

THEORIES OF POVERTY AND ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

By **Ted K. Bradshaw**

ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore how five competing theories of poverty shape anti-poverty strategies. Since most rural community development efforts aim to relieve causes or symptoms of poverty, it makes a difference which theory of poverty is believed to be responsible for the problem being addressed. In this paper five theories of poverty are distilled from the literature. It will be shown that these theories of poverty place its origin from (1) individual deficiencies, (2) cultural belief systems that support subcultures in poverty, (3) political-economic distortions, (4) geographical disparities, or (5) cumulative and circumstantial origins. Then, I show how each theory of poverty finds expression in common policy discussion and community development programs aimed to address the causes of poverty. Building a full understanding of each of these competing theories of poverty shows how they shape different community development approaches. Although no one theory explains all instances of poverty, this paper aims to show how community development practices that address the complex and overlapping sources of poverty more effectively reduce poverty compared to programs that address a single theory.

Which view of poverty we ultimately embrace will have a direct bearing on the public policies we pursue.

—Schiller 1989, p. 4

Key-words: anti-poverty strategies, theories of poverty, origins or causes of poverty, structural inequality, social inequality, social capital

WORK, WELFARE, AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

By **Tim Slack**

ABSTRACT

Drawing on data from a survey of family households in nonmetropolitan Pennsylvania, this paper examines how households construct livelihood strategies through participation in the formal labor market, government assistance programs, and informal work (for cash, barter, and savings/self-provisioning). Throughout, special attention is paid to influence of household income. The results show that participation in a varied livelihood strategy is common. Greater formal labor force participation is shown among higher income households, and greater participation in assistance programs is shown among lower-income households. Engagement in the informal economy, however, is shown to differ little by household income. Multivariate models are used to explore key correlates of participation in various livelihood strategies. Implications for future research and efforts aimed at poverty alleviation and community development are then discussed.

Key-words: informal economy; informal work; livelihood strategies; welfare

**WORK AND WELFARE STRATEGIES AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS IN
RURAL NEW ENGLAND:
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT**

By Sally Ward and Heather Turner

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how community, social, and interpersonal networks are associated with reliance on work or welfare among rural single mothers. Based on telephone interviews with single mothers in rural northern New England, the data were used to measure the effects of demographic characteristics, community context, informal and formal social networks, and perceived social support on employment, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other service use. Demographic factors were related to work and welfare as expected, with education having a particularly important effect on mother's likelihood of being employed. Informal networks were more important than formal networks, for both TANF receipt and reliance on other types of assistance. Social support from friends and family decreased reliance on public assistance, although social support from family increased the likelihood of working. There was a consistent effect of length of residence for all outcomes; the longer a woman had lived in her community, the less likely she was to rely on public assistance and the more likely she was to be working. Policy implications of these findings are discussed.

Key-words: welfare, single mothers, social networks, poverty

**THE IMPACT OF THE 1990S ECONOMIC BOOM
ON LESS-EDUCATED WORKERS IN RURAL AMERICA**

By Elizabeth E. Davis and Stacie A. Bosley

ABSTRACT

This study uses National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79) data to investigate whether the effect of local labor market conditions on the earnings of workers differs by gender, education level or metropolitan/nonmetropolitan location. The results suggest that local economic conditions in the late 1990s did have a positive effect overall on wages for men with no more than a high school degree and for women regardless of education. Further, there is evidence of a difference between metro and nonmetro labor markets, suggesting that the 1990s boom helped urban less-educated workers but not those in rural areas. The metro - nonmetro difference is most apparent for male workers.

Key-words: employment, local labor markets, NLSY79, rural, unemployment, wage curve.

**THE *WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS*:
SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND MOBILE HOME PARK RESIDENCE**

By Katherine A. MacTavish

ABSTRACT

Given the emerging social stratification of post-agrarian small-towns, potential effects are apt to be exacerbated for rural poor families such as those residing in mobile home parks, a now characteristic rural neighborhood form. Although a mobile home park offers affordable access to rural residence, social costs are attached to such access. This paper examines the intersection between mobile home park residence and social disadvantage. Drawing on an ethnographic field study in rural Oregon, findings reveal distinct conditional features of place that determine the nature of how rural inequality is emerging and the implications for poor and working-poor families.

Key-words: affordable housing, rural housing, mobile home park, social stratification, stigmatization, unsubsidized low-cost housing, post-agrarian community, low-income rural families

**STRATEGIES AND LESSONS FOR REDUCING PERSISTENT RURAL
POVERTY:
A SOCIAL-JUSTICE APPROACH TO FUNDING RURAL COMMUNITY
TRANSFORMATION**

By James A. Richardson, Jr., and Jonathan K. London

ABSTRACT

The connection between rural poverty and structural inequities is not accidental or incidental but structural and causal. Achieving equity in strategies to build wealth and move people out of poverty in rural areas will therefore require an explicit focus on race, class, and power and on “triple bottom line” economies that are intentional about eliminating or at least closing the gap on those inequities. This article describes the transformation of the National Rural Funders Collaborative (NRFC), a ten-year rural funding initiative to reduce rural poverty, from an initiative focused on increasing wealth, family self-sufficiency, and civic participation as necessary strategies for overcoming poverty to an initiative that understands the insufficiency of these strategies alone, without also addressing race, class, and power as structural and historical conditions that must be mitigated, if not eventually eliminated.

Key-words: structural racism, philanthropy, power, rural transformation