RURAL SOCIAL WORK IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES: CONCERNS AND CURRICULA

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by

© Geraldine French, B.S.W.

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Abstract

This thesis has a two-fold purpose. First, an extensive review of the literature aimed at an analysis of several past and current rural social work themes. These subjects include: (1) Problems which affect rural people and their communities, (2) The knowledge base necessary for rural social workers, (3) Suggested curricula aimed at the development of a rural social work program, and (4) Rural social work - generic vs. specialization.

Secondly, an exploratory study was undertaken which presented data regarding present rural social work programs. The study sample was composed of thirty-six social work programs that identified themselves as having a rural focus. Data was collected by means of a mailed, self-administered questionnaire which included both closed and open-ended questions.

The specific research questions posed by the study were: (1) Was rural social work recognized as being different from other forms of social work? (2) If so, what was it about rural social work that constituted the difference?

Analysis of data revealed that rural social work was recognized, and thirty-six undergraduate and graduate programs identified themselves as offering a rural focused

program. The majority of respondents acknowledged that their program had a "part" rather than a "whole" rural focus. A wide range of social work courses were taught with only five percent having a total rural focus, and only three percent having about one-half rural focus. Courses described as having a total plus one-half rural focus constituted only eight percent of social work courses. The respondents indicated that rural content was taught throughout the social work curriculum rather than in specially designed rural courses. Rural social work programs consistently depended on field placements to provide the main component of the curriculum.

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Introduction

The subject of rural social work has held the attention of many social work practitioners and educators since the early 1900's (Campbell, 1909; Chute, 1911; Kelso, 1911). Interest in the subject peaked in the 1930's when numerous articles appeared in social work literature (Brown, 1933; Browning, 1938; Strode, 1938). There was a decline in the 1940's; and by 1950, almost nothing was being written. In the 1960's, attention was again directed to the rural sector and has continued to the present time. (Ginsberg, 1976; Martinez-Brawley, 1980; Weber, 1976). It would appear that no analysis has been done as to why rural focus disappeared for two decades only to reappear relatively recently. Nor has anyone questioned why the majority of today's writers neglect to utilize the early material (Davenport and Davenport, 1983). An analysis of rural social work literature clearly indicates that a number of themes, which emerged in the years before 1950, were subsequently reiterated.

It is interesting to note that early authors did not concern themselves with explaining what they meant by rural. Contemporary writers on the other hand seem unable to agree on an accepted definition. To cite just a few

interpretations: Ginsberg (1976) relies on the United Status Census Bureau's definition of rural dwellers as people who do not live in or around cities of 50,000 or more or in places of 2,500 or more. Weber (1976) objects to rural being defined in relation to population size and suggests it refers to environmental surroundings -- the social systems and people who reside in areas that have a relatively low population density. Albers and Thompson (1980) point out that in some instances rural is conceived simply as being "non urban", in other cases it denotes marginal land areas or is equated with ethnicity. The Southern Regional Education Board Manpower Education and Training Project (1976) states that there is no clear and universally accepted definition of rural and suggests such a definition is not important. What does seem to be relevant, however, is whether the rural referred to by the early authors is the same as the rural referred to by today's writers.

In the period spanning 1900 to 1980, massive changes have impacted rural life. The development of highways, more elaborate means of transportation, and improvements in media and communication systems have supposedly minimized rural isolation. The introduction of consolidated schools and school attendance laws presumably brought about improvements in the educational system. The

distribution of monies through universal government programs was believed to equalize the services existing in rural and urban communities. However, it would appear that despite these changes, social workers today, like their early counterparts, are still preoccupied with discrepancies between rural and urban life. Programs such as Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan in Canada and Social Security in the U. S. offer income security to most elderly people. Family Allowances in Canada supplement incomes to help in the raising of children. An imbalance between rural and urban still continues to exist. Despite yearly allocations of money, Ryant (1976) and Weber (1976) claim that today's small communities continue to lack the array of social and health care services that are available in the larger centers.

Rural populations consist of a disproportionate number of the young, elderly and poor (Weber, 1976), consequently the lack of services has a significant negative impact on rural communities. For example, even though health care services are available to all Canadians, dissimilarities in services continue to exist. Medical services in an isolated rural community of Newfoundland such as Fogo do not compare with those offered in larger Newfoundland cities and towns. These in turn compare unfavourably to services available in larger, more

urbanized cities such as Montreal or Toronto. Mental health services in rural areas lag behind those in the cities. Alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, services to the elderly, protective services for children, specialized educational services and many other programs and services are either unavailable or available only on a part-time basis in rural areas. The institution of social welfare, therefore, tends to benefit rural dwellers less than their urban counterparts.

A changing economic focus was another significant influence on rural communities in this eighty-year time span. At the turn of this century, the majority of people in Canada and the United States were living in rural communities and made their living off the land (McCready, 1977). During the next few decades, the population shifted gradually from rural to urban centers. The majority of residents who continued to live in rural communities were no longer directly employed in agriculture (Davenport and Davenport, 1983). By 1960, only 11 percent of Canada's labour force was engaged in the cultivation of crops (Mann, 1970) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (1961) stated that in 1979 only ten percent of their rural population was involved in farming. The rest were employed in factories, service jobs, manufacturing or retail trade in urban areas. This supports the idea that

rural people are no longer isolated on the farms, rather they are commuting to and from their places of employment.

Industrialization had an effect on changing the economic focus by creating numerous job opportunities in urban centers. The result was people began leaving the rural sectors to seek more profitable forms of employment in the cities. As late as 1870, four-fifths of the population of Canada and the United States were living in rural communities, in less than fifty years, the urban population in both countries had exceeded the rural population (Weber, 1987). The trend continued and by 1960 approximately sixty-five percent of the total population was living in urban centers. Several projections have indicated that this outmigration to urban areas will continue indefinitely (Webster and Campbell, 1977).

In summation, input of monies, a changing economic focus and population movements have affected rural communities. Consequently; the rural of the 1920's may not be the same as the rural of the 1980's. Despite this, the issues relating to rural life that social workers have identified since the 1900's remain unchanged. They include: (1) Problems which affect rural people and their communities; (2) The knowledge base necessary for rural social workers; (3) A suggested curriculum for

rural social work programs. Included also is the recurrent debate which dominates much of the rural social work literature on whether or not rural social work requires a generic or specialized approach. These issues will be the subject of the ensuing literature review.

Review of the Literature

The literature review for this thesis could have been limited to the years 1960 to 1980 when interest in rural social work resurfaced. A historical review of the literature was decided upon because analysis clearly indicated that the issues which were addressed by the early authors were merely reiterated by contemporary writers. Few new ideas about rural social work were presented from 1960 to 1980. The fact that contemporary authors rarely referred to prior writers was significant. Similarities in early and current writings reinforced the importance of incorporating literature suggestions into the development of rural curricula. One purpose of this thesis was to analyze several similar themes about rural life which were identified by authors before and following 1950 (1950 was chosen because little was written in the fifties; numerous articles appeared before and following that time).

To reiterate what already has been said, these themes will be discussed under the headings: (1) Problems which affect rural people and their communities; (2) The knowledge base necessary for rural social workers; (3) A suggested curriculum for rural social work programs. Included also is the recurrent debate which dominates much

of the rural social work literature on whether or not rural social work requires a generic or specialized approach. An analysis of existing rural social work programs was also undertaken to determine whether they had incorporated the suggestions offered throughout the literature for over eighty years.

Problems Which Effect Rural People and Their Communities

There have been numerous problems identified by rural social work writers which have affected rural people and their communities that will not be specifically addressed here. The author is not attempting to minimize these problems; however, given the limited scope of this paper, a certain number of themes have been excluded. To mention a few: (1) lack of employment (Chute, 1911; Ginsberg, 1976); and (2) poverty (Strode, 1938; Cochran, 1976; Weber, 1976). While lack of adequate resources (Ginsberg, 1976; Horner and O'Neill, 1981; Matthews, 1927; Sanderson, 1930; Steiner, 1927; Twente, 1938; Wagenfield and Robin, 1976; Weber, 1976) have also been viewed as a problem, for the purpose of this paper, it has been included under the heading "The Knowledge Base Necessary for Rural Social Workers".

The following themes: (1) education, (2) migration, and (3) isolation, have been chosen for

discussion because the majority of authors before and after 1950 consistently identified these as focal topics.

Education. As far back as 1913, Betts recognized that the educational system was supposed to prepare individuals for future roles in society. It follows, therefore, that rural education should be adapted to meet the needs of rural people. Campbell (1909) supported this idea when he stated that rural schools should educate youth to develop resources within their own community. President Theodore Roosevelt (1909) maintained that the United States needed a new type of school, one that would prepare people for country rather than city living. By this, Roosevelt meant that rural school programs should be developed by rural people to meet their needs. In doing so this would provide encouragement for people to remain in rural areas, in order to develop resources, consequently, discouraging migration into the larger centers.

It is important to recognize that pioneer writers were concerned with a lack of rural focus in their schools (Betts, 1913; Campbell, 1909) whereas contemporary authors do not specifically address this area. One explanation for this difference might be attributed to the fact that early writers were aware that limited job opportunities existed in rural areas. They believed that focusing on

rural issues in schools might be a deterrant to the attractive allure of employment in urban centers. While today's authors also recognize unemployment in rural areas, they realize that unless industry can be attracted to enhance employment, migration is inevitable. Consequently, a rural focus in the schools would have little impact. One other reason writers of this decade are not concerned with this problem could be because the introduction of curricula is governed predominantly by urban experts who do not always promote rural attitudes, values and/or skills. What is evident is that both groups agree that limited opportunities exist in rural areas; however, the early writers deemed it necessary to discourage migration while present day writers view this phenomenon as inevitable. What implication does this have for present day rural education? Have schools become even more urbanized over the sixty-year span or are educators utilizing the suggestions of the first writers and incorporating rural emphasis into their educational programs? It appears from the literature that there is no research data to support or negate this issue.

The quality of education in rural areas when compared to urban areas has been a concern of both groups of writers (Betts, 1913; Weber, 1976). Chase and Baker in

1952 stated that one way to ensure quality education was by employing qualified teachers and yet, Betts (1913), Brown (1933), and Weber (1976) claimed that teachers in rural areas were often less qualified, more inexperienced, and paid lower salaries than their urban counterparts. In many rural areas, other professionals such as doctors, nurses and social workers, are concerned with similar problems in their own fields. It appears likely that many of these individuals accept employment in rural areas to gain the experience and qualification often demanded by the urban labor market.

The literature indicates that the physical environment in schools also influenced the type of learning experience that was provided (Chase and Baker, 1950). Several authors pre and post 1950 expressed concern with the physical condition of rural schools and suggested that they were often inadequate (Betts, 1913; Butterfield, 1913; Weber, 1976; Kotz, 1980). One is struck by the similarity of comment by authors writing about the same phenomenon separated by 67 years.

> Butterfield (1913) stated, that there were rural schools of half a dozen pupils, housed in an unkempt box of a building, while
>
> Kotz (1980) described a rural school as in bad physical disrepair, with pigeons roosting in the rafters and rain dripping through the ceiling.

Surprisingly, the literature suggests that rural schools have improved; if this is so a question which goes unanswered is why contemporary rural writers continue to be concerned with these inadequacies. One explanation might be that while the larger rural communities have seen advancements, similar conditions continue to exist in smaller, more isolated rural areas. Another explanation might be that while rural education has improved so has urban education; and on a continuum, rural education continues to rate lower.

Several authors have identified lack of variety in the rural school system (Betts, 1913; Twente, 1938, Weber, 1976), eg. specialized teachers, extracurricula activities, as another area which compares unfavorably to urban standards.

The effect of inexperienced teachers, inadequate school buildings and poor curriculum is often seen in the low levels of education which have distinguished many rural people from their urban counterparts (Coward, DeWeaver, Schmidt and Jackson, 1983). On balance, rural youth tend to drop out of school earlier (Burchinal, 1962). In a 1975 survey conducted by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it was found that rural males, twenty-five and older, had, on average, completed fewer years of formal education than their urban counterparts (Coward et

al, 1983). Fratoe (1978) indicated that people from urban areas were almost twice as likely to have graduated from college.

It is important to point out that the early writers emphasized two problem areas in relation to education which contemporary writers do not: (1) lack of rural focus in the rural school system (this has been discussed previously); (2) lack of mandatory school attendance. The universally accepted belief in the value of an education combined with the introduction of school attendance laws accounts for the lack of attention to this area by contemporary authors. While it is true that these factors have been a deterrant to children dropping out of school at an early age, they have done little to encourage rural youth to complete high school or attain higher levels of education.

In summary, many problems associated with education, ie, unqualified teachers, inadequate school buildings and lack of diversity in the rural school curriculum have been recognized and of concern to authors before and after 1950.

Migration. As late as 1870, four-fifths of the population of the United States and Canada were living in rural areas. The majority of people were employed in the economic sectors of farming, ranching, logging and fishing. In 1917, less than fifty years later, the urban

population of the United States exceeded the rural population (Weber, 1976). Canada was a little slower and did not experience this degree of urbanization until the 1920's (Davis, 1971). Migration of rural people has been attributed to increased employment opportunities (Mann, 1970; McCready, 1977) which industrialization bought to the urban centers (Beale, 1978; Weber, 1976).

Many early social work educators recognized the lack of job opportunities as a causative factor to migration. They credited the limited demand for agriculture as contributing to poverty in rural areas (Ezekiel, 1935; Lorge, 1937) and encouraging people to seek employment in the cities. Rural people were leaving their communities often not by choice, but rather because they could no longer support themselves or their families; financially, they were more secure in the urban areas.

The thirties experienced a turnaround in the migration pattern. Due to the depression, people began to return to the rural areas (McCready, 1977) because security lay in the land as well as family roots. While rural areas were affected by the depression, they did not experience the drastic effects felt by urban centers due to increased unemployment. The depression brought an increase in the rural population and, with this, government attention and input of monies returned (Lorge, 1937).

World War II rescued the economy, but this did not last; and by 1958, with the revived economies of Europe and the introduction of the European Common Market, the demand for agriculture again decreased (McCready, 1977). The decline in rural populations resumed and many current authors believed that this outmigration would continue (McCready, 1977; Webster and Campbell, 1977; Weber, 1976).

While both groups of writers recognized industrialization as a contributing factor to migration, today's writers view the phenomenon somewhat differently than their early counterparts. When many of the early articles concerning rural issues were written, migration from the rural areas was a relatively new phenomenon. Writers of the day probably did not conceive that the outmigration would continue. Present day authors on the other hand are familiar with the number of people who annually leave the rural centers. While both groups recognized that people were leaving because of increased employment opportunities, better social service programs, improved living conditions which existed in the urban centers, the early writers saw migration as a consequence; eg. people were leaving because of deplorable conditions that existed in the rural communities. Contemporary authors see migration as an accepted fact; e.g. logic

dictates that people would leave rural areas because of the limited resources which exist there.

Although felt by the rural communities in the 20's and 30's, the effects of migration do not appear to have been addressed by the social work authorities of the day. In contrast, contemporary social work thinkers are concerned with the rapid growth of urban centers which directs legislative attention to the urban crisis (Ginsberg, 1976; Weber, 1976). Meanwhile, little thought was given to the plight of rural economies and lifestyle. As youth, who are capable of entering the urban work force, leave villages and towns, the proportion of the very young, elderly and under-educated increases thereby intensifying the heavy burden on the underfinanced rural environment (Coward et al, 1983). In contrast, adaptation to the urban environment was stressful to some (Winston, Stanton, Tucker and Denton, 1983); and this stress caused them to return to their family origins. A similar occurrence was experienced in Newfoundland when Premier J. R. Smallwood introducted the concept of resettlement (Gwyn, 1968). Many outport people were encouraged and financially assisted to relocate to larger communities where they would benefit in overall lifestyle. Little thought was given to psychological issues and consequently many returned to their original homes. It appears that

there are two groups of people migrating from rural areas. One group leaves voluntarily for financial gain and another who leaves not by choice but because there is no alternative.

Isolation. The concept of isolation will be discussed in relation to rural communities and also in reference to rural social workers.

What exactly is meant by isolation? Is the isolation of rural communities which was discussed pre 1950 similar to present day discussions of isolation? To carry this further, are the majority of contemporary writers referring to the same condition when they discuss this concept? Webster's New World Dictionary (1980) defines isolation as "a person or group set apart", (p. 748). Rural communities are believed to be set apart from each other and from more urbanized communities.

Discussed earlier were improvements, i.e. more sophisticated means of transportation, improved highways, advancements in media and communication systems, which affected and should have decreased much of the isolation experienced by rural people; and yet, present writers continue to address this issue as a concern. The fundamental answer would appear to be in the definition of rural. While rural communities were affected by isolation in the 20's and 30's, the authors of the day did not

attempt to define what they meant by rural. Contemporary writers seem to experience numerous disagreements and great problems with the definition and rely primarily on population size as a gauge for whether or not a community is rural. This being the case, many communities very different from each other in terms of isolation would be defined as rural. An example of this in Newfoundland would be Clarke's Beach, which is a rural community in close proximity to a larger city, and Fogo Island, which is fairly isolated from other communities. It is important to note that while rural of the thirties is not necessarily rural of the eighties, and although degrees of isolation have been identified, both groups of authors express similar concerns when discussing this issue.

Steiner (1927) suggested that urban developed social work programs neglect to prepare social workers for the problems experienced due to community isolation. By this he was referring to the distance between clients and communities and individualistic attitudes which developed. Vaile (1933) and Brown (1933) attested to community isolation when they wrote that individuals were miles from their nearest neighbour. Blackey (1935) and Browning (1938) commented that distances also made it difficult for rural people to leave their environments. Early authors seem to have concentrated on physical

distances between individuals. Because of this, they agreed that rural citizens developed a philosophy of handling their own problems, few confidences were shared, and minimum advice was sought (Blackey, 1935; Brown, 1938; Vaile, 1933).

Early writers also saw a relationship between isolation and the limited services which existed (Matthews, 1927; Steiner, 1927). Matthews (1927) believed that the country worker was called upon to perform many duties not expected of her urban counterpart, ie. handling all types of problems such as family problems, financial problems, and child welfare issues. The sentiments of these early writers seem applicable to many existing rural communities where one social worker is expected to deliver services to four or five geographic as well as service areas. In rural areas the community rather than the individual seems to be a rural worker's client. If a worker in the city alienates a client, she can be successful with subsequent individuals. If a rural worker fails with an individual or group, the community may not give her a second chance. It would seem that failure with a rural client has greater ramifications than failure with an urban client. This could indicate that specialized training or knowledge is required for the rural worker. This will be discussed later.

One positive effect of isolation identified by early writers was the importance of the family which seemed to diminish in the cities.

To summarize, two important effects of isolation identified by pre 1950 writers were: (1) the development of a rural attitude, and (2) the lack of social services.

Contemporary writers Willets, Bealer and Crider (1980) supported the supposition that rural people had been disadvantaged with regard to services. They also attributed this to scattered, isolated populations. Horner and O'Neill (1981) maintained this by agreeing that distance did influence the delivery of services.

An awareness develops that the majority of writers continue to refer to geographic isolation in reference to rural. Yet, if we consider the communities which were defined as rural fifty years ago, but today because of the improvements, are no longer classified as such, we recognize that much of the geographic isolation has decreased. Willets et al (1980) agree that this has occurred, however, they believe that psychological and social isolation of rural communities continues. They suggest that rural individuals can continue to selectively expose themselves only to stimuli which corresponds with their existing beliefs, values and interests.

Writers of today agree with the early writers that rural people have maintained different attitudes and beliefs due to isolation (Osgood, 1980; Weber, 1976; Willets et al, 1980). Corroboration for this can be found in a rural province such as Newfoundland where importance is attached to family relationships and the significance of maintaining a denominational school system despite financial costs.

Early writers identified colleague isolation (Matthews, 1927), lack of exposure to developments in the field (Twente, 1938), absence of social and/or cultural stimulation (Blackey, 1935; Brown, 1933) as concerns in relation to worker isolation. Present writers agree that colleague consultation, professional stimulation and supervision are lacking (Ginsberg, 1976).

Both groups of writers agree that professional isolation and its consequences are a major concern. However, there seems to be a consensus that worker isolation does not have to be a negative experience, workers can use the opportunity for creativity (Brown, 1933; Davies, 1976-77). An awareness of the fifty-year span in publications makes the similarity of concerns in relation to isolation interesting to note.

In summation, the foregoing paragraphs have discussed several problems identified by rural social work writers'

which have affected rural communities since the early 1900's. The knowledge required by rural social workers to help minimize these problems will now be discussed.

The Knowledge Base Necessary for Rural Social Workers

The social work literature of today and yesterday indicates that specific knowledge in relation to rural life is essential to ensure successful practice. The ideas expressed consistently can be grouped as follows: (1) knowledge of rural communities, and (2) knowledge of rural people. The repetition of these themes by past and present authors clearly indicates that they were thought to be relevant.

Knowledge of Rural Communities. An understanding of rural communities was a dominant theme throughout the literature (Blackey, 1935; Cole, 1949; Colliver, 1976; Irey, 1980, Martinez-Brawley, 1983; Matthews, 1927). The authors suggested that it was important to understand a community's organization, including its political and social structure (Irey, 1980; Matthews, 1927), to be aware of the community's boundaries, its economic and political organization (A Social Work Education Workshop, 1976; Martinez-Brawley, 1983; Vaile, 1933), and to perceive that while the majority of rural communities possessed commonalities, they were simultaneously unique (Weber,

1976; Vaile, 1933). Possession of this knowledge was deemed essential to the rural worker in organizing rural resources and perceiving that the methods which produced results in one community might not be applicable to another (Cole, 1949; Vaile, 1933). The literature suggests that gaining a knowledge of rural communities requires an understanding of local government, knowing how to utilize volunteers, and an awareness of power structures. While these are quite distinct bodies of knowledge, they appear to be given equal importance in rural social work literature.

Local Government. Several authors suggested a knowledge of the political structure but failed to elaborate on what this entailed (Gertz, Meider, and Pluckham, 1976; Johnson, 1977; Martinez-Brawley, 1980; Matthews, 1927). It was implied that rural governments differed from their urban counterparts (Cole, 1949; Johnson, 1977) and an awareness of this difference permitted the rural social worker to develop a role of community organizer (Cole, 1949; Willets et al, 1980).

Authors pre 1950 and subsequent to that time allude to the importance of understanding local government and the role it is presumed to play in rural communities; they failed to elaborate on what exactly it was that one should be aware of.

Volunteers. Strode (1938) stated that due to the multiplicity and complexity of their duties, rural social workers must learn to share and delegate their responsibilities. Matthews (1927) attested that where there are insufficient workers, as in a rural setting, to perform the duties expected of them, an efficient system of volunteers is essential. Brown (1933) asserts that while volunteers are optional in an urban setting, they are essential in a rural setting. Brown expanded by stating that city volunteers usually obtain methods and factual material about a case from either a trained worker or the case worker. In the country, the same worker might find the volunteer more knowledgable about the family history and present situation than any case record.

Buxton (1976) stated that the utilization of volunteers is imperative in the rural community if the worker is to recruit sufficient help to deal with the problems. Wylie (1976) projected that rural communities seemed to be characterized by groups of individuals, accustomed to helping one another, and the rural worker should not hesitate to utilize these people.

While the past and present authors agree on the necessity of utilizing volunteers, both groups caution the rural worker. Matthews (1927) advised that using volunteers was not always positive. He felt free

discussion of clients was common among volunteers who either did not recognize the negative ethics of such a practice, or the novelty of working on an interesting case suppressed their better judgement. Albers and Thompson (1980) cite other dangers: (1) they believed that reliance increased the risk of these structures becoming less natural, thereby diminishing their effectiveness; (2) the danger of perceiving informal systems as a substitute for quality service; and (3) the problem of biased information.

It would appear that volunteers are an integral component of rural social service delivery. An awareness of how to maximize volunteeers while at the same time realizing their limitations would seem essential to the rural social worker. To aid in the recruitment of volunteers, a knowledge of the influential and/or active people is essential (Brown, 1933; Mermelstein and Sundet, 1976). Scant reference is made to knowledge of key people or community power structure by early authors who seemed to concentrate more on the utilization of volunteers; however, they failed to expand on whether the volunteers were recruited and trained by agencies or whether they were people just waiting to be of help. Power structure seems to be a term used frequently by the present writers. Josephine Strode (1938), one of the very few

early writers who did allude to power structure in a rural community states:

> A city worker may go through life believing that leadership rests with certain traditional "key" people, prominent businessmen, newspaper "philantropists", big contributors, scions of "old families" high officials and so on. In rural parts leadership is never static. (p. 343)

Strode failed to expand on this idea.

Power Structure then is a contemporary term which seems to refer to both the formal (elected officials) and the informal (significant, behind the scenes decision makers) nature of power in any community. Due to the fact that formal power structures are easily discernible, this thesis is more concerned with the hidden or informal power structures. Buxton (1976) defines power structure as:

> a group of leaders who operate unofficially but who have greater power than the elected officials (p. 32).

Johnson (1977) supports this when he states elected officials are not necessarily the important decision makers in a rural community. Gertz et al (1976) believed that knowledge of power structures in combination with the ability to develop informal patterns of communication with key people was essential to successful rural practice. Colliver (1976) adds that the more sensitive workers are

in identifying the power structures the more effective they will be in influencing community affairs. Buxton (1976) points out that hidden power structures are the most potent and difficult to discover; however, rural social workers must learn how to recognize and utilize the powerful people. Martinez-Brawley (1983) suggests rural sociology with specific emphasis on rural community power structure be studied to enhance this process. Johnson (1980) believes that social workers should develop relationships with leaders of various sectors of the community: for example, church officials, school officials, farm organizers, store owners, etc. in order to learn the community's customs, norms, patterns and traditions. He attests that natural helpers and informal structures will emerge and are then easily recognized. Buxton (1976) suggests that by referring to the formal leaders, their decisions and the people they refer to may give valuable clues to the worker of where real power lies.

Identifying the key decision makers is important and may have implications for success or failure of social work projects (Johnson, 1977). Buxton (1976) confirms that without the sanction of the influential people, other individuals in the community may reject what is proposed. He adds that without their support, accomplishments would be more difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

In summation, the majority of writers suggest a combination of academic and experiential learning to aid the rural social worker in identifying the informal power structures which have been deemed necessary for successful practice.

Lack of social services. In reference to lack of services, Matthews (1927) provides the following commentary:

> "a worker in the city goes about her work as a small part of a large social service machine. A country worker is usually the whole machine herself. The city worker is more of a specialist while the country worker is a general practitioner. She comes pretty near having to do everything." (p. 164)

Strode (1938) continues this idea by stating that many city workers concentrate on difficulties specific to their area of specialization while the rural worker's role encompasses more diverse duties. Strode elaborated by suggesting that in urban areas problems of community cooperation, interpretation, policy administration and procedures are allocated to superiors while responsibility for these tasks in rural areas lie with the worker. Ginsberg (1976) utilized different terminology but expressed similar concerns when he stated that rural social workers required specialized skills in working with a scarcity of services.

Brown (1933) suggested that rural workers be knowledgeable in how to stimulate community leaders to study the needs of rural people. Cole (1949) felt that rural workers were often the only ones available to plan and motivate programs in the rural community. In (1976) Mermelstein and Sundet supported a similar view when they suggested that, the rural social worker, in addition to intervening in existing systems, should know how to construct and design an organization to deliver services.

It is necessary at this point to indicate the important role the church played in the lives of rural people. Brown (1933); Matthews (1927); Ginsberg (1976); Johnson (1977); suggested that the church in rural areas retained much of the social responsibility which it had relinquished in urban centers to alternate institutions. Rural individuals and families seemed more willing to accept help from the church rather than a social agency (Johnson, 1977). Lack of social services in combination with rural attitudes could have contributed to this occurrence. The emphasis attached to the importance of the rural church should be an important consideration for the worker.

To summarize, both early and contemporary writers agreed that rural social workers would be summoned to perform a variety of services. As far back as (1927) Steiner identified this and commented that traditional forms of social work could not merely be extended to the country and that new policies needed to be developed in response to the demands of the rural situation.

Knowledge of rural people. Blackey (1935); Brown (1933); Steiner (1927) and Strode (1938) agree that rural workers required a clear understanding of rural attitudes. By this they meant a rural value stressing independance in solving one's own problems, negative attitudes which exist toward social assistance and government programs, and the importance rural people place on their home and property. It was felt that a rural social worker needed to understand why specific attitudes developed and their implications for rural people (Steiner, 1927). If a rural worker did not possess this understanding, the help offered was limited (Blackey, 1935). Brown (1933) and Steiner (1927) carried this theme further by suggesting that part of the worker's technique should be concerned with changing certain

negative attitudes, i.e. with regard to relief, delinquency and unemployment.

An appreciation and understanding of rural life was also viewed as being important for the rural worker (Matthews, 1927; Cottrell, 1927). Matthews (1927) advised workers to use caution, to consider feelings and emotions when attempting to better life conditions. He believed that this would come instinctively to social workers born and reared in a rural community. While a number of authors felt there was validity to this, Cole (1949) stated that instinct was no substitute for training.

Brown (1933) and Steiner (1927) believed an awareness of the problems which affected rural people was also important. Matthews (1927) summarized this well when he stated that rural workers needed an appreciation and understanding of the customs, habits, prejudices, religious affiliation and background of every individual he encountered.

Several sentiments regarding rural people which were expressed by today's writers included an understanding that historic events influenced present interactions (Irey, 1980). Familiarity with and empathy toward rural people are important to the worker (Gertz et al, 1976). An awareness that

individuals and their community are intricately related was considered an asset (Irey, 1980). The rural social worker should know that rural people tend to believe in traditional structures and value systems and these were and the reasons why they were resistive to change (Weber, 1976). Persistent attitudes towards unemployment and poverty existed (Osgood, 1980) and rural people were found to be more traditional, less accepting of minority rights, more religious and conservative (Willets et al, 1980). Coward et al (1983) agreed that this is the traditional view of rural people but indicated that results of national and local surveys dispute this concept suggesting that rural and urban populations each support as much internal differentiation in attitudes as do the total population.

While both groups agree that rural attitudes are different and an understanding of such is necessary for successful practice, the early writers emphasize the importance for social workers to understand why these attitudes developed. Contemporary writers rely on descriptive characteristics of rural people; i.e. they are more conservative, more traditional for explaining the difference in attitude. There is

little attempt made to understand why rural people are this way.

The courses which have been suggested to enhance the incorporation of this knowledge will be discussed further.

Suggested Curriculum for a Rural Focused Program

> "A profession does not begin by training a group of workers and then finding something for them to do. A need is present; someone fills the need as best he can; then it gradually becomes apparent that some particular kind of training is helpful to those who relieve the particular need, thus a profession gradually develops" (Cal Maxted, p. 165).

When Cal Maxted made this statement in 1945, she was referring to the discipline of social work, more specifically rural social work. It was recognized that there was a need for social workers who possessed special knowledge about rural people and their communities. As indicated earlier, both the past and present authors agreed that there was a specific knowledge base with regard to rural social work that was a prerequisite to successful practise. Both groups of writers indicate specific course suggestions which would facilitate this learning process:

(1) Rural Sociology - While both groups suggest rural sociology, no attempt is made to define this term.

The early writers suggest that rural sociology provided an understanding of the environment, customs, traditions, and attitudes of rural people (Steiner, 1927; Vaile, 1933), a comprehension of rural life (Brown, 1933; Cole, 1949; Vaile, 1933) and an awareness of the complex nature of rural problems. It was recognized that this understanding enabled the rural social worker to perceive problems through a community rather than an individual perspective. Current writers also recognize that rural sociology is important in providing an understanding of rural life (Martinez-Brawley, 1983; Swep, 1976) but failed to elaborate.

It could be speculated that rural sociology, like rural communities, has undergone significant changes over the time period involved. Independent of these changes, writers in this area recommended this subject in the 20's and continue to recommend it in the 80's.

The authors, pre and post 1950, also felt rural sociology enhanced a comprehension of family ~~and family~~ dynamics. While both groups agreed on the importance of understanding families, their reasons were not the same. The early writers acknowledged that sociology provided an analysis of the rural culture or life in which a family was set (Vaile, 1933) in comparison to the current writers

who emphasized that an understanding of family could aid in comprehending rural life (Kelley, 1982).

An understanding of rural government was acknowledged by early writers as important. Vaile (1933) suggested this could be obtained through rural sociology. Martinez-Brawley (1980) agreed with the importance of this understanding but failed to suggest where to obtain this knowledge.

The early writers seemed to suggest that rural sociology provided a major portion of the knowledge necessary to ensure successful rural practice. The present writers seem less inclined to place this responsibility on rural sociology but often fail to suggest alternate learning experiences.

(2) Group work was recommended by both groups. Cole (1949) believed an awareness of group work and its ideas would enhance successful practice as the rural worker would be expected to work with a variety of groups. Ginsberg (1976) agreed that group work would be an asset but failed to elaborate.

(3) Brown (1933) and Martinez-Brawley (1983) suggested a working knowledge of rural economics. Neither author commented on what they meant.

(4) Field Placements -- Both groups of authors agreed on the importance of rural field placements (Brown,

1933; Lerrigo, 1935; Ginsberg, 1976; Weber, 1976). An awareness of the importance of rural field placements by contemporary authors is consistent with current developments in social work education which recognize the value of placements in all areas of social work. What is important to point out is that the value of rural field placements was recognized over fifty years ago. Even though many early writers suggested that it was an advantage to be born and reared in a rural community (Brown, 1933; Cole, 1949), it was acknowledged that learning could be accomplished academically (Browning, 1938) and by working under supervision in a rural environment (Brown, 1933). While contemporary authors agreed with the importance of rural placements, they did not concede that being born in a rural area was an advantage. Rather, they concentrated on the learning atmosphere provided by the placement, suggesting that it offered an opportunity for the workers to learn their professional roles (Granger and Noone, 1982). Kelly and Jacobsen (1981) carried this theme further by suggesting that the student not only work but live in the rural environment and Weber (1976) recommended that preferably not only the students but also the rural educators be located within the rural community.

Both groups imply that there is specific knowledge related to rural people and their communities which cannot be learned solely academically and that experiential learning in combination with academic learning is required. Proceedings from a conference on Social Work in Northern Regions (1976) summed up this position well which stated that field placements are viewed as the primary place where teaching and learning specifics of rural practice could occur.

An array of other courses were suggested throughout the years without elaboration. These included: casework skills (Cottrell, 1927; Lerrigo, 1935), community organization (Brown, 1933; Cole, 1949), counselling skills (Granger and Noone, 1982), research skills (Weber, 1976; Kelly and Jacobsen, 1981; Ginsberg, 1976), political science, history and geography (Martinez-Brawley, 1983), native studies (Social Work in Northern Regions, 1976). Many of these course suggestions would appear to be appropriate to any social work program; but throughout this literature, they are recommended specifically for rural social work programs.

Even though the literature clearly recognizes rural social work, these suggestions indicate that there is confusion about what combination of courses are essential for a rural focused program. It could be suggested that

courses which promote rural learning have not yet been developed and writers are attempting to adjust existing courses to accommodate rural content. This reinforces the contention that rural social work is not a speciality, however, it does require a generic approach with a special knowledge base. A statement made by Jessie Steiner (1927), sixty years ago, is as applicable today as it was then: "Only a few professional schools give particular attention to the training of rural social workers and they are not agreed upon the subjects of study to be emphasized" (p. 185).

Rural Social Work - Generic Vs. Specialization

Martinez-Brawley (1980) suggests that concern has been generated by past and present writers about whether or not urban born social work is appropriate for rural areas or whether much extensive modification is required; that, in effect, social work in rural areas is a discipline distinct from that practised in the cities.

Interest in whether or not rural social work required a generic or specialized approach emerged in the early thirties. Many differing points of view were discussed, however, Brown (1933) was given credit for ending the discussions when it was accepted that while the method remained unchanged, specific knowledge with regard to

rural living was a prerequisite. Today's writers resumed the debate in the early sixties and seem to be at a similar point in their discussions as the initial writers were in the thirties when the debate was discontinued.

(1) Casework seemed to be the main theme expressed by many of the early authors (Browning, 1938; Cottrell, 1927; Matthews, 1927; Pennypacker, 1939; Steiner, 1927; Twente, 1927), probably because it was the only developed component of social work at that time. Casework was viewed as a treatment modality designed to help people by an approach and method that was fundamentally the same regardless of the area in which it was employed (Pennypacker, 1939; Twente, 1938). It was believed that individual uniqueness and treatment differentials were its principles and did not require redefining for the rural field (Shafer, 1939). While it was acknowledged that the physical environment in rural communities differed from urban communities, it was felt that the human element remained unchanged and that identical problems existed in both areas (Cottrell, 1927). These authors agreed that the social work method did not differ in rural environments. They did concede, however, that actual work performance was affected by the physical environment (Lerrigo, 1935; Twente, 1938). In essence they meant that

lack of resources and isolation factors which existed in rural communities did have an effect on rural practice.

(2) The early writers also placed emphasis on individual attributes of the worker as contributing to successful practise in rural areas, i.e. resourcefulness, insight, ability, sense of humor. (Brown, 1933; Lerrigo, 1935; Steiner, 1927; Twente, 1927). If the rural social worker lacked these attributes, no amount of academic training could prepare him for successful rural practice.

(3) Other writers of the period (Brown, 1933; Matthews, 1927; Strode, 1938) believed that rural social work was different from urban social work. They adhered to the view that while the fundamental principles of casework were the same, extensive modification in the method was advisable, and specific knowledge about rural living was essential to ensure successful practice. However, when they tried to define what these modifications entailed, they merely described the physical conditions which distinguished rural environments from their urban counterparts. While their premise was that rural social work was different and required a specialized approach, no literature adequately described this form of casework.

In summary then, we see three different ideas expressed by pre 1950 social work authors about rural social work:

(1) Casework is applicable, while the method remains unchanged from urban casework the environment which the service is delivered differs and affects practise.

(2) Personal attributes of the rural social worker contribute to successful practise.

(3) Social work in rural areas was different from social work in urban areas but the differences were not contextual but rather conceptual.

Groups expressing these three ideas seemed to have reached an agreement in the thirties in that the casework method was applicable to urban and rural social work, but as with any area of social work, certain pertinent knowledge was seen as a prerequisite to successful practise.

While the early writers did not specifically suggest a generic approach as this was not yet in their repertoire, their ideas encompass this focus.

Contemporary social work authors no longer suggest casework as a main theme and many suggest a generalist approach. This corresponds to recent developments in social work in general. Mermelstein and Sundet (1976) provided the following description of a generalist social

worker for a rural setting: "A rural social worker is one who assesses phenomena in all their systematic ramifications and identifies and intervenes at whatever level is efficient and effective to bring about desired social change" (p. 16). To Glicken and Dutton (1983) the generalist approach implied that the worker was competent to practice with a variety of clients and client problems. To Martinez-Brawley (1977) and Walsh (1981) successful practitioners in rural areas were both flexible and versatile in clinical treatment but did not adhere to any specific treatment modality, rather a generalist approach was perscribed.

Several authors, while agreeing on the suitability of the generalist approach, agreed with the early writers in suggesting the need for a specific knowledge base with regard to rural social work (Weber, 1976; Buxton, 1976). Buxton (1976) believed that many facets of social work applied to all areas. He expressed the idea that rural and urban communities experienced similar problems and utilized similar social work practice but believed it was necessary to emphasize key differences in order that social workers practicing in rural areas would be able to develop special skills to deal with rural problems. While Irey (1980) agreed with a generalist approach, she was not referring to a "Jack of all Trades" rather a social worker

who was highly skilled with regard to people, their transactions and their environments. Stafford (Note 1) supported this when he stated that rural social work practice involved special problems which required a specialist who used a generic framework of knowledge.

Martinez-Brawley (1983) stated that the matter of specialization has not yet been resolved, however, the majority of contemporary writers agree that a generalist approach with a specialized knowledge base in rural social work is more suitable for rural practice. Discrepancies appear in current writers' perceptions of what constitutes a generalist. The disagreement is not whether a generic or specialized approach is necessary, but rather should the rural knowledge base that is required be referred to as a speciality or a component of the generic approach.

Method

The Setting

Even though much has been written on the phenonemon of rural social work, empirical research dealing with the practice of social work in rural areas is lacking. Rural social work has not been compared to its urban counterparts and social work education with a rural focus is not highly developed. Because practitioners and educators in Canada and the United States were actively examining rural social work as evidenced by the numerous articles and books published on the subject since the 1960's and the number of conferences focused on rural social work, the curiousity of the investigator was aroused about what contributed to the uniqueness of rural social work programs. A survey of social work programs, therefore, was undertaken to determine what made rural social work programs different from other conventional social work programs. The setting of the study was Canada and the United States. The reason the two counties were included was to find out how many rural social work programs there were in both countries. The anticipated small sample size also warranted the inclusion of the two countries.

The Sample. All social work programs listed with the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education except for 105 programs which were either obviously urban: e.g. University of New York, University of Toronto, or where the investigator had prior knowledge that the program offered was urban.

Of the two hundred and sixty-four questionnaires mailed to schools of social work in Canada and the United States, two hundred and six were returned. Thirty-nine programs identified themselves as having a rural focus. Included in that number were six Canadian programs and thirty-three American programs. One Canadian university, which identified itself as rural due to location, eliminated itself from the study because it believed the distinction between a rural and non-rural program was impossible to determine. Three American questionnaires were not included because of insufficient information, leaving a total of thirty-six programs for analysis.

The Procedure. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) and covering letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix B) were mailed May 10, 1982, to social work programs listed with the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education. Included with the questionnaire was an orange response card (see Appendix B). Those schools which did not

consider their program rural were requested to return the orange card indicating this. Those identifying their programs as rural were asked to return the completed questionnaire. A follow-up letter (see Appendix B) was mailed on October 4, 1982, to those schools which failed to return either the orange card or the completed questionnaire. This study was completed under the auspices of the School of Social Work at Memorial University.

This was a one-shot exploratory study. Pretesting was not done due to the anticipated small number of participants.

The Questionnaire. To reiterate what has previously been said, both past and present writers emphasized several important themes which they believed were essential to facilitate rural practice. While there is disagreement as to whether or not rural social work requires a specialized approach, there is concensus that a specific knowledge base with regard to the rural milieu is essential. The investigator sought to determine what social work programs identified themselves as having a rural focused program and what was it about these programs that made them different from more conventional social work programs. Were the programs that identified themselves as offering a rural focus incorporating the

literature suggestions into the development of their curriculum? A questionnaire was developed to answer these questions. The initial questions on the questionnaire endeavoured to determine if a relationship existed between a rural focused program and whether the program was classified School of Social Work, a department/division of Social Work, or Combined Department/Division. Whether or not the college or university was a public or private institution was of interest to determine if this influenced whether or not a rural focus was offered. It was then determined if the rural program was undergraduate, graduate program or both. The respondents were requested to identify the degree (part or whole) of the rural focus. Part implied that the rural focus was a component of the social work program. Whole inferred that the rural theme was the major emphasis. How the programs themselves identified the rural component was perceived to be significant. Reluctance by rural authors to use terms such as rural social work and social work in rural areas, social work generalist and rural social work generalist interchangeably prompted the inclusion of the next question which sought to determine what terminology rural programs employed to describe themselves. Could and should the terms be used interchangeably or were they

viewed as distinct and separate by programs professing to being rural.

Questions seven and eight were included to find out what percentage of the total social work courses offered contained a rural focus. Respondents were requested to identify the rural focus on a continuum which ranged from no rural focus, to some rural focus, to about half rural focus, to total rural focus. (Some referred to a small input of the rural theme, about half implied half of the course focus was rural, total indicated that rural was the main concentration.)

Questions nine, ten and eleven provided an analysis of course titles and the main texts and readings these courses employed. For the purpose of this study, the investigator grouped the responses to course titles under the headings, Practice Issues, Policy Issues, Field Concerns, General, and Insufficient Information. Practice Issues included responses concerned with incorporating social work methods. Policy Issues encompassed rural concerns and their implementation. Field Concerns dealt with responses pertaining to field placement interests. General refers to answers which could not be categorized under either of the three headings. These categories were picked because, upon analysis of the returned questionnaires, these three groupings were discernible.

However, it would seem that these three categories could be applicable to any social work course. The main texts and readings utilized in the rural courses were also of interest. For the purpose of analysis, the investigator grouped the responses under the headings, Rural, Non-Rural, and General. Rural referred to those texts and readings which indicated a rural theme; non-rural represented texts and readings which did not indicate a rural component. Materials that could not be classified as rural or non-rural were placed in the General category.

The literature suggests courses other than social work to provide rural content, questions twelve to sixteen were included to determine whether rural programs were utilizing the suggestions by either requiring or recommending non-social work courses with a rural content.

Rural field placements were recognized in the literature as a vital component of rural programs, hence the inclusion of questions sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, which relate to rural placements.

Question nineteen was added to identify what percentage of full-time faculty were devoted to rural focused social work education.

Questions were used which sought to identify the participant's views of what constituted the uniqueness of rural focused programs and what educators deemed social

work students should learn in these programs. For analysis, the responses were grouped under Resources and Delivery Patterns, Rural Life and Social Issues, Practice Issues, Interest Concerns, and Other. Resources and Delivery patterns were chosen because a number of responses identified lack of social services to rural people as a concern. Rural Life and Social Issues included responses which were concerned with knowledge of the individualism of rural people and rural lifestyle. Practice Issues dealt with responses concerned with incorporating social work methods to aid rural people and their communities. Interest concerns included answers that did not pertain solely to rural issues, rather were applicable to other forms of social work. Other referred to responses that did not fall under either of the four categories.

Results and Discussion

The thirty-one schools which participated in the study consisted of eleven autonomous schools of social work, eleven departments/divisions of social work, eight combined departments with Sociology, Psychology or Anthropology, and one response indicated other but failed to elaborate. There were nine private institutions (further analysis showed that eight of these were church affiliated) and twenty-two public colleges or universities. Table 1 represents these data.

TABLE 1

Selected Descriptive Characteristics of Programs (n = 31)

DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS	EDUCATIONAL UNIT			
	School	Dept./Div.	Combined	Other
Public	11	6	4	1
Private	0	5	4	0

Thirty-one schools identified themselves as having a rural focus. Of the thiry-one schools, five indicated they offered a rural focus in both an undergraduate and

graduate program bringing the total number of programs for analysis to thirty-six. Included in the thiry-six were twenty-four undergraduate programs and twelve graduate programs. Five of the undergraduate programs were Canadian, nineteen undergraduate, and twelve graduate programs were American. It was speculated that the educational unit (i.e. school, department/division, combined) might be related to whether or not a rural program was offered. Table 2 refers to these data.

TABLE 2

Descriptive Features of Rural Programs
(n = 36)

DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS		EDUCATIONAL UNIT				
		School	Dept./ Div.	Combined	Other	Total
Undergraduate Rural Focus	Can.	2	2	0	1	5
	U.S.	0	7	7	0	14
Graduate Rural Focus	Can.	0	0	0	0	0
	U.S.	6	1	0	0	7
Both		3	1	1	0	5
Total		11	11	8	1	31

Analysis revealed no such relationship existed between educational unit and a rural focused program being offered.

Only two of the twenty-four undergraduate programs described their focus as "wholly" rural and none of the graduate programs did. Twenty-two undergraduate and eleven graduate programs considered their program offered a part rural focus and one respondent failed to answer. Table 3 represents these data.

TABLE 3

Degree of Rural Focus
(n = 36)

DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS	RURAL FOCUS		
	Part	Whole	No Response
Undergraduate	22	2	1
Graduate	11	0	0

These results were interesting, for although the respondents identified themselves as offering a rural focused program, the majority believed the rural concentration was only a part of the social work program.

The majority (13) of the undergraduate programs described their rural program as social work generalist while the graduate social work programs described themselves as rural social work and rural social work practice equally (4). Thirteen of the respondents indicated more than one response, and several indicated more than five responses. From this it may be speculated that the terms rural social work and social work in rural areas, social work generalist and rural social work generalist are viewed by the respondents as interchangeable, which is interesting because writers in this area seem hesitant to transpose the terms.

The total number of social work courses offered in each program was tabulated. The undergraduate programs indicated that the range of social work courses offered was from 1 course to 30. Of the graduate program respondents, the range was from 2 to 100. One undergraduate social work course offered in an undergraduate program and (100) graduate social work courses seem improbable; therefore, these numbers were excluded to obtain a more accurate average. The average number of undergraduate social work courses was (14) and the average graduate social work courses was (28). While a wide range of social work courses were taught, only five percent of the undergraduate and graduate courses had a

total rural focus and three percent were about half rural focus. Courses described as having a total plus about one-half rural focus constituted only eight percent of social work courses. The majority of courses fell into the categories of some or no rural focus. These data are represented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Concentration of Rural Focus in Social Work Courses (n = 30)*

COURSES	DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS		
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total Percentage
Total Rural Focus	15	13	5.0
About Half Rural Focus	17	4	3.0
Some Rural Focus	188	97	48.0
No Rural Focus	93	169	44.0
Total	313	283	100.0

Note. (*) denotes one school who did not respond.

It was indicated by the responses that few courses had been planned with the idea of a total rural focus, and a major portion of the teaching of rural content relied on various

social work courses that completed the curriculum rather than specially designed rural courses.

Of the respondents who indicated they offered a total, about half, and some rural focused courses, the course titles were of interest. Data analysis indicated that only seventeen of the thirty-one schools responded to the question which illustrated course titles -- total rural focus. The responses ranged from 0 to 13 with an average of two courses offered. Six schools indicated course titles which dealt with about half rural focus. The range was 0 to 4 with an average of two courses proposed. Sixteen schools replied that they offered courses with some rural focus, the range was 2 to 21, and the average course offered was five. These data clearly suggest that the rural focused programs do not rely on the courses they are offering to provide the rural content. Further analysis of the course titles was undertaken; and for the purposes of this paper, the responses were grouped under the headings, Practice Issues, Policy Issues and Field Concerns. The reason for these groupings has been previously discussed. Table 5 represents these data.

TABLE 5

Categories of Rural Focused Courses
Determined by Course Titles*

RURAL FOCUS	COURSE CATEGORIES				
	Practice	Policy	Field	General	Insufficient Information
Total Rural N = 17					
Undergraduate	10	10	1	6	2
Graduate	4	4	2	5	3
About Half N = 6					
Undergraduate	2	3	1	6	9
Graduate	0	0	0	0	0
Some N = 16					
Undergraduate	16	35	11	20	82
Graduate	0	0	0	0	0
Total	32	52	15	37	96

Note. (*) denotes 232 titles listed by respondents.
N denotes number of respondents in each category.

The data indicated that (52) responses were classified under policy issues, (32) under practice issues and (15) could be placed under field concerns. This was an interesting finding as the literature focuses on practice rather than policy issues. A significant number (37) were classified under the heading General as no other one classification appeared appropriate or discernible.

Analysis of the texts and readings required by the rural focused programs revealed that only sixteen schools out of three indicated the texts/readings they required for their total rural focused courses. They ranged in number from 0 to 6 with an average of two texts/readings per course. Six schools indicated the books/readings for about half rural focus the range was 0 to 13 with an average of four materials being utilized. Fourteen schools offered texts/readings utilized for some rural focus courses with a range 2 to 21 and an average of five teachings per school.

In addition, the texts and major readings were further classified by the investigator under the headings, Rural, Non-Rural, General.

Sixty-eight texts and readings could not be classified because nothing significant was evident to allow them to be grouped under either rural or non-rural; consequently, it could not be determined if a rural component existed. It may be significant that the majority of respondents did not reply. This may indicate that the texts and readings used did not reflect rural content; therefore, they were not provided by the participants. The majority of the respondents who did reply indicated that they do not rely on rural social work literature to provide the rural content for their rural programs.

TABLE 6

Number of Main Texts and Readings Employed in Rural Focused Courses*

RURAL FOCUS	TEXT OR READINGS			
	Rural	Non-Rural	General	No Information
Total N = 16				
Undergradute	7	22	13	2
Graduate	13	0	5	3
About Half N = 6				
Undergraduate	4	11	9	9
Graduate	0	0	0	0
Some N = 14				
Undergraduate	5	38	40	84
Graduate	0	0	1	69
Total	29	71	68	167

Note. (*) denotes 335 texts and readings identified by respondents. N denotes the number of respondents in each category.

A surprising and significant finding of this study was that the majority of undergraduate (20) and graduate schools (11) did not require rural content courses outside the social work curriculum. Fifteen undergraduate and seven graduate did not recommend outside courses with a rural content. In other words, the information provided

by respondents indicated that either there were no suitable courses offered or there may be an underlying confidence that all the necessary rural knowledge was conveyed in social work courses.

Rural field placements were offered by all except two of the undergraduate programs and by all of the graduate programs. It could be surmised that rural field placements constitute a major portion of the rural content and integration of rural knowledge. This could also imply that rural locations of social work programs rather than rural content might be an influencing factor in programs identifying themselves as rural.

The responses of the undergraduate programs as to the percentage of full-time faculty concentrated on rural focused social work education ranged from 0 percent to 100 percent with an average of 34 percent. The graduate programs ranged from 1 percent to 30 percent with an average of 13 percent. It seems illogical that programs which identify themselves as having a rural focus indicate that either none or one percent of faculty are involved in rural education. It would appear to be another indication that the rural placement may be the main element in identifying a rural focus.

Two open-ended questions were also asked: (1) What are the components that make a rural focused program

different from other programs? (2) What are the most important things a student should learn in a rural focused program? As has been previously indicated in the section, Questionnaire, the responses were grouped under the headings, Resources and Delivery Patterns, Rural Life and Social Issues, Practice Issues, Interest. Table 7 represents these data.

TABLE 7

Selected Characteristics of a Rural Program*

Open-Ended Questions	Resources Delivery Patterns	Rural Life & Social Issues	Practice Issues	Interest	Other
(1) Different	22	23	29	6	20
(2) Learned	9	26	32	0	15

Note. (*) denotes 26 responded to Different, 27 responded to Learned.

The responses indicate there is little difference in Resources and Delivery Patterns, Rural Life and Social Issues and Practice Issues. Respondents saw them as being equally important in contributing to the uniqueness of rural social work. Educators indicated that Rural Life and Social Issues and Practice Issues were

areas a student should learn. Instructors viewed knowledge and delivery of resources as less important for a student to learn in a rural focused program. This could indicate that educators believed this could only be learned in the field rather than in an academic setting.

What was interesting to note in the responses was that participants seem to have difficulty making a distinction between the two questions and in several instances gave exactly the same answers to both questions.

Overall, while rural educators recognized and agreed that there is such a thing as a rural focused program, they failed to demonstrate major differences between their program and any other social work program.

There was little indication from the information provided that a rural component was offered in the majority of social work courses. While the literature suggests non-social work courses with a rural content to complete the curriculum, responding schools rarely required or recommended such courses. Another significant finding was less than half of faculty were dedicated to promoting rural social work education. It could be assumed that the majority of rural programs which responded relied on rural field placements to provide the important difference in their program and an urban

program. Rural placements in combination (not isolation) with rural courses should comprise a rural curriculum.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was related to the small sample size. Due to the anticipated small number of respondents, pretesting of the instrument was not possible. Owing to the fact that the questionnaire had to be developed, questions which may have enhanced the findings may not have been included. Some of the questions were cumbersome and required time and attention of the respondents. This may have been an influencing factor in some of the unanswered questions. Furthermore, the coding of questions, nine, ten, and eleven was subjective. While the investigator collaborated with a colleague, it would have been better had the information been rated independently and the ratings compared to establish inter-coder reliability.

Recommendations

On the basis of this thesis, the following recommendations are offered:

(1) Rural social work writers should be encouraged to recognize and utilize the abundant rural social work literature that was written prior to 1960. Rural social

work regained popularity in the 1960's and was approached at that time as a relatively new subject. Little reference is made by the majority of present day writers to the profusion of literature written on the subject from 1900 to 1960.

(2) Contemporary rural social work writers have developed the rural theme to the same point that past writers abandoned the subject in the late 1940's. Rather than reiterate what has already been said, today's writers should be encouraged to continue to develop new dimensions of rural social work and not allow the subject to disappear in the 1980's only to resurface at a later date.

(3) Rural educators should be encouraged to utilize the course suggestions and include the specific rural content which has been consistently suggested in literature since the early 1900's.

(4) A further study which would compare present day social work programs with urban social work programs might illustrate that a difference other than rural placement does exist.

(5) This study has identified that rural focused programs do exist and are viewed as an important area of social work. A study undertaken to determine why existing rural programs are not incorporating more rural content into their programs might be beneficial.

(6) A study to determine the nature of social work practice in rural areas could contribute to the limited knowledge base.

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APPENDIX A

Memorial University
of Newfoundland

School of Social Work

RURAL CURRICULUM STUDY

St. John's, Newfoundland
Canada, A1B 3X8
March 5, 1982

RURAL CURRICULUM STUDY

_____ (Can.)

_____ (U.S.)

1. Which Most Accurately Describes your Program?

   a. ☐ School of Social Work

   b. ☐ Department/Division of Social Work

   c. ☐ Combined Department/Division (Social Work, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, etc.)

   d. ☐ Other (please specify) _____

2. Indicate whether your university or college is a public or private institution.

   a. ☐ Public

   b. ☐ Private

   c. ☐ Other (specify) _____

3. Indicate whether your program is one or both of the following:

   a. ☐ Undergraduate

   b. ☐ Graduate

4. Indicate which of your programs has a RURAL focus.

   a. ☐ Undergraduate

   b. ☐ Graduate

5. Given the rural focus of your Program(s), would you say this focus is partly or wholly rural?

		Part	Whole
a.	Undergraduate		
b.	Graduate		

6. Which, if any, of the following terms describes your rural focus. If none, please describe your rural focus in the space below marked "PROGRAM DESCRIPTION".

	UNDERGRADUATE	GRADUATE
Rural Social Work	a.	b.
Rural Social Services	c.	d.
Social Work in Rural Areas	e.	f.
Rural Social Welfare	g.	h.
Rural Social Work Practice	i.	j.
Social Work Generalist	k.	l.
Rural Social Work Generalist	m.	n.
Social Welfare in Rural Areas	o.	p.
Other	q.	r.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (to be used only if list of terms above are not appropriate).

7. Please indicate the total number of Social Work only courses presently offered in your program.

a. ☐ Undergraduate

b. ☐ Graduate

7

8. From the total number of Social Work ONLY courses indicated in Question 7a and/or 7b, please indicate how many courses have a TOTAL, ABOUT HALF, SOME or NO rural focus.

NOTE: The response categories that appear below are ONLY for Social Work courses. The categories are mutually exclusive and should not overlap. You may use all four response categories.

UNDERGRADUATE		GRADUATE	
Total Rural Focus	a. ☐	Total Rural Focus	b. ☐
About-Half Rural Focus	c. ☐	About-Half Rural Focus	d. ☐
Some Rural Focus	e. ☐	Some Rural Focus	f. ☐
No Rural Focus	g. ☐	No Rural Focus	h. ☐
Total	i. ☐	Total	j. ☐

NOTE: The Total number entered in 8i and/or 8j should equal the number entered in 7a and/or 7b.

9. For each social work course offering entered in 8a and/or 8b (TOTAL Rural Focus), please list the Course Title and the main text and/or readings used. Please include Title, Author and Source, i.e., Book, Journal, Monograph, etc.

a. Undergraduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Graduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Use backside if necessary)

10. For each social work course offering entered in 8c and/or 8d (ABOUT HALF* Rural Focus), please list the Course Title and the main text and/or readings used. Please include Title, Author and Source, i.e., Book, Journal, Monograph, etc.

a. Undergraduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

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_____

b. Graduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Use backside if necessary)

11. For each social work course offering entered in 5e and/or 5f (SOME Rural Focus), please list the Course Title and the main text and/or readings used. Please include Title, Author and Source, i.e., Book, Journal, Monograph, etc.

a. Undergraduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

_____

_____

_____

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

_____

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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b. Graduate

Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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Course Title _____

Title, Author, Source

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_____

_____

_____

(Use backside if necessary)

12. Do you REQUIRE courses OTHER THAN Social Work Courses (i.e. courses outside your program) that have a RURAL FOCUS?

Undergraduate		Graduate	
a. ☐	yes	c. ☐	yes
b. ☐	no	d. ☐	no

13. If you answered yes in 12 a and/or 12 c, please list below the REQUIRED non-social work courses by Course Title.

a. Undergraduate

Course Title

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

b. Graduate

Course Title

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

14. Do you RECOMMEND courses other than social work courses (i.e. courses outside your program that have a RURAL FOCUS)?

Undergraduate		Graduate	
a. ☐	yes	c. ☐	yes
b. ☐	no	d. ☐	no

15. If you answered YES in Question 14 a and/or 14 c, please list below the Recommended Non-Social Work courses by Course Title.

a. Undergraduate

Course Title

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

c. Graduate

Course Title

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

16. Does your program provide rural field placements?

Undergraduate

a. ☐ yes

b. ☐ no

Graduate

c. ☐ yes

d. ☐ no

17. Please indicate the percentage of your current undergraduate field placements that have a Rural Focus.

☐☐ %

18. Please indicate the percentage of your current graduate field placements that have a Rural Focus?

☐☐ %

19. What percentage of your full-time equivalent faculty (each F.T.E. = 1.00) is devoted to Rural Focused Social Work Education.

Undergraduate

a. _____ %

Graduate

b. _____ %

20. What three things do you think make a Rural Focused Program different from other Social Work Programs.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

22. What do you think are the three most important things a student should learn in a Rural Focused Program.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

APPENDIX B

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8

School of Social Work

Telex: 016-4101
Telephone: (709) [illegible]
737-8164

May 10, 1982

Dear Colleague:

The School of Social Work of Memorial University of Newfoundland, is undertaking a study of curricula in Schools and Departments of Social Work which may have a rural focus. Because this information is not readily apparent from digests provided to us by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education, we are writing to most of the Schools and Departments of Social Work in Canada and the United States to request their assistance in this study.

If your School or Department does not have a rural focus would you kindly indicate this in the box marked "No Rural Focus" on the enclosed orange card and return it to us.

If your School or Department does have a rural focus we would genuinely appreciate your completing the questionnaire we have included and the orange return post card. We would like to have the orange card returned as soon as possible.

If you are interested in receiving a summary of our study please check item No. 3 on the orange card. Thank you for your co-operation and assistance.

Sincerely,

J. Victor Thompson, D.S.W.
Director

JVT:fc

Enclosure

School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Nfld., Canada
A1B 3X8

1. ☐ No Rural Focus
2. ☐ Rural Focus, Questionnaire to be Returned
3. ☐ Interested in Summary of Study

Name of School/College/University _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Signature _____

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8

School of Social Work

Telex 016-4101
Telephone (709) 737-8166

October 4, 1982

Dear Colleague:

Early last Summer I wrote you indicating that we are undertaking a study of curricula in Schools and Departments of Social Work which may have a rural focus. At that time, I also enclosed a Questionnaire and a response card.

I can appreciate that with the Summer exodus and the demands of Fall registration, you probably weren't in a position to answer my earlier request and it is for this reason that I am again writing.

If your School or Department <u>does not</u> have a rural focus would you kindly indicate this in the box marked "No Rural Focus" on the enclosed orange card and return it to us.

If your School or Department <u>does have</u> a rural focus, we would genuinely appreciate your completing the enclosed Questionnaire <u>and</u> the orange return card. We would like to receive the orange card as soon as possible as this will help us greatly with our data collection.

If you are interested in receiving a summary of our study, please check item No. 3 on the orange card. Again, let me thank you for your consideration and help with our study.

Sincerely yours,

D.V. Thompson, B.S.W.
Director

/jb

encl.