

Social Landscapes of the Inter-Mountain West: A Comparison of ‘Old West’ and ‘New West’ Communities*

Richelle Winkler
Applied Population Lab
Department of Rural Sociology
University of Wisconsin- Madison

Donald R. Field
Department of Forest Ecology and Management
University of Wisconsin- Madison

A. E. Luloff
Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
The Pennsylvania State University

Richard S. Krannich and Tracy Williams
Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology
Utah State University

ABSTRACT Rural communities have experienced dramatic demographic, social, and economic transformations over the past 30 years. Historically characterized by close links between natural resources and social, cultural, and economic structures, few of today’s rural communities remain heavily dependent upon traditional extractive industries like ranching, forestry, and mining. New forms of development linked to natural and cultural amenities, including tourism and recreation, have evolved to sustain the link between community and resources. The Inter-Mountain West region offers an excellent example of this distinction. Many of the region’s rural communities have experienced substantial population growth resulting from the immigration of a new kind of rural resident. Their arrival, in a process some have associated with the emergence of a “New West,” has transformed rural places. However, amenity-related social and economic structures have not occurred uniformly across space. This paper uses factor analysis and exploratory spatial data analysis to analyze demographic characteristics related to the “New West” phenomena in Inter-Mountain West communities and the spatial patterns found in the degree of “New West-ness” that each community exhibits.

* This project was supported by the National Research Initiative of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA, Grant # USDA CSREES 2003-35401-12889. We would like to extend our appreciation to Bill Buckingham of the Applied Population Lab for his excellent cartographic work and for calculating spatial distances, and to thank our three anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Please direct correspondence to: Richelle Winkler, Applied Population Lab, Department of Rural Sociology, University of Wisconsin, 316 Ag Hall, 1450 Linden Dr., Madison, WI 53706, rwinkler@ssc.wisc.edu.

The Inter-Mountain West Region has experienced significant demographic, social, and economic change for more than thirty years. These shifts have been significant enough to have led to a purported transformation from an “Old West” to what has been coined the “New West” (Bennett and Mcbeth 1998; Nash 1993; Riebsame, Robb, and Gosnell 1997; Rudzitis 1993; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001). Included in Old West images are ranchers, horses, and dusty cattle drives. Today, the New West conveys images of residents wearing Patagonia fleeces and western jeans, telecommuters, and professionals with laptops able to work remotely. In addition, the New West attracts retirees seeking a lifestyle tied to the natural environment and the slower pace of country living, as well as growing numbers of seasonal residents who divide their time between city and country.

The migration of new people into selective locations has contributed to a transformation of the region’s small and rural places. Many have become homes to new professional businesses, tourism, construction, and consumer service industries as the local economy has shifted away from traditional extractive industries like agriculture, forestry, and mining. Second home and condominium developments, and increasingly “trophy home” developments, have become more common as both year-round and seasonal residents are drawn to the recreational and aesthetic values of the landscape and the quality-of-life attributes associated with rural settings.

As with the migration research conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s on the nonmetropolitan turnaround (Brown and Wardwell 1980; Fuguitt et al. 1998; Johnson 1993; Johnson and Beale 1994), research on the New West has shown that people are migrating to rural areas of the region largely for non-economic reasons. Quality of life factors appear to dominate migration decisions, particularly in recent years (Beyers and Nelson 2000; Cromartie 1998; Jones et al. 2003; Rudzitis 1999; Williams and Jobes 1990). During the 1990s, nonmetropolitan counties rich in natural amenities and recreation resources experienced substantially higher rates of in-migration and population growth than either metropolitan counties or other nonmetropolitan counties across the United States (Johnson and Beale 2002; McGranahan 1999). The Inter-Mountain West, in particular, experienced especially rapid population growth due to amenity-based in-migration during this period (Johnson and Beale 2002; Otterstrom and Shumway 2003).

As new migrants, both seasonal and permanent, move to the Inter-Mountain West region or relocate from metropolitan to non-metropolitan areas within the region, they change it. According to Riebsame et al. (1997:46):

Many Americans still think of the Interior West as the old-style frontier, but in fact over the past forty years a profound transition of landscape and social life has almost completely modernized this geography.

This transition has generated academic and popular conversation, making Old West–New West discourse popular in discussions about the Western US. Debates over visions of the “American West” can be thought of as both descriptive and prescriptive, involving tension over what the West “is” as well as what it “should be.” Riebsame et al. (1997:46) further state:

To some the New West is a post industrial high-tech society riding hard in the saddle of a beautiful but fragile landscape. Others see a West still rooted in its natural resources, sporting a facile New West patina of software firms, service workers, and city slicker cattle drives—a thin veneer that will soon erode, they claim, because you’ve got to produce something physical and concrete—lumber, beef, molybdenum—to be a real and lasting economy.

Industry changes, economic restructuring, and the important aesthetic value of the landscape are helping, and in some ways forcing, rural communities throughout the region to diversify their employment base. In many instances tourism and other amenity-based developments are an integral part of this diversification. Tourism has a well-established history in some western locales, particularly in so-called “gateway” communities located adjacent to national parks, destination ski and winter sports resorts, and other major attractions. However, amenity-based development and population growth are increasingly affecting communities located in other settings where National Forest lands, major river and lake resources, mountain environments, and other natural attractions provide both recreational opportunities and an attractive aesthetic backdrop. In such settings, condominium complexes, major hotel chains, gourmet restaurants, theme parks, large retail centers, and coffee houses often compliment more traditional craft shops, the village general store, and mom-and-pop grocery stores.

Those residing in rural communities of the Inter-Mountain West inhabit a geography characterized by major shifts in both local and regional economic structures and in cultural identities. The public lands that comprise a large portion of this geography are of central importance to these economic and cultural transformations. Traditionally important as a source of commodity production, the more

contemporary emphasis on preservation and protection of public land resources has helped to attract growing numbers of in-migrants and seasonal residents seeking naturally beautiful settings (Power 1996). As a result, public lands also play a central role in the transformation of the Old West to the New West. The purpose of this paper is to document the emergence of the New West phenomenon through a comparative examination of the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of Inter-Mountain West communities and to analyze the spatial variation in the location of these communities.

Community-Resource Linkages

Historically, the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of American rural communities have been closely linked to a multifaceted dependency on natural resource-based commodity production. A variety of extractive activities that developed across rural landscapes gave rise to symbiotic relationships between rural communities and adjacent hinterlands. Structurally, communities provided institutional support in terms of governance, education, religion, employment opportunities, and myriad economic services for residents, land owners, and business enterprises throughout the rural hinterland. In turn, land and resource owners delivered raw materials, including farm produce and timber, to local markets and service centers for consumption, processing, and distribution to distant markets. A natural resource-based bond between communities and the farmers, ranchers, miners, fishers, and foresters who worked these lands and resources characterized small town rural America through much of the twentieth century.

In recent decades, however, this pattern of rural community/natural resource dependence has changed substantially. Economic activity and especially levels of employment opportunity have waned in traditional extractive industries that once sustained most rural areas. In farming regions, for example, improvements in agricultural technology contributed to increased farm size and higher levels of productivity with reduced labor inputs. As a consequence, fewer farmers and farm families remained to support local trade centers. As forest milling technology improved with robotics and a shift to harvesting second growth timber, fewer forest workers were needed. Similarly, capital intensive mining activities resulted in reduced labor requirements, lost jobs, and rapid declines in mining community populations. As these shifts occurred, many rural areas experienced a downward spiral of reduced economic opportunities, depopulation, and an erosion of community institutions and capacity (see Krannich and Luloff 1991).

Today, few communities are solely or even primarily dependent upon traditional resource-based rural industries such as mining, agriculture, or timber production (cf. Halfacree and Boyle 1998; Johnson and Fuguitt 2000; Marcouiller and Green 2000; Power 1996; Salamon 2003). Instead, alternative forms of land management activities and uses, sometimes involving tourism and recreation linked to natural resource amenities, have evolved as key drivers of economic activity, population growth, and rural community development processes (Lorah and Southwick 2003; Reeder and Brown 2005). This is especially the case for amenity-rich rural regions in the American West, where growth in recreation-based economic activity and associated in-migration and population growth have been widespread in recent years.

Whether organized around extractive industries or natural amenity oriented, the resource base and related economic structure of rural communities have important ties to community social structure and to the sociodemographic characteristics of local residents (see Frisbie and Poston 1978). Field and Burch (1990) described this relationship from an ecological perspective, suggesting that the ebb and flow of population, social structure and resource based employment was a continuous and ever-evolving pattern on the rural landscape. They cited Landis' classic study of *Three Iron Mining Towns* (1938) as an example. There, the mining of iron ore and inherent cycles of ore production directly influenced the expansion or contraction of community social structure, a process of change that repeated itself over time. Similar examples were noted in areas dependent on agriculture, where shifts in agricultural technology or the depletion of soil quality often led to farming changes that led to shifts in population characteristics of those residing and working in the community and to associated shifts in the social organization of local community life (Allen and Dillman 1994).

In New West communities, amenity-oriented land use and associated in-migration, tourism, and seasonal housing impact social structure. Areas affected by in-migration and new development are likely to witness the emergence of new types and forms of social interaction and organization. The arrival of new residents with diverse organizational and leadership skills can contribute to a larger critical mass of residents needed to reinvigorate local organizations and institutions and can enhance community capacity and well-being. At the same time, population growth and change can also place new demands and strains on informal social structures as well as public institutions and formal organizations. Sometimes the values and morals of long-established rural residents clash with those of newcomers (Johnson 2003; Rudzitis

1999; Salamon 2003; Smith and Krannich 2000), contributing to strains that reduce the potential for civic engagement and limit capacity for collective action in the pursuit of common interests (Wilkinson 1991). In short, the structure of rural economies and associated social and demographic patterns are not without consequence for the functioning of rural communities and the well-being of rural people.

While many communities in the Inter-Mountain West are experiencing New West characteristics, the phenomenon is not distributed evenly across space (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001). The literature on the New West, gateway communities, and natural amenity migration suggests that communities located in attractive, high-ambiance rural settings, including places adjacent to national parks, in the foothills of national forests, along waterways, and against the backdrop of mountain peaks are especially likely to experience the kinds of demographic, social-cultural, and economic characteristics that are the focus of our analysis. However, quantitative evaluations of the extent and the location of this phenomenon have not been accomplished. How common are New West attributes within the Inter-Mountain West? And, geographically, where do communities exhibiting New West (or Old West) traits cluster?

Here, we demonstrate that New West demographic and economic structures do not occur uniformly across communities in the Inter-Mountain West and that the degree of “New West-ness” a community exhibits tends to be related to the New West-ness of its neighbors. New West communities have a decidedly different social structure (as exhibited by the sociodemographic characteristics of local populations and employment structures) than communities that are strongly dependent on extractive economies. We illustrate this relationship by creating a continuum of New West-ness for Inter-Mountain West communities. We use this New West continuum to classify places into four subgroups: “Model New West,” “New West,” “Old West,” and “Classic Old West.” Further, we examine the spatial relationships between communities on the continuum, demonstrating that they are not distributed evenly across space, but rather cluster together.

The Inter-Mountain West Landscape

The Inter-Mountain West region is bounded by the Rocky Mountains to the east, the Sierra Nevada and Cascade ranges to the west, the US-Canadian border to the north, and the Colorado Plateau area encompassing the Utah/Arizona and Colorado/New Mexico borders to the south. This region is rich in scenic and recreation qualities, with

vast expanses of forests, grasslands, rivers, high desert plateaus and canyons, and majestic mountains. Many of its areas have experienced substantial changes in resource use patterns and in the management of resources on public lands. Considerable population growth involving year-round and seasonal residents has occurred as the region has attracted increasing numbers of new residents who rate environmental quality, scenery, outdoor recreation opportunities, and pace of life as primary reasons for moving there (Cromartie 1998; Johnson and Fuguitt 2000; Matarrita, 2005; McGranahan 1999; Rudzitis 1999; Williams 2006).

In many ways the social and economic structures of rural communities in the Inter-Mountain West are linked to the uses of and activities on expansive tracts of public land that characterize the region. The U.S. government owns approximately 650 million acres of federal land, roughly 29 percent of the American land base. The majority of this land is concentrated in 12 Western states whose public lands have been a significant feature shaping the American West's identity. Traditionally, public lands were valued primarily for their contribution to rural economies through extractive natural resource industries such as logging, mining, and agriculture. These vast tracts of public lands have played a pivotal role in the region's settlement patterns, economic history, and cultural identity. As well, they have contributed to a long-established imagery of the West as a region characterized by a rugged independent lifestyle, a tradition of making a living off the land, and unfettered access to wide open spaces and surrounding natural resources. Such images are inextricably intertwined with the histories, economies, and culture of the "Old" American West.

In many rural areas, local residents and leaders place substantial value on a tradition of resource-based commodity production and the customs and cultures that evolved during an era when extractive uses of public land resources dominated. At the same time, changing economic conditions at global, national, and local levels, as well as shifts in management priorities for public land resources, have altered the dependence of Western communities on such industries. With a decline in the importance of extractive industries, many rural communities are now characterized by "new-consumption-oriented economies" including amenity-based tourism (Smutny 2002:438). For many residents and visitors public lands are valued more significantly for their recreational and aesthetic properties than for the commodity production activities that once dominated land management policies and practices (Power 1996). As different stakeholder groups struggle to

protect their interests, public lands management has been the fulcrum of local, regional, and national debates.

The Inter-Mountain West with its diverse physiographic qualities, rugged mountain landscape and its national parks, monuments, and forests provides an ideal case for examining the demographic, social, and economic attributes that are associated with the notion that a New West is emerging to compete with and perhaps supplant the Old West. Its selection as the focus of our research was predicated upon the region's historically rural character and natural resource based economy, its recent growth in permanent population and seasonal housing, its striking topography, and its many natural amenity-based recreational activities including ski resorts and river trips. Within this context, we identify variables associated with the New West, the extent of the New West phenomena, and the spatial variation of New West communities across the landscape.

For the purposes of our analysis, we define the Inter-Mountain West as a five state region (including Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah), excluding the largest metropolitan centers of the Region (Denver, CO, Salt Lake City, UT, and Boise, ID).¹ Nevada was excluded because it differs substantially from the five states selected for analysis with respect to both physiographic characteristics and population settlement patterns. Nevada is far more arid than the other states, with vast desert and sagebrush steppe landscapes that are virtually uninhabited. In addition, over 90 percent of Nevada's land base is owned by the federal government, with vast tracts managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Defense. As a result of these conditions, the state's population is almost entirely concentrated in the Las Vegas and Reno metropolitan areas (87% of the state's population lived in these metropolises at Census 2000) leaving a limited rural population and few rural communities across a vast landscape that would be appropriate for our study.

Framework for Analysis

In order to understand how New West characteristics vary across Inter-Mountain West communities, we conducted a principal factor analysis and applied the resulting factor scores to Census Places (incorporated places and Census Designated Places [CDPs]). The analysis generated one factor we believe represents the character of the New West and can

¹ Places located in the following metropolitan counties were excluded from analysis: Ada and Canyon Counties, ID; Chaffee County, CO; and Utah, Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber Counties, UT.

be used to distinguish communities on a New West continuum. Several communities in this region exhibited strong New West characteristics, while many others were situated in an Old West, extractive-oriented economy.

Whereas most studies of natural amenities, population change, and economic transition in the Western United States use counties as the unit of analysis, we use Census Places. Despite their utility for providing continuity for studies examining change over time, counties in the U.S. West generally cover large geographic areas that span various social, biological, and topographic systems. Using smaller Census Places allows for greater analytical precision by identifying and distinguishing differences within counties. Because the more urban centers of rural areas have long served as social and economic hubs for the surrounding hinterland, incorporated places and other Census designated places adequately reflect the make-up of their surrounding area. Although we do exclude a certain number of people who live in the open country, our analysis of Census Places includes 77 percent of the total population living in the counties of interest. Relatively few people live in the open country not included in this analysis because the large amount of public land and the mountainous and wild topography of the Inter-Mountain West concentrate the vast majority of the population together in valleys where incorporated places and CDPs exist.

Principal factor analysis was used in this study because it simultaneously manages many variables, compensates for random errors and invalidity, and disentangles complex relationships into distinct regularities (Rummel 1967). Through its data reduction capabilities, we save many degrees of freedom in statistical analyses while at the same time generating simpler and more complete models for understanding how a range of variables best explain a phenomenon. Here, we wanted to test whether a broad set of measures identified in previous studies of the changing New West could be organized and synthesized. If it could, we wanted to see if this factor could help us answer the following three questions: (1) How do the measures identified in previous research fit together to characterize the ideas associated with a New West? (2) How widespread is the New West phenomenon in the Inter-Mountain West? and (3) How do New West characteristics vary spatially across the region and is there a clustering of such communities?

Factor analysis assumes complex relationships among measures. It makes use of the variance among all of the measures to identify and generate factors that account for the common variance among them. Given our interest in identifying what the New West implies, we

Table 1. New West Factor Analysis Results

Variables	Factor Loading
In-migrants from out-of-state	0.524
In-migrants from met area	0.737
College-educated	0.629
Extractive industry employment	-0.380
Seasonal housing	0.772
FIRE industry employment	0.675
Tourism industry employment	0.506
Housing valued at \$200,000 or more	0.480
Eigenvalue	2.897
Variance explained	0.935
Cronbach's alpha	0.764

included eight measures, each drawn from the Census 2000, that have been used independently in various studies (Bennett and McBeth 1998; Nash 1993; Power 1996; Rudzitis 1998; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001). These measures examine patterns of population change, sociodemographic composition, housing characteristics, and local economic conditions. The following eight items were included: (1) percent of 2000 residents living in a different state in 1995; (2) percent of 2000 residents living in a metropolitan area (or different metropolitan area) in 1995²; (3) percent of workers employed in finance, insurance, or real estate industries (FIRE); (4) percent of workers employed in extractive industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining); (5) percent of all housing units that are for seasonal or occasional use; (6) percent of all specified owner occupied housing units valued at \$200,000 or more; (7) percent of all people age 25 and over with a 4 year college degree; and (8) percent of workers employed in a tourism-type industry (including arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services).

These measures all loaded on one factor, with loadings in excess of 0.35. This one factor accounted for 94 percent of the common variance shared among the variables (see Table 1). Only employment in extractive industry had a negative loading. The alpha reliability for this scale was 0.76.

The factor analysis allows us to quantitatively assess the way in which variables associated with the New West fit together to jointly inform what it means to be “New West.” Previous studies about the New West

² For places in non-metropolitan counties, this measure is simply the percent of people who lived in a metropolitan area in 1995. For places in metropolitan counties at Census 2000, this measure is the percent of people who lived in a different metropolitan area in 1995.

have made qualitative deductions about this meaning (as discussed above), but we are aware of no systematic study across communities that examines how variables used to describe the New West work together to create this meaning. This paper addresses that gap by analyzing the relative weight each of these variables contributes to an overarching factor, the New West.

Factor Analysis

The factor analysis indicated that in-migration from metropolitan areas and from out of state, employment in finance, insurance, real estate, or tourism-related industries, seasonal housing, high housing values, and college education rates were positively associated with one underlying dimension—our New West factor (see Table 1). Employment in extractive industry was negatively associated with this factor, meaning that places with more employment in extractive industries exhibited less New West character. These findings are consistent with literature on the New West (Power 1996; Rudzitis 1999).

The prevalence of seasonal housing and counter-urbanization (in-migrants from metropolitan areas) were acutely important contributors to New West character, each having factor loadings in excess of 0.7. This suggests that New West communities reflected encroachment of new people (seasonal and permanent residents) into the area. New West communities also were characterized by well-educated populations, enjoyed above average median incomes, were marked by widespread employment in tourism, finance, information, and real estate, and had high housing values.

In broad terms, our analysis indicated that this combination of variables reflected the presence of a New West character in communities of the Inter-Mountain West region. However, wide variation in the extent to which New West characteristics dominated the regional landscape existed. In order to compare the degree to which particular communities across the Inter-Mountain West experienced New West characteristics, we produced estimates of the New West factor for each Census place and used the resulting factor scores to rank communities along a New West continuum. Doing this facilitated comparisons of places experiencing profound New West change with those that remained rooted in traditional Old West lifestyles and social structures.

In order to simplify and summarize our comparisons, we then used the New West continuum to create community classifications. First, we categorized places into two main groups (New West and Old West). New West places scored above zero (positive) on our factor score, while

Old West places scored below zero (negative). Whether a place scored above or below zero was significant because extractive industry employment loaded negatively on our scale. Those places with negative values were marked by a concentration of extractive industry employment and an absence of characteristics associated with the New West.

In order to examine Inter-Mountain West places from a more nuanced perspective, we then divided the New and Old West places into four sub-groups (Model New West, New West, Old West, and Classic Old West). We made the division between Model New West and New West at factor score 0.9 (above = Model New West) because there was a clear break in the scatter plot of points between 0.83 and 0.92. With the division, 100 places fell in the Model New West category and 164 were classified as New West. We divided the Old West categories at -0.5 . Places scoring -0.5 or lower on the factor score had substantial levels of employment in the extractive industry and very few New West attributes. There were 224 such places, which we refer to as Classic Old West, and the remaining 292 Old West places were classified simply as Old West.

Traits for each of these sub-groups are summarized in Table 2. More than a quarter of the residents in Model New West communities recently moved from metropolitan areas, and more than a quarter recently moved from out-of-state. This stands in marked contrast to only 5.9 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively, for Classic Old West communities. Employment patterns also illustrated clear differences between New and Old West communities. Although extractive and manufacturing employment comprised only a fraction of total employment in any of the four community types, employment in extractive occupations and manufacturing was more prominent in Old West communities than in New West communities, and tourism, professional services, and FIRE employment were more prominent in New West communities.

The most dramatic difference between New West and more traditional communities was reflected in the local housing market. In Model New West communities, over 20 percent of houses existing in 2000 were constructed between 1995 and 2000. For Classic Old West communities this figure was 8.6 percent. More importantly, housing values varied drastically across the New West continuum, from a median value of about \$81,000 to \$331,000. Less than 29 percent of the housing units in Old West communities were valued at \$200,000 or more, while 59 percent of Model New West units were valued this high. Even more striking, over 15 percent of the homes in Model New West communities

Table 2. Characteristics of Old West and New West Places, 2000

Factor Analysis Variables	Inter-Mountain West Communities on New West Continuum			
	Classic OW	Old West	New West	Model NW
			Percent	
In-migrants from out-of-state	6.77	11.91	16.44	25.60
In-migrants from met area	5.92	11.28	16.98	28.66
College-educated	10.87	15.22	21.88	39.62
Extractive industry employment	14.78	8.56	5.62	2.71
Seasonal housing	4.01	4.17	8.93	28.86
FIRE industry employment	2.27	3.37	4.94	8.30
Tourism industry employment	7.34	9.70	13.43	21.68
Housing valued at \$200,000 or more	1.62	3.63	13.62	59.33
Additional Variables			Percent	
Professional services employment	2.26	2.59	3.43	6.31
Manufacturing employment	10.48	9.70	8.27	4.25
Construction industry employment	9.33	9.72	11.97	12.54
In-migrants from another county	15.76	22.32	28.19	38.78
Housing units built since 1995	8.60	9.84	14.76	20.73
Housing valued at \$500,000 or more	0.15	0.16	0.62	15.05
			Values	
Median rent	\$312	\$526	\$832	\$845
Median value owner-occupied housing	\$80,696	\$130,910	\$238,970	\$331,433
Median household income	\$35,652	\$51,509	\$79,489	\$63,690

Statistics are averaged for each classification
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SF1 and SF3

were valued at \$500,000 or more, while homes of this value were practically non-existent in more traditional communities. Such differences in the housing market demonstrated the premiums placed on living in a natural amenity-rich area and were indicative of the types of on-the-ground changes that these communities were experiencing.

Housing has traditionally been an obvious visual symbol to residents and visitors of the extant social structure. It may well be the most noticeable indicator of New West structure. Great differences in housing values may also suggest areas where long-term and/or less affluent residents may be priced out of local housing markets. Examples of such trends can be found in places such as Vail, Colorado; Sun Valley, Idaho; and Park City, Utah.

Not surprisingly, median income tended to be higher in New West places than Old West places. At the same time, income levels were lower in Model New West places than in those classified as New West places. New West places enjoyed a median income of \$79,500, while Model New West places had appreciably lower median income (less than

\$64,000). These differences reflect the higher levels of economic diversification and more urban nature of New West places, especially when compared with Model New West places. In the latter, the dominance of employment in relatively low wage industries (like tourism and services) was coupled to high housing values, indicating potential affordable housing difficulties for substantial segments of local populations.

Places that scored highest on our New West continuum and that we subsequently classified as Model New West included ski resort areas (e.g., Keystone and Breckenridge, Colorado and Park City, Utah) and other amenity destinations such as Alpine Northeast, Wyoming (an area located just outside the boundary of Grand Teton National Park). These places tended to be small, rural communities subsumed by a recreation-based and natural amenity driven economy. Places we classified as New West tended to be more heavily populated. Several were larger cities or were located near larger cities. Perhaps because of their larger population size, these places tended to be more diverse demographically and economically, and reflected greater variation within the group. Examples of places classified as New West included: St. George, Utah; Missoula, Montana; and Sandpoint, Idaho.

Old West communities tended to either be larger cities that retained an extractive oriented economy or more rural areas in relatively undeveloped, but natural amenity-rich areas experiencing some degree of seasonal housing development. Such communities included: Butte, Montana; Twin Falls, Idaho; Casper, Wyoming; Escalante, Utah; and Craig, Colorado. Conversely, Classic Old West communities were mostly rural and remote and did not exhibit New West traits. They included: Dinosaur, Colorado; Aberdeen, Idaho; Dixon, Wyoming; and Browning, Montana.

An examination of community type by state reflects the spatial variation of the New West phenomenon and the ways in which states in this region differ with respect to natural resources, residential patterns, and economy. Colorado's relatively diverse economy and popularity as a tourist destination are reflected by the presence of the highest number of Model New West and New West communities. In contrast Wyoming, a state where traditional economies based on resource extraction remain firmly entrenched, had the fewest number of these communities. Wyoming and Utah had more Old West and Classic Old West communities than other states in the region. These two states also had the highest proportion of population engaged in extractive occupations (irrigated agriculture, ranching, forestry, hunting and fishing, and mining).

Table 3. Old West/New West Categories by State

Inter-Mountain West Communities on New West Continuum				
	Classic OW	Old West	New West	Model NW
Number of places in each state that fall into each category				
Colorado	11	27	28	43
Idaho	77	70	31	11
Montana	28	68	39	14
Utah	58	77	44	20
Wyoming	50	50	22	12
Total	224	292	164	100
Percent of places in each state that fall into each category				
Colorado	10.1	24.8	25.7	39.4
Idaho	40.7	37.0	16.4	5.8
Montana	18.8	45.6	26.2	9.4
Utah	29.1	38.7	22.1	10.1
Wyoming	37.3	37.3	16.4	9.0
Percent of places in each category that are located in each state				
Colorado	4.9	9.2	17.1	43.0
Idaho	34.4	24.0	18.9	11.0
Montana	12.5	23.3	23.8	14.0
Utah	25.9	26.4	26.8	20.0
Wyoming	22.3	17.1	13.4	12.0

Variations in geography and natural resources further influenced the location of New West and Old West communities across the landscape, as seen in Figure 1. New West communities were concentrated in the Rocky Mountains, and along the Wasatch Front mountain ranges of northern Utah. Few such communities were found in portions of Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, or Wyoming characterized by plains geography or other types of relatively undifferentiated landscapes.

Spatial Analysis

In order to better understand the spatial distribution of Inter-Mountain West places on the New West continuum, we calculated a global Moran's I ,³ a measure that indicates the spatial correlation of places on the New West continuum. We found Inter-Mountain West communities tended to be located close to other communities scoring similarly on the continuum. A Moran's I statistic of 0.62 indicates a significant relationship between spatial location and the New West factor scale.

³ We report the Moran's I generated from a weights matrix including 5 nearest neighbors within 30 miles. We calculated four alternative types of weights matrixes (including nearest neighbor and distance) and found the Moran's I to be robust, varying between 0.55 and 0.65.

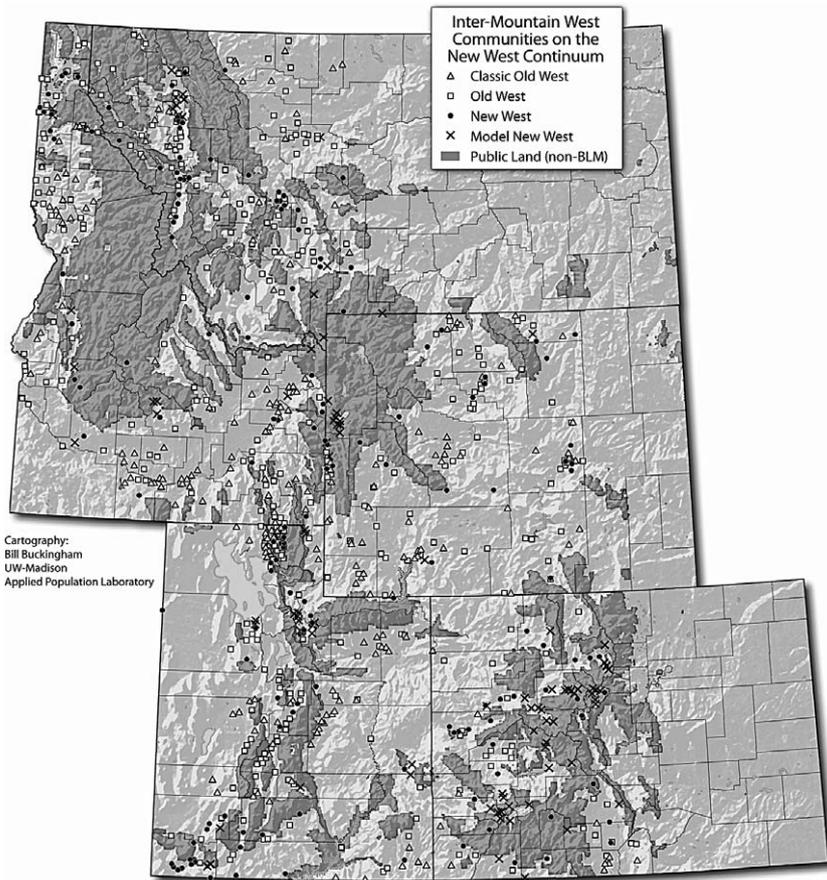


Figure 1. Inter-Mountain West Communities on the New West Continuum

Next, we examined Inter-Mountain West places according to local indicators of spatial association (LISA statistics). LISA statistics are measures of local spatial associations which allow for assessment of spatial correlation of places in individual locations (Anselin 1994). These local measures show us *where* New West places tend to cluster together and where they do not. Figure 2 shows where both particular communities and their neighbors scored high on the New West score (shown as black stars) and where other places and their neighbors scored low on the New West score (shown as black circles). Communities shown as significant in Figure 2 are statistically significantly spatially autocorrelated with their neighbors on our New West

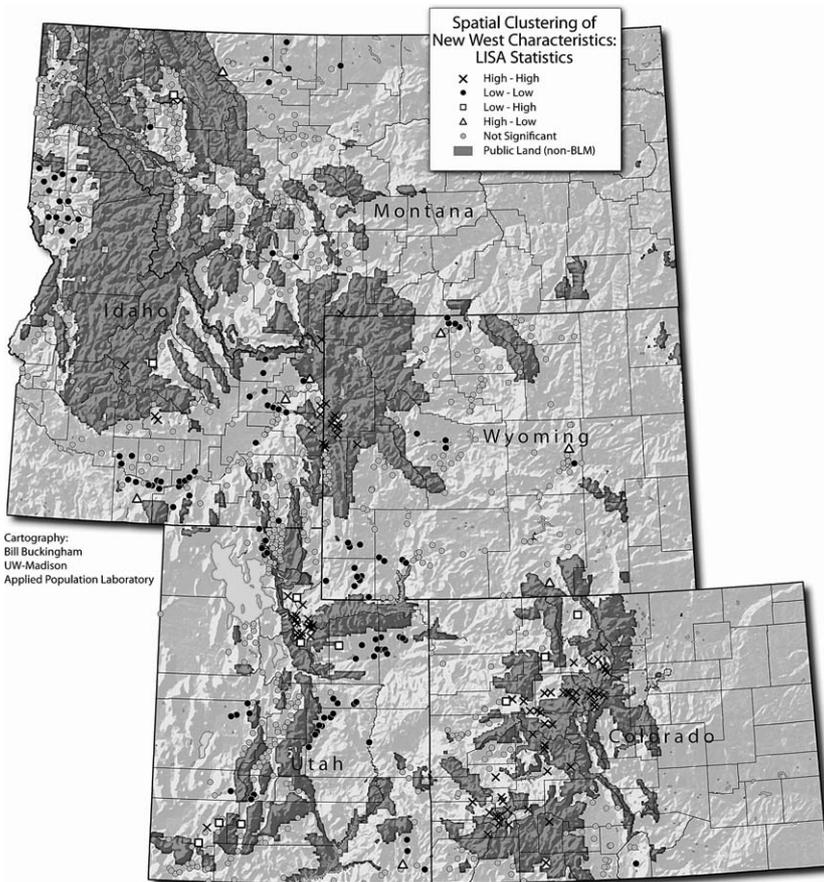


Figure 2. Spatial Clustering of New West Characteristics: LISA Statistics

scale at $p \leq 0.05$. The areas that stand out as having clusters of New West communities are the Colorado Front Range, the area around Park City, Utah, and the area around Jackson, Wyoming. Old West places tended to be clustered in northeast and central Utah, southwestern Wyoming, and in Idaho.

Additionally, LISA statistics show us where neighboring communities are *different* from one another on the New West continuum (shown as white squares and triangles in Figure 2). Because most New West and Old West places tend to be located near communities similar to themselves, it is particularly interesting to examine the unique communities that are *unlike* their neighbors. Some such places were

outliers because of their unique circumstances which caused them to stand out from their neighbors. For instance, Bluff, Utah is a unique artist colony in southeast Utah situated along the San Juan River bordering the Navajo Nation. Bluff's historical richness (Anasazi ruins, Navaho traditions, and sandstone homes from the 1880s) has attracted scientists, professionals, artists, and recreationists to the village in a pattern unique to the area. Although the entire area is rich in natural amenities, it is very remote from any large population center and, except for Bluff, the area remains rooted in an Old West social and economic structure.

Other places were not outliers, but located in areas where both New and Old West communities co-existed. Here, groups of communities were located geographically near one another, but reflected contrasting degrees of New West-ness. One example was found in eastern Idaho where some communities (like Rexburg and Warm River) were influenced by the New West nature of relatively nearby Yellowstone and Teton National Parks and Jackson, Wyoming. On the other hand, most communities in the area (like Ashton and Teton) remained predominantly Old West. A look at the websites from the Ashton⁴ and Rexburg chambers of commerce illustrates the stark differences between nearby communities. While Ashton's homepage features the "world's largest seed potato producing area" and advertises the chamber as serving the "commercial, agricultural, industrial, civic, and general interests of the Ashton area," Rexburg's homepage advertises dance and music festivals, Native American culture, sunbirds, golf courses, and recreational opportunities in nearby National Parks. Another example occurred at the western edge of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado where communities like Silt, Yampa, and Walden exhibited Old West attributes despite their proximity to several New West mountain communities including Glenwood Springs, Eagle, and Carbondale. Such disparate communities located together in space may represent contested landscapes where a transition from Old West to New West is currently underway.

Finally, we analyzed Census places with respect to their natural amenities, recreation infrastructure, and distance from public lands. Table 4 shows how places clustered along the New West continuum using these physical landscape features. Model New West and New West

⁴ Between the time this article was written and the publication date, the Ashton Chamber of Commerce revised their website. In May 2007, the Ashton website now features more of a "New West" oriented design to welcome rail passengers, include scenery-oriented photographs, and to emphasize recreation and relocation along with agriculture. The website retains the world's largest seed potato producing area reference.

Table 4. Distribution of Old West/New West Places

Location Variables	Inter-Mountain West Communities on New West Continuum			
	Classic OW	Old West	New West	Model NW
	Percent			
In Nonmet Rec counties	24.1	33.9	54.0	83.5
In Met counties	15.1	25.1	32.7	15.0
Within 1 hour drive from NP	4.0	7.5	18.9	26.0
10 min. drive from NP, NM, or NF	16.1	33.2	51.2	55.0
	Average Score on McGranahan's Scale			
Natural Amenity Index	2.6	2.7	3.3	4.6

places disproportionately were found in counties classified by Johnson and Beale (2002) as Nonmetropolitan Recreation Counties and in counties that had higher scores on McGranahan's (1999) natural amenity index scale. Further, Model New West and New West communities tended to be located in the shadow of the kinds of public lands that tend to be associated with high-amenity settings (e.g., National Parks, National Monuments, and higher-elevation National Forest lands, as opposed to generally lower-elevation and more arid landscapes administered by the Bureau of Land Management), while Old West communities tended to be more remotely located relative to such areas. We calculated two approximate drive time measures to evaluate the relationship between proximity to these types of public lands and a place's score on the New West continuum.⁵ First, we calculated the drive time from the centroid of each place to its nearest road entrance to a National Park. We found 26 percent of all Model New West places fell within one hour drive time to a National Park, while only 4 percent of Classic Old West Places were this close. Next, we calculated the drive time from each place to its nearest National Park, National Forest, or National Monument (whichever was closest). More than 50 percent of Model New West and New West places were located within a ten minute drive of such areas, while only 16 percent of Classic Old West places were similarly located.

Why do New West communities tend to cluster where they do? Various explanations can be made, and in the end, it is probably due to a combination of factors. Often posited reasons for in-migration of new residents (and associated New West structure) include: (1) the physical

⁵ Drive times were calculated using StreetMap USA data (2004) with associated mph in ArcGIS 9.1 Network Analyst by Bill Buckingham at the Applied Population Lab. For more information contact the lead author.

landscape (or natural amenities) of the area, (2) socially constructed recreational or tourism-oriented infrastructure, such as the location of ski resorts, lodging establishments, and National Parks, and/or (3) proximity to a metropolitan area. Our findings support each of these explanations. On the other hand, the very existence of an established New West (or Model New West) community may influence the likelihood that its neighbors would begin to demonstrate New West traits. It is well documented that people tend to in-migrate to places with which they have some familiarity and that seasonal home owners purchase property in areas they have visited. In this sense, if people are visiting one New West community as a tourist or seasonal resident, they may be likely to move or to purchase residential property in a neighboring community. According to this line of thinking, New West-ness may disperse through a region following a spatial diffusion type of process.

Conclusions

The American Inter-Mountain West is a region exhibiting divergent social and economic structures reflective of a contradiction between the “Old” and the “New” West. Café conversations often touch on the New West phenomenon and how it is impacting local communities. Many scholars and journalists have likewise penned their impressions of the New West. The latter’s characterization of the New West often includes images of a wealthy and educated citizenry arriving from the city, some of whom remain permanently, while others settle seasonally, bringing their appetite for lattes, turquoise jewelry, antler art, and fine dining. Their images also include bucolic rural communities acquiring a makeover through the construction of new homes, condominiums, and businesses catering to tourist clientele. In this paper we have taken specific dimensions of such New West images and translated them into empirical measures.

Results derived from a factor analysis examining interrelationships among eight variables linked to the New West concept allowed us to classify communities on a continuum from traditional service centers with important links to extractive resource management such as mining, forestry, or ranching to communities of the New West that are dependent on the non-commodity traits of natural resource amenities. Our findings support earlier literature describing a “New West” reflective of the in-migration of “outsiders” exhibiting higher levels of educational attainment, presence of seasonal populations, prevalence of tourism and real estate employment patterns, and high

housing values. Our analysis revealed the extent to which these characteristics were manifest and how these multiple elements were interrelated, each contributing substantially to a New West factor. The convergence of this complex set of elements was highly evident in places that represented prototypical examples of "Model New West" communities.

Although the New West phenomenon appears to be fairly widespread across the Inter-Mountain West, it is not the dominant form of social and economic organization throughout the region. Communities experiencing New West traits were spatially concentrated along the eastern and western slopes of the Rocky and Wasatch Mountains, particularly in the Front Range of Colorado, around Salt Lake City and Park City, Utah, and around Teton National Park in Wyoming. Indeed, our analysis revealed that about two-thirds of the Census-defined places in the region scored negatively on our New West continuum (Old West), the majority of which were located in the plains areas of the region. Clearly, portions of the Inter-Mountain West are reflective of the social, economic, and demographic structures that have contributed to characterizations of an emergent New West. At the same time, however, more traditional social and economic structures remain firmly entrenched in many communities.

Using Census places as the unit of analysis allowed us to examine variation in the extent of the New West phenomenon within counties. While all the places within some counties exhibited similar New West or Old West traits, our analysis showed considerable variation within others. Counties with significant clusters of New West communities included: Teton County, Wyoming; Summit County, Utah; and Grand, Summit, Eagle, Gunnison, and Ouray Counties in Colorado. Counties with significant clusters of Old West communities included: Latah, Lewis, and Minidoka Counties in Idaho; Uinta County, Wyoming; and Uintah, Emery, and Duchesne Counties in Utah. At the same time, using the Census place unit allowed differentiation within several counties that had significant differences between neighboring communities, including: Fremont County, Idaho; Iron County, Utah; Garfield County, Colorado; Park County, Wyoming; and Flathead County, Montana.

Further, exploratory spatial data analysis of Inter-Mountain West communities demonstrated that places displaying New West traits were concentrated in amenity-rich natural resource settings (particularly in areas surrounded by mountains and within modest traveling distance of larger urban centers), in areas abundant in recreation resources, and/or proximate to national parks, monuments, and forests. In addition,

the presence of a community with firmly-established New West characteristics appeared to stimulate the emergence of other similar communities in nearby areas. This clustering phenomenon may, over time, contribute to a fundamental transformation of both natural and built environments, as what were once spatially and socioeconomically distinct rural communities merge into larger, less differentiated, and increasingly urban/suburban, scenic and recreational enclaves.

The social and economic characteristics associated with amenity-based growth and development represent an important context for understanding the linkages between natural resources and rural community life. As social scientists continue to document this most recent manifestation of a rural rebound, we suggest that community structure, as represented by the kinds of New West traits examined here, provides important clues about the transformation of rural space and rural culture.

References

- Allen, J.C. and D.A. Dillman. 1994. *Against all Odds: Rural Community in the Information Age*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Anselin, L. 1994. "Local Indicators of Spatial Association- LISA." Research Paper 9331, Morgantown, WV: Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University.
- Ashton Area Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved 10 July 2006 (<http://www.ashtonidaho.com>).
- Ashton Area Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved 2 May 2007 (<http://www.ashtonidaho.com>).
- Bennett, K. and M.K. McBeth. 1998. "Contemporary Western Rural USA Economic Composition: Potential Implications for Environmental Policy and Research." *Environmental Management* 22:371-81.
- Beyers, W.B. and P.B. Nelson. 2000. "Contemporary Development Forces in the Nonmetropolitan West: New Insights from Rapidly Growing Communities." *Journal of Rural Studies* 16:459-74.
- Brown, D.L. and J.M. Wardwell. 1980. *New Directions in Urban-Rural Migration: The Population Turnaround in Rural America*. New York: Academic Press.
- Cromartie, J.B. 1998. "Net Migration in the Great Plains Increasingly Linked to Natural Amenities and Suburbanization." *Rural Development Perspectives* 13:27-34.
- Field, D.R. and W.R. Burch. 1990. *Rural Sociology and the Environment*. Middleton, WI: Social Ecology Press.
- Frisbie, W.P. and D.L. Poston. 1978. *Sustenance Organization and Migration in Non-metropolitan America*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press.
- Fuguitt, G.V., R.M. Gibson, C.L. Beale, and S.J. Tordella. 1998. "Elderly Population Change in Nonmetropolitan Areas: From the Turnaround to Rebound." Presented at the 37th annual meeting of the Western Regional Science Association, February 18-22, Monterey, CA.
- Halfacree, K. and P. Boyle. 1998. "Migration, Rurality and the Post-Productivist Countryside." Pp. 1-20 in *Migration into Rural Areas: Theories and Issues*, edited by P. Boyle and K. Halfacree. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Jones, R.E., J.M. Fly, J. Talley, and H.K. Cordell. 2003. "Green Migration into Rural America: The New Frontier of Environmentalism." *Society and Natural Resources* 16:221-38.

- Johnson, K.M. 1993. "Demographic Change in Nonmetropolitan America, 1980–1990." *Rural Sociology* 58:347–65.
- . 2003. "Unpredictable Directions of Rural Population Growth and Migration." Pp. 19–31 in *Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by D. Brown and L. Swanson. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.
- Johnson, K.M. and C.L. Beale. 2002. "Nonmetropolitan Recreation Counties: Their Identification and Rapid Growth." *Rural America* 17:12–19.
- . 1994. "The Recent Revival of Widespread Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan Areas of the United States." *Rural Sociology* 59:655–57.
- Johnson, K.M. and G.V. Fuguitt. 2000. "Continuity and Change in Rural Migration Patterns." *Rural Sociology* 65:27–49.
- Krannich, R.S. and A.E. Luloff. 1991. "Problems of Resource Dependency in US Rural Communities." *Progress in Rural Policy and Planning* 1:5–18.
- Landis, P. 1938. *Three Iron Mining Towns*. Middleton, WI: Social Ecology Press.
- Lorah, P. and R. Southwick. 2003. "Environmental Protection, Population Change, and Economic Development in the Rural Western United States." *Population and the Environment* 24:225–72.
- Marcouiller, D.W. and G.P. Green. 2000. "Outdoor Recreation and Rural Development." Pp. 33–50 in *National Parks and Rural Development: Practice and Policy in the United States*, edited by G.E. Machlis and D.R. Field. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Matarrita, D. 2005. *Factors Associated with Community Participation in Western Communities*. MS Thesis, Department of Rural Sociology, The Pennsylvania State University, College Station, PA.
- McGranahan, D.A. 1999. *Natural Amenities Drive Rural Population Change*. ERS-781, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
- Nash, G.D. 1993. "New Approaches to the American West." Pp. 15–27 in *Old West-New West: Centennial Essays*, edited by B.H. Meldrum. Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press.
- Otterstrom, S.M. and J.M. Shumway. 2003. "Deserts and Oases: The Continuing Concentration of Population in the American Mountain West." *Journal of Rural Studies* 19:445–62.
- Power, T. 1996. *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Reeder, R.J. and D.M. Brown. 2005. *Recreation, Tourism, and Rural Well-Being*. ERR-7, US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
- Rexburg Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved 2 May 2007 (<http://www.rexcc.com>).
- Riebsame, W.E., J.J. Robb, and H. Gosnell. 1997. *Atlas of the New West*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Rudzitis, G. 1999. "Amenities Increasingly Draw People to the Rural West." *Rural Development Perspectives* 14:9–13.
- . 1993. "Nonmetropolitan Geography: Migration, Sense of Place, and the American West." *Urban Geography* 14:574–85.
- Rummel, R.J. 1967. "Understanding Factor Analysis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 11:444–80.
- Salamon, S. 2003. *Newcomers to Old Towns: Suburbanization of the Heartland*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Shumway, J.M. and S.M. Otterstrom. 2001. "Spatial Patterns of Migration and Income Change in the Mountain West: The Dominance of Service-Based, Amenity-Rich Counties." *Professional Geographer* 53:492–502.
- Smith, M.D. and R.S. Krannich. 2000. "'Culture Clash' Revisited: Newcomer and Longer-Term Residents' Attitudes toward Land Use, Development, and Environmental Issues in Rural Communities in the Rocky Mountain West." *Rural Sociology* 65:396–421.
- Smutny, G. 2002. "Patterns of Growth and Change: Depicting the Impacts of Restructuring in Idaho." *Professional Geographer* 54:438–53.
- U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. SFI data on Population and Housing.

- U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. SF3 data on Population and Housing.
- U.S. Streets. 2004. StreetMap USA. Redlands, CA: Geographic Data Technology, Inc, Lebanon, New Hampshire [producer]: Environmental Systems Research Institute, Redlands, CA [distributor].
- Wilkinson, K.P. 1991. *The Community in Rural America*. Middleton, WI: Social Ecology Press.
- Williams, A.S. and P.C. Jobs. 1990. "Economic and Quality-of-Life Considerations in Urban-Rural Migration." *Journal of Rural Studies* 6:187-94.
- Williams, T.L. 2006. *In the Midst of a Changing Landscape: Residents' Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Aspects of the American West*. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology, Utah State University, Logan, UT.