

Rural Life Isn't Just Little House on the Prairie

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Women in rural communities have their own specific obstacles to face.

A study published in the latest issue of *Family Relations* finds that rural women are particularly disadvantaged—with what the authors call the “conundrum of rural communities.” For rural working women, this conundrum involves “balancing quality of life with workforce preparation and opportunities for workers in a context of limited resources.” These challenges are often immune to urban solutions of economic recovery. The stories of the rural women interviewed show overarching concerns of jobs with low wages and no benefits mixed with childcare concerns, long commutes, seasonal work, and ties to rural family businesses. Their days are characterized as long and filled with both paid and family work. Often, they turn to family and friends for support rather than formal, government-sponsored social support systems.

The authors focused exclusively on rural families to better understand the experience of wage earning women in the midst of rural economic restructuring. Seventeen women from a rural northern Michigan county were interviewed. By focusing on women and the communities they lived in, the authors were able to see how the rural families are embedded in their community while being negatively affected by the lack of resources. Political, social, economic, and environmental factors affected these rural working women. “Empowering this population will require new modes of delivery for advanced education, addressing child care needs, and increasing access to secure, flexible employment with benefits,” the authors conclude.

This study is published in the current issue of *Family Relations*. Media wishing to receive a PDF please contact JournalNews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net

Since 1951, *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies* has covered areas of critical importance to family professionals. The journal's content emphasizes family research with implications for intervention, education, and public policy. It is published by the National Council on Family Relations. Information about the National Council on Family Relations can be found at www.ncfr.org.

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Dr. Ames is available for questions and interviews. Please email ames@msu.edu.



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