Challenges Facing Younger Employees in Rural Ontario

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Sara L. Mann, University of Guelph
Gordon B. Cooke, Memorial University of Newfoundland
James Chowhan, McMaster University
Isik Zeytinoglyu, McMaster University
Marie-Helene Budworth, York University
Chris Upton, University of Guelph

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Introduction

- Our research team
  - Sara Mann
  - Gordon Cooke (Memorial University of Newfoundland)
  - Isik Zeytinoglu (McMaster University)
  - James Chowhan (McMaster University)
  - Marie Helene Budworth (York University)
  - Chris Upton (U of G)
Our OMAF and MRA funded research

■ 5 Projects

1. What is rural?
2. Employment Survey and Roundtable
3. Comparison interviews with Newfoundland (also funded by SSHRC)
4. Field Research with Youths in Rural Ontario
5. Statistics Canada data analysis

■ Focus on our findings and the challenges we have faced
Project 1: What is rural?

- Look at definitions that are currently being used
- Perceptions vs actual
- “It’s all relative”
- Implications of using a different definition
Many organizations working on similar initiatives

- How do we increase synergy of these projects?

How do we move past the brainstorming stage?

- Implementation of these initiatives
Project 2: Employer Survey

- Sent out 1200 postcards with link to online survey
- Plan is to analyze data and compare with StatsCanada’s WES
- Potential to send link out via other organizations
Project 3: Field Research

- Examining youth employment issues in rural Ontario
- Answering the following questions:
  - Are people able to find work that truly suits their needs and wants and at what cost, if any?
  - Financial, social, and intellectual needs and wants
  - Types of employment?
  - Work schedules?
  - What community?
  - What are the choices being made and reasons for the choices?

- 3 years of longitudinal interviews/surveys (n=90, 60, 30)
- Included career training
Selected literature review

Biggest challenges for youths in rural Ontario (according to the literature):

- Varied working conditions
  - A lucky (and powerful) minority have high quality jobs with good pay, hours, security, etc while less fortunate workers endure relatively poor working conditions (see Betcherman and Lowe, 1997; Saunders, 2003; Vallée, 2005).

- Less employment options
  - Accessing good quality employment in rural areas can be even more difficult because options tend to be poorer, or at least less diverse (Alasia, 2010).
Selected literature review

- Biggest challenges for youths in rural Ontario (according to the literature):

- Education gap
  - Generally speaking, there is an urban-rural gap in terms of attained education as well as employment conditions (see Brereton et al., 2011; NLFL, 2009).

- Lifestyle Choice (rural vs urban)
  - Young rural people face a choice regarding staying or going, and whether to work or study (Shucksmith et al., 2009), and the evidence suggests that young people are the ones more likely to out-migrate than older workers (Bernard, Finnie, and St-Jean, 2008).
Project 3: Field Research

- ‘Rural’ areas (North Bay, Barrie, Tobermory, Kingston, Guelph, St. Catharine's, Fort Erie, Peterborough, Belleville, Sudbury, Brantford, Manitoulin, Niagara Falls area, Hanover)

- Sample of 78 youths between the ages of 18–25

- Difficulties of longitudinal data collection

- Posted on kijiji and recruited in person
Project 3: Findings

Findings

- Almost half hold more than one job
- Most jobs are found through family/friends
- Most would like more hours but they are not offered by their employer
- Most do not work a typical workweek
- Most have not taken any form of career related training
- 70% would leave their current region for a new job (primarily for a job in their desired field or to increase their current pay)
Project 3: Findings

Findings

- Two biggest barriers:
  - Lack of transportation
  - Lack of awareness of and access to post-secondary education and training

- Currently drafting paper for submission to academic journal – will be available to disseminate
Project 3: Training Study (with Budworth, York University)

- Example of finding additional opportunities within current project.

- The purpose of this program of research is to examine the relative effectiveness of two interventions aimed at increasing the self-efficacy, or task specific confidence, of unemployed workers.

- Job search programs often focus solely on practical skills, such as resume writing and interviewing skills and neglect to consider the many emotional and psychological difficulties that can stand in the way of finding employment.
Project 4: Analysis of YITS

Statistics Canada’s Youth in Transition Survey (YITS); cohort B, cycle 5, 2008

- The YITS is a longitudinal survey containing roughly 10,000 participants. The participants are surveyed biennially, roughly from 18 to 30 years of age.
- We are currently limiting our attention to simple descriptive statistics.
- The participants in our results are evenly split among the ages 26-28.
Project 4: Analysis of YITS

Statistics Canada’s Youth in Transition Survey (YITS)

- This is an exploratory study. We simply want to use the YITS dataset to look for patterns among young adults in terms of:
  - Urban-rural living locations
  - Mean earnings sorted by urban-rural location and attained education
  - We focused on patterns within Ontario versus outside of Ontario
Results (1 of 3): Table 1: Rural-Urban split of participants, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Based on the YITS, a higher proportion of young adults in Ontario (along with BC) are urban, relative to the rest of Canada.
Results (2 of 3): Table 2: Attained education of participants, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Only</th>
<th>Less than high school</th>
<th>'only' high school</th>
<th>Post-secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Ontario</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Only</th>
<th>Less than high school</th>
<th>'only' high school</th>
<th>Post-secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Ontario</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Only half of young rural adults in Canada pursue post-secondary education.
- That proportion rises to roughly 2/3s among young urban adults.
- The attained level of education in Ontario is roughly equivalent to the levels elsewhere in Canada, among these young adults.
Results (3 of 3): Table 3: Mean annual earnings, sorted by region and attained education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Ontario</th>
<th>Non-Ontario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>&lt;high school</td>
<td>$25,616</td>
<td>$20,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>only high school</td>
<td>$27,537</td>
<td>$28,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>post-secondary</td>
<td>$37,611</td>
<td>$35,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>&lt;high school</td>
<td>$13,191</td>
<td>$27,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>only high school</td>
<td>$25,230</td>
<td>$27,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>post-secondary</td>
<td>$32,676</td>
<td>$32,997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This requires further investigation!
  - As expected, the higher the level of attained education, the higher the mean annual earnings.
  - Plus, there is a distinct urban-rural gap among the young adults in Ontario.
  - Strangely, the urban-rural gap is non-existent outside of Ontario. In fact, outside of Ontario, the mean earnings are higher among lower –educated young adults in rural areas relative to their urban counterparts.
  - The pattern in Ontario is in line with expectations, although the gaps are larger than we expected.
Our qualitative studies led us to believe that there are distinct categories of young rural adults.

- One category is keen to acquire lots of education, likely at an urban university, and to pursue a professional-type career.
- Another category is keen to acquire education from local (rural) institutions, and might even pick a program after picking the post-secondary institution.
- A third category is on a non-academic track. This would include those finishing high school but not pursuing more education, as well as those not finishing high school.
- We do not claim that these are the only 3 categories of young rural adults. Moreover, we could not ascertain the size of these categories, nor whether these categories also applied to young urban adults.
These descriptive quantitative results have sharpened our focus:

- On the issues facing young rural workers with low or lower levels of education…
- On the benefits that seemingly accrue if ‘we’ can get rural youth to pursue and acquire more education
- On the magnitude of the gaps within rural Ontario. Wow! $13K versus $25K versus $33K, on average, among the rural participants.
- On the magnitude of the urban versus rural gap between young adults with low education within Ontario. Wow! $13K versus $26K.

There are many, many unanswered questions…

- What is driving these differences? Employment types? Work schedules?
- Industries? Occupations?
Policy recommendations?

- Increase transportation options
- Educate employers
- Awareness of and access to post-secondary education (OAFE-type initiatives)
- Campaigns to keep youths interested in the rural lifestyle
Questions?
Comments?
Complaints!?!