"Culture Clash" Revisited: Newcomer and Longer-Term Residents' Attitudes Toward Land Use, Development, and Environmental Issues in Rural Communities in the Rocky Mountain West*

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ABSTRACT  Many rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West with high amenity values have experienced substantial in-migration in the 1990s. Popular media accounts and some social science literature suggest that newcomers have very different values than longer-term residents regarding environment, growth, and development issues, and that these differences are resulting in widespread social conflict. We evaluate these "culture clash" and "gangplank" hypotheses using survey data from three rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West that are experiencing amenity-related in-migration. We examine attitudes about environmental concern, population growth, economic development, and tourism development. Results indicate that newcomers differ significantly from longer-term residents on a number of sociodemographic dimensions, but either there are no significant attitude differences between the two groups, or, where difference exist, longer-term residents wish more strongly than newcomers to limit population growth and development in their communities. We offer explanations for why the results differ from media accounts and from the earlier research observations and hypotheses.

A substantial number of rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West are currently undergoing some of the most significant demographic, economic, and sociocultural transformations in their histories. Natural resource-based extractive activities historically have dominated the economies and cultures of rural communities in this region. The role for these industries has been reduced; meanwhile, rural communities with high amenity values related to scenic and outdoor recreation have become more popular as destinations for urban in-migrants seeking a higher quality of life. As a result,

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many communities are undergoing substantial and often unprece-
dented change. This process embodies an “ongoing transition of
the Mountain West from a resource extractive region to a retire-
ment/tourist mecca and environmental storehouse for the nation”
(Shumway and Davis 1996:526; also see Power 1996). The social
and demographic changes associated with this transition may in-
clude reduction in social and community well-being and commu-
nity capacity, associated with a divergence of value orientations and
a restructuring of local social capital (see Doak and Kusel 1996;

The high rates of population growth currently affecting rural
communities in the Rocky Mountain West are part of a much larger
demographic phenomenon that sociologists and demographers
have been following for some time. In the 1970s, attention was fo-
cused on what came to be called the “turnaround migration” phe-
nomenon: for the first time in the history of population change in
the United States, rural areas experienced a net inflow of popula-
tion relative to urban areas (Fugitt 1985; Morrison and Wheeler
1976). Although this urban-to-rural population movement slowed
considerably in some regions in the mid to late-1980s (Johnson
1993), more recent analysis suggests that this period may have been
merely a temporary lull in a more permanent “rural renaissance”
(Johnson and Beale 1994; Long and DeAre 1988).

In the Rocky Mountain West, all signs indicates that the 1990s
have been a period of dramatic growth for many rural areas, which
is larger both in scale and in relative size than the growth that oc-
curred during the turnaround of the 1970s (Shumway and Davis
1996). Between 1990 and 1993, the population growth rate in the
region was more than double the national average, and six of the
10 fastest-growing states in the nation were located there: Nevada,
Idaho, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona (Kenworthy
1996). Although much of this growth is taking place in urban cen-
ters such as Las Vegas, Boise, Denver, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque,
and Phoenix, a substantial portion also includes in-migrants to
high-amenity rural and nonmetropolitan communities in the re-
region. Indeed, Shumway and Davis (1996) report that high-amenity
nonmetropolitan counties experienced the highest rates of popula-
tion growth of all counties in the Mountain West region during the
first half of the 1990s.

Popular media accounts of the growth spurt in the Rocky Moun-
tain West suggest that the sheer numbers of new people entering
rural communities are not only affecting the economy and public
services, but also exerting significant social and cultural effects. In
most of these accounts, new in-migrants are said to be generating
new social tensions and conflicts as their (presumably) urban-or-
ented, liberal environmental values clash with the longer-term resi-
dents' greater conservatism and orientation toward use of resources. According to one cover story from Newsweek:

Waves of change are turning what remains of the wilderness into a political and cultural battlefield. A growing constituency of new Westerners who covet the land for its natural beauty and recreational value are challenging the dominance of traditional users who have come to regard it as their own. (Turque 1991:20)

In the words of another Newsweek cover story:

With their gentrified new houses and chic art galleries, affluent newcomers are turning the traditional Mountain States into the nation's most fashionable—and most socially divided—region. Can the cowboys coexist with the Feds, the militias—and cappuccino bars? (Elliot et al. 1995:24)

And according to a front-page article in the New York Times:

Newcomers from bigger cities move to a small, scenic Western town after visiting it on a vacation. They open businesses or work at home with computers or wait tables at the latest mesquite grill...Then they realize that their tax dollars are subsidizing grazing, logging, and mining on public lands, and before you know it, they have joined the local environmental group. What they advocate—a Western economy built around living and playing amid great scenery—naturally scares the proponents of the old extractive economy. (Egan 1994:1)

In this study we examine whether newcomers and longer-term residents in three rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West have significant attitude and value differences regarding issues of environment, growth, and development that might underlie social conflict. After reviewing the literature on rural in-migration and attitudes of newcomers and longer-term residents, we describe the study communities and research methodology, and present and discuss the results of our research.

Rural In-Migration and Culture Clash

The media offer accounts of social conflict caused by in-migration to the West's rural-amenity communities; some of the social science literature also suggests that such conflict can be expected. In a number of studies from the urban-to-rural population turnaround of the 1970s, authors stated that there were value differences and related conflicts between newcomers and longer-term residents; in some cases they provided empirical evidence. Examples of such
conflicts included environmental preservation and growth issues in Maine (Ploch 1978), schools in Oregon (Hennigh 1978), growth issues in Wyoming (Cockerham and Blevins 1977), growth and preservation issues in Colorado (Graber 1974), and housing codes in California (Sokolow 1977).

The theoretical reasoning behind such assertions and conclusions is that newcomers of urban origin bring a particular sociocultural identity to the rural communities to which they migrate; this identity and the associated value orientations differ significantly from those held by longer-term residents. Price and Clay (1980) called this difference a "culture clash" between newcomers and longer-term residents. Similarly, Jobes (1995) referred to a "cultural clash" that creates constant tension and animosity, "since the cultural and social systems of small towns composed of locals are markedly different from the systems of the metropolis" (p. 13).

Such differences in attitudes and values, and the conflict that purportedly results, are said to be particularly evident in relation to environment, land use, and growth and development issues. In rural communities that are growing rapidly because of amenity attractions, newcomers are reported to be particularly concerned about future growth and development "destroying" the recreational, scenic, ecological, and small-town values of their destination communities. Often known as representatives of the "gangplank" or "last settler" syndrome, in-migrants to these communities are said to be fleeing the negative consequences of growth in their previous place of residence: "their vested interests are in stopping further growth and change" (American Society of Planning Officials 1976:88). Thus they may be more likely to support environmental protection and to oppose future growth and development than longer-term residents, who have not directly experienced the negative consequences of rapid urbanization. According to Ploch (1978), newcomers are

. . . much more likely to be concerned with the preservation of environmental integrity and the slow pace of rural life than they are with economic and industrial expansion. They will resist acts and policies which contravene their value positions. (p. 301)

As a result of these attitude differences between newcomers and longer-term residents, "community solidarity may be threatened by conflicts over goals, rate of development, and allocation of community resources" (Schwarzweller 1979:17).

Another theoretical explanation for the emergence of conflict over land-use and environment issues is offered by Schnaiberg (1986), who argues that urban-to-rural migrants have traits associated with subgroup cultures that support participation in social
movements; these traits—especially high educational levels—are associated with higher levels of environmental awareness and support for environmental protection. At least one empirical study (Blahna 1990) provides empirical support for the notion that newcomers are more politically active than longer-term residents.

Metro-origin in-migrants also may support environmental protection because many are employed or gain their subsistence from sources outside the traditional occupational structure of their new community, because of social network ties with other environmentalists and organizations, and because of the greater perceived efficacy of political activism. In-migrants attracted by opportunities for outdoor recreation are also likely to exhibit more pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors than are many established residents (see Dunlap and Heffernan 1975; Theodori, Luloff, and Willits 1998), even though some research suggests that some of the in-migrants’ activities consume more resources than those of longer-term residents (Fugitt, Heberlein, and Rathbun 1991).

Tensions and conflicts between established residents and rural in-migrants can occur for a number of reasons, including socioeconomic status and lifestyle differences that have little to do with environmental concerns or views about growth and development issues (see, for example, Fitchen 1991; Salamon and Tornatore 1994). Yet several case studies of rapidly growing rural and suburban communities also provide evidence supporting the existence of attitude differences and social conflict between new in-migrants and longer-term residents over environment and land-use issues. One of the earliest of these studies is The Exurbanites, whose author (Spectorisky 1955) detailed the process by which migrants moving from New York City to rural communities brought with them many of their urban values. While people originally moved to rural areas because they were charmed by the non-urban qualities, greater numbers of migrants soon caused the rural community to acquire more and more urban characteristics. To preserve the rural qualities that initially attracted them, urban newcomers became increasingly likely to try to slow or stop future development. Adopting a similar rationale in a study of one of the first places to experience turnaround migration in the mid-1960s, Dailey and Campbell (1980) suggested that many of the newcomers to the Ozark-Ouachita Uplands were “not excited about continuing population increases” (p. 260).

Two case studies have dealt specifically with these issues in Rocky Mountain communities that grew rapidly during the turnaround migration of the 1970s. In a study of Georgetown, Colorado, Graber (1974) found that newcomers had much higher educational levels than longer-term residents: nearly three-fourths (72.1 percent) had some college education or were college graduates, in
contrast to only 50 percent of the longer-term residents. Newcomers identified a number of “push” factors that led them to migrate to Georgetown, including urban pollution, competition, and anonymity and impersonality. “Pull” factors identified included the social environment of the small town and the quality of the physical environment. Graber argues that newcomers were largely responsible for mobilizing support for a historic preservation initiative to regulate and control development in the community’s downtown, although many longer-term residents joined the newcomers.

In their study of Jackson, Wyoming, Cockerham and Blevins (1977) found that the conflict between newcomers and longer-term residents over planning was based in part on the amount of land owned by the respective groups. Longer-term residents tended to own larger tracts of land; they did not support additional planning, which they viewed as restricting their ability to use the land as they saw fit. Newcomers, who tended to own smaller parcels of land, wished to preserve the rural and scenic qualities that attracted them to the community and thus favored additional planning as a means to restrict future development.

Yet numerous studies conducted during the turnaround migration of the 1970s in the North Central states found few significant attitude differences or conflicts between new in-migrants and longer-term residents regarding environment, growth, and development issues. It is commonly believed that many urban migrants who come to rural areas for amenities and quality of life may oppose population growth and economic development; Sofranko and Williams (1980), however, found that amenity-oriented migrants were as comfortable with new growth as were those who migrated for economic and employment reasons. Sofranko (1980) found that both new in-migrants and longer-term residents generally were quite aware of population growth, but expressed very little concern about it. In fact, most respondents supported increased population growth because of perceived economic benefits including money and jobs for the community, as well as the injection of new ideas. Both newcomers and longer-term residents strongly supported local efforts to increase tourism and recreation as a means of economic growth. Nothing in his data, concluded Sofranko, suggested that newcomers and longer-term residents had sharply different points of view which could become the basis for community conflict.

Similarly, in studies by Voss (1980), Sofranko and Fliegel (1980), Fliegel, Sofranko, and Glasgow (1981), and Wellman and Marans (1983), both new in-migrants and longer-term residents generally supported increased population growth and economic development. In fact, Wellman and Marans (1983) found that newcomers were more supportive of population growth than were longer-term residents.
None of the studies cited above provide evidence supporting the "gangplank" hypothesis that newcomers will be less favorable toward population growth and development than longer-term residents. These studies, however, were limited to a particular region and included various types of rural communities, not merely high amenity communities that may be particularly prone to conflict over such issues. Yet in more recent studies of rapidly growing rural communities with abundant scenic and recreational amenities, there is little empirical support for either the "gangplank" hypothesis or the assertion that new and longer-term residents hold different attitudes about the environment.

The most comprehensive of these studies is the work of Blahna (1985, 1990), which focuses on a nine-county rapidly growing, high amenity region in northern Lower Michigan. Blahna found no significant differences between new and longer-term residents regarding most attitudes about environment, resource management, and population growth. He found, however, that newcomers were more likely to support resource policies emphasizing preservation, zoning, and the designation of additional public lands, while longer-term residents were more likely to support policies emphasizing resource use and economic development.

Three other studies have reported results similar to Blahna's in high amenity rural communities in the western United States. Jobes (1995), in a long-term study of migration to Montana's Gallatin Valley, observed that the majority of residents, including newcomers, welcomed growth. In an earlier study of the same area, Jobes (1988) had found no consistent differences between newcomers and longer-term residents regarding attitudes about planning, although both groups became more opposed, over time, to state and federal planning in the local area. Additional analysis showed that migrants' orientations toward these and other quality-of-life issues varied greatly; differences in orientation were explained largely by differences in migrants' socioeconomic characteristics (Williams and Jobes 1990). Finally, Fortmann and Kusel (1990) found that residential status had no significant effect on attitudes toward the forest environment in communities near two national forests in California. They argued that a general "greening" of America had diluted or extinguished many traditional urban-rural differences in attitude. In addition, they believed, urban newcomers have not imported new pro-environmental attitudes to rural communities; rather, they have given a "voice" to existing views.

Thus, although almost all media accounts and early research from the population turnaround of the 1970s suggest that social tensions and conflicts over environment and land-use issues occur between newcomers and longer-term residents in growing amenity communities, many later empirical examinations provide little or no evidence of such outcomes.
In this study we focus on whether the often-assumed “clash” over issues of community growth and environmental quality is present in three amenity-based growth communities in the Rocky Mountain West. We concentrate on differences in attitudes and values that presumably underlie conflict, rather than on the overt conflict between newcomers and long-term residents that has often been implied in media accounts. We compare newcomers’ and longer-term residents’ attitudes toward environmental concern, population growth, economic development, and tourism development to determine whether the “culture clash” and “gangplank” hypotheses are useful for explaining social change in these communities.

Research Design and Approach

Communities in the Study

The data for the three communities analyzed here come from a larger study of social change in six rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West. We chose all of these communities because of their experience with population change related either to energy or to amenities. The three rural communities we examine in this paper have experienced a substantial amount of in-migration since the early 1990s, due primarily to their natural resource amenities: Teton Valley, Idaho; Moab, Utah; and Vernal, Utah.

Teton Valley, Idaho. The Teton Valley study area, including the communities of Driggs and Victor and unincorporated areas along the nine-mile highway corridor between the two towns, is located approximately 350 miles east of Boise, Idaho and 280 miles north of Salt Lake City, Utah. The economy in the valley traditionally has been based in farming (mainly wheat and potatoes), ranching, and timber harvesting in the Targhee National Forest. In 1965 a local economic development group opened a small ski resort 12 miles east of Driggs, just across the Wyoming state line.

In part because of the ski area and a growing recreation-oriented tourism business centered on through traffic to Jackson, Wyoming and to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, the Teton County population (concentrated primarily in the Driggs-Victor study area) grew from 2,351 in 1970 to 3,439 in 1990, a 46.3 percent increase. Because of recent expansion of the Grand Targhee Ski Area into a major national destination resort, an influx of service-industry workers from Jackson, Wyoming in search of more affordable housing, and increasing numbers of in-migrating retirees, telecommuting professionals, and second-home owners, Teton County in the 1990s became the fastest-growing county in Idaho and one of the fastest-growing in the nation. Between 1990 and 1995 the county population grew from 3,439 to 4,706, a 36.8 percent increase. Driggs recently was featured in a magazine article titled “America’s Coolest Mountain Towns,” in which the community
was described as "a simple farming town on the other side of the Tetons." The author continued, "[T]his up-and-comer is the antithesis of bustling Jackson Hole (nobody's really known about it—until now). You'd better get moving" (Minkin 1996:54).

Moab, Utah. Moab is located in southeastern Utah. The nearest metropolitan areas are Provo and Salt Lake City, Utah, approximately 200 miles to the northwest. Originally established as a farming and ranching community, Moab has a long history of boom-and-bust development associated mainly with uranium exploration, extraction, and processing. Although this activity peaked in the 1950s, employment in these industries remained fairly steady until the 1980s, when the uranium industry collapsed. Between 1980 and 1990, Moab's population fell from 5,333 to 3,971, a 25.5 percent decrease.

Since 1990, however, Moab has seen tremendous growth in tourism relating to recreational use of nearby public lands. The city adjoins Arches National Park; Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point are located just a few miles to the west. In addition, Moab is surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The network of former uranium exploration roads that crisscrosses these public lands has helped Moab become what many consider the "mountain biking capital of the world." The number of tourist-related facilities, including restaurants and motels, has nearly tripled since 1990. The population decline of the 1980s has reversed: the community's population grew 12.9 percent between 1990 and 1994. Moab's economy today depends almost entirely on tourism; over 70 percent of the city's income is derived from employment in that area (Davey 1996). The Moab study area includes the incorporated city of Moab and the adjoining Spanish Valley residential area located immediately south of town.

Vernal, Utah. Vernal is located in the extreme northeastern corner of the state, approximately 150 highway miles from Salt Lake City, the nearest metropolitan center. Vernal, like Moab, has a history of boom-and-bust development related to energy. During the 1970s, Vernal grew rapidly because of oil and natural gas exploration, processing, and production. Between 1970 and 1980, the population grew from 3,908 to 6,660, a 70.4 percent increase. In the early 1980s, growth also occurred because of the expansion of a nearby coal mine and the construction of a coal-fired power plant approximately 45 miles southeast of town. The collapse of the synthetic fuels industry in the early 1980s, and the decreasing price of oil in that period, caused Vernal's population growth to level off. Between 1980 and 1990, the population grew from 6,600 to only 6,644. Since 1990, however, the population has increased at a moderate rate; in 1994 it reached 7,291, a 9.7 percent increase.

Vernal has a moderate level of tourism development. It is one of
the gateway communities for the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (2.5 million visitors in 1994), Dinosaur National Monument, and the High Uintas Wilderness Area. Vernal is also surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management lands, where mountain biking and river recreation have increased in recent years. The Vernal study area includes the incorporated city of Vernal along with immediately adjacent areas of Uintah County that are served by the Vernal municipal water system.

Data Collection

Data for this study were drawn from surveys administered to representative samples of adult residents in each of the three communities. In each study area we developed comprehensive sampling frames of all residential dwelling units, using water or electric utility records.\(^1\) Surveys were administered in July, August, and September 1995 to randomly selected samples of 160 households in each community. Field workers personally delivered and retrieved the completed survey instruments; this technique elicits relatively high response rates (Krannich, Greider, and Little 1985).

Within each randomly selected household, an individual respondent was selected by identifying the person age 18 or older whose birthday had occurred most recently.\(^2\) This method results in a randomized selection of adult household members without the complexities or intrusiveness of more traditional methods. Overall the rates of return for usable questionnaires were excellent: 93.1 percent in Teton Valley (149 responses), 88.1 percent in Moab (141 responses), and 86.3 percent in Vernal (138 responses).

Measures

The independent variable used in this analysis is respondents' length of residence in the community. Many of the previous studies of newcomers'/longer-term residents' attitudes used a division point of 10 years: residents who had lived in the community less

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\(^1\) Employees of the public utility companies went through customer lists with members of the research team to certify that no service connections had been added or deleted since the list was printed. In addition, the employees noted instances in which multiple families occupied a dwelling area with only a single utility hookup, such as some apartment complexes and trailer courts. If the number of households per connection was not known with certainty, an on-site inspection by a team member resolved the question. In many cases, team members mapped the locations of all individual housing units in the areas in question. In one of the three study communities, no utility lists were available; the entire community was mapped by team members.

\(^2\) The classification of individuals age 18 and older as "adults" inevitably results in the inclusion of some respondents who are not in positions of responsibility for household decision making. In this study, 9.6 percent of respondents for the combined sample from all three study areas were under age 25.
than 10 years were classified as newcomers, while those who had lived there for 10 years or more were classified as longer-term residents. Although many of the studies do not provide an explicit rationale for choosing this cutoff point, those which do so suggest that length of residence in a community is crucial for developing a sense of social integration within the community (see Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). For example, Graber (1974) used a 10-year cutoff in her study "to assure a sufficiently long acquaintance with the town to facilitate informed participation in the local political scene" (p. 508). Fortmann and Kusel (1990) chose a 10-year division "on the assumption that people who have remained in an area for ten years may have been socialized to local attitudes" (p. 217).

Some previous studies, however, suggest that another important factor for classifying newcomers and longer-term residents is the approximate year in which substantial in-migration to the community began (Blahna 1985; Graber 1974). Thus the classification cutoff point should capture the major "wave" of in-migrants as newcomers, and those who lived in the community before the "wave" as longer-term residents. Because most of the recent in-migration to rural communities in the Rocky Mountain West began in about 1990 or 1991, we use a five-year cutoff point to differentiate between newcomers and longer-term residents.\(^3\)

We measured length of residence by asking respondents to indicate the year when they had moved to their community. Responses were recoded into two dummy categories: moved to the community in 1990 or earlier (longer-term resident, coded 0), and moved to the community between 1991 and 1995 (newcomer, coded 1).

We examine nine dependent variables, which are divided into four main categories: (1) environmental attitudes, (2) population growth attitudes, (3) economic development attitudes, and (4) tourism development attitudes. Below we describe the measures of each of the variables used for these categories.

**Environmental attitudes.** We assess environmental attitudes with two dependent variables. The first is a measure of general concern for environmental quality, in which the respondent is asked how important environmental quality is to the community's quality of life. The second variable concerns the importance of maintaining an unpolluted environment, including clean air and water. The response scales for both of these questions range from 1 to 11 (1 = "not at all important"; 11 = "extremely important").

\(^3\) Because this approach groups those who have been residents for only slightly more than five years with those who are lifelong residents, it could mask some differences that would be captured more accurately by using a different criterion for differentiating newcomers from longer-term residents. Yet a parallel analysis using a 10-year cutoff produced essentially identical findings, reflecting the fact that recent migration to these study areas occurred during the 1990s.
Community growth and change attitudes. Attitudes about community growth and change are assessed with two dependent variables. The first is a measure of the importance of preserving existing community ways of life and values. The response scale for this question ranges from 1 to 11 (1 = “not at all important”; 11 = “extremely important”). The second is a measure of agreement that some type of law or local ordinance should be passed to limit the number of people that could move to the community. The response scale ranges from 1 to 11 (1 = “strongly disagree”; 11 = “strongly agree”).

Economic development attitudes. We assess economic development attitudes with two dependent variables. In the first question, the respondent is asked to rate the importance of increasing economic opportunities in the community. Responses to this question range from 1 (“not at all important”) to 11 (“extremely important”). The second question is whether the respondent believes that too much economic development will ruin the community’s quality of life. Responses range from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 11 (“strongly agree”).

Tourism development attitudes. Tourism development attitudes are measured by responses to four questions from the survey questionnaire. In the first question, the respondent is asked to rate the importance of tourism to the community’s economic well-being. Responses to this question range from 1 (“not at all important”) to 11 (“extremely important”). The second question is whether residents would prefer less or more tourism in their community; values range from 1 (“much less”) to 11 (“much more”). The third and fourth questions are combined to create a composite index measuring residents’ perceptions of negative effects due to tourism development in their communities. In the first question in this index, residents are asked whether they agree that higher levels of tourism development will result in friction between local residents and tourists; in the second question, they are asked whether they agree that the quality of life in their communities will tend to decline with increased levels of tourism. Responses to both of these questions are measured on Likert-type scales (1 = “strongly disagree”; 11 = “strongly agree”). The resulting summed index has a potential response range from 2 to 22. The internal consistency of the index is substantial, as reflected by a value of .83 for Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability.

The analysis that follows begins with a sociodemographic profile of newcomers and longer-term residents in the study communities. Then we use one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine bivariate relationships between length of residence and attitudes toward environment, population growth, economic development, and tourism development. We provide results for the combined sample of respondents from all three study communities, as well as for the individual communities.
Results

Sociodemographic Profile

Table 1 presents the frequency distributions for the age of survey respondents. In the combined sample including respondents from all three communities, newcomers were substantially younger (mean age: 37) than longer-term residents (mean age: 51). The largest percentage of newcomers belonged to the 25–34 age group (37 percent); the largest percentage of longer-term residents were 65 and above (29 percent). More than 80 percent of the newcomers were 44 or younger; only 40 percent of the longer-term residents belonged to this age group. Conversely, 60 percent of the longer-term residents were 45 or older, in contrast to 20 percent of the newcomers. Among the individual study communities, Teton Valley had the youngest group of newcomers, with more than 90 percent age 44 or younger, while Moab had the oldest group of longer-term residents, with 74 percent age 45 or older. Moab also showed the highest mean age (41.5 years) for newcomers and the oldest mean age for longer-term residents (54.8 years).

Table 1 also presents frequency distributions for the sex of survey respondents. For the combined sample, 62 percent of the newcomers were female and 38 percent were male, while 57 percent of the longer-term residents were female and 42 percent were male. We found substantial differences in the three study communities. In Teton Valley, newcomers’ sex percentages were almost identical to those of the combined sample, whereas longer-term residents were divided equally between male and female. In Moab, a greater percentage of newcomers were male (56 percent) than female (44 percent). The largest percentage (78 percent) of female respondents was found among newcomers in Vernal.\(^4\)

Regarding survey respondents’ education, the combined sample indicates a fairly high educational level for both newcomers and longer-term residents. Only 8 percent of the newcomers and 10 percent of the longer-term residents had not finished high school; 74 percent of the newcomers and 65 percent of the longer-term

\(^4\) According to community planners, the unusually high percentage of female newcomers in Vernal is probably due to a substantial in-migration of single, female-headed households from the urban Wasatch Front region of Utah, which were attracted to the lower cost of living in Vernal, the availability of subsidized low-income housing, and the increase in retail employment opportunities that occurred during 1991–1995 (M.A. Page-Allen, Uintah County planner, December 3, 1998, personal communication). This trend is similar to a phenomenon observed by Fitchen (1991) in some rural communities in upstate New York. Because the sex distribution of longer-term residents does not appear to significantly overrepresent women, we do not believe that the high proportion of women in the newcomer category is attributable to errors in the sampling procedures used in Vernal.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Age, Gender, and Education Level by Community and by Length of Residence (NC = Newcomers; LTR = Longer-Term Residents)

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<th>Vernal</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
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</table>

The number of cases for each variable is smaller in some cases than the total sample sizes for each of the three communities because not all respondents answered all of the survey items.
residents had completed at least some college (Table 1). More than one-third of the newcomers had completed at least a college bachelor's degree, compared to 29 percent of the longer-term residents.

Overall we found no major differences in the education levels of newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample. Two important differences stand out, however. First, nearly twice as many newcomers (27 percent) as longer-term residents (14 percent) had completed a college bachelor's degree. Second, a larger percentage of longer-term residents had completed some graduate work (15 percent) or earned a graduate degree (6 percent) than had newcomers (10 percent had completed some graduate work; 5 percent had earned a graduate degree).

Within the individual study communities, we found some important differences in educational levels. Three percent or less of the newcomers in Teton Valley and Moab had not completed high school, in contrast to more than 19 percent of the newcomers to Vernal. Newcomers to Teton Valley were by far the most highly educated group of newcomers: 85 percent had attended college.

Table 2 presents the frequency distributions for the respondents' annual household income. For the combined sample, the median income (in 1994) for both newcomers and longer-term residents was $20,000 to $29,999. A larger proportion of longer-term residents (37 percent) than of newcomers (26 percent) belonged to the lowest income categories ($19,999 or less). A larger proportion of longer-term residents (19 percent) than of newcomers (15 percent) also reported annual household incomes in the highest categories ($50,000 or above). We found some important income differences between the three communities: in Teton Valley, newcomers had substantially higher incomes overall than did longer-term residents. Vernal newcomers, however, reported substantially lower incomes than did longer-term residents.

We included religion in the analysis because all three of the study communities are located in a region heavily influenced by the Mormon Church. Utah and southeastern Idaho are the focal point of the Mormon culture region (Meining 1965), which represents a unique "socioreligious" setting with high levels of demographic, social, and cultural homogeneity. This situation creates "ideal conditions for heightened social conflict" between new in-migrants, who often are not Mormon, and established Mormon residents (Stinner and Toney 1980:315). We dummy-coded religion into a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not a respondent was a member of the Mormon (LDS) Church.

For the combined sample, a smaller proportion of newcomers (34 percent) than of longer-term residents (41 percent) reported membership in the Mormon Church (Table 2). More than 66 percent of the newcomers were not Mormon, compared with 59 per-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Combined Sample</th>
<th>Teton Valley</th>
<th>Moab</th>
<th>Vernal</th>
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<td>50.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of cases</strong></td>
<td>153</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of cases for each variable is smaller in some cases than the total sample sizes for each of the three communities because not all respondents answered all of the survey items.
cent of the longer-term residents. Within the individual study communities, Teton Valley had the highest percentage (73 percent) of non-Mormon newcomers, followed by Moab (68 percent) and Vernal (57 percent). Vernal and Teton Valley contained substantially higher percentages of longer-term residents who were Mormon (55 percent and 54 percent respectively) than did Moab (22 percent).

Urban/rural background, or the size of the community where respondents spent most of their growing-up years, was originally measured as a five-category ordinal variable, but we recoded it into a dichotomous variable with an "urban" category (population 5,000 and above) and a "rural" category (population smaller than 5,000). In the combined sample, we found substantial differences between newcomers and longer-term residents. Approximately 72 percent of the newcomers lived in urban places during the period of their lives when socialization is most extensive, compared with 49 percent of longer-term residents (Table 2). We saw no substantial deviations from this pattern in the individual study communities.

Bivariate Analyses

*Environmental concern.* For the combined sample of residents from all three study communities, both newcomers and longer-term residents reported very high levels of general environmental concern (newcomers: mean = 9.88; longer-term residents: mean = 9.49; Table 3). Although newcomers report slightly higher levels of environmental concern, the difference is not statistically significant. Within the individual study communities, only Moab showed a significant difference between newcomers and longer-term residents: newcomers reported higher levels of environmental concern. In Teton Valley, longer-term residents reported slightly higher levels of concern than newcomers, although the difference is not statistically significant.

Both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample reported high levels of concern for the more specific question addressing concerns about air and water pollution (newcomers: mean = 10.14; longer-term residents: mean = 9.97; Table 3). Although newcomers reported slightly higher levels of concern, the difference is not statistically significant. Of the three study communities, only Moab showed a statistically significant difference between newcomers and longer-term residents: there, newcomers reported a higher level of concern. In Teton Valley, as stated above,
Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and ANOVA Results for Response Patterns of Dependent Variables by Community and Length of Residence (NC = Newcomers; LTR = Longer-Term Residents)

<table>
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<td>Vernal</td>
<td>9.74</td>
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<td>Too Much Economic Development May Ruin Quality of Lifeb</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.72</td>
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<td>8.11</td>
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<td>4.96</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>Importance of Tourism to Community Economic Well-Beinga</td>
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<td>9.30</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>6.31**</td>
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<td>Teton Valley</td>
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<td>Moab</td>
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<td>13.28**</td>
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<td>Vernal</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>9.70</td>
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</table>
longer-term residents reported slightly higher levels of concern than newcomers, but the difference is not statistically significant.

*Community growth and change.* Regarding the importance of preserving existing ways of life and values in the community (which population growth may threaten), both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample reported moderately high levels of support for preserving these values (newcomers: mean = 7.96; longer-term residents: mean = 8.96; Table 3). Although the difference between the two groups is statistically significant, it is in the direction opposite to that predicted by the “gangplank” hypothesis: longer-term residents are more supportive of preserving existing ways of life and values than are newcomers. In all of the individual study communities, responses followed the same pattern whereby longer-term residents were more supportive than newcomers. The differences between the two groups, however, were statistically significant only in Teton Valley.

Both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample reported low to moderate levels of support for policies that would limit population growth in the community (newcomers: mean = 3.89; longer-term residents: mean = 5.25; Table 3). Although the difference between groups is statistically significant, again it is in the direction opposite to that predicted by the “gangplank” hypothesis: longer-term residents reported higher levels of support for population growth limits than newcomers. In all of the individual communities, responses followed the same pattern: longer-term residents were more supportive of such policies than
newcomers, although the differences between the two groups were statistically significant only in Teton Valley.

Economic development. For the variable measuring the importance of increasing economic opportunities in the community, both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample considered it very important to increase these opportunities (newcomers: mean = 9.33; longer-term residents: mean = 9.51; Table 3). Although longer-term residents attached slightly more importance to this variable than did newcomers, the difference is not statistically significant. In the individual study communities, as in the combined sample, we found no statistically significant differences between newcomers and longer-term residents regarding the importance of increasing economic opportunities. In two of the three communities (Vernal and Teton Valley), newcomers ranked the increase in these opportunities slightly higher than did longer-term residents. These differences, although quite small and not statistically significant, are in the direction opposite to that predicted by the “gangplank” hypothesis.

For the variable measuring agreement that too much economic development may ruin community quality of life, both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample tended overall to express ambivalence, as indicated by mean responses near the midpoint of the response scale (newcomers: mean = 6.04; longer-term residents: mean = 6.72; Table 3). Although the difference between the two groups is statistically significant, it is in the direction opposite to that predicted by the “gangplank” hypothesis: longer-term residents expressed more agreement than newcomers that too much economic development might ruin the community’s quality of life. In all of the individual study communities, responses followed the same pattern whereby longer-term residents expressed more agreement than newcomers, although the differences between the two groups were statistically significant only in Teton Valley.

Tourism development. In regard to the perceived importance of tourism development to the community’s economic well-being, both newcomers and longer-term residents ranked tourism as important (newcomers: mean = 9.30; longer-term residents: mean = 8.68; Table 3). The difference between groups is significant, and once again is inconsistent with the “gangplank” hypothesis: longer-term residents perceived tourism development as less important to the community’s economic well-being than did newcomers. In two of the three communities (Teton Valley and Moab), responses followed the same pattern: longer-term residents perceived tourism development as less important than did newcomers, although the difference was statistically significant only in Moab. In Vernal, the mean responses were identical for newcomers and for longer-term residents.
For the variable constituting an index of agreement that tourism development creates negative social effects, the responses of both newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample were near the midpoint of the index scale (newcomers: mean = 12.16; longer-term residents: mean = 13.71; Table 3). Contrary to the "gangplank" hypothesis, longer-term residents agreed more strongly than newcomers that tourism development leads to negative social effects. In two of the three communities (Teton Valley and Moab), responses followed the same pattern: longer-term residents expressed more agreement than newcomers, although the difference between the two groups was statistically significant only in Moab. In Vernal, newcomers reported slightly more agreement than longer-term residents, but the difference was not statistically significant.

For the variable measuring whether respondents prefer more or less tourism development in their community than exists currently, both newcomers and longer-term residents preferred that levels of tourism development remain about the same, as indicated by their mean responses near the midpoint of the measurement scale (newcomers: mean = 7.04; longer-term residents: mean = 6.11; Table 3). Although the difference between the two groups is statistically significant, once again it is in the direction opposite to that predicted by the "gangplank" hypothesis. In two of the three study communities (Teton Valley and Moab), responses followed the same pattern: longer-term residents preferred a lower level of future tourism development than did newcomers. In Vernal, longer-term residents preferred a greater amount of future tourism development, but the difference between the groups is not statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusions

Much of the recent popular media coverage of in-migration to rural-amenity communities in the Rocky Mountain West, as well as some of the social science literature on amenity in-migration, suggests that newcomers and longer-term residents in such communities differ significantly in both sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes toward environment, growth, and development issues. The results from the three communities examined here indicate that the two groups in fact differ on many sociodemographic characteristics. Results focusing on attitudinal measures, however, suggest that newcomers and longer-term residents either do not differ, or differ in ways opposite to predictions by media accounts and some previous research.

Sociodemographically, newcomers to the three study communities differ significantly from longer-term residents on a number of dimensions. In the combined sample, newcomers tend to be significantly younger; they are more likely to be female, more likely to have completed a four-year college degree, less likely to be mem-
bers of the Mormon Church, and much more likely to have urban (versus rural) backgrounds. As suggested by media accounts and by some of the literature on "culture clash" and the "gangplank" phenomenon, the pattern of these differences increases the likelihood that newcomers and longer-term residents will view environment, growth, and development issues differently.

The results of the bivariate analyses, however, indicate that this is not necessarily the case for these study communities. Newcomers and longer-term residents in the combined sample reported very similar levels of concern for the environment. In addition, for the variables measuring attitudes toward population growth, economic development, and tourism development, either we found no significant differences between newcomers and longer-term residents, or the differences were in the direction opposite to that predicted by the "gangplank" hypothesis. For example, longer-term residents in general were more concerned about population growth, economic development, and tourism development than were newcomers, and were more interested in limiting these processes.

These results raise two major questions. First, why were many of the results inconsistent with the "gangplank" hypothesis? Although our data do not provide a basis for addressing this question directly, we can speculate about some likely reasons. In the three communities used for this study, significant portions of the economies are based on tourism related to outdoor recreation, and many of the newcomers to these communities are probably employed in this industry. Wages are often low, work is often seasonal or part-time, and housing prices are often high; therefore newcomers may view increased population growth, economic development, and tourism development as means of improving their economic quality of life. Indeed, the results show that in Vernal, the community with the least growth related to outdoor recreation and tourism, newcomers' and longer-term residents' attitudes were the most similar for nearly all of the variables examined. Conversely, longer-term residents in these rapidly changing communities may perceive the growth and development of these industries as a direct threat to the communities' traditional social, cultural, and economic identity, and therefore may be less supportive of growth and development.

Second, how and why do popular media reports and some of the social science literature reach different conclusions than this research about the existence of social tensions and conflicts in growing rural-amenity communities in the Rocky Mountain West, based on the newcomers' assumed attitudes favoring the environment and supporting the limitation of growth and development? Three explanations seem most salient.

First, media accounts of the in-migration phenomenon probably exaggerate the sociocultural differences between newcomers and
longer-term residents, as well as the social effects of these differences. As some literature suggests, media reporting of many events represents not simply an account of objective facts, but a “constructed reality” in which journalists themselves define social meanings of the events they report. Often the result is an account in which order is constructed and events are simplified in order to help explain “what is going on here” in complex situations (Gamsen et al. 1992). In addition, in the interest of maintaining and increasing circulation, editors often favor stories that are framed in terms of conflict and controversy (Hannigan 1995).

Second, it is likely that significant attitude differences exist between some newcomers and some longer-term residents. It is likely that the media framing of the issue in terms of widespread conflict, as well as some of the social scientists’ assertion of conflict, is based on the actions and expressions of a handful of individuals from both groups who have more extreme attitudes and express them vocally. As suggested by the results of this study, there is a danger in extrapolating this conflict to all members of community social groups, such as newcomers and longer-term residents.

Finally, these results do not indicate that conflict is not occurring in these communities. On the contrary, as suggested above, the social construction of newcomers and longer-term residents into stereotypic categories based on the views, attitudes, and lifestyles of some of the groups’ members can give the conflict between the two groups a life of its own. Where this occurs, it hardly matters whether the attitude differences between the two groups are perceived or real, so long as people believe them to be real.

Our findings, however, also suggest that newcomers and longer-term residents actually occupy substantially more “common ground” than might be expected or perceived by either group. This provides some hope for efforts to address and mitigate conflicts and to enhance community-building efforts based on increased understanding, respect, and cooperation toward others, who often are presumed erroneously to hold different and perhaps inconsistent positions regarding the community and the local environment.

References


