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**Review of *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Cornelia  
Butler Flora and Jan L. Flora. Reviewed by James Midgley.**

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Cornelia Butler Flora and Jan L. Flora, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008. \$45.00 papercover.

In highly urbanized, post-industrial societies such as the United States, academic interest in rural communities is no longer as strong as it was in the early decades of the 20th century. Today, the vast majority of the country's population lives in cities and towns and with the expansion of suburban and peri-urban areas, the distinction between urban and rural has become increasingly blurred. In addition, because of significant improvements in communications, rural communities are no longer as isolated as they once were. Nevertheless, as the authors of this well-written book point out, rural issues still deserve attention. Rural communities have experienced significant economic and social changes over the last half century and, faced with new social challenges, the study of rural conditions is still of great importance.

The book seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of rural conditions in the United States today. It begins with a fairly standard discussion of the rural situation and offers a helpful account of the complexities of defining the terms "rural" and "community." A brief discussion of the need to study rural communities and the way they have responded to social change in recent times is then provided. The following seven chapters cover what the authors refer to as "the capitals"—namely, natural capital, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital and finally built capital—and these chapters examine their role in community life. This is followed with a discussion of the way rural communities in United States are linked to the world economy, and the extent to which globalization and particularly financial capital flows are affecting rural areas. The next chapter discusses consumption in rural communities and the importance of consumption for rural America. The role of government in rural communities is then analyzed and the book ends with a chapter on community development in the promotion of positive community change.

As noted earlier, this is a very readable book which both students and more advanced readers will appreciate. The

authors present their material in a clear and systematic way and while they make use of theoretical concepts and approaches, they avoid the jargon that often characterizes theoretical social science accounts. Of particular interest is the extensive use of the discourse of capital in the book. Reflecting the dominance of market-based ideas in both the policy and academic worlds, the authors emphasize the role of "the capitals" in community life. Some may question the value of this approach, but the authors succeed in showing how "the capitals" play a vital role in rural communities. They also demystify these concepts and link them effectively to policy. Although the book may have benefited from a more extensive discussion of community economic development and other interventions that can enhance the well-being of rural people, it is a comprehensive and helpful resource which should be consulted by anyone working with rural communities. It will be of particular value to rural social workers and community practitioners who will benefit from its broad conceptual framework and extensive discussion of the issues and challenges facing rural communities today.

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Brian Steensland, *The Failed Welfare Revolution; America's Struggle over the Guaranteed Income Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. \$35.00 hardcover.

The idea that all citizens should be guaranteed a minimum but adequate income to meet their basic needs and live productive lives without being bound to the demands of regular wage employment has enjoyed a revival in recent times. Rooted in long-standing utopian beliefs and socialist thinking, proposals for a guaranteed minimum income for all have never been fully implemented, although the payment of demogrant social allowances and comprehensive social insurance in the European welfare states gives expression to this idea. Indeed, guaranteed minimum income proposals have historically been associated with European welfarism and regarded as least likely to be adopted in countries with strong market liberal traditions.

But, as this book reveals, a guaranteed minimum income policy was almost implemented in the United States in the