

**Social Impacts of Large Scale Economic
Development Projects in the Rural South:
A Longitudinal Re-Study of Vance,
Alabama and the Impacts of Mercedes Benz**

Ralph B. Brown, Clark D. Hudspeth, and Katherine L. Stone

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About the Authors

Ralph B. Brown is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Brigham Young University. Clark D. Hudspeth is a Doctoral Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at Mississippi State University. Katherine L. Stone is a Doctoral Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at Mississippi State University.

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Social Impacts of Large Scale Economic Development Projects in the Rural South: A Longitudinal Re-Study of Vance, Alabama and the Impacts of Mercedes Benz

Introduction, Study Objectives, and Organization of the Report

Introduction

On September 30, 1993, the storied automaker, Mercedes Benz, announced the site for their first U.S. factory—Vance, Alabama—located less than 30 miles east of Tuscaloosa. The primary reasons for Mercedes Benz locating in America, in Alabama, and, particularly in Vance, were: in-place infrastructure, available land in proximity to urban areas and amenities, the economic atmosphere in the United States (as compared to Germany), the incentive package offered Mercedes Benz by the State of Alabama that was four times the amount of some states' offers and exceeded the second place bidder by \$104 million, and finally, cheap labor (Tuscaloosa Times News [TTN], 10-10-1993).

Vance is not unlike other areas in the rural South which have increasingly been targeted by large manufacturing firms as places to locate their plants (Cobb, 1993). Most recently (May 6, 1999), Honda announced a "\$400 million comprehensive automobile manufacturing facility that will produce vehicles as well as engines...(Byrd, 1999:9)" to be built in Lincoln (a town of 3,400), Alabama, 40 miles east of Birmingham.

Such places, however, are not simply the victims of multinational corporations looking for undereducated, nonunionized populations to exploit with dirty industry. The modern targeting of these southern rural areas is also in part the result of extensive efforts by southern leaders (community, state, and regional), dating back to the post World War II years, to attract industry into the region. "[T]he South greatly expanded its public and its private industry-seeking efforts. An obsession with new plants and payrolls doubtless made the region more attractive to industrial investors...(Cobb, 1993:98)." Indeed, southern rural communities have been active participants in attempting to land factories in their respective backyards. Their calling card? An available labor pool, low labor costs, cheap

land, relaxed regulations, and anti-union sentiments; all of which make the rural South an attractive place for heavy manufacturing such as automobiles (Perrucci, 1994).

The factory chasing tactics that have characterized the region have generally been analyzed and/or justified on their economic merits alone, with little regard to their social impacts (see Cobb, 1993:209). They have been accepted at face (economic) value. Clearly, the many potential economic positives are undeniable. Consequently, what is often overlooked in economic analyses of these large scale developments are the less tangible (and at times highly charged), social impacts—costs and/or benefits—that are impossible to affix an economic value to (Falk and Lyson, 1988). Thus, as the rural South continues to rush headlong into industrial expansion, a better understanding of some of the social consequences of these strategies is needed if the ongoing experiment is to be played-out over a long time frame. In other words, a fundamental goal of economic development is to create a sustainable environment for all of the principals involved. To achieve this, more than the economic impacts of these developments must be considered and plans for mitigation in future projects established.

Objectives

This project, funded through the TVA Rural Studies Program, addresses these less tangible "social impacts" for the larger community area of Vance, Alabama, where the Mercedes Benz plant was located in 1994. It constitutes a unique case study where longitudinal and panel data from 1994/5 and 1999 are compared to better understand the social impacts of the Mercedes Benz siting in Vance.

Two specific objectives of this research are to:

1. *Establish the types and extent of social impacts the siting of the Mercedes Benz plant has had on the community of Vance, Alabama and the other rural communities in the area. In particular, it will establish community level social impacts the plant has had by comparing responses from a*

baseline survey conducted in the fall of 1995, with a second wave of survey data gathered in spring and summer of 1999.

2. Create a case study that will serve as a template from which to cautiously generalize similar cases that are increasingly common in the rural South.

The analysis utilized four different data sets to focus on the social impacts of the Mercedes Benz plant on the larger Vance area community, and specifically on Vance residents, vis-a-vis residents from all other communities in the research area.

- 1. Qualitative data from in depth interviews, observations, and archival research from newspapers and other documents*
- 2. Panel data from those who responded to both surveys, 1995 and 1999 (N=47)*
- 3. Combined 1995 and 1999 longitudinal data on common questions across both surveys (N=445)*
- 4. Unique questions from the 1999 survey which were not asked in 1995 (N=318)*

Social impacts were examined through seven categories that were derived from analysis of the four data sets above; thus, the categories constitute a research label for patterns observed in the data as expressed by individuals and aggregated into categories of social impacts:

- 1. Gestalt Shift in World View—More Cosmopolitan Orientation*
- 2. Centralization of Social and Political Power*
- 3. Decline in Sense and Commitment to Local Community*
- 4. Shifts in Quality of Life*
- 5. Shifts in Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains*
- 6. Infrastructural Minuses*
- 7. Shifts in Demographic Makeup*

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into five major sections. Section One provides the theoretical justification for examining social impacts associated with large scale economic development efforts in the rural South, a discussion of the Mercedes Benz case in particular, early qualitative evidence of social

impacts, and information on the meaning of social versus economic impacts. The second section provides information on the research design and data collection procedures as they pertain to the two quantitative surveys. Section Three gives a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the 1999 and combined 1995 and 1999 surveys. Section Four presents the quantitative results of the data analysis as they address the two objectives; while discussion and conclusions are presented in Section Five.

1. Theoretical Justification

Social scientists have largely concentrated on rural places with agricultural and or natural resource based economies (c.f., Billings, 1988; Buttel, 1982; Harrington, 1988; Kirkendall, 1987; Murdock et al., 1993; Peterson, 1990). Others have given more attention to rural locales whose economies are not directly tied to the geographic space they occupy (Bealer, Willits, & Kuvlesky, 1965; Miller & Luloff, 1981; Schroeder, 1980). Residents of "bedroom communities," for example, are primarily residents of one place, while their economic fortunes are tied to another (Brown, 1993; Johansen & Fuguitt, 1984; Wilkinson, 1990).

Today, nonmetropolitan areas have moved beyond an insular local economic base to locales with a genuine stake in the global market economy (Blakely, 1991). Extensive national and global markets provide consumer products to even the most isolated rural resident (Brown, 1993). As rural places are increasingly reshaped by non-local forces, new obstacles present themselves to residents attempting to gain or maintain some degree of control over local development processes (Logan & Molotch, 1987).

Such global economic forces also explain in part why relationships in rural areas are not simply a result of the economic characteristics of the locality itself. A positive experience of community is shaped by a high quality of life primarily obtained through an adequate income allowing the purchase of desired consumer goods and services. Secure employment is therefore, a basic enabler of consumption and thus helps assure access to a higher quality of life (Brown, 1993; Ewen, 1976; Lo, 1990). Brown (1993) argues that meeting consumption needs has primacy over

where they are met, and that adequate employment and income permitting attainment of a higher quality of life also have primacy over location of employment. Therefore, the optimal place of residence is often a tradeoff between the size of the town and the desire for an adequate income and the availability of consumer goods and services (Tweeten & Lu, 1976).

Though many rural places have traditionally been tied to an agricultural and/or resource extraction based economy, rural areas are changing. About one-half of America's labor market areas are rural (Flora et al., 1992). During the 1970s, manufacturers began leaving urban areas to take advantage of cheaper rural labor and land. Thus, by 1979, manufacturing had become the largest employer of the rural work force. The South has been particularly aggressive in recruiting industry to locate in its many rural areas (Cobb, 1993). This trend greatly influenced the rise of bedroom communities in rural America. Yet, whether categorized as bedroom or traditional, rural places have much in common; they share a marginal status in the larger economy and the need for effective measures to remain economically viable (Flora et al., 1992).

In attempting to attract industry to a locale, community organization and development theories generally hold that collective action and solidarity at the local level along with infrastructure development and the presence of successful business and/or industry are key elements (Castle, 1991; Coughenour & Wimberley, 1982; Kriessel & McNamara, 1990). How well does this model apply to contemporary bedroom communities in the rural South? In other words, is it an effective strategy for rural places whose economies (and thus economic fortunes) have long been removed from the locale?

Tilly (1973) maintains that one of the social impacts of the development and growth of rural places (not only in the United States, but on a global scale) through industry and other economic expansions has been a decline in the relative importance of local level activity and solidarity as a strategy for growth oriented goals. Logan and Molotch (1987) see the "growth" model of community/economic development as encouraging competition between places and intensifying their

commodification, thus obfuscating the human relations of peoples who occupy and utilize those places (see also Bender, 1978). It is this obfuscation of the human elements that undergirds the study of social (not just economic) impacts. Such impacts are not as obvious or easily quantified as economic ones. Therefore, a better understanding of the social impacts on the Vance community—after being selected as the site for the Mercedes Benz facility—may facilitate a fuller understanding of some of the non-economic impacts of economic development in rural locales in a capitalist, consumer oriented, global market economy. The knowledge generated from this understanding can potentially aid rural communities in not only the economic development process, but in a variety of social development processes as well. Thus, what social impacts imply are trade-offs—something is sacrificed for something else—again, not all of which are economic.

Vance and Mercedes Benz: Some History and Early Social Impacts

About Vance

Vance was founded around 1830 and was first known as Trion. Timber and agriculture were main contributors to the economic base of the area (Brewer, 1975). The area was rich in coal and plentiful in iron ore, sandstone, and limestone.

By 1858, there were two stores in Trion. In 1872, the town's first schoolhouse was built, and the name of the town was changed to Smallwood. In 1873, the Atlanta and Chattanooga Railroad came through the town and a depot was built to service local shipping and travel (TTN, 10-10-1993). In 1876, the name was changed to Vance Station and finally to Vance in 1879 (see Foscue, 1989; Harris, 1982; McEachin, 1977). In 1905, with a population of 96 inhabitants, six general stores, a railway station, and a cotton gin, Vance appears to have been an early trade center for the region (Harris, 1982; TTN, 10-10-1993).

It was not until the late 1950s and into the 1960s that these establishments began to "die off". The last of the old stores in the town of Vance went out of business around 1993, mostly because of improvements in transportation and changes in the local economy. After World War II, better

employment and transportation freed residents from being locked into the higher prices of local stores (Strasser, 1989) due to having to buy needed goods on credit, allowing them greater access to the urban markets of Tuscaloosa and Birmingham.

While some residents who lived in and around Vance were still making their living via agriculture or the timber industry, most others began to find employment in the surrounding larger towns and cities, such as Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, 30 to 35 miles away, respectively. Salaries began to increase, women in the households went to work, and household incomes began to increase. As a result, the standard of living in the area increased. With rising incomes, new opportunities emerged that were generally seen as improvements in one's "quality of life" (Hays, 1987). Now, conveniences associated with home, leisure, recreation and the "good life," lay within the reach of many.

The population of Vance diminished somewhat in the 1950s and 1960s. The decline was due mostly to people looking for employment opportunities. Local job opportunities, especially good ones, however, were still few.

People live and work in a place, and the qualities of that place influences the interpretation of whether an environment is attractive or not (Hays, 1987). These contexts of human perception and experience become significant organizing principles from which distinct ideas and action flow—i.e., these contexts are the source of an ideology of "community" (Hummon, 1990). Since World War II, Americans' values stressed the quality of human experience and the search for a better life associated with home, community, and leisure (Hays, 1987). More affordable cars and trucks enabled more workers to escape industrialized cities as a place of residence (Bender, 1978; Flora et al., 1992). Rural lands, which seemingly nobody wanted, was now very much in demand for its natural, yet consumable, amenities—lakes, trees, hills, open spaces, etc. People were finding in rural places the more relaxed atmosphere and lifestyle not found in cities, and with the increase in incomes, they were able to purchase it. Today more than one-fourth of the people in the United States live in nonmetropolitan areas (Flora et al., 1992).

By the 1970s and 1980s, it was becoming more convenient to live in a rural area (Long & DeAre, 1988). During this time, the population of Vance also increased somewhat. As surrounding cities and towns became even more accessible, more and better consumer shopping and job opportunities became available. Better transportation and communication served to reduce the time and cost of travel (i.e., functional distance) between places thus permitting a greater dispersion of population without loss of accessibility (i.e., psychic cost of distance) to family and friends, goods and services, and or jobs and income (Chalmers & Greenwood, 1980; Johansen & Fuguitt, 1979; Lichter & Fuguitt, 1980).

Despite an improved area economy and population increases, Vance went bust in 1984. Rather than go into debt or tax residents, Vance simply tightened its belt. The town council decided to lay off employees, cut their own salaries, and do the garbage pick-up, police protection, and so on, themselves. After a slow recovery, a new mayor was elected in 1992 who was "growth" oriented. The city council is now in the process of applying for federal grants to help fund the building of a sewer system and other infrastructure improvements in hopes this will attract "spin-off" business to the town of Vance. The new mayor also started taking an active role in the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority (IDA). He also appointed two other council members to the IDA. They felt that IDA involvement would be their best chance of attracting more industry or businesses to their town.

The "Winning" of Mercedes Benz

Alabama's reasons for pursuing Mercedes Benz in a highly competitive arena went beyond expected immediate and direct revenue increases for the state. They were looking for long-range economic gains. Like other southern states, Alabama had an image problem state officials were trying to overcome (Billings, 1988; Flora et al., 1992; TTN, 10-10-1993). Government officials and industry promoters (e.g., business leaders, industrial development agents, and academic administrators) in the state believed that the hanging the Mercedes Benz "star" over the State of Alabama would result in immediate revenue increases, and also take them from

being viewed as a "red-headed stepchild" to "world-class" status (TTN, 10-10-1993). Thus, the "winning" of Mercedes Benz would produce a fast return on their investment and provide the ultimate "magnet" for attracting other industry to the state, further enhancing revenue increases. By turning a "sow's ear" into a "silk purse," Alabama would reap a return on their investment many times over—a tactic in line with common "industrial targeting" strategies as outlined by Akpadock (1993).

Examination of news articles published in *The Tuscaloosa News* (TTN, Oct. 10, 11, 18, 23, 1993; Feb. 10, 17, 20, 24, 28, 1994; Apr. 18, 1994; June 11, 1994; Nov. 7, 13, 1994; and Dec. 6, 7, 1994) tell the following details of the Mercedes Benz deal. On September 30, 1993, Mercedes Benz officially announced the site for the automaker's first U.S. factory. The \$540 million, 1500 employee, high-tech facility began producing over 60,000 sports utility vehicles early in 1997. The first "M-Class" Mercedes Benz rolled off the Vance plant assembly line on February 14, 1997. Of the \$540 million, \$300 million went toward construction with the remaining \$240 million going for equipment.

Mercedes Benz had made a decision to go into the lucrative sports utility vehicle market as part of the Daimler plan to be one of the top multinational corporations in the global economy (TTN, 10-10-1993). There were three overriding issues that directed the Mercedes Benz decision making process: the market, tariffs, and production cost. Since they anticipated selling 60 percent of their products in the United States, it was believed that it would be more profitable to locate their new facility in America, thereby reducing product-to-market cost drastically. Enhancing this cost reduction was the avoidance of a 25 percent tariff fee by locating the facility in the United States. Further enhancement of profitability resulted from a reduction in production costs. This was facilitated by a significantly cheaper American labor force and an enormous reduction in capital outlays as a result of Alabama's incentive package estimated to have been worth between \$253 million and \$500 million.

Indeed, much to the consternation of officials from other states in the Mercedes Benz bidding war, the lucrative incentive package offered Mercedes Benz by the State of

Alabama was four times the amount of some states' offers. The original agreement included a pledge by the Tuscaloosa City Council to spend \$30 million to buy and develop the plant site. Once the 966 acre tract was cleared, leveled, and prepared for construction, the entire 966 acres was to be sold to Mercedes Benz for a mere \$100.00. The Alabama legislature also set up a plan to allow Mercedes Benz to keep 5 percent of its workers' wages to pay off construction debts (the workers would get a matching tax break) and approved a 25 year corporate tax holiday for the company. The state was also to pay the workers while they were training. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs approved a grant application dated December 1993 for estimated state funded improvements to the site and surrounding area totaling \$426.3 million which breaks as follows: site acquisition: \$5.3 million, site preparation: \$12.4 million, site improvement: \$10.0 million, water and sewer: \$11.0 million, railroad extension: \$4.0 million, job training facility: \$30.0 million, service center building: \$5.0 million, fire station: \$0.6 million, interstate interchange and access roads: \$50.0 million, plant facility, equipment, and other expenses: \$300 million (TTN, 1994).

Dieter Zetsche, the Mercedes Benz board member responsible for passenger car development, explained that not only is the German autoworker a generation older than his/her American counterpart, he/she averages between 300 to 400 fewer hours of work per year and earns up to \$15 an hour more (TTN, 10-10-1993). "It's cheaper to do business here [in the United States]." Mercedes Benz expected the largest percent of sales to be to the American public, therefore "the most important reason for coming to the United States was the market."

Clearly, the winning of the prestigious German automaker's first facility in the United States for Vance has put this area in an enviable economic position. A high ranking Alabama state official, citing an impact study done by Troy State University and Flour Daniel Siting and Consulting Service, expected over 9,500 new direct and indirect jobs the first year and that direct and indirect wages were expected to be as high as \$294 million. As a result, tax receipts were expected to increase \$16 million the first year. The estimated state

funded improvements to the site and surrounding area were expected to total \$426.3 million. In order to understand the significance and/or impact of these changes, a fuller understanding of the place where this event occurred is needed.

How well Mercedes Benz has measured up economically to these initial expectations and to its record breaking incentive packet cannot be addressed in this report. That is the role of the economist. Addressed are the various social impacts that have occurred as a result of the Mercedes Benz plant locating in Vance.

Early Social Impacts

Formal and informal interviews conducted in 1994-1996 from the Vance area, as well as archival data, primarily from the Tuscaloosa Times News, reveal that residents basically saw this as a process external to them. It appears the project originated with the Alabama Development Office [ADO], and the IDA, not through local officials of Vance. The ADO, (namely, Billy Joe Camp and Glenn Pringle) and the IDA (specifically, Dara Longgrear and Chairman Anthony Topazi—also Division Vice President of Alabama Power Company) met with Mercedes Benz, enticed them to visit, entertained them once they got there, set up the itineraries and planned the strategies to bring Mercedes Benz to Vance.¹ They had already decided on the Vance site long before anyone from Vance knew of the goings on. Vance does have representatives on the IDA board—two council members and the Mayor. They knew about the Mercedes Benz deal after the initial contacts had been made and the site identified, but, due to their positions, were sworn to secrecy until its official announcement. Consequently, Vance representatives had only a very small active voice in the Mercedes Benz deal and were excluded from the upper level negotiations. Interviews also indicate that economies of scale were in the favor of the IDA who could afford to finance larger projects and thus do more to promote economic development than could the much smaller Vance. As one interviewee explained, "it was really all cut and dried before hand; it was a big boys' game...Tuscaloosa was the pro playing in that ball game and we [Vance] were just a high school team."

The first measurable social impact occurred early after the announcement. Interviews and newspaper articles show that, in essence, community action on the part of Vance citizens was non-existent (both for or against Mercedes Benz), until a battle between Vance and Tuscaloosa began as a result of a proposed (and carried out) annexation of a 14 mile corridor in an island formed by I-59/20 and Highway 82 which runs nearly parallel between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham. The area would become a high-revenue yielding industrial corridor. This would bring all of the properties up to the doors of the plant (which remains in Tuscaloosa County) under the taxation control of the City of Tuscaloosa thus cutting out any of the other, smaller and closer local tax jurisdictions from capitalizing on the indirect economic benefits of the plant location.

The City of Tuscaloosa was simply adhering to traditional development strategies of industrial targeting (Akpadock, 1993); IDA members believed that in-place infrastructure (i.e., highway, rail, and water transportation), an incentive package, and a large tract of available land in proximity to urban areas and amenities would not only secure their revenues from Mercedes Benz, but potentially attract other industries to the area as well. The feeling from many Vance residents, however, was that due to the City of Tuscaloosa's actions, there would be fewer long-term economic benefits accruing to the City of Vance which had to shoulder the greatest social costs in locating the plant. Consequently, it was not until the Tuscaloosa annexation that residents of Vance put up a united front. As one resident put it: "Though some individuals would speak out against Mercedes Benz coming here, no action was ever taken by them other than to make plans to leave." But the opposition was toward Tuscaloosa, not Mercedes Benz. Thus, early in the unfolding events of the Mercedes Benz project, the residents of Vance—who had long considered their ties to Tuscaloosa as one of its bedroom communities a positive—found themselves having to reevaluate that perceived relationship.

Early, pre-construction, interviews revealed that with few exceptions, Vance residents were very supportive of the Mercedes Benz project and looked forward to the job opportunities and economic "shot in the arm"

this would bring to their area. However, when Tuscaloosa annexed the corridor, the residents of Vance reacted by redefining their community, as well as their relationship with Tuscaloosa. Indeed, the Mercedes Benz plant has lost all connection and identity to the City of Vance, which sits in its shadow. Upon the side that faces the Interstate (even though the rest of the city is 14 miles to the West), the water tower which services the Mercedes Benz plant states in bold letters: "Tuscaloosa City."

Brown et al. (1989) has shown that in communities experiencing rapid social change, people must redefine fundamental relationships with familiar others and institutions. The redefining of relationships thus constitute the earliest and most enduring social impacts in these contexts. Consistent with Brown's et al. 1989 findings, the earliest social impacts in Vance centered on pre-construction, non-demographic shifts in the community, as residents redefined long-standing relationships with each other as well as with other communities—in particular Tuscaloosa. Deeply seated sentiments, long-standing relationships, had been disturbed. Information gathered in interviews and from news articles revealed that of the 966 acres acquired for the site, approximately 466 acres were acquired from Vance residents. Even so, only a few families lost their homes in the sale. Yet, the loss of these families' homes was disruptive and a factor in the way residents began to change their perception of community, and in particular, their community. Again, the major factor in this change of how the residents of Vance defined community appears to have resulted from the perceived threat to the loss of identity and autonomy of Vance to Tuscaloosa. The annexation of the corridor by Tuscaloosa invoked a "flood" of emotions that rapidly escalated into all-out war of distrust. The "us" and "them" were quickly identified and a new perception of community was formed; an identity which no longer saw Vance as a bedroom community of Tuscaloosa, but Vance as its own entity with its own goals and identity.

Those who did have to relocate felt that their community had "sold them out" as illustrated by excerpts of the following interview. The first quote represents this resident's feelings about his community

(Vance) before he lost his house through eminent domain for the construction of the plant.

There ain't nothin no stronger than a family or community from my point of view. People knowing that there's people out there they can trust that's your neighbor. Not necessarily your neighbor but the man down the street....he might be a mile away but if you need him you know he's there. He might not come to see you every week. You might not see him for a month, but if you need that fella he's there...If I left anything I owned out....If I forgot and left my fishing rods out in my boat and my tackle box, [no problem]. I could ride up the road and wave at all the people I knew....wave at friends. It was just a friendly community. Period! If I needed help wiring up a plug in my house, I didn't have to call an electrician, I just kind of mentioned that I had to do this down at the store and somebody was there.

When forced to sell his house and land for an overpass/plant access from the Interstate, this was his statement:

My feeling down there [Vance] is not good. I don't feel like I belong here. I exist....You've read the story in school called Man Without a Country? Okay, that's what you feel like, you feel like your country has stepped on you....My whole attitude of life has changed. My attitude of life before this happened was that you come by my house and you said I want to buy this or I want to buy that, or I can sell you this.... I didn't need a piece of paper. I didn't need to know who you were. We shook hands on it and that was fine with me. I don't trust nobody no more. Not nobody. Anything I sell will be to somebody I have checked out to the hilt. Anything I sell will be to somebody I have checked out all the way around. My faith in people has went from here to way down.

These early social impacts are indicative of the types of issues covered by the concept of social impacts and how they are qualitatively different from economic impacts. Thus, extrapolating from interview and archival data, rural places are often forced into a position of reacting to extra-local forces and events that are rapidly transforming their options (Blakely, 1991). In other words, one of the primary social impacts in a case such as Vance is that communities are typically left with few proactive options and consequently are left to adopt a defensive posture in their “community action.” Such defensive, reactionary activities are not uncommon when the perception of threat exists as a result of facility construction, zoning changes, or annexation efforts (see Melko, Koebernick, & Orenstein, 1994; Silverman, 1987).

The next section defines social impacts in relation to this project.

Social Impacts

Social impacts, as opposed to economic impacts, must be understood in light of their effects on existing social structures, organizations, cultural practices, norms, values, etc. and how individuals relate to these structures, organizations, and so forth.

Most social impacts affect individuals (or families), organizations, and/or communities. Generally, impacts on individuals are best monitored within a quality-of-life framework, which includes both descriptions of measurable changes in a person’s objective conditions and subjective responses to these changes. (Finsterbusch, 1980:23)

Many of these fundamental elements of social life go relatively unnoticed, as they are largely taken for granted in everyday interactions; until such time as they are grossly disrupted and the shifts which occur in them pervade all aspects of one’s social being.

The term “social impact” often carries an assumed negative connotation or outcome. However, the concept only symbolizes the shifts in existing social arrangements, structures and practices that occur due to a singular event—such as the siting of the Mercedes Benz plant in Vance. The concept itself is theoretically neutral as to the social

value—“good” or “bad”—of the shift. Yet, in any social arrangement, competing interests will interpret events from their own particular view. Consequently, it can be anticipated that certain parties will see identifiable shifts from previous social patterns as a positive while others will see them with a more jaundiced eye. Even the terminology that sociologists use to categorize social impacts tends to emphasize the value component of social impacts when the analysis focuses on the overall positive or negative consequences of the impacts for a certain group(s) of people. In other words, despite the supposed “value-neutrality” of the concept, it tends to be “value-laden” in its application. Finsterbusch captures this in the following comment:

Averages, unfortunately, do not stir the emotions, and social impact assessments should promote some concern on the part of readers or they are inadequately representing the reality they report. Accordingly, we quote some analysts who write eloquently about conflicts which they have observed or heard from the people affected. The suggestion is that the social impact assessor should be in touch with affected parties. (Finsterbusch, 1980:13)

The research presented in this report looks at social impacts as inherently a value-neutral sociological concept which, in its application, represent value-charged shifts in people’s lives. Consequently, evident social impacts are established by preponderance. In other words, by examining various indicators, the aggregated responses of respondents will establish whether or not a social impact is evident and whether or not the majority of respondents perceive it positively or negatively.

2. Methods

Study Site

The study site included the towns of Vance, Brookwood, Coaling, Peterson, and West Blocton, all of which are within a ten mile radius of the Mercedes Benz plant and represent the larger towns in the 10 mile zone. Each of these towns carries its own unique postal zipcode. In addition to the 10 mile zone, a sample was also taken in Cottondale and

Tuscaloosa to represent the more urban interest in the Mercedes Benz Plant.

Multiple Research Methods

Two distinct research approaches were used in this study: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative methods were utilized in a previous data gathering exercise to better understand the reasons for locating the Mercedes Benz facility in Vance, Alabama. These data, though not funded through or gathered through this research grant by the TVA Rural Studies Program, are utilized in this report, primarily in the information on Vance and Mercedes Benz provided in Section One above. Quantitative research methods were used to gather and analyze survey data. An existing data set from surveys administered by the principle investigator in 1995 was added to this study to form a base-line by which to compare survey data gathered in 1999. The combination of the two surveys allowed the establishment of the types of social impacts experienced by residents of the area resulting from the Mercedes Benz plant siting.

Quantitative Techniques

Survey Sample Frame and Sampling

Both the 1995 and 1999 surveys used the same sample frame—as all adult household members in the 10 mile study area which included the towns of Vance, Brookwood, Coaling, Peterson, West Blocton (as designated by zipcode) and Cottdale and Tuscaloosa which were outside of the 10 mile zone.

For both the 1995 and 1999 surveys, a residential telephone and address locator CD-ROM was used to identify potential respondents and randomly draw the sample. The original 1995 sample consisted of 800 randomly drawn names and addresses of which 382 were valid. Final count (N) of completed surveys for the 1995 data set was 127, representing a 33 % response rate.

The 1999 sample consisted of 516 names and addresses from the original Vance 1995 sample frame with an additional 693 randomly drawn new names added to it: 210 additional names from the Vance zipcode; 273 additional names from the Vance area; and 210 from Tuscaloosa/Cottdale. Of these additional 693 names, 463 were valid. Combining the

names from the 1995 and 1999 sample frames, a sample of 1,212 was created. Of this 1,212, 433 were invalid leaving a *final total of 779 valid names*. Total number who responded to the 1999 survey was 318 representing a 41% response rate.

Survey Instruments

With the exception of some re-wording for the intent of clarification and to update for the follow-up, the construction and content of the two surveys were identical. In both the 1995 and 1999 surveys, a mail-out method was used. In both cases, Dillman's (1978) "Total Design Method" was employed in an attempt to maximize response rates. For the 1999 survey, to avoid appearing similar to an envelope containing another contest entry and magazine solicitation, we used a U.S. Postal Service "Commemorative" stamp on the outside envelope. In 1995, the postage on the outside envelope was metered. In both years, the return envelope was bulk-return metered. The 1995 survey instrument was 18 pages long plus a cover page. The 1999 survey was 22 pages long plus a cover page. Both instruments were prepared in booklet form on heavy bond ivory colored paper. Both years employed a post-card reminder as well.

The original proposal called for a telephone survey for 1999. After looking into the logistics of the telephone survey, we decided to go with the mail-out technique instead, knowing that we would sacrifice some return rates for additional information due to the fact that we could not ask as many questions in a telephone format. We used what monies we saved from the long distance telephone costs to provide a \$2.00 incentive in the mail-out version. The incentive was sent to all in the 1999 sample. Though response rates increased some from 1995 to 1999 (most likely due to the incentive offered in 1999, as none was offered in 1995), in both years they were still lower than hoped, but not out of character with a survey/poll fatigued American public.

Data Sets

From the surveys, three data sets were constructed for the analysis. The first data set constituted panel data from all respondents in 1999 who had also responded to the 1995 survey. There were 47 cases in this data set.

The second data set represented the combined 1995 and 1999 surveys. There were 445 total cases in this data set. It was used in two ways: 1) to longitudinally examine differences across the two survey years for only those residents that have a Vance zipcode, and 2) to longitudinally examine differences across the two survey years for all respondents regardless of place of residence.

The third data set was comprised only of the 1999 survey data. Because this data set contains some unique questions that were not asked in 1995, these questions were analyzed separately.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, employing cross-tabulations and frequencies, constitute the first part of the analysis. These allow a picture of who the respondents are, as well as how well the two samples match available Census data for the area.

T-Tests

The primary technique of analysis was T-Tests. T-Tests specifically allow for hypothesis testing across two independent samples within a data set (such as 1995 respondents and 1999 respondents) by examining variation across the

respective means of each variable by some predetermined criterion variable: in this case, year 1995 or 1999, or, Vance resident versus non-Vance resident. They also allow for “paired” comparisons across the same respondents over the two different time frames. In other words, Paired T-Tests were used in the panel data to examine respondents’ changes in answers to the same questions over the two time frames; and for the longitudinal data, Independent Sample T-Tests were utilized.

3. Basic Demographic Information

The descriptive data were broken down using the combined two data sets (1995 and 1999, N= 445). Beginning with where the respondents are from: in 1995, 50% (n=63) of the respondents were from Vance; 3% (4) from Brookwood; 1% (1) from Coaling; 12% (15) from West Blocton; 1% (1) from Peterson; 17% (21) from Cottondale; and 17% (21) from Tuscaloosa. In 1999, 33% (105) were from Vance; 2% (6) were from Brookwood; 1% (2) were from Coaling; 19% (61) were from West Blocton; 1% (3) were from Peterson; while 18% (59) and 25% (80) were from Cottondale and Tuscaloosa respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1. Frequencies for Community Area by Year of Survey

Community Area	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Vance	50% (63)	33% (105)
Brookwood	3% (4)	2% (6)
Coaling	1% (1)	1% (2)
West Blocton	12% (15)	19% (61)
Peterson	1% (1)	1% (3)
Cottondale	17% (21)	18% (59)
Tuscaloosa	17% (21)	25% (80)

Racially, the region is quite homogeneous, especially for a southern rural area. Data are reported in Table 2. In 1995, 95% (111) respondents were white, while only 3% (3) were black and 3% (3) were other. The pattern for 1999 is similar where 93% (290) of the respondents were white, 6% (17) were black

and 1% (4) considered themselves as other. The 1990 Census data for “Vance Town” show all 226 residents to be white. Cross-Tabulations show that for the combined survey data, 65% of the 20 black respondents (n=13) were from either Cottondale or Tuscaloosa.

Table 2. Frequencies for Race by Year

Race	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
White	95% (111)	93% (290)
Black	3% (3)	6% (17)
Other	3% (3)	1% (4)

Table 3. Frequencies for Education by Year

Education	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Grade School or Less	1% (1)	6% (19)
Some High School	8% (9)	5% (16)
High School Diploma	37% (42)	41% (124)
Some College	27% (31)	26% (78)
College Degree	6% (18)	22% (67)
Post BA Degree	11% (13)	0% (0)

The data on education show that for 1995, only 1%, or one person, had a grade school education or less. Those who had some high school in 1995 was 8% (9), while those who had a high school diploma was 37% (42). The 1990 Census data for Vance Town also show that 38% had a high school diploma. Regarding higher education, 27% (31) had some college experience, another 16% (18) had a college degree and 11% (13) had post-graduate degrees.

The data for 1999 show that 6% (19) of respondents had a grade school education or less. Those in 1999 who had some high school

education were 5% (16), while those who had a high school diploma were 41% (124). Moving to the category of higher education, 26% (78) of respondents had some college experience, 22% (67) had a college degree, with no one claiming a post-graduate degree (see Table 3).

Table 4 presents the data on gender differences. As can be seen, gender differences are fairly even across both years. In 1995, 49% (59) of the respondents were male and 51% (62) were female. For 1999, the numbers were 46% (144) males and 54% (168) were female. Census data for Vance Town show that 47% were male and 53% female.

Table 4. Frequencies for Sex by Year

Sex	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Male	49% (59)	46% (144)
Female	51% (62)	54% (168)

Table 5. Frequencies for Age by Year

Sex	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
19-30	NA	9% (29)
31-40	NA	21% (64)
41-50	NA	22% (70)
51-60	NA	22% (69)
61-75	NA	20% (62)
>75	NA	6% (18)

The data on respondents' age in Table 5, are incomplete due to the fact that the 1995 survey instrument had several questionnaires which did not have the age variable included. Consequently, only those data on age for 1999 are reported. To make the data more convenient, the various ages were collapsed into larger categories. In 1999, 9% (29) fell into the 19 to 30 age group, 21% (64) fell into the 31-40 age group, 22% (70) fell into the 41-50 age group, with still another 22% (69) falling into the 51-60 age group. Finally, 20% (62) were found in the 61-75 age group, and 6% (18) in the over 75 age group. The 1990 Census data for Vance Town, however, do show that the mean age was 32.7 years.

Occupational data show that for 1995, 31% (29) were in a professional or technical occupation, 14% (13) were in administrative and managerial occupations, 11% (10) in

clerical, none in sales, 24% (22) in service workers, 2% (2) in agriculture and mining, and 18% (17) in production. In 1999, 32% (66) were in professional technical occupations, 6% (13) in administrative and managerial, 12% (24) in clerical, 3% (6) in sales, 15% (32) in service oriented occupations, 4% (9) in agriculture and mining, 23% (48) in production related occupations, and finally, 4% (8) were students, .5% (1) homemaker and .5% (1) in the military. The amount of missing data on this particular variable (144) shows that many people did not answer the question, it can be assumed that many of these who did not answer may fall into the category of homemaker or retired (see Table 6).

The largest occupational category in the 1990 Census for Vance Town was "service occupations" with 20% of working residents falling into this category.

Table 6. Frequencies for Occupation by Year

Occupation	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Professional or Technical	31% (29)	32% (66)
Administrative/ Managerial	14% (13)	6% (13)
Clerical	1% (10)	12% (24)
Sales	0% (0)	3% (6)
Service Workers	24% (22)	15% (32)
Agriculture and Mining	2% (2)	4% (9)
Production	18% (17)	23% (48)
Students	0% (0)	4% (8)
Homemaker	0% (0)	.5% (1)
Military	0% (0)	.5% (1)

The data on unemployment show that in 1995, unemployment was at 7% (7) while those who were either employed or retired were 93% (87). In 1999, the unemployed

constituted 10% (22) and the retired and employed was 90% (203). These data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Frequencies for Employment Status by Year

Employment Status	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Employed or Retired	93% (87)	7% (7)
Unemployed	90% (203)	10% (22)

The income data reported in Table 8, break down in the following ways: in 1995, those whose income fell into the \$9,999 or under category was 8% (9) as well as 8% (24) for 1999. Respondents who fell into the \$10,000 to \$19,999 category were 13% (14) in 1995, and 12% (34) in 1999. In the \$20,000 to \$29,999 category, respondents were 23% (25) in 1995, and 11% (30) in 1999. In the \$30,000 to \$39,999 category, 15% (16) of respondents in 1995 and 21% (59) in 1999 were found. The data show that for 1995, 14% (15) were in the \$40,000 to \$49,999 category, while the 1999 data show that 12% (33) fell into this category. Other categories show that in 1995, 12% (13) fell into the \$50,000 to \$59,999 category, 11%

(31) did so in 1999; 6% (6) for 1995 fell into the \$60,000 to \$69,999 category and 9% (25) did so in 1999; 4% (4) were found in the \$70,000 to \$79,999 category in 1995, and in 1999. 8% (23) were in this category. No 1995 respondents fell into the \$80,000 to \$89,999 category, while 4% (12) did so in 1999. The final two categories show that 3% (3) of respondents in 1995 had an income between \$90,000 to \$99,000, with only 1% (2) having this income in 1999, and a similar 3% (3) of respondents in 1995 had incomes over \$100,000, with 4% (10) having such in 1999. Census data for 1990 show that the median household income for Vance Town was \$19,375.

Table 8. Frequencies for Income by Year

Income	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
\$9,000	8% (9)	8% (24)
\$10,000 to \$19,999	13% (14)	12% (34)
\$20,000 to \$29,999	23% (25)	11% (30)
\$30,000 to \$39,999	15% (16)	21% (59)
\$40,000 to \$49,999	14% (15)	12% (33)
\$50,000 to \$59,999	12% (13)	11% (31)
\$60,000 to \$69,999	6% (6)	9% (25)
\$70,000 to \$79,999	4% (4)	8% (23)
\$80,000 to \$89,999	0% (0)	4% (12)
\$90,000 to \$99,000	3% (3)	1% (2)
>\$100,000	3% (3)	4% (10)

Examination of marital status reveals that in 1995, 81% (84) were either married or living together, 2% (2) were living as though married, 4% (4) were separated, 13% (13) had no steady partner, and none were widowed. In 1999, the numbers were very similar: 73% (218) were either married or living together, 3% (8) were living as though married, 4% (13) were separated, 15% (44) had no steady partner, and 6% (19) were widowed (see Table 9). The 1990 Census figures show that for those 14 years and over, 17% had never been married.

Also very similar across the two time frames was the percentage of respondents who owned their own home (reported in Table 10). In 1995, 92% (106) did so, while in 1999, it was 94% (281).

The actual number of people per household was also tallied. In 1995, 20% (23) lived alone, 29% (34) had two members in the household, 16% (19) had three, 23% (27) had four, 8% (9) had five, 3% (4) had six and 1% (1) had seven members in their household. The numbers for 1999 show that 16% (49) lived alone, 36% (109) lived with one other person, while 22% (68) had three, 17% (52) had four, 8% (23) had five, and under 1% had six, seven and eight members, (2) (1) and (1) respectively (see Table 11). The 1990 Census numbers show that 12% (9) of households had 1 person, 29% (22) had 2 people, 21% (16) had three, 16% (12) had four, 12% (9) had five, and 5% (3) had six people.

Table 9. Frequencies for Marital Status by Year

Marital Status	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Married	81% (84)	73% (218)
Living Together	2% (2)	3% (8)
Separated	4% (4)	4% (13)
No Steady Partner	13% (13)	15% (44)
Widowed	0% (0)	6% (19)

Table 10. Frequencies for Home Ownership by Year

Home Ownership Status	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Own Home	92% (106)	94% (281)

Table 11. Frequencies for Number in Household by Year

Number in Household	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
Live Alone	20% (23)	16% (49)
Two Members	29% (34)	36% (109)
Three Members	16% (19)	22% (68)
Four Members	23% (27)	17% (52)
Five Members	8% (9)	8% (23)
Six Members	3% (4)	1% (2)
Seven Members	1% (1)	1% (1)
Eight Members	0% (0)	1% (1)

Finally, the number of years the respondent has lived in his/her community was examined. These data are reported in Table 12. For 1995, 24% (30) had lived in their community for five years or less, 10% (13) for 6 to 10 years, 15% (19) for 11 to 20 years, 17% (21) for 21 to 30 years, 20% (25) for 31 to 50 years, while 5% (6) and 10% (13) had for 51 to 75 years and over 75 years respectively. In 1999, the numbers read 12% (38) for the five years or less category, 17% (53) for 6 to 10 years, 21% (66) for 11 to 20 years, 18% (54) for

21 to 30, 21% (64) for 31 to 50, 9% (29) for 51-75, and finally, 2% (5) for over 75 years in the community.

Census data were used to examine where residents had been born and where they had previously lived. Eighty four percent had been born in the state of Alabama; and 62% still lived in the same house as they did five years earlier. An additional 22% either lived in the same county/same state, or same state but different county.

Table 12. Frequencies for Years in the Community by Year

Years	1995 % (n)	1999 % (n)
< 5	24% (30)	12% (38)
6-10	10% (13)	17% (53)
11-20	15% (19)	21% (66)
21-30	17% (21)	18% (54)
31-50	20% (25)	21% (64)
51-75	5% (6)	9% (29)
>75	10% (13)	2% (5)

The survey results match the available Census data well. Consequently, the survey results are seen as valid representations of the larger Vance Town and subsequent areas. The next section details the findings of the statistical analysis of the three data sets.

4. RESULTS

Research Objective

Establish the types and extent of social impacts the siting of the Mercedes Benz plant has had on the community of Vance, Alabama and the other rural communities in the area. In particular, establish community level social impacts the plant has had by comparing responses from a baseline survey conducted in the fall of 1995 with a second wave of survey data gathered in spring and summer of 1999.

Vance Panel Data—Changes in Responses from 1995 to 1999

Using the 1995 and 1999 longitudinal data set, those respondents who had answered

both waves were identified and selected to create a panel data set. There were 47 usable cases. Though the number of cases is relatively small, the power of the panel format compensates for the small n, in that it allows a direct assessment of change across a group whose initial status (i.e., in this case, their status prior to the intervention of Mercedes Benz) is known. Consequently, any change, observed from time A–1995 to time B–1999, can be attributed to outside factors acting upon the respondents themselves and not to a shift in the makeup of the sample group itself.

To examine the panel data, a Paired T-Test procedure was used. In the Paired T-Test, a respondent's response from 1995 on a particular question must be matched with his/her response from 1999. This was accomplished by merging the two data sets (1995, and 1999) together across the common 47 cases. Consequently, the data sets were merged on the basis of additional variables, not additional cases. Because each variable in a data set must have a unique variable name

(though there are two variables measuring the same thing, one in 1995 and another in 1999), the 1995 data set was modified by changing the names of all the variables so that they could be combined with the 1999 data set. The last letter in the variable name for each 1995 variable was dropped and a number sign (#) added to the end. This allowed easy identification of the matching variables across 1995 and 1999. Paired T-Tests were run for all common variables available across the two data sets. Only those pairs that were statistically significant at the .07 level are reported.

Though typically statistical significance is designated at the .05 level, the .07 level for statistical significance allowed some compensation for the small n of 47, while remaining conservative.

The results of the Paired T-Tests for the panel data (Table 13) demonstrated evidence of five primary social impacts in which the results can be classified: *1) Centralization of Power, 2) Loss of Community, 3) Infrastructural Minuses, 4) Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains; and 5) More Cosmopolitan Orientation.*

Table 13. Statistically Significant Paired T-Tests Across 1995 and 1999 Panel Data from Vance, Alabama Area

<u>Social Impacts/ & -Indicators</u>	1995 Mean	1995 Minimum	1995 Maximum	N	1999 Mean	1999 Minimum	1999 Maximum	N
<u>Centralization of Power</u>								
-Are you an Important Community Leader?	3.00	1	4	44	1.95	1	4	47
-No Dominant Group	2.89	1	5	38	3.44	1	5	46
<u>Loss of Community</u>								
-Sense of Community	71.33	54	98	37	67.16	50	87	43
-Community Commitment	2.20	0	4	43	1.76	0	4	47
-Community Feeling	33.75	18	42	43	30.82	22	41	43
<u>Infrastructural Minuses</u>								
-Property Safe	3.27	1	5	44	2.81	1	5	46
-Safe in Home	4.04	1	5	43	3.74	1	5	46
-Residents Quick to Respond to Problems	3.87	1	5	40	3.47	1	5	46
-Residents Aware of Problems	3.92	1	5	40	3.65	1	5	46
<u>Economic Advantages</u>								
-Dependable Income	.878	0	1	44	.975	0	1	44
-Good Jobs	2.54	1	4	40	3.00	1	4	40
-Housing Not a Problem	1.81	1	3	32	2.14	1	3	36
-Retrain for Careers	.425	0	1	41	.275	0	1	46
<u>Cosmopolitan Orientation</u>								
-Shop Out of Town	3.95	1	5	42	3.50	1	5	47

Centralization of Power

In both years respondents were asked: "People have different ideas of just how they fit into community affairs. Which would you say best describes you?" They were then given the following response categories: a) "I am an important leader," coded 1; b) "I am a person who contributes to community decisions, but not as a leader," coded 2; c) "I am a person who is active in things, but not one of the decision makers," coded 3; and finally, d) "I am a person who is not very active in the things that go on the community," coded 4. The Paired T-Test shows that the mean for 1995 was 1.95, indicating that these 47 citizens saw themselves as fairly highly engaged in their community at a decision making level. In 1999, however, that civic engagement had declined as indicated by the mean of 3.0.

Yet another indicator fell into this general impact category of Centralization of Power. Respondents were asked to respond to the following statement using a Likert Scale where Strongly Agree was coded as 5, Agree 4, Undecided as 3, Disagree as 2, and Strongly Disagree as 1. "Important local decisions are made by several different groups and no one group is able to dominate the others." The Paired T-Test shows that in 1995, the mean score was 3.44 indicating a sense of a fairly diffuse power base in the community. In 1999, however, the mean had fallen to 2.89 indicating a greater sense of more centralized control over community affairs.

Both indicators show that between the two periods, 1995 and 1999, respondents felt that some of the ability to make local decisions for, or within, the community had become less diffuse and had concentrated into fewer people's hands.

Loss of Community

Perhaps no other social impact has received as much attention as the decline of community thesis (see Brown et al., 1989; 1998). The reason for this is quite straight forward, people experiencing rapid social change (even if over all it is deemed positive) often feel anomic, experiencing almost a sense of nostalgia, a loss for earlier social forms, relations, arrangements etc. Knowing the literature on loss of community is very detailed in regard to situations like the Vance community, the two data sets were created to provide extensive indicators of loss of community. Using these various indicators,

several additive indexes were created by summing the responses across each indicator in the index to account for different facets of the concept—loss of community.

The first index used was intended to measure a *sense of community*. It was composed of adding 20 separate indicators presented as statements measured through a Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Alpha reliability measures for the index show that for 1995 it was .77 and for 1999 it was .80.

The 1995 index had a minimum score of 54 and a maximum of 98 with a mean of 71, and N=37. The 1999 index had a minimum score of 50 and a maximum of 87 with a mean of 67, and N=43. The Paired T-Test showed a significant decline in the overall sense of community as measured between 1995 and 1999 through this index.

The second statistically significant index measured *community commitment*. This index was composed of four indicators which asked respondents if neighbors would: a) watch their house, b) run errands for them, c) lend them money, or d) provide emotional support if they were hospitalized for a period of two weeks. These were dichotomous variables measured as 0 = No and 1 = Yes. Both indexes had a range from 0 to 4. The 1995 index had a reliability score of .71 and a mean of 2.2 and N=42. The 1999 index had a reliability score of .81 and a mean of 1.7 and N=47. As can be seen, there was a significant decline in the number of respondents between 1995 and 1999 who felt that their neighbors would assist them across these various items if they were for some reason hospitalized for two weeks.

The third community loss index that was statistically significant across the two time periods was one that measured *community feeling*. This index was composed of nine indicators that had been identified through a factor analysis from the fifteen indicators in the survey. It used a similar Likert Scale as described above for the sense of community index. The nine indicators were: 1) "The longer

I live in this community the more I feel I belong here,” 2) “The community I live in is basically a friendly place,” 3) “If I were in trouble, most people in this community would go out of their way to help me,” 4) “Most people in this community can be trusted,” 5) “I feel most comfortable around long-time residents in this community,” 6) “I feel most comfortable around newcomers in this community” (reverse coded), 7) “People in this community keep too much to themselves, instead of making efforts to make new friends and meet new people” (reverse coded), 8) “I have as many real friends now as anytime in the past,” and 9) “There are few dependable ties between people anymore” (reverse coded).

The alpha reliability score for the 1995 index was .76, while the 1999 reliability score was .70. The range for the 1995 index was from 18 to 42, with a mean of 33.8 and N=43. In 1999, the range was from 22 to 41 with a mean of 30.8 and N=43. In both years the community feeling was relatively high. Though it did decline between 1995 and 1999, it does not represent a catastrophic decline. Yet it does show that community feeling had decreased over the years, which is consistent with the other two community loss indicators reported above.

Infrastructural Minuses

The third major social impact examined had to do with changes in the local infrastructure, changes which respondents, on average, saw as detrimental. Four different indicators were found to be significantly different between the two survey years. The first two had to do with the relative safety that respondents felt toward their property and in their homes. Respondents were asked the following two questions: “When I am away, I worry about the safety of my property;” and, “I worry about my personal safety when I am in my home.” Both questions used a Likert Scale which ranged from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree. The mean score in 1995 for the first question (property) was 3.27, while the 1999 mean was 2.81. As for the question concerning personal safety in the home, the 1995 mean was 4.04 and the 1999 mean was 3.47. Again, in both cases, respondents were not highly fearful for the safety of their property or person, but there had been a significant change in 1999 toward more fearfulness than had been the case in 1995.

The other two statistically significant indicators in this social impact category were from a battery of seven questions concerning how the community responds to problems. The two significant indicators were: “The people and organizations of this community are quick to respond when problems arise requiring action;” and, “Most of the people in this community are well aware of local problems and needs.” Both used a Likert Scale which ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. For the first question (responding quickly to problems), in 1995, the mean was 3.87 and in 1999, the mean had fallen to 3.47. The second question, which dealt with awareness of problems in the community, had a 1995 mean of 3.92 and a 1999 mean of 3.65.

As with the previous measures reported above, the responses across both years indicate a high level of the community being able to address problems, yet there had been a significant decline over the two survey years.

Though the various indicators discussed above—centralization of power, loss of community, and infrastructural minuses—all indicate that these are not serious problems in the community, it is important to remember that these are panel data and represent real shifts in the people’s attitudes from 1995 to 1999. In that regard, though the shifts seem small, the implications are not—there has been a greater sense of the concentration of power, loss of community, and infrastructural minuses that have occurred in these respondents’ minds since the coming of Mercedes Benz. The responses of these 47 people across both years show the above social impacts as intrinsically negative. But not all the social impacts associated with a large economic development project like the Mercedes Benz plant are necessarily negative. The next section will explore those that respondents saw as intrinsically positive social impacts.

Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains

Four different indicators that dealt with economic advantages and infrastructural gains in the community were statistically significant across the survey years. The first one dealt with the dependability of the household income. The question was coded dichotomously with No = 0 and Yes = 1, and asked: "Is your household income dependable? That is, can you count on getting about the same amount of income from month to month during the year?" In both years, respondents' income was quite dependable, yet in 1999 it was more so than in 1995. The Paired T-Test shows that the mean for 1995 was .88 while the mean for 1999 was .96. More dependability in household income was evident after the Mercedes Benz plant had been constructed in the area. Clearly, some of this can be attributed to a booming economy in general but the positive economic effect of the Mercedes Benz plant in this regard should not be dismissed. This is also illustrated by the next indicator: availability of good jobs.

Respondents were asked if they thought a variety of things were "Not a Problem," a "Slight Problem," a "Moderate Problem," or a "Serious Problem" in their community. These were coded from 1 = "Serious Problem" to 4 = "Not a Problem." When asked about the availability of good jobs, the mean score for 1995 was 2.54 indicating that it was seen as a moderate to slight problem. In 1999, however, the perception had shifted to seeing it as a slight problem only. The mean score for 1999 was 3.0.

The third indicator of economic advantages was whether the availability of adequate housing was "Getting Worse," "Staying the Same," or "Getting Better." These were coded 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The mean score for 1995 was 1.81 indicating that respondents in 1995 saw housing as a problem that was getting worse over time. In 1999, this had changed to the point that respondents now saw the housing issue as staying the same and perhaps getting better, but not getting worse. The mean for 1999 was 2.14.

Finally, respondents were given a list of 15 specific items and told to check all that applied to the following statement: "For your community to improve its economic condition and quality of life, what will be needed?" Again, responses were coded dichotomously with a 1, indicating that the item had been checked, and a 0, indicating that it had not. One item of the

fifteen—"Retraining people for new careers"—showed a significant difference across 1995 and 1999. The mean score for 1995 was .425 while the mean score for 1999 was significantly lower at .275 indicating that fewer people in 1999 saw the retraining of people for new careers as an issue for local economic development.

The four indicators above show that, while not dramatic, in the minds of these 47 Vance area residents, some positive impacts have accrued to their community in consequence of the Mercedes Benz plant locating in the region.

More Cosmopolitan Orientation

Finally, one indicator showed that, between 1995 and 1999, respondents had begun to look beyond their local community. It can be argued that they developed a more cosmopolitan—or outward oriented—view of the world in which they live (see Merton, 1963). Respondents were asked where they preferred to shop. Based on Likert Scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree, the question stated: "When I shop, I am more likely to buy things in a discount store located in bigger nearby towns than I am to buy them in my community." The mean score for 1995 was 3.95, showing that people tend to shop in the community (as they disagreed with the statement) more than they leave the community to shop. The 1999 mean of 3.5 shows the same was true for 1999: that people prefer to shop in their local community than at large discount stores in nearby towns. However, between the two survey years, more of the 47 people in the panel began to purchase more things outside of the community than they had in 1995. There is the beginning of a more cosmopolitan perception of themselves and their community as they begin to look more beyond the borders of the community for goods and services (see Brown et al., 1996).

Longitudinal Data for Vance Residents Only

The panel data revealed some definite and measurable shifts in the

attitudes and views of the 47 people who responded to both the 1995 and 1999 questionnaire. However, because the number of cases was small, a longitudinal approach was utilized to examine shifts and social impacts across more than just the 47 members of the panel. By doing a second analysis with the longitudinal data, the panel data acted as a validity check. If the trends and social impacts were the same, the conclusion could be drawn that the impacts can be generalized across the entire community. To construct the longitudinal data set, the 1995 and 1999 data sets were combined across common variables to create one large data set with an N of 445. In this combined data set, the year of the survey became one of the variables. Unlike the panel data set described above which was merged on the basis of additional variables, not additional cases, the longitudinal data set was merged on the basis of additional cases, not variables. Only those variables that had a common name across both data sets could be merged.

After the creation of the longitudinal data set, two different data strategies were employed to analyze it. The first strategy was to select for only those cases/respondents who lived in the Vance zipcode area. This allowed for a specific examination of those who live closest to the Mercedes Benz plant. The second strategy was to examine all 445 cases of the combined data set regardless of where they resided in relation to the plant. This section reports on the Vance-only subsample for the longitudinal data set.

Using Independent Sample T-Tests, similar to the Vance panel data, the same five social impacts were identified in the Vance-only longitudinal data. Results are reported in Table 14. In addition to these same five social impact categories identified in the Vance panel data, 1) *Centralization of Power*, 2) *Loss of Community*, 3) *Infrastructural Minuses*, 4) *Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains*; and 5) *More Cosmopolitan Orientation*, two additional social impacts were identified in the Vance-only longitudinal data: 6) *Quality of Life*, and 7) *Demographic Changes*.

Centralization of Power

The same two indicators found in the Vance panel data on centralization of power were also statistically significant for the Vance-only subsample of the longitudinal data. Respondents to the two different surveys were presented the

following statement: "People have different ideas of just how they fit into community affairs. Which would you say best describes you?" Respondents were then given the same response categories as described above in the Vance panel data. The Independent Sample T-Test shows that the mean for 1995 was 1.85 indicating a high level of civic engagement in their community at a decision making level. In 1999, however, that civic engagement had declined significantly as indicated by the mean of 3.23.

The other indicator that fell into this social impact area asked respondents to respond to the following statement using a Likert Scale where Strongly Agree was coded as 5, Agree 4, Undecided as 3, Disagree as 2, and Strongly Disagree as 1. "Important local decisions are made by several different groups and no one group is able to dominate the others." The Independent Sample T-Test shows that in 1995, the mean score was 3.23, indicating that Vance residents in 1995 saw the power base for community decisions as broadly shared. The 1999, survey results however, shows that the mean had fallen to 2.91 thus indicating more centralized control over community affairs.

As with the Vance panel data above, the longitudinal data show that one of the primary social impacts of the Mercedes Benz plant locating in the Vance area has been the concentration of decision making power into fewer people's hands.

Loss of Community

Where the Vance panel data had only three indicators in this social impact category, and all three were indexes, ten statistically significant indicators fell into it in the Vance-only longitudinal subsample.

The first indicator asked respondents to identify how many adults they know on a first name basis of the people who live in the 10 closest houses or apartments to them. The 1995 mean was 37.30 while the 1999 mean was 11.51. Clearly, there was a significant

decline in the number of adult neighbors known over the two time periods.

The second indicator of this social impact asked respondents to “Imagine the ideal community in which you would like to live. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being worst and 5 being best, where would you rank your present community compared to your ideal community?” The 1995 mean was 3.81 and the 1999 mean was 3.42. In both years, community satisfaction was relatively high, yet it did significantly decline over the two survey years.

Similar to the Vance panel data above, the longitudinal Vance-only subsample also found three additive community indexes with significant differences across the two survey years. Two of the indexes—Community Commitment and Community Feeling—were the same as the Vance panel data. The third index was a Community Satisfaction index and was composed of four indicators: 1) “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poorly and 5 being well, how well do you feel you fit into your community?” 2) “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being nothing and 5 being everything, how much do you have in common with most of the people in your community?” 3) “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being dissatisfied and 5 being satisfied, how satisfied are you with living in your community?” and 4) “Imagine the ideal community in which you would like to live. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being worst and 5 being best, where would you rank your present community compared to your ideal community?” The 1995 mean for this Community Satisfaction index was 15.65, while the 1999 mean was 14.67. There had been a relative decline in the community satisfaction among Vance residents between 1995 and 1999. The alpha reliability for this index in 1995 was .85, and in 1999, it was .83.

The 1995 and 1999 means for the Community Commitment indexes were 2.06 and 1.51 respectively and the alpha reliability score for 1995 was .78, and for 1999, .76. The Community Feeling index had 1995 and 1999 means of 32.41 and 30.95 respectively. This index however, had a lower alpha reliability score than the other two indexes for 1999. In 1995, it was .79, and in 1999, it was .38. By dropping one of the indicators—“there are few dependable ties between people anymore”—the alpha reliability score increased to .55, still low for 1999. Again, while cautiously considering the community

feeling index for 1999, the three indexes illustrate that “community” remains a viable aspect of Vance residents, even after the Mercedes Benz plant had located there, but significant declines, as indicated by the three indexes over the two survey years, have occurred.

The last five indicators were all derived from a set of questions which asked respondents: “If you were hospitalized for two weeks, who besides members of your immediate family do you think would be willing to do the following things for you? For any task, you may check more than one category of persons who you think would be willing to help.” Five different tasks were then listed: “Watch your house,” “Tend your children” “Run your errands,” “Lend you money,” and “Provide emotional support.” Finally, the choices of persons willing to help across each of these six categories included: Neighbors, Friends, Relatives not living in your household, and, No one. Each question was coded 0 = No response in the category and 1 = Yes, that person would help with the identified task.

For the option of neighbors watching your house, the 1995 mean was .769 and the 1999 mean was .647. Fewer people in 1999 felt that their neighbors would be willing to watch their house. Fewer people in 1999 also felt that their neighbors would be willing to lend them money than was the case in 1995. The 1995 mean was .271 and the 1999 mean was .152. Clearly, in both years, not many felt that their neighbors would lend them money but more felt they could borrow from their neighbors in 1995 than was the case in 1999. The last three indicators all dealt with emotional support. Respondents from the 1995 survey felt that neighbors and friends were more likely to lend emotional support than did respondents in the 1999 survey. The respective 1995 and 1999 means were as follows: for neighbors: .610 and .428, and for friends: .847 and .723. Finally, nobody in 1995 felt that there would be no one who would lend them emotional support (mean = .000);

this, however, was not the case in 1999 where the mean was .066.

The findings on emotional support between neighbors and friends also reveal some interesting findings above the differences across years. The data show that people are more likely to turn to friends versus neighbors for support. The implication is that neighbors are not necessarily friends, and that people's orientations have moved beyond their immediate spatial surroundings for the construction of community and support.

Infrastructural Minuses

Two specific indicators fell under this social impact category for the longitudinal Vance-only subsample; both were different from the Vance panel data. None of the four indicators identified in the Vance panel data were found to be statistically significant in the longitudinal Vance-only subsample. The two indicators concerned schools and the owning of businesses.

Respondents were asked if they thought a variety of things were "Not a Problem," a "Slight Problem," a "Moderate Problem," or a "Serious Problem." These were coded from 1 = "Serious Problem" to 4 = "Not a Problem." Adequacy of schools was one of the items listed. The mean score for 1995 was 2.46 indicating that the adequacy of schools was seen as a slight to moderate problem in 1995. In 1999, it had become a moderate to serious problem with a mean score of 1.93. The school is definitely an issue. It currently has 17 trailer houses to help accommodate the increased number of children (Barlett and Steele, 1998).

The other indicator asked respondents if they owned a business. Responses were coded dichotomously with 0 = No and 1 = Yes. The 1995 mean was .183 while the 1999 mean was .078. Thus, the number of Vance zipcode respondents who owned a business, while not numerous, declined over the two survey years even in the midst of economic prosperity.

Table 14. Statistically Significant Independent Sample T-Tests Across 1995 and 1999 Longitudinal Data for Vance Residents Only

<u>Social Impacts/ & -Indicators</u>	1995 Mean	1995 Minimum	1995 Maximum	N	1999 Mean	1999 Minimum	1999 Maximum	N
<u>Centralization of Power</u>								
-Community Leader?	1.85	1	4	57	3.23	1	4	104
-No Dominant Group	3.23	1	5	55	2.91	1	5	103
<u>Loss of Community</u>								
-Know Names of Adults	37.30	0	99	63	11.51	0	100	71
-Ideal Community	3.81	1	5	60	3.42	1	5	105
-Community Satisfaction	15.65	7	20	60	14.67	4	20	104
-Community Commitment	2.06	0	4	59	1.51	0	4	105
-Community Feeling	32.41	18	42	58	30.95	22	40	98
-Neighbors Watch House	.796	0	1	59	.647	0	1	105
-Neighbors Lend Money	.271	0	1	59	.152	0	1	105
-Neighbors Emotional Sup.	.610	0	1	59	.428	0	1	105
-Friends Emotional Support	.847	0	1	59	.723	0	1	105
-No Emotional Support	.000	0	1	59	.066	0	1	105
<u>Infrastructural Minuses</u>								
-Adequacy of Schools	2.46	1	4	56	1.93	1	4	96
-Own a Business	.183	0	1	60	.078	0	1	102
<u>Quality of Life</u>								
-Community More Desirable	1.87	1	3	58	2.14	1	3	105
-Satisfied with Life	3.78	1	5	56	4.06	2	5	97
<u>Demographic Changes</u>								
-Marital Status	.844	0	1	58	.717	0	1	99
-Number in Household	2.98	1	7	57	2.57	1	7	101

Table 14. (continued) Statistically Significant Independent Sample T-Tests Across 1995 and 1999 Longitudinal Data for Vance Residents Only

<u>Social Impacts/ & -Indicators</u>	1995 Mean	1995 Minimum	1995 Maximum	N	1999 Mean	1999 Minimum	1999 Maximum	N	
<u>Economic Advantages</u>									
-Good Jobs/ Problem	2.62	1	4	56	2.95	1	4	91	
-Conditions of Streets/Prob	1.85	1	4	55	2.24	1	4	100	
-Conditions of Streets/Bett.	1.84	1	3	52	2.11	1	3	81	
-Alcohol Getting Better	1.75	1	3	48	1.93	1	3	80	
-Respect for Law Better	1.86	1	3	51	2.10	1	3	78	
-Adequate Housing Better	1.89	1	3	49	2.25	1	3	81	
-Satisfied w/ Employment	3.66	1	5	54	4.06	1	5	90	
-Dependable Income	.827	0	1	58	.938	0	1	98	
-Improve Highways for Dev	.678	0	1	59	.366	0	1	101	
-Retrain for Careers	.525	0	1	59	.287	0	1	101	
-Less Attractive Development	2.61	1	5	60	3.38	1	5	104	
<u>Cosmopolitan Orientation</u>									
-Shop Out of Town	4.11	1	5	59	3.71	1	5	101	
-Participate in Community	3.73	1	5	60	3.35	1	5	102	
-Community Center of Life	3.32	1	5	59	2.99	1	5	103	
-Residents are Similar	3.58	1	5	60	3.28	1	5	105	
-Depend on Community	2.45	1	5	60	2.84	1	5	103	
-Pride in Community	4.01	1	5	59	3.57	1	5	105	
-Member of Community	4.11	1	5	60	3.76	1	5	105	
-Rural too Like Urban	2.61	1	5	59	3.04	1	5	102	
-Growth Hurts Community	2.80	1	5	60	3.29	1	5	104	
-Comfortable New People	3.18	1	5	59	2.62	1	5	103	

Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains

The same four indicators that were statistically significant in the Vance panel data were also significant for the longitudinal Vance-only subsample, in addition to seven others. Respondents in 1995 saw more problems with the availability of good jobs than they did in 1999 (means, 2.62 and 2.95 respectively). They also saw more problems with the conditions of streets and roads in 1995 than they did in 1999 (means, 1.85 and 2.24 respectively). The 1999 respondents felt that the conditions of the streets and roads, problems with alcohol use, respect for law and order, and the availability of adequate housing were all getting better in 1999 versus the relative opinions on the same issues in 1995. The respective 1995 and 1999 means for each indicator were as follows: for streets 1.84 and 2.11, for alcohol 1.75 and 1.93, for respect for the law 1.86 and 2.10, and for adequacy of housing 1.89 and 2.25.

More respondents in 1999 also felt more satisfied with their employment situation. The question ranged from 1 = dissatisfied to 5 = satisfied. The 1999 mean was 4.06 while the 1995 mean was 3.66.

Respondents' incomes in 1999 were also more dependable than they were in 1995. The range was a dichotomous 0 = No, the respondent's income is not dependable to 1 = Yes, it is. The 1999 mean was .938 while the 1995 mean was .827.

The 1995 respondents felt that in order to improve the economic condition and quality of life in their community they would need to improve the state highways and do a better job of retraining people for new careers. The 1999 respondents from Vance did not feel these were as important as they had been in 1995, showing significant improvement. The mean scores were for highways 1995: .678 and 1999: .366, and for career retraining: 1995: .525 and 1999: .287.

The final indicator in this social impact category asked respondents what their perception of the business and economic activities in their community was, and if these had increased or decreased over the past 5 years. The response categories were as follows: 1 = Declined Significantly, 2 = Declined Somewhat, 3 = Stayed the Same, 4 = Increased Somewhat, and 5 = Increased

Significantly. The 1999 mean was 3.38 while the 1995 mean was 2.61. It is interesting that in both years, respondents did not see the business and economic activities increasing much in their community though it was more the case in 1999, than in 1995. Apparently, the residents of Vance do not see themselves as economic beneficiaries of the Mercedes Benz plant in their backyard. The indicator was classified, however, under this more positive social impact because it did show an increase between 1995 and 1999.

More Cosmopolitan Orientation

This social impact category had the one indicator that was found in the Vance panel data—leaving the community to shop—as well as 9 others. In 1995, the mean for leaving the community to shop in big discount stores like Walmart was 4.11, while in 1999 it was 3.71. Because the question was reverse coded, the higher score indicates respondents were more likely to stay in the community to shop. The next eight indicators were drawn from a series of questions that simply stated: “Here are some questions about your community. Indicate whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, are Undecided, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.” The coding ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, with two exceptions that were reverse coded which will be identified below. The 1995 respondents were more likely than the 1999 respondents to: participate in community affairs (means = 3.73 and 3.35, 1995 and 1999 respectively), see the community as the center of their lives (means = 3.32 and 2.99), see community residents as similar to one another (means = 3.58 and 3.28), depend more on their own community versus others for goods and services needed for day-to-day living (reverse coded, means = 2.45 for 1995 and 2.84 for 1999), have more pride in their community (means = 4.01 and 3.57), consider themselves as members of the community (means = 4.11 and 3.76), feel that local rural areas are becoming too much like urban areas (reverse coded, means = 2.61 and 3.04), and that increased growth in the community will hurt the quality of life available there (means = 2.80 and 3.29). The final indicator asked if respondents felt more comfortable around new people in the community. It was coded with the same scheme as above but reversed

where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree. Respondents in 1995 had a mean of 3.18, while those in 1999 had a mean of 2.62. The 1999 respondents felt relatively more comfortable around newcomers in the community than did the 1995 respondents.

The ten indicators all show that respondents in 1999, had adopted a more outward orientation than they held in 1995. In both years, it is interesting to note that respondents did not see the local community as meeting their day-to-day needs through goods and services, that they were, in essence, dependent on other communities for this. As noted in the first section of this report, Vance residents had viewed their town as a bedroom community to Tuscaloosa at least since the 1950s. This perceived dependence, however, did increase even more by 1999.

Quality of Life

Two indicators fell into an Improved Quality of Life social impact category. Respondents were asked if they felt that over the past five years their community has become a more or less desirable place to live. The responses were coded 1 = Less desirable, 2 = Stayed about the same, and 3 = More desirable. The 1999 mean was 2.14 while the 1995 mean was 1.87. More respondents saw improvement in 1999 in the desirability of their community over the past five years than did the 1995 respondents. The other indicator in this social impact category measured general life satisfaction. Respondents were asked: "On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being dissatisfied and 5 being satisfied, how satisfied are you with your life in general these days?" The 1999 mean was 4.06 while the 1995 mean was 3.78. Clearly, in both years, respondents were generally satisfied with their lives, but more so in 1999 than in 1995.

Demographic Changes

Two specific demographic changes were noted between 1995 and 1999 for Vance residents. There were more people who were either married or living together in 1995 than was the case in 1999 (means = .844 and 717 respectively where 0 = Not married or living together and 1 = Married or living together). The other indicator measured how

many people were living in the household, including the respondent. The mean number for 1995 was 2.98, while the mean in 1999 had dropped to 2.57.

The data from the longitudinal Vance-only subsample reaffirm the findings from the Vance panel data—identifiable social impacts occurred between 1995 and 1999 with the coming of the Mercedes Benz plant in Vance, Alabama. The longitudinal Vance-only subsample showed that seven distinct social impact categories were identifiable in which multiple indicators were further identified as having significant differences across their means between 1995 and 1999. The findings also show that the social impacts varied across positive and negative effects.

Longitudinal Data for the Entire Sample

With some variation in the individual indicators which were statistically significant across the previous two data sets, six of the same seven social impact categories identified through the Independent Sample T-Tests on the longitudinal Vance-only subsample were also identified for the entire longitudinal sample. The only one that was not repeated in the entire sample was Demographic Changes. No indicators fell into this category in this analysis. This analysis is very similar to the one above. Consequently, references to coding schemes and values of indicators were only discussed for those indicators that were unique to the entire longitudinal sample. Results are presented in Table 15.

Centralization of Power

The same two indicators which fell under this social impact category for the Vance panel data as well as the longitudinal Vance-only subsample were statistically significant for the entire longitudinal data set. More people in 1995 thought of themselves as important community decision makers (mean = 1.90) than did respondents in 1999 (mean = 3.14). Additionally, more respondents in 1995 felt community decisions were not dominated by one powerful group (mean = 3.20) than did so in 1999 (mean = 2.98).

The same pattern of centralization of power manifested itself across all three analyses. The locating of the Mercedes Benz

plant in the area, is in many ways, an illustration of how much is *not* in the control of local decision makers when it comes to large-scale economic activities.

Loss of Community

Fourteen different indicators fell into the loss of community social impact category for the longitudinal data set. Of these fourteen, eight were unique from the Vance-only subsample and six were common. Four of the indicators in the Vance-only subsample were unique to it and were not significant in the entire longitudinal data set. These were: neighbors watching the house, neighbors and friends lending emotional support, and finally, no one lending emotional support.

The first indicator of loss of community for the entire longitudinal data set asked respondents to indicate what percentage of their friends lived within the community or an hour's drive. The mean score for 1995 was 71.86. The mean score for 1999 was 61.56. There had clearly been a shift away from more local friendships in 1999 from 1995.

When asked how many adults did they know on a first-name basis in the 10 closest houses or apartments, the 1995 mean was 34.62 while the 1999 mean was 10.25. Again, a similar trend was displayed in these findings as above, fewer local ties were evident in 1999 when compared with 1995.

Respondents were asked on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being nothing and 5 being everything, how much they had in common with most of the people in their community. Respondents in 1995 had a mean of 3.40; 1999 respondents had a mean of 3.18.

Asked about their community satisfaction on the same five point scale described above, 1995 respondents showed greater satisfaction with a mean of 4.30 than 1999 respondents who had a mean of 4.04. Both, however, still showed high signs of community satisfaction.

When asked about their ideal community, the 1995 respondents had a mean of 3.71 and the 1999 respondents had a mean of 3.41.

The same three community indexes that were significant in the Vance-only subsample were significant in the entire data set as well. The mean for the Community Satisfaction

index was 15.63 in 1995, and 14.75 in 1999. The alpha reliability score for this index was .81 in both 1995 and 1999. The mean for the Community Commitment index in 1995 was 2.07, while in 1999, it was 1.76. The alpha reliability scores were .75 in 1995, and .79 in 1999. And finally, the Community Feeling index had a 1995 mean of 33.01 and a 1999 mean of 31.14. Once again, this index had a much lower alpha for one of the years than did the other two indexes. In 1995, the alpha reliability was .47. However, by dropping the indicator—people keep too much to themselves in this community—the reliability climbed to a more respectable .61. The 1999 alpha reliability for the entire index was .76.

The next two indicators were from the questions dealing with the hypothetical scenario of being hospitalized for two weeks and whether or not certain people would be willing to perform various tasks to help the respondent. More people in 1995 felt their neighbors would be willing to run errands (means = .437 and .317 respectively), and lend them money (means = .268 and .176) than was the case in 1999.

The last four indicators used a Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree format where Strongly Agree was coded 5 and Strongly Disagree was coded 1. Respondents in 1995 felt that people in the community worked together to get things done (mean = 3.69) more than did the respondents in 1999 (mean = 3.48) did. The 1995 respondents were more likely to feel that they had as many real friends now as in the past (mean = 3.73). The 1999 mean was 3.54. The 1995 respondents were also more likely to feel that the community was quick to respond to people's needs than were the 1999 respondents. The mean for 1995 was 3.77; while the mean for 1999 was 3.52. Finally, in an indicator that was reverse coded, people in 1995 were more likely to disagree with the statement that "there are few dependable ties between people and more" (mean = 3.18) than did respondents in 1999 (mean = 2.96).

The longitudinal data supports the previous two analyses that the residents of the Vance area have experienced a relative decline in community over the two survey years.

Similar to the Vance panel data, the longitudinal data also showed that respondents in 1995 felt more safe in their

homes than did respondents in 1999. The respective means were 3.92 and 3.72.

The last two indicators were statements about the respondent's community to which they responded with the familiar Likert scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Respondents in 1995 were more likely to feel that the future of their community looked brighter than the respondents in 1999 (means = 3.87 and 3.68 respectively). In 1995, respondents were also more likely to feel that when the community made plans, it found a way to make them work (mean = 3.41) than was the case in 1999 (3.20).

Economic Advantages and Infrastructural Gains

Twelve different indicators fell into this social impact category for the longitudinal data. Of these twelve, five were unique to these data. Similar to both the Vance panel data and the Vance-only subsample in the longitudinal data, respondents in 1995 saw more problems with the availability of good jobs than they did in 1999 (means, 2.61 and 2.88 respectively). They also saw more problems with the conditions of streets and roads in 1995 than they did in 1999 (means, 2.07 and 2.31 respectively). The availability of adequate housing was also seen as more of a problem in 1995 than it was in 1999 (means = 2.69 and 2.99 respectively). Respondents in 1999 were more likely to feel that respect for law and order and housing were both getting better than did respondents in 1995. The mean for respect for law in 1995 was 1.92; and in 1999, it was 2.05. The mean for housing in 1995 was 1.97; and in 1999, it was 2.22.

The 1999 respondents were more satisfied with their current household income than were the 1995 respondents. The 1999 mean on a five point scale was 3.36 and the 1995 mean was 3.12.

As with the previous two analyses, the 1999 respondents felt that their income was more dependable than did the 1995 respondents (means = .921 and .840 respectively). In 1999, the household incomes were also higher than in 1995 (means = 4.82 and 4.31). The income indicator was coded in the following manner: 1 = Under \$10,000; 2 = \$10,000 to \$19,999;

3 = \$20,000 to \$29,999; 4 = \$30,000 to \$39,999; 5 = \$40,000 to \$49,999; 6 = \$50,000 to \$59,999; 7 = \$60,000 to \$69,999; 8 = \$70,000 to \$79,999; 9 = \$80,000 to \$89,999; 10 = \$90,000 to \$99,999; 11 = Over \$100,000.

The next three indicators all addressed what would be needed to improve economic development and the quality of life in the community. The 1995 respondents were more apt than the 1999 respondents to feel that improvements in state highways (means = 1995, .601 and 1999, .397), better roads and streets (means = 1995, .575 and 1999, .472), and better opportunities for career retraining (means = 1995, .504 and 1999, .334) were needed.

Finally, respondents in 1999 saw unemployment as less of a problem than did the 1995 respondents (means = 3.72 and 3.35 respectively).

Table 15. Statistically Significant Independent Sample T-Tests Across 1995 and 1999 Longitudinal Data for All Residents

<u>Social Impacts/ & -Indicators</u>	1995 Mean	1995 Minimum	1995 Maximum	N	1999 Mean	1999 Minimum	1999 Maximum	N
<u>Centralization of Power</u>								
-Community Leader?	1.90	1	4	118	3.14	1	4	315
-No Dominant Group	3.20	1	5	109	2.98	1	5	309
<u>Loss of Community</u>								
-% Friends in Community	71.86	0	100	127	61.56	0	100	313
-Know Names of Adults	34.622	0	100	127	10.25	0	100	238
-Much in Common w/ Others	3.40	1	5	121	3.18	1	5	318
-Community Satisfaction	4.30	1	5	120	4.04	1	5	317
-Ideal Community	3.71	1	5	120	3.41	1	5	318
-Community Satisfaction Ind.	15.63	5	20	117	14.75	4	20	314
-Community Commitment	2.07	0	4	119	1.76	0	4	318
-Community Feeling	33.01	18	42	114	31.144	9	43	294
-Neighbors Run Errands	.437	0	1	119	.317	0	1	318
-Neighbors Lend Money	.268	0	1	119	.176	0	1	318
-Community Works Together	3.69	1	5	119	3.48	1	5	315
-Real Friends Now as Ever	3.73	1	5	119	3.54	1	5	312
-Few Dependable Ties	3.18	1	5	117	2.96	1	5	305
-Community Quick Respond	3.77	1	5	111	3.52	1	5	310
<u>Infrastructural Minuses</u>								
-Adequacy of Schools	2.51	1	4	115	2.27	1	4	291
-Feel Safe in Homes	3.92	1	5	117	3.72	1	5	312
-Future of Community Bright	3.87	1	5	116	3.68	1	5	314
-Community's Plans Work	3.41	1	5	112	3.20	1	5	306
<u>Quality of Life</u>								
-Feel Member of Community	3.23	1	5	116	3.97	1	5	315
-Relatives Watch Children	627	0	1	118	.760	0	1	213

Table 15. (continued) Statistically Significant Independent Sample T-Tests Across 1995 and 1999 Longitudinal Data for All Residents

<u>Social Impacts/ & -Indicators</u>	1995 Mean	1995 Minimum	1995 Maximum	N	1999 Mean	1999 Minimum	1999 Maximum	N
<u>Economic Advantages</u>								
-Good Jobs/ Problem	2.61	1	4	114	2.88	1	4	271
-Conditions of Streets/Prob	2.07	1	4	112	2.31	1	4	299
-Adequate Housing Problem	2.69	1	4	115	2.99	1	4	291
-Respect for Law Better	1.92	1	3	95	2.05	1	3	224
-Adequate Housing Better	1.97	1	3	91	2.22	1	3	229
-Satisfied w/ Income	3.12	1	5	116	3.36	1	5	303
-Dependable Income	.840	0	1	113	.921	0	1	304
-Income	4.31	1	11	108	4.82	1	11	283
-Improve Highways for Dev	.601	0	1	113	.397	0	1	305
-Improve Roads for EconDev	.575	0	1	113	.472	0	1	305
-Retrain for Careers	.504	0	1	113	.334	0	1	305
-Unemployment a Problem	3.35	1	5	117	3.72	1	5	314
<u>Cosmopolitan Orientation</u>								
-Shop Out of Town	3.81	1	5	116	3.30	1	5	310
-Participate in Community	3.65	1	5	123	3.32	1	5	307
-Community Center of Life	3.29	1	5	121	3.02	1	5	311
-Residents are Similar	3.59	1	5	120	3.31	1	5	316
-Depend on Community	2.66	1	5	123	2.90	1	5	312
-Pride in Community	3.99	1	5	120	3.69	1	5	317
-Growth Hurts Community	3.05	1	5	119	3.33	1	5	311
-Less Attractive Development	3.00	1	5	119	3.47	1	5	313
-Comfortable New People	3.25	1	5	116	2.68	1	5	308

More Cosmopolitan Orientation

Eight of ten indicators found in the Vance subsample for this social impact category were also found for the entire longitudinal data set. More 1999 respondents shopped outside of their community (means = 1999, 3.30 and 1995, 3.31) than did 1995 respondents. The 1999 respondents also participated less in community affairs (means = 1999, 3.32 and 1995, 3.65) than did the 1995 respondents. They were also less likely to see the community as the center of their lives (1999 mean = 3.02 and 1995 mean = 3.29), and that they were similar to other community residents (1999 mean = 3.31 and 1995 mean = 3.59).

The 1995 respondents were more likely to depend on the local community for their needs than were the 1999 respondents (1995 mean = 2.66 and 1999 mean = 2.90—reverse coded). The 1995 respondents also had more pride in their community than did the 1999 respondents (1995 mean = 3.99 and 1999 mean = 3.69), and they were more likely to feel that continued economic growth would hurt the quality of life in the community (1995 mean = 3.05 and 1999 mean = 3.33—reverse coded).

The 1999 respondents were less likely to feel that the community was losing its attractiveness due to economic growth than were the 1995 respondents (1999 mean = 3.47 and 1995 mean = 3.00—reverse coded). Finally, the 1999 respondents were more comfortable around new members of the community than were 1995 respondents (1999 mean = 2.68 and 1995 mean = 3.25).

Quality of Life

Two indicators fell into this social impact category. The first one—how much one considers him/herself part of the community—had fallen into the More Cosmopolitan Orientation for the Vance-only subsample, because the 1995 respondents felt more a part of their community than did the 1999 respondents (see above). However, in the entire longitudinal data set, the pattern was reversed—more 1999 respondents felt they were a part of their respective communities

than did the 1995 respondents (means = 1995, 3.23 and 1999, 3.97).

Also in this category, the T-Test showed that 1999 respondents were more likely than the 1995 respondents to feel that relatives would watch their children for them if the respondent required hospitalization for two weeks (means = 1999, .760 and 1995, .627).

Demographic Changes

There were no significant differences across the two survey years in this social impact category for the entire longitudinal sample.

1999 Data Specifically on Mercedes Benz

Paired and Independent Sample T-Tests

The 1999 survey contained a series of questions that were not found in the 1995 survey that dealt specifically with the Mercedes Benz plant and the respondents' perception of potential impacts as a result of it. Respondents were asked the following two questions: "Before it was built, how did you feel about the Mercedes Benz Plant locating in Tuscaloosa County?" and "Today, how do you feel about the Mercedes Benz Plant locating in Tuscaloosa County?" For both questions they were given the following options: 1 = Strongly favor it; 2 = Favor it; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Oppose it; and 5 = Strongly oppose it.

Clearly, there are potential problems with asking respondents to recollect how they may have felt about the Mercedes Benz plant locating in their area well after the fact. However, those who held extreme opinions would certainly remember them and these would show in the analyses. A Paired T-Test across the two questions was utilized to see if there was a significant difference across the two responses and, if so, in what direction it would be (see Table 16). The T-Test showed that the mean for the first question was 2.09 and that for the second questions was 1.89. It was a significant difference. Respondents were more in favor of the plant after it had arrived and had been running than they had remembered being before its arrival.

Though current and previous support for the plant is relatively high, when the data were split between Vance residents and all others, it was found through Independent Sample T-Tests that Vance residents were, and remain more opposed to the plant than respondents

from all other areas. The mean for Vance residents for prior feelings about the plant was 2.36, while the other areas' mean was 1.97. The mean for Vance residents for how they feel today was 2.17 while it was 1.76 for all other places (see Table 17).

The T-Tests show that both before it was built and today, the non-Vance residents were more in favor of the plant than were those who actually live in Vance with the plant in their backyard.

Another set of questions dealt with the potential impacts the plant may have on the region, the communities, and the people within it. These results are also reported in Table 17. A five point Likert scale was used with Strongly Agree coded as 1, and Strongly Disagree coded as 5. Dividing the 1999 data into Vance versus all other places, two indicators were found to have a significant difference in an Independent Sample T-Test. Vance residents felt that the plant had threatened the local environment more than did the non-Vance residents (means = Vance, 3.28 and non-Vance, 3.58). The next indicator was reverse coded where 1 = Strongly Disagree. Vance residents were more likely to feel that the plant had not created local jobs than were non-Vance residents (means = Vance, 3.81 and non-Vance, 4.12). This finding is consistent with those above, which seemed to indicate that Vance residents did not feel they were getting their share of the economic benefits of the plant.

Vance residents did show significant differences in relation to non-Vance residents in regards to their support of the plant and the environmental and economic benefits of it. The fact that the plant is closest to the Vance community is significant. When compared to the other communities in the area, Vance has paid the highest social costs but its residents feel it has not reaped the commensurate economic benefits.

Table 16. Statistically Significant Paired T-Tests Across All Cases in Longitudinal Data Set

Variable	Before Plant was Built			N	After Plant was Built			N
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum		Mean	Minimum	Maximum	
Feelings on Mercedes Benz	2.09	1	5	311	1.89	1	5	311

Table 17. Statistically Significant Independent Sample T-Tests Across Vance and Non-Vance Longitudinal Data Set

Variable	Vance Mean	Vance Minimum	Vance Maximum	N	Non-Vance Mean	Non-Vance Minimum	Non-Vance Maximum	N
<u>Feelings on Mercedes Benz</u>								
-Before Plant was Built	2.36	1	5	102	1.97	1	5	209
-Today, After Plant	2.17	1	5	102	1.76	1	5	209
<u>Potential Impacts of MB</u>								
-Threaten Environment	2.17	1	5	102	3.58	1	5	205
-Create Local Jobs	3.81	1	5	103	4.12	1	5	205

Qualitative Data from the 1999 Survey

In addition to the survey data, several potential respondents sent letters or notes with their uncompleted surveys. Five of these notes were to inform that the sampled person was deceased, another five were from people who refused to fill out the survey and wished to express it in a letter, and still another five were rather miscellaneous, ranging from inability to read the type-face due to poor eyesight, to a sampled respondent's wife explaining that her husband had memory-loss problems and therefore could not fill it out. Four of these letters however, specifically addressed issues related to the persons' opinions about the Mercedes Benz plant. Their comments are provided below as they are illustrative of the bitter feelings some residents have about the plant. It should also be noted that all four were from residents of Vance. The letters are presented verbatim.

I through [sic] away the questionnaire. I am so disgusted with what Mercedes Benz is doing to our community. It doesn't benefit local people at all! To answer some of your questions; I am female, borned [sic] and raised here. My sisters and I worked very hard to help our parents pay for this property in hopes of having a nice quiet place to retire WRONG! What Mercedes means to us: 1) doubled our property tax, 2) causes traffic problems, 3) higher crime rates. I don't intend to leave, but I wish Mercedes would.

To Whom this Concerns: I appreciate your being nice and taking time out for this request. But I want to be honest. Progress is going on every where, but I don't personally see where this Mercedes Benz Plant has helped any of our local people—they have really taken away—in the first place my grandmother and her family came from the Cherokee Indian Tribe in North Carolina down through Tennessee and settled here where the great thing Came in. My birth place is exactly on the spot where Mercedes Benz is located. My mother is 93 years

old and still wants to go home. My people all had to relocate and it's never been the same.

Personally—they have hired people from their other plants! Transplanted them in here. We had lots of our service boys killed during world war two to same them Germans. I am no goof ball or hillbilly as my people here described to be. This has changed everything in many peoples lives [sic] around here. I had rather not here [sic] anymore about this. Thanks so much—My people hearly [sic] get enough money to relocate. I hate this mess. My husband whose name this was addressed to has been deceased for 9 years. He didn't get to see this happens [sic].

In one paragraph you asked for my opinion, here it is. Number 1. Little Jim Folsom forced Mercedes on the people of Alabama in a desprate [sic] effort to be elected Gov. It back fired on him and we are stuck with it. Number 2. What Mercedes did for me. It raised my taxes and ruined my Deer hunting that side [sic]. That is all it did for [name of person]. Also thanks but no thanks for your \$2.00. Please let me know if I can be of further assitance [sic].

I prefer not to participate in your survey, therefore I am returning the material and your two dollars. You are asking questions that are very personal about things I consider private information. As for my mental health, I am seventy-five years old, I still work and am raising two grandchildren. My opinion of Mercedes Benz is: they have caused more harm than good. Sure, a few people got jobs, but that does not make up for the pollution they pour into our air every day. The little elementary school has seventeen trailers due to more children in the area. The big

boom in residential housing hasn't happened. Most of these children live in trailers, which downgrades the community. The economic development for this area hasn't happened either. The shopping mall we were to have has set there almost a year without a shovel of dirt being moved. I hope this answers some of your questions.

Finally, two more of interest which do not directly address the Mercedes Benz plant but were quite interesting are provided below:

I won't write in you [sic] book so you could send it to some one else. I'm 81 years old and my only interest is my family and be ready when the "Good Lord" decides to take me home. God bless you.

I believe the whole issue for creating economic advancement is making sure all able bodied people work. It will cure a lot of society's ills. Please find the enclosed money.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The examination of community level social impacts is different than an examination of economic impacts. As the data have shown, the two are not synonymous. Social impacts are concerned more with the objective and subjective issues of quality of life (Finsterbusch, 1980). Though the analysis examined both of these aspects, the subjective components were more likely to show significant differences across the data than were the objective (which were found primarily in the demographic changes).

One of the more subtle social impacts observed through the data was that Vance residents seemed to feel they were not getting their share of the economic benefits of the plant though they have had to pay the highest social costs. The mayor of Vance, Mike Sanders told the Tuscaloosa Times News (TTN, 11-15-1995) "Part of the advantage of having a plant in your town is the name recognition for future commercial prospects. The town of Vance will have to deal with all the problems, yet we are being stripped of

most of the benefits." Of the 966 acres acquired for the site, approximately 466 acres were acquired from Vance residents. The one person who did not respond to the survey but sent a letter explaining that the plant sits on her birth place is illustrative of the high social costs for some of the Vance residents. Others who lost their property through eminent domain also lost much more than their property, they lost their sense of community and trust in those around them. Though only a few people out of hundreds, they were part of the Vance community and not from one of the others. In accordance to Brown's et al. (1989) findings on social impacts in rapid growth communities, the fundamental reorganization of existing relationships between people and institutions constitutes the primary and most enduring social impact. Contrary to the "Social Disruption Hypothesis" (England and Albrecht, 1984; Krannich and Greider, 1984; Murdock and Schriener, 1979; and Thompson and Blevins, 1983), which states that social impacts result from the infrastructure of a community being over capacitated due to the influx of in-migrants, the most fundamental social impacts occur before the first new person steps foot into the community. They are socio-psychological in nature. People are literally forced to redefine long-standing relationships between people and institutions.

Lending even further credence to Brown's et al. (1989) argument is the fact that little demographic change was observed between 1995 and 1999 in the survey data. Observations of the area also show that few if any new housing starts have occurred between the time as well. Consequently, the majority of social impacts evidenced by these data are subjective in nature, but it was anticipated given previous literature that they would be so. As Finsterbusch (1980) notes, the quality of life issues with which social impacts deal will always fall into the subjective realm as they illustrate *how* the residents of a community have *experienced* a singular event—the Mercedes Benz plant.

Perhaps the most revealing of the seven documented social impacts is the adoption of a more extra-local or cosmopolitan orientation as it illustrates a fundamental shift in relationships with others and the local community. Lacking a control community for comparative purposes, it cannot be decisively

argued that this shift would not have occurred without the Mercedes Benz plant locating in the area. Yet, the theoretical evidence is compelling and supports the findings. Indeed, a conglomerate of the three analyses show that when compared to the 1995 respondents, the 1999 respondents were more likely to shop outside of the community in large discount stores like Walmart; they also participated less in their respective communities' affairs; they were less likely to see the community as the center of their lives; they did not see themselves as being as similar to most of the other residents in their communities; they did not depend on their community as much for their day-to-day necessities; they had less pride in their communities; they were less likely to consider themselves as members of their community; they were less likely to feel that the area was becoming too urban because of economic development, and similarly, they were less likely to feel that continued economic growth would hurt the quality of the community; they were also less likely to feel uncomfortable around newcomers in the community, and finally, they were more likely to feel that noticeable improvements have been made in the community over the past few years.

The term "Cosmopolitan Orientation" was chosen deliberately due to its long tradition in the sociology of the community dating back to Carl Zimmerman's 1938 English translation of Ferdinand Toennies' concepts *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Zimmerman translated *Gemeinschaft* as "localistic" and *Gesellschaft* as "cosmopolitan." Robert Merton (1963) added recognition to the terms when he applied them to different types of community influences. Merton justified his usage of the terms based on Zimmerman's usage of them.

In Merton's scheme, the cosmopolitan influential orientates his/her self to the larger social structures of the society at large. In other words, "he is also oriented significantly to the world outside [the local community], and regards himself as an integral part of that world. He resides in [the local community] but lives in the Great Society. If the local type is parochial, the cosmopolitan is ecumenical." (Merton, 1963. p. 393).

Merton found that cosmopolitan types had been more mobile than local influentials.

Thus, they had not lived as long in the community as had local influentials. He also found that cosmopolitans had higher educational and professional status. Finally, he also noted that the cosmopolitan influentials "...have notably little interest in meeting as many people as possible. They are more selective in their choice of friends and acquaintances. They typically stress the importance of confining themselves to friends with whom 'they can really talk,' with whom they can 'exchange ideas.'" (p. 297). Personal relationships at the local level were therefore, not as instrumental to the cosmopolitan influential as it was to the local influential. "Having characteristically lived elsewhere, they feel that [the local community], 'a pleasant enough town,' is only one of many. They are also aware, through actual experience, that they can advance their careers in other communities. They do not, consequently, look upon [the local community] as comprising the outermost limits of a secure and satisfactory existence. Their wider range of experience has modified their orientation toward their present community." (p. 396).

This last point—"their wider range of experience has modified their orientation toward their present community"—relates specifically to the findings of this study and the residents of the Vance area. A study by Eisenstadt (1955) found that the structure of the community itself made a difference in how externally orientated citizens were. In other words, as the community itself experienced shifts in its social and economic structure, the orientation of the citizens also shifted. Yet the analysis showed that demographic differences—years residence in the community, where they lived at age 16—were not statistically significant. Consequently, the shifts in orientation can not be accounted for by the influx of new people with different, more cosmopolitan, orientations; they must be accounted for by a change in perceptions of the residents themselves.

The Mercedes Benz plant brought with it an entirely new worldview. Deutschland had come to Dixie. Local residents were suddenly exposed to new words and phrases (for example, the sign identifying the future site of the plant welcomed viewers in German and English, and referred to them as neighbors in German with the appropriate translation) from

a far-off land—Germany. They were also exposed to different traditions—Oktoberfest. In conjunction with the City of Tuscaloosa (interestingly, not Vance), Mercedes Benz held a “1994 International CityFest and Weindorf” on October 28 and 29, 1994. The newspaper ads for the event explained that the event was being sponsored by Tuscaloosa, Mercedes Benz, and the city of Stuttgart, Germany. “Finally, the perfect opportunity for your family to learn and experience the diverse cultures of both Alabama and Germany.” The advertisement continues with an entire section dedicated to the definition of Weindorf.

Weindorf is German for wine village. For two weeks each August, Stuttgart is transformed into Weindorf, which is the largest gourmet food and wine festival in Germany. This year, downtown Tuscaloosa will make the same transformation. Specially constructed cottages replicating the same type of German village will house food, fun, and culture right in the heart of West Alabama. It is here you will find 25 of Germany’s finest master chefs along with their staffs, preparing unique entrees specific to the Stuttgart region, plus...German Beer from the Famous Stuttgart Brewery, Delicious Native Wines, Handmade German Dolls, German Christmas Ornaments, German Oom-Pah Music.

The advertisement ends with the small print: “Sponsored by Mercedes Benz and Stuttgart.”

Finally, the realities of an imploded global market were parked on their doorstep. The interconnectedness of localities through the global market was undeniable. Consequently, though the demographic structure of the area changed relatively little over the two survey years, the orientation of the residents changed significantly. The residents of the area, without leaving home, now had “a wider range of experience” which had “modified their orientation toward their present community.”

The residents now saw themselves as having a real stake in the global economy—an inevitable emergent view, given the size of the development project and the cultural and political underpinnings of the German Mercedes Benz plant.

Another significant finding was an increased centralization of power. This is not a surprising finding given the more cosmopolitan orientation of residents. In a more locally oriented community, power is typically shared across a variety of groups. Based on Merton’s concepts of local and cosmopolitan influentials, the more locally oriented the community residents, the more likely power is highly diffused across less rational lines of leadership and influence—how many people one knows versus what specific skills a person may possess.

Additionally, as the qualitative evidence showed, residents of the area saw the landing of the Mercedes Benz plant as a process external to them. The 1999 data show evidence of a realization that even the most local of concerns can be usurped by larger, more powerful interests and groups. The data therefore, reflect this realization that powerful groups, external to the community, can and do control much of the day-to-day processes of the local community. When coupled with a more cosmopolitan orientation, coming to such a realization may actually enhance the resident’s community satisfaction (Brown, 1993). Brown found that those rural residents who had, in essence, a more externally oriented perspective also had the highest levels of community satisfaction. To such residents, the community represents a means to an end and not the end in and of itself. If the community provides them with the requisite opportunities to participate fully in the consumer economy, the cosmopolitan oriented resident is satisfied.

The data also showed, however, that there had been a decline in the various community indicators. Indeed, perhaps one of the most prolific areas of study within the sociology of community has been the topic of the decline of community (see Brown et al., 1998). Many intrinsic assumptions undergird the invocation of the loss of community argument. One of the primary ones is that community is envisioned as a subjective experience, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways and can be measured in a variety of ways, most commonly through

community satisfaction and attachment. Thus, residents of a town may experience community, or the sense of it, in the same place for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons may even be contradictory. One commonality that cuts across most all reasons however, is quality of life. Hays (1987) has established that post World War II Americans primarily associate quality of life with standard of living. It can be purchased.

An examination of the traditional measures of community satisfaction and attachment show that they are also tied to the measurement of quality of life (Wellman, 1979). Thus, community attachment and satisfaction are utilized as independent variables in predicting quality of life. Brown's (1993) research further has shown that one's satisfaction with the community of place—a town, city, village, etc.—is associated with their ability to secure a high quality of life as assessed through a mass consumer oriented culture and economy. Thus, those who are the most satisfied with their community tend, ironically, to be those who are also the least attached to it—the mobile, the highly educated, the more wealthy, etc. These residents tend to see their community as a means to an end and not the end in and of itself. Again, referring to Merton's use of the terms, *locals* and *cosmopolitans*: the community is a "pleasant enough town," but it is simply one of many such potential sites. In this context, even friendships take on a more cosmopolitan structure. Fischer (1982) has shown that in modern society, friendships need not be tied to place/proximity. Friendship networks can span great distances. The analyses showed that the 1999 respondents had fewer local friends and knew fewer of their closest neighbors than their 1995 counterparts. Vance residents were beginning to look out of the community for their friendship ties as well. Thus, to fully understand the implication of the loss of community indicators, they must be seen in conjunction with the rest of the social impacts, most specifically with the preceding two discussed above—more cosmopolitan orientation and centralization of power—and with the quality of life indicators.

Consequently, all three analyses found that respondents felt their overall quality of life had improved while their sense of community had declined. The findings are not paradoxical.

As Vance area residents have been drawn directly into the high-stakes game of the world economy, their orientation toward their community has changed. The function of their community has changed. It is seen less as the center of their lives, though it remains important in this regard. Residents did have fewer local friends and knew fewer people who live next to them. They also indicated that they had more friends in 1995 than in 1999 and that friendships were not as easy to make. Because the demographic evidence showed there had been little shift in the overall makeup of the community, the explanation for these changes must be in the orientation of the residents themselves, an orientation that shifted as the community's social and economic structure dramatically shifted with the coming of the Mercedes Benz plant. These shifts are manifest in the various indicators of "community" used in the analyses. Respondents in 1999 versus those in 1995 felt that they had less in common with other members of the community, and they were less likely to feel the community approximated their ideal community. In essence, the Vance area residents lost much of their traditional community orientation and perspective. Yet in exchange, they felt that they had achieved a better quality of life.

The analyses also showed that respondents in 1999 felt that the community had become a more desirable place to live over the past five years and that residents were more "satisfied with their life in general these days." The trade-off of local orientation to that of mass/global markets and one's place within it, necessitates a redefinition of community. Their quality of life shifts are concomitant with the previous social impacts described above. Yet the redefinition of community is not a simple trade-off. Quoting the mayor of Vance, Mike Sanders, from a TNN article dated October 15, 1995, he stated: "That's something the citizens of Vance resent—having a company come in and all of a sudden rename your community...emotions run deep when you start doing that." The Mercedes Benz plant also uses a Tuscaloosa postal address instead of one from Vance. In many respects, the prospects of losing their identity to Mercedes Benz and Tuscaloosa, may have solidified the resolve of the residents of Vance to maintain an identity. The irony is that in doing so, the identity with

which they have reemerged is quite different than the one they set out to save. By losing their identity, Vance may have actually established one—one that is more independent of Tuscaloosa. The community is now more interested in its own history than it has ever been. There is an urgency to see itself as Vance, not Vance the bedroom community to Tuscaloosa and/or Mercedes Benz.

Clearly with any “trade-off” something is lost or given up for something else. Consequently, two other related categories of social impacts were found and examined in the analyses—infrastructural minuses and economic advantages/infrastructural gains. The boomtown literature documents that during times of rapid social change, people’s fear of crime and victimization increases (Krannich et al., 1985; Krannich et al., 1989) while actual crime and victimization rates increase very little. The perception of a breakdown of social norms (a loss of community) is often associated with an increased concern for order and stability. When social systems change rapidly, it is often accompanied by a sense that one’s personal safety is at risk. Again, perception is the key. It is the subjective components of one’s community experience that one responds to. Now where has this been more clearly explicated than by Marans and Rogers (1975)? They argue that even objective differences in a community’s infrastructure will be responded to subjectively. Consequently, different people will respond differently to the same objective reality. It is the perception of objective realities that people respond to and act upon. Vance residents felt they had a different stake in the Mercedes Benz plant that only they would “understand.” The disruptions to their patterns of life are found through the subjective indicators of social impacts in the Vance area. They clearly show a pattern of shifting orientations as the objective conditions of their lives were altered through the Mercedes Benz plant. These more objective infrastructural impacts, and the subjective responses to them, also need to be examined in greater detail.

There were several infrastructural issues identified in the analyses. In particular, the school appears to be over capacitated and has received considerable attention both in the local and national news. For example, on November 9, 1998, TIME magazine ran a special report on “corporate welfare” in which

one section dealt with Vance, Alabama and the Mercedes Benz deal, and it singled out the problem with the school.

The Mercedes-Benz plant illustrates a fundamental principle of corporate welfare: everybody pays for economic incentives—either with higher taxes, fewer services, or both. To understand this, go to Vance Elementary School, located a football field or two from the plant. Of course, you cannot actually see the school building. That is because it is surrounded by portable classrooms—17 in all. They are being added at the rate of two a year. Inside the school, the results of crowding 540 pupils (expected to be 700 to 800 within the next two years) into a building designed for 290 are readily apparent—a marked contrast with the roominess of the \$30 million training school the state built for Mercedes Benz. Throughout the school day, students stand in line to take their turn in one of the six tiny rest rooms serviced by a septic system, which produces its own unpleasant consequences on occasion, since the septic tanks were also built for 290 pupils. (TIME, 9-9-98)

Though a statistically significant difference was found between the 1995 and 1999 respondents on the issue of the adequacy of the school, in both years, it was identified as the most important issue to be resolved for the community to create economic development and improve the quality of life of its residents. There is no doubt that the school has added children over the past five years. Yet the overall demographic makeup of the community has changed little. Where are the additional children coming from? It is not clear, but some may be coming from new areas annexed into the city limits of Vance.

The economic advantages expressed by the respondents were quite predictable: they included better jobs and streets, more respect for law and order (another sign of an

orientation shift to more rational forms versus local informal controls), more dependable income, they were also more satisfied with their income, and unemployment was less of a problem. Again, all of these issues relate directly to a measurable increase in the quality of life through a potential high standard of living (see Hays, 1987).

The analyses showed that at least seven identifiable social impacts could be documented in the Vance area population as a result of the Mercedes Benz plant locating in the area. The analyses also showed that all seven were highly correlated with each other and logically predictable if viewed from the perspective of a shift in orientation from the local community to a more cosmopolitan perspective of one's life in the community.

The lack of major demographic shifts also points to the fact that much of the brunt of new immigrants, etc. was born between the major metropolitan centers at the poles—Tuscaloosa and Birmingham. The infrastructural capacities of these two areas have been able to counter much of the potential impacts associated with over-capacitation of local infrastructure. The measurable, as well as, the most meaningful to the residents themselves, social impacts therefore deal specifically with shifts in orientation and behaviors at the local level. The Vance of pre-Mercedes Benz does not exist. In the words of Thomas Wolf, "You can never go home again." But the question the analyses raise is, do you want to? To which there will always be the qualified answer "Yes!" and, well, "No."

Conclusions

This study, like any of its kind has several limitations that need to be considered. First is the limited number of 1995 respondents. In

both years, low response rates were the norm. However, when matched against available Census data, the representativeness of both surveys was sound. More panel members would have greatly added to the power of the study. Finally, in terms of creating a generalizable model for other southern rural communities, the analysis, though specific to Vance and the Vance area, does match the theoretical arguments of the existing literature and therefore can be cautiously applied to other locations and events. The most important findings in this case study have been the ability of local residents to redefine and reorient their views to live with an event that frankly was completely beyond their making. In any such case, there will always be conscious as well as unconscious trade-offs. The greatest social impact on Vance has been that in losing itself, its identity, it has found itself. But it is a very different self than the one it lost.

Endnotes

¹ Articles in *The Tuscaloosa News* indicate that, for all practical purposes, seven people were responsible for bringing Mercedes Benz to Vance, Alabama: Governor Jim Folsom, ADO Director Billie Joe Camp, ADO Director of Industrial Development Glen Pringle, IDA Chairman and Vice President Western Division Alabama Power Company Anthony Topazi, IDA Executive Director Dara Longgear, IDA Vice Chairman Tom Joiner, and IDA Treasurer Bryan Chandler. Moreover, Topazi and Longgear were primarily responsible for practically all negotiations with Mercedes Benz, as the majority of board members described their involvement as minimal and authorized Topazi and Longgear to proceed autonomously with recruitment efforts (TTN, 10-10,10-18-1993, 2-20-1994).

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