

## **Our Own Land**

*Sweet Springs, a rural community in Missouri*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Rural communities are usually labeled negatively, with words such as high poverty rate, lack of infrastructure, limited sources for education and high rates of health problems. This research explored the stereotype of rural communities through community members' eyes in Sweet Springs, a rural town, population 1,484, located in mid-Missouri. Two rounds of photo elicitation interviews were used in this research. Subjects' reactions and perceptions to photographs helped to analyze the "role of photography in society"<sup>1</sup>, how they felt about the labels of their town and how visuals change the stereotypes. Framing theory was used to guide the research.

### **SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT**

*Our Own Land* is a photographic project about the community of Sweet Springs, a rural town located in mid-Missouri. Downtown Sweet Springs is almost vacant now, but the community members are trying to thrive. These photographs show how people live their lives in Sweet Springs and how they are trying to save their town.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Z.C. & Woodward, A.M. (1999). Photo-elicitation method gives voice and reactions of subjects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, pp. 31-41.