

WALTER L. SLOCUM, 1910-

Walter Slocum, President-Elect of the Rural Sociological Society, died August 15, 1975, from a very sudden heart attack. He had been in good health, getting in a short round of golf each morning, working on a manuscript for a new book and tending to extensive real estate interests. Although he had officially retired two months earlier, his activities had not decreased. If there was any specific cause of the heart attack, it probably was working a bit too hard. Walts' was a busy and productive life from his early childhood on a farm in South Dakota until his recent passing. To have two jobs or at least one and a half was no exception to his rule of life; it was but the rule itself.

He was born June 28, 1910 at Glenham, South Dakota, the son of Edward and Julia Slocum. He was graduated from high school at Brookings, South Dakota, later attending and graduating from South Dakota State University at Brookings. He earned both the M.S. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin.

Walter early learned to apply his educational training to program problems as Office Manager and Staff Director for the South Dakota State Planning Board, prior to returning to the university environment for graduate training. Following completion of the Ph.D. he taught sociology at South Dakota State University (1940-1943) as Assistant and Associate Professor of Sociology. Entering the Service in 1943, he served as a statistician and later as a military government officer in Korea (Lieutenant, USNR). After World War II he continued in government service until 1951 as Educational Statistician, Assistant Chief and Chief of the Research Division of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Veterans Administration.

In 1951 he came to Washington State University as Rural Sociologist and Chairman of the Department of Rural Sociology, in which position he served until 1969. He also served as a consultant and administrator in the Cooperative Extension Service. As Professor of Sociology, he taught numerous graduate and undergraduate courses in that department. During

THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

Ohio State University

Master's Thesis:

Chapman, Elaine W., "Homophily of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Aides and Homemakers Related to Homemakers' Adoption of Food Practices," 1974.

Ph.D. Dissertations:

Anikeeff, Michael A., "Impact of Industrialization on Community Population Growth and Central Place Function," 1975.

Liao, Cheng-Hung, "Migration and Socioeconomic Change in Ohio Counties, 1950-1970," 1975.

Mynko, Lizbeth Fay, "Health and Illness in Rural America," 1974.

Sharma, Satish C., "Psycho-Social Modernism in Indian Villages and Its Implications for Programs for Planned Social Change," 1974.

Stahura, Barbara Thornton, "Rural-Urban Differences in Marital Happiness and Family Satisfaction: Toward a General Model," 1975.

Wright, Cathy Joan, "A Longitudinal Analysis of Social-Psychological Response to Watershed Development in a Rural Ohio Community," 1975.

Wu Yang, Shu-O, "An Ecological Analysis of Crime in Rural Ohio," 1975.

Yale University

Master's Thesis:

Greist, David A., "Effects of the Social Order on Human Spacing Behavior in a National Park Recreation Area."

West, Patrick C., "Social Structure and Environment: A Weberian Approach to Human Ecological Analysis.

THE SOUTHERN RURAL SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH
COMMITTEE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN THE SOUTH¹

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This statement is intended to reflect on the potential role of the Southern Rural Sociology Research Committee in the development of rural sociological efforts in the South, and to offer some suggestions aimed at realizing this potential. There is no need for a detailed presentation of the changing nature of our region, of our discipline's emerging role in monitoring and impacting this change, or of the difficulties we face both collectively and as individual rural sociologists. This has already been done in several papers developed for the Southern Rural Sociology Research Committee.² What I really want to do here is to provide a rather eclectic, frank and informal appraisal of the SRSRC itself. Secondly, I would like to speculate on the research foci we need to evolve.

A Power Elite

The current organization of Rural Sociology at the regional level in the South evolved as a result of ideas and initiatives of a small group of researchers who participated in the S-44 project a decade ago and then continued their close associations through involvement in S-61 and newer projects spawned from these.³ For a decade, the same handful of people have filled the leadership positions of these regional research projects, of the SRSRC, and until the past few years, the officer positions of the Rural Sociology Section of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists.⁴ The leadership positions of all these regional organizations of our discipline have been traded around among this handful of individuals with few exceptions, for the past decade. This small group has evolved as a power elite within Rural Sociology in the South. While this elitist, "good ole boy," structure was constructive during the initial phases of building the basic organizational basis for cooperation among rural sociologists in the South, its maintenance particularly in reference to membership and control of operations of the SRSRC, will probably impede the maturation and expansion of significant cooperative structures among southern rural sociologists. It may also impede the stimulation for needed change in the general orientations and priorities structuring the major research thrusts at the local and regional levels, and the development of a better relationship with Agricultural Experiment Station Directors in the region as a collectivity.

A number of observations appear to indicate evidence in support of this proposition. One of these pertains to the general feeling evidently

THE SOUTHERN RURAL SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH
(Continued)

prevalent among the "Southern Directors" that we are for the most part a collection of unimaginative, tradition-bound researchers who have a tendency to stick with the same tried and true research problems and research methods.⁵ Another is the negative reactions to the SRSRC and its operations held by some of our younger, very capable colleagues and their evolving ideas about making the Rural Sociology Section of the SAAS the dominant force for Rural Sociology in the region. There is a notable lack of any really new research thrust at a regional level, and an apparent absence of awareness or concern about getting hold of some of the really significant, broad, regional problems involved in the rapidly changing structural components of social organization within the South.

We seem to have served our purpose as a leadership collectivity. It is time we encouraged the involvement of new and younger colleagues in the SRSRC - and, as full-fledged members and leaders. This can be done in a number of ways and should be given top priority.

In my paper on the development of cooperative structures among rural sociologists in the South, presented to this group several years ago, I implied that one of our major impediments to development might be the parochial, state-oriented perspective of key administrators.⁶ In fact, after some interaction with a number of our "Southern Directors," I have a feeling that as a whole they would be very supportive of a stronger force of rural sociologists with broad regional concerns. Currently, I have come to the idea that the key impediment to the development of our discipline lies in our own parochialism, tradition-bound patterns of research, limited vision, and lack of imagination in setting research priorities. This was brought home to me with telling impact at last year's SRSRC meeting, when, after several year's work by a large number of colleagues, the "Cooperative Structures Subcommittee's" final report was received with deafening apathy and lack of interest.

Needed Changes - Some Suggestions

I suppose my presentation so far has sounded hyper-critical and pessimistic to you. I think it is neither. It is my opinion that the Farm Foundation knows what it is doing in supporting the development of this group and that it has a good bet going for impacting on the rural South through it. However, the time has come for a qualitative jump in the development of this organization and on its impact on research in the South. In order to accomplish this, we must get a broader membership and involve our younger colleagues more often and in more substantial ways. We must develop a clearer, more specific set of short-term and

long-term objectives. Possibly, we also need to develop a more limited conception of our role. We need to forget about our past and present research thrusts and accomplishments and our individual research involvements - let the regional research committees dwell on those things. We need to spend our time thinking broadly and imaginatively about what we are not doing, but ought to be, and about broad and significant social change now evolving and spawning pressing problems for tomorrow's rural South and its people.

One of the most important changes evolving in the organizational structure of the rural South is the increasing significance of vertical linkages between segments or subunits of local communities and extra-local social units of various kinds. Yet, to a large extent we go on designing and carrying out our research almost exclusively within narrow, local boundaries - looking at groupings of individuals or families of particular types, or, at best, examining horizontally structured, intra-local relationships. It would seem to me that a research thrust concentrating on extra-local organizational linkages and their consequences for the people and groups of the rural South lends itself well to regional research. Relative to horizontal patterns, we still are not directly facing up to what is perhaps the most important and dramatic dimension of social change taking place - the changing nature of inter-racial relations. How long can we keep our heads buried in the sand?

It seems clear that we have a potentially excellent support situation within the USDA-Experiment Station framework to carry out outstanding research on exciting and significant social problems of region-wide and even national significance. However, whether or not we really want to do this, and whether or not we can organize to do so if we want to, remains to be seen.

Footnotes

1. A "think piece" presented at the annual meetings of the SRSRC, New Orleans, June 8-10, 1975.
2. See "Toward a Regional Faculty of Rural Sociology in the South: Dimensions of Organized Cooperative Efforts" (invited presentation given at the 1972 annual meetings of SRSRC - copies available on request) and "The Future of Rural Sociology in the South" in John E. Dunkelberger and Janice B. Vanlandingham (eds.), Reflections on the Development of Cooperative Rural Sociology Research in the South. Auburn: Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, April 1974, pp. 61-64.
3. C. L. Cleland, "Southern Regional Research in Rural Sociology During the Sixties" in Dunkelberger and Vanlandingham (eds.), op. cit., pp. 41-57.

4. C. L. Cleland, op. cit., pp. 53-54. The SAAS was formerly titled the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers.
5. This conclusion is based on my interpretation of an exchange that took place between the Southern Directors of Agricultural Experiment Stations and Chuck Cleland and me, representing the SRSRC in September 1974.
6. "The Future of Rural Sociology in the South," op. cit.
7. This particular problem has been avoided for the most part by sociologists located in the southern region. Very little in the way of current research results can be found on race relations in rural areas of the South. (William P. Kuvlesky and Clara Johnson, "Researching Racial Prejudice: The Social Behavior of Sociologists." Paper presented at the Southern Sociological Society Annual meetings, Atlanta, April 1973.

PERSONALITIES

(Arrived too late to classify)

Dave Hansen, Ohio State University, has returned to campus. He spent 1974 and the first half of 1975 in Brazil under a contract between the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture and The Ohio State University to provide technical advice on the operation of a pilot project of assistance between four centers of higher agricultural education. In 1974 he was stationed in Rio de Janeiro with the Brazilian Association for Higher Agricultural Education and in 1975 in Brasilia with the Ministry of Education. The program is designed to top existing educational resources of Brazil's graduate programs; to strengthen weaker programs of higher agricultural education. He advised the Brazilian Department of University Affairs on program planning, evaluation and expansion. This included regular, direct contacts with administrations of the participating learning centers, and with those designated as future participants. The program has since been expanded to include eight other centers.

Bill Martinson, Ohio State University, has joined the Department of Rural Sociology as a Visiting Assistant Professor. He will be examining the structural antecedents of agricultural land-use practices and energy consumption with Professor W. L. Flinn, and continuing his ongoing research on the American grain marketing system.

NOTICES

NEW FACULTY AT V.P.I.

Five appointments, all at the rank of Assistant Professor, have been made at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University: Patricia Kluck, Ph.D. in Anthropology from Cornell University, 1975; Ellsworth R. Furhman and Michael K. Miller, Ph.D.'s from The Pennsylvania State University, 1975; James W. Michaels, Jr., Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, 1972; and William L. McWhorter, Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University, 1972. Dr. Michaels formerly was an Associate Research Scientist at the John Hopkins University. Dr. McWhorter returns to academic life after a three-year tour of duty in the United States Army.

THE RURAL YOUTH RESEARCH GROUP

Twenty members of the Rural Sociological Society attended organizing sessions for evolving a Rural Youth Research Group during the Annual Meetings at San Francisco. Bill Kuvlesky of Texas A&M initiated this activity to stimulate a broader range of research activity focused on rural youth and to facilitate cooperation and communication among those members or potential members of the RSS having a special interest in rural youth. Participants agreed to begin working on plans to organize several sessions of papers or panels for the 1976 RSS meetings to provide visibility for research on youth and a forum for exchange of current research information and ideas. Kuvlesky was selected to act as chairman of the group for the coming year. The group also accepted an invitation from Don Crider, editor of Newsline, to use this publication as a communication vehicle. A section of Newsline devoted to information exchange on rural youth could be established. Anyone having information relevant to this section is encouraged to submit it for publication - new projects, notices of reports, requests for cooperation, etc.

Persons desiring a list of members of the "RYRG" or interested in having their names on the list should contact Kuvlesky at Texas A&M. Any suggestions or ideas about possible activities for the research group or its sessions at next year's RSS meetings should also be sent to him.
