

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY
RURAL SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH LABORATORY
617 WARF OFFICE BUILDING
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706

10/25/73
COMMENTS WELCOMED

THE PROSPECTS FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGY

BY

ARCHIBALD O. HALLER

PREPARED FOR THE ANNUAL MEETINGS

OF THE

PACIFIC SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SESSION 26 "RURAL SOCIOLOGY:

DODO OR PHOENIX"

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

MAY 4, 1973

ABSTRACT

The Prospects for Rural Sociology

by

Archibald O. Haller

Empirical sciences are efforts to explicate phenomena. Sociology's phenomena are activities of persons (social psychology), states and transformations of human organizations (social organizations), and the distribution of people (demography). Rural sociology is identical to sociology except in its focus on rural people. The world's rural people are varied and their life experiences are not identical to those of others. If done well, rural sociology's explicative task is important theoretically and practically. Theoretically, from its studies of rural people it would provide new concepts by which to enrich sociology. Practically, it would provide sociological expertise needed to cope with problems more or less unique to rural peoples. The field, though fully institutionalized, is dwarfed by the size of its task. In the United States where it is concentrated, it is also diverted from its task by a budgeted commitment to an institutionalized style of problem-solving ("extension") which neither uses nor contributes much to the body of sociological knowledge. There is a slight possibility that the field might be restricted so as to fulfill its promise, at least partially. This will require the establishment, with adequate funding, of a model department, staffed by a large number of unusually productive researcher-teachers wholly dedicated to the scientific task of explication of the sociology of rural peoples. Given such an example to follow, those committed to the field might transform it in two or three decades. Failure to carry out such a transformation will deprive both rural people and sociology.

The organizers of this session of the Pacific Sociological Association have asked me to discuss with you the prospects for rural sociology. As one who was born on the Pacific Coast and grew up in Arizona, yet has lived and worked for more than half of his life in rural sociology's midwestern homeland, I am delighted that you have given me this opportunity.

The session has been entitled "Rural Sociology: Dodo or Phoenix." Is it the one or is it the other? I hope that when ^{the} this session is over you will think it is neither. To give you a preview I think rural sociology is potentially one of the most important areas of sociology. Moreover, by all the usual signs the field is healthy and growing. Yet I believe it to be unlikely that its promise will be fulfilled, ~~that-it-is-now-about-at-its-peak-in-the-United-States;-and-that-the-roots-of-its-probable-demise-are-already-evident.~~

What is rural sociology? How does its subject matter relate to that of the general discipline? What are the signs of its apparent health? How does its strength compare with that of sociology? What are the ^{weakness?} sources of its ~~possible-decline?~~

These are the questions I shall try to answer. I hope you understand that I speak as neither a prophet of doom nor as a detractor of the field, but rather as one who believes deeply in the need for a comprehensive and dependable sociology of rural life, and seeing the structural sources of its malaise, wishes to identify them so that, if possible, steps might be taken to permit its practitioners to devote their energies to its main task as a field of knowledge.

1. The potential of rural sociology. The field of sociology has developed and continues to expand a body of concepts and hypotheses by

which to explain several sets of related phenomena: How human beings interact; how human personality is formed and expressed in behavior; how the repetitive behaviors we call social structure emerge; how social structure influences the behavior of persons; and how human populations are distributing themselves over the globe. At this point in history the field of sociology tends to be classified into three major specialties each of which treats one or more of the following topics: social psychology, social organization, and demography. Social psychology attempts to explain human interaction, the formulation and expression of individual personality in daily behavior, and the individual bases and consequences of social structure; social organization attempts to explain the internal structure and external relationships among enduring human collectivities, large and small, which are emergents of human interaction; demography attempts to explain and predict the distribution and spread of human population.

The overall objective of all-activity-of-^{sociology} sociologists is, I believe, explication. Explication is the detailed explanation of behavior of phenomena within a given domain. It may take various forms, according to the audiences and problems to which it is addressed. Some sociologists devote themselves to highly abstract theoretical and methodological analysis, as illustrated by the work of Merton and Parsons, on the one hand, and of Duncan and Blalock, on the other. Other sociologists are the main audiences for this work, and sociology journals are perhaps the main outlets for it. Some dedicate themselves to equally abstract explication, but which, addressed to experts in other disciplines, takes a somewhat different form. This is what sociologists do when they publish in such journals as Daedulus and The Public Interest. Some devote themselves to

training graduate students in the theory and method of various specialties, and some to teaching sociology to undergraduates. This, too, is explanation, although the precise intellectual problems (and vocabulary) differ according to the interests and degree of preparation of the students.

Sociologists are convinced that population density and the occupational structure of communities exert a powerful influence on other aspects of human life. This being the case, it is reasonable that sociological specializations based upon population density and occupations would come into being. This is exactly what has happened in ^{the case of} rural sociology. The field is defined as being the sociology of dispersed and isolated populations, primarily those engaged in ^{agriculture} or quite immediately dependent upon it. ^{who are} agriculture. But rural sociology is not the only subdiscipline of sociology defined by population density and/or occupationally-related concerns. This is obviously the case regarding urban sociology. Indeed the 1970 Directory of Members of the American Sociological Association (American Sociological Association, 1970) lists about 800 sociologists who define themselves as urban specialists. About 2,700 were listed in the same publication as specialists in such occupationally-related areas as education, law and society, crime and delinquency, medical sociology, and occupations and professions.

The justification for the existence of rural sociology as a body of knowledge is, as I see, simple and convincing. In their residential and occupational aspects, the special characteristics of rural people are sufficiently unique to require the existence of a special body of people trained to explicate them to whatever groups need to know about them:

the rural people themselves, other citizens, personnel of governmental agencies, etc.

This is not very different from the justification for almost all other specialties of sociology. The area of marriage and the family exists as a special subject matter because a great many people need to understand such things as how marriages work out or break up, how children are influenced by different types of families and by their locations in the family, how kinship systems condition individual behavior, etc. Medical sociology is justified by the widespread recognition, first that the social organization of medical delivery systems exerts a substantial affect on health and medical treatment, and second that the onset and course of illness itself is in part a social process. I'll not add to these examples. As specialized sociologists, I'm sure each of you has quite a defensible rationale for your speciality and, at a general level, is probably not very different from these.

If it weren't for the enormous complexity of human behavior, we would not need specialties. Maybe we would not even need sociology. But the fact is that most if not all of our more effective concepts must be applied differently to peoples living under different circumstances.

The numbers and the variability of rural people are large enough to demand the attention of a great many sociologists. It has been estimated that in 1950 79 percent of the world's population lived in localities of less than 20,000 persons. This represented a net increase in fifty years from about 1.5 to about 1.9 billion people (Larson, 1968). The total number must be considerably larger today. The estimate for the year 2000 is 3.775 billion (Ford, 1973). The sheer population numbers are enormous.

The variability is also considerable. There is rural variation in the industrialized nations of Western Europe and North America. The life and work of those in communities dependent upon family sized farms differ from those involved in large-scale agriculture. In the United States alone, the communities of small farmers in the Midwest and Northeast are quite different from those of the western ranches and from the California fruit, vegetable, and dairy operations. Both, in turn, are different from those of the rural South. In South America, the life of the Brazilian parceiro and his patrão are different from those of the Quechua-speaking peoples of the Andean highlands. Consider, too, the varieties of rural life in the African deserts, among highland and lowland tribal people in East Africa and in Japan, China, India, and South Asia.

Taken seriously, it is the task of the sociology of rural life to explicate--to provide detailed descriptions and explanations of--the social life of rural peoples who live under a dazzling variety of circumstances. The practical usefulness of such a body of substantive sociological knowledge regarding rural people would in itself make the enterprise worthwhile.

Even if the body of sociological theory and research methodology were perfected, the task of explicating the social psychology, the social structures, and the demography of this vast and varied sector of the world's population could easily absorb all of the efforts of all of the trained sociologists in the world. But we do not have a set body of general theory and research methodology.

When the sociologist approaches a research problem in his own delimited sector of human phenomena, he frequently finds that the existing

body of concepts and methods is insufficient to provide a satisfactory explication of it. If he and his colleagues are innovative, rigorous, and energetic, they may add to the body of theory and/or research. For one example, the work of Merton, Stouffer, Hyman, and others illustrates how the concept of the reference group ^{emerged from} grew-out of a need for new theory. As you know, to a large extent it grew out of research on behavior of soldiers. Another example can be drawn from the methodological work of Duncan on the use of structural equations in sociology. It grew out of research on status attainment. The main concern was to learn to what degree the occupational statuses of American men were achieved and to what extent they were ascribed. Both innovations have been found to be useful in many other sectors of sociology besides those from which they followed.

Given the state of today's sociology, the necessity and opportunity to make additions to the body of theory and methods arises almost every time the sociologist seriously attempts to formulate an explication for a set of social phenomena. This means that each time research is undertaken in a new domain of human activity, new possibilities arise for generating widely-ramifying concepts and methods. Large-scale efforts to explicate the sociology of many types of rural peoples would doubtless add a great deal to our store of general sociological knowledge.

In a few words, rural sociology is potentially fruitful, first, because it calls upon sociologists to explicate the social psychology, social organization, and demography of most of the people in the world, who live under almost unbelievably varied circumstances; and second, because such explications would beyond doubt force innovations in the general concepts and methods of sociology. This is why I believe it to

be potentially one of the most important fields of sociology.

2. The vitality of rural sociology. By all obvious signs, the field of rural sociology is faring well.

Consider first the facts regarding publications in the field. In the United States, the journal Rural Sociology has published four issues per year since it was founded in 1935. The most recent, Volume 37 (1972), contained 684 pages. It was devoted almost exclusively to presenting a total of thirty two research articles. Regionally, they were quite varied: their data concerned the United States, Puerto Rico, India, Israel, Brazil, Egypt, Bangladesh, and Mexico. Topically, they concerned status measurement, urbanization, caste, social change, information-seeking, status aspirations, interpersonal influence, fertility, mobility, achievement, innovativeness, agriculture, community development, crosscultural research, migration, and religion. At least six of these articles are attempts to add to the sociologist's theoretical or methodological tools. *P* This is by no means the only such outlet. For more than a decade, a rural sociological journal, Sociologia Ruralis, has appeared regularly in Europe. It publishes similar types of articles, mostly in English. In Rio de Janeiro, UNESCO has published America Latina for about 15 years. It is largely directed to the sociology of rural life in the southern part of the hemisphere.

Rural sociological writing neither began with these journals nor is currently restricted to them. For the United States alone, Bertrand (1973) and his colleagues have identified and abstracted almost 1900 rural sociological journal articles which have been published since 1895. In addition they have published citations (without abstracts) for almost

4,500 monographs, reports, and bulletins concerning rural sociology. These are not the only facts about publications which could be adduced, but they are sufficient to show that the field is viable in this regard.

What, then, of the voluntary societies? ~~While technically chartered in the United States,~~ ^{the oldest} The Rural Sociological Society is ~~an internationally~~ oriented association of rural sociologists. In 1956 its membership was 538. As I recall it was on the way down at that point in history and it fell off to about 425 the next year. At any rate, according to Dunkelberger (personal communication), ^{by} in 1972 it had 1,064 members, 226 of whom had addresses outside the United States. Of those in the United States 50 percent had the Ph.D. degree. In 1970, incidentally, only 20 percent of the American rural sociologists were employed outside the universities (Field, Fredrickson, and Fuguitt, 1970). About 60 percent were professors and the rest were students.

Not only is this society growing, but the European Society for Rural Sociology has been active for about 15 years and must now have 400 to 500 members. The latest addition to such groups is the Latin American Association for Rural Sociology. It is now about four years old. In December 1972 it had just over 100 members. The possibility of setting up similar societies in India and the Philippines is now under discussion. Furthermore, the three existing rural sociology societies, together with the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, have drawn up a tentative constitution for an international rural sociological association.

In short, the point of view of voluntary associations in support of the field, rural sociology is getting stronger all the time.

Graduate training in rural sociology also seems to be on the increase. The three associations mentioned above have put together an as-yet-unpublished Directory of Universities Offering Graduate Training in

Rural Sociology (Capener, 1973, personal communication). In the United States, 28 so indicate/ that they have such programs. Four Canadian universities make the same claim. In Latin America, 16 are so listed, as are 32 in Europe (in reality, both figures are probably too large). There are a few more in other parts of the world.

In summary, in terms of the existence of graduate training programs there can be no doubt that the field is growing. From the standpoint of secure publication outlets, it is far from weak and appears to be strengthening itself. The same may be said of its voluntary associations.

It is no wonder that at the periodical meetings of each rural sociological association everyone appears to be optimistic.

3. The institutional base of rural sociology. From the sociologists' perspective, no scholarly or scientific discipline--or any other social phenomenon--is intelligible apart from the social situation within which it is embedded. The context influences a discipline in a variety of ways. For example, despite its roots in Western Europe during the 19th and early 20th century, no one would seriously deny that present-day sociology bears an unmistakable American stamp. American faith in knowledge has been translated into funds for science and education. Money and a popular demand for higher education were translated into new and expanding colleges. All through this century, new disciplines have been welcomed and nurtured, sociology among them. Borrowing from and expanding upon other fields--notably psychometrics, econometrics, and social anthropology--American sociology has developed a social research technology which was simply nonexistent in Europe or anywhere else. It is neither more nor less valid because it grew up here. Indeed, it is now being diffused throughout the world. But the social

and economic conditions which fostered this development were American. Naturally this was not unique to sociology. Something corresponding to this happened in field after field.

Rural sociology, like sociology, is today primarily an American phenomenon. I do not say this with pride, patriotism, or chauvinism. It is a simple sociological fact. At this point in history practically all of the viable rural sociological work in the world turns on the United States in one way or another. With some important exceptions, the key rural sociologists of the world regularly visit the United States to learn what is happening in the field, to learn the latest research concepts and techniques. And they volunteer that they are years behind the Americans and Canadians in most respects. (The exceptions I alluded to are a few Marxists who reject the United States sociology, including rural sociology, on principle, as well as a number of French rural sociologists who maintain little contact with the United States, or so far as I can tell, with the rest of the world rural sociological community.)

If the United States is the center of rural sociology, the land-grant college of agriculture is its true institutional base. It determines the main sources of rural sociology's strengths and weaknesses. It is to that base which we must look if we are to have more than a superficial understanding of the field.

The fact is that rural sociology is more an outgrowth of American agriculture than of sociology. The first rural sociologists were not even trained in sociology. Galpin, for example, seems to have obtained rather broad education at Colgate University in the mid-1880s, but it did not include sociology (Galpin, 1937a, 1937b, 1937c). After graduating he first taught mathematics at an academy in New York state, then taught

history at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. After graduate study in philosophy at Harvard and in psychology and anthropology at Clark University he spent time as a farmer, a milk processor, and a campus pastor. At Madison, Wisconsin he came under the sponsorship of an agricultural economist named H. C. Taylor. Under Taylor's guidance, Galpin founded the country's first program in rural sociology at the University of Wisconsin in 1911. So far as I can determine he did this before he had any knowledge of sociology. His earliest contacts with sociological knowledge seem to have been in discussions with E. A. Ross of his research on the human ecology of Walworth County, Wisconsin. These were evidently held after Galpin had written it. His experience seems to be no different from that of other early rural sociologists.

In any case all three of the American rural sociology departments which have been most influential over the years were founded in colleges of agriculture. Two of these (Cornell and Wisconsin) remain there. The third, at Michigan State, has moved from the agricultural college while maintaining a tie to it. The main rural sociology program in Europe is also in the agricultural university (at Wageningen in the Netherlands).

Colleges of agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture, exert considerable influence on their programs, including rural sociology departments. By legislation, the main mission of the USDA is to improve American agriculture. This is also the main task of the college of agriculture. In the early part of the century, improvements in farming also improved rural life, and the colleges and the USDA both contributed to this end. In the last generation, improvements in production and marketing have made American agriculture extremely fruitful. The farmers who survived have benefitted. But the same forces which made

a strong agricultural plant also produced rural cast-offs who could not and cannot compete in modern agriculture. True, to some extent the colleges of agriculture helped smooth a path out of farming for many. They provided educational opportunities for those leaving farming as such. They supported a small but consistent trickle of research on non-farm adaptations of farm-reared people. They encouraged action programs, such as in home economics extension work, which had the effect of socializing rural people to urban life-styles. Yet despite a few such emphases, the overwhelming concern of the colleges and the USDA has been on improving farm production and marketing. Even in their sociology programs the main single concern of the colleges of agriculture has been with diffusion of farm technology.

All agricultural colleges in the United States are state institutions and all have important links to the federal government. Federal and state legislation does not merely define the general areas in which colleges of agriculture are to work. It also specifies within limits, how the work is to be carried out. Since the early days of rural sociology, the colleges have had three administrative subdivisions which cut into each department. Though their form has changed a bit over the years, each of these exists today. These are teaching, research, and extension. In recent years many of the colleges have added a fourth such administrative division. It deals with international programs. Each of these has a budget line. Any given department of rural sociology probably has all the first three, and a number have the fourth as well. I make a point of this, because each budgeted responsibility sets its own type of obligations upon the faculty of the department and some of these are sharply contradictory.

The first of these is teaching undergraduates and graduate students, as well as a few "farm short-course" (non-degree) students. The monies for this are provided by the state. Ordinarily an associate dean administers this under the dean of the college. The organization of teaching in colleges of agriculture is much the same as it is in the liberal arts colleges, and requires no special elaboration.

The second of these sets of activities is research on agricultural and other aspects of rural life. This is funded primarily by monies provided by the state and by the Cooperative States Research Service of the USDA. State and federal contributions are based on a formula which requires both to pay. This area, too, is administered in the college by a "director" or an associate dean. This arm of the college is usually called the Agricultural Experiment Station (sometimes Research Station). The "experiment station" is not a place. It is an administrative division of the college of agriculture which provides funds for agricultural research on topics set, within limits, by state and federal legislation. Practically all of the research work is carried on at the main campus of the college. This partly because the projects are conducted by professors and research assistants. Both must stay close to the campus--the professors because they teach, the assistants because they are graduate students. There is another reason why they stay on campus. As researchers they are more and more dependent upon complex laboratory equipment, computers, library facilities, and the expertise of other professors. On campus, these are available. Off campus, they are not.

As agricultural scientists, rural sociological researchers theoretically have access to the "in-house" monies mentioned above, which are

disbursed by the College. This is useful, although it is not as impressive as it may seem. In 1970, only 0.7% of all USDA and state AES funds were spent on sociological research, and these supported less than 100 person-years of research time (NAS Rural Sociology Panel, 1972). They may also compete at the state or national level for other research monies. In the Department of Rural Sociology where I work, for example, during the past few years, the research monies from federal agencies other than agriculture and from the big foundations have totalled far more than all of the "in-house" funds put together. This is encouraged in those colleges of agriculture which have a history of conducting basic scientific research. In others, it is not.

Teaching and research usually are thus the first two budgeted divisions within each department in an agricultural college. These two sets of activities are quite compatible. Both are conducted at the same campus. The graduates of the department form the pool from which the professor's research assistants are drawn. A professor's research colleagues are also his instructional colleagues. His research and his courses require much the same theoretical and methodological knowledge.

Extension--the third of the subdivisions which cut across the departments--is a very different matter, especially in sociology. It is not particularly compatible with either teaching or research. The agricultural extension service is the action arm of the USDA and of the colleges of agriculture. Typically, every county in the state will have an extension office, funded partly by county or state money and partly by federal money. Each county office may have from one to a dozen or more agents in such areas as agriculture, economic development, home economics, and youth programs. These agents have nominal positions in

the university, although they are not members of departmental faculties. Formerly, the dean of each college of agriculture was the administrator over the "county agents" of his state, usually through a so-called "director" of agricultural extension. Nowadays, these programs are sometimes administered outside of the college. Even so the college is always deeply involved with them. In addition, practically all departments in a college of agriculture have budgeted extension responsibilities. These are carried out by people called "extension subject matter specialists." They are usually Ph.D.s in an academic field relevant to agriculture or to home economics, and they have regular positions as professors in the various departments. In most departments their academic subject matters and their extension responsibilities coincide with each other. Marketing specialists in agricultural economics give advice on marketing problems regarding various commodities. Plant pathologists work on crop diseases. Poultry researchers provide help to poultry producers. But no one knows quite what to do with the extension sociologists except that--analogously to poultry or dairy specialists--they are supposed to work on "people problems."

By federal legislation, each state may have one or more extension sociologists, 50 percent or more of whose salaries are paid from federal funds. These people are full fledged members of the department of rural sociology. Their primary responsibility is to the extension administration. If one carries out his extension responsibilities, he is frequently on the move around the state, organizing meetings, giving speeches on population change and leadership, consulting with "resource development" agents or groups of pastors, etc. Very few have been able to carry on any systematic research while acting as extension specialists. They sometimes get in trouble with their administrators if they teach too much, because teaching regular courses on campus competes with attendance at meetings out in the state. Based upon many years of observation, it seems certain to me that

most of the more capable sociologists simply refuse to consider such positions. This is because they believe that a few years of extension work will leave them so far behind their field that they may never again catch up. In my experience, they are right: with a few exceptions, the diligent extension sociologist soon loses his sociological expertise because he fails to practice it. He loses touch with the literature. As a result he falls hopelessly behind in his field.

The fourth, newest, and probably most ephemeral of the formal activities of the colleges of agriculture is international programs. All over the so-called "third world" the United States, through the Agency for International Development as well as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Agricultural Development Council, has been assisting in the upgrading of colleges of agriculture as centers of teaching, research, and--through extension--the dissemination of the results of agricultural research. There is frequently a place for rural sociology in these programs. Indeed, under the auspices of the USDA have written several eminent rural sociologists/wrote books in various Latin American countries. This ^{was initiated} ~~occurred~~ during the 1940s, several years before the Point 4 plan (AID's precursor) was established. These included books by Nathan Whetten (1948) on rural Mexico, Lowry Nelson (1950) on rural Cuba, T. Lynn Smith (1972) on Brazil, C. C. Taylor (1948) on Argentina. The work of these men set a pattern which others have followed. Since then, quite a few rural sociology professors have spent considerable periods of time with AID and other contract programs abroad. This work--like teaching, research, and extension--is institutionalized within the agricultural college. Typically, each college which has such an "institution-building" contract will have one or two administrators on

campus and one or two at the contract site. The former are responsible for recruiting personnel to work abroad, and for taking care of the documents regarding the foreign university's graduate students who are studying on the campus. The administrators at the contract site are responsible for the teaching, research, and extension activities of the American professors who are stationed there. Because there is usually no state money in these programs--only federal or foundation funds--there is not much institutional pressure on the departments to participate, although the sociologists are usually interested.

~~The stresses of~~ These four areas ^{have} ~~which crosscut each department are~~ consequences for the sociology programs of the university. ~~fascinating to observe.~~ First, teaching responsibilities are not inconsistent with the ordinary activities of other colleges. This is not a light matter. Many college of agriculture departments have disciplinary counterparts elsewhere on the campus with which they must cooperate. The campus liberal arts college usually has a department of economics, another of sociology, usually botany and zoology, often genetics; the college of medicine may have a department of biochemistry, perhaps microbiology, etc. The college of agriculture may have a department of agricultural economics, another of rural sociology, others of plant pathology, animal husbandry, agronomy, plant and animal genetics, biochemistry, etc. The teaching activities of the rural sociologists are usually quite compatible with those of their colleagues in the department of sociology. Occasionally, though, the latter are unaware of the multiple responsibilities of the rural sociologists, and look askance at them because they think that their teaching loads are too light. The research activities are usually compatible. But here too tensions arise between the two departments, especially, if the liberal arts sociologists do not do research and

writing, or if the rural sociologists' research is viewed by the others as lacking in sociological sophistication.

Whether international activities are compatible with the main line of academic activities of teaching and research depends upon what they really consist of. If the professor draws on his overseas experience in his teaching, or if he conducts and publishes research coming from his international work, the chances are that he will keep up with his field and perhaps even be a bit ahead of it in some ways. If he spends his time in administration or in liaison with various agencies in the overseas site, he may well fall behind. My impression is that overseas experience usually enhances a sociologist's expertise.

Extension is another matter. Unless he is a superman, the more faithfully the extension sociologist tries to fulfill his obligations to extension, the more out of date his sociological knowledge becomes, and the more tension this generates both between departments and within the rural sociology department itself.

The strains caused by the rift between extension and the other more academic activities are extremely serious in departments dedicated to both. These tensions are not merely felt by individual faculty members in proportion to their budgets. A department which has extension budgeted in it, tends to attract others who are interested in extension even though they themselves are not so budgeted, just as a department with international responsibilities attracts other faculty members who are internationally oriented. Concretely, a department having extension responsibilities will try to be an effective action agency, in addition to carrying out its teaching and research responsibilities.

4. The prospects for rural sociology. The academic arm of rural sociology is oriented toward careful explication. The job it has set for itself describing the sociology of the world's rural peoples is staggering. The numbers of trained rural sociologists available to do the job is small--in all there are probably no more than 700-800 Ph.D.s in rural sociology in the world. Despite the number of graduate programs which exist on paper, there are not more than 16 viable doctoral programs in rural sociology in the United States and not all of these are provided by formal rural sociology programs. Indeed, the American Sociological Association (1972) lists only 10 United States and one Canadian university emphasizing graduate work in the field. There appears to be only one strong doctoral training program in rural sociology outside North America. Contrast this with the case for sociology. There are about 180 graduate training programs in sociology in the United States, about half of them offering Ph.D. degrees (American Sociological Association, 1972). An examination of the Roose and Anderson report (1970) and of the Glenn-Villenz (1970) data shows that there are perhaps six programs in the United States which could be reasonably labeled "elite departments of sociology" on the basis of their publications and their prestige. Bigness is a necessary condition of their excellence. The largest single rural sociology program, Cornell's, is smaller than the smallest of the elite sociology programs, and the largest of the latter is three times the size of Cornell's rural sociology department. A look at the programs shared by elite departments is informative. In 1972-1973, all six stressed political sociology, socioeconomic change, and social stratification. Five stressed race relations, social psychology, sociological theory, and urban sociology. Four stressed demography, formal organization,

methodology and statistics, and occupations and professions (taken from American Sociological Association, 1972). These are the areas the elite departments define as most worthy of explication at this point in history. Most of them are appropriate subject matters for a rural sociology program to treat. There is not a rural sociology program anywhere in the world which has the personnel numbers sufficient to support research and graduate training in more than a few of these.

It takes large numbers of extremely well-trained and dedicated sociologists to perform excellently in even one sociology program. It takes many times that number to explicate carefully the important social phenomena in any one delimited area. The explicative task of rural sociology is as broad as that of the rest of sociology. Done right, it must focus upon more people and a greater variety of sociocultural systems than is true of the rest of sociology.

Yet a few brilliant sociologists in the right spot might do wonders for rural sociology. The rural sociology system is well institutionalized. It is not going to collapse suddenly. Moreover, rural sociologists (like other people) use each other as models. I am convinced that if just one absolutely outstanding rural sociology faculty could be brought together for a decade or more it could induce multiplier effects through its own work and its influence on others. That is, if its members could be freed from other obligations to conduct research, to write, and to teach a well-selected set of graduate students, its example could serve as a guide for the others. Its new Ph.D.s could fill positions in the other programs, thus strengthening them. Also, those trained elsewhere would tend to emulate the work of a creative group. Conceivably, by the year 2000 we could have enough well-selected and well-trained personnel so that the promise

of rural sociology might be fulfilled--enough to describe and clarify the human social problems unique to the various types of the vast rural population of the world and enough scientific brainpower to transform the experiences of those sectors of human experience into new contributions to sociological theory and research technology.

Without at least one such exemplary center of rural sociology, I do not believe that the promise can be fulfilled. Unfortunately, I am pessimistic about its possibilities. To accomplish this, it would be necessary for at least one big rural sociology program to dedicate itself wholly to sociological explication. Interdisciplinary work would divert it. Weak sociology would doom it to failure. Faculty commitment to short-term application of sociological (or other) knowledge would divert it. Only brilliant, dedicated, single-minded concentration on sociological explication, firmly based upon research, could ^{suffice.} ~~accomplish it.~~

Unfortunately, such a concentration is probably not possible. The research capability of all present rural sociology programs is debilitated by the action emphasis of the departments; as we have seen, this is ordained by the budgetary requirement to do "extension" work. In addition, the most capable sociologists are not usually attracted to extension. This means that the research-action split within the departments is aggravated by a competency split. The result is that it will be quite difficult to form the kind of hard, active, and intellectually productive group that would be required to galvanize other programs of rural sociology.

5. Conclusion. As I said in the beginning, rural sociology is neither dodo nor phoenix. Most of the stereotypes about it are nonsense. It is a field of great potential. Yet it is doubtful that its promise

can become a reality. What of the future of the rural sociology departments? My guess is that most of them will improve a bit, raising themselves or at least keeping up with the average quality of other sociology departments. Their members will gradually increase, too. But the elite departments of sociology are going to sweep ahead, adding conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, and substantive knowledge. / These will, ^{mostly about the non-rural sectors of the} world.

I think, improve far faster than the best of the rural sociology programs, gradually leaving the latter--and most of the rest of sociology--farther and farther behind. I do not think the rural sociology programs will die easily, though in a decade or two they may become tradition-ridden backwater departments, adding little of importance to the body of sociological knowledge. Of course, this dreary picture might change; though they are quite unlikely, one can imagine a set of events which could make at least one strong department possible. Obviously, one would have to be the elimination of extension. Another would have to be a rigorous and effective personnel policy, which would collect and hold on a set of outstanding sociologists wholly dedicated to explicating the sociology of rural life.

Assuming that such a department is not in the cards, what will happen to the task of explicating rural life? Who will do it? Unfortunately, for the most part I fear it will be relatively neglected. Without one or more dynamic centers especially devoted to the study of rural life, I believe that there may not be much incentive for individual sociologists to devote attention to it. Of course, general sociologists do not neglect rural life quite as much today as they did 15 years ago. The war in Vietnam, the world food crisis, the sociologists' discovery of rural poverty--among rural southern blacks, the Appalachian whites,

the reservation Indians, and the rural Chicanos--has made the majority of the sociological community less insensitive to the social circumstances of rural people than they used to be. Perhaps the future of the best of sociology of rural life lies outside the rural sociology programs. Still, a more likely, if more pessimistic, forecast is that the sociological community as a whole will continue to ignore the rural population as it has in the past.

Rural sociology is neither dinosaur nor phoenix. It is simply too small and too fragile to carry out its task and unless something unforeseen happens it is doubtful that it will grow to be big enough and strong enough to do it.

References

American Sociological Association

- 1970 Directory of Members. Washington, D.C.: The American Sociological Association.
- 1972 Guide to Graduate Departments of Sociology, 1972-1973. Washington, D.C.: The American Sociological Association.

Bertrand, Alvin

- 1973 Seventy Years of Rural Sociology in the United States. New York: Essay Press.

Field, Donald R., Carl R. Fredrickson, and Glenn V. Fuguitt

- 1972 The Rural Sociological Society: A membership profile." Unpublished paper presented at the annual meetings of the Rural Sociological Society in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 27.

Ford, Thomas R.

- 1973 "The presidents' column." Newsline 1 (January): 1-4.

Galpin, Charles Josiah

- 1937a "The story of my drift into rural sociology: I. Scraps from my log book." Rural Sociology 2 (June): 115-122.
- 1937b "The story of my drift into rural sociology: II. Beginnings of rural sociology at Wisconsin." Rural Sociology 2 (September): 299-309.
- 1937c "The story of my drift into rural sociology: III. Fifteen years in the U.S. Department of Agriculture." Rural Sociology 2 (December): 415-427.

1915 Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community. Madison,
Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture.

Glenn, N. and W. Villemez

1970 "The productivity of sociologists at 45 American universities."
The American Sociologist 5 (August): 244-252.

Larson, Olaf

1968 "Rural society." Pp. 580-588 in David L. Sills, editor, the
International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, V. 13.
New York: MacMillan Company and the Free Press.

NAS Rural Sociology Panel

1972 "Observations on the status of rural sociological research
sponsored by the USDA and the state agricultural experiment
stations." Unpublished document of the Agricultural Board
of the National Academy of Sciences. Washington, D.C.
(February).

Nelson, Lowry

1950 Rural Cuba. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

Roose, K. and C. Andersen

1970 A Rating of Graduate Programs. Washington, D.C.: American
Council on Education.

Smith, T. Lynn

1972 Brazil: People and Institutions. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
State University Press. (First edition, 1946).

Taylor, Carl C.

1948 Rural Life in Argentina. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
University Press.

Whetten, Nathan

1948 Rural Mexico. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.