RURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH IN SOCIOLoGY

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Lack of Correspondence of Social Research to Field Situations
by Dr. Kenneth E. Pigg

A Needed Research Orientation For Rural Sociologists in the South
by Dr. John E. Dunkelberger et. al.

Problems and Prospects of Application
by Dr. Edward O. Moe

SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
SRDC SERIES PUBLICATION NO. 19
FOREWORD

Knowledge is in many respects a living thing—it grows and changes, and various of its parts are replaced as they become obsolete, but the dynamic nature of knowledge is traceable to this interplay and tension with its acquisition, transmission, and application.

Applying knowledge to activate needed social, economic, and environmental change is the major mission of rural development. When scientific inquiry reveals a need for action, or when rural people themselves require and request assistance in meeting their goals, programs must be developed to best remedy the situation.

These three papers outline the major concerns of rural sociological research as it is practiced in the South today. Dr. Kenneth E. Pigg looks at the "Lack of Correspondence in Social Research to Field Situations." He finds that too often Experiment Station research has no applicability to the problems Extension agents face in the field, and suggests some ways to close the communications gap. Dr. John E. Dunkelberger and his subcommittee on Research Priorities review the current state of the art in rural sociology research and discuss new theoretical orientations and techniques. Dr. Edward O. Moe attacks the "Problems and Prospects of Application" by centering on the contributions to knowledge which can be made by and through the land-grant university system.

Together these papers raise vital questions about the direction of sociological research and the programming based upon it. For in the end it is the benefit of rural people and a betterment of their way of life which determines the success of any efforts.

William W. Linder
Director

August 1977
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Published by the Southern Rural Development Center
Box 5406
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

SRDC Series Publication No. 19
August 1977
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THE LACK OF CORRESPONDENCE IN
SOCIAL RESEARCH TO
FIELD SITUATIONS

by

Dr. Kenneth E. Pigg
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Reprinted from Rural Development Research and Education,
THE LACK OF CORRESPONDENCE IN SOCIAL RESEARCH TO FIELD SITUATIONS

Whenever Extension agents and Experiment Station researchers get together, the comment heard most often is usually: "The research you are doing doesn't have any relevance to the problems Extension agents actually face in the field." Sadly, this criticism usually has more than a little truth in it. In fact, it can be surprising when research can find some practical usefulness in operational situations. Of course this problem applies more to sociological research then to research on technical problems in agricultural production. Exploring some of the reasons for the lack of correspondence between the "problem" and the "research question" should give a better understanding of the researcher's situation by field staff and eventually bring the interests of researcher and user closer together.

Why does a researcher pick the questions he does? The topics he selects are a function of his professional training, the institutional environment in which he works, the administrative structure of which he is a part, and the requirements of his professional field.

The old cliche about "publish or perish" may be trite but its impact on the researcher is not. He is restricted in the topics he can choose for research to those of sufficiently broad interest in his discipline to justify publication of the research results. Without being able to demonstrate to his administrative head the ability to publish in professional journals, the researcher will be unable to continue in his research role. Whenever practical or field problems cannot be stated in broad terms, they will very likely be ignored in favor or those which can.
Another constraint on the researcher is his own personality. In order to maintain his professional integrity, the researcher must pursue research topics which fall within his general area of expertise and to which he can apply the kinds of methodological training he has received. Without recognizing this constraint, the credibility of the researcher falls into disrepute; the information he might provide to a field worker concerning a community development problem would be very poor if that researcher were trained primarily to study the attitudes and motivations of individuals with regard to technological change. When such a problem occurs, the agent is unlikely to call again upon the researcher for assistance, the institution of which he is a part suffers, and the eventual quality of the local program suffers.

A related constraint on the researcher's choice of topics and his approach to the problem is the need to produce "generalizable" results. The researcher must not only select his topic in accordance with this constraint, but he must also select his sample to reflect the general population in which he is interested. He must conceptually define his research framework so that he can draw general conclusions applicable to any particular situation. Failure to do so will severely limit the usefulness of his research.

The fourth constraint is more complex. It involves the fundamental question of what factors ultimately define the research topic. Stated differently, the researcher must seek to separate the immediate problem from the issues involved. One of the most common mistakes the "socially concerned" researcher makes is to allow the users of his research to define the problem for him, rather than to investigate the user's situation fully in an effort to get a more complete picture of what the user is asking. At its most extreme, this situation can result in a "mindless" sociology, in which the
researcher has little control over the kinds of data he analyzes, the questions he poses, or the eventual uses to which his research is put. Additionally, allowing the client to define the problem may subject the researcher to damaging accusations of political bias. While sociological research should be "apolitical," it should not also be "politically naive."

Finally, the researcher and Extension agent both operate in a world of ineffective communication, despite our efficient communications technology. Too often the research topics selected by the researcher do not reflect field problems because those problems have not been communicated to the researcher. Such imperfect knowledge of "real" situations and pragmatically focused needs will always produce little correspondence between research and utilization.

This, then, is the "context" in which research topics are chosen. What can be done to improve the situation? If the field staff can communicate -- frequently and effectively -- their needs to researchers, some of this lack of correspondence can be remedied.

Making time available in an always busy schedule to document in writing the specific problems the local agent faces can bring those problems directly to the attention of the researcher. Or requesting Extension specialists to discuss problems with researchers before responding to the field will help eliminate ineffectiveness. No it's not inefficiency of the tools we have to communicate with. Every effort must be made to communicate directly with researchers, rather than indirectly through impersonal reports, newsletters, and the like, which only add to the volume of "professional" material to which researchers must attend.

The communications gap cannot be chosen by the efforts of local agents
alone. Researchers should make greater attempts to get out of the office and deal more directly with agents and local groups in order to get a first-hand impression. In some cases, accomplishing this goal may require some structural changes. Appointments in Experiment Station faculty positions should emphasize a primary responsibility (research, teaching, Extension), without creating the impression that a researcher, for example, does not also have some Extension responsibilities. Also, administrative allotment of funds to departmental programs should include specific monies to permit researchers to travel in their states. And, researchers, in reporting the results, should make greater efforts to present the practical significance of their research, and to offer specific suggestions as to how those results could be used.

In a period when research is increasingly called upon to provide answers to pressing problems, the local agent can help bring the focus of social research in line with the needs of practical situations. The researcher can also make greater efforts to present the results of his research in a manner directly applicable to local problems. In short, the responsibility for the lack of correspondence between research and practice falls on the shoulders of all involved: administrators, researchers, and field agents, and it can only be improved if we all make every effort to carry our share of the responsibility.
A NEEDED RESEARCH ORIENTATION FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGISTS
IN THE SOUTH

by

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Subcommittee on Research Priorities

The compiler of this report wishes to acknowledge the major inputs of
William P. Kuvlesky and Harold F. Kaufman, who developed position papers
on the topic from which the present report was synthesized. This
article is reprinted from Newsline, Vol. IV, No. 4 (1976), published by
the Rural Sociological Society.
A NEEDED RESEARCH ORIENTATION FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGISTS
IN THE SOUTH

Introduction

What research by rural sociologists in the South can help provide a sound knowledge base for social development in rural areas? This question was posed by the Southern Agricultural Experiment Station Directors to the Southern Rural Sociology Research Committee more than a year ago. It was a question worthy of consideration by researchers concerned with the rural South. Thus, the purpose of this statement is to treat this and related questions about identification of primary research needs.

Interest in identifying priorities for research is not new among rural sociologists. Prominent efforts to address the issue appear in several presidential addresses to the Rural Sociological Society, in the work of the Committee of Fifteen of the Rural Sociological Society (Sewell, 1960), and in a book entitled Our Changing Rural Society (Copp, 1964). Although special projects have been pursued at isolated times and places, there has not developed any major thrust toward expanding the scope of rural sociological research into critical new areas or any implementation of dramatically different theoretical and methodological orientations.

The establishment of the Southern Rural Sociology Research Committee in 1968 was at least in part a response to this type of concern for addressing the most pertinent research problems (Dunkelberger and Vanlandingham, ed., 1974). Virtually the same desire to identify research priorities was present among the Southern Directors in 1970 when they convened the Southern Task Force on Rural Development which attempted to address this issue in its discussions and report (Southern Task Force on Rural Development, 1970).
Continuing attention to problems and research priorities is essential to any maturing discipline. Rural sociology in the South has experienced substantial growth in recent years both inside and outside the land-grant college framework (McLean, et al., 1975). It is relatively well organized on a regional basis and has attracted the interest of a number of important publics. The foundation has been laid. Now is the time to freshly assess current research orientations in conjunction with the most critical needs of the region and to initiate new research thrusts into neglected areas, or to attack "old" problems from different theoretical orientations.

The purpose of this report is three-fold. First, it is to review briefly the general state of rural sociology research in the South. Second, it is an attempt at presenting a rationale and set of criteria for determining research priorities. And, third, it is to suggest some needed sociological research emphases related to the practical problems of the region.

Current Research Emphasis

Review of research projects presently being conducted by rural sociologists at the Agricultural Experiment Stations of the Southern region reveals a strong attachment to practical problems (Southern Rural Development Center, 1974). The research projects tend to fall under one of six general problem areas, listed here according to the present amount of research activity across the region:

1. Rural development. A broad category of problems relating to economic and human resources of rural areas as well as mechanisms for providing public services associated with a high quality of life.

2. Population distribution. The shifting numbers, characteristics, and spatial distribution of people between rural and urban areas and between regions.
3. **Social inequality and disadvantaged groups.** Standards and levels of living along with programs and policies serving special categories and minorities.

4. **Environment and natural resources.** Limitations on the availability of natural resources and the societal reappraisal of valued priorities relating to standards of living.

5. **Agricultural industry.** Problems of agriculture such as land utilization, management practices, adoption of technology, and other concerns relating to production.

6. **Nonmetropolitan communities.** Local institutions and the nature of their function in rural areas.

Several of these six research areas represent rather traditional ones for rural sociologists, whereas others have evolved only within the last decade. Areas such as population and community have been around since the origin of the field, but the natural environment area is a rather recent problem concern. There are also several additional areas that could be identified, although they do not represent problems to which any significant research effort is presently directed.

**Criteria for Determining Research Priorities**

Rural sociology is an applied field in the discipline of sociology and as such may be seen as a bridge between science and society (Kaufman, et al., 1964). Being an applied field means that the impetus for research originates largely outside the discipline in the social problems confronted by policy makers and practitioners of professions involved with action programs. Although the impetus for research may come from outside the field, the orientation and subject matter are of necessity sociological. The practice of sociology is a process of research and interpretation relating to societal problems. Rural sociology localizes these problems in the towns, villages;
and open-country sectors of society and lends visibility to problems of "macro" scope.

What relevance does this have for the selection of research priorities? It suggests that criteria for identifying priorities may be found at two levels—-that of practical problems and that of sociological theory and methodology. Most classifications of research problems in the past have been derived from practice rather than from theory and method. It is the failure to approach the problem from the latter perspective that tends to frustrate the rural sociologists' capabilities for resolution of pressing societal problems.

Determining research priorities is not an isolated event but a continuing process. For this reason, the establishing of criteria and procedures for setting priorities is more important than developing a listing of specific priorities. Moreover, lists of priorities defined only in terms of current rather than futuristic research become dated and, if everyone's interests are considered, encyclopedic. An adequate basis for determining research priorities must be grounded in the "practice of rural sociology" in order to provide continuity and focus but not to the exclusion of theory and methodology as synthesizing vehicles for meaningful solutions.

Critique of Current Research Practice

Proposals aimed at establishing research priorities for a field such as rural sociology must be visualized within the context of existing research practice. A critical look must be given the current situation in order to decide where a change in emphasis is required.

A general indictment against rural sociologists in the South, and to
some extent against sociologists per se, is their tendency to emphasize the demographic perspective and social-psychological methods which stress individual characteristics and opinions rather than efforts to deal with social organization and patterns of interaction. To date this latter perspective has been neglected in the southern region. One reason for this relative lack of emphasis may stem from the requirement that a broader mix of methodologies is required along with a higher investment of research funds.

Low-budget research is one reason rural sociologists have paid relatively little attention to the use of longitudinal and historical design and have been preoccupied with cross-sectional analyses. There is a specific need for more extensive use of longitudinal design and the accompanying emphasis on social change and stability. Solution of some pressing contemporary social problems will most likely depend on extensive change in social structure while others will depend on maintaining relative structural stability.

Abundant evidence exists to document the fact that rural sociologists in the South have not focused their research on social organization and interaction as a central concern of sociological study. Just a cursory look at social organization reveals different levels of operation ranging from the local through the state and regional to the national and international. At the same time there are different types of organizations ranging from primary groups such as the family to large secondary collectivities like labor unions and political parties. It is within this dynamic setting of social organizations that the problems of rural people in the South must be analyzed. Change in the organization of society as it relates to rural people is the problem context with which the rural sociologist must
ultimately be concerned. Such a perspective offers the greatest potential for contributing to the broad task of rural development at the present time.

Identification of social change as a prime aspect of contemporary society is one thing on which most rural sociologists agree. Social change is a general theoretical orientation that can serve as a comprehensive frame of reference for conceptualizing the problems confronted by rural people in the South. At least one sociologist has called for his colleagues to broaden their perspective to involve more direct focus on larger systems of social organization (Etzioni, 1970). This shift in emphasis does not预clude the study of smaller societal units or the neglect of other perspectives such as the demographic and social-psychological, but rather gives expanded attention to the larger organizational contexts within which these smaller units exist and to how they affect local institutions and groups. To accomplish this shift, the rural sociologists will need to: (1) utilize a broader set of observational methods, and (2) move to broad studies encompassing the linkages between levels of social organization. Greater effectiveness in dealing with general patterns of local and regional change along with a better understanding of the complex of interacting processes active in social change should result from such an approach. Specifically, rural sociologists in the South need to place more research emphasis on:

(1) changes in social organization and interactional patterns, and

(2) linkages between various levels of social organization.

Emerging patterns of change in social organization are clearly contrary to the idealized conception of rural society as the stronghold of grass-roots democracy based on local autonomy and rugged individualism (Warren, 1963). Because the southern United States has changed more slowly
than other regions of the country with regards to these patterns, the traditional rural picture still maintains meaning. However, it seems clear that the South, too, is changing to a more urban pattern of organizational life and that the rate of change is occurring at an increasingly rapid pace. It appears also that the majority of rural people in the South from the driver of the pulpwood truck and the part-time farmer to the local politician recognize that things are changing and are no longer within their sphere of influence.

Some rural sociologists have proposed that the driving force behind rural social change resides in the transformed operation of key institutions such as education and government. One such change is embodied in the movement of decision-making away from the local community and from locally based systems of relationships (Sower and Miller, 1964). Both in explicitly organized public spheres of action and in many more subtly organized nonpublic spheres, the key decision-making processes determining the critical life changes of small societal units are located outside the local area. Often there is only a vague notion among local people of where the critical decisions are actually made and who makes them. Evolving between the individual and the locus of authority is an increasingly complex organizational structure with overlapping responsibilities for given areas of concern. To understand what such social change holds for the rural South, there must be developed a thorough appreciation of the changing nature of vertical linkages between levels and types of organizations. More attention is needed to studies of regional configurations (Ford, 1966).

Rural communities have already lost their capacity to some extent to determine their own destinies. This erosion of local autonomy will increase
and they will become more linked to and dominated by urban centers of social, economic, and political concentration. Rural sociologists in the South have done little research to determine the possible consequences of such changes on the quality of rural life. Particular attention should be directed to the ways in which local communities and their constituent subunits are linked to and influenced by other social units of which they are a part.

Although no one expects to see the time when rural-urban life styles become one, it is expected that rural life styles will become increasingly urbanized (Copp, 1964). What is less clear is the kinds of conditions that will influence the extent to which this process occurs. The cultural ethos of self-determination and local autonomy characteristic of rural society provide a compelling incentive to consider the variety of research problems created by the urbanization process. Since we currently know little about the variability and consistency that exist in the patterned ways of life among contemporary rural communities in the South, it seems justified to emphasize descriptive studies of this order in future research undertakings.

Dramatic changes in social organization at the local level have resulted in increasingly complex patterns of intergroup relations, shifts from full-time to part-time or no farming, distinct rates of social deviance, to indicate but a few examples. Most of these and many other changes can be traced to external pressures; but regardless of their initial source, these changes will precipitate others by affecting such things as the determinants of social rank, social norms, and the structuring of influence and authority. There is a pressing need for rural sociologists to begin researching the consequences of such changes on the basic social fabric of all segments of the community. Research by rural sociologists is needed to identify points
in the organizational structure where inefficiencies and blockages to meeting change occur. Change is an acknowledged fact of contemporary life in the rural South. The research challenge is to assist rural areas meet change in a manner that strengthens rather than depreciates the quality of rural life.

Conclusions

Rural sociological research in the South needs to confront the question of research priorities in order to more effectively meet the needs of its various client publics and especially the rural people and localities throughout the region. The process of determining research priorities for an applied science is not an easy one. An explicit examination of the practical potentials for research findings, the long-term contributions to scientific knowledge, and the normative stance involved all relate to this process.

In this statement an attempt has been made to review the current state of the art in rural sociology research. Much good work is being conducted, yet some very suggestive theoretical orientations and methodological tools are either under- or un-utilized. One such theoretical orientation is that of social change as it applies to social organization with particular application to social structures and organizational linkages. In order to employ the organizational orientation there must be a change in methodological emphasis to include the use of a more diverse assortment of research tools.

The use of case studies and longitudinal designs will increase the cost of doing research. Where will the additional funds come from for such studies? Over the years rural sociology has experienced difficulty in
identifying specific client publics with sufficient economic or political influence to change the system for allocating research funds. The primary benefactors of rural sociological research are not highly organized groups such as the Cotton Producers Association or the Farm Bureau but the general public. Lacking direct ties to specific kinds of industries or public agencies which support such research, either with funds or pressure, rural sociology has not been able to obtain its share of the available research monies. Thus, increased emphasis needs to be given to building into research activities a capacity for initiating and continuing communication with potential clients and users of the research results.

This statement has specified a limited set of substantive problem areas which embrace the current research activities of rural sociologists in the South. Within each of the six areas enumerated, a priority emphasis is possible using a theoretical orientation of social change in organizational structures and patterns of interaction. The challenge to rural sociologists in the South is to attempt using this orientation in their research activities and thereby provide an additional dimension that suggests exciting possibilities for problem solutions. By the same token, the Southern Agricultural Experiment Station Directors must realize that implementation of such a research thrust is more time-consuming and more costly.

Finally, there is a continuing need to work intensively on developing a process for establishing research priorities. First, there needs to be a collaborative effort among rural sociologists to develop an organizational structure to exchange research information, to develop a broad framework of general priorities and to establish reciprocal communication with special publics (i.e., the Southern Agricultural Experiment Station Directors).
The SRSRC provides one mechanism for achieving this goal. Second, there needs to be established a means for organizing effective working subgroups within the larger body of rural sociologists along lines of particular substantive problem areas. These smaller units can then establish more specific priorities relative to their general areas of interest and competence.

The establishing of priorities is a continuous process—it can never be finished. This report provides the basis for initiating an organized effort to channelize this process and a general framework for providing a basis for the direction of priority setting.
REFERENCES


PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF APPLICATION

by

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Adapted from a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association, Columbus, Mississippi, October 1975.
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF APPLICATION

Introduction*

Questions about the role of sociology in action and the problems and prospects of using or applying sociological knowledge in seeking solutions to major community and societal issues will not go away. They have always confronted us, they confront us now, and will continue to confront those who follow our discipline.

This is a good time for dispassionate analysis. As Street and Weinstein observed, the winds of social, political, and intellectual upheaval have moderated, but the demand for and upon sociology remains high. We are encouraged by the maturing and rising sophistication of the discipline and by the promise of application. At the same time we are deterred by the spotty nature of our products and the failure "to provide a coherent and convincing basis for action in improving significant institutional patterns in our society" (Street and Weinstein, 1975).

What I attempt to do in this paper is:

1. Explore, briefly, the concerns about application and the demands for communication of research findings which are internal to institutions of higher education and those that are external to them.

2. Re-examine ideas on the uses of sociological knowledge and particularly some of the views held by the founders of the discipline.

3. Examine the institutional framework within which we work and identify some of the forces which facilitate communication and application of research findings, and some which impede these processes.

4. Identify some approaches and some models which would more effectively link users of research and researchers.

An involvement strategy which brings together sociologists, sociological researchers, and users of sociological knowledge can become both a powerful communication and social change strategy. Up to this point in time, what seems to be a rather simple, straight-forward approach has not been implemented in any significant way. Examples from the land-grant university research stations highlight similarities and differences in application among the sciences.

Research for Policy Purposes

Some clarification of the concept of research for policy purposes is needed. This term is defined to include:

1. Making basic systematic analyses of significant societal issues and "problems" in their institutional settings including causes, effects, and consequences.

2. Analyzing, devising, and testing of strategical alternatives to attain selected policy or program goals, including evaluation of inputs and outputs and/or costs and effectiveness.

3. Devising, assessing, and testing specific institutional and technological innovations including new sets of rules which influence what is to be done, how, by whom, and at what levels or standards with respect to public goods and services.

4. Devising and testing of information, evaluation, and monitoring systems which make it possible to assess the extent to which programs achieve their objectives and to determine their overall impact, intended and unintended, on the conditions they were designed to improve.

5. Analyzing organizations and agencies as social systems and as parts of the larger system through which policies and programs are implemented—their goals, their structure, their place in the "field" or the community, and their relationships to other organizations serving the same area.
The ultimate and discriminating product of policy research is a policy, program, or action modified by research results. While such research may be a contribution to existing knowledge, and may in whole or part be published in the favored journals, this is not what distinguishes it. Important characteristics of disciplinary research such as parsimony and elegance are overshadowed by the correctness of predictions. As Coleman (1973) points out "the policy research problem enters from outside any academic discipline and must be carefully translated from the real world of policy or the conceptual world of a client without loss of meaning." It is increasingly recognized that most applied research, and much so-called policy research, is not policy research at all. It is not because the research is not done in a policy context and the findings are not adequate to modify a social or development policy or program at any level from the local to the federal.

For purposes of clarity one must distinguish between different types of research, although the differences may sometimes be overemphasized. Policy research attempts to develop solutions to problems in societies by various alternatives and assessing their relative effectiveness and costs. It is strategic in concept and design. Applied research tends to be tactical and to be characterized by the use of discrete findings to improve established practices and procedures, or to propose new ones within established patterns or systems. Basic research undergirds both policy and applied research. Its great value is that it is abstract, theoretical, and not tied to action. All these types of research are needed to bridge the gap between understanding societies, institutions, and communities and devising specific ways to improve their functioning or to develop new systems to improve the human condition.
I. THE CONCERN ABOUT COMMUNICATING RESULTS--THE DEMANDS FOR COMMUNICATION

The growing concern about "applied research," "action research," "research for policy purposes" and the "communication of research results" may be seen as a constellation of forces. Some are internal in our system of higher education and specific to publicly supported universities and colleges and their research traditions. Others are external to higher education and rooted within the struggle of society to achieve quality in living and to solve some horrendously complicated social problems. These sets of forces combine to heighten concern about the research.

**Forces Within the American System of Higher Education**

A major internal force is the basic design of our publicly supported colleges and universities with their functions grounded in the functions of knowledge itself, i.e., acquisition and discovery of knowledge in research, transmission of knowledge in teaching, and application and utilization of knowledge in public service-extension.

The intricate interrelation among these functions is critical. It is in these interrelations that the functions are tested as former President Perkins of Cornell (1965) observed. "Knowledge acquired must be transmitted or it dies. Knowledge acquired and transmitted must be used or it becomes sterile and inert. Even more chemistry of knowledge is such that the very discipline of application stimulates and guides those who work at the frontiers of knowledge."

"Knowledge is in many respects a living thing--it grows and changes, and various of its parts are replaced as they become obsolete, but the
dynamic nature of knowledge is traceable to this interplay and tension with its acquisition, transmission, and application. It is this interaction that creates the needs for new knowledge, that brings inaccurate teaching to account, that shows what could be rather than what is. Taken separately, the three aspects of knowledge lead nowhere; together they can and have produced an explosion which has changed the world."

The pretensions of this system of higher education are more than rhetoric, although there is never any shortage of rhetoric. There is a deep and continuing concern within the system about the interplay among the functions of knowledge. Even when there seems to be an evident lack of concern, there is implicit both substantial uneasiness and uncertainty about what research is needed and how to put the results to use.

A second major internal factor is that of the value systems of researchers themselves. Most researchers seem committed to the idea of doing research that serves some social purpose in addition to its contribution to a growing body of knowledge. Researchers are elated when their results are used by policy makers and program administrators. They are also aware of the inadequacy of much of their research for policy purposes, and the lack of an institutional framework which supports adequately applied and policy research.

Another factor is the growing recognition that the failure of development policies and programs is in part at least a failure of academe and its intellectual and research enterprises. While a feeling, widely held, that policy makers--congress, state legislatures, the "feds," state agencies, county commissioners--always "screw things up" puts the monkey on the backs of others, there is the lurking fear that back of their failure may be an intellectual and research failure.
A fourth factor is the recognition of increasing applied and policy research competence in the social sciences. Of particular importance are the richer and more adequate bodies of theory in sociology and in other social science disciplines, the development of more sophisticated research methodology, and the uses of computers which enable researchers to deal with problems of the complexity and magnitude inherent in policy and program issues. This growing competence has been built, in part, by public investments in social science and social science research.

The final point is the emergence of potential research constituencies in the social sciences. Let me illustrate this point with the constituency interested in the development and quality of life in our nonmetropolitan rural areas. Included are such national and local groups as the Cooperative Extension Service and others; the executive and legislative branches of national, state, and local governments; the rural development subcommittees of the House and the Senate and the staffs of legislators; the Coalition for Rural Development; the Rural Caucus; the Farmers Home Administration; the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service; national, state, and local planning and development bodies; state and national associations of municipal and county officials; the National Association of Regional Councils; and the Rural Education Association, the Rural Housing Alliance, the Housing Assistance Council; the American Medical Association; the Office of Rural Development in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The list is very long, and those listed are only illustrative of the types of groups that are interested in development of nonmetropolitan rural areas. The fact that they are increasing in number is reassuring. There is someone out there with whom we need to be in continuing communication.
Forces Outside Higher Education and the Land-Grant System

There are a number of insistent external forces, also, that are part of the constellation of influences supporting a new relationship between researchers and policy makers, and other users of sociological and other social science research. Among the more important of these forces are:

1. The growing demand that institutions of higher education generally, and that researchers particularly, respond to national needs and help in the alleviation of human problems. Creation of a program entitled "Research Applied to National Needs" (RANN) in the National Science Foundation is a case in point.

2. The increasing requests from decision makers, citizens, and program and agency administrators for help in understanding social issues, for assessing policy and program alternatives, and for evaluating impact of programs.

3. Closely related to point 2 is the increasingly sophisticated oversight function performed by Congressional subcommittees such as the Subcommittee on Rural Development of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry chaired by Senator Dick Clark of Iowa. Senator Clark does an excellent job of questioning and probing. He is attempting to get at the equity issues in the allocation of resources and to get some better estimate of the impact of policies and programs. This serves a very useful purpose.

4. The last external factor to be mentioned is the observation of President Frederich P. Thieme of the University of Colorado (1972) that "It seems inevitable that for the next twenty years or so the new and major incremental federal support for universities will be to purchase their services in an effort to solve national problems." The necessity to respond to national needs, and the investment in education and research, must be taken into account.

The Confluence of Forces -- A New Opportunity

What we are confronted with, then, is a confluence of internal and external forces which seem to support a stronger, more vigorous effort in application and the uses of sociological research findings on social policy
issues. This is an opportune time. The "turn-around" in population growth and job creation in nonmetropolitan rural areas since 1970 identified by Beale (1974) and others, for example, seems to usher in a new area. Some old issues persist and new ones are emerging. Stabilization and/or new growth will likely create a more favorable climate for improving economic opportunities and social services. Less effort will have to be expended to overcome the discouragement of continuing decline. The time is opportune and a basis has been built for a significant new response.

II. IDEAS ON THE USES OF SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE HELD BY FOUNDERS OF THE DISCIPLINE

Social science and sociology, in particular, emerged out of the confluence of social philosophy and the scientific method in the latter part of the eighteenth, through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its highly diverse origins have had a profound and continuing effect on its composition as a science.

Among the continental founders, some significant common themes appeared. In Condorcet—a major goal was "to develop a science of the highest degree of rigor, which, by its truthfulness, would improve the processes of government, and thus, increase the well-being of society" (Shils, 1975). For Montesquieu, a forerunner of macrosociology, a major concern was the discovery of the principles of laws governing societies with the intention of fostering wisdom and improving the conduct of rulers and citizens. Those who studied the poor—Buret, Villerme, and others—called attention to misery and danger "so that ameliorative action could be taken" (Shils, 1975).
Auguste Comte helped bring together diverse contributions, gave sociology its name, and produced a substantive work that has had a profound influence on the development of the discipline. Comte's intention was to observe, to identify regularities, to predict and to provide for control. As Shils (1975) points out, Lorenz, von Stein, Karl Marx, Henry Maine, W. H. Riehl, Frederic LePlay and Alexis de Tocqueville, while they worked from a variety of motives and ethical positions, were concerned about the state of their society and what was to take place in it.

In England doing something about the conditions in society was a major concern. A good example is the great work of Charles Booth and his associates, *The Life and Labour of the People of London*, in which an attempt was made to estimate the magnitude of poverty and to assess its causes in order to do something about it (Shils, 1975).

Other founders, Durkheim, Tönnies, Weber, Thomas, through their writings, attempted to make people aware of existing conditions and "to inspire them to improve these conditions."

They addressed a nonprofessional sociological audience. There was no professional audience. And they did not believe their capacity to discover truth was enfeebled by their revolutionary or reformative intentions or their moral viewpoints. Shils (1975) summarizes their general position as being guided by the highest prevailing standards of science and a view that sociology could serve practical and evaluative purposes. Sociological subject matter would, thus, become part of the existing culture. It would appear that sociology in its founding and now has been concerned with both the more theoretical and the more practical aspects of the functioning of people in societies.
The basic question seems to be whether sociological theory and research as it exists now can provide an understanding of what social institutions are, how they come into being, how they operate, how they change, what the possible alternatives might be, and how they affect or might affect people so as to be of any use to consumers or potential consumers other than sociologists themselves. It is to this question that we need to direct our attention.

III. INTELLECTUAL-INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS—FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE AND IMPEDE COMMUNICATION AND USE OF KNOWLEDGE/RESEARCH FINDINGS

Communication of knowledge and research findings and the processes by which it is achieved are always embedded in institutional and relational contexts. Sociology and sociologists are no exception. A brief analysis of two dilemmas— one intellectual and discipline-related, the other institutional and organization-related— helps put in context the issues faced in policy and applied research. Our isolation and separation from users or potential users of sociological products in the "real world" is a basic issue and must be resolved. The attempt to resolve this issue forces us to recognize that the simple research application view or Research-Extension-application views are partial ones and do not take into account the significant steps that occur between the discovery of a basic idea or set of ideas and the eventual utilization of these ideas shaped into new institutional forms or practices.

A more accurate view of the flow of ideas is from basic research to applied research to developmental research through public service extension to the testing of innovations to the institutionalization of innovations.
into an on-going system. Any improvement in the "delivery system" for
social science research has to take these functions into account, and re-
late them to each other in such a way that each performs its basic tasks,
and facilitates the performance of the other functions in the chain. A
breakdown at any point weakens the system or destroys its effectiveness
altogether. This is a basic sociological problem and one we have handled
poorly.

The Intellectual-Discipline Dilemma

This dilemma is rooted in the nature of disciplines, and in the nature
of science itself. Research is developed in an implicit or explicit frame
of reference. This frame of reference is usually determined by the theo-
retical structure of the science. At best, these frames of reference are
only occasionally relevant for action.

This is true when the "frame of reference" is explicit. Unfortunately,
in sociology and social science, general theoretical structure has been
weak, and the theoretical framework of specific research has been largely
implicit. Under these conditions determining relevance for action is a
real problem. Research, to be relevant for action or decision, must assume
an intellectual and social framework beyond the theoretical one. This
framework is provided by conditions and events as they exist at a given
time, or in a given situation. As such it is beyond the control of
sociologists or social scientists. Sociologists have failed to make their
assumptions about it explicit. Some other conditions also characterize
the dilemma.

Research serves a function in action and decision to the extent that
two conditions are met:
1. The social and intellectual framework presupposes action, and

2. The research directly answers questions about the kind of action to be taken — or the kinds of action to be avoided.

Research is more effective in influencing action and decision when the researcher is conversant with the social and intellectual framework of the action contemplated.

To influence decision, research must be available. The gaps at present, in many cases at least, are almost synonymous with the areas of need.

To influence action and decision, research, once it exists, must be translated into nontechnical language.

To influence decision, research must carry weight so as to elevate it above the level of opinion. Weight in this sense would come from two sources:

1. The quality of the research, its meeting high standards of scientific excellence;

2. The importance of the research in terms of public standards of value.

Research, to influence decision, must go through existing channels, the same channels open to other information and points of view which attempt to influence.

Up to this time research which has influenced action has for the most part been done within an administrative agency concerned with the action.

This in brief is the disciplinary dilemma — sociology shares this dilemma with all sciences.

The Institutional-Organizational Dilemma

The institutional-organizational dilemma is obviously related to the disciplinary one, but has some important characteristics of its own. These
arise essentially from the structure of universities and colleges and their discipline-based departments together with the demands on these units as they become professionalized and bureaucratized. Definitions of the roles and functions of departments, however they emerge, and definitions of the role of the staff members within the departments, however they are made, tend to isolate and separate. This happens both within the university itself, and particularly in relation to the community and society that surrounds the university. The "publish or perish" phenomenon and the powerful system of sanctions which supports it are manifestations of these internal demands.

Another significant way of gaining insight into the function of disciplines, observes Derik J. de Solla Price (1970), is to examine the "social place of branches of learning in society. The whole life of a discipline within a university is determined by whether it is used for education or for training. In some fields such as history and philosophy most of the embryonic researchers get their Ph.D.'s and then proceed toward some sort of a career as a teacher. In that case, society is paying for students to become teachers to beget students; research becomes an epiphenomenon."

In marked contrast are the so-called hard sciences such as chemistry where only 20+ percent of the Ph.D. output is fed back into education. Society in this case gets its return not only in education and by-product research, but in the larger number of Ph.D.'s who become employed in the nonacademic world.

Some 83 percent of Ph.D.-trained sociologists (Nelson and Pollock, 1970) are employed by colleges and universities. This places us in somewhat the same position as philosophy and history. This fact also gives us
some insight into the "social place" of our discipline, and in turn, some understanding of the pressures we see and feel when talking about application.

It is an accident of history that we were caught in this mold, and that we are now beginning to break out of it. As the college and university employment picture changes, and as more sociologists are employed in non-academic positions, it is likely that two significant things will happen. Our training and research programs will change to better equip students for nonuniversity employment. We will then have created a body of sociologists who will help interpret and apply what we know. We will have begun to bridge the gap between the growing body of sociological knowledge and putting it to use in society. This could well result in more adequate testing of theory, improvement in research methodology, and greater emphasis in research on major social issues and alternative courses of action.

The Land-Grant System Research-Education-Extension-Public Service, A Research Application Model That Works

Before summarizing factors that impede and encourage communication and use of research findings, an example of a user-involvement model for application would be useful. Perhaps the best example known is the Land-Grant model which serves agricultural and social sciences. It should be clear that this model, prestigious as it is, has not and does not now serve the social sciences and social science research to the same degree that it serves agriculture. An understanding of why it does not serve the social science disciplines or social science research as well is basic to the problem of communication.
The system came into being through great legislative acts in 1862, 1887, and 1914. Social and institutional innovations based on these legislative acts raised the farmers' educational level, provided basic and applied research findings related to his needs for solutions of his immediate problems, and put into the field a corps of Extension workers who both supplemented researchers' understanding of the problems of farmers and who facilitated the flow of information to them. The full impact of this system and its elaboration over time is great, both in prospect and retrospect. Recurring cycles of expanding knowledge, new problems confronted by farmers, further applied research, application of research, alleviation of problems, emergence of new problems became institutionalized and a structure to support the functions emerged. Continuing researcher-user contacts were built in and a basis for establishing and maintaining credibility emerged. This system, like every other system, needs renewing on a continuing basis, and for the most part it achieves such renewal. It has been kept alive and vigorous through contacts with farmers on their farms, through bringing farmers to research stations and college campuses, and through a lively continuing exchange with general farm and commodity organizations.

Research on the processes of diffusion of agricultural technology done by social scientists made a distinguished contribution. It increased understanding of how ideas are disseminated, and how new products and recommended practices move from research stations into use. It illuminated the operations of the system. This body of findings is being re-examined for ideas about the diffusion of the results of other types of research.

A significant point that needs emphasis and re-emphasis is that researchers helped create the system, and helped establish researcher-user
contact. Within the system, and especially when it works best, the researcher makes his contribution and the system itself keeps the researcher involved and facilitates the flow of information to people whose needs it is designed to meet.

It is significant, also, that the researcher knows the farmers, farm firms, and agribusiness firms of various types and is directly conversant with their needs.

Another distinguishing feature, and one that is very different when one works on social policy and societal issues, is that the decision to use research findings is the decision of a farm operator, a farm family or a farm firm, or an agribusiness enterprise of some type. The situation is very different where many decision makers are involved or where the decision is made through political processes as is generally the case with social policy.

The Case of Social Science Policy and Applied Research: Factors Which Impede Communication

The present research, education, and public service-extension system for social science-policy research and applied research is in its early and most primitive stages. There is rather solid evidence that the principles inherent in the work with agriculture and specifically the involvement of users apply in the social sciences. Two significant conditions must be taken into account, however: the differences in the content and the differences in who makes the decisions about use. Decisions about the use of social science research findings frequently are made through a political process replete with the trade-offs and compromises necessary to generate support and gain acceptability.
Against this backdrop one can identify a number of factors which impede communication:

- lack of a system which effectively links users and researchers, including a clear identification of who the users are.
- mutual suspicion and distrust between researchers and users or decision makers on policy and programs.
- users not aware of what research is available, and not having had a voice in the formulation of the problems researched.
- difficulties researchers face in accepting the fact that from a user point of view partial information available at time of action or decision is better than complete information after that time.
- lack of appropriate, periodic research information releases and publications for users.
- failure to follow up significant relationships and exchanges that are initiated with users.
- failure to provide technical and educational assistance to users for interpretation of findings and for adapting them for use.
- research which has not been made a built-in, continuing part of the development processes.
- lack of a broad-based public education program which builds public literacy about social policy issues, policy alternatives, and development.

Factors Which Facilitate Communication

Essential elements in the communication of research findings are implicit in the preceding discussion. An illustration of successful communication and use of research findings, and of researcher-user collaboration, will help highlight these elements. A group of sociologists and economists in the northeast initiated a project entitled "An Economic and Sociological Study of Agricultural Labor in the Northeast States." In collaboration with the Department of Labor, whose representatives joined the technical research committee, they worked out a design to test various alternatives
for extending unemployment insurance coverage to agricultural workers. In order to get a more national view, Ohio, Florida, and Texas joined the project. The standardized design provided for state and regional-national analysis and reports. Costs and relative benefits of the various coverage alternatives were assessed. The results became the basis for legislation to extend unemployment insurance to farm and migratory workers. Department of Labor staff participated throughout the project and contributed to the design and conduct of the study. Following completion of the research a conference for policy makers and those involved in policy making was held at Ohio State University to explore the results, issues, interpretations, and implications. The comments of William H. Kohlberg, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Manpower, on the work of this research group are revealing.

"It is a rare occurrence when the results of research conducted by the academic world bear such a close and timely relationship to legislative proposals of the administration."

An analysis of this case shows these factors to be critical:

1. The researchers involved Labor Department staff and officials in the formulation of the problems to be studied, the project design, and the analysis.

2. They dealt with a major problem, and one recognized as such by all parties involved.

3. They not only diagnosed the ills, they explored and assessed the alternatives and recommended a treatment.

4. They involved a team including senior researchers with complementary skills together with graduate students.

5. Findings were reported promptly to users and potential users in the Department of Labor and Congressional staffs.

Obviously this incident does not deal with synthesized data, a mass audience, and mass communication media. It may be, and likely is, more typical of the types of exchanges which occur in policy and applied research.
IV. APPROACHES AND MODELS FOR LINKING RESEARCHERS AND USERS AND POTENTIAL USERS OF RESEARCH

We can now make explicit four major aspects of the multiple problems in the application of sociology.

1. Problems related to the producers of knowledge -- the ability and capacity of sociologists including their theoretical and methodological resources; the question of bias and whether sociology and sociologists will be regime-serving, revolutionary movements-serving, self-serving, or social well being-serving with built-in self-correcting procedures to maintain some sense of balance.

2. Problems related to the products -- whether sociological research findings say anything; whether they are a firm enough basis for action and decision; or whether or not the knowledge needed in application exists.

3. Problems related to users and potential users of social products -- who are they; what do they need; how are the products to be used and toward what end, and

4. Conceptualization and communication of an appropriate relationship between producers and users -- a clarification of the role of each party; and the probing of potentialities and limitations of sociology and sociologists in meeting the needs of users and the needs for application in general.

It would seem that sufficient experience and analysis have accumulated to more deliberately conceptualize producer/user relationships, and to test in our institutions some approaches and models. Street and Weinstein (1975) proposed four types of models -- three pure types and one mixed. Following Janowitz (1970) and others, they label the pure types social engineering, radical sociology, and enlightenment.

Social engineering is the more or less traditional model for application. Users have specific problems to solve and sociologists or other social scientists thought to have conceptual and methodological skills are engaged to help find solutions. Difficulties in this model are that it tends to be "mindless," overly oriented to the problem and thereby weak
conceptually, and that the social scientist tends to lose control of his data. A more fundamental weakness is that it may not deal with institutions and processes in a way that will result in significant change. While the criticisms are well founded, the difficulties seem manageable.

Radical sociology has been much in vogue in recent years. The orientation of fundamental social change seems to require a radical approach as Gouldner (1970) and others have suggested. In this model conflict is emphasized, established regimes and institutions are attacked, and much of what exists is seen as epiphenomena of underlying exploitative relationships. This approach underplays the self-correcting nature of science and scientific research, downgrades order, stability and consensus, and tends to become so politicized that it is unable to establish access and relationships which would make it effective.

The enlightenment model, the third of the pure types identified by Street and Weinstein, is characterized by the attempt to communicate sociological perspectives to decision-makers in a broad and basic way. Under this model sociologists would attempt to help users and potential users, including not only official decision makers but a wide range of publics, citizen groups, recipients of services, and other groups affected by public and private actions. It would help them understand systems, processes, social forces, and potential consequences of alternative actions. Its genius is enlightenment and not specific answers, and it would not sharply distinguish between "pure" and "applied" aspects of a discipline. A major weakness is seen in that it tends to be, through intimate contact with elites, oriented to the status quo. To the extent that it could become and remain self-critical, this potential difficulty could be controlled.
The fourth type would be a combination of the social engineering, radical, and enlightenment models.

Each of the so-called pure types has features that are needed in an application of sociology that would respond to the problems of society and realize the potential of the discipline. How to put it all together is the question I would like to explore.

Knowledge and Research Constituencies -
An Approach to An Integrated Model

A logical starting point in a knowledge and research constituency approach is the continuing conceptualization of how knowledge is generated and how it flows into use. Present conceptualization of this flow is somewhat tenuous. One could start with the notion that the flow is from basic research to applied research to policy developmental or strategical research through the creation of understanding and enlightenment through extension-public service to the testing of institutional innovations and finally to the incorporation or institutionalization of innovations into on-going systems. The first three steps are functions of universities, but not exclusively. Universities are involved in the fourth step, and the initiative in the fifth and sixth is outside the university and must be recognized as such.

The models do not adequately deal with this flow nor with the kind of institutional arrangements that are needed to facilitate the flow. It is very clear at this point that we do not have a system -- a delivery system if you will -- that takes these functions into account, and relates them to each other so that in each the basic tasks are performed and the performance of the other functions in the chain are facilitated. Existing
departments, social science research centers, and bureaus of applied
social science research, effective as they are, do not do the job. As a
result, demands on researchers are impossible. They cannot do the quality
of research that is needed and at the same time compensate for the inade-
quacies of the system in building and maintaining contacts with users.
This brings us, then, to the idea of a knowledge and research constituency.
It has to be viewed at this point as an interim arrangement, one that
attempts to build from where we are to the eventual design of an adequate
system. A knowledge and research constituency is defined by two conditions:

1. Involvement of users and potential users in exploring diffic-
culties in the functioning of social institutions and proc-
esses, identifying social issues and problems and in defining
problems to be researched.

2. Some continuing contact with users including the feeding back
of research findings and interpretations to create understand-
ing and to provide specific help in solving or ameliorating
problems.

The essential idea is a new partnership between our discipline and its
practitioners and the large and diverse body of users and potential users
of sociological knowledge and perspectives. We are at a critical point in
time, one of high mutual need. We like to emphasize the user's need for
us, which is great as we readily recognize. On the other hand, our need
for users is equally great, a condition which we frequently fail to
recognize.

Involvement of users would not only be an essential feature of a new
partnership, it would also be a change strategy. This change strategy
would also be a communication strategy. When users and researchers are
jointly involved in the formulation of problems, and where there is contact
throughout the research process, interest in research findings is increased.
The feedback and interpretation of findings can be more effective. It follows, also, that the utilization of findings is more likely to occur.

**Strengthening Relationships With Users**

If we are to move toward a knowledge-research constituency, some important relationships need to be strengthened and/or established. Among them are these:

- Building on and strengthening established department, research unit, user contacts. This would obviously include an analysis of what contacts already exist, and what new ones are needed to enable sociology and sociologists to be more effective in putting knowledge to work.

- Interpreting to users and the public the university's research role and functions.

- Interpreting the existing body of data as it relates to issues, problems, alternatives of major interest to users.

- Helping identify development and policy issues from the user point of view involving researchers, research administrators, department heads, and other college or university administrators.

- Bringing users' groups of all types to the campus —
  - to meet with researchers and administrators.
  - to help clarify issues which need to be researched.
  - to make possible direct researcher-user exchanges on the meaning and limitation of findings, implications of findings, and on the possible/probable impact of alternatives.

- Helping define user needs for continuing communication and how various media might be used to get findings to users.

- Helping utilize the instrumentality of social science research centers and bureaus of applied research as mechanisms through which the university could contribute both to an understanding of and solution to social problems.

- Helping arrange new types of liaison between universities, departments, and research units and a variety of significant user groups such as national, regional, and state administrators and staffs of social agencies; state, county, and municipal
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- Helping arrange new types of liaison between universities, departments, and research units and a variety of significant user groups such as national, regional, and state administrators and staffs of social agencies; state, county, and municipal
officials; planning and development bodies; state and local agencies in planning and development. Some consideration might be given to setting up new types of joint university-user advisory and technical groups, and having persons from user groups in a liaison capacity on campus for extended periods of time.

This is an imposing set of functions, and it is certainly not complete. If we are at the opportune time described above -- opportune in terms of the psychological moment and the availability of the capacity to do policy research -- what we will be able to do is contingent on the performance of these functions. Performing them, in effect, will help to bring into being for social science research an appropriate modification of what exists in agriculture in its researcher-user system.

One way to help bring this about would be for the universities, colleges, or departments to designate a researcher who knows the situation to undertake the job. It should be clear that he would be putting pieces together into a new system. Empower him to surround himself with a few Research and Extension-type colleagues, if they exist, who understand the problem, and who have imagination in building innovation. The activity should be legitimized by the university.

Some Possible Payoffs

While it is not possible at the beginning of such an effort to know what the payoffs would be, there are some intriguing possibilities. Researchers and users could be linked more effectively. Such research findings as presently exist could be put to use in social programs. Research could come to grips with some of the more basic issues in contemporary society and particularly with aspects of the problems important to
significant users. It is very likely that a wider support base could be built both in understanding and public support. Departments and universities could gain in that they might be seen as a more effective partner with communities, counties, the state, and the nation in improving the well being of people. This phrase, the well being of people, is a significant end and the hallmark of what we are about.

A CONCLUDING WORD

Social science research, despite the continuing frustrations, is coming of age. A framework is emerging which gives it meaning and which can increase its effectiveness. Relationships to users and potential users are the key as a change strategy and a communication strategy. There is reason for cautious optimism about the future if we can survive the present.
REFERENCES


The SRDC is one of four regional rural development centers in the nation. It coordinates cooperation between the Research (Experiment Station) and Extension (Cooperative Extension Service) staffs at land-grant institutions in the South to provide technical consultation, research, training, and evaluation services for rural development. This publication is one of several published by the Center on various needs, program thrusts, and research efforts in rural development. For more information about SRDC activities and publications, write to the Director.

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