A case study in trade-area development changes in occupation and social organization in a Northeast Mississippi County

Harold F. Kaufman

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A Case Study in

Trade-Area Development

Changes in Occupation and Social Organization in a Northeast Mississippi County

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

HENRY H. LEVECK, Director

STATE COLLEGE MISSISSIPPI

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SUMMARY

This is a case study of community development — planned change in a limited locality. The focus is on shifts in the labor force, changes in rural social organization and institutions, and the nature of development organization. It is an interpretive report based on intensive studies in Alcorn County in Northeast Mississippi. The findings of 26 published reports listed in the appendix, together with unpublished data, provided the basis for analysis.

As the number of workers in agriculture declined, population, organizations, and services moved from the open country to the trade center, Corinth, which in 1963 had an estimated one-half of the county’s population. The decades 1940-1960 showed a rapid shift out of agriculture into manufacturing, trades, and services. Family income increased appreciably, and radical changes occurred in the farm enterprise. The increase in the number of rural women gainfully employed had a favorable impact on rural income and level of living.

Families in the open country varied considerably in terms of social and economic characteristics, and thus were analyzed on the basis of the different kinds of development programs needed. Several types of families were delineated. There were those supported entirely from nonwork income, those still receiving all or part of their income from agriculture, and those rural residents living in the open country who received no agricultural income. The nonwork income type, which consisted chiefly of the older retired families, was relatively homogeneous. Families receiving income from agriculture consisted of two widely divergent types of farm operators, the modern commercial farmer and the traditional, small farmer. Rural residents were highly heterogeneous in nature — on the one hand, the unskilled part-time worker of low income and socio-economic level, and on the other, the “elite” of the countryside.

With the transition from an agricultural economy with small farmers to an industrialized one massed around an urban center, radical changes occurred in schools, churches, and rural services. Although open-country neighborhoods had lost services over the last several decades, community club programs provided strength in some places. By 1963, open country club organization had reached a plateau with its future appearing to depend on both occupational shifts and county-wide organizational strategy and effectiveness. Data indicated that it was in the strong neighborhoods with a long history of activity at the neighborhood level that community development clubs were likely to succeed rather than in the weaker neighborhoods where development organization might seem to offer a last hope for neighborhood survival.

At the county level two strong centers of development in terms of interest, organization, and leadership existed. One was the complex of agricultural organizations in which the Agricultural Extension Service played a prominent role. There were approximately a score of different types of agricultural agencies and membership organizations at the county level and more than fifty neighborhood units.

A second center of development in terms of organization and leadership was the business-industrial complex in which the Corinth Chamber of Commerce played a prominent role. During the decade 1952-1962 the area was especially fortunate to have both paid and voluntary workers of high ability in both agricultural and business activities. During this period a number of significant projects were inaugurated and some completed, such as the creation of an industrial park, the planning and financing of a 2.8 million dollar hospital, the construction of a commercial airport, and the extension of telephone service to many residents in the southern portion of the county.

Overall planning and coordination were carried out through an informal liaison between the two major leadership groups — the agricultural and the business-industrial — rather than through one centralized agency.
A Case Study in Trade-Area Development  
Changes in Occupation and Social Organization in a  
Northeast Mississippi County  

By HAROLD F. KAUFMAN and LUCY W. COLE  

PROBLEM AND PROCEDURES  

This report is a case study in community development. Community development focuses on the process of planned change in a limited locality. In this instance it is a county seat in Northeast Mississippi with its surrounding trade area. The emphasis is on development organization and programs and their interrelation with changes in the occupational structure and local institutions.

Economic Development  

The study of development activity is a multi-disciplinary task with economic concerns frequently receiving the major attention. Generally considered as the best single indices of economic development are per capita increases in real income and in output.

Increasing attention is being paid to the process of development in both highly industrialized nations and underdeveloped countries; the latter have some similarities with the former but also conditions uniquely their own. In the United States, the South, especially the rural South, has received special attention in development of the economy and in improving the relatively serious, low-income situation.

The first pronounced interest in facilitating adjustments of low-income families in rural areas developed during the depression of the thirties. There has been a re-emphasis since World War II. Compared to high-income regions, low-income areas usually have limited agricultural resources, heavy farm population, and insufficient nonfarm employment opportunities. Approximately 1,000 counties in the nation, most of them in the South, have been identified as low-income counties. All the counties in Mississippi have been classified as low-income, and only those in the Delta and on the Gulf Coast are not listed in the “serious” category.

A number of studies have been done within the last decade dealing with economic adjustment of families in low-income areas. These studies have focused on labor utilization, resource use, and level of living of families. With the rapid shift of workers out of agriculture, the low-income situation of the South is changing primarily from a concern in the economics of agriculture to a focus on the complex of problems dealing with the development of the total economy and society.

In promoting economic development, knowledge of what might be termed the “little” economies appears to be essential.

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1 The literature in the general field of rapid social and economic change is already voluminous and continues to grow. A journal such as “Economic Development and Culture Change” published quarterly by the Research Center in Economic Development and Culture Change of the University of Chicago, would give the reader some notion of the scope and amount of work in this field.


3 Ibid.

4 Agencies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and state experiment stations have carried on cooperative studies in a number of places. See Buis T. Inman and John H. Southern, Opportunities for Economic Development in Low Production Farm Areas, Agricultural Information Bul. 234, USDA, November 1960.
Until recently, however, this area of research has been largely overlooked. A recent survey of the "little" economies in the United States found over 14,000 privately and publicly financed organizations concerned with local economic development. It was also discovered that "single purpose programs, such as industrial development, are beginning to be replaced by multi-purpose, comprehensive programs." It is within this context of local economic development that the present study of development organization and related social factors may be most timely and useful. To complement the traditional economic analysis, which includes the balance or imbalance of productive factors such as capital, resources and technology, it is proposed that the notion of development organization be added as an essential part of the study of local development.

5See Donald R. Gilmore, Developing the "Little" Economies, Committee for Economic Development, Supplementary Paper No. 10, 1950. See also the work of the group of researchers affiliated with the Regional Science Association.

6Ibid., p. 24.


8See A Blue Print For Mississippi Economic Progress sponsored by the Mississippi Economic Council and released in November, 1962. This consists of a summary statement and of more than a score of "background papers" describing what are termed "income stations" and "income conditioners." To the three factors, resources, capital, and technology are frequently added population and economic and political institutions. The notion of development organization as treated here is, at best, a residual category, largely implicit in most writings.

9Although beyond the scope of this study, the need should be noted for a coverage of theory of development organization and notions of production factors as they apply to the "little" economies—town and country trade areas and cities.

Organization for Local Development

The objective of this study is to analyze, at least in a preliminary fashion, selected organizational factors in the local development complex. Of central concern is the development organization itself, such as a community development or area improvement agency. Closely associated with the above is a group of auxiliary agencies serving clientele with special interests and technical needs. These agencies in the locality studied include the Agricultural Extension Service and USDA agencies with county programs.

A second concern of this study is a description of changes in organizations which represent the basic social institutions, such as the church and school, and which are essential in providing social stability and continuity. These might be termed agencies of the "community of residence," and data on them are presented in the section on "Changing neighborhoods."

A third body of data deals with the labor force. This includes an analysis of changes in occupation and of classification of family types useful for development programs. Presented first in the report, however, as necessary background for describing the development organization, are population and geographic data.

Activities in the county trade area reported here are to be seen as a case study of the community development movement in the South, which has been prominent since World War II. Programs are generally organized on a trade center or county basis and frequently have both open-country neighborhood and regional counterparts. Although they emphasize creation of new jobs and income, they are broad in purpose and have a number of objectives. In Mississippi at

10Harold F. Kaufman, et al., Community Development Programs in the Southeast, Social Science Research Center Community Series 9, 1956.
the present time there are a score or more of counties with development organizations such as those described in this report.

Major opportunities for the employment of persons leaving agriculture may reside in centers such as the one described in this study. As one analyst notes, centers up to 50,000 population "make up small city America and probably furnish the bulk of employment opportunities to rural people." In the 1950-60 decade population centers from 10,000 to 50,000 grew much more rapidly than the nation as a whole. In Mississippi many towns even in the 1000 to 2500 class had a comparatively rapid growth, which is an indicator of the rapid increase in non-farm employment.

Labor Force Analysis

Analysis of labor force composition and trends and of sources of employment may provide a crucial link between a study of development organization and the factors in physical production. This type of interpretation is attempted in this report. Persons who engage in production are also to be seen as participants in development programs.

Change in the occupational distribution is frequently used as a measure of development. In this process the relatively large agricultural labor force declines, the proportion in manufacturing at first increases rapidly then levels off, and the percent in trades, services, and professions continues to grow. For example, in the South for the 70-year period, 1890-1960, the proportion of workers in agriculture and mining declined from approximately two-thirds to one-sixth, while the proportion in the professions, commerce, and services increased from one-fourth to over three-fifths, and the proportion in manufacturing, from one-tenth to approximately one-fifth.

In the nation as a whole the proportion in manufacturing has leveled off, while in Mississippi, with a much smaller industrial base, this proportion continues to increase as the percent of workers in agriculture declines rapidly. With the change in occupational types and the decline in the relative position of agriculture in the economy, it is generally observed that the real per capita income increases.

An Interpretive Approach

The approaches and problems noted above indicated a report of some scope. An interpretive report is attempted in order to bring together data from several field studies conducted in Alcorn County, Mississippi, for the period 1955-60.

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11See Colin Clark, Conditions of Economic Progress, London: Macmillan, 1940. This author states, "Careful generalization of the available facts indicates that the most important concomitant of economic progress is the movement of the working population from agriculture to manufacture, and then from manufacture to commerce and services."


14Ibid.

15Investigation was also conducted for a short period the summer of 1963. The work has been done by the Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station. The Agricultural Relations Division of the Tennessee Valley Authority provided cooperation on certain phases of the study. In addition to the authors of this bulletin, W. C. Bailey, Andrew W. Baird, and Ellen Bryant were active in the study during much of its history. The first named person had general supervision of the work for several years. Other professional persons associated with it for a shorter period of time were F. D. Alexander, H. A. Aurbach, R. M. Bobbitt, G. V. Douglas, J. F. Dunkelberger, A. A. Fanelli, W. M. Gillis, A. Ostric, H. A. Pendersen, and L. J. Silverman.
Earlier publications, which are listed below, as well as previously unpublished data, are utilized.

This report is aptly described as secondary analysis in that the interpretive framework and data used for evidence have been determined after the field work was completed. No attempt is made to carry out an analysis of a tight cause-effect pattern, but rather to reconstruct a loose association through time between shifts in occupational composition on the one hand, and development and neighborhood organization on the other. This relationship suggests the interpretive thread of the bulletin. Sizable bodies of field data which at first might appear as disparate have been brought together and provide significant evidence to support the interpretation.

From the standpoint of an historical and trends perspective, the analysis is limited by lack of data on early time periods. A panel design, however, was employed for a sample of the farm population, information being obtained on the same population for 1954 and 1957.

Full references of 26 selected publications on Alcorn County Studies are to be found in the last section of this report. They may be identified by matching the numerals in parentheses in the text with those in the Appendix. Generalizations in this report are based on extensive statistical materials which are not reproduced in this publication. They are to be found in a statistical supplement entitled A Case Study in Trade Area Development, A Statistical Supplement. Ten of the 26 publications focus on the educational and other processes involved in the adoption of agricultural and homemaking practices; ten are concerned with neighborhood characteristics, neighborhood development clubs, and related organizations; and the remaining six deal with a description of family types, occupational mobility, and other relevant topics.

Research Procedures

The data used have been taken largely from sample surveys of the open-country population. Thirty-seven white, open-country and hamlet neighborhoods were delineated by an experienced analyst in 1955. An enumeration of households by occupation of the head was made at that time. Over 3,500 households were reported.

A note on the rationale of the original surveys is in order. Three family surveys were made involving two separate but overlapping field work designs. Three data complexes were also pointed up. These were (1) adoption of agricultural and homemaking practices, (2) community club functions and neighborhood structure, and (3) open-country family characteristics and types.

In the first survey in 1955, the schedule on "Adoption of Agricultural Practices" was taken on 161 farm operators in six neighborhoods. A resurvey of these farm operators was conducted in 1958.

In the second survey, conducted in the late spring of 1956, a schedule on "Part-time Farmer and Rural Resident," which focused on occupational and level of living changes, was taken on 482 households in 15 different neighborhoods. In this survey nine neighborhoods were added to the six which had been utilized in the adoption of prac-

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16Progress Report in Sociology and Rural Life No. 30, August 1963. This may be secured by writing to the Department of Sociology and Rural Life or to one of the authors.

17Less than one-tenth of the open-country population was Negro. This population was found widely scattered in 13 of the 37 white neighborhoods and in one small all-Negro neighborhood.

18Farmers included in this study had at least five acres of crop land, worked on the farm at least one third of the time, (approximately 100 days), lived on the farm in 1954, owned work power, and made their own decisions on enterprise. Schedules were taken in 1955 covering the 1954 crop year and the resurvey in 1958 covered the 1957 crop year.
practices survey.
A random sample of households in the 15 neighborhoods was secured by interviewing every third household in the nine neighborhoods in which contact had not been made previously. In the six neighborhoods in which the adoption of practices schedules had been taken, every third household was also drawn, but in case the household had already been interviewed, a second interview was not held. The one-third sample of households in 15 neighborhoods resulted in 487 household schedules. All occupational types of households were interviewed. These included full-time farm households as well as part-time farm and rural resident ones, although the schedule had the title designating only the latter two groupings.

The neighborhoods themselves were selected on a purposive basis. The six neighborhoods in the adoption of practices sample were selected by first classifying all neighborhoods as large, medium and small in terms of number of families. Then within each size group, two neighborhoods were selected, one which had a community club and one which did not. The level of agricultural practice in the neighborhoods was also a consideration in the selection.

In selecting the nine additional neighborhoods several factors were considered. First, the neighborhoods to be selected were to be seen in relation to the six which were already being studied. Criteria made explicit in selecting the additional nine neighborhoods were (1) location in the county and distance from the county seat, (2) number of households, (3) occupational distribution, (4) land type, and (5) degree of neighborhood organization. The sample of neighborhoods and families when classified as to size of neighborhood and soil type corresponded very closely to the proportions found in the county as a whole.

The representativeness of Alcorn County of the northeast hill area of Mississippi and of the upland region of the South is noted in the following section.

A community club did not exist in either of the two smallest neighborhoods, although one was organized in one of them later. The latter neighborhood was selected as one of a pair for this reason.

PLACE AND PEOPLE

This section provides a brief discussion of human and physical resources as background for consideration of labor force shifts and the role of development organization. Physical resources include location, land, and man-made physical property such as buildings, roads, and machinery. The term human resources refers to the population — its characteristics and changes.

Location and Land

Alcorn County, bordering on the Tennessee line and one county removed from the Alabama line, is located in the hill section of Northeast Mississippi. The county is crossed by four railroads and two federal highways. All of these arteries of transportation cross at Corinth, the major trade center and the county seat. In addition to Corinth the county has one small incorporated town, Ripenzi, and several unincorporated hamlets. See Figure 1.

The county can be divided into three distinct land use areas. The eastern and western portions are similar and consist of the poorer, more hilly land, much of which is best suited to timber. A third area running north and south through the center of the county
is relatively more level with more of the land suitable for agriculture. The county seat is located at the northern end of this belt. Agriculturally the county is an upland cotton area; this crop still provides a majority of the cash farm income although livestock production is gaining in importance. Certainly over half, and some estimates are as high as four-fifths, of land in the county is better suited for timber than agricultural uses, especially row crops.

Alcorn County is characteristic of the state and the upland South with respect to its major social institutions and traditional agricultural economy with cotton the chief source of cash income. The slow development of industry before World War II with an emphasis on textiles is also typical. Although many counties have one dominant center, as is Corinth, this center is probably larger than the average (median) for the region and certainly for Mississippi. In 1960 one-fifth of Mississippi counties had population centers of 10,000 or over.

Alcorn County was organized in 1870 from parts of the county on the east and the one on the west. It is divided, as are other Mississippi counties, into five beats (administrative townships). See Figure 1.

Centralization in the Trade Center

The shift in population and economic and other activities from the open country neighborhoods and hamlets to the larger centers is a general trend not only in the state and the South but throughout town and country America. This parallels the much greater population shift nationally from town and country to metropolitan areas. The population change is of course an index of the shift in jobs from farm to factory and service establishment.
This radical shift in the location of population and settlement patterns raises important questions concerning work and residence and the relation of the trade center to its hinterland. A central question, which is discussed below, is under what conditions and to what extent the open country can hold and attract persons no longer engaged in agriculture. This assumes that their jobs are located in or near the larger centers of the area.

The proportion that Corinth comprised of the county population increased from approximately one-seventh in 1880 to upward of one-half in 1960. See Table 1. The number of persons outside of Corinth reached its maximum in 1940 and declined sharply in the following twenty years, especially in the 1950-60 decade. In 1960 the population in the open country was about the same as a half century earlier. The analysis of changes in the population by beat locates the shifts geographically. The beats least influenced by activities in the larger trade center had about the same population in 1960 as 80 years earlier when first settlement was under way. See Figure 1.

As is typical, new residences and industries have located in the areas surrounding Corinth. The growth of the center has come not through increase in density of population but by annexation of suburban territory. The entire increase in population in Corinth for the decade 1950-60 was acquired in this manner.

Population Characteristics and Change

Characteristics of the population to be noted are race, age, education, and income. These are compared with state and national averages, and their significance for the adjustment process — the shift of workers out of agriculture — is observed. As is seen in Table 1, the proportion of the population non-white declined from nearly one-third of the total in 1880 to less than one-seventh in 1960. As this racial group has been located entirely in the better farming area in the central portion of the county and in Corinth, the decline in numbers is largely a reflection of the reduction in agricultural workers. The nonwhite population in 1960 was approximately 30 percent less than that in 1940.

The percent nonwhite in 1960 was less than one-third of that for the state but slightly higher than the proportion for the nation. This situation and trend with respect to the nonwhite population is typical of the upland town and country South.

The age distribution of a population may provide some indication of the stage of the adjustment process. A pop-

Table 1.—Population of Alcorn County classified by residence and race for selected years, 1870-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>County Total</th>
<th>Corinth</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Percent of Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>10,431</td>
<td>1,512</td>
<td>2,768</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>14,272</td>
<td>2,275</td>
<td>4,409</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>13,115</td>
<td>2,111</td>
<td>3,510</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>14,987</td>
<td>3,661</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>18,159</td>
<td>5,020</td>
<td>4,275</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>21,369</td>
<td>5,498</td>
<td>4,106</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>23,653</td>
<td>6,220</td>
<td>4,130</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>26,969</td>
<td>7,818</td>
<td>4,723</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>27,158</td>
<td>9,785</td>
<td>3,904</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>25,282</td>
<td>11,453</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U. S. Census of Population.

It is estimated that the population of Corinth increased over 1500 for the period 1960-1967.
ulation that has relatively few jobs for its workers is likely to have a lower proportion of persons in the productive age group — 15 to 64 years of age — than is the population which has adequate employment. The age groups, 0-14 and 65 and over, are frequently termed the dependent ages, and the proportion these age groups form of the total population is sometimes called the dependency rate or ratio.

This rate is appreciably different for the white and the nonwhite group in that the latter has a much higher proportion of the population in the dependent ages. This indicates that the nonwhite population has a much higher out-migration of persons in the productive ages. In 1950 the percent of white persons in the dependent ages was approximately 3 percent higher for Alcorn County than for the nation. Because of the rapid decline in the proportion of persons over 65, however, the dependency rate for the county in 1960 was one percent lower than the national rate. This similarity is an indication of adjustment in the white labor force. However, the nonwhite population in the county continued to have a 4 to 5 percent higher proportion of persons in the dependent age groups than was true for the nation.

In both income and educational level the county ranked slightly below the state and decidedly below the nation. In 1960 the median years of schooling completed for persons 25 years of age and over was 8.3 in the county, 8.9 in the state and 10.6 in the nation. The median family income in the county in 1959 was approximately half that of the nation and slightly below that of the state.

As great differences existed within the county with respect to population characteristics as between the county and outside populations. Data collected in a 1956 survey of one-third of the families in 15 of the open-country neighborhoods in the county point up this differential. As was noted above, that portion of the county farthest from the county seat, and with the smallest proportion of agricultural land, had lost population rapidly in the previous twenty years and in 1960 had no more residents than in 1880. The neighborhoods in this portion of the county were more likely to have an older population, one with less schooling, with much lower family income and with a much higher proportion of the population on nonwork income, principally welfare and pension payments. In 1956, for example, in a neighborhood in a declining area of the county 47 percent of the male heads were over 55 years of age. The median years of school completed for persons over 25 was 5.3, and the median family income reported was approximately $600. By contrast, in one of the open-country neighborhoods adjoining the county seat only 29 percent of the male heads were over 55, the median years of schooling completed was 8.5 and the median family income reported was approximately $2300. The declining neighborhoods had a relatively high percent of the population who were supported entirely from nonwork income. In one neighborhood nearly one-third of the households had no work income.

OCCUPATIONAL CHANGES

The focus of this study is an examination of the relations between changes in occupational patterns and in social organization, especially developmental activity. What effect, for example, has the rapid decline in employment in agriculture had on group life, especially in the open country? Changes in occupational patterns are described in some detail in this section.

From Agriculture to Manufacturing
The changes in major occupational
groupings for the 20-year period, 1940-60, are shown in Table 2. For this period the number gainfully employed remained relatively constant; the number in agriculture declined by approximately 60 percent and the number in manufacturing increased three-fourths. The increase in workers in trade, services, business and the professions was moderate. Occupational shifts were especially rapid in the 1950 decade and appeared to be continuing at this pace at the time of writing of this report in 1963. Estimates of jobs added by the establishment of new factories and the expansion of existing ones for the period, 1960-63, indicated that not only the number of workers in manufacturing for 1963 was considerably higher than three years earlier but also the proportion.

An open-country population, which as late as the thirties was made up largely of farm families, was rapidly disappearing. In its place was to be found a population comprised largely of rural residents — persons who lived in the country but whose livelihood was from sources other than agriculture. Of the 482 families reporting income in the 15-community sample survey of 1956, the percents receiving income from the following sources were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Pct. Receiving Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonfarm work only</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming and nonfarm work</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming only</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwork income only</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is quite likely that at the date of writing this report in 1963 the proportion receiving income from agriculture only was still decreasing and the reverse was true for the proportion receiving all of their income outside of agriculture.

Process of Shifting Out of Agriculture

Evidence of a shift out of agriculture may be seen also in terms of the trend in number of farms. The year of enumeration and the number of farms reported were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>3050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of farms reached the peak in 1930, had a slight decline in the next two decades, and showed a very sharp decrease during the 1950's.\(^{21}\)

Part-time farming is widely regarded as a transitional stage, either into or out of agriculture, especially the latter. In Alcorn County in 1960, 30 percent of the farm operators reported working 100 days or more off their farms. This was approximately twice the proportion reporting off-farm work two decades earlier.\(^{22}\) By contrast, for this period the South and the nation showed a reverse trend.

The six-neighborhood survey for the crop years 1954 and 1957 details the process of the shift out of agriculture. (6)\(^{23}\)

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\(^{21}\)The decrease from 1954 to 1959 is appreciable even when changes in definition of farm are taken into consideration.

\(^{22}\)U. S. Census of Agriculture.
Of the 161 farm operators\textsuperscript{23} enumerated in these neighborhoods for the crop year 1954, only 109 were left three years later. Thus the decline in number of operators was 52 or approximately one-third in the three-year period. Those who moved had the following status in 1957:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtained non-farm employment</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to a farm elsewhere</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 29 persons who had quit farming, two-thirds had not moved. Only one of the retired persons had moved from the place where he had been living three years earlier. This relatively large portion of operators retiring is to be partially explained by the enactment of Social Security legislation for farmers during this period. The great majority of persons taking nonfarm employment stated that the major reason for the change was to make more money.

Persons leaving agriculture were more likely to live in the poor farming neighborhoods located farther from the trade center than were those who remained in agriculture. Those entering nonfarm employment were younger than those remaining in farming, their level of practice was lower, and their operation smaller. Analysis of the use of approximately 1500 acres of cropland operated by the 52 persons who had left farming in the three-year period indicates that the poorer cropland had either gone into the soil bank or remained idle, while much

\textsuperscript{23}Farm operators were defined in this study as having at least five acres of cropland, working on the farm at least one-third of the time (approximately 100 days), living on the farm in 1954, owning work power, and making their own decisions on enterprise.
of the better land had been utilized by neighboring farmers. Although the total acreage of crop land had declined, it was probably more productive.

Changes in the Agricultural Enterprise
With the decrease in the number of farms, the median size of farms increased. A major loss in number of farms came from the smaller ones. The average size farm in 1880 was 120 acres. Size declined until 1930, when the average was 60 acres. From then it increased until 1959, when the average was 95.

With the decline in the number of smaller and less productive farms, income rose. The proportion of commercial farms with sales of $5000 or more increased from 1 percent of the total in 1950 to 14 percent in 1959. The reverse was true of those commercial farms with less than $2500 gross sales, which formed nearly nine-tenths of the total in 1950 but only about one-half in 1959. As indicated above, the number of part-time and residential farms continued to increase. The proportion was slightly over one-third in 1950 and increased to nearly one-half by 1959.

Trends in tenure paralleled those found in the nation, region, and state. For the period of record the percent of operators who were tenants gradually increased until 1930, when it formed 59 percent of the total. In 1959, the percent of tenants was 31, only about one-half the proportion found two decades earlier.

Although livestock sales were becoming a more important part of agricultural income, cotton remained the major source of cash farm income. Even with a steady increase in the number of cattle and hogs for the 1940 and 1950 decades and a declining cotton acreage, upward to three-fourths of the cash farm income in 1959 came from cotton. Although the acres devoted to cotton in 1959 were only approximately one-third of those used in 1930, the total production was almost as great due to the fact that yield per acre almost tripled.

Some Aspects of Industrialization
The early industries consisted of sawmills, food processing plants, brick kilns, hosiery mills and a garment plant. Apparel and related plants have continued to be a major source of employment in the county. Between 1954 and 1956 three new shirt factories and a new hosiery mill added close to 700 new jobs. During the latter part of the 1950's two relatively large factories were established producing pianos and telephone equipment. These provided approximately 800 jobs, many for men.

With the large apparel industry it is not surprising that over one-third of all gainful workers in 1960 were women. Of the women in the labor force approximately two-thirds were married, and more than one-fifth of these had children under six years of age. For the 20-year period, 1940-1960, the number of employed women increased by approximately two-fifths, and the proportion women formed of the total labor force increased from 27 to 36 percent. As the percent of employed women living in Corinth remained the same for the period, the increase came entirely in rural areas.

The percent of rural women employed increased from 13 to 26 percent during the two decades. Significantly, this increase in rural women working came in the period when the number of farms and farmers was rapidly declining. Further implications concerning the rural homemaker who works are discussed in the following section on family types.

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Effect on Income
The shift of a relatively large proportion of the population out of agriculture into other types of employment contributed appreciably to raising the income level of the county’s population. Median earnings of all males in 1959 were $2150.26 Those in manufacturing and related work reported a median income approximately three times that of those in agriculture.

Although the median family income in the county in 1959 was reported to be only about half that of the nation, it had much more than doubled during the preceding ten years. In 1959 it was a decidedly higher percentage of the national median than 10 years earlier. This trend was the same as that observed in the state.

An indication of money which the population had available for consumption and investment is to be seen in the index of bank debits.27 With an index number of 100 in 1945, the amount of funds in the Corinth banks on time and demand deposits had increased to an index of 173 in 1950, and to one of 333 in 1960.

Related to this index is to be seen the sharp increase in industrial payrolls reported by the Corinth Chamber of Commerce. For the period, 1952-62, this item increased from $5½ million to $13½ million. Other indicators of the rise in level of living also reported were the increased number of rural telephones and users of electricity. In 1952 there were only 3,000 rural telephones, and by 1952 the number had more than doubled (6,113). During the same period the number of users of electricity in the county rose from 6,561 to 9,126, an increase of approximately two-fifths. These increases are to be seen in relation to a declining total population.

26U. S. Census of Population.

27Compiled by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Miss. State Univ.

FAMILY TYPES AND FAMILY LIVING

An analysis of family types moves from a look at the labor force and other factors in production to a concern for the types of people who participate and are served by development organizations. The population, even in the open country, is quite varied, and thus has different needs and demands a variety of services. For educational and action agencies to render the most effective service, some functional classification of families and individuals is necessary.

The Process of Upward Mobility

The process of upward mobility, as the term is used here, is the movement from a given occupation and level of living to a more desirable one for those concerned. The aspect of social mobility which has been described above is the occupational shift from small farm, low-income agriculture to more remunerative non-agricultural employment. Upward movement of job and income is also desirable for many persons in nonagricultural pursuits.

The sample survey of families in fifteen neighborhoods in 1956 provides the data for the two types of classifications used here. The one is determined by source and amount of income and points up level of living groups. The other is determined by level of practice in agriculture and is suggestive of the nature of mobility in this occupational grouping.

Table 3.—Relation of Source and Amount of Income to Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Families in Alcorn County, Fifteen-Neighborhood Survey, 1956. (22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source and amount of income types</th>
<th>Number of families</th>
<th>High socio-economic score</th>
<th>Daily newspaper</th>
<th>Under 55 yrs.</th>
<th>12 or more yrs. sch.</th>
<th>Participating in organizations</th>
<th>Wife employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonwork: All incomes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfarm: Under $1500</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-farm: Under $1500</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm: All Incomes</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfarm: Under $4000</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-farm: $1500 &amp; over</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfarm: $4000 &amp; over</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2Membership in other than religious organizations.

Source and Level of Income

Table 3 shows families classified by source and amount of income and described in terms of selected characteristics such as level of living score, participation in other than religious programs, age of head, and years of schooling (22). The sources of income for the survey families (not head) were classified as to nonwork, nonfarm, farm only, and farm and nonfarm, which is termed in the table “part-farm.” In the 1956 survey almost all families reporting only nonwork income and those reporting only farm income stated that their total cash income was less than $1500. Thus these groups are not sub-classified in terms of amount of cash income received, whereas the part-farm and nonfarm are so classified.

The groups are presented in an ascending order from a low to a relatively high level. The basis for comparison is to be found in the percents for the total sample population. For illustrative purposes the lowest and highest ranking groups may be described. The nonwork income group is to be seen as one of older families, many of them probably retired. Years of schooling, level of living, amount of participation, and percent of wives working were all low. This group comprised approximately one-seventh of all the families. By contrast, the group of families living entirely on nonfarm income and having total annual cash earnings of $4000 or more ranked highest on all the measures used. This group comprised approximately one-twelfth of all families. The significance of these groups for development organization is noted below.

Level of Agricultural Practice

In slightly more than two-fifths of the families surveyed in 1956 — 213 out of 485 — the head was engaged in agriculture either full or part time. These farmers were classified as to how well they followed recommended agricultural practices (26). A level of practice score was computed.\textsuperscript{29} Two types of farm operators are treated in this discussion: (1) those with the highest level of practice, adopting all five recommended methods, and (2) those with the lowest level of practice, adopting none, or at the most, one of the recommended pro-

\textsuperscript{29}Five out of 12 practices were selected by the cumulative method of scoring. These were use of certified cottonseed, use of hybrid seed corn, thick spacing of corn, soil testing, and written records.
These two groups are compared and contrasted on selected socio-economic characteristics in Table 4. The two groups suggest two types of farm operators found in the present rapidly changing agricultural scene. The highest adopter represents the modern commercial farmer, while the low adopter has the characteristics of the traditional operator who was the dominant type in the area up until a decade or two ago. The high adopter as compared with the low adopter had a much greater gross income, was more likely to have someone in his family in nonfarm employment, was more highly educated, was considerably younger, and was much more active in development and agricultural organizations.

The Employed Wife

Approximately one-fourth of the wives in the survey of the 15 open-country neighborhoods were employed outside the home. These working homemakers had a higher level of adoption of recommended home practices than did those homemakers who were not employed (9). The higher score for those employed may be partially explained by the age and education of those persons and the fact that they were likely to have husbands who were employed and had contacts off the farm. The employed wives were more likely to be in the middle age groups, 35 to 60, than were women not working outside the home.

Thirteen homemaking practices were used in the index. For details see (9).
Highly significant was the fact that the employed wife contributed approximately one-half of the family's total cash income (9). Partially because of this, those families with employed homemakers were likely to have considerably higher incomes than the other families. It should be noted that the three highest income groups in Table 3 had the highest proportion of wives employed.

It is sometimes maintained that working wives slow up the shift out of agriculture by allowing the husband to remain in farming instead of securing other employment. Certainly, the evidence from Alcorn County does not support this position. Families with heads entirely in nonfarm employment or only part-time in agriculture were much more likely to have homemakers employed than were those where the head received all his income from the sale of farm products. The data from this study suggest that far from the working wife "subsidizing" a partially or totally unemployed husband she is much more likely to have a husband who is "more aspiring" and has higher income than others.

**Family Types and Development Organization**

From the above analysis several types of families relevant for development programs are indicated. Perhaps the most homogeneous group was those who were supported entirely by non-work income. Most of the heads of these families were retired. Families supported entirely from non-work income comprised approximately one-seventh of the rural population surveyed in 1956. It is likely that the relative size of this group will be maintained for some time because of the high age of many farm operators. Programs most relevant for this group would be those which provide services for the older population of a health, welfare, and educational nature.

A second grouping, those toward which most adjustment programs have been oriented, are the persons who still receive all or part of their income from agriculture. Two types of farm operators and families were noted in Table 4 below and were characterized as the modern

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**Table 4.—Farmers with the highest and lowest level of practice compared on selected social and economic characteristics. (26)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>All operators</th>
<th>Highest</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median gross farm income</td>
<td>$1333</td>
<td>$7600</td>
<td>$1058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median net family income</td>
<td>$728</td>
<td>$2000</td>
<td>$423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent families receiving income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside of agriculture</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of operators full time farming</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent owning tractor</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median acres operated</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with nine or more years of schooling</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Score</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent belonging to organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other than the church</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent having contact with Soil</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent having contact with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension Service</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Highest all five practices; lowest, none or one.
2Sewell op. cit.
commercial farmer and the traditional small farm operator. Data are not available to predict the exact number of commercial farms with adequate resources that the county can support, but it is likely that the number is considerably less than the 990 commercial farms in the county in 1959. Adequate educational and action programs appear to be available in the county for the full-time commercial farmer. With the growing number of rural residents and part-time farmers, however, programs especially oriented for these persons need to be considered.

A third population of great importance in planning rural development is made up of rural residents—those who live in the open country but are not engaged in farming. This is the largest group in the countryside and is growing in size. As indicated in Table 3, it is quite diverse. It is made up on the one hand largely of unskilled, part-time workers who have relatively low income and socio-economic level, and on the other hand, by a group of rural residents who in terms of level of living, education and organizational leadership may be considered the “elite” of the countryside.

With the rapid decline of the farm population, the open-country neighborhood is becoming more and more a place of residence rather than a location for work. This implication is developed in the following section dealing with rural neighborhoods.

**CHANGING NEIGHBORHOODS**

Open-country and hamlet neighborhoods provide at least a part of the locale for rural development. The central question is what contribution, if any, neighborhood organization can make. In this section the neighborhoods in the county are described in terms of services provided and other characteristics; in the following section neighborhood development organization is critically analyzed.

**Location and Characteristics**

The rural neighborhood has undergone radical change with the transition from an agricultural economy with small farm operators living and working on dispersed farmsteads to an industrialized one with population massed around an urban center and rural residents commuting to this center for work in trades and services. Before changes for the Alcorn County neighborhoods are detailed, however, a brief description is presented of a survey of them in the mid-fifties (1).

As pointed out above, 37 all or pre-dominately white neighborhoods and one non-white neighborhood were delineated in 1955. The neighborhoods varied greatly as to size and other characteristics. In size they ranged from 21 to 295 families, and the median number was 74. The neighborhoods of the county classified as to degree of organization are shown in Figure 2. The nature of neighborhood organization will be discussed in detail in the following section, but it should be noted that a neighborhood is a social unit to the extent that certain activities conducted within its boundaries contribute to its identity. These ac-

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32 Following its technical usage in sociology the term “neighborhood” is employed rather than the term “community” which is the popular or folk term. Communities and community clubs of Alcorn County are used to designate neighborhoods and neighborhood associations.

33 One or more Negro families lived in only 14, or slightly more than one-third of the 37 neighborhoods. These were in the central portion of the county.
Figure 2.—Alcorn County Rural Neighborhoods, 1955-1958, by Type of Organization for Development.

Activities include not only organized efforts but also "neighboring" and informal leisure time pursuits.

In the mid-fifties approximately one-third of the neighborhoods had community clubs, and about the same proportion were utilized as Agricultural Conservation and Stabilization units. Over two-fifths were used as voting precincts, and one-fifth had Home Demonstration Clubs. The number of stores, cotton gins and related services had declined, but the exact figures were not available. In 1911, 10 of the neighborhoods had post offices as compared to only four in the mid-fifties. During the last several decades the number of voting precincts increased and remained organized along neighborhood lines.

Consolidation of Schools

Since neighborhoods often grew up around schools, the loss of these institutions explains some of the decline in number of neighborhoods and also the changes in boundaries. Minutes of county school boards for the early decades of the century indicated that the schools were thought of as being neighborhood institutions. These minutes contained many references to petitions for establishment of schools and adjustment of school boundaries. In 1910 there were 71 white elementary schools outside of Corinth (17). At this time school districts and neighborhoods apparently coincided.

The early consolidations seemed to indicate the joining together of neighborhoods or parts of neighborhoods. By 1925 there were only 53 school districts in the county, and according to newspaper accounts, the school names were still the same as the neighborhood names. By 1955 there were only 23 rural elementary schools and three high schools for the 37 rural neighborhoods, and school dis-
districts no longer corresponded to neighborhood boundaries. By the sixties the divorcement of school district from neighborhood boundary was complete. There was one district for Corinth and another for the rural areas with eight attendance units. All Negroes were transported to Corinth. The loss of the school as an important neighborhood service not only reduced the number of local functions but also necessitated the forming of new relationships with other neighborhoods and with the county as a whole.

Churches Maintain Their Numbers

By contrast with school trends, the number of churches in the rural area of the county increased. In 1957 all of the 37 neighborhoods except four had churches. There were 64 churches in the rural area of the county as compared with 55 nearly four decades earlier. From 1920 to 1940 there was a gain in the rural population but a loss in the number of churches (19). From 1940 to 1957, however, population declined by one-fifth, but during roughly the same period, 1942 to 1957, the number of churches increased 31 percent. These counter-trends may be illustrated by the seven survey neighborhoods in beats losing population. In the last two census decades two of these neighborhoods gained in number of churches, four retained the same number, and only one lost a church. The village of Rienzi, which lost 6 percent of its population between 1930 and 1950, gained two churches.

In 1957, 29 of the 64 churches were Baptist, 13 were Methodist, 11 were Church of Christ or Christian, and 3 were Presbyterian. Eight were either non-denominational or smaller religious bodies in terms of their representation in the area and the state; all of these eight churches had been organized since 1921. For the period, 1921 to 1957, the number of Baptist churches remained almost the same. The number of Methodist and Presbyterian Churches declined. The number of Churches of Christ increased.

Although many of the schools bore the neighborhood name, a church had the neighborhood name in only one of the 37 localities studied. As contrasted with most other activities, church service areas were for the most part not co-terminous with neighborhood boundaries. Slightly more families attended church outside than inside the neighborhood in which they resided.

The Future of the Open-Country Neighborhood

The decline of open-country neighborhoods throughout the nation over the last several decades is well recognized and documented. Although the rural neighborhood has probably been stronger in the South than elsewhere, at least in recent decades, the decline appears to be appreciable here also. In 1910 approximately 70 school neighborhoods were found; in the thirties and forties 45 or 46 neighborhoods were mapped by agricultural workers; and in 1955 in this study only 37 were delineated, some of which were nominal with no organized activity on a neighborhood basis and many residents appearing to be unaware of the name.

The complexity of a neighborhood, the number of services offered, should not be taken as an index of its vitality. The importance of an activity in maintaining locality identity rather than the number

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of such activities is the significant criterion in judging the vitality of the neighborhood. For example, some neighborhoods adjacent to the county seat with a relatively large number of services offered to the population were declining as distinctive social units just as were some of the smaller neighborhoods distant from the county seat which were losing population rapidly and which had lost all or nearly all of their services.

The central question in planning is whether or not certain services can be more effectively organized on a neighborhood basis than in some other way. With the decline in the population engaged in agriculture the neighborhood has become largely an area for residence rather than one in which economic production plays a prominent part. Thus it might be contended that the open-country neighborhood will survive to the extent that it can provide effectively those educational, recreational, and other services which make a given locality a good place in which to live.

The prediction might be ventured that if there is to be an open-country neighborhood of the future which has some permanency, it will have an organized structure with considerable informal association accompanying it. The organization will be multi-interest, will adjust to meet change, and will help relate the residents to one another as well as to the
larger society. A recent attempt has been made in the South and specifically in the county studied to organize the open country neighborhood. This activity is called the "community club" program which is treated in the following section.

DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION IN THE OPEN COUNTRY

Development organization in the open country refers to those groups established on a neighborhood basis which have as their objective the improvement of living in the neighborhood. In the county studied these organizations were of two types. One was limited in its interest and generally in its sex and age groupings. It included 4-H Clubs, home demonstration clubs, Future Farmers and Future Homemakers of America, and forestry clubs. The second type of organization was the neighborhood club, called the community club. The community club was a multi-purpose organization which designated all families residing within the neighborhood as potential members. The discussion which follows deals with the neighborhood club.

The Club Movement in Alcorn County

The neighborhood club program in Alcorn County is a part of the movement which has developed through the state and the Southeast since World War II.\(^\text{36}\) The first club of this type was organized in the county in 1952 by the professional agricultural leaders. This club was in one of the better farming neighborhoods which had a reputation of cooperation with county organizations (7). During the four-year period, 1952-1956, a total of 11 clubs were organized. In 1955, the county coordinating and sponsoring agency was established and named the Alcorn County Development Council.

This council was made up of representatives from the neighborhood associations, the sponsoring civic clubs, and the professional agricultural leaders or workers.

In 1960, two additional clubs were organized. Thus, by the end of this year there was a total of 13 organizations. In 1961, however, one club was disbanded, and in 1962, two organizations were discontinued, leaving a total of 10.\(^\text{37}\) In all three neighborhoods key leaders in the clubs had either died or moved away. In one neighborhood the population decline was very rapid, and in another, residents of the locality became seriously divided over school issues.

By 1963, open-country club organization had reached a plateau, and its future appeared to depend on several rapid and critical changes occurring in the county. These included occupational shifts, which have been discussed above, and county-wide organizational strategy and effectiveness, which is considered below.

The relation of neighborhood clubs to schools is seen in the fact that of the 10 active clubs in 1963, four were meeting in a building which was formerly used for the school and had been sold to the neighborhood association as a club house. A fifth club was planning to purchase a school building as a meeting place. A sixth club met in a church, and the remaining four met in school buildings now in use.

In the late fifties approximately one-

\(^\text{36}\) For a treatment of these programs see Harold F. Kaufman, Community Development Programs in the Southeast, Miss. State College Social Science Research Center, Community Series No. 9, June, 1956.

\(^\text{37}\) In 1952, 164 clubs were reported active in the state. By the mid-fifties this number had increased to over 400 and by 1963 to over 500.
fifth of the families in the neighborhoods in which clubs were organized participated in these associations. The membership averaged around 25 or 30 families.

Club Activities

Programs of the clubs were varied and covered a number of major interests ranging from development of agriculture and improving homemaking to recreational activities (7). A club typically had a monthly meeting balanced with educational and recreational activity. Educational topics were of a wide range including many community problems as well as specific presentations on agriculture and homemaking. As the number of families engaged in agriculture rapidly declined, the number of programs devoted to agricultural topics likewise decreased. In addition to monthly meetings, clubs had special projects such as work days for repairing and landscaping buildings, fund raising campaigns, and community tours.

Clubs usually made an annual plan of work and established committees to carry out various aspects of their program. At the end of each year the county council held a meeting at which time awards for outstanding achievements were made.

Neighborhood Factors in Club Success

An effort was made to discover those factors within a neighborhood which might be favorable toward the organization of a development club, and if one were organized, to influence its successful operation (10). Data from the 15-neighborhood survey were used for this analysis. The neighborhoods were classified as to those which had clubs, those which had more limited improvement organizations but not community clubs, and those without any organization except possibly a church. Several factors stood out which differentiated the club neighborhood from the others, especially from those without improvement organizations. One characteristic of club neighborhoods was their long history of extensive neighborhood activity. They had relatively more improvement organizations, schools, churches, and economic services than had other neighborhoods. There was decidedly more awareness as to the identity of community leaders in the club neighborhoods than in the others.

There was not only more activity within neighborhood boundaries, but there was also more contact with the outside. Residents of club neighborhoods had a higher rate of membership in organizations other than the church, particularly those promoting educational and development programs. Although club neighborhoods were on the average larger than neighborhoods without organization, this fact in itself did not appear to be directly related to organizational effectiveness. Rather than the total number of families, the number of families of relatively high socio-economic level and interest in development programs appeared to be the significant factors.

Contribution to Development

Several contributions of the community clubs to development may be noted. One was the role of clubs in improving agriculture. Although club members on the average followed more recommended practices than did nonmembers, and for the period studied, 1954-1957, had a higher rate of adoption, it is not clear to what extent, if any, the club contributed to this differential. Certainly those people with education and other characteristics conducive to the acceptance of recommended practices were also more likely to belong to clubs. Possibly the indirect effect of the community club was the important contribution. That is, it pointed up problems for solution and generated motivation rather than providing
specific and detailed technical knowledge.

Also, it should be noted that the nonfarm membership in community clubs increased rapidly for the period following the mid-fifties when most clubs were organized. A study of six clubs revealed that in 1955 less than one-third of the families in these organizations had no income from agriculture (3). By 1958 this proportion had increased upward to one-half of the total, and by 1963 it is quite likely that the proportion was reversed from what it was eight years earlier.

A second contribution of the community club to economic development was in providing a channel of communication in respect to nonfarm employment, especially in manufacturing. The club provided a medium by which residents of the neighborhood were informed as to the need for support for new industry and also of the opportunities available for employment.

A third contribution of the clubs was in the standards they set for good living. These related to adequate recreational facilities for youth, support of the schools and churches, and the utilization and need of health and welfare services. As the neighborhoods have fewer and fewer farmers, programs aimed primarily at building better places in which to live through improved institutions and group activities are likely to be the dominant object of club activity.

It is quite possible that the greatest contribution of neighborhood clubs is not to be measured in physical terms but rather with respect to leadership development and the strengthening of groups which promote desirable change. It might be said that an effective neighborhood club sets the tone or sensitizes the residents of an area as to the need for change.

Although raising income and providing community services were frequently cited as contributions of neighborhood clubs, “the improvement of community spirit and pride” are probably the most frequently mentioned and strongly supported justification for club organization. Related to the strengthening of neighborhood relations was also the very obvious contribution the clubs made toward improving relationships between town and country. The unique tie-up discussed below between civic clubs in Corinth and the open-country organizations helped greatly to minimize the differences between the town and the rural neighborhoods.


ORGANIZATION OF THE TRADE AREA

This report to this point has been concerned with documenting and interpreting changes in a trade area in the Southeast which is to some degree representative of the region and possibly other parts of the nation. Changes, almost revolutionary in speed, have been noted. These have occurred with respect to occupation, level of living and organization of the open country.

In this section a central objective of the study is pointed up, namely, the contribution of county and trade center development organizations in promoting and guiding desired change. Certainly the major forces of change are outside the community, but this does not mean that within certain limits there is not the possibility of considerable local initiative. It appears that many crucial decisions related to the establishment of
new enterprises providing non-farm jobs are made by local leaders.

In trade areas as small as the Alcorn-Corinth one and in the early stages of industrialization, decisions by local leaders may be relatively more important than in larger places with a more advanced industrial trade complex. Growth is not automatic as is shown by the radical decline in population of many agricultural counties in the two decades following World War II.

Dynamics of Development

Development organization, more adequately termed the dynamics of development, has at least three aspects which should be noted here — structure of organization, nature of leadership, and process. Such analysis is to be seen against the background factors of location and resources. The organizational structure is both formal (organized) and informal and represents several interests such as agriculture, industry and the services. This structure also has essential decision-making elements such as planning councils and coordinating groups.

A second essential aspect of the dynamics of development is to be seen in the nature of the leadership. Both paid and voluntary leaders who collectively possess technical skills and the knowledge and art of human relations are needed. This latter talent and ability is especially important in the executives of the developmental organization. Alcorn County was especially fortunate to have paid and voluntary leaders of high ability in strategic positions during the 1952-62 decade described below.

A third important aspect of the dynamics of development is the process as seen in terms of decision-making and stages of action. A key factor is the timing of decisions in terms of local needs, resources, and outside support. A selection of the appropriate time to act is to some degree in the hands of local leadership. Fortunate is the community which has paid workers and volunteers with this sense. Some events within and outside the community are, of course, fortuitous and beyond the control of the local leaders.

Areas of Interest and Organization

The importance of a complex of development organizations is seen when the town and country trade area of today is compared with that of a generation ago or with situations in underdeveloped countries at the present time. This complex of development organizations, including its paid leadership and clientele, is an invaluable factor in mobilization for change.

The most highly developed complex of organizations in a traditionally farming county such as Alcorn is the agricultural one. At the time of this study there were approximately a score of different types of agricultural agencies and membership organizations and more than that number of professional workers. County agricultural organization had its beginning with the creation of the local office of the Agricultural Extension Service in the second decade of the present century. The number of agencies grew rapidly in the depression of the thirties. They serve all aspects of agricultural and forest production and marketing.

As noted in the preceding section, many agricultural, homemaking, and

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36 This study has taken these factors as given and has left detailed analysis to the economist and the physical planner.

40 In addition to the Agricultural Extension Service those agencies serving the county include the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Farmers Home Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Agency, the Mississippi Forestry Commission, the Soil Conservation Service, the Vocational Agricultural Departments, the National Farm Loan Association, the Tupelo Production Credit Association, the Alcorn County Artificial Breeders’ Association, and the Alcorn County Cooperative.
forest organizations had neighborhood clubs or chapters. There were approximately 50 different neighborhood organizations of this type in the mid-fifties. The Alcorn County Farm Bureau was a county membership organization. There were several councils of agencies and organizations. These included the Home Demonstration Council, the 4-H Advisory and Junior Councils, the Alcorn County Development Council (council of community clubs), and the Agricultural Coordinating Council.

The pattern of the Agricultural Coordinating Council was developed by the USDA in the late thirties. Mississippi has been known for its strong state and county councils. The Alcorn County group was reorganized in 1960 as the Agricultural Workers’ Council, and at the time of this writing provided an important co-ordinating and communication function in rural community development.

The business-industrial complex of organization centered in the Corinth Chamber of Commerce. Other groups and agencies which played an important role in this area of interest were the city and county governments and the Mississippi Employment Service. The Chamber of Commerce was organized on a full-time basis in 1955 and during the following eight years had an impressive record of accomplishments. It had several programs and committees concerned with trade area development. Among the interests organized in 1963 were agriculture and forestry, airport, highways, industrial development, travel development, and merchants’ promotion.

A third grouping relevant to development consisted of the service groups and institutions. In this classification were found such agencies as the Public Health Department, the Public Welfare Department, and the Northeast Mississippi Regional Library. Highly institutionalized groups included schools and churches. All of these agencies and associations focused on services to families and individuals and had special relevance for use of leisure time.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for creativeness and development of community distinctiveness lies with what has been termed the service groups and institutions. A national market leaves its imprint of uniformity on all types of economic activities as do government-oriented programs. Thus, in the so-called community of residence probably lies the greatest opportunity for distinctively local initiative.

Overall Coordination and Planning

Of central concern in development is an organizational structure which carries out coordination of activities and long-range planning. For the period of study two organizational centers of planning emerged. For agriculture, there was the Alcorn County Development Council in which the Agricultural Extension Service played a prominent role. For industry and trade there was the Chamber of Commerce.

Certainly the several aspects of economic life need to be seen as integral parts of the total picture in long range planning. The most effective type of coordinating agency is a moot question. Whether a trade area such as the one studied can operate more effectively with one overall organization or two or more centers of leadership is a question on which all evidence is not in. There had been two proposals, both initiated by the Agricultural Extension Service through its state and national programs, for an overall coordinating and planning agency. One was the county program projection activity in the late fifties, and the other, the Rural Areas Development Program of the early sixties.

There had been extensive discussion
by county leadership of both of these proposals. The consensus was that the present dual but closely coordinated organization was producing satisfactory results, and that the leadership and the design for a uniting superstructure to replace the present organization would be difficult to realize.

There were many ties between the rural and agricultural programs on the one hand and the industrial and trade activities on the other. Perhaps the most effective method of coordination and unit planning came through the informal contacts of both paid and volunteer leaders. These contacts were seen in coffee cliques, civic clubs, churches, and recreational groups. At the formal level, business and industrial leaders played a prominent role in the Alcorn County Development Council. On the other hand, the Chamber of Commerce had, as mentioned above, a Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. The executive of this agency was secretary of the Fair Board. Less formal from an organizational standpoint but a significant index of the close cooperation between business and agriculture was the fact that the monthly meeting of the Agricultural Coordinating Council was held in the Chamber of Commerce office.

Significant in the process of communication and planning was the civic club. Eight service clubs, two of them women's clubs, were located in Corinth, and one was found in the village of Rienzi. Programs of these clubs and contacts they provided appeared to make decided contributions toward providing information, and toward motivating members to take part in community projects.

A Decade of Development

The period, 1952-1962, might well be termed a decade of development in Alcorn County. The progress made here should of course be seen within the context of rapid regional and national development. Development might be seen in terms of stages in the process, development structures, and specific projects or results. The latter are the major concern of this section.

Effective programs frequently grow out of a reaction to serious problems. In 1952 an apparel industry which employed over one-third of all the workers in manufacturing was closed. At this time also were occurring rapid adjustments in agriculture. Both of these conditions served as stimulants to the creation of development organization. By 1955, as has been noted above, the Alcorn County Development Council had been organized and a full-time program in the Chamber of Commerce had been initiated.

Specific projects included both those providing jobs and those improving community services. During the decade under consideration 15 new industries were established in the county providing several thousand new jobs. In addition, a paper plant was built across the state line, which is manned by a relatively large number of workers from the Corinth trade area. Even a railroad was built to link the plant with the transportation outlets in Corinth.

During this decade radical change was to be observed in the country-side. Hard-surfaced and graveled roads were extended to all parts of the county. Telephone service was extended to hundreds of residents in the southern portion of the area. Many new homes were built, and farms were mechanized. A county airport was constructed, and soon thereafter scheduled air service was established.

The City of Corinth and suburbs saw the creation of an industrial park pro-

41The writers are indebted to the Corinth Chamber of Commerce and the Alcorn County office of the Agricultural Extension Service for much of the data used here and in preceding sections.
moted by an Industrial Development Association. By 1963 this park had seven new industries. An urban renewal program had been inaugurated, and a city park and recreational program had been established. By the end of the decade commitments had been made to build a 117-bed county hospital at a cost of approximately $2.8 million.

By this time plans were also under way for the development of the Tusculumia River Watershed. When completed, this was expected to make a most important contribution to both agriculture and recreation in the area. The Watershed covers the better farming area in the center of the county. Equally significant for longtime development was the inauguration of a study aimed at establishing policy guidelines for future economic development. This study focused on a type of enterprise most suitable for the area, labor needs and resources, rate of growth, and services needed.

Some Questions:
Answered and Unanswered

Development organization focuses on that aspect of the process which lies beyond resource analysis, and market and monetary trends. This concern for a detailed picture of organizational dynamics appears, however, to be necessary not only for the development of the "little economies" but also for good living — providing adequate services and institutions. Questions have been raised here concerning the structure of area planning and coordinating agencies and of the relation of these local associations to federal and state agencies. Also noted has been the necessity for specifying through further research, areas of action in which local initiative is especially relevant and useful.

Of special concern in this analysis was the role of open-country organizations. Does the community club movement, for example, foretell a new day for the countryside, or is it a last unsuccessful effort to preserve some semblance of open-country neighborhood organization?

There is some prospect of a new day for the countryside if it is realized that the providing of jobs is only one major objective of development. Another goal of equal importance is to maintain and improve the quality of living — to develop the community of residence.

APPENDIX

LIST OF SELECTED PUBLICATIONS IN THE ALCORN COUNTY STUDIES

Monographs

(1) Alexander, Frank D., Rural Communities, Organized Groups, and Public Agencies in Alcorn County, Mississippi, In Relation to Community Development, Particularly Educational Programs Through Rural Community Clubs. Miss. State College Division of Sociology and Rural Life, Preliminary Report in Community Organization No. 2, Nov., 1955. (98 pp.)


(11) Gillis, Willie Mae, The Adoption of Recommended Farm Practices in Alcorn County and Its Relationship to Other Variables. Miss. State College Preliminary Report in Sociology and Rural Life No. 5, August, 1958. (12 pp.)


Other Papers


