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Factors in rural neighborhood development in Alcorn County, Mississippi

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Factors in

Rural Neighborhood Development

In Alcorn County, Mississippi



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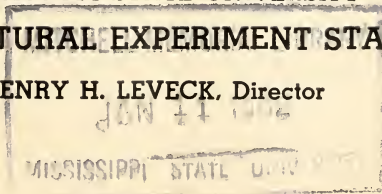


TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| SUMMARY OF FINDINGS | 3 |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| Problem and Objective | 5 |
| Method of Analysis and Limitations of Data | 6 |
| The Alcorn County Neighborhoods and the Sample | 8 |
| II. ECONOMIC AND POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS | 8 |
| The Agricultural Enterprise | 8 |
| Source of Income and Education | 9 |
| Socio-Economic Score Distribution | 9 |
| Population Characteristics | 11 |
| III. INTERACTION PATTERNS WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD | 12 |
| Neighborhood Services | 12 |
| Organizational Activity—Past and Present | 14 |
| Neighborhood Identity—Past and Present | 16 |
| IV. CONTACTS OUTSIDE THE NEIGHBORHOOD | 17 |
| Contacts of Rural Residents with County Seat Leaders | 18 |
| County Seat Influence and Neighborhood Location | 19 |
| Participation in Secular Organizations Outside the Neighborhood | 20 |

Summary of Findings and Implications

Fifteen of the 37 neighborhoods in Alcorn County, Mississippi, were studied intensively for suggestions as to factors conducive to neighborhood development organization. The problem was to discover in what kind of neighborhoods, clubs were likely to succeed, and to delineate those factors which facilitate or hinder the organization and growth of Community Development Clubs.

The 15 sample neighborhoods were classified in terms of degree of development organization as (1) the five which had Community Development Clubs, (2) the four which had other development organizations but not Community Clubs, and (3) the six which had no development organizations. The other development organizations were three women's Home Demonstration Clubs, one civic club, and eight 4-H Clubs. The Community Club neighborhoods varied from the other two neighborhood groups in (1) economic and population characteristics, (2) extent of activity within the neighborhood, and (3) the number and kind of outside contacts.

Certain combinations of economic and population characteristics seemed to facilitate neighborhood organization, while others appeared to hinder it. In the Community Club neighborhoods families had adopted more improved agricultural practices, had more work income with fewer not gainfully employed, more household heads in the productive ages with higher education, and a larger proportion of households with a relatively high level of living. The organized neighborhoods on the average were larger than the unorganized and had lost less population. A minimum of around 20 families interested in organizational activity seemed necessary for the successful operation of a Community Development Club. Neighborhood organization seemed to depend not so much on number of families as on number of families of a relatively high socio-economic level. There was no correlation between number of households and the proportion of neighborhood fam-

ilies represented in the club.

The major characteristic found to be associated with the organization and growth of Community Development Clubs was a long history of interaction or activity at the neighborhood level. As compared with other neighborhood groups, Community Club neighborhoods had more services to promote neighborhood contacts and a longer history of organizational activity. There had been more schools, churches, economic services, and organizations. This strong local activity resulted in strong neighborhood identity. More Community Club neighborhoods had columns in the county paper, their names had been recognized over a longer period, and their boundaries had remained more stable than in the other neighborhoods.

In the Community Club neighborhoods there was not only more activity within neighborhood boundaries, but there were also more contacts with the outside. Families had more frequent contacts with the development agencies at the county seat, and, in turn, received more assistance from county seat leaders. When neighborhoods were weak, it was observed that their geographic location might be unfavorable for organization if they were either too far from the county seat or too near it. Community Club neighborhood residents had more memberships in outside secular organizations, and the kinds of organizations participated in were more likely to promote development than those participated in by families in the other two neighborhood groups.

The study indicated that it was in the neighborhoods already relatively strong that the Community Development Clubs were more likely to succeed, rather than in the weaker neighborhoods where development organization might seem to offer a last hope for neighborhood survival. Implications seem to portend that neighborhoods strengthened by development organizations may continue to persist as significant social units but that the declining, inactive neighborhoods will likely soon disappear.



FACTORS IN RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN ALCORN COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

By LUCY W. COLE and HAROLD F. KAUFMAN*

Introduction

In the transition from an agricultural society with small farm operators living and working on dispersed farmsteads to an industrialized society with population massed around an urban center and rural residents commuting to this center for work in trades and services, the rural neighborhood faces a crucial period of adjustment. In Mississippi as elsewhere small rural areas are being rapidly drained of population, and the larger trade centers on the whole have increased in size during recent decades.¹ Rural development organizations are to be seen as major agencies in adjustment. The chief organization concerned with overall development activities and adjustments to these occupational shifts and population changes is found in some areas to be the rural neighborhood development club, known locally as the Community Development Club.²

The Community Development Club is an inclusive family-type organization with a multi-interest program for achieving "Better Homes on Better Farms in Better Communities." In Alcorn County, Mississippi, the area of this study, Community Development Clubs were organized in 11 of the neighborhoods and in five of the 15 sample neighborhoods of this study.

Problem and Objective

Because of the important role of Community Clubs in rural development, the feasibility of attempting to organize them in other neighborhoods deserves careful consideration. The objective of this study is to delineate factors which facilitate or hinder the organization and growth of development agencies. As mentioned above, the most significant development agency found in Alcorn County was the Community Development Club. This study deals only with factors external to this club which are congenial or detrimental to its organization.³ An active Community Development Club is hypothesized to be related to three clusters of factors, namely: (1) economic and population characteristics, (2) interaction within neighborhood boundaries, and (3) con-

*The authors are Research Assistant and Sociologist, respectively, in the Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station. Special credit is due Wilfrid C. Bailey, who together with one of the authors, first saw the need for this study and supplied suggestions and data. See Wilfrid C. Bailey and Harold F. Kaufman, *Factors Related to Differential Participation Among Neighborhoods* (State College: Miss. Agr. Experiment Station Division of Sociology and Rural Life, Preliminary Reports in Community Organization, No. 3, Oct., 1956.) Credit is also due Frank D. Alexander and Andrew W. Baird, who supplied data.

The Tennessee Valley Authority cooperated with the work in Alcorn County. Members of the staff of the Agricultural Economics Branch, Division of Agricultural Relations, gave valuable assistance throughout. The TVA share in the research was officially known as the "Mississippi Community Fertilizer Education Experiment."

¹For the last decade see *Preliminary Reports, Population Counts for States, 1960 Census of Population, PC (P1)-26, Aug. 1960* (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census), pp. 1-2.

²The term, community, is used by the local residents to refer to a neighborhood. A neighborhood in this study refers to a small spatial cluster of families possessing some group consciousness and having one or more common services. Its essence is seen in the frequency and nature of interaction drawing residents together for the accomplishment of desired ends. Other neighborhood characteristics are implicit throughout the report. See Andrew W. Baird and Wilfrid C. Bailey, *Community Development Clubs in Alcorn County Mississippi* (State College: Miss. State Univ. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 597, May, 1960.)

³Dynamics within this club have been analyzed by Baird and Bailey, *op. cit.*

tacts outside the neighborhood. The first cluster is the situation or setting within which the interaction takes place, and the others deal with the interaction itself.

The clubs in Alcorn County have been organized under direction of the County Agricultural Extension Agents, who have secured the cooperation of other agricultural agencies and civic-minded organizations with an interest in rural improvement. The Alcorn County Development Council—composed of representatives of all rural Community Development Clubs, the sponsoring civic organizations, and professional agricultural workers in the county—serves as a coordinating agency.

Other neighborhood organizations carrying out development activities in the sample neighborhoods at the time of this study were the women's Home Demonstration Clubs, a men's civic club, and the 4-H Clubs for boys and girls. These clubs, like the Community Development Club, carried out multi-interest programs, but not nearly so broad, of general neighborhood improvement and also assisted in making adjustments to change. Unlike the Community Development Club, they were limited in membership to certain ages or sexes. In this study a neighborhood containing any of the above mentioned development organizations is referred to as an organized neighborhood.

Method of Analysis and Limitations of Data

The method of analysis used was to divide 15 sample neighborhoods into three groups: those with Community Development Clubs, those without Community Development Clubs but with other development organizations, and those with no development organizations, and then to compare the three groups to discover differences. The analytical design used was both cross-sectional, to compare present neighborhood differences, and longitudinal, to discover past differences leading to the formation of different inter-

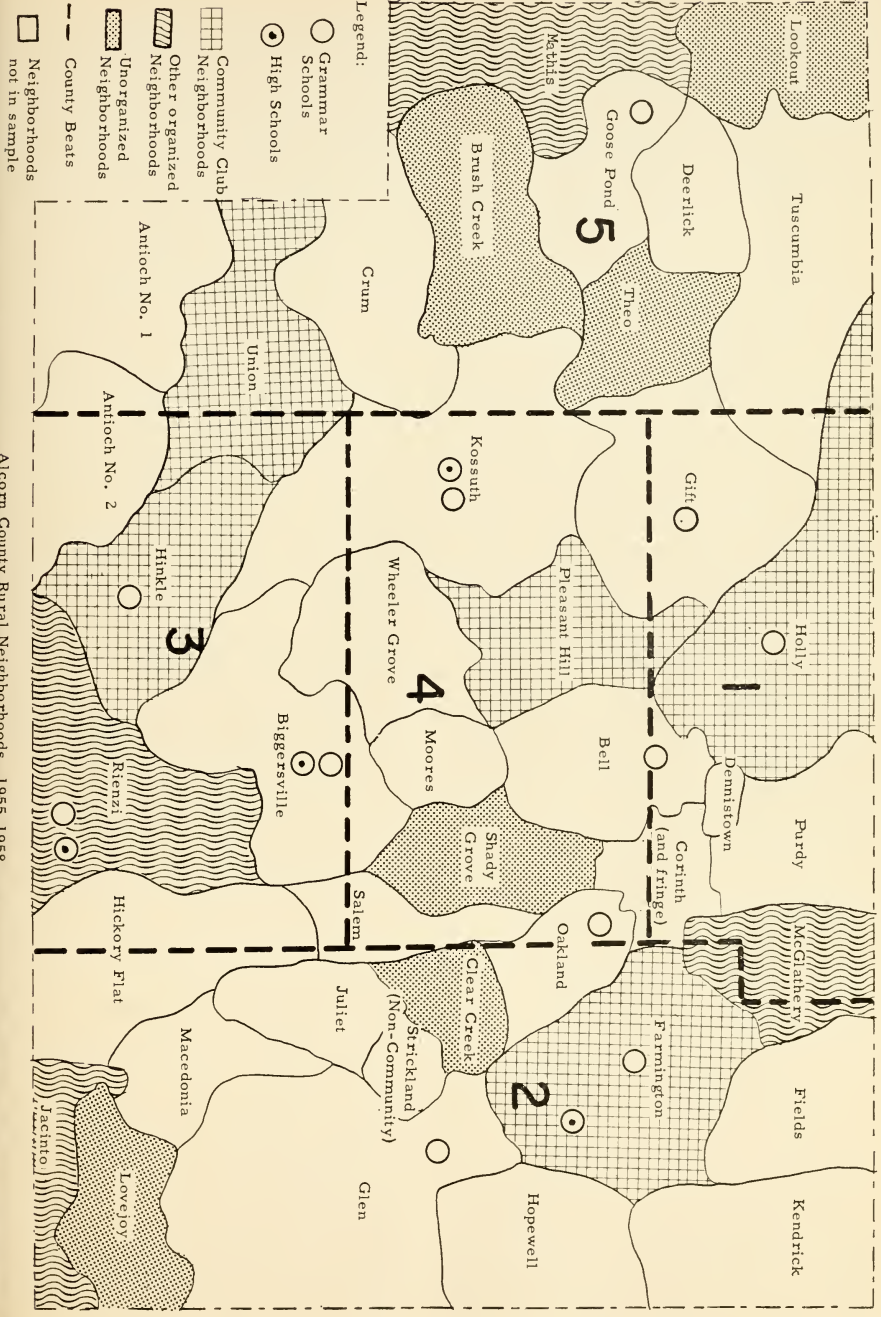
action patterns in the different groups of neighborhoods.

The subsequent analysis is confined chiefly to the two polar types of neighborhoods, the Community Club neighborhoods in contrast to the unorganized. The other organized neighborhoods were a more heterogeneous group with characteristics of both polar types. The two in the isolated sections of the county, which had no adult organizations but only 4-H Clubs, on the whole, resembled the unorganized group. The large village-centered neighborhood and the large neighborhood adjacent to the county seat, which had both adult organizations and 4-H Clubs, more nearly resembled the Community Club group except for more non-farm work and higher income.

The limited locality, the smallness of the sample, and the fact that data were often inadequate because of being collected for other purposes⁴ limit the value of this study largely to suggesting hypotheses rather than to their testing according to rigid statistical measures. The statistical measures used were proportions and measures of central tendency. Since the theory of experimental inference rests on the principle of randomization, and no randomization was possible in the selection of the neighborhoods studied, statistical tests of significance were not used.⁵

⁴Data for 1957 were secured from informal interviews by a field worker, Agricultural Extension Service employees, and Alcorn County newspapers. Data for earlier years were from publications of the Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Miss. AES, two surveys made by this department, namely, the Alcorn County Survey of Part-Time Farmers and Rural Residents, 1956 and the Alcorn County Survey of Adoption of Agricultural Practices, 1955, Alcorn County school records, annual reports of County Agricultural Extension Agents, a 1924 county map published by the USDA Bureau of Soils, and unpublished histories of Alcorn County found in the Corinth Public Library.

⁵Hanan C. Selvin, "A Critique of Tests of Significance in Survey Research," *American Sociological Review*, 22:5, 528-533 (Oct., 1957).



Alcorn County Rural Neighborhoods, 1955-1958

- Legend:
- Grammar Schools
 - Schools
 - High Schools
 - Community Club Neighborhoods
 - Other organized Neighborhoods
 - Unorganized Neighborhoods
 - County Beats
 - Neighborhoods not in sample

Also, the number of cases was not large enough to control by cross tabulations all the important variables, so even if tests had been made, it would be difficult to draw correct inferences.

The Alcorn County Neighborhoods and the Sample

Alcorn County lies in the northeast hill section of Mississippi. This geographic area, along with the rest of the state and much of the Southeast, has been designated as the low income problem area of the nation. In 1955, an experienced field worker and analyst, through interviewing county leaders and key informants, delineated 37 predominantly white rural neighborhoods and a locality known as Strickland, designated as a non-community area⁶. (See map). The accuracy of this delineation was confirmed by a response to an item on neighborhood name discussed in a subsequent section of this

report. Distributed through approximately one-third of these neighborhoods were 14 Negro groupings which appeared as small clusters of scattered households in the much larger white neighborhoods. There was only one predominantly non-white neighborhood, Dennistown. Since the proportion of nonwhites in the county was so small, with 10 of the 14 groupings having less than 20 families, the non-white groupings were omitted from this study.

The sample for the study consisted of those 15 neighborhoods selected for the Alcorn County Surveys of 1955 and 1956. Judgment sampling was used, and the neighborhoods were selected in order to be representative of the county in terms of number of households, economic and public services, presence or absence of Community Development Clubs, and land use type.

Economic and Population Characteristics

How people make a living and how well they live influence their social participation. Size of neighborhood population and drastic population change have also been found to influence social organization.⁷ Clusters of economic and population characteristics are here examined to determine their influence on the social

organization of the rural neighborhoods in Alcorn County.

The Agricultural Enterprise

Since farming was the traditional major source of income in both Community Club neighborhoods and the unorganized neighborhoods, the level of the agricultural enterprise in each group was examined to detect differences. Table 1 reveals that both classes of organized neighborhoods had adopted a greater number of improved agricultural practices than the unorganized group. The Community Club neighborhoods on the average adopted 3.4 improved practices out of 5 in contrast to an average of only 1.3 adopted in the unorganized group. Where neighborhoods were largely dependent upon farming, the adoption of improved agricultural practices seemed of major importance in determining production and probably income from farm sources.

Community Club neighborhoods on the

⁶Frank D. Alexander, *Rural Communities, Organized Groups, and Public Agencies in Alcorn County, Mississippi, in Relation to Community Development, Particularly Educational Programs Through Rural Community Clubs*. Sociology and Rural Life Preliminary Reports in Community Organization No. 2 (State College: Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1955).

⁷Paul J. Jehlik and Ray E. Wakely found seven factors which modified rural organization: highly productive soil, history and tradition, communication and transportation, changing population characteristics, scientific and mechanized farming, and level of living. See *Rural Organization in Process, A Case Study of Hamilton County, Iowa*. Research Bul. 265 (Ames, Iowa: Agr. Exp. Sta., Sept., 1949), pp. 186-187.

whole had more of the better soil than the unorganized group. Three of the five had over half their area in soil suitable for pasture in combination with row crops, but only one of the unorganized had such a high proportion of cultivable soil.⁸ Half of the other organized neighborhoods were in the better soil area, and half had low soil fertility. Table 1 shows little difference in tenure, age, or years of residence in the locality in the three classes of neighborhoods.

Source of Income, and Education

When the source of income of Community Club neighborhoods was compared with that of the unorganized group, the striking difference was in the amount of work income. (See Table 1.) One-fifth of the household heads in the unorganized neighborhoods were not gainfully employed, exactly twice as high a proportion as in the Community Club neighborhoods. In one of the unorganized neighborhoods about one-third of the families had no work income. The large proportion of household heads not gainfully employed in the unorganized neighborhoods virtually accounts for the low median family income, which was about three-fifths lower than in the Community Club group. The greater amount of income in the other organized neighborhoods is largely explained by greater opportunity for non-farm work, especially in the large neighborhood adjacent to Corinth.

Male heads in the unorganized group in neighborhoods had two years less of education than in the Community Club group. Education is not only an important factor in explaining opportunity for gainful employment and amount of income, but has also been shown to be highly correlated with level of living and participation in organizations.⁹

Socio-Economic Score Distribution

Socio-economic scores may be seen as an index to level of living and social participation.¹⁰ The difference in Sewell socio-economic scores in the three neighborhood groups was revealed more clearly in the distribution of scores than in the median score shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows that 17 percent of Community Club households but only 3 percent of the households in the unorganized neighborhoods were in the highest category of scores. The proportion of Community Club neighborhood families represented in the club ranged from 16 to 28 percent. If these were the families of high socio-economic level indicated in Table 2, it might be implied that if around one-fifth of the families in a neighborhood had relatively high socio-economic scores, a club could succeed even though neighborhood families as a whole had low scores and a low income.

This conclusion was borne out by two examples. In one active neighborhood in the Community Club group the median family income was less than \$700, but 19 percent of the households were in the highest socio-economic score category, while another 19 percent fell in the second highest category. In contrast, an unorganized neighborhood in the vicinity of Corinth had a median income of \$2,000 (the second highest income of all sample neighborhoods), but the majority of the households fell in the medium low category of scores and only 8 percent in the highest. In the lowest income neighborhood there were evidently enough families of higher socio-economic status to form a nucleus for organizational membership while in the higher income neighborhood there were not.

⁸Alexander, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

⁹Raymond Payne and Harold F. Kaufman, *Organizational Activities of Rural People in Mississippi*. Circ. 189 (State College: Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., Nov., 1953), p. 8.

¹⁰A sample of 1,043 adults from 552 rural families in four selected counties of Mississippi showed that these scores provided "clues to participation patterns," the higher the score, the larger being the proportion of persons belonging to organizations.

Table 1. Economic and Population Characteristics of Neighborhood Residents by Kind of Organization for Rural Development, 1956.¹

| Economic and Population Characteristics | All Neighborhoods | Community Club Neighborhoods | Other Organized Neighborhoods | Unorganized Neighborhoods |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Source of Family Income: | | | | |
| Percent from farming & part-time farming | 49 | 55 | 39 | 50 |
| Percent from non-farm work | 37 | 35 | 44 | 30 |
| Percent heads not gainfully employed | 14 | 10 | 17 | 20 |
| Median Family Income | \$1215 | \$1360 | \$1681 | \$823 |
| Median yrs. sch. completed | | | | |
| Male head | 8.2 | 8.1 | 8.4 | 6.3 |
| Female head | 8.6 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 8.2 |
| Median Sewell Socio-Ec. score | 70 | 72 | 71 | 67 |
| No agr. practices adopted | 1.8 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 1.3 |
| Median No. acres operated..... | 67 | 51 | 60 | 79 |
| Tenure: | | | | |
| Percent owners and owner-renters | 61 | 61 | 52 | 69 |
| Percent renters | 27 | 31 | 25 | 19 |
| Percent sharecroppers and laborers | 12 | 8 | 23 | 12 |
| Home practice score (perfect, 20) | 14.6 | 15.7 | 15.0 | 12.6 |
| Percent couples with children | 53 | 55 | 50 | 53 |
| Median size of household | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| Median age of male head | 48.9 | 48.1 | 49.7 | 49.3 |
| Median yrs. residence in neighborhood of household head | 22 | 21 | 20 | 25 |

¹Source of Data: Alcorn County One-Third Sample. (Based on sample drawn from both Ado tion and Part-Time Farmer and Rural Resident Surveys).

Table 2. Percent Distribution of Household Socio-Economic Scores in 15 Sample Neighborhoods, 1 Organization for Development, 1956.¹

| Neighborhoods by Kind of Development Organization | Categories of Socio-Economic Scores | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|
| | Low 39-61 | Medium Low 62-71 | Medium High 72-81 | High 82-91 | All 39-91 |
| | (Percent of Households) | | | | |
| All sample neighborhoods | 20 | 35 | 29 | 16 | 100 |
| Community Club neighborhoods | 17 | 33 | 33 | 17 | 100 |
| Other organized neighborhoods | 21 | 33 | 23 | 23 | 100 |
| Unorganized neighborhoods | 29 | 40 | 28 | 3 | 100 |

¹The Sewell Socio-Economic Score was used.

Population Characteristics

Although Community Club neighborhoods varied widely in number of households, there was some relationship between number of families and neighborhood organization. The mean number and range of households in the three groups of neighborhoods were as follows:

| | Mean | Range |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|
| Community Club | 138.6 | 68-295 |
| Other organized | 133.5 | 41-207 |
| Unorganized .. | 53.3 | 32-92 |

While on the average the unorganized neighborhoods were smaller, the range, especially of the two organized groups, was tremendous. Table 3 seems to indicate that a minimum of around 20 families interested in organizational activity was necessary for the successful operation of a Community Development Club. Whether or not a neighborhood had organization seemed to depend more on the number of families of a certain socioeconomic level than on the total neighborhood population. For example, the number of families participating in Community Development Clubs was never any more than the number in the smallest neighborhoods. However, as shown previously, the economic and population characteristics of the smallest neighborhoods differed from those of the other two neighborhood groups. The small unorganized neighborhoods were characterized to the greatest extent by a combination of characteristics found to be least conducive to organizational interests, namely, poor land, lack of work income, isolated location, population loss, and a large proportion of families of low socio-economic level.

The distinction between number of neighborhood households and complexity of interests was found to be important¹¹.

¹¹The literature on neighborhoods has assumed a high correlation between strength of neighborhood and size, but this study did not reveal this to be necessarily true.

When number of households was related to mean number of development organizations in Table 4, the larger neighborhoods had a greater number of organizations, but a higher percentage of the medium size neighborhoods had Community Development Clubs. In larger neighborhoods there is the problem of diverse interests and a tendency to divide into smaller groups¹². Table 3 shows that in largest Community Club neighborhoods the percent of families represented in development organizations was smallest in both the Community Club and Home Demonstration Club. Nevertheless, the Community Club was able to function effectively because a sufficient number of families were members, regardless of the proportion of neighborhood families participating.

Community Club neighborhoods on the whole had lost less population than the unorganized group. In the 1940-1950 census decade all three groups of neighborhoods showed little difference as to the number of neighborhoods gaining or losing population, but in the unorganized group population loss was much greater, amounting to approximately one-fifth in the three neighborhoods in Beat Five.

The 1960 census showed that all rural areas of the county had lost population, although some of the loss was due to the extension of the City of Corinth boundaries. Beat Five lost another one-fifth of its population, bringing the loss from 1930 to 1960 up to more than one-third of the 1930 population.

To summarize, the chief economic and population characteristics differentiating the Community Club neighborhoods from the unorganized group were the adoption

¹²Dorris Rivers, Extension Sociologist at Mississippi State University, has observed that it is often difficult for a Community Club to operate in a large neighborhood because of too much competition from special interest organizations. Also, in the Missouri Standard Community Program of the 1920's it was generally observed that clubs did not persist in hamlets because of competing organizations.

of a greater number of improved agricultural practices, more work income, a greater number of school years completed, a larger proportion of families with relatively high socio-economic scores, and a less drastic population loss. If the above combination of characteristics is favorable, and there is a minimum of 15 to 20 neighborhood families interested in organizational activity, the prospect would

seem favorable for the successful functioning of a Community Development Club.

Thus far certain conditions have been examined which appear to be favorable to the kind of local interaction or activity necessary for a successful Community Development Club. The remainder of the report will deal with the interaction itself.

Table 3. Number of Households in Five Sample Community Club Neighborhoods with Number and Proportion of Households Represented in the Community Club and the Home Demonstration Club, 1957.

| Number of Households | In Community Development Club | | In Home Demonstration Club | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | Number of Families | Percent of Families | Number of Families | Percent of Families |
| Total | 693 | | | |
| | | 161 | 23 | 6 |
| | 295 | 47 | 16 | 24 |
| | 139 | 40 | 29 | |
| | 111 | 26 | 23 | 20 |
| | 80 | 29 | 36 | |
| | 68 | 19 | 28 | 18 |

Table 4. Number of Households in Sample Neighborhoods with Mean Number of Development Organizations, and Number of Neighborhoods Having Community Clubs, 1957.¹

| Neighborhoods Grouped by Number of Households | Number of Neighborhoods | Mean Number of Organizations | Number of Neighborhoods with Community Clubs |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| All | 15 | 1.1 | 5 |
| 139-295 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 68-111 | 5 | 1.5 | 3 |
| 32-58 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

¹Mean number of development organizations includes Community Development Clubs.

Interaction Patterns Within the Neighborhood

Groups and associations within the neighborhood which promote interaction among the residents are the services through which common needs are met, such as school, church, post office or general store; organizations for solving common problems and fostering common interests; and informal groups.

Neighborhood Services

School: A study of school districts and neighborhood boundaries in Alcorn County over a thirty-year period¹³ indicated that school districts were originally formed on a neighborhood basis and that

the school was regarded as a major neighborhood institution. In 1910, there were 71 white rural elementary schools in the county. By 1925 there were only 53 districts, but school names were still the

¹³Wilfrid C. Bailey, "Changes in School Districts and Neighborhood Boundaries for a Thirty-Year Period in a Selected Mississippi County," *The School and Church in Community Improvement, Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Institute for Town and Country Church Leaders*, Mary B. Whitmarsh and Harold F. Kaufman, Eds. (State College: Miss. Agr. Exp. Sta., Sociology and Rural Life Conference Series 5, Feb., 1958), pp. 24-25.

same as neighborhood names. In 1955, there were 23 rural elementary schools and three high schools for the 37 rural neighborhoods, and school districts no longer corresponded to neighborhood boundaries. As shown by the map of the Alcorn County neighborhoods, by the late fifties the divorcement of school district from neighborhood boundary was complete, and there were only eight attendance units in the rural areas. The loss of this important neighborhood institution not only reduced the number of local services but also necessitated the forming of new relationships with other neighborhoods and with the county as a whole.

A study of school records of the fifteen sample neighborhoods for seven selected years between 1905 and 1957 showed that schools were more often present in the Community Club neighborhoods than in the other two neighborhood groups. All but one of the Community Club neighborhoods had at least one school during the entire time, and this one retained its school until the 1930's. All but one of the

other organized neighborhoods also had a school during the entire period, and this one was without a school for only two of the selected years. In the unorganized group, four of the six neighborhoods were without schools by 1957, and one in the vicinity of the county seat had never had a school.

Church: The rural church was the only neighborhood institution that had seemed to hold its own. At the time of this study churches were located in all rural neighborhoods in the county except four, and there was a total of 64 churches in the 37 neighborhoods. From 1942 to 1957 the number of rural churches increased 31 percent, although the rural neighborhoods during roughly the same period (1940-1960) lost 23 percent of their population. Table 5 shows that in the sample neighborhoods the mean number of churches over a time period was slightly higher in the Community Club group.

At the time of this study the service area of the rural church was only occasionally related to the area of organiza-

Table 5. Mean Number of Churches in Three Groups of 15 Sample Neighborhoods for Selected Years Between 1921 and 1957.

| Neighborhoods | 1921 | 1936 | 1942 | 1957 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| All Neighborhoods | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.6 |
| Community Club neighborhoods | 2.3 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 2.5 |
| Other organized neighborhoods | .6 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.5 |
| Unorganized neighborhoods | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 2.1 |

Table 6. Number and Percent of Families Attending Church Inside and Outside the Neighborhood in 15 Sample Neighborhoods, 1956.¹

| Number of Families and Percent Attending Church Inside or Outside the Neighborhood | All Sample Neighborhoods (15) | Community Club Neighborhoods (5) | Other Organized Neighborhoods (4) | Unorganized Neighborhoods (6) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Number of families | 487 | 227 | 160 | 100 |
| Number of families attending church inside or outside the neighborhood | 430 | 198 | 145 | 87 |
| Percent of families attending: | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside neighborhood | 46 | 47 | 46 | 40 |
| Outside neighborhood | 54 | 53 | 54 | 60 |

¹The following households were omitted: divided households where some members of the family attended church inside and others outside the neighborhood; families where household heads were not church members and did not attend regularly; and families on which no data could be obtained.

tion for rural development. According to Table 6, which shows that more families in all groups of neighborhoods attended church outside the neighborhood than inside, the church seemed to have become more of a special interest group than a locality group as might have been the case in the "horse and buggy days" of the last century. The fact that the percent of families attending church inside the neighborhood was slightly higher in the Community Club group may denote more vital local interaction patterns.

While usually the church seemed to have little influence on organization for rural development, there were exceptions. In one neighborhood the pastor was instrumental in organizing the Community Club, and in two neighborhoods church buildings were used as meeting places for the Community Club. On the other hand, in one small unorganized neighborhood with three churches, the churches were reported to be more of a divisive than a uniting influence.

Economic Services: Both groups of organized neighborhoods had more economic services than the unorganized.¹⁴ All Community Club neighborhoods had one or more business establishments. The mean was 3.6, and the range from 1 in a medium size neighborhood to 8 in a large neighborhood in the vicinity of the county seat. In the four other organized neighborhoods the mean was 7.5 and the range from 2 in the smallest neighborhood to 17 in the village neighborhood. In contrast, only two of the six unorganized neighborhoods had business establishments, one with 2 and the other with only 1, making a mean of .5 for the unorganized group. Previous studies have shown that those neighborhoods with few or no services were the ones which became inactive.¹⁵

Voting precincts were found in all but one of each of the two organized groups

of neighborhoods but in only two of the unorganized group. There were Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committees in all but one of the Community Club neighborhoods but in only one of the other organized neighborhoods and in only one of the unorganized group. These functions of government also increased contacts among local neighborhood residents.

Informal Groups: The old concept of "neighboring," which has long been considered a vital part of rural neighborhood interaction, in a day of modern transportation facilities and special interest groups no longer seems to assume its former importance. Scores for visiting, swapping labor, and aid in time of trouble were practically the same for all three groups of neighborhoods. Unfortunately, no data were available as to friendship cliques and kinship groups.

Organizational Activity— Past and Present

History, Neighborhood Organization¹⁶:

The organizational experience and the pronounced leadership patterns prior to the organization of the Community Development Club may be regarded as major factors in the establishment and success of the club. The Community Club neighborhoods had more significant histories, and with one exception (the village-centered neighborhood which was almost too large for a family-type organization such as the Community Club); there was no neighborhood with a history

¹⁵Edmund deS. Brunner and J. H. Kolb *Rural Social Trends*, quoted in Dwight Sander son, *Rural Sociology and Rural Social Organization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1942), p. 69. Historical data were not available on economic services in the Alcorn County neighborhoods.

¹⁶Although information is undoubtedly incomplete, the authors feel that enough was found to support the hypothesis that the Community Club neighborhoods had more past organizational experience than the unorganized neighborhoods.

¹⁴Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63. The data data were for 1954.

of strong organizational activity in which a Community Club was not found.

In the Community Club neighborhoods not only the present generation but their fathers had experience in working together at the neighborhood level and over a long period of time had built up what might be termed organizational "know-how." The mean number of different kinds of organizations prior to 1955 found in the three groups of neighborhoods was as follows:

Community Club neighborhoods. . . 4

Other organized neighborhoods. . . 4

Unorganized neighborhoods. . . . 1

The organization most frequently found was the women's Home Demonstration Club, which at some time was present in all but one of the five Community Club neighborhoods, in all of the other organized neighborhoods, and in all but one of the unorganized group. While there was no appreciable difference as to the presence of this club in the three neighborhood groups, there was a great difference in its duration. In all of the Community Club neighborhoods the Home Demonstration Club had lasted over five years, but in only one each of the other two groups had it lasted so long. In half of the unorganized group it had lasted only one year. The duration of 4-H Clubs showed a somewhat similar trend. In both the Community Club group and the other organized neighborhoods there had been a 4-H Club for over five years, but in only two of the unorganized group had there been 4-H Clubs, which lasted only three and four years, respectively.

Other organizations found in the five Community Club neighborhoods prior to 1955 were the Parent-Teacher Association in three, Works Progress Administration Clubs in two, a Woodman of the World fraternal organization in two, a Farmers' Union in one, a Masonic Lodge in one, a Girls' Poultry Club in one, and a neighborhood "Society" in one. The only organization other than the Home Demonstration Club and the 4-H Club found in

the unorganized group of neighborhoods was a Woodman of the World Camp in one neighborhood. In the other organized group, only the small village neighborhood had had other organizations, namely a Parent-Teacher Association, a Lions Club, a Civic Club, a Canning Club, and a Works Progress Administration Club.

The existence of a strong interactional network in Community Club neighborhoods prior to the organization of the club is further indicated by the fact that the Home Demonstration Club women also became active members of the Community Club, and the two agencies worked together so closely that it was difficult to distinguish precisely between those activities carried out jointly and those performed by the two agencies separately.

Only one neighborhood in which a Community Development Club was formed did not at the time of its organization already have a development club of some kind, and in this neighborhood ten percent of the women were attending a Home Demonstration Club in an adjoining neighborhood, a fact indicating that the type of activity congenial to social organization was present.

Neighborhood Development Activity in 1957: The presence of a Community Development Club in a neighborhood was associated with extensive organizational activity. Out of 151 activities reported in the 15 sample neighborhoods in 1957, 109 were carried out in the Community Club neighborhoods as compared to 36 in the other organized neighborhoods, and only 6 in the unorganized group. Both the Home Demonstration Clubs and the 4-H Clubs participated in more activities in those neighborhoods with Community Clubs.

The Community Club neighborhoods not only carried out a greater number of activities but also more different kinds. Eleven different kinds of activities were carried out in the Community Club neighborhoods compared to seven kinds in the

other organized neighborhoods, and three kinds in the unorganized group. In the unorganized group this type of activity was limited to mutual aid in time of trouble, an occasional church work day, and cemetery beautification.

Leadership Perception: It is commonly recognized that capable leadership is important in social organization and in carrying out planned development projects. In initiating the Community Development Club movement in the county in the spring of 1952, county seat leaders chose as the first neighborhood to be organized one known for its strong local leadership.¹⁷ Where such leadership exists, there is likely to be some consensus among local residents as to who the leaders are. In the Community Club neighborhoods a higher proportion of both men and women recognized one, two, or three of top influence leaders than in the other neighborhood groups. (See Table 7). The low degree of leadership perception in the neighborhoods with other development organizations may be explained by a large neighborhood in the fringe area of Cor-

inth which was gradually losing its identity and becoming absorbed by the city. In this neighborhood more than half of the men and half of the women named no local leaders.

Neighborhood Identity—Past and Present

Local services, local organizational activities, and local history help establish a neighborhood as a separate and unique locality group. Neighborhood identity was measured by neighborhood delineation on maps of three different time periods,¹⁸ the presence of news columns in the county paper, and recognition of neighborhood name.

A sampling of early maps, newspaper and other historical records revealed that all the Community Club neighborhood existed during the past century, and on the whole, their boundaries had remained relatively stable throughout the years. In only one of the neighborhoods had the name changed. Four of the five had new columns in the county paper as early as 1890. These columns reported neighborhood social affairs, school improvements fairs, and other educational events and programs.

All but one of the four other organized neighborhoods existed in Civil War days. In all, boundaries had changed slightly. In one the neighborhood had shifted a mile east to take advantage of the railroad. While four of the six unorganized neighborhoods dated from the nineteenth

¹⁷Baird and Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 7

¹⁸Agricultural planning maps of the late thirties and the late forties were compared with the map shown below. The accuracy of the data is questionable, since the method of delineating neighborhoods probably changed from time to time.

Table 7. Leadership Perception by Male and Female Household Heads in Three Groups of Sample Neighborhoods.¹

| Names Mentioned | Percent of Male Heads in Three Groups of Neighborhoods | | | Percent of Female Heads in Three Groups of Neighborhoods | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | All | Community Club | Other Organized | Unorganized | All | Community Club | Other Organized | Unorganized |
| 1, 2, or 3 of top leaders | 59 | 71 | 44 | 55 | 56 | 69 | 37 | 54 |
| No names or none of top 3 leaders | 41 | 29 | 56 | 45 | 44 | 31 | 63 | 46 |

¹Data were obtained by compiling replies to the following question: "Who is this community would be the best people to go to if you wanted to get folks around here together to do something about bettering your community, such as improving the schools, churches, roads, etc.? (Try to get at least 3.)"

century, only two had columns in the early newspapers examined, and one had a column for one year only. No mention could be found of the other two of the unorganized group until 1912 and 1930 respectively. Boundaries in the unorganized neighborhoods had not remained as stable as in the organized groups.

Neighborhood identity at the time of this study was measured by recognition of neighborhood name. In the different Community Club neighborhoods, from 90 percent to all of the residents correctly identified the neighborhood name, and in the other organized neighborhoods, with one exception the percent was almost as high. (The exception was a large neighborhood on the outskirts of Corinth, where only 60 percent identified the name.) In half of the unorganized, group identification scores were as high, but in the other half, relatively low. The two

neighborhoods with the lowest scores (ranging from 60 to 70 percent) were in Beat Five, two of the same neighborhoods where no history could be found of past organizational activity.

All Community Club neighborhoods and all other organized neighborhoods except the village-centered one,¹⁹ had society columns in the county newspaper in 1957. None of the unorganized group had a column, although news items from these neighborhoods appeared occasionally.

As evidenced by the data, the Community Club neighborhoods had long been recognized as centers of rural activity. As rural and urban interests began to merge, not only local activity but contacts with the county seat began to increase in importance. The following section of this report describes the nature of the participation of neighborhood residents in the larger trade area.

Contacts Outside the Neighborhood

The county seat was found to be highly important as a trading and marketing center, an avenue of communication, a source of nonfarm employment, and a resource for rural development. At the time of this study there was no locality unit intervening between the neighborhood and the trade area community of Corinth.²⁰

Corinth was the chief market for the agricultural products of the county, and residents of all but two of the 15 sample neighborhoods mentioned Corinth as the place where they did most of their buying. The county newspaper published there was received in every neighborhood in the county. Other agencies drawing rural residents to the county seat were the Northeast Mississippi Regional Libra-

ry, the County Hunting and Fishing Club, the Public Welfare Department, the County Community Fund, the Public Health Department, and the county branch of the Mississippi Employment Service.

Of major importance in rural organization were the development agencies concentrated in the City of Corinth. Among these were the Alcorn County Chamber of Commerce, which promoted development in the entire trade area, and a number of civic clubs, which sponsored the local neighborhood development clubs. The Alcorn County Development Council, composed of both urban and rural members and serving as the overall coordinating and supporting agency for the Community Development Clubs, met in the county seat. Also located in Corinth were six agricultural agencies: the Agricultural Extension Service, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee, the Farmers' Home Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Agency, the Mississippi Forestry Com-

¹⁹News from the village-centered neighborhood appeared chiefly in a newspaper outside the county.

²⁰Cf. Irwin T. Sanders and Douglas Ensminger, *Alabama Rural Communities, A Study of Chilton County*. Bul. No. 136 (Montevallo: Alabama College, July, 1940).

mission, and the Soil Conservation Service.

The county seat was observed to influence neighborhood organization in two ways: first, through the two-way activity or interaction patterns established between rural residents and county seat leaders; and second, by the geographic location of the neighborhood in relation to the county seat.

Contacts of Rural Residents with County Seat Leaders

The leaders of the Agricultural Extension Service, the federal agricultural agencies, the chamber of commerce, and the Alcorn County Development Council assisted in organizing neighborhood development clubs, and their judgment as to whether or not a neighborhood had the qualifications necessary for the success of the club was an important factor in neighborhood organization. If rural leaders called upon these agencies for assistance in effecting improvements in their home localities then their neighborhoods began to receive special attention from county leaders, and important two-way interaction patterns or channels of activity were formed between the county seat and these rural localities. County seat leaders became familiar with these neighborhoods and alert to opportunities for offering their assistance.

When rural residents failed to take advantage of county development resources available to them by contacting county agency leaders, they naturally created the impression that they were uninterested in improving their localities and preferred no interference by outsiders in their affairs. It was the weak, de-

clining neighborhoods especially in need of assistance where no interest was shown in development activities. Unless there is a reverse trend in these declining neighborhoods, present indications portend that these groupings will disappear as neighborhoods.

Table 8 shows the difference in contacts of residents of the different neighborhood groups with the County Agricultural Extension Service, an important county development agency which was also instrumental in assisting rural residents with the organization of Community Development Clubs. Neighborhood development organizations seemed easier to establish and maintain in those neighborhoods where families had frequent contacts with the Agricultural Extension Service personnel. Since all the development organizations with the exception of the one civic club were Extension associated, where contacts with this agency were lacking, there would seem to be little chance for a club to function successfully.

Both male and female household heads in the two groups of organized neighborhoods made more contacts with this agency than did household heads in the unorganized neighborhoods, although a higher percentage of families in the latter group were dependent on income from farming. The larger number of contacts with the Agricultural Extension Service in the Community Club neighborhoods as compared with the unorganized group also provides one explanation for the larger number of families in those neighborhoods which adopted the improved farm practices referred to previously.

Table 8. Percent of Household Heads Contacting County Agricultural Extension Service in Three Groups of Sample Neighborhoods, 1955.

| Household Heads | Percent Contacting County Agricultural Extension Service in Three Groups of Neighborhoods: | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Community Club | Other Organized | Unorganized |
| Male | 61 | 66 | 36 |
| Female | 30 | 19 | 7 |

County Seat Influence and Neighborhood Location

When neighborhoods had no strong organization of their own, it was observed that their geographic location might be unfavorable to neighborhood organization if they were either too far from the county seat or too near it. Geographic isolation as a single factor seemed to show little relationship to neighborhood organization, but when it was combined with other unfavorable situational factors—such as lack of opportunity for non-farm employment, infertile soil, limited education, low income, low socio-economic level, small number of households, and population loss — a configuration was formed which seemed to sharply constrict organizational effort.²¹

Geographic accessibility to the county

²¹James E. Montgomery in "Three Southern Appalachian Communities: An Analysis of Cultural Variables," *Rural Sociology*, 14, 2 (June, 1949), pp. 138-148, by matching natural resources in three communities found that isolation was an important factor in retarding neighborhood change.

seat was measured by distance, paved roads, and transportation facilities. The map shows that three of the five Community Club neighborhoods were relatively near the county seat. The one in the remote area in Beat Five was the last to be organized. Three of the six unorganized neighborhoods were in this beat, and a fourth was as far removed in another direction. Nevertheless, residents in all but two of the unorganized group reported doing most of their buying in Corinth, which seems to indicate that enough county contacts would have been possible for organizing a club, had other characteristics conducive to neighborhood organization been present.

The other two unorganized neighborhoods were both near the county seat and on paved roads. Both were without services and might be termed nominal neighborhoods. None of the Community Club neighborhoods but half of the other organized neighborhoods and half of the unorganized were on regular interstate bus lines, but in only one was there a bus stop. The lower income of the unorganized group (see Table 1) might mean

Table 9. Percent of Sample Neighborhoods with Selected Transportation Facilities, by Organization for Rural Development, 1955.

| Groups of Neighborhoods | On Paved Road | School Bus Used for General Transportation |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| All sample neighborhoods | 60 | 60 |
| Community Club Neighborhoods | 40 | 60 |
| Other organized neighborhoods | 75 | 100 |
| Unorganized neighborhoods | 67 | 33 |

Table 10. Percent of Household Heads Belonging to Secular Organizations in Three Groups of Sample Neighborhoods, 1956.

| Household Heads in Secular Organizations | Percent of Household Heads Belonging to Secular Organizations in Three Groups of Neighborhoods | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Community Club Neighborhoods ¹ | Other Organized Neighborhoods | Unorganized Neighborhoods |
| Total ² .. | 28 | 18 | 12 |
| Inside neighborhood | 18 | 6 | 0 |
| Outside neighborhood | 14 | 13 | 12 |

¹These data were secured prior to the organization of the last Community Club, so the table shows only four Community Club neighborhoods instead of five.

²Since the same persons often belonged to secular organizations both inside and outside the neighborhood, the total of the two categories is not the same as the total for family heads belonging to secular organizations.

fewer automobiles for private transportation, but the public transportation facilities shown in Table 9 were no more favorable in the Community Club neighborhoods than in the unorganized.

Participation in Secular Organizations Outside the Neighborhood

The position has frequently been taken that strong neighborhood life prevents participation in the trade area and also at state and national levels. This study seemed to indicate that the stronger the neighborhood life, the more likely were the residents to participate in secular organizations both inside and outside the neighborhood. Table 10 shows that Community Club families belonged to more secular organizations both inside and outside the neighborhood than did the residents of the other neighborhood groups.

The leaders in the Community Club neighborhoods seemed to relate themselves to the larger trade area community, thus increasing their opportunities for economic, educational, and social development. The three top influence leaders named in one Community Club neighborhood had held offices in county, state, and national improvement organizations and had also won recognition in contests for farm and home improvement.

The three groups of neighborhoods could be differentiated not only by the number of outside secular memberships but also by the kind of outside organizations in which these memberships were held. Table 11 shows that residents of

Community Club neighborhoods belonged chiefly to development or special interest organizations, while those of the unorganized neighborhoods belonged mainly to fraternal and patriotic groups. Nine residents of Community Club neighborhoods were officers or committeemen in the county development organizations, while only one in the other organized neighborhoods and none in the unorganized group held such positions.

The effect of outside participation on neighborhood life appears to depend on the strength of local organization. Two large neighborhoods bordering on the county seat provide cases in point. One of these had remained strong and active, carrying out development activity through a Community Development Club, a Home Demonstration Club, and a 4-H Club, yet 36 percent of the family heads belonged to secular organizations outside the neighborhood and only 30 percent to local organizations.

In the other, there was little interest in neighborhood development. Twenty-six percent of the family heads belonged to outside organizations, and only 5 percent to the one development organization for adults, which was a women's Home Demonstration Club. This club was not designated by the neighborhood name, and its membership was composed largely of county seat residents with rural members in the minority. The neighborhood was rapidly losing its identity and becoming absorbed into the county seat

Table 11. Percent of Households in Three Groups of Sample Neighborhoods Participating in Different Kinds of Outside Secular Organizations, 1957.

| Kinds of Outside Secular Organizations Participated in | Percent of Households Participating | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Community Club Neighborhoods | Other Organized Neighborhoods | Unorganized Neighborhoods |
| Farm Bureau | 14 | 6 | 10 |
| County Cooperative ¹ | 27 | 15 | 21 |
| Special Interest and Development | 6 | 6 | 1 |
| Fraternal and Patriotic | 9 | 20 | 14 |

¹It was discovered that anyone buying as much as \$25 worth of goods from the County Cooperative was listed as a member, so membership in this organization was no measure of a desire for agricultural improvement. While advice could be secured at the Cooperative in regard to seed, feed and fertilizer, some farmers bought these things there merely because they found it more economical to do so.