

EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue of *Southern Rural Sociology* (*SRS*) is my second and completes my first volume as editor of the official journal of the Southern Rural Sociological Association. While an editor's introduction would usually be included with the first issue, I chose to omit it then. I was focused on the look and feel of the journal and website as we transitioned from print to electronic format. Now that my team and I are moving along apace, I would like to introduce myself for those of you who do not know me, quickly recap the history of *SRS* to gain some perspective on where we have been, and discuss the direction of the journal over the next two years.

So Who Is D. Clayton Smith and What Is He Going to Be like as Editor?

First off, call me Doug. Only strangers call me Clayton. My *nom de plume* is D. Clayton Smith because I have very common given and surnames. I am currently an Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Kentucky University. Originally, I am from New Castle, Kentucky (a town in the outer Bluegrass region with a population still less than 1,000 persons). Although I grew up in town, the son of a tireless public servant/prankster and his smart, long-suffering wife, some of my favorite memories occur at my grandfather's farm and at the ridge farms on Flat Rock Road where my father and I used to go cut the family Christmas trees. Most of my extended family still farm although my immediate family left farming when my grandfather sold his land in the 1980s.

As for my professional training, my undergraduate degree was a B.A. in Sociology from Transylvania University where my mentor was Dorothy (Bashor) Neff, an Iowa State trained sociologist/rural sociologist. My master's and Ph.D. are in Sociology from The Pennsylvania State University, where I fell in with Rex Warland, Al Luloff, Ken Wilkinson and their students.

I consider myself an eclectic sociologist. I always knew that I wanted to come back to Kentucky and work with folks, especially folks in rural places. I had assumed that to do so would require me teaching at a small college where I would be required to teach all aspects of sociology, so I studied broadly. I was wrong, of course. A good deed and a blown engine serendipitously landed me a research analyst job with the Kentucky Department of Education, and after two years, my position at WKU opened. While my personal research interests lie in the interstices of community, natural resource use, environmentalism, social movements, and

symbolic interactionism, I have always attempted to pursue sociology writ large. Over my career I have coauthored two books, *Don't Burn It Here: Grassroots Challenges to Trash Incinerators* (with Ed Walsh and Rex Warland) and *Basics and Applications of Sociology* (with James Grimm and Amy Krull) as well as articles on education performance differences, health insurance and its effects on physical and mental well-being, and ecofeminism.

A couple of things are evident from this short autobiography. First, I have a desire to use social science to understand and ameliorate real world problems. This desire has drawn me to into the orbit of rural sociology and rural sociologists. I have always felt humbled to be accepted as a peer among those who do so much for so many. Thus, I am really proud to serve as editor of *SRS*.

Second, my eclecticism means that I do not come to this editorship with any agendas. All flavors of rural scholarship are welcome here. I will not turn away a manuscript because it does not use the terminology that my research program uses. I have been on the other side of that 8-ball and it is nonproductive for both scholar and discipline. I will not play that game. Moreover, I also recognize that both qualitative and quantitative research have their place in advancing knowledge. My concern is that the research I publish is valid, reliable, accurate, and well-written. If your research strives toward those goals, you can publish with me.

A Thankful and Abbreviated Remembrance

Southern Rural Sociology started in 1984 when editor G. Richard Wetherill (and his editorial board: Ronald C. Wimberly, Howard Ladewig, and Lionel J. Beaulieu) took seven selected papers from the Rural Sociology Section of the 1983 annual meetings of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists and bound them together to form the first issue of *SRS*. The next year, a much more “official-looking” issue of the journal was published under the editorial guidance of James H. Copp. At the time the hope of the society was that the journal would be published biannually with one issue being drawn from papers delivered at the annual meetings and the other from submitted manuscripts. It took some time, but *SRS* finally reached the goal of two issues under Connor Bailey’s editorship of Volume 18 in 2002.

I would like to thank all those officers, editorial board members, and reviewers who have worked so hard over the past 23 years to produce this journal. I would especially like to acknowledge the work of the editors who preceded me. In order they are: G. Richard Wetherill, James H. Copp, Robert L. Moxley, Douglas Bachtel, Glenn D. Israel, Connor Bailey, and Robert Zabawa and Ntam Baharanyi. Without

their work to draw on and learn from, my editorship would be a much more difficult proposition. I especially would like to thank Drs. Zabawa and Baharanyi for all their help in making SRS's transition from Tuskegee University to Western Kentucky University easy. All of the articles in Volume 21, Issue 1 and three articles in Volume 21, Issue 2 (including both of the articles with which I am an author) were accepted for publication under their editorship. Gentlemen, thanks for the head start.

So, Where Am I Taking *Southern Rural Sociology*?

From my vantage point it appears that *SRS* has consistently battled two issues: production costs and access. By moving to the new electronic format we have been able to virtually (pun intended) do away with most publication costs while increasing our visibility in internet search engines. This means: a) that instead of having to charge authors \$30 a page to publish their article that instead we can charge an article submission fee of \$20-30, depending on SRSA membership, and b) that we are making our research much more accessible to our students and to the public who are more apt to search for articles using Google Scholar or Ask.com rather than search a library database. Do not fear. I am still working to get *SRS* indexed in scholarly databases. However, it seems to me that the role those databases are playing in real world information exchange is declining.

In any event, our new electronic format allows for just-in-time journal production. When I get five articles accepted, I publish the journal. This can mean a much shorter period from initial submission to publication. I took over the journal in February. Two of the articles in this issue were submitted to me directly and are not leftover from the previous editors. One of these articles was submitted in late March, the other in August. Both underwent review, were revised and resubmitted, were re-reviewed, and are now being published. The crucial point of this example should be clear. If you want your research out quicker, submit it to *SRS*. If your research is good, it will get published, it will get indexed, and it will be found and read.

Lastly, let me mention the forthcoming special issues and the security they provide. When I took the editor's mantle, several folks approached me about guest editing special issues of the journal. With the concurrence of my editorial board, *SRS* currently has four guest-edited issues underway. This assures me the rest of the issues required during my tenure as editor. However, I will not rest on my laurels. I envision increased manuscript submissions allowing me to produce three to four issues of the journal each year for the next two years. It is definitely

possible, but I cannot do that without your submissions and your readership. So send me your articles (or your proposals for additional special issues), read the current issue (or peruse the back issues {I am posting more back issue content as release forms are signed and journals scanned}) and let us work together to advance our scholarship and our praxis. I look forward to reviewing your work soon.

D. Clayton Smith

January 13, 2007

Bowling Green, Kentucky