

1989

## Front Matter

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THE  
GREAT PLAINS  
SOCIOLOGIST

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Official Journal of the Great Plains Sociological Association

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## WHY HAVE A REGIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION?

It is estimated that in 1989 more than two million professional articles will be published in the United States. The Chronicle of Higher Education routinely publishes pages - in very small print - of professional conferences and meetings to be held in the near future. It is no wonder that many professionals are not sure if they are being introduced to a cornucopia filled with items of intrinsic worth simply too numerous to consume, or if they instead are being misled by a calliope of well orchestrated extrinsic distractions. Quite probably the true situation is a combination of both of the above probabilities.

Is a journal to publish more articles needed? Is another association needed? Is there a need to continue, or to add to, the proliferation of associations and journals? My answer is "Yes." Particularly in our region the answer needs to be positive.

### SUBSTANTIVE REASONS

Many of the reviewers in larger journals, have a bias, unintentional or otherwise, which questions the external validity of generalizations from regions such as the Dakotas to other populations. The reverse generalization is much less likely questioned. The result is a paucity of studies using subjects from this region. In a recent survey I did for the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice, the respondents indicated that they needed fewer studies, but, paradoxically, they felt they needed more data on South Dakota and its approach to justice for the young. Data on this region will come from researchers in this region; it will not come from other researchers who come to "America's Outback" to study. Dissemination of the findings of research in this region will come from journals in this region.

### EDUCATIONAL REASONS

Education is much more frequently evident in the process of becoming than it is in any end product. Regional meetings, particularly the smaller meetings, are much less threatening to participants, either polished professional or green novice. Participation via panel, oral presentation, or article submission is often first done on the "small" association level. But it is the first step (which step might not be taken at a "larger" association) which lets the participants know that if they wish to run rather than step, they are capable of doing so. Sociologists know the important part that modeling plays in social life. Regional associations provide both models and opportunities for participation for both junior faculty and students. If the presentation is more in the form of an "is this a good, useful contribution?" rather than a thunderous, self important "I am right, I have the definitive answer," that's okay. I can live with that.

### SOCIAL REASONS

Being sociologists, recognition of the need for a little professional *gemeinschaft*, in what is increasingly becoming a *gesellschaft* profession, is probably obvious. The difficulty with what is obvious is that no one knows it with enthusiasm. We have the opportunity to know each other as people - not just as names or faces, researchers or position holders. Let's know this opportunity enthusiastically.

A CLOSING EDITORIAL NOTE

In a different vein, my term as editor is completed and this will be my last issue as editor of the Great Plains Sociologist. Thank you all for the privilege of serving the Association in this capacity. Since the issue of succession has not been finalized, I will serve as a "depository then forwarder of manuscripts" for the new editor.

Harlowe Hatle, Editor  
Great Plains Sociologist

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