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# UA37/35/3 Sociology at Western Kentucky University

Harold Hepler

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## SOCIOLOGY AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

### An Unfinished Sketch

Harold R. Hepler

In the 1907 catalogue of the newly organized Western Kentucky State Normal School one course in sociology was listed in the Department of History, Arnt M. Stickles, M. A. (Indiana), sole instructor. Under the subdivision of Economics and Sociology this unnumbered course was titled Political Economy.

In 1911 the catalogue lists a Course 5 - Sociology as an elective offered by the Department of History and Sociology for aspirants of the Advanced Certificate. The course was designed to enable the student "to see the fundamental laws underlying society and to open his eyes to the social conditions about him." Blackmar's Elements of Sociology assisted in this apocalyptic enterprise.

From 1912 to 1920 the designated sociology course Rural Economics, the examination of "rural life problems," was offered by the reorganized Department of History, Government, and Economics, Arnt M. Stickles, Ph.D. (Indiana), Head. This course was transferred to the Education Department in 1920; it was given the number Education 7 H and was renamed Rural Sociology.

Impetus to sociology's fortunes was provided in 1924 by further reorganization of the school whose name was officially changed to Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teacher's College. Though still classified under History, sociology courses were separated by the caption "Other Social Sciences." The listing reads: Sociology 101 - Principles; Sociology 201 -

### Rural Sociology.

The following year an increase in sociology offerings occurred with the establishment of the Department of Economics and Sociology, N. O. Taff, M. A. (Peabody), Head and sole instructor. In addition to Principles of Sociology (101), the department instituted Introduction to Sociology (25) to meet general education requirements of most of the students and Educational Sociology (150) to serve as an elective. The Rural Sociology course was transferred once again to the Education department and was numbered Education 108. A social problems course also originated in the Education Department, namely Education 200 - Rural Social Problems.

In 1926 the course in Rural Sociology regained its status in the Department of Economics and Sociology as Sociology 108 and has remained so ever since. (The Education Department changed the number of Rural Social Problems to Education 300.) Added to Principles, Rural, and Educational Sociology was a fourth course Civic Ideals (Sociology 120) which was permanently dropped after two years. With the exception of Civic Ideals the sociology course offerings of 1926 remained unaltered until 1933. In that year the Education Department substituted Rural School Problems (Education 320) for Rural Social Problems (Education 300). Economics and Sociology fell heir to this problems course which was registered in 1935 as Social Problems (Sociology 210). Five courses constituted the sociology program from 1937 until 1943, the fifth course being Advanced Principles (Sociology 102).

For the nine-year period between 1943 and 1952 the sociology program

numbered four courses: Principles (101), Rural (108), Educational (300), and Problems (310). N. O. Taff, Ph.D. (Peabody) assumed the major teaching responsibility for these courses from 1924 until his death in 1951. He was assisted by Mrs. Francis Simmons, M.A. (Peabody) when she joined the department in 1946. Mrs. Simmons shared the sociology assignment through several administrative changes until 1961 when she devoted full time to the teaching of economics.

Karl E. Ashburn, Ph.D. (Duke), replaced Dr. Taff as department head but taught no sociology. During his administration two sets of courses were added to embellish the major and minor programs in economics and sociology and to service the student in graduate education. The sets were similarly named Social Investigations (Sociology 311 and 312, Sociology 411 and 412).

During the tenure of William Lawton, Ph.D. (Chicago), as Department Head the following courses were added to the sociology curriculum: Collective Behavior (204) in 1953, Methods of Research in Social Science (195) in 1954 replacing Methods in Economics and Sociology (200), and Social Organization (308) also in 1954. This program of nine courses reflected the strength of Dr. Lawton's interest in sociology without sacrificing the major needs of the economics curriculum. His particular concern about social research resulted in the designation of Sociology 195 as a requisite for the major in economics and sociology. After Dr. Lawton's departure, Dr. Fred R. Yoder joined the department and shared the sociology assignment with Mrs. Simmons.

Albert L. Olson, Ph.D. (Yale), assumed headship in 1958 and served



until his death in February 1963. The sociology staff increased to four full-time members. The sociology program increased to eleven courses with the following changes: Marriage and Modern Family (194), Criminology (306), Social Stratification (388), and Cultural Anthropology (400) were added; Sociology 195 and Sociology 300 were dropped in 1960; and, Social Problems was renumbered 196 to serve the influx of students meeting general education requisites.

Sociology began the year 1963 in co-status <sup>as</sup> ~~with~~ the Department of Government and Sociology, Hugh M. Thomason, Ph.D. (Emory), Head, and continued as such through the academic year of 1964. The department was one of several merged into the newly organized College of Commerce, William M. Jenkins, Ph.D. (Kentucky), Dean. This administrative reorganization represented the harbinger of the transition of Western Kentucky State College from teachers college to university status, and the sociology program encountered the full impact of that transition.

Under the supervision of John H. Watson, Ph.D. (Mississippi State), acting as deputy chairman of the sociology section of the Department of Government and Sociology, a Minor in Sociology was introduced for the first time in the history of Western in 1964. The sociology staff was increased to seven full-time members, and the sociology curriculum was increased to nineteen courses. The following courses augmented the program: Introduction to Social Work (296), Industrial Sociology (302), Deviant Behavior (306), Methodology (310), History of Social Thought (311), Government and Social Work (326), Casework Techniques (328), and Minority Relations (396). Social Organization was renamed Social Systems and The Family was renumbered 362.

The year 1965 witnessed the inauguration of an independent Department of Sociology, the appointment of Dr. John H. Watson as Head, and the initiation of a Major in Sociology. In the implementing of this program the department faculty was increased to twelve full-time members, and the curriculum was increased to twenty-nine courses. Courses were renumbered and the following were added: Community (165), Social Institutions (170), Introduction to Anthropology (175), Population (210), Field Work Observation (275), Contemporary Sociological Theory (285), Advanced Social Research (290), and Directed Studies (295). To service the graduate education degree program, the department offers 400 numbered studies in community, social systems, anthropology, deviant behavior, and family. The above program continued in force through the academic year of 1966 with the assist of a faculty numbering sixteen full-time members.

The prospectus for 1967 includes the appointment of a new department head, Clifton Bryant, Ph.D. (Louisiana State), the initiation of a Minor in Social Welfare, the addition of three courses in anthropology and <sup>two</sup> ~~one~~ courses in social welfare, and the formulation of plans for the Master of Arts program in Sociology. The new courses include Old World Pre-history (315), Ethnology of North America (345), Pre-history and Archaeology of the Indians of North America (430), Social Welfare as an Institution (285), and Dynamics of Human Behavior (330).

The potential of any enterprising academic program resides in the professionalization of its faculty, namely doctoral possession, doctoral pursuit, and doctoral sensitivity. There is promise of that potential in the sociology program at Western Kentucky University.