

Contrasting Decades

Arthur L. Johnson

In celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Sociology Department at the University of Minnesota I will focus on the third quarter-century, 1945-1970, contrasting periods in staff stability, students, and social environment.

As World War II ended in 1945, the Sociology Department at Minnesota was small, stable and seasoned. Six tenured faculty were pillars with 12-41 years spent at Minnesota, led by Chairman F. Stuart Chapin (1921-1953), and former President of the American Sociological Assn. Dr. Chapin was distinguished, rather formal, and well organized. For example, in personal conferences with him about my dissertation, he kept notes and provided me with the carbon copy. It was also rumored that he kept very detailed records of his fishing adventures at his summer residence at Turtle Lake in Shoreview.

Elio D. Monachesi (1930-1971) served as chairman from 1952-1970 and a record 41 years in the department. I recall Monty had mixed feelings when the department lost forever our quiz sections for Soc 1 in the funding retrenchment of 1949. He was a bit peeved to find out that some grad student assistants were offering quiz section lectures contrary to his.

Two core faculty soon left for greener pastures; Ray Sletto (1935p-1948) left to be chairman at Ohio State U., and Clifford Kirkpatrick (1937-1949) followed a year later to be chairman at Indiana U. That left two stalwarts to remain and retire at Minnesota, Lowry Nelson (1937-1958) and George Vold (1927-1964).

Tenured faculty retention was difficult in 1945-54, compared with subsequent decades.

Remaining at University of Minnesota:

Decade	Hired	Retired	Died	On Current Staff	Moved
1945-1954	12	3	1		8
1955-1964	5	2	1	1 (J. Nelson)	1
1965-1974	18	8	3	1 (R. Anderson)	6

By contrast, of 27 tenured faculty in the Department of Sociology in 1982, sixteen retired at Minnesota, two died here, three are on the current staff, and six have moved.

The Cultural Setting

The student environment showed many changes during these three decades. The 1945-54 decade was the euphoric post-war period, with many war vets on campus eager to make up for lost time. It was also a time to erase the reputation Carey McWilliams gave to Minneapolis in 1948 as “*the capital of anti-Semitism in the U.S.*” It was also the beginning of McCarthyism in the state and the Korean “Conflict.”

The decade of 1955 saw the groundswell on campus of the civil rights movement, with many students helping in voter registration in the Deep South. It was a time of rising popularity of sociology courses, but with no commensurate increase in Sociology staff and funding in new quarters on the west bank.

The following decade (1965-1974) witnessed the rising anti-Vietnam war movement, climaxing in May 1970 and continuing until 1974. It was also the decade when youth were exhorted “to make love, not war” and “not trust anyone over age 30”, and reverse socialization was advocated by such luminaries as Margaret Mead.

Physical Facilities

Significant changes have made the campus more user-friendly than fifty-five years ago. Back then the Department of Sociology had two electric Frieden calculators. Hand-held Texas-Instrument calculators soon followed, (at least we were better off than the Biostatistics lab, which still had hand-cranked Marchant calculators). Electric typewriters and Kinko's came later. Stencils for ditto and mimeograph machines made test production an ordeal. Optical scanning of tests came later. Extra copies of manuscripts required carbon paper. No large data banks were accessible, nor many grants for research or travel, nor SPSS or SAS manuals. Although space was more plentiful upon moving to the west bank, for a long time the library and large classrooms for introductory courses were only on the east bank, which was a formidable hazard in winter until the Washington Avenue bridge was enclosed.

On the plus side, in earlier decades we enjoyed generous desk copies from publishers, which dried up later when many faculty sold desk copies to transient entrepreneurs. We experimented with TV instruction and found it was not a panacea in the 60s. Grade inflation did not become visible until the Vietnam era. I also believe there was a greater spirit of cooperation and community in the earlier decades.

Closing Comments

The inscription chiseled in stone on the façade of Northrup Auditorium has been an inspiration and credo for me for over a half-century. It reads: "*Founded in the faith that men are ennobled by education; Dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the search for truth; Devoted to the instruction of youth and the welfare of the state.*"

The April 2002 issue of *Contemporary Society* has a review essay of Amitai Etzioni's new book, "The Road to Good Society". I hope the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota in this century will help blaze that road.