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Program Planning in Academic Settings

Since the late 1970s, sociology departments around the country have shown an increased interest in offering courses and programs in sociological practice. Various factors point to why there has been a renewed interest in clinical and applied sociology. Howery (1983:3) notes:

The student culture of the 1960s pushed for relevance and concern with social problems; their successors in large numbers now bail out of the liberal arts and opt for vocational and professional degrees, choosing to come to college primarily for occupational training. Faculty in liberal arts departments, including sociology, feel the pinch of retrenchment in academic jobs and the decline in academic enrollments.

Clark and Fritz (1986:175) concur that students are becoming increasingly practical about their approach to a college education and “look for assurance regarding the use of their education and skills in the job market after graduation.” This concern is coupled with declining enrollments in the social sciences and the expectation that employment of sociologists is expected to increase more slowly than the average for all occupations through the mid-1990s.

Demographic shifts also have had an impact on program revisions. There has been a decrease in the number of college students between the ages of 18–24, and an increase in the number of older, returning students.

Despite what appears to be a need for rethinking and perhaps restructuring our academic program offerings, there are serious concerns about what changes may mean for individual departments and for the discipline of sociology. A major obstacle is what Mauksch (1983:2) refers to as “the subculture of the sociological community in academia,” which extols “the pursuit of conceptual and theoretical issues with little regard to their application.” Others fear the emphasis will shift completely from sociological theory to skills and techniques, and that the discipline of sociology will be sacrificed to the vocational training of our students.

The articles in this section were selected because they would be useful to

those considering the development of a practice program and to those who would like to modify an existing one. The articles address many of the concerns raised by Mauksch and others about program establishment. Of particular interest is the fact that the authors agree that sociological practice is not a body of knowledge distinct from the core of the discipline, but a use of that core for practical purposes.

The first article is Frank Blackmar's "Reasonable Department of Sociology for Colleges and Universities." We reprint this article, which first appeared in a 1914 issue of *The American Journal of Sociology*, to show a concrete example of the similarities between program development in 1914 and in the 1980s.

Blackmar presents four major groups of courses: 1) Bio-social Group; 2) Pure or General Sociology Group; 3) Applied or Specialized Group; and 4) Social Technology and Social Engineering. The latter two groupings are clearly of interest to us as is Blackmar's (1914:263) statement that "the whole aim is to ground sociology in general utility and social service."

In the following two articles, Carla Howery, and Elizabeth Clark and Jan Fritz, discuss modern day formats for revising academic programs in applied and clinical sociology. Howery in "Models for Applied Sociology Programs at the B.A. Level" addresses the need for carefully articulated learning goals and cautions against hurried curriculum revisions in order to reverse declining enrollments. She also describes the value of practical experience for students and encourages career counseling specific to sociology.

Clark and Fritz's article, "The Clinical Approach to Successful Program Development," appeared in the 1986 issue of the *Clinical Sociology Review*. The authors present guidelines for sociology departments to use in developing, assessing and implementing a new program and underscore the importance of the program's label. The authors use, as an example, the development of a clinical sociology program, but the points they make also apply to the development of a program in applied sociology or a complete program in sociological practice.

The last article in this section is about the development of a community-based research center. "Establishing a Local Research Center at a College or University" was written especially for this journal by Stephen Steele, E. Joseph Lamp, Harold Counihan, and Joan Albert. The center they have developed provides applied research services to the community. The points they make, however, are valid for a center that provides clinical as well as applied services.

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