

The First 100 years of of Sociology at WSU and thoughts about our future

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A more descriptive title might be:
“Fast, Fast, and Faster”

- My purpose is to describe **six major developments in WSU sociology** in our first 100 years that have lasting impacts.
- But an underlying theme is the constant change in sociological issues needing study and the increasing speed by which issues emerged and work needed to be done.
- I will end with some thoughts about the future of sociology at WSU.

Creating WSU sociology was influenced by our land-grant mission

- WSU is a public land-grant research university committed to the principles of practical education for all, scholarly inquiry that benefits society, and the sharing of expertise to positively impact the state and communities. Liberal arts have always been a part of the accepted mission. (From WSU web page, October 2023)
- WSU was established as a land grant college in 1890, to deliver practical education as articulated in the Morrill Act of 1862, supported by the Hatch Act of 1887 with its emphasis on research and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 that emphasized outreach.
- This mission is the starting point for understanding how sociology was established at WSU and how it developed over the ensuing one hundred years.

Why was sociology needed at WSU?

- Sociology is about social interaction, how people influence each other and the determinants and consequences of those interactions.
- Sociology is only one of many disciplines that study determinates of human behavior, but we have a unique perspective on the causes and consequences of opinions, beliefs, and norms on how people interact with others and make decisions.
- Part of the impetus for bringing sociology to WSU came from rural community studies legitimized and financed by the USDA in the early 20th century at land grant universities.
- Early rural sociology emphasized research as well as the practical application of the results.

1. Dr. Fred Yoder first WSU sociology professor, 1920-1954

- Educated as agricultural economist and rural sociologist
- **Founding Head of sociology department 1928-1947.**
- Taught courses on many different topics, from social psychology and social philosophy to rural sociology.
- WSU Library Archive has 18 boxes of Professor Yoder's files, including correspondence and teaching outlines.
- His connections to Eastern Washington were deep, including membership in the Grange the dominant farmer movement organization in the Pacific Northwest.
- He ran for Congress, unsuccessfully, in 1944 and 1954.


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ca. 1954

"Political problems are always ultimately moral problems—to be solved in the light of our Christian Ethics." — Fred Yoder

Elect to Congress

Fourth District



FRED YODER
DEMOCRAT

Teacher of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at State College of Washington 34 years.

Member of American Legion 30 years and Past Commander of Pullman Post.

Member of Grange 31 years.

Long-time student of the problems of the 4th District.

Veteran of World War I and World War II.

Positive man who tells the voters where he stands.

PAID FOR BY YODER FOR CONGRESS CLUBS 2795

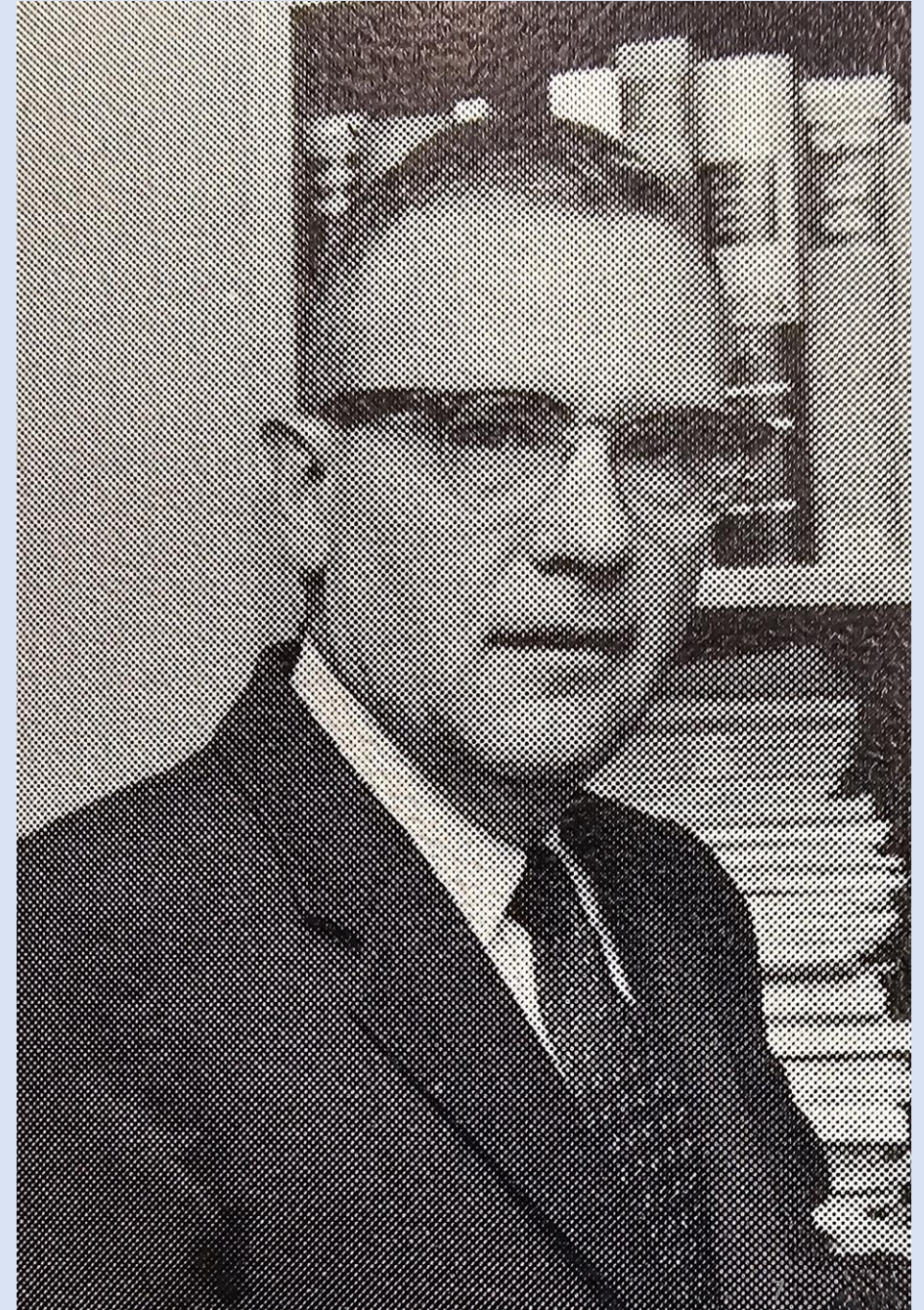
You Vote for Yourself when You Vote for Yoder

Yoder's significant role in translating research into practice

- I heard of Yoder and others taking weekend train trips to do research in Yakima county where the first irrigated agriculture was developing .
- He gave frequent talks to community groups throughout eastern Washington that brought useful community and family life knowledge to residents.
- An example of bringing sociological perspective to the general public included his favorable analysis in the 1930's for the federal government to create *Social Security*, explaining why it was opposed by some economists, middle-class wage earners and capitalists.
- He remained at WSU for seven years after retiring as chair.

2. Wallis Beasley Sociology Department Head, ~1947-1964, and the education of Black PhDs.

- Beasley succeeded Yoder as chair of sociology., serving 20 years, before becoming Vice-President and Acting President of WSU.
- Beasley and Tolbert H. Kennedy, Dean of liberal arts had served as ministers in Tennessee before becoming sociologists; both had contacts with traditional black colleges throughout the South.
- They spread the word that the WSU Department of Sociology would welcome African-American graduate students.
- **Their efforts resulted in 25 sociology PhDs being granted to African American students from 1950 -2004.**
- Our department received the 2004 American Sociological Associations DuBois-Johnson-Frazier Award for its accomplishments in educating African-American PhDs. (First organization to receive this award).
- Beasley Colliseum was named for him at the time of his retirement.



A few of the African-American WSU Sociology PhDs and their accomplishments



Charles U. Smith,
PhD 1950

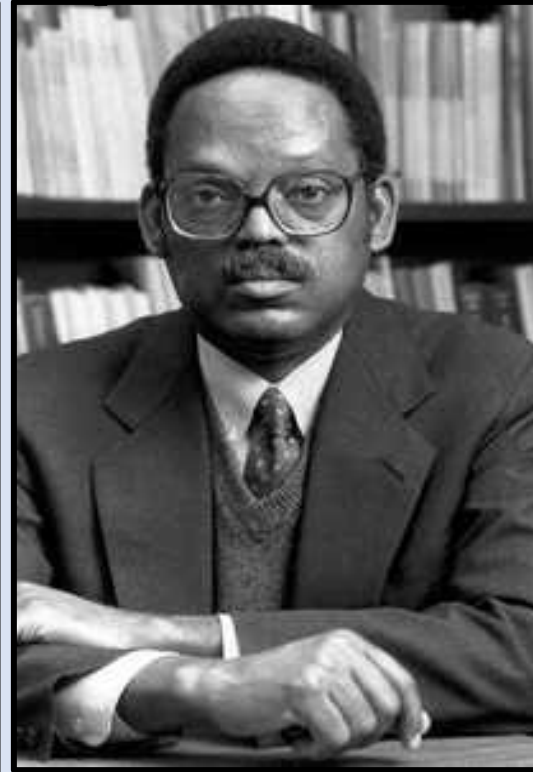
First African-American PhD
from WSU

Distinguished Professor,
Florida A&M University
President of Southern
Sociological Society



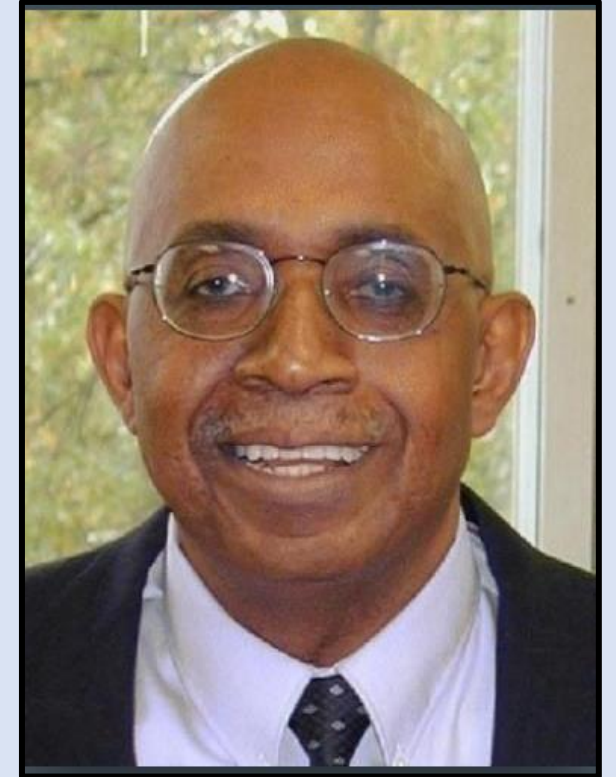
Gordon D. Morgan
PhD 1964

University Professor of
Sociology
University of Arkansas



William Julius Wilson
PhD, 1966

Geyser University
Professor, Harvard
University.
President, American
Sociological Association



Franklin D. Wilson,
PhD 1973

Professor of Sociology
University of
Wisconsin
Co-Editor, American
Sociological Review

African-American WSU PhD's As Professional Leaders

- Nine of our early black PhD's were elected presidents of sociological associations.
- Charles U. Smith led effort to found the ASA Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities that had 700 members in 2004.
- Anna Harvin Grant and James Blackwell, shown here, became major leaders in higher education.
- William Wilson and James Blackwell--received WSU's Distinguished Alumni Award.



**Anna Harvin Grant
PhD 1956**

First woman to earn sociology
doctorate at WSU.
First woman to chair a
department at all-male
Morehouse College, Atlanta.
Among first U.S. sociologists to
address teen pregnancy and
violence

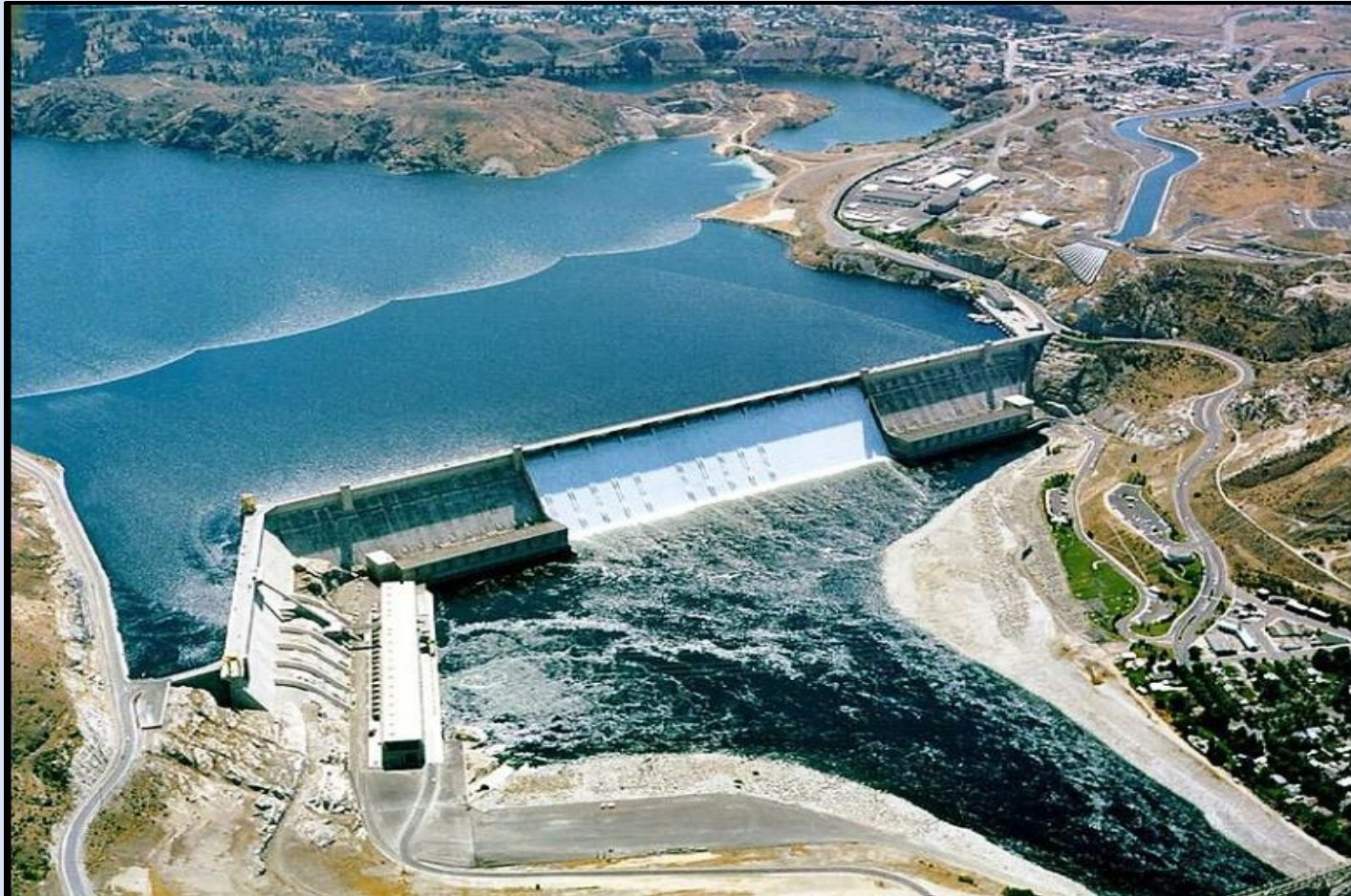
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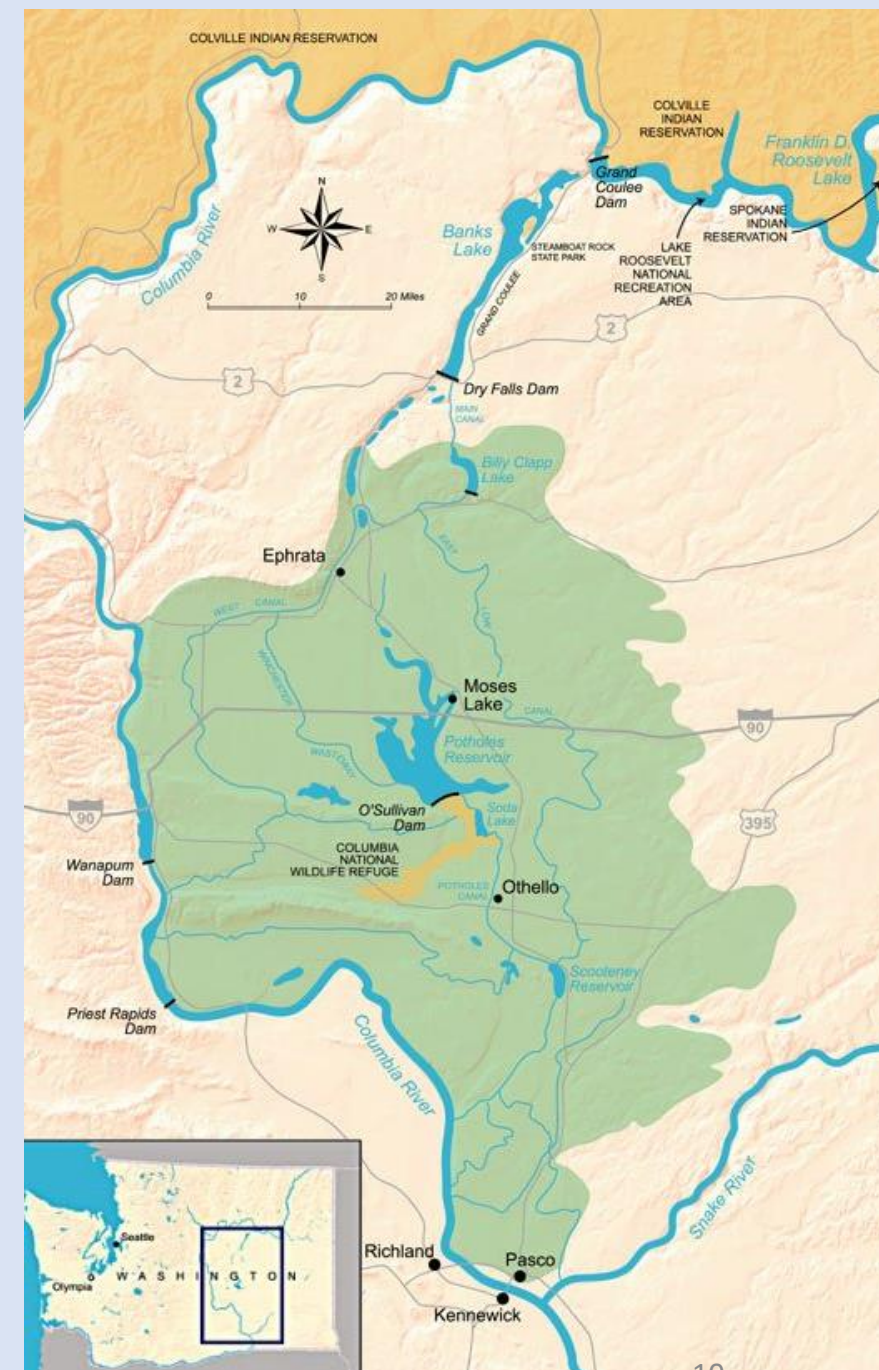
**James E. Blackwell
PhD 1959**

WSU's highest honor: Regents
Distinguished Alumnus Award,
2002
Built Department of Sociology at
U Mass Boston
President: Society for the Study
of Social Problems, Association of
Black Sociologists, Eastern
Sociological Society

3. Rural Sociology: The Grand Coulee Dam constructed on the Columbia River in the 1930s produced excess electricity used to pump water into Banks Lake that was siphoned to irrigate farmable land.



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**Led by Dr. Walter Slocum in 1950's and 60's,
Rural Sociology faculty systematically
investigated and provided outreach on the
adoption of new farm technologies
associated with Grand Coulee irrigation, fruit
orchard irrigation from Cascade mountains
and dryland agriculture (e.g. the Palouse).**



Summary thoughts on impact of the early years (1928-1964) of WSU Sociology

- Under **Fred Yoder** the general relevance of sociology to teaching, research, and reaching out to the people of the state was established.
- **Dean Tolbert Kennedy and Wallis Beasley** leveraged the opportunity to build a PhD. Program and provide opportunity to an under-served population that grew national attention.
- Rural sociology research led by **Walter Slocum** supported extension outreach to encourage adoption of improved crop varieties and farming practices.
- Sociology degrees granted from ~1928 to 1964: (estimates)
 - ~640 Bachelor of Arts (from 1928)
 - ~56 Master of Arts (from 1943)
 - ~23 PhD's including 6 African-Americans (from 1951)

(Estimated degrees 1928 to 2023; **3800 BAs, 500 MAs, 410 PhDs**)

During 1960s-70s the department went through significant changes in leadership and emphases

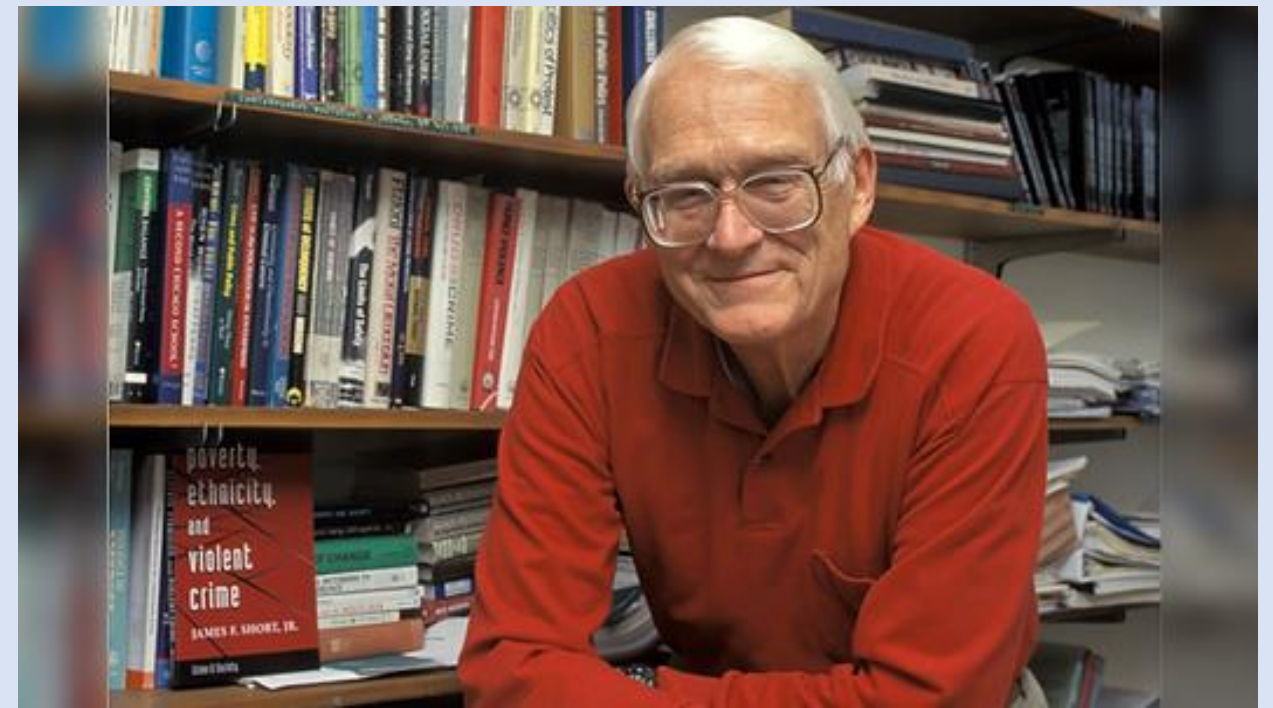
- Washington State College became Washington State University
- Enrollment grew from to nearly 15,000 students
- Sociology grew to about 30 faculty (including social work).
- The department leadership changed significantly, as sociology found its way forward:
 - **Fred Yoder** **1928-1947**
 - **Wallis Beasley** **1947-1964**
 - **John Lillywhite** **1965**
 - **Jack Gibbs** **1966**
 - **Ivan Nye** **1967**
 - **Joel Montague** **1968**
 - **Melvin DE Fleur** **1969-1972**
 - **Charles Bowerman** **1973-1976**
- From about 1970 the emphasis was upon expanding graduate enrollments, while maintaining undergraduate enrollment.

Changes in WSU Sociology were influenced by national forces

- Specialization of sociological interests was encouraged by the creation of American Sociological Association subsections.
- A belief developed that many (if not most) individual sociologists needed sub-specialization more than breadth.
- Graduate training and preliminary PhD exams became specialized and departmental hiring processes often focused on finding similar scholars, thus limiting departmental breadth except in large departments.
- A common expression among scholars was that “individual sociologists knew more and more about less and less.”
- Departmental success shifted towards specializing in specific areas.
- Jim Short’s career is an example of individual specialization that led to department, university and national impacts.

3. James F. Short, Jr. brought an emphasis on criminology to WSU and became a national leader

- WSU Professor, 1951-1997, known for research on urban gangs
- Dean of Graduate School 1964-1968
- Director of Research, National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence 1968-69.
- Editor of the American Sociological review 1972-74
- President of American Sociological Association, 1983
- President of American Society of Criminology. 1997
- Led development of our department as recognized center for studying criminology and deviant behavior.
- Wilson-Short Hall renamed in his honor in 2009.



2009 Renaming of Wilson-Short Hall



4. WSU's role in creating environmental sociology

- Faculty in Sociology and Rural Sociology provided significant leadership in 1970's for the development of environmental sociology as an area of legitimate sociological investigation .
- This development came less from sociological literature than it did from opportunistic interactions and thinking about new possibilities in response to a new societal concern.
- Four strikingly different WSU faculty made significant WSU and national change possible.
- The take-away is about how scientific work advances as a result of different **individual motivations, synergistic interactions, and the fit with external influences.**

Timely hiring of four sociology professors who found benefit in collaboration

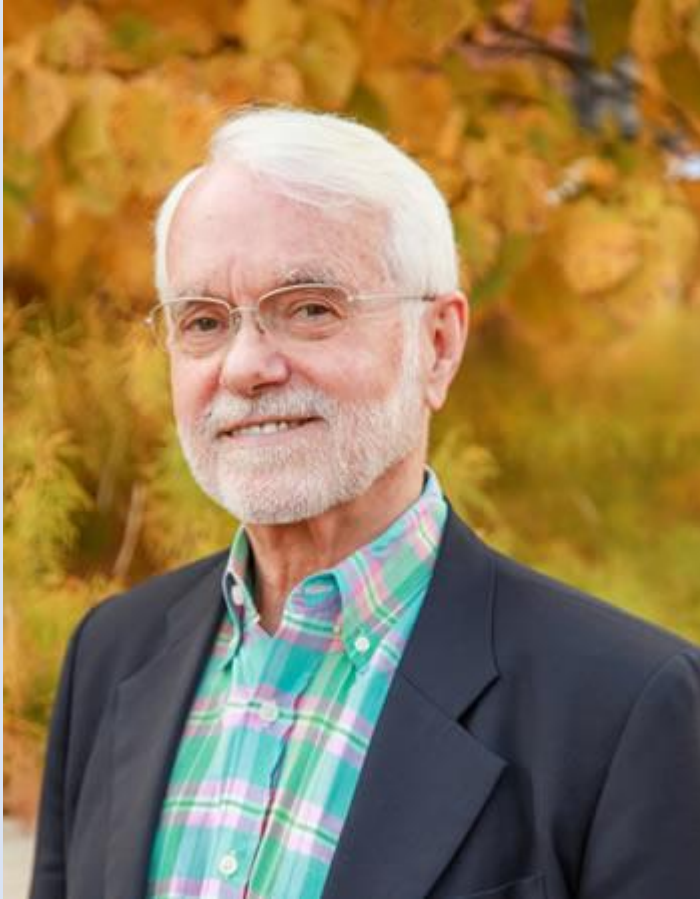
- (Local Context) In 1970, the Chinook, mentioned increasing concern about the existence of environment problems. WSU administrators were aware of this concern among students.
- The faculty members came to WSU in the 1970's, as separate hires:
 - **Bill Catton** a full professor and well-known human ecologist
 - **Riley Dunlap** who had passion for all things environmental that stimulated local as well as national developments in environmental sociology.
 - **Gene Rosa** a Hired in Social Research Center and sociology with a strong interest in the sociology of risks, nuclear energy and later the effective training of WSU graduate students.
 - **Bill Freudenberg** who studied rural boomtowns (e.g. energy developments) and had national impact on social impact assessments.

William R. (Bill) Catton, Jr. (WSU 1972-1989)



- University of Washington PhD, and later faculty members who developed strong environmental ties to New Zealand and commitment to environmental protection.
- Major contributions:
 - *Overshoot: The Ecological basis of Revolutionary Change*, 1980.
 - Catton, W.R. Jr. & Dunlap, Riley (1980) *A new ecological paradigm for post-exuberant sociology*. *American Behavioral Scientist* 24-14-17.
 - First Chair of newly created ASA Environmental Sociology Section
 - Dunlap. R.E. & Catton, W. R. Jr. *Environmental sociology*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 5, 243-273.

Riley Dunlap (WSU 1973- 1997)



- University of Oregon graduate student with concern about fall-burning of grass fields to increase yields.
- A major accomplishment was development of New Environmental Paradigm scale.
- An activist for enhancing environmental protection, supported by strong research skills.
 - Catton, William R., Jr. and Riley E. Dunlap. 1978. "Environmental Sociology: A New Paradigm." *The American Sociologist* 13:41-49.
 - Dunlap, Riley E. and Kent D. Van Lyre. 1978. "The 'New Environmental Paradigm': A Proposed Measuring Instrument and Preliminary Results." *Journal of Environmental Education* 9 (4):10-19.
- Impact has been large. Google Scholar Citations 60,780. H-Index 93. New Environmental Paradigm cited ~5300 times.

Synergy developed between Catton and Dunlap for gaining acceptance of environmental sociology

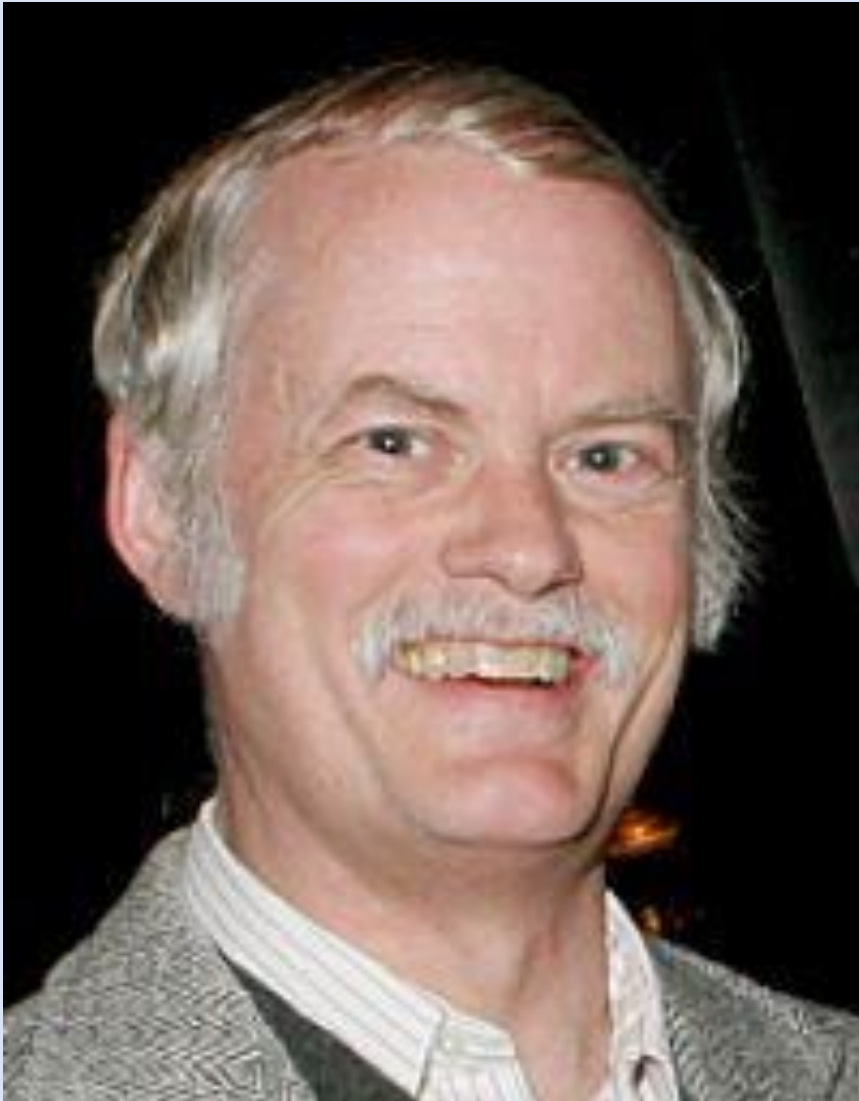
- Catton was a well-established sociologist having made significant contributions on human ecology theory. His approach tended to be theoretical and macro. Dunlap's approach was micro aimed at measuring attitudes.
- Dunlap focused initially on *The Society for the Study of Social Problems* and *The Rural Sociological Society* as places to bring people together to research environmental issues. In the RSS he leveraged the RSS Natural Resources Group.
- Together they started the process of finding others who would support formation of an American Sociological Section (or interest group).
- They were successful because of Catton's sociology reputation in human ecology and Dunlap's dogged determinism to identify people and get them to sign-up.

Eugene Rosa (WSU, 1978-2013)



- Department chair: 1996-2001
- Major emphasis was sociology of risk, and its association with nuclear power.
- Very effective in training graduate students attracted to WSU by impact of Catton and Dunlpa, e.g., Richard York and Thomas Dietz.
- A major publication:
 - York, Rosa and Dietz 2003. STIRPAT, IPAT and impact: Analytic tools for unpacking the driving forces of environmental impacts. *Ecological economics* 46 (3). 351-365.
- Google Scholar citations ~20,000, h-index 51.
- Rosa was also an established artist.
- Died in 2013.

William R. (Bill) Freudenberg (WSU 1979-1990)



- A Yale PhD significantly impacted by Kai Erikson and his book, *Everything in It's Path*, about the collapse of three coal slurry dams in West Virginia that left thousands homeless.
- Drs. Dunlap and Catton watched him give an ASA presentation about social impact of "Boom town" growth on communities and pushed to hire him.
- A joint hire between sociology and rural sociology where he was tenured.
- Left WSU in about 1990 for University of Wisconsin Rural Sociology Department and later University of California Environmental Studies Program, Santa Barbara.
- President of the Rural Sociological Society, 2004-2005; died in 2010.
- National expert on social impact assessments of environmental actions

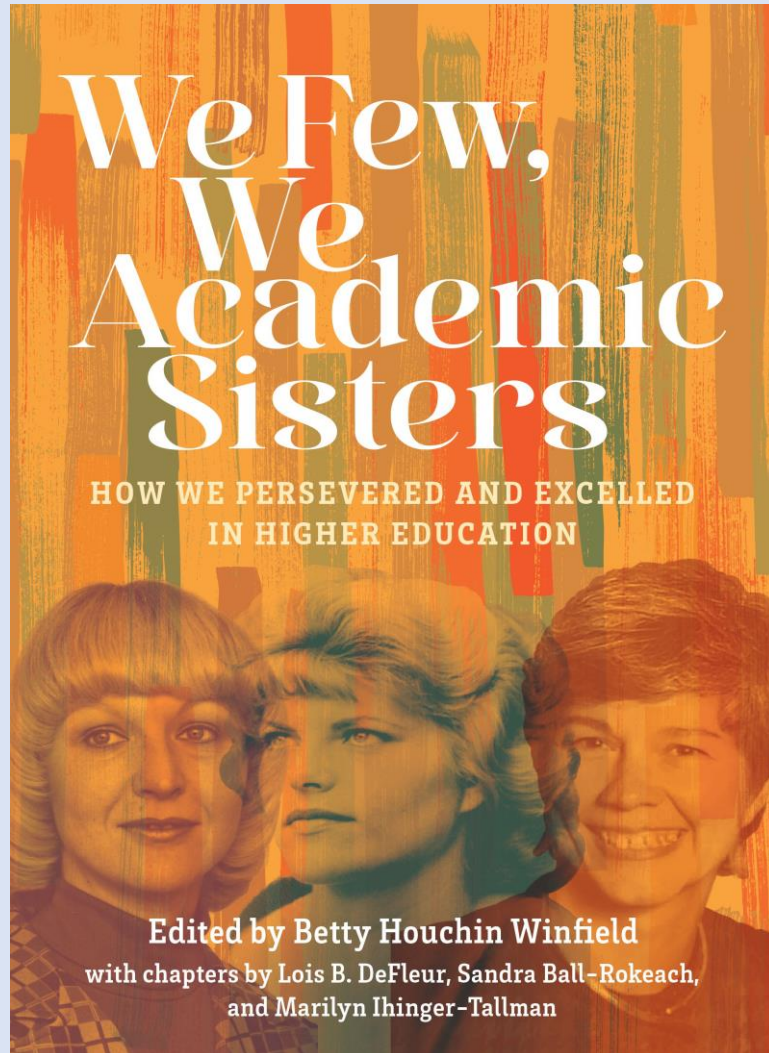
Understanding their joint accomplishment of creating environmental sociology

- **Catton, Dunlap, Rosa and Freudenberg** were each concerned about protecting the environment and believed sociology was relevant to that task. They were also activists.
- Each had exceptional scientific skills in different areas- general theory, measurement of attitudes, nuclear energy risks, social impact assessments. They influenced each other's thinking on nearly a daily basis.
- The appointments of Dunlap and Freudenberg in Department of Rural Sociology was critical to supporting their work that was consistent with the land-grant university mission.
- Their joint success led to environmental sociology becoming a lasting emphasis of the Department of Sociology. .

5. The transition from all male faculty and emergence of research on gender equality

- Lois DeFleur was hired in the Rural Sociology Department because it was against university rules for her to be in Sociology where her husband had just been hired as Chair. That rule was changed in 1968.
- Three successive hires, DeFleur, followed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Marilyn Ihinger-Tallman produced synergy that contributed significantly to changes in sociology department emphases and University leadership.
- A new WSU Press book edited by Betty Winfield, *We Few, We Academic Sisters: How we persevered and excelled in higher education (2023)*, details how these changes happened.

Working Together for Change



- The department and university changed significantly because of sociology's first women faculty.
 - **Lois DeFleur**, 1967—1986, From WSU Professor to WSU Dean of Humanities and Social Science to President of Binghamton University (SUNY).
 - **Sandra Ball-Rokeach**, 1972-1986. Co-authored The Great American Values Test at WSU, and became Professor of Communication at USC Annenberg.
 - **Marilyn Ihinger-Tallman**, 1975-1999, First woman to chair WSU Department of Sociology '88- '96.
- They had different sociological interests (deviance, communications, family) but inter-personal synergy fueled their accomplishments that had wide impact.
- The book tells how this happened—**in their own words!**

6. A personal perspective on sociology in the 1960s and 70's and its influence on the development of modern mail and telephone survey methods at WSU

- Sociology was advancing in disparate directions so common theory received less emphasis—Conflict vs. social systems vs. social psychology concepts. Our remaining common thread was that we had mostly been educated from the same theory books, e.g., Don Martendale. Talcott Parsons.
- Faculty were transitioning from a “group focus” to “individualism” thinking of departments as subsidiaries of professional societies with rewards and recognition based mostly upon publication.
- Technology was limited—expensive long-distance telephone, manual typewriters, no copy machines., printing only by smelly ditto usually kept in closets. As a consequence research moved somewhat slowly.
- These ideas may help explain why my own career at WSU (1969-2024) developed in unexpected ways.

Don Dillman's introduction to WSU was unexpected



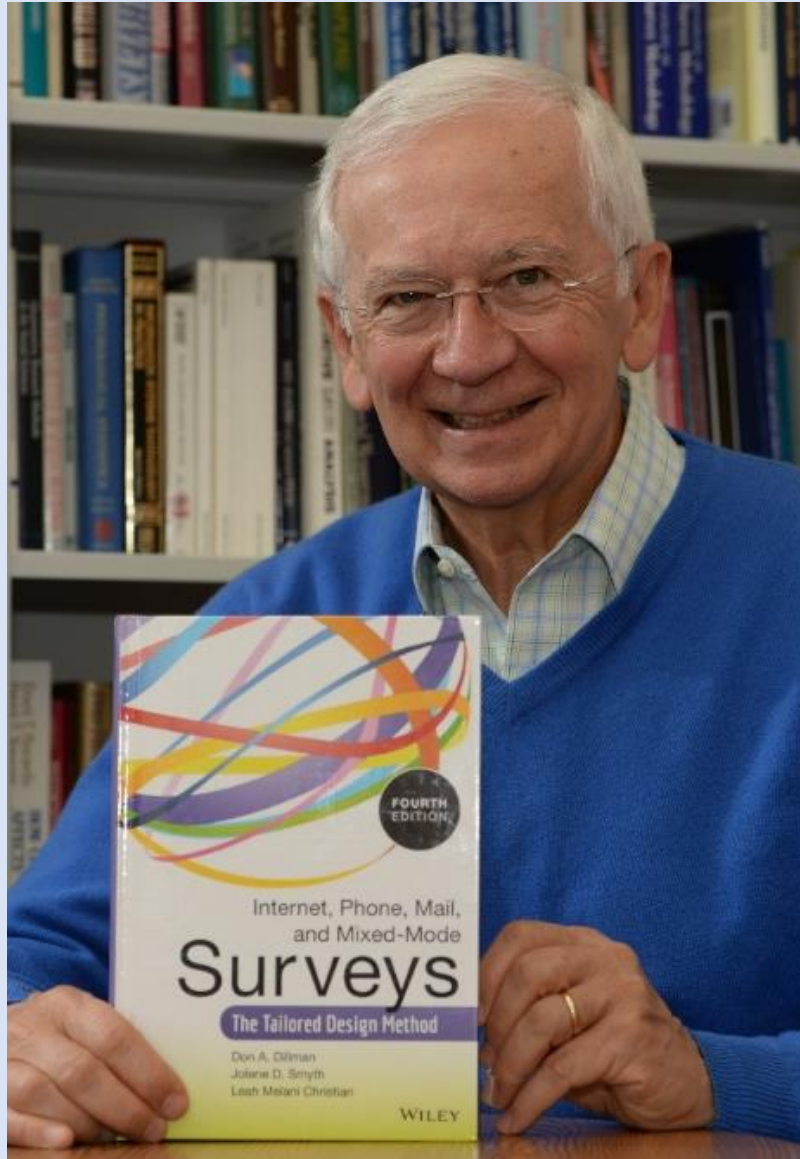
- In 1969 I was appointed a tenure-track assistant professor in two colleges: Rural Sociology in Agriculture, and Sociology in Liberal Arts.
- I was focused more on application of research to solve practical problems than journal publication.
- Students went on strike in spring 1970 over Viet Nam War and transition to supporting Black student demands for university change.
- The Sociology chair (DeFleur) and SRC Director (Jiim Short) told President Terrell that if funds were available a telephone survey laboratory could be set up to find out what students were thinking. Money was quickly provided to the SRC.
- I was asked to set up the lab partly because I had conducted one telephone survey in graduate school.
- Suddenly, I was working for three different colleges without any expectation on where all of this was headed.

My lack of understanding about what we created and the realization that scientific advancement occurs in different ways.

(See draft of Dillman memoir, under review)

- Before 1970 in-person interviewing was the **only acceptable survey method, but we immediately** showed that we could get high response rates and data quality by mail and telephone.
- The methods were immediately picked up by WSU students and faculty for theses, dissertations and other research studies.
- The Director of the National Opinion Research Center (Dr. Peter Rossi) came to WSU. After we showed him our results he said, “You are ahead of me, just keep doing it. We need new methods.”
- My rural sociology chair (Howard Bahr) told me I needed to write a book. I was in the weird position of having worked out survey design procedures without realizing their potential importance.
- I complied, with the book being published in 1978, but even then I did not realize that it would redefine my career.

50 years later the 4th edition of the TDM book was published



- I tried to keep my work in rural sociology going but the pull of methods was stronger and led to my becoming director of the SESRC in 1986 to further develop survey methods.
- Now in its 55th year of operation the SESRC and has brought in nearly \$80 million of grants and contracts to do surveys for clients.
- Its existence with 20 + technically trained staff, equipment and sources of funds to constantly do surveys made it possible to develop, test and apply new methods.
- Updates to the TDM book changed significantly with each edition, as summarized here:
 - Creation of practical telephone and mail methods (1978)
 - Creation of internet and mixed-mode methods. (2000)
 - Developing an understanding of why visual vs. aural questionnaires produce different answers. (2009).
 - Development of web-push methods using postal and web contact and response modes to replace telephone methods (2014, 2017; 2020)
- Web-push is now the major method for country censuses (U.S., Japan, Australia, Canada and others). The 1927 Biennial European Social Survey conducted in 30 countries will use web-push methods.

Graduate students made the web-push innovation possible

- The capability of scientists to move science forward is often limited by their age and training. SESRC staff and these PhD graduate students made it possible for advancements to occur that I could not make alone.
- WSU Recipients of 2017 AAPOR Mitofsky Innovation Award for inventing web-push methodology and their present positions.

Michelle Edwards—Sociology, Texas Ste. Univ.

Morgan Millar—School of Medicine, Univ. Utah

Jolene Smyth—Sociology chair, Univ. Nebraska

Leah Christian—Senior Vice-President, National Opinion Research Center.

Benn Messer—U.S. Energy Information Admin.



Surveys are only one method of data collection important to WSU sociology

- The unique capability of surveys is that research can: *estimate with statistical confidence the distribution of a characteristic in a population of millions by surveying only a few hundred or thousand randomly sampled individuals, provided errors from coverage, sampling, measurement and nonresponse are overcome.*
- Historical methods, small group experiments, ethnographies and qualitative methods are all important data collection methods for different purposes used by departmental faculty.
- **One of our lasting departmental contributions is the development and acceptance of different methods for answering different research questions.**

A quick summary of accomplishments

- I have mentioned six significant accomplishments that are part of sociology's 100-year history.
 1. **The Yoder years**—making a difference in Washington with focus on rural.
 2. **The Beasley Years**—establish graduate education with emphasis on underserved Black Americans..
 3. **The Jim Short influence**—Establishing criminology with national impact
 4. **Building Gender equity and University change**—The works of DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach and Ihinger-Tallman.
 5. **Creating Environmental Sociology**—Catton, Dunlap, Rosa and Freudenberg
 6. **Data collection methodologies**—a history of using different methods to answer different questions.
- We also have accomplishments in other areas that should be recognized, so please view what I have reported here as selected themes.

The future of sociology at WSU

- In 1980 I became part of the Kellogg National Fellowship Program for training leaders. I could do whatever I thought would help me become a better leader provided it was not just learning more sociology.
- I chose to investigate the impact of information technologies on rural America and predicted a lot of impacts, e.g., use of the internet for email communication and the sharp decline in costs for long distance telephone (Dillman, 1985).
- I also missed some things. I could not imagine building towers every 25 miles to support mobile phones. Nor could I imagine the overwhelming speed and volume of connections via smartphones.
- **That experience left me dubious about anyone's ability to predict the future, but here are some of my tentative thoughts about the future.**

Sociology remains important for explaining human behavior

- The nature of social interaction is changing dramatically. Geography plays a lesser role, allowing people to connect with others sharing their interests and beliefs, regardless of location.
- Work, learning new skills and volunteering can happen for some people and tasks, virtually.
- The speed by which changes in connections and their impacts is likely to be greater than ever experienced.
- These changes need to be studied and the consequences understood.

The need for sociological investigations is greater than any time in our history

- My mind runs constantly across interaction-related concepts: norms, social systems, role expectations, ascribed vs. achieved status, primary vs. second relationships, informal vs. formal sanctions., social movements, social exchanges, social inequities and dozens of other sociological concepts and theories.
- We do not yet understand how the shift from mostly in-person geographically-based interaction to virtual interaction is affecting human behavior and the evolution of institutional supports for the results.
- We are experiencing these changes **fast, fast, and faster**. That means sociology research needs to respond and do so with greater speed.
- In addition, connections across disciplines need to be built into the design of studies and application of results.

How do we fit sociology into the times in which we now live

- The trajectory towards total a focus on single discipline research, single authored publications in high status journals in support of only training graduate PhD students to become professors is undesirable and probably not sustainable.
- Effective undergraduate instruction is too important to leave only to graduate students.
- Continued development of career track faculty responsibilities is critical to providing quality undergraduate education.
- I also believe strong encouragement for teaming across departments is essential for increasing the relevance of research.
- At the same time we need to maintain instruction, research and outreach that is informed by sociological theory concepts that a sociology department can and should provide.

Is a Department of Sociology important to the future of WSU?

- I think of heterogeneity and homogeneity as complementary forces, both of which need structural encouragement within universities.
- I worry about a University that focuses the building of departments mostly around recognized problems that results in scholars being separated from others trained with similar theories and concepts.
- I also worry about a University that focuses the building of departments only around disciplinal interests that ignore practical problems.
- Sociology needs to remain a separate academic department, but faculty and graduate students need motivation and support to connect with scholars and technical staff in other disciplines with shared interest in finding and practical solutions to recognized problems.
- Current and anticipated communication technologies suggest to me these connections are happening and will be crucial to sociology's future contributions to communities, the state, nation, and increasingly, the world.
- I cannot imagine a greater time to be a sociologist and do that work at WSU.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts related to our celebration of 100 years of sociology at WSU.

I would be happy to respond to comments and questions.

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Limitations and acknowledgements

The observations offered here are limited to only some of the work accomplished by WSU sociology in the last century. It was impossible in this limited space to acknowledge all or even most of the work accomplished by faculty, staff and graduate students to whom I am indebted, for allowing me to pursue my career.

For reasons of space, I have also left out contributions of current faculty, which are critical to the future of WSU sociology.

My thanks go to WSU Terrell Library Archives personnel, Trevor Bond and Will Gregg, for helping me locate historical information on the WSU Department of Sociology.

Also, my thanks go to the many faculty, past and present for their impact on my professional work during the past 55 years. I also want to thank the SESRS staff and especially Jim Short, John Tarnai, Rita Koontz and Thom Allen who inspired me to build a career that made it possible to advance survey methodology. I am also grateful for the extensive interactions with 35 or so sociology PhD students (from 1969-2023) who taught me as much or more than I hopefully taught them, providing support for a professional career that was both fun and productive.

Additional Acknowledgements

I also appreciate Washington State University allowing me to spend my entire career with simultaneous appointments in 2-3 different colleges that allowed me to more fully support serving WSU's land-grant mission. The conflicts in expectations were as memorable as they were productive. In addition, I appreciate WSU allowing me to be loaned to the U.S. Bureau of the Census for four years under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act for making the 2000 U.S. Decennial Census respondent-friendly.

Thanks also to members of professional associations, especially members of the Rural Sociological Society and the American Association of Public Opinion Research who got me focused on methodology and the American Association of Public Opinion Research for career-long interactions that pushed me to become a better survey methodologist. I also wish to acknowledge with thanks the extensive interactions with survey methodologists in more than 30 countries throughout the world who have inspired me to help adapt data collection methodologies for improving survey data collection in their cultures.

I am responsible for any factual errors in this presentation and would appreciate knowing any errors that need correction.

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