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Singing the Blues: Sociology/Sociologists in Challenging Times

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Abstract: Numerous challenges confront higher education in post-pandemic America. Demographics, inflation, political conflict and technology have altered the environment of higher education. In particular, sociology has struggled to maintain enrollment, program appeal and relevance. In Georgia, sociology is at a crossroads for students, faculty and the future of the discipline.

Introduction

Sociology, a systematic and scientific study of human social behavior (Ferrante, 2016), is now a discipline at risk. The once public image of the discipline as a social science dedicated to the synthesis of all of the social sciences (Sorokin, 1928) has become a field which stresses micro-social differentiation and conflict (Fein, 2018) (Bates, 2015). In an environment of economic stress caused by inflation and declining birth rates (Macrotrends, 2022), enrollment in higher education in the United States has dropped by 9% (June, 2022). Though some flagship and prestigious institutions have reported significant enrollment gains, a recent study sees minimal enrollment gains through 2030. Smaller, less-elite institutions, however, will suffer significant enrollment declines (Burt, 2022-2). Furthermore, a bi-polar political environment has contributed to increasing stresses between academe and government, especially at the state-level (Burt, 2022-3). Georgia is one such state where teaching sociology in challenging times has

contributed to a number of issues for faculty and sociology programs.

Where Have All the Students Gone?

Recently, not a week has gone by that this question has not been addressed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The declining national birthrate has significantly lowered the enrollment rates of traditional age college students by 5%. The immediate college enrollment rates also differ by race and ethnicity. Specifically, in 2020 students of Asian identity enrolled at a rate of 86%, Whites at 67%, Hispanics at 60% and Blacks at 54% (Othot, 2022).

In Georgia, Clayton State University (CSU) is a minority/majority institution. Enrollment has decreased from 7,003 students in the Fall of 2017 to 6,042 in the Spring of 2022. New traditional student enrollment remained relatively stable with 553 students in the Fall of 2017 and 596 in the Fall of 2021. However, CSU, a largely commuter institution, enrolls more new transfer

than new traditional-age students each year. In 2017, 810 new transfer students enrolled as compared to 466 in the Fall of 2021 (Clayton State University Fact Book, 2022).

Since 2012, there has been a decline in sociology majors from 96 to 50 (48%). The number of degrees granted in sociology was 12 in 2022 (CSU Fact Book, 2022). Demographics, however, does not fully explain the downward trend of enrollment at CSU. Since the university is experiencing a decline in non-traditional students, the pandemic and the economy also have contributed to this challenging environment. For example, 50% of all college students are part-time students (University Business, 9/7/2022). Inflation is currently approaching 9.1% and rising employment rates have, according to the Alchian-Allen effect, a traditionally negative impact on higher education enrollment (Kroncke, 1993). As a consequence, the University System of Georgia (USG) has mandated CSU's deficit of \$5M for fiscal year 2023 and \$7.63M for fiscal year 2024 be addressed. Within this context, teaching at CSU is very challenging for the program, the faculty and the university. All Blues songs are sad.

Challenging Times – Sociology

Overview

From Comte's attempt to promote a rational and scientific-based perspective to advance society without the chaos created by the French Revolution (Coser, 1977), sociology progressed through a variety of theoretical perspectives to understand society. Theories of consensus, conflict and interaction were advanced with concerns about the importance of value-

neutrality (Bates, 2015). With the spread of the perspective from its European roots to America, the new discipline was embraced by advocates of applied knowledge and social reform. These early advocates of sociology developed empirical studies of urbanization and modernization, combining quantitative sophistication with qualitative interpretations and explanations (Farganis, 2011).

Sociology emerged from the cloistered confines of academe in Post-World War II America to a prominent place at the table of the social sciences. In 1950, the National Science Foundation, though somewhat reluctantly, accepted sociology but only with the assurance that the discipline would be quantitative and apolitical (Berger, 1963). The success of many of its major works in providing social scientific support for civil rights legislation and improved understanding of military and corporate communities cemented its reputation as a relevant resource (Bates, 2015).

The pressure of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War contributed to challenging times for sociology. The podium was stormed during the Presidential Address at the 1969 American Sociological Association (ASA) Meeting in San Francisco by about 75 left-wing sociologists seeking to memorialize the passing of Ho Chi Minh (Roach, 1970). This event marked a change in the public perception of sociology from its traditional, apolitical, value-neutral position as a social science to one of a left-wing political activist group.

In the 1980s, Jonathan Turner (1986) summarized the major controversies in the sociological perspective: Can sociology be a science? Should sociology be micro or macro? Is

sociology a paradigmatic science? The debates associated with these issues moved the discipline in a number of different directions.

Though positive contributions continued to be made in numerous areas of social concern, advocacy and sub-cultural relativity marked the latter part of 20th century sociology. Race, class, gender and the concept of intersectionality (Collins, 2019) shaped at least two generations of sociologists. However, the success of this critical perspective was lessened by its widespread acceptance as an ideology rather than a methodology.

With its commitment to the critical micro-social perspective, sociology attempts to generalize from the specific. The ASA, in following the controversial leadership of Burawoy (2005) in shaping the discipline to have a moral obligation to critique the conventional and conservative (right-wing) in matters of public interest, further contributed to the politicalization of sociology (Horowitz, 2006). Deflhem (2005) and Turner (2007) suggested that sociology had lost focus and offered little understanding of larger social processes which impacted society.

The decline of the significance of sociology in both academe and public acceptance have contributed to the challenging times experienced by sociology at the national and local levels. Enrollment decline continues as the image and perceived value of the major is called into question. Especially at the undergraduate level, a partisan perspective may attract students to colorful electives, but they do not contribute to meaningful and employable academic majors.

Nationwide, a college degree remains a significant component of lifetime economic success. In Georgia, for example, higher education credentials increase the expected work-life earnings of the median Georgia resident by \$238,455 (certificate), \$377,000 (associate), and \$1,152,500 (bachelor's degree) (Burt, 2022-4). Beyond a bachelor's degree, a master's degree is worth \$247,000 more than a bachelor's and a professional degree is worth \$1,015,000 more. Finally, a Ph.D. increases work-life earnings by \$638,000 over a master's degree. In fact, graduates of USG institutions, who work in Georgia, have the highest relative increase in life-time earnings than any other state. However, as important as these figures are, the field in which one graduates plays a significant part in life time earnings. Not all degrees are equal in earning potential.

At institutions like CSU, the declining number of sociology majors and graduates also confront a challenging financial conundrum. The cost of higher education is continuing to rise, even with tuition rate increases being restricted during the pandemic (Stirgus, 2022). With the recent Federal College Debt Relief Program, students, especially those who are self-financed (adult learners) or from lower income families, still must consider the cost/benefit issue when choosing a major (Lu, 2022).

Career opportunities for recent sociology graduates are normally in the areas of social services counselor, human resources generalist, nonprofit coordinator, sales, market analyst and similar positions. In 2021, the average graduate salary was \$29, 920. Higher salaries were allocated for those graduates with documented research and technical skills. The student debt

for these graduates averaged \$23,500 (CollegeFactual, 2021). This financial conundrum is further influenced by the decline in employment opportunities for recent graduates (June, 2022).

States like Texas and Kansas are now assessing various academic programs as to their utility and cost/benefits for students (Burt, 2022-1). Specifically, students taking out loans to pay for majors that won't give them adequate earnings to pay back these loans and the cost of less viable majors are both unfair and unethical. Texas, for example has suggested that it is the duty of colleges to ensure this doesn't happen.

In Georgia, CSU and other members of the USG are charged with reviewing and assessing the alignment between an institution's academic portfolio and available academic resources. The goal of this review is to make strategic decisions about faculty resources and the viability or elimination of non-productive programs (USG, 2022).

Overall, most of the issues which have contributed to the decline in institutional enrollments in higher education and the sociology program at CSU are largely beyond the program's ability to address. However, program content, focus, leadership and perceived contribution to a community and society remain crucial factors for potential growth and program survival in these challenging times.

The Social and Political Context

Coser (1977) emphasized the role of the social context in his analysis of development of sociological perspectives. Likewise, Duncan

(Hawley, 1986), in his discussion of Human Ecology, noted that context, along with the major variables of population, organization, environment and technology shaped all social systems. Sociology's challenging times, especially in Georgia, cannot be understood or addressed without an appreciation of the current social and political context.

Critical to the context of higher education has been an ongoing struggle between government and higher education for control and direction. In the past, unfunded federal mandates created significant economic stress on higher education at all levels. This is of paramount concern for public institutions which receive or benefit from state and federal funding.

The recent pandemic has accelerated the governmental role in higher education. Wippman and Altshuler (2022) noted that because of governmental funding, either directly or indirectly, during the pandemic, a significant change in the balance between government and higher education occurred. Federal agencies, in the name of public health responsibilities, literally took over the management of higher education through a variety of mandates and requirements. In addition, institutions which were struggling with reduced tuition and other revenues benefitted from millions of dollars of federal funding from the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act, the Federal Emergency Management Act and other sources (Wippman and Altschuler, 2022).

Disagreements over pandemic policies, coupled with public dissatisfaction with some trends in higher education, have resulted in less restraints on politicized regulation. Having

exerted their influence and power with pandemic issues, other academic activities, including research, curriculum and tenure decisions, are now being challenged by state and federal governments (Wippman and Altschuler, 2022). In addition, the Supreme Court and other legal bodies have ruled on issues of race and legacy-based admission policies.

Academic Freedom

Education and the academic environment have long sought to be an environment where objectivity is practiced. In many states, however, recent legislation has challenged the tradition of academic freedom. Many professors see these efforts as overstepping their boundaries and their authority with regard to challenging the teaching practices and ideas currently being utilized in academe.

In 1940, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued what has become the standard definition of academic freedom. It specifies the expectations of professionalism and the limits of infringement upon the academic rights of faculty. It specified that:

1. Teachers are entitled to full academic freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their academic duties, but research for pecuniary should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their

teaching controversial matters which have no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of appointment.

3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

Today's challenging times, with regard to academic freedom, stem from different interpretations of the AAUP Statement, specifically the second paragraph which addresses the teaching of controversial matters and the authority of the hiring agency to limit materials taught in a course.

Sociology covers such a broad range of subjects that it can justify teaching almost anything. However, controversial issues need to be relevant to their course of instruction and teachers should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not

speaking for the institution. In addition, faculty need to understand that they have an obligation to their hiring authority. These two areas have fueled the conflict over academic freedom.

The transition of sociology from a value-free social science to a partisan political perspective has further challenged the protection of academic freedom. In private institutions, the hiring authority is understood to be able to control and limit some matters of academic presentation. Today, it is in public higher education that the authority of state government and education boards are being exercised to challenge academe as to the limits and responsibilities of academic freedom.

Governors and legislatures, which fund and control public institutions, are increasingly exercising their control over the content and function of education. In fact, the University of Idaho recently issued a directive to all faculty and staff regarding a prohibition against encouraging or supporting reproductive health and abortion practices. This was done to align the institution with recent state legislation (Burt, 2022-2). In addition, Emporia State University in Kansas has been given permission to fire employees in response to economic issues, including tenured faculty (Pettit, 2022). A recent Florida court case supported the belief that public university curricula are in fact government speech and thus subject to the direction and guidelines so established (Brown, 2022).

The 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom also addresses the role and function of tenure for faculty members. In the public arena, the appointment and retention of administrators and faculty are increasingly being scrutinized by state governors and legislative bodies.

The Board of Regents (BOR) of the USG, a politically appointed body, has adopted policies regarding post-tenure and tenure policies. These actions have caused the AAUP to censure the entire USG (AAUP, 2022). This action is not the first time that the AAUP has censured an entire system; it also censured the USG in 1941 (Demmitt, 2022). Moreover, a recent survey conducted by the AAUP reported that "about 70% of faculty survey respondents said the efforts at censorship in Georgia would negatively affect their recommendation to a graduate student or faculty in another state seeking employment in the USG" (AAUP, 2022). Academic freedom is under attack not only in Georgia but also in many other Red states across the nation. Finally, the recent alignment directive by the USG to reduce institutional deficits and evaluate and eliminate non-productive programs will reshape the structure and curriculum at many public institutions of higher learning in Georgia (USG, 2022).

In addition to these challenges to the forms and functions of public higher education, the emergence of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Taylor, et al, 2009) as a perspective of our history and a key component of the form and function of American society has been at the foundation of the issue of academic freedom in higher education. The history of racism in America, as outlined in the "1619 Project," also has been a major source of controversy (Hanna-Jones, 2019). These and similar works have been targeted as divisive and challenging basic American values.

Increasingly, legislation has been introduced and passed in states like Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, South Dakota and Idaho

to limit or restrict the teaching of controversial topics such as race, gender and sexuality. In fact, there has been a 250% increase in gag orders introduced in 2022, and 39% of those bills have targeted higher education and instructional content (Burt, 2022-3).

Florida now prohibits the teaching of CRT in K-12 and all public educational institutions and hiring CRT consultants. Gov. DeSantis stated that public colleges and universities found to have introduced divisive concepts on their campuses might lose state funding (Burt, 2022 - 3). Mississippi has passed legislation that colleges and universities that receive state funding cannot classify their students by race, and in South Dakota, public institutions of higher education cannot offer training to teach so-called divisive concepts regarding anything in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Likewise, in Arizona, a bill that would fine teachers \$5,000 for promoting one side of a controversial issue passed the House. Texas lawmakers introduced a bill that would ban schools from giving course credit for internships in social or public policy advocacy, as well as limit how teachers discuss controversial issues; it also passed the House. In Missouri, proposed legislation is being debated that would ban the use of specific resources, like the "1619 Project," "Learning for Justice Curriculum of the Southern Poverty Law Center," "Black Lives Matter at School," "Teaching for Change," and the "Zinn Education Project" (Schwartz, 2021).

The state of Georgia has joined the ranks of states that have sought restrictions on the teaching of CRT and of other historical facts in the classroom. These actions have been primarily restricted to the K-12 environment, but

in a letter to the BOR of the USG, Georgia Governor Kemp strongly encouraged the BOR to pass legislation which would effectively urge schools to stop teaching CRT calling it a dangerous ideology and stating that it is a divisive, anti-American agenda that has no place in Georgia classrooms (Dzhova, 2022). Though both the proponents and opponents of CRT seek to address issues of discrimination, their differences lie in their theoretical orientations: one is Marxist and the other is not.

The Georgia Legislature passed bill (SB 377), which applies only to K-12 schools and specifies that promoting many of the perspectives of critical race theory is against the law. Though this issue has raised considerable concern in higher education with regard to potential issues of academic freedom, review of SB 377 suggests that it is basically a civil rights bill. The nine prohibited divisive concepts listed in the bill are:

- (1) One race or ethnicity is inherently superior to another race or ethnicity;
- (2) The United States of America and the State of Georgia are fundamentally or systemically racist;
- (3) An individual, solely because of his or her race, skin color, or ethnicity, is inherently racist or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously;
- (4) An individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race, skin color, or ethnicity;

(5) An individual's moral character is inherently determined by his or her race, skin color, or ethnicity;

(6) An individual, because of his or her race, skin color, or ethnicity, bears responsibility for actions committed by other individuals of the same race, skin color, or ethnicity, whether past or present;

(7) An individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of his or her race, skin color, or ethnicity;

(8) Meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or were created by individuals of a particular race to oppress individuals of another race;

(9) Any form of race or ethnic scapegoating or race or ethnic stereotyping.

Advocates of CRT, however, object to this type of legislation. They suggest that the basic premises of SB 377 are in themselves racist. In one article, the author states that virtues such as merit, excellence, hard work, fairness, neutrality, objectivity and racial colorblindness are now deemed racist or sexist and were only created to oppress members of another race, color, sex or national origin (Ward,2022-3).

While SB377 does not affect higher education, the role of legislative actions to potentially determine and shape academic curriculum is increasingly obvious. The politics of conservative legislatures, appointees and agencies are increasingly at odds with the traditionally liberal institutions of higher education. In Georgia, these challenging times

have many sociology programs and their constituents singing the Blues.

Program Issues

In addition to the issues within the social and political context, the mythical ivory tower of academe is not immune to a variety of other factors that challenge the form and future of sociology. The interdependency of institution and department size, the degrees offered, the level and variety of faculty expertise, institutional and curriculum requirements, content competition, teaching modalities, service commitments and institution and program focus are some issues which shape the potential and problems of sociology in these challenging times.

Size

Size makes a difference. Large universities with substantial enrollments in general education service courses, like Introduction to Sociology, support program size, the types of degrees offered and curriculum diversity. In smaller institution, like CSU, the ebb and flow of enrollment fluctuations have dramatic and almost immediate consequences. With state formulas for funding based on enrollments and graduation rates, programs and sociology majors must keep up with increased education costs. In the case of CSU, for example, increased faculty, staff and administrative costs have not fluctuated with enrollment changes. Faculty rarely are released for economic reasons. In times of economic stress, the faculty and staff numbers are usually addressed only through natural attrition. However, given the extent of the deficit confronting sociology at CSU, this is no more the case. Furthermore, at the

institutional level, administrative overhead has steadily increased (CSU Fact Book, 2022).

Smaller institutions also do not have the luxury of supporting a variety of degrees, certificates and concentrations. Increased specialization, especially at the undergraduate level, limits the ability of departments or programs to support general education, lower-division courses. This conflict creates increasing challenges in other program areas.

Curriculum

Regardless of institutional size, there have been serious debates as to what constitutes an appropriate sociology curriculum (Bates, 2015). Obviously, the curriculum at the graduate level is more extensive and diverse than one found at the undergraduate-level. As there is no graduate level sociology program at CSU, the curriculum debate centers around the mission of the department, the needs of the institution, and the established expectations for a major in sociology.

The ASA guidelines for an undergraduate major in sociology state the following three recommendations:

1. Develop distinct mission statements, specific program goals, and measurable learning outcomes that are made public, especially to students.

2. Within the sociology major, include required and elective courses that incorporate essential sociological concepts and competencies, as exemplified in the Sociological Literacy Framework.

3. Include required courses in: introductory-level sociology, sociological theory, research methods, statistical analysis, substantive topic areas, and a capstone experience within the sociology major (ASA, 2022-1).

These recommendations are routinely followed by most undergraduate sociology programs, including CSU. However, programs do differ in terms of the levels at which these courses are offered, pre-requisites, and if and how a capstone experience is a part of the curriculum. As a consequence of declining enrollment and student interest in the traditional sociological perspective, CSU has modified the major to offer more of a focus on applied social policy and career relevant courses. Today, this is not an unusual accommodation as institutions seek to promote more viable and financially relevant undergraduate programs.

For undergraduate sociology majors seeking entry-level positions, it is their transcript and not their degree that is the critical factor in the hiring process. Thus, curriculum may be part of the challenging times for sociology in general and for CSU in particular.

Content Competition

Historically, because of the successes experienced by sociology, many areas of inquiry and analysis have been appropriated by other disciplines. Business Administration, with its Weberian roots, has claimed organizational theory as their own and, as is the case at CSU, object to any use of the term "administration" as an infringement on their empire. Aging/Gerontology is now largely within the domain of Nursing and Health Care Administration. Social Psychology is psychology

and is now a stranger in its original environment. Even subjects like Race, Class, Gender and Multicultural Communities have begun a migration across disciplinary borders. Interestingly, intersectionality, the foundation of much of our current sociological enterprise, is now widely heralded in the health care professions as a methodology and the subject of sophisticated path analysis-based inquiry (Mena and Bolt, 2019).

Sociology, with its current commitment to a largely neo-Marxist micro-social, conflict perspective and commitment to identity politics, has abdicated much of its content to other more productive fields of inquiry (Fein, 2018). The DNA of the discipline runs deep in academe, but our public perception is increasingly shaped by the unusual rather than the useful (Deflham, 2005).

Teaching/Learning Environments

Teaching sociology has become a more complex process as a consequence of changing institutional priorities, more diverse student populations, environmental challenges, and technological advances. These issues shape how sociology is delivered and received.

Hans Mauksch (1986) stressed that institutional values and structures shape how sociology is taught. Large public universities, with their more cosmopolitan commitments, tend to be more eclectic than smaller institutions which have more applied and career relevant focus. On the other hand, smaller undergraduate institutions with four or less full-time faculty members in sociology, tend to be either more local in their focus or limited in their range of offerings or theoretical focus (over-

specialization), depending on the training and background of the faculty.

Large universities and sociology programs frequently have a significant population of traditional, residential students. In addition, their more cosmopolitan perspectives also reflect greater geographical and cultural diversity than smaller schools and programs. Teaching and learning in these environments traditionally have been in seated classes. Many smaller institutions and programs rely more heavily of online learning to connect with constituencies that are non-traditional in age and with a high percentage of part-time or working students (University of Illinois-Springfield, 2022).

The explosion of online learning during the recent pandemic also created issues which contributed to the challenging times confronting sociology programs of all sizes. The move from the traditional, seated learning environment to online learning required that almost all faculty had to transition to a different type of pedagogy. It is well documented that online teaching and learning require significantly different strategies and tactics. In smaller sociology programs, such as CSU, the demand and the available resources for professional development and program flexibility are very challenging.

The tools and tactics of online instruction required a substantial investment of time and a different pedagogy than many faculty had been fully-prepared to utilize. Once developed and implemented, both students and faculty have had to adjust to a new learning reality. The self-control and familiarity with technology required of online students contributed to many students

not being successfully engaged in many of their courses. Many non-traditional students, a substantial component of the CSU constituency, reduced their enrollment or dropped out (CSU Fact Book, 2022).

Once committed to an environment of fully online learning, many faculty members have been reluctant to return to in-person instruction, traditional office hours, and campus commutes. The asynchronous nature of online learning provided faculty with an unprecedented amount of personal flexibility and autonomy. Opportunities for interaction with other members of the program, as well as students, however, are not easily replaced. Virtual meetings, emails and video chats are less personal; academic collegiality weakened; informal student learning and student support suffers (Bates and LaBrecque, 2019). The technology that made sociology survivable during the recent pandemic has contributed to a latent issue that is another challenge in academe today.

Advising/Mentoring

Student success is a critical component of program performance. Prompt and effective student advising and faculty mentorship are fundamental to student success. In an undergraduate program, like sociology, without a traditional and established career path, advising must be more than helping students navigate program and graduation requirements. Anticipating and addressing student needs, both in their immediate and future roles, require proactive strategies. Faculty and academic advisors must go beyond the catalog and/or student handbook. They need to fully research student records to anticipate student priorities

and needs. Successful advising and mentorship require identifying issues and potential roadblocks. The use of online resources as supplements and not replacements for personal advising is essential (Ohrabia, 2017). These prerequisites for effective advising are not always easy to meet in a teaching/learning environment such as CSU, with its large non-traditional student population, the recent pandemic, and the other factors which contributed to these challenging times.

CSU has a formal advising and mentoring program. Students are assigned to a formal academic advisor who specializes in addressing general education and courses for specific majors. However, in practice, students can register for courses without consultation or approval. Thus, due to the high number of students assigned to an academic advisor, advising has not been very proactive.

Once a student declares a major, they are assigned a faculty mentor. Few students contact or meet with their faculty mentor. Thus, this program largely has been symbolic. Furthermore, during the pandemic and the transition to online learning, the limited opportunities for face-to-face contact have isolated both students and faculty from an environment conducive to effective mentoring. In sociology, most career counselling has been through a link to the ASA web-site (ASA, 2022-2).

Conclusion

Sociology is confronted by challenging times that are a product of demographic, economic, political and other factors. Especially at the undergraduate level, curriculum content,

program design and practice can be addressed to influence the status and future of the discipline. Having to navigate an ever-increasing number of constituencies, sociology is no longer just an academic major. It is increasingly a social, economic, political, demographic, and philosophical perspective that, hopefully will inform a more diverse and equitable future.

Singing the Blues and focusing on the sad songs of society in general, and academe in particular, limits the potential of sociology in an increasingly complex environment. Sociology, as a symphony and a synthetic perspective, reasserts Sorokin's historic view of the discipline. Drawing on the diverse roots of sociology will decide whether sociology will survive as a discipline or will join phrenology and alchemy as a footnote in the history of academe.

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