

sons; 1933, 117 persons. The Commission on Church Attendance of the Congregational and Christian Churches in its 1934 report says the figures indicate that 70 per cent of the seats in churches are not being used on Sunday morning and that probably 75 per cent of the persons known as members are not supporting their churches with their personal attendance and active encouragement."⁶

If it is assumed that the Congregational

and Christian churches are not significantly different in their attendance records from most other Protestant churches of the country, our data would seem to show that the Protestant attendances in Madison are somewhat above the average of the United States as a whole.

⁶ "The Church and Religious Activity," *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1935, pp. 783.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION AND REORGANIZATION IN HARLAN COUNTY, KENTUCKY*

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HARLAN COUNTY, KENTUCKY, is one of the ten leading producers of bituminous coal in the United States. During the 1930's it attracted nationwide attention due to the violence of its industrial relations, the county acquiring the name of "Bloody Harlan." The history of the county illustrates many of the problems of social disorganization which accompany the sudden impact of industrial civilization upon a self-sufficient, isolated agricultural society.¹

Harlan is located in the most rugged mountain area of southeastern Kentucky. Its narrow valleys at the head-waters of the Cumberland River are hemmed in by steep ridges which rise 500 to 1,000 feet above the valley bottoms. These ridges were

once covered with dense forests and beneath the surface lie twelve seams of high-grade coal.

Until the development of coal mining this was an extremely isolated area. For more than a century the people had lived a self-contained life, their farms and household industries producing most of their necessities.² A few manufactured items were in use, but it was a two-day wagon trip over rough mountain roads to the nearest railway and the volume of goods brought in from the outside was limited. Some money was in circulation, but much of the trade was carried on by barter. The chief sources of income were the sale of cattle and timber, the latter being floated out on the Cumberland River in the spring during periods of high water.

In this stable society the family and the local community were the two basic social units. A closely knit pattern of family kinship influenced all aspects of life. The heavy labor of clearing fields or building houses was done by neighbors working together on an informal basis of mutual aid. The people shared a common body of folkways and mores which came down to them from pio-

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¹ "Western civilization appears at the present time to be passing through some kind of major transition, a change so fundamental in character that it unsettles our basic institutions. . . . The great underlying cause appears to be the transition from pre-industrial folk society to modern industrial civilization." Robert E. L. Faris, *Social Disorganization*, New York: Ronald Press, 1948, p. 3.

² Information on this pre-industrial period was obtained from interviews with old residents still living in the county and from various contemporary literary sources.

neer days. In this isolated primary society social contacts were so intimate that one elderly resident still recalls these earlier days when he knew not only all the people in the county but even the horses and to whom they belonged.

The people were independent and self-reliant. There were no class distinctions and every man felt himself the equal of all others. Although suspicious of unidentified strangers they were generally friendly and hospitable among themselves. The traditions of pioneer days lived on in an intense individualism and resentment of personal slights or injustices. The use of liquor and firearms was another heritage of frontier conditions, resulting in a certain amount of violence and occasional killings. But Harlan had no active feud tradition, there having been but one relatively brief family feud in the county's history. On the whole the people were content to live a quiet, peaceful life following the traditions of their ancestors and paying little attention to what went on outside their narrow valleys.

Their culture was that of an arrested frontier society similar in many ways to that of the Boers of South Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ The mountain culture had many characteristics of a folk society but it lacked the stability and class stratification found in typical peasant cultures. Pioneer attitudes survived in the exploitation rather than conservation of the soil and other natural resources.

The industrial revolution came to Harlan with great suddenness in the summer of 1911. A railroad was built up to the headwaters of the Cumberland and mines were driven into the seams of coal which lay exposed along the sides of the valleys. Within three years coal production reached a million tons annually, by 1921 it was nearly seven million tons, while in 1928 and 1929 fifteen million tons were produced a year, a figure which has been exceeded only three times since then. The coal industry has come completely to dominate Harlan's life with

70 per cent of the men in the county in 1940 being engaged in mining.

Population growth has kept pace with this industrial development. From 10,566 people in 1910 the population tripled in ten years to 31,546 in 1920. It doubled in the next decade to 64,557 and reached a total of 75,274 in 1940. Most of these people came from nearby mountain counties bringing with them cultural backgrounds and personality traits similar to those of the older Harlan residents. In the early days of mining some Negroes and foreign-born laborers entered the county, but they have never been a large proportion of the population and their presence has not created serious social problems. Since the majority of the in-migrants travelled relatively short distances most of them brought their families with them, thus causing no major dislocation of the sex ratio as often occurs in new mining areas. Even so, in 1920 there was an average of 131 males 21 years of age and over for every 100 females, most of this excess being Negroes and foreign-born men who presumably had migrated from greater distances.

The development of coal mining and the enormous increase in population destroyed the stabilized frontier culture. The most immediate consequence was the disruption of the economic life of the county.

Instead of the security provided by the older self-sufficient agriculture there was substituted the instability of industrial employment. A man's livelihood now depended on fluctuations in the national economy which were entirely outside his control. The miner worked when there was a demand for coal, but he was left destitute when the demand declined as happened during the depression of the 1930's. The mountain man also had to surrender the freedom and timelessness which he had enjoyed on his isolated farm for the routine of mine whistles and fixed hours of work.

With this change in occupation money assumed a dominant place in the county's life. The friendly barter system disappeared and human relations came to be measured in terms of wages and profits. The frontier

³ James G. Leyburn, *Frontier Folkways*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935, Chapter IV.

culture had not emphasized thrift or given experience in the wise use of money. The insecurity of industrial employment and the occupational hazards of mining tended to develop a fatalistic attitude which militated against careful planning for the future. Thus there was little incentive to save, and wages were generally spent with reckless abandon as rapidly as received. Even today most mountain miners are notoriously improvident in handling money.

The most serious aspect of economic disorganization developed in the relations between the mine operators and the workers. Instead of the older social equality a rigid class system was introduced. Men were now either bosses or laborers, with obedience expected from subordinates. The mountain man turned miner continued to feel that he was as good as anyone else and resented being ordered around by mine foremen and other company officials.

Industrial relations were made more difficult by the intransigent attitude of many of the mine operators who came to Harlan from older coal fields. They were determined to keep firm control over their workers and to prevent the entrance of labor unions in this new mining area. The Harlan County Coal Operators Association which includes most of the owners has steadily resisted the advance of organized labor. Philip Murray, then an official of the United Mine Workers of America, stated in 1937 that the Harlan operators were the only group in the entire Appalachian coal area who refused to negotiate with the union.

During the first World War labor unions gained a temporary foothold in the county but afterwards they practically disappeared. The depression of the 1930's and the suffering which it brought, together with favorable New Deal legislation, resulted in renewed efforts to unionize Harlan, first by the United Mine Workers and then by a Communist-influenced group. Violence flared up repeatedly with assassinations, pitched battles, and wide-spread suppression of civil rights of the miners. The state militia was sent in on three occasions during this decade to restore peace. So serious did the situation

become that a congressional committee under the chairmanship of Senator LaFollette investigated Harlan conditions in 1937. The Federal government the next year indicted a large number of individuals and companies for a conspiracy to deny workingmen the right to organize or join labor unions. A conviction was not obtained, but the long trial exposed the lawlessness and violence of industrial relations in the county.

More far-reaching than the disruption of the economic organization was the breakdown of the older community structure. People who had always lived in stable primary groups were thrown together with masses of other uprooted individuals. The restraints of family clan and neighborhood ceased to be effective. The social values of the frontier society lost their meaning in these new communities. Competition and exploitation replaced friendly mutual aid as social relations became casual and impersonal. The people found themselves living in a "human wilderness."⁴

The destruction of the older social solidarity was almost complete. As thousands of people moved into the county they were crowded together in small industrial towns. In order to obtain workers the mine companies built villages, generally known as coal camps, in the narrow valleys near the mouths of the mines. The companies owned not simply the houses but the store, church, and all other facilities. The miners had no voice in governing these villages nor any sense of local responsibility. Lacking any attachment to these company camps and having no connections with the strangers surrounding them, it is not surprising that miners and their families moved frequently from one camp to another.

The ties of the family clan tended to disintegrate under the impact of this new way of life. Even within the small family group there was a serious readjustment of member roles. The father who had operated his small farm with the help of the whole

⁴W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York: Knopf, 1927, Vol. II, p. 1774.

family now was away all day in the mine. The care and discipline of the children thus fell almost entirely on the mother. Life in the company villages brought a loss to the wife of domestic handicraft and agricultural functions. She no longer preserved and stored the winter's supply of food. Instead, daily supplies were bought in paper bags and tin cans on credit at the company store. The children had no farm chores or other duties and had little to do except to associate with other idle companions. The disorganizing effect of these changes is reflected in the rapid rise of the divorce rate. Between 1922 and 1932 there was approximately one divorce for every four marriages, an increase of 80 per cent over the rate between 1901 and 1906.

With the disruption of the older community and family controls, crime and vice increased greatly. The mountain miner was often restless and bewildered by his new environment. He preserved his traditional feeling of independence and resented any insults, either real or fancied. He found relaxation in drinking and continued his familiarity with firearms. Out of this combination grew many drunken brawls and shootings. Between 1920 and 1925 the annual number of recorded murders averaged 78 per 100,000, which is reported to have been higher than for any other county in the United States. This figure, moreover, does not represent all of the murders, for it is general knowledge in the county that many killings take place which are never officially reported.

Prostitution and venereal disease were apparently unknown in the pre-industrial period. With the coming of good roads and automobiles there was a wide development of roadhouses which became centers of gambling, prostitution, drunkenness, and murder. In the summer of 1942 there were over forty such establishments or an average of one for every three miles of paved road in the county. So serious did the problem of venereal infection become that during the second World War the United States Public Health Service established a special vene-

real disease clinic in the county as a war measure to assure the maximum production of coal.

The political organization of the county has also been affected by the rapid social and economic changes. Before 1911 political campaigns were spirited and often involved intense rivalries, but they were essentially peaceful. There was some nepotism in the operation of the county government but apparently no serious cases of graft or dishonesty. Recent years, however, have seen widespread corruption, killing of officials, stealing of elections, stuffing of ballot boxes with false votes, and many other forms of political dishonesty. The conflict between mine operators and workers has been projected into local politics. The LaFollette investigation revealed that most of the deputy sheriffs in the county were paid by the mine companies. The political influence of the operators is seen in the fact that at the time of this investigation the secretary of the Coal Operators Association was the chairman of the county Republican committee while the president of the Association was head of the county Democratic committee. The properties of the coal companies are grossly under-assessed, thus depriving the county of sufficient tax revenue to support an adequate educational program and other public services.⁵

Apart from the attempts of labor and capital to control the county government, there are bitter rivalries between individual politicians and cliques. It is commonly believed that the roadhouses have had political protection and that certain politicians have shared in their profits. A climax in the stealing of elections seems to have been reached in 1942 when dishonesty was so extensive in the election of a United States senator that federal indictments were returned against 99 persons, with the United States Supreme Court ultimately confirming

⁵ "Public Education in Harlan County, Kentucky," *Bulletin of the Bureau of School Services*, College of Education, University of Kentucky, Vol. XX, (December, 1947), p. 51.

the conviction of 17 of the defendants.

Recent years have witnessed a slow stabilization of conditions and a gradual adjustment of the people to the routine of industrial society. There has been no major expansion of coal mining since 1928. In 1941 a labor contract was signed providing for a union shop and compulsory arbitration, and since then industrial relations have been relatively peaceful. The rate of population growth has levelled off and the sex ratio is becoming less unbalanced. In 1940 there were 114 males 21 years of age and over per 100 females, and almost all of the excess males were in the age group of 40 years and over.

A sense of public responsibility regarding some of the county's most serious social conditions is developing. Many people are sensitive to the national publicity and bad reputation which the county has acquired. In 1942 after a campaign sponsored by the churches, the county adopted local prohibition. This law has not eliminated all drunkenness, and its enforcement has involved considerable violence and corruption, but it has resulted in closing the roadhouses and thus eliminating some of the worst centers of crime and vice. Improved social conditions are also indicated by the decline in the official homicide rate which was approximately 23 per 100,000 in 1944 and 1945, or only a third of the rate in the early 1920's.

The county now has a public health department and most of the school children receive inoculations and vaccinations against the main communicable diseases. The death rate for most causes is very much lower than twenty or thirty years ago due to a large number of doctors and better sanitary conditions. A number of youth organizations have been developed and a County Planning Board is interested in providing better recreational facilities for young people. There are about 2,500 Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, or approximately a quarter of all the children from 10 to 15 years of age in the county. A number of 4-H Clubs have a total of 1,200 members. A county-

wide community chest raises money for six welfare organizations.

The process of reorganization has been slow, and conditions are by no means fully stabilized yet. A deep cleavage continues to separate workers and operators, and the hostility of these two groups influences almost every aspect of the county's life. Memories of past injustices live on and there has been no real substitution of co-operation for the tradition of industrial conflict. A very unequal distribution of wealth exists, and those who have become rich have shown very little responsibility in matters of civic welfare. There is only a small middle class of independent business and professional people. This is not a very effective force in mediating between the two major antagonistic classes, but this group is gradually assuming leadership in various matters of public improvement. The five civic clubs in the county are made up largely of persons from this new middle class.

Nearly nine-tenths of the miners still live in company villages where there is no home ownership or right of local self-government. In some of the larger communities, such as those owned by the United States Steel Corporation and the International Harvester Company, living conditions are relatively good and the population is quite stable. But many other camps are rural slums with dilapidated housing and irresponsible, shiftless tenants. There will be little development of social stability or community loyalty in Harlan as long as most of the county's miners continue to live in these company-owned slums.

In comparison with other mining counties in the Kentucky mountains, Harlan experienced a more rapid invasion of mining and a greater expansion of population. As a result Harlan has suffered more serious disorganization. Under the impact of this new economy most of the physical and social characteristics of the earlier frontier culture have been swept away. The ballads, folk dances, and dialect of the older days have all disappeared along with the handicraft industries and other material traits. The most

resistant elements of the older culture have been the personality traits of the people. Beneath the veneer of modern industrial society there survives a feeling of individual independence, a resentment of inequalities and discipline, a distrust of strangers, and a tendency to personal violence.⁶

⁶ The social changes in Harlan are similar to

those experienced by immigrant groups which have moved from stable agricultural societies into modern industrial communities. The problems of Polish immigrants have been much like those of the mountain farmers who flocked to Harlan's coal mines. "The prevalent general social unrest and demoralization is due to the decay of primary-group organization, which gave the individual a sense of responsibility and security because he belonged to something." Thomas and Znaniecki, *op. cit.*, p. 1826.

PROBLEMS IN POSTDIVORCE ADJUSTMENT*

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A REPORT on research in progress, the present discussion concerns a pilot study of the postdivorce adjustment of 100 urban mothers, and the field problems encountered in that study as well as in a subsequent study based on a still larger sample. In spite of the problems, the paucity of field research in this area seemed to justify a presentation of some of the data.

The earlier study, completed in March, 1948, formed the basis of a later investigation of approximately 450 urban mothers, aged 20-38, who have undergone a divorce. Attempts to solve the earlier field problems have restructured the research design and the focus of several hypotheses.

This report touches on the following three aspects of the research: (1) The shaping of divorce research by American value orientations; (2) The technical problems of field research in postdivorce adjustment; and (3) Some of the data tentatively drawn from the present sample of 450 divorced urban mothers as well as the earlier sample of one hundred.

A fairly diligent search of professional journals since 1935 discloses no more than perhaps three or four published investigations which could be categorized as dealing with adjustment to divorce.¹ And there is

no systematic field study of the divorce adjustment process in a representative and adequate sample of any population segment. Excluded, of course, are a few case history summaries, as well as a number of popular articles. This lack of field research seems surprising, since it is generally agreed that divorce is a major personal crisis. Further, this personal crisis is the prospective experience of one-fifth to one-fourth of all American adults who live an average life span.²

In the broader framework of social theory, such an investigation could contribute as a subsidiary body of information to several other problem areas. Examples are: (1) Indices of social change and social integration; (2) The problem of social disorganiza-

to Each Other" *American Sociological Review*, III, (1938), 695-699; Harvey J. Locke, "Predicting Marital Adjustment by Comparing a Divorced and a Happily Married Group," *American Sociological Review*, XII (1947), 187-191; and Harvey J. Locke and William J. Klausner, "Marital Adjustment of Divorced Persons in Subsequent Marriages," *Sociology and Social Research*, 33 (1948), 97-101.

² The exact figure would depend on the estimates of changes in marital status, and the particular year chosen. However, if one assumes that one out of four marriages will end in divorce, and nine out of ten persons living out an average life expectancy will marry (see T. Lynn Smith, *Population Analysis*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948, pp. 135 ff.), the chances of divorce fall between one in four and one in five. For corroboration of this admittedly crude estimate, see Paul C. Glick, "Class Differences in Remarriage," *American Sociological Society* meeting Chicago, December 28, 1948.

* Paper read at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society held in Chicago, December 28-30, 1948.

¹ Paul Popenoe, "The Remarriage of Divorcees