

# News Release

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## **Hawley, pioneer in ‘Human Ecology,’ dies**

CHAPEL HILL – Amos Henry Hawley, Ph.D., whose 1950 book “Human Ecology” had an international effect on the field of sociology, died Monday (Aug. 31). Hawley, 98, died at Carolina Meadows retirement community in Chapel Hill.

Hawley, a Kenan Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, subtitled his book “A Theory of Community Structure” (The Ronald Press). He wove together previously under-appreciated ideas from the 1940s to revive the field of human ecology, which focuses on ways that populations use technology and social systems to leverage environmental resources, mainly through community and economic organizations.

“‘Human Ecology’ was one of the most influential pieces in the rise of macro-sociology in the 1950s and 1960s,” said John Kasarda, Ph.D., Kenan professor of strategy and entrepreneurship in the Kenan-Flagler Business School and director of the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at UNC, a former student and a friend of Hawley’s.

“He was really the person who revitalized and extended what was called the Chicago school of urban ecology, a very powerful school of thought in the 1920s that had receded,” Kasarda said. “Dr. Hawley rejuvenated this field and added a good deal to it. (“Human Ecology”) is one of the greatest books of all time in sociology.”

Hawley’s leadership in population studies and sociology was recognized by his peers, who elected him president of the Population Association of America (1971-72) and of the American Sociological Association (1977-78). His career was divided between the University of Michigan, where he earned his doctorate in 1941 and taught for 25 years, and UNC, where he taught from 1966 until his retirement in 1976. He chaired the sociology departments at both schools.

Hawley was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the highest honors in academia, and was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. He also wrote the 1971 book “Urban Society: An Ecological Approach” (Ronald Press) and co-wrote “Principles of Sociology” (Henry Holt, 1952).

Hawley traveled the world conducting population studies and urban research, advising governments in the United States and elsewhere. From 1960 to 1974, he was a member of the National Academy of Sciences advisory committee to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. He also was on an advisory committee for the 1960 United States census and on other National Academy of Sciences committees and boards.

Hawley also was a demographic adviser for the government of Malaysia (1973-74) and a Fulbright Scholar in Italy (1959). He directed the census in Aruba in 1960 and was an adviser to the prime minister's office in Thailand (1964-65). He studied populations and land use in the Philippines, Japan, Michigan and elsewhere.

Hawley's nine-page list of presentations, books and articles from his prolific pen includes "Urban Land Use in Central Boston" in the *American Journal of Sociology* (1947), "Opinions on School District Reorganization in Metropolitan Areas" in the *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* (1967) and "The Logic of Macro-Sociology" in the *Annual Review of Sociology* (1992).

In 1990, he received the Robert and Helen Lynd Award from the American Sociological Association for research and scholarship on community and urban sociology. Also that year, Cornell honored Hawley with an award for outstanding achievements and contributions to sociological human ecology.

At Carolina, one of the Margaret and Paul A. Johnston Professorships in the College of Arts and Sciences was named in his honor, the Amos Hawley Distinguished Professorship.

Besides writing short stories in his retirement, Hawley remained active in professional associations and conducted research, said Howard Aldrich, Ph.D., Kenan professor and chair of the sociology department in the UNC College of Arts and Sciences: "He was as sharp as a tack, right up into his 80s and 90s – a very quick-witted guy."

About eight months ago, the co-author of Kasarda's forthcoming "Aerotropolis," due next year (2010), interviewed Hawley for the book. "He was answering quite penetrating questions in a very articulate manner," Kasarda said.

As a student at Cornell University, Kasarda learned about Hawley's work when the latter was a professor at Michigan. Kasarda liked what he heard so much that he applied to Michigan to study under Hawley. When Kasarda learned that Hawley had recently moved to UNC in 1966, Kasarda quickly applied to Carolina and was accepted. Hawley became his dissertation adviser.

"He was a very calm, insightful and thoughtful leader whose approach was to get beneath the surface of concepts and understand their core meaning," Kasarda said. "He was a true macro-sociologist who believed that the structure of organizations, be they communities or societies or formal organizations, had an overriding influence on individual behaviors and superseded individual behavior and influence, so that the power was in the organization."

Whereas human beings have fairly fixed life spans and size limits and cannot rejuvenate critical parts, organizations and communities endure through personnel succession and can grow in scale and complexity to the limits posed by their environments, Kasarda said. These concepts were at the heart of Hawley's work on human ecology.

“There’s nobody who’s influenced my and many others’ thought processes more,” said Kasarda, who chaired the UNC sociology department from 1980 to 1990. “He was a remarkable intellect and conceptual pioneer in the discipline.”

Said Aldrich, “He was a very important figure, a very learned and cultured man, a world citizen and international scholar. His work was respected worldwide.”

Hawley’s wife of 60 years, Gretchen Hawley, died in 1997. He is survived by four children: Steven Hawley of Raleigh; Maggie McEwen of Brunswick, Maine; Susan Hawley of Dexter, Mich.; Pat Roos of Durham; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

“He lived a great life, and we all got a chance to say goodbye,” said Hawley’s son-in-law, Craig McEwen of Brunswick, Maine. “According to his wishes, there will be neither a funeral service nor a memorial service.”

Memorial contributions may be made to a new Amos Hawley Memorial Fund, which will benefit graduate students in sociology. Donations may be mailed to the Arts and Sciences Foundation, Campus Box 6115, UNC, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-6115. Contributions also may be made online via credit card at <https://college.unc.edu/foundation>.

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