

Medical Sociology Newsletter

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A Publication of the Medical Sociology Section of the ASA

LINK 2007 LEO G. REEDER AWARD WINNER

by Chloe E. Bird

Reminders:

- **MSN Winter Deadline:**
March 30, 2007
- *2007 ASA Annual Meeting:*
August 11-14, 2007
New York, New York
- *2008 ASA Annual Meeting:*
August 1-4, 2008
Boston, Massachusetts



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The Leo G. Reeder Award for “Distinguished Contribution to Medical Sociology” will be presented to Dr. Bruce Link at the August 2007 ASA Meetings in New York City. The award is presented annually in recognition of scholarly contributions, especially a body of work displaying an extended trajectory of productivity and encompassing theory and research. The Reeder Award also acknowledges teaching, mentoring, and training, as well as service to the medical sociology community broadly defined.

Link is Research Scientist at New York State Psychiatric Institute, Professor of Epidemiology and Sociomedical Sciences (in Psychiatry) at the Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University, and a member of the Institute of Medicine. The award honors over 25 years of work through which he has contributed immeasurably to the field of Medical Sociology. The award recognizes his leadership and effective advocacy for the significance of sociological research in addressing social disparities in physical and mental health. Moreover, he has made a career-long commitment to training a new generation of scholars in pursuing this line of inquiry for which he has also received Columbia University’s Presidential Teaching Award.

Link's career has focused on how and under what conditions social and economic inequalities are translated into health disparities. In pursuing this question, he has examined numerous issues in social and psychiatric epidemiology from a sociological perspective. He has written extensively on the connection between socioeconomic status and health, homelessness, violence, stigma, and discrimination.

As David Mechanic noted in his letter of recommendation, “Bruce has been the primary leader of several research collaborations that have shaped distinct and important areas of research.” In his recent work with Jo Phelan, Link has sought to explain the persistent association between SES indicators and mortality. This work demonstrates that the dominant epidemiological public health approach

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of risk factor epidemiology fails to account for historical patterns and that the association between SES and mortality remains robust although the mechanisms of disease causation have changed dramatically. Link and Phelan offer an alternative “fundamental cause” theory that uses dynamic social processes of social stratification to explain how risk and protective strategies affect mortality. Link and his colleagues continue to test and extend this theory in innovative ways.

Link and his colleagues have also elucidated a longstanding debate concerning the relationships between mental illness and violence. This work demonstrates that while persons with mental illness have prior risks of violence comparable to the non-mentally ill of the same gender, age, and education, they are at increased risk during periods of florid psychotic symptoms. Link and his colleagues have developed and tested a theory to explain these results.

In addition, Link has been at the forefront of work that is shaping our understanding of stigma and labeling and its effects on employment, earnings, social support, and quality of life. In earlier work with Bruce Dohrenwend and other colleagues, the group’s innovative examination of the selection/causation issue in the relationship between SES and mental disorder published in *Science*, received the AAAS Prize for Behavioral Science research.

Link’s remarkable contributions based on both his scientific productivity, which includes over 130 publications, and his work’s impact on our discipline and the related fields of social and psychiatric epidemiology distinguish him among scholars. The Medical Sociology executive committee proudly honors Bruce Link with the 2007 Leo G. Reader Award.

The Journal of Long Term Home Health Care is interested in articles of about 20 pages that are focused on any aspect of health care and social issues as they pertain to the elderly. Manuscripts may include position papers, reports of research studies, case reports, analyses of government policy, descriptions and/or evaluations of agencies, programs, and not-for-profit organizations serving any component of the aged population. Papers that offer detailed discussions of a topic, forecast developments, or provide readers with enhanced perspective are particularly welcome. The Journal also considers for publication commentaries on previously published articles, book and media reviews, etc. The readership of the Journal consists of physicians, nurses, social workers, social scientists, and others who work directly with older persons, as well as managers and staff of not-for-profit and government agencies serving the elderly. Author queries should be directed to **DRPWB@aol.com** or forwarded by mail to: F. Russell Kellogg, MD, Editor, or Philip W. Brickner, MD, Managing Editor, Saint Vincent's Hospital-Manhattan, Department of Community Medicine, 41-51 East 11th Street, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10003.

CALLS FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

LEO G. REEDER AWARD The Medical Sociology Section invites nominations for the 2008 Leo G. Reeder Award. This award recognizes scholarly contributions, especially a body of work displaying an extended trajectory of productivity and encompassing theory and research. The Reeder Award also acknowledges teaching, mentoring, and training as well as service to the medical sociology community broadly defined. Please submit letter of nomination and the nominee's curriculum vitae to Chloe Bird, via email and snail mail. Please email letter and curriculum vitae to: Chloe_Bird@rand.org. Also, please snail mail letter and curriculum vitae to: Chloe Bird, RAND Corporation, 1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA, 90407-2138. Deadline is **August 1, 2007**.

ROBERTA G. SIMMONS AWARD Nominations (self-nominations are acceptable) are being accepted for the 2007 Roberta G. Simmons Outstanding Dissertation Award in Medical Sociology. Eligible candidates for this award must have defended their doctoral dissertations within the two academic years prior to the annual meeting at which the award is presented. To be considered for the 2007 award, the candidate should submit an article-length paper (sole-authored), not to exceed 30 double-spaced pages (11- or 12-pitch font), inclusive of references. This paper may have been previously published, in press, or under review. Submissions may be sent by e-mail as Word documents. Hard copies (please send 5 copies) will also be accepted. Deadline for receipt of submissions is **June 15, 2007**. Send nominations to: Joanna Kempner, 263 Wallace Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544-2091, jkempner@princeton.edu.

ELIOT FREIDSON OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION AWARD The Freidson Award is given in alternate years to a book or journal article published in the preceding two years that has had a major impact on the field of medical sociology. The 2007 award will be given to a scholarly article in a journal published between 2005 and 2006. The article may deal with any topic in medical sociology, broadly defined. It need not be published in a sociology journal. Co-authored articles are appropriate to nominate; book chapters are not eligible. When making your nomination, please indicate (however briefly) the reason for the nomination. Include a copy or reprint of the article if available. Self-nominations are permissible and encouraged. Nomination letters are to be sent by **April 1, 2007** to: Professor Maxine Thompson, Sociology and Anthropology Department, North Carolina State University, Box 8107, Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-8107. Nominations may also be emailed to maxinet@sa.ncsu.edu with the subject line: Freidson Award Nomination. Please attach a copy of the article as an attached document or provide a full reference to the article.

Career & Employment

Carol Caronna and Deborah Glik

For this column, we have focused on potential employment opportunities with independent think tanks not connected with universities or governments. Health research that informs health policy, promotion, communication, and advocacy are important components and so many of these institutes do hire people trained in the social sciences at the doctoral level. Here is a sampling of some prominent institutes that sponsor research activities in the health field.

Alan Guttmacher Institute

(<http://www.guttmacher.org/>)

Founded in 1968 as the Center for Family Planning Program Development, the Alan Guttmacher Institute is an independent nonprofit organization focused on sexual and reproductive health research, policy analysis, and public education. It was nurtured in its formative years by Alan F. Guttmacher, an eminent obstetrician-gynecologist, and after his death was renamed in his memory in 1977. The Guttmacher Institute maintains offices in New York and Washington, D.C. Its current staff of 61 comprises demographers, social scientists, public policy analysts, editors, writers, communications specialists, and financial and technical personnel. The Guttmacher Institute publishes *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *International Family Planning Perspectives*, *The Guttmacher Policy Review*, and special reports on topics pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Institute's mission is to protect the reproductive choices of all women and men in the United States and throughout the world, and to support their ability to obtain the information and services needed to achieve their full human rights, safeguard their health, and exercise their individual responsibilities in regard to sexual behavior and relationships, reproduction, and family formation.

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research

(<http://www.aei.org/>)

Founded in 1943, with headquarters in Washington D.C., The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research is a private, nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics, and social welfare. Its Health Policy Studies Program focuses on Medicare reform, the re-importation of prescription

drugs, health coverage for the uninsured, the role of the FDA, the development of vaccines, pharmaceutical research and development, and the role of private-sector solutions to public health problems.

The Aspen Institute

(<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/>)

The Aspen Institute, founded in 1950 and headquartered in Washington D.C., is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue. Through seminars, policy programs, conferences, and leadership development initiatives, the Institute and its international partners seek to promote nonpartisan inquiry. The Health, Biomedical Science and Society Initiative explores the latest developments in medicine, science, health, and nutrition, bringing people together to discuss new discoveries and cutting-edge ideas – from cloning and genomics to nutrition, drug development, and HIV/AIDS – and consider their implications from the perspective of ethics and values.

The Brookings Institution

(<http://www.brook.edu/>)

Founded in 1916 and headquartered in Washington D.C., the Brookings Institution is a private, non-profit organization focused on independent and non-partisan research and policy solutions. Research on health care includes: health care financing; urban health care services; global health; biomedical and pharmaceutical research; and health policy, including health insurance, HMOs, hospital financing, Medicaid, Medicare, and minority health disparities.

Cato Institute

(<http://www.cato.org/>)

The Cato Institute was founded in 1977 by Edward H. Crane. It is a non-profit public policy research foundation headquartered in Washington, D.C. Cato's health policy work centers on market-based approaches to issues of health care access, quality, and cost. Major issues include Medicare, Medicaid, health savings accounts, the deregulation of health care, and the FDA and prescription drugs.

Center for Studying Health System Change

(<http://www.hschange.com/>)

The Center for Studying Health System Change is a

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nonpartisan policy research organization located in Washington, D.C. It designs and conducts studies focused on the U.S. health care system to inform the thinking and decisions of policy makers in government and private industry. In addition to this applied use, its studies contribute more broadly to the body of health care policy research that enables decision makers to understand change, and the national and local market forces driving that change. Its three major areas of research are: insurance coverage and costs, access to care, and local markets and managed care.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
(<http://www.cbpp.org/>)

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, headquartered in Washington D.C., was founded in 1981 to analyze federal budget priorities, with particular emphasis on the impact of various budget choices on low-income Americans. Current work includes research on budget priorities and low-income programs at the state level and collaboration with other non-profits. In a 1998 Aspen Institute survey of members of Congress of both parties and Administration officials, the Center was rated as “one of the 10 most effective” in health policy. Major issues include ensuring that federal and state health insurance programs provide coverage that meets the health care needs of low-income children and families, as well as seniors and people with disabilities. The Center also works to remove barriers preventing eligible families from gaining access to health coverage.

The Century Foundation (<http://www.tcf.org/>)

The Century Foundation, founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene, is a nonprofit public policy research institution with headquarters in New York City and an office in Washington, D.C. Their work is premised on the belief that a mix of effective government, open democracy, and free markets has been the key to the growth and prosperity of the United States. The foundation’s website includes a “health policy watch” page. Major issues include Medicare reform, Medicaid reform, health savings accounts, and universal health coverage.

The Heritage Foundation
(<http://www.heritage.org/>)

Founded in 1973 and headquartered in Washington D.C., the Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies. Major issues include the deregulation and privatization of health care, health savings accounts, prescription drugs and Medicare benefits, and Medicare and Medicaid reform.

The Institute for the Future
(<http://www.iftf.org/>)

The Institute for the Future (IFTF) is an independent nonprofit research group located in California’s Silicon Valley. Founded in 1968 by a group of former RAND Corporation researchers with a grant from the Ford Foundation, its goal is to take leading-edge research methodologies into the public and business sectors. Research sponsored by IFTF is used to enhance understanding in such areas as work and daily life, technology and society, health and health care, global business trends, and changing consumer society. Two large projects at present have to do with nutrition and aging.

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
(<http://www.jointcenter.org/>)

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a national, nonprofit research and public policy institution. Founded in 1970 by black intellectuals and professionals to provide training and technical assistance to newly elected black officials, the Joint Center is recognized today as one of the nation’s premier think tanks on a broad range of public policy issues of concern to African Americans and other communities of color. The Joint Center has headquarters in Washington D.C. It aims to ignite a “Fair Health” movement focused on improved health outcomes for people of color, increased resource allocation for prevention and treatment of chronic diseases, reduced infant mortality, reduced risk factors for children and youth, improved mental health, optimized health care access and quality, and improved conditions for healthy aging.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
(<http://www.kff.org>)

Located in Menlo Park, CA, the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private operating

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foundation focused on the major health care issues facing the nation. The Foundation is an independent voice and source of facts and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public. KFF develops and runs its own research and communications programs, often in partnership with outside organizations. Through their policy research and communications programs, they work to provide reliable information in a health system in which the issues are increasingly complex and the nation faces difficult challenges and choices. They are not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Progressive Policy Institute
(<http://www.ppionline.org/index.cfm>)

The Progressive Policy Institute, headquartered in Washington D.C., is a research and education institute that is a project of the Third Way Foundation, Inc. Its mission is to define and promote a new progressive politics for America in the 21st century. Major priorities in health care include: universal coverage for the uninsured, Medicare reform based on competition and expanded benefits – especially for prescription drugs – and initiatives to improve quality and empower consumers. Its website includes a “health policy wire.”

The Public Health Institute (<http://www.phi.org>)

Located in Oakland, CA, the Public Health Institute (PHI) is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting health, well-being, and quality of life for people throughout California, across the

nation, and around the world. As one of the largest and most comprehensive public health organizations in the nation, it conducts research, offers training, and engages in advocacy and community to improve the efficacy of public health statewide, nationally, and internationally.

RAND Corporation (<http://www.rand.org/>)

Located in Santa Monica, CA, RAND was formed as a national security think tank in the wake of World War II. Since then, RAND (Research and Development) has expanded to address issues on a very broad front with health services and social science research one of their major components. RAND employs over 500 research professionals and analyzes choices and developments in many areas, including “national defense, education and training, health care, criminal and civil justice, labor and population, science and technology, community development, international relations, and regional studies.”

Urban Institute (<http://www.urban.org/>)

Founded in 1968 at the request of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Urban Institute is an independent, nonpartisan research organization headquartered in Washington D.C. focused on economic and social policy research. Its Health Policy Center examines how the healthcare market and government policy affect how much care costs, who pays the bills, and who lacks access to care. Major issues include community-based care, disabilities, health insurance, hospital and physician payment, long-term care, Medicaid, Medicare, S-CHIP, uninsured/uncompensated care, and health statistics.

Psychiatric Epidemiology Program

Columbia University Psychiatric Epidemiology Training Program announces openings for pre- and postdoctoral fellows beginning September 2007. The program provides social scientists, epidemiologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists with research skills in psychiatric epidemiology. Training involves coursework in substantive issues and research methods, and participation in an affiliated research unit.

Postdoctoral stipends range from \$36,996- \$51,036 depending on years of experience. Pre-doctoral stipends are \$20,772. Application deadline: **February 15, 2007**. Contact: Training Coordinator, Columbia University, School of Public Health, 722 West 168th Street, Room 720-B, New York, NY 10032; e-mail: PET@Columbia.edu. Columbia University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

Avoiding the Problem? Pathological Delusions and the Sociology of Mental Health

by William McGee, University of Toronto

The tragedy in the Amish community in Pennsylvania in early October 2006 occurred while the Montreal murders were still fresh in my mind. These events, and too many similar others, have made me think back to when I started to study the sociology of mental health. I wanted to study destructive delusions, false beliefs, and their emotional concomitants. My graduate school supervisor dissuaded me by pointing out that those problems are very difficult to assess using methods appropriate for large general population studies. It is true that the sociology of mental health has progressed over the past few decades primarily by focusing on distress, depression, and anxiety, and not on delusions and related emotional problems. I suppose this may have something to do with the aversion of sociologists of mental health to the psychiatric practice of first deciding if beliefs and emotions are reasonable, and justifying mental illness labeling on the basis of those decisions. In the sociology of mental health we tend to focus on mental illnesses that are normal or reasonable reactions

to unreasonable, unjust, or otherwise stressful environmental conditions. I think there is also a tendency among sociologists to avoid dealing with problems like pathological delusions under the assumption that they are rare in the general population and thus of less sociological interest than more prevalent problems. However, if these violent acts, perpetrated by people who hold sick, distorted ideas that motivate acts of unwarranted vengeance, are the tip of an iceberg of pathological delusion, then we might be missing a massive phenomenon by neglecting delusions, or paying more attention to the reasonableness of emotions. If delusions are widespread and destructive in ways that go beyond physical violence, then a focus on physical violence alone will also miss the bulk of the problem. Perhaps my assumption is wrong that the sociology of mental health can make a positive contribution if only we more actively engage these issues. If so, then I can only hope that positive delusions might somehow have the capacity to undermine negative destructive delusions.

4th Annual Sociology Department Graduate Student Ethnography Conference, March 2nd, 2007. Stony Brook University—Manhattan Campus

Presentations by graduate students using ethnographic methods, including field research and in-depth interviews. Panels topics include *Race, Ethnicity and Gender*, *The Body and Performance*, and *Political Ethnography*. Invited senior scholar discussants for each panel will include **Prema Kurien** from Syracuse University, **Mitchell Duneier** from Princeton University, and **Nina Eliasoph** from University of Southern California.

The one-day conference will be held on Friday, March 2nd at Stony Brook, Manhattan (401 Park Avenue South at 28th St., New York, NY). Contact LaJoseph@notes.cc.sunysb.edu for more information.

A Publication of the Medical Sociology Section of the ASA

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Student Newsletter Editor

TBA

 ★ **CALL FOR NEW STUDENT**
 ★ **EDITOR**
 ★ The position of student editor is currently vacant.
 ★ We are soliciting applications from graduate
 ★ students who might want to hold this position for
 ★ the remainder of 2007 (through the annual
 ★ meeting in New York). This is a wonderful
 ★ opportunity for a graduate student to become
 ★ visible to members of the section and to
 ★ contribute her or his ideas in the form of two
 ★ remaining columns in the *Medical Sociology*
 ★ *Newsletter*. If you are interested in the position,
 ★ please send an email to **Robin Moremen,**
 ★ **Editor**, at **rmoremen@niu.edu**. Please address
 ★ the following questions in your email:
 ★ 1. Why are you interested in this position?
 ★ 2. What are some of your ideas for the "Student
 ★ News and Views" column?
 ★ 3. How might these ideas increase student
 ★ interest in the Medical Sociology section?
 ★ *****

**Students – Apply to be the
 2007 Louise Johnson
 Scholar!**

The Medical Sociology Section will choose a student member of the section to be the 2007 Louise Johnson Scholar. The scholar will receive travel funds up to \$350 to present at the annual ASA meeting in New York City and to attend section events. The scholar will be chosen based on academic merit and the quality of an accepted ASA paper related to medical sociology.

Papers with faculty co-authors are ineligible. Applications are due on **May 15, 2007**. To apply, send: 1) a copy of your acceptance notification to present at the 2007 ASA meeting, 2) a copy of your paper, 3) your CV, and 4) a letter of recommendation from a professor who can write about your academic merit. Submissions may be sent by e-mail as Word documents or PDFs. Hard copies will also be accepted. Applications should be sent to: William R. Avison, Department of Sociology, Social Science Centre, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada, N6A 5C2. E-mail: wavison@uwo.ca

The Louise Johnson Scholar fund was established in memory of Louise Johnson, a pioneering medical sociologist whose mentorship and scholarship we are pleased to honor. The fund was made possible by Sam Bloom of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and a former colleague of Louise Johnson.