

Medical Sociology Newsletter

VOLUME 44, ISSUE 1

FALL 2007

A Publication of the Medical Sociology Section of the ASA

NOTES FROM THE NEW CHAIR

By Chloe Bird

Reminders:

- *MSN Winter Deadline:*
January 11, 2008
- *2008 ASA Annual Meeting:*
August 1-4, 2008
Boston, Massachusetts
- *2009 ASA Annual Meeting:*
August 8-11, 2009
San Francisco, California



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As a sociologist committed to advancing research to understand and address health disparities, I am greatly honored to serve as Chair of the Med Soc section. As interest in the complex contributions of social interactions and institutions to health and health care has increased so have opportunities for medical sociologists to forward both our own discipline and the broader dialogue among researchers in related disciplines.

Consequently, this is an exciting and challenging time to be a medical sociologist. Interdisciplinary work and cross-disciplinary dialogues create both an opportunity to demonstrate the complex and enduring nature of social inequities and inequalities in health and health care. Such dialogues also require us to explain our theories, assumptions, and methods, often in far greater detail and specificity than is necessary when communicating within the discipline.

Although demanding and time consuming, interdisciplinary communication and research can contribute both to advances in our understanding of the social determinants of health and ultimately to policy aimed at reducing health disparities. For example, as sociologists we can help to explain the nature and impact of the social organization of every day life and the broad consequences of the opportunity structure and the constraints it presents for life and health chances at the level of individual, family, community, and country.

To this end the 2008 Medical Sociology program, presented elsewhere in this newsletter, includes sessions that encourage the submission of papers related to the conference theme of demonstrating the relevance of social science research for public policy and for efforts to address social inequities and inequalities through activism around work-related issues. The session organizers and I have developed a diverse set of sessions intended to contribute to a variety of dialogues among medical sociologist and between medical sociology and related disciplines.

I strongly encourage you to submit your work to the conference as the submissions themselves ultimately shape both the content and impact of sessions. Moreover, there are occasional opportunities to increase the number of sessions in response to a large pool of high quality submissions. I look forward to another stimulating and productive conference and to seeing you all in Boston.

GOOD NEWS!! We have achieved our target membership of 1,000 members! Please keep signing up your students and colleagues! We have been hovering around 1,000 members for some time and need to keep up the momentum.

MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY SECTION 2008 PROGRAM

1. **“British Medical Sociology’s 40th Anniversary: Advances and Debates from Across the Pond”**

Organizer – Patricia Rieker, Boston University (priecker@bu.edu)

This invited session will capitalize on the availability of several leading scholars who will be attending the British-American Medical Sociology Conference taking place in Boston preceding the ASA meeting.

2. **“Contributions of Medical Sociology to Health Services and Other Policy Research”**

Organizer – Jill Quadagno, Florida State University (jquadagn@fsu.edu)

This invited session will provide examples of the ways medical sociology are contributing to health, health care, and health care policy.

3. **“From Illness Experience to Disease Outcome: Qualitative and Quantitative Contributions and Collaborations”**

Organizer – Stefan Timmermans, UCLA (stefan@soc.ucla.edu)

This session will link the literature on illness narratives, patient-doctor interaction, and illness experiences to the literature on health outcomes. The premise of this session is to examine the clinical consequences of well-documented sociological processes.

4. **“Emerging Forms of Evidence in Medicine and Population Health: Opportunities to Shed Light on the Contribution of Sociological Knowledge to Health?”**

Organizer – Allen Fremont, RAND Corporation (fremont@rand.org)

This session will include papers on the sociological significance of the use, proliferation, and impact of changes in ways of knowing in medicine and population health research (e.g., research on biomarkers, pharmacogenetics, genomics, and the impact of the evidence-based medicine movement and community-based participatory research).

5. **“Advances in Understanding the Contribution of Neighborhoods to Health and Health Disparities”**

Organizer – Stephanie A. Robert, University of Wisconsin (sarobert@facstaff.wisc.edu)

Papers for this session will present recent advances in theory and methods in research on the effects of place on health.

6. **“Work, Care, and Health: How are Changes in Employment Policy, Technology, and the Work Place Affecting Health and Well-Being?”**

Organizer – Pamela Brayboy Jackson, Indiana University (pjackson@indiana.edu)

Papers for this session could include those on work and family as well as research on the impact of work on physical and mental health and related health behaviors.

7. **Round Tables**

Organizer – Brian Finch, San Diego State University (bfinch@mail.sdsu.edu)

In addition, the Med Soc section will have a council meeting, a business meeting, and a reception.

MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY SECTION 2007 ELECTION RESULTS

Chair-Elect: Janet Hankin

Council Member: Jason Schnittker

Publications Committee Chair: Michael Hughes

Nominations Committee Chair-Elect: Robin Simon

Nominations Committee Member: Stefan Timmermans

Nominations Committee Student Member: Elaine Hernandez

Student Council Member: Cheryl Stults

Career & Employment Committee Chair: Sara Shostak

Teaching Committee Chair: Rachel Kimbro

Congratulations to all!!

Armstrong, Carpenter, & Hojnacki Receive 2007 Eliot Freidson Award



The 2007 Elliot Freidson Award is given to the research article that makes a substantial contribution to medical sociology. This year's recipients were Elizabeth Armstrong (Princeton University), Daniel P. Carpenter (Harvard University), and Marie Hojnacki (Pennsylvania State University) for their article, "Whose Deaths Matter?: Mortality, Advocacy, and Attention to Disease in the Mass Media." They used a unique data set on mass media attention to seven leading causes of death over a 20-year time period. The paper, which was published in *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (August 2006), examines the relationship between newspaper stories and network nightly news broadcasts about these diseases, mortality, and organized interest group activity. The paper makes two significant contributions. First, it finds robust statistical evidence that diseases that affect blacks more than whites get less attention in the mass media. Second, much of the sociological and political science literature on agenda setting and disease as a social problem has been based on case studies of a single disease, most typically HIV/AIDS or breast cancer. This paper demonstrates empirically that the attention process to AIDS is systematically different from that of other diseases, suggesting that we cannot generalize from the AIDS case to other diseases. The members of the committee were Phil Brown (Brown University), Tony Brown (Vanderbilt University), Elizabeth Menaghan (Ohio State University), and Maxine Thompson (North Carolina State University).

~Maxine Thompson & Betsy Armstrong

Springer Receives 2007 Roberta J. Simmons Dissertation Award



The Medical Sociology section awarded the 2007 Roberta G. Simmons Dissertation Award to Kristen Springer, for her thesis entitled "His and Her Marriage Today: The Impact of Wives' Employment on Husbands' Later Mid-Life Health." Women are entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers, all but demolishing the reality of the male breadwinner. Dr. Springer's dissertation investigates a persistent puzzle: how and why does women's participation in the workforce affect their husbands' wellbeing? Drawing on data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), she finds that a wife's employment impacts a husband's health only when he fails to achieve the normative prescription of the family breadwinner. The committee, which included Joanna Kempner (Chair, Princeton University), Bill Avison (University of Western Ontario), and Jay Turner (Florida State University), was impressed by Kristen's significant contributions to both medical sociology and feminist scholarship. Kristen graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 2006 and is now an assistant professor of sociology at Rutgers University. The committee extends their congratulations to Kristen's dissertation co-chairs, Bill Hauser and Myra Marx Ferree.

~Joanna Kempner

Gayman 2007 Louise Johnson Scholar



The 2007 Louise Johnson Scholar is Mathew D. Gayman. Mathew is pursuing doctoral studies in the Department of Sociology at Florida State University. His dissertation chair is Donald A. Lloyd. The title of Mathew's paper is "Consequences of the Timing of Onset of Psychiatric Disorders and Substance Dependence on Social Support and Psychosocial Resources." The paper examines how mental health problems among a sample of youths transitioning into adulthood have consequences for their social and psychosocial resources. The results reveal that there are negative consequences of psychiatric disorders and substance dependence for the acquisition of social and psychosocial resources. These associations are conditioned by the specific disorder-resource relationship and by gender and race/ethnicity. The Committee was impressed by the conceptual argument that is set forth in the paper and by the sophistication of the analyses. Mr. Gayman's paper was judged to be an important contribution to research in medical sociology. This year's selection committee included Jo Phelan (Columbia University) and Dan Menchik (University of Chicago—last year's

Johnson Scholar). I would like to thank them for their hard work .

~Bill Avison

Career & Employment

Sara Shostak

In the coming year, this column both will continue the survey of opportunities for medical sociologists outside of Departments of Sociology, begun by outgoing chairs Carol Caronna and Deborah Glik, and also provide “insider accounts” of the experience of being a medical sociologist in these varied locations. Below, I provide a very partial, but hopefully provocative, map of opportunities for medical sociologists in Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and the Veterans Administration (VA).

Schools of Medicine

The role of medical sociologists in medical schools was an early concern of the ASA’s Committee on Medical Sociology (Straus, R. 1957. “The Nature and Status of Medical Sociology.” *American Sociological Review* 22(2): 200-204). In the years following, sociologists have become visible members of medical school faculties. In 1990, Hunt and Sobal reported that sociologists were teaching in most U.S. medical schools and in thirty-two of Britain’s thirty-four medical schools (“Teaching Medical Sociology in Medical Schools.” *Teaching Sociology* 18: 319-328). Medical sociologists also do research in departments of community health, family health, health policy and health services research, and maternal and child health. Schools of medicine also often host centers for bioethics, which provide important opportunities for medical sociologists. A decidedly non-representative sample of departments and centers at medical schools which feature the work of sociologists (and job postings of relevance to sociologists) follows:

Department of Community Health
(<http://bms.brown.edu/commhealth/>); Current job postings:
<http://bms.brown.edu/commhealth/employment>

Department of Family Medicine
(<http://www.iufammed.iupui.edu/>)

Department of Health Care Policy
(<http://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/index.php>)

Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice
(<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~cecs/>)

UC San Francisco Center for Reproductive Health, Research, and Policy (<http://crhrp.ucsf.edu/>)

Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics
(<http://bioethics.stanford.edu/>)

University of Pennsylvania Center for Bioethics
(<http://www.bioethics.upenn.edu/>)

Schools of Nursing

Schools of nursing have been important sites for the development of medical sociology (see, for example: <http://www.ucsf.edu/anselmstrauss/>). The extent to which sociology should be included in the training of nurses has been the subject of debate within nursing (for a recent review, see Pinikahana J. 2003. “Role of Sociology within the Nursing Enterprise: Some Reflections on the Unfinished Debate.” *Nursing and Health Sciences* 5: 175-180). This debate notwithstanding, medical sociologists serve in prominent roles as teachers and researchers in Schools of Nursing, in Departments of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Community Nursing, and in affiliated Research Institutes.

I hope it won’t seem self serving if I note that my alma mater is a great place to explore the work of sociologists affiliated with schools of nursing. Medical sociologists at the UCSF School of Nursing teach medical sociology and research methods to nursing students and serve as the core faculty for programs in health policy for nurses at both the Master’s and Doctoral level. They also conduct research in affiliated institutes:

University of California, San Francisco, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences
(<http://www.ucsf.edu/medsoc/>)

University of California, San Francisco, Institute for Health and Aging (<http://nurseweb.ucsf.edu/iha/>)

The Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing maintains job listings on their website, which include opportunities for research, teaching, and applied sociology
(<http://www.nursingsociety.org/default.aspx>)

Schools of Public Health

Medical sociologists often play prominent roles in schools of public health, perhaps especially in

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departments of epidemiology, sociomedical sciences, health policy and management, community health sciences, health behavior and education, and health law, bioethics, and human rights. Sociologists also have important leadership roles in the administration of schools of public health (<http://info.med.yale.edu/eph/news/march06/cleary.html>)

Below is a list of websites that provide a vista on the opportunities afforded medical sociologists at schools of public health.

Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology (<http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/epi/index.html>)

Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, Department of Sociomedical Sciences (<http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/sms/index.html>)

University of California, Berkeley affiliated research centers (<http://sph.berkeley.edu/research/programs.html>)

University of California, Los Angeles School of Public Health, Department of Community Health Sciences (<http://www.ph.ucla.edu/chs/>)

University of Michigan School of Public Health, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education (<http://www.sph.umich.edu/hbhe/>)

University of Michigan School of Public Health, Department of Health Policy and Management (<http://www.sph.umich.edu/hmp/>)

However, as brevity requires that any such list be partial, the Association of Schools of Public Health

(ASPH) website, which has contact information and overviews of all the accredited schools of public health in the U.S., is an invaluable resource (<http://www.asph.org/>)

It also has a link to jobs in public health more generally, on which a recent search using the keyword “sociologist” produced 30 requests for applications (<http://www.publichealthjobs.net/>)

Likewise, the site offers a listing of post-doctoral fellowships and internships in public health (<http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=752>)

Veteran’s Administration (VA)

About a quarter of the U.S. population – approximately 70 million people – are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services because they are veterans, family members, or survivors of veterans. The VA has special programs for Disabled Veterans, Homeless Veterans, Minority Veterans, and Women Veterans, among others.

Veteran’s Administration Centers for Excellence, located at various sites in the U.S. (http://www.hsrds.research.va.gov/about/centers/centers_of_excellence.cfm) support research on areas of interest to medical sociologists, including health disparities (<http://www.cherp.research.med.va.gov/index2.php>), mental health (<http://www.hsrds.minneapolis.med.va.gov/>), post traumatic stress disorder (<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp>), and provider behavior (<http://www.providerbehavior.med.va.gov/>).

VA positions are posted at <http://www.usajobs.gov>. Relevant search terms include: social science analyst, management analyst, and program analyst.

SEEKING SUGGESTIONS FOR SESSIONS FOR 2009

We want to do a special session in honor of the section’s 50th anniversary. I would like to highlight our accomplishments as a discipline and directions for the future. Please send your suggestions to me, Janet Hankin, at janet.hankin@wayne.edu. Thanks!

Student News & Views

William A. Anderson, MPA, MPH

Sweet, Sociological Bird of Youth

It can happen quickly. You have traded the sociological imagination for procedures, methods, and previous findings. Creativity and innovation are fine, as long as they can be categorized. It is not necessarily that you were advised to put your creativity on hold – it just happened. There were theories and literature to understand and methods to master. In short, there were the basics, and you had to learn them. Early, seemingly innovative ideas now appear as wild and fading notes on scraps of paper that you think of throwing away.

Uncertain reception interacts with class deadlines, grades, and the end of funding to produce a toxin deadly to innovation. It becomes all too easy to abandon the radical in favor of the regular, to give up the difficult to explain for the easy to understand. It can even be comforting finally to succumb, end the questioning, and accept the revealed truth of the field. It certainly gets you through more quickly and in at least one sense, more easily: you don't continually have to explain yourself. In succumbing to these temptations, however, we students abdicate the powerful and important role of constructive provocateur. It is an abdication we should resist and that mentors should discourage.

I sat down for my first PhD-level class having never taken a sociology course. Everything was new and exciting. I did extra reading on theories and previous

research. I engaged statistical methods as a recreational exercise. I questioned everything. And, finally, I realized that most of my early thinking was wrong. The questions I was interested in were trivial, overly complex, or were supposedly settled. Development of theory was something best left to others. The big questions were already answered. What was needed now was for someone to fill in the holes. No one forced or necessarily even advised me to think this way. It just happened. Afterwards everything did seem simpler, even if less interesting. I was never comfortable with that trade-off and now I want to trade back.

It is easy to understand and accept the more traditional roles of receiver of knowledge, follower of rules, and participant in rituals. They are reinforced daily. But the role of the student as agnostic and skeptic are equally, if not more important. As students, we often do not fully appreciate the unique perspective and opportunity afforded us by our liminal state. (Or we lose our appreciation of it.) Having not yet seen how the parts are *supposed* to fit together, students are well positioned to look at the raw materials of sociology and see among them new connections, new forms, and new ideas. Even while ingesting the basics, we should exercise our skeptical, agnostic, and provocative selves. Some thoughts may be innovative, some previously tried, some useless, but in thinking through and explaining them all, much is learned – and perhaps something new arises. At a minimum, it keeps things interesting.

BOOK RAFFLE RAISES MONEY FOR REEDER AND SIMMONS AWARDS

The Section book raffle raised \$375 for the Leo G. Reeder and Roberta G. Simmons Awards this year. Nineteen individuals and publishers donated thirty-nine books which were raffled

off at the Reception of the Section on August 13, 2007 at the ASA meetings in New York City. The success of the raffle was made possible only through the generous donations of the following publishers

and individuals: Cambridge University Press, Fordham University Press, Haworth Press, Indiana University Press, McGill-Queen's University Press, McGraw Hill Contemporary Learning Series, Oxford University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, Rutgers University Press, Temple University Press, University of Alberta Press, University of Iowa Press, University of Toronto Press, University of Wisconsin Press, Peter Conrad, Valerie Leiter, Virginia O'Connell, and Jill Quadagno. Thank you to everyone for making this year's raffle such a success. We could not have done it without you and we sincerely hope that you will contribute again next year. I look forward to another successful year ahead! ~Sarah Burgard

De Jong Lecture in Social Demography

"Social Class Health and Mortality Differentials: Are There Important Selection Effects?"

The De Jong Lecture in Social Demography will be held at Penn State on October 22, 2007. Alberto Palloni, Ph.D., Professor of Population and International Studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and President of the Population Association of America, will be the featured speaker.

Dr. Palloni will discuss the role of an important conjecture that is purported to explain the persistent, large, and ubiquitous disparities in health and mortality by social class. By and large, these disparities have been attributable to properties or endowments of social classes individuals occupy even though the exact mechanisms that make this possible

remain largely unidentified. An alternative way to explain health and mortality differentials by social class is to invoke the existence of selection. This implies to attribute, at least partially, the observed health and mortality differentials by social class to one (or several) mechanism(s) through which individuals who are in poor health to begin with are unable to accede to top positions in the social class hierarchy or, through which individuals who have better health to begin with are better equipped to succeed and end up in the top strata of a hierarchy of social classes.

Dr. Palloni will examine the nature of this conjecture and identify what are the conditions of possibility for its validity. He will then establish the types of empirical evidence that one should marshal to prove the existence of selection mechanisms and delve into the empirical estimation of selection effects. Duane Alwin, Professor of Sociology and Demography at Penn State will be the discussant. See <http://www.pop.psu.edu/events/dejonglecture/> for more information.

Call for Papers

Papers are being sought for volume 26 of *Research in The Sociology of Health Care* published formerly by JAI Press and now by Elsevier Press. The major theme for this volume is **CARE FOR MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEMS AND POPULATION HEALTH CONCERNS: IMPACTS ON PATIENTS, PROVIDERS AND POLICY.**

Papers dealing with macro-level system issues and micro-level issues involving provision of health care and issues related to major health problems or population health concerns are welcome. This includes examination of social, demographic and structural problems, and a wide variety of major health problems including chronic illnesses, serious acute health problems, and disabilities that require health care. Papers that focus on perspectives of patients, providers, or health policy concerns as ways to meet health care needs of people both in the US and in other countries would be welcome. The focus can be from a consumer side or a provider or policy perspective. Papers that raise issues of the availability

of services, access to those services, quality of services, and the role of government in services provision would all be appropriate. Papers can focus on issues of services for specific diseases such as AIDS, heart disease, and cancer, or across a wide variety of health care problems or health care services delivery in general. For papers examining health care delivery systems in other countries, the focus could be on issues of delivery systems in those countries and ways in which revisions and changes impact major health problems and population health, especially if those are then also related to broader concerns in health care in the US or other countries as well. The volume will contain 10 to 14 papers, generally between 20 and 40 pages in length. Send completed manuscripts or detailed outlines for review by **February 15, 2008**. For an initial indication of interest in outlines or abstracts, please contact the same address by **January 10, 2008**. Send to: Jennie Jacobs Kronenfeld, Sociology Program, School of Social and Family Dynamics, Box 873701, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-4802 (Phone: 480-965-8053; Email: Jennie.Kronenfeld@asu.edu). Initial inquiries can be by email.

A Publication of the Medical Sociology Section of the ASA

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Purdue University, West Lafayette

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology (www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/soc/) invites applications for a tenure track position of Assistant Professor of Sociology to begin August 2008. We are seeking candidates doing interesting and important research within the broad area of social inequality, including topics related to health and medical care. Health, aging, and the life course is one of our department's five specialty areas. Qualified candidates for the position will have a PhD in sociology by the date of appointment and an excellent emerging record of research. The teaching load is two courses per semester and includes teaching graduate and undergraduate students. Applicants should send a statement of research and teaching interests, curriculum vitae, research papers and publications, information regarding teaching approach, experience and effectiveness, and three letters of reference to: Sociology Faculty Search Committee, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Purdue University, 700 W. State Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2059. Inquiries may be directed to Scott Feld, Chair of the Sociology Faculty Search Committee (sfeld@purdue.edu). Purdue University is an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Employer and welcomes a diverse faculty. It offers excellent salary and benefits and is located in an affordable metropolitan area of 150,000 people conveniently located between Indianapolis and Chicago. Screening of applicants will begin on **September 15, 2007** and continue until the position is filled.

**INTERNATIONAL
 SOCIOLOGICAL
 ASSOCIATION RESEARCH
 COMMITTEE ON THE
 SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH
 (RC15) INTERIM MEETING &
 THE CANADIAN MEDICAL
 SOCIOLOGY ASSOCIATION
 INAUGURAL MEETING**

**Making Connections for Health
 Montréal, Canada, May 13-16, 2008**

The Joint Interim Meeting of the Research
 Committee on the Sociology of Health
 (RC 15) of the International Sociological

Association (ISA) and Inaugural Meeting
 of the Canadian Medical Sociology
 Association will be co-organized by Ivy
 Lynn Bourgeault (McMaster) and Amélie
 Quesnel-Vallée (McGill) and held at
 McGill University in Montréal, Canada,
 from May 13th to 16th 2008. Please note
 that this meeting will officially be bilingual.
 We are currently welcoming session
 proposals and will be opening the general
 call for papers on November 1. Stay tuned
 for more information! In the meantime,
 you may contact Tania Jenkins at
cmsa.rc15.2008@mcgill.ca if you have any
 questions.