A Note from the Chair, Amy Binder

Shortly after I became chair of our section, I was approached by Allison Pugh, the new chair of ASA’s Children and Youth section, to see if we might co-sponsor our reception at the annual meetings. Allison came to me because she knew that our two sections had many overlapping members. Although we ended up not going with a joint reception (I am sure all SoE members will shudder at the memory of our cramped quarters last year in San Francisco), Allison’s query got me wondering: With what other sections does SoE have significant overlapping membership? The answer, I thought, would be something of a proxy for the heterogeneity of our members’ interests.

I asked Justin Lini, ASA’s program coordinator, to generate some statistics, which are shown in the table below. These numbers are based on our Summer 2015 rolls of 825 members.

As it turns out, we’re a pretty heterogeneous group, with no one section claiming the lion’s share of our members. Compare this to such significant overlaps as 44 percent of Theory section members who are also in the Sociology of Culture section, 40 percent of Latina/o Sociology section members in the International Migration section, or 66 percent of History of Sociology members in the Theory section, and you spot relative spread in our members’ interests.

To find out more about what’s happening in the other fields our members belong to, I decided to ask the current chairs of a few of these sections to write short essays in this issue’s newsletter. I asked them to think about what is “hot” in their field, or how they envision education and their field engaging more productively in the future. Two intrepid chairs agreed, while two others pointed me to members of their sections who have a strong profile in education research. Many thanks to Michèle Lamont (Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility section), Nancy Lopez (Race, Gender, and Class section), Amy Wilkins (Children and Youth section), and Elizabeth Armstrong (Organizations, Occupations, and Work section) for sharing their thoughts in this issue’s installment of our “Playing the Field” column.

This issue also contains several other pieces of note. One of them is a short article written by newsletter editor Dan Davis about Sara Goldrick-Rab’s front-and-center role in the Obama administration’s free community college proposal. Sara, tireless as ever, is continuing to push the President’s proposal further—such as for stipends for low-income kids and an extension to all public colleges, not just community colleges. When people argue that sociologists are not sufficiently policy-oriented, Sara certainly is not among those accused.

Mitchell Stevens announces a book he has just edited with Mike Kirst on the “changing ecology of higher education”—a nice link to Sara’s work—while Kelly Nielsen, a graduate student at UC San Diego, writes about his creative practice of using a range of films in the classroom to interrogate educational inequalities.

I hope you’ll find many things to like about this issue. Dan and I will put together one last newsletter before ASAs, in which we will announce regular, section, and roundtable sessions, as well as everything you will need to know about the annual meetings in Chicago. Mark your calendars now: our section day is Monday, August 24, 2015, which will include most sessions, our business meeting, reception, and our off-site dinner with 160 of our nearest and dearest friends.

### Biggest Overlaps with Sociology of Education section

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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inequality, Poverty and Mobility</td>
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<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race, Gender and Class</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Minorities</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<td>Children and Youth</td>
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<td>Organizations, Occupations and Work</td>
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<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Spring in bloom here at UC San Diego
But no need for envy: Next season is Wildfires
Inside this Issue

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>Playing the Field: “Section Overlaps with SoE”</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Goldrick-Rab’s Community College Initiative</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>An Ecology Approach to Higher Ed Scholarship</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Playing the Field

**Question: "What is one of the “hottest” topics, or approaches, currently being studied in the area of your section, and in what ways might research in this area contribute to, challenge, refine, shed light on, or add to a better understanding of education?"**

“Sociologists are becoming more aware of the relative advantage of our multi-method discipline over some of the other social sciences. Instead of assessing our accomplishments using measuring sticks borrowed from other fields, we are increasingly aware of the questions we are uniquely equipped to study.”

**Michèle Lamont, Harvard University**
Chair, Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility Section
182 (22 percent) Overlapping Members with SoE

“The lack of high-quality data on race and class is a major stumbling block hampering our ability to conduct research that can inform the creation and implementation of equity-based policy in education.”

**Nancy López, University of New Mexico**
Chair, Race, Gender, and Class Section
133 (16 percent) Overlapping Members with SoE

“School officials… were so afraid of missing bullying that they manufactured it out of every conflict.”

**Amy Wilkins, University of Colorado-Boulder**
Member, Children and Youth Section
114 (14 percent) Overlapping Members with SoE

“Organizational research on the post-secondary sector is relatively impoverished.”

**Elizabeth Armstrong, University of Michigan**
Member, Organizations, Occupations, and Work Section
106 (13 percent) Overlapping Members with SoE
Pushing the Frontiers of Research in Education and Inequality
Michèle Lamont, Harvard University
Chair, ASA Section on Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility

The 2010 founding document of the Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility section (IPM) argued for a new section that could bring back to the ASA meetings experts on inequality who were neglecting our association in favor of the Population Association of America and the RC 28 of the International Sociological Association. The diagnostic was right on target. The IPM section quickly grew from 499 members in the year of its founding to more than 800 members this fall. When David Brady asked me to run for chair, his explicit goal was to bring more sociologists studying the cultural processes of inequality into the section.

Like all other particularly successful ASA sections, our section is now serving as a broad intellectual umbrella, which embraces pluralism and eschews sectarianism. This is particularly important given the various scales, institutions, and substantive foci needed for a comprehensive understanding of inequality in all its facets.

Today I am asked to identify a hot topic in the field of IMP (inequality for short) that is particularly relevant to the study of education. Undoubtedly, we will all have our own responses to this question. Instead of privileging one topic, I offer a few topics that I believe are, or should be, questions at the frontier of inquiry.

1) While philosopher Nancy Fraser has written about the politics of distribution and recognition, much empirical work needs to be done to understand these as the twin faces of inequality processes. Too often, sociologists of education have focused on distributional outcomes at the expense of stigmatization processes (although there are exceptions, such as Bud Mehan’s work on the stigma of class and Prudence Carter’s research on the stigma of race). I view this as a frontier area.

2) Researchers are improving our understanding of connections between micro interactions, meso levels (institutions, cultural repertoires, networks, and neighborhoods) and macro distributional patterns. Education is a pivotal site for connecting political, economic, and cultural transformations, as seen in the work of John Meyer et al, Elizabeth Armstrong, Laura Hamilton, Ruben Gatzambide-Fernandez, Natasha Warikoo, Maggie Frye, and Mitchell Stevens, to mention a few.

3) Lamont, Beljean, and Clair (2014) have argued that we need to consider how cultural processes—such as identification and rationalization—feed into inequality and complement other processes that have long attracted sustained attention in the field of inequality (e.g., exploitation and domination). An ASA session will pursue a debate initiated in Socio-Economic Review last summer around this paper (with Doug Massey, Leslie McCall, Cecilia Ridgeway, Don Tomaskovich-Davey and myself.) Education will take center stage.

4) We are moving toward a greater comparativism. Historically, much of the American sociology of inequality and education was almost exclusively U.S.-focused. There is now a greater awareness of the limitations of such an approach in a context where the interdependence between societies is growing exponentially, and where spatial and social mobility are so deeply intertwined.

5) Sociologists are becoming more aware of the relative advantage of our multi-method discipline over some of the other social sciences. Instead of assessing our accomplishments using measuring sticks borrowed from other fields, we are increasingly aware of the questions we are uniquely equipped to study—in relation to economics and psychology, in particular. The question of how to do this remains an open question. Education research, which is based on all forms of methodological inquiry (though it has often privileged status attainment models), is in a unique position to lead in this area.

To conclude, my hope for the future of the nexus between the fields of inequality and education is the development of a field where complementary groups of experts will focus on various parts of a shared intellectual project, which will require different types of data and analytical/technical skills. In this way we can move toward collectively connecting the dots theoretically and empirically, and reach a more comprehensive understanding of inequality processes. Easier said than done… but the fact that the two fields are so closely intertwined portends well for the future.

References
An Invitation to a Dialogue about Establishing Statewide Race, Gender, Class Data Policy Consortia

Nancy López, University of New Mexico
Chair, ASA Section on Race, Gender, and Class

The lack of high-quality data on race and class is a major stumbling block hampering our ability to conduct research that can inform the creation and implementation of equity-based policy in education. Challenges faced by both sociologists of education and sociologists of race, gender, and class include:

1) Lack of Systematic Class Data: Zip code and free lunch are often used as proxies for class status because they are most readily available; however, these are inadequate measures of socioeconomic status. What if we had systematic detailed data on parental education attainment as a more reliable class measure?

2) Conflation (Measurement Equivalence) of Race: Although race can be understood as a master social status that is ascribed by assigning meaning to an individual’s physical appearance (such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features), due to the limits of compliance-oriented data collection, it is often assumed—without justification—that race is equivalent to ethnicity (cultural background), national origin (nationality/country of residence/citizenship) and ancestry (distant lineage or geographical origins). What if we had clear instructions on the difference between race and ethnicity and created data infrastructure that did not conflate ethnicity and race?

3) Conflation of Race with Class: Many state funding formulas assume that as proxies for socioeconomic status, free lunch and Pell Grant status can be used to estimate the racial achievement gap. What patterns could we uncover if we specifically mapped race-class gaps in educational outcomes?

4) Homogenization of Latina/os/Hispanics: There is tremendous racial and ethnic heterogeneity of Hispanic groups in the U.S. (Mexican American, Mexican, Chicana/Chicano, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominicans, and so on), but state agencies lack contextualized and detailed data on people of Hispanic origin. Lumping racial and ethnic variation into one analytical category of Hispanic/Latina/o is a major impediment to advancing educational equity for groups that may have very different educational outcomes. What if we had contextualized data that captured the complexity of Latina/o communities?

5) Lack of Transparency for those Marking More than One Race: Individuals may mark more than one race when filling out demographic forms, but information is not readily available to parents and students when they do so. This has consequences for Civil Rights Monitoring. What if all federal, state, and local school districts included clear guidelines for parents and students filling out these forms, which explained how data on those marking one or more race will be bridged for reporting school outcomes, such as graduation rates and/or standardized tests?

In an effort to provide potential solutions to these questions, and as director and co-founder of the Institute for the Study of “Race” & Social Justice, in 2014 I invited the directors of UNM-based research Institutes and Centers to talk about establishing a Race, Gender, Class Data Policy Consortium at The University of New Mexico. A guiding premise of the Consortium is that examining the intersection and co-construction and interaction of race, gender, and class, as well as other axes of inequities, provides a valuable framework for mapping and ameliorating social inequalities in high-priority policy arenas. Consortium partners are now working on developing and piloting a common instrument for the collection of contextualized, detailed Hispanic origin and race, as well as gender identity, detailed parental educational attainment, disability, and sexual orientation on all undergraduate applications to UNM and eventually in K-20 and early education. Most importantly, we are creating communities of practice and collaboration for the advancement of equity-based education data collection, research, and policy relevant to diverse communities.

Who would you invite to a dialogue about improving data? Consider the research and policy transformations that could occur if sociologists of education invited strategic partners in their institutions, as well as state agencies, to join a statewide race, gender, class data policy consortium, which would move from compliance-based data collection and analysis to equity-based research guided by the insights of intersectionality. In doing so, it is important to underscore that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) does not prohibit the collection of contextualized data; the only requirement is that data be aggregated to OMB standards. It is also essential to highlight that each state institution has tremendous discretion in how to collect, analyze and report these data to address the research and policy needs of a given community.

For more information on my work in the New Mexico consortium, see the Smithsonian Showcase: “What’s Your Street Race-Gender?” Feb. 19, 2015. 53-min Video Presentation:
http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/58998514
Kids Act Back: How the Institutional Analysis of Schools Must Be Paired with a Better Understanding of Youth as Actors

Amy Wilkins, University of Colorado-Boulder
Member, ASA Section on Children and Youth

Fifteen year-old Phoebe Prince’s 2010 suicide brought national attention to bullying. Unprecedented were both the criminal charges brought against the six students who bullied Prince so virulently that she chose to take her own life, and the pointed questions about the complicity of South Hadley High School in allowing this bullying behavior to continue unchecked. In community meetings, Prince’s aunt and other community members accused the school administration of ignoring a pervasive bullying culture, prompting Massachusetts to develop an anti-bullying task force. Since 2010, other states have joined Massachusetts in defining bullying primarily as a school-based problem, while various schools have developed programs and protocol for identifying and responding to bullying. At the same time, academic attention to bullying has proliferated, with entire conference panels being devoted to the topic.

As both a parent and sociologist, I have found these developments fascinating. My son—a high-status, white boy, not in any protected category—told me how school officials attempted, indeed, almost demanded, that he privately frame his various school-based conflicts as bullying, a frame that would seriously ramp up consequences for the other student (resulting in suspension, for example). He sensed they were so afraid of missing bullying that they manufactured it out of every conflict. What is more fascinating to me is the way youth appropriated the category too, divesting it of its original content, and instead using it for their own purposes. “She bullied me,” my son would occasionally tell me while still in middle school (bullying seems to have lost its social appeal as a way to explain or settle scores by high school), to explain an upsetting social slight. “No,” I would say, “She made you mad.”

Most conversations about bullying assume that young people need to be protected from bullying, that bullying is something that is being done to children, albeit often by other children. They seek to impose institutional interventions that can somehow sort, categorize, and regulate bullying. But, as the example of my son illustrates, students use both bullying and talk about bullying for their own purposes, to make the institutions conform to their wishes, often in ways that sustain the very power inequities that drive “bullying” as it is narrowly conceived to begin with. It is perhaps possible that processes of reciprocal socialization—in which students have created definitions of bullying for the school authorities, which the school authorities then use in their subsequent disciplinary strategies—are shaping my son’s interactions with school counselors, teachers, associate principals, and so forth.

We miss much about how educational institutions work when we do not take seriously the idea that young people themselves challenge and act back upon the school settings in which they participate. Bullying is but one example of how redirecting our attention away from how the institution creates structures and pathways for young people to how young people themselves act back on institutions by appropriating, resisting, or reshaping them, can yield fresh and important insights into educational processes. Moreover, remembering that young people themselves bring different biographies and capacities to educational settings, we can better attend to the ways these processes can both build and take on new directions as young people enter new educational settings, rather than assuming that educational settings are made up of static social actors.
The Missing Organizational Lens in the Sociology of Higher Education
Elizabeth A. Armstrong, University of Michigan
Member, ASA Section on Organizations, Occupations, and Work

Schools are organizations, creating a natural affinity between organizational analysis and the study of education. What students learn is shaped by the fit between the student and the educational context. Schools do a lot more than educate students—they are professional workplaces, they deliver social services, and they are even the sites of violent crime. And, as John Meyer famously argued, education constitutes categories of personhood. Scholarship focusing narrowly on individual-level predictors of the movement through schooling not only fails to fully account for student outcomes, but also removes from the frame the analysis of the broader role of schools in society.

Fortunately, organizational approaches to primary and secondary education are common. Four of the five papers published in the January 2015 issue of Sociology of Education—all on K-12 schooling—were explicitly organizational in approach. Recent winners of the Pierre Bourdieu Award for the Best Book in Sociology of Education exemplify the analytical power of an organizational approach. For example, last year’s winner, Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses When Schools Become Urban Amenities by Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara, analyzes the efforts of an urban school district to attract professional families to inner-city schools. She found that the strategies used by the schools to attract professional families privileged their agendas at the expense of those of less affluent families. This book treats the distribution of families to schools as a political and organizational process.

In contrast, organizational research on the post-secondary sector is relatively impoverished. Only two papers on post-secondary education were published in the last four issues of Sociology of Education, and only one of these adopted an organizational approach. In a recent review of book-length scholarship for Contemporary Sociology, Johanna Massé and I found that recent books on higher education focused primarily on the movement of undergraduates through post-secondary education, particularly through selective four-year residential colleges. There are exceptions, of course, some of which we highlight in our review essay. For example, Creating the Market University: How Academic Science Became an Economic Engine by Elizabeth Popp Berman, also a winner of the Bourdieu Award, traces the rise of market logic in academic science from the 1950s to the 1980s. Berman engages in an analysis of the drivers of this change, looking at the roles of university leadership, industry, and government. She finds that government played a game-changing role in the commercialization of academic science, with several policy changes that occurred between 1977 and 1982.

I invite scholars to develop a more robust organizational sociology of post-secondary education. The centrality of higher education to society is hard to overstate. There are few desirable places in society one can go without going through a university to get there. The university affects many other aspects of society—family arrangements, economic development, healthcare, the distribution of populations geographically. Post-secondary education in the United States is undergoing dramatic change. Scholarship describing and explaining these changes is needed.

References

A Sociologist Who Knows Why America’s College Promise Matters: Sara Goldrick-Rab’s Work on Free Community Colleges

By Daniel Davis
University of California, San Diego

On the day that President Obama announced his America's College Promise proposal, the New York Times published “Obama's Community College Plan: A Reading List.” Sociologist of education Sara Goldrick-Rab's work was mentioned first. Then, two days later, the Chronicle of Higher Education came out with “The Players Who Influenced Obama's Free College Plan.” Again, she topped the list.

As many of us in the Sociology of Education Section know, Goldrick-Rab is a professor of education policy studies and sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she founded the Wisconsin HOPE Lab as the nation's first laboratory to focus on translational research into college access and affordability. She publishes extensively on the complexities of college affordability, and she advised the White House Council on Domestic Policy as the president's plan was being developed.

In addition, she and colleague Nancy Kendall last year made the definitive case for eliminating two years of college costs in their paper "Redefining College Affordability: Securing America’s Future with a Free Two Year College Option."

"I've been working on this for years," she says, "and my goal for 2015 was to hear the president say the words 'free' and 'college' in the same sentence." On January 9th, he did.

How It Could Help Everyone

Sociologists have been studying socioeconomic disparities in college attainment for more than 50 years. Goldrick-Rab's research on affordability, which includes randomized experiments with financial aid as well as multi-sited ethnographic research and longitudinal panel studies, build on the findings of many scholars including Bill Sewell and Robert Hauser, also of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Despite the clear and persistent evidence that family income constrains educational opportunities, there is a popular perception that college is already affordable for students from low-income households, and that the real challenges facing these students have more to do with academic under-preparation or informational barriers.

But as Goldrick-Rab writes in a recent blog published by Bill Moyers,

"If only this were true. The average out of pocket cost facing community college students from low-income families ranges from $8,000-$11,000 per year. That is after all grant aid is taken into account, and it represents the amount that students must borrow and earn in order to make college possible. The situation facing moderate-income families is not much better—and they are often in a more difficult situation since they have little disposable income and yet cannot access the federal Pell Grant.

Thirty years ago, high schools were focused on helping more students envision college as part of their future. Two decades ago they began really focusing on academic preparation for college. But today, ambitious, academically prepared high school graduates are attending college and leaving without degrees..."
because they cannot afford to be there. Among the academically prepared, more than one in five high school graduates from low-income families forgoes college entirely, and about 30 percent who start at a two-year college never complete any degree. These non-completion rates signal talent loss, and things have gotten worse over the last decade.”

For this reason, Goldrick-Rab applauds the president's proposal as "a giant step in redirecting focus on the importance of access to community college programs." She notes that a study by economist Jeff Denning found reducing the cost of community college by $1,000 a year resulted in increased access, persistence, and success for students of all incomes. She cites this research as a predictor that the president's plan can be expected to increase all three results.

Further, the president's plan is a first-dollar plan, so low-income students who would attend community college for free can then use their existing financial aid, such as Pell grants, to pay for other expenses. Research done through the Wisconsin HOPE Lab has discovered that tuition, while substantial, can account for as little as one-fifth of the total cost of attending community college. In addition, the lab examined the often hidden costs of affordability such as the role food and housing insecurity play in the ability of students to remain in college once they get there.

In response to criticism from some education policy scholars that the president's plan might not be narrowly targeted so as to help low-income students, Goldrick-Rab again cites Denning's study. It revealed that the $1,000 tuition discount helped low-income students in two unique ways: More of these students enrolled directly from high school, and more enrolled who would not have otherwise attended community college at all.

"That is one of the most vital aspects of the president's plan," she says. "It will not only help students who are already attending or who would already attend community college. It will also reach a very important demographic: those students who are not attending because they simply cannot afford to. That's an entire cohort whose talents and contributions would otherwise be lost to us."

What's next

As the America's College Promise proposal continues to thread through a national dialogue on college affordability, Goldrick-Rab's voice will continue to shape the discussion. Expect her to make a case for not only supporting the plan, but taking it further. For example, coupling free tuition with financial aid and a modest stipend, she says, will mean that students can cover the totality of the first two years of their postsecondary education and thus increase their chances of completion. She is now working with U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders to advance legislation that includes those supports, and makes two years of college tuition-free at all public colleges and universities.

"I chose sociology as a discipline because of the ways in which it helps me to think about critical social problems," says Goldrick-Rab. "I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to bring theory and research into policy and practice so that we can improve our children's futures by making college more affordable."
Book Highlight:
Remaking College: The Changing Ecology of Higher Education
editors Michael W. Kirst & Mitchell L. Stevens (Stanford University Press, 2015)

By Mitchell Stevens

In 2010 Stanford Professor Emeritus Mike Kirst and I received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a three-year effort to focus more social-science attention on colleges and universities doing the lion’s share of higher education in the US: community colleges, comprehensive state universities, and for-profit institutions of all kinds. The goal was to consider what the economics, political science, and sociology of higher education would look like if these disciplines put broad-access schools at the center of their theories — rather than the academically selective residential institutions that receive disproportionate academic attention.

During the term of the grant the ground shifted beneath us. Stanford professors spun off Coursera, Udacity, and NovoEd — for-profit instructional providers making grand claims to revolutionize higher education for the digital age. Harvard and MIT launched EdX. 2012 was dubbed “the year of the MOOC” by the New York Times. And while all of this activity failed to turn higher education on its axis, it certainly heightened public attention and political scrutiny from outside the sector and anxiety within it.

Mike and I see great opportunity in this period of turbulence: a general recognition that college has become too expensive; canny entrepreneurialism in educational provision; a growing appreciation for the instructional and research possibilities of online learner data; and the intellectual thrill of rethinking working assumptions about what college is and could be.

One result of the project is Remaking College: The Changing Ecology of Higher Education (Stanford University Press, 2015), comprising essays commissioned by top scholars and leading journalists of higher education. SOE Section members will recognize the names of many of the authors and be pleasantly surprised by the insights of those beyond their field. The table of contents and the full text of the introduction to the volume are available at the Stanford University Press web site [insert web page]. A Q&A session with with the authors is excerpted here [insert web page].

Rarely do social scientists have the chance to study institutional change at such vividly close proximity. Join us! There is plenty of good work to do.

Web sites:
- http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=23137
By Kelly Nielsen, University of California, San Diego

In season four, the celebrated television series *The Wire* addressed many of the challenges of educating children in low-income communities. William Julius Wilson attracted national attention for teaching *The Wire* and has written about the show’s unique ability to put concentrated disadvantage on display (see Chaddha and Wilson 2011). *The Wire* is set in Baltimore but, as Wilson argues, the story that David Simon (a former reporter) and Ed Burns (a former teacher) draw from their own experiences in that Mid-Atlantic port city parallel life throughout the post-industrial Northeast and Midwest. Fictionalized and deeply embedded in a particular place, *The Wire* nevertheless captures something very real about contemporary urban education and life more generally. I teach season four of *The Wire* in my undergraduate course on language, culture, and education by approaching *The Wire* as an account of schooling rather than dramatized sociology. I ask my students to view the show as discourse belonging to a broader history of representation as opposed to a singular example of verisimilitude.

One lesson I have developed illustrates this discursive dimension particularly well. First, I divide the class into four groups. Then I give each group a short section from the beginning of one of four films. The films are *To Sir, With Love* (1967) starring Sydney Poitier, which is set in a white working-class neighborhood in London at the height of the counter-culture era; *Conrack* (1974) starring Jon Voight and set in a small black community on an island off the coast of South Carolina; *Stand and Deliver* (1987) starring Edward James Olmos and set in a predominantly Latino community in Los Angeles; and *The Wire* (2007) set in a predominantly black neighborhood in Baltimore. I chose these films because of their geographic and demographic diversity, but throughout the course we consider others including *Up the Down Staircase* (1967), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), and *Freedom Writers* (2007), all of which place novice female teachers in a class of diverse, detached, and defiant inner-city high school students.

After watching the clips, the groups of students take turns describing to the rest of the class what they observed. One-by-one, they describe a scene that has been reproduced with little change over the 40 years from 1967 to 2007. An outsider arrives to his or her first day as a teacher in a new school; the other teachers and administrators warn the newcomer about the students, whom they view as out of control and disinterested in learning; and finally, the teacher meets the students for the first time and is faced with the challenge of winning the students over, making them not only interested in learning but also making them believe they are capable. When we watch the film clips together as a class, the students see that they are nearly identical pieces of filmmaking despite their distance in time, space, and demographics. If we had time to watch each film to its end, they’d also see that the movies follow the same narrative arc: The novice teacher wins the trust of the students and proves that what George W. Bush called “the soft bigotry of low-expectations” is ultimately to blame. Only *The Wire*—with its complex plotlines spanning multiple seasons and its rejection of elegant answers—challenges this easy resolution.

This narrative is commonly referred to as a white savior narrative. Yet as the films illustrate, people of color can be placed in the white savior role. These films help us explore Patricia Hill Collins’ (2009) argument in *Another Kind of Public Education* that whiteness and blackness attach to bodies of all colors. Moreover, since
sociology of education section newsletter  

Spring 2015

A scene from The Wire. New to teaching, Mr. Prez struggles to get his bearings in an under resourced school fixated on standardized test outcomes.

socioeconomic status—as opposed to race, ethnicity, gender, or place—functions as the unifying context of these films beyond that of the school itself, the students and I can examine this cinematic trope within a longstanding discourse about the poor. For example, using Fred Block and Margaret Somers’ (2014) research showing how poor people and welfare programs were characterized in nearly identical terms in 1830s England and 1990s America we can think about how elites similarly frame poor students and schools that serve the poor.

Many of my students plan to become teachers. Just as often, they plan to apply to Teach for America, a program that places inexperienced college graduates with little preparation for teaching in low-income neighborhood schools, as they plan to pursue teaching credentials in a university. At the end of one lesson, a student remarked that it is no wonder Teach for America is so popular once we recognize it as a case of life imitating art. Wilson is right that schools shape our life circumstances. Teaching students that we shape schools through how we portray them is also an important lesson.

References


Congratulations to Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton for winning the ASA Distinguished Publication award for their book, Paying for the Party. Drawing on findings from a five-year interview study, they examine how one university bolsters the party scene on campus, and how the party pathway disproportionately affects working class students and mitigates the returns on education.
The Power of the Past: Understanding Cross-Class Marriages
Jessi Streib, Duke University (Oxford University Press, 2015)

In an era in which class divisions are becoming starker than ever, some individuals are choosing to marry across class lines. The Power of the Past traces the lives of a subset of these individuals - highly-educated adults who married a partner raised in a class different from their own. Drawing upon detailed interviews with spouses who revealed the inner workings of their marriages, Jessi Streib shows that crossing class lines is not easy, and that even though these couples shared bank accounts, mortgages, children, and friends, each spouse was still shaped by the class of their past, and consequently, so was their marriage.

Counterfactuals and Causal Inference, 2nd Edition
Stephen L. Morgan, Johns Hopkins University and Christopher Winship, Harvard University; 2014, (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

In this second edition of Counterfactuals and Causal Inference, completely revised and expanded, the essential features of the counterfactual approach to observational data analysis are presented with examples from the social, demographic, and health sciences.
Member News

Hiring/Promotions

Dr. Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has been awarded the designation of University Professor. She has an appointment in sociology and public policy.

Dr. Dara Shifrer accepted a position as Assistant Professor at Portland State University's Department of Sociology, beginning Fall 2015. She was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Houston Education Research Consortium, Rice University and completed her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin in 2012.

Article Publications

Dr. David L. Levinson, Norwalk Community College, was guest co-editor of The American Sociologist, Volume 44, Number 4 thematic issue: Sociology in Community Colleges (December 2013). He also contributed an article “Community Colleges and the ‘Promise’ of Public Sociology: A College President’s Perspective.”

Jonathan Jan Benjamin Mijs’ article, “The Unfulfillable Promise of Meritocracy: Three Lessons and their Implications for Justice in Education” has been accepted for publication in a forthcoming volume of Social Justice Research. Jonathan is a doctoral student in sociology at Harvard University.

Grants

Sarah Ovink has been awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation through its Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program. This five-year grant is expected to total $453,359. The CAREER Program is committed to promoting the role of teacher-scholars, and supports early pre-tenure faculty whose projects integrate research and teaching. The project, entitled "CAREER: Broadening Participation in STEM: Intersectional and Institutional Influences on Underrepresented Minorities' College and Career Pathways in Longitudinal Perspective," uses mixed methods to examine undergraduate student trajectories in STEM and non-STEM majors at Virginia Tech.

Don’t forget to send your member announcements for the Summer issue!
Email them to Dan at: dbdavis@ucsd.edu

Upcoming in the Summer Issue

- List of ASA sessions and presenters
- This year’s section award winner announcements
- Schedule of events: SoE business meeting, reception, and off-site section dinner
- Update on Sociology of Education from editor Rob Warren