It is a great privilege to chair this healthiest of ASA Sections. We are already one of the largest ASA Sections but there is still more room at the inn. In my opinion, every sociologist should be a medical sociologist because whatever you are interested in – be it organizations, professions, identities, race, gender, inequality, systems, or markets – becomes much more interesting when you add a health dimension. Unlike many of the other social processes, health allows for measurable outcomes rather than vague assessments. Also, health and illness reverberate at a deep existential level. Symptoms and diagnoses shake people up and tend to put life back in perspective.

Our section is celebrating 50 years of Medical Sociology with a special issue forthcoming in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* highlighting the policy implications of our research. So, is there life after 50? The special issue, the Handbooks of Medical Sociology, and the many textbooks delineate a core intellectual body of Medical Sociology with robust research traditions. The challenge, as I see it, is to build upon this tradition to further invigorate and take advantage of changing demographic, technological, and policy changes in the health field. This means engaging both with the broader sociological discipline and translating sociological issues to diverse audiences of patients and health care providers who are looking to social scientists for insight and understanding.

While the peachiness of this summer’s annual ASA meeting in Atlanta is not even a distant memory, we are already planning next year’s meeting in Chicago. Here is a preview of the planned sessions. Following Peggy Thoit’s stimulating Reeder Award address, we will have an open session on social mechanisms of health. Donald Light volunteered to organize an open session on immigration, health, and health care. This year’s open session co-organized with the Marxist sociology section is on the broad theme of commodification, consumerism, and other controversies. Then, we plan to reach out to the broader sociology community with an open session called, rather immodestly, “Exciting new Medical Sociology that every sociologist should know.” Session organizer Karen Lutfey provided the following description:

Medical Sociology has a long history of building on sociological classics and examining topics that are of broad interest to other sub-fields and generalists alike, including life chances, stratification, (Continued on page 2)
1. Session Title: Medical Sociology and the Obama Health Care Plan Invited Session Session Organizer: Stefan Timmermans, Stefan@soc.ucla.edu

2. Session Title: Health, Health Care, and Migration Open Session Session Organizer: Donald Light, dlight@princeton.edu

3. Session Title: From Patient-Physician Interaction to Health Policy: Controversies, Commodification, and Consumerism in Health Care Open Session Session Organizer: Hyeyoung Oh, hyeyoungoh@ucla.edu (joint session with Section on Marxist Sociology)

4. Session Title: Mechanisms of Health: Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives Open Session Session Organizer: Sara Shostak, sshostak@brandeis.edu

5. Session Title: Exciting New Medical Sociology That Every Sociologist Should Know Open Session Session Organizer: Karen Lutfey, klutfey@neriscience.com (see description in Notes from the New Chair, pages 1-2)

6. Session Title: Medical Sociology Refereed Roundtables Open Session Session Organizer: Kerry Dobransky, dobrankm@jdu.edu

organizational structures, social psychological processes, variations in outcomes over the life course, and cross-national differences in social life. However, opportunities for cross-pollination are sometimes lost as we all tend to focus on new research in our specific areas, whether that be in the classroom, at conferences, or through publications. In this session, the panel will focus on presenting exciting new research in Medical Sociology that every sociologist should know. Papers and discussion will focus on research situated in Medical Sociology, but with implications for the field writ large.

The invited chair’s session aims to look into the future, anticipating a Medical Sociology research agenda following the Obama health care plan. Last but not least, we’ll have our roundtables chaired by distinguished members of our section. I encourage you to submit papers to these sessions.

Please make a special note that Medical Sociology Section Day will be on the third day of the meetings, Monday, August 15th, but our reception will be the evening before (Sunday, August 14th). Be sure to put these dates on your calendars. We will meet to celebrate our award recipients, debate the issues, and rekindle old friendships.

I want to thank Bill Avison for his stellar work as Chair. Bill put together an outstanding program and maintained constant contact with Section members throughout the year. Thanks also to outgoing members of Council who gave so freely of their time. They include: former Chair, Janet Hankin; Council Member-at-Large, Sarah Burgard; Student Council Member-at-Large, Dawne Mouzon; Chair of the Membership Committee, Heather Turner; Chair of the Health Policy Committee, Verna Keith; Nominations Committee Chair, Jeremy Freese; Nominations Committee Members, Mary Claire Lennon and Nancy Kutner; and Student Member of the Nominations Committee, Abigail Sewell. The successes in our section are due to the efforts of these volunteers.

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago in 2011. In the meantime, keep in touch. I’ll be contacting you through the Medical Sociology listserv. Feel free to contact me at Stefan@soc.ucla.edu.
Dobransky Receives 2010 Simmons Award

Kerry Dobransky received the 2010 Roberta G. Simmons Outstanding Dissertation in Medical Sociology Award. He won the award for an article entitled “The Good, the Bad, and the Severely Mentally Ill: Official and Informal Labels as Organizational Resources in Community Mental Health Services,” which was based on his dissertation “Help Me Help You: The Logic and Practice of Empowerment in Community Mental Health Services.” He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Northwestern University in 2009 and Dr. Carol A. Heimer was his dissertation chair. He is currently Assistant Professor of Sociology at James Madison University where he teaches Medical Sociology, Sociology of Mental Health/Illness, Sociology of Organizations, and Microsystems. Dr. Dobransky’s research examines the varying intersections among several subfields: medical sociology, sociology of organizations, cultural sociology, sociology of mental health, health/social policy, and sociology of information and communication technologies. The award includes a $750 travel grant to attend ASA, attend the Reeder dinner as a guest of the Medical Sociology Section, and an award certificate. This year Committee members were Dawn M. Upchurch (Chair), William Avision, Sarah Burgard, and last year’s winner, Marissa King.  

~Dawn M. Upchurch

Joyce Receives 2010 Freidson Award

The 2010 Freidson Award was for the author of a scholarly book that has had a major impact in the field of Medical Sociology. Books published in 2008 or 2009 were considered for this year’s Award. The Freidson Award this year went to Kelly A. Joyce, Associate Professor of Sociology at the College of William and Mary, serving at present as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation, for her book, Magnetic Appeal: MRI and the Myth of Transparency, published by Cornell University Press. Magnetic Appeal examines the use of MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) technology from multiple angles, including perceptions of the technology in popular culture, how doctors make use of the images in clinical practice, and the political economy of expensive technology use. Kelly Joyce uses a mixed methods approach in her book, combining cultural analysis, ethnography, in-depth interviewing, as well as data on insurance reimbursement practices and research funding. She argues that the MRI has been socially constructed as a sacred and necessary technology because it makes the inside of the body transparent through mechanical means, thus objectively revealing the “truth” about patients’ health or illness. Adjectives that committee members and other commentators have used to describe the book include: nuanced, fascinating, compelling, insightful, admirable, and impressive in its depth and scope. The Freidson Award Committee consisted of Stefan Timmermans, Karen Lutfey, Brea Perry, and Peggy Thoits (Chair). 

~Peggy Thoits
Reczek 2010 Louise Johnson Scholar

This year’s Louise Johnson Scholar is Corinne Reczek at the University of Texas, Austin, for her paper: “Gender and Health Work in Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Long-Term Couples.” Reczek’s dissertation work builds on a larger project headed by Dr. Debra Umberson at UT Austin that examines the link between social ties and health behaviors, but Corinne went beyond the original project’s goals to recruit gay and lesbian subjects into the subject pool. Using unique qualitative data – 122 interviews with 31 straight married spouses and 30 gay and lesbian cohabiting couples – Reczek examines how couples negotiate “health work”, the work done to promote health and well-being among family members. Her key findings show that gay, lesbian, and straight couples alike describe health work done primarily by one partner. However, in straight couples, this health work is gender bifurcated, wherein women do the bulk of health work to unhealthy men, whereas no gender theme is found in gay and lesbian couples. Her research has implications for medical sociologists and those interested in population health, but it also bridges scholarly divides between such scholars and those interested in gender and family sociology. The committee – consisting of myself, Dawn Upchurch, and last year’s winner, Danielle Fettes – was uniformly impressed with Corinne’s work. Reczek is currently completing her graduate training under the direction of Dr. Umberson.

~ Sarah Burgard

BOOK RAFFLE RAISES MONEY FOR REEDER AND SIMMONS AWARDS

The Section book raffle raised $500 for the Leo G. Reeder and Roberta G. Simmons Awards this year. Sixteen individuals and publishers donated thirty-seven books which were raffled off at the Medical Sociology Section Business Meeting, August 15, 2010, at the ASA meetings in Atlanta. The success of the raffle was made possible only through the generous donations of the following publishers and individuals: Harvard University Press, Beacon Press, University of Toronto Press Incorporated, University of Chicago Press, Temple University Press, Springer, National Academies Press, Yale University Press, Ashgate Publishing, Left Coast Press, Chris Bobel, Dan Chambliss, Susan Bell, and Allen Horowitz. A special thank you to Robin Moremen, Marian Katz, Robin Brown, and Dmitry Khodyakov for their help selling raffle tickets and transporting books, and to our donors 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!

~ Susan Stockdale
MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY SECTION  
2010 ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to our incoming Section Officers and Council members!

Chair-Elect: Eric R. Wright, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Secretary-Treasurer-Elect: Kristen Springer, Rutgers University
Nominations Committee Chair-Elect: Renee R. Anspach, University of Michigan
Nominations Committee Members: Molly Martin, Pennsylvania State University; Brea Louise Perry, University of Kentucky
Nominations Committee, Student Member: Elaine Marie Hernandez, University of Minnesota
Council Member-at-Large: Sara Shostak, Brandeis University
Student Council Member-at-Large: Christy Eving, Indiana University
Membership Committee Chair: Rachel Tolbert Kimbro, Rice University
Health Policy & Research Committee Chair: Sydney Halpern, University of Illinois-Chicago

2011 ELIOT FREIDSON OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION AWARD:  
Seeking Article Nominations

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 2011 award will be given to a journal article published in either 2009 or 2010. The article may deal with any topic in medical sociology, broadly defined. Co-authored articles are appropriate to nominate. Self-nominations are permissible and encouraged. When making a nomination, please indicate (however briefly) the reason for the nomination. You do not need to send a copy of the article. Nomination letters may be sent to: Professor Peggy A. Thoits, Department of Sociology, 1020 E. Kirkwood Ave., 744 Ballantine Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Alternatively, nomination emails may be sent to pthoits@indiana.edu with the subject line: 2011 Freidson Award Nomination. Nominations are due by February 15, 2011.

SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR 2011 SIMMONS AWARD

Nominations are being accepted for the 2011 Roberta G. Simmons Outstanding Dissertation in Medical Sociology Award. The award is given each year by the American Sociological Association’s Medical Sociology section. Self-nominations are acceptable. Eligible candidates must have defended their doctoral dissertations within two academic years prior to the annual meeting at which the award is made. To be considered for the 2011 award, the candidate should submit an article-length paper (sole-authored), not to exceed 35 double-spaced pages (11- or 12-point font), inclusive of references. This paper may have been previously published, or may be in press or under review. A letter of recommendation from a faculty mentor familiar with the candidate’s work is also required. Electronic submission of the paper (MS Word or PDF) is required; please include the words “Simmons Award” in the subject heading. The letter of recommendation should be sent directly by the recommender as an email attachment (MS Word or PDF). The awardee will receive a $750 travel grant to attend the ASA meetings, attend the Reeder dinner as a guest of the Medical Sociology section, and an award certificate. Deadline for receipt of all submission materials is March 1, 2011. Please send all materials to: Sara Shostak, Department of Sociology, MS 071, Brandeis University. Waltham, MA 02454; sshostak@brandeis.edu.

Visit the ASA Medical Sociology Website at http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/asamedsoc/
Career & Employment

by Karen Lutfey

Fall is here again, and for many that means job market season is upon us! This issue’s column builds on previous discussions of how to conduct a non-academic job search, and my focus here is on researching and applying for non-academic jobs. As one person emailed me:

“…[O]ne of the most important things that I am struggling with… centers on how you sell your [sociology] degree when you may have little or no ‘real experience’ in an actual job. Relatedly, how do you sell a sociology degree when they want someone with a M.A. in public health or high degree in economics, statistics, etc? My main point is that we are not trained to sell ourselves outside of academia.”

This comment resonates with comments I hear all year through email and at conferences. A variant is, “You found a job outside a university that you like, but you do health research and so that makes it easy. My own interests are not as focused on health and so it's probably impossible for me.” Similar concerns arise around methodological expertise (“But I don’t do statistics”) or level of analysis (“I do micro”), or even lack of policy knowledge (“My background is entirely abstract”).

The questions underlying these conversations are: How do I figure out which job features might be a good fit for me? And How do I think about my skills and interests in this context? Below, I outline some observations based on a combination of my own experience (as a job-seeker but also from the hiring side) and those of former students and colleagues over the course of the last ten years.

First, do not underestimate the power of having an optimistic approach. I used an exclamation point in the first sentence above partly to be tongue-in-cheek, but also to denote enthusiasm, possibility, open-mindedness, and optimism – all of which are prerequisites for conducting a job search, no matter the economic environment or what rumors you may hear at the ASA meetings. People who go looking for jobs with pessimistic outlooks tend to reek negativity, which is devastating for a job search. If you are looking for a job, this is the time to be in touch with people who are going to help you have the right attitude (besides, faking it until you make it is a time-honored tradition; people are doing it all around you).

Second, and deriving from the above point, you need to be creative and resourceful. When people ask me for job advice and then immediately respond with “But…”, it generally does not matter how the sentence ends, because ultimately those sentences are structured to look for (or expect) a negative or limiting outcome. No one can do more for you on this front than you can do for yourself. If you are not looking for ways to make a case for your own employment, no one else will either. All the people I know who have found non-academic work they enjoy learned how to cultivate possibility and forestall dead ends (not invite them with “but.”).

Third, try this exercise. Think about your interests – not only how they all come together in your dissertation, or how they map onto ASA-defined areas that are listed in academic job ads – but as separate entities. This will help you identify organizations and jobs that overlap with your interests. Some examples that I have observed:

- A colleague who was an excellent teacher translated those skills into working in client education (she travels all over the country to “teach” clients how to interpret social science results that her marketing company generates as a survey vendor – not in a substantive area that was of interest while in academia). Her company was struggling with the dissemination of results until they found each other, and now they have an entire department dedicated to client education (she is Director).
- A former student whose research background in ethnographic research and sexual behavior in a U.S. context took a position with a major international nonprofit to help figure out how to study the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa (she did not work in the international, health, policy, or survey design aspects required of her current position before she applied).
- Another colleague is in a project director position with a state health agency where his

(Continued on page 7)
background in social science methodology (study design, not statistics) is needed for executing large projects, liaising across agencies, managing large datasets, and conceptualizing valid variables for the implementation of large-scale state health policies (this person worked in political sociology studying welfare states).

In each of these cases, people ended up in health-related positions even though they did not start off with clearly defined substantive interests in those areas. For each of them, I believe health remains peripheral to the aspects of their jobs that they most enjoy – the teaching, the understanding of sexual behavior, and the study design. These cases are useful examples, but there are many others.

Thinking back to the above email, these success stories point to ways that people manage to not try to “sell” themselves as something they are not. Rather, they developed understanding of their strengths based on their sociology background, and figured out how those applied to settings other than academia. With this approach, they were each on extremely solid ground because they were not exaggerating or distorting their knowledge or skills – in ways, they were in optimal positions because they were able to show their employers that they could fills gaps that had not even been fully articulated yet. If you can think about your own work in this way, you will have made a significant step toward finding appropriate kinds of positions and employers, without compromising your own education and motivations.

ATTENTION JOB-SEEKERS: Do you have questions for the Career & Employment column? Have you asked me about jobs at ASA but are feeling shy about sending me your questions? Now is your chance!

ATTENTION JOB-HOLDERS: Do you have a non-academic job and want to share advice with job-seekers? People are very interested in this information, but it’s difficult for students to meet you! What are 3 things you wish you knew when you started out?

Are you ready to Talk Turkey about jobs? Send your confidential questions/comments to klutfey@neriscience.com (subject line: TALK TURKEY).

Let me compile this information so this column can address your real concerns!

Call for Medical Sociology Course Materials on TRAILS
Faculty who are teaching undergraduate or graduate courses related to Medical Sociology, or any specific topic within Medical Sociology, are encouraged to consider submitting a course syllabus, course assignment, class activity, or other course-related materials to ASA’s new online teaching resource, TRAILS (Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology). Although it has only recently gone live, TRAILS already includes more than 2,700 peer-reviewed resources in more than 70 subject areas—more than 100 in Medical Sociology. To learn more about TRAILS, log on to the ASA Website (www.asanet.org) and click on the TRAILS link in the right-hand menu. Then, click on “About TRAILS” to learn more about the resource, “Subscribe” to learn how to enter a subscription, and “Resource Submission Instructions” to learn how to submit a teaching resource. It is anticipated that TRAILS will be a significant step forward in the sharing of teaching strategies and resources. —by Greg Weiss, Roanoke College, TRAILS Area Editor for Medical Sociology.

Emerald Literati Network Paper Award
Each year Emerald Group Publishing invite their editors to select an Outstanding Paper and up to three Highly Commended award winners from the papers published in their journals during the previous year. Karen Staniland, who is a member of the ASA Medical Sociology Section, has been chosen as an Outstanding Paper Award Winner at Emerald’s Literati Network Awards for Excellence 2010 for her paper entitled “A Sociological Ethnographic Study of Clinical Governance Implementation in One NHS Hospital Trust” which was published in Clinical Governance: An International Journal. As these awards are chosen following consultation amongst the journal’s editorial team, who are eminent academics or managers, the winning authors know that their paper was one of the most impressive pieces of work the team have seen throughout last year.

Visit the ASA Medical Sociology Website at http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/asamedsoc/
EXTRA ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, OCTOBER 2010
KEY FINDINGS FROM 50 YEARS OF MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY
Guest Editors: Janet R. Hankin and Eric R. Wright
Editor, JHSB: Eliza K. Pavalko

This extra issue was made possible by a generous grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to the American Sociological Association. The extra issue of JHSB will be mailed on October 11, 2010. It will be available on the Sage website for everyone (http://hsb.sagepub.com/content/51/1_suppl for the extra issue). We will post the link on the Medical Sociology Section listserv as soon as it is available. An executive summary will be part of the issue and targets policy makers, funders, and legislators. The ASA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will coordinate the media blitz announcing the publication. The Fall issue of Contexts will include a condensed version of the Executive Summary.

We would like to acknowledge Phil Brown, Chloe Bird, and Michael Hughes who helped us conceptualize the proposal for the Extra Issue. David Mechanic and Bruce Link helped to secure the funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Pamela Russo of RWJF was instrumental in working with us to fund the Extra Issue. We are most grateful to RWJF for their financial support for this volume.

We would like to thank the Advisory Board for the Extra Issue: Sarah Burgard, Michael Hughes, Pamela Braboy Jackson, Sherman James, Eliza Pavalko, Bernice Pescosolido, Jill Quadagno, Stephanie Robert, Scott Schieman, and Sidney Stahl. The Advisory Board helped determine the topics for the manuscripts, suggested authors, and served as reviewers. We appreciate the efforts of all the reviewers for the manuscripts who were required to read manuscripts under tight time constraints. The authors deserve recognition for producing thoughtful and scintillating papers. They were required to meet our expectations that their papers summarize key findings and policy implications. We were strict with our deadlines, and the authors met the challenge. Katherine Rosich wrote the executive summary for the Extra Issue and we want to thank her for her excellent work. Special thanks to Sara Amberg, Graduate Research Assistant to Janet Hankin, for her assistance with the Extra Issue manuscripts.

Sally Hillsman and Karen Edwards prepared the foundation proposal in record time and have been most supportive at every stage of our endeavor. Finally, we wish to acknowledge our debt to Eliza Pavalko, Editor of JHSB, who assigned the manuscript reviewers and handled all the details for the Extra Issue. Eliza gave us sage advice in each step of the process and made our job an easy one. We would also like to thank Eliza’s able staff, managing editors Joseph D. Wolfe and Indermohan Virk, and copy editor, Andrew J. Cognard-Black.

Table of Contents
Executive Summary
Katherine J. Rosich & Janet R. Hankin
Acknowledgments
Janet R. Hankin & Eric R. Wright
Reflections on Fifty Years of Medical Sociology
Janet R. Hankin & Eric R. Wright
Understanding Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions
David R. Williams & Michelle Sterndahl
Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications
Jo C. Phelan, Bruce G. Link, & Parisa Tehranifar
Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications
Peggy A. Thoits
Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy
Debra Umberson & Jennifer Karas Montez

The Social Construction of Illness: Key Insights and Policy Implications
Peter Conrad & Kristen K. Barker
Examining Critical Health Policy Issues Within and Beyond the Clinical Encounter: Patient-Provider Relationships and Help-Seeking Behaviors
Carol A. Boyer & Karen E. Lutfey
The Continued Social Transformation of the Medical Profession
Stefan Timmermans & Hyeyoung Oh
Medical Sociology and Health Services Research: Past Accomplishments and Future Policy
Eric R. Wright & Brea L. Perry
Medical Sociology and Technology: Critical Engagements
Monica J. Casper & Daniel R. Morrison
Bioethics, Raw and Cooked: Extraordinary Conflict and Everyday Practice
Charles L. Bosk
Sociology of Health Care Reform: Building on Research and Analysis to Improve Health
David Mechanic & Donna D. McAlpine
Presenters at the Special Session at the ASA meetings highlighting the Extra Issue of *JHSB* (authors for two of the papers [Thoits and Williams] were not present)

Eric Wright (left) and Janet Hankin (bottom right), Guest Coeditors of *JHSB* extra issue, and Eliza Pavalko (top right), outgoing editor *JHSB*
This teaching exercise was originally developed by Deborah Umberson, University of Texas, and modified by Teresa L. Scheid, UNC-Charlotte. A good resource for lectures is Otto Wahl’s *Media Madness*. You can replace mental illness with another medical sociology topic (for example Dr. Umberson developed her exercise to explore images of death and dying in the media; you could use substance use/abuse, medicalization, doctor-patient interaction, or the patient role).

**GOALS:**

We are exposed to many media images of mental illness. These media portrayals reflect cultural attitudes toward mental health and illness. This assignment is designed to increase awareness of the attitudes and behaviors that the media fosters toward mental illness. The main objective is to compile a collection of images of mental illness as they are presented in media forms and to analyze these images using information you learn from the course.

**PROCEDURES:**

Identify and collect portrayals of mental illness in the media. Sources may include the print media of magazines, newspapers, books – both fiction and nonfiction, children’s books, and comics, and the visual media of television, video, and movies.

Your analysis will be presented in two parts: A PowerPoint presentation and a 2-3 page essay. The PowerPoint slides will present your media images (they can be downloaded or scanned images or text excerpts). You may collect information on a specific media type (newspapers, television, movies, ads, literature), a particular type of mental illness (e.g., depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar, ADHD, anorexia-bulimia), a particular population (e.g., women, children, the elderly, ethnic group) or particular treatment (e.g., medication, therapy, ETC, surgery). You should include 10-12 slides (some topics will be more limiting than others and I will take this into account). Feel free to be creative but **make sure that you include a number of the important issues covered in the lectures and readings.**

**SUMMARY:**

1. Specific examples from the media presented in a slideshow (with descriptive titles where possible).
2. An essay 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced).

---

**Urgent Appeal from Section-in-Formation: Disability in Society**

This is an urgent appeal to all social scientists interested in disability scholarship to join the newly formed Section-in-Formation of the American Sociological Association: Disability in Society. Scholars in this field are exploring many issues that are well known to medical sociologists such as experiences of health/illness/disability and the stigma, discrimination, or prejudice which often accompanies them. However, what is new about critical perspectives on disability is that they specifically engage with notions of a disabling society, the development of a social movement around disability rights, the rise of identity politics associated with disability, and the development of disability-specific legislation, databases and policies… as well as drawing on a range of theoretical insights that explore and complicate the study of embodiment, identity, and representation. This new Section-in-Formation is a great place to network, engage with other scholars, discuss recent events, and pursue avenues for grants, teaching, research, and service. The existence of the Disability and Society Section is dependent upon our ability to attract at least **300 paying members by September 2010**, or we have lost the opportunity to become a section of ASA. If you would like to advance the continuation of disability scholarship in sociology, please join us today. The Disability Section is also pleased to be offering FREE membership to graduate students who are current members of ASA who would like to join the section. Please contact Valerie Leiter (valerie.leiter@simmons.edu) to make those arrangements. Please feel free to contact Liat Ben-Moshe (ibenmosh@maxwell.syr.edu) with any inquiries about the Section and becoming a member.
While navigating the annual meetings can be daunting, it is comforting to belong to a Section that is so intellectually engaging and welcoming. In addition to hosting one of the best receptions at the ASA meetings, the Medical Sociology Section is a great place to network and learn from others. As one student member told us after the conference, “I like how easy it is for students to connect with faculty in their area. I think Section members as a whole are very open to talking to and collaborating with students.” Indeed, this year we met and connected with a number of faculty and graduate students doing exciting work in Medical Sociology.

Particularly impressed by the involvement of graduate students in the Section, we left the meetings curious about how many graduate students participated in this year’s Section-Sponsored Sessions. We found that of the approximately 206 people involved in the Medical Sociology Sessions and Roundtables, about 42 (or 20%) were current graduate students. Even at the “50 Years of Medical Sociology” session, which was intended to review the state of the field, three of the ten papers were co-authored with graduate students. Overall, the annual meeting in Atlanta was a productive one for graduate students.

We would like to use this column as a forum for ongoing dialogue with graduate student members. We begin this by sharing quotes we recently gathered from other doctoral students about their experiences as members of the Section. Dan Morrison nicely summed up the benefits by saying: “With about 1,000 members, the Medical Sociology Section is both intellectually vibrant and diverse in terms of theoretical and methodological orientations. I think this is a great strength of the Section, and it makes Section meetings and receptions at the ASAs more interesting. Senior members of the Section seem especially warm and receptive to newcomers, particularly at the ASA Section reception. I wish all Section receptions were like this, where junior and senior scholars converse easily.”

Elaine Hernandez shared this insight with us: “The first ASA conference for any graduate student induces some anxiety – we know very few people, yet we know that we should conquer the dreaded task of networking. As a student member of the Medical Sociology Section, I’ve been very grateful that the faculty members of the Section welcome graduate students with open arms. What other Section rewards graduate students with free books for showing up at the business meeting?”

Other graduate students we contacted for this column expressed similar enthusiasm about the Section website, newsletter, and ASA reception. Some reported that they would like to see more teaching resources, a faculty-student mentorship program, and additional Medical Sociology student social events.

To continue this conversation, we have opened a Medical Sociology graduate student email account: MedSocStudentViews@gmail.com. This account is intended to be a place for graduate student members to send us their thoughts and concerns. Comments would only be used with the permission of the authors. (If you are a faculty member, please share this column and email address with your graduate students!)

For future columns, we are interested in hearing from you about the following topics: What are some resources you have found useful when studying for comprehensive exams, writing your dissertation, and staying up with the literature? What are some ways you have fostered and maintained your mentor-mentee relationships? How are you preparing for particular types of jobs after your degree? And finally, what are some ways you have successfully used your time during the summer months? Please don’t feel bound by these initial questions – feel free to send us any thoughts or questions and we will use them as we plan future columns.

To quote this year’s Nominations Committee Student Member, Elaine Hernandez: “Surviving graduate school isn’t easy, and turning to people who have successfully navigated graduate school, the job market, and academic or research positions helps immensely. In the midst of exams, papers, and dissertation data collection, we need a light at the end of the tunnel.” In that spirit, please send us your feedback!
Waggoner and Munoz New Student Newsletter Editors

Miranda R. Waggoner and Vanessa Lopes Munoz are the new student editors of the Medical Sociology Newsletter.

Miranda is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology and Social Policy at Brandeis University. She received her B.A. in Sociology and Government at the University of Texas at Austin and her M.A. in Social Policy at Brandeis University. A member of the Medical Sociology Section since 2006, Miranda has presented her work at several ASA sessions. Miranda’s NSF-funded dissertation, “The Emergence of Preconception Care: 1980-2010,” examines the social trajectory and implications of preconception care, a novel maternal and child health strategy that locates risk factors for adverse birth outcomes prior to pregnancy.

Vanessa is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department at Brandeis University. She completed her Master’s in Sociology at the University of Maryland, where she conducted an ethnographic study of how nurses manage competing time demands at work. Her research interests are in Medical Sociology and Sociology of the Family. She is particularly interested in how families manage children’s health conditions and the management of chronic pain. We look forward to their contributions in the Student News & Views column (see page 11 in this issue). Congratulations Miranda and Vanessa!