A Note from the Chair, Doug Downey

A Note from the Chair:

It’s been cold this winter and that’s a good excuse for thinking about the pleasant climate in San Francisco this summer, when we meet for the ASA meetings. I want to thank Kimberly Goyette and Amy Langenkamp for their work organizing our paper sessions. From about 200 papers they have developed some provocative sessions. Our section day (Sunday, August 17th) should be exciting.

I’m also enthusiastic about our second “Room for Debate: Sociology of Education” series. In this newsletter, six scholars (Karl Alexander, Joe Merry, George Farkas, Doug Ready, Maryellen Schaub, and Bruce Fuller) comment on President Obama’s proposal to make high-quality preschool available to all children. Anyone interested in schools, inequality, and policy (who isn’t?) will want to read their discussion.

And if you need more intellectual stimulation I highly recommend the new blog—The Hidden Curriculum (http://soehiddencurriculum.wordpress.com/). So far there have been posts about how to look good on the market (Rory McVeigh), advice on competing for grants (Chandra Muller), publicizing your research (Josipa Roksa), and when to appeal an editor’s decision (David Bills). I wish we had this when I was in graduate school.

Finally, our section endured another major loss when Maureen Hallinan passed away last month. In this newsletter, Bill Carbonaro shares a personal remembrance.

Sincerely,

Doug Downey
Remembrance: Maureen Hallinan

It has been an honor and a privilege to be Maureen Hallinan’s friend and colleague for the past thirteen years. It was a sad day when she passed away on January 28th of this year, but it is comforting to know that she left behind a tremendous legacy.

Maureen’s impressive scholarly record speaks for itself. She was a prolific scholar who made lasting contributions to numerous areas within our subfield, with seminal papers on school effects, ability grouping, interracial friendships, school organization, black-white educational inequality, and sector differences in learning. One of Maureen’s proudest accomplishments was her role in conceiving and editing the *Handbook of the Sociology of Education*. It is an amazing roadmap of where our field has been, and where it must go to mature and progress. More than a decade later, it remains an invaluable resource for researchers, scholars and students.

I would like to share a few personal impressions about Maureen that reveal who she was as a scholar and a person. First, Maureen’s approach to sociological research can be boiled down to a simple no-nonsense mantra: “have a theory!” Anyone who has read Maureen’s work can appreciate her firm conviction that a well-developed theoretical framework should always motivate and inform one’s research. I attended dozens of academic talks with Maureen over the years, and she almost never failed to ask the presenter a fundamentally important and probing question about how his/her research findings related his/her theoretical framework. If the presenter didn’t have a crisp, articulate response? Well – s/he was toast. I hope that these scholars were helped by Maureen’s prodding. I certainly know Maureen’s emphasis on theory made me a better scholar, reviewer, and mentor to my own students.

Second, Maureen was fearless in her academic pursuits. Maureen’s second most cited publication was her “Exchange” on ability grouping with Jeannie Oakes in *SOE* (1994). Whenever I mentioned that this article was a great teaching tool, Maureen would “pooh-pooh” me and suggest the piece was “frivolous.” My comeback was that it was rather “gutsy” for Maureen to argue forcefully that the use of ability grouping could play a positive role in schooling under the right circumstances, and that “detracking” was not a panacea – two views that were rather unpopular at the time. Her response was (not surprisingly) more “pooh-poohing.” To Maureen, this is just what scholars do: we look at the evidence, make arguments, and let the chips fall where they may.

Maureen’s last large scale research project was a comparison of achievement differences among students attending Catholic and public elementary schools in the city of Chicago. Maureen personally convinced the superintendent of the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic schools to participate, with many assurances of how important the research would be. Well, after many, many analyses, it became quite clear that Chicago’s Catholic schools actually performed rather poorly when compared with Chicago’s public schools. Most of us might feel apprehensive about reporting back to the superintendent and board of directors with this rather unflattering conclusion. Not Maureen. She walked into the meeting and told the superintendent exactly what the findings were, what they meant, and how she thought Catholic schools needed to improve! Maureen believed that researchers couldn’t help anyone if they pulled their punches. And Maureen never did.
Finally, Maureen overcame many professional and personal challenges in her life. A scholar until the very end, Maureen wrote an introspective memoir about many of these struggles, which will be published in the near future. One striking feature of Maureen’s account is how little attention she drew to her own status as a trailblazer. Attaining her Ph.D in 1972, Maureen was a member of a generation of female scholars who swam “upstream,” fighting overt and latent sexism for much of their careers. In 1996, Maureen served as only the sixth female president of ASA (in 90 years!). Professional accomplishments like these were a testament to her iron will and determination to overcome whatever obstacles she faced in life. Throughout her career, Maureen quietly but vigorously mentored many young female professors in both our department and our field. She always fought for the people and ideals that she believed in. I know I speak for many section members when I say that she will be greatly missed.

By Bill Carbonaro
Room for Debate: Sociology of Education

In his State of the Union address this past January, President Obama said he wanted to ‘make high-quality preschool available to every single child in America.’ His plan specifically calls for federally financed preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families.

If you were advising him regarding this policy initiative, what would you tell him?

“Program quality counts, and quality is hard to maintain on a mass scale”.

Karl Alexander, Johns Hopkins University

“Your initiative is well targeted to reduce inequality…But it has to be done right.”

George Farkas, University of California, Irvine

“What’s lacking is deliberative civic conversation of how we want to nurture and raise young children.”

Bruce Fuller, University of California, Berkeley

“If we truly want to capture the full benefits of social investment in our future generations, preschool cannot stand alone.”

Joseph Merry, The Ohio State University

“The challenge will be to maintain a focus on the unique needs of very young children…”

Doug Ready, Teachers College, Columbia University

“The creation of universal pre-K is part of the inevitable movement toward a highly rationalized and age-graded childhood.”

Maryellen Schaub, Pennsylvania State University
 Expanded Preschool? Sure, but how, and for whom?  
Karl Alexander, Johns Hopkins University

The federal government historically and constitutionally has a limited role in K – 12 education policy and funding. That landscape has changed some since the advent of NCLB, but the locus of decision-making for educational policy remains at the state and district levels. Still, when the President speaks, decision-makers listen. That was the case with President Clinton’s call to end social promotion and NCLB, President Bush’s education legacy, has filtered down to every nook and cranny. President Obama’s call to expand preschool for needy children certainly resonates, and when it is echoed in voices ranging from Nobel Laureates (i.e., James Heckman) to college football coaches (See coach Randy Edsall’s Opinion piece in the December 30, 2014 issue of the Baltimore Sun), it would seem virtually a “done deal.”

In fact, for those of us who favor evidence based practice, the case is compelling. Here are some of the things we know (references available on request):

1. There are vast differences across social lines in language exposure and language development over the preschool years;
2. Disadvantaged children (on average) begin kindergarten already behind in terms of cognitive assessments and teachers’ deportment ratings;
3. Over the summer months after they’ve begun school, when children are cut off from the school’s resources, disadvantaged children lose ground relative to children of more advantaged background;
4. Disadvantaged children’s learning altogether is more sensitive to school resources;
5. High quality preschool programs produce lasting benefits (academic and non-academic) for low income and disadvantaged minority children, and even “mass” programs like Head Start and Early Head Start appear to be cost effective.

But there are issues:

1. Some of the achievement benefits of a strong preschool experience fade over time. This very likely is a dosage issue. Miracles ought not to be expected from a one-time intervention, as the conditions outside school that hold back poor children don’t go away. Two years of Head Start are better than a single year; children who receive continuing supports into elementary school after a strong preschool experience fare better; and some of the Head Start “fade” likely traces to the quality of the schools Head Start alums later transition into.
2. Program quality counts, and quality is hard to maintain on a mass scale. Owing to the recent deep recession, there has been unprecedented decline in financial support per pupil for pre-K. Talk is fine, but commitment is needed.
3. And who should be prioritized? There is a quiet battle raging between advocates for universal preschool and advocates for targeted preschool. The President’s proposal is targeted, but his position is far from universal. Here in Maryland, the two leading democratic candidates for governor are on opposite sides of the issue, with Anthony Brown championing universal preschool and Douglas Gansler focusing on needy children.

If poor children are the concern, then surely Gansler ought to win the day, yes? In fact, the issue is deceptively complex. Nothing happens if reforms are not implemented, and as a political expedient, entitlements likely have the advantage. But what of achieving policy objectives?
"Preschool for all" is an extension of regular schooling; Head Start programs often are freestanding. A much higher percentage of preschool teachers than Head Start teachers have college degrees and preschool investments per pupil are higher. Children of wealthier, highly educated parents currently have the advantage: more of them attend center based programs and they attend programs of higher quality; in contrast, Head Start in 2012 enrolled fewer than a million children.

Universal preschool, it is certain, would reach a much higher portion of the needy population than would an expansion of Head Start-like programs, and very likely at higher quality. And because of that, needy children would arrive at kindergarten on a stronger footing. But does that mean they would be performing closer to the level of more advantaged children? Not necessarily, and almost certainly not if the programs attended by children of privilege are higher quality and those children are positioned better to profit from them.

Both stipulations seem highly likely, in which case “universal” risks increasing the performance gap across social lines. There is the famous Sesame Street example, and that appears to be the case also for effects of summer program attendance. How would we feel about a highly effective early schooling intervention that boosts poor children’s academic prospects at the expense of aggravating educational inequality? That’s a tough one.
To: President Obama  
Re: Early Education Initiative  
George Farkas, University of California, Irvine

Your initiative to expand education from birth to age 5 is of historic importance. Research shows that unequal educational opportunity is central to achievement and earnings inequality, and unequal achievement is already present at kindergarten entry. Thus, your initiative is well targeted to reduce inequality.

The boldest aspect of your proposal is the plan to provide services to low-income children at all ages from birth through five. This builds on programs that have already been piloted and evaluated: Nurse-Family Partnership for infants, Early Head Start for birth through three, Head Start for three-year-olds, state Pre-k for four-year-olds, and full (instead of half) day kindergarten. I applaud your decision to use these programs to provide the greatest assistance possible to low-income children from birth through kindergarten.

*But it has to be done right.* As you know, the success of this initiative depends on the quality of its implementation. All of the existing early learning programs have been evaluated; the strongest effects appear to be for state Pre-k and full day kindergarten. The most questionable effects appear to be for Early Head Start and Head Start. Both the Head Start and Early Head Start randomized experiments yielded disappointing findings; effect sizes were modest, and disappeared a year after the end of the programs. Many states have been instituting their own prekindergarten programs (pre-k), and the evidence indicates that they achieve larger effects than Head Start programs in the same localities, but these effects may also disappear between grades 1-3.

The problem seems to be that Head Start lacks an effective curriculum, and often employs less than well-educated and fully trained staff, and that pre-k programs struggle to provide consistently effective quality across different program sites and state programs. Your press release states that preschool programs must pay teachers comparably to K-12 staff, have small class sizes and a rigorous curriculum. These are the reasons often given for the greater success of some state-run programs – I congratulate you on seeking to extend these conditions to all pre-k programs.

Your plan to organize this as a federal-state partnership with cost-sharing is well chosen. The attempt to bring in middle class families while minimizing the substitution of public funds for money they would otherwise have paid themselves is reasonable. Maintaining the delivery of health and related services while focusing on instruction is a good choice. So is the requirement for effective evaluation and review of programs.

This federal-state partnership is well illustrated by your plan to focus Head Start on three-year-olds, with state Pre-k educating four-year-olds. Research on some (but not all) state Pre-k's shows that they can be more closely connected to K-12 schools, and sometimes provide significantly larger academic gains than comparable Head Start programs. Combined with full day kindergarten, they should give low-income children a strong foundation for first grade. By contrast, Head Start and Early Head Start are most in need of improvement. Your plan to raise the standards for curriculum and staff is well-founded but, for political reasons, difficult to attain. Your staff needs to work with the Department of Health and Human Services to attack this problem.
George Farkas Continued...

The implementation and evaluation challenges of your initiative are great. You have to put limited resources where the benefit/cost will be greatest. I believe that this lies with the state Pre-ks. We are counting on large effects from these programs, but the evidence for this is based on successful programs in only two locations -- Tulsa and Boston. We know too little about which program characteristics most benefit children, and different combinations of program elements are often given the same program name. I recommend that you ask Congress to initiate a random-assignment study of state Pre-k programs, so that we can be confident of their benefits, and understand how to scale-up these programs so that these results are replicated throughout the nation. Ideally, we should undertake similar research for the other elements of your birth-five initiative. As you know, the Devil is in the details.
The universal pre-k (UPK) bandwagon now offers an enjoyable ride for a range of political leaders, union chiefs, and educators. The cause is a worthy one. We have a half-century of empirical work showing strong and at times sustained benefits for young children from low-income families.

But what’s the specific problem that the rekindled UPK attempts to remedy? Is this a policy remedy aimed at a vividly defined target?

About three-quarters of all White and Black 4 year-olds already attend a center-based preschool. The national enrollment rate for Latino children is only about 50%. So, the access problem is narrower than commonly framed. And if government were to universally finance pre-k, public funds would subsidize large numbers of better-off families and those who may struggle to (but eventually do) pay for preschool. This would be a regressive finance policy. Some advocates claim that universal preschool would help to narrow early achievement gaps. That’s the policy target. Pre-k could close learning disparities if the magnitude of benefits remains greater for poor, compared with, middle-class children. But the history of entitlements in narrowing class-based disparities – form lower class size to farm subsidies is not compelling. And if preschool finance becomes rooted in school districts (as New York mayor Bill de Blasio would have it), then all the finance and institutional inequalities inherent in K-12 will work against reducing early gaps. This would kill-off many community organizations that have provided child care services for over a century.

Many states now focus on raising quality, not supporting wider access, given disappointing effects sizes and the fade-out of preschool benefits as pre-k graduates move through elementary school. So, uneven quality is yet another framing of ‘the problem’.

What’s lacking is deliberative civic conversation of how we want to nurture and raise young children. For whose community are we preparing children? How do we balance preparation of children for schooling and the labor market, versus equipping children for their immediate social collectives, so pluralistically diverse across American society? Government, not surprisingly, moves from a frame of ‘school readiness’ – largely preparing a colorful variety of children for a plain-vanilla form of schooling and occupations. Pre-k is designed to instrumentally mold children for an imagined mainstream that may be fading rapidly.

Details on pragmatic policy options in a recent essay:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/preschool-is-important-but-its-more-important-for-poor-children/2014/02/09/79ff4ab4-8e96-11e3-b227-12a45d109e03_story.html
The evidence is mounting that the achievement gaps we typically analyze during primary and secondary school are largely established by the time of school-entry. We even see sizeable SES learning gaps as early as eighteen months (see Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder 2013). Universal preschool is a strategy that will help to reduce these early childhood learning disparities and work towards a more level playing field.

President Obama’s policy initiative for universal preschool needs to be framed around the following: First, the initiative should emphasize the importance of early intervention from a global perspective, in comparison with other affluent nations. Second, it should be stressed from early on that in order to obtain the desired social outcomes, preschool must be viewed as part of a broader reform agenda.

Cross-national evidence reveals that one of the greatest impediments to a more competitive U.S. performance is our skewed scoring distribution characterized by high variation and a disproportionate amount of low-performing students (importantly, this distribution has taken shape before children enter formal schooling). Therefore, President Obama's rhetoric needs to emphasize the fact that the guarantee of preschool for children (especially the most disadvantaged) is in the best interest of our national performance. Furthermore, preschool investments represent a meaningful way to broaden our ideas of education reform. While K-12 expenditures and curricular practices differ from country to country, the much greater variation lies in the kinds of social programs and investments (like preschool) that affect the formal education system. For example, The U.S., Finland, and Canada (the latter two represent consistent high performers) spend a similar percentage of GDP on K-12 education. Now consider the current variation in preschool services: this range includes everything from free, full-day preschool/daycare (from 8 months and up) in Finland, to heavily subsidized pre-K in Canada (but more so for ages 4-5), and finally to the more cost-prohibitive U.S. system. In other words, Pre-K allows us to concentrate our efforts early on and where the variation in inputs is considerably larger.

The preschool initiative is exactly the direction in which we need to move. But it alone is not enough. Lane Kenworthy argues convincingly in his new book, *Social Democratic America*, that universal preschool is a critical component in the many types of government programs we need to implement to achieve a more just society (paid parental leave, sickness insurance, a more generous Earned-Income Tax Credit, among others). If we truly want to capture the full benefits of social investment in our future generations, preschool cannot stand alone. The president needs to make this clear from early on (his original plan also calls for increased funding for ‘Early Head Start’ – birth to three years old – and increased full-day kindergarten programs, but the focus is already being narrowed to the year or two just prior to kindergarten). The implementation of universal preschool provides a promising starting point for this future trajectory, but we cannot neglect how educational outcomes remain tied up in the many other social conditions that affect families and their young children.
Reply to Obama Preschool Initiative
Doug Ready, Teachers College, Columbia University

Given that the President has already embraced early childhood education and its many benefits, I can dispense with the litany of evidence supporting his proposal. Instead, I raise three questions (and embed a few answers) that relate to the “high-quality” standard put forth in his State of the Union address. These questions assume that the political obstacles facing universal pre-school have been overcome—a somewhat problematic assumption given the political headwinds currently facing his administration.

How can we develop a focus on pre-school quality without replicating the current K-12 accountability battles? Expanded pre-school access tied to federal funding would surely be accompanied by increased accountability demands. Although troubling in many ways, the quality of pre-school teachers and programs does indeed vary dramatically. And as with K-12 schooling, children who would benefit most from high-quality pre-school are often the least likely to experience it. The adoption of universal pre-school access would present a unique opportunity to forge a balance between monitoring for accountability and monitoring for instructional improvement. Legislatures in both Red and Blue states are currently investigating the use of pre-school formative assessments to do just this. Several of these state efforts could serve as guides for the implementation of universal pre-school and also inform new initiatives to reform the K-12 accountability regimes already in place.

What should the content of universal pre-schooling be, and who should decide? Over the past decade, early childhood educators have felt pressure to increase their focus on cognitive development and school academic readiness. Given the tremendous racial/ethnic and socio-economic inequalities present at kindergarten entry, attention to school readiness is surely warranted, as is improved cohesion with the K-12 system. But early childhood education must be permitted to preserve the developmental approaches that distinguish it from later schooling. We should challenge those who view pre-school simply as preparation for formal schooling, while acknowledging the reality that universal pre-school will be doomed politically if it is interpreted as nationalized daycare. The challenge will be to maintain a focus on the unique needs of very young children while continuing to provide hard evidence of its academic, social, and economic benefits.

Can we be more thoughtful and purposeful about pre-school racial/ethnic and socio-economic compositions? Recent evidence suggests that pre-school demographic composition is related to student outcomes, as it is with K-12 schooling. There is the potential to decouple student pre-school placements from residential location, particularly if federal funds followed the student and were not tied to local governments. One approach being increasingly implemented is the creation of work-place pre-schools. Businesses, government agencies, hospitals and colleges—many of which employ diverse groups of workers from across the socio-economic spectrum—have found that employees value the ease and comfort of on-site centers. And an important byproduct is that these pre-schools are typically more integrated compared to neighborhood centers. There are clearly many other solutions. But it is seems unwise to implement universal pre-school in a manner that simply reproduces historical patterns of educational segregation and stratification.
Reply to Obama Preschool Initiative
Marryellen Schaub, Pennsylvania State University

Our slow progress toward universal prekindergarten (preK) has many parallels with the earlier addition of kindergarten to public schooling in the US. Originally, public school educators did not consider kindergarten an essential or even practical experience yet in a little over a century it was transformed from a separate, play-based experience into the first year of formal schooling. Now universal preK is facing the same public scrutiny. The debate around the expansion of schooling downward to include 4 year olds largely stems from two camps. The first camp is pushing for universal preK. They argue that the time has come for all 4 year olds to have access to high quality preschool. In this scenario, preK, like kindergarten, would likely remain optional but all children would have access.

The second camp argues that government sponsored preK should be targeted to low income families. Acknowledging the close connection between school readiness and family background, this camp is motivated by the knowledge that the achievement gap appears before formal schooling begins and that some children come to school better prepared than others. They argue that middle and upper middle class parents already send their children to preschool at their own expense, and that targeted programs enable us to spend more on the children most in need of intervention. Either for budgetary reasons or romantic notions of childhood, this camp sees unnecessary bureaucracy and uniformity in universal preK and prefers to limit government involvement in early childhood.

While both camps make good points, I would advise President Obama on several key issues:
1. Quality is premium. The United States has supported a publicly funded preschool program for economically disadvantaged children since the Johnson Administration created Head Start in 1965. However, Head Start is a part-time program that runs nine months per year and has a diverse set of goals. It is also highly decentralized so the quality varies by location. We know that high quality programs like Perry Preschool and Abecedarian have had lasting positive effects on participant’s lives. But what has also become obvious is that targeted programs only receive moderate public support and therefore never deliver the high quality needed to make a lasting impact. A universal program is more likely to gain the approval of a wide proportion of the population and thus guarantee long-term public support and funding.
2. Schools should reflect the broader population. Although comprehensive schooling is a core attribute of the US education system, as a nation, we have struggled with the integration of US public schools by race/ethnicity and family income. We know that low income and minority students benefit academically from being in an integrated environment. The sponsorship of a level of schooling that intentionally segregates students will likely also have a limited impact on educational success.
3. But finally, schooling is a powerful social institution. The expansion of schooling downward is not just about the achievement gap but also about the role of school in the creation of the individual and later opportunities. The rapid rise in participation in early childhood education programs, both kindergarten and preschool, are evidence of our general belief in schooling as a legitimate way to allocate opportunities in modern society. But unlike expansion at the upper end of the schooling spectrum, expansion to younger children has less obvious human capital benefits. Instead, it is connected to the general trend toward greater engagement in cognitive activities of young children. Over the course of the 20th century, parents increasingly chose to enroll their children in kindergarten and over the second half of the 20th century we saw the same rapid rise in preschool enrollments. The creation of universal preK is part of the inevitable movement toward a highly rationalized and age-graded childhood.
News from Section Members: Books and Reports

Out of the Shadows: The Global Intensification of Supplementary Education.
by Janice Aurini, Scott Davies and Julian Dierkes (Emerald Press)

Supplementary education consists of private instruction that complements and sometimes ‘shadows’ formal school content. Providers range from informal and part-time tutors to highly institutionalized, multi-national corporate franchises. This phenomenon is growing worldwide and has many potential impacts on formal education systems. This volume is the first multi-national examination of this topic and includes ‘big picture’ analyses to comparatively explain the intensity, authority and policy contexts of supplementary education. Quantitative and qualitative case studies of countries with high and low intensity forms of supplementary education are detailed. The chapters aim to deepen comparative and interdisciplinary knowledge on the impact of these educational markets on formal school systems, and inform future research and policy on supplementary education.

Janice Aurini is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at University of Waterloo

Scott Davies is a professor of Sociology and in the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University

Julian Dierkes is an associate professor and the Keidanren Chair in Japanese Research at the Institute of Asian Research

Immigrant Networks and Social Capital
by Carl Bankston III (Polity Press)

In recent years, immigration researchers have increasingly drawn on the concept of social capital and the role of social networks to understand the dynamics of immigrant experiences. How can they help to explain what brings migrants from some countries to others, or why members of different immigrant groups experience widely varying outcomes in their community settings, occupational opportunities, and educational outcomes?

This timely book examines the major issues in social capital research, showing how economic and social contexts shape networks in the process of migration, and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to the study of international migration. By drawing on a broad range of examples from major immigrant groups, the book takes network-based social capital theory out of the realm of abstraction and reveals the insights it offers.

Written in a readily comprehensible, jargon-free style, Immigrant Networks and Social Capital is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate classes in international migration, networks, and political and social theory in general. It provides both a theoretical synthesis for professional social scientists and a clear introduction to network approaches to social capital for students, policy-makers, and anyone interested in contemporary social trends and issues.

Carl L. Bankston III is a professor in the Department of Sociology at Tulane University
How College Works
by Daniel F. Chambliss and Christopher G. Takacs (Harvard University Press)

Constrained by shrinking budgets, can colleges do more to improve the quality of education? And can students get more out of college without paying higher tuition? Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs conclude that the limited resources of colleges and students need not diminish the undergraduate experience. How College Works reveals the surprisingly decisive role that personal relationships play in determining a student’s collegiate success, and puts forward a set of small, inexpensive interventions that yield substantial improvements in educational outcomes.

At a liberal arts college in New York, the authors followed a cluster of nearly one hundred students over a span of eight years. The curricular and technological innovations beloved by administrators mattered much less than the professors and peers whom students met, especially early on. At every turning point in students’ undergraduate lives, it was the people, not the programs, that proved critical. Great teachers were more important than the topics studied, and even a small number of good friendships—two or three—made a significant difference academically as well as socially.

For most students, college works best when it provides the daily motivation to learn, not just access to information. Improving higher education means focusing on the quality of a student’s relationships with mentors and classmates, for when students form the right bonds, they make the most of their education.

For more information, please visit:
http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674049024&content=bios

Daniel F. Chambliss is Eugene M. Tobin Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Hamilton College

Christopher G. Takacs is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at the University of Chicago

In Defense of Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity and Specialization in the Research University
by Jerry Jacobs (University of Chicago Press)

Calls for closer connections among disciplines can be heard throughout the world of scholarly research, from major universities to the National Institutes of Health. In Defense of Disciplines presents a fresh and daring analysis of the argument surrounding interdisciplinarity. Challenging the belief that blurring the boundaries between traditional academic fields promotes more integrated research and effective teaching, Jerry Jacobs contends that the promise of interdisciplinarity is illusory and that critiques of established disciplines are often overstated and misplaced. Drawing on diverse sources of data, Jacobs offers a new theory of liberal arts disciplines such as biology, economics, and history that identifies the organizational sources of their dynamism and breadth. Illustrating his thesis with a wide range of case studies including the diffusion of ideas between fields, the creation of interdisciplinary scholarly journals, and the rise of new fields that spin off from existing ones, Jacobs turns many of the criticisms of disciplines on their heads to mount a powerful defense of the enduring value of liberal arts disciplines. This will become one of the anchors of the case against interdisciplinarity for years to come.

Jerry Jacobs is a professor of Sociology at University of Pennsylvania
Defining Student Success: The Role of School and Culture
*by Lisa M. Nunn (Rutgers University Press)*

The key to success, our culture tells us, is a combination of talent and hard work. Why then, do high schools that supposedly subscribe to this view send students to college at such dramatically different rates? Why do students from one school succeed while students from another struggle? To the usual answer—an imbalance in resources—this book adds a far more subtle and complicated explanation. *Defining Student Success* shows how different schools foster dissimilar and sometimes conflicting ideas about what it takes to succeed—ideas that do more to preserve the status quo than to promote upward mobility. Lisa Nunn’s study of three public high schools reveals how students’ beliefs about their own success are shaped by their particular school environment and reinforced by curriculum and teaching practices. While American culture broadly defines success as a product of hard work or talent (at school, intelligence is the talent that matters most), Nunn shows that each school refines and adapts this American cultural wisdom in its own distinct way—reflecting the sensibilities and concerns of the people who inhabit each school. While one school fosters the belief that effort is all it takes to succeed, another fosters the belief that hard work will only get you so far because you have to be smart enough to master course concepts. Ultimately, Nunn argues that these school-level adaptations of cultural ideas about success become invisible advantages and disadvantages for students’ college-going futures. Some schools’ definitions of success match seamlessly with elite college admissions’ definition of the ideal college applicant, while others more closely align with the expectations of middle or low-tier institutions of higher education.

With its insights into the transmission of ideas of success from society to school to student, this provocative work should prompt a reevaluation of the culture of secondary education. Only with a thorough understanding of this process will we ever find more consistent means of inculcating success, by any measure.

*Lisa M. Nunn* is an assistant professor of Sociology at University of San Diego.

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Success Academy: How Native American Students Prepare for College (and How Colleges Can Prepare for Them)
*by MaryJo Benton Lee (Peter Lang Publishing)*

Picture two very different schools, one, a federal Indian boarding school emphasizing vocational training, where few graduates attend college. The other—its neighbor—an overwhelmingly white, land-grant university.

These two schools had little to no contact until an innovative initiative turned things around. In the fall of 2000, the Flandreau Indian School began a reform effort, Success Academy, aimed at preparing all of its students for postsecondary education. Over the next decade South Dakota State University responded by committing 300 of its faculty and staff and $85,000 of its annual budget to opening the doors of higher education to Indian students who had previously been excluded.

The traditional way of increasing college access for students of color is through remediation, that is, through attempting to “fix” those presumed to be unprepared for higher learning. What sets Success Academy apart is that the educators involved chose instead to “fix” both of their institutions, institutions that were actually preventing Indian students from entering college. Throughout all aspects of Success Academy programming, students’ American Indian identities have been affirmed, honored—and incorporated into school culture.

*MaryJo Benton Lee* is an adjunct assistant professor of Sociology at South Dakota State University and for the past 12 years has served as co-founder and coordinator of the SDSU-Flandreau Indian School Success Academy.
**Korean Education in Changing Economic and Demographic Contexts**  
*edited by Hyunjoon Park and Kyung-keun Kim (Springer)*

This edited volume of 10 papers examines various challenges that recent changes in economic and demographic environments pose to Korean education and its responses. Divided into three parts, the book first assesses the current state of Korean education. It examines how the educational system handles the effects of family background and gender in helping students smoothly transition from school to the labor market.

Next, the book introduces growing concerns over whether the traditional model of Korean education can adequately meet the demands of the emerging knowledge-based economy. It examines features of new reform measures that have been introduced to help Korean education prepare students for the new economy. The third part discusses how an influx of diverse migrant groups, including marriage migrants, migrant workers, and North Korean migrants, and the rising divorce rate — two major demographic changes — challenge the fundamental assumption of cultural homogeneity that has long been a part of Korean education. This detailed analysis of a society and educational system in transition will appeal to a wide range of readers, from those involved with Korean education to educators and administrators in countries currently looking for ways to handle their own economic and demographic changes.


**Hyunjoon Park** is the Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Sociology and Education at the University of Pennsylvania  
**Kung-keun Kim** is Professor in the Department of Education at Korea University.

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**When Middle-Class Parents Chose Urban Schools: Class, Race, and the Challenge of Equity in Public Education**  
*by Linn Posey-Maddox (University of Chicago Press)*

In recent decades a growing number of middle-class parents have considered sending their children to—and often end up becoming active in—urban public schools. Their presence can bring long-needed material resources to such schools, but, as Linn Posey-Maddox shows in this study, it can also introduce new class and race tensions, and even exacerbate inequalities. Sensitive to the pros and cons of middle-class transformation, *When Middle-Class Parents Choose Urban Schools* asks whether it is possible for our urban public schools to have both financial security and equitable diversity.

Drawing on in-depth research at an urban elementary school, Posey-Maddox examines parents’ efforts to support the school through their outreach, marketing, and volunteerism. She shows that when middle-class parents engage in urban school communities, they can bring a host of positive benefits, including new educational opportunities and greater diversity. But their involvement can also unintentionally marginalize less-affluent parents and diminish low-income students’ access to the improving schools. In response, Posey-Maddox argues that school reform efforts, which usually equate improvement with rising test scores and increased enrollment, need to have more equity-focused policies in place to ensure that low-income families also benefit from—and participate in—school change. For more information go to: [http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/W/bo17508026.html](http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/W/bo17508026.html)

**Linn Posey-Maddox** is an Assistant Professor of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.
The Palgrave Handbook of Race and Ethnic Inequalities in Education
Edited by Peter A. J. Stevens and A. Gary Dworkin

This authoritative, state-of-the-art reference work provides the first systematic review to date of how sociologists have studied the relationship between race/ethnicity and educational inequality in 18 different national contexts: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Finland, France, England, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Russia, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the USA. Using a similar, comprehensive literature review methodology, national experts critically review how sociologists have studied race and ethnic inequalities in education over the last 30 years. The analysis focuses on the main research traditions that developed over time and their relationships with developments in social policy and social thought. This book ultimately integrates the findings of the national reviews and maps out new directions for future research. Additionally, the editors explore how national contexts of race/ethnic relations shape the character and content of educational inequalities. Global in its perspective and definitive in content, this one-stop volume will be an indispensable reference resource for a wide range of academics, students, and researchers in the fields of education, sociology, race and ethnicity studies, and social policy.

Peter A. J. Stevens is an assistant professor with the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at Ghent University.

A. Gary Dworkin is a professor of Sociology at the University of Houston.
Announcements from Members

Jeanne Cameron was awarded the following three awards for Canaries Reflect on the Mine: Dropouts’ Stories of Schooling (Information Age Publishing):
· 2013 Outstanding Publication Award of the Narrative Research SIG of the American Educational Research Association
· The Society of Professors of Education 2013 Book Award
· American Educational Studies Association 2013 Critics Choice Award
For more information please visit http://www.infoagepub.com/products/Canaries-Reflect-on-the-Min

Prudence Carter and Sean Reardon have been inducted as Fellows into the National Academy of Education. Reardon and Carter are Professors in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University.

Tomasz Drabowicz has published a chapter entitled “Digital Inequality in Physical and Skills Access Among European Adolescents” in the 2014 book Welfare State at Risk. Rising Inequality in Europe (Springer International) that is edited by Dieter Eißel, Ewa Rokicka, and Jeremy Leaman.

Floyd M. Hammack will become Professor Emeritus at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development of New York University in September, 2014. Dr. Joscha Legewie, a recent graduate of the Sociology Department at Columbia University will become an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Education in the Sociology of Education Program in the Department of Humanities and the Social Sciences upon Professor Hammack’s retirement.

Beverly Lindsay, Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education-University of London is the recipient of a multi-year grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for her international research project, "An Exploratory Examination of STEM Graduate Programs Between the United States and England." Co-Principal Investigators are located at the Institute of Education–London and the University of Texas-El Paso. Dr. Lindsay is also a Guest Professor at Oxford.

A conference on the new computational sociology at Stanford campus will be hosted by Dan McFarland of Stanford University and Fabio Rojas of Indiana University this August 15th. The goal is to bring together social scientists, informatics researchers, and computer scientists who are interested in how modern computation can be brought to bear on issues that are of central importance to sociology and related disciplines. Interested people should go to the following web site for information on registration and presentation topics. https://css-center.stanford.edu/computational-sociology-conference

Call for papers: Comparative studies of gender segregation in vocational education and training – Institutional and individual perspectives
Comparative Social Research, vol. 31, 2015
The gender segregated nature of vocational secondary education has received little attention in the stratification literature, despite its consequences for gender differences in labour market outcomes, such as job placement, income, occupational status and access to full-time employment. While previous research on vocational education and transitions into the labour market have employed an institutional perspective, it has also been criticized for being "gender blind" or descriptive in nature. Recent research has pointed to four institutional characteristics that may be particularly significant for gendered educational pathways. These are 1) the degree of vocationally specific education and training, 2) timing of educational decisions, 3) track differentiation, and 4) opportunity for changing tracks. These characteristics are thought to influence young men’s and women’s career choice, choices which may have long term consequences for their professional development. Furthermore, the structure of the labour market and available welfare state provisions are also thought to have a filter effect on the gendered life courses and, possibly, career decisions of young people.
We invite scholars in the field to submit an abstract for possible inclusion in an edited volume on this topic for the publication series Comparative Social Research (Emerald Books). Contributions on the above themes should be theoretically guided empirical studies, preferably comparative by design. The submitted abstract, with (working) title, should make its objectives and research questions explicit, discuss its theoretical framework and identify (preliminary) results. The abstract (length 2-3 pages) should be submitted by June 1st 2014 to kristinn.hegna@nova.hioa.no. Final papers should be
submitted by end of January 2015, and will then undergo full blinded peer review, with a minimum of two referees for each paper. For further information see the full length call for papers at http://samfunnsforskning.no/eng/content/view/full/3177

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Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (SLLS) Call for Papers and Symposia

Although the overall conference theme will focus on social policy this year, we welcome conference submissions from all areas of longitudinal and life course studies: physical, psychological, social developmental and ageing processes and functioning within and across life course stages from infancy to old age; methods and findings of cohort studies; other sources of longitudinal data such as panel studies and record linkage; international comparisons; household, and income dynamics; intergenerational transfers and returns to learning; gene-environment interactions; ‘mixed’, and comparative methods; innovative methodology in design, measurement, data management, analysis and research practice (quantitative and qualitative). Proposals are sought for three kinds of conference presentation:
1. A symposium comprising at least 3 papers to be presented in a one and a half hour session or a series of two sessions. For each symposium suggested we require an overall abstract of no more than 300 words plus an abstract of no more than 300 words for each paper. Please provide names and professional affiliations for all presenters.
2. An individual paper for oral presentation for which an abstract of no more than 300 words is required.
3. A poster presentation for which an abstract of no more than 200 words is required.

Abstract Submission Form
All contributors will be notified of the conference committee’s decision by May 31st 2014. More information about the conference and conference accommodation will be posted on the SLLS website as it becomes available. The fee for conference registration will be discounted for SLLS members so please consider joining if you have not already done so! Please visit the membership pages of this website for full details and a membership form to complete on-line.

Society’s journal, Longitudinal and Life Course Studies, will be a possible outlet for the publication of conference papers.

Call for nominations from the University of Louisville’s College of Education and Human Development for the 2015 Grawemeyer Award in Education.
The University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development is pleased to announce Diane Ravitch as the winner of the 2014 Grawemeyer Award in Education. She was selected for her book, The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education.
Nominations for 2015 Grawemeyer Award in Education:
Nominations for outstanding ideas in education are currently being considered by the committee. Self-nominations are not considered. A prize of $100,000 will be awarded to the winner. To apply, visit: http://louisville.edu/education/about/grawemeyer
Deadline: April 30, 2014

The William T. Grant Foundation is pleased to announce a new initiative supporting research on programs, policies, and practices that reduce inequality in outcomes for youth. Free webinars (advance registration required) to provide more information will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 1:00-2:00 p.m. EST and Friday, March 14, 3:00-4:00 p.m. EST. Details, including a Grants Application Guide, are posted at: www.wtgrantfdn.org

Social Foundations of Education, Department of
Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

Purpose: The Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) invites applicants for a one-year Postdoctoral Associate in the Social Foundations of Education. Applicants with an educational focus utilizing a critical analysis of urban teacher education preparation programs through the lens of postcolonial studies, feminist studies, or critical historiography are strongly encouraged to apply.

The Postdoctoral Associate requires participants to teach one course per semester. This is a full-time position, available August 16, 2014 through August 15, 2015. The Postdoctoral Associate includes faculty health insurance, dental coverage, and support for professional travel. Postdoctoral Associates have access to University libraries, e-mail, Internet, recreational facilities, and cultural and athletic events. Salary is competitive.

Requirements: Applications are invited from persons with an earned doctorate prior to August 2014. The successful applicant should demonstrate a professional commitment and interest in Social Foundations of Urban Education and urban teacher education. The applicant’s research focus, background, and scholarship should demonstrate a commitment to the mission of the College of Education (http://education.uic.edu/about-us/about-us#mission-values--history).

Setting: UIC is a vibrant urban university located in Chicago’s West Loop. Currently the University’s commitment to engaged scholarship at the local, national and international level is supported through entities such as the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP), the Social Justice Initiative (SJI) and the Great Cities Institute (GCI). In alignment with the aforementioned entities, the College of Education is committed to developing new knowledge about education that improves teaching, learning and assessment; informs policy and practice; and is valued by the communities we serve.

The Department of Educational Policy Studies (EDPS) is one of four departments in the College of Education at UIC. Our twelve faculty members are invested not only in their research but also the preparation of teachers, scholars, and school leaders. The signature academic programs of the department are the PhD in Policy Studies that includes separate strands for the social foundations of education and educational organizations and leadership, and the Ed.D. in urban educational leadership, a principal preparation program.

Application procedure: Applicants should submit a letter of interest, a resume, transcripts for all graduate course work and three letters of references electronically at https://jobs.uic.edu/job-board/job-details?jobID=39778 no later than March 28, 2014.

Applicants are encouraged to reference the department website (http://education.uic.edu/academics-admissions/departments/department-educational-policy-studies#overview) for more detailed information.

The University of Illinois is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.