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Section Homepage
American Sociology Association
http://www2.asanet.org/soe/

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A Note from Brian Powell, Chair

Dear Section Members:

Halloween just ended and Thanksgiving is approaching, so I suspect that many of you are both scared and thankful that the semester or year is coming to an end. Here I want to be thankful. Thankful to Claudia Buchmann and Suet-ling Pong for their remarkably energetic and effective efforts as chair and secretary-treasurer. The SOE section is in excellent shape, which I attribute in large measure to Claudia and Suet-ling. They will be a very tough act for Karolyn Tyson and me to follow. Thankful to Mitchell Stevens, Amy Binder, and Elizabeth Armstrong for coordinating one of the most energizing conferences in years—a conference that confirms that vitality of sociology of education. Thankful to Eric Grodsky, Ruth López Turley, Linda Renzulli, Antonia Rudolph, Evan Schofer, and Elizabeth Stearns for organizing a terrific set of sessions at this year’s ASA meetings. Thankful to the resourceful and indefatigable Barbara Schneider who has ended her term as editor of Sociology of Education. Thankful to the American Institutes for Research for continuing to sponsor the SOE section reception in San Francisco. And especially thankful to the Stevenson family for their generous donation to the David Lee Stevenson Award fund.

But this list is incomplete. Many members of the SOE section continue to be generous in their time and commitment. Rob Warren and Jenny Stuber have agreed to take on the daunting task of chairing next year’s SOE section sessions, and they will be coordinating with Dennis Condron, who will organize the regular education sessions. Dennis is serving double-duty because he, along with Jim Ainsworth and Regina Werum, head the local arrangements committee. Meredith Phillips and Amy Binder have just completed their terms as members of the SOE council, but they continue to serve the SOE section as chairs of the Coleman Award and Nominations committees, respectively. Chairing other committees are Doug Downey (Bourdieu Award), Susan Dumais (David Lee Stevenson Award), and SOE chair-elect Chandra Muller (Waller Award). Continuing council members Jim Ainsworth, Eric Grodsky, Ruth López Turley, and Catherine Riegle-Crumb will be joined by incoming members Angel Harris and Sara Goldrick-Rab. I also am delighted that Carl Schmitt continues as webmaster and equally pleased that David Bills begins his term as editor of Sociology of Education. Finally, let me note that this is the last SOE newsletter edited by Fabian Pfeffer, as Anne McDaniel begins her term as newsletter editor. We all are indebted to Fabian for his instrumental role in resuscitating the newsletter.

Brian Powell
Your Guide to Education Blogs
by Corey Bunje Bower

The blogosphere is filled with plenty of good (and bad) commentary on education. Whether you choose to follow one blog or a hundred, it’s easy to learn something new or see something from a different perspective and, often, obtain information before it’s reported by the mainstream media. But with so many sites out there, it’s hard to know where to go, what to read, and what to ignore. That decision is ultimately up to you, but here are a few suggestions to get you started:

Bridging Differences (blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences), run by Diane Ravitch and Deborah Meier, is probably the most consistently thoughtful blog out there. The two write “letters” back and forth (every Tuesday and Thursday) discussing all sorts of topics fairly in-depth. Too many education blogs delve into rancorous rhetoric; this one does not.

Gotham Schools (gothamschools.org), focuses mostly on NYC educational issues and news -- and does a pretty good job of it -- but the highlight are the pieces in the community section (gothamschools.org/category/community), many of which are written by section member Aaron Pallas. They cover all sorts of relevant topics and often feature analysis beyond what can be found elsewhere.

The Education Optimists (eduoptimists.blogspot.com) is run by section member Sara Goldrick-Rab and her husband. She focuses more on higher ed. issues while he focuses more on K-12 issues. Both are informed and provide valuable information and commentary.

Sherman Dorn’s Blog (www.shermandorn.com) sometimes provides short insights on the latest debates, but usually provides less frequent and more in-depth discussions of all aspects of the debate. The posts always seem to come at the problem from a slightly different angle than do other blogs -- meaning you’ll learn something every time you visit.

Inside School Research (blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research) usually posts one medium-length post each day on a recent report or piece of research. The posts never quite do the research justice, but they offer more discussion on actual research than you’ll find almost anywhere else.

To keep up with the latest news in ed policy, you can check This Week in Education (thisweekineducation.com) or Eduwonk (eduwonk.com), both of which specialize in short blurbs about the latest happenings but occasionally offer some longer analyses.
A few other sites worth checking:

The Core Knowledge Blog (coreknowledge.org/blog)
Education Policy Blog (educationpolicyblog.blogspot.com)
Teacher Beat (blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat)
Teacher in a Strange Land (teacherleaders.typepad.com/teacher_in_aStrange_land)
The Quick and the Ed (www.quickanded.com)
Education Next Blog (educationnext.org/blog/)

Plenty of other sites may merit your attention or pique your interest as well. One way to find sites is to look in the "blogroll" -- a list of blogs that the author reads and/or recommends -- that most sites keep in the sidebar.

Lastly, lest you think that checking so many sites on a regular basis to be too much to handle, you should be aware that you can “subscribe” to the RSS feeds of any of these sites in an RSS reader such as Google Reader (google.com/reader). If you do this, one site will display all of the blog posts that are new since the last time you checked (you can also subscribe to various newsfeeds or even comic strips). In short, there’s no reason to delay; start exploring education blogs today.

Corey Bunje Bower
Ph.D. student in Education Policy, Vanderbilt’s Peabody College

Corey humbly suggests you check out his own blog on educational issues Thoughts on Education Policy (edpolicythoughts.com). He can’t promise that every post is earth-shatteringly insightful, but he tries his best.
Five Questions to ... Mitchell Stevens

by Kendra Bischoff

Mitchell Stevens is an Associate Professor of Education and (by courtesy) Sociology at Stanford University. He is the author of Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites (Harvard, 2007), and Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement (Princeton, 2001). He currently is at work on a project, with Cynthia Miller-Idriss (NYU), on how American social scientists conceive of the international.

Kendra Bischoff is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at Stanford University. Her research interests include large-scale trends in residential segregation and inequality, as well as the manifestation of these trends in local school environments.

Your most recent book, Creating a Class, investigates the college admissions process from the perspective of an admissions office. What is the connection between the acceptance of individuals into a college class and the creation of a certain culture at that college?

Creating a Class only made inferences about relationships between admissions practices and campus culture. I did not study this directly. But there can be little doubt that at schools where applicants are sorted by measurable academic accomplishment, athletic skill, and the legacy status and social prominence of their parents, admissions policies have a lot to do with campus culture. Selective college admissions is social engineering. It may not be too much to say that it is a highly legitimate form of eugenics. Where and with whom one attends college strongly influences choice of sexual partners and mate selection. This is a big part of the reason why wealthy WASP families began to patronize rural boarding schools and colleges at the end of the nineteenth century. The words we use to describe the engineering have changed, but the technology itself remains much the same. This is why the revival of interest in sexuality and homogamy in higher education is so important I think. We need to get over our obsession with academic outcomes and see the rest of the forest.

In your book, Kingdom of Children, you describe home schooling as a form of social activism. Are there other forms of social activism within the education system that might serve as catalysts for institutional change?

I believe we are at a watershed moment for educational activism. School reform is now attracting some of the most academically accomplished and socially prominent young people in each year’s cohort of college graduates. Call it the Teach for America phenomenon, but it goes well beyond TFA. Improving schools has become fashionable, and almost entirely decoupled from political ideology -- conservative and liberal elites agree that school reform is cool. And rich people are pouring money on it. I suspect we are seeing a reiteration...
of the school improvement impulse among native-born Anglo elites during the Progressive era that David Tyack wrote about. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation alone is reshaping the landscape of education policy in the U.S., and they are just one of many players. Richard Arum, Jal Mehta, Tom Toch, and Pam Walters talked about this during their panel at the Sociology of Education Section conference at the ASA in August. Very few people in academic sociology are paying attention to this, and it's a shame. We barely know what questions to ask.

You wrote an article for the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science in 2008 entitled "Culture and Education." What research questions are the most pressing in the study of culture and education, and what research methods are the most promising to answer these questions?

In my Annals paper I argue that the sociology of education has long defined culture very narrowly: as a bundle of attributes possessed by individuals that variably influence their educational trajectories. This is a thin conception of culture, as scholars as different as John Meyer, Pierre Bourdieu, Michèle Lamont, and Annette Lareau have pointed out. Following Meyer and Bourdieu, I think we need to see the organizational form of schooling itself as culture and as generative of a great many of the hierarchies governing modern societies. Following Lamont and Lareau, we should see formal schooling as shaping entire lifeworlds and subjectivities for whole groups of people, not merely influencing individual academic accomplishment. Work in progress by people like Elizabeth Armstrong, Amy Binder, and Shamus Khan is going in this direction I think.

Regarding methods, I think that we are in the early stages of a revolution in educational sociology, in which network models, data, and imagery will come to replace the individual- and cohort-level models of the status attainment tradition. Education is a fundamentally relational enterprise; it defines whole systems of social relationships. This is James Coleman’s generative idea, but we're just now beginning to touch it empirically.

Finally, network approaches and cultural theory have a natural affinity I think. I follow people like Omar Lizardo, Mustafa Emirbayer, and Dan McFarland on this.

You have conducted field work researching two fascinating educational processes: home schooling and college admissions. How did you decide to pursue this methodology, and what are the positive and negative aspects of this methodology for educational research?

I became an ethnographer because (1) I wasn't very good at quantitative methods and (2) I thought that quantitative models tended to elide or even throw away empirical complexity. I like complexity. Ethnography is good for that, but only on rare occasions does it enable practitioners to make claims about institution-level processes. When this happens we call the results classics. But it's a high-stakes game. That's why I'm moving in the direction of historical methods. They accommodate complexity, but they also enable scholars to plausibly make claims about system-level phenomena. Besides, ethnography takes huge
amounts of energy. It's a good method for young people. I think it gets much harder to do as one ages.

In your opinion, are the unanswered questions in the sociology of education today different than they were 30 years ago? What have we learned in recent years?

The sociology of education has three main storylines: (1) education socializes; (2) education credentializes; (3) education creates and maintains social inequality. In the last thirty years the great preponderance of our stories have been about inequality. I think we’ve gotten a bit repetitive, to be honest, and this storyline definitely is a hard sell in Washington and in the foundation world. Think about it: who wants to fund something that reproduces inequality?

With a few exceptions, our work on credentialing has ossified over the last couple of decades, and we've largely lost the credential vs. skills battle to educational economists, whose whole epistemology is predicated on the notion that formal schooling actually does produce skills. The wild popularity of Goldin and Katz' The Race between Education and Technology (Harvard 2008) is just one trace of this. Modern states may be impossible to govern without widespread faith in this idea. Socialization we've largely left to other fields, especially psychology. I'm optimistic that sociologists' growing interest in higher education might help us embrace socialization again. College kids spend the great majority of their time doing things other than studying. We all know this, but we've barely begun to take it seriously.

Questions asked by Kendra Bischoff
Doctoral Candidate, Stanford University
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Student Reports on the Pre-Conference in San Francisco

The mini-conference “New Directions in the Sociology of Education”, organized by Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Amy J. Binder, and Mitchell L. Stevens under the chairmanship of Claudia Buchmann, took place in San Francisco immediately preceding the Annual ASA Meeting (the conference program is still available at http://ed.stanford.edu/suse/events/new-directions-social-edu/index.html). It challenged young scholars to critically reconsider why sociologists study schools and educational processes; how the study of schools is generative for sociology generally; and how sociology can be made more useful for education policy. One of the main targets of the conference were advanced graduate students. Some of them comment below on their experiences at the event and reveal how well the organizers have accomplished their goals.

I found the ASA pre-conference to be helpful in many ways including professional development for those getting ready to enter the job market. I took advantage of the sessions on publishing your dissertation and finding work as an educational sociologist. These sessions provided firsthand experience and advice from established educational sociologists. You should not wait until you are done or almost done with your dissertation to think about publishing articles. If you keep this goal in mind throughout the dissertation process (from forming the idea to completion), you can submit articles for publication as you move toward the completion of your dissertation. Since the publication process can take a while from submission to print, it is beneficial to have papers in the pipeline while finishing your dissertation. When you are ready to consider the job market, there are multiple paths to take including a position in academia or research institutes. Whether you find work as a researcher at an institute or a professor at a university, you will use the skills that you developed during graduate school. Overall, the SOE pre-conference provided the opportunity for young scholars to join in the conversation with junior and senior scholars about sociology of education. Not only did the conversation include new directions in sociology of education but also how young scholars can establish themselves as part of the ongoing conversation. As the next generation of scholars, it is important for us to understand where sociology of education has been as well as where sociology of education may be going.

Elizabeth Covay
University of Notre Dame

The sociology of education pre-conference marked a transition for me from participating in a community of ideas to a community of scholars. It was an opportunity to put faces to names I had read and, more importantly, witness these scholars engage with one another regarding the pressing questions which will direct the future of the field. The mentoring lunch in particular paid dividends over the course of the weekend, in the form of ongoing conversations, project discussions, and personal encouragement. In all, the sociology of education pre-conference was a highlight of ASA.

Jeffrey Grigg
University of Wisconsin-Madison
I thought the education pre-conference was good, I am grateful I attended. There are many misconceptions graduate students eventually sort out about the mysteries of the peer-review process or navigating the role between scholarship and public policy that I think the conference, in a small way, helped clarify. Like any academic field, it is nuanced and forums to discuss this always help. The mentored lunch was a success given the amount of discussion but was hurt by its success too—it was really hard to hear. The true success of the pre-conference, for me, was the many discussions in the hallways and in the back after presentations. The informal talks have led to some emails, new insights, and best of all a better sense of connection with other soc of ed section members.

Benjamin Gibbs
Ohio State University (now Brigham Young University)

I came into the sociology of education pre-conference with a dissertation idea that was somewhat vaguely formulated, but left with a concrete idea of my research questions, the significance of the topic, and the particular literatures I plan to address. The day was full of opportunities to meet faculty and fellow graduate students at various institutions whose work relates to my own and with whom I was able to ‘pitch’ my idea and see what would ‘stick’. People were incredibly open and willing to share their knowledge and lessons learned from their own experiences, which continues to be invaluable as I further develop my dissertation topic. I have stayed in regular email contact with several of the graduate students/new faculty I met. Each has been an incredible resource and sounding board. It was also great to meet David Bills and get a sense for what he has in mind for the future of Soc of Ed and, of course, to reunite with old friends and mentors. All in all, it was an incredibly well organized day that facilitated many new insights.

Jayanti J. Owens
Princeton University

As an advanced graduate student in Sociology of Education, I experienced the recent Sociology of Education pre-conference as an invitation into the “inner sanctum” of our sub-discipline. Over lunch I had the opportunity to talk about my dissertation research and to hear from others with similar research interests. The questions others asked me reinvigorated my own thinking as I navigate the challenge of trying to put on paper the key findings from my last few years of research. I appreciated these opportunities to engage in informal conversations with colleagues from across the country and with individuals whose work I am familiar with but with whom I had not previously had the opportunity to speak directly. Indeed, the entire day from the morning conversation about how we view the future of Sociology of Education, to the concern expressed about the differential status accorded to qualitative and quantitative research methods, and finally to the heated debate Richard Arum sparked in the last afternoon about our roles and responsibilities as sociologists studying education all left me with the sense of belonging to a dynamic intellectual community of sociologists of education that I am pleased to be joining.

Marci Borenstein
New York University
Attending the SOE mini-conference was the highlight of my ASA weekend. I particularly enjoyed the plenary on directions SOE research should take (and relieved to find my dissertation not entirely in the wrong direction!), and will share some of that information with the hiring proposal committee I’m on this fall. The main theme I gleaned from the day was the importance of studying processes. Prudence Carter called for this when she asked us to study how schools operate dynamically, and how stratification occurs within a nominally integrated school. I see CJ Pascoe’s request for studying students’ social worlds as about process as well: what is the texture of a school day? In the breakout session on policy, Sara Goldrick-Rab and Michal Kurlaender gave us concrete advice about how to affect educational processes, and the totally fascinating session on net works with Dan McFarland, Craig Rawlings & David Diehl gave me a glimpse of brand new things we can do with and from data – in particular, McFarland’s call for “computational ethnography” is provocative. It was fascinating and intellectually stimulating for me to hear the tensions that came out between folks in the session on school reform – an insider’s glimpse into the processes behind the sociology of education! That – and the mentoring lunch where I got to meet face-to-face faculty whose work I’ve been reading for years – were particularly useful to me as I navigate my way into the subfield.

Audrey Devine Eller
Rutgers

Attending the Sociology of Education pre-conference was probably the best experience I had at ASA this year. I walked in a tiny bit late (thanks, BART!) and stopped in my tracks—how exciting to see such a large crowd of like-minded researchers. The panels were interesting and energizing, and the mentoring lunch was a great opportunity to meet face to face with scholars whose work I’d read and cited numerous times. Everyone I spoke to was uncommonly friendly and generous with advice. I also connected with a former grad school colleague and got a chance to discuss our common research interests and possibilities for future collaboration. Thanks to the section for sponsoring my attendance with a generous fee waiver, and for making the pre-conference such a valuable experience.

Sarah Ovink
University of California-Davis

The Sociology of Education Mini-Conference was an engaging event to kick off the 2009 annual meetings. The sessions were engaging and stimulating much discussion. I thoroughly enjoyed the publishing session with Amanda Lewis and Dennis Condron from Emory University. They focused on publishing books and journal articles from qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The mentor luncheon was an excellent idea, allowed graduate students to meet faculty, as well as interact with other graduate students to exchange ideas related to research and teaching. Altogether, I left this event with a good idea of where the field is going and I am confident that my work fits within this cutting edge paradigm. Mitchell Stevens and the rest of the planning committee did a good job organizing the mini-conference. It ran very smoothly and I look forward to attending this event in the future.

Rashawn Ray
Indiana University
Impressions from the ASA section reception
Section Award Winners 2009

Pierre Bourdieu Award for the Best Book 2009: Mitchell Stevens
by Sigal Alon

The winner of this year’s Pierre Bourdieu Best Book Award is “Creating a Class” by Mitchell Stevens. Stevens’ ethnographic work takes place in the admissions office of a selective liberal arts college where he spent a year and a half. By detailing the everyday life of admissions officers, including their paperwork and travels, Stevens uncovers the role of the agent in maintaining social stratification. Through his rich narrative, we learn how individual decision-making adds up to social reproduction. We observe how the college evaluates the applicants’ attributes; we discover the importance of the physical surroundings in attracting students; and we become painfully aware of how the college’s need to maintain its ranking dictates every decision. Finally, we recognize the complexity of the job of college admissions officers—the constant attempt to balance the demands of the football team and development office with their personal orientations toward rewarding merit, hardship, and diversity. In sum, this elegantly written book provides an empirically rich, theoretically informed account of a key player in the social transmission of privilege in higher education.

James Coleman Award for the Best Article 2009: Dough Downey, Paul von Hippel, and Melanie Hughes
by Tom DiPrete

The Coleman award committee consisted of Chandra Muller, George Farkas, Richard Breen and myself. After reading a number of fine education-related papers published in the past two years, we decided to give this year’s Coleman award to Doug Downey, Paul von Hippel, and Melanie Hughes for their article “Are ‘Failing’ Schools Really Failing? Using Seasonal Comparison to Evaluate School Effectiveness”. Their study proposes new strategies for evaluating the effects of schools on achievement. Downey et al argue that conventional measures of school effectiveness place too much emphasis on levels of current achievement, and they critique these approaches for inadequate attention to the differing student populations that schools serve. Learning-based measures are preferred, because they potentially show the impact of schools on change over time in achievement rates.
The real innovation of this paper is the development of what the authors call an "impact" measure, which exploits the fact that schools typically are on a nine-month calendar, and therefore allow separate estimates of academic growth in the summer months, when school is not in session. The estimate of academic growth during the summer months provides a baseline against which learning rates during the school year can be assessed. By subtracting the school-year learning rate from the summer learning rate, the authors obtain a purer measure of the value-added from the school itself. Downey et al.'s new measure turns out to be very consequential in the context of school assessment. They show that many schools which appear to be failing on the basis of achievement rates are not in fact failing when learning or impact criteria are used. Their paper is an important contribution because it directs our attention to focus on the potential of schools to improve student skills, and because it shows that many schools can and succeed at this goal even when their population of clients are largely disadvantaged.

**David Lee Stevenson Graduate Student Paper Award 2009: Kyle Longest**

*by Brian Powell*

The David Lee Stevenson Graduate Student Paper Award committee, consisting of Amy Langenkamp, Jennifer Lee, Josipa Roksa, and myself, received an unusually large number of submissions this year. The committee was impressed by both the high quality of the papers and the wide range of topics covered—among them, the implications of parental and grandparental wealth for private school attendance, schooling and citizen formation, neighborhood effects on educational attainment, social capital in elite private universities, oppositional culture theory, and educational experiences among children of immigrants. The diversity of topics and quality of papers speak to the vitality and future of scholarship in sociology of education.

The recipient of this year’s award is Kyle Longest for his paper, “*Popularity Lost: Identity Status and Its Consequences during the Transition to Adulthood.*” In this thoughtful, sociologically engaging and professionally done paper, Longest compares high-status (i.e., popular) and low-status youths. He finds that the putative advantages of being a high-status student are illusory. High-status youths do not fare better than their lower-status peers in academic achievement and, in fact, have higher rates of alcohol and marijuana usage. High-status in adolescence also has negative consequences beyond high school: it is a significant risk factor for substance abuse and disrupted education and employment roles in young adulthood. Kyle Longest just recently completed his doctorate at the University of North Carolina and joined the faculty at Furman University.
David Lee Stevenson Graduate Student Award 2009, honorable mention: Anne McDaniel

by Brian Powell

The committee also was so impressed with another paper that we decided to award honorable mention to Anne McDaniel for “The Influence of Gender Egalitarianism and the Structure of Education Systems on Cross-National Gender Differences in Educational Expectations.” In this innovative, technically sophisticated, and highly policy relevant paper, McDaniel examines how the educational expectations of youths have changed over time in over two dozen industrialized countries. She finds a consistent pattern across these countries: girls now have higher educational expectations than boys. She attributes this pattern in large measure to girls’ more positive attitudes toward schools. She also finds that the level of gender egalitarianism within a nation increases girls’ educational expectations, but slightly lowers boys’ expectations. Anne McDaniel currently is a doctoral student at Ohio State University where she is completing her dissertation, Women’s Rising Educational Attainment and the Growing Gender Gap in Higher Education in Industrialized Nations.
Call for 2010 Award Nominations

The Willard Waller Award
This award is given every three years to an individual who has had a career of distinguished scholarship in Sociology of Education. Nominations should include a description of the career contributions that make the candidate deserving of the award. Please send nominations to Award Committee Chair, Chandra Muller, University of Texas, email: cmuller@prc.utexas.edu. The deadline for nominations is February 1, 2010.

The Pierre Bourdieu Award
This award is for the best book in the Sociology of Education published in 2008 or 2009. Nominations, including copies of the book (either print version or PDF), should be sent to all committee members (listed below). Any questions regarding the award should be directed to the Award Committee Chair, Doug Downey, Ohio State University, email: downey.32@sociology.osu.edu. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2010.

The Pierre Bourdieu Award Committee is comprised of:

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The James Coleman Award
This award is for the best article published in the field of Sociology of Education in 2008 or 2009. Please send nominations and an electronic copy of the nominated paper to the Award Committee Chair, Meredith Phillips, UCLA, email: Meredith.Phillips@ucla.edu. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2010.

The David Lee Stevenson Award
This award is for the best paper by a graduate student on a topic in education. The author (or first author) must be a graduate student at the time of submission and all authors must have been graduate students when the paper was written. The paper may be unpublished, under review or published but all papers submitted for this award must have been written in the past two years. Papers submitted to last year's competition are not eligible. Nominations from members of the section and self-nominations are welcome; nominees are not required to be section members. Please send an electronic copy of the paper to the Award Committee Chair, Susan Dumais, Louisiana State University, email: dumais@lsu.edu. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2010.
News from Section Members: Books

No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal. Race and Class in Elite College Admission and Campus Life by Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford

Against the backdrop of today’s increasingly multicultural society, are America’s elite colleges admitting and successfully educating a diverse student body? No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal pulls back the curtain on the selective college experience and takes a rigorous and comprehensive look at how race and social class impact each stage—from application and admission, to enrollment and student life on campus. Arguing that elite higher education contributes to both social mobility and inequality, the authors investigate such areas as admission advantages for minorities, academic achievement gaps tied to race and class, unequal burdens in paying for tuition, and satisfaction with college experiences. The book’s analysis is based on data provided by the National Survey of College Experience, collected from more than nine thousand students who applied to one of ten selective colleges between the early 1980s and late 1990s. The authors explore the composition of applicant pools, factoring in background and "selective admission enhancement strategies"—including AP classes, test-prep courses, and extracurriculars—to assess how these strengthen applications. On campus, the authors examine roommate choices, friendship circles, and degrees of social interaction, and discover that while students from different racial and class circumstances are not separate in college, they do not mix as much as one might expect. The book encourages greater interaction among student groups and calls on educational institutions to improve access for students of lower socioeconomic status.


Comprehensive, contemporary, and cross-cultural in perspective, this text provides a sociological approach to education—from several theoretical approaches and their practical application, to current educational issues, to the structure and processes that make education systems work. New to this edition is co-author Floyd Hammack from New York University who brings his expertise in secondary education and its links with higher education.

This text uses the open systems model as a framework. It shows the formal organization of schools with structure, goals and processes; the informal organization with hidden curriculum, organization climate, etc.; the external environment that influences what goes on in the school, including financing, parent(s), community interest groups, etc.; processes such as stratification and change; higher education. Diagrams show interrelationships between topics.
Sociology for Educators in the Post 9/11 World  
by Edith W. King with Jennifer A. Thompson  
In this book, the lens of eminent social thinkers’ writings are brought to bear on education at all levels—elementary, secondary, and higher education. After an introductory chapter, the book is divided into three parts. Part One contains sociological thought from the Pre-9/11 world, the theories of 20th century sociologists, Robert K. Merton, David Riesman, Erving Goffman, Elise Boulding and anthropologist, Margaret Mead are exemplified by anecdotes, stories, and accounts drawn from educational settings. Part Two continues with three of the classical social thinkers of the 19th century, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx, applying their theories to schools, classrooms, and higher education settings. Part Three, “Women and Social Thought for the Post-9/11 World”, covers the extensive writings of feminist educator, Peggy McIntosh and her adherents as central to education in the Post-9/11 era. An epilogue concludes the volume emphasizing sociological perspectives for contemporary educators.

Blood and Culture. Youth, Right-Wing Extremism, and National Belonging in Contemporary Germany by Cynthia Miller-Idriss  
Over the past decade, immigration and globalization have significantly altered Europe’s cultural and ethnic landscape, foregrounding questions of national belonging. In Blood and Culture, Cynthia Miller-Idriss provides a rich ethnographic analysis of how patterns of national identity are constructed and transformed across generations. Drawing on research she conducted at German vocational schools between 1999 and 2004, Miller-Idriss examines how the working-class students and their middle-class, college-educated teachers wrestle with their different views about citizenship and national pride. The cultural and demographic trends in Germany are broadly indicative of those underway throughout Europe, yet the country’s role in the Second World War and the Holocaust makes national identity, and particularly national pride, a difficult issue for Germans. Because the vocational-school teachers are mostly members of a generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s and hold their parents’ generation responsible for National Socialism, many see national pride as symptomatic of fascist thinking. Their students, on the other hand, want to take pride in being German. Miller-Idriss describes a new understanding of national belonging emerging among young Germans—one in which cultural assimilation takes precedence over blood or ethnic heritage. Moreover, she argues that teachers’ well-intentioned, state-sanctioned efforts to counter nationalist pride often create a backlash, making radical right-wing groups more appealing to their students. Miller-Idriss argues that the state’s efforts to shape national identity are always tempered and potentially transformed as each generation reacts to the official conception of what the nation “ought” to be.
Lives in Science. How Institutions Affect Academic Careers  
by Joseph C. Hermanowicz

What can we learn when we follow people over the years and across the course of their professional lives? Joseph C. Hermanowicz asks this question specifically about scientists and answers it here by tracking fifty-five physicists through different stages of their careers at a variety of universities across the country. He explores these scientists’ shifting perceptions of their jobs to uncover the meanings they invest in their work, when and where they find satisfaction, how they succeed and fail, and how the rhythms of their work change as they age. His candid interviews with his subjects, meanwhile, shed light on the ways career goals are and are not met, on the frustrations of the academic profession, and on how one deals with the boredom and stagnation that can set in once one is established. An in-depth study of American higher education professionals eloquently told through their own words, Hermanowicz’s keen analysis of how institutions shape careers will appeal to anyone interested in life in academia.

Professing to Learn. Creating Tenured Lives and Careers in the American Research University  
by Anna Neumann

Research, teaching, service, and public outreach -- all are aspects of being a tenured professor. But this list of responsibilities is missing a central component: actual scholarly learning -- disciplinary knowledge that faculty teach, explore in research, and share with the academic community. How do professors pursue such learning when they must give their attention as well to administrative and other obligations? Professing to Learn explores university professors' scholarly growth and learning in the years immediately following the award of tenure, a crucial period that has a lasting impact on the academic career. Some launch from this point to multiple accomplishments and accolades, while others falter, their academic pursuits stalled. What contributes to these different outcomes? Drawing on interviews with seventy-eight professors in diverse disciplines and fields at five major American research universities, Anna Neumann describes how tenured faculty shape and disseminate their own disciplinary knowledge while attending committee meetings, grading exams, holding office hours, administering programs and departments, and negotiating with colleagues. By exploring the intellectual activities pursued by these faculty and their ongoing efforts to develop and define their academic interests, Professing to Learn directs the attention of higher education professionals and policy makers to the core aim of higher education: the creation of academic knowledge through research, teaching, and service.
Changing for good: Sustaining school improvement.
by Melissa Evans-Andris

Research, The recent emphasis on educational reform has lead to many books on initiating school improvement, but relatively few on how to sustain reform efforts so that improvements have a lasting impact. Changing for Good offers a detailed examination of current schoolwide reform efforts and identifies strategies for introducing, managing, and sustaining successful school renewal programs. Based on a six-year study of 74 schools, the book provides a model for generating the necessary district support, schoolwide leadership, teacher commitment, and performance outcomes to cultivate improvement that lasts. Applicable at the state, district, and school level, this model helps readers:

– Align reform efforts with educational standards and accountability guidelines
– Create a research-based improvement plan
– Support change by developing a shared vision
– Promote distributed leadership
– Celebrate gains to encourage cooperation

The most beneficial school improvements are the ones that endure. With this exceptional resource, educational administrators and leaders can create a school environment that embraces meaningful change, sustains positive reform, and ensures successful learning outcomes.

News from Section Members: Awards and Announcements

Sanford M. (Sandy) Dornbusch, Professor emeritus at Stanford University, has received the Eggers Award for lifetime achievement by an alumnus from Syracuse University. Also, the Stanford class of 1984 voted him one of their favorite teachers at their 25th reunion.

The Stanford Sociology Department recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the creation of the modern Department in 1959.

The Spencer Dissertation Fellowship 2009-2010 has been awarded to the following student section members: Lori Ann Delale-O’Connor (Northwestern University). Simone Ispa-Landa (Harvard University), Fabian T. Pfeffer (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and Jennifer Lisa Stephan (Northwestern University)
Call for Papers: International Sociological Association World Congress
Gothenburg (Sweden), July 11-17, 2010

Research Committee on Sociology of Education RC04
Programme Coordinators: Ari Antikainen & A. Gary Dworkin

The RC04 program for the 2010 ISA World Congress of Sociology will consist of the following education-relevant sessions. All persons interested in presenting a paper in one of the sessions must submit an abstract (250 word maximum) to the session organizer by November 15, 2009. Session organizers will select the papers for their sessions and inform submitters by January 31, 2010.

Sessions (additional information see: http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rc04.htm)

• Global agendas and national and regional configurations: New ways of regulation in education policies
• Sociology of adult education
• The meanings of schooling
• Transitions from school to work
• A Critique of educational reforms at the dawn of the 21st century in developing, under-developed, and non-western societies: Theoretical and empirical implications
• Educational accountability in global perspective: challenges for developed nations
• Old and new conflicts in education
• Educational futures: lessons from the sociology of knowledge
• Leading society to a sustainable future: education and the crisis of sustainability
• Accountability and consequences for funding higher education
• Civics and citizenship education in a globalizing world
• Paulo Freire and the sociology of education
• Development of sociology in higher education
• Europeanization and governance of higher education: Evidence and challenges
• The Condition of teaching: teachers as workers, teachers as professionals
• Vocational education
• Education, stratification and poverty: Manifest and latent inequalities
• Leisure and education
• Changing forms of university-society relationship
• Pure vs applied research? Challenges confronted by higher education institutions and research centers
Call for Papers: Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociology Society
Atlanta, August 12-15, 2010

How Flat is Rural? Diversity in the Age of Globalization
Program Chair: Mark Schafer, Louisiana State University

Thomas Friedman’s influential book The World is Flat makes several important points about the changing social, political, and economic conditions in the 21st century. His thesis is that the decreasing cost of global telecommunication and other communication technology has lowered the barriers to inter-national competition. The world is becoming “flat” in the sense that distant places are becoming closely connected. Those connections link different cultures, religions, and races and ethnicities together, thus creating ever more diversity even in formerly homogenous, atomized places. The places and people who can adapt to new, ever-changing conditions will do best.

Diversity in this new, global era goes beyond race and ethnicity to include social classes, gender, and generations. While technological changes can level the playing field, the fast pace of change presents both opportunities and challenges. Having “won out” at a given point in time will not guarantee a long run of success; the constantly and rapidly changing conditions require continuous adjustment and adaptation.

The theme of the 2010 RSS meetings aims to highlight the consequences of these dynamics for rural areas by asking the question, how are rural areas positioned in this new age of globalization? I hope that the theme stimulates research that considers how rural areas can benefit from the new conditions for development.

February 1, 2001 Deadline for submitting proposals and abstract on www.ruralsociology.us
July 21, 2010 Deadline for hotel reservations at conference rate
July 26, 2010 Deadline for uploading papers

All paper abstracts are submitted online http://www.ruralsociology.us. Submissions will be evaluated by chairs of the Rural Sociological Society’s Research Interest Groups (RIGs). Education-related proposals will be evaluated by the Education and Work RIG (Chair: Kai Schafft, Penn State College of Education).

For more information check http://www.ruralsociology.us
AERA Grant & Fellowships

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) invites applications for the following programs:

AERA-AIR (A²) Fellows Program

The AERA-AIR (A²) Fellows Program aims to build the talent pool of high skilled education researchers experienced in large scale studies in a major research organization. A² fellows will receive mentoring from a diverse group of highly recognized researchers and practitioners in a variety of substantive areas in education. Fellows will hone their skills in all aspects of the research process from proposal development through writing and presentations. Up to three fellows are selected annually for a two year, rotational position at AIR in Washington, DC. More information is available at http://www.aera.net/fellowships/?id=698. Application deadline: December 15, 2009.

AERA-ETS Fellowship Program in Measurement

This fellowship is designed to provide learning opportunities and practical experience to recent doctoral degree recipients and to early career research scientists in areas such as educational measurement, assessment design, psychometrics, statistical analyses, large-scale evaluations, and other studies directed toward explaining student progress and achievement. Up to two fellows will be selected for this rotational research position at ETS’s facilities in Princeton, NJ. Information about the AERA-ETS fellowship is available at http://www.aera.net/fellowships/?id=702. Application deadline: December 15, 2009.

AERA Grants Program

The AERA Grants Program provides dissertation support and small grants for researchers who conduct studies of education policy and practice using quantitative methods and data from the large-scale data sets sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Science Foundation. More information is available at http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/.

AERA Minority Fellowship Program

AERA offers dissertation support through the AERA Minority Dissertation Fellowship in Education Research. This program offers doctoral fellowships to enhance the competitiveness of outstanding minority scholars for academic appointments at major research universities by supporting their conducting education research and by providing mentoring and guidance toward completion of their doctoral studies. This program is targeted for members of racial and ethnic groups historically underrepresented in higher education (e.g., African Americans, Alaskan Natives, American Indians, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders). Further information about the Fellowship is available at http://www.aera.net/fellowships/?id=88. Application deadline: December 15, 2009.
AERA Training Workshops

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) invites applications for the following workshops:

AERA Institute on Statistical Analysis for Education Policy
The Institute’s goal is to help develop a critical mass of U.S. education researchers using National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and NSF data sets for basic, policy, and applied research. Hands-on training is provided in the use of large-scale national data sets, with special emphasis on using these data sets for policy-related research in education. The Institute will be held on May 20–22, 2010, in Washington, DC, and will focus on education policy issues, such as mathematics achievement, that can be addressed using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K). Those selected for participation will receive support covering the Institute’s fees, housing, transportation to Washington, DC, and per diem for the dates of the Institute. The deadline for applications is January 6, 2010. For submission information see http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/stat_institute/SIFly.html.

AERA Statistics Institute for Faculty
The Institute’s goal is to help develop a critical mass of U.S. education researchers using large-scale federal data sets, especially those sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), NSF, and other federal agencies. It aims to “train the trainers,” enabling more education researchers to take advantage of these rich data resources. The AERA Statistics Institute for Faculty will be held June 18–20, 2010, at Stanford, CA. The deadline for applications is January 6, 2010. For submissions information see http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/stat_institute/SIFacFly.html.

AERA Undergraduate Student Education Research Training Workshop
This workshop is designed to build the talent pool of undergraduate students who plan to pursue doctorate degrees in education research or in disciplines and fields that examine education issues. Applicants are sought who have potential and interest in pursuing careers as education researchers, faculty members, or other professionals who contribute to the research field. Senior researchers and faculty from both academic institutions and applied research organizations (i.e., ACT, the American Institutes for Research, Educational Testing Service, the College Board, and the Urban Institute) will introduce education research as a field and share their area of expertise and knowledge with the fellows. Workshop activities will also focus on exploring graduate education, applying to graduate school, and beginning a career in education research. Fellows will be paired with a faculty member and a graduate student who will serve as program mentors. In addition to attending the workshop, fellows will attend preselected paper sessions and presentations during the AERA Annual Meeting. Dates: Friday, April 30–Sunday, May 2, AERA 2010 Annual Meeting, Denver. Application deadline: December 15, 2009.
Anne McDaniel will take over as the newsletter editor with the next issue. Anne is already an active contributor to the field and promises to be a great contributor to the section as well. She also has extensive experience in the “publishing business” as an editorial associate for the American Sociological Review. I am very happy to hand over the newsletter to her knowing that she will continue to develop it further as an interesting and widely read publication. I am looking forward to the next issues! It has been great fun for me to help re-erect the newsletter and I thank all contributors of this year’s issues for filling it with great content.

Fabian Pfeffer

Submit contributions for the next newsletter to
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