A Note from the Chair

Catherine Riegle-Crumb

Welcome to the newest edition of the SOE newsletter! We are a little late getting it out this year, but we have been hard at work planning a pre-conference for this year’s Annual Meeting. See details on the next page, and links for registration and scholarships will be coming soon via email. A special thanks to the pre-conference committee members: Jessica Calarco, Jacob Hibel, Yasmyn Irizarry, and Linn Posey-Maddox. In this issue, we also have an update from Linda Renzulli as the Editor of SOE, sociological perspectives about school choice from Mark Berends, Jennifer Jennings, Douglas Lauen, and Amy Stuart Wells, and finally, book announcements.

SOE Journal Update
An update from Linda Renzulli, Editor of Sociology of Education.

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What if You Had Fifteen Minutes with Betsy DeVos to Talk About School Choice?

Page 4

Book Announcements
New and upcoming books from section members!

Page 7
9:00-11:00am
Research and the Conceptualization of Race in the Sociology of Education
Featured Speakers: John Diamond (Wisconsin); Yasmyn Irizarry (UT Austin); Jennifer C. Lee (Indiana); Amanda Lewis (Illinois-Chicago); Nancy Lopez (New Mexico);

11:30-12:45pm
Focus on Policy: A Lunch Presentation by Bob Kim (Rutgers)

1:00-3:00pm
Public Scholarship and How Sociologists Can Address Racial Inequalities in Schooling
Featured Speakers: L’Heureux Lewis-McCoy (CUNY); Tressie McMillan Cottom (Virginia Commonwealth University); Victor Rios (UC Santa Barbara)

3:30-5:30m
Race and Its Relationship to Teaching, Mentoring, and Service
Featured Speakers: Amy Binder (UC San Diego); Jomills Braddock (University of Miami); Natasha Warikoo (Harvard); George Wimberly (AERA)

5:30-7:00pm
Reception

travel awards will be available for graduate students of color
registration information will be available soon

with generous support from the WT Grant Foundation and the Spencer Foundation
Let me start by saying that the state of *Sociology of Education* is strong. The breadth, quality, and methodological robustness of the work submitted to *Sociology of Education* is excellent. In the last year, we have published a diverse set of manuscripts analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. As you can see from the word cloud below, we see a great deal of variation in the submissions. Our amazing managing editor, Rebecca Boylan, created a word cloud from the keywords of 2017 manuscript submissions. This provides a visualization of the type of work submitted to the journal. I am proud to say that the work submitted and published covers and crosses multiple intellectual traditions and yet it all aims to make novel contributions to our understanding of how schools and the educational system, broadly defined, contribute to or ameliorate inequality, advantage, cultural awareness, global connections, and workplace mobility.

The number of submission remains high and climbing. Last year we had 189 new submissions and we are on pace so far in 2018 to have near 250 submissions— a record. As of this time, April 2018, we have already received 80 original manuscript submissions this year. Our acceptance rate, though, remains low at about 10 percent. The journal reviewers are among the best reviewers the discipline has and keep the standards of this journal high. In 2017, my editorial team published 18 articles, of which 5 were primarily qualitative pieces and 13 were quantitative, and we used the entire page allotment provided by ASA and Sage. I hope to continue to add a fifth article to each issue and ultimately publish 20 articles a year. Our balance of quantitative and qualitative pieces reflects the submissions we receive—approximately 25 percent of new submissions last year were qualitative, 70 percent were quantitative and 5 percent used mixed methods.

This year ASA allowed the journal to hire an undergraduate social media specialist to help get the journal’s work into social space. When I wrote my application for the editorship, I wanted to promote the work we publish, but quickly learned it was a bigger job than expected and one for a more tech savvy person than I. I am delighted to work with and give this opportunity to Jordan Foster—a sociology major at Purdue. When an article is accepted, we are now asking the authors to contribute to the public dissemination of the scholarship. Authors have been having fun with this and the response has been great.

If you are active on social media please connect with us by liking or following our new accounts:
- Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/Soc.ofEducation/](https://www.facebook.com/Soc.ofEducation/)
- Twitter: Soc. of Education [@SocEducation](https://twitter.com/SocEducation)
- Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/sociologyofeducation/](https://www.instagram.com/sociologyofeducation/)

We need you to like, share, comment, tweet, and retweet!

Finally, the work of this journal can only be as strong as it is because of the scholars, reviewers, editorial board, deputy editors (Thad Domina, Karolyn Tyson, Jennifer Lee, and Katerina Bodovski) and managing editor (Rebecca Boylan). Additional thanks goes out to the many mentors who are helping create the next generation of scholars whose work contributes to the sociology of education. I am fortunate to see that work in action as I read innovative and creative work done by graduate students, junior faculty, and their teams. Keep it coming!
We asked four prominent sociologists (and section members, of course) to weigh in on the following question: "Suppose you had 15 minutes with Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education. What is the most important thing you would want to convey to her about the issue of school choice from the perspective of Sociology of Education?"

All of the contributors bring their expertise, grounded in their own research, to this hypothetical conversation with our current Secretary of Education. Mark Berends points to the need to place the issue of school choice within the larger context of our nation’s public schools and the educational problems facing this country, including issues of civil rights. Jennifer Jennings’ comments center on how increasing access to information might (or might not) lessen inequality, and points to the need for district support to level the playing field. Douglas Lauen’s comments focus on the importance of holding schools accountable and examining how and why some charter schools are successful. Finally, Amy Stuart Wells brings attention to the role of school agents in choosing who goes to which schools, contributing to the maintenance of segregated schools. Although they differ in their perspectives, I think we can all agree that it would be a wonderful thing for our nation’s students if each of our contributors did in fact get 15 minutes to talk to Betsy DeVos, and if she listened to and was informed by research in the sociology of education.

Dr. Mark Berends
Professor of Sociology; Director, Center for Research on Educational Opportunity (CREO)
Faculty Fellow, Institute for Educational Initiatives
University of Notre Dame

If I had a few minutes with Secretary Betsy DeVos, I would offer her the following advice.

First, maintain perspective. Remember that 90 percent of students in the U.S. attend public schools. (Of those, only 5 percent attend public charter schools.) The remaining 10 percent are composed of religious private (4.7%), Catholic (3.7%), and nonsectarian private schools (2.5%). Public school students need our attention.

Second, recognize that choice is not a panacea. Although school choice—particularly voucher and tax credit programs—is a pet project of this administration, it is not the answer to educational problems in the U.S. Everyone agrees that all students should have quality choices, but we have a lot of work to do in terms of grasping exactly which choices (especially charters and voucher programs) are best for them.
Third, consider context. Charter school research tells us that some schools are helping students (e.g., in Boston, NYC, Indianapolis), while others are harming them (e.g., virtual charter schools). Voucher program studies previously suggested that student learning either did not differ in voucher schools, or had slight positive effects—in some places, at certain times, for some groups (e.g., African Americans). More recent statewide studies (e.g., IN, OH, LA), however, reveal significant negative effects, especially early in the program. What is going on? Understanding the social context for success and failure is essential to moving educational policy and practice forward.

Fourth, attend to more pressing educational problems. The U.S. continues to be a laggard in the global educational competition. We can turn this around by focusing our energy on issues such as high-quality early childhood education, post-secondary education costs and wellbeing of students, and professional development for teachers who are dealing with increasingly diverse classrooms.

Fifth, uphold students' civil rights. This administration’s actions to dismantle the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Education and its push to get rid of regulations will have serious consequences for many students in this nation. These actions need to stop. Inequalities are real. Protections need to be preserved.

Finally, do your homework. The 60 Minutes interview revealed a striking naiveté about public education in the U.S. It also revealed the need for some speech lessons. This is not a personal attack. Just advice. A deep dive into all that plagues our nation’s education system and a strong team of expert advisors will boost not only the office of the Secretary of Education but the schools that serve our children. There’s still time.

Let's see what tomorrow brings.

Dr. Jennifer Jennings
Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton University

In cities like New York, Chicago, and New Orleans, all students must apply to high school. Existing studies demonstrate that low-income kids are more likely to apply and match to lower-performing schools. Many have hypothesized that equalizing families’ access to information may reduce these disparities.

In New York City, our team (Sean Corcoran, Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, Sarah Cohodes, and I) conducted a field experiment in 165 middle schools serving almost 20,000 students to determine whether information delivered directly to 8th graders would alter their school choices and matches, and ultimately their success in high school and college. We found that providing simplified information about school options did decrease students' likelihood of matching to the lowest performing high schools. In other words, students did use the information. However, because both more and less advantaged students benefitted from these interventions, they did not reduce inequality in school matches by income or race, though we did find that kids living in households that did not speak English benefited more than those in English-speaking households.
The real test of the equalizing potential of information will come from following these kids’ high school and college outcomes. For example, if school effects are substantially larger for disadvantaged students, these interventions may reduce inequality in attainment outcomes even as increased information had similar effects on the high school matches of both groups. For the time being, these results suggest that districts may need to implement more targeted and intensive supports to help level the playing field for school choice.

Dr. Douglas L. Lauen
Associate Professor of Public Policy and Sociology
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The main problem in America’s schools today is that there is not enough inspiration. Every child deserves to be inspired by the curriculum, the teaching, and the environments they are in for many hours a day. Some children are inspired by schools with all of these elements, but not many. Why? Because these elements require coordination and action on the part of many different entities – state officials, district officials, principals, teachers, parents, taxpayers – to carry out.

One rationale for school choice is that public education has become sclerotic because it is bound down by so many rules and regulations. The image of America’s public schools as Gulliver bound by the Liliputian’s ropes is an apt one for anyone who has sat on a school board or attended a faculty meeting.

But what has our country’s experimentation with school choice taught us? Is expanding school choice going to necessarily lead to more inspiration? Inspiration is a tough thing to measure. So maybe this is not a fair question, but I think it is the key one to ask.

Here is what we know, in a nutshell. There is no denying the remarkable impacts of No Excuses charters on test scores, especially since there have been high quality randomized controlled trials on these types of schools. The jury is still out on the long term effects on college completion, wages, and many other important outcomes. And there may be unanticipated negative consequences of the disciplinary practices and the militaristic school culture of these schools that could outweigh the positive benefits on test scores.

But, the average charter is nothing like a No-Excuses charter. And, in general, the larger the sample size of charter schools in the study, the smaller the test score effect. Nationwide, the average charter school does not outperform its nearby traditional public schools, although there is some evidence that charters may be more effective for underrepresented minorities, poor, and students with limited English proficiency than for their more advantaged white peers.

Charter school effects also vary a lot across cities, districts, and states. In the District of Columbia, New Orleans, Massachusetts, and your home state of Michigan, charters outperform traditional public schools. In other places, charters do less well, such as in Pennsylvania and Arizona. I suspect this has do with authorizing practices, accountability, and the relative quality of the counterfactual options.
So, we need to know a lot more about what makes some charter schools work well and spread those innovations to traditional public schools. I thought the implicit bargain with charter schools was this: more freedom from regulation in exchange for greater accountability. Let a thousand flowers bloom, but every once in a while pull up the flowers that don’t bloom. But in many states authorizers are loath to shut down schools for poor results. And in some states, they have a financial conflict of interest in keeping them open!

And what of vouchers? After being left for dead, there has been a resurgence in voucher programs across the states. The early results from one of the newer programs in Louisiana are quite negative. North Carolina has a voucher program that cannot be evaluated by anyone because no one is allowed to enter these private religious programs and students do not take the state tests. This wouldn’t be a huge worry if this was not a major public investment, but this year $27 Million has been spent and the state legislature has set aside over $100 million dollars to support this program in the future.

Some would argue that parents provide the accountability. They can, and should, vote with their feet. But once parents make a choice it is hard for them to unmake that choice. For some of the same reasons that local officials fail to act when faced with a tough decision to pull a school’s charter, parents may hesitate to make the tough choice too.

Apologies to Milton Friedman, but schools are not like restaurants. If someone makes poor choices about a restaurant, they get a bad hamburger. If someone makes poor choices about schools, then a child suffers in the short and long run. It is in the national interest to support a strong educational system of great schools that inspire children. Whether public, voucher, or charter, schools should be held to a high standard and reformed, turned around, or closed if they fail in this important duty.

So choice without government accountability is an empty promise. To argue that the market will provide good schools if government just gets out of the way is nonsense. Governments make markets work with good institutions, laws, enforcement, and rules. And because we all have a stake in the education of children, accountability must be a part of the promise that school choice has to offer.

Amy Stuart Wells
Professor of Sociology and Education
Teachers College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University

For the last two years, my research team and I have been working with neighborhood public schools in New York City located areas of intense gentrification and rapid charter school expansion. Our project, called the Public Good, uses systematic research to help parents, educators and our team, understand the ways in which racial and social class privilege operates in these spaces and in the school choice process. Our goal is to work alongside educators and parents to explore whether the “de facto” diverse public schools in gentrifying neighborhoods can, through research-based engagement, become genuinely integrated in their school culture, school decision-making and practices, and their pedagogical approaches.
We have learned two important lessons from our sociological analysis of the data we have collected:

1. The reputations of public schools are in large part defined by the race and class of the students who attend them, and parents make choices based on reputation versus the reality of the curriculum, pedagogy or sense of a caring community found in a school. Working against this norm in a highly stratified society in which we measure schools and students almost exclusively by standardized tests that too often correlate with race and class is difficult but incredibly worthwhile work. School choice policies that do not highlight the educational benefits to all students who attend racially and ethnically diverse public schools conducting the socio-cultural, political and curricular work of meaningful integration are perpetuating segregation. The uneven playing field of charter-versus-public school choice makes this work all the more difficult.

2. Charter schools in New York City in most cases have far more choice of students than students have of charter schools. And more importantly, charter schools have much more control over their enrollments – at the admissions and the expulsion stages of the enrollment process – than do nearby public schools. When you examine the charter school recruitment and deportation processes through the eyes of families and educators in nearby public schools you are forced to rethink the notion that there is a level playing field in school choice processes. We have heard and witnessed strategic charter school recruitment of high-achieving (as measured by test scores only) students and the various bribes that are offered – backpacks, iPads, etc. We have heard and witnessed the charter school refugees – those students who do not perform well on the tests who are pushed out via harassment techniques or expelled. We know that this push-out process ALWAYS happens well into the school year after the NYC DOE does its enrollment counts and allocates funds accordingly. The public school educators accurately predict the arrival of the charter school student refugees shortly after the enrollment counts and after the pre-testing of students in grades 3-8, making the public schools less stable and underfunded. Parents of students who are forced to leave the charter schools will tell you that once their children are labeled as low-scoring on the tests, many of the charter school educators pick on them and write them up on trumped up discipline charges or threaten to hold them back a year in school until they leave.

This, Ms. DeVos, is what school choice looks like from the ground-floor level. Nothing you have said in your position of authority reflects your understanding of these issues that make preparing our children for the 21st Century in racially, ethnically and culturally diverse public schools so difficult. Should you like to learn more about the sociology of school choice, please let me know.
New Book Announcements from Section Members:

Daniel Davis
Contingent Academic Labor

Contingent Academic Labor is a concise guide that offers higher education professionals a way to measure the degree of equality taking place in work environments for non-tenure track faculty across institutional settings. It frames the relevant issues and examines the nationwide situation facing contingent faculty across the professional landscape. The goal is to review contingent faculty treatment, and offer a standardized way to identify both equitable and unjust practices that impact adjunct faculty and their students by extension. The main feature of this guide is The Contingent Labor Conditions Score, a tool to help evaluate current labor practices that impact adjuncts in both positive and negative ways. The report card measures 3 areas of labor conditions:

- **Material Equity**: Pay, job security and benefits
- **Professional Equity**: Opportunities for advancement, professional development, academic freedom, sense of professional inclusion, and job satisfaction
- **Social Equity**: Gender and race parity between contingent and non-contingent faculty in proportion to the population served

This book will be useful for administrators and labor organizers alike in assessing the degree of exploitation, or empowerment, in their own institution. The Contingent Labor Conditions Score, as a standardized tool, will serve audiences on both sides of the discussion in creating positive steps forward, improving not only contingent faculty working conditions, but ultimately improving student outcomes.
Michael Gaddis  
Audit Studies: Behind the Scenes with Theory, Method and Nuance

This book offers practical instruction on the use of audit studies in the social sciences. Readers will learn how to implement an audit study to examine a variety of questions in their own research. These experiments allow researchers to make strong causal claims and explore questions that are often difficult to answer with observational data. Audit studies also stand as the single best way to conduct research on discrimination, particularly in employment and housing markets. This book features chapters from sociologists, economists, and other experts who have employed this powerful and flexible tool. The authors in this book explore the history of and theory behind research using this method, various methodological issues, and more nuanced aspects that often get left on the cutting room floor of journal publication.

In the first part – The Theory Behind and History of Audit Studies – the authors cover a wide range of history, explain why we should conduct audit studies, examine the connections between audit studies and activism, and outline what researchers have uncovered about labor market processes using audit studies in the past decade. In the second part – The Method of Audit Studies: Design, Implementation, and Analysis – the experts provide guidance on designing your own audit study, discuss the challenges and best practices regarding email, review extensive issues of validity, and consider the technical setup of matching procedures. In the final part – Nuance in Audit Studies: Context, Mechanisms, and the Future – the authors focus on more nuanced aspects of audit studies and address limitations and challenges, examine the use of context to explore mechanisms, and consider the value of variation.
Helen Forbes-Mewett
The New Security

*The New Security* places the concept of ‘security’ under the spotlight to analyse its meaning in an original and contemporary context. In so doing, Forbes-Mewett revisits the notion from the perspectives of individuals and communities to understand what security means in our culturally diverse, contemporary society. Chapters highlight the extent of the shift of traditional uses of the term from the established perspective of international relations to a more commonly used concept which now broadly relates to many aspects of peoples’ everyday experiences.

Based on empirical studies of security in relation to housing, employment, food, personal security and campus settings in times of perceived heightened risk, this book presents new and different ways of thinking about security to demonstrate how we need to expand the dialogue surrounding the concept. Drawing on empirical research to describe, analyse and reposition the concept of security to have meaning in diverse everyday contexts, this methodological and insightful text will be of particular interest to scholars and students of criminological theory, security studies and sociology.
Ranita Ray

The Making of a Teenage Service Class

In *The Making of a Teenage Service Class*, Ranita Ray uncovers the pernicious consequences of focusing on risk behaviors such as drug use, gangs, violence, and teen parenthood as the key to ameliorating poverty. Ray recounts the three years she spent with sixteen poor black and brown youth, documenting their struggles to balance school and work while keeping commitments to family, friends, and lovers. Hunger, homelessness, untreated illnesses, and long hours spent traveling between work, school, and home disrupted their dreams of upward mobility. While families, schools, nonprofit organizations, academics, and policy makers stress risk behaviors in their efforts to end the cycle of poverty, Ray argues that this strategy reinforces class and racial hierarchies and diverts resources that could better support marginalized youth’s efforts to reach their educational and occupational goals.
In *Human Targets*, Rios takes us to the streets of California, where we encounter young people who find themselves criminalized in school and on the streets. We follow young gang members into schools, homes, community organizations, and detention facilities, watch them interact with police, grow up to become fathers, get jobs, get rap sheets—and in some cases get killed. What is it that sets apart young people who succeed and survive from the ones who don’t? Rios makes a powerful case that the traditional good kid/bad kid, street kid/decent kid dichotomy is much too simplistic, arguing instead that authorities and institutions help create these identities—and that they can play an instrumental role in providing young people with the resources for shifting between roles. In Rios’s account, to be a poor Latino youth is to be a human target—victimized and considered an enemy by others, viewed as a threat to law enforcement and schools, and burdened by stigma, disrepute, and punishment. That has to change. This is not another sensationalistic account of gang members. Instead, the book is a powerful look at how authority figures succeed—and fail—at seeing the multi-faceted identities of at-risk youths, youths who succeed—and fail—at demonstrating to the system that they are ready to change their lives.
In New York City in 2009, a new kind of public school opened its doors to its inaugural class of middle schoolers. Conceived by a team of game designers and progressive educational reformers and backed by prominent philanthropic foundations, it promised to reinvent the classroom for the digital age. Ethnographer Christo Sims documented the life of the school from its planning stages to the graduation of its first eighth-grade class. *Disruptive Fixation* is his account of how this "school for digital kids," heralded as a model of tech-driven educational reform, reverted to a more conventional type of schooling with rote learning, an emphasis on discipline, and traditional hierarchies of authority. Troubling gender and racialized class divisions also emerged.

Sims shows how the philanthropic possibilities of new media technologies are repeatedly idealized even though actual interventions routinely fall short of the desired outcomes—often dramatically so. He traces the complex processes by which idealistic tech-reform perennially takes root, unsettles the worlds into which it intervenes, and eventually stabilizes in ways that remake and extend many of the social predicaments reformers hope to fix. Sims offers a nuanced look at the roles that powerful elites, experts, the media, and the intended beneficiaries of reform—in this case, the students and their parents—play in perpetuating the cycle.

*Disruptive Fixation* offers a timely examination of techno-philanthropism and the yearnings and dilemmas it seeks to address, revealing what failed interventions do manage to accomplish—and for whom.
Catherine Kramarczuk Voulgarides
Does Compliance Matter in Special Education?

This book asks a question that many educators may think, but won’t say out loud: Does compliance with IDEA legislation matter? The author acknowledges that, while compliance with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is important, it can also be an administrative burden that detracts from practitioners’ capacity to adequately serve students with disabilities. Using data collected from three suburban school districts, Voulgarides helps us to understand how compliance with IDEA intersects with decades of evidence of racial inequities in student outcomes. This timely and thought-provoking book unpacks the civil rights history of IDEA, examines the impact of its procedural focus on educational practice, and questions why racial inequities in special education persist despite good intentions by policymakers, educators, and school personnel.