

ASA 2004 in San Francisco: Practice Workshops

In addition to the regular session organized by Jay Weinstein at the ASA this summer, there will be at least 5 workshops organized by Section Officers (with great thanks to Ted Lamb, Cyndi Sipe, and with thanks to many others). These workshops will be an opportunity for new and veteran practitioners and applied sociologists to learn something new and helpful. Spread the word.

Career Paths Outside the Academy: Career Workshop

Chair: Ted Lamb. Panelists: Emily Bezayiff, Melissa Marcello, Estell Disch, and Alice Kroliczak.

Description: The Workshop on Career Paths Outside the Academy will feature panelists who will discuss:

- (1) their insights on what knowledge, skills, and abilities a sociologist needs which they may not have been exposed to in their sociological education.
- (2) how attendees could acquire those knowledge, skills, and abilities
- (3) what (from their experience) non-academic career paths would look like.

The panelists will provide attendees with a set of resources and/or references for attendees. After the workshop, attendees should have a better feel for what they need to do to enhance their non-academic employment potential and performance.

Non-Academic Job Search: Career Workshop

Chair: Cynthia Sipe Panelists: Karin Mack, Melody Lawrence, Paul Aldo,

Description: Attendees of the panel can expect to gain an understanding of how to be more successful in various segments of the non-academic job market. We have asked each of the panelists to address the following topics as it relates to their area of expertise:

- (1) Getting to the interview ... networking, job ads, attitude, presentation of self.
- (2) Interviews: getting them, behaving in them, following up after, the first, second, third offers, negotiations
- (3) Getting to the next job: networking on the job, getting recognition for work done, dealing with adversaries.
- (4) Non-academic soft skills: being proactive, continuous education, getting it done...from calendars, to knowing MS office, to whatever.

Public Policy – Methods and Applications: Professional Workshop

Chair: Ross Koppel – Chair. Panelists: Denise Lach, Judith Cook.

Description: This workshop provides an overview of sociologists' work in the formation or change of public policy. It is directed to those who may want improve their understanding of the policy process as well as to those who might wish to become participants in policy research and policy creation. Featuring a diverse group of sociologists involved in policy research and policy actions, the workshop will touch on: how policy research is done; how policy is formulated-passed-created-changed (which may be tangentially related to policy research); how policy research is funded; how to get a job doing policy research and what skills are needed to be effective (e.g., statistics, knowledge of politics, profound cynicism, impervious and abiding spirit, ability to live without sleep, good writing skills, good power point skills); and the occasional rewards of these efforts.

Writing for Larger Audiences: Professional Workshop

Chair: Kathryn Goldman Schuyler. Panelists: Cristina Bodinger-deUriarte, Laura Hecht, Lowndes F. Stephens.

Description: If sociologists are going to be effective in demonstrating the value of sociological insight to other professionals, they need to know how to write in a way that is accessible for those not accustomed to reading peer-reviewed journal articles. This workshop covers writing styles and techniques when working with or for journalists, government officials, and business audiences. Examples, references and resources are given.

Consumer Behavior Research: Methodological Seminar

Presenter: Leora Lawton.

Description: Sociologists are well-suited to study consumer behavior. A read of a consumer behavior textbook reveals that the field is essentially applied social demography. Nevertheless, few sociologists work in this area, perhaps due to underlying biases about working in the business sector, and perhaps due to lack of training. In this workshop, we will discuss the applications of qualitative and quantitative methods as applied to consumer behavior research, and go through two examples: customer satisfaction and new product development. Participants will receive handouts.

A Note from the Chair

Leora Lawton

More Than Just A Section

I once observed that there is no section called 'academic sociology'. Perhaps having just one section for all sociological practice frames an understanding: if SP is just like the other sections, then practitioners of sociology should fill their role at the ASA by holding paper sessions. Yet, as our solitary section struggles with a small membership, it is my conviction that trying to be like the other sections shortchanges members of this section, other ASA members, and sociologists who have since left the ASA.

I wanted to chair this section because I believe that the ASA will do a better job of meeting the needs of sociologists if the Sociological Practice section gets a larger voice in the organization. My years in business and marketing have influenced me: sociologists need to receive something of greater value from us than what paper sessions alone provide. I have a vision of what I think we can do differently, and do better.

Let me preface the description of this vision by adding that currently in the ASA there are many graduate students and recent graduates who do not want to, or won't be able to, go into a fulltime academic position. They want to know what you can do with a degree in sociology other than go in the direction encouraged by their professors (usually the older ones). They need to have access to the variety of experience and knowledge that we have.

Established sociologists outside academe often cease becoming members of the ASA because they no longer benefit professionally. I meet these sociologists all of them time. Said one recently, "When I go to a public health meeting, we talk about what's happening in public health. When I last went to the ASA, they were so inbred with their theory. I don't go anymore." They cannot justify continuance with the ASA, and so they cease to be connected with other sociologists. No one knows what sociologists do the way they know about economists, psychologists or statisticians. So sociologists 'outside' assume the profession of an abbreviated job description – analyst, program manager, or focus group moderator. You won't find a listing for 'sociologist' in the classified ads. The US State Department does not recognize us.

I have spent many years with little or no professional contact with sociologists. For the last 18 months I've been working with at least one other sociologist, and I greatly prefer the latter situation. It's not just that I weary of hearing people refer to running a set of frequencies on the data set as 'analysis.' Or entering a categorical variable into a regression as if it possesses some kind of linearity. Or not understanding why they don't get significant variables in a regression model with 17 cases and 7 explanatory variables ('drivers'). And don't get me started on questionnaire design. Sociologists tend to be taught a set of design, research and analytic skills and processes, whereas the training in other disciplines is less even. And the approach to conceptualizing and addressing a research question or other issue is in line with my own. Sociologists tap into a common understanding.

The ASA is the only national association for sociologists in training. With the power of the entire association, the Section can link practicing sociologists to professional opportunities, both for established sociologists and those just starting out. Instead of just section paper sessions, I believe that the Section, through the organizational efforts of the Council and the participation of the members, should do the following:

- Create, develop and organize invited sessions such as thematic, special, author meets critic, and regional spotlight sessions.
- Make sure that there are a growing number of career, research methods, and professional workshops that specifically address professions and careers outside of academe at each annual meeting.
- Provide a stronger networking ability between the ASA and the more focused association, that is, the soon-to-merge Society for Applied Sociology and Sociological Practice Association (see Jay Weinstein's essay for more information).

The first two of those components does not require terribly much work, but the work that needs to be done has to start *nearly two years before the annual meeting*, instead of one year. Instead of just responding to the Call for Papers, we also respond to the Program Committee's call for session suggestions. Therefore, the final component of my vision is to clarify the roles for the Council and Officers in the Section so that we can be more effective.

I see little additional value in getting more members simply to have more paper sessions and talk amongst ourselves. If we are creative and proactive with existing channels in the ASA to have a greater voice, I believe we'll get it, and the membership will come.

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The SAS-SPA Merger and the Future of the SP Section

Jay Weinstein (Chair-Elect)

The Society for Applied Sociology (SAS) and the Sociological Practice Association (SPA) are in the midst of negotiations to dissolve the two organizations and create a new, merged one. This has important implications for the future of our section, as there is considerable overlap in the membership of the three groups.

In the course of the merger discussion, we have looked at the relationship of the new organization to the SP Section. Although nothing has been finalized, all agree that we need to support one another fully. For a while, the Merger Task Force (Joan Biddle, Ross Koppel, Bob Dotzler, Tillman Rodabough, Susan Stein, and John Kennedy) considered putting all of our efforts into the Section and abandoning the idea of a separate association. It is now clear that such a move is too drastic, and that there is much value in having a group of practitioners that is separate from the ASA. But the idea does suggest how strongly SAS and SPA feel about the Section.

At the recent SAS meeting in New Orleans, we had the pleasure of hosting Sally Hillsman, ASA Executive Officer and Carla Howery, ASA Deputy Executive Officer. (Carla was given the Lester Frank Ward Award for lifetime contributions to our field.) We made it abundantly clear that we support ASA and the SP Section in particular and that we know that we can expect the same kind of support from them. In that spirit, it is likely the first meeting of the new SAS/SPA organization will be held in conjunction with the ASA 2005 meeting in Philadelphia.

The SP Section is unique in that its mission involves the interests of every other ASA section. It has been suggested that we try to place an applied/clinical sociologist on every panel at the ASA national meetings. Section Council Chair, Leora Lawton, is working on several initiatives along these lines. Most SAS and SPA members appear to be in favor of some kind of dues reduction for joint membership. Long time Section and SAS member, Steve Steele, is on the 2005 ASA Organizing Committee and is looking for suggestions. As Section Chair-elect, I would like to ask you to contribute to this discussion. We might start up a thread on the SP Section, SAS, and SPA listserves. Or, if you prefer, send me a note at <weinst@aol.com>.