



SPPS NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter of the Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology, American Sociological Association

Winter 2009

Editor's commentary

Change We Can All Do

Leora Lawton
TechSociety Research

In our last edition we had voted on changing our section to include Public Sociology, and the ASA approved our change. This change recognizes that not only is it important to use our sociological knowledge and skills, but that it is important to communicate to a broader audience as well. The election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States, and the imperative that the job he does should have more successes than failures, makes us aware that change is something that not only *can* happen, but *must*.

In this first new all electronic edition of our newsletter, we now have room for more members' experiences and perspectives. Using our training, skills and *weltanschauung* of sociology takes many forms: applied, clinical, public, be it as researchers, -communicators, or change-makers. Paul Lachelier's essay about community-based research (CBR) and beyond is a meld of all of that.

I have my own CBR experience. Last spring I taught an undergraduate CBR class at UC Berkeley where the students learned all the steps and skills necessary to perform a simple program evaluation for a local non-profit, the Family Support Services of the Bay Area (FSSBA), on their mentorship program for children with incarcerated parents. After presenting the results to the FSSBA directors, one student told me "Finally I was able to do the social change I wanted to do when I became a sociology major." It was a small change, but the results have already been used by FSSBA. Certainly there were a few glitches, but the Sociology Department scheduled another course for this spring, and we are back working with FSSBA on another one of their programs, a kinship foster parent program. One improvement at a time.

All of us have the potential for changing at least one small corner of our world and making it better. Sharing these activities and successes in this newsletter both motivates and validates our efforts.

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Sociology in the Age of Obama

Those of us who consider ourselves practicing sociologists are committed to a set of ideals that, while largely shared by those in the academy, keep us focused on the doing rather than the teaching of our field's principles. At this landmark moment in U.S. and, by extension, the world's history, the challenges we as sociologists face in making a place for ourselves are not trivial. The incoming political administration is the type that might be more likely to embrace us and where we might more easily define our contributions. The broad scale changes being discussed along lines of health care, green practices and policies, definitions of morality and their legal consequences, and others have long been the bailiwick of sociologists. And we may be more willing to espouse our ideas loudly when we feel there is a sympathetic ear.

If it is true that we have had such an ear as of Wednesday, January 21, how will we ensure engagement in the sweeping change efforts being proposed? Will we wait to be invited to the table and, as is our wont, hope someone takes notice of how much we have to offer? Or will we thrust ourselves into the national spotlight to ensure a well-defined role in the significant public policy matters we hold so dear to our theories and ideals?

It is not clear to me how much of a role a section of a national organization, such as the Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology of the American Sociological Association, can do in helping to promote the involvement of sociologists in matters of national importance. Nor is it clear how the Section can help to make its members and the national socio-political regimes recognize the good work that sociologists do. But it is clear to me that our professional association does not have adequate representation of practicing sociologists. The non-academic practicing sociologists are still the hidden sub-culture that our professional association has not done a good job of engaging. It is likely that the relevance of ASA and the Section are not clear to those outside the academy. Larry Williams' article in this newsletter is a welcome exception to this rule. Without engaging in a public-television-like recruitment drive, there may be some ways to consider growing the relevance of our field and simultaneously increasing our membership.

- It is very possible that many practicing sociologists are members of Sections that have topical relevance for them. For instance, there are many public service agencies that house sociologists alongside other professionals, and for whom the value of the ASA is the opportunity to connect with others working or studying in their field. Sections on Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco, Aging and the Life Course, Crime, Law and Deviance, Family, Mental Health, all overlay very nicely with service and research agencies of local, state and federal governments, as well as many community-based non-profits. Outreach to these Sections and, perhaps more importantly, to these agencies, might bear some fruit for our Section, and link us to the national change efforts more directly.
- I have met more practicing sociologists in the world of researchers, research agencies and funding-contingent research requirements than any other context. Yet most are disconnected from the professional association meant to serve them. This world, in conjunction with a political administration that seems committed to the production of quality scientific knowledge, provides a natural laboratory for both membership recruitment and ways to enhance our "Doing Sociology" goals.
- In the current climate, the Section on Environment and Technology, and on Human Rights, seem particularly well-positioned to exert influence on pending national policies. Why not create ties between our members – many of whom are well-versed in public issues – and these other sections? Or go further and become a resource to policy-makers and journalists, perhaps as a coordinated effort with the Association?
- The ASA has a strong commitment to helping grow the involvement of practicing sociologists in professional associations. This commitment is evident in the regular participation of ASA staff in the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology (AACCS) annual meetings, as well as in the Section on

Sociological Practice and Public Sociology events at ASA. It seems particularly worthwhile to promote this relationship with the ASA to enhance our opportunities for playing a larger role in the significant social change efforts being discussed in the current national political agenda. What other associations are committed to these goals? We should help the ASA to create these links, and we should continue existing partnerships and foster new ones to advance the sociological practice voice and plan positive social change.

It is not clear how far efforts such as these can take us but it seems worth a try. I welcome thoughts from our membership, and any suggestions for reaching out beyond our current membership, to give Sociology a real voice at this watershed moment in our history.

Feature Article

Public Sociology & Community Organizing: Moving from CBR to COSC

By Paul Lachelier
Stetson University

As a new section member, and given our recent inclusion of public sociology in our section name and mission, I wanted to offer some personal news for section members interested in the future of public sociology: starting this spring semester 2009, I will be launching a course that will help open a new frontier in the movement for a more public sociology.

Let me first talk about community-based research, or CBR. Many SSPPS members have no doubt heard of, if not practice CBR. CBR is gaining ground, and institutionalizing – through books, networks, centers, etc. – as part of the wider trend toward service learning and community engagement in higher education. Central to CBR are the altogether laudable principles that research should both benefit and involve communities (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008, Strand et al. 2003, Stoecker 2005). CBR is considered a win-win-win. For universities and colleges, CBR improves town-gown relations. For faculty, CBR helps advance teaching, research and social change all at once. For communities and advocacy groups, CBR offers assistance in researching and documenting social problems and needs.

But what happens when the research is done? The awkward problem with CBR is that for most communities and advocacy groups, research is just the beginning, yet for many faculty and universities, research is the end.

On one hand, one might argue that this situation simply illustrates communities' and universities'

different but complementary goals: communities want to solve problems, universities want to research and teach about problems, but in order to solve problems, one must first understand them, and hence the need for CBR. On the other hand, is it possible that the academic reluctance to move beyond research to advocacy is sometimes due not just to different goals, but to a flawed approach to academic engagement?

In this approach, the university and its faculty never get their hands dirty by engaging in advocacy or politics – the government lobbying, voter persuasion, media campaigning, fundraising, recruitment, and worst of all, conflict and compromise with opposing groups. However necessary that dirty work may be, it is not part of the university's benevolent research and teaching mission. Despite often quite passionate commitments to the poor, the weak, the voiceless, this approach curiously coheres with Max Weber's famed ideal of the scientist who may advise advocates and politicians from the sidelines, but who never him/herself steps into the fray (Weber 1946).

There are at least two flaws in this conventional approach to academic engagement when it comes to addressing community problems. First and foremost, communities and their advocates often need more help with advocacy than research. They need money and volunteers, but even more, they need people who can effectively fundraise, recruit, train and inspire volunteers, lobby government, gain positive publicity, build powerful coalitions, and do

all the other things that come with the central and ongoing task of community organizing. Second, universities committed to teaching engaged citizenship, not just job skills and the capacity to think, do their students a disservice if they stop at researching community problems and needs. Of course, in addition to CBR, many schools already encourage if not require service learning. But too often service learning means spurts of volunteering on weekends or holidays, and/or having students do menial work for an organization.

As Alexis de Tocqueville long ago noted, democracy requires engaged citizens, and the best citizens above all know how to work with their fellows to address community problems (Tocqueville 1969). These two fundamental principles of democratic theory are the starting point for a new course titled Community Organizing for Social Change (COSC) that I will be teaching this spring semester 2009 at Stetson University. Over the course of the spring, about a dozen Stetson students will develop staple community organizing skills (e.g., public speaking, volunteer recruitment, fundraising, coalition building, media outreach) by working on a selected community campaign, while learning the theory, practice, and history of community organizing in the classroom.

COSC is intended to nurture stronger citizens by teaching students community organizing skills. COSC moves beyond CBR, engaging students first and foremost in community organizing, and in CBR only to the extent that it is necessary to community organizing. My hope is that COSC will do two things: (a) put students at the center of social change rather than on the sidelines, and (b) effectively help communities and their advocates

with that vital task of community organizing, not just research.

One last thought: if democracy and citizenship are primarily about collective action, not research, sociologists know a lot about collective action. Yet curiously, few sociologists teach courses in the practice of collective action. It is time that changed. Perhaps the election of a former community organizer as U.S. President will help open a new frontier in the movement for a more public sociology: courses in community organizing and social change.

Paul Lachelier is an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Stetson University in DeLand, FL. He can be reached at placheli@stetson.edu.

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Stoecker, Randy. 2005. Research Methods for Community Change. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Strand, Kerry, et al. 2003. Community-Based Research and Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Tocqueville, Alexis de. 1969. Democracy in America. New York: Harper & Row.
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We're all electronic! This issue - Winter 2009 - is our first all electronic edition. In addition to being emailed in the listserv with a link and as an attachment, it can be found at www.techsociety.com/asa/communications.html, along with an archive of the last 5 years of newsletters.

Elections

Ballots for our section officers and council members will be sent to all members no later than May 15. Please be sure to vote. We have an excellent slate of candidates and the Council thanks all of those who have agreed to run for office.

Chair-elect

Roy Feldman
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Coming Back Around: A Synergy of Academia and Application

Larry S. Williams

Bureau of Labor & Industries, State of Oregon

In 1991 I co-authored my first academic paper. Based on my master's thesis (Williams 1989), I presented this paper with Clarence Y.H. Lo, who was my thesis advisor at the University of Missouri and lead author on the paper. The presentation, on the use of frames analysis in the study of social movements, took place at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, held in Cincinnati. I then entered the 'real world' and that kind of writing was not relevant.

Now, in the summer of 2008, I have co-authored a second academic paper, and it feels in some ways like a return from the wilderness. I found that you didn't have to return to the same topic, however. Those of us who work in government in program positions (rather than at a policy level) don't have the leverage to promote better programs, only to enforce a lowest common denominator. In my area of work, the Affirmative Action regulations have become like the "pirate code" of Disneyland – more what you'd call guidelines. There's plenty of interest and hope, but the inertia of trying to build some kind of political consensus before we move the ship of state creates a sense of suspended animation. It dulls the senses. In this essay I want to share the process of how I got back involved in this form of scholarship and how it informs government.

This second academic paper (Berik, et al, 2008) analyzes data that I work with as part of my government job in the Bureau of Labor and Industries, which is the labor department for the State of Oregon. Over a year ago, I approached Cihan Bilginsoy (professor of Economics at the University of Utah) with ideas for some analyses that could be done with data about apprentices in the workforce collected by Oregon. Cihan, along with his colleague, Günseli Berik had previously published papers on apprenticeship programs based on data available from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Cihan will present the paper based on the Oregon data (called "Gender and Racial Training Gaps in Oregon Apprenticeship Program") at the

2009 Annual Conference of the International Association for Feminist Economics in Torino Italy. The conference theme is "Women's Work and Education in the Global Economy," and the paper will be presented in a session on "Women's Education and Training."

While Cihan is presenting in Torino, though, I'll be doing a presentation in Portland, Oregon on descriptive statistics that show progress in the registration of women and minorities into certain apprenticeship committees whose selection procedures had been criticized in a 1996 Disparity Study from Mason Tillman Associates.

The material for my Portland presentation is much less academic, but it will hopefully serve its purpose of informing the statewide board members that they were correct to replace the informal selection by employers with more formalized selection criteria that the apprenticeship committees use to rank and select new apprentices.

In Torino, meanwhile, participants will be learning that based on registrations from 1992 to 2002 in Oregon's 10 largest 8,000 hour programs, the overall completion rate was 57 percent, which is higher than the previously reported nationwide rates of 40-45 percent. Yet, disparities do still exist. There were significant differences in the training hours completed (the percent of the program completed based on final hours at the time of cancellation or completion) favoring male apprentices and white apprentices. Apprentices in union-sponsored programs did better across the board, but the unions in Oregon (as elsewhere in the U.S.) remain embattled.

I found it very enlivening to have the intellectual stimulation of doing something with all that electronic data that's piled up for more than a decade, and to put it to good use. And the recognition doesn't hurt either.

Günseli Berik, Cihan Bilginsoy & Larry S. Williams (2008). "Gender and Racial Training Gaps in Oregon

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Member News

NEW PUBLICATIONS AND GRANTS

Jan Marie Fritz (University of Cincinnati) has been busy. She recently published “Improving Special Education Mediation” in the November 2008 issue of the *International Review of Sociology* (18/3:469-480).

Dr. Fritz also gave two presentations and was a discussant at the International Sociological Association Forum (becoming quite the well-attended event) in Barcelona, Spain in early September 2008. The presentations were “Writing the History of Sociology: Research in Your Own Backyard” and (with Jacques Rheume) “Working with the Public: The Contributions of Clinical Sociology.” She also was a discussant for the Pre-Forum Seminar, “The Shape of Sociology.” Then, on September 24, Jan presented “Women’s Participation in Peacemaking Efforts during and after Serious Protracted Conflicts” at the Association for Conflict Resolution conference in Austin, Texas. She just returned from El Salvador where she represented the International Sociological Association (Jan is a vice-president of ISA) at the XI Congreso Centroamericano de Sociologia and the IV Congreso Salvadoreno de Sociologia from November 11-14, 2008. She gave an opening address and two featured presentations on “Clinical Sociology, Mediation and a Culture of Peace” and “Should Every Country Have a National Plan? The Road to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Need for National Plans.” While in El Salvador, Jan had the opportunity to visit a mediation center, meet with NGO representatives about developing a national 1325 plan and assist a group applying for a grant from a Swedish organization to support human rights education in El Salvador.

National Student Award Named for Judith Little

Judith Little, Humboldt State University, was honored by the Association on Applied and Clinical Sociology (AACCS). Beginning Fall 2009, the student team winning an applied sociology competition will be recognized with the “Judith Little Student Award.”

Each year AACCS selects a client from the community that hosts the AACCS annual meeting. The organization or group is asked to identify a problem that might be addressed by a student team of applied sociologists. In preparation for client meetings at the annual meeting, student teams advised by AACCS faculty members research the problem or issue and develop preliminary plans. At the annual meeting, the teams meet with a representative of the client and gather more information. After the annual meeting, the teams submit their problem solutions to the representative and to the AACCS problem solving coordinator. While one team wins the award, all teams receive feedback on the quality and usefulness of their proposed solutions.

Judith was one of the creators of this activity, along with Jerry Krause (HSU Sociology emeritus faculty member) and Stephen Steele (Anne Arundel Community College). She is currently a member of the Commission on Applied and Clinical Sociology, is the Commission representative to the Board of the Association on Applied and Clinical Sociology and immediate Past President of the California Sociological Association, and of course, is a member and former officer of our Section.

Kathleen Odell Korgen, Ph.D, Professor of Sociology at William Paterson University in Wayne, NJ, is pleased to announce the Second Edition of *The Engaged Sociologist: Connecting the Classroom to the Community*. This text brings the public sociology movement into the classroom by showing students how to use the tools of sociology to become effective participants in our democratic society. Through exercises and projects, Korgen with co-author Jonathan M. White encourage students to apply these tools to get hands-on training in sociology and to develop their sociological imaginations as they work for a more just and civil society.

New Features include

- Updated and additional exercises and projects, including more global activities, allow students to connect the sociological knowledge they are learning to their campus and the larger community. Each chapter contains both hands-on data collection exercises (surveys, interviews, observations) and library-based research.
- Increased connection to theory helps students see how their practical efforts are grounded in sociological research and theory.
- Enhanced “Sociologist in Action” sections include powerful examples of how sociology students and professional sociologists use sociology in efforts to improve society. More examples of student “Sociologists in Action” have been added to this edition.
- More material on the environment, including expanded discussions of Hurricane Katrina and its outcomes as well as of global warming, provides more coverage of a hot-button topic of concern to many students, engaging their interest and encouraging them to act to improve environmental issues.
- Discussion questions challenge students to ponder and converse about what they’ve learned and to use their sociological imagination to relate the issues covered in each chapter to their individual lives.
- Instructors’ Resources on CD-Rom, featuring a test bank, are available to qualified instructors by contacting Customer Care at 1-800-818-SAGE (7243) between 6 am – 5 pm, PST.
- A new student study site at www.pineforge.com/korgen2study features Web addresses that link to helpful organizations; additional exercises for several chapters; a survey, a scoring sheet, and interview guidelines for the last chapter; and resources for job and volunteer opportunities.

This is an ideal supplement or affordable, brief stand-alone, core text for courses in which the instructor wishes to include a *public sociology* component, particularly Introduction to Sociology, Principles of Sociology, Social Problems, or Applied Sociology.

Another special feature of this book: 10% of the proceeds from this book will be donated to Free the Children*

Notes from the U.S. Field _____

Upcoming Annual Meetings

- The Fourth Annual Meeting of The Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology will be held October 7 to 11, 2009, in San Antonio at the St Anthony, a historic hotel located approximately a block or two from the Alamo. For more information, please visit <http://www.aacsnet.org>.
- The 2009 Annual Meeting of The Midwest Sociological Society will be held in April 2-5, Des Moines, Iowa at the Des Moines Marriott Downtown. For more information, please visit <http://www.themss.org>
- AAPOR, the American Association for Public Opinion Research, will be holding its 64th Annual Conference, May 14-17, 2009, at the Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood, Florida. For more information, visit www.aapor.org.
- The Pacific Sociological Association, PSA, has its Annual meeting in 2009 Annual Meeting: April 8-11, Westin Gaslamp Quarter, downtown San Diego. For more information, visit www.pacificsoc.org.

Awards – Call for Nominations

All of us have met, or are at least aware of, another sociologist who has accomplished in a way that perhaps you could only dream. They've brought sociology into the world to make at least their corner of it a better place. Nominate this person for the William Foote Whyte Award and bring honor to the value of their work and achievements. And for Section members who teach, if you have a student – graduate or undergraduate – whose work exemplifies the promise of living up to the mission of Section by increasing understanding of the relationship between sociological practice and sociological knowledge, then please submit this student's name for the Student Award. For both awards, send a letter detailing the nominees contributions and supporting materials such as a curriculum vitae or resume, and/or additional letters of support to the section chair, Augie Diana (dianaa@nida.nih.gov) by March 31, 2009.

Robert Dentler Award for Outstanding Student Achievement.

The Robert Dentler Award for Outstanding Student Achievement* is made to up to two graduate students who have made a promising contribution to the field, such as a project or paper in the areas of sociological practice and public sociology. Work done within the three years prior to the conferral of the award will be considered. Products of graduate-level classes, internships, or independent projects are eligible. An award recipient who attends the 2009 ASA Annual Meeting in San Francisco will receive a cash award of \$200 to offset travel expenses. Nominations should consist of a letter detailing the nominees contributions, a copy of the paper or other project, and supporting materials such as a curriculum vitae or resume, and/or other additional letters of support. Please send nominations by March 15, 2009 to Augie Diana.

* The Sociological Practice Student Award was renamed in 2008, by unanimous vote of the Section Council, in honor and memory of Robert Dentler, former Section Chair, as well as President of the Society for Applied Sociology, whose work advanced not just our field, but also the American people.

William Foote Whyte Award

William Foote Whyte Distinguished Career Award: The William Foote Whyte Award is for individuals who have made notable contributions to sociological practice, which can include several of the following elements: outstanding clinical or applied work, exceptional service to the section, publications that advance both the theory and methods of sociological practice, or mentoring and training of students for careers in sociological practice. Nominations should consist of a letter detailing the nominee's contributions and supporting materials such as a curriculum vitae or resume, and/or additional letters of support. Please send nominations by March 15, 2009 to the section chair, Augie Diana.



Steve Picou receiving the William Foote Whyte Award, with 2007-2008 Chair, Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, presented at the ASA Meeting in Boston, August 2008.