

Sociology News

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SPRING/SUMMER 2010

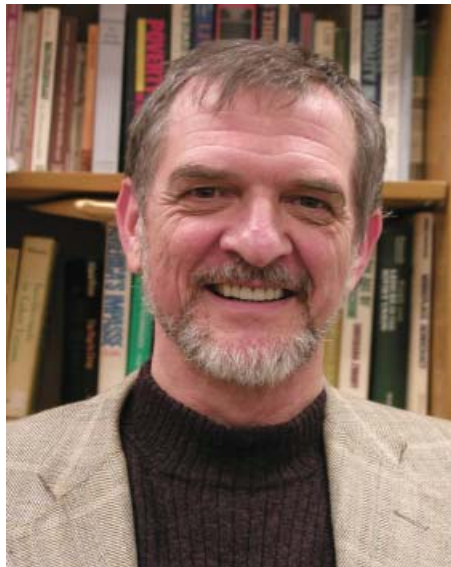
Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Spring 2010 edition of CWRU Sociology News! This past year, the life of the department has been enriched by the presence of two visiting scholars who taught courses in sociology, Professor Ana Prata of California State University at Northridge, and Professor Hong-Joon Yoo of Sungkyunkwan University in Korea. This year, we also benefited from a visit and lecture by Duane Alwin, a leading figure in the study of cognition and aging in sociology in the USA. This issue features brief articles on each of these distinguished visiting colleagues.

This issue also contains news and updates on faculty research and editorial activities as well as faculty and student awards. Of special note is the CDC Minority Health fellowship awarded to doctoral student Melinda Laroco Boehm, and an ADVANCE opportunity grant awarded to Professor David Warner through the ACES+ program, which will support advanced training at ICPSR this summer. We also congratulate Professor Sue Hinze on winning the Diekhoff Award for Graduate Student Mentoring. Faculty activities this summer will include presentations at the meeting of the International Sociology Association in Gothenburg, Sweden by Professors Eva Kahana and Brian Gran. Doctoral student Rachel Bryant will be co-presenting with Brian at the ISA meeting.

This issue reviews the accomplishments of undergraduate students and graduates, including Honors and Capstone Projects



and AKD induction. This spring semester we inducted 18 students into our chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta, the Sociology Honors Society. Additionally, 14 students completed the Senior Capstone course, which is an opportunity to conduct independent research by forming a research question, designing a study, and collecting and analyzing data. To illustrate the superb work done for the Capstone Project, two students, Alexander Song and Michael Corn, briefly describe their projects on page 5. As you will see, for faculty and for both graduate and undergraduate students, there is a lot going on, and much to celebrate!

As always, we are interested to hear alumni news. Please keep us informed of any job openings that may be of interest to our recent graduates and students. And if you are in the area, stop by and visit the Department of Sociology!

Dale Dannefer, Chair

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Aging expert Duane Alwin shares research knowledge

By Jieliu Lin

In late March, the Department of Sociology hosted Duane Alwin, McCartney Professor of Sociology and Demography and director of the Center on Population Health and Aging at Pennsylvania State University. A past chair of the ASA Section on Aging and the Life Course, Alwin has made innovative contributions in both the theoretical and methodological domains.

The department arranged a variety of events at which students and faculty interacted with our guest. Over coffee and pastries at Presti's, Alwin offered graduate students specific suggestions on how to develop strong research proposals. He also met individually with several faculty members to discuss common interests.

In his lecture, "Re-Thinking Generations and the Life Course," Alwin urged scholars to reconsider the concept of generations. Through an investigation of the scholarly literature, he demonstrated that generations have been used as positions in family lineages, as birth cohorts (or historical locations), and as historical participation. All three have been useful for the study of lifelong development of attitudes and political identities, within the context of both social change and the construction of individual life course patterns.

For Alwin, cohorts are of special interest, because cohort-specific attitudes, beliefs and individual behaviors influence the stability and change of human characteristics over the life span. During the past 30 years, Alwin has published extensively on differentiating the effects of cohort from those of aging, and he was among the first scholars to de-link chronological age from inevitable functional decline. His work on aging-versus-cohort explanations in many age-related phenomena has been widely cited and has influenced subsequent conceptualizations of "aging" in scholarly work.

In his talk, Professor Alwin presented data from the Health and Retirement Study to examine cohort variations in age-based trajectories of cognitive functioning. One of the most striking findings is that, contrary to what common knowledge would suggest, early cohorts had higher cognitive ability



Duane Alwin

scores than later cohorts. Moreover, this pattern persisted regardless of schooling. Alwin proposed that selective mortality might be driving the pattern. The composition of a cohort changes systematically across time because not all individuals have the same chance of surviving into old age. Consequently, early cohorts consist of more robust individuals with better cognitive functioning. Alwin ended the talk with this interesting yet puzzling pattern and encouraged the audience to think more broadly about what factors correlated with age and what social processes are likely to explain such cohort differences.

Jieliu Lin is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology.

Department hosts Korean Sociologist Hong Joon Yoo

By Scott Adams

This spring, the Department of Sociology has been enriched by the collegiality of Hong Joon Yoo, professor of sociology at Sungkyungwan University in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. Yoo taught an undergraduate course on the sociology of Asian societies, focusing on Korean society and culture in particular.

Professor Yoo received his doctorate in sociology from SUNY at Stony Brook, after which he accepted a faculty position at Sungkyungwan University. In 2003 he was a visiting professor at the China Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. His research explores the influence of social relations on workers' attitudes and emphasizes that participants in the labor force often work for more than just money. His substantive areas of interest include complex organizations, work and occupation, industrial sociology and new economic sociology, a growing field that examines how social factors affect economic behavior. Yoo has also published research comparing occupational structures in China and Korea. Currently, he is writing a book on new economic sociology and translating Mark Granovetter's book *Getting a Job* into Korean.



Hong Joon Yoo

Scott Adams is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology.

Graduate students learn qualitative methods from Ana Prata

By Ellie Stone

Last fall, I was one of several graduate students who had the privilege of enrolling in a qualitative methodology course with Ana Prata, assistant professor of sociology at the California State University Northridge. Professor Prata received her BA/BS in sociology from the New University of Lisbon in Portugal and her PhD in sociology from the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses primarily on women's movements and policies affecting women in Portugal. Her interests include state feminism in Southern Europe and Latin America, global human trafficking and reproductive rights. Currently, she is working on a major international research collaboration comparing the influence of Europeanization on domestic policies in Portugal, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, with a particular focus on women's movements surrounding labor, prostitution and trafficking.

The combination of Ana's research experiences and dynamic personality made our course with her both educational and enjoyable. We were introduced to qualitative methodologies, learned firsthand how to conduct a qualitative study (most of us did ethnographies and/or field observations), and produced qualitative papers. Prata is very dedicated to her students' success and spent time outside of class helping us with the process of collecting and interpreting data. We all felt that the course was a wonderful introduction to qualitative methods, and Professor Prata has inspired us to consider incorporating qualitative methods into our own future research endeavors.

Ellie Stone is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology.



Ana Prata

David Warner awarded ADVANCE Opportunity Grant

David Warner has been awarded an ADVANCE Opportunity Grant through the ACES+ Initiative. With this grant, Warner will attend the CPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research at the University of Michigan. This program, the premier source of intensive training in statistical methodology for social scientists, attracts the foremost national and international experts in research methodologies.

Two week-long, specialized courses will provide Warner with advanced instruction on multilevel trajectory models for longitudinal data analysis. Multilevel models are a family of advanced statistical techniques that enable researchers to explicitly estimate shared variance that occurs across multiple sampling dimensions—that is, across measurement occasions (e.g., waves), survey respondents (e.g., persons) and ecological units (e.g., states and counties). With advances in computing power and analytic software, longitudinal analysis techniques that explicitly model such dependencies in the data are at the cutting edge of social science research. Yet few scholars nationally are trained in these methods and their application to social science research questions.



David Warner

Warner plans to put his specialized training to immediate use, as he is currently writing a research grant for submission to the National Institute on Aging (NIA). Analyzing data from the University of Michigan Health and Retirement Study, Warner will examine intra-individual change in physical health among older adults, focusing on geographic inequalities in health care infrastructure and utilization as mechanisms that contribute to the well-known racial/ethnic health disparities in the United States.

Eva Kahana edits issue of OPEN LONGEVITY SCIENCE focused on proactivity in late life



Eva Kahana

As the life expectancy of older adults continues to rise, the scientific community is challenged to understand those factors that can contribute to good health and quality of life for the old-old. Prior research has focused on genetic factors, social inequalities and health-care-related influences on quality of life in old age. However, the role of proactive adaptations by older adults to enhance their own quality of life has only recently gained recognition.

The forthcoming “Hot Topics” issue of Open

Longevity Science calls attention to this emerging research. Guest editor Eva Kahana showcases contributions by scientists from various disciplines using different theoretical lenses and methodologies to understand both self-empowerment and services that can facilitate empowerment of the aged. Kahana hopes that this special issue will generate debate and further conceptual and empirical developments that can elucidate the role of proactivity in promoting health and well-being among the old.

We want to hear from you!

We are proud of the accomplishments of our faculty, students and alumni. Let us know about job leads, awards, honors and life events. Please email your news and contact information updates to debra.klocker@case.edu.

Research Update: Today at the Cancer Survivors Research Project

As we put the finishing touches on our decade-long research project, we continue to be very active disseminating the findings on the quality of life of older adult, long-term cancer survivors at conferences and through journal articles. One exciting recent event was the award from The American Psychosocial Oncology Society for our research presentation at their annual conference this February in New Orleans. This presentation entitled "Personality, Cancer-related Worry and Psychological Distress among Older Adult, Long-term Cancer Survivors" was co-authored with Melinda Boehm and Sherri Brown, the project's two research assistants along with collaboration colleagues T.J. McCallum and Clare Mitchell from CWRU's Psychology Department.

In addition to the other recent publications and presentations listed below, we are now preparing a chapter on "Adaptation and Adjustment to Cancer in Late-life" for a book entitled "Cancer and Aging: Research and Practice" edited by Keith Bellizzi and Margot Gozney to be published by Wiley-Blackwell in December 2011. This as well as the products above have been prepared in parallel with the work we are doing to prepare our final report to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) which is due this September.

The Future

As the 12 years of funding on our primary project comes to an end, we have been awarded pilot funding through the NCI sponsored



Sociology doctoral students Sherri P. Brown, M.S., and Melinda L. Boehm, M.A., present their work at Research ShowCase last spring.

Comprehensive Cancer Center here at CWRU to extend our work on cancer survivorship. The new project will collect information from a sub-sample of the 471 older-adult, long-term survivors who participated in our ten year, six-wave NCI-funded study. The data we collect from these survivors we hope will inform our plans to develop a Coping and Communication Support (CCS) program for future cancer survivors. The pilot project will determine the feasibility of implementing a program to enhance coping and communication between health care providers and survivors as they face the adverse long-term or late effects of cancer and its treatment. Because our original projects included a substantial group of African American survivors, we will also be able to identify the unique health and psycho-social needs of this group of minority survivors. Using the data from the pilot we plan to submit an R01 application to the NCI spring of 2011. Ultimately, the program, when fully developed will provide a model for long-term cancer care of older survivors.

Sociology Graduate Student Association

SGSA held a colloquium on "Navigating the Job Market" with Robin Shura, who defended her dissertation in the Department of Sociology last spring. Shura, currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina, discussed trends in hiring for sociology positions, potential academic job tracks and the materials required for applications.

This summer, SGSA is sending out an alumni survey to learn about the jobs that our graduates have and their other professional activities.

SGSA's projects for next year will include developing a code of student rights and responsibilities; sponsoring colloquia about funding after the third year and career paths; introducing brown bag sessions; gathering good examples of academic job applications; developing a system for rating the graduate student experience; and reforming the graduate program's process for resolving conflicts and concerns.



Professor Emilia McGucken with initiate Karlton T. Harrison.

Alpha Kappa Delta initiates 18 sociology students

This year's inductees are:

Brittany Adams
Alexa Fiffick
Allison George
Karlton T. Harrison
Brittany Herold
Colleen Hosler
Cody Howell
Alyssa Kerr
Nick Knevel
Matthew Langston
Jeanne Li
Tye'Shae McClay
Deana Metri
Anshul Saurastri
William Toliver
Madeline Van Gunten
Nadra Williams
Victoria Wolfe

This year 18 students were inducted into Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Honor Society in Sociology. The inductees have maintained a high standard of excellence in their Sociology courses and have demonstrated serious interest in the field. As lifetime members of Alpha Kappa Delta, they will become part of a tradition that began in 1920.

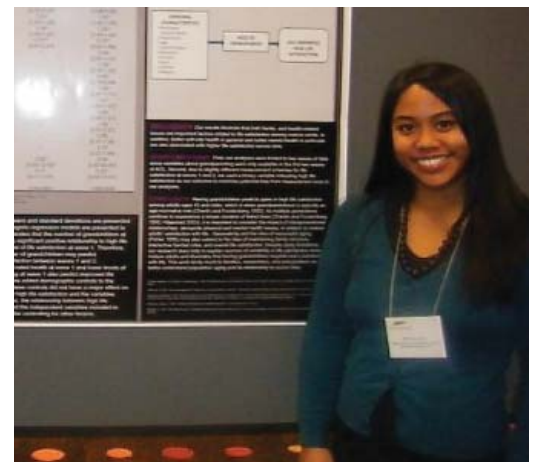
Students with a Sociology GPA of 3.4 or above and an overall GPA of 3.1 or above qualify for AKD membership, provided that they have completed at least three Sociology courses. The inductees have the right to wear AKD honor cords at graduation, and their selection will be an impressive addition to their resumes.

The Iota of Ohio Chapter at Case Western Reserve is one of more than 600 AKD chapters throughout the United States and six other countries, comprising more than 92,000 members.

For more information about the Society, please contact Emma McGucken, the faculty advisor.

Melinda Laroco Boehm awarded CDC Minority Health Doctoral Fellowship

Melinda Laroco Boehm was recently awarded a prestigious two-year fellowship from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support her doctoral research. She is studying how residents of disadvantaged urban neighborhoods define and engage their local food environment. Much of the previous research has focused on what food resources are lacking in poor urban neighborhoods, namely a large-scale supermarket. However, little research has examined how residents of such neighborhoods acquire their food, how they perceive their own neighborhood food environment, and the meanings they associate with the food outlets that are available. Melinda will conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with residents of these so-called "food deserts" to explore the meaning structures around food access, acquisition, and consumption.



Melinda Laroco Boehm.

Melinda's research is a complementary study to the core research project in the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at CWRU, which is a neighborhood-level intervention to increase access to healthy foods across multiple venues in these neighborhoods (stores, schools, community centers, and community gardens). In addition to stipend support, the CDC Minority Doctoral Fellowship provides training opportunities in public health research and policy at professional meetings and networking opportunities across the nation. Melinda was only one of four recipients nationally of this fellowship.

Senior Capstone Spotlights

Korean Americans: Embracing Identity, Empowering Community

By Alexander Song

As the number of Korean Americans continues to grow, it is interesting to observe both their patterns of assimilation and their tendency to hold onto their traditional Korean culture. I conducted a study that addresses the development of Korean Americans' ethnic identity through networks of friends, parental influence and Korean American churches. My study was conducted through a structural, one-on-one interview with preplanned questions. I interviewed eight second-generation Korean Americans and two Chinese Americans who were all undergraduate students at Case Western Reserve University.



Alexander Song

The interviews and my analyses of the qualitative data revealed four common trends. First, Korean Americans' networks of friends seem to undergo changes, from being more ethnically diverse to more ethnically specific, as they age. Second, parental influence seems to have a huge impact in preserving the traditional Korean culture, including language, lifestyle and values. Third, Korean American churches play a significant role in Korean American society, providing a community for networking and social support as well as religious worship and fellowship. Lastly, Korean Americans seem to balance Korean values and American values quite effectively, creating a new identity that embraces both. These four trends suggest that the production and reproduction of Korean Americans with distinctive identities will continue through networking, preservation of culture, and community from the church.

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Medications Among College Students

By Mike Corn

The nonmedical use of prescription medications among college students is not a new phenomenon. Efforts to curb this behavior encounter two significant obstacles: prescription medications are widely accessible, and their use does not carry the moral stigma associated with other types of drug use.

While most of the research to date has been conducted through self-administered surveys, I conducted two focus groups with seven undergraduates, mostly upperclassmen, to probe the attitudes and perceptions of Case students regarding the abuse of prescription medications among their peers. My research revealed that while recreational drug use in general is more prevalent on other campuses, Case students believe that some prescription medications, especially stimulants, such as Adderall, are used in greater numbers here than at other universities.



Mike Corn

Using stimulants is perceived as a socially acceptable and viable method for studying, a necessary tool in the "dog-eat-dog" academic world. In contrast, opiates (e.g., OxyContin) are used purely for the "high" and in combination with other drugs like alcohol. Among inexperienced users, stimulant use is much more common than opiate use. Although my research is specific in its scope and population, it contributes to our understanding of college students' perceptions of and motivations for abusing prescription medications. Such an understanding is necessary if universities are to address the problem effectively.

Honors Presentation—Jacob Kornblatt

At this year's induction ceremony, Jacob Kornblatt '10 presented his honors thesis, "Sociological Perspectives, Educational Inequalities and 'Reciprocal Learning': Project STEP-UP at CWRU." With IRB approval, Jacob conducted a survey of all tutors in Project STEP-UP, which recruits Case students to work with young people in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. He focused on the outcomes of the relationships that tutees and tutors develop through the program and the tutors' investment in the principles of peer tutoring and service learning.

Jacob has accepted a two-year position with Teach for America and will be working in a bilingual elementary school in Philadelphia this fall.

Teaching Awards and Nominations

Sue Hinze received the John S. Diekhoff Award for Graduate Teaching and Mentoring. This annual award is presented to full-time faculty members who epitomize what it means to mentor graduate students: connecting them with experts in their discipline, engaging them academically in a forthright and collegial manner, and actively promoting their professional development.

Dale Dannefer and **Gary Deimling** were nominated for the Diekhoff Award.

Brian Gran was nominated for the Carl F. Wittke Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

Sue Hinze and graduate student **Tanetta Andersson** were nominated for the J. Bruce Jackson, M.D., Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Mentoring.

Support the Department of Sociology

Please consider supporting the Department of Sociology as we continue building on our achievements. You can contribute to our success by making a gift to the department. Your gift allows us to continue to offer opportunities for our students to excel academically and to conduct important research. You can give online at giving.case.edu.



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