

ASA Section on Aging and the Life Course



News from the Chair

Thinking about the Section on Aging and the Life Course (which I have been doing a lot of in recent weeks), there are three areas in which I think our section needs to excel. First, provide intellectual stimulation for researchers and teachers in the area of aging and life course. Second, provide mentoring and professional development assistance to more junior members of SALC. Third, promote networking and friendships among members of the section. If we do a good job in these areas over the next year, I will feel that my tenure as Chair of the section has been successful.



Peter with 3 of his 17 grandchildren.

So, how are we doing? Based on my observations and conversations with others at the ASA meeting in San Francisco, I would say we are currently a healthy section with vitality. The sessions sponsored by SALC were well attended and, more importantly, were bristling with creative, provocative ideas. From roundtable discussions to the wonderful reflections on a long career of stimulating research by Angie O'Rand, our 2009 Distinguished Scholar, we were offered rich intellectual fare. At the mentoring dinner, which has become a highlight of SALC activities at the annual meeting, we enjoyed good drink and food at Johnny Foley's Irish Pub. And the other purpose of this gathering – to promote and facilitate conversations between members at all career stages- was clearly achieved. I especially appreciate the old-timers engaging younger colleagues in serious conversation, and newer members taking initiative to meet those whose writing is shaping the field. The same type of interactions occurred at the reception following the distinguished lecture where lively conversations were evident.

Looking ahead to our 2010 meeting in Atlanta, we can anticipate good things to continue. We plan to have two open paper sessions, one focused on blending theory and methods and the other on social forces shaping aging. A wide range of opportunities for sharing ideas will be provided by the roundtable session. A call for papers for these sessions will be coming, but I hope that you are already thinking about possible submissions. An invited paper session is planned around the topic of "connections across age." And, unless something wholly unexpected happens, Dale Dannefer will treat us to stimulating ideas in his 2010 Matilda White Riley Distinguished Lecture. Further, opportunities for mentoring and networking will not be neglected. Janet Wilmoth will succeed Victor Marshall and David Ekerdt as Chair of the mentoring committee, and she is already enthusiastically working on plans for our 2010 meeting.

It is wonderful to step in as Chair of a section that is in good shape. One reason for the vitality of SALC is that the two past Chairs, Eliza Pavalko and Duane Alwin, have really cared about the section. The other reason is that we have a lot of bright and nice members who willingly help out.

Peter Uhlenberg
Section Chair 2009-2010

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Section on Aging and the Life Course Business Meeting August 9, 2009, 3:30-4:00 p.m. Hilton, San Francisco, CA

Call to Order: Eliza Pavalko 3:30

Secretary's Minutes from 2008 Annual Meeting Anne Barrett, Florida State University

Last year's minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report Anne Barrett, Florida State University

As of June 30, the section had a balance of \$8,382 and had raised or had commitments of over \$2,500 in individual and institutional donations. A full treasurer's report is available upon request. Contact Anne Barrett at abarrett@fsu.edu

Planning Committee Report

Chair: Eliza Pavalko, Indiana University
Melissa Hardy, The Pennsylvania State University
Scott Lynch, Princeton University

Bridget Gorman, Rice University
Janet Wilmoth, Syracuse University

The SALC Program included a well attended mentoring dinner (outside the hotel), council meeting, 4 open submission sessions (including one session devoted to roundtables and research groups), and one invited session. Two sessions were co-sponsored by the Section on Children and Youth. The themes for the paper sessions were as follows: "30 Years of Research on Aging and the Life Course: What Have We Learned and What Do We Still Need to Know?"; "Transition to Adulthood: The Importance of the Health Domain"; "Early Life Predictors of Health through the Life Course"; and "Methodological Innovations in Research on Aging and the Life Course." We also had a reception in the hotel after the Distinguished Scholar lecture.

Book Raffle Committee Report

Chair: Pam Herd, University of Wisconsin, Madison

This fundraising activity helps to subsidize student activities at the meeting. In 2009, we raised \$500 and had 17 books and journal subscriptions for raffle. Tickets were \$5 and drawings were held following ASA. Winners received an email and arranged for books to be sent either from us or directly from the publisher. We also raffled off 10 student memberships to the section, in an effort to also boost membership.

Ad Hoc Committee on Mentoring

Chair: David Ekerdt, University of Kansas
Victor Marshall, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Miles G. Taylor, Florida State University
Jori Sechrist, Purdue University
Jennifer Karas Montez, The University of Texas at Austin
Elena Portacolone, University of California-San Francisco
Eliza Pavalko (ex-officio), Indiana University
Peter Uhlenberg (ex-officio), University of North Carolina



The committee focused its efforts on the mentoring dinner, which has been a successful event for the section. We raised over \$3700 from donations (from 30 individuals and organizations), \$535 of which is designated for the 2010 dinner. Donors were listed on the dinner program. Approximately \$1800 was raised from ticket sales and about 100 people attended (evenly divided between student and regular members). Tickets were \$25 for regular members and \$10 for students. The dinner was held at Johnny Foley's Irish House (outside of hotel) on the evening before Section Day. At the dinner, we had a brief program during which Section members who are journal editors offered advice on publication strategies. Participating editors were Francesco Billari, Ken Ferraro, Kyriakos Markides, and Eliza Pavalko.

THE NEW POLITICS OF COMMUNITY

104th Annual Meeting
August 8-11, 2009 | San Francisco, CA

Section Business During 2009 Annual Meeting

Membership Committee Report

Chair: Noelle Chesley, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Amy Pienta, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

A continuing challenge for the section is maintaining membership at 600 (which is the point at which we get an additional session at ASA). We appear to have steady attrition as a result of retirements and the current economic situation. Our strategies for maintaining or increasing membership include emailing lapsed members 1 or 2 times per year and raffling off student memberships.

Communications Report

Newsletter Editor: Jenifer Hamil-Luker, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Section Web Master: Tonya Allen, The Pennsylvania State University
Listserv Editor: Linda Wray, The Pennsylvania State University

Council approved at this year's meeting the section moving to a fully electronic newsletter. A direct link to the newsletter will be posted on the section's listserv. Members will receive email notification when the newsletter is posted on the section website, <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/index.htm>.

During the 2008-09 year, regular listserv announcements were distributed to SALC members twice monthly: official Section business announcements at the first of every month and other announcements (e.g., jobs, new books by Section members, journal or book invitations, conferences, and other miscellaneous news) at the middle of every month. Periodic special additional announcements were also distributed to Section members. All regular and special listserv announcements included the address for the SALC website at the top of the page. In a change from the past, ASA's new server now requires all listserv announcements to be approved by the listserv editor before final distribution to Section members to guard against unauthorized senders attempting to distribute messages.



Linda Wray
SALC Listserv Editor

Ad Hoc Committee on Publications:

Chair: Cheryl Elman, University of Akron
Rick Settersten, Oregon State University
David Ekerdt, University of Kansas
Duane Alwin, The Pennsylvania State University (ex-officio)
Peter Uhlenberg, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (ex-officio)
Eliza Pavalko-Indiana University (ex-officio)

At a January conference call, the committee discussed issues and prospects for a section publication. The main decision was to put discussion of a section publication on hold as we take stock of several new developments, including the new journal *Advances in Life Course Research*. At the council meeting this year, we discussed a new proposal for a section-affiliated or section-sponsored book series through Springer.

Eliza introduced Francesco Billari (Universita Bocconi, Milan, Italy), the new editor of the section's journal, *Advances in Life Course Research*. Billari spoke about his plans for the journal and encouraged members to support the journal by submitting and reviewing. The journal replaces the well-established Elsevier book series edited by Timothy Owens.



Francesco Billari
Editor of *Advances in Life
Course Research*

Research Groups and Roundtables Report:

Co-chairs: Dennis Hogan, Brown University
Ross MacMillan, University of Minnesota

At this year's conference we had 13 papers presented in the research group tables and 29 papers in the roundtables.

Meeting Adjourned 4:00



Presentation of ASA Section Awards 2009

Outstanding Publication Award

Chair: Mark Hayward, University of Texas at Austin
Kenneth Ferraro, Purdue University
Jessica Kelley-Moore, Case Western Reserve
Victor Marshall, Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Cheryl Elman, University of Akron



Wilson, Shuey, and Elder

This marks the 3rd year for the outstanding publication award. The criteria considered for the award included originality, theoretical and methodological rigor, and importance. This year's recipients are Andrea E. Willson (University of Western Ontario), Kim M. Shuey (University of Western Ontario), and Glen H. Elder, Jr. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) for their paper entitled "Cumulative Advantage Processes as Mechanisms of Inequality in Life Course Health." It was published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 2007.

Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award



Kyle C. Longest

Chair: Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson, Washington State University
Jessica Kelley-Moore, Case Western Reserve University
Victor Marshall, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Andrea Willson, University of Western Ontario
D. Wayne Osgood, The Pennsylvania State University

This year's recipient of the outstanding graduate student paper award is Kyle C. Longest, who wrote "Integrating Identity Theory and the Life Course Perspective: The Case of Adolescent Religious Behavior" as a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Longest is now an Assistant Professor at Furman University.

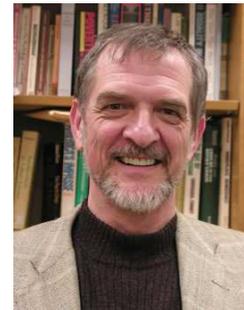
Congratulations to New SALC Officers!

Election Winners

Dale Dannefer, Case Western Reserve University, Chair-elect
Debra Umberson, University of Texas at Austin, Council
Debra Street, University of New York at Buffalo, Council
Amelia Karraker, University of Wisconsin-Madison (student member)

Committee on Nominations

Chair: Duane Alwin, The Pennsylvania State University
Nicholas Danigelis, University of Vermont
Sara Moorman, University of Wisconsin-Madison (student member)
Angela O'Rand, Duke University
Jill Quadagno, Florida State University



Dannefer, Chair Elect

Appreciation to Outgoing Officers

Thanks to outgoing council members, Cheryl Elman, Jori Sechrist, Rick Settersten, and Amy Pienta for their service on council. Thanks also goes to outgoing chair Eliza Pavalko for an outstanding job running the section and putting together a great 2009 meeting in San Francisco.

We're on the web!

<http://www.pop.psu.edu/asalc/index.htm>

Dale Dannefer Receives 2009 Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award

Chair: Peter Uhlenberg, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Cheryl Elman, University of Akron
Rick Settersten, Oregon State University
Angela O'Rand, Duke University

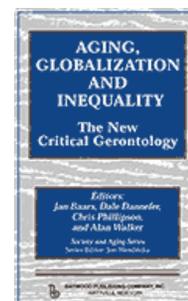
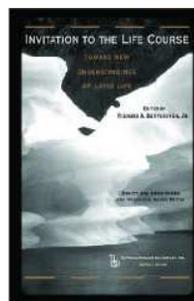
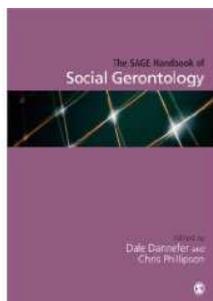
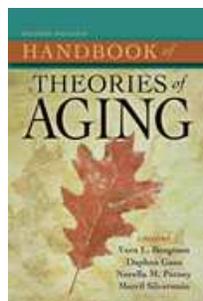
The committee unanimously selected Dale Dannefer as the winner of the MWR Distinguished Scholar Award for 2009. He will present a distinguished lecture at the 2010 annual meeting. Dale Dannefer came to our attention in the field of life course research in the mid-1980s when he challenged us to rethink prior epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding the nature of aging in societies and how to study it. His first challenge was to the dominance of methodological individualism in most adult development research, which privileged individualistic over structural reasoning in causal analyses of the aging process. The individualistic bias of gerontological research & its dependence on survey research had moved towards what Dannefer referred to as an "ontogenetic model" of the aging process that ignored the relational and interactive dynamics of aging and the important impact of variable environments over the life course on its trajectory (*American Sociological Review*, 1984).

His second challenge was to the opposite demographic bias that assumed that aging cohorts were homogeneous populations without significant within-cohort variability. Indeed, in this critique Dannefer took on his own mentor, Matilda White Riley, who had pioneered the "age stratification" model of aging that emphasized inter-cohort variability and succession and downplayed intra-cohort variability.

The identification of this bias laid the foundation for another theoretical innovation associated with Dannefer, the support of a stratification theory of aging adapted from Robert K. Merton's original formulation of the "Matthew Effect" in science. The Matthew Effect argues that within social stratification systems of all varieties, initial inequalities come to be reproduced over time in such a way as to increase inequalities: the rich get richer the poor, poorer. In aging research, this process is now examined as a complex system of cumulative advantage or disadvantage over the life span that operates with respect to access to economic, social, and health resources. While the detailed elaboration of the mechanisms generated by these deep processes is well underway, Dannefer deserves the major credit for bringing the framework and the language for this approach to the attention of the broader research community.

Accordingly, Dannefer has established himself as a sociologist with acute wide-angle and microscopic lenses on our field. He has been able to identify problems in our field that prevailing conceptualizations and methodological conventions have obscured. Today, Dannefer is the "staple" theorist of aging research. I have great respect for his mind and his contributions to our field.

By Angela M. O'Rand, Ph.D.



SALC Seeks Nominations for 2010 Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award

The Section on Aging and the Life Course seeks nominations for the 2010 Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award. This award honors a scholar in the field of aging and the life course who has shown exceptional achievement in research, theory, policy analysis, or who has otherwise advanced knowledge of aging and the life course. Letters of nomination should describe the nominee's contributions to the study of aging and the life course that warrant consideration. Additional letters of support are encouraged but not required.

Nominations and additional letters of support should be submitted by **March 1, 2010** to:

Dale Dannefer
Case Western Reserve University
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland OH 44106
dale.dannefer@case.edu

Mark Your Calendars for the 2010 ASA Annual Meeting!



E-Newsletter Fosters Aging Research Discussions

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) offers free subscriptions to its "Today's Research in Aging" newsletter, intended to increase awareness of research results and their application to major public and private decision making. Funding for this e-newsletter series and related articles and webcasts has been provided by the NIA's Behavioral & Social Research Unit, through a grant from the University of Michigan Center on the Demography of Aging. Visit the PRB website to subscribe to the newsletter.

Health Care Publication Welcomes Manuscripts

Papers are being sought for volume 28 of "Research in The Sociology of Health Care." The theme is "Racial/Ethnic, Geographic, Gender, and Other Social Factors Leading to Differences in Health and Health Care: Issues for Patients and Providers." The volume will contain 10-14 papers, 20-40 pages in length. Completed manuscripts or detailed outlines are due for review by 2/1/10. Initial indications of interest are due by 1/5/10. Address correspondence to Jennie Jacobs Kronenfeld at (480) 965-8053 or Jennie.Kronenfeld@asu.edu.

Job Position Announcements from ASA Job Bank

The Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the **University of California, San Francisco** announces a search for a tenure track faculty position to be filled by September 1, 2010 (preferred, but later start date may be negotiable). Appointment will be at the Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor rank, depending upon the finalist's level of experience. We are seeking a sociologist with an established or promising research career who is academically prepared to teach classes in the sociology of aging, health policy, medical sociology, long term care, organizational theory, and quantitative research methods. Preferred areas of expertise include long term care and aging, health policy, health care organizations & quantitative research methods. Candidates should have a research program that will be synergistic with departmental teaching and research directions. At the senior level, candidates must be willing and able to contribute to the leadership of the department, through periodic rotation to the Department Chair position. Applications should be received by January 31, 2010.

University of North Dakota-Department of Sociology is seeking applicants for a tenure track Assistant Professor of Sociology beginning August 16, 2010. Teaching areas to include Aging, Statistics, Research Methods, Introduction to Sociology and a course in the candidate's specialty area. Candidates are expected to have a Ph.D. in Sociology or evidence of its completion before appointment. Evidence of excellence or promise of excellence in teaching effectiveness and research is required. The candidate will teach undergraduate and graduate courses, maintain an active research program and provide service to the university and the discipline. Salary dependent upon qualifications.

The Department of Sociology at the **University of North Texas** invites applications for a full-time tenure-track appointment at the Assistant Professor level to begin Fall 2010. We are especially interested in candidates whose research and teaching skills strengthen our department in the areas of gender, aging/social gerontology, comparative and global sociology, health and illness, and/or social stratification/inequality. Preference will also be given to candidates with a demonstrated record of scholarly research and publication, securing external funds for research, and effective teaching of multiple courses at the college or university level. Review of completed applications will begin November 6, 2009 and continue until the search is closed.

Focus on Research and Policies: Health Disparities

By Halle, Lewis, and Seshamani ¹

The United States spends more than any other nation in the world on health care. In 2007 we spent \$2.2 trillion.² Despite consistent increases in spending, disparities among demographic groups persist. Low-income Americans and racial and ethnic minorities experience disproportionately higher rates of disease, fewer treatment options, and reduced access to care.² With unemployment on the rise, disparities already apparent among these groups will continue to increase. It is vital that health reform reduces costs to make health care affordable; protects a patient's choice of doctors, hospitals, and insurance plans; invests in prevention and wellness; and assures affordable, quality health care for all Americans.

Access to Care

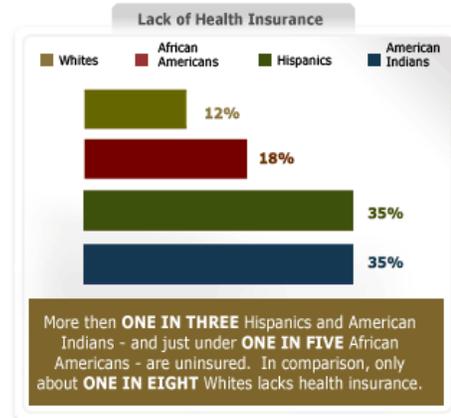
Access to quality care is vital to overall health & wellness, & health insurance plays a key role. In the United States, racial and ethnic minorities and low-income populations experience serious disparities in rates of insurance and access to health care.³ More than 1 in 3 Hispanics and American Indians and just under 1 in 5 African Americans are uninsured. In comparison, only about 1 in 8 Whites lacks health insurance. Four in 10 low-income Americans do not have health insurance, and half of the nearly 46 million uninsured people in the United States are poor. About 1/3 of the uninsured have a chronic disease, and they are six times less likely to receive care for a health problem than the insured.⁴ In contrast, 94% of upper-income Americans have health insurance.⁵

A primary care provider and a facility where a person receives regular care substantially improve health outcomes. However, Hispanics are only half as likely to have a usual source of care as Whites. Half of Hispanics and more than a quarter of African Americans do not have a regular doctor, compared with only one fifth of Whites. Low-income Americans are three times less likely to have a usual source of care compared to those with higher incomes – and almost half of low-income Hispanics lack a usual source of care. Poor communication with health care providers results in a host of problems including less access to preventative care and higher rates of re-hospitalization. Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics all reported having poor communications with their doctor more often than Whites.⁴

Routine Care and Prevention

Disparities in health are also apparent in the variation in routine care and prevention among demographic groups. People who do not have access to a usual source of primary preventive health care are more likely to end up in the emergency department or in the hospital.⁵ Low-income adults and children struggle to obtain routine but needed care that serves to prevent the occurrence of more serious health problems. Twenty percent of low-income Hispanic youth have gone a year without a health care visit – a rate three times higher than that for high-income Whites.⁵ Preventative care is paramount to stopping the root causes of disease as well as detecting diseases in their early stages when treatment is most effective. For example, diabetes requires consistent management to prevent progression of the disease – proper management and prevention includes hemoglobin testing, eye & foot examinations, lipid management, and influenza vaccinations. Less than one-third of people living within 200% of the poverty line receive these preventive measures, while more than half of people with high incomes receive proper care.⁵ When diabetes is not managed properly, patients can incur kidney disease and foot amputations as late-term consequences – conditions that are much more likely among Hispanics and African Americans, respectively.⁵

These disparities in health care highlight the need for reform. Meaningful reform must invest in prevention and wellness and ensure that all Americans have access to high-quality, affordable care. We can no longer afford to tolerate disparities in health.



¹ US Department of Health and Human Services. 2009. *Health Disparities: A Case for Closing the Gap*.

² Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, National Health Expenditure. 2007. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ Mead, H., Cartwright-Smith, L., Jones, K., Ramos, C., Siegel, B., Woods, K. (2008). "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in U.S. Healthcare: A Chartbook." The Commonwealth Fund.

⁴ Kaiser Family Foundation, *Medicaid and the Uninsured*, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009).

⁵ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *National Healthcare Disparities Report*, 2008

Thanks to our Sponsors!

2009 Section on Aging and the Life Course Mentoring Dinner and Program

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**Thanks to Duke University
 and Elsevier for supporting the
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