

ASA Section on Aging & The Life Course



Winter 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

New SALC Website Initiative	2
Section Announcements	3
Six ways to Communicate	4
Recent Publications	5
General Announcements	5
2008 Section Nominees	6
Section Officers	6

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

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Lines of Communication

In Philip Roth's most recent novel, *Exit Ghost* (Houghton-Mifflin, 2007), the main character, writer Nathan Zuckerman, returns to New York City for a week after a lengthy exile in his rural mountain home in the Berkshires. Like Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle, returning to his hometown after many years away, he finds that everything has changed. One of the striking changes he notices is that there are some new "lines of communication" – nearly everyone walking the streets of the city is talking on a cell phone. Zuckerman ponders the implications of this new technology.

Alone on his New England mountain for the past 11 years, Zuckerman has been nothing but a writer, entirely isolated from most other people: no voices, no media, no terrorist threats, no news, nothing but work and the problems of aging. He has not adapted to new technologies, and is in fact not aware of many of them. Other than the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome from the use of his typewriter (remember those?), his erstwhile technological existence includes none of the risk factors for new chronic diseases, like "blackberry thumb," "cellphone elbow," or "ipod-deafness." He owned a corded telephone, but rarely used it.

We are not a section of "social isolates" like Zuckerman. However, one of the areas I promised myself and others that I would work on during my year as section chair falls under the category of *improving communications*. As you may have guessed, this is a theme that is interwoven in several of the contributions to this issue of the *SALC Newsletter*. Among other things, I want to try to get people to consider how we baby boomers and pre-baby boomers maintain lines of communication with our younger colleagues, and how we can find ways to successfully age into new technologies. How do we remodel our existing section "lines of communication" in such a way that we can successfully reach across generational lines and bring our technologies into the 21st century in which we now live?

Other than conference calling and e-mailing, our section currently relies on several vehicles for communication. If you are reading this essay, you are aware of the *SALC Newsletter* as a way of communicating. There are others as well—specifically the section website and our listserv. I want to use this opportunity to acknowledge the many people who have voluntarily served our section in managing these facilities and who have contributed to these mechanisms of communication. Ron Abeles got our website started and Adam Perzynski has maintained it over the past several years. We also owe a lot to past and present newsletter editors, again Ron Abeles, Laurie Hatch, and Renée Beard. Over the past several years Amélie Quesnel-Vallée managed the "announcements listserv" and the "discussion listserv," and Linda Wray is currently our Listserv editor. We owe all of these people a great deal of thanks.

In this issue of the *Newsletter* there are three additional "communications" about "communicating." I have written a short note titled "Six Ways of Communicating" (see page 4), which is also posted on our website. There is also an announcement about the new website initiative and the work of SALC Council in developing a set of proposals for oversight and maintenance of the website in future years (see page 2). And there is also an important announcement from the Ad Hoc Committee on Publications (Cheryl Elman, chair; see page 3) regarding the use of the "discussion listserv" to conduct communications about "publication options." And finally, there is an announcement about the new ASA Forum, a venture initiated in October by Mike Murphy, section coordinator at ASA (see page 3).

Improving lines of communication is a good thing, both for the efficiency of transmitting information and seeking feedback, and more importantly, it is a mechanism that can foster greater inclusiveness and a sense of common purpose.

Duane Alwin, 2007-08 Section Chair

The New SALC Website Initiative

In early January 2008 we launched a new version of the website, which can be found at:

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

This followed from a SALC Council discussion of the issues of maintaining, managing and editing the section website at its winter (conference call) meeting held in December. The Council accepted a proposal from the Chair with the following elements:

The creation of the position of "website editor" (distinct from the "webmaster") who oversees the website. It was proposed that the section chair assume this role and this be listed as one of the key duties of the section chair. This will insure that one section member is designated the responsibility for keeping information on the website current and for finding ways to make it a "dynamic" set of opportunities for communicating.

The use of section funds to cover the developmental costs of making the transition to the newly-designed site and to make maintenance costs associated with keeping the website current a part of our regular section operating costs.

The development of a set of guidelines for operating the website, covering such issues as what can change and should change (or should not change) on what cycle and how the section proposes to use the website as a communication device. The guidelines will be drafted by the current chair and chair-elect and will cover responsibilities for maintaining and editing the website. The draft guidelines will then be submitted to SALC Council for discussion and feedback, and ultimately approval, prior to August at the 2008 Boston meetings.

The launching of the website effective in early January, or thereabouts, as a SALC endeavor consistent with the foregoing points.

I would like to express my appreciation to those who have given this endeavor their support through discussion of these issues, as well as other types of feedback, especially Jacqui Angel, Ron Abeles, Eliza Pavalko, Adam Perzynski, Cheryl Elman, and Linda Wray. There are still some areas of this website that need further developing and in the future we may want to add other features, but for now we are moving forward with this initiative, as embodied in the above four elements.

Duane Alwin
Section Chair

SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Express Your Views on SALC Publication Issues, by Cheryl Elman

Over the first several months of 2008, a key topic of discussion among the membership of SALC will be about the section's publication options. The Ad Hoc Committee on Publications is gathering information about member's views on sponsoring publication(s). You are invited to express your ideas about this via the SALC discussion listserv (<http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/listserv.htm#disc> to sign up) or by direct communication with Publications Committee members, see <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/committees.htm>. For background on the issue, see the document, Publication Options at <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/puboptions.htm>

ASA Discussion Forum, by Mike Murphy

Participate in ASA's online community by registering for the ASA discussion forum at: <http://members.asanet.org/forums>.

Discuss journal articles, new books, professional concerns, teaching, and practice. Or "Ask the ASA" a question or share experiences with others interested in a specialty field (including Aging and the Life Course) or create your own topic (and have replies delivered via e-mail). Bookmark the forum and visit often! ASA or section membership not required, although you will need to create a forum ID and password to post or respond.

The Creation of Two New Sections-in-Formation

At the 2007 ASA meetings in New York, ASA Council approved the formation of two new sections of interest to aging and life course researchers: one on *Human Rights*, and one on *Disability and Society*. See the December issue of Footnotes: <http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/dec07/fn10.html>

Nominations due March 31 for Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award

Please consider nominating a distinguished scholar in aging for the Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award. This award honors a scholar who had 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 candidate's contributions to the study of aging and the life course. Additional letters of support are encouraged but not required. Nominations should be submitted by **March 31, 2008** to: Eliza Pavalko, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Ballantine Hall 744, 1020 E. Kirkwood Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405-7103. Email: epavalko@indiana.edu; phone: 812-855-7629.

Keep our Numbers Growing!

Membership in the Aging and Life Course Section has been growing in recent years and underscores the vibrancy, energy, and dedication of our scholars. Section membership is an inexpensive and easy way to stay in contact with a broad intellectual community. To obtain or renew your membership online, visit: <http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Join+or+Renew&name=Join>

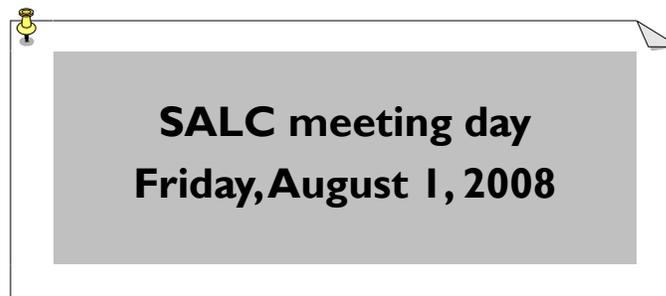
Membership in the Aging and Life Course section is available to all members of the American Sociological Association. A one-year membership is \$13.00 for regular members and \$6.00 for student members. Further inquiries about section membership can be directed to Diane Brown (browndi@umdnj.edu).

Six Ways of Communicating

Duane Alwin, SALC section chair, 2007-08

SALC (Section on Aging and the Life Course) has several ways of communicating and transmitting information as a section. In this message I list them and point you to some key links.

1. Thanks to the efforts Ron Abeles and Adam Perzynski, we have maintained a website for a number of years. We are in the process of initiating a “new” website which expanded our previous site. Check it out and give us your reactions. See the announcement in this issue (page 2).
2. The SALC Newsletter is edited by Renée Beard. Previous Newsletter editors in the recent past were Laurie Hatch and Ron Abeles. See the current newsletter (and archived newsletters) on the website: <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/index.htm>
3. The SALC “announcements listserv” provides (a) announcements from the Section, (b) member announcements and (c) job announcements. Over the past several years Amélie Quesnel-Vallée managed the “announcements listserv.” Linda Wray is currently our Listserv editor. See the following link: <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/listserv.htm>
4. The section “discussion listserv” provides an opportunity to initiate discussion on section-related issues and seek replies and commentary. In this case, one must subscribe to the discussion listserv, and one must be a member of the group to initiate and respond to discussion messages. It is very easy to subscribe: <http://www.pop.psu.edu/asasalc/listserv.htm#disc>
5. The ASA has recently launched a new web-based discussion forum, with both "general" areas of discussion (e.g. ASA business, journals), as well special topic forums. In October, Mike Murphy announced the initiation of these new discussion forums. Mike will be the moderator of the topic forum on Aging and the Life Course. Open discussion and posting is encouraged; postings are not pre-approved but will be screened by the moderator. Job listings are not allowed and users must agree to the ASA Code of Conduct when posting or replying in these forums. Learn how to register by visiting http://members.asanet.org/Forums/view_forum.php?id=13
6. To be complete, I should also include our annual meetings among the several ways we have of communicating. Through the operation of our annual section meetings, we share ideas, communicate findings, and conduct the business of our section. Among the ways SALC has of communicating, this is the best way. At our annual meetings we have many mechanisms for exchanging thoughts, ideas, interests, results, and overall group solidarity in pursuit of understanding aging and the life course. This year’s ASA meeting will be held Friday through Monday, August 1st to 4th in Boston.



RESOURCES AND/OR RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Encyclopedia of Health and Aging, Edited by Kyriakos S. Markides, Sage Publications, 2007.

Research on Aging -- Special Issue

Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health in Life-Course Perspective

Available: 1 March 2008; Vol. 30, No. 2 @ <http://roa.sagepub.com/content/vol30/issue2/?etoc>

- Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health in Life-Course Perspective: Introduction to Special Issue
Scott M. Lynch, pp. 127-136
- Race, Gender, and SES Disparities in Self-Assessed Health, 1974-2004
Jason L. Cummings and Pamela Braboy Jackson, pp. 137-167
- Accumulating Disadvantage Over the Life Course: Evidence From a Longitudinal Study Investigating the Relationship Between Educational Advantage in Youth and Health in Middle Age
Katrina M. Walsemann, Arline T. Geronimus, and Gilbert C. Gee, pp. 169-199
- Cumulative Disadvantage and Black-White Disparities in Life-Course Health Trajectories
Kim M. Shuey and Andrea E. Willson, pp. 200-225
- Timing, Accumulation, and the Black/White Disability Gap in Later Life: A Test of Weathering
Miles G. Taylor, pp. 226-250
- The Contributions of Race, Individual Socioeconomic Status, and Neighborhood Socioeconomic Context on the Self-Rated Health Trajectories and Mortality of Older Adults
Li Yao and Stephanie A. Robert, pp. 251-273

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS/OPPORTUNITIES

Visiting Gerontology Institute Fellow, University of Massachusetts Boston

The Gerontology Institute seeks applicants for a visiting fellow the 2008/9 academic year. The fellow is expected to pursue a research project that fits within the Institute's priority areas and to contribute to Institute endeavors through such activities as lectures, workshops, brief seminars, assistance with publications, assistance with grant writing, or participation in program development. We are particularly interested in contributions that will lead to joint projects with Institute faculty. Fellows will receive a stipend of \$24,000. One fellow or two fellows will be in residence for three months during the 2008 Fall or 2009 Spring Semester. The fellow should have an established record in Gerontology. Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae; a letter of application specifying semester of residence; their research plans during residence, as well as their plans for other contributions to the Institute; and copies of 4-5 recent publications. We are particularly interested in fellows who will collaborate with Institute faculty on research projects and grant proposals. We will consider applications received by **March 15, 2008**. Please send or e-mail applications to: Maximiliane E. Szinovacz, Director, Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125-3393. Visit our website at <http://www.geront.umb.edu/inst/> for further information about the Institute. For additional information contact Maxi Szinovacz at 617 287 7320 or maxi.szinovacz@umb.edu

2008 Section on Aging and the Life Course Nominees for Section Offices

Chair

Peter Uhlenberg, University of North Carolina
Linda J. Waite, University of Chicago

Council (elect two)

Heather Hofmeister, RWTH Aachen University (Germany)
Dennis Hogan, Brown University
Ross MacMillan, University of Minnesota
Sheryl L. Sellers, University of Wisconsin—Madison

Graduate Student Representative (elect one)

Daniel L. Carlson, Ohio State University
Jennifer Karas Montez, University of Texas at Austin

Looking for a Tax Deduction? Donate to the Section

You may make a donation to the Section on Aging and the Life Course and include it in your tax deductions. Your donation will help the Section by providing funds for its annual activities, especially the Student Paper Award. Make your check payable to the American Sociological Association. Mail your check, along with a brief letter requesting that the donation be placed into the account of the Section on Aging and the Life Course, to:

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Washington, DC 20005-4701

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Council

Deborah Carr (08)
Sidney M. Stahl (08)
Cheryl Elman (09)
Richard A. Settersten (09)
Jessica A. Kelley-Moore (10)
Victor W. Marshall (10)

Student Members

Sara Marian Moorman (08)
Jori Sechrist (09)

Listserv Editor

Linda A. Wray