

ASA Section on Aging & The Life Course

winter-spring
2005

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Home Page:
[www.asanet.org/
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Centennial Celebration: A Time to Remember, Reflect, and Honor

2005 is turning out to be a special year for sociologists. The ASA is turning 100 years old, and our Section is in its 26th year.

As I spoke with the late Matilda Riley in the summer of 2004, she recalled the challenges the Section faced while she was chair. Chief among her concerns was the struggle to get more members so that we could have additional sessions at the annual meeting. Our Section has had a membership over 480 in each of the past 4 years, but the next threshold for an additional session is 600. It would take quite a bit to get to 600, but our Membership Chair, Debby Carr, is challenging us to reach for 525. *Would you help by asking two of your colleagues if they are members of the Section?* Then simply tell them why you belong. I also believe this year's program may be a great vehicle to spark interest in our Section.

Our annual meeting in Philadelphia is turning out to be a time to remember and reflect. Matilda is no longer with us—at least not in an earth suit—but we will be taking time to remember those who helped form and nurture the Section. We are also planning some times to reflect at a banquet and as well as in the official program. Duane Alwin is organizing a special session on *Milestones in the Study of Aging and the Life Course*. This should give us a chance to celebrate our accomplishments and identify needed areas of research.

I also ask you to ponder additional ways to honor our colleagues. I think we need to do more to honor the *people* and the *writings* that shape our thinking, teaching, and scholarly pursuits. Our Section currently has two standing awards:

- Graduate Student Paper Award
- Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award.

It strikes me that there is a significant “life course gap” between winning these two awards. Our Section is permitted to create more awards, and I am asking for your suggestions by April 18. Should we consider another award? If yes, what type of an award would be an optimal addition for our Section?

Ken Ferraro
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Section on Aging & the Life Course Distinguished Scholar Lecture

Fredric D. Wolinsky, The University of Iowa

99th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association

August 14, 2004, San Francisco California

Our sitting Section chair, Ken Ferraro, has asked that I write up a brief synopsis of my Distinguished Scholar Award presentation at the 2004 annual meeting. I demurred, in part due to the joy of condensing 30 minutes into 800 words. But Ken was adamant. So, with apologies, here goes.

Taken together, the previous recipients of the Section's Distinguished Scholar Award comprise a formidable "honor roll" of sociologists who have made important and lasting contributions to the study of aging and the life course that go far beyond the confines of our vibrant discipline. To learn that my name was to be added to that list of luminaries was an incredible and total surprise that caused me great pause. In my view, many of our colleagues are certainly far more deserving than I am. Thus, it is my sincere prayer that they will be appropriately recognized in due course.

Upon notification of selection, it became clear that the Distinguished Scholar Award is an example of exchange theory. That is, you get the award, but you have to give a talk for it. Given the substance (and name) of our Section, it seemed plausible to frame my talk around how I got to this point. That part was relatively clear -- it wasn't by strategic planning or dumb luck -- the Lord had a plan for me, and frequently (but certainly not always), I followed it, albeit unknowingly. It was quite helpful that He put a number of our colleagues in my path, both literally and virtually. It is a long list, but I would remiss not to mention those who trained me (Roland Hawkes, Larry Landis, and Jerry Gaston), influenced my work (Ron Andersen, Eliot Friedson, and David Mechanic), and led and nurtured me to the promised land of aging and the life course (Rod Coe, Marcia Ory, and Matilda White Riley). There are also those members of my cohort whose work is consistently of such high caliber that I am motivated to emulate (Ken Ferraro, Neal Krause, and John Mirowsky). And of course, I must thank Steve Cutler who taught me professional citizenship by example. It is hard to imagine a better role model than Steve.

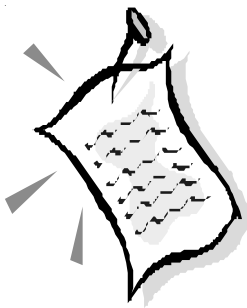
Most of my work has focused on health services use and health status, especially in terms of equity, which we now refer to as disparity. There have been changes in our work over time in both arenas. In terms of health services utilization, we focused on all-cause models for a long time, before it became clear to us and others that the real issue was not simply equity in access to health care, but equity in access to quality health care. That recognition has shifted our interests to the more meaningful constructs of preventable hospitalization, and hospitalization for ambulatory care sensitive conditions. AHRQ currently recognizes the latter as the quality evaluation measures of choice. Similarly, in terms of health status, our original focus was on self-rated health, which has since evolved into more refined measures of functional status (self-reports and performance based assessments), as well as health-related quality of life. This is especially important for our field, inasmuch as performance based assessments of lower body function have been shown to be strong predictors of subsequent changes in self-reported functional status, ADLs, IADLs, hospitalization, nursing home placement, death in older adults, and more recently, death in middle-aged adults as well. Most importantly, there is considerable evidence from randomized controlled trials that physical performance interventions can be effective, even among older and frail adults.

Related to this shift in our emphasis have been two new lines of investigation. The first extends the work of Linda Fried and colleagues on sub-clinical disability assessment, which they developed in the study of older White women in the Women's Health and Aging Study (WHAS). Our work demonstrates the utility of this construct to men, minorities, late middle aged individuals, and to functional status. An article coming out later this year in the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* provides a detailed review of how sub-clinical (activity modification in Lois Verbrugge and Alan Jette's model of the disablement process) can be easily measured by self-report, and

how effectively such reports predict the onset of subsequent disability (task performance difficulties) in just a year or two.

The other line of relatively new investigation that we think bears promise for the field involves the identification of clinically relevant levels of change in longitudinal comparisons of health-related quality of life. We have approached this from the perspective of the three critical groups of stakeholders: expert physicians, patients, and the primary care physicians treating these patients. The results (i.e., empirically determined clinically important difference [CID] thresholds) from our expert physician panels with reference to the widely used SF-36 (Version 2.0) scales will appear later this year in an article in Health Services Research. Our empirically derived estimates of CID thresholds obtained from patients and their primary care physicians are currently under review, and we hope that they will appear later this year as well.

In a nutshell, that pretty much sums up the talk. In closing, let me simply repeat the text from the final slide of my PowerPoint presentation: "Thank you, and may the Lord's blessings be upon you, as they have been upon me."



Dear Colleagues,

We have added two areas to our HomePage (<http://www.asanet.org/sectionaging/index.html>). We now have a "What's New" note on the first page to direct you to any changes recently made to the HomePage. Scroll to the bottom of the start page.

Secondly, we are publishing reminders of the contributions made to sociology and the Section by deceased Section Chairpersons and Distinguished Scholars. "Remembering Our Leaders" (<http://www.asanet.org/sectionaging/obits.html>) provides information about their lives and professional careers. We are honoring Past Chairpersons Nicholas Babchuk, Helena Lopata, Matilda Riley, and Harold Sheppard as well as Past Distinguished Scholars Marie Haug and Irving Rosow. As you see, we do not have any information on Irving Rosow. If you know of a published obituary or can write one for the HomePage, please let me know.

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Balancing Multiple Roles:
Advice for Students and Other Newcomers
Maureen R. Benjamins, University of Illinois at Chicago
Shalon M. Irving, Purdue University

The challenges that we face as students and new researchers are plentiful. Professional demands come from courses, teaching responsibilities, research opportunities, memberships in professional organizations, and other related areas. Personal demands encompass an entirely different realm of activities and responsibilities, involving family, friends, romantic partners, social organizations, and personal health and well-being. Consequently, one question that frequently arises in any discussion is "How do I balance these multiple, and often competing, roles?" Every emerging scholar has faced this question at some point and has grappled with the challenging process of creating a balance in her or his life. In order to do this, it is helpful to begin with three important steps: identifying the needs, demands, and responsibilities that you face; setting goals; and managing your time to allow you to meet those goals. In this article, we will attempt to provide some ideas on how to prioritize among different responsibilities, set goals, manage time, and get organized. As before,* we collected suggestions and ideas from a range of junior and senior members of the ALC Section and have summarized them here. We hope you find something useful!

Identifying Demands

Clearly identifying the multiple demands that we face is critical to successfully balancing them. To begin thinking about your different needs, it is often helpful to create several lists of specific needs. In the professional arena, we may need to publish our first paper, gain some teaching experience, or continue to expand our professional networks by attending conferences and meetings. Closely related are monetary needs, such as salary and benefits, which may dictate the types of positions we take and the amount of time we need to dedicate to them. Personal needs, including responsibilities to one's self, family, and other civic commitments, may require us to block off specific times. As we construct our lists, it often becomes clear that our demands and responsibilities are closely connected and frequently overlapping. At this point, it is essential to begin distinguishing the relative importance of each demand. For example, each list could be separated into categories, such as "Necessary," "Important," and "If Possible." Note that most demands are dynamic. For example, events such as the end of the school year, entering the job market, or having a baby will all change the weight of each responsibility. Although each of us face somewhat differing demands, and also differ in the relative salience of these demands, this is an activity that will be useful to begin setting goals, prioritizing, and ultimately leading a balanced and successful life.

Setting Goals

Once you have clarified your needs and responsibilities, it is critical to set specific goals and deadlines. Some goals will be easy to set, for example finishing your thesis proposal by a set deadline to qualify for graduation or completing a paper for presentation at a conference. However, other goals have more ambiguous deadlines and may involve managing more complex tasks. The dissertation provides a useful illustration because it is relatively self-directed and the scale of the project requires a more exhaustive list of goals and deadlines. Thus, it is helpful to set a series of manageable goals, such as finishing the literature review or developing a theoretical framework, rather than setting just one (overwhelming) goal -- to simply finish. It is also important to take into account the other dimensions of your life when you are setting professional goals. Minimizing stressful situations at work and school is important to your overall well-being and your ability to handle family responsibilities. For example, if at all possible, try to avoid setting professional deadlines around family holidays or special occasions (e.g. children's birthdays, religious holidays, or an anniversary). This will help you to maintain balance and can help to minimize tensions between the personal and professional dimensions of your life.

* This is the third in a series of newsletter articles authored by student members of the Section Council. Please see the Section website at www.asan.etorg/sectionaging for "Getting More Out of the ASA: Advice for Students and Other Newcomers" by Joy Pixley and Adam Perzynski (Summer, 2003) and "Strategies on Getting Published: Advice for Students and Other Newcomers" by Adam Perzynski and Maureen R. Benjamins (Winter-Spring, 2004).

Support Groups

The formation of "support" groups is a great way to help set and manage goals. These groups are particularly helpful when all members have a similar goal. For example, students who are working toward finishing their dissertations (or proposals) can form dissertation support groups. Support groups are also helpful when students are preparing for comprehensive exams. Structured, weekly groups often are the most productive. At the beginning of each meeting, members can go around the circle and list their specific goals for the next week and report on how they did the previous week. As an added bonus, these groups provide social support (hence the name) during what can be a very solitary period. Setting comprehensive, long-term goals (e.g., monthly or quarterly) is also a good idea.

Progress Reports

Another helpful idea is to write weekly or monthly progress reports for a mentor (especially for a dissertation chair). Even if you chose not to give these reports to anyone, it still may be helpful to write them up for your own accountability. You can then compare your reports to the list of goals and specific tasks that you made at the beginning of each month. These reports could also be more comprehensive. For example, you could include a list of all working papers and papers in the review process. Additionally, work for RA or TA positions could be described, as well as any other projects with which you may be involved. These reports are great for monitoring your progress over time and keeping track of numerous projects going on at the same time.

Managing Your Time

Once you have set your goals, it is important to organize your time so that these goals can be met. The first step in this process is to set up a daily schedule. In developing your schedule, don't forget to build in time for mundane yet time consuming tasks, such as checking your email, traveling to and from work, or managing data. And, whenever possible, try not to build your schedule so tight that a small deviation (e.g., traffic jam or computer malfunction) throws you off completely.

Creating a Schedule

To begin, you need to determine when you have the highest level of concentration. If you are a morning person, you should set aside this time to work on projects that require the most thinking and attention. Writing, data analyses, or developing a lecture may fall into this category. Then, during non-peak hours, you can set aside time for other tasks, such as grading quizzes, finding articles, or meeting with colleagues. Additional steps can be taken to increase your efficiency. For example, it may be helpful to turn off your cell phone during work hours. Limiting your times to check email may be equally important, though it is probably a harder undertaking for most!

One post-doc suggested that making evenings and weekends off-limits for work was important for maintaining her personal well-being during graduate school. While this may not seem realistic for many, knowing that you only have a finite amount of time to finish your work may increase both your efficiency and motivation. Additionally, certain sacrifices were needed to maintain these hours. Non-essential activities, such as chatting with other students, eating lunch out, or participating in student government and other activities were cut out.

Dissertation as a Job

In a similar manner, another frequent suggestion was that students who are in the dissertation phase of their career should treat their dissertation as a job. As in the above suggestion, this means that work takes place only between 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. While this frees up your nights and weekends for other areas of your life, the opposite aspect of this rule is equally as important. That is, you have to work on your dissertation every work day and not take advantage of your "free schedule" to go on extended vacations or stay home to catch Oprah. Beyond the logistics, this suggestion also implies a change in how you think about your dissertation. Your dissertation is just one of many parts of your life. Even if things are not going well, you should be able to put this aside when the day is done. Perhaps most importantly, if you really work during the set-aside hours, there is no need to feel guilty when you are not working on it.

Continued

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Scheduling in Fun

In terms of time management, it is also important to schedule “fun time.” This advice is twofold. First, it is necessary to take time to *celebrate* the accomplishments and successes within all areas of your life. Because our demands are often so numerous, it is easy to transition from the completion of one goal straight to another. Whether it is your first (or twentieth) journal acceptance, the completion of a thesis chapter, or giving a successful and well-received lecture, take a few moments to reflect on your accomplishment before rushing on to the next task. Second, sometimes you have to take time for yourself to do something you enjoy. For one of us, this means: an ice cream cone. When I started college and would get stressed out, my dad would tell me to take myself out for an ice cream sundae. While the advice seemed preposterous to me at that stage, I now realize the value of a well-timed double scoop of butter pecan. Sometimes taking a step away from your work -- to do something that gives you pleasure and allows you to reconnect with yourself -- is necessary to re-energize yourself in both personal and professional arenas.

Just Say No

Once you have clearly identified your multiple demands and goals, it is much easier to communicate them to others. You will be much better equipped to make decisions on what new activities or additional responsibilities to undertake when you know exactly what you currently have on your plate. As young professionals, it is imperative that we be able to say NO graciously. For many of us, we are just at the beginning of what will be a long and productive career, and, as such, we will be in demand. You will be approached with a myriad of opportunities including offers to teach new or additional courses, serve on committees, and review papers for conferences and journals. While some of these opportunities will be too good to pass up, others will not. If necessary, ask for more time before committing yourself, and then review your calendar as well as your list of goals and priorities to be sure that the additional responsibility fits into your existing schedule. One member of the Section suggested keeping a calendar page for each month of the semester posted above your desk. On it, mark all big deadlines, conferences, vacations, etc. This way, long-term goals won't come up unexpectedly and issues of scheduling are easier to evaluate.

Other Helpful Tips

At any stage, it is important to have mentors who understand your goals and priorities. You should not limit yourself to just one advisor. Instead, it is often useful to have a number of mentors who may be able to advise you on different aspects of your life and career path. In addition to seeking out mentors with research or teaching interests similar to your own, it can also be helpful to request guidance from individuals who are similar to you in terms of career stage, gender, ethnicity, etc. For example, students on the job market may find it useful to talk with a new professor who has recently been through the process instead of a tenured professor whose last interview was twenty years ago. Similarly, women may want to seek out other women to get advice on issues such as having children while in school or working. A word of caution, however, is to think carefully before proceeding if you receive different advice from two different mentors. It may be useful to discuss the conflict with whomever you consider to be your primary mentor.

Finally, when asked for advice on how to balance the multiple demands that we face, a senior ALC Section member described the life of an academic as a very precise juggling act. She suggested that because the demands are so varied it is often difficult, if not impossible, to balance, since that implies an equal consideration to all demands. However, if we begin to look at our lives as a juggling act, we realize that it is sometimes necessary to put some balls down and focus our attention on others. Additionally, we may reach a point where we can no longer take on any new balls (responsibilities). She concluded by noting that all of the balls were rubber, except for our health (and possibly family responsibilities). In order to protect these few "glass" balls, it may be necessary to let one or more of the rubber balls drop until we can pick it back up, instead of allowing one of the glass balls to fall and shatter. Happy juggling!

Section Members' News and New Publications

Autumn A. Behringer, Richard Hogan, and **Carolyn C. Perrucci**, "Disentangling disadvantage: Race, gender, class, and occupational effects on the employment earnings of older U.S. workers," *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 41 (2): 147 - 162, 2004.

Ingrid Arnet Connidis and **Julie Ann McMullin**, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, were awarded the 2004 Richard Kalish Innovative Publication award at the Gerontological Society of America's annual meeting held in Washington, D.C. The award was for their paper, "Sociological ambivalence and family ties: A critical perspective" published in *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (3): 558 - 567, 2002.

Patricia Drentea, University of Alabama-Birmingham, received an NSF/ADVANCE Senior Faculty Research Award to study the institutional climate for female faculty.

Jessica A. Kelley-Moore and **Kenneth F. Ferraro**, "The Black/White disability gap: Persistent inequality in later life?" *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 59B: S34 - S43, 2004.

Laurie Russell Hatch and Kris Bulcroft, "Does long-term marriage bring less frequent disagreements? Five explanatory frameworks." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (4): 465 - 495, 2004.

Richard Hogan, **Carolyn C. Perrucci**, and Autumn A. Behringer, "Enduring inequality: Marriage, gender and employment income in late career," *Sociological Spectrum* 25 (1): 53 - 77, 2005.

Tay K. McNamara and **John B. Williamson**, "Race, gender, and the retirement decisions of people ages 60 to 80: Prospects for age-integration in employment." *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development* 59 (3): 255-286, 2004.

Phyllis Moen and Patricia V. Roehling, *The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

Roberta Satow, *Doing the Right Thing: Taking Care of Your Elderly Parents Even if They Didn't Take Care of You*. Tarcher/Penguin, 2005.

John B. Williamson and Ce Shen. "Do notional defined contribution accounts make sense as part of the old-age security mix for China?" *Journal of Aging and Social Policy* 16 (4): 39-57, 2004.

Help Wanted:

Section Communications

Newsletter Editor

Laurie Hatch is completing a 3-year term as Newsletter Editor. This volunteer position is a great way to learn more about and serve the Section. The editor plans, solicits, and organizes the content, preparing camera-ready text for print mailing. ASA does the mailing on behalf of the Section. (Term to begin with the fall 2005 newsletter issue.)

Listserv Manager

The Section will soon need a new Listserv manager as Tay McNamara completes her term. The position entails timely handling of requests for listserv communications. (Term to begin summer or fall of 2005.)

Each position requires a two-year commitment. If interested in either position, please contact:

Ken Ferraro, 765-494-4707 (ferraro@purdue.edu) or
Phyllis Moen, 612-625-5483 (phylmoen@umn.edu)

Call for Papers

International Journal of Mental Health. Papers are invited for a peer-reviewed, special issue planned for 2005 to focus on morbidity and mortality and mental health. U.S. or global data. Prevention or epidemiology topics employing theoretical or quantitative or qualitative methodologies are welcome. Contact: Guest Editor, Anthony Kouzis, Johns Hopkins University; email akouzis@jhsph.edu.

Dual-Title Ph.D. Program: Sociology and Gerontology

In an effort to develop scholars with disciplinary depth and expertise in gerontology, **Purdue University's Center on Aging and the Life Course** now offers a dual-title Ph.D. program. Graduate students are admitted to one of 9 participating departments, including sociology, and fulfill all disciplinary requirements for the Ph.D. The dual-title Ph.D. is earned by also completing 24 credit hours related to aging, including three interdisciplinary courses. For more information, visit www.purdue.edu/aging or call 765-494-9692.

Position Announcement

University of Alabama at Birmingham. The Department of Sociology invites applications for a tenure-track position, rank open, to begin August 1, 2005 for teaching and research interests in health and/or medical sociology. The successful candidate will hold a Ph.D. in Sociology and have a record of publication, grant support, and teaching commensurate with rank. Duties include teaching four (4) courses per nine-month academic year at graduate and undergraduate levels. The candidate will be expected to mount an independent research agenda. Appointment at Associate or Full Professor rank requires seeking funded research, with a portion of salary to be derived from extramural grants in collaboration with interdisciplinary campus research centers. Salary is commensurate with rank and experience. UAB is a Carnegie Doctoral/Research Extensive institution with an undergraduate population of 10,900 and a graduate/professional student population of 5,200. UAB's Medical School is in the top 25 in the U.S. The Department of Sociology houses the Center for Social Medicine and Sexually-Transmitted Diseases and is affiliated with the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy, the Center for Aging, the Center for the Advancement of Youth Health, and the UAB Minority Health and Research Center, and others. The Department of Sociology offers BA degrees in Sociology and Social Psychology, the MA in Sociology, and the PhD in Medical Sociology. Metropolitan Birmingham is home to nearly 1 million people and sits at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains with plentiful cultural and recreational opportunities. Applicants should send a current curriculum vitae, an official transcript, a list of at least three references, and a cover letter summarizing interests and experience to: Dr William C. Cockerham, Co-Chair of Search Committee, Department of Sociology, U-237, 1530 3rd Ave S, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL 35294-3350. The deadline for applications is March 31, 2005 or until the position is filled. The University of Alabama at Birmingham is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. The Department of Sociology is committed to diversity and welcomes applications from women and minorities who may apply for special start-up funds.