



UAB Department of Sociology

Winter 2007

Mission:

The UAB Department of Sociology fosters a creative and supportive interdisciplinary environment that provides quality graduate and undergraduate training, original research advancing knowledge, promoting health and social justice, and service to the discipline, community, state, nation and world

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UAB SOCIOLOGY: SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

The Department of Sociology at UAB has been actively engaged in research on homelessness in Alabama since 1987 when Drs. **Mark LaGory** and **Ferris Ritchey** did the first comprehensive census and survey of the homeless in the state. Since that time LaGory and Ritchey, along with the assistance of former Professor Kevin Fitzpatrick and several graduate students conducted five censuses and several intensive interviews of the homeless in the metropolitan area. The last was completed in 2005. This research has led to seventeen publications in refereed journals ranging from the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* to the *American Journal of Public Health*. The years of research have provided unique training opportunities for students and critical information on the homeless for providers, planners, and sociologists.

Most importantly, data from these studies have been used by

local agencies to gain tens of millions of dollars in money to fund housing assistance and social services for Alabama's homeless. Much has been learned about the homeless during this time that has proved invaluable in addressing their needs and getting them back on their feet. The statistical snapshots provided show that the true faces of the homeless often don't match public stereotypes. The majority of homeless have high school degrees; some have college degrees. About 30% are veterans and most are under the age of 40. Many homeless work during the week, but average minimum wage or less for their jobs. Despite the popular image of the homeless as transients, crisscrossing the country by bus, train or hitchhiking, a large majority of the homeless are homegrown. Nearly 30% have been homeless for some time or have had multiple episodes of homelessness. These chronically homeless represent



a group of special concern because they absorb a large portion of the monies available for services.

The Department's emphasis on medical sociology has led to an exploration of the physical and mental health correlates and consequences surrounding homelessness. Discovery of high levels of severe depression
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UAB SOCIOLOGY: SERVICE TO THE WORLD

UAB Sociology has a global reach as seen in several activities. **Bill Cockerham** was elected President of the Research Committee on Health Sociology of the International Sociological Association at the 2006 World Congress of Sociology in Durban, South Africa. Bill will serve a four-year term (2006-2010) which will include

membership on the ISA Research Council and the Editorial Board of the Sage Studies in International Sociology Monograph Series. He will help plan and host a forthcoming interim international conference on health sociology in 2008 at a site to be selected in India, Israel, Montreal, Barcelona, or Paris, and help plan the 2010 World

Congress in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Bill Cockerham and **Brian Hinote** presented an invited paper in October on "Health Lifestyles and Competing Social Explanations of the Mortality Crisis in the Former Soviet Union" at the International Seminar in Kiev,
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SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Harry Hamilton was a discussion book leader for *Kite Runner* held at the McWane Center in November. This program extended UAB Discussion Book series to the larger Birmingham community.

BACK FROM IRAQ!

SPC Kevin Hinote, Brian's brother, has returned safely with his unit back to Germany after a tour in Iraq. Kevin served in Ramadi with the 40th Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Division. **Sean Cockerham**, Bill's son, is back in the U. S. after being embedded as a newspaper reporter with the 2nd Infantry Division. He was in Baghdad and Mosul with 2nd Brigade Stryker Combat Teams.



Sean Hwang's research focuses on the social and health consequences of Three Gorges Dam Project

and suicide ideation encouraged new programs for local homeless. In addition surveys have helped pinpoint problems related to specific disease syndromes and health delivery problems. Now new approaches to the study of homelessness are emerging in the Department.

For **Jeffrey Michael Clair** and **Jason Wasserman**, interest in the street homeless started as a way to conduct a new visual sociology course. The two began to make a film for that class and selected homelessness as the topic. After interviews with key researchers, service providers, politicians and religious leaders in Birmingham, they headed to the streets and began to spend time at homeless gathering spots and eventually local homeless encampments. They ultimately came to the realization that the street homeless were qualitatively different than the traditionally researched homeless who stay in local

shelters and consistently use services.

Three years later their research is ongoing. Not only have they established long-term relationships with the highly distrustful street homeless population, but the longitudinal nature of their project has allowed them to trace their trajectories as they move from camp to camp, obtain and lose jobs, transition off and back onto the streets, and how some eventually reintegrate into mainstream society. Clair and Wasserman have also spent significant time in the field. They have been welcomed into closely-guarded camps traditionally hidden from the public, and sometimes spend several consecutive days with their participants. A monograph and documentary, "American Refugees," should be complete during the summer of 2007.



NEW BABIES!

Patricia Drentea and Paul Tybor (and her big sister Hope) welcomed Ally Grace Drentea Tybor into their family last March. Mark and Mary Sue LaGory are still beaming over the arrival of their fourth grandchild in March, when Benjamin Elliott LaGory was born to son Jason and his wife Jenni. Ferris and Wanda Ritchey are proud, first-time grandparents of David A. Ritchey, born in August to their son Daniel and his wife Holly. Harry and Ensaf Hamilton are doting over their first grandchild, Maia Hanna Pladdy, born in May to their daughter Brenda and her husband Chris. Graduate student Juan and husband Guangbo Wei had a son, John Wei.

SERVICE TO THE WORLD

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Ukraine, on mortality in countries of the former USSR. This was the third in a series of conferences examining the region's declining life expectancy and was sponsored by several organizations, including the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Previous meetings were held at the Max Planck Institute in Rostock, Germany and Harvard. Their paper will be translated into Russian and published in an edited book next year in Moscow.

Sean Hwang has completed the second wave of his

Three Gorges migration study in China with the assistance of graduate students **Yue Cao**, **Xiaofei Qiao**, and **Juan Xi**. Several papers have been submitted for publication from this study and others are underway. Sean will present a paper entitled "Anticipation of Migration and Psychological Distress" at a symposium co-sponsored by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and Old Dominion University.

Doctoral student **Mercy Mwaria** represented UAB Kenyan Students at the Medical Roundtable for the Kenyan

Delegation of Parliamentarians on their visit to Alabama and Washington, D.C. She spoke about the integral role of academia in shaping the direction and efficacy of healthcare utilization. She noted the lack of participation of Kenyan universities in government healthcare programs and policy development. She urged Kenyan government officials to bridge university and government programs, and do more to support university research.

IN THE NEWS

Shelia Cotten was interviewed by the *Birmingham News* on the monitoring of Internet content for children by their parents. **Bill Cockerham** and **Brian Hinote** were interviewed on health, gender differences, and psychological distress in the former Soviet Union. The inter-

view was reported in *The Moscow Times* and *Le Figaro* (Paris).

UAB Sociology's new graduate director, **Patricia Drentea**, was selected to participate in leadership training of Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar in Scottsdale, Arizona, spon-

sored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and Harvard Medical School in December of 2006.

Jeffrey Michael Clair received a \$10,000 faculty development grant for homeless research.

NEW FACULTY

Erika Austin

Erika Austin joined the UAB Sociology faculty last August. She has a BA from James Madison University, MA from the University of Michigan, and a PhD from the University of Virginia. For the last two years, she has held a post-doctoral fellowship in public health at UCLA. Her teaching interests include quantitative methods, sociology of health, gender and sexuality. She has published papers in *Women and Health*

and *Race, Gender, Class*.

Over the past several months, she has been working on a project using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to compare substance use trajectories for lesbian/gay and heterosexual young adults, with an eye toward the effects of specific life course transitions (i.e., cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood). She and her colleagues argue that the unavailability

of one of the key social roles which demarcates adulthood – the legally recognized status as wife or husband – may explain why lesbian and gay individuals report higher rates of substance use lasting longer into young adulthood than their heterosexual peers. One of their goals is to contribute sociologically-informed evidence to the larger debate on the legal and social status of gay-identified individuals in the US.

Casey Borch

The UAB sociology department's newest faculty member is **Casey Borch**, who arrives next August. Casey is expected to receive his Ph.D. this spring from the University of Connecticut, where his research is supported by a dissertation grant from the National Science Founda-

tion. He attended UAB as an undergraduate before graduating *summa cum laude* from Eastern Connecticut State University and has an MA from the University of South Carolina. He has co-authored a number of publications, including papers in the *Social Psychology Quarterly*, the

Journal of Mathematical Sociology, *Sociological Inquiry*, *Sociological Forum*, and others. His teaching interests include advanced quantitative methods, political sociology, and social psychology.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Caroline Robinson and colleagues received \$22,000 in funding from the Lucille Beeson Trust for a project entitled "Faith-Based Support Teams Providing Homebound Elderly Nutrition Assistance".

Graduate Student Paper Presentations:

American Sociological Association, Montreal, Canada

Jessica Irwin (with Kevin Fitzpatrick, Mark LaGory and Ferris Ritchey), "Social Capital and Depression among the Homeless"; Tim Hale

"Functional Somatic Syndromes: Medically Unexplained Illness as a Liminal State"; Mercy Mwaria, "Blame It on the Women: A Social

Constructionist Perspective of the Changing Profile of HIV/AIDS";

Juan Xi and Yue Cao (with Sean-Shong Hwang) "Structural and Individual Covariates of English Language Proficiency"; Juan Xi (with Sean-

Shong Hwang) "English Fluency among the Foreign-born in the Metropolitan United States"

Southern Sociological Society, New Orleans, LA

Cullen Clark and Henna Budwani, "Streetcars, Steel and the Social Construction of an Urban Space in Birmingham, Alabama"

Theses and Dissertations Defended:

Jessica Irwin, M.A. Thesis: "Social Capital and Depression among the Homeless";

Juan Xi, Doctoral Dissertation: "Age Differentials in Involuntary Migration-Induced Distress"



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NEW PUBLICATIONS (SINCE MAY 2006)

- Clair, Jeffrey, Cullen Clark, Brian P. Hinote, Caroline Robinson, and Jason Wasserman.** 2007. "Developing, Integrating and Perpetuating New Ways of Applying Sociology to Health, Medicine, Policy and Everyday Life." *Social Science and Medicine* 64:248-58.
- Cockerham, William C.** 2007. *Medical Sociology*, 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cockerham, William C., Brian P. Hinote, and Pamela Abbott.** 2006. "A Sociological Model of Health Lifestyles: Conducting a Preliminary Test Using Russian Data." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 46:177-197.
- Cockerham, William C., Brian P. Hinote, and Pamela Abbott.** 2006. "Psychological Distress, Gender, and the Health Crisis in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine." *Social Science and Medicine* 63:2381-2394.
- Cotten, Shelia R.** and Shameeka Bowman. 2006. "A Disappearing Digital Divide among College Students? Peeling Away the Layers and the Digital Divide." *Social Science Computer Review* 24:497-506.
- Drente, Patricia,** Olivio Clay, David Roth, and Mary Mittelman. 2006. "Predictors of Improvement in Social Support: Five-Year Effects of a Structured Intervention for Caregivers of Spouses with Alzheimer's Disease." *Social Science and Medicine* 63:957-967.
- Drente, Patricia** and Melinda Goldner. 2006. "Caregiving Outside of the Home: The Effects of Race and Depression." *Ethnicity and Health* 11:41-57.
- Price, Jammie, and **Shelia R. Cotten.** 2006. "Teaching, Research, and Service: Expectations of Assistant Professors." *The American Sociologist* 37:5-21.
- Fitzpatrick, Kevin M., **Akilah Dulin,** and B.F. Piko. 2007. "Not Just Pushing and Showing: School Bullying Among African-American Adolescents." *Journal of School Health* 77:16-22.
- Locher, Julie, Janet Bronstein, **Caroline Robinson,** Charlotte Williams, and Christine S. Ritchie. 2006. "Ethical Issues Involving Research Conducted with Homebound Older Adults." *The Gerontologist* 46:160-64.
- Wasserman, Jason, Jeffrey Clair, and Ferris Ritchey.** 2006. "Racial Differences in

PUBLICATIONS: FORTHCOMING

- Cockerham, William C.** 2007. *Social Causes of Health and Disease.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Cockerham, William C.** In press. "Health Lifestyles and the Absence of the Russian Middle Class." *Sociology of Health and Illness.*
- Cockerham, William C. and Brian P. Hinote.** In press. "Health Lifestyles and Competing Social Explanations of the Mortality Crisis in the Former Soviet Union." In *Mortality in Countries of the Former USSR Fifteen Years After the Breakup: Change or Continuity*, edited by E. Andreev, N. Foygt, F. Meslé, S. Pyrozhhkov, V. Shkolnikov, J. Vallin, and A. Vishnevski. Moscow. (in Russian)
- Earle, John, Philip Perricone, Kenneth Davidson, Nelwyn Moore, Catherine Harris, and **Shelia R. Cotten.** In press. "Premarital Sexual Attitudes at a Religiously Affiliated University: Two Decades of Convergence and Divergence." *Sexuality and Culture.*
- Murphy, D, **Austin, E,** and Hoffman, D. In press. "HIV/AIDS Stigma form the Perspective of Infected Mothers and their Early to Middle Adolescents Aware of Maternal Serostatus." *Women and Health.*
- Ritchey, Ferris J.** In press. *The Statistical Imagination: Elementary Statistics for the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. Including supplements: *Computer Applications* (online) (Jeffrey E. Hall and **Ferris J. Ritchey**); *Solutions Manual* (**Brian P. Hinote, Jason Wasserman, and Ferris J. Ritchey**); *Test Bank* (**Jason Wasserman, Brian P. Hinote, and Ferris J. Ritchey**); and *Instructor's Manual* (**Ferris J. Ritchey**).

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