Hi All – I’ll tell about my lunch yesterday with Bob Manning (PhD 1989) in another Update later in the semester. This one’s about me, or more properly, the Beginning School Study. And it is shamelessly self-promotional. You’ll recall that when I began thinking about retirement, I had some unfinished business to wrap up. Well, I am happy to announce that one of the biggest now can be checked off. Our book, the capstone of a quite remarkable, and gratifying, 30 year effort, has hit the streets – see the attached flyer.

I am proud of what we accomplished with the BSS and I am proud of this book. My one regret is that Doris isn’t here to share in the celebration. But knowing Doris, she would not want us to mope about and we aren’t. The little memoriam that appears in the front of the book I think says it well:

“Our dear friend and collaborator of nearly 30 years, Doris Entwisle, passed away while The Long Shadow was in final production. Doris inspired us with her intellect and drew us to her with her warmth and compassion. She was not one to dwell on misfortune, at least not her own — Doris was remarkably strong. For that reason, we use this dedication to celebrate her life, not mourn her passing. Doris left us knowing the volume was complete; it brought a smile to her face.”

That is how I remember Doris, and I hope those of you who also knew her will agree that these words are faithful to who she was.

Some of you may be interested enough in the BSS, or in the issues we address in this book, to want a copy. For me, it is a return to my roots – intergenerational mobility, origins to destinations, in life course perspective. The flyer tells you how to qualify for a 20% discount (I believe at some point on-line you use the code: Shadow). And for those of you in the academic world, please do forward the flyer along to your acquisitions librarian. I am told that if you are at a school that subscribes to Project Muse or JSTOR, it can be purchased electronically. The folks are Russell Sage think the book has course adoption potential. There is an option at Muse and JSTOR for multi-user simultaneous access.

I hope to see many of you at ASA in San Fran. There will be an announcement about a department reception as soon as we settle the details. And The Long Shadow will be the centerpiece of an Author Meets Critics session sponsored by the Rose Monograph Series editors. I am looking forward to it, and hope that some of you will drop in. But if not then, then certainly at the reception. It will be, as always, an opportunity to re-connect. This time, as well, there will be new faculty to introduce as per my last Update (and by then Steve Morgan too will be official!) and it could well be my last, in which case I hope there will be a lot of love in the room!
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THE LONG SHADOW
Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood
KARL ALEXANDER, DORIS ENTWISLE & LINDA OLSON

"The Long Shadow profoundly challenges our understanding of schooling in the lives of disadvantaged urban children, black and white. They and their more privileged classmates are followed from first grade into young adulthood. Numerous policy-relevant observations emerge, including the persistence of first grade inequalities and the recurrence of summer setbacks in learning. This is an essential book for all who care about children's education." —GLEN H. ELDER, JR., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

West Baltimore stands out in the popular imagination as the quintessential "inner city"—gritty, run-down, and marred by drugs and gang violence. Indeed, with the collapse of manufacturing jobs in the 1970s, the area experienced a rapid onset of poverty and high unemployment, with few public resources available to alleviate economic distress. But in stark contrast to the image of a perpetual "urban underclass" depicted in television by shows like The Wire, sociologists Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson present a more nuanced portrait of Baltimore's inner-city residents that employs important new research on the significance of early-life opportunities available to low-income populations. The Long Shadow focuses on children who grew up in west Baltimore neighborhoods and others like them throughout the city, tracing how their early lives in the inner city have affected their long-term well-being. Although research for this book was conducted in Baltimore, that city's struggles with deindustrialization, white flight, and concentrated poverty were characteristic of most East Coast and Midwest manufacturing cities. The experience of Baltimore's children who came of age during this era is mirrored in the experiences of urban children across the nation.

For 25 years, the authors of The Long Shadow tracked the life progress of a group of almost 800 predominantly low-income Baltimore school children through the Beginning School Study Youth Panel (BSSYP). The study monitored the children's transitions to young adulthood with special attention to how opportunities available to them as early as first grade shaped their socioeconomic status as adults. The authors' fine-grained analysis confirms that the children who lived in more cohesive neighborhoods, had stronger families, and attended better schools tended to maintain a higher economic status later in life. As young adults, they held higher-income jobs and had achieved more personal milestones (such as marriage) than their lower-status counterparts. Differences in race and gender further stratified life opportunities for the Baltimore children. As one of the first studies to closely examine the outcomes of inner-city whites in addition to African Americans, data from the BSSYP shows that by adulthood, white men of lower status family background, despite attaining less education on average, were more likely to be employed than any other group in part due to family connections and long-standing racial biases in Baltimore's industrial economy. Gender imbalances were also evident: the women, who were more likely to be working in low-wage service and clerical jobs, earned less than men. African American women were doubly disadvantaged insofar as they were less likely to be in a stable relationship than white women, and therefore less likely to benefit from a second income.

Combining original interviews with Baltimore families, teachers, and other community members with the empirical data gathered from the authors' groundbreaking research, The Long Shadow unravels the complex connections between socioeconomic origins and socioeconomic destinations to reveal a startling and much-needed examination of who succeeds and why.

KARL ALEXANDER is John Dewey Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

The late DORIS ENTWISLE was Research Professor in Sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

LINDA OLSEN is associate research scientist at Johns Hopkins University.

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