

Alumni Update, Feb. 2014: Agree, Burdick-Will, Edin, Greif, Kuo, Levien, Morgan, Nelson

Hello All – It has been way too long since you’ve heard from me with anything other than gloomy news. Our losses of the past year are quite real and linger still, but it is time to move on – not to forget, but much has been happening back here at The Hop and I am eager to bring you up to date.

By way of transition, I’d like to share this brief testimonial to Doris that will appear in our final collaboration, our book *The Long Shadow: Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood* (Russell Sage, spring 2014):

“Our dear friend and collaborator of more than 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; that brought smile to her face.”

This Alumni Update is another sort of celebration, so let’s get onto it!

Let’s start with a quiz – what do the eight names in this note’s subject line have in common? No peeking – that wouldn’t be fair {a pause here}.

Ok, no doubt some of you have figured it out, but for many it’s likely puzzlement. Here’s the answer: these are the names of newcomers to the department. Six arrived in 2012 – 2013 and this year; two more are anticipated for 2014 – 2015. Five are tenure track; three are non-tenure track, but full-time and intended to be long-term. But more than that, the latter have been embraced as faculty – they teach, do research, attend meetings and are accorded votes. In everything under our control, they are full-fledged partners and we welcome them into the department as such.

That’s the “big happening,” now let me back up.

Some of you will recall the Dean’s four-year hiring plan for the department that resulted from of our White Paper strategic planning exercise. This flurry of hires reflects the successful implementation of that plan, but it is more than that.

Some of you also may recall the hope I expressed in announcing my retirement (June 30, 2014 is my last day!) to leave behind a strong and vibrant department. The names just listed, and more critically what they bring to the department, are for me a dream fulfilled. I would not go so far as to say it is a classic instance of addition by subtraction (the case certainly could be argued, but I’ll leave that to others). What I will say is that Sociology at Hopkins is alive and well, and that the future looks bright.

How did this happen, you might ask? Partly it is a matter of strong support from the Dean (the four-year plan), partly the result of changes internal to the department, and partly it can be credited to the department’s entrepreneurial spirit.

Some of the listed names will be familiar to avid readers of these occasional mailings; others will be familiar because of their eminence.

Among the former are Michael Levien and Emily Agree, about whom I’ve written previously. Michael is a recent PhD out of Berkeley, recruited to strengthen the Global Social Change wing of the department under our four-year plan. In that capacity, he also is contributing to the Department’s new Global Social Change track for International Studies majors. Developed under Beverly Silver’s leadership, this new initiative (just in its second year) has doubled the number of sociology majors to

50. That's an all-time high. Fifty has long been aspirational, but I honestly hadn't expected us to get there in my (professional) lifetime.

Emily, a Research Professor and more senior, came to the department from the School of Public Health to strengthen the department's curriculum offerings for undergraduates wishing to prepare for the new social science module that will be added to the MCATs in 2015. Emily is a social gerontologist by trade. She teaches our course in Medical Sociology, is the department's bridge to East Baltimore initiatives generally, and works with Andy Cherlin as Associate Director of the Hopkins Population Center.

That's two down, leaving six to go.

Four of the six are here already: Meredith Greif, Tim Nelson and Kathy Edin joined the faculty this year and Huei-ying Kuo has been elevated from a term Senior Lecturer/Research Scientist to permanent status (as permanent as anything can be in academia short of tenure: her appointment is renewable for, as I recall, 18 years!).

Huei-ying falls on the global social change side of the ledger, with teaching and research on the Chinese diaspora and colonial empires (with a focus on East Asia). Her recent book *Networks Beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalist Activities in the Hong Kong-Singapore Corridor, 1914-1941* has been well received.

Tim and Kathy came to Hopkins together from Harvard. If you are at all well read on the urban poor here in the U.S., then you know their work. Kathy, I say with pride, is one of JHU's very first Bloomberg Distinguished Professors (chairs endowed by Michael Bloomberg, who has been very generous to Hopkins indeed!). Here is how Kathy's appointment was announced in a recent email blast from President Daniels:

"Kathryn Edin, a newcomer to the Johns Hopkins University community, comes to us from Harvard University. Kathryn is a prominent sociologist who studies families in poverty. She is particularly noted for books detailing how single mothers make ends meet, why poor women prioritize motherhood before marriage, and how economic and cultural changes have altered the role of fathers among the inner-city poor. At Harvard, Kathryn has been professor of public policy and management at the John F. Kennedy School of Government since 2007 and chair of the Multidisciplinary Program in Inequality and Social Policy. She was recently named a Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. At Johns Hopkins, she will be a Bloomberg Distinguished Professor with appointments in the departments of Sociology and Population, Family and Reproductive Health. She will take a lead role in the Institute for the American City and teach in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and the Bloomberg School of Public Health."

This inaugural Bloomberg cohort is a very exclusive club, numbering just three in total. The other two are internal appointments, both Nobel recipients. That puts Kathy, and the department, in rarified territory indeed. In the department, Kathy will support our new undergraduate concentration in Social Policy.

At Harvard Tim helped build up the undergraduate sociology major and had a strong reputation for excellence in teaching, which we expect to transfer to Hopkins. He already has stepped forward to cover Introductory Sociology and has joined our Undergraduate Committee. Tim's research, like Kathy's, focuses on the urban poor, but he also has a book on the African American church and is teaching our very first course ever on the sociology of religion.

Bloomberg Professors are obliged to hold appointments in at least two divisions of the university and so by design are interdivisional. Tim and Kathy both have appointments in the School of Public Health's Department of Family and Reproductive Health, strengthening our already strong ties to Public Health. In Sociology, Tim holds two titles: Senior Lecturer and Associate Research Professor.

Meredith Grief's appointment as assistant professor came about when she and her husband James, a computational biologist, were being recruited to Hopkins. Meredith came to us from the sociology faculty of Georgia State University. Her interests fit in beautifully. Her teaching and research include race, urban sociology and health, here in the U.S. and in developing countries. A prominent theme in much of her work is risky sexual behaviors in relation to risk of HIV infection, which promises to be yet another link to the School of Public Health.

Steve Morgan and Julia Burdick-Will are the remaining two faculty appointments, both expected to be on board in the fall. Their expertise is in Sociology of Education and both their appointments are in partnership with our good friends at the School of Education. Steve, who is relocating from Cornell, is quite senior and has been approved for yet a second Bloomberg Distinguished Professorship. Where these Bloomborgs will land is a closely guarded secret until they are announced, but I have to think that having two in Sociology is a major coup. I can assure you that the vetting is severe and the standards high. Nominations are subject to committee review, but the Provost and President are the ultimate deciders.

Steve is a quantitative methodologist of the first rank, having written, literally, the book on causal inference. His substantive research addresses issues in the sociology of education, stratification and labor markets. With my retirement, the department looked to be absent senior leadership in sociology of education for the first time in its history. Our White Paper urged the Dean not to allow that to happen, and with Steve's arrival it will not happen ("senior," though, is relative. Steve is in his professional prime and we expect him to be around to anchor sociology of education for many years).

Steve's appointment is not quite a done deal, but he has committed to accepting our offer once it is formally extended. The Bloomberg review happens at the University level. At the school level, there is a committee now at work evaluating his qualifications for appointment as Full Professor in both our divisions – Arts and Science and Education. This is standard practice. Once the Committee concludes its work and comes to what is the inevitable conclusion, the deal will be sealed.

There is no such uncertainty surrounding Julia's appointment as Assistant Professor. She has been approved by our Academic Council and it is just a matter of her arriving in the Fall. Julia is a Chicago PhD, currently finishing a post-doc at Brown. She, like Steve, is strong in quantitative methods; her substantive interests include issues of segregation at the school and neighborhood levels. Julia will arrive with a strong pedigree and an already impressive vita.

Julia's hire was not anticipated in our four-year plan; rather, it emerged out of conversations with the School of Education Dean, David Andrews, who has proven to be an excellent friend and partner. The School of Education this year launched a new PhD program to complement its practitioner-oriented EdD. There are strong ties place already with the School of Education – BERC and CSOS are housed administratively there and they are one of our partners in the IES funded predoctoral training program that I direct. So when Dean Andrews set out to strengthen the School's research-intensive faculty to staff his new doctoral program, it seemed quite natural that he would look to our history of research, mentorship and PhD instruction in sociology of education. Conversations followed and we quickly settled on a two-body plan: a senior appointment to anchor sociology of education in both our units and a junior appointment to provide for future professional

growth. That was in the abstract; two years later, it has become a reality. Steve's Bloomberg is a bonus.

So wow – 8 new faculty in the span of just a little over two years! You've heard me cry "too busy" in my apologies for falling behind on these Updates. Now you know what has been keeping me, and the rest of our faculty, hopping. And there might well be more to come. There is a search now under way for a tenure-track junior faculty area hire in Islamic Studies. Two of the five short-list candidates are PhD sociologists, and should one of them get the job, the appointment will be in Sociology!

So, a busy year yes, but also an extremely gratifying one. Dean Andrews, in a truly gracious gesture, asked me to lead the two Sociology of Education searches. In fact, he provided the resources to move up the timeline for the second so that I could be involved. And as chair, I have had a hand in all 8 appointments. But my goodness, what a ride!

When Dean Newman initiated her strategic planning exercise, she announced that most replacement appointments would be at the junior level. That's a cost-cutting measure, and it allows for more faculty hires than if all authorized searches were at the same level as the openings created through retirements and resignations. It is a familiar approach here at Hopkins, as I've lived through it across a succession of Deans. But with Mel Kohn's retirement during the exercise and mine anticipated, our White Paper made a strong, and it seems persuasive, argument that the department's senior ranks had to be shored up. The Dean's plan alone would not have allowed for that, but with the resources provided by the Bloomberg competitions and by sharing faculty lines with the School of Education, we were able to pull it off. And in grand fashion! Kathy Edin and Steve Morgan – both still young and full of vigor – will add senior leadership, while the others add strength in areas considered vital to the department's future.

I invite you to consider the import of this in light of those already in the department: <http://soc.jhu.edu/directoryindex/faculty/> Please review the names and bios – you can't help but be impressed. We have an extraordinarily talented and accomplished faculty, junior and senior, and amazing strength in the department's two broad areas of concentration, global social change and social inequality.

If all this impresses you the way it impresses me, then I invite you to come celebrate with us. I'll be off the faculty as of July 1, as you know. It will be a quiet exit -- I've said I don't want a big fuss made. But I did make one request, and it has been granted. The department will be hosting a reception at this summer's ASA meeting in San Francisco. I'll be there, and I hope lots of you will be also. These parties are always a highlight for me, and this one, for me at least, will be extra special.

As I think of it, there's been a second request: that I be allowed to attend the department's beginning-of-the-year fall reception. Worming my way into the party didn't require much arm-twisting, and I suspect the invitation will be an open-ended one (Kathy and I aren't going anywhere; we're committed to staying in B'more), but the 2014 – 2015 party will be special. If everyone is there, I'll try to get a group photo with all 8 of the newbies. When I walk out the door on June 30, I don't intend to take much with me (I'll have more to say about that at a later date), but I will treasure this keepsake this picture; it will be a very special remembrance indeed!

I've been collecting other tidbits to share, but this note kept growing and I'll save most of those for another Update -- one that I promise won't take me as long to get to! There is, though, one time-sensitive announcement that I simply cannot pass up. This Thursday (February 27), Aaron Pallas (1985), a former student and current dear friend, is being installed as the Arthur I. Gates Professor of Sociology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. That's a very big deal indeed,

and even the bitter cold of 2014 won't keep Kathy and me from being there. Congratulations Aaron!!

That's it for now.

For those of you shivering along with us in cold clims, let's hope for an early spring.

Cheers to all!

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