

Hello All, and a very happy Thanksgiving to the Department's extended family.

As you know from earlier notes, I returned to duty as Chair July 1, succeeding Andy who originally had signed on for a one-year interim term, but then extended through a second year. Andy stepped forward when the Department was sorely challenged by Giovanni's tragic passing and his doing so allowed me to take a sabbatical year to work on a BSS book with Doris and our research associate Linda Olson. Andy then extended for a second year to help manage relations with the new higher-ups above the Department level -- in a period of two years we found ourselves with a new Dean (and colleague -- Kathie Newman, recruited from Princeton's Sociology department), a new Provost and a new President. Andy's steady leadership helped us weather those transitions and inside the Department we managed to shore up what you know as the PCSID side of the Department (more on that below) with a terrific hire, Ho-fung Hung. If the name is familiar, it is because Ho-Fung is one of our own (PhD, 2004). Those of you whose professional lives are within academic sociology will know that it is uncommon for departments to hire their own graduates, but with Ho-fung we did it the right way. He went off to Indiana and established his bona fides with a quite extraordinary record of scholarly accomplishment -- his trophy shelf includes outstanding this and that awards from four different ASA sections and his book "Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots and Petitions in the Mid-Chin Dynasty" received the Social Science History Association's 2010 President's book award. We, in turn, held up our end by conducting a thorough national search. There is no replacing a Giovanni Arrighi, but for scholars of Giovanni's stature "like for like" can't be the goal. Ho-fung is a terrific addition to the faculty and we hope he will be with us for a long, long time.

That's a long-winded way of explaining my return to duty. But I'm almost six months into my term, and I'm just now getting around to a proper note -- why the big lag? I've written in the past that these occasional letters are, for me, a highlight of the job, and that's absolutely the case. But it's also the case that they aren't the most pressing priority. Yes, the situation in the Department is thankfully more settled, but that hardly means all is quiet back here in B'more. There are many pleasing developments in prospect, but they require considerable time, effort and concentration. So if I've an excuse, that's it. The largest of these "developments" is reflected in the attached document, which I am pleased to be able to share with you. Shortly after her arrival, Dean Newman initiated a strategic planning process which has all the Arts and Sciences Departments and the major Centers on campus undertaking self-studies. Our self-study began with a half-day faculty retreat last spring, then a two-day Futures Seminar in which a three-person committee of distinguished sociologists came to campus to help us think about the Department's future, and then more internal discussions. All this yielded the attached White Paper. It, in turn, served background reading for a second external committee. That two-day visit happened in the early fall, and the committee members without a doubt earned whatever they were paid -- it was two days of marathon meetings, with everyone in the Department -- faculty, adjunct instructors, graduate students, and undergraduates -- faculty colleagues from other departments, and folks from the Dean's office.

Their report I know has been submitted to the Dean and the next step is to learn of the Dean's response. We are eager for that to happen, as we have been told that the Dean's goal is use the exercise to establish four-year hiring plans for all Departments. It hardly needs to be said that the Dean's commitment to faculty hiring will do much to determine our future course. When you look through the document you will see that it makes mention of my intended retirement after the 2013 -- 2014 academic year and Mel's phased retirement at the end of the current school year. That leaves two very large holes to plug. The White Paper also outlines hoped for growth in Social Policy, Urban Inequality, and Global Social Change.

I won't bore you with an extended recap of the Department's desired future, as the document is clear enough on the large issues. But I would like to highlight several themes. First, the plan is evolutionary, not revolutionary. The goal is to build on an already strong foundation, as we feel very good about who we are and what we do. So rest assured that the Sociology department you know so well, and hopefully think well of, will hold steadfast to our longstanding sense of self. That said, and second, we also see great potential in fine-tuning the instrument by way of carefully calibrated new initiatives. Specifically, the Program in

Comparative Sociology and International Development becomes the Program in Global Social Change, the Program in Social Inequality becomes more self-consciously centered on urban themes and more B' more-centric, we partner with Political Science and Economics in building up a distinctively Hopkins Social Policy Program, and we do a bit more deliberate programming within the Department to better bridge the PGSC and PSI programs.

These goals for the Department's future are realistically attainable. Some, like the "bridging" are altogether within our control. The others require good partners, but good partners seem to be within reach -- an Urban emphasis aligns with the University's upcoming development campaign, to be themed around the Urban Century (funding the Arrighi Center penciled in as a major campaign goal), President Daniels seems quite serious about involving Hopkins more deeply and constructively in Baltimore City, and the Dean has been pushing hard on the Social Policy front. In fact, we are told she already has secured donor commitments to fund three new faculty hires, one of which will land in Sociology. I should mention too that Laura Salganik (PhD 1985 and Senior Vice President at the American Institutes for Research and Director of their Federal Statistics Program) is a member of the Social Policy planning advisory committee.

Of course, ultimately what counts is the Dean's support. We should be getting a read on that before too long, and I look forward to sharing the news in subsequent Alumni Updates.

This pretty well brings you up to date on large Departmental happenings. The smaller may not be as consequential in the grand sense it, but they are what make us who we are and they are the part of these occasional mailings that I most enjoy. So let's move on to the truly entertaining stuff.

I've mentioned Mel's retirement. There will be a special session at this summer's ASA in Denver devoted to Mel's amazing career of scholarship and I hope many of you will be able to attend. We'll also be using this occasion to host a Departmental reception at ASA. We let those lapse for a couple of years, but what better excuse for a party than a hearty thank you to Mel for a job well done? We'll share the details when they are settled.

Our external speaker series this fall has been an absolute blockbuster, with Annette Lareau (school choice), Gretchen Purser (the day labor industry, with a B' more focus), Devah Pager (racial self-selection in job search), and Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein held several seminars, including a fascinating reflection on his career evolution. Here is a link to the audio recording – the first voice is Beverly making the introduction: <http://www.soc.jhu.edu/recordings/Wallerstein-11-4-11.mp3>

I could tell you lots about our current students, but for this note, I'll mention just one. Wei-ting Chen has been working with folks locally to raise awareness about good nutrition and problems with the corporate food system. It's very "hands on" for Wei-ting, encouraging better eating habits on campus through [Real Food Hopkins](#) and working on a Hopkins community gardening project. The latter is highlighted in this link to a [JHU Gazette article](#) and you can learn more through the group's blog <http://jhucommunitygarden.wordpress.com/>. There's also an academic side to Wei-ting's passion for eating the right stuff the right way: her dissertation will examine coursework on nutrition education and student obesity.

And I've a few items to share from our graduate Alums also (please keep those notes coming!).

Lu Zhang's (PhD 2010) dissertation "From Detroit to Shanghai?: Globalization, Market Reform, and the Dynamics of Labor Reform in the Chinese Automobile Industry, 1980 to the Present" has received two awards: the Best Dissertation Prize from the Labor History Journal and the Best Dissertation Award from Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA). That good work has been rewarded in another way too – with a position in Sociology at Temple University, my undergraduate department.

Joe Gasper (PhD 2009) has crafted a book out of his dissertation: "Drug Use and Delinquency: Causes of Dropping Out of High School?" (LFB Scholarly Press). I have fond memories of my service to Joe's Committee and I applaud this big success.

Mentioning "dropping out," we have a collection of new babies to announce. Here is the list I have, but I'm sure we've missed some, so please do help me with updates:

Alums:

Nicole Aschoff (2010)– daughter Simi, born in February

Astra Bonini (2011) – expecting a girl in February 2012

Jake Lowinger (2009)– Yonah (Jonas David Lowinger is his legal name)

Peter Rosenblatt (2011 and current post-doc)– son, Gabriel - born 5/31

Current Students:

Phillip Garboden – son Clifford

Dan Pasciuti – son, Lucas – born 1/19

Siri Warkentien – son, Wesley – born 4/24

Faculty:

Rina Agarwala – in Bogota, Columbia right this minute bonding with her and Carsten’s new son Felix

Steve Plank – daughter, Gracyn (early February)

Hearty Congrats to All!

Salvatore Babones (PhD 2003) has been travelling the world trying to improve it, and especially the good old USA. For a sense of how he is going about this, see his “Benchmarking America” blog:

<http://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkingAmerica>. I had a chance to catch up with Salvatore at ASA in Las Vegas (ugh – Las Vegas, not Salvatore!) and it’s clear this is a commitment from deep down inside that he intends to stay with over the long haul.

There’s a “fresh start” of a quite different sort to announce for Tom Rodriguez: this year he began a new position as Assistant Professor of Sociology at California State University-Stanislaus. We wish him well! And an Alumni Update wouldn’t be complete without mention of Bob Manning. Like Salvatore, Bob too is on a mission to make the world a better place. If you are a regular reader of these notes you know already about his taking on the predatory credit card industry and helping everyday folks figure out how to live within their means. Well it seems Bob doesn’t have enough to do already, so he has launched yet another do-gooder initiative, a “First-Generations Pathways” mentorship program to help urban Rochester minority high schoolers who will be the first in the family to attend college

(<http://www.debtorwise.org/website/pathways.aspx>). Good for you Bob!

That’s ample context for now, but let me conclude with a challenge. The second attachment is a photo from one of Doris’s famous Halloween parties – ah, those were the days, rivaled only by disco fever! It arrived recently courtesy of Patricia Arregui (MA, 1977) from far away Peru, but it is undated and some of the names are missing. There is a gold prize waiting for whomever helps fill in the most missing names, and it would be nice to be able to date it too. Patricia, by the way, reports that she is not in good health. Please join with me in sending a collective virtual hug and good wishes.

That’s it for now. Stay tuned for the next installment, and please do help with some juicy tidbits of news for content.

Cheers to all!

Karl