

Alumni Update, January 2007.

January eh? What ever happened to November, when I said I would write next? Or to all of 2006 for that matter? Well, Happy New Year anyway – at least the New Year we celebrate here in the States. I say that because Kathy and I spent part of New Year's Eve at Lingxin and Alan's making Chinese dumplings, which made me mindful of the fact that we're not all on the same calendar. Shaohua Zang, a first year student, and his wife Lingli Huang were in attendance, as well as Weidong Wang, a visiting scholar from Renmin University who is working with Mel on his big China study (they've fielded surveys in, I believe, 6 different cities scattered throughout China). A wonderful time was had by all. In fact, Kathy and I so enjoyed the evening that we're planning a February repeat to celebrate the Chinese New Year. And those of you who know Kathy won't be surprised to hear she's got some creative ideas on how to jazz up cross-cultural cuisine -- if you can do Chinese dumplings on Dec 31, there's no end to the possibilities!

It's been a busy year in the department, with lots of comings and goings. I've already mentioned Mel's collaborator. We also had the pleasure of Suet-Ling Pong's company, who spent her Penn State sabbatical semester at CSOS. Suet-ling's visit was a special treat for me, as she was one of my two Deputy Editors when I was editor of *Sociology of Education* -- we forged a strong bond at the time. Suet-ling is working on a several projects with Lingxin, so her time here was well spent. And she was quite active while here, participating in the SoE journal club sessions and giving two talks in the department (one together with Lingxin).

In terms of "goings," Giovanni and Beverly are on sabbatical the whole year. They were in the department often during the fall semester and generous with their time, but in the spring they'll be in South Africa and we're not expecting to see much of them. I gather Giovanni's interest in Africa is rekindled and the stay will help inform his future work, so watch out for another big book! Stefanie spent the fall semester at Notre Dame (yes, the real one) as a visiting fellow at Maureen Hallinan's Center for Research On Educational Opportunity. She's back now, and by all accounts it was a wonderful stay. Stefanie says she got tons of work done, and a good friend from her Northwestern days, Regina Deil-Amen, was there at the same time, so it wasn't all work

Now for a bit of "hot off the presses" news. Lingxin has been invited by the Spencer Foundation to spend the upcoming summer and fall semester in residence there as one of six visiting scholars under the Foundation's new Visiting Scholars program. We're pleased for Lingxin, and proud of her. And it turns out that Suet-ling will be there at the same time, so it's a great opportunity for the two of them to press ahead with this collaborative work. I have to mention too that Doris Entwisle, whom all of you know is a dear friend and long-time collaborator, was recognized recently by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with a two year Emeritus Fellowship. This award will help Doris keep going on our BSS study, but she would have stayed at it regardless – Doris seems never to slow down (indeed, sometimes I think they modeled the Energizer Bunny after her!). There's more faculty news to report, and if you're interested (which I hope you will be) please refer to the department's website.

Now on to our far-flung network I did get a few notes in reply to my last update, but the prior one announcing the ASA party seemed to generate more "buzz," so, please, let's pick up the pace so we can stay better connected.

First, let me thank Salvatore Babones (2003) for helping launch the Alumni Paper Competition. I know there are others working on this with Salvatore, but I don't have names so for now it will have to be a collective "thank you." Salvatore has suggested a presentation during the department's Commencement reception, which I think is a terrific idea. And if we get our act together for another ASA reception, maybe we can do something in New York also. If some of you don't know about this initiative, you can check with Salvatore for more detail: sbabones@inbox.com.

Hmmm, what else I know? Dag MacLeod (2002) reports from the West coast that he finds himself doing a different kind of public sociology, managing the research unit of the California State Judicial Council / Administrative Office of the Courts. From that experience he finds it something of a revelation that "the most vexing problem in policy often is the fact that nobody ever agreed on whether (or how!) to define and count some variable of interest!" Well hello, from somebody who's tried to keep up with dropout and grade retention statistics I feel Dag's pain -- maybe the real world needs Sociologists after all!

But the really important news, now somewhat dated but still relevant, is that Dag and Terri are the proud adoptive parents of Juan Jose Bartolero MacLeod. JJ was born April 26 and came to Dag and Terri May 1 (Dag's note to me arrived Sept 29!). So hearty congrats to Dag, Terri and JJ -- we're thrilled for all three of you.

Going from dated to quite timely, I heard just this morning (Jan 19 -- not sure when this note actually will go out for distribution) that Beth Simon has (2001) arrived safely in the Bay Area and is getting settled in nicely in her new Oakland digs. For Beth this is something of a return home after 12 years in B'more, and she writes with great enthusiasm about the prospects. Beth will be doing yet another kind of public sociology, working with the market research division of BC/BS. And it catches my eye that included on Beth's email distribution are Dag MacLeod (the very same) and Melanie Arthur (2002). There may be others that I can't decipher, but it seems we're close to critical mass for a West Coast alumni chapter! We wish you the best Beth.

Kerri Kerr (2002) stopped by the department this past fall and did a very nice "doing sociology outside the academy" Brownbag for students -- it was a great session (thanks Kerri!) and I hope to do a couple more this spring. Tom Dial (1986) checks in often with job announcements and the like from the NEA and it would be interesting to hear what it's like do policy analysis for a big teachers' union, so you might be hearing from me Tom. And if others in the Baltimore -- DC area might enjoy stopping by for an afternoon and sharing your stories, please let me know -- it's really a great opportunity for current students and it's always fun getting caught up on news. But back to Kerri, who is Chief Data and Accountability Officer for New Leaders for New Schools, a non-profit preparing the next generation of effective big-city school principals. Kerri telecommutes to New York from her home in north Baltimore. And I hope I'm not revealing news I shouldn't, but Kerri wrote to me just the other day on business and dropped the blockbuster news that she and Bill are expecting -- their first. Congratulations and good luck!

Silvia Golumbek (1996) also has remained in the area, working as VP of Programs at Youth Service America, which promotes youth civic engagement through service learning in the U.S. and over 100 countries. Silvia also teaches part-time at SPSBE (which some of you may have heard is being carved up into a School of Education and a School of Business), covering courses like "The Sociology of Children and Youth," "Children and Cities," and "Inter-Cultural Communications." That's when she's not on the road – when she checked in toward the end of September, Sylvia was just about to head off to India for several workshops at the world conference International Association of Volunteer Effort. That all sounds very impressive, and it is, but it pleases me just as much when our paths cross occasionally at the Rotunda Giant or Trader Joe's (likewise with Pat Gucer (2001) and Michelle Hindin (1999) who is at JHSPH, where it is committee service that occasionally has us together in the same room).

And Susan Dauber (1993) dropped me a note to say how much she enjoys these occasional mass mailings. That's pleasing too, although I didn't succeed in coaxing a chit-chatty follow-up note from her for general distribution – maybe this will pry one out. But I can say that Susan remains a mover-and-shaker as Program Director with the Spencer Foundation and that she lives a very full life with her two daughters. Susan stopped by last fall with a Foundation colleague to do some brainstorming with people here and at College Park about non-cognitive dimensions of human capital. I gather the Foundation is planning to launch an initiative with that focus, so if that sort of thing interests you (I know it does me), you should contact Susan: sdauber@spencer.org. There's a really nice side-benefit to having people like Susan stop by. To avoid the appearance of impropriety, they have to cover meals, and since the Foundation has deep pockets, we ate well –thank you Susan!

That's it for now. Please do keep in touch, and send something in I can use in the next of these. The next one I hope will follow soon, but won't be newsy. Rather I'll be asking for help updating our email distribution list. Toward that end, I've asked Linda Burkhardt, the department's new Academic Program Coordinator and our point-person for graduate student issues, to compile names for which we lack good addresses. And mentioning Department staff, can you believe that Pam Stichion (aka Skalski) is still here! Pam and I arrived the same year (1972) and we're both still going strong. It's a friendly competition to see which of us will be the last one standing, but one way or the other I believe Binnie's 42 year record is in jeopardy!

Cheers to all –

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