Sociology of Mental Health Newsletter and Announcements. July 2021
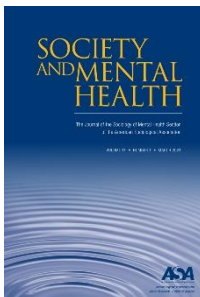
From the Newsletter Editor:

I am sorry this is late, it has been a rough spring and COVID finally caught up with me and my graduate students 😊 Richard Adams and Katie Gary have done the majority of the formatting of the newsletter with information provided to them, but Katie has defended her dissertation and is starting a post-doc and Richard has more than enough to do as Chair of the Sociology Department.   Instead of the more glitchy newsletter you are getting a hybrid newsletter and announcement via the listserve. First we have many kudos! Then discussion of the ASA meetings, and then research and teaching related to COVID.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CHAIR!

Dr. Pamela Braboy Jackson has been awarded the 2021 Tracy M. Sonneborn award and named Provost Professor at Indiana University, Bloomington.
https://sociology.indiana.edu/news-events/news/Jackson-provost-sonnenborn-award.html

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR JOURNAL!

Society and Mental Health

Impact Factor: 3.432
Now Ranked 26/149 in Sociology

(Source: 2020 Journal Impact Factor, Journal Citation Reports [Web of Science Group, 2020).

What a great testament to the commitment and expertise of our Editorial Board and reviewers and highlights the increasing quality of the articles published in the journal.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 AWARDEES!

CHAIR: ELAINE WETHINGTON (ew20@cornell.edu).

Leonard I. Pearlin Award for Distinguished Contributions. Given the rescheduling of the ASA meetings due to COVID in 2020, we delayed the Pearlin Award and Dr. Phyllis Moen will officially receive the award and provide the talk at the 2021 Mental Health Section Awards Ceremony. Nominations for 2022 should be sent to the Awards Committee Chair for the Mental Health Section by February 1, 2022. Nominations should include a CV of the nominee and a letter of support describing the nominee's contributions to the sociology of mental health.

Best Publication

The committee found the nominations for the Best Publication Award theoretically and methodologically innovative, as well as timely. The Awards Committee has recommended that two papers be awarded the Best Publication Award this year:

Lijun Song (Vanderbilt University), "Social Capital, Social Cost, and Relational Culture in Three Societies," *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 83(4): 443-462; 2020

Caitlin Patler, Erin R. Hamilton, and Robin L. Savinar (University of California at Davis), "The Limits of Gaining Rights while Remaining Marginalized: The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program and the Psychological Wellbeing of Latina/o Undocumented Youth," *Social Forces,* 2020.

Best Dissertation

Megan Bolton, Indiana University, has been selected as the 2021 awardee for Best Dissertation. The title of her dissertation is: *What It Means to Be "Wise": Personal Experiences, Interpersonal Encounters, and Mental Illness Stigma.* Using a unique dataset*,* Dr. Bolton conducted a theoretically innovative examination of how social relationships with people with mental illness influence stigma outcomes.   Dr. Bolton was nominated by Prof. Brea Perry (Indiana University).

Best Graduate Student Paper

Rebecca Ewert, University of Chicago, has been selected as the 2021 awardee for Best Graduate Student Paper for "Post-Disaster Masculinity and Mental Health." Based on her field work in Northern California and interviews with service providers, firefighters, and community residents, Ms. Ewert has used the intersection of the sociology of disaster, mental health, and economic sociology to examine the impact of prevalent wildfires on the mental health of rural residents. Ms. Ewert's paper was nominated by Prof. Kristen Schildt (University of Chicago).

The Awards Ceremony and the Pearlin Talk will be on Monday, August 9ᵗʰ 11:30 to 12:25 (see below).

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE VIRTUAL ASA MEETINGS

Mental Health Day will indeed be busy, with most of our sessions on Monday, August 9. A brief summary of the day is provided below:

Monday, August 9.

    10 to 10:45: Council Meeting
    11 to 11:30: Business meeting
    11:30 to 12:25: Challenges to Mental Health Research, Awards Ceremony
    12:45 to 2:10 Free to Be Me: Defining Mental Health and Assessing Risks
    4:15 to 5:40: Covid-19 and Mental Health

Tuesday, August 10.

    1:45 to 2:40. Mental Health

Would you like to serve as a mentor or receive a mentor this year? High-quality mentoring is an important component of our ASA section, and we encourage anyone who is interested to sign up to be a mentor or mentee. If you're interested in being a mentor or receiving a mentor—or both—please sign up using the forms below**.** We'll aim to have you paired up around the time of the ASA conference. In general, mentorship follows the academic calendar, so this year's mentor-mentee pairs will last from about August 2021 to August 2022 (or longer if you like!).

To be a mentor: https://forms.gle/XvePRPumQPGj5KNr5
To receive a mentor: https://forms.gle/RjwyEA6xjy1ftqCv8

Research and Teaching Related to COVID by Section Members

Magdalena Szaflarski, PhD, UAB Department of Sociology

People's Experiences and Attitudes during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States and Poland. Published in *COVID-19, Volume II: Social Consequences and Cultural Adaptations* (Routledge, 2021).

Abstract: There is a limited understanding of how people in different sociocultural contexts fare during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they view their societies' responses. This study compares COVID-19 perceived threat, governmental response, impacts, and experiences in the United States and Poland. An online survey was conducted in June and July, 2020 using published COVID-19 instruments. The sample consisted of 538 participants (54% US-based). The study found COVID-19 perceived threat and impacts (e.g., logistical, psychological) to be generally lower in Poland than in the United States. However, views on government responses (e.g., lock-downs) were largely similar. Conservatives and moderates perceived COVID-19 threat as lower than liberals, but trust in science explained the effect for moderates. Also, women had a greater fear of coronavirus than men. These and other findings confirm and extend prior knowledge. The discussion focuses on the role of ideological divide that shape COVID-19 attitudes/experiences in these two countries.

Cobb, Ryon J., Christy L. Erving, and W. Carson Byrd. 2021. "Perceived COVID-19 Health Threat Increases Psychological Distress Among Black Americans." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* **44(5): 806-818.**

Abstract: The present study used data from the American Trends Panel to examine the interplay between the perceived COVID-19 health threat, discriminatory beliefs in medical settings, and psychological distress among Black Americans. We measured psychological distress as an average of five items modified from two established scales and used self-reports of perceived COVID-19 health threat and beliefs about discrimination in medical settings as focal predictors. Ordinary least squares regression was used to examine these relationships. Holding all else constant, we found that perceived COVID-19 health threat and the belief that Black Americans face racial discrimination in medical settings were both positively and significantly associated with higher levels of psychological distress. We also found a significant perceived COVID-19 health threat by belief about discrimination in medical settings interaction in the full model. Future studies should assess how these relationships vary across age groups and over time.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING ABOUT COVID

Richard Horton. 2021. The Covid-10 Catastrophe and How to Stop it From Happening Again. Polity Press. Brief Review by Teresa Scheid.

This is the second edition, expanded and updated with the quick movement of COVID events in 2020. Richard Horton is the editor of *The Lancet* and he provides a concise, theoretically rich, and empirically solid analysis of the global pandemic which can be understood as a SYNDEMIC, a synthesis of epidemics. Not only the health pandemics of viral and chronic non-communicable disease, but the background global context of systemic social and racial inequality, and what WHO identified as an "infodemic" which includes the daily news stream and updates on COVID, but the overflow of disinformation designed to deceive. Horton provides a concise and readable overview of the science of COVID-19 and vaccine development, a history of events during the past year starting with Wuhan China, and then a summary of the initial response to COVID-19 – detailing what we got wrong and showing how systems of inequality both exacerbated and were exacerbated by the syndemic. While much of the focus is on the US (especially his critique of the Trump administration and its role in undercutting WHO and any effort at a global response), there is attention to the considerable global variability in response. The book is also theoretically rich; in the introduction Horton draws on Raymond Aron and his arguments for the "end of history" -though Horton hopes for a new "universal history." In the conclusion we are reminded of what we as medical sociologists know, a "risk society" produces its own iatrogenic diseases. In *The Risk Society* (1986) Ulrich Beck in argued the accumulation of wealth produces new risks (climate change, increasing inequality, cyber attacks, etc.) an argument Horton extends to provide a solid analysis of our political economy. Horton draws on a diversity of scholarly perspectives to provide a comprehensive framework for scholarship on how COVID changed the world we live in. What will the future bring? The writing is crisp and straightforward, the book is short in length (210 pages large print), and while critical, hopeful too. Suitable for your academic book group, advanced undergraduates and graduate students. I plan to use it in my Health Policy class next spring.

INTEGRATING RESEARCH INTO TEACHING ABOUT THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF COVID AND MENTAL HEALTH

I am also including the assignment I use in my graduate Social Context of Health Class which asks them to explore the intersection of mental health with COVID and to develop some research ideas. I use the chapters in Part II of the Handbook as well as recent research, to provide background on the many social contextual factors which influence mental health. I gave my undergraduates (upper level writing intensive class with Sociology of Health and Illness as a prerequisite) a similar assignment, though somewhat "watered down" in terms of research focus and expectations. Several of my students have used this assignment in developing their doctoral, MA, and undergraduate theses!

Covid-19 is clearly a chronic stressor, with devastating effects on health, well-being, and employment. With Covid-19, we have seen that those workers who are deemed "essential" are both higher status (physicians and governmental representatives) but also lower status (fast foot, nursing home aides) and they all face not only greater risks of contracting the virus, but also job related stress. At the same time, many sectors of the economy have been closed with workers being furloughed and/and or laid off. The uncertain prospects for the future is a major stressor for all of us, and has already had a marked impact on mental health with rising rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

In this assignment, I am asking you to develop a research oriented essay applying ideas from the assigned readings and you own understanding of mental health and COVID-19 to understanding the mental health consequences of COVID-19. In this essay you should address the following:

1. Elaborate on the Stress Process Model and other theories/ideas relevant to your research ideas. Sometimes a diagram can help. Identify specific stressors, social supports, vulnerability to support, and coping resources.

2. Expand on relevance of social status and social context (be that SES, gender, race/ethnicity, age, or employment).

3. Discuss interactions among key social statuses (i.e intersectionality).

4. Differentiate between "cause" and "effect" and "intervening" conditions.

5. Provide some ideas about research design. This does not have to be elaborate, but put out some ideas about how best to examine the research question you are focusing on. What is the relevant population? How could you study a sample of this population? Should the data be more exploratory and qualitative (intensive interviews) or more quantitative to answer specific hypotheses (a survey). Are there conditions for a natural experiment? For example, can we compare essential workers who have to go to work versus those who can work at home? Health care workers versus grocery store workers?

6. Conclusion. What are the important implications of your research ideas?

Call for Papers

Submissions in all areas of health including <u>mental health</u> are welcome for the following Special Issue: [Innovations for better health & social justice](#)

BMC Health Services Research has launched a collection to curate innovative research broadly examining the environmental, political, and social factors that perpetuate health inequities and social injustices in health systems. We encourage submissions covering the following topics:

- Accessibility and affordability of care
- All forms of prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization
- Corruption
- Freedom of movement and borders
- Health disparities
- Health policy, politics and power
- New technologies, artificial intelligence, and big data for combatting health inequities
- Quality of health services and meeting the healthcare needs of people facing discrimination and marginalization
- Resource distribution

Research may focus on specific marginalized population groups, such as indigenous populations or ethnic minority groups.

This collection supports Health Systems Global's call to consider how we can re-imagine health systems for better health and social justice, and UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 & 10, good health and wellbeing, and reduced inequalities. ● Guest Edited by Magdalena Szaflarski, PhD, University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA. ● Open to submissions until May 2022. For more information about the collection and how to submit, visit: https://www.biomedcentral.com/collections/IBHSJ

OTHER CONFERENCES OF INTEREST

The Society for the Study of Human Development (SSHD) is pleased to announce the **SSHD 2021-22 Conference Series — *Macrosystem Challenges to Lifespan Human Development.*** (A brief abstract appears below.)
A series of invited and submitted events will be held **online between November 2021 and June 2022**. The **submission site opens June 15th and closes August 15th**. Please visit these sites for
   information about SSHD: http://sshdonline.org/
   more detail about the theme & dates: https://sshdonline.org/events-2/
   a conference poster: https://sshdonline.org/21-22-series-poster/

Theme Abstract:
   Developmental trajectories and outcomes can be understood only within the
   context of the macrosystems in which individuals develop (e.g., see

Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Our contemporary macrosystem is replete with challenges. Some (like COVID) are newly emerging; others (like racism and environmental injustice) are long-standing, but increasingly visible to greater swaths of humankind. The SSHD 2021-22 Conference Series—***Macrosystem Challenges to Lifespan Human Development***—is designed to share and encourage scholarship that advances conceptualizations of macrosystem challenges, methodologies for studying them, and strategies for reducing or navigating such challenges.

We look forward to seeing you at the SSHD 2021-22 Series.

The Program Committee

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