

# Collective Memory



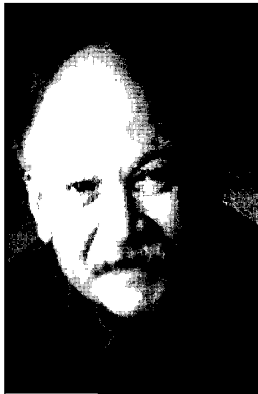
# UNCG sociology

Fall 2005

Written 10 September 05

## Notes From a Grateful Head – The Liquid University and a Sociology of the Future\*

Growth, change, alteration, modification, fluidity: descriptions one and all of the modern university. If there is one thing certain in this place, it is change. Look about and you will see new permutations of course scheduling, classroom technologies, learning goals, majors, concentrations, and more. Gaze at the campus and its landscape appears almost animated, moving boldly up, down, and across our vision. Buildings, sports fields, parking lots, and landscaping all appear in flux, as if following a command to "become," "change," and "become again."



A core idea in sociology is the "institution," a firm, secure, and orderly way of doing the things that matter to us. Religion, in all its many forms, hospitals, banks, and, of course, schools are among the more predictable human arrangements for accomplishing life's essential tasks. A certain feeling accompanies the idea of the institution. Call it a palpable sense of order and predictability. And if it also feels oppressive, its burdensome presence is not a surprise. Too much order is always constraining.

But the idea of the "institution," at least as we conventionally use this term, no longer makes much sense when applied to UNCG or any modern university. A wise sociologist who has been watching such things argues that we are moving from a world that is solid and predictable to a world that is increasingly "liquid," fluid, almost runny if you will. In this world, institutions and ways of life do not keep their shape for long. A liquid society cannot stay on course.

A liquid university inaugurates a series of new beginnings, one after the other, with no end in sight. While I don't have any advice on how one lives in a liquid world, I can offer a picayune conclusion that would seem to follow from what we've said: The future

will not be more of the present.

That tired idea, however, does beg a more evocative one: Sociology in a liquid world is invited to inquire into the nature of the future. The problems and promises of futures, with few exceptions, have thus far escaped our notice. A sociology of the future. Where to begin?

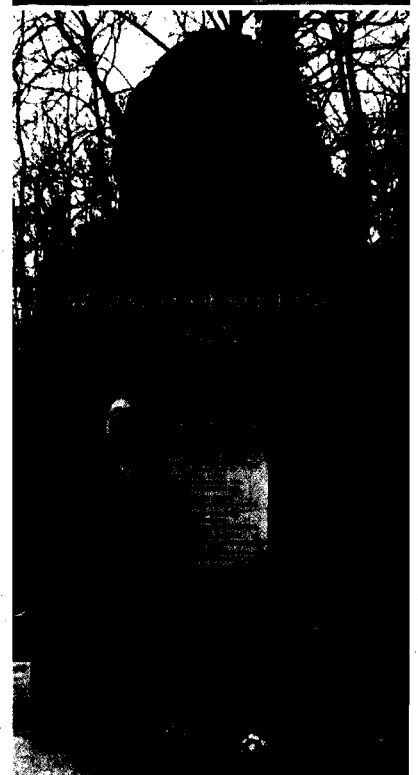
*\* For those who watch such things, this newsletter is a little late. Out tardiness is intentional. We made the decision to go to a fall release date because the spring is a bit too busy to write, edit, and print a good letter.*

### A postscript – Katrina, Social Class, and Chaos: Remembering a Hurricane

Hurricane Katrina will likely be remembered as a signal event in modern American history. Thousands of pictures streaming through our media tell vivid stories of immense suffering, loss, and malfeasance. This act of nature did what no book, strident voice, or social movement could do: it peeled back the underbelly of America, exposing our dirty little secret, the black dispossessed. Packing the disinherited and evicted into the New Orleans Superdome had the unintended consequence of making visible the rootless and disenfranchised. A few committed violent acts; predators in good times, they continued to hunt in chaos. But their ferocity quickly assumed an iconic quality for a middle class increasingly anxious about its own security. It took a class 4 hurricane to put race and poverty back on the public's radar, let's hope it doesn't take another debacle to begin redistributing wealth downward to those who truly need it.

### Marx and Spencer are Visited by Another Great Sociologist

During his time in Germany, as a Fulbright Fellow, Dr. William Markham visited significant sites associated with sociology.



## City's Newest Park Named For Ex-Mayor

The city's newest park was christened Thursday in honor of Greensboro's first female mayor.

More importantly, it was dedicated to a mayor who would much rather have her name attached to something outside than a stodgy government building.

The Carolyn S. Allen Community Park in northwest Greensboro on Drawbridge Parkway is home to a quartet of new tournament-caliber softball fields. Allen threw the first pitch - a strike - to start one of four games that played into the evening under lights.

Allen served as mayor for six years until 1999, and is known as an environmentalist who quietly helped bridge social divides in the city. During her first mayoral run in 1993, Allen's campaign embraced opponent Bob Mays' criticism of her as a "tree-hugger" by running a TV ad of her embracing a tree.

Now 71, she stuck to those roots, pointing out that spectators at future ballgames at the park could catch a glimpse of nature and hear bird calls by merely crossing the road onto the nearby Bicentennial Greenway. But she also thanked city officials for attaching her name to the park and emphasized that teamwork is what got the city to this point.

"I am honored and very touched by this dedication," Allen said. "Here on these ball fields, cooperation is taught along with the zeal for competition."

The \$2.8 million park has been almost two years in the making, complicated by large boulders that had to be dug out of



the land and poor soil in other parts.

Workers laid down sod starting this summer, so all the fields are ready for league play.

Jimmy Smith, a longtime softball umpire, said he's traveled across the country to other softball facilities, and placed Greensboro's at the top.

"I can sum up this park in one word: awesome," Smith said. "We will not take a back seat to anybody."

Jean Jackson of the city's Parks and Recreation Department said the main benefit of the park is that it's big enough to host all of a league's games in one place. The city has nine other fields, but they are spread around in different places.

The complex is already booked through 2005 for weekend tournaments, and city leagues will probably fill the schedule during the week.

Some softball league players complained to elected officials when the fields were modified to host youth baseball as well, but Jackson said there would be a healthy mix of play.

Money for the park came from a parks bond approved by voters in 2000 and a \$250,000 state grant.

### NEWS & RECORD

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by Matt Williams ~ Staff Writer

Contact Matt Williams at 373-7004 or mwilliams@news-record.com

Mayor Allen received her BA from University of Texas, Austin and her MA in sociology from Florida State University. She is married to *Emertus* professor Donald Allen, former department head.

## Student Voices

From Joshua Kelley...

Hello readers, my name is Joshua Kelley and I am a graduate student at UNCG in the department of sociology. I would like to tell you a little bit about my history at UNCG and what my future aspirations are. I received my Bachelor of Arts from UNCG in 2003. As an undergraduate I double majored in Psychology and Sociology with a concentration in Criminology. While I was working towards my Bachelors I worked in two different cognitive psychology laboratories as an experimenter. This was my first experience with real scholarly research and I liked it. My educational focus coming into UNCG was psychology, but by the time I was getting ready for graduate work I had switched my main academic interests to sociology. I had taken a graduate class in advanced topics of Social Psychology from a sociological perspective as an undergraduate and this class completely changed the way I thought about everything. From that point in time I decided that I would become a sociologist instead of a psychologist.

The highlight of my graduate work so far was making my professional debut at the Southern Sociological Society Conference in Charlotte, NC last April. At the conference I presented a piece of my thesis, which is a discussion on the historically new creation of the infant as a category of person. My topic resonated well with the audience at hand and luckily I did not forget how to talk when it was my turn. Seeing the amount of interest in my thesis from people outside of my own department gave me a motivational boost to keep working to finish my thesis and to keep the same topic when I start working on my dissertation. I am applying to PhD schools this fall and hope to continue my graduate work in the Northeast or on the West coast.

## Staff News

Ms. Julie Capone will assume the role of Managing Editor for the journal *Sociological Inquiry* beginning spring term 2006 (Professor Steve Kroll-Smith will edit the journal).

### The Department of Sociology Colloquium Series

#### "Unequal Childhoods Grown Up: Class, Race, and Family Life."



Dr. Annette Lareau, Professor in the Department of Sociology at Temple University, was the guest speaker at the Sociology Colloquium Series in March 2005. She discussed an observational study of white and black families and showed the differences in child rearing by social class. Her book, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, was a finalist for the C. Wright Mills Award. It received the best book award from the Sociology of Family Section and the Section on Childhood and Youth; it was a co-winner of the best book award in the Sociology of Culture Section. Her first book, *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*, won the Willard Waller Award of the Sociology of Education Section of the American Sociological Association.

## Focus on Faculty



**Paul Luebke**

every two years, I have substituted legislating as a second role for my major occupation as a sociologist.

What's different this year is that what I do—applying sociological insights to the public policy issues facing North Carolina—has become almost fashionable in American Sociological Association circles. What I've been doing for 15 years now has a name—Public Sociology.

For me, Public Sociology is something that every sociologist and sociology student could practice—but it's not an activity that appeals to all sociologists. It starts with enjoying finding the links between sociological knowledge in the classroom and the world "out there." My students know that I want them to see that link; that's why in each of

Spring semester 2005, I was on leave without pay from the Sociology Department to serve as a full-time legislator representing Durham County in the North Carolina State House. This is not a new activity for me. Beginning in Spring 1991, once

my classes either Greensboro's *News and Record* or the *New York Times* on-line is assigned once a week.

Most of the insights I try to apply at the State House emerge from various undergraduate courses including Introduction to Sociology. Our sociology courses teach us that the poor fare worse than the affluent in the quality of their public schools, and the wealthy benefit from our tax system. So since 1991 I've worked to increase resources for schools disproportionately attended by low-income children and have successfully reduced the tax burden on the less affluent by eliminating the state sales tax on groceries.

Because sociological data make clear that the death penalty system in North Carolina includes biases against the poor and against African-Americans, I am co-sponsoring a bill that would suspend the death penalty for two years while the system is reformed to minimize such biases.

But sometimes the data don't point to an obvious solution. Should North Carolina raise its cigarette tax? Health care data indicate clearly that smoking is both a societal hazard and a drain on government health care budgets. But sociological data

show that a 75 cent per pack increase on all smokers will in percentage terms take more from the pocketbook of the low-income than from the affluent. And US data indicate that today the low-income are more likely to smoke. In this case, what's a Public Sociologist to do? My answer is to decide which value is more significant to me in making societal policy. In this case, I've decided that the health care benefits are overriding, so I am a co-sponsor of a bill to raise N. C.'s cigarette tax to 80 cents per pack.

Finally, practicing Public Sociology also means discussing sociological insights with citizen-lobbyists in small groups, or speaking about sociology and policy to large groups. Already this semester, I have made four public speeches in which sociology influenced my policy comments, including a January address to Union County Democrats (near Charlotte) and remarks to a UNCC Conference on Immigration Policy in March.

For me, the ability to apply sociological data to public policy is my favorite reason for being a sociologist. I would encourage sociology students, both graduates and current majors, to think about how they might also practice Public Sociology in their neighborhood, city, or state.

## Club News

by Crista M Cuccaro

After a lull in activity, the Sociology Club came back full force last year. The biggest event was a political debate about the 2004 Presidential elections. The views flew back and forth between the College Republicans, the Coalition of Progressive Students, the College Libertarians, and the International Socialists Organization. Over 100 students were in attendance. Community service projects included Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, Winter Walk for AIDS, and fund raising for tsunami relief. Open forums and monthly movie nights where sociological films were shown and hosts debated themes were also held. This fall, the Sociology Club is gearing up for another exciting and progressive year. In October, the Sociology Club is committing all our time and activities to domestic violence awareness. With the help of several faculty members, the Sociology Club will be conducting a campus wide survey studying domestic violence. The Club will be replicating many of its events from last year, but is brainstorming about new and unique ideas. For the future, the Sociology Club aims to reach beyond the Sociology Department and into the Greensboro community with our "sociological imaginations".

## Alumni News

**From Frances Yancy...**

Right now, I am working full-time with the Mental Health Association, as a Program Manager for SPMI adults. I am also (much to my surprise) working at Alamance Community College, teaching an Introduction to Sociology class (this is my first semester). My contact information remains the same, feyancy@hotmail.com - 1008-J Avon Avenue, Burlington, NC 27215. Hoping that you are doing well too!!! And thank you for everything while I was attending UNC-G!

**From Matt Hembree...**

I am a staff supervisor for CBS techs for CNC Access here in Asheville. CBS stands for "client

based services" or "one-on-ones" or "shadows". Basically my workers stay with the kids all day in class. Sometimes they take them to and from school. Our workers are there for behavioral issues, not educational issues so they work with the "problem children". Our clients have mental health diagnoses such as ADHD, Bi Polar, etc. I supervise about 20 workers in Buncombe, Madison, Jackson, and Henderson counties. I really enjoy my work, and the people with whom I work.

**From Shelvey Wallace...**

"I am teaching Special Education for Guilford County Schools. I teach students with learning disabilities."

## AKD Honors

Dr. Jeffrey Leiter from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at North Carolina State University was the guest speaker at the AKD luncheon and induction ceremony held the end of April. The title of his talk was, "Engaged Sociology with a Non-Profit Example."

## Initiates

Jennifer Beard  
Dana Brooks  
Ebony Burgin  
Emily Cabaniss  
Samuel Carson  
Kamalpreet Chauhan  
Martha Gathings

Jessica Hulick  
Alicia Hurley  
Michael Sileno  
Cindy Alvarez  
Angela Barrett  
Barris Burch  
Jennifer Cromling

Crista Cuccaro  
Janine Farris  
Kelly Anne Fisher  
Rachel Holland  
Kristan Huntley  
Margaret Hutchens  
Liam Hysjulien

Sarah Johnson  
Adam Levorse  
Jennifer Perry  
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THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA



## *Faculty Briefs*

**Rebecca Adams** has been serving as an Advisory Editor for the *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (edited by George Ritzer), was elected to a three-year term on ASA Council (2004-2006), and was appointed as Editor of *Personal Relationships* (2005-2008), an interdisciplinary, international journal sponsored by the International Association for Relationship Research and published by Blackwell. This year, in addition to teaching in the Department of Sociology, she has been serving as Interim Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Information Technology and Planning.

**Ken Allan** published *Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory* with Pine Forge Press. He is currently working on the last bits and pieces of a companion book on contemporary theory.

**Shelly Brown:** This year I made it through reappointment : )

**Jill Fuller** published a research article on gender and on-line civic participation in

*Social Science Quarterly*. She also had the honor of introducing Annette Lareau, author of *Unequal Childhoods*, at the Sociology Colloquium. Jill returned to teaching *Sociological Perspectives on Gender* after not having taught it for a few years.

After finishing drafts of two papers last year which dealt with gender and age specific cross-national homicide victimization, **Gwen Hunnicutt** is currently conducting research on infant and child homicide victimization in the US from 1998-2002. Gwen is working on describing the common, as well as unique, features of homicide victimization among these particular age groups. A second paper from this study extends macro level criminological research to explain the patterns of infant and child homicide rates in rural and urban areas.

**Bill Markham** continues to work on his book on German environmentalism. In the Spring and Summer, 2004 he held a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the

University of Essen, Germany. In the Fall, 2006, he will be a Visiting Scholar at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

**Sandra Westervelt** recently received grant support from the American Sociological Association to continue her work on the post-release experiences of death row exonerees. To date, Sandra (and her colleague, Kim Cook, University of Southern Maine) has completed 10 interviews with death row exonerees. These funds will support an additional 6 interviews over the next several months.

**Steve Kroll-Smith** accepted the editorship of *Sociological Inquiry*. He is working with the department of Anthropology and the Department of Communications to create a disaster management certificate program.