

- **Green reflects on the intersection of place and sociology**
- **2011 theme is “Social Change and Capitalism in a Cultural Context”**
- **2010 speaker explores the implications of the insider-outsider continuum in research**

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

A-MSA 2011	2
Dennis Peck on Death and the Human Experience	3
Reflections on the 2010 Meeting	3
New Textbook	5
Job Opportunities	6
A-MSA Journal	7
2010 Student Competition	8

Soc Scribbles

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A Look Back at the 2010 Meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association

In his book *The Sociological Imagination* (1959, Oxford University Press), C. Wright Mills famously characterized sociology as the study of the intersections between biography, history and social structure. Although once considered an outsider to the mainstream of sociology, much of Mills' work is now considered basic to our understanding of sociological scholarship, albeit in a selective and piecemeal fashion.

In his opening remarks for the 41st annual meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association (A-MSA), President John Green (Associate Professor in the Division of Social Sciences at Delta State University) argued that there is an important element missing from Mill's concept of sociology and the sociological imagination – “place.”

Although Mills alluded to neighborhoods, the metropolis and problems of city life, he did not explicitly consider place as central to an understanding of society. Countless sociologists have directed their atten-



**A-MSA Past President
John J. Green**

tion toward Mills' concern with biography, history and social structure. However, his detailed conception of the interface between sociology and the uses of history has not been matched with sufficient attention to place.

Of course, numerous disciplines have addressed place, such as anthropology, history and especially geography. Applied fields including community development and public health have also attended to place. Many sociologists have borrowed from and even contributed to understandings of place, but their work has not been considered as part of the base on which any understanding of social phenomena must take into account. Even sociological human ecology and community studies are treated as sub-disciplines within the broader body of sociological work.

At the same time, advanced methods and technologies have profoundly influenced our

Continued on page 2

A Look Back, cont. from pg. 1

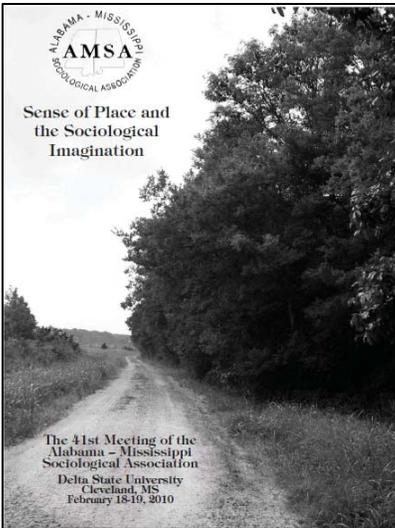


Photo: 2010 A-MSA Conference Program Cover.

ability to take place into account. These include, but are not limited to, geographic information systems and multi-level statistical modeling. Although these tools have opened opportunities for new explorations, we often use them as a matter of normal expectations. Just as Mills warned with over-reliance on survey methods, researchers often take up use of a

technique and technology without critically investigating the broader issues they take for granted. Such is the case with place. The forces of globalization, concentration of poverty, disasters, and climate change have reawakened concern over issues of place. While many sociologists in the post World War II era expected place to become irrelevant, in our un-

derstanding of local-global forces, place appears to be taking on a new relevance.

In sum, John argued, place is critical to developing an understanding of social phenomena, but we have not given place its due.

A-MSA 2011 in Montgomery, Alabama

What a great conference John Green and his colleagues at Delta State University organized for us this past February. As you know, it's time to start planning for the A-MSA 2011 conference. As your president, I would like to take this opportunity to have you start thinking about your travel and lodging arrangements for the upcoming conference. The theme for A-MSA 2011 is "Social Change and Capitalism in a Cultural Context."

Montgomery, Alabama has plenty of places to stay at or visit near Troy University Montgomery's downtown campus, the site for our meetings in 2011. Consider visiting the Rosa Parks Library and Museum, which our campus hosts.

"The Rosa Parks Library and Museum provides a great venue for research, education, enjoyment, and materials related to the events and accomplishments of individuals associated with the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The Museum includes a permanent exhibit, a time machine, temporary exhibit space, archives, classrooms, an auditorium, and conference room" (<http://montgomery.troy.edu/rosaparks/>).

Also, Montgomery is home to the Southern Poverty Law Center, The Equal Justice Institute, The U.S.

District Court Central Alabama (tours are available), and a plethora of state museums, legislature, and government buildings. Downtown Montgomery is also expanding it's nightlife and entertainment venue.

Let's make the 2011 A-MSA annual meeting one of our best!!!

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Peck Edited Encyclopedia



Dennis L. Peck of The University of Alabama recently edited the *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience* (with C.

Bryant). Published by Sage Publications in fall 2009, this comprehensive two volume set addresses traditional death and dying – related topics and presents a unique focus on the human experience to create a new dimension to this field of study.

The encyclopedia includes 330 entries which are authored by prominent international scholars, health practitioners, and lay experts with firsthand knowledge of issues involved in death and dying as well as many fields relat-

ing to the various aspects of the human experience. In presenting this comprehensive field of study, the *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience* offers a variety of diverse perspectives including historical concepts, perspectives, and theories, contemporary death and survivor-related issues and research topics that are gaining notoriety.

2010 Annual Meeting in Cleveland, MS

“The theme of the 2010 meeting was “Sense of Place and the Sociological Imagination.”

The A-MSA annual meeting, held February 18-19, 2010 on the campus of Delta State University (DSU) in Cleveland, Mississippi, attempted to engage with the concept of place. The theme of the meeting was “Sense of Place and the Sociological Imagination.”

More than 75 people were in attendance. They included faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff from a variety of nonprofit organizations. Presenters at this year’s conference came from Alabama and Mississippi, as well as locations as far away as Michigan and Washington, DC. They represented a

wide range of disciplines. Not only were sociologists in attendance, but so too were people with backgrounds in geography, history, political science, law and public health, among others.

Mrs. Deborah Moore, Director of DSU’s Center for Community and Economic Development, served as Program Chair for the annual meeting. There were 2 preconference workshops, followed by 15 concurrent sessions on the program, including 3 panels and 12 paper sessions. A wide range of substantive topics were covered in these sessions, such as social theory, volunteerism, gender, educa-

tion, employment, stratification, health, community and economic development, and religion. There were also sessions focused on graduate school, teaching and service learning.

Additionally, there was a plenary session for the Presidential Address, and there was a Keynote Address at the Awards Banquet. Both presenters focused their attention on issues relating to representations of people and places through research.



Photo: Historic Highway 61 – The Blues Highway – In the Mississippi Delta

A-MSA 2010, cont.

“Who counts reality and why it counts?”

John Green’s talk was entitled “Who Counts Reality and Why It Counts: Searching for a Community-Based Approach to Quantitative Research.” Based on the challenges posed by development scholars and activists, John reflected on his educational and research experience regarding quantitative research. He then provided an argument for why community-based researchers must break their self-imposed boundary of qualitative research and engage with quantitative research methods. John ended his speech by stating,

“Through community-based research, we hope to address the questions of ‘Who counts reality and why it counts?’ by being proactive. Engaging with each other, the collective ‘we’ will count reality and make sure that it really does count in efforts to improve livelihood security and quality of life in specific places.”

Katie Kerstetter, MPP, delivered a presentation entitled “From the Outside Looking In: Reflections on the Impact of ‘Outsider’

Researchers on the Community-Based Research Process.” An applied researcher with field experiences in the Delta and Gulf Coast regions of Mississippi, Washington, DC, and rural Jamaica, Katie presented results from an original qualitative study exploring the intersections of place, identity and research. Her insights provided for a more nuanced understanding of the insider-outsider continuum and the implications for research.



Katie Kerstetter

In addition to meeting with their colleagues, sharing information about research and teaching, and advancing the numerous disciplines making up the field of social science, participants had the opportunity for new

cultural experiences. The breaks and pre-banquet reception were catered by a student group led by Cameron McMillen (a faculty member in DSU’s Division of Family and Consumer Sciences). Their work featured delicacies including black-eye pea caviar and a king’s cake. The pre-banquet reception was held at the Capps Archive and Museum with a featured photography show by William Anderson entitled “A Compassionate Eye.” Furthermore, a sizeable group of conference attendees were led by Luther Brown (Director of the University’s Delta Center for Culture and Learning) on a visit to Po’ Monkey’s Lounge, an authentic juke joint.

New Textbook for Community Development

Faculty members in the Division of Social Sciences at Delta State University recently celebrated the launch of a new edited textbook for community development. Edited by Jerry Robinson Jr. (DSU) and Gary Green (University of Wisconsin), the book involved a long list of notable authors from across the country. DSU

faculty members Alan Barton, Paulette Meikle, John Green and Albert Nylander III were contributing authors to the 328-page book entitled *Introduction to Community Development: Theory, Practice and Service Learning*. For more information, please visit the Sage Publications website at www.sagepub.com/robinson.



Photo: (from left) Jerry Robinson Jr., Alan Barton, Paulette Meikle, John Green and Albert Nylander III

Organizational Development for A-MSA

Over the course of the past year, the A-MSA Executive Committee continued its work to further develop and strengthen the organization. Among numerous other activities and successes, this included formal incorporation. A group of Executive Committee members signed the A-MSA incorporation

papers at its meeting held in conjunction with the conference, and the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office granted recognition a few weeks later. An incorporation application is pending in Alabama. The next step for A-MSA will be to seek tax-exempt status for donations. For more informa-

tion about this process, please contact John Green (jgreen@deltastate.edu).

Changing of the Guard

The 2010 annual meeting concluded with the business meeting. As part of the meeting, outgoing A-MSA President John Green (Delta State University) handed over the symbolic gavel to incoming President Geoffrey McIn-

tyre (Troy University-Montgomery). Lynne Cossman (Mississippi State University) was nominated and selected as President-Elect.



(from the left) Incoming A-MSA President Geoffrey McIntyre and outgoing President John Green exchange the gavel at the business meeting

Job Opportunities at Delta State

Assistant/Associate Professor of Social Justice and Criminology in the Division of Social Sciences (August 2010 start date). The Social Justice and Criminology Program is housed within the Division of Social Sciences at Delta State University. As an interdisciplinary academic unit, the Division offers multiple degree programs, including those at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty members are from diverse disciplines. The successful applicant will teach undergraduate and graduate courses in the Social Justice and Criminology Program and other Social Science courses; advise undergraduate and graduate students; assist with coordination of the graduate program; provide service to the Division and University; and engage in scholarly activities. Required qualifications include a Ph.D. in Criminology or Sociology by the time of appointment. Preference will be given to applicants with teaching experience, including online instruction. Areas of specialization are open.

Chair, Division of Social Sciences (July 2010 start date). The Division of Social Sciences is an interdisciplinary academic unit. It offers multiple degree programs, including those at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty members are from diverse disciplines. Responsibilities of the Chair include: recruiting, supervising, and evaluating faculty and support staff; supervising course schedules; managing the Division budget; assessing academic programs; overseeing student enrollment; assisting with faculty development; and reviewing curricula. Qualifications entail a terminal degree in one of the Division's disciplines (<http://dsusocialsciences.org/>); eligibility for tenure at either the rank of associate professor or professor; creativity with strong administrative and leadership abilities; experience with

grant/extramural funding; and a distinguished record of teaching, scholarship and service.

Review of applications for both positions will begin May 1, 2010. Interested persons should send a DSU employment application, transcripts, curriculum vitae, and three letters of reference to Office of Human Resources, Delta State University, Kent Wyatt Hall 247, Cleveland, MS 38733 or via email at DSUHRjobs@deltastate.edu.

2010 New Officers!

During the A-MSA business meeting, elections were held for president elect and new members-at-large for Alabama and Mississippi. The results were:

President-Elect -- Lynne Cossman from Mississippi State University

Member-at-Large Alabama -- Jason Smith from the University of Alabama in Huntsville

Member-at-Large Mississippi -- Tyrone Jackson from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Please join us in thanking all three for their willingness to serve the association.

A-MSA On-Line Sociological Review

Volume 1, Issue 1, Part 1 of The A-MSA On-Line Sociological Review went "to press" this past February. With the help of Steve Grice and his coworkers at Mississippi State University, the first four articles were uploaded to the server at the University of Mississippi as PDF files. The four articles that comprise Part 1 of Volume 1, Number 1 constitute the inaugural issue of the association's e-journal.

Two of the papers in this issue were authored by undergraduate students. The lead article, "Family Planning and the Thai Fertility Decline: Applying a Cultural Framework for Analysis," was written for an A-MSA student paper contest when Doc M. Billingsley was a student at Millsaps College. Doc is now in the Ph.D. program in anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. Rebecca Hanson was a student at University of Montevallo when she submitted "Duct Tape, Eyeliner, and High Heels: The Reconstruction of Gender and Sexuality in a Drag Show" to an A-MSA undergraduate student paper contest. Currently, Rebecca is a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia. "Engaging the Debate Over 'Biological Limits of Gender Construction': Applying Concepts from Research Methods to Published Sociological Research" is a collective professor-student effort by Michael F. Johnston and the members of one of his methods classes at UCLA. One of my former colleagues, David Swanson, now at University of California, Riverside, authored "Population Aging and the Measurement of Dependency: The Case of Germany." All of the authors of these papers received "revise and resubmit" letters. Three of the papers were revised three times.

The polished appearance and layout of these papers, and their grammatical correctness, are the results of efforts by my colleague at the University of Mississippi, and Deputy Editor of this journal, Elise S. Lake. Elise is an experienced and expert copy editor. My thanks to Elise, to colleague and

Deputy Editor Minjoo Oh, and to the paper reviewers—all of whom invested time in these papers.

In order to survive, this fledgling journal requires people to submit work of high quality. I hope that the quality of the articles in Part 1 of the inaugural issue will encourage sociologists to submit papers to the A-MSA On-Line Sociological Review by suggesting that our e-journal is a worthy showcase. I encourage A-MSA members and their colleagues and students to submit papers for consideration.

Currently the journal has one new article under review and another that may be under revision. In the near future I trust I will be asking A-MSA members to take on the task of reviewing articles.

Gary L. Long, Editor

Check the journal out at
<http://www.olemiss.edu/pubs/amsa/>



Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association

<http://www.a-msa.org/>

Established in 1969, the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association (A-MSA) is a community of professionals and students dedicated to building a better world through the use of sociology and other social sciences. Our goal is to facilitate the development of knowledge in an environment that celebrates the diversity of life and recognizes the necessity of incorporating multiple forms of knowledge in the development of answers to social problems. The A-MSA website, annual conference and online journal bring people together for active learning.



At last count, we have 70 Facebook members!

Address any comments, corrections, and news to Tom Kersen, editor of *Soc Scribbles* at thomas.m.ersen@jsums.edu.

(Thanks to John Green for his assistance with this inaugural issue of *Soc Scribbles*.)

2010 Student Paper Competition Participants!

Annice Yarber, Auburn University Montgomery, served as Chairperson for the Student Paper Competition Committee. The student paper competition was comprised of a collection of seven interesting writings by students from the University of Mississippi and Millsaps College. Gary Long (University of Mississippi), Tyrone Jackson (Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College), Geoffrey McIntyre (Troy University) and Annice Yarber served as judges. All submissions were sociologically relevant and interesting; yet, a few rose to the level of notability. The winners were as follows:

Graduate

Andrew Whitaker, University of Mississippi. **First Place**, "Between Max Weber and Clifford Geertz:

The Hermeneutics of Sociological Imagining."

Jonathan Dial, University of Mississippi. **Second Place**, "Emotional Labor and Social Solidarity in Marathon Makeover's Group Training."

Undergraduate

Evan Parker, Millsaps College. **First Place**, "The Legitimacy of Attainment in American Society."

Nile Patterson, Millsaps College. **Second Place**, "The Color-Coated Income Gap."

Undergraduate Certificates of Participation were presented to:

Amanda Cloyd, Millsaps College, "Are All Men Created Equal? Pay Differences in

Homosexual and Heterosexual Men in the Workplace."

Kailey Rocker, Millsaps College, "The White Male's Progression in the Job Market in Relation to Women and Minorities."

Beth Smith, Millsaps College, "Gender Gap in Pay, Education and Occupational Sex Segregation: A Sociological Analysis."

