

Research Up-To-Date

The Newsletter of the Urban Appalachian Council Research Committee

September-October 2008

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The Research Committee was created at the founding of the Urban Appalachian Council more than thirty years ago and has always informed the council through active research. To be notified of future research committee meetings, which are open to all, please contact msullivan@uacvoice.org or phone 251-0202.

CONTRIBUTORS WELCOME!

Please send your article, announcement, or website link to Roberta Campbell at campberm@muohio.edu. Also, feel free to forward this newsletter to interested parties.



From the Editor: How I became an Appalachian

“The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959, London: Oxford University Press).

When I was a little girl I was from Kentucky. I knew that the area that I lived in was called Appalachia and that it was in the eastern part of the state. Beyond that, however, I defined myself in terms of my family, the people that I met in church, and school, my playmates. We all start out in a microcosmic world and our experiences broaden our sense of self.

The particular experiences that we have which are shaped by our positions in society, places we go, and events with share with others,

bring us to become the people that we are. It's basic sociology and psychology. Along the way of my own development I made a particular discovery about my life and my place.

When I was eleven years old, my father took his wife and children to live in Gary, Indiana. Gary is to all intents and purposes a suburb of Chicago and Dad got a job teaching high school there. In 1962, I entered the sixth grade at Hosford Park Elementary.

I remember that the impending move was pretty exciting. In my naiveté, I thought that I would be able to play with black children. Heretofore, black people had been remote from me both literally and figuratively. But this was 1962, and this school was as white as the one I'd left. Yet it was not without prejudice and bigotry. In my classroom, many students discriminated overtly toward others, me in particular. Because I talked funny and was different, I became a target of several bullies. That year was hell for me and when Dad moved us back to Kentucky in 1963, I was relieved. But I carried the stigma into the rest of my life. I became withdrawn and fearful, lest I reveal to others that I was strange and undeserving.

About that same time, however, I made another discovery. Images of the downtrodden, backward people and stark lives of my neighbors were published and broadcast across the country in the wake of the "War on Poverty". This was the image "out there" and the definition by others of me and people like me. And that definition did not reflect my reality at all. Slowly, very slowly, I began to shed my self-hatred and to realize that I had been a victim of circumstances.

The rest of my story is long and complex. Let's just say that I decided to become a sociologist and study Appalachia. I wrote my dissertation on Appalachian identity. I'm a college professor, a member of UAC's board, a frequent participator in the Appalachian Studies Association. I am a scholar-activist and I stand up for myself and the people of Appalachia who are politically, ethnically, racially, and economically diverse. We each have our strengths and our weaknesses. Some of us are good and some of are not. Our experiences, while often shared, are not identical. We are not strange, we are not all poor, and none of us are backward. But we are frequently misunderstood and some of us call ourselves Appalachian, or even hillbilly, and some do not. And that's okay.

I'm also a mother, sister, my late parents' daughter. I'm white and female. And on and on. All my positions and related experiences matter. I've grown to be proud of myself and my accomplishments, no matter how small or large. I love sociology. I hope I contribute meaningful to UAC. I adore my son and I hope he's glad to be mine.

The story up to now has made me these things and more. Being these things has helped shape my story. Like I said, it's complex. We are all complex, no matter where we come from, what happens to us, or what we call ourselves.

As for me, I'm definitely an Appalachian.

This editorial is inspired in part by the Appalachian Heritage Month at Miami University Hamilton. See the story in this issue.

Call for Essays on Appalachian Health

Dr. Robert Ludke and Dr. Phillip Obermiller are soliciting proposals for essays to be included in a book that they are editing. The tentative title of the book is *Appalachians: Their Health and Well-Being*.

Appalachia has been characterized as a region with pervasive health disparities and limited health care infrastructures and services. Environmental, economic, and social conditions contribute to this situation. Knowledge about the health of Appalachians and its underlying determinants is limited. Also limited is an understanding of the facts about the health of those persons who migrated from Appalachia into urban areas and their descendents. These migrants experience health disparities similar to those of their rural Appalachians.

According to Dr. Ludke and Dr. Obermiller, "Useful information about the health of Appalachians has yet to be compiled in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. This has limited the education of the students of Appalachia, health practitioners, and policy and decision makers who should know about the status and determinants of health of Appalachians. Moreover, this lack of compilation has prevented the translation of what is known about the determinants of Appalachian health into effective health policy and health service delivery. This lack has also restricted the identification of the gaps in our knowledge of Appalachian health and its determinants, thus limiting our understanding of the future directions needed to decrease health disparities in Appalachia. "

The editors are looking for proposals for essays that specifically address health determinants and health status in selected areas. Proposals of 1-2 pages may be sent to the editors at either robert.ludke@uc.edu or SoloTSO@aol.com by November 15, 2008. You may also email them for additional information.

Miami University Hamilton Celebrates Third Annual Appalachian Heritage Month

The third annual Appalachian Heritage Month celebration was kicked off October 6 in the university's Downtown Center and featured musicians Kentucky Express with Max Reese.

October 13 brought three authors of *Coalfield State* (2006) to read to the community. This insightful anthology was a result of *The Alliance Writers Project: Voices* which brought creative writing classes to union employees in Norton, Virginia. On Oct 15 Dr. Roberta Campbell and Mark Shores, Assistant Director of the campus library, presented Appalshop's 1987 documentary *Long Journey Home* and led a discussion of the film. On October 25, acoustic guitarist Tony played straight-ahead bluegrass to jazz-influenced music at MUH's Parrish Auditorium.

Still to come is a presentation on November 3 at 7:30 pm by Jeff Biggers, author of *The United States of Appalachia*, in the Harry T. Wilks Conference Center and The Del McCoury Band, the most honored band in bluegrass music, will perform at 4 pm and 7:30 pm November 9 in Parrish Auditorium.

Mountain Mist quilts are on display in the Wilks conference Center during the month-long celebration and MUH faculty and staff also participate in the 49th annual O'Tucks dinner on October 30.

Also during this month's activities, Miami University-Hamilton administrators, faculty, and staff launched an oral history project entitled *Appalachian Stories*. The aim of the project is to record those experiences of Appalachian migrants and their descendants in the community and make the histories available to the public.

Editor's Notes:

Appalachian Heritage Month is the brainchild of Kathleen Burgoon, Senior Instructor at MUH. The O'Tucks (short for Ohio Kentuckians) was founded in the 1950's by Stanley B. Dezarn in Hamilton, Ohio. For more information about these events and related projects, go to www.uacvoice.org or <http://www.ham.muohio.edu/appalachian/index.htm>

Mark Shores' review of Jeff Bigger's book, The United States of Appalachia, appears in the most recent edition of The Appalachian Connection.

Nov 12-13 Summit on Health Disparities in Coal Counties

A 2-day Summit on *Health Disparities in the Appalachian Coal Producing Counties* will take place at Buckhorn State Park in Kentucky. The summit begins at 9 AM on Wednesday, Nov. 12th, and ends after lunch on Thursday, Nov. 13th. For more information contact Lyle B. Snider, Ph.D., PLLC at (606) 436-8860 or (606) 438-2758.

Appalachian Studies Conference

The Appalachian Studies Association's thirty-second annual conference will be held March 27-29, 2008 at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, Ohio. The conference theme is *Connecting Appalachia and the World through Traditional and Contemporary Arts, Crafts, and Music*.

For more information about exhibiting, applying for a scholarship, or registering for the conference, go to www.AppalachianStudies.org.

Research Notes

June 6 2008 (From the Research Committee: Robert Ludke, Chair)

Introductions, Announcements, and Research Updates:

Ann McCracken will be asking for Research Committee input into the 2010 Community Health Status Survey.

UAC Strategic Planning and Action Plan Development

Debbie Zorn guided Committee members through the "Strategic Plan 2015" document, a.k.a., the placemat (June 12, 2008 draft). She pointed out the Goals and Objectives section, noting that there is no 1-to-1 correspondence, with 3 goals and 5 objectives.

The next Research Committee meeting will be devoted to developing an Action Plan for the Research Objectives.

Data Collection to Eliminate Health Disparities in Cincinnati

Monica Mitchell of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center made a presentation on a project she referred to as the City Survey Project. The project involved multiple modes of data collection, including telephone survey, point-of-contact survey, and focus groups. UAC contributed to the success of the project in Price Hill. The City Survey Project had 3 primary goals: (1) Collect data on race and geographic health disparities; (2) Understand health challenges; (3) Identify strategies to reduce health disparities. A distinguishing feature of the project was a high level of community involvement in survey design and implementation, data entry, analysis, and interpretation, and action planning.

Summary of Parent & Caregiver Survey and Focus Group Data

Dr. Mitchell presented a summary of data collected for the Price Hill neighborhoods of Cincinnati on early childhood education. This project is part of the Place Matters initiative at United Way of Greater Cincinnati. Santa Maria Community Services probably has copies of the report. Selected findings: (1) Many families eligible for child care vouchers do not use them; (2) Early childhood education is generally not highly valued by parents in Price Hill; (3) Trust is a big factor inhibiting parents from enrolling their children in high-quality early childhood education

programs; (4) Other obstacles include affordability, transportation, and scheduling.

Telephone Survey Component of City Survey Project

Bob Ludke reported that the telephone survey component of the City Survey Project interviewed 1,500 adults in listed land-line telephone households in 21 low-SES Cincinnati neighborhoods. The low-SES neighborhoods were identified through Maloney and Auffrey's Social Areas of Cincinnati report. The phone version of the questionnaire consisted of 120 questions covering disparities prevalence and access to care.

The next meeting of the Research Committee will be at 10:00 a.m. November 14, 2008 at the Urban Appalachian Center.

Additional Links:

The Appalachian Connection)

<http://uacvoice.org/AppalachianConnection/apconarchives.html>

Appalachian Partnership for Literacy Development at Eastern Kentucky University

<http://www.coe.eku.edu/literacypartnership>

Appalachian Regional Commission

<http://www.arc.gov/index.jsp>

Appalachian Studies Association

<http://AppalachianStudies.org/>

Appalachian Studies at Miami University-Hamilton

<http://www.ham.muohio.edu/appalachian/index.htm>

Appalachian Women's Alliance

<http://www.appalachianwomen.org>

Berea College Appalachian Center

<http://www.berea.edu/appalachiancenter/>

The Center for Appalachian Studies, Appalachian State University

<http://www1.appstate.edu/dept/appstudies/>

Center for the Study of Gender and Ethnicity in Appalachia

<http://www.marshall.edu/csega/index.asp>

East Tennessee State University Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

<http://www.etsu.edu/cass>

Friends of Appalachia

<http://friendsofappalachia.org>

Highlander Research and Education Center

<http://www.highlandercenter.org/>

Oral History of Appalachia Program, Marshall University

<http://www.marshall.edu/sociology/Oralhist/ohap.html>

“Regional Study and the Liberal Arts”, Summer Institute for University
and College Teachers

<http://www.ferrum.edu/NEH/>

Social Areas Report of Cincinnati

<http://www.socialareasofcincinnati.org/>

The University of Kentucky Appalachian Center

<http://www.research.uky.edu/Appalcenter/index.html>



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