



## Message from Division Chair

*Carol Gardner*

Our Division is preparing for its first elected Chair, and we have three excellent candidates from whom to choose: Erica Owens Yeager, Linda Morrison, and Valerie Leiter. This Division belongs to all members, so please read our candidates' statements and vote by July 15th.

It has been a pleasure (and, as much, an education) serving as the initial Chair and interacting with members with many different perspectives. I must thank many people for their support, among them Michele Koontz, Sharon Shumaker, Erica Yeager, Sola Omosegbon, Whitney Hendress, Bill Gronfein, and Max the Service-Dog-in-Training. (I especially thank Sola and Whitney for editing this newsletter.) I know the Division will continue to be a vibrant one, for we now have over 100 members. I hope that Division members will also continue to support the creation of divisions on disabilities in other organizations, like the ASA.

I must also remind you of the quite wonderful array of sessions we have planned for our next annual meeting in San Francisco. I look forward to seeing you at those sessions. We've sometimes partnered with scholars and activists in other SSSP divisions who are equally enthusiastic about collaborating with us and, in the process, learning more about the intersection of social problems theory, scholarship, and activism with disabilities issues.

In addition, please be thinking about creating the Division's first official Mission Statement. For the initial Mission Statement (2007-2009), the following "Vision of a Just World" has been compiled from feedback received from members. Please read it and consider it critically, for it is something in the nature of a first attempt to represent the concerns of our Division toward creating a just world with regard to people with disabilities. How can this first working Mission Statement be amended to include your views and concerns?

### ***Preliminary Mission Statement (2007-2009): "Vision of a Just World"***

The Disabilities Division of the SSSP is dedicated to the critical study of all aspects of all disabilities in society and in the global community as they relate to the creation of a just world—a just world being understood to be a world where the social harm that is done in the name of disability, no matter whether disability be explicit or implicit, is no more.

The concern for all disabilities includes those "disabilities" that individuals themselves reject having labeled as such (like some people who are Deaf, for example); that are not sometimes thought of as "disabilities" but that individuals nevertheless may want so labeled (as do some people who are transgender, or fat or obese); that are sometimes omitted when disability is stereotypically understood as physical to include so-called "mental" or "developmental" disabilities); or that concern esthetic and nonmedical, but nonetheless socially potent, aspects of social life (as can the overlapping medical and general social stigmatizing aspects of appearance norms associated with "ugliness" and relatively minor behavioral norms associated with a variety of non-normate labels).

Although we realize that some of these types or aspects of disability are ignored or forgotten, we realize that they are all crucial to a socially conscientious understanding of disability.

Above all, we realize that the community of "stigmatized" that Goffman first described as feeling the obligation to manage a "spoiled" identity now includes many who wonder why it has taken nonstigmatized segments of society, and of societies in general, so long themselves to understand their own management obligations, and that this fuller social community includes the families and loved ones of those whose identities have been felt to be "spoiled," as well as those who work with and who make policy about, individuals with "spoiled" identities.

Activists of various stripes have pointed out that "normate" bodies, as well as normate minds and normate beauty and ugliness, contribute to many of the disadvantages, discriminations, and outrages that can be experienced by individuals in the name of disability around the world.

That is one reason why our Division is, and will continue to be, called the "Disabilities" Division rather than the "Disability" Division.

Our overriding concern for the creation of a just world with regard to disability is reflected in the statement of other concerns that follows.

We applaud those areas of the United States, and of the world, that have done the most to address some of the areas of concern to people with disabilities, and those academic studies that have contributed conscientiously to these concerns. Examples of some such academic work is reflected in the references list that follows: We think, for example, of Australian scholar Samantha Murray's recent work arguing for the mutual interests of more "traditional" disabled groups with obese women and with the transgender community. We think of the attention given early by the U.S. Disability Rights movement to the importance of public transportation by the activist group ADAPT, and we note the effective example set by the public sociology of Ross Koppel in studying continuing barriers to transportation for people with disabilities, which demonstrates how activism can illuminate, and change, social problems for people with disabilities in everyday life. We note the many sociologist scholars of Deafness who have contributed both to an understanding of the social history of Deafness in the United States and to the ways in which Deaf citizens' activism has led to self-empowerment—such as demanding that the nation's first university for Deaf people be headed by a Deaf president, for example. On a more general note, projects like Charlton's

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*Nothing About Us Without Us* display the full impact of what disability activism can be and what the Disability Rights Movement can do. Among the features of these, and many other, projects are that they model the breadth and depth of the interests of people with disabilities by reinforcing the right of people with disabilities not merely to enjoy citizenship but to enjoy existence and to define that existence themselves, as the anti-eugenics and reproductive rights elements of disability activism demonstrate.

At the same time, we deplore the danger posed by armed conflicts that cynically create more and more citizens—both world citizens and U.S. citizens—with mental and physical disabilities, and we regret the existence of those healthcare systems that themselves create and reify disability as a social problem.

*In brief, the Disabilities division's concerns include but are not limited to:*

1. The social sources of disability considered globally, in nations with all levels of industrialization. We have special interests, as a group, in factors like race/ethnicity, gender, age, and social class, as these coincide with the situation of people with disabilities.
2. The study of the social construction of disability, by which disability is understood not merely or simply to be a health issue but to be the product of the social definition of a general category: Members of the Division are especially interested in the power of the social institutions to define disability and in the efforts of members of society who have disabilities, and their kin, loved ones, friends, and associates, to enhance their own self-determination.
3. The study of the delivery of health, mental health, rehabilitative, and allied supportive care at the level of patient/provider interaction as well as at the institutional level, insofar as these ameliorative services are understood to apply to disabilities: We are interested in the ways in which health care is prescribed for and delivered to people with disabilities, whether that health care is traditional, alternative, or complementary.

*Below are listed some of the resources that may help those who work outside the area of the study of the sociology of disability, Disability Studies, and other academic disability specialties to gain an appreciation of critical academic perspectives on disability. Because disability is so vast an area of study, this "sampler" list is by no means comprehensive.*

Albrecht, Gary L., "Pragmatism in Disability Studies: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice." *Heilpaedagogik*, Vol. 3 (2003), pp. 22-50.

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*1900 to World War II*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.

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Charlton, James I. *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

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Christiansen, John B., and Sharon Barnartt. *Deaf President Now! The 1988 Revolution at Gallaudet University*. 1997.

Conrad, Peter, and Joseph Schneider. *Having Epilepsy: The Experience and Control of Illness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

Davis, Lennard, editor. *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

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Deutsch, Helen, and Felicity Nussbaum, editors. "Defects": *Engendering the Modern Body* (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 2000).

Donley, Carol, and Sheryl Buckley, editors. *The Tyranny of the Normal: An Anthology* (Ohio, 1996).

Friedman, Roberta. "Weight Bias: The Need for Public Policy." *The Rudd Report for the Rudd Center for Food and Public Policy of Yale University*. New Haven: Yale University, 2009.

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Horwitz, Allan. *Creating Mental Illness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Horwitz, Allan and Jerome Wakefield. *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

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Longmore, Paul, and Laurie Umansky, editors. *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

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Metzl, Jonathan. *Prozac on the Couch: Prescribing Gender in the Era of Wonder Drugs*. Duke University Press, 2003.

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**Have you renewed  
your Membership to  
SSSP and the  
Disabilities Division?**

**Do so now by visiting  
[www.sssp1.org](http://www.sssp1.org)**

## An Open Letter from Barbara Altman



Dear Members of the SSSP Disabilities Division:

As you know, the existence of the Disability and Society Section in ASA is dependent on our ability to attract at least 300 paying members by the end of 2009, so this is the year that will decide our fate.

Right now while we have gained membership since last fall, we also have a number who have not renewed membership since last year. We are not accumulating members as quickly as we need to in order to make our deadline. It is of serious concern to the acting officers and committee chairs, and we would like to ask you to join our section--or, if you are already a member, to renew your membership if you have not already done so. A lot of work has gone into creating the section and we would like to sustain that momentum and enthusiasm to institutionalize, for the first time, disability as a topic area for teaching and research in the ASA.

We also want to address your concerns about our section directly:

Is there something that the Section can do for you or help you with, or do you have suggestions for activities or goals for the section? We welcome any ideas, criticisms, or suggestions you may have, and we look forward to seeing you at the meetings in San Francisco this coming August where we are hoping we can announce that the Disability and Society Section is a permanent part of ASA.

Please feel free to get in touch with me with any questions or ideas and seriously consider joining us.

Thank you for your consideration and for leading the way.

Sincerely,

Barbara M. Altman, Ph.D.  
Acting Chair, Disability and Society Section in  
Formation

E-mail: [b.altman@verizon.net](mailto:b.altman@verizon.net)

## News about Members: Awards, Research, Recommendations

**Jeremy Brunson**  
Gallaudet University

Jeremy Brunson, graduate student at Gallaudet University, received the 2009 Irving K. Zola Award for Emerging Scholars in Disability Studies for his paper titled "Visually Experiencing a Call: The Calculated Consumer Labor Deaf People Perform to Gain Access Through Video Relay Service." Contact Jeremy at jeremy.brunson@gallaudet.edu

**Michelle Mahler**  
California State University East Bay

Division member Michelle Mahler (michelle.mahler@csueastbay.edu) is a graduate sociology student at CSUEB working on a thesis on "Service Animals, Housing and the Disabled." Michelle writes that she has been "able to find ample research and articles on the benefits of service animals to individuals whether they are disabled or not." However, Michelle says she "cannot locate anything coming close to or relating to housing and service animals (other than the ADA and FHAA). My thesis is focused on the social benefit of the relationship between canine service animals and their human counterpart(s), as well as, the availability (or lack thereof) of services (specifically housing, access, etc.) for individuals with service animals." Many of us, like Michelle, who own a service animal know firsthand the challenges experienced when looking for housing. It is my hypothesis that landlords, specifically independent ones handling their own rental property, do not know the laws regarding service animals and therefore discriminate against disabled individuals when they are seeking housing. For any suggestions, referrals--really, anything--I would be most grateful." You can contact Michelle with suggestions at her email address above at California State University East Bay.

**Nate Johnson**  
Student

Division member **Nate Johnson** (njjohnso@gmail.com) recommends, for those teaching classes in disability for undergrads especially, the popular film *The Music Within*. (On Nate's recommendation, I've shown the film to two classes, and it provoked discussion in both.) As Nate writes: "It is about the beginning of the ADA movement. According to the filmmakers, it is based on 'actual events.' The two main characters are real people still working for disability rights today. Some critics might argue that simplifies things too much. For example, a law is passed that requires wheelchair ramps--and then ramps appear. However, the film does show some history." This 2008 film--with actors Rebecca De Mornay, Ron Livingston, Hector Elizondo, and others--is currently available as a DVD from Amazon for \$9.99.

## SSSP Conference Information for the Division

Note the Disabilities divisional meeting is scheduled on Saturday, August 8, from 12:30pm - 2:10pm in the Stanford East.

All committee meetings and special events are scheduled at the Stanford Court Hotel (SCH). Sessions are scheduled at the Stanford Court Hotel (SCH) and the University Club (UC), which is adjacent to the hotel. Directions to the University Club (UC): Exit the hotel and make a right on California Street. Go to the corner of California and Powell. Cross Powell Street, turn left, and cross over California Street. The University Club is on your right.

All of the Disabilities Division's sessions will be held at the Stanford Court Hotel (SCH).

### DISABILITIES SESSIONS & ACTIVITIES AT THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING

**Date:** Friday, August 7  
**Time:** 12:30 PM - 02:10 PM  
**Session 17:** Disability Activism and Policy  
**Room:** SCH-California Blue  
**Sponsor:** Disabilities  
**Organizer:** Marlene Chait, The George Washington University

**Presider & Discussant:** Timothy Lillie, The University of Akron  
**Papers:** "Activist Narratives for Policy Change: Disability Advocacy and Civic Engagement," Linda J. Morrison, Duquesne University

"Autism Foundations as Moral Entrepreneurs: The Social Problem of Autism," Kate Jenkins, CUNY Graduate Center

"Getting disability policy changed inside one University: Points of conflict between needs and governance," Timothy Lillie, Associate Professor, Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, The University of Akron

**Date:** Saturday, August 8  
**Time:** 08:00 AM - 09:40 AM  
**Session 49:** Is Mental Illness a Disability? Issues and Concerns  
**Room:** SCH-California Gold  
**Sponsors:** Disabilities  
Health, Health Policy, and  
Health Services Mental Health  
**Organizers:** Elizabeth Etorre, University of Liverpool  
Linda J. Morrison, Duquesne University  
**Presider:** Elizabeth Etorre, University of Liverpool

*Discussant:* Linda J. Morrison, Duquesne University

*Papers:*

"The Relative Influence of Negative Life Events and Daily Hassles on Objective and Subjective Quality of Life Among those with a Severe Mental Illness," *Kelly MacArthur and Richard E. Adams*, Kent State University and *Evelyn Bromet*, Stony Brook University

"Is Paranoia a Disability? Well, That Depends...," *William Gronfein*, IUPUI

"Disability and Stress-associated Health Conditions of Female Veterans," *Sarah Aktepy*, IUPUI and Erin Krebs, MD, MPH, Roubidoux VA Hospital

"On Loss and Losing: A Crucial Nexus," *Melvyn Fein*, Kennesaw State University

**Date:** Saturday, August 8

*Time:* 02:30 PM - 04:10 PM

**THEMATIC**

**Session 67: The Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Disability**

*Room:* SCH-California Gold

*Sponsor:* Disabilities

*Organizer, Presider &*

*Discussant:* Carol Brooks Gardner, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis

*Papers:*

"My Only Choice: Individuals Caught in the Language of Rights and Choices," *Barbara Katz Rothman*, City University of New York

"Disability, Bullying, and Sexual Harassment: Impact on Health and School Outcomes for Adolescents," *James Gruber*, University of Michigan-Dearborn and *Susan Fineran*, University of Southern Maine

"Mental Disability, Race and Gender in Warfare: World War I Veterans in St. Elizabeth's Hospital," *Moira O'Neil*, UCSB

"Living with Less: The Long-Term Experiences of Vietnam Veteran Amputees," *Carrie Foote*, Indiana University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), *Seth Messinger*, Univ. Maryland, Baltimore County, *Jodie Atkinson* and *Regina Pessagno*, Indiana University-Indianapolis (IUPUI)

**Date:** Sunday, August 9

*Time:* 12:30 PM - 02:10 PM

**Session 109: Theorizing and Representing Chronic Illness and Disabilities in the Discipline of Sociology and in Sociological Classrooms**

*Room:* SCH-Rincon Hill

*Sponsors:* Disabilities  
Health, Health Policy, and Health Services  
Social Problems Theory

*Organizer &*

*Presider:* Alexis A. Bender, Georgia State University

*Discussant:* Kathleen Lowney, Valdosta State University

*Papers:*

"The Conceptualization and Inclusion of Disability in Family Sociology Textbooks," *Carol Brooks Gardner*, IUPUI

"How Individual Web Spaces Create a Social Movement: Mapping the Network of the Autism Blogosphere," *Victor Perez and Ray Maratea*, University of Delaware

"ADHD: Biological Disease or Psychosocial Disorder-Comparing France and the US," *Manuel Vallée*, Sociology Department, UC Berkeley

"Using an Advocate Approach to Study Social Problems," *Sara Towe Horsfall*, Texas Wesleyan University

**Date:** Sunday, August 9

*Time:* 02:30 PM - 04:10 PM

**Session 119: Becoming a More Effective Presenter: Utilizing Universal Design in Conferences and Classrooms**

*Room:* SCH-Rincon Hill

*Sponsors:* Accessibility Committee Disabilities

*Organizer &*

*Presider:* Liat Ben-Moshe, Syracuse University

*Description:* In this interactive workshop you will learn how to maximize your conference experience by designing presentations that are effective for a broader spectrum of audience members. This goal will be accomplished by utilizing principles of Universal Instructional Design (UID). UID means that, rather than designing your instruction for the 'average' student or audience member, you design for potential students with a broad range in ability, age, reading level, learning style, native language, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics. This will be a hands-on workshop that will enable you to apply these principles to your own teaching and presentations.

See you in San Francisco!

