

# Medical Sociology Newsletter

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## Williams 2011 Reeder Award Winner by David Takeuchi & Eric R. Wright

David R. Williams is winner of the 2011 Leo G. Reeder Award. The Reeder Award is given each year to a deserving sociologist who has had an outstanding and distinguished career in medical sociology. It is one of the most prestigious awards given to a medical sociologist who has made important contributions to scholarship, teaching, mentorship, professional and community service. David is the Florence and Laura Norman Professor of Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health and Professor of African and African American Studies and of Sociology at Harvard University. His first six years in academia were at Yale University where he was an Assistant to Associate Professor of Sociology and an Assistant to Associate Professor of Public Health, Yale School of Medicine. The next 14 years were at the University of Michigan where he was the Harold Cruse Collegiate Professor of Sociology, a Senior Research Scientist at the Institute of Social Research, and a Professor of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health. Since entering academia, David has accumulated a record of achievement that is truly exceptional. David has distinguished himself in countless ways including as a researcher who has received national and international recognition for his scholarship; an accomplished and award-winning teacher and mentor who has enhanced the lives of undergraduate and graduate students not only at the institutions at which he has worked, but across the nation; and an engaged scholar who has worked

tirelessly in the community and for the discipline and profession of sociology.

David is internationally recognized as a leading social scientist focused on the social influences on health. His research examines the trends and determinants of socioeconomic and racial differences in mental and physical health. His research has enhanced our understanding of the complex ways in which race, racial discrimination, socioeconomic status, and religious involvement can affect health. He is especially interested in interactions between race/ethnicity and SES and in identifying SES and race-related exposures at the level of the individual, household, and neighborhood. From the late seventies to the early nineties, sociology had not made much progress in the study of race and health, in part, because we were locked in a simple debate about whether it was social class or race that explained any association between race and some health outcome.

David's research has helped sociology move beyond this debate to examine the intricacies of the concept of race and, more importantly, to develop theories and methods to study the mechanisms that better determine why race is associated with health. Part of this work has included developmental work on how perceptions of racial bias can affect health status. The Everyday Discrimination scale that he developed is currently one of the most widely used measures to assess perceived discrimination. He has also contributed

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### Reminders:

- **MSN Spring Deadline:**  
*March 25, 2011*
- **2011 ASA Annual Meeting**  
*August 20-23, Las Vegas, Nevada NEW!!*
- **2012 ASA Annual Meeting**  
*August 17-20, Denver, Colorado*
- **2013 ASA Annual Meeting**  
*August 10-13, New York City*



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to several integrative summaries outlining the conditions under which discrimination at both the interpersonal and the institutional levels can adversely affect multiple indicators of health. He has also focused on the ways in which residential segregation and other risk factors linked to residence in particular places can combine with individual characteristics to affect health risks. He has been interested in the ways in which biological susceptibilities combine additively or interactively with exposures in the psychosocial and physical environment to affect health risks for persons of different socioeconomic or racial/ethnic statuses. Currently, he is a member of the NIH Center for Research on Genomics and Global Health Working Group and he was recently awarded a center grant by the National Cancer Institute to study some of the linkages between social and biological factors in understanding cancer.

David is the author of more than 200 scholarly papers in scientific journals and edited collections and his research has appeared in leading journals in sociology, psychology, medicine, public health and epidemiology. He has served on the editorial board of 11 scientific journals including the *American Sociological Review*, *Ethnicity and Disease*, *Social Problems*, *Ethnicity and Health*, *Milbank Quarterly*, and *Social Psychology Quarterly*. David has also served as a reviewer for over 60 journals. According to ISI Essential Science Indicators, he was one of the Top 10 Most Cited Researchers in the Social Sciences during the decade 1995 to 2005. *The Journal of Black Issues in Higher Education*, ranked him as the Most Cited Black Scholar in the Social Sciences in 2008. David's article with Chiquita Collins in the *Annual Review of Sociology* published in 1995 (21:349-386), "US Socioeconomic and Racial Differences in Health: Patterns and Explanations" was one of the most cited in *Annual Review of Sociology* during a ten-year span. He has been invited to keynote scientific conferences in Europe, Africa, Australia, South America, and across the United States.

He has received numerous honors and awards for his scholarship. In 2001, he was elected to membership in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of

the National Academy of Sciences. In 2004, he received one of the inaugural Decade of Behavior Research Awards, and in 2007, he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. David has been involved in the development of health policy at the national level in the U.S. In 1992, he was appointed, by the Bush administration, to a 4-year term on the Department of Health and Human Services' National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (a congressionally mandated advisory panel that maintains oversight of all Federal health data collection). He served in an advisory capacity to President Clinton's Task Force on Health Care Reform. Dr Williams has also served on seven committees for the Institute of Medicine including the Committee that prepared the Unequal Treatment report. He has been a consultant to federal and state health agencies, private foundations, and the World Health Organization. He has held elected and appointed positions in professional organizations, such as the American Sociological Association, the American Public Health Association, and AcademyHealth. He also served as a member of the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health.

David directed the South African Stress and Health Study, the first nationally representative study of the prevalence and correlates of psychiatric disorders in sub-Saharan Africa, with funding from the National Institutes of Health and the sponsorship of the World Health Organization (WHO). This study, among other things, assessed the effects of exposure to racial discrimination and torture, during apartheid, on the health of the South African population. He was also a key member of the team that conducted the National Study of American Life, the largest study of mental health disorders in the African American population in the U.S. and the first health study to include a large national sample of Blacks of Caribbean ancestry.

In addition to his scholarship, David plays a visible and critical national leadership role in raising awareness levels of the problem of health disparities and pointing to interventions to address them. From November 2007 through October 2009, he served as

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the staff director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America. This national, independent, and nonpartisan health commission was focused on identifying evidence-based nonmedical strategies that can improve the health of all Americans and reduce racial and socioeconomic gaps in health. David guided and coordinated the Commission's research, policy, and communications activities, and worked closely with Commissioners. As part of his work with the Commission, he provided testimony at several Congressional Briefings and also participated in meetings at the White House with Obama Administration officials. David has also appeared on national television, including ABC's Evening News, CNN, PBS, C-SPAN, and the Discovery Channel. His research has been featured or he has been quoted in the national print media including the New York Times, Time, Newsweek, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, Jet, and USA Today. He was also a key scientific advisor to the award-winning PBS film series, *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* David has demonstrated his commitment to the profession and discipline by his service on an extensive array of boards and committees. David is currently a member of eleven different scientific and advisory boards including for the CDC, Kellogg Health Scholars Program, U.S. Dream Academy, and the Cross-University Brain and Behavior Initiative in South Africa. He has been secretary-treasurer for the Medical Sociology Section, nominations committee for ASA, DuBois-Johnson-Frazier Award Selection Committee, and nominations committee for Social

Psychology. He has been a grant reviewer for a number of agencies and institutes in the United States and in different countries.

Despite all of these activities and commitments that make his schedule quite busy, David still finds time to be an exceptional mentor to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior scholars. At the University of Michigan, he directed or co-directed three postdoctoral training programs and received the Harold R. Johnson Diversity Award in recognition of his efforts in training minority investigators.

In sum, David is a truly worthy recipient of the Leo G. Reeder Award. David is a highly accomplished sociologist who has addressed a range of important issues in medical sociology and for the broader discipline. He has superb research and teaching skills, provides extensive service to the profession and community, collaborates wonderfully with others, and is always willing to share his substantial expertise with students, faculty, and other colleagues. David works on some of the most pressing issues of our times: the unequal distribution of health and health care. His work melds the best of scholarship with mentoring the next generation of scholars. David has played a central role in new initiatives on health across the nation and across the globe. He has worked effectively with federal agencies, private foundations, and community groups to shape efforts to reduce disparities in health. His research exemplifies how theory and innovative approaches can contribute immeasurably to advancing the discipline of medical sociology and, most importantly, improving the health and the quality of life for all.

## SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR 2012 REEDER AWARD

The Medical Sociology Section invites nominations for the 2012 Leo G. Reeder Award to be awarded at the annual meeting of the Medical Sociology Section in Denver, Colorado. This award is given annually for "Distinguished Contribution to Medical Sociology." This award recognizes scholarly contributions, especially a body of work displaying an extended trajectory of productivity and encompassing theory and research. The Reeder Award also acknowledges teaching, mentoring, and training as well as service to the medical sociology community broadly defined. Please submit letter of nomination and the nominee's curriculum vitae to **Eric R. Wright**, Chair-Elect of the Medical Sociology Section, at [ewright@iupui.edu](mailto:ewright@iupui.edu). While email is preferred, you may also mail the nomination letter and C.V. to Eric R. Wright, Department of Public Health, Indiana University School of Medicine, 410 W. Tenth Street, HS 3119, Indianapolis, IN 46202. The deadline is **June 1, 2011**.