

# AIDS & ANTHROPOLOGY BULLETIN

The Newsletter of the AIDS and Anthropology Research Group

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## **AARG Under Threat of Dissipation** by Elisa Sobó, AARG Chair

Last year, AARG's chair received no nominations for open offices. Not one person stepped forward to nominate a colleague; not one volunteer's voice was heard. In desperation, Fred Bloom asked me and several others to fill vacated steering committee seats. My assumption of the office of chair took some but not all of the pressure off of Fred, who still serves as our past chair and acting membership coordinator.

Many of the people who serve as AARG officers and steering committee members were once very active in the field of AIDS. But some have changed research direction; others have contributed to AARG to the limits of their endurance. In short, AARG is burning out. Without a new infusion of energy, AARG cannot go on. We need your help if this group, which once served a very helpful function in uniting researchers interested in issues related to HIV and AIDS, is to carry on into the 21st century.

We are presently in need of six steering committee members (three members at large, an AARG chair, a newsletter editor, and a membership officer). To fill these roles, we need people who are involved in AIDS research and who can help rebuild AARG. More immediately, we need volunteers to help reorganize and revitalize the group.

In order to help recruit such individuals, rather than the regular series of steering committee and business meetings that pepper the AAA meeting program, we have this year decided to combine all AARG meetings into one. This unified meeting (called 'business meeting' in the AAA conference program) will be convened at 12.15 on Friday the 17th of November (location TBA; check the conference program for details). Fantastic refreshments will be served.

Rather than following the regular agenda of reports from officers ("bla bla bla"), we will use an open-forum format at the Friday meeting. Our goal is to check for signs of life and, if we find them, to revitalize AARG right then and there. New officers will be recruited and a new lease on AARG's life will be designed and signed. Alternately, AARG will be dismantled. This is a real possibility. The choice is ours.

If you support AARG and would like to be part of its reincarnation, whether as an officer or a supportive member, please join us at the lunchtime meeting. Please spread word of the meeting to all colleagues who might be interested in AIDS and related issues. Ideally, we will recreate AARG as an organization that is vital and longstanding; at worst, we will all have enjoyed good conversation, fine networking opportunities, and wonderful (complimentary) refreshments! **We look forward to seeing you in San Francisco at 12.15 on Friday, November 17th.**

## Recently Published by AARG Members:

### The Endangered Self, part of Routledge's *'Health, Risk and Society'* Series by Graham Hart

We are eighteen years into the AIDS epidemic, yet there are relatively few texts which privilege the position of people living with HIV or AIDS, allowing us to see their perspective on the disease. Gill Green and Elisa Sobo, in this second book in the 'Health, Risk and Society' series, do precisely that, by giving a voice to those with HIV from such disparate places as North-East England, Scotland's central belt, and New Mexico. The book is also notable because of the wide range of people interviewed in the studies undertaken by the authors. Whether transmission of HIV occurred sexually, through injecting drug use, or through infected blood products (as in those with haemophilia), or whether it is men or women who are speaking, we are fortunate in being granted access to their thoughts and feelings about the experience of being HIV positive. However, the primary strength of the text is its sociological perspective on HIV risk."

Introducing the concept of 'social risk', Green and Sobo note that social situations always entail risks; "A specifically social risk is a risk... that might alter one's social relations... taking a course of action, engaging in a behaviour, or adopting an identity that might alter one's social relations and place in various social networks (e.g., familial, sexual, income-related, etc.) and one's position in society as a whole." This permits a more dynamic understanding of the social processes involved in navigating risk landscapes, and in individual and social risk management, than that allowed by the somewhat static concept of stigma (although this remains useful, not least to people with HIV themselves). It also recognises that "taking risks may have negative outcomes such as rejection, isolation or loss of status," whilst "at other times taking risks has positive results such as increased support, love and closeness.

Green and Sobo have produced an original and distinctive text rarely seen either in the HIV literature or within the sociology of health and illness. To understand better people's accounts of living with HIV, they employ an analytic framework and perspective which connects individuals, through daily interactions and experiences in their communities of origin and attachment, to the society in which they live. This book exemplifies the analytic potential of risk and explores fully its many sociological dimensions. I am very pleased indeed to welcome it to the 'Health, Risk and Society' series.

## AARG Members Receive 'Research Award of the Year'

AARG members Michael Gorman and Robert Carroll, both of the University of Washington have been awarded the Research Award of the Year by the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care for their article on substance abuse and HIV published in the April, 2000 issue of the *Journal of Nursing and AIDS Care*. The article drew on the work of a NIDA funded [R01] ethnographic study of methamphetamine and "club drug" use among gay and non-gay identified men in relation to HIV. Gorman notes that by way of reference, in most Western states in the US gay men have constituted between 1/3 and 2/5ths of incident IDU AIDS cases over the last 5 years—and most of these are methamphetamine users. Gorman and Carroll report that they feel honored and flattered by this distinction. Congratulations from the AARG membership.

## AARG LISTSERV NOW AVAILABLE

AARG steering committee member Ray Bucko has set up a listserv for AARG members. The listserv provides an extremely speedy and effective way for AARG members to network, get advice, plan conference panels, and share resources.

To join the AARG listserv, simply send an email to the list moderator, Ray Bucko (bucko@creighton.edu). Identify yourself as a member of AARG and request to join the list. He will register you and you will then receive instructions on how to use the listserv. If you have any questions or suggestions about the list please feel free to contact Ray.

## CONFERENCES

Dec. 4-7  
National STD Prevention Conference  
Midwest Express Center  
Milwaukee, WI  
Contact: Glenda Vaughn (404) 639-1806  
website: [www.stdconference.org](http://www.stdconference.org)

Dec 14-15  
CDC Advisory Committee on HIV, STD Prevention (ACHSP)  
City: Atlanta, GA  
Location: Corporate Square, Bldg 8, 1 Floor  
Contact: Paulette Ford  
404-639-8008  
Email: [pbf7@cdc.gov](mailto:pbf7@cdc.gov)

May 4 - 8  
Voice 2001: The National Conference on HIV/AIDS and Children, Youth & Families  
City: Washington, DC  
Location: Renaissance Hotel  
Contact: Chip Heath (202) 785-3564  
Email: [cheath@aids-alliance.org](mailto:cheath@aids-alliance.org)

## NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

We encourage all members, especially our colleagues working internationally, to contribute to the AIDS AND ANTHROPOLOGY BULLETIN. Submissions can include announcements of or reports on AIDS-related conferences and events, grants awarded and available, positions available, publications, obituaries of anthropologists and/or AARG members, book reviews, commentaries and letters (at the discretion of the Chair and Editor), research reports, and paper abstracts.

Submissions for the next issue of AIDS AND ANTHROPOLOGY BULLETIN are due December 31, 2000. Please send your submission via email only to:

Katherine Fritz  
email: [kfritz@psg.ucsf.edu](mailto:kfritz@psg.ucsf.edu)

## AARG MISSION STATEMENT

The AARG, an interest group of the Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA), is a network on HIV infection and AIDS. The mission of the AARG is to support anthropological research on AIDS. To this end, AARG 1) works to use anthropological research in the fight against HIV and AIDS, 2) advocates for AIDS research within anthropology, 3) promotes AIDS research by anthropologists within the broader AIDS research community, and 4) provides a forum for anthropologists working on AIDS to meet and communicate about their work.

## AIDS AND ANTHROPOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP

### Officers

Chair: Elisa Sobo

Chair Elect: open

Membership (acting): Fred Bloom

Treasurer: Delia Easton

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McGrath

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Ralph Bolton (1991)

Janet McGrath (1994)

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Robert Carlson (1996)

Margaret Connors (1997)

Fred Bloom (1998-1999)

