

A History of RC-49 Membership



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For over 50 years, Research Committee No.49 (RC-49) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) has provided a structure for scholarly discourse and research collaboration at the international level in psychiatric sociology, social psychology, and more recently, in the broadly defined field of mental health and illness.

RC-49 was established in 1959 and its first President was **Professor Arnold Rose** of the University of Minnesota. At the time of RC-49's creation, the ISA was closely linked to its founding organization, UNESCO. In concert with the expressed desire for world peace in the post-war era, UNESCO in 1948, through its Social Science Department, initiated ISA to promote international research which would help establish a peaceful world order. It provided 90 percent of ISAs' budget and restricted membership to selected institutions. There was no individual membership until 1970.

Initially, under Professor Rose, who served as RC-49 President from 1959 until his untimely death in 1968, the Research Committee was named Psychiatric Sociology, which was later changed to Social Psychology in 1965. Professor Rose is best known for his studies of American race relations, especially his contribution to Gunnar Myrdal's classic "An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy".

Many other sociologists from a wide range of countries provided leadership and research contributions to RC-49 during its first two decades. Among these scholars were: Professors George Brown of the United Kingdom, Robert Castel of France, Felix Gower of the Netherlands, and Norman Bell of Canada.

- **George Brown's** studies of depression showed the role of social factors in causing depression. In his book, with Tiril Harris, "Social Origins of Depression", he established the importance of the stresses and strains of daily living in causing depression.
- **Robert Castel** wrote about the development of psychiatry in France in the 19th and 20th century. He is known for his critical work on psychoanalysis as practiced in France in the 1960s.
- **Felix Gower** wrote extensively on alienation and stress in industrialized societies. He also contributed to the development of general systems theory as it related to the measurement of the quality of life.

- **Norman Bell** initiated studies on mental health delivery systems in Canada. He also collaborated with Dr. Francoise Boudreau on "The Quebec Psychiatric System in Transition: A Case Study in Psycho-Politics."

During the 1980s the leadership of RC-49 expanded beyond Western Europe, Canada, and the United States. Professors Jerzy Krupinski of Australia, Karel Chromy of Czechoslovakia, Layi Erinosh of Nigeria and Rolando Collado Ardon (from Mexico) joined the RC-49 Governing Board.

- **Jerzy Krupinski**, a medical doctor and epidemiologist is credited as an important early influence in the development of the sociology of health and medicine in Australia. In his research, he systematically mapped the social class and ethnic characteristics of psychiatric patients.
- **Carlos Collado Ardon** contributed to the development of cross cultural ethnomedical research in Latin America. He published widely on the folk concept of mental distress "susto" documenting its recorded incidence in many Latin American countries and analyzing its relationship with the western concepts of stress and depression.

Two other notable members of RC-49 in the 1980s were Professors Barbara and Bruce Dohrenwend from the U.S.

- **Barbara Dohrenwend** died early in the 1980s. She was known for her analysis of the various ways that stress and other variables cause psychiatric disorders and she wrote "Stressful Life Events: Their Nature and Their Effects".
- **Bruce Dohrenwend** has contributed to knowledge about relationships of types of psychiatric disorders and social positions defined by gender, ethnic/racial status and socioeconomic position. He has focused on how adversity associated with these social positions is related to psychiatric and substance abuse disorders.

During the 1990s Professors Rumi Kato Price, U.S. and Tsunetsugu Munakata, Japan led RC-49 through a period of expanded mission and membership. RC-49 was renamed the Research Committee on Mental Health and Illness. Further, RC-49 did not endorse a particular definition of mental health and illness. It interpreted these terms in an inclusive way, ranging from serious psychiatric disorders to subjective feelings of well-being. With this expanded mission, the committee attracted a larger group of members from sociology, and other social sciences, and the healthcare and medical fields.

- **Rumi Kato Price** made many contributions to the study of substance abuse and dependency in the veteran and civilian communities.
- **Tsunetsugu Munakata** and his associates presented work on the outcomes of the Structured Association Technique (SAT)--a therapeutic intervention for mental problems.

Several other notable RC-49 Board members during its 4th decade were Professors Renata Kokanovic, Australia; Tanya Cassidy, Ireland; and Sam Friedman, U.S.

- **Renata Kokanovic** has completed qualitative work relating subjective experiences to societal political and cultural processes. She has also written about the emotional consequences of forced migration.
- **Tanya Cassidy** has applied the concept of ambivalence to the study of Irish drinking behavior. She has helped clinicians to understand why Ireland has one of the highest hospital admission rates for alcohol-related illnesses, while at the same time one of the highest percentages of abstainers in Europe.

- **Sam Friedman** has participated in many international collaborative projects with the MultiCenter Study of Drugs and HIV and with researchers in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, Ukraine and other countries. He has also published on international HIV topics such as war and HIV; sociopolitical transitions and HIV; and drug users' organizations global role in the prevention of HIV.

In the new millennium, Professors James G. Linn, U.S., Reinhold Killian, Germany, and Bronwen Lichtenstein, U.S. have led RC-49 through a challenging period of expanded conference activity. ISA conferences and RC-49 presentations were organized for Ottawa, 2004, Durban, 2006, Barcelona, 2008, Gothenberg 2010, and Buenos Aires, 2012. Regional RC-49 meetings were organized this year by Dr. Linn in Denver, with the Western Social Science Association, and, under the leadership of Professor Kjeld Høgsbro, at Aalborg University, Denmark. Bronwen Lichtenstein has proposed nine RC-49 sessions for the upcoming ISA World Conference to be held in Yokohama main 2014.

- **Bronwen Lichtenstein** has made contributions in the areas of stigma, gender, health and crime, and the sociology of HIV/AIDS. In 2012 she published the book " *Social Stigma and Sexual Epidemics: Dangerous Dynamics.*"
- **Reinhold Kilian** has written on involuntary psychiatric treatment and the misuse of psychiatric institutions as instruments of political oppression. For the 2014 ISA World conference he is organizing a session on safety and mental health in contemporary societies.
- **J. Gary Linn**, for almost 25 years, has reported on the behavioral and mental health dimensions of HIV/AIDS as they relate to public health initiatives in Africa and Latin America. He will be speaking on "Multinational Inter-institutional Negotiation and Decision-Making in PEPFAR" at the Group Decision and Negotiation 2013 conference in Stockholm later this year.

In the new millennium, RC-49 has also benefited from the leadership and research presentations of several recent members including Professors Takashi Asakura, Japan; Breno Fontes, Brazil; Kjeld Høgsbro, Denmark; and Silvia Krum, Germany.

- **Takashi Askura** has made contributions to the literature on the quality of working life among workers in Japan, and on the sequelae of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami among adolescents.
- **Breno Fontes** has done comparative research on mental health institutions in Brazil, Angola and Mozambique.
- **Kjeld Høgsbro** has contributed to the literature on social policy and self-help and the sociology of diagnostic systems.
- **Silvia Krumm** is an emerging scholar on mental health and the family. She published "Psychiatric Discourse on Desire for Children and Parenthood among People with Mental Illnesses."

As these scholars assume new roles in RC-49, the continuing success of the Research Committee will be assured.