

Robert Denis Mare, Distinguished Sociologist and Demographer, Dies at 69

Robert D. Mare, an eminent sociologist and demographer who recently retired from his position as Distinguished Professor of Sociology at UCLA, died of leukemia in his home in Marina Del Rey, California, on Monday February 1, 2021.

Robert Mare was a world leader in the areas of social stratification, sociological methods, and demographic processes. He contributed definitive scholarship on social trends in schooling, employment, and assortative mating. His latest work considered dynamic analysis of residential mobility and multigenerational social mobility.

Mare's first major contribution was published in a 1980 article in the *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, in which he convincingly argued that factors influencing educational attainment differed in importance by transition points, such as the transition from high school completion to college. In doing so, Mare found something that others had missed: family resources mattered most earlier, rather than later, in the educational process. As students move through the system, their own performance becomes more important and their parents' resources matter less. The combination of an innovative approach and counter-intuitive finding came to be known as the "Mare Model." To this day the Mare Model continues to be used, debated, challenged, and improved upon by sociologists and economists studying educational inequality.

Mare's subsequent work in quantitative sociology and social demography addressed a broad range of areas – statistical methods, demography, social stratification – as he moved beyond standard questions of how individuals' socioeconomic status is reproduced across generations to broader issues of how social hierarchies reproduce themselves. In a highly influential paper, Mare showed that marriages between people with different amounts of schooling were less likely for the highly educated. College goers were more likely to marry other college goers, and that tendency was increasing. A key implication of an increase in educational assortative mating is that it can increase inequality in family resources and children's socioeconomic achievement. In the decade before his retirement, Mare focused on one of the oldest, most vexing sociological problems: how a combination of individual behaviors at the micro level leads to societal changes. Studying the connection between family structure and poverty, educational assortative mating, and residential mobility and segregation, Mare's latest work applied advanced statistical techniques to micro-data to model the determinants of individual social and demographic outcomes and then used simulations to examine alternative scenarios and illustrate the implications of these scenarios for population changes. This work advanced our understanding of fundamental social processes, such as residential segregation by race. Until his death, he had been working with his collaborators to model the effects of demographic events such as marriages, having children, and death on multigenerational inequality.

At both UCLA and the University of Wisconsin, where he was Professor of Sociology prior to coming to UCLA, Mare was legendary in mentoring young scholars. In the words of Elizabeth Bruch, one of Mare's recent doctoral students and now Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, "Rob offered a road map for the process of research: how to navigate, how to get unstuck, what to do with confusion and despair, and how to find joy and discovery. Importantly, he made a potentially isolating experience sociable, even fun." Esther Freidman, another of Mare's doctoral students and now Social and Behavioral Scientist at the RAND Corporation, said: "Conversations with Rob were the highlight of graduate school – always intense and electrifying, whether focused on the lofty or the everyday. There was a strong feeling of shared mission. He managed to instill in his graduate students a sense that we were all part of something special and significant."

Born in North Vancouver, Canada in 1951 to Helen and Arthur Mare, he completed his bachelor's degree at Reed College in 1973 and his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in 1977. Between 1977 and 1997, he was on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he directed the Center for Demography and Ecology between 1989 and 1994. He joined the faculty at UCLA in sociology and was the founding director of the California Center for Population Research at UCLA beginning in 1998. He also held an appointment in statistics at UCLA.

Mare's contributions were widely recognized by social and population scientists. He was elected President of the Population Association of America in 2009, President of the Research Committee on Social Stratification and Mobility (RC28) in 2006, and fellow of both the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences in 2010. For his lifetime contributions to sociological methodology, the Methodology Section of the American Sociological Association awarded him the Paul F. Lazarsfeld Award for lifetime achievement in 1999. For his career of research on inequality he received the Robert M. Hauser Award from the Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility section of the American Sociological Association in 2016. His published articles received multiple awards.

A highly respected and well-liked scholar, Mare will be dearly missed by a large international community of sociologists and demographers who admire him and his work. His scholarship and mentorship will continue to influence future generations of social scientists who study the intersection of demography, family, and social inequality. In the words of Robert Sampson, the Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard University, "Rob Mare was a brilliant scholar who made major contributions to demography, stratification, and methodology. His work on the multi-generational transmission of inequality, for example, was pathbreaking in my view. Rob's keen insights were essential to the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey wave of data collection and our analysis of persistence and change in spatial inequality over two decades in greater Los Angeles."

Mare is survived by Judith Seltzer, also recently retired Professor of Sociology at UCLA, his spouse and colleague since their graduate studies at the University of Michigan. Contributions in Robert Mare's honor may be made to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank (<https://www.lafoodbank.org/>) or other local foodbanks.

Yu Xie, Princeton University

Jennie E. Brand, UCLA

Michael Hout, NYU

Robert Hauser, American Philosophical Society and UW-Madison