

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors, Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)
From: Shirley A. Jackson, Chair, 2007 Racial/Ethnic Minority Scholarship Committee
Re: SSSP 2007 Racial/Ethnic Minority Scholarship Committee Report
Date: July 9, 2007

This is a report on the activities of the SSSP 2007 Racial/Ethnic Minority Scholarship Committee. The members of the committee were: Trinidad Arguello, Charles Howard, Hua-Lun Huang, Shirley A. Jackson (Chair), Zeynip Kilic, and Joya Misra. We began with one additional member, Quinn Gentry, but after the deadline for results were requested, he notified the Committee Chair via email on May 22 that he would be unable to participate.

Application Process:

Mary Walker and Michele Koontz were helpful in notifying the chair of the number of applications received during the application period and in referring applicants to the chair to answer any questions they may have regarding application questions, other funding award competitions, and the expected date on which the award would be announced. Mary Walker was instrumental in keeping the chair updated on the number of complete and incomplete files. Applicants who submitted incomplete files were contacted by Mary Walker to encourage them to submit the missing information by the application deadline. If applicants had not taken care of information that was missing from their files at the time the applications were being bound and prepared to be sent out to the committee, they were excluded from consideration.

The SSSP Executive Office sent five binders via Fed-Ex containing 56 completed applications to the committee on February 23, 2007. The number of applications received this year, far exceed the committee's expectations. Our applicant pool more than doubled in comparison to last year's pool of 22. We commend the Executive Office and the Executive Board for 1) helping us to clarify applicant requirements, and 2) doing an excellent job of publicizing the scholarship.

Summary of Applicants:

Table 1 shows the number of applicants by race/ethnicity. Black/African American candidates were more likely than any other group to apply for the scholarship. There were 2 Black/African American candidates who identified as being in this category as well as two other categories (American Indian or Alaska Native and Hispanic/Latino). There were no Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander applicants. There were 13 Asian or Asian American applicants and 14 Hispanic or Latino candidates. Only 2 applicants identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, one of which identified this category as well as Black/African American.

Table 1: Applicants by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity*	Number of Applicants
American Indian or Alaska Native	1; 1 noted ½
Asian or Asian American	13
Black or African American	26; 2 noted ½
Hispanic or Latino	14; 1 noted ½
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0
Total	56

* As used in the U.S. Census

Consistent with the trend in both sociology and in higher education, women outnumber men in the applicant pool. Table 2 provides a gender breakdown of those who applied for the scholarship. Women were almost three times as likely to be found in the applicant pool as are men.

Table 2: Applicants by Gender

Male	Female	Total
14	42	56

Not surprisingly, sociology students are more likely to apply for the scholarship than are students from other disciplines (See Table 3). Twenty-six students were enrolled in sociology doctoral program. Six students were enrolled in programs in each of the following disciplines: psychology and social work. Most applicants are found in social science and education programs. One student was enrolled in a science program (epidemiology).

Table 3: Discipline

Anthropology	2
Conflict Analysis and Resolution	1
Criminology	1
Education/Curriculum and Teaching	5
Epidemiology	1
History of Consciousness	1
Human Development and Family Studies/Marriage & Family Therapy	3
Political Science	1
Psychology	6
Public Health	1
Social Work/Social Welfare	6
Sociology	27
Urban Planning	1
Total	56

Although master's level students are ineligible to participate in the scholarship competition, one student did apply although she was not yet admitted or enrolled in a doctoral program. As Table 4 shows, students in their fourth and fifth years were most likely to apply for the scholarship, although first year students were also highly likely to apply. Given the information requested in the application, it was expected that some students who had not yet advanced to candidacy would be discouraged from applying. However, first year students were more likely to apply than were those in their second or third year.

Table 4: Year in Program

MA/MS	1
1 st Year	10
2 nd Year	7
3 rd Year	9
4 th Year	11
5 th Year	12
6 th Year	4
7 th Year	2
8 th Year	1
Total	56

Selection Process:

After receipt of the applications, the committee members were sent via email a Criteria Rating Sheet, First Round Ballot and Timetable for Review. Slight changes were made to this year's Criteria Rating Sheet. Additionally, this year's application clarified which racial/ethnic groups were eligible for the scholarship.

First-Round Ballot sheets were submitted to the chair, the clear winner was Angie Kay Beeman, a sociology graduate student at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. She was ranked in the top two by four of five committee members. She also was number one for three of the evaluators.

The committee chair phoned Ms. Beeman to notify her that she had received the award. A formal letter to Ms. Beeman was sent by the Executive Office. All other applicants were notified that they had not received the award. Applicants not receiving the award contacted the committee chair or the executive office requesting feedback from the committee regarding their applications. Many expressed a desire to know how they might strengthen their applications for next year's competition. The chair responded to all such requests for this information.

Concerns and Recommendations:

Although we more than doubled the number of applications received in this year's scholarship applications, it should be noted the majority of applicants had no involvement in SSSP in the past, and in fact, many forgot to note their SSSP membership on their CVs. Thus, we may want to reach out to those students who are already in SSSP or attempt to retain those who have applied for the sole purpose of being eligible for the scholarship competition.

One concern that was mentioned in last year's report is the manner in which the committee evaluates proposals based on criterion such as "disadvantaged social background" which includes education of parents, applicant's debt, marital status, etc. This area of the application requires some clarification because it is difficult to "weigh" such items that are clearly needed in order to assess need. Perhaps the more tangible criteria of prospectus or dissertation chapters completed, percentage of work completed, etc. might be discussed by the board to come up with a more appropriate way to evaluate the proposals.

It also became clear that some graduate students are receiving very little guidance with regard to conferences, scholarships, CVs, etc. which may hinder their ability to be competitive when they go on the market upon completion of their doctoral degrees. Students who requested information on the availability of similar scholarships (in particular, those who missed the scholarship deadline) were given advice by the chair on how to search for funding sources. Perhaps the SSSP website might provide a link on the SSSP Racial/Ethnic Minority Scholarship page to additional sources of funding.

One idea that has been expressed in the last couple of years has been the establishing of a scholarship for international students. This would be one way to maintain the original intent of the scholarship which is for historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. and to help to diversity the discipline and the organization. Such a scholarship for international students would keep the original scholarship's intent intact, but would also continue to diversity the organization and the discipline by encouraging participation from those who do not fit into the U.S. racial/ethnic minority category. If such a scholarship were founded, there might need to be clarification as to whether or not it would be limited to those who are residing outside of the U.S. or within the U.S. The proposed scholarship may, along with the Racial/Ethnic Minority Scholarship, provide students an opportunity to present their research at a special session. The proposed session could include past and present recipients.