

July 7, 2011

To: SSSP Board

From: Karen McCormack, Chair 2011 Annual Meeting Program Committee

Re: SSSP Program Committee Report

Thanks

It was an honor to serve as Chair of the Program Committee for the 2011 Annual meetings and I appreciate the opportunity that President Javier Treviño offered when he asked me to take on this role. A great deal of work is involved in putting together the program, and we could not have organized this program without the guidance, wisdom, and assistance of Michele Koontz and her staff, Kelley Flatford and Sarah Hendricks. Michele manages to balance all of the details of the conference within the larger mission and vision of the Society seamlessly. A consummate professional, Michele provided the experience and knowledge that are the cornerstone of planning these meetings. On behalf of the entire committee, we wish to thank Michele, Kelley, and Sarah for their tireless work. They truly deserve the lion's share of the credit for a successful meeting.

I also want to thank the members of the program committee: Luis Fernandez, Holly Foster, Michelle Janning, and Monica White. The Program Committee sponsored 38 sessions, and committee members worked as organizers, presiders, and discussants for sessions. In addition, the Program Committee would like to thank President Javier Treviño. The conference theme, Service Sociology, offered the opportunity for us to explore the connections between academic sociology and service work and the varied forms that these connections may take. These explorations are important for our work as scholars and our lives outside of academia. On behalf of the entire Program Committee, we look forward to offering the Society a full and rewarding annual meeting.

Paper Submissions

As of July 7, 2011, 531 papers had been submitted either by session organizers or authors via the online submission system. Of these submissions, 471 were submitted by the 1/31/11 deadline for submissions. The Program Committee continued to accept additional papers when they could be accommodated through the spring. Only two papers were not accepted into the program, one that lacked any research or theoretical question (and whose author did not respond to attempts to elicit more information), and one because a late submission left no suitable options for placement.

With the additional invited papers and student award winners, we currently have 140 scheduled sessions, including paper sessions, workshops, author-meets-critics, and a film series. The placement of papers was relatively smooth, although the number of papers moved to the repository has increased over each of the last two

years. The table below details the breakdown of paper acceptance, comparing this year's numbers with those from last year.

	2010	2011 (current)
Accepted by 1 st choice	219	252
Accepted by 2 nd choice	27	39
Repository/created by organizer/moved to session	165	240

There is a significant increase in the number of papers moved into the session, created by an organizer, and accepted from repository. This number includes papers that were placed by the Program Committee into existing sessions, but also into sessions created to accommodate these additional papers. The Program Committee created 9 new sessions in order to accommodate papers from the repository after placing available papers in existing sessions. This year, 3 of the 9 sessions focused on issues of education and education policy. The other 6 session ranged widely in topic area.

Recommendations: The Committee recommends that future program committees monitor the number of papers in the repository, and especially those that require new sessions to be created. In the event that these papers tend to cluster in certain areas of interest, we would recommend encouraging the Divisions that represent these interests to create a tables-in-the-round session to accommodate more papers.

Session limits

As recommended by the SSSP Board of Directors and President Javier Treviño, each division was allowed to propose up to 3 regular sessions (we recommended that at least one of these be thematic) and 7 co-sponsored sessions. We encouraged each division to include a papers-in-the-round session as a part of their 10 session limit, but in a change from last year these roundtable-type sessions counted as one of the 10 available sessions. We currently have 14 tables for discussion scheduled for the meeting.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends continuing to encourage Divisions to consider tables-in-the-round as an option to reduce space pressures and allow for more participants. Initially we had envisioned these sessions as a possible place for established scholars and newer members to interact, particularly useful if the established scholar organized or moderated the roundtable. However, proposing this idea at the Sunday Division chairs meeting meant that divisions had already decided on their proposed sessions and the tables-in-the-round didn't fulfill the role that we had anticipated. In the future, we would encourage Divisions to begin

thinking about these sessions as opportunities to bring in new scholars/members and to allow for greater engagement.

Sponsoring Sessions with Other Associations

This year's program includes one session co-sponsored with the Association of Humanist Sociologists, to be held at our meeting site. Co-sponsorship with other organizations can help build and maintain ties between the groups and can extend SSSP's reach without taxing our space and time crunch at the meetings.

Recommendation: Continue to explore areas of overlapping interest with other organizations.

Innovative programs

In addition to the traditional paper sessions, workshops, film viewings, author-meets-critics, and papers-in-the-round, this year's program includes three new session formats. First, a Saturday discussion/reception that will respond to the media attacks and threats against Frances Fox Piven. This panel will allow the Society to consider the contemporary attack on academia from the right, and on Piven in particular, while providing academic engagement and support for our colleague. Second, a conversation about Sociological Images, a blog attempting to bring the sociological imagination to a wider audience, will expand our engagement with media from the film exhibit to new forms of communication. The authors of the blog will discuss the challenges and promises of blogging as a medium for doing sociology. And third, "conversations with..." invited scholars whose work will be the focus of the session. These colleagues were invited to choose the topic and circulate a short paper among a group of panelists, then use the session itself for a discussion of their work, or new directions in their research and theorizing.

Recommendations: We are enthusiastic that these new sessions will be engaging and well attended, and would encourage future Program Committees to look for opportunities to bring new conversations to the program. We would recommend that these sessions be evaluated (by attendance at least) after the meeting to see how well they worked.

Editing the program

One of the tasks that the Program Committee takes on is editing the program at two points: first, before the preliminary program is released, and second, before the program is finalized and printed. The program itself is a cumbersome document (57 pages for the preliminary program) and the editing time very short (3 days for the preliminary this year). The timing is also difficult for teaching faculty, with the preliminary program available for review at the beginning of May, which will coincide for many with the last week of classes and beginning of final exams. In order to allow each member of the program committee time to read carefully and to

avoid an overload of work, we divided the preliminary program into 5 sections, with 2 committee members responsible for the introductory material (which contains the most text), and the remaining 3 members dividing the work of editing the pages that list the sessions. This worked very well and we would encourage next year's Program Committee to consider dividing the work for a quicker turn around time.

Exemptions from Registration Fees

As of 7/7/11, we have granted 25 exemptions from registration fees for presenters, although two of these individuals are unable to attend the meetings. The criteria for exemption include: (A) Non-students who are unemployed and/or receiving monthly financial assistance to meet living expenses may request a waiver of registration fees to participate on the program. (B) Individuals from community, labor, and comparable organizations working on social problems or social justice issues who have been invited to serve on a panel or to make a presentation. (C) Non U.S. and non-Canadian scholars who are from less advantaged countries. (D) Co-authors of papers who will not be attending the meeting. One of the co-authors must be a paid registrant. Both co- authors must pay if both expect to attend the meeting. (E) Persons excused by direct request of the Program Committee Chair.

The number of exemptions has more than doubled since last year (LY: 12 exemptions). While it is likely that the failing economy/job market has created need for a larger number of members, we also believe that the focus on Service Sociology has encouraged participation by community based organizations and not-for-profits, and this may have contributed to the increase in exemptions.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Society continue to monitor the number of exemptions granted in order to evaluate the financial impact of exemptions in the event that the number continues to rise.

Editing the report/evaluating the meetings

A last recommendation: I would recommend that this report be open to brief amendments at the conclusion of the meeting, and particularly when attendance records are compiled. I would like to pass on to the next Program Committee a report that more neatly summarizes the successes and any missteps from this year, but until the conclusion of the meetings am not able to evaluate our work.