

July 7, 2014

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Kelly L. Patterson and Robert M. Silverman, Co-Chairpersons
SSSP 2014 Annual Meeting Program Committee

RE: SSSP Program Committee Report 2014

We were honored to serve as Co-Chairs of the Program Committee for the 2014 annual meeting of the SSSP. Although this is a rather hefty task, and we had never done anything like this before, when all was said and done, we were glad to have accepted the responsibility. Additionally, it was our pleasure to work with Anna Maria Santiago whose timely theme, "Fifty Years Later: From a War on Poverty to a War on the Poor" places the Society's tradition of critical scholarship and social justice right at the forefront of contemporary policy debates where both of us want it to be.

The work of the committee would not have gone so smoothly but for the aid of Michele Koontz, the Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager, and her team: Sharon Shumaker, Information Technology Specialist; Marisa Stone, Administrative Assistant; and Lisa East, Graduate Research Associate & Webmaster. Our work and that of the Program Committee members benefitted tremendously from their assistance, support and guidance. Michele shielded us from many time-consuming issues and her experience and expertise meant that no situation went without being resolved in a timely manner and in a professional fashion. We are very grateful for that.

We also want to thank and acknowledge the contributions of the other members of the Program Committee: Benigno Aguirre, Kathleen Blee, Filomena Critelli, Marlese Durr, Jennifer Shea, and Gregory Squires. Our gratitude also extends to Judith Gordon and Joel Best for their willingness to help when called upon and for working hard on their individual sessions.

Based on the Session Management System, there were originally 723 papers submitted on February 1, 2014, a day after the January 31st deadline. As of July 8th there were a total of 647 papers submitted using the on-line submission process and 43 papers added by session organizers for a total of 690 conference papers. All the papers in the repository have been placed in sessions organized by the divisions or created by the Program Committee. There are currently 688 program participants registered for the 2014 conference and 124 not yet registered. The total of possible registered participants is 812. As of this writing, there were 13 participants who received exemptions for the conference registration fees.

There are 164 total sessions this year. Of the 164 sessions, 95 were sole-sponsored sessions and 69 were co-sponsored. The special divisions sponsored 134 sessions, and owing to the robust and timely theme of President Santiago, 35 of those were thematic sessions; many of which were decided upon during the Program Committee meeting in August 2013. Although the Program Committee conceived of many of the thematic sessions, the divisions did the hard work of organizing most of the thematic sessions and, thus, integrated the broad membership of the SSSP into the program theme, making it their own. There was also an additional co-sponsored session entitled, "Community Based Research: A Key to the Equitable Development of US Cities?" which is being held at the ASA hotel. This session was not included in the above count.

The Program Committee sponsored 30 sessions. Seven of these were thematic sessions, and 4 were special sessions. One of the special sessions, organized by Gregory Squires and Raymond Michalowski, is a tribute and memorial for the former SSSP President Bill Chambliss entitled, "Celebrating Bill Chambliss: A Saint and a Roughneck." This special session is co-sponsored by George Washington University and the American Sociological Association (ASA). Additional items on this year's program include two plenary sessions, an open discussion of SSSP Resolutions, an award session & panel discussion in honor of Richard Leo sponsored by the Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division, and the Social Action - Highlight the Work of the Social Action Winner Special Session. This year's winner of the 2014 Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award is the SAGE Project (Standing Against Global Exploitation).

This year we made two changes to the program; one was an addition to the program and one a removal from the program. The addition was a special session entitled, "Author meets Author: Deconstructing Racism in Schools and Communities." The "Author meets Author" session focuses on the intersection of neighborhoods, schools and race. The session is designed to provide authors of books on a related topic with a forum to discuss their work and to exchange ideas about innovations in their common areas of interest. In addition to focusing on substantial publications (i.e. book length monographs), the session facilitates the identification and synthesis of emerging themes, novel methods, and critical approaches to the session topic that can inform future works. The session format includes: 1 hour for authors' synopses of books - 30 minutes per book, 10 minutes for discussant comments, and 30 minutes for dialogue with audience. This year's authors and books are:

"'We Live in the Shadow': Inner-City Kids Tell Their Stories through Photographs,"
Elaine Bell Kaplan, University of Southern California

"Education and Racism: A Primer on Issues and Dilemmas," Zeus Leonardo and
W. Norton Grubb, University of California, Berkeley

For the first time this year, the Program Committee decided not to include the film exhibit in the conference program. There were several reasons for this, but the two most significant were the very low attendance of the films and the need for more regular session space. Although this may seem like a substantial loss of tradition, technological innovations have enabled us to include a hyperlink to selected film previews on the California Newsreel website so that those who are interested can view this material on their own personal devices. A hyperlink for this purpose was created on the SSSP website with other conference information.

In response to comments from division chairs and attendees at last year's conference we addressed two key issues. First, we wanted to improve communication problems that the division chairs had issues with last year. We created a special email address that all SSSP inquiries would go to. Thankfully, many of the issues were intercepted by Michele, and others we were able to address in a timely manner. In addition, we promised to contact organizers and presiders if we had to add any papers to their sessions from either the repository or because other sessions had too few papers. Happily, we haven't had to do that much, but we anticipate that once the FINAL deadline passes we will have to do some rearranging. Second, we wanted to address the misperception that critical dialogues were second rate sessions that were formed from rejected papers. Individuals actually said they didn't think these sessions had the same caché as the regular paper sessions. On the one hand, this is understandable because this particular session type was introduced just a year ago. However, these sessions have a specific purpose and are a useful innovation and addition to the conference program. Thus, this year we edited the description to make the purpose clearer and to assure that submissions to these sessions were every bit as reputable as regular sessions. Additionally, we encouraged submissions to these sessions.

Overall, the entire process was fairly smooth especially given the size and complexity of the task. Michele, was invaluable to the process and made it more seamless than it would have been without her assistance.

With that said, the Program Committee makes the following three recommendations to the Board¹:

1. We recommend that the Board consider moving the deadline for conference participants to register from July 1 to an earlier date such as June 1. This would give the Program Committee more lead time to make necessary adjustments to the conference program. The additional time would be of particular benefit when

¹ We only have a selected number of recommendations to the board since, on balance, the system that is in place for conference planning worked well. We also found that the existing structure for making decisions provided us with a good balance of guidelines and flexibility.

there is a need to merge sessions with too few remaining participants with others in the program (a process that entails notification of other session organizers, presiders and discussants).

2. We recommend that the Board review its existing criteria for granting exemptions for paying the conference registration fee. In some cases there can be ambiguity about criterion. For instance, criterion "C" allows for exemptions to be granted to scholars from "less advantaged countries", but this was ambiguous in the case of some requests. The adoption of an economic, need-based approach for foreign scholars as opposed to a geographic criterion may provide a better guideline.
3. We recommend that the Board explore the adoption of a web-based conference program. This format has become more common for meetings since it allows conference attendees to access the program schedule on portable electronic devices and customize their daily schedules. There are vendors like SCHED (<http://sched.org/>) which organizations like the Urban Affairs Association have used for several years. These types of web-based conference schedulers also organize content better than we were able to using the existing SSSP website. For example, we created links to California Newsreel content and book information for the Author-meets-Author session, but a web-based scheduler would allow for these and other materials to be more visible and easier to access.