

**Ph.D. Program in Urban
Education**

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July 29, 2019

Dear SSSP Board of Directors:

Thank you for this amazing honor to serve as chair of the SSSP C. Wright Mills Book Award Committee. We closed the nominations portal with 94 submissions in December 2018. However, we ended up with a total of 79 eligible books to consider once we eliminated duplicate submissions and removed nominations that did not have an online nomination form AND eliminated nominations that were made online without books sent to committee members. This number is a marked decrease from the 2017 award process that had 95 eligible nominees.

The names and addresses of committee members were confirmed in Fall 2018 with the extraordinary assistance of Michele Koontz and her staff.

Carla Shedd, *Chair*, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Sigal Alon, Tel-Aviv University
Joel Best, University of Delaware
Orly Clerge, University of California, Davis
Steven Epstein, Northwestern University
Charles A. Gallagher, La Salle University
Nancy A. Naples, University of Connecticut

The committee members were responsive to all deadlines, managed potential conflicts of interests, and worked amicably throughout the process. None of this would have happened without the amazing efficiency of Michele Koontz and the staff at SSSP.

These were the Key Dates/Outcomes for our process:

- Deadline for submissions of nominated books: December 15, 2018
- First-round books assigned to committee members for reading: January 15, 2019
- Chair submission of finalists to SSSP office: May 5, 2019
- Chair notification of the award winner: July 1, 2019

Committee members received copies of the nominated books (though not in the most timely fashion). Once all books have been received and the nomination portal was closed (12/15/18), the Chair organized a list of all the books with the help of Michele Koontz's staff, and sent it to each committee member. The Chair then assigned readings to each committee member at random where each of us ended up reading (as close to) the same number of books. This process is outlined in further detail below below:



First round of reviews—completed on March 13, 2019

1. Each book was read by 3 committee members in the first round.
 - a. The Chair used an Excel spreadsheet to randomly assign the readings to each committee member, and then corrected for recusals due to conflicts of interest.
 - b. Each committee member read 32 or 33 books during this first round.
2. Chair instructed all committee members to rank each book on a 1-5 scale
 - a. (5 = excellent candidate; 4 = strong candidate; 3 = good candidate; 2 = marginal candidate; 1 = unlikely candidate).
3. Chair instructed all committee members that each book should be read and rated according to how it fits the 6 criteria for the award:
 - a. **Critically addresses an issue of contemporary public importance,**
 - b. **Brings to the topic a fresh, imaginative perspective,**
 - c. **Advances solid scientific understanding of the topic,**
 - d. **Displays a theoretically informed view and empirical orientation,**
 - e. **Evinces quality in style of writing,**
 - f. **Explicitly or implicitly contains implications for courses of action.**
4. Each member submitted a list of the books read with the numerical ranking to the committee Chair by March 13, 2019.

Second round of reviews—completed on April 30, 2019

5. The Chair then compiled a list of the rankings in hierarchical order from highest to lowest ranked and submitted them for a new evaluation on April 5, 2019.
 - a. The top ten ranked books moved to the next round.
 - i. Important note related to my statement above regarding committee diversity: 9/10 of the books were by authors who were identified/perceived as white.
 - b. We received a top five list by April 30th. We identified those as our five finalists.

Abigail Leslie Andrews, *Undocumented Politics: Place, Gender, and the Pathways of Mexican Migrants*, University of California Press

Margaret A. Hagerman, *White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America*, New York University Press

Issa Kohler-Hausmann, *Misdemeanorland: Criminal Courts and Social Control in an Age of Broken Windows Policing*, Princeton University Press

Tey Meadow, *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century*, University of California Press

Ranita Ray, *The Making of a Teenage Service Class: Poverty and Mobility in an American City*, University of California Press

Third/Final round of reviews—completed on May 5, 2019

6. The chair then notified the committee of the five finalists on April 30, 2019.

- a. After online deliberations, the finalist was chosen from that list of five finalists. The winner had the highest rankings of the five finalists. The committee agreed to designate the book below as the winner.

Winner: Ranita Ray, *The Making of a Teenage Service Class: Poverty and Mobility in an American City*, University of California Press

Recommendation

I would suggest that the committee chair for 2019 be given a list of ten to twelve persons who are interested in serving on this award, and then confirming the final seven members after making sure the committee is demographically, geographically, and institutionally diverse. This really does make a difference in the ratings of the range of books that are nominated for this very important award. It is my hope that the incoming SSSP President will be open to a slight tweak to the committee selection process from prior years.

We also need publishers to be more responsive to the deadlines to send all books to committee members prior to the submission deadline in mid-December. We especially had issues with the one committee member who lives overseas (Tel-Aviv) getting all books on-time.

This is an attractive committee on which to serve due to receiving excellent books and to having a stake in the selection of one of the most prestigious awards in our discipline of sociology. I am grateful to the board and SSSP leadership for allowing me this opportunity to serve. I look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carla Shedd
Associate Professor of Sociology and Urban Education
The Graduate Center, CUNY