

June 22, 2023

To: The Society for the Study of Social Problems Board of Directors
From: Mary Romero, Program Chair SSSP 2023 Annual Meeting Program Committee
Re: SSSP Program Committee Report 2023
Theme: Same Problem, Different Day: Recognizing and Responding to Recurring Social Problems

SSSP President Shirley Jackson appointed the following members to the Program Committee (PC): A. Javier Treviño, Ranita Ray, Mangala Subramaniam, and Angus A. Nurse. I agreed to serve as chair.

Based on Michele Smith Koontz' most recent information on this year's SSSP program from the online session management system, there were originally 411 papers submitted by January 31, 2023. As of June 22, 2023, there were a total of 386 papers submitted using the online submission process and 38 papers added by session organizers for a total of 424 conference papers. At this point, there are 549 registrants for this year's conference.

Currently, there are 116 sessions on the program. In total: there are 3 plenary sessions, 35 thematic sessions, and 16 special sessions. There are 45 co-sponsored sessions. After the 1/31/23 Call for Papers deadline, 52 sessions were canceled due because they did not receive enough submissions, and 11 new sessions were added after receiving more papers than could be accommodated in one session.

The Program Committee solicited organizers for the nine traditional sessions held at every conference. In addition, nine other relevant panels were proposed. In addition to co-sponsoring a session with the Association for Black Sociologists (ABS), the PC organized a memorial session celebrating the work of G. Reginald Daniel, and a special session "Reflecting on 'The Philadelphia Negro'."

As the Board guidelines required, the PC selected two Author Meets Critic (AMC) sessions on books published in 2021 or 2022. We received 9 nominations, but because one nomination was for two books the total was 10 book nominations. Whether the Board's intent was to limit the number of AMC sessions or the number of books, is not clear.

The nomination for two book titles was a variation of the traditional AMC:

"In this model, authors of two recent books on a similar theme comment on each other's research. A moderator and additional commentators fill out the session. This model not only allows for the coverage of two books rather than one but tends to highlight different – usually complementary approaches -- and typically points the way toward the state of the field rather than the virtues and limitations of a single study."

Thus, I presented to the committee the nomination for two books in one session. However, the PC selected two different proposals and the matter was not discussed. I have used this model quite successfully at ASA, which allows more authors and audience interaction. The Work and Family Researchers Network (WFRN) conferences have also used this model successfully.

Whether the Board's intent is to limit the number of books or AMC sessions, there needs clarification in further guidelines. There are two other book sessions on the program this year. One additional session was organized by the Transnational Initiatives Committee (TIC), and the other co-sponsored session with ABS. Unlike the books nominated for the PC to select from, these two books were not vetted by the PC or another committee. Furthermore, the co-sponsored session is an edited collection. Given how coveted the AMC sessions are, clarification of the board's intent would be helpful to future PC's selection process and options available to members' wanting a book session.

To allow a smoother process, the TIC should be allocated up to 2 sessions on the program each year. This would ensure that TIC has plenty of time to plan. The process can also be improved by appointing the TIC Chair as a session organizer.

The PC followed the Board's guidelines adhering to the Budget for Invited Speakers. However, the session co-sponsored with ABS was a unique request and after conferring with the President, the PC decided to ask ABS panelists to become SSSP members and waived the registration fee. Since all but two were already members, their first-time membership was \$50. The Board might want to consider fees for co-sponsored sessions in the future.

In reflecting the PC's work over the last year, the following recommendations are proposed to make the process more efficient: members and the chair of the PC should be identified before the conference prior to the one they will serve on. This will allow for all to meet at the conference with the in-coming president. A meeting between the PC chair, president-elect and the SSSP Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager to review the PC Sponsored Sessions, the members interested in organizing these, and to review program budgets and discuss/prioritize possible needs and deadlines.

The Program Committee expresses extreme gratitude to Michele Smith Koontz for her assistance in identifying organizers for the Program Committee Sponsored sessions and assisting the committee's work.