



# SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Community Research and Development Division  
Fall 2016 Newsletter

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## Message from the Chair

By Jessica Lucero, Utah State University

Greetings Community Research and Development Division Members! I hope that each of you are wrapping up a successful Fall semester.

In the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, I am reminded of the important work we do as activist-scholars. Across the U.S. and world, we are witnessing stark divisions across partisan, racial/ethnic, religious, and class lines. As community scholars, we are uniquely positioned to help heal these rifts. The hard work starts in our communities. Our division's mission statement says:

*Our focus on social justice at the group level leads us to ask questions about the determinants and consequences of communities' exclusion or marginalization from processes and resources. We are also concerned about the collective identity and lived realities of communities, and how those identifications and experiences affect everyone's well-being and quality of life.*



Our division has a strong history of doing research in our communities and for our communities. Most importantly, we use our research findings as the impetus for social development and social change work, policy and program improvement, and social justice work. I am honored to be part of a group of scholars who care deeply about their communities. You all do the kind of work that builds mutual understanding, celebrates and affirms diversity, sheds light on social injustice, and effectively advocates for those who feel unsafe, oppressed, or marginalized. Given the political climate in the U.S. and more broadly, the world, this work is so urgent. We have highlighted the work of two of our members (Charlotte Ryan and Alan Grigsby) in this newsletter, and I look forward to connecting with many of you in Montreal next August and learning more about your scholarship and activism. Our annual program theme, "Narratives in the World of Social Problems: Power, Resistance, Transformation" should encourage submissions on very timely issues that relate to our current social, political and economic climate.

Thanks to our newsletter editor, Gabriela Palomino, this newsletter contains other important pieces of information. Please consider submitting your paper to our student paper competition or our community partner paper competition (see page 4). Additionally, I want to remind you that conference submissions are due on January 31, 2017. You can see a list of our division-sponsored and co-sponsored sessions on page 3. Finally, we will be sending a call out to the division in the spring for division chair nominations. If you or someone you know in the division is interested in serving in this role, please consider nominating. Feel free to reach out to me if you have questions ([jessica.lucero@usu.edu](mailto:jessica.lucero@usu.edu)).

Have a wonderful winter break!

Warmest Regards,  
Jessica Lucero

## 2017 Annual Meeting Program Theme

By Donileen R. Loseke, University of South Florida

Our globalized, cyber-mediated world characterized by extraordinary social, political, economic, and moral fragmentation raises a variety of questions about social problems, including: How do people who experience the consequences of social problems understand the causes of their misery? How do people not suffering understand the experiences of those who do? How do activists convince others to work toward social change? The answer to a variety of such questions is the same: Narratives, or what simply are called “stories” in daily life. Social problem narratives create meaning from the buzzing confusion of practical experience, they convey complex experiences to others, they motivate, they shape public opinion and social action.



Whether told as stories about unique people facing specific troubles or about types of people—the abused child, the terrorist, the welfare mother—in types of situations, social problem narratives are pervasive in daily life. Individuals tell stories to make sense of their troubling experiences, politicians tell stories to sell themselves and their policies; teachers, preachers and parents use stories to convey moral lessons; courts work through the telling and evaluating of stories. Narratives about social problems are pervasive because they are persuasive. Unlike statistics or research, stories can appeal to minds and to hearts: The story of the “Migrant Mother” told through the photographs of depression-era photographer, Dorothea Lange, for example, remains to this day a compelling testimony of the human tragedy created by economic collapse. Regardless of the extent to which images in a story match indicators of empirical reality, social problem narratives can be personally, socially, and politically consequential. These narratives are about power: Those told by people in privileged positions are assumed to be believable and important, while those told by others are routinely challenged, if not completely silenced; stories whose plots, characters, and morals reflect the status quo are more likely to be positively evaluated than those challenging entrenched power and privilege. Stories become material power when they shape public opinion and social policy. Yet social actors most certainly are not cultural robots who simply accept whatever images of them circulate in the social world. On the contrary: Narratives can be a site of resistance as individuals and groups challenge the truth of those offering ideological support for oppression. Resistance, in turn, can lead to authoring and promoting new stories that foster equality and thus are transformative.

In order to understand public reactions toward social problems and, in order to do something about these conditions causing so much human misery, we need to know much more about the work of social problem narratives. In a world of countless competing stories, we need to know how some—and only some—stories achieve widespread cognitive and emotional appeal and go on to influence public opinion and social policy; how different stories appeal to people in different social positions. We need to know how stories promoting particular images of social problems reflect and challenge and/or perpetuate existing inequalities and structures of power, and how stories encourage or discourage social change. We need to more fully understand how story contents and meanings change as they circulate through particular societies and throughout the globe.

The power and workings of social problems narratives will be the focus of our conversations at the 2017 meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems to be held in the fascinating, beautiful, bi-lingual, multi-cultural city of Montreal. I look forward to seeing you there.

Bon voyage!

## CRD Sessions at 2017 SSSP Annual Conference

| Session # | Session Title   | Sponsor(s)   | Organizer(s)   |
|-----------|---|--|--|
| 1         | Suburbs in Society  | Community Research and Development   | Grigsby, Alan V.<br>grigsbav@mail.uc.edu   |
| 2         | Urban Redevelopment, Gentrification, and Resistance-THEMATIC                  | Community Research and Development   | Halasz, Judith R.<br>HALASZJ@NEWPALTZ.EDU  |
| 3         | PAPERS IN THE ROUND: Communities and Neighborhoods in Poverty                 | Community Research and Development   | Ray, Ranita<br>Ranita.Ray@unlv.edu   |
| 4         | Urban and Rural Narratives of Belonging-THEMATIC                              | Community Research and Development & Conflict, Social Action, and Change                           | Dassopoulos, Andrea<br>dassopou@unlv.nevada.edu  |
| 5         | Non-Academic Jobs and How To Get Them   | Community Research and Development & Disability & Drinking and Drugs                               | Steinberg, Hillary R.<br>hillary.steinberg@colorado.edu  |
| 6         | Education and the Significance of Place: Urban, Suburban, and Rural Contexts  | Community Research and Development & Educational Problems  | Kimelberg, Shelley M.<br>shelleyk@buffalo.edu  |
| 7         | Community Development and Local Food Systems                                  | Community Research and Development & Environment and Technology                                    | Hossfeld, Leslie<br>lhossfeld@soc.msstate.edu  |
| 8         | Research Challenges and Dilemmas in Community-Based Participatory Research    | Community Research and Development & Health, Health Policy, and Health Services                    | Berg, Kristen A.<br>kab185@case.edu  |
| 9         | Policy, Action, and Research in Housing and Homelessness                      | Community Research and Development & Poverty, Class, and Inequality & Sociology and Social Welfare | Kurwa, Rahim<br>rahim.kurwa@gmail.com & Chen, Patricia M.<br>pmpan@utdallas.edu<br>(co-organizers) |
| 10        | Using Photos and other Visual Media in Community Research and Action-THEMATIC | Community Research and Development & Youth, Aging, and the Life Course                             | Jones, Amanda Michelle<br>amandamichelle@uchicago.edu  |

## Call for Student Paper Competition Submissions

Our division is currently accepting submissions for its 2017 Graduate Student Paper Competition. Paper topics can focus on various aspects of the community, including its capacity, development, renewal, and its relationship with other social issues or problems. Qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses, applied research and theoretical papers are welcome.

To be eligible for submission, a paper must not be published nor accepted for publication. Papers must be student-authored; they may be authored by a single student or co-authored by more than one student, but may not be co-authored by a faculty member or other non-student. Papers must not exceed 25 double-spaced pages (including all notes, references, and tables), and should include a brief abstract.

To be eligible for the award, the author(s) must make a commitment to present the paper at a session during the 2017 SSSP Annual Meeting in Montreal. To be considered, submit (a) a copy of the manuscript, (b) a cover letter specifying that the paper is to be considered in the Community Research and Development Division Graduate Student Paper Competition, and (c) a letter from each author's advisor certifying the person's status as a student and including some brief comments about the research. All materials must be submitted electronically to the Annual Meeting call for papers on the SSSP conference website by January 31, 2017 and also sent to the Committee Chair, Dr. Meghan Ashlin Rich at [meghan.rich@scranton.edu](mailto:meghan.rich@scranton.edu).

Please note that students may only submit to one division. The winner will receive a \$100 cash award, a one-year membership to SSSP, conference registration fees, and a plaque of recognition at the conference awards ceremony.

## Call for Community Partner Paper Award Submissions

We are currently accepting submissions for our second annual Community Partner Paper Competition. Consistent with our division's mission, this paper award is intended to recognize rigorous academic work that has practical implications for members of marginalized communities and specifically, to celebrate community-engaged work. Paper topics can focus on various social issues and problems related to community, such as the causes and consequences of communities' exclusion or marginalization from processes and resources, the capacities and strengths of communities and community movements, and the development and changes within communities. Qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses, applied research and theoretical papers are welcome.

To be eligible for submission, a paper must not be published or accepted for publication. Papers must be coauthored with a community partner; they may be coauthored by more than one faculty member and/or student, but must include at least one community partner. Community partners are characterized by any community-based entity that is outside of the academy. Papers must not exceed 25 double-spaced pages (including all notes, references, and tables), and should include a brief abstract. To be eligible for the award, the author(s) must make a commitment to present the paper at a session during the 2017 SSSP Annual Meeting in Montreal. To be considered, submit (a) a copy of the manuscript, (b) a cover letter specifying that the paper is to be considered in the Community Research and Development Division Community Partner Paper Competition, and (c) a brief letter from the community partner commenting on his or her role in the paper.

All materials must be submitted electronically to the Annual Meeting call for papers on the SSSP conference website by January 31, 2017 and also sent to the Division Chair, Dr. Jessica Lucero at [jessica.lucero@usu.edu](mailto:jessica.lucero@usu.edu). The winner will receive a plaque of recognition at the Community Research and Development Division business meeting.



## Fall 2016 Faculty Spotlight Charlotte Ryan

Charlotte Ryan is Associate Professor of Sociology at UMASS Lowell (UML) where she coordinates the Environment and Society Program and serves on the Climate Change Initiative Steering Committee. She teaches Fast Food, Hot Planet, a course that combines service learning with a survey of food inequalities from a world systems lens (<http://www.climate-change-initiative.org/curriculum/fast-food-hot-planet-course>).

She also participates in UML's Policy and Social Problems Concentration in which she links linking theories of change, practical organizing tools, and community engagement in a sequence of courses—Public Sociology, Sociological Perspectives on

Communication and Social Change, and Learning from the Field, a course in which students design and execute a collaborative research project with a partnering community-based group. In her sociological practice, she serves as a co-director of the Movement/Media Research Action Project [www.mrap.info](http://www.mrap.info), and interdisciplinary social science network that collaborates with under-represented and misrepresented constituencies to develop communication strategies and messaging. Since 2007, she has partnered with the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless ([www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org)) on models for theorizing collaboratively from experience (see pictures on page 6).

### ***Can you tell us about yourself and how you arrived in your area of study?***

I was a student organizer, a community organizer, then, a labor organizer for over a decade before doing graduate work in Sociology. My most formative experience was living in Popular Unity Chile when Freirian pedagogies informed organizing, communication, and community based research. I was interested from the start in how change efforts grow, particularly, how they communicate. The movements and social problems in which I've been involved have varied over time, but my interest in the interaction of communication and social movements has remained constant. Not surprisingly, my doctoral work with Bill Gamson focused on social movement communication.

### ***What is your current research focus?***

If social movements are intended to build collective agency; I think social scientists can be extremely useful helping movement leaders and participants understand power relations, set, promote, and execute strategies, reflect on their experiences, and distill lessons. Scholars also can help document both the experiences of collective action and reflection on those experiences. To understand these processes better, I've been partnering for the last decade with the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless [www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org) (see page 6 for pictures).

### ***How does CBPR fit into your work?***

CBPR is an approach to learning from experience that I bring to my collaborations with the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless. Reducing much less ending homelessness is hard, and there are always more families and individuals falling into poverty. So a campaign to end homelessness is never done. That said, the Coalition has made major strides: it's gained standing in the Statehouse political deliberations, become a routine and respected source in mass media, established and expanded a social media presence, and

through all of the above, built a mass-based coalition in Rhode Island that has been impressive strides to ending homelessness. We use community-based research methods to both learn from our experience and to create documents that share the experience with other states. (See Ryan, Charlotte M., Karen Jeffreys, Jim Ryczek, and Janelle Diaz. 2014. "Building Public Will: The Battle for Affordable—and Supportive—Housing." *Journal of Poverty* 18, no. 3: 335-354.)

***I understand you are involved with the URBAN Research Network-- can you tell us more about that?***

In 2012, a loose network of scholar-activists and change-makers began sharing collaborative efforts to ground social theory building in reflexive practice (<http://urbanresearchnetwork.org/about-us/mission-history>). URBAN is now anchored at CUNY Graduate Center where the multi-issue, multi-disciplinary Public Science Project offers periodic workshops in critical participatory action research (<http://publicscienceproject.org/critical-par-institutes/>) Action Research This work resonates with SSSP's Community Research and Development Division mission of building dialogs among critical thinkers committed to understanding patterns of social inequality and advancing justice-driven responses (<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1329/m/464>). In contrast to groups driven by academic one-upmanship, the CRD has offered me a space in which I can share hard won lessons and questions with other critically supportive researchers.

***What advice do you have for emerging scholars who would like to engage in CBPR?***

URBAN's Publication Committee has created guidelines for peer review of community-based research which we've shared on the URBAN Network's website (under methods). (<http://urbanresearchnetwork.org/tag/methods/>)

***Anything else you'd like to share with the division?***

It is very hard to sustain community-based participatory action research as a lonesome only. I have always had allies with whom to work and reflect. Early in my career they were located at UMASS Boston's College of Public and Community Service and in Boston-based social justice groups. Later the Movement and Media Research Action Project [www.mrap.info](http://www.mrap.info) played this role. The CRD is uniquely well-positioned to help critically engaged scholars build learning communities and I look forward to reconnecting with colleagues in Montreal. Some CRD members are exploring options for building a pre-conference on community-based research for 2018. We would welcome others interested.



Photos documenting efforts by Charolette Ryan with the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless.

## Fall 2016 Student Spotlight

### Alan Grigsby

Alan is a Ph.D. student--his current research interests include urban change, contemporary race relations and social stratification.

#### *Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what brought you to your graduate studies?*

My name is Alan and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cincinnati (UC). I am also a Charles Phelps Taft Dissertation Fellow with the University of Cincinnati. I came to graduate school to conduct sociological research on the topic of contemporary race relations. I chose the doctoral program at UC for its focus on urban sociology. My underlying interest in race relations, combined with faculty expertise on urban inequality, has motivated me to explore social life in multiethnic suburbs.



#### *What is the focus of your current research?*

I am happy to say that my current project is my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a neighborhood ethnography to explore the dynamics of race relations in Shaker Heights, Ohio—a multiethnic suburb of Cleveland.

Currently, I am in the data collection process. I am collecting interview and observational data from a sample of African American residents, employees, and visitors of Shaker Heights. In my interviews and observations, I am examining how African Americans a) perceive neighborhood diversity and b) participate in social life within a multiethnic community. I focus on the social life of suburban African Americans because, when most scholars evaluate neighborhood diversity, black voices are largely absent.

#### *What are the practical and policy implications of your work?*

Many liberal scholars, myself included, espouse the value of diversity. Our country is becoming more diverse by the day, but how will this rising diversity impact social life? To understand how diversity works sociologically, we need to know a) if diverse settings facilitate or hinder social interactions and b) whether social interactions influence the quality of race relations.

On a practical note, my dissertation will help us better understand social interactions in a diverse setting that is growing in demographic importance but is rarely explored by social scientists. Most studies of social life in neighborhoods that are “statistically integrated” focus on city or urban spaces. Less attention is focused on diversity or integration in the suburbs. Racially diverse suburbs are rare historically. However, recent demographic projections suggest that as historically underrepresented groups continue to suburbanize at unprecedented rates we can expect to see more diversity in American suburbs.

The findings from my research will help scholars and policy makers better understand the qualitative relationship between social interactions and community race relations. These findings will highlight various factors that promote or discourage social interactions between and within different racial groups.

### ***Where do you see your work going in the future?***

I have so many ideas! I plan to publish the results of my dissertation in book form to contribute to scholarship on race relations and urban development in the United States. I definitely have a unique fascination with suburbia and so my next scholarly project will likely connect to the dissertation—either by expanding the research questions and methods in my current site or replicating my current methods in some other place.

In addition to scholarly writing, I want to teach sociology to university students and produce sociological content to share publicly. My dream project of the future, currently deferred by more pressing matters like finishing the dissertation, would be to produce and disseminate sociological videos aimed at educating the public. Sociological theories and facts are inherently complex and nuanced. It would be challenging to break-down even some of our most fundamental concepts in a short-video format, but that is what I would like to do.

I have been teaching online courses since 2013 and I like to use a lot of video content. About two years ago, I came up with the idea to create a YouTube channel devoted to lessons on social inequality. I created some promotional content, but never went live. The idea was good, but I did not have the time or resources to make it great. This is just one of many projects I hope to complete with the goal of sharing sociological facts with the general public in a format that is both informative and engaging.

### ***Do you have any advice for fellow graduate students?***

This may sound cliché, but my advice is twofold: 1) Discover your true self, and 2) find out how to make a living being you. There is a paradox: many of us pursue graduate studies for the personal appeal of a discipline, but this appeal comes largely without our own input.

In college, I fell in love with sociology because it helped me make sense of myself and the world. Sociology felt very personal. As I get closer to the end of graduate studies, I realize that somewhere along the way—between the classic theories of Max Weber and the more contemporary theories of William Julius Wilson—I lost my own voice. Like many other graduates, I have willingly humbled myself to learn the central expectations and ideas of my discipline—I willingly became a consumer of a body of knowledge that others had constructed. When you arrive on the other side—whether as scholar, teacher, or activist—you will need to be a producer. I think you will produce the best work if it is truly your own. This requires that you have a solidified sense of self and are willing to do the work that validates you and draws on your strengths. Be reflexive. Work to your strengths because “[...] that’s around the time that your idols become your rivals.” – Aubrey “Drake” Graham

### ***Anything else you’d like to share with the division?***

I am full of stories and words of wisdom for fellow graduate students. If you have a student in need of a peer-mentor or you are faculty in need of an advanced graduate student’s perspective, please reach out to me.

## SSSP CRD Member Accomplishments:

### Publications

Gregory D. Squires. 2016. "Gentrification is Nothing New: The Long History of Uneven Development of Metropolitan America," *Social Policy* 46(2): 55,56.

Roark, J., Lucero, J. L., & Smith, C. 2016. "Social Service Workers' Knowledge and Attitudes of Fair Housing" *Journal of Social Service Research*. DOI: 10.1080/01488376.2016.1248878

## Special Calls, Invitations, & Announcements

### Media Review Submissions

Recognizing the multiple modalities of communication and how presentations enhance our sociological understanding of the complex realities of the 21st century, the journal *Humanity & Society* (<http://has.sagepub.com/>) seeks authors for Media Reviews. We invite reviewers of critical messages in popular films, television shows, documentaries, multimedia presentations, video games, and other forms of media. Written submissions should be approximately 1,000 words and are accepted on a rolling basis. The journal welcomes reviewers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives, including activists, graduate students, and practitioners in fields other than sociology. To review for *Humanity & Society*, please contact the Media Review Editor, Bhoomi K. Thakore, at [bhoomi.thakore@elmhurst.edu](mailto:bhoomi.thakore@elmhurst.edu) with your background information and suggested review topic.

If you have a publication, special call, invitation or announcement not listed, we would love to include it in the spring 2017 issue. Please contact our Chair, Jessica Lucero, Utah State University ([jessica.lucero@usu.edu](mailto:jessica.lucero@usu.edu))

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