



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Community Research and Development Division Summer 2019 Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

By Meghan Ashlin Rich, University of Scranton

Greetings Community Research and Development Division members! We have been busy planning the 2019 SSSP Annual Meeting, being held August 9-11 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Many CRD-sponsored sessions will be offered, as well as a special one-day workshop on Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR). I attended this workshop last year and it was chock-full of invaluable information and discussion for those engaged in (or curious about) community-based learning and research. You can register for this workshop when you register for the regular meeting. See page 5 for information about the CRD-sponsored sessions and page 9 for description of the CBPAR workshop.



In this edition, our newsletter editor Jennifer Skinnon interviews this year's CRD outstanding graduate paper award winner, Olanike Ojelabi, who is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Public Policy and Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Olanike will be honored at the SSSP Awards Ceremony on Saturday, August 10 from 6:45pm-7:45pm. The Division-Sponsored Reception will follow from 7:45pm-8:45pm. All members and potential members are welcome to attend!

We would also like to congratulate the winners of the Community Partner Paper Award, which analyzes the partnership between the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness and researchers from the University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco State University. We will honor the recipients at the CRD Business Meeting on Friday, August 9 from 12:30-2:10pm. All CRD members are encouraged to attend.

Lastly, while we are in the process of electing a new Division Chair (and please don't forget to vote in the run-off election!), I wanted to express how amazing the experience of chairing CRD has been these past two years. The opportunity to serve SSSP and this division has allowed me to meet so many wonderful people and gain insight into all the excellent work our members do. That insight continues to inspire the work I do in my own community and in support of community-based learning and research at my university.

Thanks so much for your support during this time and I'll see you in NYC!

Meghan

2019 Annual Meeting Program

Theme

Nancy J. Mezey, SSSP President, Monmouth University



Illuminating the SOCIAL in Social Problems

In his book, *The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*, the late Allan G. Johnson wrote that the most important thing sociology teaches us is that we are always participating in social systems that are larger than ourselves. Because we are constantly shaping and being shaped by social systems, individualistic models do not work for understanding the social world or for solving social problems. Indeed, Johnson tells us that if we want to solve social problems, we need to understand, explain, and address what is “social” about those problems.

The theme for the 2019 SSSP meetings is a call for social justice theorists, empiricists, practitioners, activists, policy makers, and analysts, to draw deeply and widely on sociological teachings to illuminate the social in all aspects of social problems. If our founding scholars were correct, then our ability to illuminate the social in social problems will help solve some of the major social problems of our time.

The move away from individualistic models is critical in such an illumination. Individualist models focus on the characteristics of individuals without looking at the relationships that connect individuals to each other, to groups, or to larger society. Johnson reminds us that people do not exist outside of systems, and systems cannot function without people. And yet, “people are not systems, and systems are not people,” but the relationship between the two is critical to understanding the social world and the problems caused by unequal power relationships institutionalized throughout history. In other words, a forest is not just a bunch of individual trees, but rather “a collection of trees that exist in *a particular relation* to one another.” Similarly, society is not simply a collection of unrelated individuals, but rather a collection of people that exist in a particular relation to one another; and those relationships create the very essence of what is “social” in our lives. So when we illuminate the social in social problems, we are illuminating the patterned, structural, and institutionalized relationships that exist among us and connect us together to create our larger social world.

Because of an increasing focus on individualistic models, public discourse lacks a social structural analysis regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, mass incarceration, and immigration, to name a few. For the 2019 SSSP meetings, I call on our membership to reclaim and refocus that public discourse. Let us carefully consider the connective spaces between the trees that creates the larger forests; the spaces in which social problems are embedded and perpetuated by unequal power relationships. Let us push forward our disciplinary roots to explain what is social about social problems, so that what we understand to be obvious becomes obvious to everyone around us and becomes part of popular thought and parlance.

As a community of social science and social justice researchers, activists, and practitioners, I invite the SSSP membership to join together during the 2019 meetings in New York City to use our collective sociological imaginations to explore each corner of the social world. Our exploration should have the explicit and strategic intention of illuminating the social in social problems and applying what we study and practice in pursuit of becoming a more just global society.

While in New York City, explore this great urban forest as well. Go north on the Manhattan island to Harlem and see the birthplace of some of the greatest American culture. Travel to the southern part of the island and discover how Wall Street got its name. While there, find out where over 10,000 people of African descent were buried in the 1700s, or visit the areas where immigrants lived in tenement homes and started small businesses. Take a ferry to Ellis Island or Liberty Island. Stroll or bike through Central Park, walk the High Line, or visit any number of the green spaces in the City. Take a subway to Brooklyn to see Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party." Travel to Greenwich Village and check out where a significant part of the modern LGBTQ movement began. And of course, take in the many shows and good eats that NYC has to offer. As you wander around, think about how the spaces of the City connect the seemingly separate neighborhoods and histories to create one large and complex city.

Just as the possibilities of exploring and connecting the many spaces in NYC are endless, so are the possibilities of exploring and connecting the endless spaces of the social world. And as NYC becomes a more illuminated city to you as you explore, let us use our expertise in August 2019 to help illuminate the social in social problems with an intention of informing the rest of the world.

2020 Annual Meeting
Program Theme: TBD
August 7–9, 2020
Park Central Hotel
San Francisco, CA

CRD Sessions at 2019 SSSP Annual Conference

Session #	Session Title	Date/Time	Room
1	Integration of Immigrants and Refugees into Local Communities in the New Immigration Era	Date: Friday, August 9 Time: 8:30 AM - 10:10 AM	State Suite
2	Integration of Immigrants and Refugees into Local Communities in the New Immigration Era II	Date: Friday, August 9 Time: 10:30 AM - 12:10 PM	State Suite
3	Community-Based Youth Organizations and Social Change	Date: Friday, August 9 Time: 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM	State Suite
4	Community-Led Revitalization versus Gentrification	Date: Friday, August 9 Time: 4:30 PM - 6:10 PM	State Suite
5	Rural Communities in the US and Beyond	Date: Saturday, August 10 Time: 8:30 AM - 10:10 AM	Plaza Suite
6	Education, Community, and Place	Date: Saturday, August 10 Time: 10:30 AM - 12:10 PM	Plaza Suite
7	Human Subjects Research: Tricky Subject, Tricky Research, and the IRB	Date: Saturday, August 10 Time: 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM	Promenade Suite
8	Trauma, Transience, and Transformation: Community-Engaged Partnerships for Change	Date: Saturday, August 10 Time: 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM	Promenade Suite
9	Community Engaged Teaching about Youth, Aging, and Matters of Life and Death	Date: Sunday, August 11 Time: 8:30 AM - 10:10 AM	Broadway Suite
10	High-Quality Community Engaged Partnerships in Pedagogy and Practice	Date: Sunday, August 11 Time: 10:30 AM - 12:10 PM	Broadway Suite
11	Community-Based Ethnographies	Date: Sunday, August 11 Time: 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM	Broadway Suite
12	Community, Violence, and the Law	Date: Sunday, August 11 Time: 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM	Broadway Suite

CRD Community Partner Paper Award 2019

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.

Congratulations to San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness!

Lisa Marie Alatorre (San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness), Chris Herring (University of California Berkeley), and Diara Yarbrough (San Francisco State University)



Formed in 1987, the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness has been organizing against the criminalization of poverty for over 20 years. In collaboration with sociologists, we conducted a PAR study about the effects of the criminalization of homelessness in San Francisco. This paper discusses 1) how our participatory research process enhanced the quality of data and worked as a vehicle for organizing 2) how our project impacted the organization, city, and narrative on the criminalization of homelessness and 3) how we confronted assumptions about expertise as we worked to establish homeless people as leaders and experts in the local policy arena. Our successes, struggles, and process will be useful to other researchers and organizers designing and implementing projects that establish the expertise and leadership of directly affected communities.

Summer 2019 Graduate Student Spotlight

Olanike (Nike) Ojelabi

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

I am a 2nd year doctoral student of Public Policy in the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB). I chose to attend UMB because of the excellent Public Policy program offered, the interdisciplinary nature of the program, knowledgeable faculty, and vast opportunities for learning and collaboration within the department and affiliated centers and institutes at the university.



Prior to joining the UMB community, I worked with different local nonprofit organizations in Worcester, MA, where I advocated for vulnerable youth and families, connected them with community resources, provided expertise in behavioral health management, and assisted high-risk youth in residential and non-residential programs to develop positive life skills. My experience working in diverse nonprofit settings greatly influenced my interest in the study of nonprofits. I became interested in understanding how nonprofit organizations serve and engage people in underrepresented communities.

In addition to working on my doctoral degree, I serve as a student advisory board member in the broader UMB community. In this position, I collaborate with other graduate students and executive university administrators on social and policy issues relevant to the student body. I hold two master's degrees: one in Nonprofit Management from Worcester State University, and the other in International Social Policy from the University of Bath, UK. I earned my bachelor's degree in Sociology from Bowen University, Nigeria. I have been fortunate to use knowledge from these disciplines to further my research and policy interests.

What is the focus of your doctoral dissertation research?

My research interests focus on influencing policies on nonprofit organizations, immigration, and population health. For my dissertation, I am still working on the specifics. However, I am broadly interested in understanding and advancing local nonprofits' engagement in health promotion and equity. I am looking to engage in community-based participatory research where I can work hand-in-hand with the community. One of the goals of considering the method is to allow for engagement that will be empowering for nonprofits and members of the community most directly marginalized in terms of health and healthcare. I believe together we can identify collective goals for social and policy change. Community-based participatory research can be very challenging and time-consuming, but I hope I am able to ground my dissertation research in the knowledge of the local community as much as possible.

What made you interested in studying community nonprofits and African immigrants?

As I mentioned earlier, my interest in nonprofits is greatly influenced by my experience working with local nonprofits. I became particularly interested in studying community nonprofits and African immigrants after I volunteered for a local nonprofit that served African refugees and immigrant youth and families. This nonprofit devotes itself to assisting African refugees and immigrant youth (K-12) to achieve educational and social stability, and also offers additional social services to parents to help with their integration.

In my role as the volunteer outreach coordinator assistant, I was charged with maintaining and navigating a strong network of providers to facilitate youth and family referrals to needed resources. Working in this capacity

helped me realize the vast role of nonprofits, the need for extensive collaboration among local nonprofits, and the challenges of finding culturally appropriate services to meet the unique needs of minority populations like African immigrants.

Where do you see your work going in the future?

I see my work advancing in ways that can really influence policies relevant to nonprofits' involvement in health promotion and equity, particularly at the local level. Through my dissertation work I hope to provide practical recommendations to city managers or policymakers at the local level to improve nonprofits' presence and activities in serving underrepresented populations.

Do you have any advice for fellow graduate students?

I would say to fellow graduate students, recognize that your work is of great importance and identify why the phenomenon you study matters among many other important issues in our world today. If possible, identify your niche early and connect with professional organizations and networks that can help broaden your knowledge in the area of your focus. Also, seek opportunities to make your work seen and acknowledged by scholars and the public. Be open to the critical review of your work and be readily available to offer critical feedback on the work of other scholars. Lastly, take full advantage of the opportunities you have as a graduate student – attend conferences, present your work, apply for relevant funding, and submit your work for awards and recognition.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with Division members?

The annual 2019 annual meeting is my first SSSP conference, as I recently joined SSSP. I look forward to the meeting and the opportunity to present my work and connect with other scholars working to advance social justice and equity.

I am particularly excited to be a part of the community of scholars in the Community Research and Development Division who share a similar interest in understanding and addressing inequality at the community level. I look forward to interacting with members.

SSSP CRD Member Accomplishments:

Amanda McMillan Lequieu will be starting as an Assistant Professor in Environmental Sociology at Drexel University in Philadelphia, within the Sociology Department.

Alan V. Grigsby earned his PhD in Sociology from the University of Cincinnati in August 2018 with his dissertation, "Integration without Assimilation: Black Social Life in a Diverse Suburb." In May, he completed his first year as Assistant Professor at Curry College, within the Sociology and Criminal Justice Department.

Matthew H. McLeskey was awarded an Advanced PhD Fellowship from the University at Buffalo's Humanities Institute for his dissertation project, "Life in a Leaded Landscape: Understanding Housing, Stigma, and Struggle in the Rust Belt."

Meghan Ashlin Rich was promoted to the rank of Full Professor of Sociology at the University of Scranton, 2019.

Publications:

Leverentz, Andrea, Adam Pittman and Jennifer Skinnon. 2018. "Place and Perception: Constructions of Community and Safety Across Neighborhoods and Residents." *City & Community*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12350>

Rich, Meghan Ashlin. 2019. "Arts Districts and the Reimagining of Neighborhood through Arts and Culture-based Development." Pp. 318-31 in *The Routledge Companion to Urban Imaginaries*, edited by Christoph Lindner and Miriam Meissner. Abington, Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Rodgers, Diane M. 2019. "Local Chapter Outposts: A Dilemma for Federated Social Movement Organizations." *Sociological Inquiry*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12271>

Special Calls, Invitations, and Announcements

Monday, August 12, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Location: Roosevelt Hotel, Room: Sutton Suite, 2nd Floor Conference Level

Registration Fee: \$25 for unemployed/activist/student registrants or \$50 for employed registrants

The Community Research and Development Division is hosting an interactive workshop for researchers who use or are interested in community-based participatory action research. The workshop will (1) offer a foundational orientation to the purpose and process of CBPAR; and (2) provide a context within which CBPAR scholars, both new and old, can learn from each other and build a stronger network. This one-day workshop will be divided into two sections. In the morning, Section I will cover the following topics: (1) What is CBPAR and Why Do It?; (2) Capacity Building and Community Partnerships; and (3) CBPAR Methodology – Balancing Methodological Rigor with Community Need. In the afternoon, Section II will cover the following topics: (1) Data dissemination: To Whom, How, and Where; (2) Publishing and Funding: Challenges and Opportunities; and (3) Maintaining Partnerships and Building Steam. The workshop will be collaboratively delivered by Drs. Charlotte Ryan, Felicia Sullivan, and Jessica Lucero. The workshop will be interactive in nature and provide opportunities for attendees to discuss their CBPAR research ideas and receive feedback. For researchers with prior training and/or experience, there will be a breakout session provided to discuss their work and concerns. Workshop fee includes morning coffee.



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