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EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

Educational Problems Division Newsletter of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Volume 6, Issue 3

Greetings From the Chair...

I hope this message finds you well! As your new Chair, I wish to thank all my colleagues for their support. I would also like to thank Billie Gastic, past Chair of the Division. Dr. Gastic is a conscientious and dedicated colleague. We appreciate her leadership and support of our Division!

As the fall semester comes to a close and winter comes upon us, let us reflect on all the good things that we have accomplished over the last year. It's been an exciting time in the academy and our colleagues have been busy teaching, researching and providing service across the spectrum.

I hope you are as excited as I am about next year's annual meeting in Boston. The theme is "Crossing Borders: Activist Scholarship, Globalization, and Social Justice." The initial Call for Papers is listed on page 3 of this newsletter. I encourage you to submit a paper and share your knowledge with the academy and the public.

Information regarding the Student Paper Competition can be found on page 4. In the past we have had great contributions by students and we hope to keep that tradition going! Also, there is a position open for the SSSP Executive Officer—see page 4 for details of this very important position. In addition, be sure to check out what your colleagues are doing in the "Member News and Announcements" section on page 5.

As always, feel free to contact me if you have any news, tidbits or vital information that you would like to share with the Division. I look forward to working with you in continuing the great legacy of our dynamic Division!

Happy holidays!

Otis Grant

Division Chair, 2007-2009

Crossing Borders:

Activist Scholarship, Globalization, and Social Justice

58th Annual Meeting of the Society
for the Study of Social Problems

July 31-August 2, 2008

Boston, MA

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Education Reform and the Power of the “Engaged Teacher”

~ Otis B. Grant, Indiana University South Bend

Education reform is often a source of disillusionment. Policy makers who initiate federal, state, and local education reform place the blame on practitioners. Policy makers consider teachers and school administrators to be hostile to education reform. Educators working at the local and classroom levels blame policy makers for drafting initiatives that lack understanding of contemporary social problems. Is poverty, lack of funding, violence, and apathy core problems or merely symptoms? Notwithstanding, policy makers and practitioners often blame the students, and by implication, the parents for the quandaries of education.

This of course begs the question: If teachers and administrators are not prepared to cope with the rigors of education reform, why would parents and students be expected to comprehend and adhere to reform-mandated regulations, procedures, and requirements? Whereas all involved readily acknowledge the goal of increasing student performance, there are disparate, and quite often, conflicting assumptions about the relative responsibility students have in their [own] education process.

Most experienced educators have taught the “chosen few.” Those students who seem to have everything going against them, yet they succeed against “all odds.” Likewise, many educators can recall the “fortunate ones,” students that have every advantage yet they floundered. Because of their station in life, these students rarely become negative

statistics. Each of these accounts, however, highlights exceptions. Education policy should not be built on exceptions. Rather, education policy should help frame the rules. Hence, the issue is not whether there are those who prove the exception to the rule, but rather what the rule is, and whether the rule is fair.

In the effort to overcome harmful organizational structures and institutional roadblocks, the power of teacher engagement should not be underestimated. Engaged teachers do not succumb to the political whims of policy makers. They are nurturing and caring and provide learning environments that actually confront factors that inhibit the student’s ability to learn. The engaged teacher attempts to prevent failure by any student. For students and the community at large, in the absence of positive adult role models the engaged teacher stands supreme. Accordingly, education policy should be framed from the mindset of “engagement,” and from the perspective of the teacher-student relationship. Despite political hyperbole, engaged teachers have never failed. There is no indication that they will do so in the future.



The democratic ideal demands of the school that it shall give the child’s own experience a social value; that it shall teach the child to direct his or her activities and adjust them to those of other people.

~ Jane Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics (1907)

Educational Problems Division Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Sessions 2008 Annual Meeting Call for Papers

Sessions

Session 1: Getting Out of the Ivory Tower: Applying Scholarship to Activism (Thematic)

Organizer: Otis Grant, Indiana University South Bend

Email: ogrant@iusb.edu

Session 29: Coordinating Families

(co-sponsored with Family; and Institutional Ethnography)

Organizer: Alison Griffith, York University

Email: agriffith@edu.yorku.ca

Session 30: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching about Globalization (Thematic)

(co-sponsored with Teaching Social Problems)

Organizer: Otis Grant, Indiana University South Bend

Email: ogrant@iusb.edu

Session 31: The Reality of Cultural Capital in the Classroom

(co-sponsored with Teaching Social Problems)

Organizer: Susan C. Warner, Cedarville University

Email: warners@cedarville.edu

Go to www.sssp1.org for SSSP Online Submission procedures. Deadline: January 31, 2008.

2008 Program Participation Schedule

Deadline for submission of papers/proposals to session organizers of the Program Co-Chairs. **January 31, 2008**

Participants must be notified by the session organizer of acceptance or referral of paper/proposal. **February 18, 2008**

Session/paper titles and contact information for each author must be in the Executive Office. **March 3, 2008**

Preliminary programs will be distributed all current members via email. **May 15, 2008**

2008 Annual Meeting, Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers, Boston, MA July 31-August 2, 2008

2008 STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

Call for Papers

The Educational Problems Division announces its **2008 Graduate Student Paper Competition**. Papers must address a contemporary educational problem and may be empirical or theoretical in nature. Authors must be current graduate students or recent graduates with conferral dates no earlier than January 2008. Only unpublished, single-author papers will be considered. Papers must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages (excluding notes, references, tables and figures). All papers must include a 150-200 word abstract and be prepared for anonymous review with the author's name and institutional affiliation appearing only on the title page. Winners will receive a small monetary prize and a complimentary ticket to the awards banquet at which all winners will be recognized.

All papers must be submitted electronically (as an attachment) to the Division Chair, Otis Grant (ogrant@iusb.edu). Please include your name, institutional affiliation and contact information in the body of your email.

Deadline for submissions: May 14, 2008

SEARCH FOR SSSP EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) announces an opening for the position of Executive Officer. The SSSP is an interdisciplinary and international community of scholars, activists, practitioners, and students creating greater social justice through social research. The members of the SSSP work in colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, research organizations, activist groups, and other applied settings. A detailed description of the Executive Officer's position is posted on the SSSP web site, <http://www.sssp1.org>. Preference will be given to those familiar with, or a commitment to, SSSP's purposes. Interested applicants may apply by submitting a letter of interest, CV, contact information for three references and a letter of support from the applicant's Department Chair and Dean to: Gabriel Aquino, Chair of the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee, Department of Sociology, Westfield State College, 577 Western Avenue, Westfield, MA 01086 (gaquino@wsc.ma.edu). The letter of interest should include a statement of the applicant's vision for the future of the Society and understanding of the duties of the Executive Officer that are stated in the SSSP Bylaws and Operations Manual. The candidate should also indicate what support the host institution is willing to provide if selected for the Executive Office site. Institutional support information should be corroborated by the letters from an official with budgetary authority. Applications received by February 15, 2008 will receive full consideration. Compensation will include salary assistance and travel.

The Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (POSPC), working in consultation with the Board of Directors and the Treasurer, will screen the applications and will take into consideration the protection/promotion of affirmative action and cultural diversity interests, as well as the qualifications of the applicants and the resources available from the applicants' institutions, including estimated budgets for operating the Executive Office at their institutions. Following established procedures, up to three application files will be supplied to the Board of Directors by July 1, 2008. Finalists will be interviewed by the POSPC and the Board separately at the 2008 Annual Meeting. A site visit to the selected site will be conducted not later than November 1, 2008. Final appointment will take place by March 1, 2009. The President of the Board, Chair of the POSPC, and newly appointed Executive Officer will make arrangements to have the Executive Office moved to its new location – following the 2009 Annual Meeting.

Member News and Announcements...

ALAN KAHN, South University, Savannah, GA, has been working with his sociology club on a mentoring program for his local public school. They have been working with the superintendent on developing new and creative ways to help the public school student become more successful.

KEN KYLE, California State University-East Bay, reviewed the book *Widening Access to Education as Social Justice: Essays in Honor of Michael Omolewa*, edited by Akpovire Oduaran and Harbans Bhola (2006, Amsterdam: Springer). The review was published in the November issue of *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 87-90.

FIONA PEARSON, Central Connecticut State University, has published *The New Welfare Trap: Case Managers, College Education and TANF Policy*, *Gender & Society*, 21:723-48 (2007).

Of Special Interest...

The **International Sociological Association** has organized the First ISA Forum of Sociology entitled "Sociological Research and Public Debate." It is scheduled for September 5-8, 2008 in Barcelona, Spain. RC04, the Sociology of Education Research Committee of the ISA will hold sessions on "Accountability, standards, testing, and inequality: Critiques, collaboration, and future research." Abstracts will be accepted through December 31, 2007. Abstracts of approximately 250 words should be sent to **GARY DWORKIN** (Division member), at gdworkin@mail.uh.edu.

The announcement from the ISA can be found at (<http://www.isa@isa-sociology.org>) and RC04 website (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc04.htm>).

**Be sure to check out the SSSP website at www.sssp1.org
for employment and fellowship opportunities!**



For more information regarding the Educational Problems Division, please contact:

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