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EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

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

Summer 2009 Volume 8, Issue 1

Greetings From the “Outgoing” Chair...

I hope you all are eagerly anticipating our conference in San Francisco! Just a few items to mention... In this edition of the newsletter you will find the **2009 Graduate Student Paper Award Recipient**. You will also find that the Division is sponsoring/co-sponsoring exciting **panel sessions**. We ask that you attend and encourage your colleagues! Our **Divisional meeting** will be held on Friday, August 7th from 4:30-6:10 pm. The **joint reception** will also be held on Friday from 6:30-7:30 pm. The reception is a great opportunity to mingle with your colleagues while enjoying some tasty treats! Our Division is currently seeking resolutions so feel free to email me at ogrant@iusb.edu any suggestions or comments that you may have.

My time as Chair of the Division is coming to an end. I would like to thank **Michele Koontz** and her hard working team including **Sharon Shumaker** for their dedication and service to SSSP and the support they have given me throughout the years. I would also like to thank **Dr. Thomas Hood**, whose leadership over the years embodies the dynamic vision and action that is the hallmark of SSSP!

Our new Division Chair will be our colleague **Dr. Pamela Quiroz**. She was a past chair of our Division and she brings experience and enthusiasm. I know she will have our full support! As you contemplate during the summer months, remember the mission of our great organization and continue to support and empower each other as we strive to make positive changes in the world. It has indeed been a pleasure serving you and I look forward to seeing you in San Fran!

Sincerely,

Otis Grant

Division Chair, 2007-2009

Race, Ethnicity, and the Continuing Problem of the Color Line

59th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

August 7-August 9, 2009

San Francisco, CA

Visit www.sssp1.org for Preliminary Program

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Congratulations to Arina Gertseva 2009 Graduate Student Paper Award Recipient

Arina Gertseva, a PhD Candidate in the Sociology Department of Washington State University will be recognized at the awards ceremony along with the other Divisional paper awardees. As our winner, Arina received a complimentary ticket to the banquet and a cash prize. She will present her winning paper, **“Does Legal Apprehension in Adolescence Effect Educational and Occupational Attainments in Adulthood”** at the Student Award Winning Papers session (Session 83) on Sunday, August 9, from 12:30 pm-2:10 pm. Congratulations Arina!

Abstract

In attempting to resolve the conflict between deterrence and labeling perspective which differ in their theoretical predictions about the effect of sanctioning, this paper explores the differential impact of legal sanctions consisting of different levels of official processing (being charged, being convicted, and being on probation) on adult educational and occupational achievements. This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79), a large and nationally representative sample, to compare the educational and occupational attainments of adults who had a history of juvenile delinquency but avoided contact with justice system with those of adults who have been officially apprehended. By demonstrating that application of legal sanctions may have the differential deterrent effect on individuals with various delinquency experiences, the present research provides some support for both labeling and deterrence theories.



Welcome Incoming Chair!

**Educational Problems Division Chair
2009-2011**

Pamela Quiroz

University of Illinois at Chicago

paquiroz@uic.edu

Thank you for letting me serve you!

**Educational Problems Division Chair
2007-2009**

Otis Grant

Indiana University South Bend

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Educational Problems Division Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Sessions

Teaching About Race in the Color-blind Era (Session 103, THEMATIC)

Organizers & Presiders: **Kris Macomber** and **Sarah E. Rusche**, North Carolina State University

Papers:

“Seeking the ‘Common Denominator of Human Universality’ In What is Culturally Distinct: The Educational Thought of Alain LeRoy Locke,” **Ronald Porter**, University of California at Berkeley

“Shades of Sexual Assault: Masculinity, Peer Groups, and College Men’s Contempt for Women’s Sexuality,” **Brian Sweeney**, Long Island University

“Taking Account of Race/Ethnic Relations Textbooks: Disciplinary Trends Rarely Reflected,” **Kathleen Fitzgerald**, Columbia College

“A Slap in the Face: Student Perceptions of University Responsibility in Regulating Racial Climate,” **Kathryn Sweeney**, Purdue University Calument, **Adria Welcher** and **Regine Jackson**, Emory University

Teaching About Human Rights (Session 7, co-sponsored with Global; Law and Society; Poverty, Class, and Inequality; Program Committee; Racial and Ethnic Minorities; and Teaching Social Problems)

Organizer and Presider: **Otis B. Grant**, Indiana University South Bend

Papers:

“‘And Roma were Victims, too.’ The Roma Genocide and Holocaust Education in Romania,” **Michelle Kelso**, University of Michigan

“Multiculturalism as a New Ideology: The Race and Ethnic Representation in Japan’s Junior High Schools’ English Language Textbooks between 1980s to the Present,” **Mieko Yamada**, Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne

“Mystifications in the Construction, Appropriation, and Teaching of Human Rights,” **Stephen Adair**, Central Connecticut State University

“Using the Right to Health as a Framework for Fostering Integrative Learning: Lessons from Teaching Issues in Health and Illness,” **Alex Otieno**, Arcadia University

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Sessions continued...

Institutional Technologies of Education (Session 34, co-sponsored with Institutional Ethnography)

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: **Lois Andre-Bechely**, California State University, Los Angeles

Papers:

“The Colonizing Reach of Schooling: Mapping the Translocal Relations Organizing the Educational Work of Families with Young Children,” **Roz Stooke, Pam McKenzie and Suzanne Smythe**, The University of Western Ontario

“Educational Governance Technologies in Ontario: In Pursuit of Student Achievement,” **Naomi Nichols**, York University

“Explicating the Ruling Relations that Inhibit Inclusion for Students with Disabilities,” **Deanna Adams**, Syracuse University

“Managing Quality or Quality Control?” **Mandy Frake-Mistak**, York University

Juveniles and Education: Symbolic Frameworks and Institutional Issues (Session 93,

co-sponsored with Crime and Juvenile Delinquency; Law and Society; Program Committee; Racial and Ethnic Minorities; and Teaching Social Problems)

Organizer & Presider: **Otis B. Grant**, Indiana University South Bend

Papers:

“What Lessons Can Public Schools Learn From KIPP Charter Schools?” **Marissa Shaw, Cecily Medved and Kiara Garcia**, California State University, East Bay

“Teaching about US Punishment to Privileged Liberal Arts Students.” **R. Tyson Smith**, Dickinson College

“Canadian Multiculturalism as an Official Policy of Inclusion?: Immigrant Youth, Identity and Symbolic Constructions,” **Maryam Nabavi**, University of British Columbia

“The Manifestation and Consequences of Identity Issues for Children of ‘The Enemy’: A Continuum Approach,” **Selina Coleman and Alex Otieno**, Arcadia University

“Studying Race & Media: Is Reifying Race Unavoidable?” **Natalie Byfield**, St. John’s University



IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF TEACHERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM MICHAEL JACKSON

~ Otis B. Grant, Indiana University South Bend

For teachers, the cultural understanding of identity constitutes an intellectual tool (see e.g., Valimaa 1988, p. 120). When students are asked about their experiences with teachers, they often reveal that classroom interactions are relational; in fact, teachers and students are in a constant relationship with each other (Van Manen 1994, p.135). The question becomes even more precarious when scholars examine the substantially lower levels of educational achievement of racial and ethnic minority students, including African Americans and various ethnic groups that are categorized under the pan-ethnic label "Latino" (Carter 2006, p. 304).

Two distinct conceptual models can be utilized to elucidate the complexity of society, identity and learning. The first conceptualization refers to socialization; in this case, a macro level manifestation of social structure. The second highlights individuation; which conceptualizes an individual's comprehension of human nature.

Social Structures and Psychological Identity

Structurally, identity is important because it shapes how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it. Psychologists and philosophers have delineated the (un)conscious links between identity, self and society. For example, Mead (1934) developed a fairly detailed psycho-cultural explanation of how identity, self, and society are constructed and interact in relationship to one another. Vygotsky (1978) argues that as individuals interact in society, their mind and the self develop knowledge of, and beliefs about, the world and their place in it.

At the micro level, the mind and (un)consciousness are linked and because selfhood and identity are socially constructed and are an important part of the learning process, we can argue that identity and learning are imperatively connected. People are understood by others in particular ways; consequently, identity is important because people act towards one another depending on such understanding (McCarthy & Birr Moje 2002, pp. 228-229). Implicit though not always (un)conscious in this post analytical paradigm is race and identity.

When contemplating teaching or merely thinking about their students, teachers should consider the affect identity plays in the teaching process. For instance, a student's identity is influenced by how they interact, respond, and learn in the classroom. Or said

another way, a student's experience with their family, their previous experience with social institutions such as schools, religion and the larger social and political frameworks in which these social institutions operate, shape their classroom interactions. In sum, what these students are in terms of race, class and gender identity has been influenced by institutions and reflected in their classroom behavior (McCarthy & Birr Moje 2002, pp. 228-229).

Symbolic Interaction and the Method of Michael

Symbolic interaction is a sociological theory that views society as consisting of the patterns common to a group of people. For symbolic interaction theorists, societal quandaries are not considered objective conditions but rather the issues that people have decided to call (i.e., socially constructed) social problems.

Critical to the symbolic interaction paradigm is the (pre)supposition that human behavior is not simply a response to external stimuli; rather, a person is "self-reflective" and subsequently "minded" (see e.g., Snyder and Spreitzer 1984, p. 152). Accordingly, the interactions perspective is an appropriate framework for examining the meanings associated with the role of the teacher with emphasis on the structural arrangements that facilitate commitment. Here, Michael Jackson offers a post analytic framework of identity, society and behavior.

Michael Jackson was born on August 29, 1958 in Gary, Indiana. At the time of Michael's birth, Gary, Indiana was already a post industrial city deeply in decline. Michael's career in show business started at the age of five, when he was the youngest member of his family singing group, the Jackson 5. Michael eventually became the leader of the group, much to the chagrin of his older brother Jermaine.

The Jackson 5 were part of the Motown records founded by Berry Gordy, a man known for his ruthless business ethics and his insistence that Motown be a place where the performers aggressively compete with each other. During the 1960s the Jackson 5 had four consecutive number one singles, each record selling more than a million copies. In the late 1970s Michael left Motown and the Jackson 5 and began his solo career in earnest. Teaming up with legendary producer Quincy Jones, Michael recorded *Off the Wall* (1979), an album that is credited with setting new standards in

popular music. Michael's 1982 album *Thriller* was listed as the number one album on Billboard magazine for 37 weeks.

Three music videos based on the *Thriller* album – “Billie Jean,” “Beat It,” and “Thriller,” became the top rated videos on cable, and are credited with legitimizing the cable television network MTV and opening the way for other African American artists to appear on the network. Michael's third collaboration with Quincy Jones was *Bad* (1987), which became the first album to yield five number one singles.

Dubbed the “King of Pop,” Michael was elected to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997 as a member of the Jacksons, and in 2001 as a solo performer. Michael is arguably one of the world's most well-known entertainers. When the media first reported his death there was so much traffic on Twitter that it caused the site to crash.

Developmentally, Michael started his career as a man child. As the lead singer for the Jackson 5, he sang of sexual longing. Yet, by most accounts Michael was not considered threatening. As such, he was allowed to “cross over” and perform in front of white audiences.

Michael spent the majority of his life in the public eye. During that time, the public witnessed Michael's physical appearance change drastically. Among other things, his skin lightened, his hair changed from Afro to straight, and his nose was surgically transformed. Indeed, it was an open joke in the African American community that his song “Black or White” actually referred to his physical appearance.

But jokes aside, Michael's situation speaks to the concept of identity. He did not have a good childhood; he often claimed that his mother was distant and his father was physically and mentally abusive. One wonders how Michael would have been if he had teachers that understood the concept of self and the significance of having a Black identity.

Because reality had not met his hopes and expectations, Michael attempted to replace it with a compensatory fantasy. His Neverland Ranch was a response to this stress. In addition to physically separating himself from society, he sought an ageless, androgynous physical appearance. For this he should not be faulted. Seeking a new identity is one of the cornerstones of Americanism. American culture and

identity have long been the reference group for those who came from other places only to discover that in America they are stigmatized by their “otherness.”

Eliminating the “Other”

By many measurable variables, African American and Latino communities lag in educational achievement. It is rare for African American and Latino students to have teachers of color. Moreover, like Michael Jackson many of these students come from dysfunctional homes. Sadly, for many of these students, positive role models are few and far between. That white teachers will be role models for African American and Latino students is virtually uncontested.

Identity is the result of the conflict between the self and the structure and system of relationships. Identity and (un)consciousness are an integral part of the learning process, and since selfhood and identity are linked, it could be argued that teachers provide a fundamental role in the development of a student's identity and selfhood. In the contemporary classroom, it is the role of the teacher to keep the student from becoming or existing as the “other.”

Michael Jackson knew he was an African American. He was also an international superstar who sold more records than any human being. He was inspired by people from all races. His persona embraced luminaries ranging from Sammy Davis, Jr., Sam Cook to Fred Astaire and Charlie Chaplin. Yet, despite his superstardom Michael Jackson was the quintessential outsider and the enigmatic “other.” The lesson of Michael Jackson should be taught and not forgotten.

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RECEPTIONS AND SPECIAL PROGRAM EVENTS

(check Program for additional activities or visit www.sssp1.org)

Thursday, August 6th

Welcoming Reception 6:00 pm- 7:00 pm

Friday, August 7th

Divisional Meeting 4:30 pm- 6:10 pm

Division-Sponsored Reception..... 6:30 pm- 7:30 pm

Graduate Student "Happy Hour"..... 7:45 pm- 8:45 pm

9th Annual AIDS Fundraiser..... 9:00 pm-10:30 pm

Saturday, August 8th

Presidential Address featuring President Steven E. Barkan 11:10 am-12:20 pm

Reception Honoring Dr. Thomas C. Hood, SSSP Executive Officer, 1990-2009 6:45 pm- 7:45 pm

Awards Banquet 8:00 pm-10:00 pm



Of Special Interest...

*Critical Sociology Conference**

Monday, August 10th, 9:00 am-6:15 pm

Stanford Court Hotel, San Francisco

**All registered participants of the SSSP Annual Meeting are entitled to complementary registration for this conference!*

Upcoming Annual Meetings

August 13-15, 2010

Atlanta, GA

August 12-14, 2011

Chicago, IL

August 16-18, 2012

Denver, CO

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