

On the Line

SSSP Labor Studies
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Message from the Chair

By Kendra Jason, Labor Studies Division Chairperson

Greetings! I must say I am enjoying the change of season and the nostalgic feelings autumn brings: the excitement, anxiety and energy of the fall semester, the holiday season, and the closing of another year- just to name a few. It is also time for my season as the Chair of the division to come to a close and we must elect a new chair for the 2011-2013 term.

I have sincerely enjoyed the benefits of this position. As a graduate student, I had the idiosyncratic opportunity to serve as chair of a specialized division of a nationally known and respected organization, SSSP, and lead what I wholeheartedly believe shapes the human condition- labor and work. Through work a person provides substance for his or her family and self. Work is an individual's definition of self and contribution to society. And the workplace is the base at which all types of inequality persist.

As chair, I have reached a broad audience through this newsletter on topics I feel as relevant to our division that are shaped by my own research and interests. I have been honored to serve as the voice of graduate students, young academics, and labor activists over the past two years. I have built friendships and associations it may have taken me years to accomplish by being the point person for the Labor Studies Division in executive meetings, social gatherings, and various professional conferences.

I am a 31 year old Black female doctoral student at North Carolina State University and with the support of the SSSP executive board, the overall membership and especially, our special division membership, I have been granted an opportunity and a platform that many other respected professional memberships would have not even considered. That is what makes SSSP what it is and I am so grateful for that.

I urge you to consider being the next chair of our division. If you feel you are too busy remember that we all are. We are in professions that do not rest. I can honestly say that I have been fully supported in all things concerning my duties and the responsibilities do not take up much time. If you do not think this platform is for you, please consider a nomination as we will be voting soon.

Finally, as my last formal act as chair, I would like to ask for your support in changing our division name to "Labor and Workplace Studies." Our editors, Dan Tope and Ted Brimeyer and I discussed this at the 2010 national conference. We thought it would be a great way to open up the division. There is an impression that the "Labor



Studies Division” is only about unions and the labor process, yet as our former chair, Charles Koebler, so eloquently put it “our division advocates equality, justice, democracy, recognition, appreciation, and respect for those who work.” By adding the term *workplace* to our division title, our aim is to attract membership interested in workplace studies and workers, broaden our perspective, and provide a renewed meeting ground of interdisciplinary action. I hope to have your continued support as I close out my term and make way for the new chair.

MEET THE 2010 HARRY BRAVERMAN AWARD WINNER, SAUNJUHI VERMA, FOR OUR LABOR STUDIES DIVISION STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION (abstract below)



Saunjuhi Verma is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include migration studies, sociology of law, and concepts of race/ethnicity as entwined with immigration regulations. Her research projects involve two strands of inquiry: (1) gendered labor organizing practices and (2) migration theory and immigrant legality. Her M.A. thesis utilized gender analysis of subversive labor organizing strategies within garment factories of Bangalore, India.

Currently, her dissertation research evaluates the migration experiences of low wage South Asian guest workers into the U.S. oil industry. Given the recent economic downturn, her study asks why employers from the U.S. Gulf south continue to recruit labor from overseas, particularly Asia. Findings from her pilot study indicate a system of labor brokerage by which workers become indebted to employers and often slip into undocumented status. The population within the study immigrates through legal avenues and yet acquires illegal status. The study also evaluates how workers who have experienced various states of legal status make sense of their migration history and economic opportunities in the U.S.

MANIPULATING THE WEAKER SEX SCHEMA:

SUBVERSIVE GENDERED ACTION IN BANGALORE’S LABOR PROTESTS

In theories of gender as performance, context is emphasized for converting schema into intended gendered action. Recently, among these studies, the potential of “undoing” gender has reemerged as a focus of attention. This research engages scholarship by asking: Can schema of gender difference be used in ways that challenge gender inequity? This ethnographic study evaluates labor strategies in Indian export garment factories. Data shows contrary use of schema across adjacent physical spaces; inside factories female frailty schema results in women’s subservience, but directly outside factory gates, women exploit the same schema to challenge authority. Women’s public challenges alter gender dynamics between laborers and reconstitute factory level gendered practices. The paper argues that the referencing of physical spaces as public or private is significant for (1) contextualizing the enactment of female frailty schema, and (2) reformulating relations stemming from that performance. The relationship between space and contrary gender performance offers in-roads for addressing gender inequity.

Thinking Ahead to our 61st Annual Meeting
August 12-14, 2011
Renaissance Blackstone Chicago Hotel

Following our President A. Javier Trevino's conference thematic, *Service Sociology*, we have worked hard to put together a series of sessions and a panel titled the "Social Impacts of the 'Great Recession' that speak to the needs of the labor community. We are especially excited to have a conference located in the middle of such a historic and fertile area for labor. Please submit your work to one or more of the following sessions at SSSP1.org.

Service Work, Power, and Relationships; organized by Kendra Jason kjason@ncsu.edu

Social Movements, Unions and Worker Rights; organized by Ted Brimeyer
tbrimeyer@georgiasouthern.edu

How Service Workers Help Sustain Youth, Schools, and Communities. Co-sponsored by the Institutional Ethnography, Youth, Aging and the Life Course, and Labor Studies Divisions; Organized by Chris Wellin, Illinois State University cwellin@ilstu.edu., and Kendra Jason, North Carolina State University, kjason@ncsu.edu

Migration, Work and Racialization: Exploration in Institutional Ethnography Co-sponsored with Institutional Ethnography, Race and Ethnicity, and Labor Studies Divisions; Organized by Roxana Ng roxana.ng@utoronto.ca

Social Impacts of the "Great Recession"; Panel organized by Dan Tope dtope@fsu.edu and Ted Brimeyer tbrimeyer@georgiasouthern.edu

2011 Call for Student Paper Competitions and Outstanding Scholarship Awards

LABOR STUDIES DIVISION

Deadline 5/1/2011

One of the most important activities of the Labor Studies Division is to recognize the work of graduate students. As in the past, the division is soliciting graduate student papers that build on the legacy of the late Harry Braverman. The Award consists of a \$200 cash prize and a ticket to the annual SSSP awards banquet. The Braverman tradition includes work in a variety of areas, including (but not limited to): labor process studies, critical organization studies, research on the intersections of gender, race, and class at work, technical and organizational change and its impact on work culture, labor movements and resistance in the workplace, critical perspectives on labor markets and occupational transformation. Papers co-authored with faculty members will not be accepted. Single authored papers by graduate students and papers co-authored by graduate students are welcome. All papers will be evaluated by a committee composed of at least three Labor Studies Division faculty scholars. E-mail your paper and a short letter of submission identifying your graduate program to: Kendra Jason kjason@ncsu.edu.

Call for Chapter Proposals

In 2004 and 2008, the SSSP and the Justice 21 Committee published the first two volumes of the **Agenda for Social Justice**. Those reports contained chapters on a variety of social problems, among them poverty, educational inequality, unemployment, environmental health risks, global economic change, capital punishment, post-Katrina disaster response, gender inequality in the criminal justice system, the vulnerability of ESL students in public schools, surveillance technologies, civil unions, domestic violence.

We are now beginning our work on the third publication--**Agenda for Social Justice-2012**. This publication is designed to inform the public-at-large about the nation's most pressing social problems and to propose a public policy response to those problems. This project affirms the commitment of SSSP to social justice, and enables the members of the association to speak on public issues with the sponsorship of the corporate body. This report will be an "agenda for social justice," in that it will contain recommendations for action by elected officials, policy makers, and the public at large. The report will be distributed as widely as possible to policy makers, those in progressive media, and academics.

The quadrennial report will be a product of the most valid and reliable knowledge we have about social problems and it will be a joint effort of the members and Divisions of SSSP. We invite you to consider preparing a chapter for the 2012 publication. We ask you, individually or with colleagues, to consider submitting a brief proposal (1-2 pp) identifying a social problem of concern to members of SSSP, and respond to the questions:

- *What do we know?*
- *How do we know it?*
- *What is to be done?*

As the coordinating committee for **Justice 21**, we invite members to prepare a draft statement for a proposed contribution to the 2012 publication, tentatively to be produced and distributed by the Edwin Mellen Press (<http://www.mellenpress.com/>). For the 2012 edition, confirmed contributors include the following well-known sociologists: Frances Fox Piven, Alejandro Portes, and Amatai Etzioni. Please submit a copy of your 1-2 page proposals to each of the members of the committee by March 1, 2011, and contact us if you have questions or would like additional information. Final manuscripts will be due near the end of 2011, and will appear in print prior to the 2012 SSSP annual meetings in August 2012.

Glenn Muschert (chair), Miami University, muschegw@muohio.edu
Kathleen Ferraro, Northern Arizona University, kathleen.ferraro@nau.edu
Brian Klocke, SUNY Plattsburgh, bkloc001@plattsburgh.edu
JoAnn Miller, Purdue University, jlmiller@purdue.edu
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Jon Shefner, University of Tennessee, jshefner@utk.edu

For an expanded discussion of **Justice 21**, see the May 2001 issue of *Social Problems* ("Inventing Social Justice"). To see the 2004 and 2008 publications, see the SSSP website at the following address: <http://sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/323>



Recent Publications by our Members

Carolyn Cummings Perrucci and Dina Banerjee, 2010. "Gender, Race and Perceived Promotability among American Employees," pages 147-166 in Marcia T. Segal, editor, *Advances in Gender Research*, Volume 14, *Interactions and Intersections of Gendered Bodies at Work, at Home and at Play*. Emerald Books.

The authors examine the effects of gender, race, human capital work conditions and organizational characteristics on employees' current supervisory status at work, and their perceptions of their future promotability. Data are drawn from the salaried employees of The National Study of the Changing Workforce in 2002. In contrast to earlier research, non-white women are as likely as white women and non-white men to have attained supervisory status at work. There also is no gender or race effect on employees' perception of their future promotional opportunity.

Rhomberg, Chris. 2010. "A Signal Juncture: The Detroit Newspaper Strike and Post Accord Labor Relations in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 115, Number 6 (May): 1853–94

Dina Banerjee and Carolyn Cummings Perrucci, 2010. "Job Satisfaction: Impact of Gender, Race, Worker Qualifications And Work Context," pages 39-58 in Christine Williams and Kirsten Dellinger, editors, *Research in the Sociology of Work*, Volume 20, *Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace*, Emerald.

The authors examine perceived job satisfaction for a large national sample of employees in 2002. In a model that includes human capital and work context variables, race continues to significantly impact job satisfaction. Gender and race segregation do not impact job satisfaction, but having supportive coworkers does. Such support is more characteristic of women's than men's work relationships in these data, and may help account for women's comparable job satisfaction.

Robert Perrucci and Carolyn Cummings Perrucci, *America at Risk: The Crisis of Hope, Trust and Caring*, Roman and Littlefield, 2009.

In *America at Risk*, the authors identify the broad economic and technological changes that have led to the loss of high wage jobs, declining opportunity, and increased income and wealth inequality. Taking data from a thirty-year period, they apply a critical sociological lens to view the dominant economic, political, and cultural institutions that cause the main social problems affecting Americans.

REMINDERS:**Time to RENEW!**

If you have not renewed your 2011 SSSP membership, please do so as soon as possible. Don't forget to choose THE LABOR STUDIES DIVISION as one of your special problems divisions. We have less than 200 members and want our division to thrive. We also ask that you do at least one of the following to ensure our division's success:

- *sponsor a membership for a student;
 - *sponsor a membership for a colleague or friend;
 - *ask for SSSP brochures and make them available at your department and/or workplace;
 - *encourage fellow SSSP members to join the Labor Studies Division;
 - *promote SSSP to your students, colleagues, and peers;
 - *become (or continue to be) active at annual meetings;
 - *contribute to our newsletter with a book review, announcement, op ed, essay or special writing.
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Take your pick! Whatever type of CHAIR you will be, we need.



Get comfortable and lead the Division with your vision, your ideas, your direction and your passion!

Please send your nominations for Labor Studies Division Chair (2011-2013) to kjason@ncsu.edu by **November 22, 2010**