

# Poverty, Class, & Inequality

## Division Newsletter

Society for the Study of Social Problems

Fall 2004

### In this Issue:

- New Chair Welcome: Eric Swank**
- Parting Words from the Exiting Chair**
- Harrington Teaching Award Winner**
- 2004 Annual Meeting Recap**
- Globalization and Inequality Sessions Recap**
- Announcement of the 2005 Annual Meeting Session Titles, Organizers & Call for Papers**
- Dates & Deadlines**
- Book Recommendation List**
- 2005 Awards and Call for Nominations**
- Web Resources on Welfare Reform**
- Job Postings**
- Contact Information**

### New Chair Welcome: Eric Swank

Academic organizations exist for many purposes. At a basest individual level, professional groups such as SSSP can function as personal career boosters. Presentations at annual conference can pad the vita of cynical professors or offer helpful critiques to eager researchers. Similarly, talented schmoozers can use conferences as vehicles to more prestigious teaching gigs and larger research grants. And while these practices make sense in light of the limited job openings in higher education, this orientation is far from what the whole SSSP experience can be about.

Rather than seeing SSSP as another group that simply offers individualistic perks, I do hope that this section can offer collective benefits. I would like the PCI newsletter and the conference to be a collaborative effort in which people share frank and helpful insights with each other. These exchanges can come in many forms. At a core level, I hope that we will share crucial and nuanced information about the matters of inequality and hierarchy. With the continual class, race and gender polarizations in our society, and the possibility that George W. staying in the Whitehouse after the

November elections, all of us probably feel greater urgency in being well-informed public intellectuals that try to debunk the misperceptions and false solutions that are present in our current society.

In keeping with this theme, since I fear that the US body politic will keep in its current path irrelevant of a possible reprieve in this coming election, I would like to suggest some essays that explore the ways in which lefty professors can act on their political commitments and still keep their jobs (see the books *Radical Sociologists and the Movement* and *Feminist Sociology: Life Histories of a Movement*). Likewise, in the spirit of solidarity, it would be great to see seasoned professors sharing the tricks of the trade with their cohorts of younger scholars. Professors who have lead “job searches” could identify some job candidate faux pas or veteran instructors can reminisce about the adjustments they experienced as first-year assistant professors. On the other hand, it could be invigorating to see grad students directing us stogy and comfortable professors into more current directions of activism, theory and research. Perhaps some senior faculty need a strong reminder of what it is like to be a younger sociologist during an era of greater teaching and publishing expectations (public documents rarely include the impressions of workers in the lower stratum of this educational shop).

While this request is intentionally broad and open-ended, I can offer some concrete examples. Along teaching lines, we can recommend books and essays that work in our classes—the one’s that go beyond bland descriptions of social phenomena and actually engage the curiosities and social justice impetus of our students. Likewise, I hope that people can recommend insightful sources of recent works. Perhaps one can direct us to discerning bibliographies or create a brief list of the “great works” in a sub-field. Similarly, with numerous research centers, think tanks and journals posting papers on the web, some of us can share the better sites that offer good data or studies of interest (I did so in this edition).

Discussion of research topics can be just as interesting. I once skimmed a fascinating book title *Where Social Science Researchers Go Wrong*. As one might expect, the book was about authors publicly admitting to research blunders. While this material is funny in itself, it also broke down the façade of the impeccably-perfect researcher and gave warnings of pitfalls to avoid. So, I can see some of us writing essays about their research foibles. Likewise, people can write about the process of getting published. Perhaps one can offer some strategies on how to deal with revise-resubmits or how particular journals treat

their authors. Knowing the typical review pace of specific journals or which one's specialize in vitriolic or pretentious reviews could help us all.

I am not sure as to what will be the result of this welcoming essay. It is possible that my request seems inappropriate, silly, or not worth the effort. If that is the case, I guess we can stick with the standard parts of a newsletter. On the other hand, with only a few submissions this newsletter can become a frank and engaging exchange that energizes and improves us all. No matter what transpires, I look forward to being the PCI section chair for the next two years and fully appreciate the fact that Mason Martin at Ohio University and Hocking College is willing to join as newsletter editor.

### **Parting Words from the Exiting Chair: Leon Anderson, PCI Chair (2003-2004)**

#### **The SSSP's "Largest Division": The Strength and Challenge of the Poverty, Class & Inequality Division**

Over the last four years I have had the opportunity to be closely involved in the activities of the Society for the Study of Social Problems through my service as chair-elect and then as chair of the Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division. Having now completed my two-year term as chair, and having passed that role on to the able hands of Eric Swank, I want to take a few lines in our newsletter to reflect on what I believe are the strengths and challenges of this Division in relation to the SSSP more broadly.

The Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division has historically been among the largest—if not the largest—of the Society for the Study of Social Problems' Divisions, counting well over 500 SSSP members on its rolls. I believe our large membership reflects the fact that issues of poverty and inequality are central to virtually all social problems. In looking over the list of SSSP Divisions, I cannot see even one for which issues of inequality do not loom large. As the Division focused specifically on poverty, class, and inequality, we are relevant to the work of virtually all members of the SSSP.

On the one hand, this fact gives us great strength—the strength of numbers and of centrality to the SSSP's core goals of promoting social problems research and advocating for social justice. But there is another aspect to our place in the SSSP that I believe at times works to our disadvantage, reducing the number of actively committed Division members. How can it be, I have asked myself, that with over 500 members, we tend to have a bare handful show up for our division business meetings and offer to play a role in organizing sessions for the annual meetings? Part of the reason may well lie with the Division's leadership—that over the past two years I have failed to reach out effectively to our Division members. I am very aware that I was unable to get newsletters like this one out on a regular basis. And I am happy to see that we now have a committed new newsletter editor, Mason Martin. So, I believe this problem is now behind us.

But I think there is another reason as well that our members have failed to take an active role in the Division's

matters. Most other SSSP Divisions are focused on more tightly circumscribed social problems: health and health care, education, family, crime and delinquency, drinking and drugs, etc. SSSP members can join three Divisions free of extra charges beyond their annual dues. My guess is that many of you choose one or two primary Divisions, and add the PCI Division out of a general sense of its importance. As a result, while we have lots of members, we seem to have few who identify primarily with the PCI Division.

I hope that in the year ahead we can generate more active participation in our Division's activities. Please, think about our Division as a vehicle for supporting your interests. Consider contacting Eric with ideas for future sessions and projects, contact Mason and offer to write a book review or another piece for the newsletter. And by all means plan to come to next year's business meeting in Philadelphia. Ultimately, the strength of the Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division depends not on its numbers, but rather on the commitment of members to be actively engaged.

### **Harrington Teaching Award Winner: Jon Shefner with excerpts of his recommendation from Sherry Cable**

"I have known and worked with Professor Shefner since his arrival at UT in 1999. We have a co-authored article in journal submission. I recently chaired the committee for his review for promotion with tenure. I can think of no more suitable person than Jon for an award named in honor of Harrington... In addition to teaching ... Professor Shefner built on his successful, year-long lecture series, 'American Transitions in a Globalizing World'... Professor Shefner's dedication to the understanding and amelioration of inequalities is also demonstrated in a pragmatic way outside of the classroom. He has served as faculty mentor in the Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, a program designed to encourage and facilitate the pursuit of the PhD by first generation college students from under represented social groups...[in the classroom] Students unanimously praise: class discussions and debates, the readings, the promotion of students' intellectual growth, and the instructor's qualities...Professor Shefner's active encouragement that students hone appropriate skills is apparent in the classroom setting where his discussion questions demand analytical thinking and push students to think outside the box...The peer teaching review committee's assessment of Professor Shefner's teaching abilities and effectiveness was that he exceeds departmental criteria for teaching sociology and their report identified his teaching strengths as: his breadth of knowledge and mastery of his specialty area; his teaching techniques, involving highly interactive class sessions with focused discussion and debate and well-organized and accessible lectures; and his personal qualities of enthusiasm, a willingness to help, and strong concern and support for students... I most enthusiastically and loudly nominate Professor Jon Shefner for the Harrington Teaching Award"

Sherry Cable, Associate Professor, Sociology

## **2004 Annual Meeting Recap: Leon Anderson**

### **PCI Division Makes Strong Contribution to 2004 Meetings**

This year, once again, the Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division made strong contributions to the SSSP Annual Meetings. We took full responsibility for organizing six sessions—twice the number usually given to a Division. Three, or half, of our many interesting sessions, were devoted to issues of globalization and inequality—all organized by Jon Shefner. This topic has become a regular staple in the Division's sessions, reflecting the increasing importance of international research for understanding social inequality. Leon Anderson also organized two sessions on homelessness, one exploring the problems faced by the homeless, and the other session focused more directly on social policy issues. We were delighted this year to have Cissie Bonini, the director of St. Anthony's Dining Room, a major San Francisco homeless service provider, make a presentation on a recent survey they had conducted with those who use their services. The survey found increasing need for food and shelter in San Francisco. Perhaps the most striking findings involved the mismatch between the incomes of the poor and even minimal shelter costs in the city. The other session sponsored by the Division focused on the topic of "Bankruptcy, Debt, and Inequality." Deborah Thorne took on organizing this session, which was the first one that we have sponsored on this critical topic. Finally, we cosponsored two sessions—one on "Urban Inequality" (organized by Michael O'Neal and Keith Kilty, and cosponsored with the Community Research and Development Division) and the other exploring perspectives on Gordon Lafer's recent book, *The Job Training Charade* (cosponsored with the Labor Studies Division and organized by Kevin Henson).

Participation in a cosponsored division reception on Friday night, and the awarding of the 2004 Michael Harrington Teaching Award to Jon Shefner (highlighted in another article in this newsletter) rounded out the PCI Division activities at the San Francisco meetings. We thank all those who played a part, and we look forward to continuing our tradition of strong contributions to the annual meetings when we meet next year in Philadelphia.

### **Globalization and Inequality Sessions Recap: Jon Shefner**

Global interests at SSSP, 2004

The Poverty, Class, and Inequality Section continued to display SSSP members' interest in the political, economic, and cultural changes that we call globalization. Researchers largely focused on political responses to changing economic conditions and how the globalizing neoliberal economy has diminished states' capacities to support health, education, housing, and other welfare needs. Presenters addressed the impacts of these changes, and how various publics resist and accommodate them.

Several presenters (Rodrigo Figueroa and Esteban Romero) addressed the impact of globalization on Chile,

focusing on declining employment and increasing poverty and on changing identities among labor. Several presenters (Lesley Wood, Daniel Egan, Jason Weller,) focused on how global economics provided impetus for resistance from locales as diverse as Quebec, New York, and how strategies of action and discourse continue to evolve. One researcher discussed the opportunities for global governance to address the excesses of globalization (Mark Frezzo), while another (Mark Harvey,) addressed how these global changes are immiserating Mexican-American families. Finally, Evan Weissman, and Cory Blad discussed how even cultures of resistance, like reggae music in Jamaica, can be commodified in a seemingly unstoppable wave of global consumer culture.

A final indication of the daily penetration of globalized politics explains why a third panel discussing the impacts of the global economy in Chile was cancelled. Three of 5 presenters were unable to get visas to present their papers, a result of the war on terror's influence on immigration policies. Interest in global change continues to flourish, as demonstrated by the SSSP's intention to form a new section on globalization.

### **Announcement of the 2005 SSSP Annual Meeting Session Titles, Organizers & Call for Papers: Eric Swank**

#### **POVERTY CLASS AND INEQUALITY SESSIONS**

##### **Thematic:**

"The Politics of Welfare"

Eric Swank

Morehead State University

Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminology

311 Rader Hall

Morehead, KY 40351

(606) 783-2190

e.swank@morehead-st.edu

##### **3 Regular Sessions:**

"Homelessness"

Bart W. Miles

Wayne State University

School of Social Work

4756 Cass Avenue

Thompson Home, Room 311

Detroit, MI 48201

(313) 577-4434

"Bart W. Miles" <ar7663@wayne.edu>

"Inequality, Globalization and Empire"

Gregory Goldey

Morehead State University

Department of Government, Geography and History

325 Rader Hall

Morehead, KY 40351

(606) 783-2760

g-goldey@morehead-st.edu

### **“The Inequities of Credit, Debt and Consumption”**

Deborah Thorne  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology,  
Bentley Annex 155  
Ohio University  
Athens, OH 45701.  
(740) 593-1367  
<thorned@ohio.edu>

### **Joint session with Social Welfare:**

#### **“Tax Policies and Class Dynamics”**

Daniel Egan  
Department of Sociology  
University of Massachusetts-Lowell  
850 Broadway Street  
Lowell, MA 01854  
(978) 934-4304  
Daniel\_Egan@uml.edu

### **Joint session with Racial and Ethnic Minorities:**

#### **“Native Americans and Inequality”**

Trisha Robinson  
San Francisco State University  
1200 Lakeshore Ave. #19E  
Oakland, CA 94606  
Phone: 510-282-0739  
boxentrish@hotmail.com

### **DATES & DEADLINES**

Deadline for submission to session organizers:

**January 31, 2005**

Notification of acceptance or referral of their  
submission:

**February 21, 2005**

Preliminary programs mailed to current  
members:

**May 16, 2005**

2005 Annual Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel,  
Philadelphia:

**August 12-14, 2005**

### **SUBMISSION OR SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER:**

**February 21, 2005**

**Please E-mail Us!**

**Eric: [e.swank@morehead-st.edu](mailto:e.swank@morehead-st.edu)**

**Mason: [mm194898@ohio.edu](mailto:mm194898@ohio.edu) or  
[martin\\_m@hocking.edu](mailto:martin_m@hocking.edu)**

### **Book Recommendation List**

- David Bacon. 2004. *Children of NAFTA: Labor Wars on the U.S./Mexico Border*. University of California Press.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2003. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Brown, Michael K. 2003. *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-blind Society*. University of California Press.
- Brush, Lisa. 2003. *Gender and Governance*. Alta Mira Press.
- Charles, Maria and David Grusky. 2004. *Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men*. Stanford University Press.
- Clawson, Dan. 2003. *The Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements*. ILR press.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara.; Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *Global Woman : Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Metropolitan Books.
- Fantasia, Rick and Kim Voss. 2004. *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement*. University of California Press.
- Kilty, Keith M. And Segal, Elizabeth A. (eds). 2003. *Rediscovering the Other America, The Continuing Crisis of Poverty and Inequality in the United States*. Haworth Press.
- Lewis, Amanda. 2004. *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the Color Line in Classrooms and Communities*. Rutgers University Press.
- Derek V Price. 2004. *Borrowing Inequality : Race, Class, and Student loans*. L. Rienner Publishers.
- Rank, Mark. 2004. *One Nation, Underprivileged : Why American Poverty Affects Us All* . Oxford University Press.
- Schram, Sanford Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording. 2003. *Race and the politics of welfare reform*. University of Michigan Press,
- Rhomberg, Chris. 2004. *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*. University of California Press.

## **2005 Awards and Call for Nominations: Eric Swank**

Each year PCI presents awards that highlight achievements in teaching, research and activism. In the past, this section has alternated between which of these awards that would be offered. Attendees at the San Francisco conference suggested that we run the activism award in the next Philadelphia conference. At the time of the meeting, incoming chair Eric Swank asked if any person in the section meeting would like to chair an awards committee. None of the participants jumped at this possibility, so the section is still looking for persons to head up this task. With such a scenario, we are now asking for volunteers. In the best-case scenario, three people get involved and create an awards committee (a member from the Philadelphia area would be a benefit as well). These fine colleagues would then solicit nominees for the awards, evaluate the merits of each nominee and make the presentation of the award at the 2005 (clearly all members do not have to attend the upcoming annual meeting). I hope this plea is successful and a slew of volunteers agree to lead up this effort. Please email Eric Swank if you want to join this task force or if you have a suggestion of possible award recipients [e.swank@morehead-st.edu](mailto:e.swank@morehead-st.edu)

## **Web Resources on Welfare Reform**

**Center for Law and Social Policy:** <http://www.clasp.org/>

Through education, policy research and advocacy, CLASP seeks to improve the economic security of low-income families with children and secure access for low-income persons to our civil justice system.

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:**

<http://www.cbpp.org/>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities conducts research on governmental programs that affect low and moderate income peoples.

**Electronic Policy Network:** <http://www.epn.org/>

A consortium of public policy organizations and advocacy groups, the Electronic Policy Network provides timely information about relevant policies.

**Institute for Research on Poverty:**

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>

The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) is a national, university-based center for research into the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States.

**Institute for Women's Policy Research:** <http://www.iwpr.org/>

The Institute for Women's Policy Research is a public policy research organization which focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and domestic violence, and women's civic and political participation.

**Joint Center for Poverty Research:**

<http://www.jcpr.org/about.html>

The Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research concentrates on the causes and consequences of poverty in America and the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing poverty. The list of rigorous studies is impressive.

**Low Income Directory:** <http://www.lincproject.org/lid/lid.html>

Directory of Low Income Organizations Working on Welfare Issues.

**Mathematica Policy Research:**

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/>

This policy research center has some innovative evaluation of recent welfare reforms.

**Project for Research on Welfare, Work, and Domestic Violence:**

<http://www.ssw.umich.edu/trapped/>

The Project seeks to foster collaboration among researchers, policy makers, and community organizations which are concerned with the nexus of welfare and domestic violence issues.

**The Urban Institute:** <http://www.urban.org/>

A famous site that studies a wide range of domestic programs.

**Research Forum on Children, Families and the New Federalism:**

<http://www.researchforum.org/>

This web site features an on-line database of summaries of large- and small-scale research projects. Most of these studies have not been widely distributed yet.

**Wisconsin Welfare Reform Evaluations and Impact Studies:**

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ETI/pages/surveys/welfare.htm>

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute works with local governments and schools in Milwaukee County to assess the impact of state and federal welfare reform proposals on families.

## **Job Postings**

The Department of African American Studies at Ohio University invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in African American Social and Family Life. Successful applicant must be prepared to teach survey courses in African American sociology and social development as well as courses on such areas as the Black Community (esp. in the Rural U.S.), the Black Child, Black Youth, the Black Male, the Black Woman and social and family life in the African diaspora in the Americas. The successful applicant is expected to be part of a team developing and delivering a curricular specialization that focuses on African American Social and Family Life and a research agenda that explores the African American presence in rural United States. Ph.D. required at time of by start date (September 2005). Review of applications begins December 1, 2003. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, statement of competence to teach courses on African American Social and Family Life, and three letters of reference to Dr. Vibert Cambridge, Chair, African American Social and Family Life Search Committee, Department of African American Studies, Lindley Hall 302, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701. Please visit <http://www.ohiou.edu/aas/> for more information on the department. For further information about Ohio University more broadly visit <http://www.cas.ohiou.edu>. Ohio University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. Women and Minorities are encouraged to apply.

OHIO UNIVERSITY's Department of Sociology and Anthropology seeks a tenure-track Assistant Professor with expertise in criminology. Specialties in criminology sought in some combination of the following: (1) criminal justice processes and institutions, (2) race, gender, and justice, (3) law and society, (4) rural crime and justice. Additionally, candidates should demonstrate ability to teach in one or more of the following: Introductory Sociology, Research Methods, or Sociological Theory. Members of the Search Committee will be attending the American Society of Criminology meetings in November and will be available for meeting, either at the ASC Employment Exchange or by arrangement. Applicants interested in meeting should contact the Search Committee Chair, Thomas Vander Ven, at [vandervt@ohio.edu](mailto:vandervt@ohio.edu) or 740-593-1374. Candidates should have Ph.D. at time of appointment. Ohio University is a Research Extensive institution located seventy-five miles southeast of Columbus, Ohio. Enrollment on the Athens Campus is approximately 19,500. The College of Arts and Sciences includes 340 tenure-line faculty and contains 19 departments, most of which offer graduate degrees. Further information about Ohio University is available at: <http://www.cas.ohiou.edu>. Send cover letter, c.v., publications or other samples of scholarly writing, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and three letters of reference to Thomas Vander Ven, Criminology Search Committee Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701-2979. Review of applications will begin December 15, 2004. Ohio University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

## **Editor's Corner**

Without requiring you to guess, I'll be direct and inform you that I'm new to this arena. I'm certainly not new to the issues of poverty, class or inequality being a registered Native American; however, given the welcome and parting words from the respective chairs of this division, I have to admit, I feel a bit intimidated. As bell hooks once wrote, "I came to theory hurting", so too, I feel I came to Sociology in much of the same manner. Call me idealistic, naïve or whatever other term that connotes out-right ignorance but I thought entering into this field would provide a home long sought. I don't want to imply that I have found anything to dispute that the possibility is there; perhaps I'm simply dealing with curmudgeons (as the chairs have admitted) and they feel I need a little grounding prior to me looking to the community for support for this endeavor. Irrelevant of these possibilities (and I need to clarify both Eric and Leon have shown me in more ways than one that being "aged" and "careered" has not diminished their large hearts) I'm still diving head first, bright eyed in the hope that we'll be able to accomplish something significant with this newsletter. If it's just to make a single connection, or inform, ANYTHING other than just another item to delete off of one's e-mail account. With that desperate parting word, I hope I work with many of you in the future.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

CHAIR: Eric Swank  
Morehead State University  
Department of Sociology, Social Work and  
Criminology  
311 Rader Hall  
Morehead, KY 40351  
(606) 783-2190  
[e.swank@morehead-st.edu](mailto:e.swank@morehead-st.edu)

EDITOR: Mason Martin  
Ohio University  
Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
145 Bentley Annex  
Athens, OH 45701  
(740) 597-2762  
[mm194898@ohio.edu](mailto:mm194898@ohio.edu)

-OR-

Mason Martin  
Hocking College  
Arts & Sciences Department  
Oakley 316  
3301 Hocking Parkway  
45764-9704  
(740) 753-3591 ext. 2253  
[martin\\_m@hocking.edu](mailto:martin_m@hocking.edu)