

# Social Problems Theory News

**Society for the Study of Social Problems**

## Message from the Chair

The 2009 SSSP meetings in San Francisco are right around the corner. I hope to see many of you there. The Theory Division has a terrific set of sessions this year. See pages 2-3 for more details.

On page four, check out the winning papers for this year's student paper competition. The first place winner, Jared Del Rosso, will present his paper on Sunday, August 9 at 10:30 am. I encourage you to attend his presentation and show support for graduate students in the division. I would like to thank the committee members, Mark Cohen (chair), Tim Berard and Amir Marvasti for their work on this committee.

This year the division spon-

sored an outstanding article award. Check out the winning articles (and abstracts) on page five. Thank you to Joel Best (chair), Kendal Broad and Wayne Brekhus for their work on this committee.

Winners of both the student paper award and the outstanding article award will be recognized at the SSSP banquet on Saturday, August 8 from 8:00-10:00pm at the Standford Court Hotel.

On page seven, check out the description of the job of division chair. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for this position. Nominations will be solicited at the summer meeting and again via e-mail in the fall.

The deadline for nominations is December 1, 2009.

Finally, I hope to see many of you at the division business meeting on Friday, August 7 from 10:30-12:10 in the Stanford West room. Attending the business meeting is the best way to get involved in the division. Here you have the opportunity to suggest sessions for next year, volunteer to organize a session, serve on a paper award committee, and network with other scholars who share your academic interests. Graduate students are especially encouraged to attend—we would love to have your ideas and energy!

Lara Foley  
July 2009

## PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

Submissions of all sorts are welcome! From comments and calls for papers, to brief analyses and critiques related to Social Problems Theory. Let us know your reactions to this newsletter, the events at the annual meetings, or inform us of your new work so we can help spread the word.

Send submissions to: Lara Foley at [lara-foley@utulsa.edu](mailto:lara-foley@utulsa.edu)



Summer 2009

**Theory Division Chair  
2008-2010**

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## 2009 Social Problems Theory Division Sessions in San Francisco

**Friday, August 7, 12:30-2:10; Room: UC-4th Floor Lounge**

**Thematic Session:** The Problem of New Racisms: Theorizing the Changing Nature of Racism

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Tim Berard, Kent State University

- “Racism vs. Racism” Mitch Berbrier, University of Alabama in Huntsville
- “Intergenerational Racism and Resistance: Longshoremen in Southern California” Jake B. Wilson, California State University, Long Beach
- “Institutional Assumptions in the College Application Process in High and Low-SES High Schools,” James Rosenbaum, Kelly Hallberg, Jennifer Stephan, Lisbeth Goble, and Michelle Naffziger, Northwestern University
- “Unintended Consequences of Educational Programming: when Good Intentions Beget Negative Outcomes,” Cecile David, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Saturday, August 8, 2:30-4:10 & 4:30-6:10; Room: SCH-Stanford West**

**Invited Sessions:** Constructionist Conversations I and II: Theory, Method and Analysis

Co-Organizers: James Holstein, Marquette University & Joel Best, University of Delaware

### **Panelists for Constructionist Conversations I**

Darin Weinberg, Cambridge University  
Donileen Loseke, University of South Florida  
Jun Ayukawa, Kwansai Gakuin University  
Mitch Berbrier, University of Alabama-Huntsville  
Susan Chase, University of Tulsa  
Valerie Jenness, University of California, Irvine

### **Panelists for Constructionist Conversations II**

Gale Miller, Marquette University  
Kathleen Lowney, Valdosta State University  
J. William Spencer, Purdue University  
Scott R. Harris, St. Louis University  
Cynthia Bogard, Hofstra University  
Nancy Berns, Drake University

**Sunday, August 9, 12:30-2:10pm; Room: SCH-Rincon Hill**

**Co-sponsored Session with Disabilities and Health, Health Policies and Health Services:** Theorizing and Representing Chronic Illness and Disabilities in the Discipline of Sociology and in Sociological Classrooms

Organizer & Presider: Alexis A. Bender, Georgia State University

Discussant: Kathleen Lowney, Valdosta State University

- “The Conceptualization and Inclusion of Disability in Family Sociology Textbooks,” Carol Brooks Gardner, IUPUI
- “How Individual Web Spaces Create a Social Movement: Mapping the Network of the Autism Blogosphere,” Victor Perez and Ray Maratea, University of Delaware
- “ADHD: Biological Disease or Psychological Disorder-Comparing France and the US,” Manuel Vallee, University of California, Berkeley
- “Using an Advocate Approach to Study Social Problems,” Sara Towe Horsfall, Texas Wesleyan University

**Sunday, August 9, 2:30-4:20; Room: SCH-Stanford East**

**Roundtables co-sponsored with Race and Ethnic Minorities:** Public Discourse of Racial Inequality

Organizer: Scott Harris, St. Louis University

- “Pseudo-Indian Mascots & Meaning Making in ‘Indians’ Country,” Michelle Jacobs, Kent State University
- “Problematizing the Post-Race Paradigm: Post-Soul Intersectionality as an Alternative Framework to Understand How Black College Students Defined Diversity During their College Choice Process,” Siduri Haslerig, Rican Vue and Walter R. Allen, UCLA
- “Racial Friendship Patterns and Neighborhood Choices of White College Students,” Margaret Hunter, Mills College

**Sunday, August 9, 4:30-6:10; Room: SCH-California Gold**

**Co-sponsored Session with Crime and Delinquency:** Theorizing Crime Stories

Organizer: Jack Spencer, Purdue University

- “Enron’s Perp Walk: Status Degradation Ceremonies as Narrative,” Gray Cavender, Ken Miller and Kishonna Gray, School of Justice & Social Inquiry, Arizona State University
- “What’s the Problem? The Public, the President, and the Media’s Contribution to the ‘Crime Problem’ in America,” Jennifer Christian, Indiana University
- “Narrating the Progressive Juvenile Court,” Paul Colomy, University of Denver
- “Sympathy for Whom?: Representations of Hate Crime victims in Federal Law Making and National News Media,” Clara Lewis, The George Washington University
- “Frames of Degradation: examining the Social Organization of ‘To Catch A Predator,’” Brian Monahan and David Schweingruber, Iowa State University

## 2009 Student Competition Winners

### First Place Prize:

To Make a Prison Mobile: Social Problems Forms and the Construction of Abu Ghraib

By: Jared Del Rosso, Boston College,

Paper will be presented on Sunday, August 9, 10:30-12:10, Room: SCH-Nob Hill "Mapping the Discursive Coordination of Global Action" co-sponsored by Global Division and Institutional Ethnography

### Abstract

How do institutional materials and meanings traverse the social, so as to influence local, claims-making activities? I propose that those who transform their social problems work into social problems forms—durable and mobile things—can potentially exert contextual effects on the activities of claims-makers at some other (spatially or temporally) distant site. Based on a qualitative content analysis of two series of US Senate Armed Services Committee hearings held in response to allegations of detainee abuse in Iraq, this paper focuses on the process by which some senators and witnesses typified the photographed violence at Abu Ghraib as an isolated incident or, as one investigator described the events, "'Animal House' on the night shift." I demonstrate how social problems forms, such as official investigations and reliable investigators who could testify to the content of their reports, produced by the Department of Defense provided an asymmetry in interpretive resources that favored senators sympathetic to this typification and forced senators critical of it to seek interpretive resources from sources external to the hearings. This paper extends social problems theorizing by drawing attention to the materiality and textuality of social problems.

### Honorable Mention:

"Victim Work": A Narrative Analysis of the Duke Rape Case

By J. David Thomas, Purdue University

### Abstract

Constructionist research suggests that the media frequently depicts social problems as occupied by victims and villains. This article expands constructionist literature on the rhetoric of victimization by examining how major media outlets narrated the Duke University rape case. The Duke University rape case is unusual in that it is one of few cases where the media were required to articulate a narrative fissure. This fissure, caused by apparently exonerating DNA evidence, should be excavated to understand better the structure and nature of victim work. Specifically, I argue that the news media employed two distinct and incompatible rhetorical idioms in its victim narrative. The rhetoric of social justice constructed the accuser as the victim of Southern racism, sexism, and classism. The rhetoric of individual justice constructed the Duke lacrosse players as victims of a rogue District Attorney. I use this analysis to add to the work of Holstein and Miller (1990) by offering a structural model of victim narratives. I then apply this model to the Duke narrative to illustrate the model's empirical utility. Third, I use the Duke narrative to illustrate, on the one hand, the validity of the binary code victim/villain as a narrational stratagem; and on the other, the changeable and provisional nature of victim work in the media. Finally, I discuss theoretical implications and future lines of research.

Thanks to committee members: Chair, Mark Cohan (Seattle University), Tim Berard (Justice Studies, Kent State University), and Amir Marvasti (Penn State Altoona).

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## 2009 Outstanding Article Competition Co-Winners

### **Erasing the Brown Scare: Referential Afterlife and the Power of Memory Templates**

*Social Problems* 54 (2007): 170-87

By: Gary Alan Fine and Terrence McDonnell

#### **Abstract**

Perhaps paradoxically, events can have effects despite having been “forgotten.” Events have, in Erving Goffman’s (1981:46) phrase, a *referential afterlife*, the period in which events can be referred to with the expectation that audiences will understand their relevance and symbolic meaning. When an event has passed this period of shared recollection it still may leave traces, especially if responses to the event have been institutionalized. We examine the dynamics by which events serve as memory templates for subsequent events. We distinguish templates into two subtypes: interpretative templates and action templates, those that contribute to how the public recalls the past and those that provide strategies for action. To examine the power of templates, we analyze the forgetting of the brown scare of the early 1940s, and specifically the largest sedition case in American history, *United States v. McWilliams*. Attacks on the right contributed to the development of the national security state and courtroom tactics in political trials, but the public rarely remembers them.

### **The e-Rise and Fall of Social Problems: The Blogosphere as a Public Arena**

*Social Problems* 55 (2008): 139-60

By: Ray Maratea

#### **Abstract**

Social Problems theory has yet to fully address the impact that new communication technologies are having on the claims-making process. This article examines the emergence of the blogosphere as a cultural phenomenon that provides claims-makers with a powerful new public arena to advance social problem claims. Using Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk’s (1988) public arenas model of social problems construction, blog-generated problem claims are examined to analyze how Internet driven social problems compete for public attention. Findings suggest that blogs make the claims-making process more efficient, offer expanded carrying capacity compared to traditional arenas, and provide outsider claims-makers with greater opportunity to have a voice in social problems construction. Still, only a small number of blogs have become recognized as claims-making arenas; they still rely on traditional principles of selection; and bloggers face the same competition for mainstream media attention as claims-makers using traditional arenas.

Thanks to committee members: Chair, Joel Best (University of Delaware), Wayne Brekhus (University of Missouri) and Kendal Broad (University of Florida).

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## *Social Problems*

### **Editorial Search**

The Editorial and Publications Committee of the Society for the Study of Social Problems is preparing to begin the search for the next editor of *Social Problems*. The formal announcement of the search will appear this fall, but currently, the committee would like to encourage potential candidates to consider applying for the position.

The Editor's three year term will begin with the operation of the new editorial office at mid-year 2011. The new editor will be responsible for editing Volumes 59-61 (years 2012-14). Members of the SSSP are encouraged to apply for the position and/or nominate colleagues who are (or will become) members.

The Editor is responsible for soliciting and reviewing manuscripts (approximately 300-400 per year), and preparing four issues of the journal (approximately 650 printed pages) annually. The editorial office is responsible for managing the review process—using the on-line services of ScholarOne/Manuscript Central—and for copy editing and proofreading in accordance with customary publishing standards.

The committee seeks editorial candidates with distinguished scholarly records, previous editorial experience (e.g., service as journal editor or associate editor, editor of scholarly editions, etc.), strong organizational and management skills, and the ability to work and communicate well with others. A familiarity with, and commitment to, *Social Problems* and the SSSP are essential.

The SSSP supports the operation of the editorial office with an annual budget and provides a modest stipend and travel expenses for the Editor. Support is also expected from the host institution. This may include office space, utilities, the use of computers and other office equipment, tuition waivers for office personnel (if appropriate), faculty release time, and other basic expenses. Each year the Editor will be expected to submit a budget to the SSSP to cover operating expenses that the host institution does not support.

Until August 10, 2009, please direct all nominations, inquiries, and/or expressions of interest to: Jim Holstein, Chair, SSSP Editorial and Publications Committee, Department of Social and Cultural Sciences, Marquette University, P.O., Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881. (414) 288-5804. E-mail: [James.Holstein@Marquette.edu](mailto:James.Holstein@Marquette.edu).

## **Nominations are sought for Theory Division Chair 2010-2012**

Description: This is a position that requires a little organizational skill and a lot of commitment to continuing the strength and vitality of the Social Problems Theory Division of SSSP. More specifically, Division Chairs are in charge of the following:

- Overseeing the organization of paper sessions for the annual meeting (which primarily involves obtaining session organizers, session titles, and session descriptions and transmitting them to SSSP Executive Office, as well as soliciting submissions through the newsletter).
- Producing or overseeing the production of a divisional newsletter two or three times per year.
- Overseeing the organization of the student paper award and outstanding article/book award (which primarily involves assembling a committee of three individuals, and the appointment of a chair for that committee, as well as soliciting submissions).
- Submitting a budget (how to allocate the \$700 we receive; in recent years most money has been allocated to the student paper competition winners).
- Representing the Division at meetings of the Council of Special Problems Divisions during the Annual Meeting of SSSP, or sending an official proxy.
- Organizing and administering the annual meeting of the Social Problems Theory Division during the Annual Meeting of the SSSP, or designating a proxy to do so.

You may nominate yourself, or nominate someone who you think should be the Chair of this division and we will find out if she or he is willing and able to serve. Please send nominations to Lara Foley at [lara-foley@utulsa.edu](mailto:lara-foley@utulsa.edu)

Nominations will be solicited in August at the SSSP Theory Division business meeting and again via e-mail in the early fall. Deadline for submissions is December 1, 2009.

**\*Description and duties written by Mitch Berbrier, division chair 2006-2008**

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