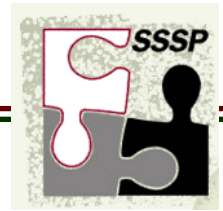


Start spreading the

# Social Problems Theory News

Society for the Study of Social Problems



**Theory Division Chair  
2006-08**  
*Mitch Berbrier*  
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**University of Alabama**  
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**“So  
it  
goes. . .”**  
**Kurt Vonnegut**  
*Slaughterhouse-Five*

*Message from the Chair*

Greetings, Theory Afficionados:

Being somewhat “in” to the collective memory literature, I have begun investigating (and as you’ll see, publicizing) our DIVISION HISTORY. It turns out that we have one that stretches back for at least 40 years.

My research has already yielded a table (Table 1, next page). I have also included below a couple of tidbits in a “From the Archives” feature. I expect to have more for you in issues to come. I’d love to develop a set of “Favorite Recollections from my Term as SPT Division Chair” from the past chairs.

My deep gratitude to Michele Koontz and Mary Walker in the Executive Office for their extraordinary assistance with this project.

In this issue you will also find all kinds of useful information on our SESSIONS at the upcoming meeting in New York City. If you can make it there, you can make it *to our sessions*.

Can there be more? Indeed. We have WINNERS of our student paper competition. Details inside, along with some information from your fellow theory divisionists.

Peace

Mitch Berbrier  
May 2007

**THIS ISSUE:**

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## HERE IS YOUR SCHEDULE in NEW YORK CITY

Note: LISTED HERE ARE ACTIVITIES THAT YOU REALLY REALLY SHOULD ATTEND. Schedule is subject to change, but your moral commitment to it is not.

**Friday, August 10**  
12:30pm – 2:10pm (co-sponsored session) **Global Integration: Exploring the Roles and Capacities of Nations and States in the Era of Globalization**  
Where? York Suite

**Saturday, August 11**  
8:00am – 9:40am **What Is Social Problems Theory? Contemporary Approaches**  
Where? Broadway Suite

11:00am – 12:15pm Go get **lunch** with other members of the SSSP division, prior to attending Divisional Meeting at 12:30

12:30pm – 2:10pm **SOCIAL PROBLEMS THEORY DIVISIONAL MEETING**  
Sutton Suite

2:30pm – 4:10pm **What Is Social Problems Theory? Past, Present, Future** Where?  
Fifth Avenue Suite

**Sunday, August 12**  
10:30am – 12:10pm **Does Research Matter? Critical Reflections on Social Science and the Pursuits of Justice (THEMATIC)** Where? East End Suite

12:30pm – 2:10pm **Constructing Social Problems through Scholarship**  
Where? East End Suite

2:30pm – 4:10pm **“Scientists have Discovered...” Disseminating Research through Media** Where? York Suite

Note: **DETAILS ON THE SESSIONS AND THE SCHEDULED PRESENTATIONS ARE INSIDE THIS ISSUE.**



This is what I have to say about this list:

1) I am humbled, truly and seriously, to be on this list of so many smart, thoughtful, and eminent people. The list includes the current and a couple of past-presidents of SSSP as well as a couple of past editors of *Social Problems*, and authors of several of the most influential books and articles in our field and throughout sociology and related social sciences.

2) If you would like to be on this list, the next election (for my successor) will take place in the Fall and we will begin accepting nominations at our SP Theory Division Business Meeting in New York during the conference on August 11 at 12:30 pm.

3) Thanks to Michele Koontz and Mary Walker in the SSSP Executive Office for photocopying and sending me the base information for this list.

4) My thanks go to **Joel Best** for his great assistance in identifying Chairs from 1966-1974, and the many of you who responded to my email with information about the dates of your stint at the helm.

5) Meanwhile, if you have any other information or corrections to this list, please contact me at [berbrim@uah.edu](mailto:berbrim@uah.edu)

Photo courtesy Ed Solonyka,  
Large Canadian Roadside Attractions  
<http://www.roadsideattractions.ca>

**Table 1: A Table of Chairs**  
**Social Problems Theory Division of the SSSP**

Years	Name	then:	now:
??-1966	<b>Albert J. Reiss</b>	Michigan	deceased (2005)
1966-68	<b>Irving Zola</b>	Brandeis	deceased (1994)
1968-70	<b>Bernard Beck</b>	Northwestern	Northwestern (Emeritus)
1970-72	<b>Peter K. Manning</b>	Michigan State	Northeastern
1972-74	<b>H. Laurence Ross</b>	Denver	deceased (1997)
1974-76	<b>Alex Simirenko</b>	Penn State	deceased (1980)
1976-78	<b>Avrama Gingold</b>	Baruch College, CUNY	deceased (2006)
1978-80	<b>Carol Warren</b>	USC?	Kansas (Emeritus)
1980-82	<b>Joseph Scimecca</b>	George Mason	George Mason
1982-84	<b>Joseph Schneider</b>	Drake	Drake
1984-86	<b>Joel Best</b>	Cal State-Fresno	Delaware
1986-88	<b>D. Stanley Eitzen</b>	Colorado State	Colorado State (Emeritus)
1988-90	<b>Gale Miller</b>	Marquette	Marquette
1990-92	<b>Gary Alan Fine</b>	Georgia	Northwestern
1992-94	<b>Donileen Loseke</b>	Skidmore	South Florida
1994-96	<b>James A. Holstein</b>	Marquette	Marquette
1996-98	<b>J. William Spencer</b>	Purdue	Purdue
1998-2000	<b>Valerie Jenness</b>	California-Irvine	California-Irvine
2000-02	<b>Kathleen Lowney</b>	Valdosta State	Valdosta State
2002-04	<b>Darin Weinberg</b>	Cambridge	Cambridge
2004-06	<b>Joachim Savelsberg</b>	Minnesota	Minnesota
2006-08	<b>Mitch Berbrier</b>	Alabama-Huntsville	Alabama-Huntsville

#### From our Archives:

"Sentimentality is the great enemy of social improvement. It allows us to oversimplify problems that cannot begin to be resolved until their complexity is recognized. . . . The future of this branch of sociology might be quite brilliant, if we practitioners become more sophisticated. And less indignant. And much less eloquent."

Theodore Caplow. "Reflections on the Future of Social Problems Theory."  
*Social Problems Theory Division Newsletter*. Summer 1976

## 2007 Student Paper Competition

### WINNERS and their ABSTRACTS

First prize: **Thomas DeGloma**, Rutgers University,  
 “Expanding the Survivor Worldview: Transmitting and Bridging Trauma through Space and Time”

*This paper maps the socio-cognitive strategies with which a variety of trauma carrier groups expand the relevance of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through social space and time. Considering narrative data from two survivor movements, six professional mental health organizations, and a variety of psychological literatures, I outline two main socio-mental strategies that are employed to expand the relevance of PTSD and trauma in general: the social transmission of trauma and the social bridging of trauma. In the first case, trauma is said to spread through previously established social relationships allowing traumatic experiences and post-traumatic symptomatology to be shared by individuals and social groups that did not directly experience the traumatic event at issue, including potential future victims. In the second case, a variety of otherwise different experiences are lumped together as trauma analogs despite the many differences between them, resulting in a socio-mental bridging of experience that allows trauma to be shared and future events to be deemed traumatic even before they happen. Both methods serve to vastly expand the pool of potential trauma victims and a general culture of survivorhood as both the causes and consequences of trauma are pushed toward universalism. Further, both socio-mental strategies rely on a unique fusion of psychological and sociological theory and contribute to the expanding relevance of a broad survivor worldview. Finally, I outline the socio-mental strategies that trauma denial organizations use to undermine the survivor worldview and dispute the social character of trauma.*

Second prize: **Colin Jerolmack**, City University of New York Graduate Center,  
 “How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of Problem Animals.”

*How do animals become a problem? Drawing on interactionist theories of social problems and cultural geography, I argue that the construction of animals as problems relies upon cultural understandings of nature/culture relationships, which in turn entail “imaginative geographies.” Specifically, Modernity posits a firm boundary between nature and culture. Animals have their place, but are experienced as “out of place”- and often problematic- when they are perceived to transgress spaces designated for human habitation. Relying primarily on New York Times articles from 1851 to 2006, this paper focuses on the process by which pigeons as a species were problematized. I contend that pigeons have come to represent the antithesis of the ideal metropolis, which is orderly and sanitized, with nature subdued and compartmentalized. While typified as a health issue, the pigeon’s primary “offense” is that it “pollutes” habitats dedicated for human use. The catch phrase “rats with wings” neatly summarizes society’s evaluations of, and anxieties about, this bird. This metaphor reflects a framing of pigeons by claimsmakers that renders them “out of place” in the cityscape. This study expands social problems theorizing to more thoroughly account for animals and the role of space.*

#### CONGRATULATIONS THOMAS AND COLIN!!

Thanks to all who submitted (I’m told there were a fair number) and of course to our hard working and wonderfully efficient committee: **Wayne Brekhus (Chair), Scott Harris, and Kathe Lowney.**

# SP THEORY DIVISION 2007

## Session Paper Sessions

### “What is Social Problems Theory? (two sessions)”

Organizers:

**Joel Best** University of Delaware and **Kathleen Lowney** Valdosta State University

#### PART I: What Is Social Problems Theory? Contemporary Approaches

Date: Saturday, August 11  
Time: 8:00am – 9:40am  
Room: Broadway Suite

*Presider & Discussant:*  
**Joel Best**, University of Delaware

#### *Papers:*

“Hurricane Katrina as a Metaphor for Modern Social Problems, or What Students of Social Problems Can Learn from the Sociology of Disaster,” **Gary Bowden**, University of New Brunswick

“How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of Problem Animals,” **Colin Jerolmack**, City University of New York Graduate Center

“The e-Rise and Fall of Social Problems: The Blogosphere as a Public Arena,” **Ray Maratea**, University of Delaware

“Societal Problems, School Classifications and Theories of Educational Psychology,” **Karen Bradley and John G. Richardson**, Western Washington University

#### PART II: What Is Social Problems Theory? Past, Present, Future

Date: Saturday, August 11  
Time: 2:30pm – 4:10pm  
Room: Fifth Avenue Suite

*Presider & Discussant:*  
**Joel Best**, University of Delaware

#### *Papers:*

“Reflections on Social Construction Approaches to Social Problems: From a Glorious Past to an Uncertain Future,” **Donileen R. Loseke**, University of South Florida

“Let’s Hear It for Uncertainty: Ambiguity in the Constructionist Social Problems Project,” **J. William Spencer**, Purdue University

“Theorizing Social Problems in an Expanding Issue Market,” **Frank Furedi**, University of Kent

“Intersecting Institutional Influences on the Social Construction of U.S. Poverty,” **Ira Silver**, Framingham State College and **Mary-Ellen Boyle**, Clark University

“Claimsmaking, Sacred Ground, and the Demise of the International Freedom Center,” **Stephen R. Couch and Barbara Wade**, The Pennsylvania State University

**THEMATIC SESSION:  
“Does Research Matter? Critical Reflections on  
Social Science and Pursuits of Justice”**

Organizer and Presider:  
**Michelle Corbin**  
University of Maryland, College Park

Date: Sunday, August 12  
Time: 10:30am – 12:10pm  
Room: East End Suite

*Scheduled Papers:*  
“Sex Offenders and Society: Policy, Pathology and the Limits of Social Theory,” **Diana Rickard**, The Graduate Center, CUNY

“Reflexivity and Statistical Data: A Story about a Qualitative Researcher, ‘Numbers’ and Political Engagement,” **Muriel Mellow**, University of Lethbridge

“A Surprising Alliance: How a Simmelian Framework Supports Feminist Theory on Violence against Women,” **Sarah Jane Brubaker and Rachel Everley**, Virginia Commonwealth University

“‘Crime’ as a Cultural Object Distributed across Segregated Neighborhoods: Mapping Discourses and Neighborhoods,” **Paul C. Fuller, Barbara Rockell and Ruth Harris**, St. John Fisher College

*Note: the session entitled “Teaching Students to Integrate Theory & Research with Social Problems Theory” has been CANCELLED*

**“Constructing Social Problems through  
Scholarship”**

Organizer and Presider:  
**Edward T. Walker**  
Pennsylvania State University

Date: Sunday, August 12  
Time: 12:30pm – 2:10pm  
Room: East End Suite

*Papers:*

“Social Problems and Population Health: The Causal Connection,” **Frank W. Young**, Cornell University

“Who’s Being Served? Exploring the Nature and Functions of Homeless Outreach Programs,” **Mirella Landriscina**, St. Joseph’s College

“‘Strange Situation’: The Discovery of Attachment Disorders,” **Mary Ann Kanieski**, Saint Mary’s College

“Sacred Bodies; Social Bodies: Bringing Women’s Concerns out through the Body,” **Jennifer Esala**, Boston College

“Progress and the Role of the University,” **David Schelly**, Colorado State University

**From our Archives:**

“Fortunately, there are a great many rank-and-file sociologists who manage to get jobs in our universities and other institutions and to keep them and who are dedicated to a critical, probing, analytical, action-oriented study of social problems and the overall social mess. To their students, the riots, Watergates, genocidal excursions into poorly defended countries with rich physical assets, corruption throughout society, sexism, racism, elitism, and all the rest are not strange aberrations or pathologies of an otherwise benevolent and rewarding social ‘order.’”

Alfred McClung Lee. “On the fate of humanism in social science.”  
*Social Problems Theory Division Newsletter*. Winter 1976

## Cosponsored Sessions

### Global Integration: Exploring the Roles and Capacities of Nations and States in the Era of Globalization

(Co-sponsored with the *Global Division*)  
Organizer, Presider and Discussant: **Cory Blad**  
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

Date: Friday, August 10  
Time: 12:30pm – 2:10pm  
Room: York Suite

#### Papers:

“The State and Globalization: Bringing Marxist State Theory Back In,” **Daniel Egan**, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

“Reproductive Tourism in the Age of Globalization,” **Lauren Jade Martin**, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY)

“The New Significance of Class and Race in Neoliberal Welfare Reform,” **Frank Ridzi**, Le Moyne College

“Numbers vs Rights: Trade-offs and Guest Worker Programmes,” **Martin Ruhs**, ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford and Philip Martin, University of California at Davis

COFA Migrants in Hawaii: A Social Policy Analysis,” **Michael J. O’Neil**, University of Hawaii

### “Scientists Have Discovered...’ Disseminating Research through Media.”

(Co-sponsored with the *Health, Health Policies, and Health Services*,  
AND *Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Divisions*)

Organizers and Presiders:

**Lara Foley** University of Tulsa and **Jessie Daniels**  
Hunter College

Date: Sunday, August 12

Time: 2:30pm – 4:10pm

Room: York Suite

Discussant: **Judith Gordon**, Yale University

#### Papers:

“Making Administrators Nervous: Lessons Learned from Doing Controversial Press Interviews,” **Kathleen S. Lowney**, Valdosta State University

“‘Oh, that Sounds like the Drug we Tested!’ Clinical Trials and the Communication of Pharmaceutical Results,” **Jill A. Fisher**, Arizona State University

“The Impact of Medical Research on Mass Media Attention to Disease,” **Elizabeth Armstrong**, Princeton University, **Daniel Carpenter**, Harvard University and **Marie Hojnacki**, Pennsylvania State University

“High Profile Crimes and the Court of Public Opinion: The Roles of the Media, the Criminal Justice System and the Academy,” **Lynn Chancer**, Hunter College, CUNY



## ADS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS from your fellow Theory Divisionists

### 1) Patricia Leavy makes a call:

Call for Contributors: Patricia Leavy and Keri Iyall-Smith of Stonehill College are editing a volume called *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations*, being published by Brill as a part of a special series in Critical Sociology. We are looking for theoretical and empirical pieces on the following subjects: 1. Hybridity on the Borders 2. Double Consciousness 3. Gender and the Hybrid Identity 4. The Diasporized Hybrid Identity 5. The Creole Hybrid Identity 6. The Third Space 7. Internal Colony Hybrid. Prospective authors can e-mail Patricia at [Pleavy7@aol.com](mailto:Pleavy7@aol.com)

2) **Joachim Savelsberg** writes in about his stint as a guest editor for *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Volume 46, Numbers 1-2 / September, 2006 *Overcoming Narrow, Distorted and Unconscious Adaptations of Theory in Criminology*.

--"Introduction: against narrow, distorted, fossilized, and unconscious adaptations of sociological theory gains for criminology" by **Joachim J. Savelsberg**

--"Differential social organization, collective action, and crime" by **Ross L. Matsueda**

--"Underused potentials for criminology: Applying the sociology of knowledge to terrorism" by **Joachim J. Savelsberg**

--"The criminological potential of pure sociology" by **Mark Cooney**

--"Profiles of punishment and privilege: secret and disputed deviance during the racialized transition to American adulthood" by **John Hagan and Holly Foster**

--"Discussion: wrestling with the beast" by **James F. Short**

3) **Eric L. Jensen** indicates that there is a fair amount of social constructionism in several chapters of this book:

**Jensen, Eric L. and Jepsen, Jorgen** (eds.) 2006. *Juvenile Law Violators, Human Rights, and the Development of New Juvenile Justice Systems*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

4) Mathieu Deflem informs us his new edited volume:

**SOCIOLOGISTS IN A GLOBAL AGE: Biographical Perspectives** Edited by Mathieu Deflem

Published by Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.

**SYNOPSIS** This volume brings together sixteen leading international sociologists to share their experiences of becoming practitioners in the field. Selected for their comparative and transnational interests and experiences, the contributors include: Martin Albrow, Karin Knorr Cetina, Diane E. Davis, Pierpaolo Donati, Leon Grunberg, Horst J. Helle, Eiko Ikegami, Tiankui Jing, Hyun-Chin Lim, Ewa Morawska, Richard Münch, Saskia Sassen, Joachim J. Savelsberg, Piotr Sztompka, Edward A. Tiryakian and Ruut Veenhoven. Each contributor provides an auto-biographical review of their journey into the discipline with special attention paid to the intellectual and social-political contexts in which their work matured. Each chapter concludes with comment on the future direction in which they see their area of sociology heading. These original and reflective contributions provide fascinating insights into the careers of sociologists living in a global age.

Finally,

5) Susan Maret suggests that some of you may be interested in her project at the Federation of American Scientists, and provides the following link:

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/news/secretcy/2006/10/103106.html#1>

## Call for CONTRIBUTIONS

**PAST CHAIRS:** PLEASE SEND a paragraph entitled something like: “My Favorite Recollections” of your term as SPT Division Chair.

**EVERYONE:** Comments and information from the membership are welcome and desired.

Let us know your reactions to this newsletter, to events at the annual meetings, or inform us of your new work so we can help spread the word.

Send all submissions and inquiries to: Mitch Berbrier, [berbrim@uah.edu](mailto:berbrim@uah.edu)