

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS – Spring 2021, Issue One

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello Sociology & Social Welfare Division Members,

We hosted a successful election for division chair and co-chair 2021-2023. Please congratulate in-coming Chair [Carey Caitlin](#), Postdoctoral Scholar, Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative at the Center for Vulnerable Populations, University of California, San Francisco. Also, please congratulate in-coming Co-Chair [Greer Ayanna Hamilton](#) an MSW graduate of University of Buffalo, SUNY. Finally, thank Michael Johnston and Tracy Peressini for making themselves available for chair and Carol Ann Daniel, Anthony Huaqui, Anne McGlynn-Wright, and Morgan Rachelle Montanez for making themselves available for co-chair.

This will be my final newsletter as Chair. I've appreciated the opportunity and it is time to rotate service. I am most proud of the success of the Book Review project. It has grown and engaged other members to get involved. Michael Johnston of William Penn University serves as chair and Anthony Huaqui of University of Massachusetts Amherst has joined as co-chair. Please scroll down to see their latest work. Also, this year we solicited submissions for a student paper competition. We are excited to award winner, Katherine Mott. Please read more below.

My mantra during the pandemic has been: Safe, Simple, Essential. It has helped, as has looking forward to seeing SSSP members and sharing ideas at the annual conference. Have you registered yet for the 2021 SSSP annual meeting? I will be there and hope to see you in a Zoom room. Please enjoy the warm thoughts I share with you now as you read on.

Chair & Co-Chair Elections (2021-23 terms)

Congratulations!

Chair [Carey Caitlin](#) Caitlin.carey@ucsf.edu

Co-Chair [Greer Ayanna Hamilton](#) greerham@bu.edu

Student Paper Competition

If the submissions to our division's competition are an indication of what is in store for our August meeting, you will not want to miss it. Thank you to the students who submitted their work. Our review committee enjoyed reading each one of them.

The winning paper by Katherine Mott, "*Hurry up and wait: Stigma, Poverty and Contractual Citizenship*," does a nice job summarizing two distinct bodies of scholarship on the contractual welfare state and intraclass stigma. Through ethnographic observation at a soup kitchen the author identifies that "beyond the administrative burdens with which poor people seeking aid are tasked, informal intraclass dynamics are chock full of stigmatization, distancing, and denigration." With the shift of welfare to workfare, the author observes, "people seeking state support are forced to abide by a set of imposed rules on how to behave as a *proper citizen*," and as such they "adapt their behavior to appear as deserving, worthy citizens and, simultaneously, externally defame their peers for their lesser behaviors." The author concludes by discussing the implications of this process to solitary building and institutional change. We were impressed by the author's insights about how political and economic shifts influence how poor people internalize system change and interact with each other.

Katherine received her Master of Science in Food Studies from Syracuse University in 2019. Her paper, "Hurry up and wait": Stigma, Poverty and Contractual Citizenship, was developed from ethnographic research she conducted on food access and urban poverty in Syracuse, New York. Last fall (2020), Katherine began her PhD in Sociology at Syracuse University. She is currently researching political ideology and barriers to class solidarity.

SSSP Membership Renewal please renew your membership. While we are in trying times, we want our divisions strong and healthy. Your society and division membership monies help fund the student paper competition and other division efforts!

Renew here:

<https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/255/fuseaction/ssspmember.portal/userid/-1>

DIVISION MEETING

Three dates will be considered for our annual Division meeting via Doodle. Please indicate your preferred day and time. We will welcome new leadership and plan for the conference sessions at the next SSSP conference.

https://doodle.com/poll/dunuua37iprsax3w?utm_source=poll&utm_medium=link

Sunday July 11, 1pm PT, 4pm ET

Monday July 12, 4pm PT, 7pm ET

Tuesday July 13, 9am PT, 12pm ET

Vision: The Sociology and Social Welfare Division supports a vision of a just society.

Mission: Our division promotes theory informed, applied scholarship about social institutions and processes in order to foster understanding, but also to speed remediation of structural racism, and all forms of exclusion through policy and social programs.

2021 ANNUAL (virtual) CONFERENCE

Revolutionary Sociology: Truth, Healing, Reparations and Restructuring

August 4 – 7, 2021

Register here: https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/839/2021_Virtual_Annual_Meeting/

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.

--Ida B. Wells, A Red Record (1895)

DIVISION BOOK REVIEW PROJECT: Call for book recommendations

The Sociology and Social Welfare (S&SW) division releases newsletters two to three times annually with a section dedicated to review a book published by an author who is an active member of our division (or review of a book held in high regard by one or more active members of the division).

Reviews are written by Anthony Huaqui and Michael O. Johnston.

BOOK REVIEW: *State of Empowerment: Low-Income Families and the New Welfare State* by Carolyn Barnes (2020).

Carolyn Barnes' *State of Empowerment: Low-Income Families and the New Welfare State* (2020) is an important contribution to the fields of public policy, political sociology, and political science. Barnes provides illuminating insights into how after-school programs, an often-neglected program when discussing social policy and welfare programs, can become a method of increasing political and civic engagement among disadvantaged populations, particularly low-income African American parents. This contribution is a product of the two years Barnes spent conducting ethnographic research as a volunteer at three after-school programs in the Chicago area: Jackson Elementary, Progress Youth Development Corp, and South End Community Center. Barnes situates their argument within the larger discussions on policy feedback and welfare reform.

Political sociologists and political scientists have long been interested in examining how public policy and political institutions impact citizens' political and civic engagement, otherwise known as policy feedback. Barnes is quick to highlight how much of this literature is focused on the impacts of cash-based assistance and other means-tested programs in political engagement; programs that are heavily stigmatized, overly bureaucratized, and have negative influences on recipients' capacity and interest for participation. Instead, Barnes focuses on work supports, which include publicly funded after-school programs and are a new class of assistance programs that emerged during the welfare reform of the mid-1990s. Being aimed at supporting, rather than excluding, low-income parents, these programs offer new features, relationships, and feedback processes that counter previous assumptions of policy feedback. In regard to welfare reform, new public management reforms have been introduced which delegate public service delivery to nonstate actors, infusing market logic into service delivery and implementing new systems of accountability. Taking these two institutional changes into account, Barnes provides a new perspective arguing that the shift towards new public management in public policy creates new policy feedback processes which can empower low-income citizens, particularly low-income parents who take on capacity-building roles in after-school programs.

The book itself is organized into two sections. In the first section, Barnes pays individual attention to each of the three mechanisms that they argue allows for the empowerment of low-

income parents: program design, relationships, and organizations within neighborhoods. The second section of the book then pays individual attention to the three after-school programs Barnes volunteered at, examining how staff at each program navigate these policy parameters and establishing the relationships which lead to parent's political and civic engagement. Barnes concludes the book by drawing attention to the implications their findings have for how we understand policy feedback and citizens' larger relationship with the state.

A strength of this book is in how Barnes connects the macro-level and micro-level when discussing how program design, relationships, and organizations affect parents' policy experiences. At the macro-level, Barnes tracks the historical changes to public service delivery for program benefits. For example, in 1993, the U.S. federal government passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) which required federal agencies to annually report their success, performance goals, and reasons for any program failures. Additionally, the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford amendment to Title I tied federal funding for school districts to student performance while the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 raised performance standards for public schools and established more stringent accountability measures. Barnes connects these macro-level reforms to the micro-level relationships and experiences that parents navigated when becoming involved in their child's after-school program. The new accountability structures, performance-focus, and market competition involved in after-school programs actually had a positive effect where staff at these programs were pushed to develop positive personal relationships and networks for parents in order to continue receiving funding and keep children in the program. As an example, the Jackson Elementary after-school program developed what they called "parent partnership" activities where parents were offered leadership positions in the program's operation in order to abide by Illinois state's goal of community collaboration. At the South End Community Center's after-school program, market competition influenced staff to tailor the activities offered to parent's preferences in order to attract and keep students in order to continue to receive funding. What Barnes sees is that the integration of parents into the operation of these programs results in increased voter participation, community volunteerism, and communication with local politicians by parents who partook in these capacity-building roles. As new public management tools and policy guidelines are enforced, program staff provide the supportive relationships and networks these parents lacked in other political institutions that previously deterred them from public and civic engagement.

In the end, Barnes' provides an important and enlightening perspective on how social policy can actually empower, rather than alienate, marginalized populations into increasing their involvement in local politics and positively transforming their relationship to the state. The use of these low-income parents' voices and experiences in this groundbreaking project is a testament not just to Barnes' skill as an ethnographic scholar, but as a person who genuinely cares about creating space for marginalized communities in American politics. This book provides a much-needed counter-narrative to the previous policy feedback literature that demonstrates how policy reform can have positive results under particular circumstances. We recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the political mobilization of marginalized communities or comparative-ethnographic studies of the relationship between public education and welfare policy.

Reference: Barnes, Carolyn. 2020. *State of Empowerment: Low-Income Families and the New Welfare State*. University of Michigan Press: Michigan.

BOOK REVIEW SUBMISSION

The S&SW newsletter is seeking suggestions for titles to review in 2021. Please email your recommendations to book review Chair, Michael O. Johnston, PhD., assistant professor, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, William Penn University.

johnstonmo@wmpenn.edu, or Co-Chair, Anthony Huaqui, Graduate student in Sociology at University of Massachusetts Amherst. ahuaqui@umass.edu.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

We encourage members to submit news such as publications, new appointments, and other professional accomplishments for inclusion in a future newsletter. Suggestions and inquiries about less conventional content are also welcome— consider editorials, book reviews, teaching notes, department/program profiles, calls for contributions to journals and edited books, obituaries... Please direct inquires or submissions to the current Division Chair, Ethan J. Evans at ethan.evans@csus.edu.

PUBLICATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Recognition of members' contributions will be posted in the next newsletter. Please email Caitlin.carey@ucsf.edu to submit announcements.

Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare. Please consider submitting your work to this journal for potential publication (See www.scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw).