



Society for the Study of Social Problems

Teaching Social Problems

The Badass Sociologist

Fall 2013

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A Letter from the Division Chair



I Hope this New Year arrives with you all feeling ready to submit your papers for the Annual Conference. Obviously we plan to get this newsletter out earlier in the fall, but the best laid plans and good intentions and a truckload of other clichés have paralyzed yours truly this fall. Still, we have collected a few very nice pieces here as well as a list of our sponsored and co-sponsored sessions for this summer in San Francisco. Better late than never.

In particular, I want to point out Mark Naison's article about the origins of the Badass Teachers Association. Last edition I took the editorial prerogative of renaming our newsletter in honor of this group and their work. I believe this tag gives some much needed identity and attitude to the way teachers OUGHT to be thinking about their work. I get at some of the frustration I have felt personally in my essay—Another Sad Song. I believe Badass Teachers may be one of the only antidote to these conditions.

Also, please note two regional teaching conferences—one co-sponsored by this division—as well as the upcoming Association for Humanist Sociology Conference next Fall—a group I have belonged to for many years (and am past-president of) and hope you will all consider as an academic home for teacher/scholar/activists.

Finally, I want to point out that we need a NEW Chair for next year (a two year term) and I am happy to talk about the responsibilities and answer any questions from folks interested. I do not intend on running again and hope someone new is prepared to take the reins. Similarly, if you would all be good enough to check out our mission statement on the division home page, <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageId/80/m/464> and consider volunteering to work on it or just suggest some revisions or things you would like to see mentioned. We need to update it by Spring and I hope to have some revisions ready for the division's approval in the next few weeks.

Peace and Solidarity—see you in San Francisco!

Corey Dolgon

The Rise of the Badass Teachers Association- A Brief History



By Mark Naison, Fordham University

The Badass Teachers Association began as a modest attempt to capitalize on the energy of parent led test revolt that took place in the Spring of 2013 and turned, unexpectedly into a huge protest movement predominately comprised of by teachers

In April of this year, about 10,000 families decided to have their children opt out of state tests in New York. One of the strongest centers of this movement was in Long Island, where conservative and libertarian parent joined with liberal and even leftist parents to protests the huge amount of testing in local schools, which they thought were making good schools worse and creating near abusive levels of stress for children and families. As an education activist with whose university affiliation appeared to give legitimacy to the protest, I was invited to speak at several rallies sponsored by one of the groups formed in this course of the New York Test Revolt- Parents and Teachers Against the Common Core- and was blown away by how former political enemies were able to work together here and even began liking one another. I made friends with some of the organizers of PTACC and together we formed a Facebook group called "The Badass Parents Association" to capitalize on this energy, and the new "multipartisan approach." In a month, we attracted about 300 members and were really proud of ourselves for doing this well

Then, in mid-June, one of the people I met through the Badass Parents group, an education activist from Oklahoma named Priscilla Sanstead, suggested we form a Badass Teachers Association Facebook page to help recruit teachers to support parents and student protesting high stakes testing. What happened next absolutely stunned us! We formed the group at 4:30 PM on Friday June 14, and by Saturday night, we had 300 members, as much as the Badass Parents group had acquired in a month and these teachers were coming from all over the country.

In response to this unexpected influx, one of the first people who had joined the group, a brilliant teacher and parent activist named Marla Massey Kilfoyle who had been one of the leaders of the Long Island Test Revolt, suggested we organize a recruiting contest and declare the winner "Badass Teacher of the Month." I set up the contest for between 4 and 5 PM on Sunday June 16 and the results were even more astonishing. More than 1000 people were recruited into the group in that one hour!! Clearly, the name- which implied that teachers throughout the nation were FED up with how they were being treated by the press, the public, and leaders of both parties- was touching a huge chord with this heavily female section of the labor force. Over the next week, the group started adding nearly a thousand people a day.

The three of us at the center of this movement- me, Priscilla and Marla- tried to make sense of what was happening and steer it in a constructive directions. Why was this outpouring of rage and defiance coming now. The first reason was that all over the country, teachers were under attack- their lessons were being scripted, their careers were being threatened by test based evaluation systems; they were forced to teach in ways that undermined their autonomy and professional integrity. But most important, the large portion of the nation's teachers that had considered themselves Democrats or liberals had become totally disillusioned

with the Obama Administration's Education policies, which were as much or more responsible for the policies that were making their lives miserable daily as the Bush Administration had been. They felt totally isolated and alone- without ANY friends in high places- and they were ready to fight back.

Our job, we quickly concluded, was to give them an organizational structure capable of doing that. Fortunately, my two co-founders were organizational geniuses, and many of the teachers who joined the group were computer savvy, artistically talented and expert at using social media. While I wrote public pronouncements to explain why the group had grown so fast, my colleagues created a board of administrators to run the organization and set policy, a network of state BAT organizations capable of holding meetings and launching protests on the ground. And we all our members to use multimedia techniques- especially memes and music videos- to get the group's message across creatively.

Within a month, we had recruited close to 20,000 members and were starting to warn those most responsible for anti-teacher policies and statements-- Michelle Rhee, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Bill Gates etc- that there was a new militant teacher group that was coming after them. We were so effective in this- through social media as well as traditional means of protest- that we were publicly endorsed by the nation's most important education historic and critic, Diane Ravitch.

Fast forward to the present. We are now a little over four months old and show no signs of falling apart. We have nearly 31,000 members, launch actions every week, and are planning a Teachers March on Washington on July 28 with plans to have 50,000 angry teachers surrounding the US Department of Education

There is nothing accidental about our growth. America's teachers are tired of being the favorite punching bags of leaders of both political parties and are- through this group- saying "Enough is Enough."

SSSP 2014 Annual Meeting

Teaching Social Problems Division Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Sessions

To submit a paper for any of these sessions go the SSSP website and follow instructions. www.sssp1.org The direct link is: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/565/fuseaction/sspsession2.publicView>

We look forward to seeing your submissions and seeing you all in San Francisco. If you have any questions not answered, please contact me at cdolgon@stonehill.edu

Division Sponsored Sessions

Session 121: PAPERS IN THE ROUND: The Politics of Engagement: Where's the Social Justice in Community Based Service and Research?

Organizer: Harker, David [harkerd@bc.edu]

Session 122: Issues in Teaching Gender

Organizer: Friedman, Sarah [sarahfriedmanphd@gmail.com]

Session 123: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Talking Poverty in the Classroom: Navigating the Personal and Political in Privileged Settings

Organizer: Dolgon, Corey [cdolgon@stonehill.edu]

Co –Sponsored Sessions

Session 45: Introducing Class in Class: Teaching About Economic Inequality in Schools. [Educational Problems]

Organizer: Pineros Shields, Thomas [pinerosshields@comcast.net]

Session 51: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Introducing Environmental Issues to the Classroom. [Environment and Technology]

Organizer: Trivette, Shawn Alan [trivette@latech.edu]

Session 66: Teaching Social Problems: Globalization and Transnationalism [Global Problems and Social Problems Theory]

Organizer: Pineros-Shields, Alexandra [apineros@miracoalition.org]

Session 86: Labors of Love or Temp Slaves? Issues Impacting the Academic Work of Graduate Students and Adjunct [Labor Studies]

Organizer: Harvey, Daina Cheyenne [dharvey@holycross.edu]

Session 103: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Teaching Intersectionality/Teaching [Racial and Ethnic Minorities]

Organizer: Harris, Michelle A. [MICHELLE.HARRIS@NAU.EDU]

Session 109: Teaching Sexualities, Genders, and Identities [Sexual Behavior, Politics, & Communities]

Organizer: Jungels, Amanda [amanda.jungels@gmail.com]

Orange in Black and White: Teaching About Race, Gender and Sexuality on TV



By Hepzibah Strmic Pawl, Coastal Carolina University

It wasn't long after the Netflix series, *Orange is the New Black*, premiered this past July that I noticed a lot of buzz about the show. From *The Christian Post* to *Huffington Post*, widespread commentary lit up the on-line third estate. But I soon noticed a lot of sociologists joining the conversation. On Facebook and Twitter my colleagues applauded the show for breaking race, class, gender, and sexuality boundaries. After all this hoop-la, I decided I had to watch the show myself. Was it really groundbreaking? If so, could I use the show as a teaching tool?

I watched the first two episodes. Intrigued, I watched two more episodes, but soon began to lose interest. Colleagues and friends told me I *had* to watch the rest of the season. So, I watched ridiculous episode five

on “The Chickening.” Then my friends and colleagues told me that was the *one* bad episode and I *had* to watch the full season before coming to any conclusions. So I did.

Now, having watched all of season one, I admit there is some entertainment value and perhaps a few, “teachable moments,” but as a sociologist I find nothing groundbreaking or incredibly redeeming. Thus, if we are going to use the show as a teaching tool, I suggest we teach students how to use an intersectional approach to reveal how the show eventually reaffirms the same racialized, gendered, and stratified class lines that media usually produce.

A majority of the commentary I’ve read focuses on the racial aspects of the show; see Bogado’s *White is the New White*, Maxwell’s *Why We Love ‘Orange is the New Black’* and Samuels’ *I Don’t Watch ‘Orange is the New Black’*. As a scholar of race and racism, I was curious about how the show would address race. I remain skeptical. The main characters, Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling) along with her two partners, Alex Vause (Laura Prepon) and Larry Bloom (Jason Biggs), all of whom are White, have the most screen time. Now, I admit that the series does attempt to depict authentic biographies of Piper’s fellow inmates such as Janae (Vicky Jeudy), the Black former track star who succumbed to peer pressure, and Aleida (Elizabeth Rodriguez), the Latina woman who allows her boyfriend to deal drugs from her house. Yet the most intimate and interesting details are revealed about the other *White* inmates. The Black and Latina women in the series are in the background to make Piper’s time in prison more interesting and “diverse.” And, as Bogado mentions in her *Nation* piece, racist clichés abound: Black women who are good singers and who love chicken and Latina women with sexy, fiery dispositions who crave hot sauce. Shouldn’t we be beyond such racial and ethnic tropes at point?

We can also point students toward how the show handles sex and sexuality. There have been other articles on the series’ openly queer dialogues and the laudable incorporation of a transgender woman, but I’m critical of the proliferation of LGBTQ cred the show is receiving. The main character, Piper, was in a lesbian relationship with Alex before going to prison and falls for Alex once again in prison. The show depicts their relationship with intimate moments, both sexual and deeply personal. The audience also witnesses an explicit scene between two White women, Nicky and Morello, early on in the season. OK, kudos to the show’s producers—we’re breaking ground here by showing women having sexual desires for each other. However, it is *White women* who are in these scenes. It seems as though their Whiteness makes it sanitary, acceptable, and perhaps even enjoyable to watch. The sex scenes with the Latina women are with men, notably a graphic scene between Daya (Dascha Polanco) and Officer ‘Pornstache’ Mendez (Pablo Schreiber). There are few, if any, sexualized scenes with the Black inmates. Are the writers, perhaps, afraid of our response should we see Black lesbian love?

This lack of attention to the sexuality of the characters of color and the focus on White lesbian love provides an opportune moment to discuss the QPOC (Queer People of Color) movement with our students. Similar to how the first two waves of feminism were dominated by White women, we see the same pattern in LGBTQ movements, with White men and (fewer) women dominating queer discourses and agendas. Thus, rather than challenging the audience with a diversity of sexuality, *Orange is the New Black* follows the pattern of such shows as *Will and Grace*, *Modern Family*, and *Grey’s Anatomy*, whose gay characters are White. For some alternatives to White dominated gay movements I introduce students to the [The Audre Lorde Project](#) and [The Brown Boi Project](#).

When it comes to how the show handles class, well, er, um, it doesn't really. *Orange* largely ignores differences in class status. We hear some lip service with inmate nicknames like Piper's being called "College," but otherwise, class differences disappear. At one point the inmates even discuss their prison life as analogous to high school. I doubt that the opportunities and antics in high school are the same as those in prison. Prison is not an equal opportunity venture, yet one would not know this when watching this show. The vast majority of the women seem to have mistakenly fallen into a bad way, prison as result of individual, bad choices. In reality, we know that poor socio-economic communities are heavily policed and constantly under surveillance thus creating a deep, cyclical relationship between low SES and imprisonment. *Defending Justice* notes that only 33 percent of prisoners have completed high school. Furthermore, a classist (and racist, sexist) society systematically creates disincentives for defendants to demand their right to a trial, which leads to more than 90 percent of criminal cases resulting in plea bargains.

I think *Orange is the New Black* provides a great opportunity for us to teach our students how to use intersectional analysis in order to see the patterns of oppressive representational politics that the show reproduces. However, I also think what is most distressing about *Orange is the New Black* is the rather benign representation of the prison system. If (minimum security) prison entails dance parties, sex, and drinking, then many might think it's not such a bad place to be. If getting a running track returned to operation were as easy as placing a minor threat against administration, there would be more change. In a time when the U.S. is in dire need of criminal justice reform, I fear that this pop culture show about prison is injurious to the movement and a misleading representation of the criminal justice system for our students to see as reality. So I suggest the next time we find ourselves drawn into a conversation about *Orange is the New Black*, we also steer the conversation towards the real issues confronting us: 1 in every 107 people are in prison or jail, there is a disproportionate amount of people of color in prison, and the number of women in prison is a population that is growing at double the rate as that for men.

Democracy and Engaged Education: Students Teaching Students



By Christopher Wetzel, Stonehill College and Hailey Chalhoub, Stonehill College '13

"This class forced me to look inside of myself more and therefore look into others more. Knowing that everyone at Stonehill has their own story has really inspired me to seek to learn more about those I come in contact with."

The premise behind democratic education is to create highly interactive environments where students can learn directly from the wisdom and experiences of their peers. In doing so, the goal is that students will become more engaged in their own educations and begin to grasp the myriad connections between life on and off campus.

As we contemplated how best to organize democratic education project at Stonehill College, we researched the innovative programs that have been established at both public institutions like DeCal at the University of California, Berkeley and DemTex at the University of Texas, Austin as well as private institutions such as the Experimental Colleges at Oberlin College and Tufts University. We were particularly intrigued by the prospect of small classes that were motivated by big questions.

In October 2012, Stonehill's Faculty Senate approved Integrating Democratic Education at Stonehill (IDEAS) for a two year pilot project. During its first year, the IDEAS program offered six one-credit, pass/fail classes on topics such as the chemistry of baking, design for the iPad, environmental action, multiculturalism, nerd culture, sabermetrics. The 37 students who enrolled in the class were drawn from across campus representing 19 different majors, a relatively even split between men and women (campus is 71 percent female, while the program was 51 percent female), and from all four years (although the largest group of participants was first year students). We jointly facilitated a weekly seminar for the 12 course instructors, using this as a chance to reflect on successes and challenges in our classrooms.

As part of our evaluation research, we asked students in the classes to reflect on how participating in IDEAS impacted their perception of learning. Given widespread questions about the value of liberal arts degrees, we thought it important to hear what students took away from their experiences. On the one hand, students reflected on their personal growth. For example, students commented: "I think I have really become more confident when giving my opinions in class. I am able to speak more openly during class," "It has made me more apt to discuss my ideas with fellow students," and "Homework assignments that let us apply what we learn and experience to our own lives make the material a lot more personal and engrossing." Here students are talking about their personal growth and development. Participating in democratic education gave them greater self-confidence to speak out and share their opinions in other classes. Moreover, they found the assignments to more directly connect with their lived experiences. Students also reflected on their connections with other people. For example, they noted: "It made me see new ways and models of teaching and engaging students. I think these classes show that students can learn from each other, and bounce ideas off of each other: two very important things to education," and "I think it has showed me the importance of interpersonal interactions and closeness in the academic process. When you feel supported and comfortable, you will be more open to new perspectives." Regardless of the specific substantive content of a course, students' participation in democratic education left most feeling a greater connection with the lives and experiences of others on campus.

As the quotes illustrate, IDEAS can be transformative. We see democratic education as fulfilling the promise of the sociological imagination, helping students see the linkages between the personal and the public. We believe this optimism is well founded – for the second year of IDEAS, we received 23 proposals for student-led courses. But perhaps the most powerful outcome of such an effort will not be found in how many courses are offered WITHIN the IDEAS program, but the impact these courses and the students who take them have on the rest of the campus as they DEMAND a more liberatory education everywhere they study.

Teaching the Social Sciences Second Annual New England Conference

April 12 2014

College of the Holy Cross



Building off of last year's successful conference at Stonehill College, we invite you to a one day regional teaching conference on the campus of the College of the Holy Cross (April 12, 2014). The conference will feature traditional paper sessions and poster sessions in the morning; a luncheon with a keynote speaker; afternoon break out sessions; and an afternoon "wrap up" session where we will identify questions and issues for future exploration. Because we are looking to establish an ongoing conversation about best practices in the social sciences, we strongly encourage people who are NOT presenting to still join us. The conference is designed to facilitate conversations among and between presenters and attendees. The "wrap up" session will give everyone the opportunity to reflect on presentations and future pedagogical concerns and to contribute ideas to future efforts at establishing a regional network of teaching scholars.

Papers submitted to the conference will be considered for a special edition of a peer-reviewed journal.

Questions and abstracts should be sent to Daina Cheyenne Harvey (dharvey@holycross.edu) by February 3rd 2014.

Look for additional announcements and information on registration and logistics at:

<https://sites.google.com/a/holycross.edu/second-annual-teaching-the-social-sciences-new-england-conference/>

CALL FOR PROPOSALS!

Association for Humanist Sociology 2014 Midwest Regional Meeting



Who Will Sociology Serve? Transforming the Discipline through Community-Focused Teaching, Service and Scholarship

Join us for a day-long event to share your change-oriented work—teaching strategies, service, scholarship, or integrated efforts—and learn of others' work. How is your teaching making a difference in your classroom, your university, or in your community? How do you integrate your community into your classroom or inspire students to get engaged socially and politically? What do they need to know to be prepared for that engagement? How do you help them investigate their local surroundings from a sociological perspective and how do they make a difference?

Share your strategies for engagement and change. Bring your students or community partners and have them tell the story with you, or tell it yourself. Or invite them to share their own initiatives and accomplishments. Hear what others are doing to make a difference in their classrooms, universities, and communities, and take some new ideas and inspirations back with you.

The registration fee for this meeting is a very modest \$25 (\$30 on-site) to allow you to add this to your professional development calendar and bring your students. Inexpensive accommodations will be available so that participants outside central Indiana can drive in the night before and drive home Saturday night (or stay and enjoy a second night in the city). Additional information about program arrangements, accommodations, and registration is available at the following website. <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=18781>

The paper deadline has passed, but contact program organizer, Jim Pennell, at jpennell@uindy.edu for more information. You do NOT have to present to attend and share.

This AHS regional meeting is hosted by the Social Sciences Department and Senior Sociology Students at the University of Indianapolis.

Another Sad Song: Teaching in the Age of Melting Solids



By Corey Dolgon, Stonehill College

“All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Back in mid-October, right after the government shutdown ended, I asked my students if they were even aware that the government had been shut down. About two thirds raised their hand. Of that two thirds—about 33 students—only a handful could actually name any of the programs or agencies actually impacted by stopping federal government workers. My students may be more oblivious than most Americans about current events, news and information, and the impact of public policy debates on everyday life. But not by much.

The impact was actually quite substantial for many. For over two weeks National Museums, Parks and Libraries closed; Federal Agencies charged with protecting our health and well-being could not conduct reviews, inspections or investigations; and the government itself lost billions of dollars in direct and indirect costs. According to the Office of Management and Budget, government workers were hit especially hard as “The shutdown followed a three-year pay freeze for Federal employees, cuts in training and support, and, for hundreds of thousands of workers, administrative furloughs earlier this year because of sequestration.” Most government workers live like the rest of us working and middle class folks—paycheck to paycheck—and losing a couple weeks pay, —even if it’s only deferred, can wreak havoc on family budgeting and grocery shopping.

Even more devastating was the shutdown’s impact on poor people who depend on various programs and assistance. Meals on Wheels suffered cuts and some food programs closed down. Disability checks and other subsidies such as WIC and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) were lost. Tens of thousands of Head Start kids saw their pre-school classes cancelled and imagine the impact on their parents who depend on such programs for child care, too. Less measurable but perhaps more cruel was the intensification of stress from increased instability. As journalist, Sasha Abramsky, explained one week into the shutdown, “We don’t know how long the shutdown will last, and that uncertainty, too, is harder on the poor. The stress of not knowing what tomorrow will bring can be debilitating. If you’re on food stamps...the prospect of not being able to pay for food in November is anxiety-provoking in a way that puts even more pressure on families that already have their fair share of it.”

According to Boston Community organizer, Horace Small, cities around the country have homeland security and natural disaster plans, “but nobody was prepared for hundreds of thousands of poor folks who lost what little support they had to pay for food, heat, shelter, child care, and transportation back and forth to work.” The shutdown, however, was NOT a natural disaster—it was a planned and purposeful event driven primarily by Tea Party activists and their very wealthy benefactors who believe the best way to save the country is by stopping the government from protecting and supporting the public welfare. Very wealthy and powerful

people in the United States promote policies and candidates promising to end government spending on all government programs except military and corporate subsidies—and few people either know about it or understand the impact.

By the time you read this, however, you may not remember the shutdown either—such is the state of 1440/24/7 news cycle. 1440 is the number of minutes in a day. Eventually, seconds will comprise an important part of our daily consciousness, resulting in an 86,400/1440/24/7 cycle. In a text, twitter and tumblr world, we may already be there.

Thus, writing about the present poses a serious challenge to authors all too sensitive to the increasingly ephemeral life-cycle of words and things. A moment's breaking news ages quickly into "current events," ripens rapidly into "recent reports," matures immediately into "yesterday's news," eventually fading into the past and evaporating into a historical consciousness already made obsolete by the death of knowledge and reason. Thoughtful consideration and meaningful reflection surrendered long ago to data points, infomercials and a "this just in" appetite. The possibility for substantive debate, intellectual reflection, and evidence-based practice has been forcefully submerged by intake overload and the psychic need to deflect persistent images of suffering or to avoid the constant inhaling of putrid, commercially-saturated air. Call it strategical avoidance or selective amnesia, but even cognitive dissonance results in enough discomfort that folks realize something is wrong. Not anymore.

Georg Simmel warned that the overstimulation of early 20th century metropolitan life resulted in a mental and emotional reaction characterized by what he termed, "a blasé attitude." City life, Simmel suggested, "Agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all." He continued:

In the same way, through the rapidity and contradictoriness of their changes, more harmless impressions force such violent responses, tearing the nerves so brutally hither and thither that their last reserves of strength are spent; and if one remains in the same milieu [these nerves] have no time to gather new strength. An incapacity thus emerges to react to new sensations with the appropriate energy. This constitutes that blasé attitude.

Brought on by the intensification of mental, emotional, and physical stimuli, individuals respond--they MUST respond—by blunting any effective sense of discrimination. Thus, Simmel concluded, "This does not mean that the objects are not perceived, but rather that the meaning and differing values of things, and thereby the things themselves, are experienced as insubstantial. They appear to the blasé person in an evenly flat and gray tone; no one object deserves preference over any other." Meaning and knowledge are replaced by information and shock, but even shock doesn't last long enough to do more than add calloused layers of anti-intellectual and anti-emotional epidermis. Time moves constantly, but stands still. The irony of modern life for Simmel was that the intellectual essence of human life—the ability, if not the actual basic human need, to discern and discriminate—lay dying amidst the contemporary miracles of mankind's technology, architecture and engineering. We had created the very physical and psychological circumstance that would eventually destroy us.

Not quite a Century later, another Sociologist, George Rizer, would tackle a similar dynamic in the McDonaldization of Society (1993). Rizer's thesis was that late 20th Century life had grown even more fast and furious, and an increasingly rationalized, cost-benefit hegemony now dominated almost all aspects of economic, political and social life. But the ultimate logic of Rizer's theory is how it demonstrates the "irrationality of rationality." According to Rizer, "Irrationality means that rational systems are unreasonable systems. By that I mean that they deny the basic humanity, the human reason, of the people who work within or are served by them." Put another way, the logical conclusion of McDonaldization is to produce the most "rationalized" product. In the fast food business, this might be McDonald's Big Mac meal [big mac, medium fries and a medium (21oz.) Coke]. But at over 1100 calories with 50 grams of fat and 150 grams of carbohydrates, it is hard to imagine thinking of this as a meal. Add eating this content to the sedentary, highly individualized, drive-thru lifestyle with its immense carbon footprint to boot and we have developed an irrational food system that promises to do the opposite of what food is supposed to do—keep us healthy and alive. Instead our food production system and attendant life style continue to make us sick. On top of this, we then pass legislation—called "food defamation laws"—to criminalize critique of such a food production system.

Has America as a nation developed a basic common sense about public policy that suggests we must destroy things to save them? Have we become so overwhelmed by the flood of data to process and comprehend our own impending doom? Or have we become so blasé that we can't muster the passion and critical engagement to care? In the place of an active and engaged citizenry—dumbed down by corporatized and McDonaldized education and sloth into apathy by poor nutrition and sedentary telecommuting, the stress of low-wage, high speed workplaces and the narcotics we take to deal with stress, we have nothing to left to fight with and perhaps no sense of what we would be fighting for. We have become a growing mass of people with an inkling that something is wrong but without the tools to analyze what it is or the moxie to try and do something about it.

In the wake of such inaction, the corporate hunger for profit (justified by a rationalized laissez faire hegemony) allows mega companies and their governmental minions to destroy whatever may be in the public's interest to save the public as a potential marketplace for private profit. The myth of hyper individualism and the primacy of corporate hegemony have left us with a very narrow ideological framework within which to navigate a moral compass already falsely fixed on the magnetic North of perpetual economic growth and Gordon Gecko's mantra, "Greed is good." Can we find our way out of this place?

As we develop our syllabi and mull over pedagogy, the big picture we face is dismal at best. "The trap" that C. Wright Mills so brilliantly described--still so relevant that many of us use this work in Intro classes around the country—doesn't actually capture the complexity of today's milieu. While Mills analyzed a situation where individual angst and powerlessness resulted in discomfort and a *sense* of entrapment—today our students BELIEVE they are free and to some degree empowered. The system will seem to still work for many of them and they are more likely to have faith in institutions like government and Wall Street because they fear what NOT having faith might mean. (Of course, they are also more likely than not to believe in angels as apparently 80 percent of Americans do.) The trap has returned only the bars are harder to see, harder to feel, and harder to break through. We have much work to do if we are to enable our students to sober up to their very real conditions and their necessary interconnectedness to politics, struggle and one another. Let's get to work!

Association for Humanist Sociology

2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Injustice, Exploitation, Racism, and the Activist Foundations of Sociology



October 8-12, 2014 at the Wyndham Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio

The activist foundation of sociology resides in the good work of founders – Addams, DuBois, Marx, Fanon, de Beauvoir, Lee, and so many others – who challenged illusions to address structural injustices. It resides in the thousands of students who are drawn into sociology classrooms because they have come to see that the social world is not as it appears. And it resides in intellectual work that identifies and documents the social conditions hidden beneath the veneer of our public discourse.

If a more just world lies in our future, then future generations will look back and shake their heads over our barbarism. Between us and that improved future vision is a lot of good work that will assess, challenge, and dismantle the systems, processes, and ideologies that perpetuate our current inhumanity. Sociologists might not lead such a transformation, but some fraction of them (AHS members at least) will be there to inquire, to study, to document, to inform, to agitate, and to teach of the promises and perils in change and the inadequacies of current conditions.

Papers and session topics that build from this foundation are encouraged, but we welcome all submissions of interest to sociologists and humanists.

Abstracts for papers, presentations or requests to organize a session should be submitted by July 15, 2014 to the Program Chair, Mary Erdmans mpe10@case.edu. Inquiries or programming suggestions should be sent to the 2014 AHS President, Stephen Adair adairs@ccsu.edu