



Society for the Study of Social Problems

In Pursuit of Social Justice

**Teaching Social Problems
Division Newsletter**

Spring 2018



Dear TSPers,

I am extremely honored to take over the reins from Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl as Chair of the Teaching Social Problems Division. In putting together this newsletter, I have learned a great deal about the accomplishments and dedication of our members, and I feel fortunate to serve the division in this capacity.

I would like to use this newsletter to promote the accomplishments of division members, but also to share practical tools for teaching sociology. To get things started, I've written a proposal for using short comedy videos to begin serious sociological discussions regarding the #MeToo movement. A second piece by Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl details her experience assigning students the task of creating infographics. The newsletter also includes announcements on new publications from Judith N. DeSena, Jerome Krase, and Ira Silver. Finally, you will find the beginning of what I hope will become a growing collection of teaching resources from TSP members.

I would like to thank Jasmine Suryawan for her help with putting the newsletter together, and I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of our division! Please let me if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns.

Lester Andrist
les.andrist@gmail.com

A Lesson from the #MeToo Movement

Lester Andrist

One of the challenges many sociologists face in their interactions with students and the broader public is how to explain the #MeToo movement, as well as the ubiquity of sexual harassment and assault to which the movement calls our attention. Sociologists can of course offer facts and figures to give a sense of the scale of this problem, but in my view, the deeper sociological insights--the logics that reveal why this problem has been so difficult to address and why it persists--cannot be so easily summarized in charts. We need to offer more than information, for as we now know, reputable facts are too easily dismissed as simply debatable. What is needed, as C.W. Mills (1959) understood, is “a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves” (p. 5).

One such lucid summation is a theory of how hostile environments—which is to say, sexist institutions—are sustained, and how such institutions are capable of seducing men to become sexist collaborators. There are a number of theorists and concepts upon which one could draw, but I find Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of habitus to be particularly useful here. Mills was right that we need to help people achieve lucid summations, but how can we effect this sort of change? On this point, I would like to submit that sociologists can do a better job of using video to help their students and other publics grapple with key sociological concepts. While video is no panacea for overcoming the challenges of teaching, my colleagues and I have argued elsewhere that when videos are used effectively, instructors can reach students who might otherwise tune out, and videos can be a means of helping students who might otherwise fail to grasp how a concept relates to their personal lives (Andrist, et al. 2014).

Take, for instance, a video created by the comedic duo Key & Peele, which was originally developed as a comedy sketch that I think was particularly effective in skewering patriarchy. The clip features a pub full of gravely-voiced pirates. Gathered in a dimly-lit tavern, these drunken men of the sea are shown in this video as archetypal masculine men occupying what is a quintessentially masculine space.

However, the brilliance of this skit is that the actors play against type for laughs, and instead of bellowing songs that objectify and degrade women as wenches, they offer matter-of-fact statements of women’s shared humanity with men: “I once met a lass so fine, ‘twas drunk on barley wine, I’d been to sea for months a’three, I knew I could make her mine. And the lass was past consent, and we threw her in bed, and rested her head, and left cuz that’s what gentlemen do.” (I encourage readers to watch the video, which I published as part of a larger post on The Sociological Cinema).

The video does not say anything directly about the persistence of sexual assault, and not surprisingly, Key & Peele fail to connect their sexist pirates to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu. Making these connections is the teacher’s job. First, recall that for Bourdieu a habitus refers to a system of dispositions that varies by time, place, and social position. Having defined the concept in class, I then ask students to consider what makes the pirates funny. As I see it, these pirates defy expectations. That is, as viewers, we implicitly understand that casually disrespecting women is, in a sense, the lingua franca among these types of men in these types of spaces; yet these pirates fail to embody and employ this sexist habitus. In a short writing assignment, or perhaps in a follow-up discussion, I challenge students to think more concretely and to offer a thick description of what a sexist habitus really looks like in the halls of government or in a particular industry. They can be encouraged to pick out the behaviors, interactions, and language that appears, at first glance, unremarkable, and which varies by gender.

As Bourdieu (1998) once remarked, “Male domination is so rooted in our collective unconscious that we no longer even see it.” And if it is true that we cannot change what we cannot see, then it seems to me that finding innovative ways to help people identify taken-for-granted behaviors is a necessary first step toward social change.

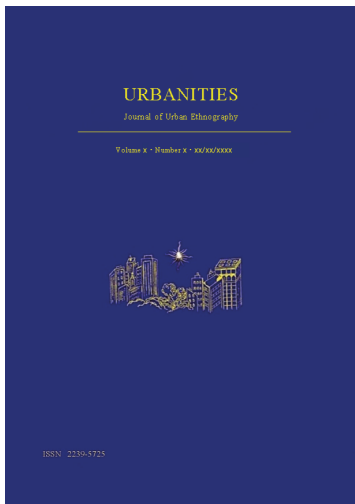
Citations

Andrist, Lester, Valerie Chepp, Paul Dean, and Michael V. Miller. 2014. “Toward a Video Pedagogy: A Teaching Typology with Learning Goals.” *Teaching Sociology*. 42(3) 196-206.

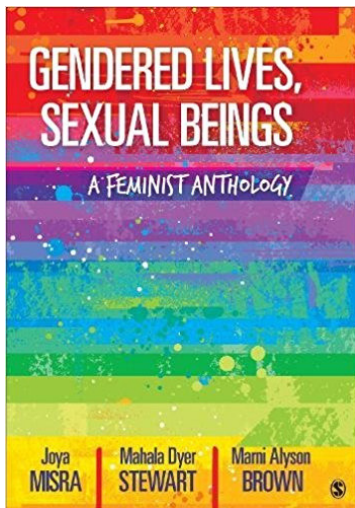
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. “On Male Domination.” Trans. Ed Emery. *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford.

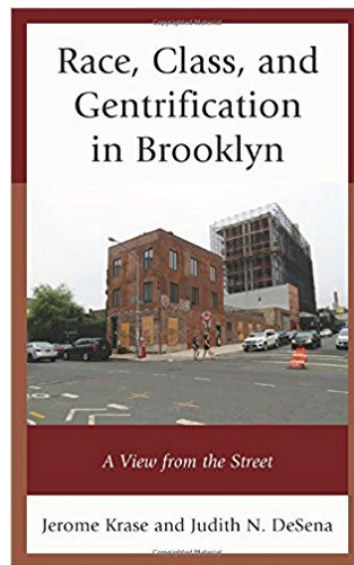
New Publication Announcements



Brooklyn Revisited: An Illustrated View from the Street 1970 to the Present
Urbanities, Vol. 5 · No 2 · November 2015
Judith N. DeSena,
St. John's University
Jerome Krase,
Brooklyn College of CUNY



Gendered Lives, Sexual Beings: A Feminist Anthology
Sage Publications, 2017.
Joya Misra,
University of MA-Amherst
Mahala Dyer Stewart,
University of MA-Amherst
Marni Alyson Brown,
Georgia Gwinnett College



Race, Class, and Gentrification in Brooklyn: A View from the Street
Lexington Books, 2015
Judith N. DeSena,
St. John's University
Jerome Krase,
Brooklyn College of CUNY



Gentrification around the World, Vol 1: Gentrifiers and the Displaced
Gentrification around the World Vol 2: Innovative Approaches
(Under review)
Palgrave-Macmillan.
Judith N. DeSena,
St. John's University
Jerome Krase,
Brooklyn College of CUNY



Social Problems: The Hidden Stories
Sage Publications.
Forthcoming (2019).
Ira Silver,
Framingham State University

Racism, Can You Talk about It? An Infographic Assignment.

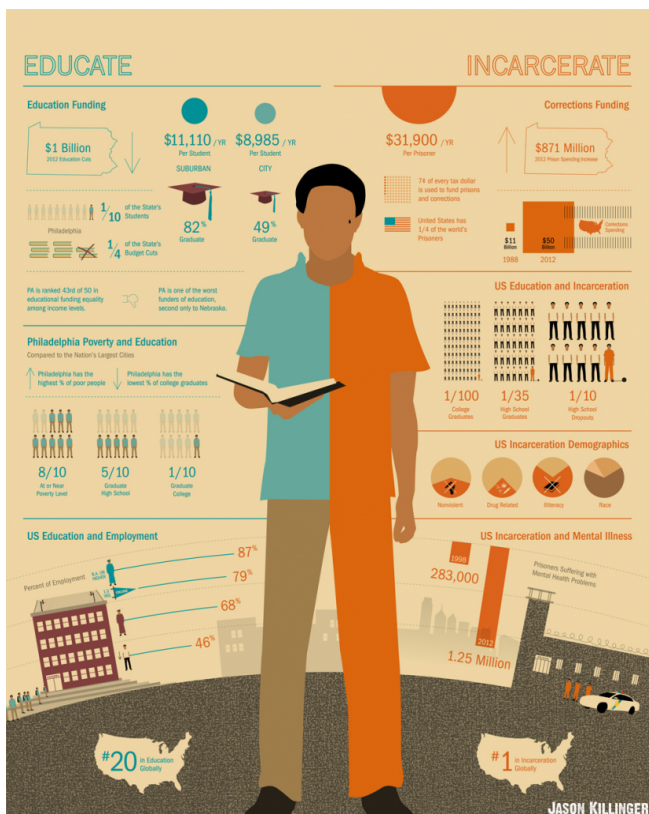
Hephzibah V. Strmic-Pawl

I am a sociologist with a focus on social inequality and my specialty area is race and racism; I teach both 2000 and 3000 level courses on race (in a small liberal arts college). Like many teachers, I often relied upon the traditional paper as a primary assignment in class. However, I consistently ran into problems assigning a paper as I found it to be too “open” for most students. Throughout the years, I’ve tried restructuring the paper assignment in many ways such as restricting the paper topic options, giving more feedback earlier in the process, shortening the page expectation, and providing specific prompts to help with organization. Such strategies did help but in the end I was still dissatisfied because the assignment did not reflect what I really wanted students to learn: Can they talk about racism? Have they learned how to present information on racism? Can they convince someone of the data that exists? Are they comfortable discussing race and racism?

A paper assignment isn’t the best tool for evaluating the answers to these questions. The vast majority of my students are not going to graduate school or becoming professors so I care more about their ability to discuss racism rather than demonstrate that they can write about it in a paper. Thus, in recent years I have worked on creating different types of assignments that ask students to creatively present information on race and racism and then give an oral presentation. This past fall, in a new course on Race and Housing Inequality, students had to create an infographic.

Infographics are “visual representations of information or data” (Oxford Dictionary). They are usually one-page rectangles that include easy to read and attention-grabbing statistics and concepts on any issue; infographics have become particularly popular among social activists because they can easily be shared on social networks. You might have come across this widely shared infographic on incarceration and education by Jason Killinger. You can see with Killinger’s infographic that he grabs your attention with clear statistics and strong icons/imagery while presenting the social problem in an easily consumable but persuasive manner. Assigning infographics was appealing to me for these reasons – it would require students to do in-depth research but force them to present it in a clear and consumable manner. In other words, an infographic can require students to organize their research and thoughts on racism in such a manner that I can evaluate their knowledge on, analysis of, and ability to address racism.

As mentioned earlier, this infographic assignment was used in a Race and Housing Inequality course; the class is a 3000 level seminar and had 16 students in it. First, I created 16 topics of which the students could chose (one topic per person); each topic reflected an area of housing, such as gated communities, mobile homes, public housing, and tribal lands. Students were first required to submit an annotated bibliography that had at least 2 peer reviewed sources along with other sources that provided contemporary data (no older than three years).



Credit: Jason Killinger

In addition, students conducted a 10-minute interview with one organization that worked on their area of housing. Students created the infographic using a template on Canva.com (a free resource). The final portion of the project required students to present the infographic to another sociology course. The infographics were also hung up in a common area on campus for a week. The infographics were graded based on quality of research, attention to race and racism, contemporary statistics, design, and ASA references.

Overall, this assignment was a huge success. The infographics reflected considerable research into the topic and showed the students' ability to convey important information on race and racism. Moreover, the students found the assignment to be both challenging and rewarding.

Students were proud to share the infographics with campus and some gave their infographics to the organization that they had interviewed for the project. I think this assignment can be adapted for a wide range of courses and provides a solid alternative to a traditional paper assignment. Check out some pictures of the students' infographics below.

** I provided the students with some supplemental resources such as links that describe what an infographic is and what makes a good infographic. If you would like to see this information, feel free to email me at hvsp@mville.edu*



Calls for Papers

Routledge/Taylor and Francis is seeking book proposals for the Solving Social Problems series. The publishing group is considering works on a wide range of social problems, backed by empiricism and theoretical foundation. Contact: Bonnie Berry, series editor, at solving@socialproblems.org or Neil Jordan, commissioning editor, at Neil.Jordand@tandf.co.uk.



**AHS Annual Meeting
Detroit
Nov 8-11, 2018**

SOCIOLOGY FOR WHOM?
**Real Conversations and Critical
Engagements in Amerikkka**

President: David G. Embrick
Program Chair: hephzibah v. strmic-pawl

"As long as we inhabit a capitalist democracy, a future of racial equality, gender equality, economic equality will elude us." ~Angela Davis (2014)

"Theory is capable of seizing the masses when it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp things by the root." ~Karl Marx (1844)

The mission of the Association for Humanist Sociology (AHS) is to foster social justice. It is our responsibility to bring sociology to the public table. AHS members' share a commitment to fulfill human need through – sociological teaching, scholarship, and activism. This meeting calls for us to address: 1) how to engage and commit to a sociology that is not relegated to a subspecialty labeled as "public" sociology, but how to make all sociology public sociology; and 2) how to best address and engage in research, dialogue, and action regarding inequalities and the intersections of inequalities in our society, our institutions, and amongst ourselves.

Submit Online: bit.ly/AHSDetroit Deadline: June 15th, 2018
Featuring two mini-conferences on "Environmental Inequality" and "Immigration in the U.S."
Questions? Email: AHSDetroit2018@gmail.com



 /HumanistSociology  @AHSsoci  humanist-sociology.org

The Association for Humanist

Sociology (AHS) invites submissions for the Annual Meeting to be held in Detroit, Michigan, November 8-11, 2018. AHS particularly welcomes submissions related to the theme of "Sociology for Whom? Real Conversations and Critical Engagements in Amerikkka." The mission of the Association for Humanist Sociology (AHS) is to foster social justice. It is our responsibility to bring sociology to the public table. AHS members' share a commitment to fulfill human need through – sociological teaching, scholarship, and activism. This meeting calls for us to address: 1) how to engage and commit to a sociology that is not relegated to a subspecialty labeled as "public" sociology, but how to make all sociology public sociology; and 2) how to best address and engage in research, dialogue, and action regarding inequalities and the intersections of inequalities in our society, our institutions, and amongst ourselves. Submit Online: bit.ly/AHSDetroit. Please direct questions to AHSDetroit2018@gmail.com. Deadline: June 15th, 2018 Add a little bit of body text

Additional Resources

Useful Sites

- **SSSP Teaching Social Problems Division**  <https://www.facebook.com/SSSPTSP/>  @SsspTeaching
- **Sociology Toolbox** <https://thesocietypages.org/toolbox/sociology-teaching-tools/>
 <https://www.facebook.com/sociologytoolbox/>  @SocToolbox
- **The Sociological Cinema** <https://www.thesociologicalcinema.com>
 <https://www.facebook.com/TheSocCinema/>  @TheSocCinema
- **Teaching with a Sociological Lens**  <https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachingsoc/>

Highlighted Videos

- **Understanding Our Roots - White Supremacy is More Than the KKK | hephzibah v. strmic-pawl | TEDxWCC**
<https://youtu.be/3wskdoFKc5E>
- **A Conversation With Asians on Race | Op-Docs** https://youtu.be/_OutYZbDwBM
- **A Conversation With White People On Race | Op-Docs** <https://youtu.be/xXow7olFyIM>
- **A Conversation With Black Women on Race | Op-Docs** <https://youtu.be/U-xz4qiUBsw>
- **A Conversation With Latinos on Race | Op-Docs** <https://youtu.be/tLLCHbCgJbM>

Papers Without Paywalls

- Strmic-Pawl, Hephzibah. 2015. "More Than a Knapsack: The White Supremacy Flower as a New Model for Teaching Racism." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(1): 195
- Strmic-Pawl, Hephzibah. 2014. "The Influences Affecting and the Influential Effects of Multiracials: Multiracialism and Stratification." *Sociology Compass*. 8(1): 63-77