

SSSP Newsletter: Division on Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

July 2010

EDITOR'S NOTES (By Chris Wellin, YALC Division Chair)

Greetings to members of the SSSP Division devoted to *Youth, Aging, and the Life Course*. As the Chair of the YALC Division, I'm committed to doing all I can to enhance the quality and vitality, both of our sessions at the annual meeting (to commence in Atlanta on August 13th through 15th), and of the linkages between the community of scholars, teachers, practitioners and activists within the association who have interests in this broad and dynamic interest area. Although the newsletter will, I hope, be useful to Division members, it is but one way for people to exchange ideas; I'm also exploring ways to facilitate online communication among members, such that people can access, in more timely ways, ideas and information that will advance our work. In this "Facebook/Wiki" world, setting up such a mechanism should be easy. I'll send a broadcast email very shortly, to all Division members, eliciting ideas.

Among the traits that have distinguished SSSP since its inception are a critical stance, and an explicit commitment to link social research and teaching with social justice. The conference theme for 2010 is *Social Justice Work*, and as a former Division Chair, Carolyn Perucci wrote, in articulating the mission of the YALC division:

From the perspective of the SSSP Division of Youth, Aging and the Life Course, a just society would enable full participation, appropriate to age, throughout the life span, without any discrimination or oppression on the basis of age, sex/gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference and disability, and their intersections. More specifically, in a just society, youth would have adequate nurturance, nutrition, housing, and education for participation in a global economy. Adults would have adequate employment and a work/family balance that permitted doing care work for the young, the old, and the disabled. Senior citizens would have adequate social support, financial resources, and health care for the preservation and restoration of good health.

Fulfilling this agenda is especially daunting, in these politically polarized and recessionary times. But it's important to renew one's broad commitments, even as we try to cope with our immediate demands. Conferences can be effective in stirring such renewal—collective effervescence and all that—but many active members of the division don't attend meetings, and we need to find ways of sustaining communication throughout the year.

This is the first of two newsletters that you will receive (the second will arrive in the fall). The current newsletter will focus on the Annual Meetings, providing specific information about sessions and other considerations for those planning to travel. The second will both report and reflect on the meetings, but also convey more material on members' activities than is contained herein. Please help me by sending any items (including publications; announcements about

conferences; teaching issues or suggestions; policy alerts; or even short, broad essays you regard as relevant to our eclectic membership to: cwellin@ilstu.edu. You can also reach me by phone at (309) 438-7698.

YALC DIVISION SESSIONS AT THE 2010 MEETING OF THE SSSP

August 13-15, 2010
The Sheraton Atlanta Hotel
Atlanta, GA

There are six sessions slated for Atlanta, Sponsored or Co-Sponsored by the YALC Division. They are as follows:

SESSIONS ON FRIDAY, AUGUST THE 13TH

Time: 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM

Session 25: *Aging and Life-Course Transitions Behind Bars or Under "Criminal" Supervision*

Room: Georgia 11

Sponsors: Crime and Juvenile Delinquency
Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Chris Wellin, Illinois State University

Papers:

“Aging Behind Bars: Meanings and Implications of Age among Women Inmates,” Leah Janssen, Independent Scholar

“Aging Inmates: Some Implications for Policy and Legal Advocacy in Georgia,” Melanie Velez, Law Office of the Southern Center for Human Rights

“Screening at the Door to Higher Education: U.S. Collegiate Policies and Practices Concerning Applicants with Criminal Records,” Michael Messina-Yauchzy, Le Moyne College, Alan Rosenthal, Marsha Weissman and Elaine M. Wolf, Center for Community Alternatives

Time: 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM

THEMATIC

Session 30: Social Justice Work and the "Aging Network": Forms of, and Constraints on, Activism in the Helping Professions

Room: Georgia 6

Sponsor: Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Chris Wellin, Illinois State University

Panelists:

Gale Miller, Marquette University

Kamini Maraj Grahame, Pennsylvania State University

Brooke Hollister, University of California, San Francisco

SATURDAY, AUGUST THE 14TH

Time: 8:00 AM - 9:40 AM

Session 44: Adolescence: Contemporary and Comparative Dynamics

Room: Georgia 5

Sponsors: Family

Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizer: Winfred Avogo, Illinois State University

Presider: Chris Wellin, Illinois State University

Papers:

“Assessing the Outcomes of Transitional Living Programs: A National Sample of Runaway and Homeless Youth,” Erin Comartin, Wayne State University, School of Social Work and Anna Maria Santiago, Case Western Reserve University, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences

“Drinking, Multiple Role Occupancy, and Traditional Family Role Attitudes in the Transition to Adulthood,” C. Andre Christie-Mizell and Mary T. Laske, Vanderbilt University and David M. Merolla, Wayne State University

“Who Can I Run To: Talking to Young Adults About Sex,” Lloyd Allen, Dawn Michelle Baunach and Elisabeth O. Burgess, Georgia State University

Time: 2:30 PM - 4:10 PM

Session 63: Intimate Relationships Across the Life Course

Room: Georgia 8

Sponsors: Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities
Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizers: Heather Dillaway, Wayne State University
Kristy M. Krivickas, Bowling Green State University

Presider: Heather Dillaway, Wayne State University

Papers:

“Socialization and Sexual Scripts among Low-Income Black Men,” Eloise Dunlap and Ellen Benoit, National Development and Research Institutes and Edward V. Morse, Tulane University

“Mothers on the Market: Assessing the Impact of Motherhood on Partner Selection and Union Dissolution,” Christie A. Sennott, University of Colorado at Boulder, Georges Reniers, Princeton University and F. Xavier Gómez-Olivé MD, MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt), University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

“Where the Hell are All the ‘Good’ Black Men Anyway? - A Look into the Dating Lives of African American Professional Women,” E. Helanda Crespín, Arizona State University

“Leaving the Women’s Community: Lesbian Elders Opt Out,” Jessica Merrick, University of South Florida

“Caregiving and Spillover among Older Adults,” Ronald E. Bulanda and Jennifer R. Bulanda, Miami University

SUNDAY, AUGUST 15

Time: 12:30 PM - 2:10 PM

Session 100: Methodological Innovations in Studying Aging and the Life Course

Room: Georgia 3

Sponsor: Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizers: Chris Wellin, Illinois State University
Mignon A. Montpetit, Illinois Wesleyan University

Presider: Mignon A. Montpetit, Illinois Wesleyan University

Discussant: Dawn Norris, University of Maryland

Papers:

“Dynamical Systems and Macroenvironmental Context: New Lenses on Old Questions,”
Mignon A. Montpetit, Illinois Wesleyan University

“Integrating Cohort Analysis and Narrative Interviewing: The Case of the G.I. Bill and
Expansion of the Post-WWII Professoriate,” Chris Wellin, Illinois State University

“Listening to Photographs: Visual Data Collection with Older Adults,” Mary E. Byrnes, Western
Carolina University

“Living in the Ages of Indeterminacy: Korean Youths’ Transnational Migration Experience in
the U.S.,” Kirsten Younghee Song, Rutgers University, *1st place Winner of the Youth, Aging,
and the Life Course Division’s Student Paper Competition*

Time: 4:30 PM - 6:10 PM

Session 116: Health Care Reform and Societal Aging

Room: Georgia 6

Sponsors: Health, Health Policy, and Health Services
Youth, Aging, and the Life Course

Organizers: Debra Street, University at Buffalo
Leah Rogne, Minnesota State University

Presider & Discussant: Debra Street, University at Buffalo

Papers:

“Career Expectancy of Mississippi Physicians: Identifying Future Physician Workforce Needs,”
Jeralynn S. Cossman and Jamie Boydston, Mississippi State University

“HEALTH REFORM, HEALTH SECURITY AND THE WELLBEING OF MIDLIFE AND OLDER AMERICANS AND CANADIANS,” Sarah Desai, University at Buffalo, SUNY and Debra Street, University at Buffalo

“The Inclusion of Long-Term Services and Supports in U.S. Healthcare Reform Debates,”
Brian R. Grossman, San Jose State University

“Working After Retirement: Considering the Role of Health Insurance as a Cause and Consequence of Unretirement,” Ben Lennox Kail, Florida State University

SPOTLIGHT ON THE THEMATIC SESSION:

Session 30: Social Justice Work and the "Aging Network": Forms of, and Constraints on, Activism in the Helping Professions

The SSSP conference theme for 2010 is *Social Justice Work*. This theme captures the enduring, but elusive, goals of advocacy or *participatory action* research, implying partnerships of various forms between scholars, policy actors, and practitioners. As stated in the 2010 *Call for Papers*, posted on the SSSP website:

“Social justice work is problem-driven scholarship that employs rigorous theory and research methods. Examples include work on human rights and civil rights; action research focused on injustices on the factory floor or in the courtroom; and the study of discrimination or violence which is directed at groups or individuals in local communities in the United States and throughout the wider world. Explanation and understanding are the starting points, not the results, of social justice work. The most urgent and persistent social problems – war and violence, economic distress and poverty, inequalities, and unfair treatment of social groups – initiate social justice work, which changes the value or utility attributed to mainstream scholarship within the social sciences. Practitioners, all types of scholar activists, are not blinded by a favorite framework or the desire to produce papers directed only to academic specialists. Social justice and ways to achieve it, rather than intellectual struggles, are deemed to be the worthy battles.”

Given the strongly applied, policy-oriented character of much research on aging, that ideal, and its potential contradictions, are especially salient. The challenge of realizing the ideal

was sharpened by the critique, articulated by Carroll Estes and others, regarding the "Aging Enterprise" and the complicity, albeit unwitting, of direct-service employees and policy-makers in perpetuating *dependency* among "incorrigible youth," the aged and disabled. Of course, one barrier to truly subversive research is scholars' dependence on funding sources and their agendas. Other barriers to social justice work are embedded in occupational socialization; the negotiated order of human service organizations; the cultural logic of policies (such as those promoting "self-sufficiency"); and even the organization of language and micro-politics of social interaction. Examining how these conditions shape the process and impact of social justice work is the central goal of this session.

These barriers don't (and shouldn't) stop researchers from exploring and developing collaboration to benefit collective interests. To abandon the effort would, in Peter Berger's term, be "bad faith." However, in this panel discussion, which is the thematic session for the YALC Division, we will engage the challenges of doing social justice work, particular as illuminated by critical stances (such as Institutional Ethnography and Constructionist approaches to social problems work), in order to complement and ground political and philosophical dimensions of this debate in textured, ethnographic understandings of workers, policies, and everyday practice.

Members of the panel bring an exciting and relevant array of experiences to bear on this problematic. Allow me briefly to introduce the panelists.

Kamini Maraj Grahame (Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg; Current Chair of the Institutional Ethnography Division of SSSP) infuses issues related to multiculturalism into her courses as well as her scholarly research. Ethnicity, race, gender, and social class are critical themes in her courses. She has also been instrumental in advancing goals of cultural diversity in her academic institution. Guided by insights in Institutional Ethnography, Dr. Grahame will touch (among other things) on how extra-local sources of power—such as texts, plans, regulations and other *relations of ruling*—impinge on or shape social justice work.

Brooke Hollister (University of California, San Francisco) will draw from her work with the Gray Panthers in order to explore the notion of public sociology as it confronts changing social movement strategies, organizations, and modes of participation. She argues, "Internet and Communication technology (ICT) has forced traditional social movements and social movement organizations to adjust their structure, practice, and outcome measures. New questions emerge, e.g., : How have these ICTs influenced the ways in which academics participate in Social Justice work? Dr. Hollister argues that with the increasingly open source nature of social movements, public sociologists are increasingly participating in all levels of social movement work rather than as elite allies or gatekeepers to emancipatory knowledge and resources. Additionally, as ICTs have facilitated the time and effort it takes to participate in traditional social movement activities (writing to legislators, signing petitions, etc), distinctions between traditional academic work and participation in social movements are increasingly blurred."

Gale Miller (Marquette University) is a distinguished teacher and researcher, whose interests include sociological theory, social interaction, and the sociology of troubles. Among his enduring interests has been documenting and analyzing how social policies are implemented in contemporary human service institutions. Over the past few years, Gale has lectured across North America, Japan, East Asia, Europe and England. Having published 24 books and dozens of scholarly articles (including several on the constructionist approach to social problems theory and research, edited with James Holstein), Gale Miller is an especially insightful student of the practical dimensions of social justice work.

Contemplating his role on the panel, Miller notes: “I see two streams in my interest in human service work and organizations. The first involves looking at the practical contingencies of this work, which might be translated into obstacles to social justice work. The second involves my more recent interest in solution-focused therapy and other affirmative, postmodern therapeutic interventions, which seek change by working within the contingencies of everyday institutional practices. One of the lessons that I have learned from the latter studies is the importance of focusing on exceptions to typical practice, amplifying times when positive differences occur. Overall, I think that sociologists orient to and are good at documenting the first stream, but are tragically ignorant about or disinterested in the latter stream. So, I would like to talk about how these streams might and must be brought together to produce an action-oriented, positive sociology that could be called affirmative postmodernism.”

WINNER OF THE YALC DIVISION STUDENT PAPER AWARD

This year’s submissions for the Division’s student paper award were all strong and ambitious, combining theoretical and methodological innovation. Within this fine group, an especially distinguished paper is: “*Living in the Ages of Indeterminacy: Korean Youths’ Transnational Migration Experience in the U.S.*”

Written by **Kirsten Younghee Song**, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at Rutgers University, the paper draws on long-term ethnographic fieldwork among a youth group in a large Korean church in order to document and theorize the experience and negotiation of transnational migration. Song critiques earlier research, which tended to frame transnational migration as a uni-directional and dichotomous process (with respect to immigrants’ spatial and temporal orientations). Today, she argues, digital communication technologies and the global reach of popular culture accompany more fluid templates regarding the transitions, timing, and stability of educational and work careers; they have, in her phrase, created conditions of prolonged *indeterminacy* for this cohort of Korean youth. This is a specific manifestation of a broader pattern in which transitions to adulthood are ambiguous and protracted.

Drawing on the key (but under-utilized) concept of birth cohort, Song concludes that, “Contemporary transnational migration is experienced not only in terms of spatial but also

temporal simultaneity, although scholarly discussion largely remains focused on spatial aspect of migration. Regarding the increasingly complex composition of Korean communities in the U.S., birth cohort is a very useful analytic tool to capture pertinent *indeterminacy* in my field site. ...My study shows how members' everyday lives are crafted with past, present, and future in practicing transnational activities." In the paper, Song combines linguistic analysis, field observation, and insightful interpretation to contribute to knowledge not only of aging in this community, but also of immigration, the church as an integrative institution, and cognitive sociology. Song's work exemplifies how intensive ethnography can not only extend or refine, but help to reconstruct, domains of inquiry on aging and the life course.

MEMBER'S NEWS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Laura Raymond and Kristen Myers recently published (April 2010) an article in *Gender & Society* entitled, "Elementary School Girls and Heteronormativity: The Girl Project," which explores the ways that elementary school girls co-constructed heteronormativity.

Sewell, Abigail A. and David R. Heise. 2010. "Racial Differences in Sentiments: Exploring Variant Culture Theory" *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34(4):400-412.

Sewell, Abigail A. 2010. "A Different Menu: Racial Residential Segregation and the Persistence of Racial/Ethnic Inequality". Pp. 287-298 in *Race and Ethnic Relations in the Twenty-First Century: History, Theory, Institutions, and Policy* (ed. Rashawn Ray). San Diego, CA: University Readers, Inc.

Caldwell, Leon, **Abigail A. Sewell**, Nieka Parks, and Ivory D. Toldson. 2009. "Before the Bell Rings: Implementing Coordinated School Health Models to Influence the Academic Achievement of African American Males." *Journal of Negro Education* 78(3):204-215.

Leslie K. Wang published "Importing Western Childhoods Into a Chinese State-Run Orphanage" in *Qualitative Sociology* (2010, 33, 2: 137-159). This fall she will become a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia.

Do You Have a Great Idea for a SSSP session topic at the 2010 meetings? We need help thinking about and organizing SSSP sessions related to issues of youth, aging, or the life course at the 2011 meetings, and the topics are endless! If you have an idea for a panel session or if you would like to propose a session, please contact Chris Wellin (cwellin@ilstu.edu). Also, if you would be willing to write a column for the newsletter—addressing teaching, research, advocacy, or other activities or issues relevant to SSSP's broad mission, we need and will welcome your contributions. Finally, in the next newsletter I'll hope to include entries that report on and/or react to the Atlanta meetings.

Remember to renew your membership in the YALC Division when you renew your SSSP Membership for 2011! Also think about giving a gift membership to students!