



SOCIAL PROBLEMS THEORY DIVISION

of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Social Problems Theory Division Members,

Welcome to the theory division's summer newsletter! Here we provide, among other news and information, updates on our division-sponsored sessions at the 2023 conference in Philadelphia—always check the SSSP official program for additional final changes.

The newsletter also highlights articles published by division members and an invitation to attend the Awards Ceremony for the student paper competition winners, which will take place on Saturday, August 19th, 5:45-7:00pm, at the Philadelphia Ballroom. Big thanks to the outstanding student paper competition, subcommittee chair Joshua Stout, with Sarah Werman and Steve Bernardin, and for the outstanding article award, chair Annulla Linders, with Kemi Johnson-Pratt, and Morena Tartari. I would also like to thank (in order of session number) all of our organizers and those willing to chair our sessions: Joshua H. Stout, Alan Santinele Martino, Morena Tartari, Sarah E. Castillo, Baptiste Brossard, David C. Lane, Andrew J. Shapiro, Andrew R. Burns, Kat Albrecht, Colin Hastings, and Jared Del Rosso. Thank you also to division members serving on the division's outstanding student paper and outstanding article awards this year. The first will be chaired by Joshua Stout, with Sarah Werman and Steve Bernardin, and the latter by Annulla Linders, with Kemi Johnson-Pratt and Morena Tartari. My thanks also to Rebecca Blackwell for her work on producing this newsletter!

We hope that you follow the division's news through our Twitter account, @SPTheoryDivisi1, and that you join our division business meeting on Friday, August 18th 4:30-6:10pm, at the Philadelphia Ballroom North. New members are encouraged to come, and anyone interested in joining the social problems theory division, is welcome to contact me, Mike Adorjan, at: madorjan@ucalgary.ca

Best wishes for a productive and engaging academic year!

Mike Adorjan
University of Calgary



Mike Adorjan

Social Problems Theory Division Chair 2022-2024
Department of Sociology, University of Calgary

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Opportunities and Announcements

Editors: Mike Adorjan and Rebecca Blackwell

SSSP 2023 ANNUAL MEETING DIVISION SPONSORED SESSIONS

Session 004: New Directions, Same Problems in Social Problems Theory

08/18/23
8:30 - 10:10 am
Freedom H

This session explores new directions in social problems theory with an emphasis on the constructionist perspective.

Discussant:
Stout, Joshua H.
Shepherd University

Papers:

“Constructing Heroes, Villains, and Victims: An Analysis of News Stories about Natural Hazards and Crime Control,” David C. Lane, Illinois State University, Jacob T. Foster, Arizona State University and Bothwell Piason, Illinois State University

“Creep Dynamics: Metaphors for Social Problems Processes,” Joel Best, University of Delaware

“Stealth: An Analysis of the Construction of Nonconsensual Condom Removal as a Social Problem in the Media,” Clara Mey, University of Delaware

“The Expert Problem in Mainstream News Coverage of School Shootings,” Brian Monahan, Baldwin Wallace University, R. J. Maratea, St. Francis College and Bailey Hall, Baldwin Wallace University

Session 015: Social Problems, Theory, and Disability

08/18/23
12:00 - 2:10 pm
Salon 3 & 4

This session centers around research at the intersections of social problems, theory, and critical disability studies. The papers link up with this year’s conference theme “Same Problem, Different Day: Recognizing and Responding to Recurring Social Problems”. Qualitative approaches here emphasize lived experiences and resistance within wider structured contexts of ableism, neuro and temporal normatives.

Presider and Discussant:
Alan Santinele
Martino
University of Calgary

Papers:

“It Starts with the Littlest Things’: Young Disabled Women’s Experiences Navigating Everyday Oppressions,” Emily Horowitz, University of Illinois Chicago

“Neuroqueer Theory: Problematizing the ‘Social Problem’ of Neurodivergence,” Jessica Penwell Barnett, Wright State University

“Siblings of (Dis)abled Family Members: An Analysis of Children’s Literature on Constructions of Normalcy and Caregiving Roles,” Cheryl Najarian Souza, University of Massachusetts Lowell

“The Intersectionality of Crip Time,” Erin Fleming, The George Washington University

Session 025: PAPERS IN THE ROUND: Drawing on Social Problems Theory From Different Perspectives

08/18/23
2:30 - 4:10 pm
Philadelphia
Ballroom North

This session hosts papers that engage with social problems theory with a different range of approaches, topics, and methods. It aims to discuss the links between the empirical research studies conducted by the presenters and the social problems theory. In particular, the session aims to focus on the presenters’ perspectives and reflections on social problems theory.

Presider/Discussant:
Morena Tartari
University of Padua

Roundtable #1 Title: Drawing on Social Problems Theory From Different Perspectives

Papers:

“Aye! Let’s Link Up: A Statistical Analysis of Linked Fate in the United States,” Dante A. Miller, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

“Egalitarian Attitudes as Mechanisms for Status Enhancement: Social and Symbolic Benefits for Men Who Support Gender Equality,” Katharine Khanna, Columbia University, Honorable Mention in the Social Problems Theory Division’s Student Paper Competition

“How the Neoliberal Ecosystem Impedes Meaningful Change through Nonprofits: A Proposed Framework,” Andrew C. Schoeneman and Bob Spire, University of Richmond

“Politicizing the Body: The Politics of Space, Place, and Belonging,” Barbara Harris Combs, Kennesaw State University

Session 046: **CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Southern Theory: Expanding Theoretical Horizons**

08/19/23
8:30 - 10:10 am
Freedom H

Papers in this session contend with theory building and present new theoretical frameworks about the persistence of social problems and inequality. From examining the role of empathy in drug addiction recovery processes, to the manifestation and reification of the concepts of order and safety within social landscapes, these papers introduce new frames of thinking about known issues. In addition, the new theoretical frameworks examine the role of colorblind racism within the republican party, approaches to the conceptualization of culture, and carceral logics underpinning the child welfare system. The papers will both expand and reimagine thinking about how systems of oppression both perpetuate injustice and can also imagine new possibilities.

President/Discussant:
Sarah E. Castillo
University of
Tennessee

Papers:

“A Review of Labor in Vietnam - Why a Theory of Global Capitalism is Needed,” Hoai-An Nguyen, University of California, Santa Barbara

“Colorblind Racism, Criminality, and the Republican MAGA Movement,” Sarah E. Castillo and Maddie R. Ross, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

“Dis/order and Il/legality: Landscapes in Dystopian Film,” Katarina M. McGuire, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

“Expanding on the Sociology of Empathy to Build on Approaches to Substance Mis-use Recovery,” Samantha McIntyre, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

“Good Practice: Why it Still Matters and Why it Isn’t Enough,” Grace Pappas, Portland State University

“Reconceptualizing and Elevating the Lifeworld to Resist the System: New Directions for Social Problems Praxis,” Sarah Jane Brubaker, Virginia Commonwealth University

“Social Problems and the Rhetoric of Culture,” Amir B. Marvasti and Amelia K. Paterno, Penn State Altoona

Session 058: **Neoliberalism, Mental Health and Social Theory**

08/19/23
12:00 - 2:10 pm
Independence C

Through several case studies, this session investigates the politics and experiences of mental health in neoliberal times and the different critical, social and alternative theoretical approaches through which this research object can be approached.

President/Discussant:
Baptiste Brossard
University of York

Papers:

“Your Wellbeing Comes First’: A Marxist Analysis of Workplace Mental Health Initiatives in Neoliberal Society,” Bruce M. Z. Cohen, University of Auckland

“Understandings and Encounters with ‘Fake News’ Online during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Experiences of Gender Non-binary and Trans Youth,” Michael Adorjan, University of Calgary and Rosemary Ricciardelli, Fisheries and Marine Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland

“I Don’t Look the Way I Want to Look, so You Cannot See Me’: A Sociological Examination of Disordered Eating in Trans and Nonbinary Individuals,” Adam Gavnik, University of Delaware

“Climate Anxiety & Climate Action: Young Adults’ Reflections on Coping with the Climate Crisis,” Kathleen L. Grant, The College of New Jersey, Alyson Pompeo-Fargnoli and Melissa Archer Alvare, Monmouth University.

Session 071: CRITICAL DIALOGUE Using Media to Teach about Social Problems

08/19/23
12:00 - 2:10 pm
Freedom E

This session is a critical dialogue focused on the ways media can be incorporated into social problems courses.

Presider/Discussant:
David C. Lane
Illinois State University

Paper:

“That’s Funny But...!’: University Students, Humor, and Critical Consciousness about Anti-Black Racism,” Lory Janelle Dance, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna Poudel, University of Kansas and Sutton Marvin, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
“Building the Global Citizen 2.0: Creative Forms of Democracy in the Age of Smartphones,” Ellis Jones, College of the Holy Cross
“Classroom Monsters in the Time of Neoliberalism,” Justin R. Huft, University of California, Riverside
“Teaching Race after the Genome: An Approach to Challenging Biological Understandings of Race in the Classroom,” Luis A. Romero and Amina Zarrugh, Texas Christian University
“Using Media to Help Students Explore a Sociological Model of Mental Health and Illness,” Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda, Miami University
“Youth and Suicide in American Cinema: Silence and its Repercussions,” Alessandra Seggi, Villanova University

Session 081: Theorizing Injustice from/in the Global South

08/20/23
8:30 - 10:10 pm
Independence C

Despite growing calls to decolonize the academy, much scholarship continues to center the Global North as its unexamined default. In a world where (post)colonial subjects bear the brunt of global injustice, those same subjects are too often excluded from theorizing about the oppression they face. This session works to decenter the Global North in favor of theorizing injustice from/in the Global South. Papers in this session offer new and expanded frameworks for thinking about global inequality, ones that work to portray colonized people on their own terms while also attending to the harms wrought by US, Western, and Northern imperialisms.

Discussant: Andrew J. Shapiro,
The Graduate Center, CUNY

Papers:

“Gendered-Racial Capitalism: Implications for the Global Capitalist Crises,” Debadatta Chakraborty, University of Massachusetts Amherst
“National Food Heritage Policy and Transnational Authority: Reproducing the Hegemony of Origin Food Schemes through Expert Discourses,” Matthew J. Zinsli, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Universidad San Francisco de Quito
“Mind the Gap: Investigating the Presence of Colonial Attitudes among Global Development Workers,” Yeabsira T. Mehari, Harvard University
“‘I am Born on the Land of Pakistan. I am Pakistani’: Terric Nationalism among Hindu Pakistanis,” Syeda Q. Masood, Brown University, Honorable Mention in the Global Division’s Student Paper Competition

Session 098: CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Current Concerns in Substance Use: Promoting Health, and Combating Stigma

08/20/23
10:30 - 12:10 pm
Philadelphia
Ballroom South

This critical dialogue considers several ongoing concerns relating to the topic of psychoactive substance use. Session participants present research on the use of these substances within the context of mitigating their potential harms, through a consideration of the stigmatization of their use and the people who use them, and the shifting contexts of psychoactive substances within social and public health arenas.

Presider/Discussant:
Andrew R. Burns, Louisiana
State University

Papers:

“Drug Checking in Skid Row: A Humanizing and Empowering Service,” Dina Perrone, Emily Millington and Ryan G. Fischer, California State University, Long Beach and Darren Willett, Homeless Healthcare of Los Angeles

“Opioid Overdose in the Metropolitan,” Kat Albrecht, Georgia State University, Andrew R. Burns, Louisiana State University and Tzu-Hao (Joseph) Wu, Georgia State University

“Substance Use in Rural America: Guiding Harm Reduction with Social Research,” Simon J. Purdy, SUNY Delhi

“The Past, Present, and Potential Futures of Psychedelic Psychotherapy,” Andrew R. Burns, Louisiana State University

“Trajectories of Cannabis Use among Young Adults: A Novel Mixed Methods Study,” Stephen Lankenau, Ekaterina Fedorova and Janna Ataiants, Drexel University, Bridgid Mariko Conn, University of Southern California; Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and Carolyn F. Wong, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

Session 107: Intertextuality, Theory, and the Social Organization of Knowledge

08/20/23
12:30 - 2:10 pm
Salon 5 & 6

Contributions to this session enhance understandings of pressing social problems by making visible the intertextual character of knowledge construction. By applying intertextuality to the study of social problems, these researchers make visible the forms of social coordination that produce and reproduce the social problems that activists are up against, and thus, can help provide the groundwork for meaningful interventions.

Discussant:
Colin Hastings
University of Waterloo

Papers:

“Jane Addams’s Use of Intertextuality--Theory and the Social Organization of Knowledge,” Gillian Niebrugge Brantley and Patricia M. Lengermann, The George Washington University

“Storytelling, Boundary Making, and Networks of Expertise on Abortion Policy: A Narrative Analysis of the Supreme Court Case of Dobbs v. Jackson,” Rebecca M. Blackwell, University of South Florida and Marta C. Blackwell, Canadian Council for the Americas

“Texts and the Social Organization of UN Climate Policy,” Lauren Eastwood, Centre for Global Cooperation Research

“The Intertextuality of Student Codes of Conduct, Police Surveillance and the Social Organization of Student Activist Work,” Elizabeth L. Brule, Queen's University

SSSP THEORY DIVISION OUTSTANDING STUDENT PAPER AWARD

This year we received several very strong submissions for our Outstanding Student Paper award. The committee awarded Justin Sola for *Theory with Consequents: Theories of Neoliberalism in the Study of Social Problems*. Congratulations Justin!

The committee agreed that Justin's paper provides a strong contribution to social problems theory. Specifically, this paper provides guidance for the theoretical and empirical implementation of neoliberal frameworks in the study of social problem. We found the thorough literature review provided by the author clearly outlined core issues in social problem literature's use of neoliberalism as a casual explanation for social problems, leading to the concept and theory of neoliberalism being applied loosely. Such application, Justin argues, has muddled the theory. Justin provides needed crystallization on how neoliberalism ought to be defined and applied to studying social problems. As the author notes, "Being explicit about neoliberalism will enable scholars to elucidate strains of neoliberalism."

Honourable mention goes to Katharine Khanna for *Egalitarian Attitudes as Mechanisms for Status Enhancement: Social and Symbolic Benefits for Men Who Support Gender Equality*. Congratulations Katharine!

The committee was thoroughly impressed by the methodological contributions of this piece. Katharine "provides the first causal evidence of the measurable social and symbolic rewards men gain by espousing egalitarian gender ideals." In this paper, Katharine demonstrates how men receive greater status positionality through the expression of egalitarian views, in turn furthering inequality along gendered lines. Utilizing theories of status process, male expression of egalitarianism is shown to aid in the reinforcement of male intragroup inequality.



Justin Lucas Sola is a 5th year Ph.D. candidate in the Criminology, Law & Society department at the University of California Irvine. His research focuses on: 1) how people seek security through gun ownership and state resources, and 2) the interplay of crime policies and inequality. Funded by the [National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research](#), Justin's dissertation evaluates gun ownership in the United States using theories of neoliberalism. He is also a researcher with the [Shadow Costs](#) project on monetary sanctions and a member of the [Irvine Laboratory for the Study of Space and Crime](#). You can learn more about Justin's work at www.jlsola.com and his ORCID profile: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0955-1031>



Katharine Khanna is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Columbia University. Her research examines how and why gender inequality persists in the United States. Current projects investigate the relational nature of gender attitudes, the social and symbolic consequences of espousing egalitarian beliefs, and men's motivations to support gender equality.

This year's SSSP Social Problems Theory Division Outstanding Article Award is awarded to stef shuster and Laurel Westbrook and for their article *Reducing the Joy Deficit in Sociology: A Study of Transgender Joy, Social Problems*.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spac034>

Congratulations stef and Laurel! This amazing paper examines what stef and Laurel dub a 'joy deficit' in sociology, exploring through interviews what 40 trans people find joyful about being trans. The article "demonstrates a vital need to address the joy deficit that exists in the sociological scholarship on transgender people specifically, and marginalized groups more generally. Bridging the sociology of knowledge and narratives, we show how accentuating joy offers nuance to understandings of the lived experiences of marginalized people that has been absent from much of sociological scholarship."

This significant scholarship has wide implications for sociological theorizing of marginalization, not to undercut experiences of oppression and alienation but to suggest there is more to know and that this knowledge – of joy and pleasure – is as much about self-acceptance as it is a recognition of shared experience.



Laurel Westbrook is a Professor of Sociology at Grand Valley State University. Their research focuses on the inner workings of the sex/gender/sexuality system, including how beliefs about sex, gender, and sexuality shape experiences of transgender people. They are the author of *Unlivable Lives: Violence and Identity in Transgender Activism* (University of California Press, 2021), and co-editor of *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies: Original Essays* (Routledge, 2022). Their scholarship has also been published in *Social Problems*, *Gender & Society*, and *Sexualities*, among other journals. They are co-founder and former co-chair of Sociologists for Trans Justice (S4TJ.com).



stef shuster is an assistant professor in Lyman Briggs College and Sociology at Michigan State University. Their current research in gender, medicine, and feminist science and technology studies considers how evidence is constructed, mobilized, and weaponized, which is the subject of their book, *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* (NYU Press). In *Trans Medicine*, shuster traces the development of this medical field from the 1950s to modern medicine to show how providers create and use scientific and medical evidence to quell uncertainty, "treat" a gender identity, and uphold their authority.

Honorable mentions for the Outstanding Article Award go to:

Joachim Savelsberg, Writing biography in the face of cultural trauma: Nazi descent and the management of spoiled identities. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* (2022) 10:34–64 <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-020-00125-8> and

Larry Isaac, Quan Mai, Jonathan Coley and Anna Jacobs, Striking News: Discursive Power of the Press as Capitalist Resource in Gilded Age Strikes *AJS* Volume 127 Number 5 (March 2022): 1602–1663 <https://doi.org/10.1086/719424>
The awards sub-committee notes that it was extremely difficult to decide on runner-ups this year!

NEW PUBLICATIONS

New articles by our members! Please see:

Huff-Corzine, Lin & Kayla Toohy -2023- [The life and scholarship of Pauline Tarnowsky: Criminology's mother](#). *Journal of Criminal Justice* 85, Article 101986 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2022.101986>

Esparza, Louis Edgar. 2023. "Social Justice & Sociological Theory: Césaire, Mills, & de Beauvoir." *Journal of Social Encounters* 7(1): 186-207. https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social_encounters/vol7/iss1/11/

Professor Esparza also received a recent award, the 2022-23 Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Award in Democracy, Human Rights and Violence Prevention at the University of Brasília! Congratulations Louis!

Joose, P., & Zelinsky, D. (1979). Charismatic Mimicry: Innovation and Imitation in the Case of Volodymyr Zelensky. *Sociological Theory*, Online first: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/07352751231174436>

Congratulations Paul and Dominik!