2015 NCSA Presidential Address

The 2015 conference theme, New Visions of Human Flourishing, stimulated creative and original ideas about structural and cultural innovation by merging theory and practice, and unifying research and teaching. This theme was fully realized in the diverse and interdisciplinary perspective offered by the 2015 NCSA Presidential Address, delivered by Dr. Matthew Lee. Focused not only on human flourishing, but on creating a cohesive vision of the future of the discipline of sociology, he proposed attending to the multiple and complex dimensions of mindfulness, which have the potential to advance human flourishing.

Meta Mindfulness

Central to Dr. Lee’s vision was the role that sociology can play in generating meta-mindfulness. In his own words, “Much of the language about creating a mindful society is reductionist. In other words, if we help individuals become more mindful then we will have a more mindful society. This is only partly true.” The culmination of the address implored us to move beyond this individualistic vision toward a future where we can “create mindful organizations, communities, and institutions, and work on the societal level to most fully realize the ideal of the mindful society.”

Notably, Lee suggested that sociology could assist secular versions of mindfulness in becoming less instrumental and commodified, more morally grounded and politically awake, and increasingly aware of the value of the broader spiritual context of mindfulness. When combined with applications at the macro level, a sociological mindfulness emerges with the potential to be transformative not only in individuals’ lives, but in society and the discipline more broadly.
From the Desk of the President

On Inequality, Injustice, and Intersectionalities

I am honored to serve as President of the North Central Sociological Association. The coming year promises to be one of great excitement and accomplishment for us as we work together with colleagues and friends from the Midwest Sociological Society to co-organize our annual conference next March in Chicago. In size and scope, our conference will be second only to the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

Our conference theme in 2016 is “Inequality, Injustice, and Intersectionalities.” Perhaps no concepts have greater contemporary significance than social inequality and injustice. Gaining a better understanding of social inequalities is what initially attracted many of us to social science in general and sociology in particular and defines us as intellectuals. Often, our understanding of the causes, content, and consequences of how inequalities and injustices intersect guides our actions in our communities, not just as social activists but also as active social scientists.

The 2016 Useem Plenary Speaker at our Chicago conference will be Professor Douglas S. Massey, Professor of Sociology at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, past president of the American Sociological Association, the Population Association of America, and the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Professor Massey is acknowledged and respected as one of the foremost scholars on the sociology of immigration. Today, almost every developed country is an immigrant-receiving society, attracting immigrants primarily from the developing world. His early work (see Return to Aztlan) focused on the social mechanisms promoting and sustaining emigration from Mexico to the United States. In Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium, he developed a theoretical synthesis to account for immigration. Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Age of Economic Integration used the same theoretical framework to analyze the history of Mexico-U.S. migration and to critique past U.S. policies, suggesting avenues for future reform. In 2010 he published the prescient Brokered Boundaries: Creating Immigrant Identity in Anti-Immigrant Times (co-authored with Magaly Sánchez).

Especially germane in today’s turbulent and dangerous world of divisive race-relations, inequality, injustice and urban discontent, Professor Massey is also well known for his research on urban segregation in America. African Americans are uniquely segregated in American cities, and since the publication of his prize-winning American Apartheid (co-authored with Nancy A. Denton), he has continued to research, publish, and speak on the consequences of segregation for African Americans and Latinos of African ancestry. Segregation figured prominently in explanations for black underachievement in his Source of the River, and it interacts with shifts in the U.S. income distribution to yield a rising concentration of poverty that intensifies social disorder and violence that undermines the health of African Americans, reduces their life expectancy, and impairs their cognitive development.

In Chicago we will explore related concepts such as growing and pervasive income inequalities, social injustice, economic exploitation, downward mobility, and intersecting systems of power and privilege. I invite you to join sociologists from over 20 states, Canada, and from abroad to help us organize a session, present a paper, participate in a professional workshop, facilitate a teaching workshop, present a poster, or just come to be inspired and rejuvenated by what is certain to be an exciting collaborative meeting.

~ Dr. Brendan Mullen
NCSA Solicits Nominations for 2016 Awards

Scholarly Achievement Award
Honoring individuals who have made significant contributions to the discipline of sociology by way of their academic work this award is divided into two categories, book and article. Self-nominations are welcome.

Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award
This honor recognizes an NCSA member who has served the association in a single truly outstanding activity, in many capacities over a long period of time, and/or throughout their professional career.

J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Award
This award is given to an individual who is, or who has been, an active member of the NCSA and has made distinguished contributions to sociological scholarship, or applied/public sociology that improves quality of life, teaching, and learning in the region and nationally.

John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award
Given to an individual, a department, a program, or an institution located in the NCSA region, this award recognizes excellence in activities that enhance the teaching of sociology.

2015 NCSA Award Recipients

Scholarly Achievement: Journal Article
The NCSA Scholarly Achievement Award for a journal article was given to Jason Manning of West Virginia University for his article, “Suicide as Social Control,” published in Sociological Forum vol. 27, no. 1 (March 2012): 207-227. In the groundbreaking piece, he proposes a unique theoretical approach to understanding suicide in its various forms, advancing our insight into a pressing social issue.

John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award
The John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award was given to Leslie Elrod of the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash. As the Director of Service Learning and Civic Engagement at UC Blue Ash, she challenges her students to engage with non-profit organizations, effectively bridging the gap between academic theories and real life, and allowing her students to get their hands dirty by doing sociology.

Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award
Barbara Denison of Shippensburg University was the 2015 winner of the Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award. Traditionally occupying a “behind the scenes” role in NCSA, Barb served diligently as the Executive Officer for the association from 1985 to 1993, as the Local Arrangements chair twice, on the Membership Committee, and most recently as Secretary. Over the years, she has presented 9 papers and participated in 7 panels and workshops at NCSA, making her a fixture in the organization.

J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Distinguished Career Award
In 2015, no J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Distinguished Career Award was presented. Please consider nominating an NCSA member for the 2016 Yinger Award.

Please consider nominating a fellow faculty member or student for an NCSA award. These awards allow us, as scholars, to recognize the contributions of others to the discipline of sociology and to NCSA as a professional association. Please visit the awards page on the NCSA website at http://www.ncsanet.org/awards to see the full details.
The 2015 Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address

This year the NCSA was honored to invite Dr. Layli Maparyan, Executive Director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, to deliver the 2015 Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address in Cleveland. Offering a fresh perspective on how to advance a womanist sociology she concentrated on the theme of human flourishing as it related to spiritual activism, discussing small ways to generate large scale changes.

Womanist Praxis

A womanist perspective focuses on inclusion, rather than opposition, bringing together the spiritual, environmental, and humanistic in an attempt to improve the welfare of the population. Focusing on recent applications of the perspective, Dr. Maparyan demonstrated alternative ways to respond to the violence and suffering of the human condition in a way that promotes social change as an accessible feature of our environment.

The John F. Schnabel Teaching Address

Dr. Mellissa Holtzman of Ball State University, last year’s winner of the John F. Schnabel Award, delivered this year’s teaching keynote address. In it, she noted the parallels between teaching and the martial arts in an entertaining and thought provoking analysis of how being a professor can be akin to being a classroom ninja. Drawing on the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, her interactive discussion prompted audience members to consider the types of forces they harness as practitioners of a craft.

Sociological Focus

Sociological Focus is the official publication of the North Central Sociological Association (NCSA). Published continuously since 1968, the quarterly journal is international in scope, covering a full range of topics of current interest to sociology and related social science disciplines. Sociological Focus is peer reviewed and committed to publishing high quality research on substantive issues of importance to the study of society. The journal’s mission is broad in scope, encompassing empirical works (both quantitative and qualitative in nature), as well as manuscripts presenting up to date literature review of any field of sociology. See author and submissions guidelines at: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usfo20#.VE62fdWTM

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Student Paper Competitions and Awards

Butler A. Jones Scholarship

In the spirit of the lifetime efforts of Butler A. Jones, the Equity and Inclusion committee of NCSA invites award applications from eligible applicants. The award comes with a $400 prize, plus one year’s membership and annual meeting registration for NCSA. The award is intended to facilitate a student’s attendance and participation in the upcoming NCSA annual meeting.

Applicant Eligibility:

- Undergraduate or graduate with a major or work that is relevant to the award.
- Member of the African American community.
- Attendance at the 2016 NCSA annual meeting

NCSA Student Paper Competition

Each year the NCSA holds a student paper competition to recognize the scholarly contributions of students. For both undergraduate and graduate divisions, the maximum length of the paper is 5000 words, and it should represent original research with empirical, methodological, and/or theoretical contributions.

Please see ncsanet.org for full details on the opportunities available for students.

2015 NCSA Student Award Winners

Undergraduate Division Papers

First Place: Elizabeth Maher (University of Cincinnati Blue Ash), “You’ve Got Time: The Formation of Female Criminal Protagonists in Popular Television.” Adviser: Todd M. Callais, University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash

Second Place: Allison Sheets (Saint Mary's College), “Switching the Code: The Complicity of Female Twitter Users in the Preservation of Rape Culture.” Adviser: Susan Alexander, Saint Mary's College

Third Place: Markie Harrison (Saint Mary's College), “Putting Blacks into a Cultural Prison: An Analysis of Victims and Criminals in the Television Series Law & Order.” Adviser: Susan Alexander, Saint Mary's College

Graduate Division Papers

First Place: Tom VanHeuvelen (Indiana University), “Recovering the Missing Middle: Within-Group Inequality, Place Effects, and the Volatility Curve.” Adviser: Arthur S. Alderson, Indiana University


Third Place: Matthew Grace (Indiana University) and Jane VanHeuvelen (Indiana University), “Ties Received, Support Perceived: A Test of the Theorized Relationships among Workplace Networks, Social Support, and Mental Health in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).” Advisers: Bernice Pescosolido, Indiana University and Brian Powell, Indiana University
The 2016 Joint MSS/NCSA Conference

The 2016 NCSA conference will be held jointly with the Midwest Sociological Society March 23rd through the 26th at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile. The theme of the conference, “Inequality, Injustice, and Intersectionality,” will challenge us to examine the myriad ways in which our teaching, research, and activism addresses the complexities and intersectionalities of various forms of inequality and injustice.

Conference Details

Few concepts have greater contemporary significance or have ignited sociologists’ passions more than social inequality and injustice. As researchers, we grapple with how to generate knowledge that illuminates the complexities of the various dimensions of inequality. As educators, we seek to inspire in our students a sociological imagination that will empower them to investigate, interrogate, and confront the social causes, content, and consequences of inequality and injustice. And, as activists, we endeavor to generate policy implications, interventions, and new mechanisms for addressing inequality in systematic ways.

The conference will feature close to 1,000 papers, so don’t miss your chance to be part of the discussion. Organize a session, present a paper, or participate in a roundtable.

Submissions

Because this is a joint meeting, the timeline for the conference is significantly shorter than the traditional submission timeline for NCSA. Make sure to check online and watch your inbox for emails from NCSA about the submission process. The online submission system will open on September 1st and conclude on October 31st, 2015. Hotel reservations (at the discounted conference rate) will open on December 7th, 2015.

Save the Date!

Did you know that the joint NCSA-MSS annual conference from March 23rd through the 26th will be the second largest gathering of sociologists in the nation? A joint meeting offers NCSA members an opportunity to participate and attend a wider variety of sessions, workshops, and offers additional networking opportunities. As an added benefit, the conference allows us to descend on Chicago -- an amazing city with a rich cultural and sociological history.
NCSA Welcomes...

The NCSA is honored to welcome our new council members:

- President Elect: Debra Swanson, Hope College
- Vice President Elect: Melinda Messineo, Ball State University
- Secretary: Rachel Kraus, Ball State University
- Council at Large: Michelle Bemiller, Walsh University

If you are interested in becoming more involved in NCSA and serving as an elected or appointed committee member, please contact the Past President and Nominations Chair, Matt Lee, at mlee2@uakron.edu. We are seeking chairs for Equality and Inclusion, Community College, and other positions.

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Contact Us
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