

# THE NORTH CENTRAL SOCIOLOGIST

Official Newsletter of the NCSA

Spring/Summer 2019 Newsletter

## 2019 NCSA Presidential Address

Dr. Melinda Messineo delivered this year's NCSA Presidential Address to a packed room. If you had the opportunity to attend, you were treated to a narrative that incited tears, laughter, and a heartfelt connection to her artful retelling of a lifetime of lessons learned from her father. One of the most compelling lessons was on being good listeners. Thus, while the central motif of the address mirrored the overarching storytelling theme of the conference, it refocused the discussion on the abandonment of the sociological lens in favor of an oft overlooked tool...our ears.

Drawing on Dr. Francesca Polletta's talk, the Presidential Address implored us to consider the ways in which sociologists could overcome the public's objections to specific types of stories by simply listening to these objections. This, however, does not imply that we no longer retell the stories we hear. Rather, it requires us to listen more and allow others to be heard, such that their voices become central to the discipline and inform the way in which we tell stories. Similarly, it requires us to listen to the

detractors as well, and consider their objections as a legitimate resource.

Could listening to stories be more important than the act of storytelling? For most of us, the subject we know best, and the one we most enjoy speaking about, is ourselves. We value being heard. But, what if we turned outward and simply became better listeners? Messineo outlined a number of ways to become better listeners, including being active and attentive, and seeking to understand first, while holding in abeyance our personal desires to immediately object, respond, or to "educate" others.

Yet, sociological listening also implies an attentiveness to the sorts of phenomena that define the discipline. That is, listening with an ear for the impact of power, structure, and inequality undoubtedly distinguishes sociologically-informed listening from the more generic form of active listening. Moreover, sociological listening must also focus on the stories that we do not hear, as this noticing can illuminate the stories that are ignored, debased, or never really told at all.

In our research, in our teaching, in our interpersonal relationships, we

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."  
~Maya Angelou*



all could dedicate a little more time to listening and a little less time to our own voices. Although navigating what we hear is fraught with significantly more risks, it also has the potential to yield far more rewards— in the form of compassionate understanding, making the unknown knowable, and helping others find their voice. In those moments, we are forced into intellectual humility, and the discovery that perhaps everything we thought we knew is actually wrong.



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2019 Useem Plenary Address: The Trouble with Stories

“SADLY, STORIES  
DON’T ALWAYS  
MATTER.”



*Pictured: Dr. Francesca Polletta*

Dr. Francesca Polletta’s 2019 Useem Plenary Address began with the story of author Roald Dahl’s attempts to persuade parents to vaccinate their children, following the death of his eldest daughter from measles. Polletta highlighted the compelling, emotional nature of the story, emphasizing the persuasive power of the types of stories that allow us to identify with the characters.

Despite the current popularity of stories and storytelling, however, these narratives may be poorly equipped to advance sociological insights. Sigh. The transformative power of stories, it turns out, hinges on how entrenched the views an individual holds really are.

In outlining what constitutes a story, Polletta underscored the importance of familiar challenges, characters with goals, and a resounding “moral” to the structure of a story. So, why are stories problematic? She offered three topics to consider that answer this question: poverty, gender inequality, and rape.

Advocacy organizations have long attempted to “put a face” to social problems. The personalization of issues like poverty, they believed, would help the public humanize those in poverty and thus support the cause. Yet, instead of humanizing those in poverty, audiences attributed the social problem to merely bad life choices, offering individualized solutions instead of support for

policies that would improve the human condition.

Some stories can be more effective, but only if they are told. In addressing gender inequality in the 1970s and 80s, the EEOC began suing major corporations, offering compelling statistics on disparity. Despite these established patterns, however, when individual women testified before judges, three times as many cases were successful. Unfortunately, many of these stories were never told, nor heard because the obstacles to “dream it,” and “be it” were already institutionalized.

The final illustration of disempowered stories Dr. Polletta related involved date rape. Survivor stories in rape outreach materials, intended to contest rape myths, and encourage reporting, instead of appearing as stories of heroism, took on a tragic form. The end result...listeners focused on what victims could have or should have done differently, a form of victim blaming all too familiar in public discourse surrounding sexual assault.

To address these issues, we can tell stories better, adapt our narratives to institutionalized norms, or refuse to feed into the storytelling machine that privileges certain types of stories and heroes. Let’s pick the first two.

*~People are not persuaded if they believe that the intent is to persuade.*

2019 Schnabel Teaching Address: Where Are All the Happy Stories?

The annual John F. Schnabel Teaching Address, delivered by Dr. Lissa Yogan, focused on happy stories, and their role in pedagogy and curriculum design in higher education. As a discipline, the standard sociological motive is to funnel anger at the source of injustice. However, there is a case for incorporating happiness into sociology. And, many of the classic sociologists knew it.

Although sociologists tend to focus on Marx’s concept of alienation, and its relationship to capitalism, Marx also wrote of happiness, which resided in the ability to translate thoughts into physical reality via labor. Herbert Spencer offered hundreds of references to happiness. Similarly, Lester Ward wrote of the social facilitation of happiness. While not all classic works in sociology were quite as keen on contentment (See Mills and Durkheim), happiness appears in and across sociological work.

How do we return the happiness to a discipline that appears to have abandoned it? Although many of us incorporate potential solutions to social problems and a “bright side” at the end of the semester, this does little to combat the overwhelming feeling of pessimism stu-

dents confront in the bulk of sociology courses. Because happiness is socially constructed and culturally imagined, Dr. Yogan advocated for a positive sociology, formed through appreciative inquiry, classrooms that incorporate happy stories and evoke positive emotions, and social interaction rooted in kindness and giving.

Pedagogically, one of the tools that can be used is the notion of a thought-action repertoire, which implies the cultivation of positive emotions among students, and through curriculum development. Thus conceived, the approach allows for exploration, and time for students to “play,” both literally and figuratively, with course topics and content. The development of positive emotions within and among students enhances creativity, offers social resources, and encourages intellectual curiosity, while sparking interest in course topics. More than this, it helps foster positive relationships between faculty and their students, building joy as a durable resource in class and beyond.

*~We need to start at the happy ending.*



*Pictured: Dr. Lissa Yogan*





## From the Desk of the New President: The 2020 NCSA Meeting



The passing of the gavel to the new president, Dr. Robert Carrothers, signals the dawn of conference planning. In keeping with the unintentional NCSA trend of alternating between positive and happy themes and the more somber discussion of social problems and our dis-

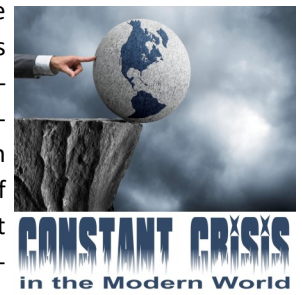
contents, the 2020 annual meeting of the North Central Sociological Association will be focused on *Constant Crisis in the Modern World*.  
of populism throughout the world, unaddressed issues of inequality, and rapid social change more generally can produce psychological strain and feelings of marginality or separateness. Such crises can threaten the collective conscience, which is essential for society's existence, risking the subdivision of our social system into disparate parts that limit the possibility of interconnectivity in the future.

Nevertheless, our work in sociology helps illuminate the causes and outcomes of these crises, as well as the short and long-term effects on social structure. Further, our attention to such issues allows us all to better understand the crises, deal with them, regather the disparate pieces, and use our skills and abilities to move through calamities to promote social change within local, national, and global communities. Join us in Cleveland, on the doorstep of the 2020 elections, as we confront crisis, seek to understand the marginalized, and discover what unites us.

More than any other discipline, sociology has an appreciation for the value of patterns, finding consistency in daily life. However, constant violations of expected behavior, the undermining of core values, and a disruption of social equilibrium have become routine in modern times, threatening to disrupt our commonalities.

Unexpected actions by political figures and administrations, access to information through social media and modern technology, the questioning of scientific authority, the rebound

of populism throughout the world, unaddressed issues of inequality, and rapid social change more generally can produce psychological strain and feelings of marginality or separateness. Such crises can threaten the collective conscience, which is essential for society's existence, risking the subdivision of our social system into disparate parts that limit the possibility of interconnectivity in the future.



## A Preview of the 2020 Useem Plenary Address Speaker

The 2020 Useem Plenary Address at NCSA will feature Dr. Rashawn Ray, Associate Professor of Sociology and Executive Director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research (LASSR) at the University of Maryland, College Park. One of the co-editors of Contexts Magazine: Sociology for the Public. Formerly, Ray was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. He recently accepted a position to be a Brookings Institute Rubenstein Fellow.

Ray's research addresses the mechanisms that manufacture and maintain racial and social inequality with a particular focus on police-

civilian relations and men's treatment of women. His work also speaks to ways that inequality may be attenuated through racial uplift activism and social policy. Ray has published over 50 books, articles, and book chapters, and 15 op-eds.

Recently, Ray published the book *How Families Matter: Simply Complicated Intersections of Race, Gender, and Work* (with Pamela Braboy Jackson) and another edition of *Race and Ethnic Relations in the 21st Century: History, Theory, Institutions, and Policy*, which has been adopted nearly 40 times in college courses. His forthcoming book with Hoda Mahmoudi to be published with University of California Press is entitled

*Structural Racism and the Root Causes of Prejudice*.

A prolific public sociologist, Dr. Ray has written for The New York Times, Huffington Post, NBC News, The Conversation, and Public Radio International. Selected as one of the 40 Under 40 of Prince George's County and awarded the 2016 UMD Research Communicator Award, Ray has appeared on C-Span, MSNBC, HLN, Al Jazeera, NPR, and Fox. His research is cited in CNN, The Washington Post, The Associated Press, MSN, The Root, and The Chronicle. Previously, Ray served on the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington Planning Committee and the Commission on Racial Justice with Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



DR. RASHAWN RAY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK



VISIT DR. RASHAWN RAY'S WEBSITE AND TWITTER FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIS PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY.



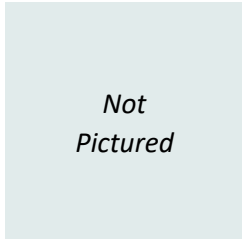
2019 NCSA Award Recipients



**Scholarly Achievement: Book**

**Jessica McCrory Calarco, Indiana University**

McCrory-Calarco, J. (2018). *Negotiating Opportunities: How the Middle Class Secures Advantages in School*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY.



**Scholarly Achievement: Article**

**Marci D. Cottingham, University of Amsterdam**

**Austin H. Johnson, Kenyon College**

**Rebecca J. Erickson, University of Akron**

Cottingham, M.D., A.H. Johnson, & R.J. Erickson. (2018). "I Can Never be too Comfortable: Race, Gender, and Emotion at the Hospital Bedside." *Qualitative Health Research* 28, 1: 145-158.



**John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award**

**Stephanie Medley-Rath**

Indiana University, Kokomo



**Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award**

**Alan McEvoy**

Northern Michigan University



**J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Award**

**Kevin Christiano**

University of Notre Dame



**Butler A. Jones Minority Scholarship**

**Jasmine Davis**

Indiana University- Bloomington

## 2019 NCSA Student Award Recipients

### Seidler Graduate Student Awards



#### 1<sup>st</sup> Place

**Tabitha Wilbur, Indiana University- Bloomington**

“Closing the Gap in Depressed Mood between First and Continuing-Generation College Students”

**Advisors:** Brian Powell & Andrew Halpern Manners



#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

**Muna Adem, Indiana University- Bloomington**

“Ethnic and National Identification among Children of Immigrants in Sweden: The Role of Social Integration and Perceived Discrimination”

**Advisor:** Patricia McManus



#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

**Vitor Martins Dias, Indiana University- Bloomington**

“Explaining Income Disadvantage among Highly Skilled Immigrants in Four Occupations in the U.S., 2000-2015”

**Advisor:** Brian Powell

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### NCSA Undergraduate Student Paper Awards



#### 1<sup>st</sup> Place

**Mikaela Gohn, Saint Mary's College**

“Navigating a ‘Good Ol’ Boys’ System: Qualitative Analysis of the Experiences of Female Police”

**Advisor:** Susan Alexander



#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

**Hunter Frederick Sagaskie, Central Michigan University**

“The Impact of Colonization: Are American Indian/Alaskan-Native Adults at Greater Risk for Food Insecurity than White Adults?”

**Advisor:** Elbert Almazan



#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

**Valerie Thompson, Miami University**

“Shocking and Inhumane: Racial Ethnic Disparities in Cardiovascular Care and Disease”

**Advisor:** Jennifer Bulanda

If you have ideas for the 2020 NCSA Conference, please contact us.

**General Program Questions:**

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Program Chair/Vice President

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Geoff Wood

Vice President Elect

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**All Teaching Sessions:**

Tamika Odum

Teaching Section Chair

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**All Undergraduate Papers:**

Mellisa Holtzman

Student Conference Chair

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For information on the NCSA, membership inquiries, sociology in the news, and conference events, like us on [Facebook](#) and visit the NCSA website. Please contact the public relations coordinator if you are interested in writing a guest blog for the [NCSA website](#). Follow us on Twitter.



## *Sociological Focus*

Consider submitting your manuscript to Sociological Focus, 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. Look for upcoming issues focused on a specific theme, and dedicated to timely topics. Current author and submissions guidelines available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usfo20#.VE-62fldWTM>

### EDITORIAL STAFF

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Consulting Editors: Annulla Linders, University of Cincinnati,

Steve Carlton-Ford, University of Cincinnati, Gustavo Mesch, University of Haifa

Editorial Assistant: Brittany Kowalski, West Virginia University

Founding Editor: Kent P. Schwirian, Ohio State University

## *Alpha Kappa Delta*

Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) is the International Sociology Honor Society. AKD was founded in 1920 at the University of Southern California by Dr. Emory S. Bogardus and became affiliated with the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) in 1967. AKD is also affiliated with the American Sociological Association (ASA). The purpose of Alpha Kappa Delta is to seek to acknowledge and promote excellence in the scholarship in the study of sociology, the research of social problems, and such other social and intellectual activities as will lead to improvement in the human condition.

Membership is open to all interested undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members from active chapters who meet the minimum standards for consideration. Currently, there are more than 120,000 members in Alpha Kappa Delta and over 660 chapters.

The NCSA is proud to partner with AKD to offer students, faculty, and sociologists in the public and private sector high quality, hands-on pre conference programming.

## *NCSA Announces New Award*

Owing to a generous donation from Dr. Fayyaz Hussain, a long time NCSA member and former Schnabel recipient, this year marked the introduction of a new NCSA award. The inaugural *Fayyaz Hussain NCSA Travel Award* was presented to Stephanie Medley-Rath, this year's John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award. Dedicated to supporting conference travel for Schnabel Award Recipients, the grant will be presented annually to support the expenses incurred by Schnabel recipients as they travel to the conference the following year to present the Schnabel Teaching Address. A heartfelt thank you to Fayyaz Hussain for his gift.





## NCSA OFFICERS, 2019-2020

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Current President.....       | Robert Carrothers, Ohio Northern University        |
| Current Vice President.....  | Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Valparaiso University       |
| President Elect.....         | Rachel Stein, West Virginia University             |
| Vice President Elect.....    | Geoff Wood, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg |
| Past President.....          | Melinda Messineo, Ball State University            |
| Secretary.....               | Rachel Kraus, Ball State University                |
| Treasurer.....               | Lisa Hickman, Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission  |
| Council Member at Large..... | Christopher Dum, Kent State University             |
| Council Member at Large..... | Paul Draus, University of Michigan                 |

## NCSA COMMITTEE CHAIRS, 2019-2020

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Nominations.....                          | Melinda Messineo, Ball State University          |
| Student Section Chair.....                | Brittany Kowalski, West Virginia University      |
| Membership Chair.....                     | Robert Peralta, University of Akron              |
| Equality & Inclusion.....                 | Temple Smith, Hope College                       |
| Finance Chair.....                        | Rachel Campbell, Grand Valley State University   |
| Sociological Focus, Editor.....           | Rachel Stein, West Virginia University           |
| NCSA Undergraduate Presentations.....     | Mellisa Holtzman, Ball State University          |
| Aida Tomeh Award.....                     | Kathleen Piker-King, University of Mount Union   |
| J. Milton Yinger Award.....               | Lynn Ritchey, University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash |
| Teaching Section/Schnabel Award.....      | Tamika Odum, University of Cincinnati            |
| Scholarly Achievement Award.....          | Joshua Woods, West Virginia University           |
| Student Paper Awards.....                 | Pam Koch, Hope College                           |
| Butler A. Jones Award.....                | Temple Smith, Hope College                       |
| Applied and Public Sociology.....         | Chadwick Mening, Ball State University           |
| Profession, Freedom & Responsibility..... | Veronica Medina, Indiana University Southeast    |
| Community College.....                    | Amaha Sellassie, Sinclair Community College      |
| Publication Policy.....                   | Kent Schwirian, Ohio State University            |
| Conference Coordinator.....               | Joyce Lucke, Paragon Meeting and Events          |
| Public Relations Coordinator.....         | Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Valparaiso University     |