

Labor and Labor Movements Section Business meeting

Sunday, August 11, 2013

Original minutes by Ellen Reese (Outgoing Secretary/Treasurer)

Revised & updated by Paul Almeida (Incoming Secretary/Treasurer)

I. Statements by Steve Lopez (Outgoing Chair)

- A. This year's program is great with three sections organized for today.
- B. The Mentoring Committee successfully matched graduate students with faculty mentors this year.
- C. Our section has participated in an exchange between labor sociologists in the U.S. and China that has been funded through a Ford Foundation grant. Chris Tilly has already sent a report on the delegation that visited China last winter to our list-serve. Chinese sociologists are now visiting the U.S. and participating in our section's mini-conference that takes place on Monday, 8/12. There will be a second visit of U.S. scholars to China taking place. Chris Tilly has volunteered to chair the liason committee to organize the second visit and members can join this committee if they want to help out with this.
- D. Thanks to Chris Tilly (last year's outgoing chair) and Ellen Reese (outgoing Secretary/Treasurer) for all of their help this year.

II. Statements by Steve McKay (Incoming Chair)

- A. Thanks to Steve Lopez for all of his help last year.
- B. Election Results
 - a. Secretary/Treasurer: Paul Almeida (UC-Merced)
 - b. Chair Elect: Shannon Gleeson (UC-Santa Cruz)
 - c. Council member: Marco Lopez (Bowdoin College)
 - d. Grad student representative: Erin Michaels (CUNY Graduate Center)
(entering second year of two year term)

III. Treasurer Report (Ellen Reese, Outgoing Secretary/Treasurer)

- A. We have about \$3,000 in our section budget, but receipts & payments related to the mini-conference are still coming in.
- B. Post-conference update: We have about \$1,441.29 in our current section budget (as of 8/14/13).

IV. Membership Report by Steve McKay (Incoming Chair)

- A. We have about 414 members. We hope to recruit more members after the mini-conference & have been keeping track of participants that are not yet members to

try to recruit them into the section and build on the momentum created by the mini-conference.

- B. Last year, we contacted members of allied sections to recruit new members. This was successful, but we later learned that this practice is not allowed under ASA rules, so we cannot use this strategy again this year.
- C. We need volunteers to help to recruit new members next year.

V. U.S./China exchange among labor sociologists

- A. Update from Chris Tilly, Chair of Liason Committee for this exchange
 - i. I sent out a report on last year's U.S. delegation to China
 - ii. Four members of our section can visit China next year for the second delegation to China.
 - iii. Chinese labor sociologists have an association similar to our Labor & Labor Movement section. I recommended three ways to keep the relationships formed through this exchange alive between visits & after they are completed:
 - 1. Exchange news on each others' newsletters
 - 2. Include a page on each others' websites
 - 3. Communicate via each others' list-serves
- B. Statement by Steve McKay (Incoming Chair)
 - i. We formed a Liaison committee to work on the second delegation to China by U.S. labor sociologists. Last year's delegation was mostly composed of section council members and we will issue a more call for participation in the second delegation to scholars that are not members of our section council. An application to participate will be issued & we have funds for 4 scholars will be selected to participate.
 - ii. Chinese labor sociologists want more research collaborations with U.S. labor scholars & ability to participate in such collaborations might be one of the criteria for selecting members of the second delegation to China.

VI. Mini-conference (report by Carolina Bank Munoz, co-organizer of mini-conference)

- A. Our mini-conference organizing was very successful! About 215 people signed up to participate in the section's mini-conference but the venue only holds 150 people, so we've had to close registration for it.

- B. The mini-conference will be held at the Murphy Institute & starts at 9am on Monday, 8/12 and ends at 5:30pm. The reception will be held at 7pm that night at the Murphy Institute.

VII. 2014 International Sociologists Association meeting (Report by Jennifer Chun)

- A. RC 44 is the ISA's equivalent of the ASA's Labor & Labor Movement Section & the ISA meets every 2 years.
- B. In 2014, the ISA will be in Yokohama. There are 22 panels planned by RC 44 (focusing on labor & labor movement issues) & submissions to them are currently open. Abstracts are due 9/30/13 via the on-line system.
- C. There will be an activist/scholar dialogue & many other sessions focusing on labor issues. This might be another opportunity to connect with Chinese labor sociologists and our second delegation to China might be timed in conjunction with the ISA meeting in Yokohama.

VIII. Section Committees & opportunities for service (Steve McKay, Incoming Chair)

- A. Please consider joining one of the section committees by signing up or contacting Steve McKay (smckay@ucsc.edu) after the meeting.
- B. Committees include:
 - i. 2013 ASA committee (to help plan our section events in San Francisco)
 - ii. Nominations committee
 - iii. Membership committee
 - iv. Award committees
 - v. Website committee: Send items to help update our section website to Paul Morgan @ pjmorgan@uci.edu or sign up to help update & improve it.
- C. Newsletter editor: Mike McCarthy has been our section newsletter editor. He is stepping down and we need a volunteer to edit it. Please contact Steve McKay if you are interested @ smckay@ucsc.edu

IX. Ideas for 2014 ASA program (Steve McKay, Incoming Chair)

- A. Our section should be given 3 sessions given our current membership.
- B. At our council meeting, we discussed various ideas for the program for 2014. How work is changing, precarious work, and/or a regional focus on the Bay Area

& food workers (rural and urban) might be potential themes. One council member suggested that we identify organizing principles for our sessions, such as including cross-national or transnational comparisons or highlighting issues of diversity & inequality (gender, race, immigrant status, sexuality, etc.).

C. Members' ideas

- i. Barry Eidlin suggested that we have “open topics” and then construct the topics based on submissions.
- ii. Carolina Bank Munoz said that we could choose one or two topics and keep the rest open.
- iii. Belinda Lum raised concerns about losing the focus on issues of diversity if the call for papers was a completely open process and wanted the section to be more pro-active in focusing on issues of diversity.
- iv. Marcel Paret suggested a potential topic might be the recent wave of uprisings.
- v. Steve McKay suggested that the 2014 session organizers try to keep principles of diversity in mind as they select papers or topics from the open submissions.

X. Section Awards (add statements from Award Committee chairs here)

A. Best Book Award (Chair: Ian Robinson)

Chris Rhomberg's *The Broken Table*, published by the Russell Sage Foundation Press, offers a compelling analysis of the two-year strike and five-year struggle between Detroit's newspaper unions and the owners of the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press. Rhomberg argues that this strike, which took place between 2005 and 2007, is the exception that proves the rule: a new, post-New Deal labor regime is now in place, and under that regime, private sector workers have no legally protected right to strike. Rhomberg traces the origins of the regime change to the election of Reagan and his repression of the air traffic controllers strike. However, PATCO was a relatively isolated and weak union. Newspaper workers in Detroit were highly organized, their several unions had a history of cooperation, and they enjoyed strong support from the rest of the labor movement and the broader community. Moreover, the news business was highly profitable at the time of this conflict – something that it is easy to forget given the state of things today. Despite all this, they lost. Rhomberg argues that the impact of the labor relations regime change on strike levels is profound, and that we need to re-think our theories of the causes of variations in strike rates to take full account of this. One of the book's many strengths is the detailed analysis of the last three years of the struggle – after the workers returned to work – when the courts systematically undercut the NLRB's efforts to defend and

apply core Wagner Act principles to this case. Overall, it is a sobering – indeed, tragic – tale that Rhomberg tells. But the intelligence and power that he brings to his task makes it a pleasure to award our book prize to this excellent synthesis of biography, organizational dynamics and fundamental regime change.

B. Best Article Award (Chair: Belinda Lum)

First, I want to thank the Labor and Labor Movement Section’s Article Award Committee: Preston Rudy, Heather Ann Thompson, Erin Hatton, Marcos Lopez for their time and hard work. The submissions were quite impressive, but the two honorable mention articles and the winning article were the clear favorites of the committee. The write-ups below summarize what committee members felt were important, compelling and interesting about each of the articles.

Winner of the Best Article Award

Rosenfeld, Jake, and Meredith Kleykamp. 2012. “Organized Labor and Racial Wage Inequality in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 117: 1460-1502.

This article begins with a fascinating fact—that for much of the 20th century, African American private-sector unionization rates surpassed those of whites. The authors note that black women were two times likelier to be in a union than whites and black men were 1.5 times more likely to be in a union than whites. Although this was the case for decades, unionization of private sector employment has been in a serious decline. Meanwhile, the income gap between black and white workers has increased over time. The authors ask is there a relationship between unionization and the rise of income inequality?

Using both quantitative data from the Current Population Survey and qualitative work from labor historians the authors show that the loss of unions has been particularly hard on black wages. If blacks could have maintained union membership their work suggests that the gap between black and white women’s wages would have been 13-30% lower and, though, less marked, the gap between black and white men would also be lower. Unions are often presented as organizations that bring about social justice, and in this article we have compelling argument and evidence for this outcome for status as well as class. As they note, “this study points to the need to move beyond class based analyses of union decline to an understanding of the gendered role unions once played in mitigating racial inequality.” This article explains the causes of higher rates of unionization among Black men and women as being primarily derived from the protections unions provide against persistent discrimination.

Honorable Mention (Listed in Alphabetical Order)

Lee, Cheol-Sung. 2012. "Associational Networks and Welfare States in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan." *World Politics* Volume 64, Number 3, July 2012 pp. 507-554

The committee was particularly interested in Lee's core questions: "How does a labor movement impact the development of a welfare state (and vice versa). Lee examines four countries—Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan—which have all recently democratized and which have all undergone rapid economic development in order to analyze what factors account for their different approaches in expanding or contracting the welfare state.. Lee's use of network analysis provides a nice addition to the historical material analysis of four nations that were the consistent focus of study during the early 2000s. The network analysis allows helps bring out the role of organized labor and the state, enabling Lee to conclude the varying level of embeddedness between institutions.

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Meyer, Rachel. 2012. "Transforming Citizenship: The Subjective Consequences of Local Political Mobilization" in Julian Go (ed.) *Political Power and Social Theory (Political Power and Social Theory, Volume 23)*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.147-188

The committee believes that Meyer takes an innovative approach to looking at a local labor struggle outside of union organizing, collective bargaining and political lobbying. As one committee member notes, "In a period of neoliberal austerity in the US, when market fundamentalism has reduced to a whisper arguments for state action to redress overweening private wealth accumulation, this article uncovers the possibilities for a counter-movement in the Chicago living wage campaign of the mid-1990s." Using strong qualitative data, her analysis provides fresh and novel insight into the ideological consequences of social movement participation and how the campaign was able to transcend racial boundaries that traditionally characterize most struggles.

### C. Graduate Student Paper Award (Chair: Nancy Plankey-Videla)

--To begin with, I want to thank Critical Sociology and its editor David Fasenfest for co-sponsoring this prize with our section supporting the wonderful research of graduate students by providing 250 dollars to the winning papers. Also please join me in thanking the members of the committee, Kyle Arnone, Ethel Brooks, Shinji Kojima, and Jeff Rothstein.

-- We received sixteen wonderfully interesting and engaging papers covering a wide range of ranging of topics both in the U.S. and Global South. We had two papers that especially represent the great scholarship produced by our graduate students and thus the committee decided to award the LLM/Critical Sociology award to TWO graduate student papers

The first co-winner is Madison Van Oort from the University of Minnesota for her paper, "Post-Recession Governmentalities: Neoliberalism, Job Searching, and Comparative Control in Minneapolis." Post-Recession Governmentalities is a cross class-comparison of two job search centers in Minneapolis, one geared toward white, middle-class job seekers and the other toward welfare recipient and refugees. While both sites sought to foster self-sufficiency among the unemployed, they relied on different control mechanisms, which reflected neoliberal rationalities and racialized understandings of the root cause of unemployment. For white middle-class professionals, the job search program recognized the existence of a new economic climate requiring new sets of marketable skills that allow job seekers to flexibly shift from employer to employer, whereas the program geared toward welfare recipients and refugees understood clients' position as a reflection of their "cultural ineptitude." Madison van Oort thus argues that "the Great Recession actually strengthened some of neoliberalism's more pernicious effects." "By sharpening the internal administration of the middle-class and solidifying the stigmatizing and punitive management of the poor, job search organizations represent an important instrument through which large-scale unemployment in a global economic crisis can remain an individualized and de-systematized problem, and can ultimately tip the scales further in the interest of capital." Please join me in congratulating Madison.

The other winner of this year's LLM/Critical Sociology distinguished grad student paper is Barry Eidlin, for his paper titled "Class vs. Special Interest: Labor Regimes and Union Strength in the United States and Canada, 1911-2011." Barry recently received his Ph.D. at the University of CA, Berkeley and is now a post-doc at the University of WI, Madison.

This paper begins with an empirical puzzle: what accounts for the divergent union density in Canada and the U.S.? This difference, Barry Eidlin argues, emerges from divergent forms of "political incorporation" of labor in the 1930s and 1940s, leading to distinct labor regimes. Through careful comparative historical analysis, the paper traces how the US and Canadian states formalized labor relations machinery that reflected significant differences in how the state granted and protected workers' rights, either as a "class" or as a "special-interest group." While the Canadian state was initially more repressive by imposing severe limits on strikes and other forms of concerted worker activity, its focus on industrial peace also recognized the existence of class divisions and imposed significant restrictions on employer behavior. This in turn encouraged greater class-based mobilization that resulted in legislative reforms and the emergence of institutional channels for protecting workers' rights. The U.S. state, on the other hand, followed a co-optive strategy by incorporated labor as an interest group within the New Deal coalition, which in turn meant class issues were mistranslated as partisan interests of a key Democratic Party constituency. Employers challenged labor's legitimacy using pluralist and legalist arguments that resulted in a less institutionalized and more politically contentious labor regime. How does this relate to differences in union density? The Canadian labor regime, which had institutionalized labor as a class, was able to more successfully hold employers in

check during 1970s attack on unions, keeping union density relatively stable. The U.S. labor regime, however, where labor was seen as a special interest mired in contentious politics, proved ineffective in protecting workers' rights, resulting in declining union density. Please join me in congratulating Barry

We also have an Honorable Mention, Kjersin Gruys, from UCLA for her paper, "Does This Make Me Look Fat? Aesthetic Labor and Fat Talk as Emotional Labor in a Women's Plus-Size Clothing Store." This paper was published in *Social Problems* in 2011.

This theoretically informed and rich ethnography of a plus-size store examines how employers' and customers' gendered and racialized understandings, and expressions about body size –or fat talk-- structure the labor process at a plus size store. The paper highlights how size structures the allocation of work tasks and the internal labor market and the ways women retail workers perform emotional labor to negotiate a workplace organized around the **commercialized slogan** of fat is beautiful and the **societal stigma** of fat as bad and ugly. Congratulations Kjersin

## **XI. Final Announcements (Steve McKay, Incoming Chair)**

- A. Congratulations to all of the award recipients
- B. Don't forget the mini-conference tomorrow & our reception Monday night at the Murphy Institute!