



Semaphore

The official Newsletter of the Georgia Sociological
Association

January 2019

From the President

Dear GSA Members and Community,

Happy New Year! I hope the year is off to a fantastic start for everyone! I am honored to serve as the President of the GSA this year.

The theme of this year's meeting is "Beyond 'Doing Good': Social Scientific Approaches to Community Building." I would like us to focus on the meaning of community and community development, as well as, the importance for social change in an era of globalization with knowledge on community development, rights and moral responsibility. Moreover, how this may enable sociologist and other scholars to address the intractable problems facing citizens and communities. I hope that while each of you consider presenting your own work that you will also encourage your students to present. Students are and have always been an integral part of the GSA.

Planning for this year's meeting is underway! The 2019 GSA Annual Meeting will be at the Jekyll Island Club Resort, November 7-9, 2019. Jekyll Island is considered one of Georgia's State Parks and The Club is located in the charming Historic District. While attending the conference please take advantage of this historic and beautiful Island.

The 2018 GSA Meeting was a tremendous success. Columbus was most enjoyable and it was exciting being in a new location. Thank you to Sara and everyone who contributed to and participated in making the Meeting memorable.

I look forward to seeing everyone in November and having the opportunity to share our work and our vision of community with one another. I hope that you all will join us!

Sincerely,

Carly L. Redding

President

A note from the Past President...

As always, it was so wonderful to see everyone at our annual conference. It was our first time in Columbus, and it did not disappoint. Our participation numbers were strong, and included a wonderful cross-section of old and new members, as well as students and faculty. We all often comment on how special our organization is and our annual meeting always highlights this reality for me. Year after year we all come together and create a collegial and supportive space in which we share our research and ideas.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as the President of this wonderful organization. I have truly enjoyed my tenure and feel honored to add my name to the distinguished list of people who have come before me. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the 2017-18 Executive Board. Our conference is truly a team effort and they each helped to make it a success.

I hope that the new year is off to a great start for everyone and I look forward to reconnecting next fall at the Jekyll Island Club.

Sincerely,

Sara Mason

University of North Georgia

New Executive Board

President: Carly Redding

President Elect: Darina Lepadatu

Vice President: Michallene McDaniel

Treasurer: Christy Flatt

Past President: Sara Mason

Members at Large:

Christina Wolfe

Brandon Attell

Pamela Pitman Brown

Parliamentarian: Sherry Smith

Journal Editors: Linda Treiber and Mel Fein

Semaphore/Website: Diogo Pinheiro

GSA 2018 Student Awards

Undergraduate Paper Competition: 400\$

First Place: Madison Higbee and Olivia Maley (Georgia State) "A Thematic analysis of a student's reflections on the City of Atlanta's Point-in-Time Count: Feedback for Future Counts" (100\$ split)

Second place: Raisa Gallegos (Georgia Southern) "Media Perpetuation of Violence Against Women of Color: A Critical Theory Analysis" (75\$)

Third place: Carlos Molina "DREAMERs Dilemma" and Rosa Jennifer Gasca "Living as an UnDACAmeted Immigrant in the US", Reinhardt College. (50\$ split)

Honorable Mentions (2 T-shirts)

Caitlyn Floyd (Univ of North Georgia) "Staffing Issues in the Institution of Long-Term Care"

Ash Scarborough (Kennesaw State University) "'Girls are Such a Drag': A Content Analysis of Misogynistic Lyrics in pop-Punk Music"

Graduate Paper Competition

First Place: Cynthia Pearce LeMay (Kennesaw State University) "Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Strategies of Millennials in the Workplace" (100\$)

Second Place: Jeffrey Lentz, (Georgia State) "When the Rainbow Turns Silver: The Effects of Minority Stress on the DIsablement Process among LGBT Adults 50 Years and Older" (75\$)

TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF ROBOT CARS: SUMMARY OF A POSITON PAPER

BY FRED ZAMPA

This paper expresses the editorial view that sociology is not present in the public consciousness and that sociologists should participate in discussions of public interest and policy. Robot cars (RCs, autonomous vehicles, self-drive cars) provide a case in point. Because of our long-standing interest in the social effects of automotive technological change (culture lag, urban growth patterns, dating, family dispersion, etc.), sociologists could have much to say about what portends to be the third time that the automobile drastically alters American society (industrialization, interstates, RCs).

Public interest, imagination, and work on RCs has been recurrent (1939 World's Fair exhibit, 1950s General Motors experiments). Now, an accumulation of inventions has made RCs a real possibility and a currently hot topic in popular media.

This paper began as simple curiosity about how sociologists today have joined the conversation. What are we saying about RCs. Before we mindlessly jump in, what pitfalls should be kept in mind? The paper took an unfortunate turn when a content analysis of 112 popular media articles about RCs revealed that of 276 authors, citations, expert commentators (etc.), no sociologists were to be found in any way. Here is a tabulation by discipline: Journalists and Columnists 90; Corporation 71; Consulting/Research Institute 34; Government 22; Economics 10; Law 8; Psychology 4; Philosophy 3; Celebrity 3; History 2; Trade Associations 2; Music 1; Sociology 0. Overwhelmingly, these articles were written from the perspective of their own discipline—sometimes very narrowly so. Considerations of social consequences were infrequent, narrow, lacking sociological imagination, and shallow.

I believe that we need to find ways to “get out there.” Functionalists might look into the critical question of whether RCs will pull us together or farther apart. If the elderly become more mobile, how might that effect the family? And might the depth of experience of the elderly gain more voice than it has now? How well might RCs fit into existing systems? What cultural elements will be displaced? Is preempting mass transit a good idea? Where do the concepts of cultural lag or latent functions lead you? Social interactionists might note the probable loss of some of the walls between our statuses and that the male role will lose a major component : “captain of the car.”

My own perspective would use conflict theory. Beyond inventions, implementation will involve never ending choices with winners and losers (areas served, toll roads, licensing, taxes, priorities, etc). Inevitably, the poor will lose. This analysis could begin simply with a chronicle of the incredible, astounding political victories that proponents have won so far. Three states have legalized cars with no driver. Trucking rules have already been changed to note that in any regulation mentioning truck drivers, the driver need not be assumed to be human. Safety requirements have been exempted.

My real concerns, however, go well beyond robot cars and are far more general. I was dismayed to hear one reporter writing on the effect of global warming on tribalism say that in 18 years as a journalist he had never interviewed a sociologist. Another shock was that the best place to find popular discussion of

sociological topics is via behavioral economics (see NPR Freakonomics Radio). My fear is that our discipline is fading into oblivion. We have much to offer on many serious matters of public policy, and we should.

Highlights from Annual Conference

Awards night and passing of the gavel:









