

Southern Sociological Society

2020 Candidate Diversity Statements

Earl Wright II
SSS Diversity Statement

Throughout my professional career I have been committed to issues concerning diversity on multiple levels. In my teaching, I proactively use readings that, while maintaining the highest level of rigor, are representative of the diversity within society and academia as it relates to race, class, gender, orientation, physical ability and other dimensions. As such, my students are presented with multiple perspectives on a given topic by varied voices. My twenty-year research agenda has centered the issue of diversity. Largely, I have focused on the contributions of early Black, and largely male, sociologists to the discipline. This led to groundbreaking findings, to name at least one, that the first American school of sociology was established at Atlanta University, not the University of Chicago. In recent years my focus, while remaining on early Black sociologists, has emphasized the contributions of Black women, namely Lucy Laney and Georgia Swift King, and a Black male queer, Augustus Granville Dill, to W. E. B. Du Bois' Atlanta University efforts. Their little-known contributions were critical to the school's canonical status. Thus, my research in this area has helped advance the discipline's understanding of the diverse contributions of persons to American sociology who happen to not be White, male and heterosexual. As president of the Southern Sociological Society I will continue my efforts to not only raise the importance of diversity within the organization, but proactively fight to assure that diverse populations are represented in the SSS membership as well as leadership. Evidence of my commitment to promoting diversity is the leadership role I played in helping to establish the organization's latest honor, the Charles Gomillion-Joseph Sandy Himes Award for a career of distinguished service at a Minority Serving Institution. As president of the Southern Sociological Society, I will continue spearheading similar efforts on a number of diversity related issues as this organizations is one of the most diverse in the nation and the interests of its membership and leadership should be represented accordingly.

Lisa Walker Diversity Statement

1. Please describe your teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches related to issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

I strive to make my classrooms and virtual spaces 100% accessible and inclusive. This means we have an open and frank discussion about being respectful and what that looks like in classes where we will be discussing topics many find difficult and where folks have a variety of experiences and opinions. I try to include images and examples that represent diversity (i.e., not just talk about old straight able-bodied white men sociologists) and I ask students to call me out when I miss the mark.

2. Please describe any research you have conducted related to issues of inequality and social justice.

I have done research and published work on inclusion, leadership, and the status meaning of gender and race. I make efforts to include a diverse range of students (graduate and undergraduate) in my research projects.

3. Please describe any other contributions you have made to help advance issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

I was the director of a summer institute the goal of which was diversifying the pipeline of graduate students. I currently supervise the Office of Disability Services and work with the staff in that office not only to provide accommodation for students but also to educate the campus about inclusion and access. I have been on the organizing committee of our campus LGBTQ+ speaker series.

4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

By and large, I think SSS does a good job being inclusive compared to some other professional organizations. But I think the messages need to be repeated again and again, and the meetings need to reflect the membership of the Society and the field. To that end, I would like to see us make efforts to include more diversity at the annual meeting.

Marni Brown

Vice President Election

1. Please describe your teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches related to issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

When I think of the related issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality I automatically turn to intersectionality. My relationship with intersectionality began as a student in graduate school. Through the instruction of Debra Walker King, (*Body Politics and the Fictional Double*, 2000; *Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology*, 1988) Ntozake Shange (for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow was enuf, 1976), and Kendal Broad, associate professor of sociology at the University of Florida whom is currently studying anti-racist work by gay men, I was welcomed into intersectional thinking and consideration; centers were shifted (Patricia Hill Collins, 1999). I witnessed, experienced, and partook in an intersectional classroom and it changed my life. In fact, these intersectional experiences brought me to sociology.

Upon completion of my master's degree in Higher Education, I had my eyes set on a PhD in sociology. I have remained closely connected to my higher education roots but I was determined to better understand how race, class, gender, and sexual experiences vary across interactional and institutional experiences. At Georgia State University, I found many professors grounded in intersectional thinking, especially Wendy Simonds, Mindy Stomblor, Dawn Baunach, and Adia Harvey Wingfield.

Pedagogically, I trained under Dr. Mindy Stomblor in which intersectional experiences from students, instructors, and resources are made central to class preparation. Today, I use intersectional thinking and analysis in all my class designs. My intersectional framework is intentional and also, in my mind, one of the most convincing ways to sell and use sociology in the classroom.

Currently, I teach a 4/4, while also doing the administrative work of a chair. I teach classes on Social Inequality, Gender, Family, and Schools. All of my courses are framed around interlocking experiences, institutions, and social systems. For example, through readings, class discussions, and assignments, students are challenged to learn about the unequal distributions of power, status, prestige and social relations of dominance and subordination in the American class, race, gender, and sexual systems. Therefore, intersectionality is embedded in all topics through conversation, particularly through the introduction of power, privilege, and inequality.

As chair, my faculty read work that shows how to center intersectional experiences in their scholarship and teaching. I also address other faculty, through the Center of Teaching Excellence, on ways to make the classroom and campus more intersectional. These opportunities led me to becoming a USG (University System of Georgia) Faculty Learning Scholar, with an emphasis on inclusive and intersectional pedagogies.

2. Please describe any research you have conducted related to issues of inequality and social justice.

1. I co-edited a Feminist Anthology with Joya Misra and Mahala Dyer Stewart on Gender and Sexuality, Sage Pubs. (2017)
2. I co-edited an Intersectional Anthology on Social Inequality with Mahala Dyer Stewart, Cognella Pubs. (2018)
3. I am writing a book with Baker Rogers and Martha Caldwell on the importance of Gender and Sexuality in the K-12 classroom. This proposal is for Norton. (2019)
4. I received a Community in Partners grant (\$5000), with anthropologist Dr. Greg Gullette where we interviewed and collected data from refugees in the Clarkston, Ga area. We focused on their experiences as exacerbated during the presidency of Donald Trump and the impact this presidency has had on their ability to access social, health, and human services.
5. I collaborated on a grant with Political Scientist and International Historian, Dr. Dovile Burdyte. We were just awarded the “Bringing the Theory to Practice grant.” (<http://www.bttop.org/grants-funding/funding-opportunities>) We will be implementing a program on campus titled, “Overcoming the Fear of Otherness: Engaging Difference in Multicultural Classrooms, Campus, and Beyond.”
6. My dissertation in completed in 2011, was based on intersectional, coming-out narratives.

3. Please describe any other contributions you have made to help advance issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

1. I am coordinator for the GGC period project, where we collect donations and stock our campus bathrooms with pads and tampons. (homelessperiodproject.org)
2. I am coordinator of the newly approved Gender Studies Minor at GGC.
3. I am the point person for the food pantry, underway at my institution.
4. I am the faculty advisor to the GGC student group Faces of Gender and Sexuality (FOGS).
5. RSO award- received from Georgia Gwinnett College Registered Student Organization Faculty Member of the Year. 2016

4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

1. An important task is getting members to acknowledge bias, be accountable for actions
2. Have members understand why they are members of the organization and share with members of the executive committee and officers what they want

3. Continue to provide space for social outlet and connection to locale foot print
4. Build partnerships across committees and other professional organizations
5. Utilize professors from local schools to help with logistical set up conference

Shannon N. Davis
Candidate for SSS President-Elect

1. Please describe your teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches related to issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

My teaching philosophy is to seek to excite, engage, and empower students toward the application of sociology in our everyday lives. In the last five years, I have most regularly taught our research methods and senior capstone course at the undergraduate level and our graduate research methods and course on gender, although I have taught introductory sociology and sociology of families at the undergraduate level in the past. The undergraduate methods and capstone courses require that students read across the sociological literature on a question of their choice and design and/or implement their own authentic research project to answer that question. I teach students to distinguish between differing methodological approaches that scholars have used to study the concepts of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality. I invite them to build on previous scholars' work that most closely resembles their own research question and propose and/or implement a design that is appropriate. This has meant that I spend a lot of time working with students to understand how the conceptualization and operationalization of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality can include but not be limited to the creation of categories. This distinction is drawn out in more detail in my graduate courses. In addition, I have recently completely overhauled my graduate methods and gender courses to have the syllabi reflect my speech. I have made my syllabi more inclusive of scholars of color and queer scholars and have deliberately highlighted this change for my students. Acknowledging my own previous blindspots as a teacher, I have reconstructed my courses to be both inclusive of past processes of knowledge construction and contemporary contributions simultaneously. In my graduate gender class we have not only readings on intersectionality as a theory but empirical examples of intersectionality that span race, class, disability, and sexuality. My research methods course in Fall 2019 uses three books that problematize how sociological research methods have been performed (while simultaneously providing suggestions for how methods can be instruments of social justice in science): Compton, Meadow, and Schilt's *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva's *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*; and, Sprague's *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences, 2nd Edition*. In addition, I deliberately chose empirical examples of all methods we read about to be reflexive of how taking critical approaches to the study of key issues like race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality can be implemented in a design (and ultimately be published within the discipline).

Outside of the classroom, I have supervised 23 BA thesis/capstone projects, 13 MA thesis/capstone projects, and 3 doctoral dissertations, the majority of which were centered around questions of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality as axes of inequality (not just categories of description).

2. Please describe any research you have conducted related to issues of inequality and social justice.

A substantial portion of my scholarship has focused on issues of inequality and social justice. Author or editor of four books and over 60 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters focused on institutions and inequalities, my scholarship examines how institutional arrangements at home, work, and school both intensify and mitigate inequality with specific attention to the invisible work on which these institutions depend. The experience of marginalized groups within these institutions has been the central theme in my research. My research has coalesced around two primary foci: (1) the role of unpaid labor in stratification processes, and (2) gender inequality. My two recent books, *Why Who Cleans Counts* and *Gender in the Twenty-First Century*, both have gender inequality as their central organizing principle. *Why Who Cleans Counts* examines how the division of housework can be seen as a proxy for power dynamics in heterosexual couples while *Gender in the Twenty-First Century* is an edited volume (with many contributions drawn from the 2015 SSS meeting where Sarah Winslow and I were program co-chairs) seeking to understanding gender politics and policies with an eye toward facilitating social justice. I have also published more than two dozen articles and book chapters that problematize gendered processes within and across cultures and national boundaries. Much of my recent work has examined the undergraduate research experience from both the perspective of students and their mentors. In this work, race, class, disability, first generation status, and to a lesser extent gender, have been found to be influential in the students' experiences, while gender and race are central to the experiences of faculty mentors. This work is critical of the historic process through which disciplines have been configured, highlighting the tacit ways that race, gender, and class intersect to create almost impermeable boundaries through which undergraduates cannot breach and from which faculty struggle to be freed. Other work has examined the teacher training approaches across the United States that facilitates teachers learning about critical pedagogy, especially around race and sexuality, factors associated with language choice in survey respondents around race using open-ended questionnaire items, and the influence of social context on immigrant experiences.

3. Please describe any other contributions you have made to help advance issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

In the SSS, I have served on the Committee on the Status of Women (before the renaming to the Committee on Gender and Sexuality) and co-organized two sessions in the 2019 meeting on anti-harassment within SSS. At my home institution I have served on the Executive Committee of our Women and Gender Studies program and have been an active affiliate faculty member in the program since my arrival at Mason in 2006.

4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

As an organization, we have made structural changes to become more inclusive during the meeting and to facilitate more and diverse participation from sociologists in the organization. These changes include providing space for people to interact over common interests, providing financial supports for individuals affiliated with Historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, and indigenous serving institutions, facilitating the designation of preferred pronouns on nametags and gender-neutral restrooms during the annual meeting, and most consequentially, creating an anti-harassment policy.

Inclusivity requires more than policy changes. What do we do to make the organization feel welcoming, respectful, and responsive to all members, but especially the members from underrepresented groups who have historically been denied access to leadership roles in the profession? As I note in my vision statement accompanying my nomination, my vision for the SSS is that the Society reflect the sociology and sociologists who do the work of the discipline in all of its forms, that our work facilitates more opportunities to learn from one another about how we each can expand our own doing of sociology, with the goal to amplify the ways that the discipline and profession of sociology can make a difference toward justice in our society. This vision can only be achieved if we work together as a Society, starting at the annual meeting and radiating outward in our daily practices as sociologists. Scholars of color, queer scholars, and scholars located at non-elite institutions (or outside of the academy) need to see themselves reflected centrally within the annual meeting. Scholars who have been successful and less than successful in translating their scholarship into praxis should see themselves as part of the meeting. Moreover, I would work to solidify how we as a professional association provide opportunities for sociologists to share effective practices for translating our discipline's core values into actions aimed at creating a more just world not only during the annual meeting but outside of the meeting's temporal boundaries as well.

Shantel Buggs

1. I have been teaching independently since I was a graduate student, primarily sociology courses on culture and racial inequality. As an assistant professor I have expanded to also teach courses in African American Studies, particularly a course on Black families. As a race scholar and Black feminist/critical race theorist, I find it imperative to take an intersectional approach to teaching about race, class, gender, and sexuality in every class I teach. I want students to understand how power works and that can't be done unless it is done intersectionally. I take seriously the "joke" an advisor used to make about how if the class was not a race class, race "week" wouldn't happen until Week 15 of the semester. With that in mind, I foreground race and its interrelationship with gender, class and sexuality every week, in every topic I teach on. I accomplish this via my lecture material of course, but also *whose* readings/films/podcasts/music I assign and *what* topics I discuss (for example, my culture class covers "cultures of the body" in one unit and therein we discuss transgender athletes, accessibility of extreme fitness culture -- e.g. CrossFit -- the social construction of health, and racialized and gendered body practices around Black and Latinx women's hair salons). A big part of my pedagogical practice is discussion -- I encourage students to ask questions and share their perspectives/experiences, and for example, play a "game" where I ask them to share news stories or other recent occurrences that are related to class material -- in my race and racism class I call this "What Happened in Race This Week?" Students have consistently noted that this makes them more aware of what is going on in the news and that it has actually encouraged them to read the news more often, with a more critical eye to what mainstream discourses are saying.

2. My primary research projects have focused on race, gender, sexuality and intimacy, particularly how inequality manifests in people's online dating experiences and dating practices. I have published several articles out of this research, including a recent case study piece on an immigrant transgender woman of color. I am also working on several other projects at present: one is an oral history of the Black Student Union at Florida State as it is the only Black student organization with a dedicated building of any state schools in Florida. We are using the oral history to explore how Black students create a sense of place at this particular PWI, especially since they used to have a more informal "house" that the university demolished (taking decades of memorabilia with it) upon building the new classroom-oriented

building that BSU students haven't been allowed to personalize. I am also working on a project exploring how women of color and nonbinary femmes of color experience micro aggressions on the academic job market and how disparities in mentorship impact the experience on the market. To our knowledge there is no sociological study of race and gender within the job market -- most studies are about already placed faculty or graduate students. Overall, my goal is to always shed some light on racial and gendered inequality and when applicable, use those findings to facilitate social change.

3. I have been active both formally, in terms of co-organizing groups like Sociologists Against Sexual Violence, serving on the ASA Committee on the Status of LGBTQ People, and pushing for workshops to address sexual harassment in academia, among other topics, and informally, in terms of mentoring graduate students who are non-white, LGBTQ+, first-generation, and/or women. I try to pay forward all the mentoring and support -- formal and informal -- that has been given to me, which I think is one small way to begin to address inequalities imbedded in academia. Often I am learning things through experience, that I never thought to ask about; I use these moments of surprise as a way to teach others. 4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

4. Many of the people who have been the most supportive of my career are people I have met at SSS so it is a space that holds special significance to me in ways more personal than ASA (though I am very active in ASA as well). I would do at SSS what I have done in every other service position or office I have held: I would endeavor for the concerns of marginalized scholars to be at the forefront. I would advocate for more attention to be paid to marginalized scholarship, such as work on sexualities and trans studies. I would, as I always do, question who the people are who get to be "in the room" and making decisions -- this is something I often have to do as on several committees and councils I am a part of, I am the only woman of color/Black woman and/or the only queer woman around. I am aware of the ways I fulfill "diversity" boxes (though I've never necessarily felt like that at SSS) and that would be something I would want to address in whatever capacity I can -- inclusion is not just about seeing who ticks off the diversity boxes, it's about making people actually feel included and valued. I've done a lot of thinking (and criticizing) of university diversity and inclusion efforts so I'd definitely be bringing those insights with me to a SSS position.

Sheryl Skaggs Diversity Statement

1. Please describe your teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches related to issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

I believe it is extremely important to provide a safe and positive classroom environment for all students. Many sociology courses take on sensitive topics that may challenge long-standing and/or privileged views/beliefs; I remind students (particularly in the context of discussion - small group and class) to be respectful of other viewpoints and life experiences. I also work to incorporate activities, assignments and discussions that help students identify and critically evaluate notions of privilege.

2. Please describe any research you have conducted related to issues of inequality and social justice.

My research has largely focused on gender and racial/ethnic diversity in the workplace. Although much of my work has investigated issues related to inequality employment structures and external organizational pressures for managerial diversity (e.g., lawsuits, courts, laws etc.), I have also more broadly examined occupational segregation and the implications this has for fair employment.

3. Please describe any other contributions you have made to help advance issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

I have worked with external agencies such as the Texas Diversity Council and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to provide insight on best practices, data collection, and research aimed at identifying employment barriers for traditionally disadvantaged group members. Additionally, I have served as an expert witness for employment discrimination lawsuits.

4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

I believe it is in the best interest of SSS to identify and dissolve barriers to professional advancement and success. Transparency is an important part of this process, as well as making intentional efforts to heighten awareness of how traditional practices can be imbued in bias. I would make all effort to ensure equity in my role on the publications committee and other areas of service to SSS. What I have learned about best practices from my research (as well as the research of others) and professional activities will guide my decisions and efforts for promoting a more inclusive organization.

Tiffany Taylor response

1. Please describe your teaching experiences and pedagogical approaches related to issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

First, thanks for the opportunity to answer these questions. My pedagogical goals involve improving students' critical thinking skills and sociological mindfulness (Schwalbe 2005). Sociological mindfulness is "the practice of tuning-in to how the social world works" (Schwalbe 2005:3). This means understanding things we often take for granted and the "ideas necessary to see what makes the social world a unique phenomenon" (4). As an inequality scholar, I see building sociological mindfulness related to race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality as a central part of teaching. I think enough of this that I co-edited an inequality reader that focuses on social processes that reproduce various intersecting forms of inequality. Interestingly, I am re-reading bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* since we are discussing the book in our graduate gender seminar this week. To me, the book is a wonderful reminder of how transformative and even liberating education can be. Of course, this transformative and liberating potential is better reached when we view teaching more holistically to encompass student experience, transcending the mind/body binary, and engaging students.

My passion for teaching is always accompanied by a strong connection to lessening inequality. I have been privileged to have the opportunity to teach sociology classes at my university and share my enthusiasm for the discipline for quite some time now. This has meant not just presenting sociology as a science or discipline, which it is, of course. This has also meant teaching students how sociology can provide them with a whole new way of looking at the world, particularly when viewing the intersections of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

2. Please describe any research you have conducted related to issues of inequality and social justice.

I am an intersectional inequality scholar, so all the research I have done is related to inequality. I hope my research helps us understand the social processes that reproduce inequality, but I would not boldly suggest my work has direct implications for social justice. My more recent project has more direct social justice goals. I am working on a project that compares the rhetoric of anti-immigrant groups (otherwise called nativist extremists which are under the hate group umbrella) to Donald Trump's rhetoric. The social justice goal is to better understand the work of hate groups, including their use of populist and anti-science discourse, leading up to the election of Trump in the hopes that we might prevent repeating history. In short, understanding the warning signs.

3. Please describe any other contributions you have made to help advance issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality.

Beyond teaching and research, my service work is often related to issues of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality. I was a somewhat non-traditional graduate student, returning to school after several years in the workforce and getting a first-hand look at the prevalence of workplace inequality. This experience shaped my interest in returning to school, but it has also shaped the type of service work I often do. As someone with research expertise in organizations and inequality, I have used this expertise in work I have done in my department, in my university, and in various sociology associations.

As a first-generation college graduate, a woman, and a lesbian, I understand marginalization across a few axes. However, I am also aware of my privileges and understand how I have been advantaged throughout my career. Much of the service work I have done has been to better understand the needs of certain marginalized groups, whether it be a survey or focus groups with undergraduate students of color on my campus or a survey of Sociologists for Women in Society members. To address inequality issues, you need to understand what people see as issues, as well as understand the prevalence and severity of issues. You need to understand what people need. Then you create a response. The response always needs to be structural and cultural, in a sense that structural changes need to be put into place that are empowering instead of marginalizing and then you have to work to build a culture that supports those structural changes. The specific work I have done varies based on the context, but overall, the steps to assess issues and then develop an effective response are often similar. The work cannot just be “happy talk” or to be self-congratulatory about being a decent human being. In academia, in our discipline, and in our associations, we have serious harassment issues. This is no trivial matter. This leads to the next question.

4. Please describe how you would work to make SSS a more inclusive organization.

Recently, as the President of Sociologists for Women in Society, I have worked toward fostering communication across sociological associations. This communication has specifically focused on the need for a more collaborative proactive and reactive approach to issues of harassment in our organizations. This harassment includes sexual harassment, but also includes microaggressions, and not so micro aggressions, exploitation, and more. In our discipline and in our associations, we have folks with expertise on creating best practices-- proactive and reactive—for dealing with various forms of harassment. Each organization does not need to recreate the wheel and we need to approach our issues as sociologists. I am proposing and hope to help organize an intra-association committee that would advise interested associations of these best practices. In this way, communication between organizations and information sharing would be greatly enhanced and all the organizations could operate more efficiently and more effectively. So that is one way, which is a bit macro, that I would like to continue to work on inclusivity in SSS, but also across organizations. Additionally, I would like to do some of the work mentioned in my response above, including finding out what members need and what they see as issues. And then work on solutions to those problems and improving SSS’s ability to meet member needs. These are obviously long-term projects, so the goal, during my time on Council, would be to get the ball rolling and to get it going quickly.