

SJSU College of Social Sciences Dean's Symposium
"Social Support and Adjustment to Stressful Life Experiences"

Wednesday May 4, 2016, 4:30 – 6:30pm, CL 222

Light refreshments will be served

Presentations in this symposium address the ways in which people provide and receive social support in order to cope with and adapt to stressful life experiences. In times of need, people not only turn to institutions and professionals for support, but also to kin, neighbors, friends, and workmates for material, informational, and emotional assistance. The presentations each feature different ways of approaching social support in social science research, with studies variously focused on individuals, groups, culture, and policy. Furthermore, each presenter introduces unique methodological approaches to the study of social support.



Title: Emotional support in the development and treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Annabel Prins, Professor of Psychology

Title: 'This Big Village of People': Louisiana Migrants and the Supportive Role of Catholic Parish Networks in the City of Angels

Faustina DuCros, Assistant Professor of Sociology



Title: Minga Practice in the Shadow of the Volcano: Reciprocity, Cooperation, and the Complexities of Social Support in Disasters

A.J. Faas, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

Title: Mass Incarceration in California: The Long Unwind

Garrick Percival, Associate Professor of Political Science



Annabel Prins: Emotional support in the development and treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Stressful life experiences that involve life threat (i.e., traumatic life events) are significantly correlated with physical health problems and health care utilization. Empirical research suggests that this relationship is mediated by the presence of psychopathology, more specifically post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The likelihood of developing PTSD following trauma exposure is dependent on the nature of the trauma and pre-trauma levels of social support, especially emotional support. Similarly, recovery from PTSD is dependent on certain types of trauma disclosures and the availability of emotional support. This presentation will focus on the implications of this research for family and friends of trauma survivors as well as health care providers.

Faustina DuCros: 'This Big Village of People': Louisiana Migrants and the Supportive Role of Catholic Parish Networks in the City of Angels

Religious institutions play a significant role in the lives of both internal and international migrants. This presentation examines the question: How do religious institutions support internal migrants' settlement in new destinations as well as their ties to the homeland? In the case of Black Louisiana Creole migrants to Los Angeles during the Great Migration era, Catholic parishes and schools played a significant organizing role in migrants' lives. Parishes helped migrants make sense of the geographic layout of Los Angeles by offering a physical space to which neighborhood boundaries could be anchored, thus making the sprawling city more familiar and manageable. Parishes organized social life by serving as a centralized location where Louisiana migrants could find each other, interact, and mutually support their adaptation and incorporation in a new city. In turn, migrants also brought Louisiana-based practices to the new parishes. As a result, Catholic parishes were emotionally important because they supported transregional collective memory, nostalgia, and a sense of identity tied to 'being from' Louisiana—a sense of shared origins in a regional homeland—despite being almost two thousand miles away from their home state.

A.J. Faas: Minga Practice in the Shadow of the Volcano: Reciprocity, Cooperation, and the Complexities of Social Support in Disasters

In times of crises, people rely not only on formal organizations for support, but also on social networks of reciprocity and mutual aid. Anthropologists therefore frequently examine pre-existing informal relations involving the mutual exchange of labor and material to cope with the scarcity and isolation of impoverishment that accompanies disaster, displacement, and resettlement. This presentation discusses an Andean traditional form of reciprocity and cooperation, the minga, in post-disaster and disaster-induced resettlement settings among people affected by the eruptions of Mt. Tungurahua in Ecuador in 1999 and 2006. Minga comes from the Quechua word mit'a, meaning "turn," and refers to collective work parties that are part of a suite of practices throughout the Andean region that mobilize social labor through complex systems of reciprocity. In the first part of the presentation, I present some of the factors that affect the endurance of the practice of mingas in these changing contexts. Some of the core issues include natural resources, diversifying household economies, changing relationships and hierarchies, and the interventions of outside agencies. In the second part, I discuss the ways in which minga practice changed in the wake of the disaster. Though outwardly appearing as the same cultural institution, mingas came to exhibit contrasting, yet intimately related, patterns of practice and social relationships in both a displaced, disaster-affected village and a disaster-induced resettlement.

Garrick Percival: Mass Incarceration in California: The Long Unwind

After a generation of practicing an extreme version of tough on crime politics and policymaking, California has entered a new era of prison reform focused on shrinking the size and scope the state's custodial population. Voters have played a crucial part in this effort. Using the initiative process, voters in recent years have repealed the most draconian aspects of California's Three Strikes law and steered many non-violent offenders away from state prisons. This presentation offers an analysis of why after years of supporting punitive measures like Three Strikes, Californians have begun supporting more rehabilitative anti-crime approaches. I demonstrate how the growing social and economic costs of mass incarceration in California have dramatically reoriented the political debate surrounding prisons and criminal offenders. So long as the political debate remains focused on dimensions favorable to criminal justice reformers, California should witness a slow but no less important decline in mass incarceration in the years ahead.

