

Research Coordination Network Proposal: Relational Poverty Network (PIs: Victoria Lawson & Sarah Elwood; 2013-2018)

Project Summary

Steering Committee members for the Relational Poverty Network (RPN) include: Dr. Victoria Lawson, Dr. Sarah Elwood (University of Washington), Dr. Andrew Morrison (Inter-American Development Bank), Dr. David Grusky (Stanford University), Dr. Gay Seidman (University of Wisconsin), Dr. Ananya Roy (UC Berkeley), Dr. Frances Fox-Piven (CUNY), Dr. Leif Jensen (Pennsylvania State University), Dr. Eugene McCann (Simon Fraser University, Vancouver), Dr. Ezequiel Adamovsky (CONICET, Buenos Aires), Dr. Richard Ballard (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal), and Dr. Maureen Hickey (National University of Singapore).

Intellectual merit of the RPN: We propose a collaborative network (currently 60 social scientists at 30 institutions intend to participate) that will generate conceptual and methodological innovations in poverty research. The RPN complements and extends mainstream poverty analysis through its combined focus on material relations, systems of rules that include and exclude, as well as on how meanings and social boundaries unite or separate the poor and non-poor. The RPN builds new research and educational practices that will allow relational poverty research to be scaled up through four central innovations: 1) developing concepts that operationalize relational poverty in ways that can be compared across international empirically grounded research; 2) building descriptive metadata, including quantitative and qualitative sources, that supports comparative analysis, as well as meta-synthesis of research findings from individual projects; 3) developing an in-common research design to be operationalized in multiple new mixed-methods research studies; and 4) catalyzing debate and discovery across mainstream and relational poverty research scholars. Our work will produce a set of meta-concepts that can inform and frame comparative poverty research such as: zones of encounter, economic crisis (recovery), social meaning-making and boundary-making, governance practices shaping poverty, and others yet to be developed. These meta-concepts and the in-common research design will allow researchers to strengthen their findings through rigorous investigation of a fuller range of dimensions shaping durable poverty across places. Circulating relational concepts through international comparisons will allow researchers to rigorously examine what supports, challenges or renders unusual findings from elsewhere. The resulting insights will lead to theoretical innovations with exciting implications for policy. Our cross-disciplinary and international network will build new research and educational practices and provide a model for collaborative and comparative approaches to other social science questions that cross disciplines, methods, and places.

Broader impacts of network: The RPN will have a variety of broad impacts. We involve undergraduates, graduate students and faculty from under-represented groups in all activities. Current U.S. members of RPN include women and people from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds who will be involved in building this research network and international collaboration. Our emergent and evolving network includes sociologists, geographers, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, economists and philosophers who will organize and participate in international conferences, publish papers and seek research funding to expand our work. RPN has an open collaboration and dissemination strategy

through (currently) seven national poverty centers as well as international poverty researchers and institutes in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. RPN scholars will expand the network and disseminate research, educational and policy resources through our website, journal articles, an edited volume, policy briefs, social media, meetings and our professional networks. We will produce and disseminate web-based metadata resources designed to help investigators around the world build comparative measures that move the poverty research community towards robust analyses of relational poverty.

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Project Description:

Problem Statement and Network Goals

We propose international research coordination to build new research and educational practices to advance poverty knowledge and solutions. This proposal builds a Relational Poverty Network (RPN) to complement and extend existing poverty research through a relational conceptualization of durable poverty (also referred to as persistent or chronic). This approach theorizes poverty as produced and addressed by economic, political and cultural relationships between social groups. The RPN will enliven and expand poverty research by bringing scholars from diverse theoretical and methodological traditions, disciplines and countries into new conversations in two ways. First, we will develop conceptual and methodological innovations that enable large-scale comparative mixed-methods research on durable poverty. Second, we will develop multi-directional flows of innovative ideas about how to address poverty: bringing together mainstream and relational scholarship and creating learning across disciplinary and national boundaries (called for by Ravallion, 2009; Smeeding, 2008).

The core group of scholars from which the RPN will grow is cross-disciplinary, bringing together human geographers, sociologists, political scientists, historians, economists, anthropologists and philosophers working in the U.S., Argentina, South Africa, India, Canada and Thailand. The research coordination activities proposed here will build and institutionalize a multi-disciplinary network of social scientists who have wide-ranging expertise in both quantitative secondary data analysis and qualitative, case study research. The RPN will organize a series of research and educational activities over five years, bringing together junior and senior, U.S. and international researchers to design concepts, comparative methodology and data collection practices. Our activities will include:

- i. extensive outreach to researchers, think tanks and policy makers
- ii. conceptual innovations that operationalize relational poverty enabling rigorous empirically-grounded comparative study across countries
- iii. searchable web-based metadata for quantitative and qualitative data for participating countries, including primary data from ongoing research of RPN scholars; specifically designed for researchers to operationalize relational poverty concepts
- iv. an extensible research design for robust mixed-methods research and ‘many sites to many sites’ comparison
- v. a suite of collaborative grant proposals to carry out the RPN scientific agenda;
- vi. co-authored research papers on the RPN’s conceptual and methodological advances;
- vii. institutionalization of the RPN within the Comparative Research on Poverty Program (CROP – a program of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) at UNESCO <http://www.crop.org/>).

CROP is an ideal long-term institutional partner for the RPN because it calls for precisely the kinds of research practice we will enact and provides a framework for dissemination of our findings through their website, the ISSC’s World Social Science Fellows program,

publications and conferences (see letter of collaboration). Our coordinated scientific and network building activities will be integrated from the outset with our educational, outreach and assessment efforts.

The work of the RPN is timely because economic instability and inequality are on the rise in many countries as middle strata fragment into the ‘new poor’ and the ‘new rich’ (Pressman, 2007; Milanovic, 2005; Birdsall et. al, 2000). Indeed, poverty remains a durable challenge around the globe, even in countries with substantial middle classes such as Argentina, South Africa, India and the U.S. Hand in glove with social fragmentation, there has been a paradigm shift over the last fifty years in how societies address poverty. Post WWII public social policy frameworks are on the decline and are being replaced with highly targeted mechanisms of social provision including charity, non-profit and for-profit services. Within international development there is a similar shift towards tightly focused semi-private programs targeting only the extremely poor. These twin trends, of economic instability and shrinking public resources to address poverty simultaneously contribute to durable poverty and also shape public understandings of who is poor and why. Poverty researchers are calling for attention to “social relations, rules and meanings” that underlie poverty in order to build innovative and viable new policy tools that go beyond existing approaches (Addison, Hulme and Kanbur, 2009: 22; Woolcock, 2009). Against this backdrop, the RPN will build a research infrastructure that brings relational poverty approaches into conversation with mainstream poverty work in order to realize the potentials of intellectual collaboration.

Genesis of the Relational Poverty Network & Research Coordination Goals

In 2010, Vicky Lawson (U. of Washington) and Asun St. Clair (CROP) convened a workshop of social scientists in Solstrand, Norway, to discuss cross-disciplinary work on relational poverty that has consolidated in the last ten years (see for example O’Connor, 2001; Houtzager and Moore, 2003; Addison, et. al., 2009; Hickey, 2009; Lawson, 2012). We discussed the scientific potentials and challenges of research designed around a relational conceptualization of poverty, which theorizes poverty as produced by economic, political and cultural relationships between social groups. Relational poverty analysis focuses on new objects of study to understand both the production and alleviation of poverty. Specifically this research focuses on market forces; public, private and non-profit institutional practices and rules; meaning-making among the non-poor (middle and upper classes, policy makers, front line staffers, etc); as well as economic restructuring (crisis and recovery) that shapes social inequality. Relational poverty analysis opens the door to new explanations and action in poverty research and policy because it poses new questions about social alliances in the face of vulnerability. For example, scholars at this workshop identified a fundamental need for more attention to the often-ignored role of middle class actors because middle strata hold material, political and symbolic resources that can legitimate or shape public action on poverty. Further, our relational poverty work moves beyond old welfare state models and politics to pose questions about emergent responses to poverty that move beyond the tightly targeted approaches that are the current gold standard of policy.

Scholars for the Solstrand workshop were selected for their intellectual leadership in poverty studies, their country expertise and research networks. Participants from the United States at the Universities of Washington, Chicago, Illinois and Penn State worked with scholars from the Universities of Bergen (Norway) Kwa-Zulu Natal (Durban, South Africa), Buenos

Aires (Argentina); as well as colleagues from European universities in the Netherlands and the UK. Lawson and Elwood convened researchers for follow-up workshops in Buenos Aires, including principal scientists from the Solstrand meeting and U.S. graduate students. These workshops, funded by an NSF OISE seed grant (#0962689), focused on exploring conceptual and data needs while linking U.S. scientists with international researchers. The current proposal builds out and institutionalizes this nascent network.

Scholars attending the workshops were enthusiastic about a research agenda that brings relational poverty together with mainstream work. Our discussions also identified significant conceptual and methodological challenges to realizing this agenda. A major reason why work on relational poverty has had little traction in the policy arena to date is because it is comprised of isolated, singular case studies without adequate grounds for cross-disciplinary and international comparison. Yet ‘scaling up’ relational poverty analysis to develop larger insights presents a far more profound challenge than merely encouraging a group of scholars to collaborate – it introduces a series of fundamental conceptual and measurement challenges. Operationalizing a relational concept of poverty introduces new objects of study through its focus on social relationships and requires linked analysis of both material and attitudinal aspects of poverty. Within existing data sets, core concepts needed to study poverty are operationalized through different variables and data schemes, while similar concepts (such as ‘poor people’) have vastly different meanings and measures across different national and disciplinary contexts. While poverty data are plentiful, researchers bemoaned the lack of interpretive resources that identify appropriate measures for comparative analysis or appropriate concepts for meta-synthesis of poverty research to generate broader insights from otherwise isolated case studies.

During the past 18 months, the RPN has built an initial leadership team and agenda of work that incorporates a range of data sources, research designs and methods (details in supplemental docs). Our research coordination is essential to realizing the conceptual and methodological innovations in poverty research proposed here because network members will exchange ideas, data and findings across different countries and build robustly comparative research that supports, challenges or renders unusual findings from elsewhere. The leadership and current membership of our emergent RPN now includes scholars with deep experience in mainstream and relational poverty research (see Tables 2 & 3). Our core goal is to engage the broader research community in order to expand poverty knowledge.

Substantive Challenges Addressed by RPN

The activities of RPN employ a multi-disciplinary and internationally comparative framework to engage US scholars with innovative concepts and evidence about relational poverty from around the globe. This design responds to Smeeding’s (2008) call for fresh perspectives to invigorate US poverty research. Our activities focus on four central challenges that have prevented such contributions to date, including: i) the need for conceptual innovations that operationalize relational poverty analysis, ii) the need for interpretive data tools that support robust comparative analysis and meta-synthesis, iii) a rigorous mixed-methods research design developed *in common* and iv) scholarly debate on conceptual and empirical insights of relational poverty scholars with the broader community of US poverty scholars and practitioners.

Comparative research is vital because it enriches the initial assumptions and hypotheses that researchers from each country bring to our work, highlighting theoretical openings and closures that frame (and potentially limit) thinking in each place. Our initial workshops with scholars from the U.S., South Africa, Europe and Argentina emphasized complementary dimensions of poverty that broadened our theorization. As just one example; scholars from South Africa and the U.S. identified historical and contemporary links between race discrimination and poverty, whereas scholars from Argentina focused more attention on how economic crisis, fear and repression combine to shape poverty. Our comparative discussions taught us that linkages between poverty, race, economic restructuring and mobilizations of fear are important everywhere but found that scholars in different countries and intellectual traditions tended to foreground some elements and downplay or even ignore other interrelationships. This is the promise of our relational and comparative approach: to highlight key interrelationships that are obvious in one place and relatively less considered in another. RPN will build multi-country comparisons that synthesize across conceptual arguments, data sources and disciplinary boundaries and lead to policy innovation. Our research coordination activities address four key challenges in order to realize these goals.

The first challenge is building concepts that address the perennially difficult question of the durability of poverty, despite enormous efforts to combat it. Relational analyses theorize poverty as produced or diminished through a range of economic, political and cultural relationships that give poverty particular expressions in each place. For example, who is poor, what it means to be poor, and how poverty is manifest looks different across space (Woolcock, 2009). These differences make particular groups the target for certain types of interventions. In broad terms in the U.S. black and Latino urban underclasses are archetypically poor, in Argentina indigenous rural in-migrants are 'the poor' and in South Africa black shanty town residents with HIV/AIDS are viewed as 'the problem poor'. These variations are meaningful because they reveal how different groups are targeted for distinct policy prescriptions: who will be intervened upon, who qualifies for resources and what interventions will look like. This focus on 'target groups' in specific places obscures underlying material social relations and processes of meaning-making that contribute to the durability of poverty across the globe. Our comparative approach will build meta-concepts that lift above place specificity, but that are less blunt than some mega theories of 'neoliberalism' and 'global capitalism' that are often used to explain global poverty processes.

Towards this first challenge, the RPN provides a unique opportunity to distill broader lessons about key concepts and processes, such as economic vulnerability, social boundary-making, as well as the efficacy of rules systems and social support structures, as they appear and govern poverty across countries. Our comparative work will explore forms of incorporation into the economy (Wright, 1985; Lawson, 1990), social boundary-making that frames the poor as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' (Tilly, 1998; Goode and Maskovsky, 2001; Lamont and Molnar, 2002; Murillo, 2008; Mosse, 2010; Lawson, Jarosz and Bonds, 2010) as well as responses to poverty. For example, the rise of neighborhood assemblies during the Argentine crisis of 2001 brought the middle and poor strata together in social alliances. These encounters changed actions and attitudes around poverty. Pooling resources together moved people out of poverty and also changed the ways in which people understood and engaged poverty, deservingness and social boundaries between poor and non-poor. The Argentine case raises crucial questions about whether similar processes can occur from common experiences of unemployment, hunger and/or foreclosure during the Great

Recession in the US or indeed elsewhere. Comparative inquiry into poverty processes leads us to new questions about how poverty is produced or changed both materially and symbolically, especially in times of massive economic transformation. This requires the addition of new objects of study, an emphasis on social, cultural and political relations and mixed methods approaches. Year 1 of the RPN activities (described in detail below) focuses on specifying comparative core concepts to operationalize relational poverty research.

The second challenge addressed by the RPN is identifying appropriate data sets that allow scholars to measure core concepts of relational poverty and to conduct mixed methods research across countries. We build from conventional poverty research that has produced rich national and international data sets. This includes census data for all countries; surveys of the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Study; UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys; U.S.AID's Demographic and Health Surveys; socio-demographic and public opinion polls such as LAPOP for Argentina; recent surveys of class identity and aspirations such as the U.S. National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey ("GSS"), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) and Kessler's study of impoverishment in Buenos Aires, 1999. Notwithstanding this wealth of data, there is no comparable measure of the 'lower middle class' or 'economic vulnerability' just sitting in existing secondary data for each country under the same column heading, and measures of poverty are operationalized in widely different ways across national and international data sources. Further, these secondary data do not capture relationality fully and so we also identify primary data sets; allowing researchers to access additional dimensions of impoverishment. We link concepts and diverse data sources by building descriptive metadata that allow researchers to link secondary and primary data sets (i.e. census data, surveys, interview transcripts, content analysis from media, case notes from participant observation, GIS-based spatial data and visual media). In addition, the descriptive metadata advances poverty research by identifying comparable measures for core concepts identified in Year 1.

To be clear, we are not proposing to develop a conventional data clearinghouse for international poverty research. Building a clearinghouse would duplicate existing online secondary resources published by the World Bank, USAID and others listed above. Unprecedented volumes of secondary data are already available online and what researchers *most need* is resources for locating and working with complementary data (including primary data) from different sources. Our unique contribution is conceptual and methodological. Specifically, the RPN will design and populate an online metadata resource that researchers can use to integrate existing secondary data with primary data being produced by network members *and* to operationalize relational poverty concepts. This challenge is yet more difficult when attempting relational international comparisons. Our descriptive metadata will support poverty researchers' efforts to identify and obtain data for comparative analysis of relational poverty across countries, compiling details on available/appropriate data sources, institutional locations and contact information for acquiring these data.

This searchable metadata will document key attributes across national data sets that may be used to measure core concepts of relational poverty and to identify which variables from separate data sets may be made comparable to one another. Most existing national and international data are not designed to focus on the relationships between social groups relevant to our work, but through the RPN's conceptual and measurement discussions we will rethink the use of these measures. Case study research on poverty often captures

relational data but these sources, and the scholars producing them, often remain relatively isolated. *The RPN provides a collaborative forum to identify critical points of commonality in existing data and archive these details in the descriptive metadata* so that our insights become a sustainable resource for poverty researchers around the world. This metadata will contain details on thematic content, regional coverage, data representation types, or temporal dimensions of the data sets allowing researchers to discern how data sets or specific variables can be compared and appropriate modes of analysis (statistical, geovisual, interpretive, etc.). The RPN metadata solves a principle challenge of meta-synthesis – providing scholars with resources to understand how different forms of evidence, variables, and analysis may be fit together for comparison (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Rudel, 2004; Valentine, 2006). The web based descriptive metadata will take advantage of Web 2.0 capabilities, allowing researchers to upload further detail based on their own use of data resources.

The third challenge the RPN addresses is to design robust, mixed-methods research that can be ‘scaled up’ and that takes advantage of both the cross-disciplinary and international membership of the network. In years four and five network members will develop an in-common research design to be operationalized in multiple new research studies that take advantage of the conceptual and empirical accomplishments in previous years. The network will encourage a range of studies employing quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to core empirical questions. To ensure full comparability across research sites, research teams will employ the same research protocol employing tools developed collaboratively. This resulting body of work will be comprised of specific studies coordinated to pose the same questions and use similar forms of evidence across places. These efforts will realize our goal of building a body of robust comparative social science research on relational poverty.

In our initial discussions, we learned that meaningful meta-concepts are an essential basis for the kind of ‘scaled up’ comparative social science research the RPN will build. For example, scholars participating in our initial workshops noted that studying relational poverty processes across places requires identifying researchable instances of sites in which poor and non-poor interact. Such ‘spaces of encounter’ might be organizational/institutional spaces such as schools, non-governmental organizations or government offices where assistance services are offered/received, participatory government schemes that seek to involve residents across socio-economic strata; or might be shared spaces such as community gardens, public spaces, or mixed income neighborhood associations. Significant sites of encounter will differ between national contexts and research projects, yet this meta-level concept nonetheless forms a basis for meaningful comparison of how interactions between middle class and low-income people frame identities, ideals, regulations and policy practices. The in-common research design that emerges from the RPN’s activities will use such meta-level concepts to lay the groundwork for synthesis across the local and national contexts that comprise its constituent research projects.

The fourth challenge is to engage a broad community of poverty scholars at every stage of this creative process. In response to reviewer feedback, members of our steering committee now include a yet broader range of intellectual perspectives on poverty from scholars in leadership positions at poverty centers and policy-making institutions around the US and beyond (Table 1). This research coordination network will provide a unique opportunity to engage this broad community of scholars in research that expands the poverty agenda.

Current RPN members are all committed to a systematic process of outreach and network expansion sustained over five years. To this end the RPN will hold a series of open meetings, educational and dissemination activities elaborated in the remainder of the proposal.

Research and Education Activities of the RPN

The series of activities we propose over five years will refine core theoretical concepts for studying relational poverty; build a searchable online metadata resource addressing primary and secondary data sources that operationalize these concepts to facilitate comparative work; generate an extensible in-common research design for international mixed-methods comparative research; and engage in ongoing dialogue with the poverty research community more broadly. In parallel, members will develop and share educational resources for teaching relational poverty, such as undergraduate course syllabi, graduate seminars, class activities based on data from the web descriptive metadata, and/or experiential community learning strategies.

RPN will develop a range of intellectual pathways to expand the network and disseminate its work. Network members are at seven US Poverty Centers, social science institutes in other countries, and CROP (Table 1). Positioned within these key institutional sites of poverty scholarship, network members have extensive research networks and will be partners in orchestrating the intellectual and outreach activities described below.

Table 1: Poverty and Policy Institutes in the RPN

Stanford Poverty Center; National Poverty Center (Michigan); West Coast Poverty Center & Evans School of Public Policy (U. Washington); Center for Social Policy (U. Mass); Inter-American Development Bank (Washington DC); Population Research Institute (Penn State); Institute for Research on Poverty (U. Wisconsin); Joint Center for Poverty Research (U. Chicago and Northwestern U.); Blum Center for Developing Economies (U. California, Berkeley); Comparative Research on Poverty Program (International Social Science Council, Paris and Bergen); Brooks Poverty Center (Manchester U.); Center for International Climate and Environmental Research (Oslo); CONICET and Gino Germani Institute for the Social Sciences (U. Buenos Aires), School of Development Studies (U. Kwa Zulu Natal)

One pathway for engaging the US poverty research community will be RPN three day annual meetings. We will hold four meetings at US poverty/policy centers (Year 1: U. of Washington, West Coast Poverty Center; Year 2: U. of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty; Year 4: UC Berkeley and Stanford Poverty Center; and Year 5: the Inter-American Development Bank, Washington DC). The annual meetings will include a one-day symposium of research presentations, a day of working sessions including steering committee (SC) and network members (to work on tasks in timeline for that year – see pp 9-11), and a final day of summative and implementation discussions by the SC. Each meeting will involve extensive outreach to a range of scholars, policy practitioners and non-profits in that region, to broaden communication about, and innovation in, the network. The RPN will also prioritize an international presence at these meetings (through steering committee membership and travel awards for junior scholars/graduate students). Bringing US and international researchers together will provide an opportunity for U.S. scholars to learn from

a substantial range of empirical and theoretical scholarship being conducted in other countries as well as to deepen their international networks.

Network members will build a range of other pathways to broaden the scope and intellectual impact of the RPN, including public scholarship, education, publishing activities and networking. Public scholarship will involve public talks, op-eds, blog debates on current topics and publishing in magazine outlets. Education activities (elaborated below) will include classroom innovations, service-learning pedagogies, and graduate webinars to bring together researchers between annual meetings. Publishing activities will involve preparation of co-authored research papers, an edited volume and funding proposals by RPN members. Networking activities will occur in concert with RPN annual meetings and open-call sessions at professional meetings (e.g. International Social Science Council, the Association of American Geographers and American Sociological Association). The RPN website will also be a central hub for outreach and dissemination of resources generated by the network: video archives of talks, working papers, call for participation in conferences, links to social media, newsletter updates, the descriptive metadata, elaboration of our in-common research design and shared educational resources.

Management Plan

The PIs are Dr. Victoria Lawson and Dr. Sarah Elwood, responsible for coordinating all project activities, in collaboration with the steering committee (SC; Table 2). Each member of the SC represents an institution with strong poverty research (Table 1) and their respective research programs form the basis for conceptual advances, comparative methodology, methodological innovations and outreach activities (see supplemental docs).

Table 2: Steering Committee (July 2012)

Sarah Elwood	Univ of Washington	Geography	Center for Demography & Ecology
Victoria Lawson	Univ of Washington	Geography	West Coast Poverty Center
Andrew Morrison	Inter-American Dev Bank	Economics	Chief, Gender Studies Unit
Ananya Roy	UC-Berkeley	Planning	Blum Center for Dev Economics
Frances Fox-Piven	CUNY	Political Science	Sociology
David Grusky	Stanford	Sociology	Stanford Poverty Center
Gay Seidman	Univ of Wisconsin	Sociology	Inst. for Research on Poverty
Leif Jensen	Penn State	Sociology	Agricultural Economics
Richard Ballard	Univ of KwaZulu-Natal	Development	Population Studies
Eugene McCann	Simon Fraser University	Geography	Center for Community Sustainability
Ezequiel Adamovsky	Univ of Buenos Aires	History	CONICET
Maureen Hickey	National Univ of Singapore	Geography	Asia Research Institute

The SC will be responsible for planning activities, overseeing the website and managing the budget. The steering committee of 12 people includes the PIs and a rotating membership that always includes poverty center faculty and policy makers. To bring junior scientists into the decision-making process, after the startup year, we will rotate a graduate student onto the SC annually. Working groups will be formed within the SC to focus on education, data tools and outreach. SC members will be responsible for recruiting additional researchers to the

RPN. We expect the network will grow to approximately 300 scientists worldwide ranging in expertise and career stage as our activities are disseminated and our web presence grows. All groups are welcome to participate and will be strongly encouraged to initiate collaborations and grant-writing activities to expand the network and engage in research.

Timeline:

Year One: Build conceptual framework and establish educational and outreach activities. Lawson and Elwood will convene the first annual meeting at the University of Washington (inviting scholars, policy practitioners and non-profit members from the region to participate in the symposium). This meeting will focus on adapting and refining core ideas within relational poverty analysis through international comparative discussion. Participants from different disciplines, countries and institutions will identify relevant social relations, objects of study, processes of meaning making and zones of encounter, with emphasis on articulating meta-level concepts that are robust and meaningful across national contexts. These discussions will refine understanding of processes such as: economic restructuring and forms of [adverse] incorporation into labor markets; processes of land/asset dispossession, social relations between middle class and poorer sectors; the racialization of poverty to think through which communities and spaces are emblematic of poverty in different places; governance practices (officially sanctioned discourses of poverty, policies enacted) as well as examples of emergent social alliances between poor and non-poor. The SC will also establish our ethical code for research collaboration to clarify rights to ideas, guidelines for single and co-authorship and research funding (this code will be on our website). The SC will launch the RPN junior research scholarship program which will fund travel and lodging for two young scholars (untenured or graduate student from across the US or other country) to attend the RPN meeting and conduct a site visit with a local senior RPN scholar. In addition, we will organize and initiate educational and diversity plans (elaborated below). The SC will also launch network outreach activities within their respective professional networks to expand the RPN. **Year 1 outputs:** conceptual paper on relational poverty (PIs); organized sessions at a professional conferences (SC members); design of RPN web portal around key functions (personnel information, blog on RPN activities, educational resources, data descriptive metadata and search tools – graduate RA); and consolidate our five-year educational and outreach plans (relevant SC working groups).

Year Two: Design descriptive metadata; expand educational resources. The PIs and an SC member will convene the annual meeting at the University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty (extended invitations as in year 1). Participants will be tasked with identifying quantitative and qualitative data that exist for participating countries (for concepts and processes identified in year 1). Whereas year 1 developed resources for *conceptual* cross-comparability, year 2 activities will focus on generating empirical cross-comparability. A key innovation is to compile information about both national-level secondary data sets *and* qualitative case-based data sets *relevant for relational poverty analysis*. Working sessions will focus intensively on sharing scholars' ongoing empirical research in order to identify relevant variables and to consider how these may be compared across data sets to operationalize relational poverty concepts from Year 1. This combined conceptual and methodological work is central to building meaningful metadata and more broadly to realizing the intellectual innovations of the RPN. The SC will award two junior research fellowships for young scholars as in Year 1. **Year 2 outputs:** online searchable metadata on conventional and relational poverty (PIs with graduate RA); educational resources on

relational poverty (education working group); blog on RPN activities and opportunities (outreach working group); an international webinar for graduate students on comparative relational poverty research (PIs and SC); YouTube dissemination of webinar excerpts (graduate RA); and organized session at a professional conference (SC member).

*Year Three: **Build out metadata content and expand education projects.*** Building from the conceptual and methodological work of Year 2, we will expand the breadth and depth of the descriptive metadata. SC members will advise the PIs who will implement a web-based survey of social scientists conducting research on poverty to identify additional relevant sources and their comparability. The survey will also request submission of innovative educational resources (more detail below). A series of virtual meetings (PIs and SC members) in Year 3 will be devoted to building out the metadata by finalizing key details needed to build comparable measurement categories across places. The PIs will also work with the Metadata Implementation Group at the University of Washington to build out the metadata, generating critical infrastructure for scholars to develop larger insights from relational poverty research. A key innovation will be our effort to bring Web 2.0 techniques to bear on our scientific collaboration; the metadata's web interface will be designed so that participating researchers may continue to add additional insights from their own experiences using particular data for comparative analysis. **Year 3 outputs:** launch metadata tool (PIs and SC); expansion of web-based educational resources (outreach working group); symposium for researchers and teachers at an education conference (education working group); and a paper on the descriptive metadata (PIs and SC members).

*Year Four: **Build a robust mixed-methods research design*** that allows for 'many sites to many sites' comparison. The PIs and local SC members will convene the annual RPN meeting in the Bay Area (UC Berkeley and Stanford) to develop the in-common research design (extended invitations modeled on Year 1). Research papers for the first day symposium will identify parameters for empirical studies that are robustly comparative across countries and incorporate creative cutting-edge mixed-methods. Workings sessions on days 2 and 3 will focus on developing the in-common research design which will blend quantitative, geovisual, and qualitative approaches, including spatially integrated social science methodologies (Goodchild and Janelle, 2004), qualitative GIS (Elwood and Cope, 2009), and spatial humanities (Bodenhamer, Corrigan, and Harris 2010). The SC will award two junior research fellowships for participation in the annual meeting and field site visits. Throughout year 4, network members will undertake and share new undergraduate teaching activities using resources generated in years 1-3. To extend our impact in policy circles, network members will be tasked with contributing to publications directed to policy makers such as CROP Poverty Briefs, the West Coast Poverty Center Flashes and IDB Policy Briefs. We will also disseminate RPN materials through social media such as Facebook and YouTube (i.e. clips of research presentations; plenary talks and virtual workshops). **Year 4 outputs:** research papers on comparative, mixed-methods research design (PIs, SC members); session at professional conference (outreach working group); expand educational resources on website (education working group - graduate RA); publish policy briefs (All).

*Year Five: **Develop funding strategy for ongoing RPN research; institutionalize RPN resources for long-term sustainability.*** The PIs and local SC members will convene the final annual meeting at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington DC (extended

invitations modeled on Year 1). This meeting will focus strongly on policy implications of our work and will also be devoted to sustaining RPN's collaborative research activities and resources over the long haul. The SC will identify additional funding resources to support comparative research for ongoing empirical projects by RPN collaborators and develop a coordinated plan for submitting proposals to these funders. The PIs will conduct a follow-up to the third year survey focused on both dissemination and assessment of the RCN. The PIs in collaboration with the SC will design an edited book to highlight innovative intellectual, methodological and policy ideas from the RPN. **Year 5 outputs:** funding strategy with coordinated proposal sequence (PIs); generating funding proposals (All); edited volume on substantive and methodological advances of RPN (PIs with SC); and institutionalizing RPN via CROP and the University of Washington (PIs).

Educational Goals and Outcomes

In our experience direct involvement of students in international knowledge creation is an invaluable educational experience. We will integrate active learning into our work; involving both graduate and undergraduate students in all activities of the RPN including workshops, empirical research, international networking, and web design. Lawson won an REU supplement for prior NSF research and then focused recruitment on under-represented students to great effect. We will encourage this same model to support diverse student involvement in all research proposals produced by the RPN.

The education working group will direct compilation and dissemination of the RPN's educational resources (via our website). These resources include educational materials geared to teachers including course syllabi, webinar videos, best teaching practices, field trips, mini-courses, service-learning, internships and class assignments that work with the data archive. Our educational resources will be linked with the descriptive metadata to allow teachers and students to explore key issues such as i) patterns of poverty and social fragmentation across network countries, ii) the usefulness and comparability of different poverty and vulnerability concepts and measures, iii) links between economic restructuring and social fragmentation, iv) international examples of innovative approaches to addressing poverty that take account of race, gender, caste, history and so on.

SC and other network members will commit to teaching on relational poverty through activities such as on-campus courses and webinars; linking up specific classes on poverty processes across our different universities through online lectures and interactive message boards; and outreach at national education conferences. SC and other network members will convene working groups on teaching relational poverty at their home institutions (to share best practices and resources from RPN website) and will commit to building or retooling an undergraduate course based on network activities and innovations. Finally, the education working group will organize a panel at a national educational conference (such as the National Council for Geographic Education) to disseminate RPN teaching resources.

RPN junior scholar awards (discussed under year 1) also provide invaluable educational benefits. In conjunction with RPN annual meetings in years 1, 2 and 4, two graduate students or junior researchers (different people each year) will participate extensively in the annual meeting and carry out a site visit to empirical research by an RPN member at that location. These site visits will facilitate the intellectual and empirical comparisons that are

core to our work, but they will also have considerable educational value. Junior researchers will be fully responsible for the structure and content of that field visit; allowing them to gear up their own relational poverty research. These site visits will build the next generation of relational poverty scholarship, will further young scholars' contributions to the data descriptive metadata and metadata, and cement their international research networks and preparation for professional leadership. In collaboration with CROP, our junior researchers will also be eligible to apply for the World Social Science Fellows Program of the International Social Sciences Council (http://www.worldsocialscience.org/?page_id=2463).

Assessment Plan

We have a multi-pronged plan to assess use of specific RPN resources, growth of the network and its intellectual contribution to poverty research. We will build assessment tools into the website starting in year 1 to track overall trends in hits and usage of specific web resources such as the metadata, in-common research design, bibliographies, teaching and educational resources (e.g. syllabi, assignments, educational assessment tools, etc.), and working papers on conceptual and methodological advances.

We will also assess engagement of social scientists with the RPN through web surveys in years three and five. We will gather information on numbers of researchers in the network, which social science disciplines are involved, whether junior researchers establish international collaborations and field site experiences, how many refereed publications and new research proposals are generated, grants awarded and professional advancements (e.g. completing doctoral work, research scholarships, grants awarded) by U.S. and international participants linked with substantive involvement with the RPN. In addition, we will use the later web survey to determine the usefulness of educational resources and the descriptive metadata. We will also track enrollment and attendance in annual RPN meetings, as well as at special sessions at national conferences to determine if attendance and interest grows over time. Key markers of success will be participation of mainstream poverty researchers in our activities, funded empirical research projects, a wide range of publications and new collaborations between international and US scholars.

The SC will also play a vital oversight role over budget allocations and to determine whether we are meeting our benchmarks towards larger RCN goals. One reviewer suggested hiring an outside evaluator; however this does not appear to be feasible within the scope of RCN funding resources.

RPN Diversity Plan

From our teaching and prior research we know that a focus on poverty, exploring social exclusion and inclusion, and integrating poverty knowledge from Global South and North attracts students from across the social spectrum. The initial meetings of the RPN attracted strong interest from a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate students and junior scholar-teachers. SC members will be explicitly tasked with active solicitation of diverse colleagues and students from around the U.S. and the world as well as outside academia in community organizations, non-governmental organizations and government agencies. We will also take advantage of the global reputation and outreach infrastructure of CROP to encourage diverse participation in the RPN. Our own experience teaches us that

underrepresented students in the U.S. are often drawn to classes and research that deal with their heritage places around the globe.

The PIs (Lawson and Elwood) have a longstanding track record in enhancing diversity among under-represented groups in geography. Lawson's career is defined by a strong role in enhancing diversity through her national work with the Association of American Geographers Diversity Task Force (2004-6), Diversity Committee (2007-2009), EDGE and current role as advisory board member on the Aligned Project (both Edge and Aligned are NSF funded to enhance diversity in graduate and undergraduate education). Lawson was also invited to participate in the 2008 workshop on the Science of Broadening Participation at the NSF. Lawson chairs our departmental diversity committee at the University of Washington that focuses on increasing diversity in our undergraduate, graduate and faculty ranks. Elwood is deeply engaged in community-based research and teaching in low income, minority communities in Chicago and Seattle. Elwood's NSF CAREER award (concluded in 2010) brought her research to undergraduate and graduate students by integrating participatory research into her classes and building extensive University-community connections. Her current participatory research on place-based learning and civic engagement by young teens (Spencer Foundation, 2009-2013), involves undergraduates and graduates students, many of them from under-represented groups, in research assistance, internship activities, and community-based service learning, at Seattle middle schools in low-income, high-minority neighborhoods.

The majority of network members are teacher-scholars working at public universities who will recruit a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate students through regularly taught classes and direct involvement of students in the network. We engage our students as knowledge producers and our thinking about this project has evolved in part through classroom discussions of the ethics of poverty research and the intellectual project of relational poverty analysis, as well as through the service-learning work conducted by our students. One key outcome of the RPN teaching activities will be these durable community-university partnerships built through service learning, internships and student research projects. As our students learn both about relational poverty and about pro-poor work already ongoing in the community, they link the university with those organizations for future learning/research collaborations (at the University of Washington this is facilitated by the Carlson Leadership and Public Service Center). This is just one example of how teaching, research and public service will combine and complement each other in this project.

Our outreach-oriented model for research and education is already linking junior U.S. researchers with scholars in other countries as we build our global network for diverse international collaboration. The RPN currently consists of 60 members at 31 universities or institutes in 8 countries (Table 2 & 3). The RPN includes underrepresented groups by gender, race, ethnicity and class. Women represent 56% of current RPN participants and 31% of current participants are graduate students or junior researchers (recent PhDs). SC members are all coordinating research in network countries and have built teams of U.S. and international scholars to be invited into the RPN in this build-up phase.

Table 3: Current Network Members (Discipline and Institution: July 2012)

Anthropology: Jean Comaroff (U. of Chicago), Christiana Miewald (Simon Fraser U.), Nicolas Viotti (U. of Buenos Aires), Maia Green (Manchester U.); **Development Studies:** Sam Hickey (Manchester U.), Julian May (U. of Western Cape); **Economics:** Randy Albelda (U. of Massachusetts-Boston), Steven Raphael (UC-Berkeley & Michigan Poverty Center), Shelly Lundberg (UCSB), Bill Freund & Dori Posel (U. of KwaZulu-Natal), Satendra Kumar (Delhi School of Econ.); **Geography:** Lucy Jarosz, Suzanne Withers, Rebecca Burnett, Dena Aufseeser, Monica Farias, (U. of Washington), Stephen Young (U. of Wisconsin), Anne Bonds (U. of Wisconsin – Milwaukee), Lise Nelson (U. of Oregon), Peter Nelson (Middlebury), Craig Jeffrey (Oxford); **History:** Santiago Canevaro (U. of Buenos Aires); **Philosophy:** Thomas Pogge (Yale), Asun St. Clair (CICERO); **Policy:** Rachel Kleit & Jennifer Romich (U. of Washington), Tony Sparks (San Francisco State U.), Shana Cohen (Woolf Institute) Toni Flotten (FAFO/Oslo), Monique Kramer (Dutch Scientific Council), Alberto Cimadamore (CROP); **Psychology:** Kevin Durheim (U. of KwaZulu-Natal); **Sociology:** Eric Olin Wright (U. of Wisconsin), Alexes Harris & Rebecca Pettit (U. of Washington), John Iceland (Penn State), Linda Lobao (Ohio State), Leslie McCall (Northwestern), Gerhard Mare (U. of KwaZulu-Natal), Susanna Murillo, Paula Aguilar, Clara Algranati, Jose Seoane, Ana Grondona (U. of Buenos Aires), Kari Waerness & Olav Korsnes (U. of Bergen), Jimi Adesina (Rhodes U./UNRSID)

Prior NSF Support

Lawson' NSF award from 2010 to 2012, is titled 'Reframing Poverty: what role for the Middle Classes?' grant SBR #0962689. This planning visit award from OISE facilitated comparative research discussions on one aspect of relational poverty: the links between middle class vulnerability, identities and poverty politics in Argentina and the United States. Lawson and Elwood organized and led a workshop involving a U.S. team of four faculty and four graduate students to collaborate with a group of Argentine scholars and students in discussions of relational poverty that led to this network proposal. The planning visit generated several key insights. First, our theoretical discussions identified complementarities between research on relational poverty in each country, built new conceptual insights and underscored the importance of researching poverty in a comparative temporal and spatial framework. Second, we reviewed existing quantitative and qualitative data on relational poverty, finding several data sets that could form the basis for comparative research but identifying the need for further work to discern how particular data sets and variables might be considered comparable. We also identified further data needs as well as the desirability of extended comparison including other countries that are differently positioned within the global economy. Third, we designed empirical case studies for the U.S. and Argentina in order to pilot the in-common research design approach. Our work affirmed the need for a social sciences research network to advance our collective research.

RPN Broader Impacts

Our international and cross-disciplinary group includes sociologists, geographers, political scientists, historians, anthropologists and economists who will organize and participate in conferences, publish papers and seek research funding to expand the RPN. The network will have a variety of broad impacts, drawing in a diversity of mainstream and relational poverty researchers (generation, discipline, gender, ethnicity, country of origin) into a social science infrastructure. As discussed above, we involve undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty from under-represented groups in all activities. Current U.S. members of RPN include women and people from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds who will have an invaluable opportunity to be involved in building a research network and learning how to engage in international collaboration. The RPN will disseminate research and educational resources broadly, both through our own website, publications and meetings as

well as under the auspices of CROP and seven U.S. Poverty Centers. The RPN will catalyze new research and educational practices which tap into cross-disciplinary and international approaches to understanding and responding to poverty. We will also produce web-based descriptive metadata providing clearly documented data set information that will allow researchers to engage in international comparative research and move our community towards meta-synthesis in social science research on relational poverty. Our findings will be disseminated through journals, policy briefs and an edited volume which highlight innovative new approaches to addressing poverty.

RPN Intellectual Merit

The RPN has the potential to transform how we conceptualize and study poverty by bringing together mainstream and relational scholars to generate innovations from internationally comparative and inter-disciplinary analyses of poverty. The RPN complements and extends mainstream poverty analysis through its combined focus on material relations, systems of rules that include and exclude, as well as on how meanings and social boundaries unite or separate the poor and non-poor. The RPN builds new research and educational practices that will allow relational poverty research to be scaled up through four central innovations: 1) developing concepts that operationalize relational poverty in ways that can be compared across international empirically grounded research; 2) building descriptive metadata, including quantitative and qualitative sources, that supports comparative analysis, as well as meta-synthesis of research findings from individual projects; 3) developing an in-common research design to be operationalized in multiple new mixed-methods research studies; and 4) catalyzing debate and discovery across mainstream and relational poverty research scholars. Our work will produce a set of meta-concepts that can inform and frame comparative poverty research such as: zones of encounter, economic crisis (recovery), social meaning-making and boundary-making, governance practices shaping poverty, and others yet to be developed. These meta-concepts and the in-common research design will allow researchers to strengthen their findings through rigorous investigation of a fuller range of dimensions shaping durable poverty across places. Circulating relational concepts through international comparisons will allow researchers to rigorously examine what supports, challenges or renders unusual findings from elsewhere. The resulting insights will lead to innovations with exciting implications for policy. Finally, our cross-disciplinary and international network will build new research and educational practices and provide a model for collaborative and comparative approaches to other social science questions that cross disciplines, methods, and places.

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