



Sociology of Education Association 55th Annual Conference

February 19-21, 2027
Asilomar Hotel & Conference Grounds
Pacific Grove, California

Call for Proposals

Contested Goals, Uncertain Futures: Revisiting the Purpose and Practice of Education

At the turn of the 21st century, historian and sociologist of education David Labaree observed that schools “occupy an awkward position at the intersection between what we hope society will become and what we think it really is, between political ideals and economic realities.”¹ This tension, he argued, is central to understanding the distinct and contradictory goals that have been imposed on American schools and how the social mobility goal of education—which views education as a private good for individual gain—came to dominate more democratic purposes and public good paradigms of education.

Three decades later, the fight over American schools and whose interests they should prioritize is ongoing. Yet, the terms of the debate are shifting. Rapidly evolving AI tools enable students to outsource complex thinking tasks, forcing schools to reassess what students are learning and what they need to learn to be ethical citizens. Simultaneously, state policy efforts to curtail discussions of race and gender in schools, mandate Christian teachings, and erode academic freedom do not square neatly with democratic or economic goals. Rather, scholars argue that they reveal the ascendance of a new form and purpose of education: as a partisan good to maintain political control.²

This year’s theme challenges sociologists of education to think about the purposes of schooling in a rapidly changing society. Proposals might grapple with the following sample questions:

¹ David F. Labaree, “Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle over Educational Goals,” *American Educational Research Journal* 34, no. 1 (1997): 39–81.

² Barrett J. Taylor and Brendan Cantwell, “An Outline of the Postliberal University: Public, Private, and Partisan Goods,” *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 56, no. 6 (2024): 5–11.

- How are conflicting purposes of education experienced and negotiated in schools and communities?
- How is power used to impose and/or resist particular educational goals?
- How are contemporary political configurations and technological tools shaping what students learn and how they learn?
- How do the purposes of education vary across states and locales?
- Which goals and ideals should schools pursue to actualize a more just and humane future?

The Sociology of Education Association (SEA) invites proposals for its 2027 meeting that explore these issues in educational contexts and processes broadly defined. We invite both theoretical and empirical contributions and encourage submissions that draw upon a wide array of data sources, levels of analysis, and methodologies.

Please submit a detailed 2-page précis that includes a brief discussion of the topic, pertinent literature and theory, research methods, findings, and study significance to [THIS FORM](#) or type in this link: <https://forms.gle/2PWAJPQKpGBtcD9a6>

For the purposes of deidentified review, be sure your submission is free of identifiers (names, affiliations, etc.) in the body and filename of the précis. The submission deadline is **Friday, October 16th, 11:59pm PT**. Direct questions to the 2027 SEA Program Chair, Becca S. Bassett, at seaconf2027@gmail.com.