
The 2017 Gabriel G. Rudney Memorial Award is presented to Dr. Claire Margery Dunning for her dissertation, Outsourcing Government: Boston and the Rise of Public-Private Partnerships, 1950-2000. The selection committee agreed that Dr. Dunning’s dissertation makes significant and original contributions to the area of nonprofit and voluntary studies by enriching our understanding of how the system of government funding and regulation of nonprofit organizations performed, both positively and negatively, in providing social welfare programs and services during the second half of the 20th Century.

Dr. Dunning’s work is an impressive piece of scholarship that draws upon the literatures of sociology, economics, health policy, criminal justice, social work, public administration and political science to tell in a compelling way the story of federally funded urban renewal and Great Society programs and their devolution toward locally funded programs run by community development corporations and other nonprofit organizations. She demonstrates how this migration from the public sector to private nonprofits created benefits in terms of communities’ sense of control and grass roots participation but also significant losses in terms of funding and scale of impact. Although the City of Boston is the focus of her research, each chapter is, in effect, a unique case study in areas such as housing, crime prevention, health service delivery, and economic development. Moreover, the story told by Dr. Dunning is at once both national and local. Boston spearheaded many early federal programs and played a significant role in shaping the design and implementation of public-private partnerships in other cities around the country.

Dr. Dunning’s research provides detailed, vivid, and nuanced insights into the political maneuvering of mayors and other elected officials and the self-serving actions of businesses and competing stakeholders that conspired to diminish the impact of social welfare programming or, in some cases, produce unintended consequences that spawned new problems and paradoxes that have extended into the 21st Century. Dr. Dunning’s work has the potential to inform the design of social welfare programming in the future, especially those that are based on intergovernmental and public-private partnerships.

The selection committee and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action take great pleasure in awarding this year’s prize to Dr. Claire Dunning.

The members of the selection committee are: Kevin Kearns, Chair (University of Pittsburgh); Silke Boenigk (University of Hamburg); Mark Hager (Arizona State University); and Margaret Sloan (James Madison University).