

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Letter from the Editors, Spring 2017

It is hard to believe that our term as *Perspectives* editors is drawing to a close. Over the past three years, we have strived to uphold the historically high caliber of the newsletter, to provide content that is interesting to senior scholars yet written in accessible and engaging language, while showcasing the theoretical diversity of the discipline. It has been a privilege and pleasure to work with the fantastic contributors who have shared their ideas in these pages over the past three years. We could not have done this without the ongoing generosity of our membership whose contributions make *Perspectives* what it is.

The theory section remains an uncommonly vibrant and intellectually heterogeneous section, an intellectual crossroads where ideas from other subfields can intersect fruitfully and critically. We think that is a tradition worth nurturing and safeguarding, and that the section newsletter plays an important role in sustaining that dialogue.

We recognize that the academic world has become increasingly crowded with venues for publication, including new journals and online opportunities like blogging. All of these compete for the short-form contributions that newsletters like this one have traditionally carried.

The vibrancy and relevancy of the theory newsletter only persist insofar as section members are willing to share their time to contribute their ideas. We know how easy it

can be to fall prey to the bystander effect and wait for someone else to contribute. But whether you are an established senior scholar or a new up-and-coming theorist, *Perspectives* needs you to keep our great tradition of theoretical dialogue going.

This final issue of our editorship features a number of essays that showcase the vitality and diversity of perspectives in contemporary sociological theory. Reflecting on the canonical theory of Emile Durkheim a century after his death, Seth Abrutyn (p. 9) argues for the importance of revisiting sociological classics rather than letting them “crystallize.” In this

year’s Award-Winner Dialogue, Hannah Wohl and Jennifer C. Lena (p. 14) reflect on the relationships between aesthetics, experience, and community in the arts, showcasing the rich vein of theoretical insights that continue to be mined from theory’s ongoing engagement with the cultural turn. A pair of essays further considers the increasing interest in post-colonial theory. Timothy Gill’s (p. 19) review of Julian Go’s

landmark *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory* identifies new opportunities and challenges for empirical applications of this important theoretical turn, while Ricarda Hammer and Alexandre White’s (p. 24) review of a recent conference on postcolonial theory reveals that Go’s call for engagement with the legacy of empire and colonialism in sociology is already being taken in interesting directions by a new generation of scholars.



Indeed, the future appears bright for our section, as a new generation of sociological theorists refines and extends theory from all corners of the theoretical spectrum. We draw your attention to the Dissertation Spotlight section (p. 27), which features sixteen exciting new works of theory by up-and-coming graduate students sure to draw the attention of theorists, and the broader discipline, in the years to come. Still other work by young theorists will be presented again at this year's Junior Theorist Symposium, whose program can also be found below (p. 35). As it is our hope that these and other new insights can find their way into the pages of the discipline's flagship journals, this issue also includes reflections by *American Sociological Review* editor Omar Lizardo (p. 5) on how theory submissions are judged at *ASR*, offering a unique peek into the backstage of the editorial process.

We close by thanking all of you who have participated in *Perspectives* under our editorship. Starting in the fall, *Perspectives* will be edited by Luis Flores, Dylan Nelson, and Pinar Ustel, a terrific team of graduate students from the University of Michigan with some exciting ideas for the newsletter. It has been enormously gratifying that so many of you have responded to our calls for content over the past three years, and we hope and trust that your generosity will continue as we pass the torch to this new editorial team.

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## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

**Theory Section Awards Season***Neil Gross, Colby College*

One of the best things about being chair of an ASA section (besides the incredible swag, like the super cool “Critical Realism Is Awesome” t-shirt I got in the mail—thanks Phil!) is that you get to hand out awards without actually having to do the hard work of serving on award committees. Don’t get me wrong: being on an award committee can be fun, especially in a dynamic section like ours, where deciding on prizes means you get to read all sorts of innovative and interesting papers and books you might not otherwise come across. It can be a little time-consuming, though, which is why section chairs who give prizes feel like they’re getting away with something.

In any event, I’m thrilled to be able to share with you news about this year’s award winners. The 2017 Theory Prize—which goes to an outstanding article published in the last four years—is awarded to Robert Jansen of the University of Michigan for his 2016 *Theory & Society* piece, “Situated Political Innovation: Explaining the Historical Emergence of New Modes of Political Practice.” It’s a terrific article that uses ideas from classical American pragmatism to help account for the unexpected rise of populism in Peru in the 1930s. Rob’s book on Peruvian populism will be coming out later this summer. If the reception of his *Theory & Society* article is any indication, the book should appeal to theorists as much as to political and comparative-historical sociologists. I say this confidently, though without exercising any of my causal powers.

The Theory Prize committee also awards an honorable mention to Omar Lizardo of the

University of Notre Dame and Michael Strand of Brandeis University for their 2015 paper in *Sociological Theory*, “Beyond World Images: Belief as Embodied Action in the World.”

Thanks very much to the chair of the committee, Kwai Ng of UC San Diego; and to committee members Hillary Angelo (UC Santa Cruz), Jeannette Colyvas (Northwestern University), Francesco Duina (Bates College), and Karen Hegtvedt (Emory University).

The Junior Theorist Award goes to Larissa Buchholz of Northwestern University for her piece, “What Is a Global Field? Theorizing Fields Beyond the Nation State.” The important question Larissa takes up in her article is how to rework Bourdieu’s concept of “field” to enable it to be applied transnationally. The Junior Theorist Award committee, chaired by Julian Go (Boston University), and also including Ben Carrington (University of Texas), Caroline Lee (Lafayette College), and Anna Sun (Kenyon College), also awarded an honorable mention to Victor Ray (University of Kentucky) for “A Theory of Racialized Organizations.” Warm congratulations to Larissa and Victor, and thank you to the committee members. I know these were hard decisions to make, as there are a lot of talented junior theorists out there.

Paige Sweet (University of Illinois-Chicago) is the winner of the 2017 Edward Shils-James Coleman Memorial Award for Best Student Paper. Her winning entry is “Ideology, Bodies, and Trespass between Feminist Theory and Critical Realism.” There is an honorable

mention in this category as well: Christopher Rea (UCLA) for "Theorizing Command-and-Commodify Regulation: The Case of Species Conservation Banking in the United States." Thanks are due once again to the committee members who volunteered their time: committee chair Ruthie Braunstein (University of Connecticut), Matt Desan (University of Colorado), Dan Hirschman (Brown University), and Ellis Monk (Princeton University).

Last but not least: the Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda Setting. The members of this prize committee are stipulated by the terms of the award: the chair of the Theory Section (so I did have to do some work), the previous year's award winner (Isaac Reed, University of Virginia), the President of the ASA (Michèle Lamont, Harvard University), the ASA's Vice-President Elect (Chris Uggen, University of Minnesota), and a sociologist designated by the president of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (Dave Lane, University of South Dakota).

We did a lot of reading, fortified by the I Know No Boundaries™-brand chocolate bars Michèle has been developing to provide ASA with a new revenue stream. And we're very pleased to announce that this year's winner is Gabriel Abend of New York University, one of the leading sociological theorists of morality. Most *Perspectives* readers will know his wonderful book, *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*, which has already won numerous awards. But he's written perceptively about a slew of topics, from causality to the theory enterprise itself. Gabi will give a talk in the Coser Salon at the ASA meeting in Philadelphia in 2018. I understand

he's hard at work on a book about contemporary politics to be titled *The Immoral Foreground*.

Before closing, I want to take the opportunity to extend a special thanks to three sociologists who have done an extraordinary amount of labor for the section over the past few years. Rob Jansen will soon end his term as Secretary-Treasurer. He's been indefatigable, helping us keep our budget balanced, our plates and cups (more or less) full during Theory receptions, and the institutional memory of the section's rules and procedures alive.

The outgoing editors of *Perspectives*, Erin McDonnell (University of Notre Dame) and Damon Mayrl (who will be joining me at Colby College), also deserve our gratitude. They've done a phenomenal job with the newsletter, publishing an assortment of pieces that together showcase theory's vitality and range, and working with authors to make contributions as strong as possible. My son's (admittedly unreliable) Magic 8 Ball predicts a successful journal editorship in their future. In the meantime, however, Erin and Damon have agreed to help the incoming *Perspectives* editors—Luis Flores, Dylan Nelson, and Pinar Ustel, all graduate students at the University of Michigan—set up shop.

See you all in Montreal!

## Publishing Theory at *ASR*

*Omar Lizardo, University of Notre Dame*

Excluding the annual ASA Presidential addresses, it is no secret that traditionally peer-reviewed theory papers are kind of a rare sight at *American Sociological Review*. “Theory” papers are kept track of as a category just like any other “method” (e.g. ethnography, historical, experimental, and so on) and usually show up in the annual mea culpa (a.k.a. report) written by the editors at the end of the year as one of the perennially “under-represented” categories. In the past, editors have engaged in strategies to boost the number of theory papers in the journal, such as sending special reminders to the theory section listserv that theory submissions are welcome and considered. In their initial proposal, the current editorship noted that even when theory authors are brave enough to actually send them on, theory pieces may have a tougher time than traditional empirical work making it through the review process. This is mainly because they pose unique evaluative challenges for reviewers. To try to address this issue, they developed a set of specialized reviewers guidelines to help readers deal with theory papers on their own merits.<sup>1</sup>

The relative dearth of theory paper publications at *ASR* presents an interesting puzzle because one does not need a formal citation analysis to observe that *conditional on publication*, *ASR* theory pieces tend to have a pretty big impact, sometimes re-orienting entire fields and becoming perennial citation classics (Jacobs, 2005). For instance, by all accounts *ASR*’s most cited paper is DiMaggio and Powell’s 1983 “Iron Cage Revisited,” a

theory piece that is one of the founding documents of institutional analysis and organizational studies in sociology. The most widely cited cultural sociology piece published in the journal (Swidler, 1986) is a theory piece that continues to set the intellectual agenda for debate in that field—and increasingly across a wide number of other fields—thirty years after its publication date. Most recently, Neil Gross’s (2009) theory piece on pragmatism and social mechanisms is one of the most highly-cited papers published in the journal in the last few years. Given this striking record of extreme success, you would think that it would be in the interest of editors to seek out and nurture these types of submissions, yet their appearance remains both rare and sporadic.

Obviously, there are a number of factors that can account for this phenomenon. Theory pieces do seem harder to get evaluative consensus on. In addition, reviewers may feel more freedom, with respect to these pieces, to be more “hands on” and ask for complete re-writes or re-orientations of the argument. After all, while reviewers will seldom ask authors of empirical pieces to go out and collect new data, insofar as theory pieces are just words, readers may feel like words can be easily deleted and replaced by others (such as their own preferred set of words). This may lead theory papers to get stuck in endless rounds of somewhat radical R&R requests with frustrated authors, reviewers, and editors on all sides.

From the point of view of prospective theory authors, fixing the relevant time-scale to the span of one research career, reviewers and their demands (whether reasonable or not) are

<sup>1</sup>[https://docs.google.com/document/d/17N6x\\_HRBWUv2DGKIoY4-wIFY\\_ma-Nsf9e8i23EzOn8E/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17N6x_HRBWUv2DGKIoY4-wIFY_ma-Nsf9e8i23EzOn8E/pub) 1



essentially exogenous. As such, I would like to focus these brief remarks on what authors can do to make a potential theory piece one that could have a decent shot to be published in *ASR*. My remarks are mostly based on my years of experience as a consumer of theory pieces all kinds (*ASR*-style or not), as an occasional producer of theory pieces (mostly of the standard kind but more recently of one that crossed over the *ASR* threshold), and from the more privileged viewpoint of my last two years as co-editor of the journal seeing theory pieces come and go (mostly go).

The first issue to resolve is whether the object to which we are referring—"the *ASR* theory piece"—is a real thing or just a spurious post hoc construction. This question is tricky, and the best way to cut through it is to use a simple field theory principle: *When stuck between realism and constructionism, just go with a tautology*. So, *ASR* theory pieces are a real object, and they just happen to be whatever theory pieces have been published in *ASR* in recent memory. Insofar as these theory pieces have qualities that make them different from high-quality theory pieces that don't get published in *ASR*—but do appear in specialized top theory outlets such as *Sociological Theory*—then authors can strive to calibrate their production strategies around the existing models.

I do believe that there are a number of things that make *ASR* theory pieces different from their brethren in other journals. (My sense is that some of what I have to say applies, with exceptions, to the "*AJS* theory piece," although I would qualify this one as yet another animal). First, and most obvious, is that the *ASR* theory piece is accessible and, for the most part, jargon-free. When such pieces do introduce jargon, or even a term that would be "embarrassing" for a theorist not to be familiar

with, you will observe the author go into a pedagogical mode and carefully and gently introduce the lingo to the reader (see for instance, Gross's [2009:360-364] canonical discussion of the various meanings of the term "social mechanism"). The skilled *ASR* theory piece author does not presume common knowledge of the great world of theory shared by self-identified theorists. Instead, s/he takes the point of view of the most generalized of generalized others.

The issue of accessibility might seem like something that doesn't deserve to be mentioned, yet it is something that I have observed many theory authors struggle mightily with in their submissions. Part of the problem here is that the production of contemporary theory is its own specialized thing. This means that authors of theory pieces tend to acquire field-specific skills in writing papers that can easily be deciphered by their self-identified theory peers, but that are essentially undecipherable to a modal sociologist. So one piece of advice for prospective theory authors is to get feedback on their pieces from a number of sociologists who do not identify as "theorists" before sending the paper out. Think of this as the "normal sociologist" version of the "grandmother" test. For instance, you can ask that person whether they belong to the theory section. If they say "no," then you may want them to read your paper and give you comments as to what parts are obscure.

Second, authors of *ASR* theory pieces identify a "big" problem of discipline-wide interest at the outset and sell you a solution. It is common to see theory authors delve immediately into abstruse argumentation and exegesis without clearly outlining what's in it for the reader. Dense argumentation or deep exegesis can be part of an *ASR* theory piece, but they must be

justified at every step. It's like going to the doctor: before you get poked and prodded, the doctor usually tells you what sort of benefit you are going to get from the pain that you are about to experience. *ASR* theory authors have to understand that general readers feel the same way about most of the standard apparatus of theory argumentation. They'll be willing to follow, but only with a strong assurance that they'll come up with something valuable from the journey.

Note also the reference to a "big" problem. This is an intentionally ambiguous phrase that does refer to something important, which is that right now there are two different conceptions of theoretical problems. On the one hand, we have the regular theoretical problems faced by regular theories within specific fields. These could be things like resource mobilization theory in social movement studies, or identity theory in social psychology. Then, there are the "general" analytic problems usually dealt with by people who self-identify as theorists; these are the problems of "action," "structure," "culture," or even "social explanation." It is clear that the typical *ASR* theory piece (with exceptions) leverages deep familiarity with an argumentative arsenal honed by dealing with the latter set of "general" problems to sell solutions to a general readership that primarily lives in the world of more specific theories such as those of race, unemployment, or class mobilization. The trick is to bridge the gap and convince people that your general solutions matter regardless of the specific problems that they are dealing with in their particular fields.

Finally, there is the issue of styles of theory work. There are many modes of theoretical production among theorists, and my sense is that not all of them are equally positioned to make the sort of contribution that can hit the *ASR* theory piece sweet spot—being accessible

and making a strong argument for general relevance. However, some theorists are more deeply invested in some modes of producing theory (because they are really good at them) than others, and may struggle when faced with the fact that their preferred mode of producing theory simply does not fit the requirements of a plausible theory piece in the *ASR* mold.

Take, for instance, deep exegesis of "classical" authors. This is in many ways the "canonical" mode of theory production, having been first perfected by Parsons himself. Yet, with few exceptions, you will note that the classic *ASR* theory pieces almost never engage in this. It is also likely that any current submission to *ASR* whose main warrant or contribution is deep classical exegesis will also struggle from the gate. Another mode of theory production that would probably not be useful in an *ASR* theory piece is the "worldview" development mode, in which entire schemes applicable to all of social life are developed.

My own sense is that most successful *ASR* theory pieces tend to engage in what Gabi Abend (2008) once referred to as "*theory*7." This type of theory "does not refer to an overarching...way of looking at or representing the social world." It is, instead, "the study of certain special problems that sociology has encountered...They may be described as 'philosophical' problems, insofar as they call for reflection...and some sort of conceptual analysis" (Abend, 2008:181). I bet that if you look back at the classic, influential, *ASR*-style theory pieces, you will find this sort of theory work, not worldviews and exegeses of the classics, at center stage. Curiously, this may be a muscle that is relatively underdeveloped among contemporary theory producers, but one that they could benefit greatly from honing further.



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# Resurrecting Durkheim

*Seth Abrutyn, University of British Columbia*

With the centennial anniversary of Durkheim's death upon us, it is perhaps as good a time as any to reflect on his significance in sociology. On the one hand, the conventional use of Durkheim illustrates widespread weaknesses in the use of theory in sociological research. On the other hand, Durkheim's ideas are so deeply infused throughout contemporary sociology that his work continues to demonstrate impressive staying-power and offers promise for future generations of sociologists.

## *What's Wrong with Theory?*

It is perhaps clichéd to begin an essay on one of sociology's great theorists by pointing to the problems in contemporary sociological theory. However, I find it intriguing to contemplate what Durkheim would think about theory today. The answer—and I am obviously taking liberties with the assumed thoughts of a dead Frenchman—is mixed. He would definitely find things he would love. For instance, the intensive experimental social-psychological programs like Affect Theory of Social Exchange (Lawler 2001; Lawler, Thye and Yoon 2009), which are committed to the production of cumulative knowledge through the scientific method. Or, the revival of emotions as both a subfield and a key sociocultural phenomenon cross-cutting research in many areas.

However, he would likely also have plenty of concerns. For one, he would likely worry that “theory” had little to no meaning—that is, like lay people who think the theory of evolution is *just* a theory, or a guess, sociologists use the term “theory” in contradictory ways (Turner 1985; Abend 2008). Second, he would be confused as to why theory textbooks and syllabi focus on individuals. This is especially

true of classical theory courses, which frequently take the form of a history of social thought course. Biologists do not spend much time on Darwin's life, or make concerted efforts to reduce his theory to the time and place that he wrote about it, so why do we? Third, he would likely be disappointed that social theory is frequently taught as if it were the same as sociological theory. The latter is scientific, the former philosophy. And, while Durkheim, like his contemporaries, was indeed indebted to German and French philosophers, he was also committed to building a sociology that transcended philosophy: one that didn't describe, in the abstract, “the good society,” but rather sought to find empirical regularities that shaped positive or negative social outcomes. Finally, he would be confused by incessant questions about whether sociology is or should be a science. It is. As proof, I offer two of Durkheim's insights that demonstrate their scientific power and, more importantly, their relevance to a powerful public sociology.

## *Liquefying Durkheim: From Settled Theory to Analytic Principles*

Durkheim's (1897 [1951]) classic *Suicide*—which, according to the Open Syllabus Project,<sup>1</sup> is the fourth-most assigned text in sociology—presents a perfect prototype of both the problems with sociological theory and its power. The problem lies in the fact that the vast majority of sociologists are taught Durkheim's four-fold typology of suicide as if it were (to paraphrase Randall Collins [1988]) a “dead” text. That is, the four types of suicide are treated as enduring social facts, essentially “truths” about how society works. Durkheim's

<sup>1</sup> <http://explorer.opensyllabusproject.org/>

typology has crystallized, despite the fact that, of the four “types” of suicide, only egoistic suicide receives consistent empirical verification, or the fact that one of the four “types” (fatalism) was added by Durkheim at the last minute in a single footnote, in a single paragraph likely for the sake of symmetry (Durkheim 1897 [1951]: 276). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that a recent review of the literature took sociology to task for its continued testing and re-testing of Durkheim’s nineteenth century hypotheses (Wray, Colen and Pescosolido 2011).

The crystallization of *Suicide* is something Durkheim, as someone devoted to the scientific method, would likely not appreciate. And indeed, the negative effects of the presumed “settled” status of *Suicide* in sociology are perhaps best illustrated by that fact that sociology currently produces the second fewest publications on suicide by a wide margin (Stack and Bowman 2012). The creative use of the sociological imagination that Durkheim depicted in his seminal text is undermined by our devotion to his ideas, without refinement, without extension, and without applying the benefit of 150 years of additional sociological inquiry into society’s effects on individuals and on mental health. Whether we are teaching the central tenets of Durkheim’s principles or motivating our own research, a more robust sociology might note that the typology has little empirical validity, and, instead of freezing Durkheim’s theoretical framework as an immutable “classic” alongside *The Protestant Ethic* or *Mind, Self, Society*, we might extend it with more modern empirical and theoretical work (Pescosolido 1990; Abrutyn and Mueller 2014b).

Despite my pessimism about the state of the sociology of suicide, Durkheim’s *Suicide* indeed endures, and for good reason. If we step back from the four-fold typology of suicide,

Durkheim’s entire argument essentially boils down to two principles that ultimately provide sociologists with a powerful array of pedagogical and theoretical tools. First, the structure of suicide rates is a function of the structure of social relationships in society; and second, the structure of social relationships varies in terms of how much integration or how much regulation characterizes social bonds. The elegance of this argument is truly inspiring, especially when we consider that Durkheim meant for this model to apply *across* phenomena, and not be limited to suicide only. This suggests that we should abandon our emphasis on the specifics of the typology, and shift our focus instead to *the principles* that underlie it.

Consider, for instance, the teaching moment the two dimensions underlying variation across social relationships (i.e., integration and regulation) provide us. Durkheim’s conceptualization of both shifted throughout *Suicide*—as they did, in fact, across his whole career. Because of this, these concepts rest at the epicenter of the massive acknowledged weaknesses in his theory (Johnson 1965; Pescosolido 1994; Abrutyn and Mueller 2016; Mueller and Abrutyn 2016). But these purported weaknesses actually hide an important opportunity to teach our students important lessons about the relationship between theory and research.

First, rather than treat Durkheim’s *Suicide* as a finished product, sociologists are in an excellent position to do what Durkheim did: synthesize his insights with more recent work from various sociological subfields to construct a clearer, stronger, and more consistent theory. For instance, how can social-psychological insights improve our thinking about integration (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014b)? How can network principles re-cast Durkheim’s theory as less about macro- and more about

meso-level processes (Pescosolido 1994)? Second, these questions naturally lead us to rethink the implicit Durkheimian paradox: if integration and regulation are supposed to be *protective*, then how do we explain the suggestion that too much of either makes us vulnerable to self-destructive behaviors? While Durkheim's discussion of altruism and fatalism are problematic on many grounds (Abrutyn and Mueller 2016; Davies and Neal 2000; Leenaars 2004), they nevertheless hold an enormous amount of teaching power and theory-building potential: if Durkheim meant his theory to be a *general* theory of suicide (or, more accurately, of social behavior), then the more useful questions to ask are (1) why, how, and when does too much of either force make us vulnerable, and (2) what types of social milieus exhibit these characteristics?

Once we begin to reconceptualize integration and regulation, we can rethink, theoretically and methodologically, how we deal with the first great principle of suicide—i.e., that the structure of suicide rates is shaped by the structure of social relationships. Durkheim's model—the conventional, orthodox version—has a serious limitation: macro-level data and processes do not explain individual-level behavior. Thus, although we can know that Protestants tend towards suicide more so than Catholics and Jews, we cannot know (a) why this or that Protestant is more vulnerable to suicide than her fellow congregants, or (b) why some Protestant congregations may exhibit higher rates of suicide than others. Thus, on the one hand, while structural conditions seem to shape suicide rates, on the other hand, the other great principle in *Suicide*—that social relationships vary in terms of integration and regulation—begs to be unpacked in creative ways. For instance, we could investigate why a specific Protestant congregation was at greater risk of suicidality by rethinking the level of

analysis. This congregation is embedded within a community that has specific historical, political, cultural, and economic conditions that operate to integrate and regulate members. What is it about these conditions that may weaken the protective bonds we would expect from religious affiliation? By asking these questions, we may shed new light on integration and regulation that leads to comparative research and more generalizable theory. Moreover, by eschewing macro-level logic, sociology is on firmer ground in understanding why a congregation or a family is at risk of suicidality and, therefore, how sociological tools can be brought to bear on the practical problem of prevention. If we are unable to bring our tools to bear on understanding and explaining suicidality without resorting to reductionism, then what good is a sociology of suicide, or even a sociology of mental health?

Thus, while there remains a need for aggregate-level research, a far more pressing need is for sociology to use new tools to analyze suicide. Durkheim himself used historical and ethnographic methods alongside quantitative methods, and opportunities abound for qualitative research into the meanings individuals apply to suicide (Kitanaka 2012), how place affects suicidality and the prevalence of suicide (Mueller and Abrutyn 2016), and how survivors (those affected by the death of a significant other) cope with the loss. Exploring these questions may allow us to consider questions Durkheim rejected, such as why suicides spread dyadically (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014a; Mueller and Abrutyn 2015) and in bounded social spaces (Haw et al. 2012). Indeed, retheorizing integration and regulation can open a whole set of new avenues for working on these puzzles—puzzles that, incidentally,

apply to other behaviors like smoking, drinking, and so forth.

*Durkheim, Theory, and the Good Society*

In short, there remains a need to assign Durkheim's *Suicide*, but there is an equal need for serious pedagogical and theoretical engagement with the *concepts* and *principles* that lie at its core rather than its more often-discussed typology. Once we engage these things, we are forced to abandon the notion that Durkheim's theory is dead or frozen, that the issue of suicide is empirically settled, or that somehow extending, modifying, or recasting Durkheim's principles violates his own intentions. There is no need for exegesis; nor is there a pressing need to interpret the book in light of the theorists or moral philosophers Durkheim himself drew from. The principles are timeless, and exist apart from their writer. Durkheim would likely be shocked that his work is treated as immutable, frozen, and crystallized. We should learn from him: sociology is about theoretical and methodological creativity. The two are equally important, and cannot be divorced from each other.

Crystallization also risks ceding sociology's rightful place in studying suicide and trying to make real-world differences in prevention and postvention. Indeed, studies of the recent American presidential election—which reveal a correlation between deaths of despair (e.g., opioid overdose, suicide) and voting patterns—drives home just how relevant Durkheimian sociology remains to understanding and pursuing the “good society.” While Durkheim and his philosophical predecessor, Comte, are sometimes unfairly maligned as too conservative or reformist compared to Marx, they too were committed to social justice. Durkheim, however, provides important tools we can use to generate a public sociology committed to helping combat poor

physical, emotional, and psychological health; and to improve our understanding of the social forces that help build positive local social organization, especially in the face of injustice, inequity, and oppression.

Durkheim's *Suicide*, and indeed his life's work, was devoted to understanding and explaining how to spot societal-level ailments so that we can improve life. Yes, he was reformist (though, he did write an interesting book on socialism), and he was not interested in power or inequality (to his detriment), but that should not take away from his concern with real, practical problems and sociology's potential to alleviate them. For some, suicide may not be as grave a concern as social justice *tout court*, but for those survivors I have interviewed, and for those communities hit by clusters of adolescent suicides, it is an existential crisis. It saturates the cultural style of the people, and it leaves a devastating social and psychological trauma.

Unlike Marx, Durkheim was not so naïve as to think homicide, alcoholism, or suicide could simply be eradicated. He reckoned that the creation of the good society was a process. And, this is perhaps his greatest lesson: social problems are a constant feature of human societies. Rather than believe, as Comte or Marx or Plato did, that a perfect society could be built, we should work to understand, explain, and try to alleviate the reality of social problems. That is, society is inherently good, but flawed. Thus, if we believe that sociology has a responsibility to work to make it better, like Durkheim, we must commit to sociology as a science aimed at developing cumulative knowledge through whatever methods and theoretical tools it takes. Rather than revere the “masters,” we should mobilize their principles so that we can clearly understand the social processes, like integration, most relevant to social life; elucidate how these

processes facilitate and constrain positive and negative social outcomes; and thus make a real difference in making society a better place. By resisting the crystallization of Durkheim's work into settled theory, we can offer our students important "weapons" they can deploy in the pursuit of a better society.

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2016 ASA AWARD-WINNER CONVERSATION

## Aesthetics, Experience, and Community in the Creative Arts

*Jennifer C. Lena, Columbia University*

*Hannah Wohl, Northwestern University*

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*Hannah Wohl is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Northwestern University, who will start a postdoctoral position at Columbia University in the fall. Her paper "Community Sense" was the winner of the 2016 Shils-Coleman award for the best student paper in the Theory Section, as well as the Petersen Award from the Culture Section.*

**Editors' Note:** The dialogue series puts promising graduate student theorists into dialogue with established members in the discipline. Here Hannah Wohl has a conversation with Jenn Lena about their shared interest in theorizing culture, including the questions that drive them, mutual interests in the theoretical role "community" can play, and challenges of capturing culture to make it theoretically tractable.

**Jennifer Lena:** Sometimes I joke that the research question for my dissertation was, "What makes a hit song?" (Lena 2003). When I started the dissertation project, in 1998 or so, we didn't have the data corpus or the computing power to analyze song metadata and musicological components like we do now. So it was truly a question: what is the relationship between the aesthetic elements of a successful song and our perceptions of one? Was your interest in "community sense" motivated by a similar kind of question about what makes "good" or "bad" taste?

**Hannah Wohl:** Actually, quite the opposite! My approach was pretty inductive. I took the Howard Becker approach of picking a site—a "sensual" figure drawing class in an erotic arts club—and then figuring out what questions that site could best answer. Of course, I had a hunch that the site would lend itself to the topics in which I was interested, including

taste, but I was surprised by how forcefully members of the group asserted the boundary between "us" and "them" based on perceptions of their own and others' aesthetic tastes. This led me to the theory that people in diverse social contexts strengthen and weaken group bonds by communicating shared or unshared aesthetic tastes. Drawing from Hannah Arendt, I call "community sense" the public face of this shared taste (Wohl 2015). Moving beyond small groups, why do you think certain musical genres elicit stronger or weaker perceptions of community among musicians and fans? Is it something about the music itself, and if so, would there be a way for sociologists to identify this?

**JL:** I would actually transform your premise into a question and ask, do any musical styles elicit stronger or weaker experiences of community than others? What are the

measures you use to indicate “strength of perceptions of community?”

**HW:** I argue that aesthetic judgments can provide powerful feelings of belonging to and distinction from and within groups because they are derived from forms, generate visceral responses, and are intersubjectively validated in interaction. However, I don't fully explore why some aesthetic forms may be more powerful than others. Do you find that some musical styles provide stronger or weaker experiences of community, and how do you measure these perceptions?

**JL:** You're generous in the framing of your question to have assumed I have ever considered this question (or measured it). I haven't, although all of the data I employed in *Banding Together* (2012) was “perceptual data,” broadly speaking. Some of the dimensions of analysis are arguably proxies for not just the organizational form of the community, but the felt experience of being in it. These include the degree to which there is consensus around member goals—as I put it, the “genre ideal” of the community; the degree to which those goals focus on the group or outsiders; the degree to which there is consensus around the performance conventions; and the degree to which there is consensus around styles of dress, adornment, drugs, and argot. Thus, consensus is the consistent measure of strength, while the variables focus on shared activity (behavioral or linguistic).

You can see some of the Simmelian roots of my sociological worldview here, although he was far more interested than I in the psychological experience of social life. I am almost never interested in emotional experience in my work and have consistently expressed a real concern about how we purport to study “meaning” as a

discipline. Briefly, my concern is that we have a very low evidentiary threshold for converting “things people say” into positive evidence of the kinds of durable, generative structures suggested by the word “meaning.”

I think you are also careful in your work around this issue—observing visceral responses provides confirmatory evidence that what is being thought and experienced is significant in its impact. But to get to your question of musical style, I think the normative expectations of emotional display vary so greatly—from, say, chamber music to heavy metal—that measuring this aspect of “community sense” would be very difficult in some cases. What might it be like to replicate your study on a group of quite staid chamber music fans or some other group in which norms of engagement dictate very minute expressions of emotion? Or on those for whom emotional display is less regulated—e.g. in children, or among those with certain neurological conditions?

**HW:** I think you are right to expect visceral responses to vary greatly from style to style. Claudio Benzecry finds the community of opera fans expresses emotional engagement by silently kneeling on the floor with closed eyes, while heavy metal fans often jump around in mosh pits. One interesting element is how these visceral responses, expressed in different ways, interact with symbolic boundaries that inscribe the community. I imagine this would be difficult to measure, but perhaps some forms of visceral responses, such as those that are more interactive or visible, permit more communication of feelings of belongingness, and therefore encourage more intensely felt communities. Another possibility is that when the visceral response itself is a subversive within the mainstream or within practices of listening to other kinds of music (i.e. moshing),

then this expresses a more tightly inscribed community to others that also see themselves as part of the community.

I find your idea of consensus as a measure of community strength to be extremely helpful. One thing I like about the idea of consensus is that it works at both the micro-level and macro-level. At the micro-level, we can observe consensus through face-to-face interaction, and at the macro-level we can observe consensus through similar practices. I would also think that these levels reinforce each other (shared practices leading to communicated agreement in interaction and vice versa). To tie this back to visceral responses, this makes me also think that very micro-level practices of visceral response can reverberate at the macro-level of community organization.

Shifting gears a bit, my newer work on the contemporary visual art world looks at how artists create and maintain distinctive signature styles (bundles of recognizable formal and conceptual elements in their work). Given your work on musical genres, do you have any thoughts about the relationship between individual signature styles and collective styles of genres?

**JL:** I have thought a lot about the relationship between aesthetic reputational work at the individual level and the group level. This is a major theme in my article with Mark Pachucki (Lena and Pachucki 2013). We analyze sampling patterns to examine the “position-taking” of rap artists. (Samples, pre-recorded pieces of music incorporated into new songs, are one important aesthetic element in the making of rap.) We treat the use of some new samples as innovations, operating within the *ars obligatoria* that regulates the space of possible choices that will be seen as legitimate among members of the field. The fact that not all

samples are imitated by peers suggests that not all aesthetically novel items are viewed as innovations (some are ignored or rejected), so we can use the repetition of samples as one indication of the source’s status position. This may make it sound like rappers are rational and strategic actors with access to total information about the field—this is of course not the case...neither objectively true nor is it consistent with how artists describe their experience at work. But like Bourdieu, we argue that an artist’s inability to state the rules of the game doesn’t necessarily mean that there are no such rules.

One of our discoveries is that advances in peer esteem (indicated by higher levels of imitation of samples by peers) often preceded increases in status based on sales. We hypothesized this was an indication of audience tastes “catching up” with those of artists. Those moments are followed by periods of greater consensus over which works are successful, which propels the next generation of innovators to emerge, then forcing the two status measures out of alignment again.

There is a potential application of this approach to the visual art fields that interest you, if you can identify aesthetic elements that were subject to innovative work or experimentation, and then find a way to measure them in works, over time. I will say that I think it is extremely important to have direct evidence of these elements and measure that, rather than relying on critical evaluation, because peer evaluation in the form of imitation is empirically distinct (and sometimes almost orthogonal) to critical evaluation (Lena and Pachucki 2013). Brushstrokes? Use of specific color? Thematic material?

**HW:** I fully share your interest in the relationship between artistic content and

status. It is exciting to engage with someone studying this intersection in another creative industry! In my book project, *Creative Visions*, I explore how contemporary visual artists differentiate their work from others by producing signature styles, and how varying degrees of formal breadth within signature styles shapes artists' critical and commercial success. I find that when dealers and collectors perceive artists to have formally narrow signature styles, this helps artists be recognized, but can prevent them from experimenting more broadly later in their careers, as demand for artists' iconic work persists. When artists stop producing work that conforms to collective perceptions of their signature styles, they often lose exhibition opportunities, sales, and face a drop in the price of their work. On the other hand, I find that when dealers and collectors perceive artists to have stagnant signature styles, they view artists as sell-outs, damaging their reputations and sometimes hurting sales as well. To remain active in the contemporary art market, artists must contend with how others perceive their signature styles and continuously navigate between consistency and variation within their bodies of work each time they present new works.

Signature styles focus on artistic content, or the qualities of creative products. I define signature styles as bundles of recognizable and enduring elements within producers' bodies of work. In the case of contemporary visual art, I examine both formal elements, such as media and techniques, as well as conceptual elements, such as topics and themes. This seems similar to your work on rap, where you look at musical content as including lyrics, notes, and themes. I wonder if this is something that is generalizable to all creative industries. In other words, do you think that we can examine artistic content across industries as composed of

formal and conceptual elements? What might this look like in different creative industries?

I see your research as measuring artistic content as an objective feature of the product. I think this can work for music (especially with lyrics), because you can detect combinations of notes and strings of words. This seems harder with other industries, such as contemporary art. Certain formal elements, such as media, can be charted, but it is hard to say that other elements, especially conceptual elements like "memory," are objectively "there" in the product. Do you think there is a way to measure artistic content directly across creative industries, or do you think we must rely on perceptions of artistic content in certain industries? Why is the artistic content of certain kinds of creative products more "objectively" quantifiable?

**JL:** In comparing my work on artistic content and status to your own, I see we may disagree about whether artistic content is ever an "objective feature of the product." In identifying patterns in the use of lyrics and other aspects of song structure, I don't mean to argue that these are "there" in the object. This work, like my work on genres (Lena 2015) and my forthcoming work on artistic legitimation, relies upon the secondary analysis of perceptions of patterns from the field participants. I very consciously employ an emic approach in my work. So some of my early manuscripts on rap music employed categorizations of the works by musicologists, who had based theirs off of participant observation and interviews with producers. In *Banding Together*, I analyzed several hundred primary and secondary documents describing the experiences of fans, artists, and others who participated in musical communities. One of the chapters in my next book is essentially a meta-analysis of studies of

fields undergoing artistic legitimation, many of them written by sociologists reading this.

My approach is driven by an understanding that even some of the most “objective” qualities of things—color, for example—are not tractable in my analysis until they are “used” by someone. So I think your question, “why is the artistic content of certain kinds of creative products more “objectively” quantifiable?”, has a premise I can’t adopt. It seems instead that we are both drawn toward understanding distinctions made within fields as people pursue careers and passions.

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## BOOK REVIEW

## Sociology and Postcolonialism: Where Are We Now?

### Review of *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, by Julian Go

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In his excellent new treatise, *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, Julian Go places sociology in dialogue with postcolonial theory and pursues an explicit aim of reconciling the two. This no easy feat; as Go points out, “social theory was born from and for empire, postcolonial thought was born *against* it” (p. 1). Yet, despite sociology’s imperial origins, Go argues that the solution is not to sideline the discipline—or social science more broadly, as some postcolonial scholars have suggested. Instead, he believes individuals can repurpose the sociological enterprise by taking inspiration from postcolonial thinkers and overcoming the epistemological, methodological, and ontological deficits that continue to distort the field. What is more, he argues that postcolonial thought remains premised upon a sociological minimalism and can, likewise, renew itself by more directly engaging with social theory.

Although sociology has largely become the progressive poster-child of academia, the discipline indeed possesses imperial origins. Not only was sociology birthed during an aggressively imperial moment within Europe and the United States (the mid-to-late 1800s), but many of the discipline’s progenitors championed imperial endeavors. Franklin Giddings, for instance, received the first full sociology professorship in the United States and served as president of the American Sociological Society. Giddings believed that sociology should, in part, concern itself with “rule over alien peoples.” Other prominent

sociologists of the day maintained similarly imperial visions, including Charles Horton Cooley and Lester Ward.

Against a backdrop of anti-colonial and anti-imperial resistance, postcolonial thought developed in direct response to the colonial and imperial gaze that had characterized social scientific writings. As such, Go points out that postcolonial thought “seeks to transcend the legacies of modern colonialism and overcome its epistemic confines” (p. 9). In doing so, he argues that postcolonial thought “critiques the culture of empire in order to cultivate new knowledges, ways of representing the world, and histories that circumvent or transcend rather than authorize or sustain imperialistic ways of knowing” (p. 9).

Go first traces the lineage of postcolonial thought through two waves. Within the first wave, he discusses the work of individuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Aimé Césaire, who centralized the experience of empire and colonialism. These writers brought attention to the social psychology of colonialism and illustrated how the personal experience of colonialism impacted how colonial subjects understood themselves and their locations within colonial hierarchies. Karl Marx, of course, also discussed issues involving empire and colonialism. First-wave postcolonial thinkers, however, explicitly sought to illuminate the limitations of Marx—namely his emphasis on class—and, thereafter, build upon



these limitations in order to, in Césaire's words, "complete Marx."

Go, thereafter, discusses second-wave postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Primarily, these intellectuals drew attention to the forms of discourse that colonial rulers and individuals within the Global North used to depict colonial subjects. Said's *Orientalism* drew attention to how European intellectuals and rulers essentialized "the Orient" and depicted individuals within "the Orient" as barbarous savages; it became the most prominent work to develop within this period. When Said wrote *Orientalism*, anticolonial movements had largely succeeded in their struggles for independence; however the consequences of colonialism persisted—rampant inequality and enduring neo-imperial dynamics. What is more, the cultural frameworks (i.e., Orientalism) that developed during the colonial period continued to characterize thinking within the Global North as it concerned their counterparts in the Global South.

Following a discussion of the historical trajectory of postcolonial thought, Go encourages readers to consider the development of a third wave of postcolonial thought that might repurpose sociology and rectify existing deficits. These problems include the bifurcation between "the West and the rest," the repression of colonial agency, and metrocentrism.

First, Go points out that "postcolonial thought...invites sociology to recognize first and foremost its embeddedness within the culture of empire" (p. 75). And indeed, he shows how this embeddedness continues "to contaminate" sociological pursuits. The result is research that often entirely neglects empire and colonialism, and continues to analytically bifurcate between "the West and the rest." In

his typology of modern societies, for example, Anthony Giddens failed to discuss colonial societies, and, within his work on nation-states, Charles Tilly failed to centralize empire-building within the contemporary world (pp. 87, 89-90). In addition, in their work on revolutions, Go argues that many historical sociologists neglected to examine revolutions in the Global South, such as the Haitian Revolution (p. 88). Instead, major sociological theorists, such as Theda Skocpol and William Sewell, Jr., centered their gaze on revolutions within Europe, like the French Revolution. Throughout all of these works, Go also asserts that sociologists have expressed an "us and them" bifurcation that fails to understand how dynamics within the Global North and Global South involve constitutive relations.

Second, Go argues that sociologists have repressed colonial agency, and thereby "yield a Eurocentric narrative that posits Europe as the sole originator and autonomous agent of history" (pp. 91-92). As one indication of this dynamic, he rightfully draws attention to how sociologists working within the world society/world culture framework often purport that norms and values develop within the Global North and subsequently diffuse throughout the world. Third, and finally, Go draws attention to how sociologists routinely utilize concepts and theories derived in the Global North to understand dynamics within the Global South, without considering how individuals within the Global South might understand their own lives (p. 94). For example, some sociologists have historically set out to work with Marxist concepts such as false consciousness and alienation to understand labor dynamics in the Global South. In doing so, they seemingly have not recognized that Marx developed his concepts to make sense of the white working class experience in Western Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that we

might require new concepts to make sense of dynamics beyond such times and places.

Go ultimately argues that a third wave of postcolonial thought must aim to rectify these issues, and, to do so, he proposes several strategies.

First, taking inspiration from Said, Go proposes that sociologists track “the processes and relations between diverse but connected spaces in the making and remaking of modernity” and that we engage in “sustained examinations of mutual connection across time and space.” In addition, Go encourages sociologists to partake in relational analyses—that is, analyses that insist “that connections and interactions between units are constitutive,” and that possibilities for change always exist. As Go demonstrates, relationalism rejects the idea that essences exist that determine particular outcomes (pp. 118-23); and, to illustrate his point, he engages in two analyses—one involving Haiti and the French Revolution, and another involving the English Industrial Revolution. In doing so, Go shows how events are always contingent upon a host of dynamics. In his discussion of the French Revolution, for instance, Go utilizes Bourdieusian field theory to show how the Haitian Revolution influenced French revolutionary thought on the concept of liberty (pp. 123-31). In addition, he points out how many French revolutionaries and National Assembly members accrued wealth directly from the slave trade and colonial relations. We must not, therefore, understand the French Revolution in a domestic vacuum.

In the final substantive chapter, Go argues that sociologists should additionally take inspiration from standpoint theory in order to move beyond metrocentric thought—that is, “the practice of false universalism: taking a

specific parochial or particular experience and assuming it is universal” (p. 144). Instead, sociologists should recognize that, although “knowledge is perspectival” and socially situated, it can still be objective (p. 157). Go then suggests that instead of beginning with concepts and theories derived from the Global North, sociologists should start “with the concerns and experiences, categories and discourses, perceptions and problems of those groups visited by imperial and neoimperial imposition. Start from their perspectives, perceptions, and practices, and from there reconstruct social worlds” (p. 173). In doing so, he argues that sociologists can arrive at new understandings of action, develop new concepts and theories, and develop new concerns. Sociologists can, of course, attempt to utilize concepts and theories developed in one locale to attempt to make sense of dynamics in another, but it remains an open and empirical question concerning how far those concepts and theories will eventually travel.

In the end, Go asserts that “postcolonial social theory can be seen more broadly as a perspective or a worldview ... [rather than] a ‘theory’ in the sense of a set of ordered hypotheses about the social world” (p. 197). And, throughout his important work, Go neatly shows how postcolonial thought and social theory might invigorate each other by proper engagement with one another.

This work is undeniably significant and should be read not only by scholars of social theory, but also sociologists intent on conducting research within the Global South or on imperialism more broadly. By the conclusion of the text, though, some concerns remain. Go rightfully draws attention to a number of theories and areas of the discipline that quite clearly suffer from “the imperial gaze,” including world society/world culture theory

and much mid-to-late twentieth-century work on revolutions, which largely ignore the Global South. In the end, though, we are left with a sense that there is very little existing work that focuses on dynamics within the Global South broadly speaking, little to no work that centralizes empire, and little to no work that begins with the experiences and perspectives of actors within the Global South. And, although there is a moderately sized literature concerning how postcolonial thought might inform the social sciences, as well as how imperialism has conditioned the origins of social thought, the question still remains: where is sociology now?

I agree that U.S. sociologists remain largely focused on dynamics within the United States. Some recognition by Go, however, of existing sociological and social scientific work involving the Global South, colonialism, and empire could help social scientists actually see how some individuals have already moved in the direction that Go would prefer.

Indeed, many of the recommendations that Go proposes seem well-suited for some comparative-historical as well as some qualitative sociological pursuits. And in fact a number of recent works using these methods have centralized issues of imperialism, colonialism, and empire, alongside experiences within the Global South: John Foran's *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions*, Sarah Babb's *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*, George Steinmetz's *The Devil's Handwriting: Pre-coloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa*, and Jeffrey M. Paige's *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America*. A number of recent works have also centralized local meaning-making and interactionist processes within the Global South: Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *Friction: An Ethnography*

*of Global Connection*, Jeffrey T. Jackson's *The Globalizers: Development Workers in Action*, Javier Auyero's *Contentious Lives: Two Argentine Women, Two Protests, and the Quest for Recognition*, and Jocelyn Viterna's *Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*. A chapter that engaged with recent works that embody at least some of what Go has called for would have nicely tied the text together and provided readers with even more optimism about the sociological discipline and its future prospects.

Although Go offers well-warranted critiques of much existing scholarship, though, it is not entirely clear how post-colonial thought might inform quantitative studies that involve large data-sets culled from across the world. Are these endeavors inevitably flawed due to their systematized approach involving surveys? One idea is that perhaps, along the lines of postcolonial critiques, quantitative social scientists could more readily work with individuals from the Global South to construct precise survey instruments that take local meaning into consideration. It remains unclear, however, whether meanings concerning race, gender, labor, and religion, for example, are so diverse that surveys could not reliably capture all of this variation.

Finally, we are left to consider how postcolonial thought might inform sociological pursuits that primarily involve domestic dynamics within, for example, the United States. Is there room for postcolonial influence upon these more circumscribed pursuits within the Global North, and what would such an approach look like? Several sociologists, including Gary Alan Fine, have drawn attention to the "sociology of the local," and a number of ethnographies exist on an array of subcultural groups within the United States. Is this the sort

of work that postcolonial thinkers would call for?

In addition, we are left to consider what postcolonial thought might make of quantitative work that examines social dynamics within nation-states wherein socialization processes are heavily varied. Indeed, some transnationally-oriented sociologists such as Leslie Sklair and William Robinson assert that U.S. elites, for example, have much more in common with elites in other countries than they do with working class members within their own communities. What then would make quantitative work between individuals of an

arbitrarily demarcated space any more justifiable, if at all, than cross-national quantitative work involving elites or working-class members? Theorists interested in transnational practices might surely consider these questions.

In the end, we certainly cannot expect one text to answer all questions concerning the relationship between postcolonialism and sociology. It is all the more commendable that Go has opened this discussion—drawing attention to sociology's imperial history and urging us to consider how our own work might remain connected to this regrettable past.

## CONFERENCE RECAP

## Decolonizing the Social: A Junior Scholars' Workshop

*Ricarda Hammer, Brown University*

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"Postcolonial thought," as Go (2016:9) tells us, "critiques the culture of empire in order to cultivate new knowledges, ways of representing the world, and histories that circumvent or transcend rather than authorize or sustain imperialistic ways of knowing." It thus goes beyond describing the historical realities *after* colonialism, instead seeking to challenge how knowledge is currently produced and the theoretical categories within which we think. It troubles ideas and questions that originate with the concerns of European social science and research areas that were shaped by Europe's position in the world system. Given sociology's emergence in metropolitan Europe, the postcolonial turn invites us to investigate the extent to which this positionality has shaped our research areas, concerns, analytical approaches, and theoretical categories. Postcolonial sociology argues that, even after the fall of formal empires, the epistemic legacies of sociology's entanglements with empire have continued to shape our knowledge production.

Our workshop,<sup>1</sup> entitled *Decolonizing the Social*, brought together Ph.D. students and junior scholars whose work addresses this problematic and finds possibilities for novel perspectives forward. We asked: How can postcolonial theory help us overcome

sociology's imperial epistemic blindspots? How do these modes of imperial thought and mechanisms of imperial rule pattern and formulate the common-sense analytical categories that sociology holds dear? How can we repair and contest those lineages? And how can sociology in turn contribute to postcolonial problematics?

The workshop took the form of a rigorous one-and-a-half-day series of intensive discussions on junior scholars' working papers, led by senior scholars, including David Embrick (University of Connecticut), Julian Go (Boston University), Neil Gross (Colby College), José Itzigsohn (Brown University), Zine Magubane (Boston College), and Jonathan Wrytzen (Yale University). The presentations drew from postcolonial thought—with its unique perspectives on the operation of empire and the reproduction of racial domination, its recovery of colonial agency, and its focus on knowledge creation—to produce novel empirical sociological research and/or theoretical frameworks. Together, the workshop papers explored how empire has shaped sociological approaches and continues to operate through the dominant epistemologies of western thought, while offering examples of new research that go beyond the limits of postcolonial theory. In what follows, we outline a few emerging themes in this line of scholarship, which may inspire both a series of sociological subfields and the postcolonial project at large.

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<sup>1</sup> The workshop was funded in part by Boston University's Department of Sociology, the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and the Associate Dean's Office of Boston University College of Arts and Sciences.



Postcolonial thought argues that sociology has long overlooked the constitutive nature of race and colonial relations to modernity and discounted the web of connections linking the imperial past to the post-colonial present. Sociology has repressed the standpoints, experiences, and perspectives of subaltern groups. Postcolonial sociology in turn aims to recuperate voices which may have been silenced in the historical archive, as well as ways of seeing the world that may point us to different research foci and distinct theoretical categories; to make visible how imperial forms of rule have persisted and get reproduced on a daily basis; and to produce sociological knowledge categories that start from the concerns of the oppressed. At the center of our thinking for this conference was the attempt to draw a lineage between “the past” and “the present,” seeking to understand how the imperial past is not a bounded analytical container but instead reemerges in our post-colonial age. At the same time, we noted that scholarship in postcolonial theory often fails to capture the empirical rigor of sociology and, so far, has not described the *mechanisms* through which empire operates. Bringing these two bodies of literature into productive tension, the workshop papers sought to address sociology’s blind spots while expanding postcolonial thought.

Several papers rethought the traditional bifurcations between the “here” and “there,” “the modern” and “the colonial,” “the local” and “the global,” and “the domestic” and “the international.” Julia Bates (Boston College), in exploring the United States’ exportation of “American Negro” education models to its West African colonies, brought insights on colonial population management and technologies of rule to traditional understandings of race in the metropolitan United States. Likewise, Zophia Edwards (Providence College) examined the proliferation of Industrial Dispute Tribunals

across the British Empire, demonstrating how the diffusion of norms, ideas, and practices are not always unidirectional and can emanate from sites in the periphery to the core. Race and the techniques of racism also formed a critical element of several papers. Marcelo Bohrt (Brown University) examined how institutional and bureaucratic legacies structure racialized forms of hiring and management in the Bolivian Foreign Ministry, describing the daily struggles of what it means to “decolonize” the state apparatus. Miguel Montalva (Northeastern University) turned a similar gaze upon the field of urban sociology by tracing legacies of racialized knowledge production in the Chicago school.

Patricia Ward’s (Boston University) examination of the legacies of Ottoman border controls at work in present day Jordanian migration management spoke directly to the questions surrounding the after-effects and reproductive systems of empire. Likewise, Denise Lim explored the multiple temporalities existent within post-apartheid spaces in Johannesburg and questioned the possibilities of rethinking the role of time and space in sociological thought. Michael Murphy’s paper examined the possibilities for theorizing the formative nature of settler colonialism on persistent legacies of the racialized relationship between humans and the environment in the United States. Ricarda Hammer (Brown University), Alexandre White (Boston University), Huseyin Rasit (Yale University) and Olivia Mena’s (University of Texas) papers all drew on postcolonial thinkers to contest our understandings of key sociological concepts. Hammer and White’s paper rethought the concept of revolution through an examination of revolutionary and anti-colonial uprising in Haiti and Liberia, thereby questioning the universality of the French and American revolutions as model forms. Rasit similarly



engaged with scholarship on revolution to reconceive the possibilities for radical politics in moments of revolt in the Middle East. Mena's work, in providing a rigorous archaeology of bordering, challenged theorizing on border walls and the materiality of bordering more broadly. Kristin Plys (University of Toronto) explored the application of Frantz Fanon's understanding of political uprising to the case of anti-fascist actions during the Emergency (1975-1977) in India.

Rather than rejecting sociology as an imperial form, this workshop sought to channel the promise of postcolonial theory for our discipline. Through an engagement with the imperial legacies of sociology, these papers found a productive way of developing novel sociological routes of inquiry and research trajectories. It is also important to note that, while postcolonial theory has inspired new questions and research areas, this workshop showed that sociological attention to processes, mechanisms, and empirical explanation can contribute to and revive the postcolonial project itself. For example, following Said, postcolonial thought assumes a fairly tight linkage between power and knowledge whereby knowledge always operates in the benefit of power. Sociology studies these thematics empirically, and allows us to trace the precise relationship between institutions and knowledge, thereby giving us a better

understanding not only of how power may coopt knowledge, but also insights into cases where knowledge may act in the service of resistance. Moreover, postcolonial thought draws our attention to the *continuing legacy* of empire and argues that imperial forms of ruling, knowing, and seeing continue to inform the present. Yet, rather than assuming the persistence of an "imperial unconscious," sociological process-tracing sets out to show precisely how empire reproduces itself via institutional memory, schemas, practices, and categories.

Most of all, we found that postcolonial sociology allows us to remember the past differently, and thereby urges us to bring to the foreground new ways of understanding the present. An engagement with our imperial past makes visible social processes, forms of rule, and forms of subaltern knowledge that we may have overlooked before. Addressing these imperial entanglements, the workshop showed that the possibilities of a sociological engagement with postcolonial theory are vast, and promises novel sociological analyses that may inspire us to imagine alternative futures.

#### REFERENCES

Go, Julian. 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Dissertation Spotlight

**Zeke Baker** (University of California, Davis)

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**Title:** Meteorological Government: A Genealogy of Climate Knowledge in the US, 1780-2017

**Committee:** John R. Hall (chair), Stephanie Mudge, Patrick Carroll, Diana K. Davis

My dissertation develops and employs concepts in historical sociology and science & technology studies to raise the following broad questions: First, what explains the dynamics of climate knowledge over time? Second, how has climate knowledge worked as a form of power within modern society? The dissertation provides an analytic approach to these questions by developing a theory of meteorological government. I define meteorological government as a process by which climate knowledge developed in and through ways of categorizing, calculating and predicting meteorological and social orders simultaneously. In short, I argue variegated problems of “climate” have been co-produced with problematics of government. To make this argument, I present analyses of developments in climate research and their articulation with social power over the 1780-2017 period, primarily in the U.S. context and drawing from primary-source documents, secondary literature, and interviews. This approach charts how social theory may provide intellectual interventions into the ongoing coproduction of climate-change knowledge and extant forms and distributions of power, which seek to make climate and its futures legible and governable in the here-and-now.

**Neal Carnes** (Georgia State University)

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**Title:** “Still Here, Still Queer” and We Ain't Going Nowhere: A Qualitative Study of Community during a Second-wave of Activity

**Committee:** Eric R. Wright (chair), Katie Acosta, Maura Ryan

Are we witnessing the emergence of queer community? To answer this question, I interviewed self-identified queer people living in Atlanta, Georgia. During one-on-one and relational interviews, 31 participants reflected on how they understand and live queer, as well as socialize with other queers. An intention of this study is to advance theory; as such, this analysis inspected tenets asserted by “first wave” theoreticians and activists of the 1980s and 1990s. To test theory, I attend to queer as fluid, non-normative and diverse. The participants viewed their queerness in sexuality, gender, and political terms congruent with a first-wave framework. On the whole, participants supported the emergence of queer community, yet offered a cautionary tale as to whether collective queer will be able to achieve its political goals. “Still here, still queer” extends theory in the direction of shared identity and code for conduct, essential dynamics of community.

**Yuching Cheng** (University at Albany, SUNY)

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**Title:** Marriageable Us, Undesirable Them: Reproducing Social Inequalities through Marital Boundaries

**Committee:** Joanna Dreby (chair), Elizabeth Popp Berman, Nancy Denton

Past researchers have suggested that intermarriage can be either a means or an end to group homogeneity in terms of transcending group differences. However, this “subtraction logic” of group formation does not fully explain why immigrant intermarriages do not develop in one direction only, but move toward polarization along racial, ethnic, gender and generational lines. I argue that the main reason for this tendency is due to the importation of polarizing perceptions of group differences from immigrant homelands during a nationalization process. Based on data from 60 in-depth interviews with Chinese-speaking immigrants with at least twenty-year lengths of stay in the United States, I found that racial/ethnic logic regarding perceived out-group differences triggered polarization regarding immigrant marriageability—a historical process involving collective identities tied to both nations of origin and settlement. I also found that class and institutional logic (respectively expressed via in-group differences and family position perceptions) mitigated the significance of race/ethnicity by reproducing essentialist ways of thinking. One unintended consequence is the perpetuation of racial and gender inequalities. These findings underscore the role of intermarriage as both a means and an end to group formation by showing that immigrant marriageability entails a block-building process in which immigrants add ethnicities of settlement to make them compatible with ethnicities of origin.

**Kim de Laat** (University of Toronto)

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**Dissertation title:** The Shape of Music to Come: Organizational, Ideational, and Creative Change in the North American Music Industry, 1990-2009

**Committee members:** Shyon Baumann (chair), Vanina Leschziner, Damon Phillips, Judith Taylor

Since the mid-1990s, the music industry has undergone dramatic and wide-ranging change that has altered the organizational field, shaping both how actors perceive their work and the creative work itself. My dissertation uses discourse and content analyses of Billboard magazine, and interviews with songwriters and music industry personnel. I also employ data from Billboard’s music charts to advance novel ways of measuring musical content. These data allow me to shed light on: (1) how occupational uncertainty affects artistic autonomy and collaboration, and how these in turn influence creativity; (2) how the patterned use of discourse informs the sensegiving and sensemaking of technological change based on one’s occupational role; and (3) how postbureaucratic workers manage conflict and rewards in contexts of ongoing uncertainty. Theoretically, my dissertation integrates an analysis of the meaning of cultural artifacts into cultural production scholarship, and advances our understanding of endogenous cultural processes that occur within creative and institutional fields undergoing technological change.

**Atiya Husain** (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

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**Title:** Beyond and Back to the Black-White Binary: Muslims and Race-Making in the United States

**Committee:** Karolyn D. Tyson (chair), Charles Kurzman, Andrew Perrin, Linda Burton, Matthew W. Hughey

Race has long been studied in terms of black and white in the US, but our understanding of blackness and whiteness is limited due to the absence of religion from our analysis. My work shows religion continues to matter in the construction of race. Blackness and whiteness are typically understood as racial concepts, and I argue they are also religious concepts. Scholarship on the history of the concept of “race” argues that blackness and whiteness are informed by premodern notions of religious difference, rather than solely secular Western modernity. Premodern binaries like Christian/heathen coalesced into the contemporary black/white binary, but most empirical research on race and religion today treats them as largely separable concepts. My study interrogates the contemporary relationship between race and religion using the case of Muslims in the US. With a focus on black and white American Muslims, I conducted participant observation in US Muslim communities and 68 interviews. I argue that Muslims’ racial positioning helps shape the boundaries of blackness and whiteness. Although some social phenomena are called race and some are called religion, they are actually entangled in one another. Ultimately, I argue that we will not understand race until we understand religion.

**Phyllis H. Jeffrey** (University of California, Davis)

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**Title:** Articulation Struggles, Party Rules, and

Polanyian Pressures: The Road to Turkey’s AKP

**Committee:** Stephanie L. Mudge (chair), Fred Block, David McCourt, Ayşe Zarakol

The recent aftermath of Turkey’s failed coup and April referendum has once more raised the question of the unprecedented acquisition of political power by the Party of Justice and Development (AKP). However, drawing attention to AKP’s near lack of electoral challenge in its inaugural election of 2002, my dissertation shifts the puzzle to inquire into circumstances that produced a representational void at precisely the moment (2001) when economic crisis and ensuing austerity engendered populist response. Introducing the concept of “articulation struggles,” I analyze a series of failed attempts to launch a popular party of the center-left between 1987 and 2002, finding that such attempts were probabilistically limited as the Turkish political field was “tilted” toward the right across this period. Tilt derived from (1) institutional conditions—“party rules”—set by the outgoing junta that disproportionately impeded left parties; and (2) accession requirements from the European Union that, from the mid-1990s on, hobbled non-majoritarian institutions from acting as checks on parties, while demanding controversial reforms that foiled coalition on the Turkish center-left. Drawing on Polanyi, I demonstrate how the failure to come to light of a party channeling democratic pressures for economic management paved the way for AKP’s populism of the right.

**Hadi Khoshnevis** (University of South Florida)

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**Title:** Navigating through Census Categories: The MENA Campaign, Geopolitics of Race, and Contours of Whiteness

**Committee:** Elizabeth Aranda (chair), Stephen Turner, Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, Ramon Grosfoguel

Despite their century long fight for achieving “whiteness,” people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are currently fighting to leave their white racial category in the hope of gaining non-white minority status in the US 2020 Census. If approved by the state, it will be the first time since the establishment of the Census that a group, instead of attempting to join the white category, had chosen to leave it. By studying the current MENA campaign for racial re-categorization, my dissertation explores the role that racial categories, as imperial/colonial concepts, play in people’s daily struggles and their historical aspirations. Through a de-colonial perspective and by drawing on critical whiteness studies, my dissertation also intends to revisit theories of assimilation which assume an “inexorable” and “progressive” transition towards the white middle-class center and its values. I propose that these assimilationist models overlook the moves in the opposite direction and cannot adequately account for structural and historical barriers that minorities face.

**Sunmin Kim** (University of California, Berkeley)

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**Title:** A Laboratory for American National Identity: The Re-invention of Whiteness in the Dillingham Commission (1907-1911)

**Committee:** Ann Swidler (co-chair), Cybelle Fox (co-chair), Irene Bloemraad, Mara Loveman, Taeku Lee.

This dissertation asks how American social scientists and federal bureaucrats generated knowledge about immigrants in the early twentieth century, and how such knowledge led to the re-invention of whiteness. To answer these questions, I analyze archival materials related to the Dillingham Commission (1907-1911), an investigative commission that conducted the most comprehensive study of immigrants ever undertaken by the federal government. Southern and eastern European immigrants, whose numbers had risen dramatically at the end of the nineteenth century, were different from those who had come before: they were white and certainly not black, but not exactly the same kind of white as the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who occupied most elite positions in the country. By investigating the racial status of “new immigrants,” the Dillingham Commission reformulated whiteness to encompass different kinds of difference: whereas non-white immigrants were deemed categorically different from whites and merited no consideration for citizenship, the differences among Europeans were incremental, and thus could be overcome, although only through a properly controlled process of assimilation. Bringing insights from sociology of culture and knowledge to the studies of race, ethnicity, and immigration, this dissertation highlights how experts and social science knowledge contributed to immigration discourse and policy in the United States.

**Dana Kornberg** (University of Michigan)

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**Title:** Reclaiming Waste, Remaking Communities: Persistence and Change in Delhi's Informal Garbage Economy

**Committee:** George Steinmetz (chair), Greta Krippner, Fred Wherry, Arun Agrawal

Reclaiming Waste, Remaking Communities examines the widespread persistence of informal economies, in which transactions occur without explicit legal recourse, through the case of garbage collection services in Delhi, India. Over twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork, I discovered that Delhi's informal garbage collectors—who are motivated by scrap recycling—had endured despite the recent introduction of municipal garbage collection trucks, producing a mutually recognized state boundary. The dissertation begins by analyzing the production of this boundary, effectively untangling a complicated knot of urban governance institutions in practice. It proceeds by detailing the particular exchange relations—for example between newer and older groups of informal collectors, informal collectors and middle-class residents, and scrap buyers—that comprise the informal garbage collection and scrap recycling markets. In particular, I focus on newly arrived Bengali Muslim rural-to-urban migrants who began working for established low-caste Balmikis as informal garbage collectors, finding that they are willing to accept stigma in anticipation of monetary gain. In responding to the question of persistence, then, the dissertation surveys the urban re-making of established hierarchies, drawing from anthropological work to conceptualize exchange processes as transactions, where exchange media are laden with particular practical and ethical affordances.

**Junpeng Li** (Columbia University)

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**Title:** The Making of Liberal Intellectuals in Post-Tiananmen China

**Committee:** Gil Eyal (chair), Shamus Rahman Khan, Xiaobo Lü, Debra Minkoff, Andrew J. Nathan

Drawing on 67 semi-structured interviews with Chinese intellectual elites across the ideological spectrum, as well as detailed historical and textual analyses, this dissertation examines the social forces that have shaped the political attitudes of liberal intellectuals in contemporary China. It argues against the prevailing attempts to define Chinese liberalism as a social category with a coherent ideology comparable to its Western counterpart; rather, as a "community of discourse" that contains a number of competing and contradictory discourses, it is embedded in China's social reality as an authoritarian regime governed by a communist party, and contingent on China's history straddling the Maoist and post-Mao eras. Rather than a monolithic or tight-knit group, Chinese liberals are comprised of an array of social actors, including scholars, journalists, lawyers, activists, and house church leaders. They are liberal not because of what they are for, but because of what they are against; more specifically, Chinese liberals are united by an anti-authoritarian mentality, which is a historical product of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 and the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.



**Ian Mullins** (University of California, San Diego)

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**Title:** Conservatism in a Time of “Fake News” and Irrelevant Truths

**Committee:** Isaac Martin (chair), Amy Binder, Richard Biernacki, Christena Turner, Robert Horwitz

The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election has raised urgent questions about the role knowledge plays in conservative politics. Scholars are turning their attention to the proliferation of “fake news” on the internet and what might be a new era of “post-truth” politics in the United States. Political sociologists suggest that conservatives in the United States may belong to numerous “epistemic cultures,” though none have done the long-term observational work necessary to investigate this claim. For my dissertation, I draw on four years of ethnographic research with conservative political organizations located in San Diego and Orange County, California, to analyze how participants involved in conservative political organizations develop and habituate epistemic practices. I find that participants in conservative organizations engage in knowledge production as a secondary activity anchored in primary practical concerns that vary by type of organization. I demonstrate how people within organizations develop coherent sets of epistemic practices by acting in relation to common sets of practical problems, the formal and relational aspects of an organization (including the organization’s relation to a broader party apparatus), and within the cultural context that they produce themselves. My work illuminates how conservatives come to distrust conventional sources of information, invalidate expert knowledge, or dismiss expert knowledge as irrelevant despite viewing it as true.

**Michael Roll** (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

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**Title:** Rebel Bureaucracies: Corruption, Networks, and Effective Government Agencies in Nigeria

**Committee:** Ivan Ermakoff (chair), Myra Marx Ferree, Gay Seidman, Bob Freeland, Aili Mari Tripp

How do effective bureaucracies emerge in corrupt states? My dissertation explores endogenous change in three government agencies in Nigeria (drug administration, taxation, election management) that today stand out for their integrity and service provision in one of the world’s most corrupt states. I focus on the changing relations of these agencies with politicians, civil society, and international development organizations since 1999 and provide a detailed analysis of their internal dynamics. Based on a comparative design, 135 interviews, participant observation, an original survey, and archival data, I identify four major factors. First, successful reformers were outsiders to Nigeria’s bureaucracy with a surprisingly high proportion of women among them. Their moral beliefs and social networks were crucial for reform. Second, organizational change did not require restaffing or material incentives but occurred through a process of incremental collective staff alignment. Third, to protect themselves against government capture, these agencies systematically mobilized and cooperated with civil society. Finally, the use of digital technology and social media was crucial for building the trust of citizens in these agencies. The findings are of broad theoretical relevance for explaining counterintuitive organizational and social change under unfavorable conditions in the Global South and beyond.

**A.K.M. Skarpelis** (New York University)

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**Title:** Racialized: Nazi Germany, Fascist Japan and the Rise and Fall of Racist Welfare States

**Committee:** Jeff Manza (chair), David Garland, Craig Calhoun, Ann Morning, Sheldon Garon

We know little about how race shapes the welfare state outside of the North-American context. My dissertation provides an historical comparative analysis of the making and unmaking of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century German and Japanese welfare states and gauges the impact of transnational developments on these ostensibly national institutions. I explore the entire life cycle of racialized welfare state formation: Part one (1880s – 1940s) inverts the conventional analyses of racial classification of ‘inferior’ populations by instead focusing on involuntary incorporation into the country’s dominant citizenship category, as colonial and imperial endeavors remapped national boundaries and citizenship fragmented along racialized lines. Part two (1930s – 1945) explores how changing conceptions of race and citizenship configure policy-making processes and how social policies in the formerly bounded nation-states and the annexed territories changed under total war. Part three (1945 – 1950s) examines the cumbersome process of deracialization after defeat. My project is based in Japanese and German-language archival documents drawn together from collections on three continents. As any analysis of boundary work relies on careful attention to concepts and their deployment, I suggest ways in which sociologists might choose to deal with translinguistic particularities such as ‘untranslatables’, concepts so firmly located in networks of meaning that linguistic translation is infeasible.

**Paige L. Sweet** (University of Illinois, Chicago)

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**Title:** Traumatizing Politics: Domestic Violence, Feminist Anti-Violence Work, and Legibility after Violence

**Committee:** Claire Decoteau (chair), Beth E. Richie, Lorena Garcia, Sydney Halpern, Annemarie Jutel

This research explores the politics of domestic violence in tandem with the lived realities of abuse, linking an historical analysis of the feminist anti-violence movement with a contemporary analysis of how domestic violence victims interact with institutions and make meaning about their experiences. Using archival research on the history of feminist anti-violence activism, in-depth interviews with domestic violence professionals, and life story interviews with survivors of domestic violence, this dissertation argues that the medicalization of expert practices in anti-violence work shapes women’s techniques for becoming “good survivors.” As they interact with an increasing array of therapeutic services premised on trauma, victims learn to narrate their experiences in psychological terms and perform psychological wellness in order to become legible to institutions of aid. Paradoxically, these psychological narratives and performances obfuscate the structural circumstances of women’s victimization and their infrastructural labor of survival. I show how institutional expectations of survivorhood enact regulations around sexuality and nationality to which women must adhere, though women also manage these boundaries to meet their needs. Thus, the policies and practices targeted at domestic violence create a disjuncture between the structural circumstances of women’s lives and the therapeutic performances they must execute to be legible to institutions.

**Luis Vila-Henninger** (University of Arizona)

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**Title:** Direct Democracy in America: How Voters Reason About Economic Policy

**Committee:** Jeff Sallaz (co-chair), Jane Zavisca (co-chair), Albert Bergesen, Lane Kenworthy

How do voters navigate the intersection between democracy and capitalism? Citizens have the opportunity to directly decide upon policies that shape their state's economy through ballot measures; however, the role of voters in this key intersection and policy making-mechanism has been largely overlooked. Models of reasoning in the voting literature have primarily developed from rational choice theory and identify conditions under which self-interest and partisanship influence voter choice and policy attitudes. To extend this literature to voter reasoning on economic ballot measures, my dissertation examined how variation in voter choice and reasoning corresponded with variation in social indicators of self-interest and partisanship, both of which are foundational for capitalism and democracy, respectively. In order to carry out this analysis I conducted semi-structured interviews with 120 respondents about how they voted on economic ballot measures that appeared on the Arizona state ballot from 2008-2012 related to narcotic decriminalization and medicalization, education funding, immigration and labor markets, and consumer protection. My findings reveal how and when voter reasoning invokes self-interest, partisan values, and economic beliefs according to variation in economic stratification and partisan affiliation. My dissertation extends previous research by providing a qualitative analysis of voter reasoning on economic ballot measures.

**Selen Yanmaz** (Boston College)

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**Title:** "The Revolution will not be Televised, It will be Tweeted": Digital Technology, Affective Resistance and Turkey's Gezi Protests

**Committee:** Stephen Pfohl (chair), Juliet Schor, Brian Gareau

The Gezi Park protests, which started in May 2013 in Istanbul, rapidly turned to a movement for democracy across the country. Through in-depth interviews with protestors in Turkey and abroad, participant observation and content analysis, my dissertation examines the role digital technologies played in the protests. These technologies, especially social networking tools, were used by protestors to construct personalized frameworks and forms of action. I show that this process depended on the individuals' interpretations of their current political and cultural context, their alternative frameworks of reality. By expressing these frameworks individuals, first and foremost, challenged the politico-cultural adjustment of the society by various powerful actors. Moreover, as individuals got together in protest, various alternative frameworks of reality interacted, leading to the emergence of empathy and dialogue among the protestors and thus contributing to long-term movement success. Digital technologies became the primary space for the production and circulation of jokes in various forms, as protestors used humor and creativity as central strategies to voice their dissent. Affective and humorous creations challenged the disciplining oppression of the political authority, hacked its presentations of reality and contributed to the formation of a carnivalesque society, where empathy and dialogue were maintained through collective effervescence.

# 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Junior Theorists' Symposium

## Université du Québec à Montréal, August 11, 2017

### Conference Program

**8:30 – 9:00 | Coffee and Bagels**

**9:00 – 10:50 | Panel 1.** Discussant: Richard Biernacki (University of California, San Diego)

Pablo Gaston (University of California, Berkeley)	Till Hilmar (Yale University)	Allison Ford (University of Oregon)
<i>Conflict and the Moral Economy: The Moral Dilemmas of Economic Conflict in California Hospitals, 1946-1974</i>	<i>Knowing what it's like. Theorizing Moral-Economic Reasoning and Notions of Deservingness in Newly Capitalist Societies.</i>	<i>Self-sufficiency: Emotional-Cultural-Material Trajectories of Environmental Practices</i>

**10:50 – 11:00 | Break** (coffee & tea provided)

**11:00 – 12:50 | Panel 2.** Discussant: Raewyn Connell (University of Sydney)

Paige L. Sweet (University of Illinois, Chicago)	Eric Royal Lybeck (University of Exeter)	Michael Roll (University of Wisconsin, Madison)
<i>Ideology, Bodies, and Trespass between Feminist Theory and Critical Realism</i>	<i>Ajurisdiction and the Fragmentation of Academic Sociology</i>	<i>Southern Movements: States and Vigilante Collective Action in Peripheral Spaces</i>

**12:50 – 14:00 | Lunch** (provided on site)

**14:00 – 15:50 | Panel 3.** Discussant: Julian Go (Boston University)

Ricarda Hammer (Brown University)	Amanda Shriwise (University of Oxford)	Ben Merriman (University of Kansas)
<i>Decolonizing the Civil Sphere: Race, Colonial Difference and Claims for Inclusion in France</i>	<i>Field Theory and Welfare State Regimes</i>	<i>Extralegal violence in the emergence of modern social fields</i>

**15:50 – 16:00 | Break** (coffee & tea provided)

**16:00-17:30 | After Panel: Theory, the Good Society, and Positionality**

Gabriel Abend  
(New York University)

Seth Abrutyn  
(University of British  
Columbia)

Hae Yeon Choo  
(University of Toronto)

Claire Decoteau  
(University of Illinois,  
Chicago)

**17:30 - ? | Theory in the Wild: Libations and Good Conversation** (off-site)

JTS will take place in the Pavillon De-Sève, 320 St Catherine St E., room DS-R520. To facilitate logistical planning, including lunch orders, please RSVP at this link: <http://www.asatheory.org/jts-registration.html>. JTS is a donation-based event, and we kindly suggest donations of \$20 per faculty member and \$10 per graduate student, which can be made at the event or in advance through PayPal (to the [juniortheorists@gmail.com](mailto:juniortheorists@gmail.com) account) or by contacting us via email to arrange payment by check.

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## **2017 American Sociological Association Meetings** **Montréal, Québec, August 12-15, 2017** **Theory Section Sessions**

**Theory Section Roundtables**

**Saturday, August 12, 8:30-9:30AM**

*Organizer:* Alvaro Santana-Acuña  
(Whitman College)

**Theory Section Business Meeting**

**Saturday, August 12, 9:30-10:10AM**

**Theory Section Paper Session: How to  
Publish in Theory**

**Saturday, August 12, 10:30AM-12:10PM**

*Session Organizer:* Neil Gross (Colby  
College)

*Panelists*

Elisabeth S. Clemens (University of Chicago)  
Mustafa Emirbayer (University of  
Wisconsin, Madison)  
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)  
Eric I. Schwartz (Columbia University)

**Theory Section Paper Session: New Developments in Classical Theory**  
**Saturday, August 12, 2:30-4:10PM**

*Session Organizer:* Natalia Ruiz-Junco (Auburn University)

*Presider:* Peter M. Hall (Colorado State University)

*Panelists*

Paul Joosse (University of Hong Kong):

“Countering Trump: Using Weber to Construct a Typology of Charismatic Counter-Roles”

Jorie Hofstra (Rutgers University):

“Attentive Flexibility: A Classical-Theoretical Grounding of a New Concept in the Study of Emotional Support”

David L. Swartz (Boston University):

“Bourdieu and Marx on the Modern State”

Filipe Carreira da Silva (University of Lisbon): “When Souls Came to Matter”

Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Jill Niebrugge-Brantley (George Washington University): “Jane Addams and the Classical Canon in Sociological Theory: A Radical Proposal”

**Theory Section Invited Session: Lewis A. Coser Memorial Lecture and Salon**  
**Saturday, August 12, 4:30-6:10PM**

*Session Organizer and Presider:* John R. Hall (University of California, Davis)

*Panelist*

Iddo Tavory (New York University): “Between Situations: Theorizing the Cadence of Interaction”

**Theory Section Reception**  
**Saturday, August 12, 6:30-8:30PM**

**Theory Section Paper Session: How to Make a Career in Theory**

**Sunday, August 13, 8:30-10:10AM**

*Session Organizer:* Neil Gross (Colby College)

*Panelists:*

Claire Laurier Decoteau (University of Illinois, Chicago)

Isaac Ariail Reed (University of Virginia)

Robin E. Wagner-Pacifici (New School for Social Research)

**Theory Section Paper Session: New Developments in Contemporary Theory**  
**Sunday, August 13, 10:30AM-12:10PM**

*Session Organizer and Presider:* Aliza Luft (University of California, Los Angeles)

*Panelists*

Jacob Gates Foster (University of California, Los Angeles): “Culture and Computation: Steps to a Probably Approximately Correct Theory of Culture”

Lawrence Hamilton Williams (University of Toronto): “Dilemmas: Where No Schema Has Gone Before”

Ana Villarreal (Boston University): “Evil Euphemisms: Folk Devils and the Social Construction of Denial”

Michael Lee Wood (University of Notre Dame): “Thinking about Age-Appropriateness: Understanding the Role of Culture in Moral Evaluation”



## Member News and Notes

### Spring 2017

#### BOOKS

Abril, Julie C. 2017. [\*Bad Spirits, Evil Thoughts, and Crime Culture: A YAQUIx Treatise. A Native American Indian View.\*](#) Lambert Academic Publishing.

Abril, Julie C. 2016. [\*Native American Indian Tribal Justice Systems: Tribal Courts and Police.\*](#) Lambert Academic Publishing.

Abril, Julie C. 2016. [\*Cultural Values v. Collective Efficacy in a Native American Indian Tribe.\*](#) Scholars' Press.

Bandelj, Nina, Frederick F. Wherry, and Viviana Zelizer, eds. 2017. [\*Money Talks: Explaining How Money Really Works.\*](#) Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Go, Julian. 2016. [\*Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory.\*](#) New York: Oxford University Press.

Go, Julian, and Monika Krause, eds. 2016. [\*Fielding Transnationalism.\*](#) New York: Wiley & Sons.

LaMagdeleine, Donald R. 2016. [\*The Leadership Imagination: An Introduction to Taxonomic Leadership Analysis.\*](#) Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Treitler, Vilna Bashi, and Manuela Boatca. 2016. "Dynamics of Inequalities in a Global Perspective." Special issue of [\*Current Sociology\* 64\(2\).](#)

Wagner-Pacifi, Robin. 2017. [\*What Is an Event?\*](#) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zelizer, Viviana A. 2017. [\*The Social Meaning of Money.\*](#) With a preface by Nigel Dodd and new afterword. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zelizer, Viviana A. 2017. [\*Morals and Markets: The Development of Life Insurance in the United States.\*](#) With Foreword by Kieran Healy. New York: Columbia University Press.

#### ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

Cornelissen, Sharon J. 2016. "Turning Distaste into Taste: Context-Specific Habitus and the Practical Congruity of Culture." [\*Theory and Society\* 45\(6\):](#) 501-29.

DeMeester, Deborah, and Donald LaMagdeleine. 2016. "Staging 'White Maleness' with Cops: A Diversity Training Case Analysis." Pp. 85-107 in [\*Change and Reform in Law Enforcement: Old and New Efforts from Across the Globe.\*](#) edited by Scott W. Phillips and Dilip Dias. New York: CRC Press.

Gill, Timothy M. 2017. "Unpacking the World Cultural Toolkit in Socialist Venezuela: National Sovereignty, Human Rights, and Anti-NGO Legislation." [\*Third World Quarterly\* 38\(3\):](#) 621-35.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2016. "Mathematical Sociology." In [\*Oxford Bibliographies in Sociology\*](#), edited by Janeen Baxter. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kalberg, Stephen. 2016. "Max Weber's Sociology of Civilizations: A Preliminary Investigation into Its Major Methodological Concepts." Pp. 75-116 in [\*The Anthem Companion to Max Weber\*](#), edited by Alan Sica. London: Anthem Press.

LaRossa, Ralph. 2016. "The Culture of Fatherhood and the Late-Twentieth-Century New Fatherhood Movement: An Interpretive Perspective." Pp. 3-30 in [\*Deconstructing Dads: Changing Images of Fathers in Popular Culture\*](#), edited by Laura Tropp and Janice Kelly. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

Lin, Lin, and Jie Zhang. 2017. "Impulsivity, Mental Disorder, and Suicide in Rural China." [\*Archives of Suicide Research\* 21](#): 73-82.

Mayrl, Damon, and Sarah Quinn. 2017. "Beyond the Hidden American State: Classification Struggles and the Politics of Visibility." Pp. 55-80 in [\*The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control\*](#), edited by Kimberly J. Morgan and Ann Shola Orloff. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McDonnell, Erin Metz. 2017. "Patchwork Leviathan: How Pockets of Bureaucratic Governance Flourish within Institutionally Diverse Developing States." [\*American Sociological Review\* 82\(3\)](#): 476-510.

## MEMBER NEWS

**Vilna Bashi Treitler** has taken a new position as Chair of the Department of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is also serving as Vice President of the Eastern Sociological Society, and was selected as Sociologist of the Month for January 2017 by *Current Sociology*, the journal of the International Sociological Society.

McDonnell, Terence E., Christopher A. Bail, and Iddo Tavory. 2017. "A Theory of Resonance." [\*Sociological Theory\* 35\(1\)](#): 1-14.

Sun, Bruce Qiang and Jie Zhang. 2016. "Economic and Sociological Correlates of Suicides: Multilevel Analysis of the Time Series Data in the United Kingdom." [\*Journal of Forensic Sciences\* 61](#): 345-51.

Turner, Stephen. 2016. "Deflating the Rule of Law: Weber and Kelsen." *Lo Stato* 6: 97-115.

Turner, Stephen. 2016. "Weber's Foray into Geopolitics." Pp. 145-74 in [\*The Anthem Companion to Max Weber\*](#), edited by Alan Sica. London: Anthem Press.

Turner, Stephen. 2017. "Knowledge Formations: An Analytic Framework." Pp. 9-20 in [\*The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity\*](#), edited by Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson, and Roberto Carlos Dos Santos Pacheco. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wynn, Jonathan. 2016. "On the Sociology of Occasions." [\*Sociological Theory\* 34\(3\)](#): 276-86.

Zhang, Jie. 2016. "From Psychological Strain to Disconnectedness: A Two-Factor Model Theory of Suicide." [\*Crisis\* 37](#): 169-75.

## CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Beyond Positivism: Theory, Methods, and Values in Social Science Conference**

August 8-10, 2017, Montréal, Québec

<http://criticalrealismnetwork.org/beyond-positivism/>

Positivism is dead, at least in sociology. Few sociologists embrace the label. And yet positivism continues to shape our thinking about theory, method, and values. Theory is largely sidelined and when it is not, we are told that the best theory is “middle-range” theory based upon empirical data, “grand theory” is a waste of time, while metatheory barely appears on the radar. Natural science provides the model for social science with the assumption that more our methods resemble experiments or mathematical modelling the better and more reliable they are.

Explorations of values and ethics remain largely taboo, and value and ethical neutrality are still the default position.

It is time to well and truly move beyond positivism. Post-positivists theories such as pragmatism and critical realism are receiving more attention, methodological pluralism is the name of the game, and research into morals, values, and social solidarity are becoming increasingly more popular. This conference attempts to build upon the considerable progress already made in this direction by bringing together a number of academics interested in post-positivism, bringing together social scientists and philosophers interested in critically engaging to envisage what a post-positivist social science might look like. Over the course of three days, plenaries, panels, and presentations, will address theory, qualitative research methods, quantitative research methods, values and ethics, politics and utopian sociology, and interdisciplinary. We hope to see you there.