

# SECTION CULTURE



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## Word from the Chair

Jennifer C. Lena, Columbia University



Even months after our collective gathering in Seattle, I'm still inspired by the culture panels I attended (every one of them!), and the conversations we had. In this and the next newsletter, our editors are going to share excerpts and reports from many excellent culture-related presentations in Seattle. This issue has three terrific conference reports and a symposium from the "Recent Advances in the Sociology of Culture" panel organized by Shamus Khan, in addition to a celebration of our award winners, and several book reviews.

For me, Mike Sauder's paper in the "Grit, Luck, Warmth, and the Irrational" panel was both bold and compelling in its insistence that "luck" would yield to sociological investigation. Mike argued that perhaps some of what we refer to as "luck" is comprised of unrecognized causal factors. Maybe some luck is produced by misidentified known causes because the events were unanticipated or poorly understood by observers. But maybe, just maybe, some luck is luck. And our sociology of luck is meager at best. Mike's call for Luck Studies was invigorating, and I'm sure we all wish him...well.

I also took note of how many of our colleagues are approaching the study of mental cultural structures in bold and compelling ways. One example was Andrei Boutyline's Saturday 8:30 am java jolt, "Toward a Cognitive Macro-Sociology of Culture," framed around the question: How can culture both be composed of a complex web of meanings and internalized by individuals? As you'll read later in the newsletter, Andrei explores the question with data from a survey of political attitudes but his goal more ambitious: to unlock our understanding of how our brains store and deploy cultural information.

In pulling out these two for comment, I do not mean to criticize the phenomenal slate of culture papers at our panels and roundtables.

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Rather, I comment on Sauder and Boutyline's work because they illustrate a leitmotif in the kinds of sociology that have inspired me for the last fifteen years: naïve approaches to complex questions that hold the potential for profound insight into social life. Or perhaps not naïve, exactly, but projects that have maintained a sense of wonder about the world, and have not surrendered to the warlords of expediency.

The first time I remember having this reaction to a piece of scholarship was in graduate school, reading a study Ward Goodenough published in 1963. His study of the neighborhood Manuhoe in Papeete was designed to answer a simple question: do families buy as many cultural goods as they can afford? He identified seven kinds of consumer goods available for sale including bicycles, cars, radios, stoves, and refrigerators, and visited 40 of the 41 households in the neighborhood to see which they owned. In contrast to what we would find if economic resources were perfectly correlated with taste, or if utility were an objective quality, social ties and cultural attitudes better explained the variation he observed. People did not buy as much as they could afford. For example, Household 33 was inhabited by a widower whose food was provided by his children; although he could afford it, he had not purchased a stove.

Reading the article was a revelatory experience. The approach to data collection and analysis was so rudimentary it was tempting to dismiss it as amateurish. But the matrix analysis that he used, now referred to as Guttman scaling, allowed him to identify classes where members are maximally similar to one another and maximally dissimilar to members of other groups, and this is an extremely powerful tool. As I would soon learn, it was fundamental to the relational, network approaches scholars were leveraging with more complex and larger datasets by the 1990s. I came to view Goodenough's study not as amateur, but as elegant—a demonstration of how relying on observation to identify and bound groups, rather than imposing a priori expectations on membership, could reveal social structures.

In those years, I also had the great fortune to be enrolled in Kelly Moore's class on the Sociology of Science, and Harrison White's odd and wonderful class on art. I learned that groups of scientists, like groups of artists, cooperate at the ideational and material levels and these links constrain the kinds of science and art that they produce. Some of these distinctions "adhere in the art works themselves" (Becker 1982: 309) and in the scientific products they produced (inter alia Moody 2004). These ideas combined—relational, matrix

methods to generate classes from similar relations (borrowed from Goodenough), and treating aesthetic elements as evidence of social relations (from Becker and White)—in work I would later publish in a series of papers on sampling in rap music (Lena 2004, Lena and Pachucki 2013). I could "see" (or, inductively produce) the invisible colleges of rappers by identifying patterns in the samples (or, prerecorded pieces of music) they wove into their compositions. Once I could see those musical alliances, I could better explain previously inscrutable status patterns emerging from measures of sales, awards, and critical acclaim.

Graduate school was a tough row to hoe, but the crop was rewarding. My peers and I were privy to early drafts of Roberto Franzosi's *From Words to Numbers*, a compellingly written ode to contextual linguistic meaning. I was a stowaway on a field trip that Peter Bearman's "Social structure and social action: Micro-foundations of macro-structures" class took to Ivan Chase's animal lab at SUNY Stony Brook, where he nurtured ants, chickens, and fish in order to study the formation of dominance hierarchies and vacancy chains. John Levi Martin (2000) presented a preliminary version of his phenomenal analysis of the totemic logic we apply to bodies and jobs in children's literature, naturalizing the division of labor before we even enter the workforce. We read a lot of bold, strange sociology.

I am so grateful for all that this discipline has given to me: tremendous opportunities, friendships, and even obstacles to overcome. I wanted to open my year as chair with an expression of thanks. This is a note of gratitude to each of you who brings a spirit of naïve and sincere inquiry to your work. If you inject a little humor, or a genuine question distilled to its essence, thank you. If you have adopted the most primitive method of gathering evidence in order to try to get it right, I salute you. If you are trying something new or unusual in your teaching or your scholarship, and you're running a high risk of failure, be encouraged. You are doing work that motivates me to write and to think, and inspires me to be curious about the world in which we live.

I want to close by expressing my gratitude to Genevieve Zubrzycki, our outgoing chair, who handled a great deal of responsibility with wisdom and grace. I have already had the great pleasure of starting work with Ron Jacobs, our chair-elect; he has designed a terrific program for Montreal which you will hear more about in the coming months. I wish to thank the organizers who helped me to assemble a terrific set of panels for Seattle: Omar Lizardo, Alex Kowalski, Angèle Christin,

and Shamus Khan. They assembled an amazing group of authors and papers, reflecting the diversity of our section, and its vibrancy. My gratitude to Francesco Duina for organizing our roundtables with Hannah Wohl's help, and Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer for organizing the professional development workshop. Finally, thanks to our newsletter editors for their terrific work on this and every issue.

We are looking forward to welcoming new newsletter and website editors at the end of this academic year. This is important and valuable work. I encourage you to apply for the position singly or in a work group; please contact Francesco Duina ([fduina@bates.edu](mailto:fduina@bates.edu)) with any questions you may have. As I noted in my remarks in Seattle, I am looking forward to hearing from you: please let me know what you think your section can do for you.

**Jennifer C. Lena**

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## NEWSLETTER EDITORS NEEDED

The Culture Section is looking to replace the newsletter's editorial team, if possible at the end of this academic year 2016-17. The editor position(s) are awarded on a competitive basis to an editor, or preferably a team of two or three editors, assisted or not by student editorial assistants. They are usually held by academics at relatively early stages of their career. The term is usually two to three years. Please send a brief expression of interest (as a single editor or as a team of 2-3 editors) with, if possible, some indication of objectives (specific topics, improvements, changes, etc.) for the newsletter to section council member Francesco Duina <[fduina@bates.edu](mailto:fduina@bates.edu)> by Feb. 15, 2017.



# CULTURE SECTION AWARDS 2016

IN THE WORDS OF AWARD COMMITTEE CHAIRS

## MARY DOUGLAS PRIZE FOR BEST BOOK

By Lyn Spillman, University of Notre Dame

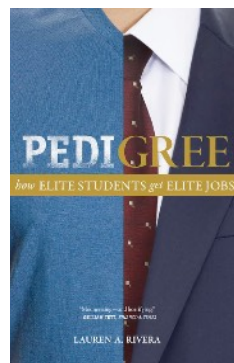
First and most importantly, I must report that it is impossible to overstate the excellence of our books in cultural sociology—their theoretical advances and sophistication, the detailed, extended interpretation they offer, and the way they illuminate gripping public issues in new ways. Cultural sociology flourishes in the intellectual space that books allow. So thanks to all of you who wrote great books with important contributions that sustain and build that traditional strength of our enterprise.

Our committee was privileged to read 42 excellent exemplars nominated for the Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book in Cultural Sociology in 2016. The huge amount of reading involved in presenting this award is easily forgotten, because it quickly becomes a happy memory of enrichment and delight in the work. Even so, and even though they are fortunate to have had the opportunity, we should all thank **committee members Ron Jacobs** (University at Albany) and **Virag Molnar** (New School), for their dedicated, efficient, and insightful work.

With so many great submissions, you will not be surprised that we awarded **two Honorable Mentions**. We want to commend **Ellen Berrey** for *The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice*, published in 2015 by the University of Chicago Press. This is original and notable for many reasons; I will only highlight two here. First, Berrey's research design is exemplary, setting up a wonderful three-case comparison of diversity language in three different settings—higher education, urban development, and corporations—involving six years of ethnography. Second, she draws the important conclusion that “the drive for diversity has contained the struggle for racial equality” (p. 276)—a conclusion that should be a central part of all our public conversations going forward. There's very much more to say about the depth and complexity of that argument, but that's the bullet point.

We are also pleased to commend **Christine Simko** for *The Politics of Consolation: Memory and the Meaning of September 11*, published in 2015 by Oxford University Press.

Again, of course, this book had many virtues; here are two. First, Simko's book offers a wonderful model of close interpretive analysis, which remains the essential core of what cultural sociology offers. Second, her analysis of “premediation” —or how “extant frameworks impinge on new events even as they unfold” (p. 197) —is an important advance in understanding the longer term impact of historically developed cultural forms, itself an essential presupposition of cultural sociology. We should all be talking about “premediation” from now on.



In the end, though, the committee was unanimous in awarding the **2016 Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book** in Cultural Sociology to **Lauren Rivera** for *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*, published in 2015 by Princeton University Press. This study stands out in what is—as you know—already

a strong field of research on culture and inequality. The book is based on more than 150 interviews and extended fieldwork at recruitment activities and firms. It builds on and links together what have been two disparate lines of inquiry: how unequal cultural capital reproduces privilege in education, on the one hand, and labor market stratification, on the other. Rivera unpacks and analyzes exactly what counts as cultural capital at every step of the elite hiring process, showing cultural mechanisms at the point of interaction. The evidence is fascinating and compelling. We learn not only exactly how unequal hiring actually happens, but even more importantly, much that we did not know before about the actual meaning of cultural capital in interaction.

Congratulations to Lauren, Ellen and Christine for their wonderful work.

So go out and read these books, think about them, and assign them in your classes: we will be talking about them for a long time. And at the same time, take a moment to be vicariously impressed by all the great books in cultural sociology. If you want more recommendations for other excellent books, just contact the committee. We will be happy to help.

## CLIFFORD GEERTZ PRIZE FOR BEST ARTICLE

By **Matthew Norton, University of Oregon**

It was a pleasure to chair the Geertz Prize committee this year and to work with my colleagues **Ming-Cheng Lo** and **Rhys Williams**. We had nearly 40 submissions for the prize. I have a few words to say about the winners, but first: what a rich and rewarding collection of papers to read! We had articles on opera-houses, philharmonic subscribers, and the Tea Party (to be clear, those were three different papers). Articles on love, fracking, color perception and color blindness. On secrets and miracles. As well as diverse in topics, they were diverse in the movements they traced between empirical and theoretical modes of analysis, leaving us with quite a task of sorting through.

My fellow committee members and I did manage to narrow this bounty down to two finalists, however, and feeling that it would really be splitting hairs to go further we stopped there, at the co-winners of this year's Geertz Prize. The co-winning articles are:

**“The Role of Bridging Cultural Practices in Racially and Socioeconomically Diverse Civic Organizations” by Ruth Braunstein, Brad Fulton, and Richard Wood (ASR 2014);**

and

**“Civic Action” by Paul Lichterman and Nina Eliasoph (AJS 2014).**

Braunstein, Fulton, and Wood focus on the challenges that arise—alongside plenty of benefits!—with increasing organizational diversity. To understand how organizations navigate these challenges they direct our attention to what they call “bridging cultural practices” that work to both bridge diversity and to reinforce organizational boundaries. In particular they focus on how prayer in faith-based community organizations can simultaneously bridge internal divisions and reinforce the boundaries of the group marking the group off from outsiders. What most impressed the committee was how skillfully Braunstein, Fulton, and Wood have woven together ethnographic and survey-based data, allowing them to both provide a thick description of how prayer is modified and used as a way to bridge difference at the level of interaction and to link these close observations to a survey-based count of how widespread these bridging practices are amongst a diverse population of faith communities. The article is likewise skilled in connecting

these findings to a useful new way to theorize how people navigate diversity in organizations.

What impressed us most in Lichterman and Eliasoph's “Civic Action” is its capacity to draw our attention to something so big and so familiar—the idea of the civic—and to craft a theoretical perspective that renders it new and generative in unexpected ways. Broadly, the article suggests a turn from seeing the civic as a distinct institutional sector to a mode of action that we should expect to see cropping up across many different sectors. According to this perspective, the potential for “the civic” is everywhere, leading to the problems of “where does it come from?” and “how to know it?” The answer the article provides is that we should look to “scene styles” to locate and understand the civic. The flexible concept of “scene styles” attends to how actors coordinate action in scenes defined by collective assumptions about what is going on. Lichterman and Eliasoph use this concept to analyze two cases of civic action in depth, but then go on to use their observations to describe how scene styles can be a powerful platform for analyzing civic action across multiple contexts and in potentially unexpected places, whenever the civic scene style emerges in collectively defined situations. Beyond the civic, scene styles is a rich concept for analyzing the sorts of situations that shape and define all kinds of collective action, and a valuable new tool for conceptualizing how social environments are structured and in turn structure interaction.

The articles are both terrific and I think that I speak for the whole committee in encouraging everyone to read them if they haven't yet.

My thanks to Ming-Cheng Lo and Rhys Williams for their work as members of the committee, and thanks also to all who submitted their articles for consideration.

## 2017 CULTURE AWARD NOMINATIONS

**Committees are currently accepting nominations for the Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book, the Clifford Geertz Award for Best Article, and the Richard A. Peterson Award for Best Student Paper. For details and submission requirements, see page 20 or visit our website at <https://asaculturesection.org/2016/11/15/2017-culture-awards-committees-calls/>.**

## RICHARD A. PETERSON AWARD FOR BEST STUDENT PAPER

**By Terry McDonnell, University of Notre Dame**

Monica Bell, Ruth Braunstein and I served as the Richard Peterson Prize committee this year, and we had a difficult task. If this pool of papers from young scholars is any indication, we can say with confidence that the state of the culture section is strong. From this incredibly strong group, we picked two superlative papers for the prize this year.

**Holly Campeau's "The Right Way, the Wrong Way, and the Blueville Way: How Cultural Match Matters for Standardization in the Police Organization"**

and

**Hannah Wohl's "Community Sense: The Cohesive Power of Aesthetic Judgement."**

Holly Campeau's "The Right Way, the Wrong Way, and the Blueville Way" demonstrates the importance and fruitfulness of bridging cultural sociology with other subfields, in this case research on criminal justice. Campeau's rich ethnographic account of the culture of a police force offers an important behind-the-scenes view into how organizations resist efforts to standardize procedures across departments. Campeau draws on the concept of cultural matching from DiMaggio and Rivera to account for local police's notion of the "Blueville Way"—the way policing has always been done around here—to suggest there is a cultural "mis-match" between expected standards and local practices. Blueville police see themselves as facing different challenges than their provincial counterparts, believing that their "methods" get the job done and to move to new standards would cause harm. They are focused on expediency, even if it means violating procedural standards like the need for warrants. This mismatch has a history in the department's reputation as a renegade department and the position of the precinct in a working class city that justify an informal and aggressive style. Campeau argues that this mismatch led to the establishment of the Blueville police's own distinct informal procedural standards which have local support from the

community. In this way, the imposition of standards reify commitment to alternatives. This excellent paper makes important contributions to the growing work on cultural matching and standards as cultures literatures and makes us rethink how reform plans should be implemented—rethinking how public policies get instituted in practice.

Hannah Wohl's "Community Sense," published in *Sociological Theory* in 2015, returns to what used to be cultural sociology's "bread and butter" with a study of the production and reception of culture in art worlds. Wohl conducts an ethnography of sensual figure drawing sessions at an erotic arts club, where she observes how face-to-face aesthetic judgements about peers' artworks powerfully shapes group belonging. Central to this argument is Wohl's development of Arendt's concept of "community sense." Community sense emerges interactively through people's expression of tastes and other's confirmation or denial of those tastes. Wohl shows us how community sense emerges and stabilizes through the production of erotic art and evaluation of other artists' work. At the Storyville Social Club, the community had a taste for erotic art that told a story and expressed emotional intimacy and wasn't shocking for the sake of being shocking or political or merely used to arouse. This community sense then validates or invalidates people's participation with the group. In one telling example, a nude image of a young woman seemingly trapped under a sheet leave some in the group cold. One woman expressed concern that the woman looked underage and that it raised uncomfortable issues of consent. When the piece was praised by one of the club's leaders, she felt her understanding of community sense destabilize and she wondered if she really belonged. Wohl's examination of taste, identity, and group belonging makes important contributions to culture beyond the artworld. The concept of community sense is in important dialogue with Eliasoph and Lichterman's concept of group style, and, in my mind, is now an essential consideration for the study for group culture, interaction, and identity.

### CALL FOR PAPERS AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION 2017

Submissions are due by January 11, 2017 at 3:00 pm EST. For full details, visit our website at <https://asaculturesection.org/2016/11/15/call-for-submissions-asa-2017/>.



# Conference Reports

## Cultural Capital in the 21st Century

(American Sociological Association Meeting, Seattle, WA, Aug. 21, 2016)



**Dustin S. Stoltz,**  
**University of Notre Dame**

In a thought-provoking invited session on “Cultural Capital in the 21st Century,” organizer **Alexandra Kowalski** (Central European University) posed the question: How have the unique historical and cultural con-

ditions of late modernity affected the “normal” functioning of cultural capital? Kowalski suggests viewing cultural capital not as a hypothesis to be tested but rather as a heuristic concept from which to better grasp our historical and cultural moment. The session met her call by considering how cultural capital is shaped by key global trends: spreading financialization and marketization; advances in, and proliferation of, communication technologies; rapid increase in inequality and the rise of a new global elite; and the decline of nation states as sources of social support and citizenship. From such a vantage point, papers illustrated the continued theoretical purchase of cultural capital as a concept, while revealing that distinction and the conditions of social stratification have transformed considerably since Pierre Bourdieu first used it to theorize symbolic inequalities in France.

**Ashley E. Mears** (Boston University) offered a glimpse into the global circuit of VIP leisure where even a seat at the (literal) table may cost up to \$5,000. Drawing on new multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in exclusive nightclubs around the world, her project attempts to answer the question: How do rich people signal their status as members of the global elite? For this invited session, her talk examined the situational production of “conspicuous waste” through public displays of excess, which are collectively organized accomplishments. She discussed the carefully planned infrastructure facilitating men and women’s participation in the “VIP potlatch.”

The paper raised two questions about cultural capital in the twenty-first century. One concerns the distinction projects of a new global elite that seems quite different from its disinterested upper-class counterpart in Bourdieu’s work. The other

concerns the money spent on VIP “potlatch,” which is seen as “disgusting” or “ridiculous” not only by the public, the “girls,” and club promoters, but also by the big spenders themselves. Mears addresses these questions by suggesting that this is indeed a *new* global elite with a distinct logic of cultural capital accumulation. Status is produced less through disinterestedness than through *deservingness*. Discussant **Jean-Louis Fabiani** (Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) responded to Mears’ contribution with the following question: If the VIP party circuit is a stage on which rich people signal their status in an increasingly internationalized world, what is the form of the capital, and how is it accumulated?

For Bourdieu, cultural capital was inherently difficult to observe and measure - not least because

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it is primarily embodied in individuals. **Kieran Healy** (Duke University) and **Marion Fourcade** (University of Berkeley) pointed out that what

used to be a sociologist’s methodological concern has become a practical consideration for businesses as they seek to extract profit from the integration and standardized scoring of the innumerable digital traces left behind by our mundane daily activities. The collection, compression, comparison, and consolidation of our digital lives make, they argue, for a “supercharged form of capital.” In this paper (and in an article entitled “Seeing like a market,” forthcoming in *Socio-Economic Review*), the authors coin the concept of “übercapital” to refer to this meta-cultural symbolic capital.

Digital scores quantify aspects of a person’s behavior that often evade precise measurement. They allow markets to “see” people in new ways and to extract value accordingly. In other words, Fourcade and Healy argue, companies are now able to “capitalize on the habitus” by offering

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## Can Cultural Sociology be an Interscience?

(American Sociological Association Meeting, Seattle, WA, Aug. 21, 2016)

**Marshall A. Taylor, University of Notre Dame**

Two of the most influential appraisals of cultural sociology over the past twenty years claim that the future of the discipline rests on researchers' abilities to think outside the boundaries of sociology and make use of

relevant insights from cognitive anthropology, cognitive psychology, and social psychology, among others. These papers—Paul DiMaggio's "Culture and Cognition" (1997) and Orlando Patterson's "Making Sense of Culture" (2014)—make clear that the future of cultural sociology rests in its ability to be a contributing member in a growing transdisciplinary cultural "interscience." In the time since these publications, have researchers heeded this call? To what extent is there agreement among practicing cultural sociologists that this is indeed the healthiest path forward?

This was the topic of a 2016 ASA Annual Meeting paper session organized by **Omar Lizardo** (Notre Dame), titled "Can Cultural Sociology Be an Interscience?" The panel consisted of some of the most promising, up-and-coming scholars in cultural sociology today: **M B. Fallin Hunzaker**, **Corey M. Abramson**, **Amir Goldberg**, **Ben Carrington**, **Kimberly Brooke Rogers**, and **Andrew Miles**. Professor **Orlando Patterson** offered a post-panel discussion. The general sentiment across the panel (perhaps unsurprisingly) was that cultural sociology *can* and *should* be a key node in this transdisciplinary enterprise—though there was some disagreement on what actually should (or does) constitute such a cultural interscience.

Though each panelist had unique insights, two general points could be extracted from the panel—one reflecting a general sense of agreement and the other reflecting variation in proposals for ways forward. The first is that *transdisciplinary communication helps address perennial issues and ambiguities in cultural sociology*. The second is that *the notion of just what this interscience is or should be is not agreed upon, which leads to varying thoughts on where cultural sociology is or*

*should be in the enterprise*. I briefly address each in turn below.

First, the panelists generally agreed that transdisciplinary reading and collaboration is a "good thing"—especially insofar as these efforts provide new food for thought for addressing tired questions in cultural sociology. For instance, **M. B. Fallin Hunzaker** suggests that work in the cognitive social sciences helps us see that questions regarding the "stability" or "instability" of culture in everyday life are perhaps misplaced; instead, she suggests that culture is "dynamically stable": i.e., while individuals are generally quite bad at *replicating* cultural information, they tend to fill in subsequent ambiguities by acquiring incoming information that is in line with their frequently-activated cognitive schemas. Individuals, then, tend to act creatively (which might be construed observationally as "unstable") *in the service* of maintaining cohesion in cultural meaning. Goldberg makes a similar point by suggesting that cultural sociologists take seriously the culture-as-distribution framework from cognitive psychology (and anthropology) to reinvigorate the formal analysis of cultural structures. Incorporating these insights, Goldberg suggests, allows us to not only focus attention on the oft-neglected forms and functions of large-scale cultural systems, but to

also generate predictive models for how individuals might be distributed within such a system across a population.

Though the notion of a cultural interscience was received with praise, there were also varying opinions on what this effort should look like in practice. Perhaps the most critical assessment came from Carrington, who argues that a

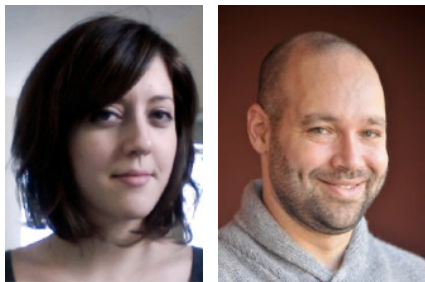
cultural interscience already exists in cultural sociology outside of the United States: namely cultural studies, a joint social science and humanities endeavor aimed at documenting the political implications of culture as a mechanism of "identity, representation, and power" (to paraphrase Carrington). Professor Carrington questions why this conversation should be initiated and anchored by these two papers in particular (DiMaggio 1997; Patterson 2014), wonders if leaving out works unrelated to the cognitive social sciences "reflects a hubris" in American cultural sociology, and raises

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## 10th Annual Junior Theorists Symposium (Seattle, WA, August 19, 2016)



**Anna Skarpelis**, New York University, and **Clayton Childress**, University of Toronto

The tenth Junior Theorists' Symposium (JTS) was organized by **Anna Skarpelis** (NYU) and **Clayton Childress** (Toronto) held at the Seattle University on Friday, August 19, 2016. Three senior discussants, **Ann Mische** (Rutgers University), **Tukufu Zuberi** (University of Pennsylvania) and **Maya Charrad** (University of Texas), provided trenchant comments on the work of nine junior scholars.

**Dan Menchik** (Michigan State) kicked off the first panel with a theory of professional status competition drawn from ethnographic observations of how professionals evaluate each other. (We kept close tabs on him at all subsequent ASA networking events). **Linsey Edwards Drummonds** (Princeton) presented work on time-use as a neighborhood-effect, convincingly arguing that temporal patterns influence opportunity structures. **Shai Dromi** (Har-

vard) and **Sam Stabler** (Yale) returned our gaze to the profession by suggesting that sociologists often grapple with the ethics of the discipline and its impact on society, even in seemingly mundane sociological research.

In the second panel **Abigail Sewell** (Emory) returned to the neighborhood level to show racial disparities in health are rooted in political-economic processes such as residential segregation by race. **katrina quisumbing king** (Wisconsin-Madison) showed that despite the rising citation count for Du Bois's concept of the color line, his emphases on the importance of imperialism and colonialism have been passed over. **Sunmin Kim** (Berkeley) looked at the work of the Dillingham Commission and suggested a theory of *contingent racial formation* to better understand the development of racial projects characterized by the gap between a racial ideology and its practical application.

**Anya Degensheim** (Northwestern) opened the third panel by retheorizing our understanding of risk through an analysis of terrorist entrapment cases. **Patrick Bergemann** (Columbia) looked at how cooperation between people and authorities happen in repressive regimes, helping us better to under-

stand denunciation and attendant processes. Lastly, **Chris Rea** (UCLA) looked to what he terms *market reconstruction* processes, which he used to explain broad institutional shifts towards regulatory marketization in environmental regulation.

**Claudio Benzecry** (Northwestern) was this year's winner of the Theory Section's Junior Theorist Award, and presented parts of his ongoing multi-site ethnography. His talk, *The world at her fit: Scale-making, uniqueness and standardization* looked at the global production of standards in shoemaking. Benzecry followed the object—the shoe—to reconstruct the process contained within it, and on his way along the global commodity chain spoke to brands, designers and so-called fit models from Dongguan to Brazil.

We invited **Christopher Bail** (Duke), **Tey Meadow** (Columbia), **Ashley Mears** (Boston University) and **Frederick Wherry** (Yale) for our after-panel, who had a rousing discussion on the relationship between theory and method. JTS will continue next year under the leadership of katrina quisumbing king and Shai Dromi. The call for submissions is forthcoming, and we hope to see you in Montréal for the 11th JTS!

### CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: 2017 Junior Theorists Symposium

Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 11, 2017

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: February 20, 2017**

We invite submissions of extended abstracts for the 11th Junior Theorists Symposium (JTS), to be held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on August 11th, 2017, the day before the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA). The JTS is a one-day conference featuring the work of up-and-coming sociologists, sponsored in part by the Theory Section of the ASA. Since 2005, the conference has brought together early career-stage sociologists who engage in theoretical work, broadly defined. For full details, [click here](http://asaculturesection.org).

## New Directions in Culture and Cognition - A Mini-conference (Eastern Sociological Society Meeting, Boston, March 19, 2016)



**Karen A. Cerulo, Rutgers University, and Daina Cheyenne Harvey, College of the Holy Cross**

The 2016 meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society held an exciting mini-conference entitled “New Directions in Culture and Cognition.” We invited submissions that address four general topics to be covered in this daylong conference on culture and cognition:

- 1) New ways of theorizing cognition
- 2) New ways of measuring thought
- 3) Dialoguing with Cognitive Science: Is there or isn't there common ground?
- 4) Cutting edge empirical work in culture and cognition

Seventeen papers were selected for the conference. In session one, “Theorizing Cognition,” **Karen Cerulo** (Rutgers), **Omar Lizardo** (Notre Dame) and **Sameer B. Srivastava** (Berkeley) offered some new perspectives. Cerulo began the session by summarizing the state of knowledge on embodied cognition and suggesting areas in which embodied cognition theory could inform the sociological study of cognition. She used her research on olfactory meaning to illustrate her points. Lizardo presented a rich theoretical model by which the idea of “social mechanisms” could come to play a valuable role in a multilevel systems approach to culture and cognition. Srivastava concluded the panel, suggesting a “merger” of network structural and cultural perspectives. He used this fusion to develop a theory of how structural and cultural embeddedness jointly relate to individual attainment within organizations.

In the second session, “Measuring Culture and Cognition,” **Gabe Ignatow** introduced a long-term project he is working on with **Nicholas Evangelopoulos** and **Kelly Roberts** at the University of North Texas. In their work they use user-generated textual responses to evaluate situated cognition. They use the responses to analyze:

- 1) differences in perceptions and definitions of ob-

stacles to women's advancement in STEM/SBS departments at the University of North Texas based on institutional position and gender, and 2) changes in problem understandings over time. In her project on welfare and poverty, **Mary Beth Fallin Hunzaker** (Duke) uses Paul DiMaggio's work on schemas to develop and test a new concept-association-based method for collecting schema data. She examines partisan schemas of poverty and finds that there are both similarities and key differences, namely group associations with minority identities. **Terrence McDonnell** (Notre Dame), likewise focuses on methods for examining cognitive processes. Building off of his work on cultural entropy, the paper he presented looked at how people work in groups to produce objects and how groups analyze and make sense of those objects. **Andrew Miles** (Toronto) tackled the issue of how best to measure automatic cognition. His paper focused on three different survey-based approaches. In particular, he administered forced choice survey responses, forced choice responses given while attention is distracted, and an affective misattribution procedure (AMP). He found that AMP worked best and that some of the practical barriers to doing AMP in surveys can be overcome by “filling in” scores for respondents by using multiple imputation. Finally, **Hana Shepherd** (Rutgers), using patterns of relationships between attitudinal measures, focused on cognitive schemas and fertility-related behaviors. Shepherd looked at two types of methods for studying cognitive associations to see if they fared better than conventional methods of analyzing attitudinal data.

The third session, “Interdisciplinary Dialogs on Cognition: Learning From One Another”, focused on the perils and promises of working in and with interdisciplinary settings and colleagues. **Maria Islas** (Denver) and **Karen Danna** (Morris) focused on their experiences of being sociologists working on cognitive processes where mind/brain conversations were often limited because of disciplinary assumptions. **Jacob Strandell** (Copenhagen) also looked at the chasm between cognitive science and the sociology of culture. In his work he focused on uniting seemingly disparate cultural schemas with cognitive schemas. His goal is to unite the two to bring different disciplinary work together. **Paul Thagard** (Waterloo) also looked to extend new neural theories in cognition to culture. His work focused on emotion in

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# Symposium: Recent Advances in the Sociology of Culture

## An Introduction by Shamus Khan, Colombia University



It is with great pleasure that I introduce these three essays, from a panel at the August 2016 American Sociological Association Meeting. They represent the depth and breadth of work in the sociology of culture. I invited Claire Alexander, Andrei Boutyline, Omar Lizardo, and Andrea Voyer to present on their current work. I thank Culture Section chair Jennifer Lena for inviting me to organize this panel, and providing me with guidance for constituting a panel on “Recent Advances in the Sociology of Culture.”

The works of Alexander, Boutyline, and Voyer, collected here, represent different methodological approaches to the study of culture, as well as different ways in which culture can be deployed to understand social phenomena. Each takes on a classic question of set of questions that scholars of culture have been grappling for decades.

**Claire Alexander** begins by focusing clearly on the relationship between culture and race and ethnicity. Her perspective moves us away from some of the pitfalls of approaches undertaken among American scholars, who seem stuck in the mire of cultures of poverty. Alexander pivots away from this morass, focusing on developments within Britain, particularly based upon the work of Stuart Hall. She gives us a wonderful analogy of the “Goldilocks approach to cultural difference,” where groups either have too much (bad) culture or not enough (good) culture. Drawing upon fieldwork that has followed Black and Asian men who have been in gangs for over 20 years, Alexander’s work both helps transform our understanding of culture, and challenge the focus on cultural explanations for some social processes.

**Andrei Boutyline** similarly challenges us to think about culture differently, taking on the relationship between culture and meaning. He builds upon John Martin’s work, which suggests that humans are likely unable to encode and recall large complex meaning systems (even though sociologists often presume that they are). Boutyline slightly challenges (or better, amends) Martin’s argument, and then models the idea that culture logics are actually simple associative relationships rather than complex matrices of meaning; he tests this using survey data. His sophisticated techniques support his own (and to a degree, Martin’s) supposition that there isn’t a lot of complexity in how people relate to and deploy culture.

Finally, **Andrea Voyer** focuses our attention on the relationship between culture and inequality. Yet she wants us to transcend our reliance on group boundaries, cultural capital, reproduction, and instead focus on a “primary division” between those who are believed to be fundamentally better or worse. Voyer’s is a radical, yet subtle argument about the role that moral standards play in inequality. In our current political environment, it’s also one that demands to be engaged with.

Overall these three papers represent why the sociology of culture is one of the most popular areas in the discipline: it continues to grapple with big questions, and provide new answers to them using new and innovative methods. I thank Claire, Andrei, Andrea, Omar, and the discussant, **Fabien Accominotti**, for providing such a rich discussion, which readers can partially recall, revisit, and enjoy on these pages.

**Overall these three papers represent why the sociology of culture is one of the most popular areas in the discipline: it continues to grapple with big questions, and provide new answers to them using new and innovative methods.**

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# Raceing Culture, Culturing Race: Gangs, Grooming, and Growing Up in the UK

By Claire Alexander, University of Manchester

## Introduction: the culture question in Britain



My research for the past twenty-five years has focused on racial and ethnic identities in Britain, with a particular focus on Black and Asian young men in London (1996, 2000). As an ethnographer, my interest has always been at the micro-level—on the textures and encounters of everyday life, and on the ways in which these experiences and identities are shaped at the intersection with the raced, gendered and classed structures which constrain them. My work has been strongly influenced by the theories of Stuart Hall, and particularly his insistence on the inseparability of structure and culture, the role of power and the possibilities of resistance and ‘play’. It is now nearly 30 years since Hall first published his iconoclastic “new ethnicities” piece, which heralded “the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject” (1992: 254) and the emergence of a new cultural politics of difference; however, the theoretical and political consequences of his radical dislocation of culture have never been fully reckoned with. At the same time, ‘the culture question’ has remained a vexed one for the understanding of race and ethnicity in Britain. Work on ‘cultural identities’ which has focused on increasingly narrow, inward-looking, transient and fragmented

configurations of subjectivities, meanings, and practices has proliferated, while the public and political discourse remains one predicated on the idea of ‘culture’ and cultural (for which read racial, ethnic, and religious) difference as autonomous, inherent, intransigent, and, largely, antithetical. Both approaches work to uncouple ‘culture’ from the broader social, political and historical contexts in which it takes shape.

## Imagining ‘the Gang’: race, religion and culture

My presentation at this year’s ASA Cultural Sociology panel focused particularly on this second manifestation of ‘culture’—that in public and political discourse. Tracing the construc-

**Tracing the construction of ‘the gang’ as a contemporary moral panic, I examined the ways in which the idea of ‘culture’ is conflated with racial and ethnic difference to frame discourses around urban violence and dangerous masculinities.**

tion of ‘the gang’ as a contemporary moral panic, I examined the ways in which the idea of ‘culture’ is conflated with racial and ethnic difference to frame discourses around urban violence and dangerous masculinities. This seemed a particularly apposite lens, not only because of its current resonance on both sides of the Atlantic in terms of the ongoing institutional and state violence against black men, as reflected in the #BlackLivesMatter campaign, but also because ‘the gang’ in its current popular incarnation in Britain has been

largely imported wholesale from American urban sociology (and TV) complete with its highly racialized dimensions and understandings. In fact, in 2009, then Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling claimed that “in many parts of British cities, *The Wire* has become a part of real life,” importing a “culture of deprivation, harm, addiction and failure” and creating “a nightmare of drugs, gangs and organised crime” (*Guardian* 25/8/2009).

My talk argued three main points about ‘the gang’: first, ‘the gang’ is centrally predicated on the intersection of race, ethnicity and culture—and increasingly, religion and culture. This can be clearly seen in two opposing but inextricable discourses on black and South Asian Muslim ‘gangs’. Second, that this label—and the racial fantasy landscape it conjures—allows us to categorise, simplify, demonize and discard a complex and entrenched set of issues around racism, inequality, conflict, and identity. Third, that the privileging of two different, opposed, but equally pathologized and pathologizing accounts of ‘culture’ provides a powerful and convenient alibi for broader and deeper processes of racism and structural neglect.

I offer here a couple of examples. The first is drawn from the moral panic around black-on-black teenage murders, which reached its peak in terms of media, political, and policy concern between 2007 and 2008 (Alexander 2008). This violence, which accounted for 185 teenage murders in London between 2005 and 2015

(<http://www.citizensreportuk.org/reports/teenage-murder-london.html>)—mainly minority ethnic young men—was largely understood as a ‘problem’ of ‘black culture’. The *Daily Mail*, for example, wrote of the murder of 15-year-old Alex Mulumba in March 2006, that “far from being innocent, he was another victim of the destructive gang culture in Britain’s inner cities”, “Brought up on an unrelenting diet of ‘gangsta rap’ music and violent video games...adrift in a subculture built around instant gratification through sex, drugs and crime”. The following year, then Prime Minister Tony Blair stated, “The black community... need to be mobilised in denunciation of this gang culture that is killing innocent black kids. But we won’t stop this by pretending it isn’t young black kids doing it” (*Daily Express*, 2007). In 2011, when the UK saw national riots, the idea of gangs and the incipient threat posed by ‘black culture’ received a post-racial makeover on national TV by Tudor historian turned contemporary cultural critic, David Starkey, who claimed:

the problem is that the whites have become black. A particular sort of violent, destructive, nihilistic gang culture has become the fashion and black and white boys and girls operate in this language together (*Guardian*, 2011).

The second formation, the Asian ‘gang’, appeared as a folk devil first in the early 1990s. In 1996, around the time I had just started my research on Asian youth in London, an article appeared in the *Evening Standard* heralding “Asian Teenage Gangs Terrorising London”—“a new underclass of illiterates, who have acquired a habit of violence” and “vicious schoolboy tribal wars”. In addition to the usual racial markers, there are some

cultural inflections—these are young men of “poor peasant stock”, whose parents are illiterate, who live in overcrowded and substandard housing, and whose command of English is poor, who are alienated from the older generation and caught between two worlds. The same arguments were rehearsed after the 2001 riots, and then, after the War on Terror, morphed into ‘the Muslim gang’ and assumed the more threatening mantle of ‘home grown’ terrorism. More recently still, ‘the Muslim gang’ has transformed again into the moral panic around ‘grooming’, and deviant cultures have been central to these discussions. To turn again to ‘gang-expert’ David Starkey, these men were “acting within their own cultural norms”, with values “entrenched in the foothills of the Punjab or wherever it is” and needed “to be inculcated in the British way of doing things” (*Guardian* 2012).

These two constructions are linked in their framing of dangerous and foreign cultures and identities. Tellingly, former Metropolitan police commissioner Ian Blair commented in 2008 that teenage murders “are the second most difficult issue that London faces behind terrorism” (*The London Paper*) while a report in the *Guardian* in 2009 stated that the MPS Special Branch were linking these threats—fearing that “London’s most notorious teenage criminal gangs are being targeted for recruitment by Islamist extremists” (11/01/09) – and the racial coding of that duality is hardly accidental.

### **Reframing the culture question**

What even this very brief sketch reveals is the way in which ‘culture’ is being wielded—in both different and the same ways—to ‘explain’ ‘gangs’. Different because the construction of the ‘black’ gang and ‘the Asian/Mu-

slim’ gang draw on opposing images of pathology—what I think of as the Goldilocks approach to cultural difference: black young men don’t ‘have’ culture, or not ‘real’ culture, whereas Asian young men have too much culture; black youth are hyper-masculinised, Asian youth hyper-feminised; black cultures are too matriarchal, Asian culture is too patriarchal; black cultures are global and hyper-modern, Asian cultures are backward and rooted in village mentalities... and so on. What remains unsaid, and invisible, of course, is the White ‘norm’ against which these ‘cultures’ are measured and found wanting.

The same because both rely on ‘culture’ as the ur-explanation for violence, and there is a chain of linkages established between culture as a way of life, culture as a form of production and consumption, culture as identity and culture as ethnicity/community—all of which are primarily defined through notions of deviance, of pathology and of failure. And this raises a number of problems:

First, there is the overlapping of culture with ideas of race and very biological notions of ethnicity. The American idea of ‘the gang’ is itself always already a raced concept—and this dimension gets imported as part of the label. In particular we can look at the way in which ‘the black community’ or ‘the Muslim community’ is constructed. With black ‘gangs’, it reduces everyone to a baseline of blackness constructed around a stereotype of ‘the black family’. With Muslims, we have the idea of backward cultures defined through tradition, poor gender norms and poverty—again, these draw explicitly on American ideas of the underclass and cultures of poverty. And because culture is linked to ‘race’, it becomes unchangeable

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# The Unbearable Linearity of Being: Measuring Complexity of “Culture-in-the-Mind”

By Andrei Boutyline, University of California, Berkeley



In this project, I elaborate and test Martin’s contention that an internalized system of meanings—that is, culture-in-the-mind—is unlikely to be complex, “because people are extremely simple” (Martin 2010:229). Sociologists frequently picture culture as a large network of complex meaningful relationships between symbols, and imagine culturally

fluent people cognitively internalizing such structures. In a provocative paper, Martin argues that this is unlikely due to limitations of human cognition. He reviews a substantial literature to make the case that human minds are not well-equipped to encode and recall large complex meaning systems. Here, I revisit this evidence to clarify and extend his argument. I propose that, while human cognition places few limitations on either the size or the connectedness of this system, simplifying properties of memory limit the complexity of the individual *connections* between sets of cultural elements. I further argue that these limitations favor the dominance of simple associative cultural logics of the form “more A fits together with more B”. I thus hypothesize that cultural logics overwhelmingly take this simple form.

I develop an information-theoretic (entropic) technique that lets me test this supposition with survey data. This technique measures how much of the systematic character of relationships between two cultural variables can be accounted for by simple associative logics. While I plan to apply this method to measure complexity across multiple distinct cultural domains, those analyses are still in preparation. Here, I report provisional results from the 2000 *American National Election Study*, which offer support for my argument.

## Simplifying effects of cognition

As scholars since at least Zipf (1949) and Simon (1955) have argued, humans are “cognitive misers” (Taylor 1981), seeking to invest as few cognitive resources into a given task as possible. The effects of these cognitive savings on language, known as Zipf’s law, have been shown to lead to the power-law distributions of word frequencies observed across human languages (Cancho and

Solé 2003). The principle of least cognitive effort also describes the functioning of human memory, which presumably plays a key role in the internalization and reproduction of symbolic systems. As Martin (2010) notes, people have been shown to encode many kinds of stimuli in memory by storing only their key characteristics while discarding the rest. When encoding the memory of, say, a human face or a narrative account, we distill it down to the features that make it distinctive. To recall the stimulus, we then create an approximation by mixing these distinctive characteristics with our internalized schemas of prototypical faces or narratives.

Note that this cognitive process has at least two simplifying properties: it is *reductionist*, in the sense that whole stimuli are broken down into small sets of distinctive characteristics; and it is *generalizing*, in that it gains its efficiency from treating individual objects as variations of a common class of objects. The result is a “lossy compression” (Wolff 1993) that leaves us unable to accurately recall complex stimuli. With memories of human faces, the proverbial cognitive miser would find the savings worth the inaccuracy as long as the memory is accurate enough for the practical task of recognizing other people.

**This technique measures how much of the systematic character of relationships between two cultural variables can be accounted for by simple associative logics.**

In general, cognitive shortcuts tend to work because they match the requirements of the task. For example, the analytical simplicity of basic laws of

physics has been proposed as a key reason why humans as a species can function so well in spite of the many simplifying heuristics used by our perceptual systems (Lin and Tegmark 2016). And, unlike human faces and laws of physics, cultural logics are not just *observed* by cognitive misers,

<sup>1</sup> By “cultural logics”, I mean shared structures specifying the relationship between simpler cultural elements such as symbols, categories, or images.

<sup>2</sup> For reasons of space, I omit discussion of embodied and dispositional aspects of culture-in-the-mind, which face different limitations. See Lizardo and Strand (2010) for overview.



but are *produced* by cognitive misers specifically for interaction with other cognitive misers, and are then repeatedly passed on from cognitive miser to cognitive miser. It thus stands to reason that cultural logics may be especially responsive to the limitations of the cognitive systems used to process them.

The connectionist character of cognitive information storage may be another important source of such limitations. As Martin points out, even such seemingly discrete and holistic entities as memories of single events are internalized as networks of concepts and impressions. Events are encoded as sets of discrete elements tied together by apparent relevance rather than any concrete propositional structure, so that, e.g., “we might remember seeing an auto accident as ‘car’ + ‘crash’ + ‘tree’ + ‘child’ + ‘happened’” (2010:232). When encoded, such experiences create cognitive associations between the elements. So, the car crash in Martin’s example may strengthen (or create) the observer’s association between ‘tree’ and ‘crash’, or between ‘car’ and the negative affect of witnessing this event. Since people can easily confuse false memories of imagined events with memories of their actual experience (e.g., Thomas and Loftus 2002), events that people “witness” within literature and film are likely represented largely the same way as actual experiences. In connectionist models of cognition, all or most of cognitively internalized contents are thought to be stored in such an associative network.

The well-established “question-answering” model of political survey response (Zaller 1992) provides a good example of how internalized cultural logics come into play within such a system. In Zaller’s model, which I phrase here in connectionist terms, a person confronted with a question about his or her attitude on some topic begins a largely non-conscious mental search of possible “considerations” that can be used to answer it. Such considerations include group stereotypes, pieces of discourse, emotionally laden images, and the like. This search begins with the considerations immediately activated by the question, and those already salient due to external factors. The activation spreads stochastically along the network of associations, increasing the salience of related considerations, until enough apparently suitable considerations are activated to sway the respondent to one answer.

The common view of cultural logics pictures them as *discursive* arrangements of cultural elements. Since language can integrate entities in varied and intricate ways, this discursive character would allow cultural logics to be varied and complex. But observe that, in contrast to this common

view, discourses feature in this model primarily not as *arrangements* of objects, but rather as the *objects* being arranged within a heterogeneous network of verbal and nonverbal elements. The job of arranging the cultural elements is handled entirely by the network of associative links itself. In other words, if cultural logics are defined as “arrangements of cultural elements”, then cultural logics likely consist of simple associative links.

Martin summarizes his argument by stating that culture-in-the-mind is likely to be simple because “our minds are not good at holding lots of connected things in them” (2010:229). But the evidence I highlight above suggests that people do hold vast *numbers* of connected objects in memory. These connections, however, are associative links that resemble simple probabilistic judgments of relevance or similarity, rather than complex discursive ties (a point Martin also makes, p. 232). The internalized objects themselves may also be generally simplified due to the “lossy” properties of memory. It thus appears more accurate to conclude that *the key limitation that human cognition places on culture-in-the-mind comes from the simplicity of connections between objects stored in memory*, as well as the tendency of memory to simplify the objects themselves.

If cultural logics are indeed cognitively represented as associative links between cognitively internalized objects, their structure would also best lend itself to encoding simple pairwise entailments. These are entailments like “A implies B”, “A implies not B”, “more A implies more B”, or “more A implies less B”, where “implies” is shorthand for a class of simple associative relationships including “fits together with” and “resembles”. If A and B can be represented by interval variables, these simple entailments would yield approximately linear relationships between them. The cultural simplicity hypothesis thus implies that relationships between cultural variables should generally be linear.

### Empirical Test

In this project, I plan to test this proposition across a broad range of cultural domains. Here, I begin this examination with the 46 political attitude items from the 2000 ANES. These cover a broad range of politically-relevant topics including limited government, gay rights, inequality, abortion, military spending, gun rights, environmentalism, moral relativism, gender equality, anti-black racism, foreign aid, immigration, and welfare. For details, see Boutyline and Vaisey (conditionally accepted).

Imagine a scatterplot where points represent people and the axes represent possible attitudes

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# A Cultural Sociology of Social Inequality

By Andrea Voyer, University of Connecticut



During the 2016 ASA meeting, I had the pleasure of participating in an invited panel entitled

“New Directions in the Sociology of Culture”. The following essay is a brief version of the presentation I gave on my ongoing work on the cultural sociology of social inequality. In earlier studies on Somali immigrant inclusion in a historically white Maine town and immigrants in Swedish high schools, and in current research on the dynamics of inequality in face-to-face egalitarian settings and the construction of group boundaries through rules of etiquette, I have developed a cultural sociological approach to the study of social inequality.

I argue that inequality arises in the intersubjective construction of a bounded civil solidarity encompassing the individuals and groups who are believed or established by working consensus to be, in their deepest essence, worthy, acceptable and consonant with group morals and principles. This civil solidarity excludes other individuals and groups who, in working consensus, are marked as polluted, inadequate, and fundamentally dissonant with closely held social values (Alexander 2006). Unlike typical approaches which study social inequality by focusing on existing group boundaries and practices, cultural capital, and social reproduction, cultural sociological investigation of inequality offers a unique focus on this primary division—between

those who are believed to be fundamentally better or worse—upon which all social exclusion rests. This powerful insight, that persistent inequality depends upon the ongoing substantivization, affirmation, and iteration of the working assumption that fundamental differences in value distinguish social groups fun-

**I argue that inequality arises in the intersubjective construction of a bounded civil solidarity encompassing the individuals and groups who are believed or established by working consensus to be, in their deepest essence, worthy, acceptable and consonant with group morals and principles.**

damentally, leads cultural sociologists to uncover baseline mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion shaping the contours of and legitimating the existence of social inequality at multiple levels of analysis—from face-to-face interaction to large scale public discourse.

## Theoretical Foundation of a Cultural Approach to Inequality

According to Durkheim and Mauss (2009 [1963]), classification is inherently a social process in which the structure of social relations (e.g. distances, economic ties, political influence) also forms the basis of the character of classificatory systems. Tied as they are to the symbolic aspects of society and collective consciousness, systems of classification are not grounded in characteristics of the things that are classified, but instead reflect collective sentiment:

Things are above all sacred or profane, pure or impure, friends or enemies, favoura-

ble or unfavourable; i.e. their most fundamental characteristics are only expressions of the way in which they affect social sensibility. The differences and resemblances which determine the fashion in which they are grouped are affective rather than substantive (Durkheim and

Mauss 2009 [1963]: p:50).

The key insight Durkheim and Mauss provide for the present discussion is this: because systems of classification are fundamentally affective, they are also inherently hierarchical. In any given time and place, actively-used social categories are based on a socio-emotional distinction (e.g. closer/more distant, more similar/more distinct) that implies a corresponding affective relative value.

To follow this insight is to assume that active social categorizations and classifications of people name and justify the content-neutral application of a social boundary that is grounded in a fundamental belief in the existence of social distinctions and an affective sense of the value differences between groups that are thereby distinguished. Belief in, or perhaps more appropriately, the *feeling* that there are systematic differences between people and that those differences reflect variations in value is foundational to inequality on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nativity, attractiveness, etc.

Put another way, a boundary between groups (e.g. racial groupings) only represents and

generates social inequality when it rests upon a higher-order symbolic division between the “sacred or profane, pure or impure, friends or enemies, favourable or unfavourable.” This fundamental division is the distinction drawn between those who are seen as deserving and those who are not, those who are recognized as belonging and those who do not, those who are believed to be capable of living in consonance with important social values and those who are not. While most research on social inequality focuses on a particular axis of inequality while leaving the foundation of inequality itself unexamined, a cultural sociology of inequality takes aim at these foundational processes that make inequality as a fact of social life possible.

### **Modelling the Cultural Processes of Inequality**

First order cultural processes of inequality consist of four component parts: 1. the symbolic construction of civil boundaries on the basis of core moral values; 2. reifications of those values in identifiable practices and theories of justification; 3. disciplinary procedures that disseminate folk theories and accepted practices; and 4. disciplinary institutions that maintain the cultural order.

### **Symbolic Boundaries**

If a social group is to enjoy social equality, it must be symbolically included within the boundary of the civil sphere. That is to say, the presence of members of that group must be recognized as unproblematic and group members’ obvious characteristics and identities must be widely considered compatible with the values associated with the social group (Alexander 2006). This aspect of inclusion takes place through the establishment of the meaning of membership-in-context or, as someone in one of my fieldsites

put it, “who we are and where we are” (Voyer 2013b). The social values assigned to the place and its people act as boundaries of belonging, establishing the criterion for social inclusion.

For example, in my research on Somali immigrant incorporation in a Maine town (Voyer 2013b), I observed the emergence and circulation of narratives that defined the city and its residents as a community populated by kind, caring, hard-working people. Unlike conceptions of membership that hinge upon residential tenure or religious or ethnic group affiliation, this definition of the place and its people was inclusive of, or at least not *de facto* exclusive of, Muslim Somali newcomers. Somalis in this town were frequently depicted as family-oriented, hard-working people of faith seeking, like immigrants who had come before them, to realize the American dream.

In contrast to this conception of the good people of that place, in the same community I also observed the symbolic exclusion of those who were not worthy of social membership—people who were unacceptable because they were deemed morally and socially problematic. Establishment of symbolic boundaries hinged upon the construction of the racist-type as a foil to upstanding members of society. “Racists” blamed for stirring up trouble in an otherwise open and caring community were depicted as individuals with cultural attributes typically held in low esteem, such as speaking with heavy Maine accents and using the “wrong” vocabulary by referring to Somalis as Somalians, characteristics more common among those with less education and from lower economic classes.

My theory and the empirical observations on which it is based suggest that inequality hinges less upon the changes in the con-

tent of any given category than the application of the boundaries of belonging (Barth 1969). Instead of being oriented toward particular group differences, symbolic inclusion and exclusion in the civil sphere is primarily oriented toward characterizing the common characteristics of “us” and “not us.” In the case of Somali immigrant inclusion in Maine, symbolic boundary construction did not so much define the various social groupings as narrate and legitimate the moral/symbolic boundaries of civil life.

### **Reifications**

The social inclusion and exclusion upon which inequality rests occurs through the establishment of the symbolic boundaries in the civil sphere. But how does one recognize the “good people” of a “good place” and the people who are “not here” and “not us”? Deep values and the social divisions they evoke are crucial elements of the establishment of social inequality. However, these values are not merely naturally emerging expressions of interior beliefs and meanings. Instead, fundamental values become reified in particular truths and practices that are often mistaken for natural, emergent, and singularly correct expressions of core beliefs. The symbolic boundary of the civil sphere, then, is reified in a generalized worldview that is taken as unquestioned truth (epistemology), and in specific ways of behaving that are given and taken as evidence that one is in possession of the qualities characterizing members of the civil sphere (praxis).

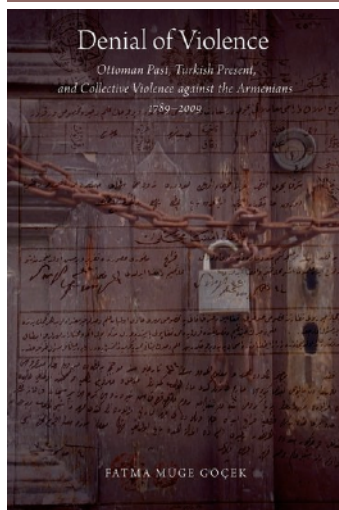
For example, my current research on all 18 editions of Emily Post’s *Etiquette* (1922–2011) focuses on historical changes in the cultural construction of inequality. In *Etiquette*, I observe epistemology and praxis as

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009*  
(2014, Oxford University Press) By Fatma Müge Göçek



**By Nil Uzun, Rutgers University**

In her new book, *Denial of Violence*, Fatma Müge Göçek unravels the historical, structural and emotional elements in the denial of collective violence in Turkey against the Armenians from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire onwards. Göçek's key argument is that denial is a reproductive

and formative process that is normalized and internalized collectively over generations, and therefore involves the state and its practices as well as the collective emotions of society. The book provides an important and very much needed new angle to the existing literature on collective violence by offering a substantial framework for understanding how these structural elements are in interaction with affective elements. It draws on an extensive historical database Göçek constructed from 356 publicly available memoirs written in Turkish. This empirical choice and Göçek's systematic analysis of the autobiographical accounts redirect genocide discussions from an archive-determined discourse to a more nuanced one.

*Denial of Violence* is organized around four chronological periods, with each period centering on events that the denial of collective violence against Armenians draws upon for legitimization. Denial is therefore not presented as a snapshot but as a continuous accumulation. Beginning with the imperial period (1789-1907), which Göçek refers to as "the denial of domestic origins", collective violence was legitimized through the 1896 Ottoman Bank raid by Armenian revolutionaries. Following the intervention of the Great Powers during World War I, the Ottoman officials held the West responsible for the massacres instead of the domestic discontent.

The Young Turk period (1908-1918) constitutes what Göçek calls "the denial of the act", which

was legitimized by holding the Armenian militia responsible for their defeat in the Balkan Wars and resulting deportation of Armenians throughout the empire. She argues that the massacres of the Armenian Genocide constitute the "foundational violence" of the Turkish nation state. Lack of accountability for those crimes in the following early republican period (1919-1973) sustained the normalization of collective violence in Turkey and what Göçek calls "the denial of actors of violence". Many of those perpetrators took part in the Independence War to avoid prosecution and almost all of them remained unpunished. Some of them became members of the Turkish national assembly; few of them were commemorated as heroes in the Turkish nationalist narrative.

Pointing out Hannah Arendt's distinction between the guilt and the responsibility of genocide and shifting the narration more towards her personal recollections, Göçek describes the continuing denial in the late republican period (1974-2007) as "the denial of responsibility for violence". The assassinations of Turkish diplomats and a decade of violent assaults by Armenian radical groups enabled the justification of violence in this period and the denial of it persisted the normalization and legitimization of extralegal collective violence against anyone considered a threat to Turkish national security, such as Kurds, Alewites, Non-Muslims, socialists, and communists. The assassination of Turkish-Armenian intellectual Hrant Dink in 2007 by an ultra-nationalist suggested that collective violence in Turkey will continue unless past violence is recognized. Göçek argues that recognizing it would benefit not only Armenians but also the Turkish state and society in terms of furthering democratization, mending the moral fabric and taking responsibility of past violence to ensure that it will not emerge again in the future (p.463). Interestingly, Göçek mentions Hrant Dink's funeral—during which 200,000 protestors marched either in silence or chanting "We are all Armenians" and "We are all Hrant Dink"—only in a footnote. The book would have benefited from a brief discussion of this event as a

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 30**

Send your proposals for reviews of books, special issues, or other media or events (films, conferences, talks) to the editors. Advanced graduate students interested in working with editors are particularly encouraged to contact us.

## Modern Romance

(2016, Penguin Books) By Aziz Ansari, with Eric Klinenberg



### By Claire Forstie, Northwestern University

Ansari and Klinenberg's *Modern Romance* begins with the romantic existential conundrum faced by urban, young, middle-class Americans in the "late modern" era (Giddens 1991). How does one know where one stands in a relationship? More generally, how does one handle dating and

relationship negotiation these days? The authors' attention to technology as both a facilitator and inhibitor of romantic relationships among straight, middle-class people captures a key tension of the moment: a sense that romantic relationships have been de-institutionalized (Cherlin 2004) even as a sense of uncertainty about their mechanics persists. One strength of Ansari and Klinenberg's book, beyond its humor and readability, is the fact that this tension remains unresolved, even as the authors play with the idea of offering sociologically-informed dating advice to readers. The book's unique combination of rich empirical material, open theoretical questions, and humor-packed readability owes of course largely to the highly unusual yet astoundingly productive collaboration between a sociologist and a comedian who wrote but also researched the subject together. And, most strikingly perhaps, it makes *Modern Romance* into a first-rate teaching support for a range of possible sociology courses.

I can easily imagine, for example, incorporating *Modern Romance* into a sociology of sexuality course, a methods course, an introduction to sociology course, or even a theory course. *Modern Romance* might be assigned alongside more classical sociological theories of intimacy, to assess the applicability of these theories and perhaps discuss where such theorizing should be heading. Ann Swidler's *Talk of Love* (2003) and Anthony Giddens' *Transformation of Intimacy* (1993) offer sociological insights that might be used to assess Ansari and Klinenberg's findings, or perhaps one could use the latter to look back at the former theories, which were formulated before the technological turn that is so central to the problematique of *Modern Romance*.

The ambivalences of modern romance, which become apparent in the interview material, would

also make for interesting discussions. Is modern romance better or worse than it was in the past? Does technology facilitate or inhibit relationships? What does a sociology of dating have to contribute to public debate about values, freedom, equality and other issues? Given the speed of technological change this book might soon become an historical ethnography of dating in the 2010s—a perspective today's students should also bear in mind. Overall an entertaining and sociologically insightful book, its value in the classroom really shines as a tool for discussion, especially when paired with more analytic texts.

Although Ansari and Klinenberg include individuals from a range of national, gender, and race backgrounds in their samples, race and gender dimensions are a secondary concern here. Combining the book with sharp, intersectional analyses of race, gender, sexuality, and dating, like Amy Wilkins' (2012) research on interracial dating among Black college men or Brandon Andrew Robinson's (2015) work on racism in gay online dating practices seems a promising avenue for in-class discussion too. Again, the questions the book raises are key to its interest. What do Ansari and Klinenberg's findings suggest (or not) about dating between LGBTQ folks of all ages, many of whom have long used the internet and mobile technology to connect? How does their discussion of non-monogamous behavior resonate with the explosion of polyamorous relationships, especially among younger city-dwellers? Such are some of these questions.

The efficacy and limitations of Ansari and Klinenberg's methods is another promising subject for discussion. Data sources are broad. They are both qualitative and quantitative, including, for example, focus groups in a variety of countries; interviews with prominent theorists of technology, family, and relationships; messaging and other electronic data from actual, ongoing dating interactions; responses in a Reddit forum dedicated to the topic; data from two major dating websites/apps; and a large amount of data from secondary sources. The summoning of Ansari's skills as an entertainer to conduct "focus groups" the size of a theater's audience is certainly not the least interesting part of the methods mobilized toward this impressive data collection. How does such an approach compare with traditional qualitative methods? How to produce IRB protocols when gathering phone data? And how to use the recent leaks

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

## CULTURE SECTION

**ASA 2017--Call for Submissions** may be consulted [on the Culture Section's website](#). Submissions due January 11, 2017 @3pm EST.

### 2017 CULTURE AWARD COMMITTEES—CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

#### The Sociology of Culture Section's Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book

Section members, authors, or publishers may nominate books published in 2016 or 2017. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the book and its significance, to each of the committee members. Books that do not have an accompanying nomination letter by the deadline will not be considered for the prize. Also, please arrange for the book's publisher to send a copy of the book to each committee member. The deadline for nominations and receipt of books is March 15, 2017.

#### **Send books and nominating letters to:**

Patricia Banks (CHAIR), Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology, 50 College Street, South Hadley, MA 01075

Caroline Lee, A&S Department, OCGE, 43 South College Drive, Lafayette College, Easton, PA 18042

Marcus Hunter UCLA Department of Sociology, Haines 264, 375 Portola Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1551

Ben Carrington, Department of Sociology, The University of Texas at Austin, 305 E 23rd St, A1700, Austin, TX 78712-1086

Zandria Robinson, Department of Sociology, Clough Hall, Rhodes College, 2000 North Parkway, Memphis, Tennessee 38112

#### The Sociology of Culture Section's Clifford Geertz Award for Best Article

Section members may nominate articles and original chapters of edited collections published in 2015-2017 (although not pieces that have previously won a Culture Section award). Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the article and its significance, along with an electronic copy of the article to each member of the prize committee. Articles that are not accompanied by a nomination letter will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is March 15, 2017.

#### **Send submissions to:**

Paul Lichterman (CHAIR), University of Southern California, [lichterm@usc.edu](mailto:lichterm@usc.edu)

Corey D. Fields, Stanford University, [cfields@stanford.edu](mailto:cfields@stanford.edu)

Christina Simko, Williams College, [cs9@williams.edu](mailto:cs9@williams.edu)

Andrea Voyer, University of Connecticut, [andrea.voyer@uconn.edu](mailto:andrea.voyer@uconn.edu)

Richard Wood, University of New Mexico, [rlwood@unm.edu](mailto:rlwood@unm.edu)

#### The Sociology of Culture Section's Richard A. Peterson Award for Best Student Paper

Section members may nominate any work (published or unpublished), written by someone who is a student at the time of submission. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. This award includes a \$300 prize to reimburse part of the cost of attending the 2017 ASA Annual Meeting. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the paper and its significance, along with an electronic copy of the paper to each member of the prize committee. Papers that are not accompanied by a nomination letter will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is March 15th, 2017.

#### **Send submissions to:** [asacsstudentprize@gmail.com](mailto:asacsstudentprize@gmail.com)

Committee members:

Jeffrey Guhin (Chair), University of California, Los Angeles

Fabien Accominotti, London School of Economics

Phillipa K. Chong, McMaster University

Casey Oberlin, Grinnell College

Mark C. Pachucki, University of Massachusetts



**Newsletter editors needed**

The Culture Section is looking to replace the newsletter's editorial team, if possible at the end of this academic year 2016-17. The editor position(s) are awarded on a competitive basis to an editor, or preferably a team of two or three editors, assisted or not by student editorial assistants. They are usually held by academics at relatively early stages of their career. The term is usually two to three years. Please send a brief expression of interest (as a single editor or as a team of 2-3 editors) with, if possible, some indication of objectives (specific topics, improvements, changes, etc.) for the newsletter to section council member Francesco Duina <[fduina@bates.edu](mailto:fduina@bates.edu)> by Feb. 15, 2017.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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### BOOKS

Julie C. Abril. 2016. *Measuring Cultural Values v. Collective Efficacy in a Native American Indian Tribe*, Scholars' Press, an imprint of OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG (Germany). ISBN 978-3-659-84319-8.

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Julie C. Abril. 2016. *Scientific Use of Native American Indian DNA: A Cultural Crime?*. Lambert Academic Publishing, an imprint of OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG (Germany). ISBN 978-3-659-95804-05.

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Corey D. Fields. 2016. [Black Elephants in the Room: The Unexpected Politics of African American Republicans](#). Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Daniel Fridman. 2016. [Freedom from Work: Embracing Financial Self-Help in the United States and Argentina](#). Stanford: Stanford University Press (Culture and Economic Life Series).

Michèle Lamont, Graziella Moraes Silva, Jessica S. Welburn, Joshua Guetzkow, Nissim Mizrachi, Hanna Herzog & Elisa Reis. 2016. [Getting Respect: Dealing with Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel](#). Princeton University Press.

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Paul McLean. 2016. [Culture in Networks](#). Polity Press.

Josh Pacewicz. 2016. [Partisans and Partners. The Politics of the Post-Keynesian Society](#). University of Chicago Press.

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Joachim Savelsberg. 2015. [Representing Mass Violence](#). University of California Press. Open access-online edition at <<http://www.luminosoa.org/site/books/detail/3/representing-mass-violence/>>.

Benjamin H. Snyder. 2016. [The Disrupted Workplace: Time and the Moral Order of Flexible Capitalism](#). New York: Oxford University Press.

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Robert Wyrod. 2016. [AIDS and Masculinity in the African City: Privilege, Inequality, and Modern Manhood](#). University of California Press.

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- Shai M. Dromi. 2016. "Soldiers of the Cross: The Red Cross and the Genesis of the Humanitarian Field." *Sociological Theory* 34, no. 3: 196-219.
- Shai M. Dromi. 2016. "For Good and Country: Nationalism and the Diffusion of Humanitarianism in the Late-Nineteenth-Century." *The Sociological Review* 64, no. S2, 79-97 (special issue "Fielding Transnationalism", edited by Julian Go and Monika Krause).
- Amin Ghaziani, Verta Taylor, and Amy Stone. 2016. "Cycles of Sameness and Difference in LGBT Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 42: 165-83.
- Peter Hart-Brinson. 2016. "The Social Imagination of Homosexuality and the Rise of Same-Sex Marriage in the United States." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*. 2, pp. 1-17, published online open-access February 8: <http://srd.sagepub.com/content/2/2378023116630555.full.pdf+html>.
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- Jordana Matlon. 2016. "Racial capitalism and the crisis of black masculinity." *American Sociological Review* 81(5):1014-1038.
- Michelle Newton-Francis and Gay Young. 2015. "Not Winging it at Hooters: Conventions for Producing a Cultural Object of Sexual Fantasy". *Poetics* 52: 1-17.
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- Robert Wyrod. 2016. "[When Rights Come Home: The Intimate Politics of Women's Rights in Urban Uganda.](#)" *Humanity* 7: 47-70.
- King-To Yeung, and Mahesh Somashekhar. 2016. "[Sensing Agency and Resistance in Old Prisons: A Pragmatist Analysis of Institutional Control](#)" *Theory, Culture & Society* 33(3): 79-101.

## NEW AND SPECIAL ISSUES

**[Queer Methods](#)**. Special issue of *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 44(3-4). Edited by Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani. As Queer Studies experiences a methodological renaissance, we look to the ways that the discipline's inherent resistance, impreciseness, and provocation toward established protocols might affect its development. Thus, this special issue of WSQ reframes the question "what is queer theory?" to "how is the work of queer theory done?" A growing field within academia, this scholarly collection creates a forum for those in the humanities and social sciences to discuss the challenges of applying traditional research methods to LGBTQ populations. All articles are available on Project Muse: <https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/35019>.

**[Mutuality, Health Promotion and Collective Cultural Change](#)**. Special issue of *Social Science and Medicine* edited by Michèle Lamont, Mabel Berezin, Alonzo Plough and Matthew Trujillo. Contents: Mabel Berezin, Michèle Lamont, "Mutuality, mobilization, and messaging for health promotion: Toward collective cultural change"; Matthew D. Trujillo, Alonzo Plough, "Building a culture of health: A new framework and measures for health and health care in America"; Irene Bloemraad, Veronica Terriquez, "Cultures of engagement: The organizational foundations of advancing health in immigrant and low-income communities of color"; Matthew Clair, Caitlin Daniel, Michèle Lamont,

“Destigmatization and health: Cultural constructions and the long-term reduction of stigma”; **Mabel Berezin, Alicia Eads**, “Risk is for the rich? Childhood vaccination resistance and a Culture of Health”; **Steven Epstein**, “The politics of health mobilization in the United States: The promise and pitfalls of ‘disease constituencies’”; **Kushan Dasgupta, Paul Lichterman**, “How a housing advocacy coalition adds health: A culture of claims-making”; **Robert Vargas**, “How health navigators legitimize the Affordable Care Act to the uninsured poor”; **David A. Frederick, Abigail C. Saguy, Kjerstin Gruys**, “Culture, health, and bigotry: How exposure to cultural accounts of fatness shape attitudes about health risk, health policies, and weight-based prejudice”; **Christopher A. Bail**, “Cultural carrying capacity: Organ donation advocacy, discursive framing, and social media engagement”; **Michael Schudson, Burcu Baykurt**, “How does a culture of health change? Lessons from the war on cigarettes”

[American Journal of Cultural Sociology Volume 4 Number 3](#) is now available online **Jason L. Mast**, Action in culture: Act I of the presidential primary campaign in the U.S., April to December, 2015; **Claire Laurier Decoteau** “You can’t eat love”: “Getting by” in South Africa’s informal sexual economy; **Richard Lachmann & Abby Stivers**, The culture of sacrifice in conscript and volunteer militaries: The U.S. Medal of Honor from the Civil War to Iraq, 1861–2014; **Eric Malczewski**, Materiality, iconic nature, and Albert Bierstadt’s “Great Pictures”; **Ori Schwarz & Guy Shani** Culture in mediated interaction: Political defriending on Facebook and the limits of networked individualism.

## AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

**Joachim Savelsberg’s *Representing Mass Violence*** (University of California Press, 2015) received Best Book awards from both the SSSP Theory Division and the ASC International Division.

**Shai M. Dromi’s** 2016 article “**For Good and Country: Nationalism and the Diffusion of Humanitarianism in the Late-Nineteenth-Century**” (*The Sociological Review* 64, no. S2, 79–97 won the ASA’s Global and Transnational Sociology Best Graduate Student Paper Award).

**Joseph Kotarba**, Texas State University, presented the Distinguished Lecture at the annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction on August 20, 2016, in Seattle Washington. The title of his presentation is: “**Integrating the Study of Disparate Phenomena: the Case of the Scientist and Popular Music.**”

## CALLS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND APPLICATIONS

**12 to 15 AIAS-COFUND Marie Curie fellowships** are available at the **Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies**, AIAS, for talented junior and senior researchers from all academic disciplines within this fourth Call for Applications. The application deadline is **3 February 2017**. Commencement dates: 1 October 2017 and 1 February 2018. Read about the fellowship programme, the Guide for Applicants, and AIAS on our website: [www.aias.au.dk](http://www.aias.au.dk); <http://aias.au.dk/aias-fellowships/aias-cofund-fellowships/>

**Culture Section ASA 2017**--Call for Submissions may be consulted [on the Culture Section’s website](#). Submissions due January 11, 2017 @3pm EST.

**The Visual Culture Caucus of the American Studies Association (ASA)** seeks to promote the participation of visual culture scholars at the ASA annual meeting in Chicago on **November 9-12, 2017**. We are looking for papers and panels that investigate or interrogate visual culture in its many forms. Topics might include a variety of visual practices both within and outside the art world, emerging vehicles of expression such as the Internet and social media, methods of studying visual culture, and issues of pedagogy. Applicants are especially encouraged to incorporate the conference theme, “Pedagogies of Dissent.” The ASA’s guidelines can be found at [http://www.theasa.net/annual\\_meeting/page/submit\\_a\\_proposal/](http://www.theasa.net/annual_meeting/page/submit_a_proposal/). Please note that the ASA program committee seeks non-traditional formats as well as conventional ones.

Contact Email: [Robin.Veder@gmail.com](mailto:Robin.Veder@gmail.com)


URL: [http://www.theasa.net/caucus\\_visual/](http://www.theasa.net/caucus_visual/)



## CULTURAL CAPITAL

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

products and services which are “good matches” with an individual’s practical acquired dispositions. As Fabiani put it in his witty response, “markets [are] able to do what Bourdieu could not.” Moreover, these scores gain a moral potency which may compel individuals to “change their lives” so as to increase their übercapital. That is, there is an element of performativity to this new form of capital. Übercapital may not straightforwardly convert into economic capital and conversion may take diverse pathways. In conversation with Fourcade and Healy’s paper, Fabiani leaves us with the query: what should we do with the idea of class in the age of übercapital? Author of the recent *Pierre Bourdieu: Un Structuralisme Heroïque*, Fabiani reminded us that time was an essential aspect of defining cultural capital for Bourdieu. Cultural capital tends to be acquired slowly and resists quick conversion into other species of capital. Attempts to “purchase” cultural capital often betray one’s lack of cultural capital. As Fabiani put it, “one cannot buy it with bottles.” Mears’ presentation suggests that fast situational conversion makes it difficult to tease apart economic and cultural capital among the global elite. Fourcade and Healy’s research points to the increasing speed with which individuals can potentially convert cultural capital into economic gain. The time dimension, Fabiani concluded, is key to the two key questions asked by the panel: Can we witness significant historical changes in the production, accumulation and conversion of cultural capital? And, is there a flaw in the definition of cultural capital or is it these historical shifts that challenge the concept?



## INTERSCIENCE

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

a concern that making cultural sociology an exercise in simply “mapping out how cultural knowledge acquisition works” might lead back to the Parsonian tradition and an unwarranted separation from cultural theories and research outside of the United States.

Other panelists were more sympathetic to the integration of the cognitive social sciences with cultural sociology but nonetheless suggested that some routes forward were more beneficial than others. Miles, for example, pointed out that cultural sociologists have largely adopted an “import model”—meaning that we tend to borrow theories and models from other disciplines—and have not adequately explored the ways in which we can uniquely contribute to the conversation. He suggests an “import-export model” as a better alternative, but also worries that such a model could lead us further from mainstream sociology, and finally advocates for a “collaborative model,” where we work closely with non-sociologists on similar topics of interest and actively publish in transdisciplinary outlets. Professor Abramson echoes this sentiment, calling attention to the fact that outside scholars and policymakers often find cultural sociology too specialized, and, drawing from Weber, suggests that cultural sociology is perhaps too comfortable with the “self-congratulatory narcissism” of modern academia. Finally, within this talk of transdisciplinary relations, Rogers proposes that we take a step back and consider how developing a cultural interscience might be served by “starting at home”: e.g., by integrating formal theories from sociological social psychology to model processes of cultural maintenance and change.

A number of important questions arose at the end of the panel. For example, are we (as cultural sociologists) doing any work to create a “list” of theories, concepts, and/or findings that we want to share with the broader transdisciplinary community? Are journal reviewers sympathetic to cultural interscience in practice? If not, how do we change that? Finally, as Bart Bonikowski pointed out, how do “culture and” studies (e.g., culture and politics) fit into this interscience picture? These questions, of course, are but a few of the many that must be addressed as cultural sociologists attempt to make sense of their position in the interscience field—regardless of what that interscience might look like.

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## NEW DIRECTIONS

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

supra-cultural processes of communication. Finally, **Stephen Vaisey** and **Lauren Valentino** (Duke) used pronoun counts to look at differences in individualist and collectivist moral orientations. They find that this is a promising improvement to relying on self-reports.

In the final session, “New Approaches in the Empirical Study of Culture and Cognition”, **Joseph Bayer** (Michigan) discussed his work on social connectedness. His research looked at “connection cues” and automatic perception that work through connection habits. **Alessandra Lembo** and **Rich Moore** (Chicago), working with **John Martin** (Chicago), looked at ways to measure cultural experiences. Using a variety of methods, from free association drawing to music, they focused on a range of life experiences and meaning making-orientations. **Hwa-Yen Huang** (Rutgers) discussed his work on social disruption and crisis and how, following Cerulo’s (2006) work on positive asymmetry, we tend to use a *ceteris paribus* assumption for everyday life. This is supported by sociocognitive practices that have us think of life as stable. The final presenter of the conference, **Jason Torkelson** (Rutgers), talked about relinquished identities. In his work he showed, among other things, how relinquished identities can still shape meaning making activities despite no longer having schematic primacy.

Over 100 people attended the mini-conference, with most sessions having between forty and sixty attendees. This was the third mini-conference on Culture & Cognition in the last ten years at ESS. and will be followed by another this year, organized by Wayne Brekhus and Gabe Ignatow.

## RACEING CULTURE

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

and collectivises individuals, communities and groups, rendering all black or Muslim youth ‘suspect’.

Second, the focus on culture shifts the emphasis away from external structural factors and inequalities to place the blame for inequality and marginalisation on the choices, actions and beliefs of the individual or group’s way of life. Questions of racial inequality, of racism, of discrimination in contemporary Britain, then, are largely understood to be questions of ‘culture’—a result of the choices, actions, and volition of those deemed to ‘have’ culture. And this proves a convenient alibi for ongoing issues of racial and ethnic inequality (Alexander 2016).

Third, there is an absence of any engagement with history, or with temporality. And here there are two main arguments: first that we need to locate this latest myth of ‘the gang’ in a longer historical context around black folk devils. Rather depressingly, we are now 35 years on from Hall et al’s *Policing the Crisis*, yet it is possible to trace the same images and rhetoric about black culture, pathological black families, violence and crime being recycled. It is this longer history of stereotypes and racial ‘commonsense’ that enables ‘the gang’ to be read as raced in the current moment. Which perhaps begs the question why nothing has changed, but it also allows us to refocus on the impetus generating this new folkdevil—i.e., the broader social, cultural, economic and political context in which these discourses are shaped. What work is ‘the gang’ being made to do?

My second point is a more personal, subjective sense of time and how ‘the gang’ fixes black and Asian youth in a kind of perpetual teen-age, a kind of

fantasized arrested development. ‘The gang’ stands outside of individual biographies and subjectivities, just as it stands outside of place, of time, of structures and even of agency or responsibility. It is a self-fulfilling culturalist prophecy.

Or not. I have recently revisited and re-interviewed the participants in my Asian Gang project, and the process of ‘growing up’ and ‘out’ of ‘the gang’ in the past 20 years, from Bengali urban youth to Muslim worker, husband, and father, and in a context of the changing formations of Muslim identities in Britain, has been revealing and salutary. Not just in terms of change, but also of the enduring and affective, but complexly articulated, dimensions of friendships, family, place, of shared struggles and histories and stories and jokes and loss. And these are the dimensions that beg to be recognised and understood—without this richer, subtler and more time- and space- specific understanding, without recognising and exploring continuity, change, and complexity, we’ll never come to grips with the realities of ‘the gang’. And for me a focus on ‘culture’—or at least the ways in which it appears—simply doesn’t cut it.

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## LINEARITY

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

regarding topics A and B (so that, e.g., if person  $k$  is maximally in favor of A and B, her point would be in the top-right corner). In earlier work, Martin (2000) talks about culture as defining the "rules of movement" within such an attitude space. If cultural logics are "simple" in the way I describe above, and there is a single widely-used set of cultural logics within the population, these rules of movement should place individuals on a single line through this space.

However, due to measurement error, and because a portion of the individuals may simply not be following the rules in their arrangement of attitudes, a portion of the points in empirical data will nearly always lie away from the common line.

The methodological challenge is then to discern actual complexity in rules of movement from such idiosyncrasy. This is possible because rules and idiosyncrasies differ in their *systematicity*. Idiosyncrasy causes people to disperse away from the line roughly at random. In contrast, complex logics would yield *regular* deviations from linear form. For example, the relatively complex logic "moderate values of A imply more B, while values near either extreme of A imply less B" would yield a U-shaped relationship within the scatterplot, whereas rule breaking or noise simply yield disorganized clouds of points.

### Mutual Information

[Note: parts of what follows are adapted from Appendix C of Boutyline and Vaisey (conditionally accepted at AJS)]

What is needed is thus a test that can distinguish systematic deviations in linearity from non-systematic ones. To construct such a test, I will make use of *mutual information*, which is a general-purpose non-parametric measure of association between discrete variables. Information-theoretic techniques played a key role in the development of cognitive science because they provided a general-purpose measure of cognitive content (Gardner 1987), and have found a number of inventive applications within sociology of culture (e.g., Vilhena et al. 2014; Martin 2002). I make use of them here because they allow me to search for a systematic relationship without knowing a priori what form this systematic relationship takes.

Unlike linear relationship measures like Pearson's and polychoric correlation, mutual information quantifies the amount of non-independence between two discrete variables  $x$  and  $y$  without any assumptions about the functional form of their relationship, or about the relative ordering of each variable's levels. The mutual information  $I(x, y) \in [0, +\infty)$  equals zero if and only if  $x$  and  $y$  are fully independent. It otherwise quantifies how much knowing the value of one variable reduces uncertainty regarding the value of the other. To search for the presence of non-linear cultural logics, I will examine the divergence between mutual information and correlation.

Since mutual information is an unbounded quantity, I first transform it into a correlation-like measure  $\hat{I}(x, y) \in [0, 1]$  by normalizing it via

$$\hat{I}(x, y) = \frac{I(x, y)}{\min\{H(x), H(y)\}},$$

where  $H(x)$  and  $H(y)$  are marginal (univariate) entropies. If either variable fully describes all variation in the other,  $\hat{I}(x, y)$  achieves its maximum of 1. For example, let two attitudes  $x \in \{-2, \dots, 2\}$  and  $y$  have the U-shaped relationship  $y = x^2$ . Even though  $x$  and  $y$  are deterministically interrelated, their correlation  $r(x, y = x^2) = 0$  because the relationship does not yield any overall linear trend. However, since each value of  $y$  maps onto exactly one value of  $x$ ,  $\hat{I}(x, y) = 1$ .

Mutual information can also detect a relationship between a pair of variables  $x$  and  $z$  even in the presence of a third variable  $w$  that determines whether the relationship between  $x$  and  $z$  is positive or negative. Consider attitudes  $x \in \{-2, -1, 1, 2\}$  and  $z$ . When  $w$  is true,  $z = z_1 = 2x$ ; when it is false,  $z =$



$z_2 = -2x$ . The resulting relationship between  $x$  and  $z$  is an “ $\times$ ” centered at the origin. If  $P(w) = 0.5$ , there is no trend in this data, and so  $r(x, z) = 0$ . However,  $x$  and  $z$  are not independent, as each value of  $z$  maps onto only two values of  $x$ , and vice versa. Correspondingly,  $\hat{I}(x, z) = 0.5$ .

I used empirical estimators to calculate  $\hat{I}_{ij}$  for each pair  $(i, j)$  of political attitude questions in the ANES data, placing them in matrix  $\hat{I} = [\hat{I}_{ij}]$ . I also constructed a correlation matrix  $C = [C_{ij}]$ , where each cell  $C_{ij}$  contains the squared polychoric correlation<sup>3</sup> between the same attitudes. Now consider the element-wise Pearson’s correlation between these two matrixes,  $r(C, \hat{I})$ . This correlation would only be high if  $C$  and  $\hat{I}$  generally varied together, which would happen if they registered the same relative rates of interrelatedness between each of the pairs of variables. On the other hand,  $r(C, \hat{I})$  would be low if  $C$  and  $\hat{I}$  frequently varied independently of one other, or if their simultaneous variances were related in a non-linear fashion. Thus,  $r(C, \hat{I})$  yields a conservative measure of whether polychoric correlation is missing any substantial non-independence between the variables.

When I calculated  $r(C, \hat{I})$  for the ANES data, I found that  $r(C, \hat{I}) = 0.91$  (or 0.97 if diagonals are included). This high value of  $r(C, \hat{I})$  shows that latent linear relationships can account for the overwhelming majority of the pairwise non-independence between variables in this dataset. This result is consistent with the hypothesis that internalized cultural logics generally take the form of simple associative relationships.

<sup>3</sup> I use polychoric correlation because it is better at evaluating linear relationships between variables measured on ordinal scales.



## SOCIAL INEQUALITY

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

elements of exclusion on the basis of the establishment of the boundary of the civil sphere—a symbolic boundary that separates what Emily Post calls “Best Society” from the rest. According to Post, Best Society contains the people who automatically engage in appropriate behavior because such behavior is both habitual and an expression of their fine ethics and genuine moral superiority:

A man of really high position is always a great citizen first and above all. Otherwise he is a hollow puppet whether he is a millionaire or has scarcely a dime to bless himself with. In the same way, a woman's social position that is built on sham, vanity, and selfishness, is like one of the buildings at an exposition; effective at first sight, but bound when slightly weather-beaten to show stucco and glue. It would be very presumptuous to attempt to tell any man how to acquire the highest position in his community, especially as the answer is written in his heart, his intellect, his altruistic sympathy, and his ardent civic pride (Post 1922: 41).

While the behaviors taken to indicate correct comportment shifted tremendously between 1922 and 2011, the epistemological assumption that good people generally instinctively engage in correct behaviour persists across the entire corpus of *Etiquette* editions.

In *Etiquette*, praxis consists of the specific behaviors that are read as evidence of one’s position vis-à-vis symbolic boundaries. For example, Emily Post’s reification in praxis of symbolic boundaries

between the “Best Society” and “the imitation” (1922:1) is evident in Post’s condemnation of Mr. Parvenu:

A man whose social position is self-made is apt to be detected by his continual cataloguing of prominent names. Mr. Parvenu invariably interlards his conversation with, “When I was dining at the Bobo Gilding’s”; or even “at Lucy Gilding’s,” and quite often accentuates, in his ignorance, those of rather second-rate, though conspicuous position. “I was spending last week-end with the Richan Vulgars,” or “My great friends, the Gotta Crusts.” When a so-called gentleman insists on imparting information interesting only to the Social Register, shun him! The born gentleman avoids the mention of names exactly as he avoids the mention of what things cost; both are an abomination to his soul (1922: 253).

We see in this example that everyday behavior takes on special significance through the reification of core values in praxis.

While the civil boundary between “us” and “not us” is a distinction built upon abstract values like authenticity and kindness, once those abstract values are reified, the margin between inclusion and exclusion need not be so *explicitly* moral. In my research on immigrant integration in Sweden (2016, 2013a), I noted a procedural epistemology and praxis that were only implicitly moral. Take this statement from the prior Swedish Minister of Integration as an example:

When immigrants arrive in our country, the signal will be clear: we want you to become a

part of Sweden; we want you to start working and learn Swedish right away. Citizenship as a tool for integration is one part of this signal that we have not employed well. Our goal is that immigrants feel that they are members of Swedish society and, we hope, they seek to become Swedish citizens (Ullenhag 2012).<sup>1</sup>

In this case, the reification of symbolic boundaries in praxis constructs upright members of the civil sphere as those who participate in the social system by speaking Swedish, working in above-board jobs, paying their taxes, and collecting their benefits. This procedural conception of membership indicates a tight connection between the deep moral values underpinning a definition of the place and its people (including equality, justice, security and individual freedom), reifications in the form of praxis (what members do), and epistemology (participation in the State means membership in a social system that is highly evolved in and effective at creating a society that works for everyone).

### ***Disciplinary Procedures***

As abstract core values tied to symbolic boundaries become reified in epistemology and praxis, individuals, groups, and institutions interiorize them as some combination of affected performance, intrinsic motivation, or authentic striving to be, become, or be recognized as being in possession of virtues associated with social inclusion. Thus, a cultural sociological study of the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion underpinning social inequality must consider the processes by which individuals and groups become “disciplined” to reifications. Discipline refers to the relatively benign process by which individuals are molded into being correct social citizens. That is, by constructing and enacting public and socially-legitimated member identities, individuals and groups become cultural subjects worthy of inclusion; are cast out for their failures to conform; and are distributed and ranked within a hierarchical space of those who may or may not belong with certainty to the community in which they reside (Foucault 1977).

In my research on immigrant incorporation in the American context, I observed disciplinary procedures in diversity training sessions, community dialogues, and job readiness programs. These procedures included both implicit and explicit instruction in the vocabulary, outlook and style of communication associated with moral worth in an inclusive community (Voyer 2011b; Voyer 2013b). The internationalization of these lessons reinforced particular notions of social life and shaped the production of upstanding persons and modern localities. In many cases, individuals pursued this instruction in the genuine quest to better live as

the kind and caring people they already believed they were—for example, in seeking out diversity training in order to better realize a desire to eliminate their own prejudice and act as an allies to Somali immigrants.

Reifications of symbolic boundaries come to have a life of their own, operating as seemingly imposed and exterior forces on the public construction of selves, communities, and even nations (Kymlicka 2007a; Voyer 2011a). At the level of interaction, disciplinary procedures maintain the hegemonic terms of solidarity by providing implicit and explicit motivations for adopting the outlook and style of communication associated with moral worth in an inclusive society (see also Goffman 1963).

### ***Disciplinary Institutions***

Disciplinary institutions disseminate reifications and embed them in social structure. Think, for example, of the role of policy makers in inscribing reifications in welfare policy—e.g., the central role that folk theories regarding meritocracy and the worthy or unworthy poor play in the establishment of behavioral requirements that assure welfare recipients engage in “work activity” that justifies their sustenance. I have looked at two interrelated “soft” disciplinary institutions, the etiquette industry and the diversity industry.

In Lewiston, Maine, administrative and programmatic responses to Somali settlement took shape in interaction with organizations and agencies that assigned meanings to diversity and designated desirable strategies for managing a diverse community. Lewiston leaders hosted many diversity professionals who played a role in shaping the nature of immigrant incorporation in the city. Diversity consultants representing a variety of organizations and contracted out of other locations advised the city on its hiring practices, service plans, school organization, accessibility policies, and community-building efforts. Diversity trainers coming from locations as close as Portland, Maine, and as far as San Diego offered frequent seminars geared toward increasing Lewistonian’s multicultural skill sets. Disparate agencies and organizations disciplined the community of Lewiston to shared reifications. These different actors espoused a common epistemological position that multicultural goals were best pursued by changing individual psychology and behavior. Although the many diversity practitioners differed in their stated purpose, site of application, and the goals of participants, they used a shared vocabulary and similar techniques for diversity training.

### ***The Cultural Sociology of Inequality***

The cultural sociology of inequality is

<sup>1</sup> Author’s translation.

grounded in the assumption that social divisions are inherently evaluative, affective, and content neutral vis-a-vis social groups. Social inclusion and exclusion are constructed through symbolic boundaries that draw on widely shared and abstract social values. Abstract values tied to symbolic boundaries are reified in praxis consisting of particular positions, perspectives and manners of speech that make good people and good communities identifiable. Values are also reified in epistemologies or folk theories that provide working rationalizations, consistency, and coherence to the relationship between praxis and abstract social values. Disciplinary procedures ensure that individuals and groups tend to demonstrate their belonging through the performance of moral worth. Disciplinary institutions disseminate reifications and inscribe them in social structure. In sum, inequality and exclusion are ongoing effects of the negotiation of cohesion, the establishment of moral standards and divisions, and the requirement of the ongoing performance of socially acceptable selves leads to the exclusion of those who are unable or unwilling to toe the line.

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## DENIAL OF VIOLENCE

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

significant distortion in the process of denial as this could provide some insights into another set of collective emotions.

The recent violent events that flared up during the attempted military coup in Turkey and continued in the aftermath thereof, underscore one more time the complexity of emergence, reproduction, and normalization of violence. Fatma Müge Göçek's *Denial of Violence* offers a very useful context for understanding and discussing these events by looking at the damaged moral fabric of the Turkish society rooted in the denial of collective violence against the Armenians. The discussion on genocide as the foundational violence of nation state formation and its denial as a process accumulating over time and space, the demonstration of the possibility of scrutinizing genocide that is not materially or discursively fixated on the archives, and Göçek's elaborate methods of illustrating this as an interaction between structural and affective elements, are among the contributions of *Denial of Violence* that extend beyond the historical and sociological studies of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire.



## MODERN ROMANCE

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

of OKCupid and Ashley Madison dating website data as comparative cases?

*Modern Romance* is an entertaining opportunity for many serious sociological questions to be examined, and should be considered accordingly.

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