

# SECTION CULTURE



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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In a few short weeks, we will all convene in New York City for our annual meeting. The manifest purpose is to share ongoing work with colleagues,



create and restore professional networks, and further our various intellectual projects. However, as Durkheim once noted, regular commemorative gatherings such as these produce several other, no less significant for

being less noticeable, effects. They restore our sense of belonging to a broader cognitive community, recharge intellectual and emotional energies, and help us recommit ourselves to our individual work while reminding us to recognize how it links up to a broader mission. These two aims are, of course, not mutually exclusive, but should not let the more obvious, instrumental ones make us lose sight of the more meaningful effects our annual coming together generates.

Our chair-elect, **Allison Pugh**, has organized an incredibly stimulating and intellectually diverse program, spread over two days on Monday, August 12 and Tuesday, August 13. The program schedule begins, appropriately enough, with a thematic session dealing with “Culture and its Impacts on Other Subfields” organized by **Greggor Mattson** and featuring a fantastic lineup of speakers all known for bringing insights from cultural

sociology and cultural analysis more broadly across disciplinary boundaries. This should be of interest for all scholars, whether young or established, who are interested in doing more of this critical work (or doing what they are already doing more effectively). The program continues with our graduate student workshop organized by **Joanna Pepin** and **Andre Riesman**. This is an invited panel on "Collecting, Analyzing, and Sharing Cultural Sociology," featuring some of the best emerging minds in the field, known for their penchant to study culture across a wide variety of methodological strategies. Methodological diversity is a signature strength of our subfield, and this panel is a way for young scholars in cultural sociology to become familiar with the type of creative cross-fertilization across strategies of inquiry. Our roundtables, featuring the usual thematic diversity of cultural analysis in sociology round out Monday activities. Tuesday follows with our section sessions, featuring four panels (two of which cosponsored) in which the theme of crossing the boundary between cultural sociology and other subfields is put in practice. This includes a session on Global and Transnational Approaches to Culture and Power (Cosponsored with the Section on Global and Transnational Sociology and organized by **Chinyere Osuji**), a session on Algorithmic Cultures (organized by **Angèle Christin**), a session on Culture, Racialization and Intersectionality (Cosponsored with the Section on Race, Gender, and Class and organized by **Michael Jeffries**), and a session on Culture and Service Work: Relationships, Identities, Inequalities (organized by **Eileen M. Otis**).

This is my last "Letter From the Chair," as I will pass the baton to Allison at the conclusion of our business meeting in New York. This is scheduled for Monday at 3:30p right between the graduate student workshop and the roundtables. I encourage all of you to attend, congratulate our section award winners, share your ideas for future section activities. I would also like to congratulate the winners of our recent election: **Terence McDonnell** (Chair-Elect), **Mariana Craciun** and **Mathieu Desan** (Council Members), and **Samantha Leonard** (Graduate Student Representative). I would like to thank our Chief

Operating Officer **Ruthie Braunstein**, whose hard work keeps the section going, the current members of the Section Council, as well as our Newsletter and Website Editors, **Diana Graizbord**, **Hillary Angelo**, and **Michael Rodriguez-Muñiz**, and **Dustin Stoltz** for all of their help and patience.

It has been my pleasure and honor to serve as section chair for the past year. I look forward to seeing and sharing intellectual currents with you in our annual ritual in New York this year. In closing, and in the service of that very end, this year we will be teaming up with our friends in the Theory and History of Sociology sections for a joint off-site reception. Set your Google Maps to **Papillon Bistro and Bar** (22 E 54th Street, New York) and your calendars for Monday, August 12, at 6:30p. Huge thanks to **Dr. Allisa Boguslaw** for her tireless efforts as our local asset in researching and help us choose a site for the reception, and to **Marion Fourcade**, **Iddo Tavory**, **John Mohr**, and **Jill Brantley**, for their willingness to coordinate on the other side.

*Omar Lizardo,  
UC Los Angeles*

## CULTURE SECTION COUNCIL

**Elizabeth A. Armstrong,**  
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**Aneesh Aneesh,**  
*Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2019*

**Patricia A. Banks,**  
*Mount Holyoke College 2020*

**Ming-Cheng M. Lo,**  
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**Gabriel Abend**  
*New York University 2021*

**Victoria Reyes,**  
*UC Riverside 2021*

## FOUR QUESTIONS FOR PATRICIA A. BANKS

**Dustin Stoltz** (Univ. of Notre Dame) interviews **Patricia A. Banks** (Mount Holyoke College) on the past, present, and future of cultural analysis and sociology.

**Dustin Stoltz:** How did you become interested in the study of culture? What work does culture do in your thinking, and what do you see as the benefits and limitations of your approach as compared to alternatives?

**Patricia Banks:** I became interested in the study of culture in graduate school at Harvard University. In my first few years of graduate training in sociology, I was focused on race and class. After reading Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*, I became curious about the interconnections between culture, race, and class. Traditionally, sociological scholarship on cultural participation has centered on class. Alternatively, a central goal of my research agenda is to cast light on the ways that racial boundaries are also shaped, and shaped by, cultural engagement. By moving beyond class and accounting for race and ethnicity, my research provides a more nuanced understanding of the role of cultural participation in shaping inequality. One especially important insight from this line of research is that it highlights how cultural participation reproduces racial and ethnic boundaries within the middle and upper class. Or, whereas the dominant approach to cultural participation emphasizes how it contributes to class boundaries between the middle and working class, my research demonstrates how cultural consumption contributes to racial and ethnic distinctions within the middle and upper class itself. Moreover, my research highlights how it is class resources, such as economic and cultural capital, that allow racial and ethnic minority elites to use activities such as art collecting and museum patronage to draw racial and ethnic boundaries.



Note: Art in a Collector's Home. © Patricia A. Banks.

**DS:** How does your approach to culture shape your choice of research topics, settings, and methods?

**PB:** I have examined these dynamics in a range of contexts. For example, in [Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper Middle-Class](#) and ["Black Cultural Advancement: Racial Identity and Participation in the Arts Among the Black Middle Class."](#) I draw on ethnographic data such as in-depth interviews with art collectors and photographs of the art in their homes, to elaborate how upper-middle class blacks use arts participation to articulate and nurture their racial identity. In "High Culture, Black Culture: Strategic Assimilation and Cultural Steering in Museum Patronage," (forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Culture*), I use ethnographic and archival data on museum patronage to develop the concepts of strategic acculturation and cultural steering. I show how the distinctive pattern of cultural consumption among the black middle and upper-class can be partly explained by the interplay of racial identity construction and cultivation by cultural intermediaries. I turn the lens to black middle-class voluntary organizations in ["Money, Museums, and Memory: Cultural Patronage by Black Voluntary](#)



[Associations](#)” to show how they use museum patronage to reshape public narratives about African Americans. Using archival and ethnographic data, I illustrate how black elite organizations use donations to black museums as a tool to challenge narratives of national life where African Americans are marginalized. An important class dimension of this practice is that they also seek to position their organizations, and members of their organizations, as central protagonists in these counter-memories.

In a new line of research, I am examining corporate support of black art. Using data such as in-depth interviews with executives and public relations and advertising texts about corporate philanthropy and sponsorship in the arts, I am investigating how corporate patronage of black culture benefits businesses. I am finding that black cultural patronage, as well as other forms of “ethnic” cultural patronage, serve as forms of what I term diversity capital. I define diversity capital as cultural practices and values that allow organizations to solve problems and leverage opportunities related to race and ethnicity and other social differences. For example, in [“Diversity Capital and Corporate Cultural Patronage,”](#) I note how corporations use donations to cultural initiatives such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial to project the image that they are diverse and inclusive. Given the growing call for scholarship on organizations to address race and ethnicity in more depth, it is especially important to develop theory about how the cultural dimensions of organizations, such as ethnic philanthropy and sponsorships, are mobilized in various organizational processes like the projection of racial images.

Each of these research projects has been motivated by gaps in knowledge about race and culture as well as by new questions that emerged in the course of my research. For example, several of the art collectors who I interviewed in Represent are also supporters of African American museums. After talking with them I became curious about why individuals give to black museums. I help to answer this question in [Diversity and Philanthropy](#)

at [African American Museums](#) where I use black museum patronage as a case to elaborate how the cultural values of the upper-middle and upper class diverge along such lines as race and ethnicity, profession, generation, and lifestyle. In the course of doing this research, I noticed that individuals weren’t the only important donor pool for black museums. Corporate gifts and sponsorships are also critical to their survival and sustenance. This insight put me on the path to studying black cultural patronage by corporations.



Note: National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN (Site of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Assassination). © Patricia A. Banks.

My in-depth interviews with collectors for Represent also inspired a new strand of research on inequality in cultural markets. Drawing on a range of sources, including a unique database of auction records, I am examining how and why the market for artists of African descent has shifted over time. For example, in [“The Rise of Africa in the Contemporary Auction Market: Myth or Reality?”](#), I use the complete history of works offered for sale at the main contemporary sales at Christie’s New York to examine the integration of contemporary

African art into the art market. Similarly, in “Black Artists and Elite Taste Culture,” I use auction records to investigate the integration of black artists in contemporary art sales. This line of research is aimed at casting light on the factors that instantiate and destabilize racial and other forms of inequality in cultural markets.

**DS: What most excites you about the future of cultural theory and analysis in sociology?**

**PB:** Moving forward, I am especially excited about the new scholarship that centers race in the

analysis of culture, taste, and inequality in places outside of the United States. While my research has mainly examined these dynamics in the United States, there is a growing body of literature that explores these issues in other national contexts such as the UK. With my investigation of artists of African descent in the global art market, my research is taking an international turn. Also, in the final chapter of *Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums* I outline a research agenda for examining cultural participation and diversity in a global context.



**Patricia A. Banks** is Associate Professor of Sociology at Mount Holyoke College and currently a Fellow at Stanford’s Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences. She studies culture, consumption, markets, and race, with a focus on the African Diaspora, philanthropy at African American museums, corporate support for the arts, and the global market for contemporary African art. She completed her undergraduate studies at Spelman College in sociology, where she was particularly influenced by **Barbara Carter, Harry Lefever, Mona Phillips, Cynthia Spence, Bruce Wade, and Darryl White**, who she says “first ignited my sociological imagination.” She then attended Harvard (‘06), where she completed her doctorate under the direction of

**Lawrence D. Bobo** (advisor), **William Julius Wilson**, and **Michèle Lamont**. **Prudence L. Carter** who served on her orals committee (“Race, Class, and Cultural Consumption”), also influenced her approach to culture. Her dissertation (“Art, Identity, and the New Black Middle-Class: How Elite Blacks Construct their Identity Through the Consumption of Visual Art”) ultimately became her first book *Represent: Art and Identity Among the Black Upper-Middle Class* (Routledge 2010). She is currently working on a new book *Race, Ethnicity, and Consumption: A Sociological View* (Under Contract Routledge). Banks also created the African American Museums Database, a digital archive for over 300 African American museums and related organizations in the United States.

# ROUNDTABLE ON NATURE AND CULTURE

## INTRODUCTION: WHEN CULTURE MEETS NATURE

*Hillary Angelo*  
*UC Santa Cruz*

*Stefan Bargheer*  
*UC Los Angeles*

Nature is a topic that stands at once at the center and at the margins of cultural sociology. From its inception in the late 1980s until it gained the (somewhat short-lived) status as the ASA's largest section about twenty years later, cultural sociology has tried to demonstrate the importance of culture as an independent field of inquiry, one that shapes social life and individual actions in ways that cannot be reduced to other phenomena.

One of the most potent ways to argue for the independence of cultural sociology was to show that nature, too, is a cultural phenomenon. The field's early studies of nature were informed by cultural anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, and last but not least Clifford Geertz. For each of these scholars nature served as a rich symbolic repertoire through which to decipher the structure of social life, rather than as a phenomenon with its own internal complexity and independent causal significance. Culture was perceived as a text and nature appeared as the otherwise empty blackboard on which this text was written.

The approach had the additional advantage of endowing the field with a pedigree of classical social theory, since it went back all the way to Durkheim's theory of totemism. In this theory, nature (i.e. the totem species, whether animal or plant) is a symbol for the social group. While this approach to culture and nature has produced fascinating results and is far from exhausted, it certainly leaves many avenues for inquiry

unexplored. The approach generalizes what is only a special case, i.e. the singular totem species that has no importance other than serving as a group symbol, to nature at large, with its myriad ways of relating to social life.

Cultural sociology was certainly not alone in attributing a rather derivative status to nature. When William Catton and Riley Dunlap called in 1978 for a "New Environmental Paradigm" with a focus on environment-society interactions, it was seen by the authors as a fundamental transformation of the entire discipline, not just the prelude for the creation of another subfield. The very scale of the ambition might have been among the reasons this call was not really taken up by mainstream sociology. Sociology—perhaps until very recently—remained a field engaged in a fairly anthropocentric study of the environment, rather than the paradigm-blasting study of environment-society interactions Catton and Dunlap called for.

Today, things appear to be changing. Research on nature and the environment is proliferating in anthropology, geography, and interdisciplinary fields such as urban and environmental studies. The nature-as-totem perspective is being declared insufficient in sociology as in scholarly work more generally, as the environment is foregrounded as agent, force, and resource—in each case being set in relationship to the social in new ways. Climate change, of course, has created a real urgency around these questions of nature's relationship to society and culture. As several essays in this collection attest, cities and infrastructural systems once taken to be testaments to humans' domination of nature are under threat, and their vulnerability highlights nature's real, material power, the complexity of its interactions with the social world, and the relative narrowness of American sociology's past engagement with these questions.



What of the sociology of culture in this context? The essays in this special roundtable outline new departures for the study of nature within cultural sociology: conceptually, methodologically, and empirically. They show what can be gained by moving the topic of nature into the foreground of cultural analysis in new and different ways, while also highlighting what is at stake when it gets ignored. Several take contemporary environmental conditions as the warrant for this research, whether dealing with ‘real’ ecological nature or its produced, symbolic landscapes.

**Mukerji** employs the powerful image of the receding shoreline on the Pacific coast caused by rising sea levels, infringing on roads and housing, to exemplify the way the taken-for-granted boundary between nature and culture can come into flux. To what extent one perceives this development predominantly as a symbol for our shared future or as a material reality with practical consequences for the here and now pretty much depends on how close one lives to the edge. Joining semiotics with a study of materiality that derives from science and technology studies, she proposes a sociology of vulnerability to look not only at potential loss, but also at the practices, technologies, and infrastructures that can be mobilized to prevent it.

**Hernandez and Auyero** show in their ethnography of a barrio in the coastal city of Esmeraldas, Ecuador what effect it can have to live at the edge, i.e. what it means for communities to be exposed to environmental hazards. For local residents, exposure to risk and the expectation of the exceptional becomes normal and finds its way into the routines of everyday life. People there are aware of the surrounding toxic risks caused by hazardous industries, but are calm and seem not to

worry. The study shows how organizational forms and daily routines shape risk perceptions and turn the barrio into a place worth fighting for.

**Loughran** shows us in the same vein the material components of cultural perceptions of nature at work in the city, which urban sociology famously ignored in its early studies. The experience of nature as a place of contemplation and leisure, i.e. as a form of symbolic gratification, is structured along the lines of class and race and inscribed into space. Through the example of urban parks from the nineteenth century to the present, he demonstrates how natural landscapes are not static objects. The initial establishment of urban parks as sites of white privilege needed ongoing maintenance: parks, if left uncultivated, might revert to an unkempt form of nature; white privileges, if undefended, might diminish.

**Norgaard** shows that the legacy of settler colonialism in the United States and the erasure of indigenous people is one of the reasons why the juxtaposition between nature and culture resonated with the emerging discipline of sociology in this country. There is a racial hierarchy built into the dualism between nature and culture and the maintenance of this conceptual boundary accordingly reproduces the hierarchy that excludes the voices of those who are subsumed under the rubric of nature. She concludes by showing us that many environmental common senses of the world today—e.g. seeing climate change as an inevitable outgrowth of human activity, and the difficulty in seeing alternatives—are themselves products of “indigenous erasure,” highlighting the existential stakes of these analytical questions.

## VULNERABILITIES OF NATURE AND CULTURE

*Chandra Mukerji*  
*UC San Diego*

It seems as though cultural sociologists have been moving away from studying culture and nature. But modernity is changing as the earth changes, and we need to pay attention. It is not a happy subject—the evidence of what moderns have done too often is a reminder of human vulnerability, hubris and stupidity. And it is hard to know how to approach such a complicated subject analytically as a critical cultural sociologist. Given the barriers, I can understand why it might be more satisfying for cultural sociologists to study something else. But I want to make the case for watching modernity at this historical moment as a kind of cultural train wreck in motion that is shaping the earth and weather into new forms, sending shock waves through communities hit by “natural” disasters.

The problem with tackling this material in cultural sociology is that using semiotic approaches alone makes us miss much of the material dynamics of modernity as a form of life in nature. And using STS methods alone to study nature in modernity leaves out much of the social complexity of modernist culture. Of course, this makes it a particularly good subject for cultural sociologists with a material bent, but the work is hard. And the object of study, modernity, is changing rapidly as distrust of modern principles of government and human rationality are creating surveillance regimes with landscapes full of cameras for monitoring and self-monitoring. Both relations of power and nature are in motion, vulnerable to the detritus and innovations alike of industrial and postindustrial society. We need different analytic tools to make sense of this.

Like many others interested in nature and culture, I have focused on modern ways of extracting power from things, but now I am thinking more about weakness and modernity. This is partly because I live in California, and can see the bluffs along the

Pacific coast crashing down after the high tides of winter. The railroad that runs along the bluff near me is threatened, and the sea walls proposed by engineers to stabilize the tracks would only serve as weak temporary scaffolding for preserving a modern icon, the train. This chunk of landscape with its housing developments behind it is vulnerable to the rising seas, just as the seas are vulnerable to the carbon emissions of California’s cars driving to and from the houses. Weakness is everywhere, and both the bluffs and local politicians are in motion. It is in this context that I have been reading sociology of vulnerability. If you know this literature, skip the next paragraphs. If you don’t, most of their books are about to come out or come out in English, so look for them.

**Antoine Hennion** is a well-known French sociologist of music who has recently done cultural analysis of immigrant communities, writing about the vulnerability of immigrants and the camps they built near Calais. Already on the run from danger, the immigrants built a temporary community with amenities they needed and created a landscape of hope and desperation. The camp was not entirely safe, but when it was destroyed by the French government, it only added to the vulnerability of the inhabitants as they were exposed to weather — a form of vulnerability modern rules of government required officials to address. This seems a pattern repeating in many places.

**Fernando Domínguez-Rubio**, less eminent but just as brilliant, has analyzed the vulnerability of things. He studied MOMA, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the problems of conservation posed by the deterioration of the defining pieces of modernity. The paintings, sculptures and digital pieces only seem like stable objects because of museum infrastructures of storage and repair. The latter keep art eternal to sustain modern ideas of unassailable human



genius. The museum helps stabilize modernity as a culture by covering its vulnerability.

**Benjamin Sims** and **Christopher Henke**, working from the STS tradition, have created a compelling and deceptively modest approach to infrastructure repair, looking at the vulnerability of the systems meant to keep modernity working. They have described a range of broken infrastructures from heating systems to roads and surveillance systems, describing the efforts to make these infrastructure work either by restoration of the system or amelioration of the problem. In either case, technical repair becomes cultural repair, too, addressing a weakness in the cultural fabric revealed in things.

All of this is amazing work, but only a start.

This analytic approach helps reveal the cultural and technical stakes for moderns as they respond to the shifting face of nature. Jakarta, for example, is sinking. So, is Mexico City. But Jakarta is now dangerously prone to flooding, so the problem has led to a proposal to build a new capital city. The ground under Jakarta has been sinking as groundwater has been pumped by the residents, changing the physical shape of the land. The point is to have fresh water, but the lower the city sinks,

the more dangerous the floods are, leaving more people vulnerable to drowning and water-borne illnesses. The new capital, like Brasilia before it, would allow the regime to create a new landscape of power. The government would, in modernist terms, take control of land on higher ground, and make it a tribute to those who had the foresight and skill to build it. It would be a rational system for solving a modern problem, but it would still be a monument to the vulnerability of modern cities, and particularly so, if Jakarta was abandoned by the government, and left to the most vulnerable people who would still be in need of water. Human vulnerability—the need for food and water—remains the heart of the problem. But it is modern culture that is collapsing, and it is not clear what can and cannot be repaired.

Sociologists routinely study social vulnerability, but not this kind of cultural vulnerability. We know how to talk about the deteriorating neighborhoods of cities based on race and class, but we also need vocabularies for explaining the vulnerability in modernity with a clearer sense of how modernity depends on the earth, but still strains its capacity for sustaining human life. This is work for cultural sociologists that is not only interesting, but also necessary.

## ROUNDTABLE, CONT.

### LIVING AT RISK: RELATIONS, ROUTINES, AND HISTORY

*Maricarmen Hernandez and Javier Auyero*  
*Ethnography Lab — Sociology Department*  
*UT-Austin*

In October of 2018, I (MC) arrived in the coastal city of Esmeraldas, Ecuador to carry out a year of ethnographic fieldwork in a contaminated informal community located next to the largest refinery and electric plant in the country. This was the fourth time I would be doing fieldwork in the area. Upon arrival, I immediately headed to Zoila's house, a woman who is a long-time resident of the barrio, a current leader and organizer, and whose house I had lived in during past fieldwork visits.

Zoila was always smiling and was very warm and welcoming. When I asked her how things were and what had occurred since I had last seen her, Zoila responded "Everything is the same here, nothing changes. There are some new ones around, others have died, some are married, others divorced, but in general, the same. One thing is true, here in the barrio, we know how to have fun and live the good life! Because we just never know... all of that hasn't changed either."



We are slowly strolling down the main street of the neighborhood as we converse. Just as Zoila finishes her thought, I look toward the right side of the road, past the ladrillera (brick maker's house), and can see the smoke stacks and industrial structures in the hazy greys and blues of falling dusk. They protrude from behind the neighborhood, and overlook the houses while puffing out clouds of light grey smoke, clearly visible against the sky. These smokestacks and the perils they represent, along with rising river currents that during the rainy season, threaten to flood the area with a toxic mix of sewage and polluted water from the refinery, and the variety of problems that accompany poor people's precarious living conditions are what Zoila is referring to when she says "here, we just never know."

We continue walking and Zoila shows me the latest development in the neighborhood and victory for the neighbors, the paving of the very first road. Construction has just begun, and there are only a couple of meters of concrete covering the dusty road, but it feels like a success. Spirits are high and music is blaring from various speakers coming from different houses. We run into acquaintances and stop to chat, we hear about the family who recently lost their home in a flood and moved into

the communal house as an emergency solution, we stop to look at an uninhabited shell of a house that sits like a vestige of the flood that swept away at least a dozen homes two years ago, and whose former residents are still living in a shelter. Mothers recount and compare their children's ailments, while attempting to understand what is normal and what isn't, and what can be ignored and what should be attended to. Despite these, at times tragic, but usually casual conversations, life goes on.

Residents here are fully aware of the surrounding hazards and toxic risks but, somewhat, are at peace. How is that possible? How is this shared understanding of risk and contamination created and how does it help the neighbors make peace with a monster that, according to them, is nothing more than a "time bomb" that is slowly poisoning them?

#### **RELATIONS, ROUTINES, HISTORY**

How do people routinely exposed to the hazards created by facilities such as an oil refinery, a fracking site, an incinerator, a smelting plant, etc. think and feel about the risks posed to their surroundings and their health? A now more than

two decades long “relational turn” in sociology has taught us that the true engine of social action (and the source of shared understandings) lies in relationships between agents (Emirbayer 1997). Perceptions of toxic risk are not different: they are not locked inside individuals’ minds but situated in specific social universes, or as Lupton (1999:15) puts it, “housed within collective cultural networks.” In the case of Esmeraldas, we find that the strenuous circumstances under which families moved into the neighborhood after being displaced due to natural disasters, their struggle to remain in this area after various adversities, and the camaraderie created through the communal struggle of making the place livable, along with their longing for housing stability, have all contributed to their building a home through hardship. This collective effort serves as the foundation for the collective cultural network that has developed in this particular social universe, the same that enables the neighbors to both be aware of the danger while minimizing it in their day to day activities.

In her detailed examination of the ways in which a cultural belief in risk acceptability was produced and normalized within NASA, Diane Vaughan states that “patterns of information obscured problem seriousness” (2004:331). The identification and correction of problems central to the catastrophic Challenger accident were, Vaughan (1990; 1997) argues, blocked by organizational patterns. These patterns (in NASA’s case, autonomy and interdependence) undercut effective discovery and obstructed collective knowledge. We learn from Vaughan that the normalization of risk and the perpetuation of mistakes do not derive from technological complexity alone but also from organizational forms. Eden (2004) makes a theoretically similar argument when analyzing the U.S. government’s failure to incorporate predictions of fire damage caused by nuclear blasts into the organizational routines developed for nuclear war planning. In both cases, we see how **the source of risk perceptions is located in relationships, not in individual minds**. Recurrent relations within these universes condition what insiders see, overlook, or misinterpret.



Studies of evaluations and judgments of risk within organizations have also taught us that risk perceptions are not only relational but also, and as importantly, embedded in daily routines, regular processes which work to both shape attention and structure thinking (Heimer 2001). Daily routines typically work as horse’s blinders: they enhance focus on whatever the task at hand is and restrict or “cloud” the vision (Cerulo 2006) about the dangers that occur outside of our immediate environments. In the *barrio* in Esmeraldas this can be observed in myriad ways, from dealing with an unpredictable and subpar potable water service to the daily problems posed by a lack of employment opportunities. As one neighbor stated in an interview when referring to the toxicity her children are exposed to, “yes, we are in danger, but first I must worry about getting them fed and in school today, before I worry about illness in twenty years.”

The kind of radical contextualization of belief production and risk perception for which organizational sociologists advocate can and should be extended beyond the limits of complex organizations (e.g., NASA or the U.S. military) and into the less formalized but equally routinely governed world of a place such as the neighborhood in Ecuador where one of us lived for





many months or the hundreds of communities sitting adjacent to toxic hazards.

Relations and routines do not evolve on the head of a pin but in a particular historical context: the history of the individuals who grew up and now live with those risks; the history of the place that has seen the hazards either suddenly appear or slowly incubate over time; and the collective history of **the people in their place** – in the particular case of the *barrio* in Esmeraldas, a space that was jointly converted from a previously uninhabitable and intimidating *monte* (jungle) into what residents now recognize as a home that nurtures a sense of belonging, an otherwise unknown sentiment for a group of people with a long history of marginalization and displacement.

#### ORAL HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

If it is true (as we think it is) that the true source of shared understandings of hazards lies in the history, the routines, and the relations of those affected by them, what are the best methodological strategies to capture risk perceptions as they evolve over time and unfold in daily life? In the case of Esmeraldas (and that of Flammable [Auyero and Swistun 2009]), oral history and ethnography are particularly helpful. Oral history serves us to reconstruct the collective history of the hazardous

area. It also helps us to understand how place-based relationships have been built between people and their immediate environment, particularly with each other and with the (depending on the case, more or less visible) source of risk. Lastly, oral histories are useful tools to document changes in risk perceptions over time and the particular role played by accidents, collective actions, and other “memorable” events.

Risk perceptions are not only ways of viewing the surrounding world but also, and as importantly, ways of acting in it. Ethnography can provide a clearer picture of the **lived** and **enacted** understandings of risk as they unfold in the actual life of communities impacted by environmental risks. As the type of inquiry based on “close-up, on-the-ground observation” in “real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do” (Wacquant 2003:5), we believe that ethnography is best equipped to capture the rootedness of risk perception in everyday routines and relations that survey- or interview-based research, almost by design, cannot apprehend. To provide a more accurate (i.e. closer to their lived experience) reconstruction of the views and sentiments of those living in

contaminated communities we must, as Matthew Desmond (2007:294) so clearly puts it, “eat their food, speak their language, walk on their sidewalks, work in their jobs, fight in their struggles, teach in their schools, live in their houses...” Only by doing so, only by living and walking alongside folks like Zoila, by attentively and respectfully listening to them, we can truly understand what this Esmeraldeña means when she says: “here, we just never know...”

Zoila and her neighbors are currently organizing to obtain land titles to be the formal owners of the land their houses are built on. They are also continuing the two decades-long fight for services and infrastructure. They are not, as we would be led to think based on the literature on contaminated communities, fighting for a clean space to live or for clean-up of the area; instead, they are simultaneously hyper-aware of the danger while also fighting to protect their continued existence there. In this case, we see that the cultural frames that are a product of their shared experience have resulted in their understanding of this place not as a place to leave, but instead a place worth fighting for.

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## NATURE, RACE, AND CULTURAL POWER

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As philosopher Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1991: 30) wrote: nature, despite its material erasure by urbanization, “is still the background of the picture; as decor, and more than decor, it persists everywhere, and every natural detail, every natural object is valued even more as it takes on symbolic weight[.]” These days, nature’s symbolic weight is very heavy, indeed, as the inescapable realities of global warming have forced a real reckoning at the urban-environmental nexus (Greenberg 2013).

But for many decades, if nature was present in sociological analyses, it was, at best, the “background of the picture” – though it was hardly assigned much symbolic, let alone empirical, weight. Consider as a prime example Ernest Burgess (1925) and the Chicago School’s influential concentric zone model. Despite the fact that Chicago’s urban growth in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century was profoundly an engagement with nature (Cronon 1991; Elliott and Frickel 2015), and despite a privileging of biological metaphors to understand urban social processes (Loughran 2015), the Chicago School did not examine the socio-environmental engineering at the heart of the city’s urbanization, such as the reversal of the Chicago River for sanitation, the draining of marshes for real estate development, or the creation of an impressive park system (Bachin 2004; Bluestone 1991). The concentric zone model firmly avoided the city’s nature by erasing Lake Michigan; the lake’s role in shaping Chicago’s “human ecology” was not examined, and Burgess abstracted the lake away as a thin line interrupting the model’s otherwise circular geometry (see Figure 1).

<sup>1</sup> I thank Max Besbris and Heba Gowayed for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

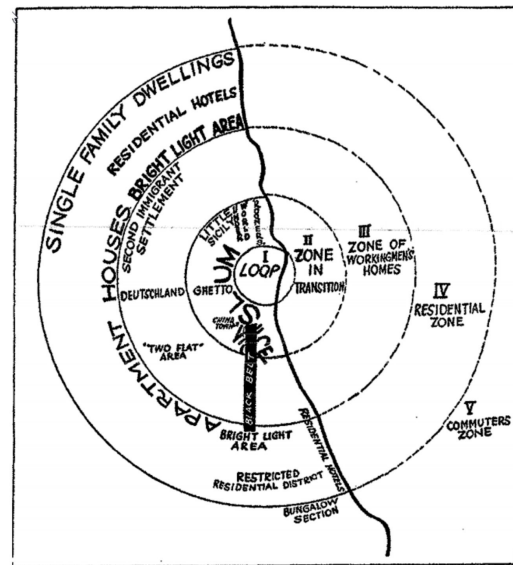


CHART II. Urban Areas

Fig. 1. Burgess's (1925: 55) Concentric Zone Model

For urban sociologists, nature has since emerged from the background of the picture, thanks to the insights of geographers, historians, political ecologists, and sociologists of culture (cf. Angelo and Wachsmuth 2015). A key question raised in recent studies and theoretical advances is a central paradox of urbanization: the simultaneous degradation of nature and the production of symbolic landscapes of nature. (A puzzle that speaks to core concerns in the sociology of culture at the intersection of meaning-making and materiality [Gieryn 2002; Griswold, Mangione, and McDonnell 2013]).

As the last two centuries of urban history have shown, essential among these symbolic landscapes of nature have been urban parks, which more than any other social space, materialize social constructions of nature (Loughran 2016). Urban parks accomplish this social construction in several ways. First, drawing on culturally powerful images of nature, early landscape architects represented nature as sacred, rugged, and vast. Early parks’ architectural components – such as tree-lined perimeters, open meadows, and winding water



features – constructed parks as spaces for the social reproduction of nature, where human interactions with these natural objects further transformed them “from things into symbols” (Fine 1998: 2). And, evincing the close ties of economic and cultural capital, the cultural power of nature that was embodied in urban parks created a valuable foundation for further urban development, as parks have a way of driving up adjacent land prices. Urban parks thus allowed nature to become central to urban symbolic economies (Zukin 1993) even as cities continued to grow and consume more of the countryside spaces that were *also* thought to symbolize nature (Williams 1973).

But the symbolic landscapes of nature produced more than just nature. Tied up in urban parks was the production of social boundaries: spatial ones that related to parks’ social geographies, and symbolic ones that related to identity and cultural practices.

In both respects, race and racialization figured importantly, as the representations of nature spatialized by urban parks were those tied to white-dominated landscapes (Loughran 2017). This idea was particularly germane during the first generation of urban park development in Europe and North America (c. 1840-1870), when migration to cities was creating new levels of ethnoracial diversity, stirring white anxieties. Parks, in their symbolic opposition to urban space writ large (Loughran 2016), were intended to quell these anxieties by serving as safe sites of whiteness within a “racially othered” urban fabric (Bonnett 2002: 354). Geographically, this link between whiteness and nature was formed as parks tended to beautify already-existing white communities or to spatially structure new ones – as civic amenities for newly built neighborhoods (Taylor 2009). And in design terms, early landscape architects’ use of “the picturesque” reflected its role as cultural colonizer, in that its proponents valorized and universalized the rural landscapes of the English countryside and elevated them to a place of global cultural supremacy (Landry 2012). This led urban boosters in many cities to adapt their parks to the picturesque style, even in ecological contexts that were poorly suited to it (Loughran 2019). So

nature, or at least culturally powerful representations of it, was linked to white-dominated spaces (see also Taylor 2016).

Nature had other racial associations, too. Essentialist links between Africans and people of African descent and a subhuman “state of nature” was, and remains, foundational to white-supremacist thought (Hesse 2007). While some black scholars in the United States, particularly those with an affection for the rural landscapes of the South (a group that included W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston), “celebrate[d] marginal landscapes like the swamp for the aesthetic and spiritual value they offer[ed]” in the post-slavery period (Raine 2013: 322-3; see also Hicks 2006), class politics in cities sometimes dictated a disavowal of such “uncultivated” forms of nature. As urban black populations increased after 1900, black leaders were well aware of the negative impacts of primitivist associations and stereotypes (Baldwin 2007). Parks brought black behaviors into the view of white observers; in part for this reason, parks emerged as important sites for the enactment of respectability politics (Higginbotham 1993). In Great Migration-era Chicago, for example, middle-class blacks encouraged “proper” etiquette at public parks’ tennis courts and boathouses and looked down upon public displays of sexuality and “backward” acts, such as using Lake Michigan as a baptismal pool (McCammack 2012: 125).

Nature’s contrasting racial symbolisms were brought, often violently, into urban parks. The initial establishment of urban parks as both symbolic landscapes of nature and sites of white privilege needed ongoing cultural work to maintain: parks, if left uncultivated by city park districts, might revert to an unkempt form of nature; white privileges, if undefended, might diminish. In the United States, the mass entry of people of color in general and blacks in particular into parks therefore threatened parks’ stability as symbols of nature and whiteness; accordingly, parks served as major flashpoints of interracial conflict in various places and at various points in time, as groups of color pushed into white neighborhoods – and into white-dominated parks –

and whites resisted this entry (Diamond 2009; Kruse 2005). When and where Jim Crow laws could not deter black and brown park use, police surveillance and racist attacks often followed people of color into park spaces (Loughran 2017).

Defending white-dominated landscapes was not the only means of protecting the link between whiteness and culturally valuable nature. The other was for whites to bring representations of nature with them as they fled newly racially integrated spaces by building symbolic landscapes in the suburbs. Post-1945 suburbanization and its corollary, urban retrenchment, meant that many picturesque parks were disinvested (Loughran 2017). In building suburban botanic gardens, preserving open lands, and cultivating green lawns behind white picket fences, suburbanizing whites and white-dominated public and private institutions shifted symbolic landscapes of nature from cities to suburbs in the second half of the twentieth century.

But nature has returned again to cities in the twenty-first century. New parks like New York's High Line that repurpose defunct industrial spaces with seemingly wild plant materials are celebrated for their architectural innovation, tourist appeal, and promise of a more sustainable urban future. While some older picturesque parks have been revived over time (often thanks to the influx of private funds), spaces like the High Line are the new symbolic landscapes of nature – unparalleled in terms of their cultural and economic value (Loughran 2016). It's a different landscape than parks of the past – it interweaves natural objects with industrial ones, celebrating “the city” rather than resisting it. But as much as the creation of postindustrial parks has been the result of industrial exodus from older urban cores (as these disused industrial spaces would not exist without historical processes of investment and disinvestment), it has as its chief social cause the return of capital and white people to central cities, who have again brought the powerful symbols of nature with them into new urban spaces.

Nature has many social constructions, but in urban parks, as in other spatial representations, prized

forms of nature have been constructed as white spaces. Moreover, the history of urban parks illustrates how nature, and the symbolic landscapes of nature, are not static cultural objects. The ongoing cultural work required to stabilize and maintain these symbols has tightly woven the control of nature with social power more broadly. And in many places, that creation and control of the symbolic landscapes of nature has been a fundamentally racialized – and racializing – process. Even while older urban parks that were conceived as sites of nature have remained in place, “nature” has moved around within metropolitan areas over time. And it has moved because of race.

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**NATURE, CULTURE AND THE PRODUCTION OF RACE**

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Like most environmental sociologists I've long been troubled by the limited view our discipline has taken of what has come to be known as "nature" and "culture." Indeed, the notion that the experiences of 'modern' peoples and societies can be understood without accounting for the beings and material processes known as 'nature,' is a nearly universal sociological premise.

But what if a wide variety of cultural practices, cultural toolkits, the range of resources available for cultural constructions of meaning are fundamentally shaped by other entities classified by our culture in the blanket term "nature?" What if the actions of the other beings and entities in the so-called 'natural' world themselves participate as animate actors in the dynamics of social power (e.g. Todd 2014, Watts 2013)? What if cultural sociologists were leading the way in the project of 'interspecies ethnography?' Instead, any word search of sociological literature will reveal how the term 'environment' rarely refers to anything beyond the so called "social" environment. Yet human societies have long co-evolved with the other-than-human entities we now classify into the generic category of "nature." That such relationships continue unacknowledged in the "modern" social contexts that sociologist of culture study is no accident. I have argued elsewhere that negating the relevance of nature for the social, material, cultural, spiritual and emotional components of human existence has been central to the discursive legitimization of the "modern" social order in North America (Norgaard 2019). Today this framework profoundly limits the scope of our sociological theorizing. It is my hope that cultural sociologists will expand attention to the relevance of the natural environment for cultural practices, cultural productions and the nature of social power. To that end, I here offer specific examples of how "nature" matters for cultural productions of the notion of race. I close with some reflections of the

consequences of all this for our ability to adequately theorize the changing climate.

For present purposes, we can take "nature" to mean both the larger complex of plants, animals, rocks, minerals and other beyond-human entities with whom humans share our world -- some of which flow in and out of human bodies, as well as their historically contingent social constructions. While many worthwhile volumes are crafted on the topic of "nature," my point here is fairly simple: not only has the field of sociology rested upon a particular divide or "dualism" between nature and culture, the categorization of a wide swath of other beings and entities into a single construct defined as inert and in opposition to the "human" and the "social," has profoundly limited our understanding of present society and social power. If the notion of nature as a generic classification for the myriad of other species with whom humans share our world is a cultural construct, what cultural work does this term perform? For whom is this work achieved? With what consequences for the sociology of culture today?

**Julian Go** (2016) describes how "The very notion of the "social"—as a space between nature and the spiritual realm—first emerged and resonated in the nineteenth century among European male elites to make sense of and to try to manage social upheaval and resistance from workers, women, and from so-called natives" (195). Certainly, this separation and negation of the natural world as a component of social action within sociology is part of the ongoing system of settler-colonialism in North America. Settler-colonial nations such as the United States have aimed to erase not only the presence of Indigenous peoples, but the ecologies with which they are embedded, and indeed the relevance of nature itself. And the near hegemonic success this discourse has achieved has allowed settler-colonial states to erase their footsteps as they go, so to speak. This mutually co-constructive attempt at the erasure of Indigenous peoples and nature makes the insights of Indigenous scholars

and Indigenous cosmologies particularly useful reference points for the present conversation. For example, Goenpul Aborigine scholar **Aileen Moreton-Robison** (2015) writes that the indigenous perspective produces particularly valuable contributions to the study of race and whiteness. Moreton-Robinson notes that in contrast to and alongside emphases on the role of slavery, migration, and the development of capitalism on racial constructions, Indigenous scholars bring attention to how land and land ownership matter for the construction of whiteness.

As a non-Indigenous settler, my own limited understanding of Indigenous cosmologies comes from a decade and a half of research collaborations with Karuk colleagues and friends in Northern California. For the people I learn from, “nature” in the form of salmon, eels or acorn trees is much more than a platform for human action or a space within which “environmental resources” might be distributed unequally. These species are part of the human society – teachers, tricksters, and treasured relatives to whom people have real responsibilities. Karuk Department of Natural Resources director Leaf Hillman references the Karuk Creation Story as he describes the intimate and serious social obligations Karuk people have to other species:

*At the beginning of time, only the spirit people roamed the earth. At the time of the great transformation, some of these spirit people were transformed into trees, birds, animals, fishes, rocks, fire and air – the sun, the moon, the stars... And some of these Spirit People were transformed into human beings. From that day forward, Karuk People have continually recognized all of these spirit people as our relatives, our close relations. From this flows our responsibility to care for, cherish and honor this bond, and to always remember that this relationship is a reciprocal one: it is a sacred covenant. Our religion, our management practices, and our day-to-day subsistence activities are inseparable. They are interrelated and a part of us.*

*We, Karuk, cannot be separated from this place, from the natural world or nature...we are a part of nature and nature is a part of us. We are closely related.*

## NATURE AND CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS OF RACE

In the 30 years since it was first crafted the theory of racial formation has become the central and most important explanation for race, racism and racial outcomes in the discipline of sociology (Sapsterstein, Penner and Light 2013). Yet within this powerfully generative framework there is a surprising absence of sociological attention to the importance of land or nature as a material and symbolic resource for the process of racial formation (Park and Pellow 2004). Instead, emphasis within recent theory has been on the vitally important, but more strictly social aspects of race making. If racial formation is the socio-historical process by which racial identities are “created, lived out, transformed and destroyed” (ibid, 109), then what might we gain by adding in attention to the natural environment as a key part of this process?

Nature matters a great deal in the project of race-making both because it is the ultimate source of all material wealth, and because the notion of ‘nature’ or ‘the natural’ is one of the most potent ideological resources available for making claims about what is ‘real,’ ‘inevitable,’ and ‘just the way things are.’ The reorganization of relationships in the natural environment has been crucial on a material level for the consolidation of state power and the generation of capitalist wealth for Whites on the one hand, and at the symbolic level in shaping the perception that these processes were both inevitable and good. Racial categories may be constructed in order to justify access to the natural environment, and the right for a given group to manipulate it according to their worldview and interests. Discourses of Native people as savages or closer to nature and Whites as civilized and therefore rightful leaders and decision makers justified direct genocide. The creation of racial categories of White and Indian and their particular contents thus paved the way for so called

settlement, and the generation of White wealth through further manipulation of the land – e.g. in California via hydraulic gold mining, the taking of land for farms and urban areas, and modern forestry practices.

Secondly, the content of racial categories often underlies lived out racialized experiences of the natural world. Some of these racialized experiences are of environmental exposure (pesticide poisoning of Latinx farmworkers, the exposure of Vietnamese American women and men to toxins in nail salons), while others like the disproportionate ability of Whites to access and enjoy and ‘pristine’ wilderness areas for recreation, are of environmental privilege. In other words, one importance of racial categories is that they justify the current situation whereby some people have environmental privilege and others extreme negative environmental exposure. Moore, Kosek and Pandian (2003) describe how the view that Indigenous people were naturally tougher was used to justify lower pay scales and longer working hours for Indigenous miners in the Peruvian Andes. Similarly, the supposed stealth of Indian men justified their placement on the front lines in warfare (e.g. WW II, Korean War, Vietnam War), at the same time as Indians’ purported lack of the fear of heights justified their exemption from safety precautions in the building of skyscrapers. In agricultural communities, notions of white people as pure and innocent work alongside beliefs about Latinos as uneducated to blame those who have been poisoned by pesticides for their own exposure. At the same time, notions that Latinx people are expendable deflect the moral implications of their experiences (Marquez 2014, Viramontes 1996). In each case the likelihood that one’s body contains particular chemicals, or will be found relaxing on the beach, becomes part of what it may mean to be Latinx, Black, White or Native in the world today. Note that it is also through references to particular notions of *nature* that these racial categories may be justified -- as in the way that the notion of nature as wild or dirty enables the concept of a Native ‘savage’ whereas very different constructions of nature as pure and pristine underlie notions of white purity and innocence. Furthermore, these notions of nature

may then be imposed back onto actual landscapes, as for example the concept of nature as ‘pristine’ and apart from humans is then imposed on wilderness areas.

Thirdly, as Omi and Winant (2014) emphasize, “race and racial meanings are neither stable nor consistent” (2). Indeed the meaning of racial categories, or even the categories themselves may be transformed through transformation of the natural world, whether the alternation of forests to commodity production, or land transformation and subsequent urban migration via the Dawes Act facilitated the development of a pan-Indian identity (Nagel 1994). Justification for the unique racial categories of American Indian and White comes from the association of Native people with the natural world. At the same time, these categories are materially solidified through the unequal wealth outcomes that result from different kinds of relationships with material nature.

Fourth, it may be through relationships to the natural environment that people resist racial and ethnic categorization. In Northern California during the time of outright frontier genocide, the fact that Karuk people lived further inland where they had access to mountains meant that at least some were able to hide from vigilantes and militia – a fact reflected in the greater portions of the Karuk population who survived into the 1880s as compared with the coastal Wiyot people (Raphael and House 2007, Secrest 2003). During this time, the intimate knowledge that people had of their land facilitated their survival.

In each of the abovementioned aspects of racial formation, ‘nature’ is not just another ‘inert’ site for the enactment of power, but it is through multidimensional relationships with the material natural world that state power is enacted, negotiated and resisted through cultural productions of the concept of race (see e.g. Scott 1998, 2008). In other words, the natural world itself is a “tool of structuration” (Giddens 1991). Again, all this is so in part because nature is the source of material human existence and wealth in the form of food, water, minerals and more, *and*



because the natural world holds profound symbolic significance.

### **A FEW CLOSING THOUGHTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

For at least the last ten years I've longed for my discipline to bring its best thinking to in particular the social, political and moral problem of our rapidly changing climate. Climate change may be the most serious ecological problem our world has faced. Climate change too is fundamentally about race and racism, as well as the erasure of Indigenous modes of knowing, being and thinking. On the one hand, racial inequalities and the racialized state have served as a mechanism to displace problems onto indigenous communities and communities of color. Laura Pulido and co-authors (2016) underscore that "vulnerable communities, in this case communities of color, are essential to the functioning of racial capitalism" (26) which, drawing upon Robinson (2000) they define as "a distinct interpretation of capitalism that acknowledges race as a structuring logic. . . Racism, as a material and ideological system that produces differential meaning and value, is harnessed by capital in order to exploit the differences that racism creates. In this case, devalued communities, places, and people serve as pollution "sinks," that enable firms to accumulate more surplus than would otherwise be possible" (ibid). And as **David Pellow** (2015) notes with respect to racism and the environment:

"The very existence of the modern U.S. nation-state is made possible by the existence of toxins --chemical poisons-- that permeate every social institution, human body and the non-human world. To be modern, then, is associated with a degree of manipulation of the human and non-human worlds that puts them both at great risk. To be modern also appears to require the subjugation and control over certain populations designated as "others," those less than fully deserving of citizenship, as a way of ameliorating the worst impacts of such a system on the privileged. These two tendencies, the manipulation of the

human and more-than-human worlds -- are linked through the benefits that toxic systems of production produce for the privileged and the imposition of the costs of that process on people and non-human nature deemed less valuable and therefore expendable" (57).

Environmental decline in the form of species loss, toxic contamination, energy shortages and now climate change is literally reshaping the baseline conditions around which human social, economic, political and cultural systems are organized. Especially in the face of climate change scholars across the natural and social sciences have begun to theorize the concept of the 'Anthropocene' -- described as an entirely new geological epoch in which human activity is fundamentally reshaping the ecosystems of the earth (Steffen et al 2007). But exactly how this level of environmental degradation translates into specific social outcomes is a complex process that too few sociologists are tracking. Now in the face of climate change, the importance of the natural world for social outcomes is just beginning to gain more mainstream attention within the discipline of sociology. Climate change also evokes an urgent need to rethink many aspects of western social, economic and political systems from the organization of energy around fossil fuels, to the sustainability of cultural values of excessive consumption, and the relevance of epistemologies that presume a separation of the social and natural worlds.

Climate change is anthropogenic, or human caused. But humans have existed on earth for a long time. Climate change is neither inevitable nor natural. In the big picture, the organization of economic activity around fossil fuel extraction and use results from specific and very recent management decisions regarding for example the extraction of coal as a fuel source, the organization of elaborate global and national transportation infrastructure, the globalization of economies, and militarization -- each of which are in turn undertaken within the logics of capitalism and colonialism. Predicted climactic changes described by the scientific community are not 'inevitable'

acts of nature, but equally nor is climate change an inevitable outgrowth of human activity. Many of the dominant discourses surrounding climate change rely upon Indigenous erasure.

Indigenous erasure manifests in our climate discourse in part through erasures within peoples' collective sociological imaginations. Erased from the dominant sensibility is the possibility of an animate world, the possibility that humans and the other species we often call "nature," might work together to create abundance (Fenelon 2015, Watts 2013). Erased are notions of belonging, responsibility and reciprocity that are simultaneously harder and harder to maintain under capitalism. Now in the highest esteemed institutions of the land it has become difficult to acknowledge or imagine that the natural world matters for the social, that there are spirits in all living things, or even that there are viable forms of social organization beyond capitalism.

*Kari Marie Norgaard is author Living in Denial, Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life (MIT Press, 2011) and Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People: Colonialism, Nature and Social Action, (Rutgers University Press, forthcoming July 2019)*

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**Contact us with suggestions for essays, book reviews, symposia, reports on conference panels, profiles of departments or research centers, etc.— or just themes or topics you'd like to see covered in the newsletter. Graduate students are especially welcome to be involved!**

**Contact us at [dgraizbord@uga.edu](mailto:dgraizbord@uga.edu)**



# CULTURE SECTION AWARD WINNERS

## **MARY DOUGLAS PRIZE FOR BEST BOOK**

Committee: Clayton Childress (co-chair), Bin Xu (co-chair), Kelsy Burke, Eva Illouz, Richard Ocejo.

### **WINNER:**

Karida Brown

UC Los Angeles

*Gone Home: Race and Roots through Appalachia*  
(UNC Press, 2018)

## **CLIFFORD GEERTZ PRIZE FOR BEST ARTICLE**

Committee: Paul Joosse (chair), Larissa Buchholz, Sam Friedman, Ellis Monk, Ori Schwarz

### **WINNER:**

Karen A. Cerulo

Rutgers University

[Scents and sensibility: olfaction, sense-making, and meaning attribution](#)  
*American Sociological Review*, 83(2), 361-389

## **RICHARD PETERSON AWARD FOR BEST GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER**

Committee: Matthew Clair (chair), Shai Dromi,  
Alvaro Santana-Acuna, Matthew Norton, Jingsi Wu

### **WINNER:**

Jacqui Frost

University of Minnesota

"The Meaning of Uncertainty: Navigating States  
of Certainty and Uncertainty in Nonreligious  
Narratives"

### **HONORABLE MENTION:**

Yağmur Karakaya

University of Minnesota

"[The Conquest of Hearts: the Central Role of  
Ottoman Nostalgia within Contemporary Turkish  
Populism](#)" *American Journal of Cultural  
Sociology*, (forthcoming)

## FOUR QUESTIONS FOR PAUL DiMAGGIO

**Dustin S. Stoltz** (Univ. of Notre Dame)  
interviews **Paul DiMaggio** (New York  
University) on the past, present, and future of  
cultural analysis and sociology

**Dustin Stoltz: How did you become interested in the study of culture?**

**Paul DiMaggio:** Two things really got me excited about sociology to the extent of wanting to go to graduate school. I practiced teaching to become a high school teacher at a local school. It was an interesting school because it was a fusion of two districts, one of which was the most upscale district in Pennsylvania and the other one was almost entirely a blue collar district. Initially, I sort of coded who was smart and who wasn't in the class. Then I got to know the students and I realized that my initial coding corresponded very heavily to what town they were from, and it was actually inaccurate in terms of who seemed to be smarter. So, I began thinking about what was it that made me perceive intelligence one way or the other. Obviously, I was ready prey for Bourdieu when I got to graduate school.

The second thing was just luck. I found out about a NSF grant to do summer research at Vanderbilt through a Swarthmore faculty member and I applied for it. I had a roommate from Tennessee who made it sound very romantic and I'd never been in the south. I asked another roommate, "You know, if I want to spend the summer doing research in Nashville at Vanderbilt, what should I say I'm interested in?" And she said "It's Nashville, country music." I wrote a little proposal which was like a baby version of what **Pete Peterson** was doing and he immediately called up and said, "Come work with me." That was a really an extraordinary experience.

Harvard was the only place I applied for graduate school. I was working in Boston for a publishing

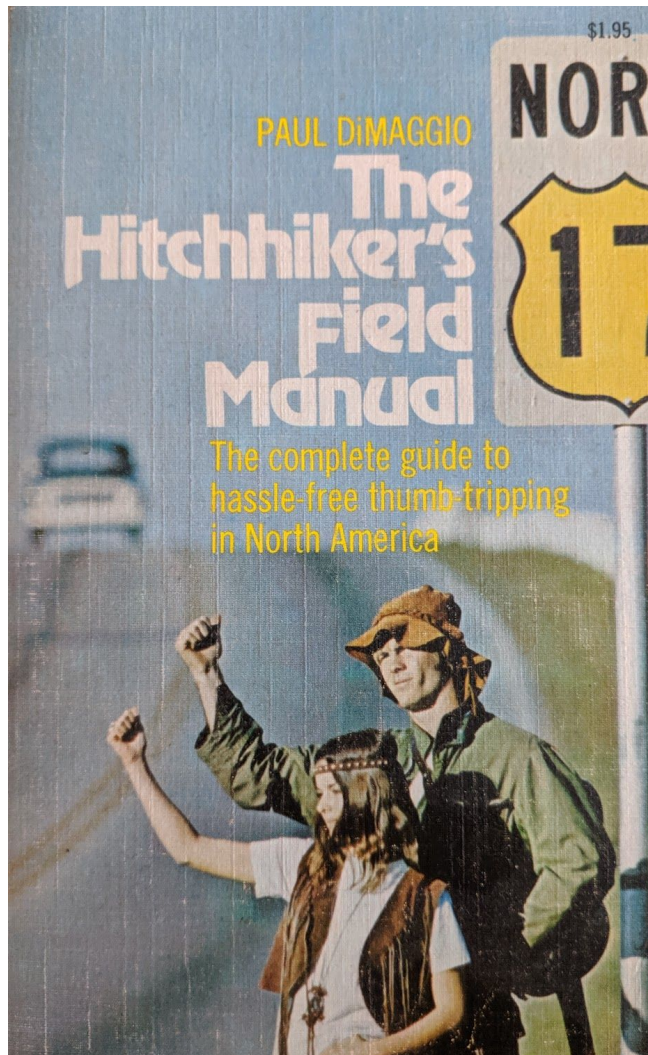
company and I walked by the Harvard Graduate School office every day on the way to the subway. There, I worked with **Mike Useem**, and then later **Harrison White** and **Ann Swidler**. Mike left Harvard by the time I was dissertating, so **Sandy Jencks** was the third person on my committee. Harrison was the director of it. I think you know he had a big influence on me, but my dissertation was actually not a very Harrison-like dissertation at all. Really all four of them were big influences, and Pete Peterson as well. Mike Useem introduced me to Bourdieu before he was even published in the US. Harrison is one of the greatest intellectuals I've ever met, It's hard not to be influenced by him. Sandy Jencks is a really great model for rigor in terms of doing quantitative work, and from the right place intellectually. Ann Swidler came later, but in some ways, was more of an influence on me than anybody. She was writing her 1986 paper and I got to read an early draft. In it, she basically described all these ideas about culture that I intuitively felt but couldn't express.

**DS: What work does culture do in your thinking, and what do you see as the benefits and limitations of your approach as compared to alternatives?**

**PD:** When I teach the sociology of culture, I tell my students that over the course of the semester we should try not to use the word culture at all, but instead we should talk about what we actually mean. By that I mean, we don't talk about the sociology of social structure in strictly general terms, we talk about stratification, networks, or forms of power. Culture is the same thing. It is a convenient indexical term that refers to everything from rituals to subjective phenomena, to patterns of text, to musical notes. There is no reason that there should be one theory or theoretical framework that addresses all these things.

So, I think there are a number of ways of looking at culture that are productive. Culture both plays a supporting role and it's also a focal topic in its own right. In the study of inequality, for example, culture has been really important as a mechanism through which inequality is reinforced. In the study

of popular culture, such the arts, it is more of a dependent variable. Increasingly I'm thinking of culture in terms of representations and systems of classification that people use to interpret reality.



**Note:** DiMaggio's first book, based on his undergraduate honor's thesis.

One of the problems with the way the sociologists have traditionally looked at culture is the expectation (a) that culture is integrated, and (b) the assumption that people actually have one set of beliefs and one set of cultural understandings. I think there's a lot of evidence that people know more culture than they use, as Ann Swidler has said, and they also have multiple identities. The matching of identity to cultural schemas is a major mechanism through which collective action occurs and through which people may behave unpredictably. For example, how is it that the people who seem perfectly normal one year can all

become supporters of an authoritarian next year, or how (as in the former Yugoslavia) people who used to intermarry and celebrate rituals together suddenly start killing each other. Obviously the explanation is not all culture, but we have to understand how culture permits that, given the external factors that militate towards it.

**DS: How does your approach to culture shape your choice of research topics, settings, and methods?**

**PD:** My recent work is trying to understand how it is that the same people will use culture in different ways from moment to moment, and I find the work on code switching for example, really helpful. And so, I should probably be doing ethnography, which I'm not doing, but I find myself drawing on ethnography and having conversations with ethnographers a lot.

What I've been doing instead is getting into more kinds of quantitative methodologies, for example, topic modeling and computational text analysis. With these methods one might potentially look at transitions between voices within texts and use them to understand the circumstances within the text where a communicator will shift from one code to another.

I am also working with **Amir Goldberg** on the problem of how to understand heterogeneity in survey data, building on Amir's AJS paper on relational class analysis. Specifically, I'm interested in methods that understand people's attitudes based on the way they are connected to other attitudes. This allows us to get away from the idea that the same attitude means the same thing across people.

**DS: What excites you most about the future of cultural theory and analysis in sociology?**

**PD:** One of the really exciting things happening is the integration of research in cognitive science with the sociology of culture. Going back as far as Parsons there's always been a psychology behind cultural theory and in the past it wasn't made very



explicit. Also in the past, since the psychologists were behaviorists, there wasn't much to draw on. Now there is.

There's also a lot of interesting work in the area of culture and politics—both people studying collective action and people coming out of political science who are thinking seriously about where do political opinions come from. Political science and political sociology at one point saw voters as having ideologies. Now, people are understanding that political perceptions are based on a lot of things other than ideology, including identity or more primitive emotions, and drawing on cultural theory.

Increasingly ethnographic work is using cultural sociology to interpret particular context or

situations, but in doing so is also contributing to the development of cultural ideas. In addition to this ethnographic work, there's also this methodological explosion around computational analysis which is getting people who don't usually study culture to study it. For example, text analysis is increasingly informed by the sociology of culture.

Broadly, I think the field is doing really well in the sense that there are a lot of young people who are doing incredibly good work and not bothering to fight about the things that people used to waste time on.



**Paul DiMaggio** is Professor of Sociology at New York University and A. Barton Hepburn Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University. He completed his undergraduate degree at Swarthmore College, where he conducted research on hitchhiking for his honor's thesis which became his first book, *The Hitchhiker's Field Manual* (1973, Macmillan). His next book was the edited volume *Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts* (1986, Oxford). DiMaggio's dissertation was "Culture, Stratification, and Organization: Exploratory Papers" and directed by **Harrison White** (chair) and **Ann Swidler**, and **Christopher "Sandy" Jencks**. Encouraged by **Mike Useem**, DiMaggio was also an early importer of Bourdieu to American sociology. Prior to graduate school, he worked with **Richard "Pete" Peterson**, who was reviving the culture concept and laying the foundation for the "production of culture perspective" through his

empirical work on country music. DiMaggio's earliest publications came out of this work, such as "From Region to Class, the Changing Locus of Country Music" (*Social Forces*, 1975). Based on his work on small nonprofit arts organizations, and **Walter "Woody" Powell's** work on small book publishers, the two were struck by the extent of homogeneity between different organizations. This became the key idea that motivated one of the most widely cited papers in the social sciences: "The Iron Cage Revisited" (*ASR*, 1983).

# MEMORIAL: PRISCILLA PARKHURST FERGUSON

On December 31, 2018, Professor **Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson** passed away. Born in Gloversville, New York in 1940, Priscilla graduated cum laude from Mount Holyoke College, and earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in French from Columbia University. Dr. Ferguson taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago from 1966 to 1989, rising to the level of Professor and Chair of the Department of French, and publishing her first two books, *The Battle of the Bourgeois* (1973) and *Literary France* (1987). In 1989 she began teaching at Columbia University as Professor of Sociology and French. She published three more books (*Paris as Revolution* (1994); *Accounting for Taste* (2004); *Word of Mouth* (2014)) and served terms as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Director of Graduate Studies. Dr. Ferguson was married for almost 30 years to the late Robert A. Ferguson, also a distinguished member of the Columbia University faculty.

In service to her memory, we called upon long-term friends and colleagues, and recent students, to share their memories of Priscilla and her many contributions. Here, we share four of these: from **Sharon Zukin**, **Krishnendu Ray**, **Diane Vaughan**, and **M. Pilar Opazo**.

*-Shamus Khan (Chair and Professor of Sociology, Columbia University) and Jennifer C. Lena (Director and Associate Professor of Arts Administration, Columbia University)*

There is no way to separate my appreciation of Priscilla Ferguson as an intellectual and as a friend. She understood both the codifying privilege of rules and the creative genius of rule breakers (see: French cuisine), wrote about French intellectuals and social movements without jargon or ideological cant (Pierre Bourdieu, *l'Action française*), and underlined the importance of women culture makers in fields where they were historically devalued (cooks vs. chefs). She loved

the refinements of an excellent meal while relishing the symbolic significance of a pot au feu. During years of meeting for lunch at various *bonnes tables* in New York, within the bounds of food allergies and tastes, she humored me by agreeing to eat soba—once—although this meal took place at a soba restaurant owned by Jean-Georges Vongerichten.

I loved listening to Priscilla talk about her food experiences. Recipes, food products, restaurants, and of course the vagaries of tastes were the fields in which she excelled. We first met in the early 1990s on a panel about food at a sociology conference, and we bonded over a love of meals we had eaten in France, which translated almost immediately into a shared ambition to understand the evolution of French cuisine. This led us to collaborate on a research project to compare the careers of French-born and U.S.-born chefs in New York, just when French cuisine's grasp of global hegemony was beginning to loosen and chefs who made their careers outside "the hexagon" were able to retain professional legitimacy. It was also a moment when chefs still stood somewhat hesitantly at the threshold of stardom. Daniel Boulud, David Bouley, Jean-Georges himself: these and other chefs who were written up in the food media but whose celebrity was not yet assured granted us long interviews. To our delight, they also brought us into their restaurant kitchens. Although colleagues assumed we were eating our way through the research, we scrupulously refused to accept anything more than a cup of coffee, well, espresso or, in Priscilla's case, a macchiato. She interviewed Gilbert Le Coze of Le Bernardin before he died and spoke often of that meeting; she was intrigued as well by the careers of women chefs who were just beginning to attract investors and starred reviews.

Priscilla leavened our collaboration with her extensive knowledge of the intertwined histories of French culture and cuisine. That kept us talking throughout our lunches, and we endlessly planned

to bring our research up to date by interviewing new generations of chefs. Priscilla received even the wildest ideas with enthusiasm tempered by dry wit. Even if she didn't share some of those ideas, she always offered support.

Alas, our ambitions for collaboration were pushed aside by other work. Priscilla was very much in demand for talks and articles on French cuisine on both sides of the Atlantic. She translated the work of Pierre Bourdieu. She also developed serious expertise in roses and chocolate, material things that fascinated her, I think, as much by their histories and personalities as by their sensuous qualities. Their beauty offered her a permanent puzzle of embodied capital, a study in the sociology of everyday life that she took seriously both inside and outside the classroom.

Priscilla had other competences that I could only admire. When I met her, she jogged and could set up her own computer. She was an accomplished gardener and the first reader her husband, Robert Ferguson, turned to for criticism and advice. She tirelessly cared for him during his last illness. Her generosity and modesty, her ability to speak eloquently in a quiet voice, were rare in this time and will be greatly missed.

*-Sharon Zukin, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center*

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Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson's writings, especially *Accounting for Taste* (2004), were central to my re-education on the difference between cooking and cuisine, both discursively and materially. According to Priscilla, cuisine happens when cooking leaves the kitchen, is written about, turned into an erudite form of gastronomy that happened most successfully in France in the 18th century in conjunction with the extensification of the print revolution already under way since the 15th century. Her analysis allowed me to make productive distinctions between the silent cooking of most people in most parts of the world and the voluble cooking of mostly male French chefs. What is that gap between a profession and an everyday practice? And how is the boundary

maintained between the two? What are the real skills acquired in a constituted field such as haute cuisine--say the making of a double consommé compared to chicken soup? What are the gaps, connections, and boundaries between the rhetoric and the reality of these modes of cooking?

Priscilla provided quiet but essential intellectual and institutional support for the legitimization of the emerging interdisciplinary field of Food Studies at NYU. She wrote letters of support, signed her name to grants, evaluated faculty tenure and promotion dossiers, helped launch our Feast and Famine Colloquium (conscientiously attending it three times a semester, often with her friends), and presented early versions of her work at our Seminar. I could go on and on about all the quotidian tasks she did to aid us in academic institution-building and maintenance. I will miss her deliberate intellect and diligent support immensely!

*-Krishnendu Ray, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Food Studies, New York University*

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At Chicago, Priscilla served as Chair of the French Department and pursued a fast-paced international career. Arriving at Columbia in 1989 at a time when women full professors were scarce and not in demand, she started as Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWAG) and other committees. After affiliating with Sociology, she served as Director of both Graduate and Undergraduate Studies.

By the time the Columbia Department of Sociology moved to Knox Hall, Priscilla had stepped back from those leadership roles, published two books, and maintained a network of ties in France, traveling for conference, lectures, and Ph.D. defenses. She made an important mark on individuals and on the department as a space/place to be. Culture was her subject and for her, a specific embodied style.

As a colleague, Priscilla was ever-organized, ever-professional, ever-elegant, ever-gracious. With just a few touches, she managed to create the



only warm, inviting office in the department. She took the time to do the small, meaningful things. New assistant professors and senior women were welcomed into the department with handwritten notes and invitations to cultural events, museums, or lunch. She took one new professor to her first opera, giving her an unforgettable welcome and memory.

Priscilla served on the Knox Space Committee, deciding about offices and allocation of space. In the same way that she automatically converted her square box office into something inviting, she paired up with a new, junior colleague, and together they gained access to a Columbia library stash of art and photographs, pieces of which they managed somehow to acquire for us, bringing color and life to the hallways, the seminar room, and the department office. Through them, Priscilla is ever-present, and a junior colleague has an indelible memory.

As both colleague and friend, she stayed in touch, sending photos of her rose garden in the summers and enjoying little pleasures along with the big. Fine dining was one thing, but as regular at the Sunday farmer's market, she liked meeting friends at Le Monde for hot chocolate and croissant after. This, apparently, sparked "The Big Business of Haut Chocolat," in *Contexts*. Along with articles and book reviews, she published small pieces in French and English on current topics, including the film, "Le Festin de Babette," "Michelin in America," in *Gastronomica*, and with colleagues/friends elsewhere, most notably a *Contexts* review of the film, "Ratatouille," with Gary Fine, for fun.

*-Diane Vaughan, Professor of Sociology, Columbia University*

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As a graduate student in the Sociology Department at Columbia University, I had the privilege to work with Priscilla on her course "Food and Social Order." The class was not only insightful but also highly creative and, above all, fun. Priscilla's reading list included extracts from the Old Testament and the Quran, which revealed how

foods and food preparations become part of a belief system, and in doing so, change social behavior. These readings complemented the classics of Sociology, such as Emile Durkheim's comprehensive study of religion, through which students learned how food was moved from mundane to sacred spaces, and how that shaped everyday life, starting from the most elemental forms of social life. Georg Simmel and Pierre Bourdieu's theories were also discussed, including their ideas of food as a form of distinction in modern society. We learned about the role of food in stratifying society, segregating individuals across class and gender, about the role of food in creating social identities and movements, and in confronting cultures. Towards the end of the course, and building on the theories we had learned, Priscilla would encourage students to analyze movies—ranging from the food classic, "Babette's Feast" to the contemporary animated movies, "Kung Fu Panda" and "Ratatouille"—through the conceptual framework we learned in class.

In her lectures, Priscilla would repeatedly point out: "Food is much more than food. Food has a social meaning and significance beyond the physiological act of eating." The class was run as a dialogue. Priscilla would ask students questions about their shopping experiences, their food preferences, "food fears," and culinary backgrounds. In one of our most fascinating classes we engaged in a discussion about the Thanksgiving meals we had enjoyed and how those revealed part of our identities. Priscilla was always fascinated to hear students' stories and incorporate them into the class.

Priscilla embodied Bourdieu's notion of distinction, in the most elegant way. For each class, she would wear a new, stylish and beautiful outfit. Leather jackets, purple hats, red coats all matching — from top to bottom — with beautiful earrings, necklaces, and shoes.

I had the privilege of being Priscilla's last Ph.D. student. I remember the day I knocked on her door to tell her about my dissertation project on modernist cuisine, which deviated from the classic

culinary tradition she so much admired. She immediately believed in my project and saw value in my work. She worked with me in identifying the connections of my findings to cultural sociology. She told me that she would almost “jump off” of her chair while reading my field notes. In our meetings, she showed me how much she enjoyed learning from my work, just as I had enjoyed learning from her research and classes.

When I defended my dissertation, Priscilla and Diane Vaughan, my two female mentors, invited me to celebrate at one of the best restaurants in New York (and in the world), Jean Georges. Priscilla knew the restaurant well and had interviewed the chef years earlier in her work with Sharon Zukin. We had a wonderful meal, looking at Central Park. Food, indeed, was much more than food.

A year before her passing we were working on an article on the subject of “play.” Priscilla had the idea to work on this topic after a seminar organized at the Sociology Department at Columbia to pay tribute to her work, before her retirement in December of 2015. While coding the interviews, we were both fascinated to learn how chefs

incorporated play in their craft and the joyful, fun, and ironic creations that resulted from their work. The process of working together on this project resembled our previous interactions: filled with good conversations at Le Monde (a French brasserie, close to the Columbia University campus). We would talk for hours about potential theoretical avenues and also about our findings, trying to establish connections between the two. This collaborative process might explain why we decided to conclude our first draft with the following sentence: “for scholars interested in the subject — and based on our own experience — studying play may turn out to be not only illuminating for sociological research but also lots of fun.”

Priscilla marked my life as a scholar, in a very simple but profound way. She studied novels, food, chefs, and roses because she loved them. She taught me that I could study something that brought me joy, and that in doing so - with care and dedication - I might bring joy to others and learn a great deal in the process.

*-M. Pilar Opazo, Post-Doctoral Associate and Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management*

# BOOK REVIEW

2018 CULTURE SECTION BOOK AWARD

CO- WINNER

*The Politics of Compassion: the Sichuan Earthquake and Civic Engagement in China*  
(2017, Stanford)

by Bin Xu

Reviewed by:

Lily Liang

UW-Madison

Tens of thousands of ordinary Chinese citizens rushed to the southwestern province of Sichuan in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 earthquake that killed 87,150 people including 5,335 schoolchildren. The citizens' volunteerism based on their beliefs of altruism, compassion, and self-fulfillment supports the Thomas theorem. However, Bin Xu's *The Politics of Compassion: the Sichuan Earthquake and Civic Engagement in China* (2017, Stanford University Press) does more than show how the meanings we assign to our actions shape the outcomes of those actions. Using a combination of interviews, field observations, archival and secondary materials, Xu provides the political, structural, situational, and historical contexts to understand how Chinese people practice civic engagement under authoritarianism; specifically, in four moments of China's largest disaster relief to date.

Initially, the scale of the devastation caused by the earthquake overwhelmed the state's disaster relief capacity. Xu shows how the consensus between state and society on the priority of saving lives created a "situational opening" (p. 51) for civic engagement. For a time, the state allowed civic associations to help with the distribution of donations and aid. This state-society partnership garnered the Chinese government much-needed positive publicity in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, when protests in Tibet and disruptions

along the international torch relay had tarnished China's image.

A few days into the rescue effort, the state accepted proposals to organize a public mourning for the earthquake victims. Xu stresses how this act was unprecedented. The People's Republic of China (PRC) had survived deadlier disasters. But the first time the PRC had ever lowered the national flag and observed a moment of silence for ordinary citizens was for the Sichuan earthquake victims. Xu argues that, "the flow of [recent] events and structural conditions" (p. 95) had put the state between a rock and a hard place. The state could not have opened up the public sphere and asked its citizens to show compassion while rejecting public demands for it to show compassion. The state had to shore up its moral legitimacy by mourning the Sichuan victims.

After the initial openness, the state started to restrict civic engagement. Xu shows how the recovery effort's political landscape left little room for civic organizations. Government-sanctioned NGOs once more took charge of managing and allocating donations. Local governments began to partner with real estate developers to rebuild the devastated areas. Xu argues the early state-society partnership during the rescue period had not fundamentally changed their relationship. Civic organizations serve at the pleasure of the Chinese state. Xu captures the powerlessness of individual volunteers, showing that even in private they would not discuss the man-made causes of the numerous school collapses that killed more than 5,000 children.

A year after the disaster, society lost access to the political opportunity structure. Xu reminds us of the repressive political contexts that discouraged all but a "tiny public" of dissidents, liberal intellectuals, and ordinary citizens from translating their compassion into activism, specifically into campaigns to collect the names of schoolchildren who died. In opportune moments the state could tolerate civic engagement as volunteerism but never as activism. For their name-collecting activism, the dissident Tan Zuoren received a



five-year prison sentence and the artist Ai Weiwei was detained by the authorities.

*The Politics of Compassion* shows that Chinese citizens' beliefs about compassion may have driven them to do their part in the disaster relief, but authoritarian political contexts ultimately define their civic engagement. Volunteers' inability to deal with larger, political issues limits the meanings they assign to their actions. One of the saddest moments in the book is when Xu

describes how volunteers would gush about their love for the children who survived but stay mute about the school collapses that killed their classmates. What's left unsaid, hanging heavily in the air, speaks volumes about individual efficacy in Chinese civil society. Xu has captured all this and more in his book. *The Politics of Compassion* is a valuable read for sociologists who wish to understand the interplay between culture and politics in China today.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### IN THE MARGINS OF CULTURE: TOWARDS A THIRD WORLD CULTURAL STUDIES

Excerpt, Volume 16, No. 3 (Spring 2002)

*The newsletter of the Culture Section provides a rich repository of knowledge about cultural sociology and the sociology of culture. Its pages, which span from the 1980s to the present, index major debates, movements, and shifts. To contribute to our collective memory, the next several newsletters will feature an article or feature from an earlier newsletter. We hope these reprints will stimulate reflection on theoretical, methodological, and substantive changes and continuities in our community of practice.*

John Foran  
UCSB and Smith College

Within the sociological approach to culture in the U.S., cultural studies is clearly a marginal perspective. Within cultural studies itself — especially as practiced in the U.S. and Europe — the Third World is also somewhat marginal. Yet, out of the many variants of cultural studies — from the original English contributions of Raymond Williams (1960), E. P. Thompson (1966) and later Stuart Hall, to the subaltern studies of Ranajit Guha (Guha and Spivak 1988), the Marxist literary criticism of Aijaz Ahmad (1992), Edward Said's

path-breaking contributions to the study of culture and politics (1978, 1994), and the burgeoning elds of postcolonial studies and Latin American postmodernism — comes what may be thought of as a distinctive (if broad) field called Third World cultural studies (TWCS), where the woven threads of lived experience, subjectivity, agency, dreams and visions underline the centrality and embeddedness of culture in everyday life...A specifically Third World cultural studies represents a political approach to culture, and a cultural approach to politics, focusing on how political cultures and discourses circulate and compete — features which are not intrinsic or exclusive to Third World cultural studies, yet which seem in my view to happen here more often than in what we might term “First World” cultural studies, let alone the conventional “sociology of culture” approaches in the U.S.

The purpose of this essay is to introduce the idea of a “Third World cultural studies” and to point toward some recent work in this field, thus broadening the scope of the ASA culture section...

#### ***Political cultures of opposition: conceptualizing agency in the sociology of revolutions***

I came to the study of culture in the early 1980s while working on the Iranian revolution, in an

encounter with theories about revolutions, most in influentially Theda Skocpol's ambitious structural interpretation of the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions, where she famously argued: "Revolutions are not made; they come" (1979: 17). As this went against my own theoretical and political instincts I set about trying to show how people had made the revolution in Iran. To do this, I had to think through how political economic structures — themselves greatly but not solely shaped by the west in a process of dependent development — were challenged by the actions of social groups. The key to this puzzle for me gradually crystallized into the notion of "political cultures of resistance" — the various ways that people creatively draw on experience, emotions, subjectivity, sedimented traditions and ideological refashionings to make sense of political and economic exclusion and to mobilize themselves and others in revolutionary struggles (Foran 1993, 1997; I owe much to Sivanandan 1980 for the germ of the idea).

How then, do culture and agency matter in the causality of revolutions? Jean-Pierre Reed and I (forthcoming) have recently argued that prior to revolutions, individuals, groups, and organizations articulate multiple political cultures of opposition to the regime, and that these may draw on diffuse folk beliefs and historical memories of struggle, shared "structures of feeling" (Williams 1960) fashioned out of reactions to common experiences, and eventually, perhaps, explicitly revolutionary manifestos and formally articulated ideologies. By "political culture," we mean not the 1960s' North American political science concept of the same name, with its measures of "tradition" and "modernity" (see Pye and Verba 1965 and Coleman 1968, among many others), but the plurivocal and potentially radical ways of understanding their circumstances that various groups within a society sometimes articulate to make sense of the political and economic changes they are living through. Other theorists invoke aspects of the same idea, notably Sewell (1985), Skocpol (1985), and Selbin (1997), as well as Charles Tilly, with his passing but suggestive reference to "cultural repertoires of revolution" (1978: 151-9, 224-5), Ann Swidler, with her

influential metaphor of a "cultural tool-kit" (1986), James Scott's work on "hidden transcripts" (1990), or even earlier, C. Wright Mills's "vocabularies of motives" (1963 [1940]: 442). The qualifier "political cultures of *opposition and resistance*," however, distinguishes this notion from the American sociology of culture tradition. The fact that such cultures tap everything from historical memories of past conflicts to inchoate sentiments about injustice to long-standing religious idioms and practices to more formally elaborated political ideologies moves beyond the polarization of the Skocpol-Sewell debate by embracing all of what they respectively pinpoint as relevant and trying to show how these might articulate with each other. Our insistence that such political cultures are plural and multiple, that they can be secular as well as religious, and that different social groups may embrace different versions, takes us beyond the excellent work of Farideh Farhi (1990) and Mansoor Moaddel (1993) on cultural aspects of the revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua. In this we are in agreement with Jon Cruz that cultural elements (which he calls "tropes") interpenetrate each other in complex and sometimes politically powerful ways (see Cruz 1999; I also owe the title of this essay to an echo of this book). We show how this is true both of liberation theology and Sandinismo in Nicaragua, and of their relationship with each other, as well as the more diffuse idioms and sentiments of nationalism, social justice, human dignity, and democracy that underpinned them. To capture the cultural and ideological dimensions of this intervention of human agents onto the historical stage, then, we have proposed the notion of "political cultures of opposition and resistance."...

We argue that organizational capacity, lived experience, emotions, culture, and ideology come together under certain circumstances to produce revolutionary political cultures. This suggests that political cultures of opposition are a product of, and in turn have an impact upon, a range of discursive and material elements: from the historical experiences that shape subjectivity and arouse emotions that E. P. Thompson (1966) has identified, to *all* the issues uncovered by Skocpol and Sewell on the spectrum from cultural idioms to

formally articulated ideologies, and through the organizations and networks of social actors who make revolutions happen (or not). The dotted lines indicate the more indirect linkages between subjectivity and ideology on the one hand, and cultural idioms and social forces on the other. All of these elements pass through and are held together by our notion of political cultures of opposition and resistance at some point in the chain, and complex two-way relations are not ruled out....

***Women, culture, and development: new approaches in the sociology of development***

In another recent project, a volume co-edited with Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Priya Kurian, *Feminist Futures: Re-imagining Women, Culture and Development* (London: Zed, forthcoming), we propose a new take on Third World development issues that centers culture. What “women, culture, and development” (WCD) can be rests on an assessment of the vast potential of creatively combining the three fields of critical development studies, feminist studies and cultural studies. Each needs the others to see its own blind spots. Each can contribute an angle of vision that is indispensable for breaking out of the impasse of the crisis of development.

Our vision of WCD is one where analysis can move flexibly between political economic macrostructures and local discourses and practices (see Freeman 2001 and Bergeron 2001 and the many works they cite for similar approaches). It would be one where scholars can center the activities and struggles of Third World women, learning from their great variety and seeking to articulate paths to the dialogue that must precede any wider unity across lines of race, sex and world, and where Third World actors are neither victim nor hero (see Jameson 2000) but play leading parts in the struggle against globalization from above. Indeed, development studies should confront and appropriate globalization — not the other way around — forging alliances with cultural and feminist studies. This kind of scholarship and analysis (for it is not carried out only in the academy), to which many people are already contributing, is not new, but deserves a name, for

which we see no better term at present than “women, culture, and development”.

***Media studies and analysis of the cold war***

Third World cultural studies represents an approach to culture that can also bring a critical perspective to First World cultural practices. In the essay where I first coined the term...I assess the 1953 coup against the radical reformer and prime minister of Iran, Muhammad Musaddiq, a non-communist advocate of democracy who sought to break with a history of dependency and Western influence in his country’s economy and political affairs. Like Sukarno in Indonesia, Gandhi and Nehru in India, Nasser in Egypt, Nkrumah in Ghana, Ben Bella in Algeria, and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Musaddiq’s nationalism and (like Arbenz and Arevalo in Guatemala, and later Allende in Chile) his democratic aims were fatefully misrepresented in the West, especially in the pages of *Time*, the *New York Times*, and other mainstream publications. Dominant U.S. constructions of Musaddiq were based on Orientalist and cold war discourses and served to further solidify such discourses. This contributed directly to the atmosphere — the “structure of feeling” (Williams 1960) — in which a coup was conceived and made. While the *New York Times* studiously avoided mention of U.S. actions in Iran, Luce’s publications *Time* and *Life* were instrumental in castigating the Truman administration’s indecisiveness in the region, and contributed to the election of a Republican administration that was more willing to intervene in Iran’s internal affairs. Against this should be seen the difficulties of countering this discourse, whether in the pages of *The Nation* or through Musaddiq’s own efforts to address the American people. The covert policies that produced the coup were in their turn produced by a cold war discourse that *Time* shaped decisively, and the “success” of the coup forged a precedent that led to further interventions in Guatemala and Cuba, among other places, in the decade that followed.

All the causal links in the chain that produced the coup may never be identified, but a Third World cultural studies perspective on the events suggests the plausibility of such a chain, and insists that the



discursive subversion of the Musaddiq administration practiced by the U.S. media played a material role in the history of the cold war, most fatefully in Iran itself.

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In sum, Arvind and I urge members of the Culture section to study some of the many works from and about the Third World that deal with culture in ways that are partly consonant with, and partly critical of, much of what is done in the name of the sociology of culture in the United States. We join with Ron Lembo in seeking to bring new theories, disciplines, and subject matters into the broad field of the study of culture. We will all be the richer for it.

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# CULTURE SECTION AT ASA 2019

## CULTURE SECTION BUSINESS MEETING

Mon, August 12, 3:30 to 4:10pm  
Sheraton New York, Second Floor,  
Metropolitan Ballroom East

## JOINT RECEPTION: SECTION ON SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE, HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY AND THEORY SECTION

Mon, August 12, 6:30 to 8:30pm  
Offsite: Papillon Bistro and Bar

Download PDFs and view the Full Online ASA program (with locations) [here](#)

**\*\*All sessions are located in the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown unless otherwise noted\*\***

## SATURDAY

**4:30 to 6:10pm**

- **Classification and Legitimation in the Sociology of Culture.** Session Organizer: David Grazian, University of Pennsylvania; Presider, Shyon Baumann, University of Toronto
  - Classification in Art, Revisited - Victoria D. Alexander, Goldsmiths
  - Artistic Legitimation and the Rise of Vernacular Modernism in America - Jennifer C. Lena, Columbia University, Teachers College
  - Extending Authenticity: Going Corporate in a Craft Market - Marie Sarita Gaytan, University of Utah
  - In the Dark: The Organizational Culture for Film Exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art - Tania R. Aparicio, New School for Social Research
  - Cultural Evaluation and Legitimacy: Films, Film Critics, and Audiences in the Era of Review-Aggregation Websites - Dimitrios Zaras, Emory University; Timothy J. Dowd, Emory University

## SUNDAY

**10:30am-12:10pm**

- **Cultural Distinction, Taste, and Intergroup Relations among Elites,** Session Organizer, David Grazian, University of Pennsylvania; Presider, Discussant, Jennifer C. Lena, Columbia University, Teachers College
  - Aristocratic, Highbrow and Ordinary: Elites and Shifting Modes of Cultural Distinction 1897-2016 - Sam Friedman, London School of Economics; Aaron Reeves, London School of Economics
  - From Omnivore to Snob: The Social Positions of Taste Between and Within Music Genres - Clayton Childress, University of Toronto; Shyon Baumann, University of Toronto; Jean-Francois Nault, University of Toronto; Craig M. Rawlings, Duke University

- Discriminating Palates: Evaluation and Ethnoracial Inequality in American Fine Dining - Gillian Gualtieri, New York University
- From Humanists to Patrons: Interclass Relations and Elite Acculturation among Western Migrants in the UAE - John O'Brien, NYU Abu Dhabi

#### 12:30pm-2:10pm

- **Moral Crisis and Meaning in the Sociology of Culture.** Session Organizer, David Grazian, University of Pennsylvania; Presider, Discussant: Lyn Spillman, University of Notre Dame
  - #MeToo, Code Switch, and Societalization: The Creation of a Social Crisis - Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University
  - Guilty Pleasures? Moral Contamination, Aesthetic Pleasure, Wagner and Bayreuth - Philip Smith, Yale University; Florian Stoll, Bayreuth Academy of African Studies
  - The Protestants' Dilemma: When Cultural Mismatches Motivate Creative and Strategic Action - Grace Tien, Princeton University
  - Marking Time in Memorials and Museums of Terror: Temporality and Cultural Trauma - Christina Simko, Williams College

### MONDAY

#### 8:30am-10:10am

- **Culture and Its Impact on Other Subfields,** Session Organizer, Presider: Greggor Mattson, Oberlin College
  - Culture as a concept denotes many shades of meaning, and different visions of culture do work differently across sociological subfields. This invited panel interrogates the visions of culture practiced outside cultural sociology, the concepts that cultural sociology borrows from other subfields, and the traffic among and between these conceptualizations of culture and its study.
  - Panelists:
    - Kristen Barber, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
    - Amin Ghaziani, University of British Columbia
    - G. Cristina Mora, University of California, Berkeley
    - Frederick F. Wherry, Princeton University
    - Deborah B. Gould, University of California, Santa Cruz

#### 2:30pm-3:30pm

- **Collecting, Analyzing, and Sharing Cultural Sociology,** Session Organizer: Joanna Pepin, University of Texas – Austin and Ande Reisman, University of Washington
  - The wide variety of the subject matter studied by cultural sociologists coupled with the large number of Culture Section members results in a tremendous amount of methodological diversity and innovation. This panel aims to expose cultural sociologists to some of the research methods sociologists use to study and measure culture. Panelists will cover some of the newly available technological innovations, theories, and methods available to systematically study culture.



- Panelists:
  - Laura K. Nelson, Northeastern University
  - Clayton Childress, University of Toronto
  - D'Lane R. Compton, University of New Orleans
  - Jessica McCrory Calarco, Indiana University

#### 4:30pm-6:10pm

- **Section on Sociology of Culture Refereed Roundtables**, Session Organizers, Matthew Rowe, University of Colorado and Celso M. Villegas, Kenyon College

## TUESDAY

#### 8:30-10:10am

- **Global and Transnational Approaches to Culture and Power** (Co-sponsored with the Section on Global and Transnational Sociology), Session Organizer, Presider: Chinyere Osuji, Rutgers University-Camden
  - In America, I'm Just Black: Black American Experiences with Privilege and Oppression in Paris - Sonita Moss, University of Pennsylvania
  - Inclusion and Alterity: An analysis of American flag hijab discourse - Deniz Uyan, Boston College
  - In the Shadow of Hollywood: The Racial Politics of Independent Filmmakers of Color in Los Angeles - Michael Tuan Tran, UCLA
  - Race-ing Across the Border: Comparative Constructions of Race and Inequality in Mexico and the U.S. - Sylvia Zamora, Loyola Marymount University
  - The Dark Side of a Golden Ticket by Imoagene and Jacobs - Onoso Ikphemi Imoagene, University of Pennsylvania; Elizabeth Jacobs, University of Pennsylvania

#### 10:30am-12:10pm

- **Algorithmic Cultures**, Session Organizer, Presider: Angele Christin, Stanford University
  - Black Box Culture? Variations in People's Algorithmic Skills - Eszter Hargittai, University of Zurich
  - Consumer Views on the Fair Use of Personal Data - Barbara Kiviat, Harvard University
  - "Gaming the System": The Politics of Algorithmic Manipulation in Digital Cultural Production - Caitlin Petre, Rutgers University; Brooke Erin Duffy, Cornell University; Emily Hund, University of Pennsylvania
  - Meaning Beyond Metrics: Gender and occupational identity on online care work platforms - Julia B. Ticona, University of Pennsylvania
  - Who Gets to Choose? On the Socio-Algorithmic Construction of Choice - Dan M. Kotliar, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

#### 12:30pm-2:10pm

- **Culture, Racialization and Intersectionality** (Co-sponsored with the Section on Race, Gender, and Class), Session Organizer, Presider: Michael Jeffries, Wellesley College
  - Gender and the Face of Multiraciality - Jiayi Janet Xu, Princeton University; Aliya Saperstein, Stanford University; Ann J. Morning, New York University; Sarah Iverson, New York University
  - "Nasty men & Ghetto Girls": Blackness, Indianness, and Sexual Visibility Politics in New York's Party Scene - Anjanette Marie Chan Tack, University of Chicago

- Patienthood as Identity and the Intersectional Failings of the Clinic - Jennifer Elyse James, University of California, San Francisco
- Why Desire Asians? Gendered Racialized Attraction Among Whites Intermarried to Asians in the US - Louise Ly

**3:30pm-4:10pm**

- **Culture and Service Work: Relationships, Identities, Inequalities**, Session Organizer: Eileen M. Otis, University of Oregon; Presider, Tongyu Wu, Zhejiang University
  - A Matter of Confianza: Searching for Service Work in Nicaragua - Lindsey McKay Ibanez, Washburn University
  - Intimacies, Authenticities, and Postcolonial Imaginaries in South African Township Hospitality - Annie Hikido, University of California, Santa Barbara
  - Making Good Loans and Creditworthy Women: Relational Work in India's Microfinance Industry - Smitha Radhakrishnan, Wellesley College
  - What a Mediminder Does: Arranging Autonomy Through Technologies of Care - Adrianna Bagnall-Munson, Columbia University

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### JOURNAL ARTICLES & BOOK CHAPTERS

**Bergstrand, Kelly and James M. Jasper.** 2018. "Villains, Victims, and Heroes in Character Theory and Affect Control Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 81: 228-247.

**Dromi, Shai M. and Liron Shani.** 2019. "Love of land: Nature protection, nationalism, and the struggle over the establishment of new settlements in Israel." *Rural Sociology* (Online ahead of print).

**Dromi, Shai M. and Samuel D. Stabler.** 2019. "Good on paper: Sociological critique, pragmatism, and secularization theory." *Theory & Society* 48(2): 325-250.

**Dromi, Shai M. and Gülay Türkmen.** 2019. "What does trauma have to with politics? Cultural trauma and the displaced founding political elites of Israel and Turkey." *The Sociological Quarterly* (Online ahead of print).

**Gidron, Noam and Jonathan J.B. Mijis.** 2019. "Do changes in material circumstances drive support for populist radical parties? Panel data evidence from The Netherlands during the Great Recession, 2007–2015." *European Sociological Review* (forthcoming). SocArXiv preprint doi: [10.31235/osf.io/w4e6s](https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/w4e6s).

**Ghosh, Apoorva.** 2019. "From moral ambivalence to differential congruence: Understanding transnational sexuality using cultural schemas." *Sexualities*. (Online ahead of print).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460719850022>

**Jasper, James M., Michael P. Young, and Elke Zuern.** 2018. "Character Work in Social Movements." *Theory and Society* 47:113-131.

**Jasper, James M.** 2017. "The Doors that Culture Opened: The New Focus on Action in Social Movement Studies." *Group Processes and Social Psychology* 20(3): 285-302.

**Jasso, Guillermina, Robert Shelly, and Murray Webster.** 2019. "How Impartial Are the Observers of Justice Theory?" *Social Science Research* 79:226-246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.10.013>.

**Jones, Tod. Ali Mozaffari, and James M. Jasper.** 2017. "Heritage Contests: What Can We Learn from Social Movements?" *Heritage and Society* 10:1-25.

**Valle, Melissa M.** 2019. "Burlesquing Blackness: Racial significations in Carnival and the carnivalesque on Colombia's Caribbean Coast." *Public Culture* 31(1): 5-20 <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-7181814>

**Mijs, Jonathan J.B.** 2019. "The Paradox of Inequality: Income Inequality and Belief in Meritocracy go Hand in Hand" *Socio-Economic Review*. (Online ahead of print).  
doi:[10.1093/ser/mwy051](https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwy051)

**Mijs, Jonathan J.B.** 2018. "Visualizing Belief in Meritocracy, 1930–2010." *Socius* 4(1).  
doi:[10.1177/2378023118811805](https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023118811805)

**Sbicca, Joshua.** 2019. "Urban Agriculture, Revalorization, and Green Gentrification in Denver, Colorado." *Research in Political Sociology*. 26: 143-164

**Sbicca, Joshua.** 2018. "Food justice and the fight for global human flourishing." *Local Environment*. 23(11): 1098-1102

**Vithayathil, Trina, Diana Graizbord and Cedric de Leon.** 2019. "The Retreat to Method: The Aftermath of Elite Concession to Civil Society in India and Mexico". *Studies in Comparative International Development* 54(1):19-39.

## BOOKS & SPECIAL ISSUES

**Duina, Francesco.** ed. 2019. [\*States and Nations, Power and Civility: Hallsian Perspectives\*](#). University of Toronto Press.

Civility in national and international politics is under siege. In this volume, twelve distinguished sociologists and historians from North America, Europe, and China reflect on the nature and preservation of civility in and between nation states and empires in a set of geographically and historically wide-ranging chapters. Civility protects individual self-determination and expression, promotes productive economic activity and wealth, and is central to political stability and peace within and across political communities. Yet power, always concentrated and endemic in nation states and imperial settings, poses great risks to civility. Guided by the perspective of John A. Hall, who has done more to identify and investigate the intricate relationships between states, nations, the power they hold, and civility than any other contemporary social scientist, *States and Nations, Power and Civility* offers a set of crisp, in-depth investigations regarding the specific mechanisms of civility and how it may be protected.

**Fantasia, Rick.** 2018. [\*French Gastronomy and the Magic of Americanism\*](#). Temple University Press.

*French Gastronomy and the Magic of Americanism* is a thorough-going Bourdieu-inspired analysis of the logic and social mechanisms of French gastronomy as a cultural field, demonstrating the effects of corporate-driven global industrial processes on its traditional practices and practitioners. It analyzes what happens to the material and the symbolic dimensions of a cultural field when its autonomy is increasingly eroded by the logic of the more powerful economic field, during a crucial period of transformation (1970-2000).

**Greenberg, Max A.** 2019. [\*Twelve Weeks to Change a Life: At-Risk Youth in a Fractured State\*](#). University of California Press.

Hailed as a means to transform cultural norms, interpersonal violence prevention programs have reached nearly two-thirds of high school students in the United States today. *Twelve Weeks to Change a Life: At-Risk Youth in a Fractured State* explores the consequences of this slow-rolling policy revolution for the young people marked for change. Drawing on over three years of fieldwork in schools across Los Angeles, as well as historical research into the shifting approaches taken by public health programs, Greenberg shows how the new cultural narratives deployed in change programs fracture and fall apart in the lives of young people. In addition, he examines the cultural consequences of risk data, as it gives rise to the social category of at-risk youth and in turn shapes the identities and relationships of young people and state actors alike.

**Jasper, James M.** 2018. [\*The Emotions of Protest\*](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*The Emotions of Protest* summarizes the author's twenty-year effort to develop a cultural theory of the topic, viewing emotions as a fundamental part of culture alongside cognition.

**Kucinkas, Jaime.** 2018. [\*The Mindful Elite: Mobilizing from the Inside Out\*](#). Oxford University Press.

*The Mindful Elite* examines how a cultural movement of affluent professionals use their credentials, stature, and networks to propel mindfulness into public consciousness. Drawing on over a hundred first-hand accounts with top scientists, religious leaders, educators, business people and investors in the movement, Kucinkas shows how this highly accomplished, elite group transformed meditation into an appealing set of secularized self-help practices by building elite networks across institutions and advocating the benefits of meditation across professions using various kinds of expert testimonies and forms of legitimacy. Yet, spreading the Dharma far and wide came with unintended consequences and this idealistic myopia came to reinforce some of the problems it originally aspired to solve. This book provides a critical look at this Buddhist-inspired spiritual movement, which explains strengths and shortcomings of elite cultural movements, drawing larger lessons applicable to other social, cultural, and religious movements expanding across institutions and organizations and among the public.

**Sbicca, Joshua.** 2018. [\*Food Justice Now!: Deepening the Roots of Social Struggle\*](#). University of Minnesota Press.

*Food Justice Now!* charts a path from food activism to social justice activism that integrates the two. In an engrossing, historically grounded, and ethnographically rich narrative, Joshua Sbicca argues that food justice is more than a myopic focus on food, allowing scholars and activists alike to investigate the causes behind inequities and evaluate and implement political strategies to overcome them.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE ASA LGBTQ CAUCUS**

Hello! As we gear up for another ASA Annual Meeting, we would like to encourage you to become involved with the LGBTQ Caucus. The Caucus aims to support and empower all LGBTQ sociologists, regardless of what areas they work in. Our full mission statement is on our website: <https://www.lgbtqcaucus.com/about-us>. At the upcoming ASA meetings, we will have paper awards and graduate travel awards, a coffee hour, a business meeting, and a reception joint with Sociologists for Trans Justice. Outside of the Annual Meeting, you can get involved via our listserv or facebook page, or by reading or contributing to our new quarterly newsletter.\* You can also help us build community by telling your colleagues about the Caucus.

\* The next LGBTQ Caucus Newsletter is open for submissions! Did you publish something this year that we can signal-boost for you? Do you have questions about being queer at ASA or on the job market? Do you have an announcement? Are you on the job market? If you answered yes to any of these questions, we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at [soclgbtqcaucus@gmail.com](mailto:soclgbtqcaucus@gmail.com).

## **CIVIC SOCIOLOGY**

The editors of the new, open-access journal, Civic Sociology, invite contributions in the social sciences - broadly conceived - for publication beginning in Spring 2019. Further details about the journal, including aim and scope, editorial board, submission process and contact information can be found via <http://www.civicsociology.org>.

## **CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY**

Thinking about where to send your next paper? Cultural Sociology publishes empirically oriented, theoretically sophisticated, methodologically rigorous papers which advance the field of cultural sociology and the sociology of culture. The journal aims to facilitate fruitful dialogue and cooperation between scholars from different national contexts and between those working within different analytic and methodological paradigms. Submissions between 5,000 and 10,000 words are encouraged from both established and emerging scholars in the ASA Culture Section. See [cus.sagepub.com](http://cus.sagepub.com) or contact Lyn Spillman, ([spillman.1@nd.edu](mailto:spillman.1@nd.edu)) North American Editor, for more information.

**Katherine R. Comeau**  
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**The “Hinge” in Humanitarian Development:  
How Groups Affect the Engagement of NGOs in Cross-cultural Settings**

Humanitarian crises often occur in national and international news. After a crisis, the work of long-term development takes over. International non-government organizations play a crucial role in the long-term development projects that provide aid and services around the world. One sub-set of these organizations includes the primarily volunteer-based organizations that sponsor groups to travel on short-term medical trips. During these trips, groups from the United States travel to a foreign country and usually get involved in construction, orphan care, medical services, or environment improvement projects. These groups affect how organizations engage with their beneficiaries in overseas locations. My dissertation explains how group styles affect engagement with beneficiaries. A group styles approach explains how the group customs shape their engagement with beneficiaries and with each other. As many of these groups are faith-based, this dissertation also considers how group styles affect the influence of religion in humanitarian development. At another critical juncture, group styles mediate the relationship between humanitarian discourses and groups’ engagement in cross-cultural settings. I explain how group styles shape the ways groups respond to the challenges of providing humanitarian aid and medical care. A focus on the group and scene styles of humanitarian aid shows how customs matter, incorporates contextual specificity, and allows for comparative analysis across multiple contexts.

**Lindsay J. DePalma**  
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**Precarity and the Passion Paradigm: How Work Passion Both Increases Perceptions of Individual Control  
and Depoliticizes Work in a Precarious Economy**

Lindsay DePalma is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at UC San Diego. She is interested in how professionals explain work in a precarious economy, with specific interest in the cultural ideologies that men and women use to interpret and/or insulate themselves from the potentially negative effects of precarity. Her dissertation is titled, “Precarity and the Passion Paradigm: How Work Passion Both Increases Perceptions of Individual Control and Depoliticizes Work in a Precarious Economy.” In it, Lindsay qualitatively compares precarious and less precarious nurses, graphic designers, and engineers, sampling an equal number of self-identified men and women in each profession across precarious and less precarious roles. She analyzes the symbiotic relationship between precarity and what she calls the *passion paradigm*, a pervasive work ideology in which the pursuit of passion at work is highly valued and prioritized. She asks: 1) What does adherence to the passion paradigm *do*? 2) How does the passion paradigm reproduce or disrupt social, economic, and gender inequalities in work? She has two central arguments. First, the passion paradigm thrives among young professionals in a precarious economy because it deeply individualizes the experience of work, allowing professionals to perceive control over their work in an otherwise vulnerable and unstable context. Second, because the passion paradigm relies on individualizing work in order to effectively function, the passion paradigm is fundamentally depoliticizing; it obscures structural causes of work strife and inequality, undermines collective consciousness, makes adherents vulnerable to exploitation, and creates cultural conditions conducive to precarity as individuals ‘search’ for their passion. In consequence, though professionals perceive that work passion contributes to their happiness, it simultaneously precludes their potential to demand cultural and institutional changes to promote more equitable access to economic and psychological well-being at work. Lindsay has empirical papers under review at *Social Forces*, the *Journal of Cultural Economy*, and *Sociological Inquiry*. She

has extensive teaching and mentoring experience, and she has been an active member of her department, university, and community. Lindsay loves to work with undergraduates and, in her current role as a graduate writing consultant, she enjoys helping graduate students make progress on their projects through in-depth conversation and care. More information about her teaching, research, and service, including course syllabi and student feedback, can be found on her website: [LindsayDePalma.com](http://LindsayDePalma.com).

**Jacqui Frost**  
**University of Minnesota**  
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### **Modern but not Meaningless: Nonreligious Cultures and Communities in the United States**

My research is motivated by an interest in the causes and consequences of the recent and substantial demographic shift away from organized religious participation in the United States. In contrast to concerns that modernization and religious decline will lead to meaninglessness, anomie, and a decline in community engagement, my dissertation investigates a growing field of nonreligious communities and practices that generate social connections and foster meaningful identities for the atheists, agnostics, and other “nones” who reject organized religion. I analyze the varied ways that nonreligious individuals seek out connection, transcend the everyday, and create meaning centered around secular beliefs and rituals. My project centers around a three-year ethnographic case study of a nascent network of “atheist churches” called the Sunday Assembly. The Sunday Assembly consists of over 70 chapters, located primarily in the U.S. and the U.K., that explicitly copy the Protestant church model to create community for the nonreligious. Through ethnographic participation and observation with one local chapter in the Midwestern U.S., a larger organizational analysis, and semi-structured interviews with participants, this case study offers an in-depth analysis of community involvement, identity negotiation, and boundary formation among the nonreligious. Building from my fieldwork, I have also begun to reconceptualize how religion, nonreligion, and civic engagement are measured in quantitative research to better account for the shifting and intersectional nature of identity and community engagement in late-modernity. Taken together, my dissertation explores how the nonreligious make meaningful communities and identities in an era of religious change and contributes to larger sociological debates about identity, meaning, and community engagement in modern life.

**Apoorva Ghosh**  
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### **Parental Acceptance of Gay Men in the U.S. and India**

Numerous scholars have studied parental attitudes and behaviors that follow after gay men come out to their parents. Family experiences have significant consequences for a gay person’s well-being. Cumulatively, these experiences also have bearings on critical social issues and institutions such as youth homelessness, LGBT inclusion, schools, public health and not the least, the family itself. A range of psychological and sociological studies explore how parents react to their gay child’s sexuality, and how their attitudes may become more favorable over time. These studies, however, tend to treat parental acceptance as a form of blanket acceptance. Acceptance may take time to arrive at, but once arrived at, it is consistent and unvarying. An alternate view, much less common in the literature is that parental acceptance is, “a complex and ongoing dialectical and reconciliatory process.” Although scholars found this process mostly linear, whereby parental attitudes will become more affirmative over time, a lesser explored possibility is that this may not always be the case. My preliminary interviews with gay men in the U.S. and India support this view. Based on the patterns I noted in some of those interviews, along with those I found in the literature, I designed this project to study the processes of parental acceptance more directly. Together, these patterns in experience suggested to me the importance of a study that is

both comparative and takes the processual and contingent character of parental acceptance for gay men seriously. In this dissertation project, I choose to study this demographic group in the U.S. and India incisively. Drawing on the ideas on the contingent nature of parental acceptance, my research asks: does parental acceptance of gay men fluctuate in patterned ways during their life course? If yes, how might those patterns differ for professionally employed gay men in the U.S. from their counterparts in India? Also, how might those patterns have differed across different generations of gay men in their respective countries?

I will use interviews of gay men from the U.S. and India to answer my research questions. Using these interviews, I hope to be able to find more specific patterns in how parental acceptance changes over time and how those patterns might differ in the U.S. from that in India as well as across different generations of gay men.

**Sarah M. Hanks**  
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### **Restoring Solidarity: 'Accountability' in Leftist Subcultures"**

In radical left activist subcultures, 'accountability processes' are a form of DIY transformative justice dealing with abuse and sexual assault, focusing on the needs of the 'survivor' and transformation of the 'perpetrator.' Within activism identifying abuse is particularly difficult because it means acknowledging abuse by a person considered politically virtuous. The specifics of the process are situational and provisional. The overwhelming pattern is male identified people abusing female identified, gender non-binary, and transgender people. My research examines why activists are developing processes to address problems and whether or not they are successful. Within the subculture, the topic is important enough to hold workshops and trainings, create curriculum, spend hours of time, form groups and end communities. But the significance is not reflected in academia. I interviewed 12 activists who participated as a survivor, abuser / perpetrator, facilitator/mediator, or general support. In addition, I collected supplementary information from 121 zines to analyze experiences around sexism, consent, men's groups, and transformative justice. The problems I found include activists' use of community-based strategies in a youth subculture, the complexity of creating flexible social institution alternatives, and the development of cultural norms consistent with prefigurative politics around gender equity, especially in inevitable sexual relationships between activists. And all of these issues converge in a subculture with an unstable and mobile population, whereby activists are continuously engaging with dominant institutions and cultural practices. Activists' argot includes reflexivity and privilege, but admitting fault and committing to change is not in our cultural repertoire. Dominant culture, as seen in the political sphere and the "#Me Too" movement, has proven individuals benefit from denial of fault. In 'accountability processes,' even if transformation occurs, it is rarely recognized. If activists' aim is solidarity, activists cannot condone injustice and the marginalized cannot continue to be marginalized.

**Yagmur Karakaya**  
**University of Minnesota**  
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### **Disentangling Contemporary Ottoman Nostalgia in Turkey: Popular and Political Forms of Collective Memory**

My dissertation examines the contemporary Ottoman revival in the making as a dynamic process between two forms: state-sponsored neo-Ottomanism observable in public displays, and the entertainment-oriented popular Ottomanism exemplified by leisure activities. Using ethnography and interviews, my dissertation brings together state-led efforts and popular culture while investigating the response of a diverse array of non-elite Turkish citizens. I argue that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has coopted popular iterations of the Ottoman past, monopolizing them to create an emotional connection between citizens and the state's populist project. However, people are interpellated by this populist, emotional project depending on their historically shaped



subjective positions. My dissertation brings back agency to the debates surrounding populism, arguing that populist rhetoric does not register in the same way with different groups. Introducing the role of emotions into the dynamic link between nostalgia and populism disrupts the relationship between the narrative script and the audience response. In other words, emotions intrinsic to nostalgia and populism do not sweep people away equally; I show when it does, why and under what conditions. In my article in *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, I argue that state-led populist nostalgia mobilizes both emotions and reflexive cognition to shape political engagement.

**Michael L. Rosino**  
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### **Democracy is Awkward: Grassroots Progressive Politics and Racial Inequality**

From voter ID laws to felon disenfranchisement, people of color face well documented structural barriers to influencing political processes in the United States. Grassroots political organizing presents one of the most important tools for combating racial inequality and asserting and protecting political rights. However, the racial politics and cultural dynamics of grassroots political organizations demand further investigation. My dissertation is a multisited ethnographic study (composed of 14 months of participant observation in organizational meetings, informal social gatherings, political campaigns, and demonstrations and 43 semi-structured interviews) that uncovers the activities and interpretations of participants of several regional chapters of a grassroots political party in the Northeastern United States. I reveal how members develop political strategies and engage with activism, electoral politics, racial inequity, diversity, and inclusion, and outreach and organizing. Through my concentration on issues of racial identity and inequality, I show that while the various chapters' stated goals include racial equity and the empowerment of people of color, and many of its members seek to advance those goals, it's membership and leadership remains disproportionately white. Moreover, the organization has struggled in prioritizing and actualizing its racial justice agenda. I capture how grassroots activists of various backgrounds interpret the opportunities, barriers, and meaning of their participation and their personal histories to understand the development of their racial and political consciousness. Public opinion research has revealed major trends in political attitudes and partisan categories including dwindling identification with the two major parties. While issue stances and political labels are important drivers of political life, political outcomes are also influenced by values, assumptions, and habits in everyday life. My dissertation thus centers the way that the organizations that facilitate grassroots democracy are influenced by human activities not just outwardly expressed attitudes or codified principles. I bring people's awareness of racial inequality and their daily habits and routines into sharper focus as important dimensions of engagement in grassroots democracy. My findings advance the scholarly analysis of the relationship between race and politics beyond outcomes and attitudes. They uncover the processes that produce these attitudes and outcomes through people's everyday behaviors and understandings. This timely study thus provides new insights into the relationship between racial inequality, everyday processes of meaning-making and social action, and political participation.

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### **Processes of Global Cultural Diffusion and Violence Against Women in Malawi**

My dissertation examines the dissemination of messages that condemn violence against women as a violation of human rights across individual people in contemporary Malawi. I use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Three papers comprise the project.

In the first paper, I consider global cultural diffusion pathways through media. I find major differences in content across media types, with some types of media being filled with global cultural scripts condemning violence against women while others instead being laden with scripts that sexually objectify women and normalize violence. Based on my content analyses, I collect and construct multiple measures of media content and pair them with five national surveys to show that exposure to these different types of media content have divergent effects on people's attitudinal rejection of violence against women. This paper has won graduate student paper awards in 2019 from the ASA CITAMS Section, SSSP Global Division, and CSA Sociology of Development Research Cluster.

The second paper shifts from focusing on media to foreign aid effects. Using a new detailed database of foreign aid projects paired with national surveys, I show that aid disbursed for projects specifically aimed at changing people's attitudes about violence against women is effective, while aid for other purposes has no effect. The main project with this aim provided funding for the 16 Days Against Gender Violence campaign in Malawi. I further conduct a natural experiment to demonstrate the positive effect of the campaign in 2015 on people's rejection of violence against women.

In the final paper, I integrate theories of public and personal culture with literature on global cultural diffusion to understand the effects of foreign aid on people's attitudes and behavior about violence against women. This helps to explain both the consistencies and inconsistencies in people's attitudes and behavior.

I am engaged in many other research projects related to the spread of cultural schemas and their effects on behavior. These projects analyze global attitudes about violence against women, cross-national perceptions of countries, and cultural influences on migration. I have published in *Demography*, *City and Community*, and *Sociology of Development*. You can find me online [here](#) or contact me at [jswindle@umich.edu](mailto:jswindle@umich.edu).