SECTIONCULTURE

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Letter From the Chair

Can it only be a few months since we gathered in New York for ASA 2019? I hope that some of the discussions you took part in or witnessed there, and the people you met, served to generate new insights, new collaborations, new ideas for research or teaching. I myself found the session on "culture and its impact on other subfields" thought-provoking, and am still ruminating on **Cristina Mora**'s comments about how cultural sociologists can learn from and contribute to understandings of racism and immigration, in particular the question of how frames about how the world works are tied to power. **Deborah Gould**'s insights about "outlaw emotions" also brought on some frank discussion in the Q&A that I found powerfully relevant: about when, if and how to read emotions onto other people's bodies, a dangerous research practice but also crucial for a richer, more resonant sociology. Thanks again to my fabulous program committee (**Kemi Balogun, Angèle Christin, Crystal Fleming, Michael P. Jeffries, Greggor Mattson, Chinyere Osuji, Eileen Otis**) for helping to come up with some terrific sessions, including those cosponsored with the sections on Race, Gender and Class (RGC)

and on Global and Transnational Sociology (GAT). Thanks to student members **Joanne Pepin** and **Ande Reisman** for putting together a great workshop with appearances by **Laura Nelson, Clayton Childress, D'Lane Compton** and **Jessica Calarco**, and thanks to **Matthew Rowe** and **Celso Villegas** for organizing the roundtables. Thanks are also due to **Alissa Boguslaw** for her work putting together a section party with the best food I've ever had at an ASA reception. More than a few people came up to me to say they got a lot out of the meetings this year.

Planning for ASA 2020 in San Francisco is already well underway, with chair-elect **Terry McDonnell** and his program committee (**Monika Krause, Phillipa Chong, Christina Simko**, and **Jacqui Frost**) putting together a great lineup of sessions, with titles like "Mind and Matter: Synthesizing Cognition and Materiality," "Populism and Civic Cultures in a Global Context," "Resurrecting the Macro in the Sociology of Culture," "Culture and Inequality After Technology," and "Teaching Culture in Today's Political Climate." More info to come on these panels, which will also include two cosponsored sessions with RGC and GAT. Here's to new linkages there: we hope to encourage more of those relationships over some free drinks at next year's reception, cosponsored with Race, Gender and Class and the section on Body and Embodiment, to be held on Sunday, August 9, 2020. Save the date!

We had a tremendous response to our call for volunteers for award and other committees; so many of you are hungry to get involved, it is real evidence of the section's vibrant membership. Thanks to you all for stepping up to take on the important tasks of recognizing our best work and our promising young scholars. We staffed those committees with an eye towards multiple dimensions of diversity; see the award committees listed in the call for submissions in this newsletter. Please distribute the call widely, submit your own work and encourage others to as well.

The council has also instituted a membership committee to come up with ways we can better serve you; we'll be announcing some of their plans later on. Finally, thanks to past-chair **Omar Lizardo** for his dedication to the section – his service continues this year, as he agreed to chair the nominations committee. We're better off for his stewardship.

All of these different committees and tasks mean your council members have been hard at work for the section, and also that the council feels stretched a bit thin – as I wrote in a recent set of announcements, we think the section would be well served by adding three new council members, who could then coordinate section publications, mount networking or mentoring events, and otherwise improve our service to members. I also note that this proposal would bring our council to the same size as that of the next largest section, the Sex and Gender section. Council unanimously approved this proposal; if all goes well, you'll be able to vote on it in the spring.

This issue represents the last hurrah from the section's longtime newsletter team, **Hillary Angelo, Diana Graizbord**, and **Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz**. As is their custom, you'll find thought-provoking, creative and timely content inside: interviews with **Jenn Lena** and **Huggy Rao**, reviews of award-winning work by culture scholars, a roundtable on "Maintenance and Repair" curated by **Fernando Domínguez Rubio** and more. Thanks to this team for their fantastic work over the years. Three intrepid souls volunteered to take over the newsletter: **Yu Ching Cheng** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science), **Johnnie Lotesta** (Harvard Kennedy School), and **AJ Young** (IUPUI). A grateful section looks forward to their collaboration.

Feel free to let me know (apugh@virginia.edu) if you have comments or questions about what we are doing, or if you want to volunteer your own ideas or time.

Best wishes for a productive and sustaining fall,

Allison

ANNOUNCEMENT:
NEW EDITORIAL TEAM JOINS CULTURE NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter will have three new editors come winter 2020: **Yu Ching Cheng** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science), **Johnnie Lotesta** (Harvard Kennedy School), and **AJ Young** (IUPUI). The new editors are excited to continue this vibrant tradition, and they wish to extend sincere thanks to outgoing editors **Hillary Angelo** (UC, Santa Cruz), **Diana Graizbord** (Univ. of Georgia), and **Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz** (Northwestern University). **Dustin Stoltz** (Notre Dame) will be continuing his service as editorial assistant and section webmaster. Bios for the new editorial team may be found below.

Johnnie Lotesta is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance & Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School. She is a political and cultural sociologist with interests in political parties, labor and social movements, inequality, and public policy.

Yu Ching Cheng is International Research Fellow of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Her research interests are at the intersection of cultural sociology, economic sociology, and science, technology, and knowledge. Applying an interdisciplinary approach and mixed methods, she studies boundaries as value-based judgements and examines their role as meaning-making processes, their origins, mechanisms, and policy implications on both institutional and global levels.

AJ Young is an alt ac sociologist currently serving as the Director of the LGBTQ+ Center at IUPUI. His academic work centers on gender and sexuality in culture, specifically how queer and transgender identities are experienced, represented, and negotiated in popular culture, sports, and organizations. He also has a growing professional interest in how and when LGBTQ+ people are counted in social institutions.

Dustin Stoltz is a PhD candidate at the Univ. of Notre Dame and a Doctoral Student Affiliate of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies. His research draws on political, economic, and cultural sociology to examine the consequences of stratification on the production and distribution of ideas, specifically within elite occupations.

CULTURE SECTION OFFICERS

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Four Questions For Jennifer Lena

Dustin Stoltz (Univ. of Notre Dame) interviews **Jennifer Lena** (Columbia) on the past, present, and future of cultural analysis and sociology.

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

Jennifer Lena: My family, actually. My mother's sister's husband—my uncle that married into the family—was a very successful artist, and my aunt was an artist as well. I spent summers and holidays as a kid in New York City visiting them. Both my parents are educators and my dad is a sociologist, and they were busy during summer teaching SAT courses and the kind of side-hustles that educators have to do to get by. My uncle was African-American and largely painted about African-American topics and was the co-creator of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition. This was the group that famously protested the "Harlem on My Mind" show in New York City. They were advocates for greater representation of African-American artists and topics. This was a deeply imprinting experience and certainly has some relationship to why I studied African-American musical culture when I got older.

My father trained my sociological habitus when I was young. The games that I would play with my dad were essentially sociology games. My favorite one was walking down this street next to a hospital where the nurses and doctors were parked. We would look inside the cars, and my dad would ask me to tell a story based on the contents of a car. It was training me to be a sociologist and engage in deductive reasoning and observation.

When I was in graduate school and even in my first job, I would have described myself as somebody who was interested in cultural products and the circumstances that give rise to them and their consequences once they are in the world. This is the "production of culture" sense of my identity. That very much came from being interested in occupations and stratification but also networks and relationality, the latter of which was a big emphasis in my graduate training with Peter Bearman and Harrison White.

I did take courses in the sociology of culture, but they were kind of eccentric. The first one I took was Harrison White's sociology of language class, which was as hallucinogenic as a sociology class could possibly be. More importantly, Harrison was a super smart person who thought that culture was a legitimate arena of study and encouraged that in his students. Then a couple of my classmates and I arranged an independent study of culture with Lynn Chancer, who had just finished her Sadomasochism in Everyday Life. It was an incredible course—if you can imagine the very best sociology course you could have taken in 1998, this was it!

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?

JL: I'm part of the Measuring Culture group, and being a part of these conversations has revealed to me that I'm a bad cultural sociologist because I'm not only *not* interested in "meaning," I'm not

convinced it is a sociological concept. I think it is a folk concept, but analytically it is not a sharp tool.

My perspective on culture is fundamentally relational. Simmel made this point about poverty: you're not poor, you are relationally poor. As soon as I take a step back from viewing people as collections of attributes, and start to think about how flows of resources produce social life, it just makes more sense to me as someone who studies classifications.

DS: How do you choose your research topics, settings, and/or methods?

JL: On some level I always knew I wanted to study the relationship between a racial classification system and a prestige system. That has continued to be a core interest of mine.

When I was in graduate school I remember a moment in Peter Bearman's office. He was teaching me to use 2x2 tables for case selection. I think the two dimensions were "high art" and "low art" and "modern" and "post-modern." Then he had me fill them in with research I was aware of, and the cell that was least populated by research was post-modern and low. Rap music fell into that cell and I was already thinking about studying work from the 1970s—the kind of work my uncle was doing. In my case, I was interested in the ways in which rap artists produced status orders while operating in a racist industry that systematically sought to deny them rights, money, and power—not unlike the art system that my uncle fought against.

Now, my work is focused on how different art forms, many of which are racialized or demarcated by class, have transformed from being seen as vernacular, folk culture into being seen *as art* in the 20th century. Again, I'm looking at

classification in the context of exclusion based on race and class.

I guess, more broadly, I am interested in arguments. Arguments are where different systems are bumping up against each other—I'm using arguments to cover a lot of territory, because you could talk about classifications or claims to identity. Because it covers such a large territory, though, this means I can't be a methodological specialist. As I go on in my career this is going to make me more dependent on methodological specialists. This also means I seek truly interdisciplinary contexts for study and I try not to pick projects solely based on my own skill-set, but rather on the constellation of experts in my networks. A deeply relational strategy.

When it comes to picking topics, there is just so many things to study that it's important to have good judgement when opportunities arise. You also need to watch how people are responding to your work, and be interested in their responses to aspects of your prior work as a launching point for the next project. Since *Entitled* was published last month, I'm keeping a watchful eye on how readers will respond to that argument, as I develop my next project.

DS: What excites you about the future of sociology? What would say to future sociologists?

JL: What makes me most excited is when I read work that has personality. I'm drawn to work that is eccentric. I think one of the natural, but perverse, things that has happened as sociology has professionalized is a focus on tightening methods, tightening topic choices, and strategies to become more influential in scholarly and public life. These are important, but I think we have failed to invest in systems that promote individuality and creativity. Teaching undergraduate sociology like physics is not the

ideal way to populate the field with mavericks and innovators. Similarly, we have allowed grantors, public and private, to place a lot of emphasis on normal science. This, of course, is important. But, we don't have, for example, Innovator Awards that might spark creative work at an early stage in a career.

When I agreed to do this interview—and thank you Dustin for the invitation!—I hoped to say the following: some of us are fighting for things we haven't seen before. I hope that sociologists of culture with wacky ideas know there are mentors who can help them just as there are mentors for more conventional scholars. A second thing I wanted to say is: there are a lot of us waiting for students coming out of non-traditional contexts to join the field, and I hope that they know they have advocates. We are waiting for those people to make their mark. Sociology needs different voices and different perspectives than the ones we've disproportionately relied on for the last century.

I'd tell future sociologists that the work is fun. That a sociological perspective can be an avenue to self-discovery, to developing empathy, to making real changes to the world. Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are potentially huge, and you should fight for them.

Jennifer C. Lena is Associate Professor of Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University and has a courtesy appointment in the Department of Sociology. She completed her Bachelor's at Colgate University ('96) in Sociology and English, and completed her Doctorate at Columbia University ('03). Her advisors there were Peter Bearman (sponsor), Harrison White (chair), Priscilla Ferguson, and Sudhir Venkatesh. Lena had already started working at Vanderbilt when she defended, and so Richard "Pete" Peterson, recently retired as professor at Vanderbilt, was the outside reader for her dissertation. Her most recent book, *Entitled: Discriminating Tastes and the Expansion of the Arts* (Princeton Univ. Press), explores how elites in the US changed the meaning of art, and in particular how social hierarchies were maintained while opening up the arts to less affluent populations and transforming vernacular or popular culture into art. Her first book, *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music*, which presents a general sociological theory of the rise and fall of genres, was among *Choice Magazine's* "Outstanding Academic Titles of 2012". Lena is also the co-author of the forthcoming *Measuring Culture* (Columbia Univ. Press), along with John Mohr, Christopher Bail, Margaret Frye, Omar Lizardo, Terence McDonnell, Ann Mische, Iddo Tavory and Frederick Wherry. This joint-project by leading figures in the sociological study of culture is an attempt to establish common ground around the perennial problems of cultural measurement. Lena is also co-editor (Tally Katz-Gerro, Vaughn Schmutz, and Marc Verboord) of *Poetics*, one of the leading journals for the social scientific study of culture, co-editor (with Frederick Wherry and Greta Hsu) of the *Culture and Economic Life* book series, published by Stanford University Press. She is also a past Chair of the ASA Culture Section.

Culture Section Council

Gabriel Abend, New York University 2021

Patricia A. Banks, Mount Holyoke 2020

Mariana Craciun, Tulane University 2022

Mathieu H. Desan, Univ. of Colorado Boulder 2022

Ming-Cheng M. Lo, Univ. of California-Davis 2020

Victoria Reyes, Univ. of California, Riverside 2021

Roundtable

Maintenance and repair as cultural work

Fernando Domínguez Rubio

Univ. of California, San Diego

Over the last few years the notions of maintenance and repair have garnered growing attention in fields like media and communication studies, anthropology, social studies of science, and urban studies. So far, however, they have not entered into debates in American cultural sociology. When I received the invitation to curate a small section for this newsletter, I thought it could be a good opportunity to prick sociological curiosities and open up a conversation about maintenance and repair from the perspective of cultural sociology.

Admittedly, this proposal may not seem a very enticing one, at least at first sight. After all, the kinds of activities that normally fall under the rubric of maintenance and repair are some of the most banal, time-consuming, and pain-in-the-ass things that we have to confront in our daily lives—studying something like, say, pothole repair is probably not very high on most people's "Great Research Topics!" lists. At the same time,

while boring and mundane, maintenance and repair are also some of the most critical activities we engage in on a daily basis. But why is that?

Maintenance and repair are examples of what I call in my forthcoming book "mimeographic labor", which is that type labor devoted to *creating* "the same" (Domínguez Rubio, 2020). I emphasize "create" because it is often assumed that the same is what is given and the new is what needs to be created. If that was the case, our lives would certainly be much easier; but unfortunately, it is not. The same is always as created as the new. Moreover, the same is not just created, it is a most fragile creation, as it has to be *continually* achieved, maintained and repaired. This is why a great deal of daily life is consumed participating in (or suffering from) a myriad of maintenance and repair activities: our cars need their oil, brakes, and tires to be changed periodically; our walls need to be repainted, floors washed, lightbulbs replaced; our hair and nails need to be

cut; our computers' and cellphones' software needs to be updated; our sidewalks, roads, buildings need to be constantly repaired, and on and on… Much to our regret, these maintenance and repair activities are not optional. Without them all of those objects and systems around which we organize our lives would simply collapse in front of our eyes. So we are stuck in them. Endlessly.

Interestingly, as pervasive as these mimeographic activities of maintenance and repair are in our daily lives, they have been mostly absent in the writing of social scientists. Theories and narratives of social and cultural life have tended to focus on those who are in charge of imagining and producing the new—e.g., artists, politicians, philosophers, scientists, or architects—since they have been understood to be the ones producing political, economic or social value. Meanwhile, the ordinary labor of the "others of creation"—e.g. housekeepers, cleaners, plumbers, care workers, mechanics, or conservators—has been deemed irrelevant, since it has been deemed to play a "merely" reproductive role and therefore lack any creative (and with it political, economic or cultural) value.

Only in the last few decades has this neglect of maintenance and repair work begun to change. The insurgence of feminist thought in the 1960s led scholars to question traditional boundaries between production and reproduction by bring to the fore forms of labor which, like women's domestic labor, had been disdained for being "invisible, repetitive, exhausting, unproductive, uncreative" (Davis 1981, 222). Over the last decade or so, a new wave of scholars has expanded this initial frame to explore all those routine acts of maintenance and repair that keep the architectures, infrastructures, and techno-scientific systems on which our lives

depend up and running (e.g. Denis and Pontille 2014; Graham and Thrift 2007; Jackson 2000; Mattern 2018; Russell and Vinsel 2018). The timing of this renewed attention to maintenance and repair is not coincidental. In a world where creativity has been elevated to the status of a cult, and where innovation charlatans are idolized with blind devotion, these approaches are trying to carve out a space for alternative narratives that shift our attention to agents and forms of labor that those hegemonic discourses occlude and forget.

Now, here you may be rightly asking yourself: Ok, this is all fine and dandy, but why *exactly* should cultural sociologists care about any of this?

The answer I would like to offer here is that mimeographic activities of maintenance and repair are crucial forms of *cultural* labor through which meanings, categories, and values are produced and sustained over time. To see why this is the case, we have to remember that, as Terry McDonnell (2016) has recently written, cultural forms are always subjected to entropic processes that break down and fracture their intended meanings over time. It requires a lot of cultural labor to prevent those meanings from collapsing. Needless to say, there is a venerable tradition in cultural sociology focused on this type of cultural labor. For example, those working in the tradition of ethnomethodology have long studied how meanings, categories and values are constantly "breached" and need to be endlessly repaired through micro-interactions; meanwhile, those in the Bourdieusian tradition have focused on the habitus as mechanism through which meanings, categories, and values are silently reproduced over time. Others, like Michele Lamont, have focused on the symbolic work required to maintain cultural boundaries, while those in the cognitive tradition spearheaded by Paul DiMaggio or Karen

Cerulo have focused on the role that mental schemata play in maintaining cultural representations over time.

The attention to maintenance and repair complements these approaches by inviting us to pay attention to a form of cultural labor that is not adequately captured by the traditional cultural sociologist kit of interactions, habitus, symbolic boundaries, or mental schemata. This is the kind of *material* labor required to maintain and repair categories, meanings, and value. Such labor is critical because, as cultural sociologists like Claudio Benzecry, Thomas Gieryn, Antoine Hennion, Harvey Molotch, Chandra Mukerji, and Geneviève Zubrzycki have shown, cultural orders are material orders. And as such, they require a lot of mimeographic material labor to be kept alive. Think, for example, of the massive amount of mimeographic labor of maintenance and repair invested in middle- or high-class neighborhoods to sustain the physical décor of class distinction—so poignantly illustrated by the work of the artist Ramiro Gómez. Or think about the vast amount of mimeographic labor invested to prevent cultural objects—e.g. architectures, landscapes, artworks— from losing their intended meanings—and think about what happens when such mimeographic process fails or stops. Or the equally vast amount of mimeographic labor required to sustain categories in our increasingly algorithmic cultures, like the silent work of coders maintaining and fixing search results to make sure they fall within the appropriate cultural categories—think of Google's and Amazon's recent fiascos in that area—or the equally massive cultural work invested in practices like content moderation, algorithmic policing or AI recognition to maintain and fix cultural boundaries around "normality" or "deviance".

So if we now return to the question of why cultural sociologists should pay attention to these mimeographic practices, we could say that they provide an excellent window into some of the critical, but largely invisible, forms of cultural labor through which the social, political, and symbolic orders that we inhabit are silently produced, negotiated, and maintained over time. Or differently put, if we need to study this type of mimeographic labor of maintenance and repair it is because no social, political, or symbolic order can be fully described, let alone understood, without attending to the forms of duration, boundaries, and sameness that these activities build into those orders.

This much is evident in the four short notes in this section. All of them are written by scholars operating outside the confines of American cultural sociology, but with a lot to offer to it. Each contribution highlights a specific area in which maintenance and repair is critical and potentially interesting for cultural sociologists. For example, Jérôme Denis and David Pontille focus on how the material and symbolic order of a city like Paris is constructed through two specific forms of maintenance and repair labor: the maintenance of underground signage and graffiti removal. Sarah Pink turns our attention to the maintenance and repair processes required to sustain the digital data on which predictive analytics, big data, and, increasingly our own research depend. Relatedly, Lara Houston, focuses on how maintenance and repair are creating their own social movements, like the "fixer" collectives that have emerged over the last years to claim the "right to repair" against industries producing objects increasingly closed-off in proprietary hardware and software regimes. Finally, Jessica Meyerson, Andrew Russell, and Lee Vinsel focus on *The Maintainers*—an intellectual community they have created to spearhead the conversation

around conversation around repair, to reflect on possible ways this community can intersect with sociological conversations.

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The Social Aesthetics of Maintenance

Jessica Meyerson, Senior Research Officer, Educopia Institute
Andrew Russell, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences SUNY Polytechnic Institute
Lee Vinsel, Assistant Professor of Science, Technology, and Society, Virginia Tech

The Maintainers is a global research network interested in maintenance, repair, infrastructure, and the myriad forms of labor and expertise that sustain our human-built world. Since we founded the network five years ago, two topics have consistently dominated the discussions, publications, and conferences we've organized: our culture's obsession with innovation and novelty, and the maintenance and repair work that keeps our world going.

We, the co-directors of the network, took our original inspiration from histories of technology. For example, David Edgerton's *Shock of the Old* (2006) emphasizes the role of old technology and its maintenance in everyday life. Ruth Cowan's *More Work for Mother* (1983) examines the relationship between supposedly labor-saving devices and women's housework, most of which focuses on maintaining domestic order and cleanliness. As our interests moved from history to related fields, we discovered communities of social scientists working on maintenance and repair, from whom we have learned a great deal (we're thinking especially of Henke and Sims; Denis and Pontille; Jackson; Rosner and Ames; and Houston).

In late 2018, The Maintainers received a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to help build its organizational capacities. We initially focused on building a framework and processes for

forming communities in specific maintenance contexts. These communities work together to define their own goals, research questions, and outcomes by working through processes that we have defined in our Maintenance Community Framework. These communities build bonds between people who share common experiences, but who otherwise might not be in contact with one another. For example, one of the communities, known as Information Maintainers, has been examining status issues around maintenance work in libraries, archives, and other information systems. The group has decided to conduct research with network members, to produce a richer understanding of the challenges faced by information maintainers. In this case, we hope that research can be a foundation for advocacy and institutional change. More generally, our goal is to foster a variety of communities that will, in sum, create an infrastructure through which the meaning of maintenance and repair can be produced and maintained.

There are many questions about maintenance and repair that overlap with interests in cultural sociology. For the purpose of this brief note, we will focus on one: how maintenance and the lives of people who do that work – who we call maintainers – are intertwined with social aesthetics. Building on Pierre Bourdieu (especially 1984) and others, John Levi Martin (2011: 239, see also Martin and Merriman 2015:132) defines social aesthetics as "a study of the processes whereby actors take in the qualities of the social world around them." The word "qualities" plays an important role here because ultimately social aesthetics centers on the sociology of judgment – how individuals and groups sort the good from the bad, the beautiful from the ugly, the fitting from the unfitting, the

maintained from the disordered (see also Miyahara 2014).

We believe that social aesthetics connects both to the experiences of maintainers and to maintenance itself. The social aesthetics of maintainers and maintenance require more systematic and especially quantitative empirical exploration. First, long-running studies of occupational prestige have found that individuals have remarkably stable judgments about where jobs fall in social hierarchies (for a summary see Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). Beyond studies of individual jobs like auto mechanics (Borg 2007) and janitors (Rabelo and Mahalingam 2019), we lack empirical research on how such ideas apply to maintenance work and the mechanisms by which understandings of labor hierarchies, including Gramscian and other forms of hegemony, take root. In his examination of Richard Scarry's children's book series *Busytown*, for example, Martin (2000) points out that our parents and other authority figures teach us what jobs are desirable and undesirable. In this way, Martin suggests we develop concrete ideas about what kinds of people fit particular roles and who might benefit from certain kinds of work. Much more remains to be explored.

Second, the same set of questions applies to technological systems and infrastructures. All of us have had the experience of going somewhere or looking at some object and finding it shabby, untidy, or rundown. But where exactly do such notions come from? To what degree do they vary across cultures? And how do factors like economic status and personal identity shape them?

Similarly, the terms "invisible" and "invisibility" are applied to both maintenance work (see Daniels 1987) and technological infrastructures (Star and

Ruhleder 1996). The discourse of (in)visibility often has a moral tinge--it can imply that the object at hand *should not be* invisible and that by ignoring it we are failing morally. Others emphasize that the important question is "invisible to whom?" Neither the work nor the thing being maintained is invisible to maintenance laborers, obviously. We believe that these discussions of visibility would benefit from more systematic research, especially into the cognitive underpinnings of what individuals do and do not take note of. Given humans' very real cognitive limits (Martin 2010), we likely miss, or fail to take note of, *most* of the activities and structures that we pass by every day. In this way, social aesthetics can also account for the social structuring of human attention, and we can work to better understand why people notice what they notice, including maintenance and repair.

We suspect that the recent focus on maintenance and repair in social science is, at some level, a fad. Like all fads, it will become less fashionable over time, and other fads will attract scholarly attention. In the meantime, it is beyond question that the many people working on maintenance, repair, and infrastructure are raising deep and important questions. We believe that these questions, and the results of their research, have the potential to contribute to lasting, positive, societal change. Finally, we believe that additional empirical research aimed at institutional and policy interventions could do much to elevate the status of maintainers and the systems they care for.

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With and without signs: the daily maintenance of urban orders

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Georg Simmel (1971) famously pointed this out, and it is at the very centre of scholarship in epigraphy : signs are a crucial feature of urban fabric. There are basically two kinds of graphic components in the city. One the one hand, official signs shape the urban institutional graphic landscape: from monumental writings (generally on pediments and façades) to the most functional ones (e.g. road markings, street nameplates, directional signs, traffic lights…), or commercial brands (e.g. shop signs and billboards). On the other hand, countless unsolicited, and more or less perennial, inscriptions proliferate in urban settings (e.g. posters, graffiti, stickers, banners…). As anecdotal as they may appear, all these graphic elements are a matter of social order. The governance of the city as a public place goes through an investment in the presence of some of these signs (Latour and Herman, 1998) and the absence of some others (Artières, 2017). This "graphic ordering" is organized through official rules, such as municipal laws, that define which inscriptions are acceptable, which are mandatory, and which are unwelcomed. Upholding these rules, requires though a specific work to make sure that this graphic order is maintained on the street on a day-to-day basis.

Let's consider two quintessential cases we had the opportunity to investigate (Denis and Pontille, 2014, 2019): subway signs and graffiti in Paris. Keeping the former and eliminating the latter is crucial to how the city looks like and how it is experienced. Maintaining Paris as the City of Light is the fragile and provisory result of the ceaseless daily activity of teams of workers who take care of these signs on the streets and the subway stations. Without the work of subway workers, signboards would not remain in place very long as they would fall, fade, rust or be stolen… Similarly, graffiti would saturate the city in a few weeks if nobody looked after the walls of Paris and clean them every single day.

The material and symbolic urban order performed by the presence and absence of these signs needs to be endlessly enacted and reenacted by maintainers and maintenance work. But what exactly do these maintainers do? What characterizes this maintenance work?

A first important feature of these activities lies in their repetitiveness. Maintenance is indeed a matter of pace. And when it comes to the presence and absence of urban inscriptions, the pace is intense. The standards in the Paris transportation system specify that any missing, worn out or obsolete signboard has to be replaced within 3 weeks. The two maintenance teams dedicated to signage maintenance work every day from 6.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Paris's graffiti removal municipal policy is outsourced to companies whose workers have to operate "from Monday to Saturday, except on public holidays, in the time slot 7:00 a.m. / 10:00 p.m.". Each 'regular' graffiti must be removed within ten working days after its detection, while those that are "offensive, pornographic or prejudicial to public order" have to be erased in three hours, 24/7.

Another key aspect of maintenance is site inspection. Every morning, before the opening of a subway station, its superintendent goes through the corridors, platforms and halls to check the general condition of the place, with a form in her hand. At the end of her round, she reports any problems to the maintenance departments. As for graffiti, detection and reporting workers patrol every day the neighborhoods for which they are responsible to spot graffiti that must be removed within the prescribed time frame. During these endlessly repeated activities, maintenance workers cultivate a close attention to their

surroundings. The urban order they contribute to maintaining draws on an awareness to often microscopic, almost imperceptible disorders. In subway stations, each transformation that occurs on signs (traces of rust or mold, fading colors) is considered a problem that has to be identified and taken care of. So is, of course, the very disappearance of signs, which is particularly difficult to detect. In the case of graffiti, workers must be able to detect and remove as quickly as possible any unsolicited inscription, however small, that may be seen as a potential threat to the social order. Maintenance thus relies on specific visual skills that the workers develop to spot tiny flaws and marks of an emerging disorder that is not publicly identified yet. Such attention to details and symptoms of what is considered "disorder" is one of the distinctive features of maintenance compared to repair: rather than "bringing things back" to order after a "breakdown" occurred, maintainers subtly work every day to prevent failure and collapse. To achieve this, maintenance workers foster a very particular relationship with the materiality of the urban environment. They have to be attuned to the varying fragility of the different materials that make up order of the city, from plastic, wood, and marble, to concrete, plaster, bricks, water, or PVC.

Taking this maintenance work into consideration invites to analyze a key, but often neglected array of practices through which the fabric of urban orders is accomplished. Whether it is a matter of organizing urban places by installing signs regulating the displacements of city dwellers, or eliminating those considered as threats, the ordering of the city is never done once and for all. It always draws on the thoughtful commitment of maintenance workers who care every day for the most mundane materials the city is made of.

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Broken Data

Sarah Pink

Emerging Technologies Research Lab, Monash University.

There has been a growing focus on questions of repair and maintenance across disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, including human geography, anthropology, sociology and science and technology studies (STS). Underpinning this is an acknowledgement of the incompleteness of ongoingly emergent states of things and processes and the environments that we and they are part of. Ideas of repair and maintenance are important because they can serve as disruptive and processual concepts. They invite us to focus our attention on how things keep going, rather than on how things are, and offer us a mode of understanding how humans, materials and processes are co-implicated in the making of our everyday environments. Research into repair and maintenance has often focused on how humans manipulate material things (for instance in geography or anthropology), technologies (in STS), or dialogue (in conversation analysis), and has also often pitched narratives of repair against those of innovation.

During the same period interest in digital data has grown in sociology and across the social sciences. This is represented in the growth of big data, and the ubiquity of personal data technologies, such as for body activity monitoring or health tracking. The advent of big data and personal data technologies can be seen as supporting an innovation narrative. That is, they are commonly seen as technological solutions to societal problems. For instance, big data and the predictive analytics associated with it are commonly associated with the ability to know in advance how certain people are likely to behave. Sociologists are rightly concerned about how such analytics might be used in predictive policing and other punitive modes of activity. Personal data technologies – such as wearables that monitor steps, heart rate, and caloric intake and expenditures – have been pitched as possible ways of changing unhealthy behaviours in people with health problems. Here sociologists have likewise been rightly worried that such technologies might lead to new and intensified modes of surveillance (e.g., by insurance companies).

These solutionist hopes for big data and predictive analytics in terms of personal data and health interventions are themselves consistent with narratives that suppose that technological innovation produces finished and complete products. Within them we might suppose that data itself is seen as complete and reliable. That is, if we are to use big data analytics to predict what people in society will do, then it would seem important to be able to believe that the data used can be depended upon. Likewise, if people are to use personal data as a basis from which to improve their health, then surely they would need to know that these data are accurate?

Inspired by the recent research on repair and brokenness, and the way that this challenges our assumptions about things and processes in society, a group of us decided to ask similar questions about data. Our interrogation of this question formed part of the work of the Data Ethnographies Lab, with participants in Australia, Sweden, Denmark and Spain. We debated and explored the question of 'broken data' through a series of three ethnographic and autoethnographic examples drawing on Sarah Pink's work on

personal self-tracking data, Robert Willim's work with sound data, and Minna Ruckenstein's research on how big data analytics are performed in practice. In each of these areas we found examples that showed us how data were not necessarily objective, complete, fixed, or finished. To understand this we proposed the concept of 'broken data,' as a way of thinking about digital data that aligns it with narratives of repair and maintenance, and to suggest that digital data does not necessarily support the narratives of technological innovation or solutionism with which it is often associated. Indeed, Pink's study of self-trackers found that users were not always particularly concerned with the accuracy of their data. While the data might have had gaps, or did not necessarily represent the activity with which it was associated in the app, this did not always matter when the participant's objective was to use it to create coherent narratives about themselves and their daily trajectories of movement. Ruckenstein's work showed how big data might be broken due to, for instance, various anomalies or infrastructure failures, how this limited the data, and how it needed to be repaired so that it could be used in analytical processes.

Thus through the concept of broken data, we were able to emphasise that digital data should not be treated as providing certainties, but rather, needs to be understood through the stories of the ways in which it was produced. These are likely to be trajectories not of the making of completely finished products, but in fact incomplete, repaired, and maintained in ways congruent with the particular strategic purposes of those who use them. That is, while digital data might, on the surface, appear to support narratives of technological problem-solving, once one scratches below the surface digital data reveals itself to be similar to other socio-technical things and processes: that is, incomplete, sometimes damaged, and repaired and maintained by humans.

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Contact us with suggestions for essays, book reviews, symposia, reports on conference panels, 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 johnnie_lotesta@hks.harvard.edu

Dustin Stoltz (Univ. of Notre Dame) interviews **Hayagreeva "Huggy" Rao** (Stanford) on the past, present, and future of cultural analysis and sociology.

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

Huggy Rao: I'm originally from India, and finished business school in India. There, it was a surprise when a number of my classmates said, "You know, you really ought to be a professor." Until then I had never thought of doing that. I assumed I would be an executive—which is what I eventually did, but I got completely bored with it! There was a bunch of my colleagues who had PhDs from Case Western Reserve, and they all said you ought to go there. And, so I did.

There, I had a wonderful mentor, Eric Nielsen. He was a Harvard sociologist, a student of Robert Bales, and a product of the Department of Social Relations. One thing I remember from his class was a writing assignment about imagining we were waiters serving Durkheim, Marx, and Weber and about their conversation—and I thought that was a lot of fun.

My dissertation was actually on savings and loan associations, and it suggested there were two organizational forms. The main point, though, was that they weren't merely organizational forms, but premised on the social surrounding. If you had a savings and loan association in Cleveland, you had a lot of community monitoring. Whereas, if you look at the stock form of savings and loan organizations, a for-profit joint stock operation, it was premised on the notion of a community as a society of strangers. What I found was that as the mutual form was recruited by entrepreneurs in places like Arizona and Nevada and so on—where there was considerable social mobility—there wasn't a stable demographic to monitor people. What happened to these mutual savings and loan organizations was that they became quasi-firms. The promoter gave loans out, but also was a

builder and civil engineer and so on—the loan was part of a system. It became an input into a budget rather than what it was originally as a cooperative where everybody monitored everybody. That was my start in sociology.

My first job was at Emory University where I had two incredible mentors who were organizational theorists in the business school and also people in the sociology department who welcomed me to seminars. For example, Richard Robinson and John Boli, and then the political economist Alex Hicks. But, the big change for me was spending a sabbatical at the Univ. of Michigan in 1996-1997. There, Mayer Zald was a very significant mentor of mine. We would have lunch every Wednesday and he we would quiz me on the classics and push me to think about collective action and culture. And, all of this had been themes in my childhood. In the city where I was born, when I was a child, I didn't understand why people were protesting because they wanted a steel plant. My dad would say, "India is a centrally planned economy and one way to actually get resources is to use your voice." That always stuck in my mind.

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?

HG: When I think of culture, I largely think of it as a system of representations. I do have a more cognitive view of culture, but I also think culture constitutes individuals and organizations and so forth.

Take a simple thing like narratives. A narrative is ultimately something profoundly cultural. Ann Mische, I think, has done wonderful work in this area. Ann says we actually use narratives to

imagine the future, in that sense they are simulations. But, does the act of imagining actually lead you to a productive future? One of the interesting questions that's occupying my mind is: does the "tense" of narrative with which you imagine the future make a difference? Is a retrospective narrative of the future going to be more helpful to you or is it a prospective narrative of the future? Does having that model help me be more alert and prepared? And, you can quickly see the connection between culture and its microfoundations.

Another interesting angle into culture is in the work on cultural holes. When we think of cultural holes, what comes to mind? We often think about boundaries and barriers. But, what is it that creates these cultural holes: is it that queues are not being integrated or that queues aren't available? Perhaps you and I are separated by a structural hole, in Ron Burt's sense, but what is to be gained from bridging the structural hole if you and I entertain the same beliefs about the world? In other words, we are so coordinated that I'm not going to be getting new information from you and you're not going to get new information from me. We often measure cultural holes in terms of co-citations or linguistic differences or semantic distances, but we can also understand cultural holes in problem-solving terms. For example, we are doing a study of diagnosing diseases that jump from animals to humans, zoonotic diseases. When the human health people made their diagnosis, the animal health people said, "it shouldn't be crows that are dying, it should be some other bird," but the human health people tuned them out. In our study we found there were twenty-six attempts to transmit this information, and finally it got through on the twenty-seventh pass. That is a wonderful example of the importance of cultural holes.

Thinking about the microfoundations of culture, another kind of fascinating research is schema diffusion within people. For example, we are doing a series of experiments where people read about contagious diseases, like the flu, and afterward they prefer ethnocentric foods. What is happening is the moment I attune you to biological contamination you become more alert

to cultural contamination. This has implications for culture and consumption because what you are able to show is that your schema of biology is actually shaping your preferences for consumption. When I was presenting this paper at a lovely festschrift for John Mohr people were asking what is the practical implications of this study? I said, "don't try to push immigration reform during flu season!"

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

HG: When I think of all my past projects, I would say a large majority of them have been the outcome of accidents. One example of an accidental project was on French cuisine. It wasn't like I was thinking of studying France or French cuisine. It so happened that when I was at Emory University there was a Frenchman, Rodolphe Durand, who was visiting. He had taken a job in Léon in France and he seemed kind of despondent, and I asked him "What's the problem with Léon?" He said, "well there's no real industry in Léon, there's no software, aerospace, or biotech… there's nothing in Léon." And, I replied "Well, there's food in Léon!" Food telegraphs so much about people and I told him I thought Leon was at the center of a revolution in French cuisine. He recalled one of his colleagues at the business school in Léon was actually trained at one of these culinary institutes. That's how the French cuisine project started. I should also point out the paper title, "Institutional Change in Toque Ville," my wife deserves credit for that—she's a professor of gerontology.

If a graduate student was starting out, my advice would be to pick a problem that would interest people way outside your field: do your grandparents express excitement, do your parents say "oh that's interesting!" Once you have a problem, the way to embark on it, in my mind, is to always mix clean models with dirty hands. Our French cuisine problem wasn't just econometrics or statistics; we actually spoke to chefs, we spoke to critics. When you talk to these people you start

to understand that a Michelin star isn't a status, but actually an identity. You realize how central this all is to their lives. When we talked to chefs for the first time, they didn't even talk about stars because it caused so much anxiety. When you talk to people you can be sensitized to data coding conventions and archiving conventions. My advice to people is to get out in the field. When you only sit at your desk, everything is clean and easily modeled. But, in the end, these are living, sentient, human beings with an identity and a sense of self and social surroundings that we need to appreciate.

DS: What was it like to introduce culture and cultural concepts into business scholarship?

HG: I think the surprising thing for us was that people in organizations were very receptive. Let me give you an instance, the paper with Klaus Weber and L.G. Thomas, "From Streets to Suites: How the Anti-Biotech Movement Penetrated German Pharmaceutical Firms." The interesting problem here was why didn't the pharmaceutical industry in Germany, the most powerful industry in Germany, get into biotechnology. Why were the smaller German companies able to establish presence but not these big powerful firms? Also, when you look at the anti-biotechnology movement in Germany, you see that it was a very small group of people, maybe 100-120 real activists, and it was a coalition of diverse groups—radical feminists, Catholics, communists, anti-Nazi and anti-eugenics groups. The question was how did this small, disconnected—almost an archipelago—activist movement able to stop this large German companies in their tracks? We find that the anti-biotechnology movement got "inside" these big companies. For example, the activists would actually challenge the companies to debate them, and the firm's would send scientists to a small town in Germany. A couple hundred people show up, the scientist is in a suit, and the activists is dressed up as a misshapen apple! The optics didn't look good for the firms, they didn't stand a chance. The other way the activists got in was by working to impose regulations which would delayed commissioning of plants. Since the biotechnology portion of the company was small, and the larger portion is in chemicals. The companies would rather invest in more reliable aspects of the company, and ultimately these big companies starved the biotechnology sectors of the firm. So the delays infected or contaminated their decision-making calculus. These are some of the ways the movement penetrated these large companies.

For people in organization research, they often thought corporate strategy was about profitability. But suddenly you see social constraints on technology choice, social constraints on diversification. And all of this gave people a very different view of what strategy was all about.

Recently I attended a conference at Apple University, and they posed the question to all of us: "Where do great strategies come from?" A number of my colleagues from business schools were arguing that they come from great people. Steve Jobs was a great person with great insight. My point was: not really. An equally plausible argument is that great strategies come from identity movements. Who was Steve Jobs? He was actually a person who was constituted by the personal computing movement which sought to challenge the hegemony of a priesthood that was in charge of centralized computing. At the time you couldn't even touch a computer. Your cards and tapes were all managed by this priesthood. The movement was, then, about freedom and autonomy and centered on a proliferation of home-brewing computing clubs. It was in the culture of this movement that the ideas emerged that infuses Apple to this day. And Steve Jobs was a person constituted by this movement. Maurice Halbwachs, a french sociologist, sees people as intersections, shaped by collective contestations, and Steve Jobs was one such individual. There might've been other Jobs, and Steve Jobs just got lucky.

My overall point was strategy isn't just about competition, strategy is about mobilizing enthusiasm, mobilizing passion, about cultural movements. And people in business and business schools were very receptive to this idea.

Hayagreeva "Huggy" Rao is Atholl McBean Professor of Organizational Behavior and Human Resources at Stanford Graduate School of Business. Rao graduated from Andhra University with a Bachelor of Arts ('78) and a Postgraduate degree in business from Xavier Labor Relations Institute ('80). Rao went on to complete his doctorate in organizational behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management ('89). His dissertation was "The Social Organization of Trust: The Growth and Decline of Organizational Forms in the Savings and Loan Industry; 1960-1987," which he would go onto publish in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* with his advisor Eric Nielsen as "An Ecology of Agency Arrangements." After finishing his doctoral work, he joined Emory's Goizueta Business School, followed by Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, before arriving at Stanford in 2005. His first book, *Market Rebels: How Activists Shape Innovation* (Princeton Univ. Press), argued successful innovation requires a "hot cause" — igniting interest in consumers — but also a "cool solution" — one's that don't look silly. Using these two concepts, Rao demonstrates why, among other things, the much-hyped Segway was a flop. His most recent book with Robert Sutton, *Scaling Up Excellence* (Random House) was a Wall Street Journal best seller. Rao was also a former editor of *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and with Phillipe Monin and Rodolphe Durand, he was the co-winner of the 2005 W. Richard Scott Award for Distinguished Scholarship from the Organizations, Occupations and Work Section for "Institutional Change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle Cuisine as an Identity Movement in French Gastronomy" (AJS).

CONFERENCE REPORTS

114th American Sociological Association Meeting,
New York, NY Aug. 10-13, 2019

ALGORITHMIC CULTURES – PANEL AT ASA2019

Dan M. Kotliar
The Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem & Stanford University

In a paper session organized and presided by **Angèle Christin** (Stanford University), panelists presented their work on the interplay between algorithmic systems and cultural processes. The papers offered five empirically-based perspectives on the ways in which algorithms affect – and are being affected by – various cultural forces, and thus emphasized the important role cultural sociology can play in studying the algorithmization of social life.

Eszter Hargittai (Univ. of Zurich) presented her work with Jonathan Gruber, Jaelle Fuchs, Teodora

Djukaric and Lisa Brombach (all from Univ. of Zurich) on the methodological challenges in studying people's algorithm skills; namely, their awareness and understanding of algorithms. Their proposed methodology aims to tackle some of the main challenges in studying algorithms and especially the difficulty of studying a "black boxed" subject, about which there is no known ground truth. Hence, Hargittai presented an interview protocol that instead of testing people's *knowledge* about algorithms, focuses on people's *perceptions* of the algorithmic systems they know and use. With acute attention to intercultural differences, Hargittai's interview protocol was translated into four languages other than English and administered to people from five different countries. In that, Hargittai offers a much-needed alternative to the US-centered approach prevalent in contemporary algorithm studies.

Barbara Kiviat (Stanford University) presented her work on Americans' views on the fair use of personal information. Focusing on people's reactions to data use by car insurance companies, Kiviat offers to go beyond the more "traditional" privacy paradigm (that predominantly focuses on the *collection* of personal data), and into a more nuanced perspective that centers on reactions to how companies *use* the collected data. Based on three nationally representative surveys, Kiviat identified four types of views on personal data use: *Permissives* generally possess an "all-data-are-good-data mentality"; *Moderatists* tend to think that data is not fair to use; *Domain Behavioralists* see behavioral data as fair to use especially when the data matches the domain in question (in this case – driving); and *Behavioral Skeptics* consistently rate behavioral data as less fair to use. Kiviat also argued that each group has a distinct socio-economic composition. That is, people's views on the collection and use of personal data is affected by their specific social positioning.

Caitlin Petre (Rutgers University) presented her work with Brooke Erin Duffy (Cornell University) and Emily Hund (Univ. of Pennsylvania) on discourses and practices of algorithmic manipulation. Based on a textual analysis of news articles, and of user guidelines by Google,

Facebook, and Instagram, Petre discussed the ways in which platforms accuse cultural producers (journalists, photographers, musicians, social media content creators, and others) of algorithmic manipulation or "system gaming". Petre argued that the lines between what platforms deem illegitimate algorithmic manipulation and legitimate strategic action are highly ambiguous, and are continually shifting in accordance with platforms' interests and needs. Even so, both platforms and the press describe the distinction in strongly normative terms, portraying accused system-gamers as morally deviant and dishonest. Petre and her colleagues dub this moral boundary-drawing *platform paternalism* and convincingly argue that such gaming accusations form an important mechanism through which platforms establish, maintain, and legitimize their institutional power.

Julia B. Ticona (Univ. of Pennsylvania) presented her work with Alexandra Mateescu and Alex Rosenblat (both of Data & Society) on gender and occupational identity in online care work platforms. Ticona argues that contemporary research on algorithms and work tends to focus on male-dominated platforms (like ride-hailing apps) and overlook women's experiences. Ticona's paper offers a corrective by focusing on women care workers' use of labor platforms. Particularly, Ticona offered to see platforms as spaces of cultural meaning-making, and argued that care platforms construct care work as a commodity, and their female workers as quantifiable products. While such platforms continually signal to workers that their online visibility is a proxy for their trustworthiness, Ticona showed that this visibility can prove problematic for some: for example, women from disadvantaged backgrounds often need to choose between their safety and their online visibility.

Dan M. Kotliar (The Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem and Stanford University) presented his work on "choice inducing algorithms" – algorithms that are explicitly designed to affect people's choices. Based on his ethnographic research of Israeli data analytics companies, Kotliar has shown that the functioning, logic, and even ethics of choice-inducing algorithms are deeply influenced

by the epistemologies, meaning-systems, and practices of the individuals who devise and use them. Thus, while people's choices are increasingly affected by algorithms, they in fact stem from much longer strings of choices, made by multiple agents in multiple social settings. Kotliar also argued that the omnipresence of choice-inducing algorithms makes them *incessant generators of choice* that actively *convert people into choosers.* Accordingly, such algorithms are not programmed to induce specific choices, but more generally, to (re)construct the modern need to choose.

In sum, algorithms and culture are becoming inextricably linked. Algorithms have deep and often tangible effects on almost any cultural field, and at the same time, they necessarily stem from specific socio-cultural contexts. As the timely papers in this panel have shown, cultural sociology is uniquely positioned in its ability to produce empirically-based and theoretically-informed explorations of the ties between algorithms and culture, and provide a more nuanced understanding of algorithms' growing power.

MEMORIAL

A CONVERSATION ON JOHN MOHR

John Mohr, former Chair of the Culture Section, former Chair of the Theory Section, and co-chair of the Historical Sociology Section, passed away on August 24 of this year. John had been diagnosed with ALS in 2017. To commemorate his passing we convened a conversation with some of his collaborators and former graduate students. **Jennifer C. Lena,** Associate Professor at Columbia University, is also a former chair of the Culture Section, and is co-author with John (and Christopher Bail, Maggie Frye, Omar Lizardo, Terence McDonnell, Ann Mische, Iddo Tavory, and Frederick Wherry) of the forthcoming book *Measuring Culture* with Columbia University Press. **Craig M. Rawlings** is Assistant Professor at Duke University, and a collaborator and student of John's. **Clayton Childress** is an Assistant Professor at the Univ. of Toronto and student of John's.

If you have any memories or stories you'd be willing to share about John, Craig and Clayton are constructing an oral history of his influence and career, and would be deeply appreciative if you would be willing to share them here:
 https://utorontosociology.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0xf1wTrYWZQB1Ax

Jenn, Craig, and Clayton spoke on Oct 22, 2019.

Clayton Childress: One of the things that was always remarkable to me about John was his ability to connect people, and there's probably no greater example of that than the forthcoming *Measuring Culture* book. Jenn, can you tell us a little bit about that, the experience of it, and how it all came together?

Jennifer Lena: I know *Measuring Culture* as a joint invention of John and Amin Ghaziani. As I understand it, they saw this opportunity for a conference on measurement and applied for an ASA Advancement of the Discipline grant, as John had done for earlier, similar conferences. They must have agreed to tap early-mid career folks as a programmatic statement, and I don't know if there were any declines or any (other) strategy behind it. I found it sometimes hard to know with John, when something was strategically well thought out, and when it was built on instinct. I think this was a function of his modesty (it took a lot of trust to get him to claim credit) but also a function of his belief in his own assessment of work, and of people.

The experience of it was like summer camp, in the sense that there were stages to it, like "events," characterized by types of debates, and it was like camp in that it was hotly competitive at times and beers around the fire at other times. On "events," I mean our first big substantive debate broke out around the question of whether noting the presence or absence of something was "measurement."

Craig Rawlings: I remember you all coming to UCSB and it was definitely a fireside conversation of sorts with some real interesting dynamics.

JL: We'd hit on one of these topics and debate it for a while, until there was enough energy around the next topic for us to shift to it (e.g., is "presence/absence" a form of quantification). John's high emotional intelligence played an important role. He wasn't the only person who worked as a mediator of debates, but he was a trusted person who did that.

CC: While you were sharing the story of those dynamics I was curious if the group was getting "Philosopher John" or "Measurement John," but *of course* it was getting "Mediator John." That you weren't really sure if he was operating off of a plan or instinct also really resonated with me. Craig, as the one of us who probably knew him best, do you think he was generally strategizing or going with his gut?

CR: I think John had a great mix of both qualities. He was willing to fail, and so he would try things, go with his gut, and then retool as necessary. He had amazing instincts. But sometimes these were a bit far ahead of the curve. And he also really distributed his thinking to others, who often helped wonderfully; but not always. I remember him allowing me, as a grad student, to do a survey for some of his diversity work, and I ended up asking all of these crazy questions to diversity professionals that were just wild Bourdieusian things.

JL: Ha! I've always wondered if he talked to his students much about his own career trajectory. Did he draw on his own experiences to advise you on career decisions? That is, did he trust *your* gut?

CC: Great question, Jenn. He didn't directly talk to me about his career trajectory too much, but he definitely trusted my gut, or at least, definitely made sure to give me that impression.

CR: Absolutely! He was the ultimate in allowing us to develop our own scholarship. That was his

trademark. I am in every way one of John's students, but sometimes I look at myself and wonder if others would see that.

CC: The real gift he gave me was to not be afraid of failure, and I think that came directly from how he approached his career. I remember sitting with him in his study right when I was starting my dissertation, and he said, "Just so you know, this is crazy and you likely can't pull it off, but that's great! And if you can't pull it off you'll still have a regular dissertation, so just go for it."

JL: That's so wonderful. And I really respect that he maintained a boundary with regards to his feelings about his career. It's a topic he and I discussed more than any other, but I was sure he wouldn't "lay that" on his students.

CR: John was very open and honest about his unconventional path and how that probably wouldn't be a possibility for me or Clayton. But he still made us fearless as if everything would of course work out for the best. Which it did!

CC: I think I maybe got echoes of John not always feeling like he was having the career he wanted, but oddly, I think in the past few years the world of sociology has really started tilting in his favor. He was an early bloomer and the rest of us were all late bloomers and needed time to catch up.

JL: I think John had a complex theory of careers, in which there were many possible, good paths; on good days, he could accurately identify his influence. On the bad days, the vibe was pretty different.

CR: I remember a big turning point was when I was a postdoc at Stanford and I was working with these Computer Science folks doing Natural

Language Processing and whatnot. I would visit John and say, "It's finally happening! Everything you used to say about the internet and text and how you would teach this crazy stuff in SAS to undergrads, it's now MacArthur Fellows doing it!"

CC: How did he respond to that? Was he excited? Frustrated it had taken so long?

CR: It took him a little while to come around to it. He had a lot of things going on. But when he got into it, he just went full steam ahead. I think he saw that it really was the next wave of work that he had begun, coding dusty books from the Yale library by hand. He just dove in and made it his own. He started working with Computer Science folks at UCSB and helped develop the Network Science program and got Computer Science postdocs even.

CC: The second to last time I saw John was at a book launch party at the Montreal ASA. He shut the bar down off in a corner hanging out with a few brilliant recent PhDs who all work in various forms of machine learning, big data, and computational cultural sociology. They were hanging on his every word. As we were all leaving I conspiratorially whispered in his ear, "John, you have fans." It's such a fond memory for me because he knew it! He really knew it, and was thrilled and flattered by that, but was too humble to actually really say it or acknowledge it.

JL: He was *so* far ahead of the rest of us in so many ways. Adding to Clayton's question: I wonder if the breadth of his reading, or his social connections with people, are either/both playing a role in preparing him to be so far ahead. I'd point out the obvious which is that he was also always able to avoid the methodologist's trap, of being

fixated on methods and inattentive to the substance and context of data.

CR: Yes, John had such an amazing mind and so much of his work was talking and listening to people. He traveled all the time and knew everyone. He was really an entrepreneur.

CC: "Avoiding the methodologist's trap" is such a great way to describe it, Jenn. As his TA, he was essentially teaching Intro to Soc as an Intro to Philosophy class and extremely passionate doing it, and then, as Craig said, he'd walk over a teach a bunch of hung over frat boys how to topic model in SAS, and again, totally enthusiastic about that too.

JL: Yeah, and he was a feminist and an anti-racist in their midst.

CC: That's a huge part of John's career and John's influence that doesn't get talked about enough.

CR: Actually, one of the things he loved about the undergrads in that class was that there were so many people of color and women. Essentially, he was teaching all of these young Latinas data science—in 2002!

CC: That's right. A total mix.

JL: I'm not evaluating the character of individual folx here; rather, I'm trying to point out that he worked in these really exclusive spaces, and was always working to transform them into healthier environments.

CC: Absolutely.

CR: It was holistic for him. From the philosophy to the practice to the teaching.

CC: His ability to dedicate his time to transforming spaces while also de-centering himself from that work was really remarkable. By de-centering I mean not making it about himself or his identity as an "ally" or a transformer who needed credit for that.

CR: John wanted to learn. That was what it was all about for him. He listened so well.

JL: Yeah this seems like a core tension in his character—a moral commitment to de-centering himself, and then a real use for the resources that come with being a "star." He was under resourced to a fault during his career...sorry, Univ. of California.

CR: He generally used those resources to throw parties.

JL: Parties! I wonder, what, if anything, did he teach you both about the art of persuasion? Either in the sense of how you do your work, your teaching, or how you navigate your career?

CC: The thing I've taken away from him most in my career is that there is never any reason whatsoever to be withholding when it comes to compliments.

JL: Perfect.

CR: I think John taught me that integrity is absolutely key to this business. He persuaded with his being in many ways.

CC: I've never thought about it that way, Craig, but it's spot on.

CR: It's a longer road to win others over than having big arguments and perhaps cutting others

down. Stick to your vision and do it honestly and people will come around.

CC: John was completely disinterested in the rules, but deeply, deeply invested in doing good and doing right. He had a real moral compass that he didn't play around with.

JL: Sustaining your integrity, when peers profit from nefarious behavior, is a Real Life Accomplishment.

CR: Hallelujah.

CC: So what do you think his legacy will be among culture scholars, and if not that, what do you think it *should* be? One thing that has really come out of this conversation for me is how I've even started to misremember him as "just" the culture and measurement guy, which is erasing how passionately he engaged across theory and measurement.

JL: For better or worse, I imagine scholars 50+ years from now looking to tell the history of the "quantification turn" in culture, who knight him.

CR: I think he'd be OK with that (being knighted, that is).

CC: I wonder what he'd think about having the "quantification turn" in culture attributed to him.

CR: To me, John defied quantitative/qualitative. I see him as having taken the impulses of qualitative scholarship—*verstehen*, interpretation,

etc.—and having shown that numbers don't have to be our enemy in this pursuit. They can help us to see the structures of culture.

CC: That's right, Craig. I remember four or five years ago showing him a paper I was working on—a bunch of straightforward regression tables about straightforward status hierarchies—and he said, "So when are you going to get back to our kind of work?"

CR: Hilarious.

JL: Yeah, so to clarify, I was thinking about the question as a sociological one—under what conditions are people's work invoked in the future?—and I'm not certain that any condition is as generative as the "reflections on four/five decades of AI," and in that (I hope interdisciplinary) construction of the history of how automated learning came to be, I think some of the specific innovations in John's quantitative work will be invoked. I worry that the same thing won't happen to a "methodological pluralist" and it certainly won't happen because he taught and supported such diverse students.

CC: Absolutely agreed, Jenn. 50 years down the line that celebrating of him will be partially true, but will also partially be a misremembering of him.

JL: His methodological pluralism, his commitment to equity, and his trust in his students should be the basis on which we pick heroes.

The Cultures of Cultural Sociology at Minnesota

Yagmur Karakaya and Jacqui Frost

When we got the news that we had both received awards for the ASA Culture Section's 2019 best graduate student paper, we knew that it was not a coincidence. We have both been trained at the Univ. of Minnesota, where cultural sociology is vibrant, diverse, and well-supported.

Our department has a long history of cultural analysis that goes back to the 1960s when **Gregory Stone** and others began to emphasize symbolic interactionism in their work. Scholars like **Sheldon Stryker** and, later, **Gary Alan Fine** were core contributors to this tradition. Today, cultural sociology is central to Minnesota sociology, though its applications are topically, theoretically, and methodologically broad. As **Joe Gerteis** puts it, "We are not a department with firm or clear boundaries between different camps. Most of our students and faculty study culture at some level, whether through macro-level cultural discourses, institutional cultures, or grounded interactions." At Minnesota, cultural sociology is seen as constitutive of the discipline, and there is a genuine appreciation among all of the faculty for the ways that cultural sociology can enrich understandings of a broad array of social phenomena, including law, family, religion, cities, transitions to adulthood, sports, race, crime, food, finance, globalization, and sports. As **Kathy Hull** explained, "Even my colleagues who might not themselves identify as cultural sociologists recognize and value the ways that cultural approaches deepen our understanding of the world."

This appreciation for cultural sociology has led to what department chair **Doug Hartmann** called "a broad and eclectic mix of scholars, subject matter, and orientations to culture and its study at Minnesota." Below, we describe these "cultures" of cultural sociology at Minnesota where different theoretical and methodological approaches are combined to explain the social world.

TALKING ABOUT SOCIAL CONTROVERSIES

Kathy Hull and **Penny Edgell** run the NSF-funded Talking About Social Controversies (TASC) project that uses focus groups to investigate the cultural schemas informing people's understandings of religion, science, and law. This project has produced research on narrative and argumentation, humor and group identity formation, how racialization of crime contributes to punitiveness, and the ways moral understandings of the body are used to "push back" against the marketization of medicine. Alumni **Kyle Green** and **Dan Winchester** worked extensively with this project, which they draw on in their recent article that investigates how narrative accounts motivate people's actions. This article won ASA's 2019 Junior Theorist Award. TASC builds from the PIs' broader interests in cultural sociology. Hull's primary research focuses on the mainstream LGBTQ rights movement and how social movements create meaningful goals and strategies in response

to a range of social forces. And for Edgell, cultural sociology has been foundational to her research on American religion. Edgell explores how religious cultures create symbolic boundaries, how rhetoric and practice intertwine in interactional settings like churches, and how rituals and embodiment motivate people to engage with communities and movements.

Boundaries in the American Mosaic

The NSF-funded Boundaries in the American Mosaic (AMP) survey project is another space in the department where the cultural takes center stage. Under the guidance of principal investigators **Edgell**, **Gerteis**, and **Hartmann**, this project is centrally concerned with the study of solidarity and difference, with a special focus on race and religion. The project combines Gerteis's expertise in political culture, nationalism, and diversity, Hartmann's critical approach to the study of race and ethnicity, and Edgell's work on religious subcultures, gender, and family. AMP has been a major hub for graduate students interested in racial and religious identities, social boundaries, symbolic exclusion, and discrimination, including alumni **Joyce Bell** and **Paul Croll** who used the survey to investigate racial boundaries and **Jack Delehanty** and **Evan Stewart** who created new measures to better understand religious boundaries. This project is a great example of the collaborative and mixed-methods approach to cultural sociology that is characteristic at Minnesota. Research coming out of AMP emphasizes the importance of both qualitative *and* quantitative data when investigating big questions about inclusion and exclusion in American society.

KIDS

The KIDS project, co-directed by **Hartmann** and **Teresa Swartz**, documents and assesses the role of out-of-school activities, particularly sports, in youth development, family culture, and community building. With ethnography and interviews, this undertaking produces a deep, rich understanding of how parents and kids experience and understand these activities in relation to both popular images circulating the public sphere and the more material, stratification-focused analyses that tend to dominate in the field. This project has been widely influenced by Hartmann's sensibility in seeing sport as a unique field of social practice where racial ideas, ideals, and ideologies circulate. His cultural approach to race and sports has drawn students of sport to the department, including alumni **Kyle Green** who studied masculinity and mixed martial arts and **Alex Manning** who investigated the contested terrain of youth soccer.

Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

The Holocaust and Genocide Center (CHGS) provides the critical foundation and analytical tools to understand and address the causes, impacts, and legacies of the Holocaust, genocides, and incidents of mass violence. As **Joachim Savelsberg** said, "Faculty and students working in the area of genocide and mass violence, a subset of our cultural sociology emphasis, have been developing a shared understanding of their task and cultivating quite intense network ties, collaborations, and collective activities." Run by **Alejandro Baer**, CHGS houses studies on the memories of violence in post-authoritarian or post-conflict societies. Baer approaches this question from a cultural lens and unearths stories in post-conflict societies. He asks how these stories condition social relations in societies emerging from violence. Work done at CHGS is very much informed by cultural trauma theory, as well the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. Another core area of research at CHGS

is on human rights *as* culture, which affect subjectivities, victim identities, and provide opportunities for carrier groups for framing and claim making. There are always exciting collaborations happening at the CHGS, which currently include a group of students who are examining representations of the US-Dakota War in Minnesota newspapers, and an upcoming collaboration with Colombian sociologist Carlo Tognato on Civil Courage in the Context of Mass Violence. Alumni include **J. Siguru Wahutu** whose research is on global media patterns in covering genocide in Africa

Collaborative Cultures and Innovative Graduate Work

Discussions across these various projects occur in department workshops, graduate courses, and working groups. The department offers an array of seminars in the study of culture, including Sociology of Culture, Sociology of Knowledge, Ethnographic Methods, and Visual Data Analysis. Seminars become collaborative spaces where students learn to "justify and celebrate methodologies centered in cultural analysis" (**Gowan**) and "get the tools they need to grapple with their own empirical and theoretical questions in what has become a quite large literature" (**Edgell**). However, one of the department's real strengths is the collaborative working groups that graduate students interested in cultural sociology can participate in.

Edgell and **Hull** began an informal reading group for students studying cultural sociology in 2007 that came to be known as "Culture Club." Edgell and Hull both teach the department's graduate seminar in cultural sociology and formed the group to foster community and rigorous research among their graduate students. The group meetings center around one student's work in progress or discussions about a set of readings in

cultural sociology. This group is still run today by Edgell, who explained, "Students interested in culture have opportunities to take a formal seminar, but also to engage regularly in conversation about their work with other students, and I think this helps students both engage more broadly in the subfield of culture but also practice linking cultural theory and analysis to questions or debates in a broader set of sociological literatures."

Another collaborative space in the department for cultural sociologists is **Teresa Gowan's** ethnography group, where graduate students in the field meet to debrief and learn how to analyze their data. Gowan explained, "I see all qualitative methods as working in the realm of culture. Whatever theoretical schools inform your work, all ethnographers share an assumption about the explanatory power of rich descriptions of local culture." Gowan also teaches a graduate course in ethnographic methods, but her working group allows students from across cohorts and topical interests to come together and get feedback on their projects. Gowan spends focused time training students how to make connections between the analytical and empirical tracks of their research, always emphasizing her motto – "Be bold, be wrong!"

Graduate students in the department draw from these various projects and perspectives to form their dissertation research, and numerous graduate students in the department are working on projects with a cultural lens. These projects span a variety of topics, including parenting practices, religious subcultures, populism, sporting subcultures, violence and reconciliation, diversity discourse, plasma donation, and Black Twitter. And these projects are as geographically diverse as they are topically, with graduate students conducting cultural analyses in countries across the globe,

including Colombia, Turkey, Egypt, Rwanda, Serbia, and Mexico.

Cultural Sociology at Minnesota

The study of culture at Minnesota is diverse in empirical subject matter, theoretical approach, and methodology, but filled with spaces of collaboration in team-based projects, courses, and mentoring groups that enrich both the faculty research and graduate training. Sociologists at Minnesota are brought together by a shared appreciation for cultural approaches, and a need for collective effervescence in sub-zero temperatures!

Book Review

Karida Brown
Gone Home: Race and Roots Through Appalachia
(UNC Press, 2018)

Reviewed by Emily Handsman
Northwestern University

Editor's Note:

Karida Brown's Gone Home won the

2019 Mary Douglas (best book) award for the ASA section on Culture.

In *Gone Home: Race and Roots Through Appalachia*, Karida Brown invites the reader to understand the Black experience in Kentucky's coal mining towns from what she terms "the standpoint of lived experience" (Brown 2018, 6). She deftly presents a narrative interwoven with broader historical context, specific local history, and the actual voices of her participants as they recount their life stories.

Her project connects the macro with the micro: She does not assume her reader has her extensive prior knowledge of Southern history, Black history, or the broader political history of the United States. Instead, she gives her reader all of the details needed in order to properly make sense of the lived experiences she features. We learn the history of the coal industry, along with the history of racial terror in the Deep South—terror that, as Brown describes, pushed Black people to seek a different life in the mountains of Appalachia. While these first few chapters could have simply been relegated to footnotes or appendices as background information, instead Brown uses this macro history to rework multiple historical narratives. First, we come to understand that what has typically been termed the Great Migration should in actuality be called the Great Escape. Brown doesn't just claim this—she backs this claim up with detailed and persuasive history. Second, we question the quintessential image of Appalachia—while this region is often portrayed as largely white, Brown demonstrates the importance of the Black influx into and then out of this region.

It is not for reasons of rhetorical nicety that I say "we come to understand" rather than "Brown tells us." Reading this book is a co-constitutive experience—Brown presents her reader with all of

the puzzle pieces, and relies on the strength of her evidence and the willingness of the reader to put in some work. This is intentional, as she states in the introduction "the only way I could even attempt to convey the struggle, striving, hope, joy sorrow, and love that they shared in their oral history interviews and through their archival donations was to spill it onto the text and offer this story to you in the spirit in which it was given" (Brown 2018, 8). This is not to say that her intellectual contributions are not clear (they are), but, again, as she notes in the beginning of the book, she places more trust in her reader than most academic texts tend to do, and this creates a powerful experience of discovery and understanding for the reader. Part of this co-constitutive experience exists in the way she presents the data; it is often in large chunks, taking up the most space on the page, at points similar experiences and thoughts are listed together, as if spoken together, by the community. This has a rhetorical effect akin to the traditional Greek chorus—a group voice, speaking for individuals, but together.

She aims to take us "within the veil of the color line" and deftly does so while honoring her participants' voices and experiences and letting them tell their own stories. This is highly effective writing, both rhetorically, and analytically. Rather than taking the traditional approach of presenting and unpacking one quote and then connecting it to theory, she lets these voices stand alone, only interjecting to make sure the reader draws the connections she intends. In the end, we are rewarded with a tactile and vivid understanding of life in Lynch, Kentucky, in conjunction with deep analysis of the combined effects of structural racism and migration on Black subjectivity. So much of this story is specific to its place, but in its

particularity, Brown shows us all what future research of place could look like.

In addition to her dexterous presentation of life in Lynch, Brown uses her case to discuss a few political points that remain just as relevant in contemporary life. First, she demonstrates how the racist regime in Lynch was in part masked by politeness and civility – and she also made sure to show us what happened when the mask came off. Second, she spends two chapters discussing schools as cultural sites. She demonstrates that segregated schools were essential Black community spaces that were disrupted by school integration. This characterization of life after the Brown verdict complicates historical narratives yet again—undermining the argument that anything deemed "progress" has to be universally and exclusively good. Both of these subjects: racism masked as civility and preaching an uncomplicated narrative of progress with no unintended consequences are as relevant in our contemporary political landscape as they were in the 1950s and 1960s.

In her methodological appendix, she discusses the challenges she faced deciding how much room on the page to give to herself, the researcher, the history, and her participants. Her success in navigating this challenge is undeniable, as the reader is left with a convincing empirical extension of Du Bois' work, as well as an empathetic and truly human understanding of her participants.

Emily Handsman is a 5th year graduate student at Northwestern University. Her dissertation looks at the ways in which suburban school teachers talk about inequality.

ARTICLE REVIEW

Review by

Reviewed by Nicholas Bascuñan-Wiley
Northwestern University

EDITOR'S NOTE:

KAREN A. CERULO'S ARTICLE "SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY" WON THE 2019 CLIFFORD GEERTZ (BEST ARTICLE) AWARD FOR THE ASA SECTION ON CULTURE

At the heart of much of today's social inquiry is a fundamental curiosity about how people make sense of their social worlds. Karen Cerulo's recent and award-winning publication, "Scents and Sensibility," offers new directions addressing this curiosity and considers how individuals form meaning from their cultural realities. The article presents a timely contribution to cognitive studies of the interaction between the body, mind, and environment and to the sensorial turn in the social sciences—a turn that anthropologists and psychologists have long heeded but one that sociologists are only recently starting to pay attention to.

Considering the perfume industry as a case study, Cerulo begins to unpack just how olfactory cognition is shaped by culture. The market for fragrance provides a fascinating area of study considering how companies attempt to relay "messages" to consumers by codifying particular scents. Cerulo notes, "Perfumes are part of the cultural landscape. We encounter, attend to, experience, and assess these scents on a daily basis, and they are part of most interactions and

experiences" (p. 370). Smell is, thus, imbued with meaning and is a form of communication that is shaped by racial, gendered, and class-based histories of the producer and consumer.

How, then, do smells shape social interactions and relationships? To answer this question, Cerulo draws on data from focus group meetings with 73 individuals. Participants were asked to smell three different perfumes, to fill out a reaction form based on their olfactory perceptions, and to discuss their reactions with Cerulo and other focus group members. Based on the participants' responses and Cerulo's observations during the meeting, the article makes three contentions: *First*, the majority of participants were mostly correct in their ability to discern the codes of the perfumes while also being able to "classify" the intended messages of the manufacturers. *Second*, participants' "social locations—especially their race and class" greatly influence the ways they interpret and discuss the perfume's intended market (p. 363). *Third*, embodied simulation and iterative processing—two cognitive mechanisms—shape the meaning-making process

when it comes to smell. Cerulo incorporates these cognitive mechanisms and takes the interactions between public culture, declarative culture, and nondeclarative culture seriously, while simultaneously moving beyond the cultural triangle initially proposed by Omar Lizardo (2017). The general argument is elucidated with several examples including one where a focus group participant smelled a particular perfume and then pulled away noting that the perfume reminded her of a former coworker she disliked. The participant's memories interacted with her olfactory experiences during the focus group to attribute a sense of anger or displeasure to the scent.

The act of smelling, Cerulo contends, can only be understood by collectively examining the full experience of sensation through the body, the mind, and the sociocultural world. And, when we do incorporate this multifaceted analysis, the senses are incredibly informative. Cerulo writes, "Smells carry and convey meaning. As powerfully as a word or an image, smells tell us something about ourselves and the world around us" (p. 382). Considering how the "socialized body" encounters the senses, and the interactions between them, therefore contributes to ongoing discussions in the study of cultural analysis (p. 384). Additionally, Cerulo's analysis offers a way forward for the study of the senses by suggesting a model that can easily be applied to other embodied experiences that have often been marginalized in sociological analysis (such as smell, taste, or touch).

In thinking through Cerulo's contributions and the next steps for studies of the sensorial, this study raises some questions about whether people can experience the senses in isolation from each other. In other words, can the act of smelling perfume happen without the influence of other senses? The feel of the perfume bottle, the sound of perfume spraying, or the sight of its color and consistency, for instance, might also be part of the experience of smelling the perfume. Additionally, as Philip Vannini (2013) notes, we must account for senses beyond the basic five. Temperature, color, the sixth sense, pain, pleasure, love, and hate, for instance, are also senses, and they are felt concurrently with smell, taste, touch, sound, and sight. Perhaps, incorporating multiple senses into the model proposed by Cerulo or theorizing on what a *transsensory* experience would look like could shed light on the concurrent nature of sensory perception. Undeniably though, Cerulo's study provides a pathway for further study of the senses and key insights into the embodied nature of social interaction.

Nicholas Bascuñan-Wiley is a PhD student in Sociology and a Mellon Cluster Fellow in Middle East and North African studies at Northwestern University. His ethnographic research explores Palestinian diasporic culture and translocal connections within Latin America. His most recent project focuses on the culture of food and eating as it is shaped by the long-term and long-distance connections between communities in Chile and Palestine.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOKS

Adler, Jr., Gary J. 2019. *Empathy Beyond U.S. Borders: The Challenges of Transnational Civic Engagement.* **New York: Cambridge University Press.**

How do middle-class Americans become aware of distant social problems and act against them? US colleges, congregations, and seminaries increasingly promote immersion travel as a way to bridge global distance, produce empathy, and increase global awareness. But does it? Drawing from a mixed methods study of a progressive, religious organization at the US-Mexico border, and hundreds of its travelers, this book examines the cultural structure of immersion travel, the valorization of experiential awareness, and the hurdles to translating empathy into civic action. The book follows alongside immersion travelers as they meet undocumented immigrants, walk desert trails, witness deportations, and return "back home." Cultural sociologists may be particularly interested in how the subjective experience of "unsettledness" is produced by civic organizations to form moral awareness and how various empathy strategies, such as face-to-face interaction and physical simulation, work in drastically different ways.

https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/empathy-beyond-us-borders/90EE6462C431D9BC2F687BE736988728

Cherry, Elizabeth. 2019. *For the Birds: Protecting Wildlife through the Naturalist Gaze.* **New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.**

One in five people in the United States is a birdwatcher, yet the popular understanding of birders reduces them to comical stereotypes, obsessives who only have eyes for their favorite rare species. In real life, however, birders are paying equally close attention to the world around them, observing the devastating effects of climate change and mass extinction, while discovering small pockets of biodiversity in unexpected places. *For the Birds* offers readers a glimpse behind the binoculars and reveals birders to be important allies in the larger environmental conservation movement. With a wealth of data from in-depth interviews and over three years of observing birders in the field, environmental sociologist Elizabeth Cherry argues that birders learn to watch wildlife in ways that make an invaluable contribution to contemporary conservation efforts. She investigates how birders develop a "naturalist gaze" that enables them to understand the shared ecosystem that intertwines humans and wild animals, an appreciation that motivates them to participate in citizen science projects and wildlife conservation.

Promo code for 30% off and free shipping when ordering from Rutgers University Press: 02AAAA17.

https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/for-the-birds/9781978801059

Ghaziani, Amin and Matt Brim (Eds). 2019. *Imagining Queer Methods*. **New York: NYU Press.**

Imagining Queer Methods showcases the methodological renaissance unfolding in queer scholarship. This volume brings together emerging and esteemed researchers from all corners of the academy who are defining new directions for the field. The result is an impressive interdisciplinary collection that covers topics such as humanistic approaches to reading, theorizing, and interpreting, as well as social scientific appeals to measurement, modeling, sampling, and statistics. By bringing together these diverse voices into an unprecedented single source, Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim inspire us with innovative ways of thinking about methods and methodologies in queer studies.

https://nyupress.org/9781479829484/imagining-queer-methods/

Hsu, Becky Yang and Richard Madsen (Eds). 2019. *The Chinese Pursuit of Happiness: Anxieties, Hopes, and Moral Tensions in Everyday Life*. **Oakland: Univ. of California Press.**

What defines "happiness," and how can we get it? The ways in which people in China ask and answer this universal question tell us a lot about the tensions and challenges they face during periods of remarkable political and economic change. Based on a five-year original study conducted by a select team of China experts, *The Chinese Pursuit of Happiness* begins with the assumption that when Chinese citizens assess themselves as "happy," they are primarily making a judgment of their lives and social relationships. Through ethnography and in-depth interviews, the contributors to this book show how different dimensions of happiness are manifest in the moral and ethical understandings that embed individuals in specific communities and the various spheres of everyday life. Vividly describing the moral dilemmas experienced in contemporary Chinese society, the rituals of happiness performed in modern weddings, the practices of conviviality carried out in shared meals, the professional tensions confronted by social workers, and the hopes and frustrations shared by political reformers, this important study illuminates the causes of anxiety and reasons for hope in China today.

https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520306325/the-chinese-pursuit-of-happiness

Osuji, Chinyere. 2019. *Boundaries of Love: Interracial Marriage and the Meaning of Race*. **New York: NYU Press.**

Boundaries of Love compares black-white couples in Brazil and the United States, the two most populous post–slavery societies in the Western hemisphere. Based on over 100 individual interviews with black-white couples in two large, multicultural cities—Los Angeles and Rio de Janeiro—*Boundaries of Love* explores how partners in these relationships ultimately reproduce, negotiate, and challenge the "us" versus "them" mentality of ethno-racial boundaries. Despite different histories and approaches to race and race-mixing, Osuji reveals marriage and the family as a primary site

for understanding the social construction of race in Brazil and the United States. Featuring black husbands with white wives as well as black wives with white husbands, Osuji sheds light on how race, gender and other social categories yield particular meanings of race-mixing. *Boundaries of Love* challenges the naive but widespread belief that interracial couples and their children provide an antidote to racism in the twenty-first century by highlighting the complexities and contradictions of these relationships.

Promo code for 20% off: SPRING19

https://nyupress.org/9781479831456/boundaries-of-love/

Pagis, Michal. 2019. *Inward: Vipassana Meditation and the Embodiment of the Self*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Western society has never been more interested in interiority. Indeed, it seems more and more people are deliberately looking inward—toward the mind, the body, or both. Michal Pagis's *Inward* focuses on one increasingly popular channel for the introverted gaze: vipassana meditation, which has spread from Burma to over forty countries and counting. Lacing her account with vivid anecdotes and personal stories, Pagis turns our attention not only to the practice of vipassana but to the communities that have sprung up around it. *Inward* is also a social history of the westward diffusion of Eastern religious practices spurred on by the lingering effects of the British colonial presence in India. At the same time Pagis asks knotty questions about what happens when we continually turn inward, as she investigates the complex relations between physical selves, emotional selves, and our larger social worlds. Her book sheds new light on evergreen topics such as globalization, social psychology, and the place of the human body in the enduring process of self-awareness.

https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/I/bo40026541.html

Reyes, Victoria. 2019. *Global Borderlands: Fantasy, Violence and Empire in Subic Bay, Philippines*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

The U.S. military continues to be an overt presence in the Philippines, and a reminder of the country's colonial past. Using Subic Bay (a former U.S. military base, now a Freeport Zone) as a case study, Victoria Reyes argues that its defining feature is its ability to elicit multiple meanings. For some, it is a symbol of imperialism and inequality, while for others, it projects utopian visions of wealth and status. Drawing on archival and ethnographic data, Reyes describes the everyday experiences of people living and working in Subic Bay, and makes a case for critically examining similar spaces across the world. These foreign-controlled, semi-autonomous zones of international exchange are what she calls global borderlands. While they can take many forms, ranging from overseas military bases to tourist resorts, they all have key features in common. This new unit of globalization provides a window into broader economic and political relations, the consequences of legal ambiguity, and the continuously reimagined

identities of the people living there. Rejecting colonialism as merely a historical backdrop, Reyes demonstrates how it is omnipresent in our modern world.

https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=28732

Wild, Nickie Michaud. 2019. *Dubious Pundits: Presidential Politics, Late-Night Comedy, and the Public Sphere*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Over the last decades of the 20th century, and into the 21st, humor on late-night TV became a more influential part of the United States' political conversations. Not only did viewers talk about what the shows were saying, but serious journalists in newspapers and television news did as well. This book explores how Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert became popular pundits, with their commentaries often being shown on the news or quoted in the papers, and how Tina Fey's parody of Sarah Palin eclipsed the real life candidate herself. This transformation occurred after the attacks on 9/11 and the beginning of the War in Iraq, when comedy figures were often more critical and informative than traditional news sources. At the same time, they became more substantive in their critiques than political humor often had been in the past, which relied heavily on mocking political candidates' personality quirks. Using transcripts from Saturday Night Live, The Daily Show, and The Colbert Report during the presidential elections from 1980-2008, this book takes a comprehensive look at how the comedy itself transformed. In addition, the analysis includes how journalists in the Washington Post and the New York Times discussed the shows at the time, revealing how they once denigrated the programs, but came to regard them as valuable narrative resources.

https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498567367/Dubious-Pundits-Presidential-Politics-Late-Night-Comedy-and-the-Public-Sphere

Journal Articles & Book Chapters

Berard, Tim and James Meeker. 2019. "Irony, Conflict and Tragedy in Cultural Analysis: Hip-Hop between Bourdieu and Nietzsche." *Critical Sociology* 45(2): 183-198. [Special issue edited by Michael Roberts and Christine Payne on Nietzsche and Critical Theory]

Ghaziani, Amin. 2019. "Sexual Meanings, Placemaking, and the Urban Imaginary." Pp. 226-34 in John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. New York: Routledge.

Ghaziani, Amin. 2019. "Cultural Archipelagos: New Directions in the Study of Sexuality and Space." *City & Community* 18(1): 4-22.

McAndrew, Siobhan, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor. 2019. "The values of culture? Social closure in the political identities, policy preferences, and social attitudes of cultural and creative workers". *The Sociological Review.* (Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119871401)

Mueller, Jason C. 2019. "What can sociologists of globalization and development learn from Nicos Poulantzas?" *Progress in Development Studies*. (Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993419860953)

Mueller, Jason C. and Steven Schmidt. 2019. "Revisiting Culture and Meaning-Making in World-Systems Analysis: A Proposal for Engaging with the Cultural Political Economy Approach." *Critical Sociology*. (Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920519856074)

Osuji, Chinyere. 2019. "Freedom and Frustration: Rachel Dolezal and the Meaning of Race," *Contexts* 18 (3): 36-41.

Osuji, Chinyere. 2019. Comment, "Cross-Domain Comparison and the Politics of Difference" by Rogers Brubaker and Matías Fernández in *British Journal of Sociology*. (Online: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12639)

Stillwagon, Ryan and Amin Ghaziani. 2019. "Queer Pop-Ups: A Cultural Innovation in Urban Life." *City & Community* 18(3): 874-95.

Xu, Bin, Licheng Qian, and Weirong Guo. 2019. "The Cultural Sociology of China: Trajectory and Dynamics of a Burgeoning Field." *Cultural Sociology*. (Online: https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975519855837)

Xu, Bin. 2019. "Intra-Generational Variations in Autobiographic Memory: China's "Sent-Down Youth" Generation." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 82 (2): 134-157.

Dissertation Abstracts

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**Bullets, Books, and Brotherhood: Grief and Recovery in an
Urban All-Boys High School after Three Fatal Shootings of Friends**

In the US today, gun violence takes the lives of nearly 3,000 youth annually, leaving a footprint of trauma in thousands of schools and affecting tens of thousands of the victims' friends and classmates, about whom very little sociological research has been undertaken. During my two years of ethnographic research in an all-boys, all-Black Philadelphia high school, three students died in separate violent incidents. The dissertation argues that grief, though understudied in this context, is a central dimension in the social lives of youth – and particularly those whose race, gender, and class position them to experience the highest rates of violence. The study exposes the interactional and institutional mechanisms through which the grief that follows gun violence tangibly impacts Black adolescent boys' school engagement, achievement, and long-term aspirations.

My ethnographic analysis proposes a theory for the stages of institutional and personal grief within the school after a student's death – how friends experience and express their grief, how school policies and practices support and constraint students' recovery, and the consequences of our society's too-frequent neglect of Black boys' emotional lives. Drawing on evidence from over 600 hours of ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews with nearly 100 students and adults, social media analysis, and students' school records, I show, on the one hand, the efforts of administrators and teachers to care for and support grieving students and, on the other hand, the structural challenges they face dealing with boys' emotions in educational spaces designed to promote and maintain order. The research uncovers layers of conflict between institutional mourning practices, designed to renormalize academic routines and classroom life, and students' unresolved (and frequently concealed) grief. Using theories of racialized and gendered emotion, I analyze the particularities of Black boys' grieving rituals in the context of their peer relationships, and assess the costs to their educational, emotional, and aspirational trajectories. My attention to boys' regular social media posts, in particular, reveals how the medium functions as a key vehicle for public emotional expression otherwise stigmatized by stubborn norms of racialized masculinity. Online spaces serve as sites not only for social solidarity among the bereaved, but also for the articulation of boundaries between mourners and rules for "legitimate" grief.

Overall, the work contributes to sociological conversations about race, masculinity, and emotion, as well as to those about the effects of urban violence on vulnerable youth and under-resourced schools; how the institutional management of emotions can reproduce inequality; and the role of online networks in teenagers' social lives.

Call for Award Nominees

CULTURE SECTION AWARDS: CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Sociology of Culture Section's Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book
Authors, section members, or publishers may nominate books published in 2019. Authors must be section members. Please send to each member of the committee: (1) a copy of the book, (2) an electronic version of the book (e-book or pdf file), and (3) a nomination letter, which provides a short description of the book and its contributions to the sociology of culture. The deadline is **March 15, 2020**. To be considered, all the committee members must receive items (1), (2), and (3) by this deadline.

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The Sociology of Culture Section's Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article
Section members may nominate articles and original chapters of edited collections published in 2018-2019. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the article and its significance, along with an electronic copy of the manuscript to each member of the prize committee. Articles that are not accompanied by a nomination letter will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is **March 15, 2020**.

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The Sociology of Culture Section's Richard A. Peterson Award for Best Student Paper
Section members may nominate any work (published or unpublished), written by someone who is a student at the time of submission. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. The award recipient will receive a $500 prize to reimburse part of the cost of attending the 2020 ASA Annual Meeting. The paper that receives an honorable mention will be awarded $100. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the paper and its significance, along with an electronic copy of the paper to each member of the award committee. Papers that are not accompanied by a nomination letter will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is **March 15, 2020**.

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The Sociology of Culture Section's Graduate Student Travel Award
The Section on Sociology of Culture is supporting five $100 travel awards for graduate students who have a paper accepted for presentation at a panel or roundtable at the ASA meeting. The panel/roundtable does not need to be sponsored by the Culture section, but the paper needs to be relevant to the sociology of culture. Criteria will be based on graduate student standing, merit, and need. Applicants must be a graduate student when receiving the award. Applicants do not need to be current section members, but recipients are required to become section members. Award can be received only once. Application materials include ASA abstract, a brief description of how the money will be spent, and a 1-2 paragraph explanation of how the paper contributes to the sociological study of culture. **Applications are due April 15th** and notifications will be sent no later than May 15th. To apply please fill out this electronic application.

The Sociology of Culture Section's John Mohr Travel Award
The John Mohr graduate student travel award of $500 will go to a racially or ethnically under-represented graduate student member of the Sociology of Culture section to participate on a panel or roundtable at the ASA meeting. The panel/roundtable does not need to be sponsored by the Culture section, but the paper needs to be relevant to the sociology of culture. John Mohr spent his career doing behind-the-scenes work to increase racial and ethnic diversity in sociology, the sociology of culture, and in graduate education more broadly. Criteria for the award will be based on graduate student standing, merit, and need. Application materials include ASA abstract, a 1-2 paragraph explanation of how the paper contributes to the sociological study of culture, and a 1-2 paragraph explanation of your identity as a member of a racially or ethnically under-represented group and how it informs your scholarship. Applicants need to be current section members and are encouraged to apply for both the John Mohr travel award and the graduate student travel award. **Applications are due April 15th** and notifications will be sent no later than May 15th. To apply please fill out this electronic application.

Announcements

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Social Research and Public Policy Professor – Tenured
New York University: NYU - Global: Abu Dhabi
Location
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Open Date
Oct 7, 2019

Description
The Division of Social Science at NYU Abu Dhabi is searching for new faculty to conduct cutting edge research and teach the next generation of global leaders.

We are inviting applications from sociologists and related disciplines for a tenured faculty member to join the program in Social Research and Public Policy, for appointment in September 1, 2021, or September 1, 2022, subject to final budget approval. We will consider applicants with an active research agenda in all areas of theoretically-informed social research, but are especially keen on strengthening our faculty in any of the following areas: social theory, political sociology, comparative-historical research, qualitative methods, migration, gender, and race/ethnicity.

NYU Abu Dhabi's unique location in the Middle East makes it an ideal headquarters for social scientists working to better understand global societies, both past and present.

We seek individuals who have a strong record of scholarship, teaching, and mentoring, and have the ability to develop and lead high-quality research.

This position requires a Ph.D. in Sociology or related disciplines.

For more information: https://apply.interfolio.com/69732

For questions about this position, please email nyuad.socialscience@nyu.edu.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members may be interested to know that there is a new **Cultural Evolution Society**, which met for the second time very successfully in Tempe, Arizona in Oct. 2018 with hundreds of attendees from all the social sciences. The plan is to meet every second year and the next meeting will be at Hokkaido Univ. in Sapporo, Japan on Sept. 21-23 in 2020. For more information see: http://culturalevolutionsociety.org/

The **Social Science History Association**'s (ssha.org) Culture Network (equivalent of ASA's Culture section) is seeking two new network representatives. As a network representative, you will collaboratively develop and solicit section topics and organize the Network's program for SSHA's annual meeting. Those who are interested should contact Nicholas Wilson (nicholas.wilson@stonybrook.edu) and Barış Büyükokutan (bbuyukokutan@ku.edu.tr) and be prepared to attend the SSHA's upcoming 2019 meeting from November 21-24 in Chicago.