SECTIONCULTURE

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Letter from the Chair

Hannah Wohl

About a decade ago, I nervously showed up to my first Culture Section Business Meeting, unsure what "business" there could possibly be and uncertain whether I, a lowly graduate student, was even allowed to be there. I must have scribbled my name onto a volunteer sign-up sheet, because not long after, I found myself contributing to this very newsletter. Over time, I served on other committees and was eventually elected as the graduate student representative, then as a council member, and later as Chair-Elect.

Gradually, the Culture Section became an intellectual home. At the ASA Culture Reception, I could reliably find the scholars whose work excited me most and whom I was honored to call my colleagues and friends. Plus, there were free hors d'oeuvres.

But what kind of intellectual home have we built?

As cultural sociologists, we have long been vexed by a foundational question: what exactly is culture—that fuzzy, nebulous thing? It is perhaps an embarrassing problem not to agree on the very concept that orients our life's work. And if we struggle to define culture collectively, then who are we as cultural sociologists? This uncertainty quickly gives rise to further complications. "*Do you mean cultural sociology or the sociology of culture?*" one might ask—or not. Whether this distinction is even useful is, itself, yet another point of contention.

With all this in mind, I read our section's recent Climate Survey with great interest. The survey is currently being analyzed by Laura Nelson, Chair of our illustrious Survey Committee, but I wanted to offer a brief preview of a few items that caught my eye.

On the question of whether the distinction between cultural sociology and the sociology of culture remains useful, the jury is still out. About 61.4% said that they personally did not make the distinction, or did but "not much," whereas about another third of respondents reported that they made the distinction a lot or did so in either research or teaching context. In the past, I've made the distinction, usually ending with some caveat that "not everyone finds this distinction to be helpful." I'll probably keep doing that.

A qualitative question asked respondents: "*The sociology of culture is vast. What does the sociology of culture mean to you?*" The responses were, fittingly, wide-ranging. One pattern stood out: the term "meaning" or "meaning-making" appeared frequently, referenced in 20 of the 47 responses. As one respondent put it, "Ideally, the sociology of culture is broad, including a wide variety of sociological questions and approaches that take meaning, ways of life, symbolic dimensions of life, etc. seriously." Respondents located meaning-making both in everyday life and in the realm of "big-C" Culture—ranging from daily interactions to cultural organizations.

Others emphasized practices, beliefs, narratives, norms, values, and material objects as constitutive of culture: "The study of the norms and material/nonmaterial artifacts of society and their impact on society/communities." Still others highlighted the interplay between culture and structure, describing culture as "the nexus between micro-level narratives and beliefs and the macro forces that shape human behavior."

More than the openness of these definitions, I was struck by how strongly respondents seemed to want to preserve that openness. "Embrace the breadth!" one urged. "Culture is everything! It's the reason why I do sociology," another declared. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Culture Section is currently the largest in ASA. I am tremendously proud—and grateful—to be leading a section so committed to intellectual diversity.

Yet the survival of our field rests not only on our membership numbers but on our ability to sustain strong undergraduate and graduate training in culture within our academic institutions. As we forge ahead in These Troubled Times, it is incumbent on us to articulate—to administrators, admissions and hiring committees, other sociologists, and the broader public—how the field of culture can be both vast and distinctive, and how the concept of culture retains unique analytic power.

Reports on the Culture Section's Panels at the 2025 ASA Annual Meeting

Compiled by Giovanni Zampieri

Giovanni Zampieri is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Sapienza University of Rome

Culture and Computational Social Science

Organized by Anna Skarpelis; reported by Carly Knight and Anna Skarpelis

The panel Culture and Computational Social Science brought together four papers that exemplify the frontier of generative AI applications in sociological research and cultural analysis. Collectively, the presentations raised questions not only about what new tools can do, but also about whether they help address theoretically meaningful problems.

Thomas Davidson (Rutgers Sociology) examined whether generative AI could take over the task of hate speech detection. Using conjoint experiments, he compared AI judgments to those of human coders. His work highlights both the promise of reducing human exposure to harmful content and the challenge of determining what should count as the benchmark for hate speech classification, given the political and contextual nature of such judgments.

Oscar Stuhler (Northwestern University), Etienne Ollion (CNRS), and Cat Dang Ton (Northwestern University) presented their published work on using generative AI for information extraction. Framing their approach as a move from "codebooks" to "promptbooks," they showed how AI can reliably extract structured information from large text corpora, using obituaries as a case study. Their method illustrates both the accessibility of AI for a wide range of researchers and the challenges of determining how far prompt engineering can go before becoming overfitted to a dataset.

AJ Alvero (Cornell University), Dustin Stoltz (Lehigh University), Marshall Taylor (New Mexico State University), and Oscar Stuhler (Northwestern University) surveyed sociologists about their use of generative AI in research. They found that adoption levels are comparable to other disciplines and that both computational and non-computational sociologists are engaging with the technology in similar ways. Interestingly, time-saving—rather than enabling new kinds of research or reducing costs—emerged as the dominant motivation for adoption. Writing tasks such as outlining, summarizing, and paraphrasing are the most common uses, raising questions about how outsourcing these early intellectual steps might subtly shape argumentation and reasoning.

Miriam Bodell and Amir Goldberg (Stanford University) applied computational methods to analyze semantic divergence in U.S. Congressional discourse. Their theory of "meaning divergence" shows that cultural change is not random but patterned and periodic. They find that divergence often occurs in procedural terms like "motion" or "speaker," suggesting that even seemingly neutral language is politically charged. They also distinguish between "culture war" and "non–culture war" issues, though their findings prompt further questions about why deeply divisive topics such as healthcare or trade show less semantic divergence than procedural terms.

Several shared concerns emerged across the panel. First is the question of labor. Generative AI raises anxieties about displacement, yet it can also take on harmful or monotonous work—such as moderating toxic content—offering clear benefits. The panel underscored the need to better understand which aspects of research practice are being replaced or transformed. Second, all four papers highlighted the unsettled role of AI in interpretation. Beyond accelerating routine tasks, AI increasingly performs functions once considered core to human scholarship: reasoning, inferring, and interpreting meaning. Whether this enhances research or risks reshaping it in unintended ways remains an open question. Finally, the panel demonstrated the dual role of AI as both an object and a tool of research. For some scholars, it is the focus of methodological reflection; for others, it is a means of extending long-standing sociological inquiries into culture and politics.

Overall, the panel offered a rich view of how generative AI is reshaping computational social science. Davidson and Stuhler et al. illustrated potential new applications; Alvero et al. surveyed the present state of adoption; and Bodell and Goldberg provided a theoretically grounded empirical study. Together, they raised pressing questions about bias, interpretation, labor, and the evolving nature of scholarly reasoning. The discussion underscored not just the technical promise of AI, but its deeper implications for how sociologists formulate questions, analyze data, and conceptualize cultural change.

Cultural Ideas and Ideals

Organized and reported by Laura Halcomb

The scholars who submitted to the Cultural Ideas and Ideals session at the 2025 ASA meeting were interested in big ideas. These big ideas included dignity, nationality, diversity, community, and privacy. Reflecting on these ideas in the Fall of 2025, I recognize that I worry about many of these ideas on a daily basis. I routinely encounter these big ideas in the local and national news stories that interrupt my work and my thoughts. Perhaps this is why these papers stood out to me as I was putting together the panel for the ASA. Of course, the timeliness and importance of these ideas can only account for part of the reason that I was drawn to this set of papers. The other reason was obviously that they drew on thoughtful and impressive studies that brought these big ideas to life.

Dignity. Cindy Cain brings abstract bioethics debates about personhood and dignity to life in her analysis of routine encounters between dementia patients and paid care workers. She finds that these big bioethics ideas, dignity and personhood, don't quite capture the dignified care she observed between patients and care workers. In practice, dignified care was negotiated in interactions, which changed over time as patients became more dependent. Critically, Cain highlights the masterful interactional skills of paid care workers in order to meet the needs and realities of their patients.

Nationality. Claire Schafer complicates our scholarly understandings of national identities by asking teenagers about how they understand their American identities. She finds four orientations, including the traditionally patriotic faithful defenders, the tempered pragmatic idealists, the hubristic hesitant stewards, and the critical globally minded dissidents. Schafer's work highlights how these teenagers' imagined futures of the US reflect their everyday emotions and their global understandings of our shared futures.

Diversity. Hsin-Keng Ling asks how the diversity of news sources matters for political engagement. Using the case of Taiwan, he uses the framework of a cultural toolkit to consider how news diversity matters. Rather than operationalizing diversity of news sources as the number of sources, which can reflect political polarization and emphasize how news can be oppositional, he looks specifically at news sources that are non-oppositional and instead express variety. Ling finds a connection between news variety and political participation.

Community. Guillermina Altomonte and Angèle Christin ask what we mean when we talk about "community." The authors leverage two independently collected data sets, one on elder care and one on social media marketing, to consider what the rhetoric of community enables. They find that "community" talk promotes decentralization and enables monetization of decentralized organizing. It also relies on infrastructures of gendered and racialized labor, which can be monetized because they are more likely to be excluded from more traditional institutions and economies.

Privacy. Although Pouya Morshedi was not able to join us in Chicago, his work was invited to be a part of this panel because of how it approached the ideal of privacy. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of Iranian films before and after the Iranian Revolution, Morshedi traced changes in the cinematic depictions of public and private life. His analysis shows how the Iranian Revolution reshaped the geography of everyday life, with the biggest changes

for women who had to be more aware of the presence of others and the boundaries between public and private space.

Producing, Circulating, and Evaluating Culture

Organized by Laura Garbes; reported by Katherine Beekman

The value of a cultural object can only be understood in its context. This panel featured five papers that examine how the valuation processes of cultural objects emerge, and how people continue to engage and push back on valuation processes after their emergence. These papers reflect the wide variety of qualities cultural objects can be valued for, from authenticity and beauty to cursedness and legibility, as well as the variety of ways valuation processes can be shaped, from platformization to interpersonal encounters. Several papers also address how social actors are differently equipped to navigate valuation processes because of their social identities or positions in the field.

In the first paper, Wanze Ma detailed how platformization and strong but selective regulation and enforcement allowed the implicit gendered classification system of Chinese online fiction to be made explicit. Ma argued that, given the proper conditions, platforms can catalyze the transition from covert to overt valuation processes. Christine Delp's paper on documentary filmmakers also investigated the impact of platformization on the valuation of cultural objects. Delp found that while some documentary filmmakers continue to embrace "epistemic differentiation," or distinct aesthetic visions in their filmmaking, platforms incentivize documentary filmmakers to engage in "epistemic isomorphism," which draws on standardized narrative forms. Thus, Delp illuminated how platforms reshape risk assessment in documentary film production and how producers cope with this change.

In the third paper, Eli Wilson and Ellen T. Meiser focused on social actors' engagement with valuation processes. They conceptualized "relational authenticity work" to understand how consumers, critics, and producers in the culinary field discuss and debate authenticity in discursive online content. Wilson and Meiser identified three kinds of relational authenticity work: asserting one's expertise, disputing others' claims, and rejecting the notion of authenticity outright, and they found that social actors are more likely to draw on particular kinds of relational authenticity work depending on their position in the field. Katie M. Duarte added to the question of emergence by tracing how the Dominican standard of beauty is upheld through structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power. Therefore, Duarte demonstrated how cognitive schemas can translate to a valuation process that promotes texturism and heteronormativity.

Finally, Kenadi Silcox and Terrence McDonnell returned to how social actors engage with valuation processes. By studying how sellers on Facebook Marketplace describe engagement rings, Silcox and McDonnell theorized how people mitigate the stigma of "cursed objects." They found that people downplay the length of their relationship and steeply discount the price when selling engagement rings, but manage the objects' stigma in gendered ways, with women being more attuned to the rings' "cursed status."

Overall, these papers speak to the impact of broad structuring forces, particularly platformization, on the emergence and sedimentation of valuation processes, as well as people's enduring ability to navigate and struggle against these processes. This panel demonstrated the need to continue studying the malleability of valuation—how can we make valuation processes and people's engagement with these processes more equitable?

Feminist and Critical Complicities, Injustice, and Culture

Organized and reported by Victoria Reyes

This past August, sociologists descended into the city of Chicago for our annual American Sociological Association meeting, the theme of which, per ASA President Adia Wingfield, was "Reimagining the Future of Work." As the then chair-elect of the ASA Race, Gender, and Class section and a longtime member (and former Council Member) of the Culture section, I was eager to organize the joint session between these two sections on "Feminist and Critical Complicities, Injustices, and Culture."

In the call for submissions, I wrote my vision for this panel: "As feminist and critical race scholars, we are all complicit in the entrenched inequities of the academy. For those of us based in the US and who pay taxes, we are also complicit in the atrocities committed and supported by the US. This panel asks: what are the specific cultural practices, meanings, and toolkits that people – perhaps unwittingly – enact and use in ways that further entrenched patterns of inequities? That is, we know that systems of domination and oppression are the foundation of everyday life. In what ways do institutions, organizations, interlocutors, and/or we as scholars maintain the status quo and are complicit in perpetuating injustices? This panel is open to papers drawing on any type of data and methodology that pinpoint cultural dimensions of how systems of oppression and domination are maintained."

Part of the impetus for this panel was a co-authored paper between myself and Ghassan Moussawi (UIUC): "Crisis Feminisms: How Convenient Forgetting, Feminist Ambivalence, and Racial Gaslighting Maintain the Status Quo," published in *Critical Sociology*. Even before Trump 2.0, we witnessed the glaring ways in which sociologists—including those who write critical scholarship—reproduced precisely the same inequities they write about through particular cultural practices. We wanted to learn more about how other sociologists were thinking about complicity (regardless of intent), and thus, the idea of the panel was born.

I was excited about the state of the field as I waded through submissions full of theory-building, empirical novelty, and methodological innovations. In the end, the panel had a set of three thought-provoking and important papers, and I served as discussant.

The first was a coauthored paper by Nancy López, Sharan Kaur Mehta, Sarah Iverson, Attiya White, Joaquín Argüello de Jesús, Michelle Johnson, Yasmiyn Irizarry, Edward D. Vargas, and Ricardo Lowe titled "Statistical Gaslighting, Fetishization of Data & Dual Evidentiary Systems: OMB & Census as Sites of Racial Formation." This paper is and will be a game-changer. Using the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) and U.S. Census Bureau as strategic research sites, the authors theorize what they call statistical gaslighting, or "the use of measurement, numbers, quantification, data collection, enumeration and tabulation to uphold white supremacy across social domains and institutions, including federal statistical agencies, media, education, employment, health and beyond" (pp 2). Delving into how statistical gaslighting is produced through two processes, the authors thoroughly and with utmost attention to detail document the negotiations and struggles over race and ethnicity categories in the Census from the 1970s to the present. The authors show how, in practice, U.S. Census Bureau and OMB staffers disregard social scientific expertise and minority advisory committee concerns and thus continually entrench white supremacy. Nevertheless, there is always resistance in the form of what authors call antiracist spectacles, whereby people and communities challenge this entrenchment. The paper in which the presentation is based is a must-read for every scholar of race/racism. I'm personally excited to cite and engage with the paper and its authors, and believe once it is published, it will spur on exciting new research directions on race, ethnicity, and racism.

The second paper was by Margaret Ruth Eby on "'Eugenics Brought Home': White Women Physicians and Reproductive Authority." Examining U.S. medicine in the early 20th century, Eby theorizes how white women physicians fought for inclusion into the medical field by using their whiteness and womanhood, arguing that this gave them a particular form of expertise over the home and thus reproductive health. To understand these dynamics, Eby conducts extensive archival research, with sources such as personal correspondence, medical journals, conference records, and newspapers. White women physicians, then, were actively complicit with eugenics and the surveillance, control, and oppression of reproductive decision-making in the service of

preserving the "white race." Part of a broader project on the entangled relationship between eugenics and expertise, Eby reveals its historical foundations, which have ramifications for today, where eugenics, including the forced sterilization of women of color, continues to be practiced. This is an insightful paper that grounds analyses in the everyday negotiations and struggles in the world of science, documenting the mechanisms by which racism, expertise, and medicine are entangled.

The third paper, "'What Can We Do at Home?' (De)Constructing the Role of the Home in Parental Engagement Discourse," was by Alyssa Lyons. Focusing on K-12 education in New York City public schools, Lyons unpacks what parental engagement is, how it arose to institutionalize in the U.S. education system, and how teachers assess parental engagement. Based on qualitative interviews with white and BIPOC teachers, Lyons reveals how home became synonymous with educational achievement in the 1960s and how this continues today as many teachers use notions of "home" as a site of state intervention, surveillance, and control of their Black and Brown students. Some of the ways home is used as a site of control and surveillance are the framing of "good" families as deferring to teachers and school requirements (such as reading at night) and the continued use of deficit thinking and cultural pathology to describe the Black and Brown children, their families, and homes. Nevertheless, many teachers resisted such thinking and cultivated a form of communication that decentered the authority of the teacher. Part of her broader book project, Lyons reveals how expectations of why, how, and what home-based parental engagement is (rather than school-based parental engagement, such as membership in a PTA organization) arose from, and continues to enforce, white supremacy. This is sure to be an important paper for scholars at the nexus of education, culture, and racial, gendered, and classed inequities.

In this particular political and historical moment, interrogating the everyday cultural practices and logics that reproduce systems of oppression and domination (including but not limited to gendered racism, transphobia, xenophobia, anti-Muslim racism, and the like) is more important than ever. We must also reflect on how we, as participants in the system of higher education—where many universities and colleges, for example, invest in weapons manufacturing—are also complicit in these broader social structures, regardless of intent. The question, if you accept this premise, is what to do. The first step must be to recognize how we are each contributing to cycles of violence in the profession and in the global political economy. But we must not stop there. Action must always accompany such reflexive thinking; otherwise, we are doomed to maintain the status quo.

Sociology of Culture Roundtables

Organized by Parker Muzzerall, Sara Tyberg, and Kevin Kiley; reported by Kevin Kiley

There is perhaps no better display of the breadth of theoretical perspectives, substantive topics, and methods that make up the sociology of culture than the roundtable session at the annual meeting.

In my second year of organizing the roundtables with Parker Muzzerall and Sara Tyberg, I was struck by both how disparate submissions to the roundtables appear at first glance, but how easy it was for scholars to make important connections between ideas when they got in the room together.

The more than 70 projects presented at this year's Roundtables in Chicago spanned from micro-level accounts of culture and cognition to large-scale studies of social movement meaning-making. Across the diversity, a few distinct themes emerged that reflect emerging or continuing directions in the sociology of culture.

One clear thread was the renewed attention to morality and evaluation as core to cultural life. From studies of moral outrage in digital spaces to analyses of the gender politics of authenticity and debates over institutional legitimacy, projects grappled with how people make judgments, express values, and draw boundaries in unsettled fields. This work continues the section's long-running interest in moral classification while bringing it into new arenas such as online communities, the arts, and political movements.

A second theme was the creative reworking of the intersection between culture, inequality, and distinction. Discussed papers revisited cultural capital and status-making in an era of blurred hierarchies and global flows, analyzing how value and worth are negotiated through education, work, and everyday aesthetics. Scholars explored how class, gender, and race inflect cultural participation and how cultural tools can both reproduce and challenge inequality.

Another notable current was the growing integration of cognitive, material, and computational perspectives. Projects advanced theories of meaning-making that link cognition and culture, exploring how ideas and beliefs are formed, stabilized, and transmitted. Others examined the role of objects, technologies, and infrastructures in cultural life, ranging from junk drawers and monuments to digital platforms and AI systems. Collectively, they demonstrate the field's growing interest in how material and informational environments shape cultural understanding.

Finally, the roundtables reflected the section's methodological pluralism. Ethnographers and interviewers sat alongside computational modelers, survey analysts, and comparative-historical researchers. Many projects combined approaches, blending qualitative insight with large-scale data or digital traces. This diversity is not just technical. It signals a shared conviction that understanding culture requires multiple ways of seeing and knowing.

Taken together, the roundtables offered a portrait of cultural sociology as an increasingly integrative enterprise: one that brings together morality and cognition, inequality and imagination, local meaning and global process. If there was a common thread running through the tables, it was a collective effort to understand how people create, sustain, and contest the moral and symbolic orders that make social life possible.

"*Writing (Culture) to the Public*": Report on the Graduate Professionalization Panel

By Yingyu Zang

Yingyu Zang is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Virginia and a Predoctoral Fellow at the Center for Cultural Sociology (CCS) at Yale University.

With Allison Pugh (Professor of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University), Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve (Associate Professor of Sociology, Brown University), and Elena van Stee (PhD Candidate in Sociology, University of Pennsylvania and Fellow in Sociology at Harvard University)

Organized and moderated by Manning Zhang (PhD Candidate, Brandeis University) and Giovanni Zampieri (Postdoc, Sapienza University of Rome).

This professionalization panel was designed for early-career sociologists interested in communicating sociological perspectives on culture-related topics to a broader public. Sharing sociological insights with people who experience the very social facts we study is both an exciting opportunity and a core responsibility. While we are driven to write for the public, we also face the challenge of distilling a paper or book into a concise op-ed or engaging podcast. To address this, the graduate student representatives of the ASA Culture Section Council organized this panel featuring three sociologists: Allison Pugh, Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, and Elena van Stee. These speakers, representing three generations at different academic stages, have impressive academic and public-facing publication records. Their discussion highlighted new opportunities for sociology today and served as an excellent supplement to the academic sessions at the ASA Annual Conference 2025.

Zhang began the panel by asking the first question after welcoming the panelists and the audience: **What does "writing to the public" mean in your work? How do you define public engagement as a sociologist?**

Van Cleve began with an anecdote: a journalism professor once said to her, "Wow, you're the smartest person I have met. I can't understand anything that you wrote." That comment struck her; she realized graduate training had taught her to write in "convoluted theoretical language," often inherited from cultural theory itself. When she now teaches cultural theory, she assigns unreadable articles precisely to show students how exclusionary academic language can be.

For her, the first public is other scholars: "I'm writing so that you understand what I'm saying to you, so we can have a conversation." From there, she sees a second layer of public writing, translation. Each research article can be recast for new audiences, including public-facing platforms like *Contexts* and *The New York Times*, as well as professionals in other disciplines. For example, explaining culture to people in criminal justice requires making sociological concepts concrete.

Van Cleve also framed public-facing writing as an ethical act, a part of storytelling tradition. Scholars who study injustice have a duty to "animate the people" they write about, rendering them as fully human, moving, thinking, feeling beings. Writing is thus "an act of love and grace," a way of reinstating dignity that research might otherwise take away. To her, good public writing is not simplification but moral restoration: cultural sociologists must "animate the culture."

Pugh said her understanding of public writing has changed over time. Her first book, *Longing and Belonging*, was written for "my neighbor who has a college degree but is not an academic." Her later book, *The Last Human Job*, had a clearer public agenda—to name a type of work that was socially vital yet vulnerable because it lacked recognition. Her writing thus became evangelical, spreading ideas through podcasts and public venues. She also hopes to connect writing more directly to policy in the future.

Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, Allison Pugh, and Elena Van Stee in dialogue with Giovanni Zampieri and Manning Zhang.

Van Stee emphasized that sociology, as a discipline, naturally lends itself to public engagement because it speaks to everyday experiences.

The second question focused on determining **whether a topic is better suited to an academic journal or a public platform**, especially given how the formats of public-facing articles and academic papers can influence workflow.

Van Cleve replied by mentioning that she keeps close ties with journalists, that is, people whose entire profession is public writing. Her process begins with sound research: she never writes publicly about work that hasn't been vetted and published academically. Once an article passes peer review, she translates it into accessible language and launches a "media strategy." For example, her core finding—that prosecutors and judges routinely conceal police shootings of innocent Black people—became the central talking point for op-eds, interviews, and podcasts. The key, she said, is distilling a book's essence into one clear, actionable message. Public engagement should be embedded in a scholar's workflow, just as grant writing or data collection is, not treated as a one-off activity. Her motivation stems from moral urgency: "My greatest fear is that no one will care." Public writing is the remedy: "to speak until people hear."

Pugh keeps two running lists of ideas: one for academic writing and one for public pieces. The distinction emerges naturally: some questions (e.g., the relation between emotional labor and pay) clearly belong in public conversations because audiences ask about them; others, like technical debates over "personalization" in the tech industry, are for specialists. The intended impact and audience determine the list. If a topic obviously affects everyday life, it goes in the public file.

Van Stee added that clarity about the audience should guide the decision; graduate students can and should start writing publicly when they have something important to say.

Next, Zhang invited the panelists to discuss the stance of public writing and the strategies to balance publicity and credibility. Some scholars and readers will criticize the public-facing writing for often losing credibility through oversimplification. **How can panelists adapt sociological insights for public readership without oversimplifying or losing credibility?**

Pugh argued that sociology's own culture of "incrementalism" can inhibit bold communication. Writing publicly isn't simplification; it's "a necessary little hypodermic jolt" to convey complex ideas vividly. Public work distills the heart of the research and rebuilds it accessibly, something scholars should practice repeatedly rather than viewing as a dilution of rigor.

Van Cleve advised treating public writing as a skill that can be learned through modeling. She recalled that Wendy Griswold would ask her students how they would explain a concept to a *New York Times* reporter in two minutes. That exercise, she said, taught her how to distill theory. She drafts an explanation, "Culture is a toolkit people use to rationalize and reflect," and then revises repeatedly to remove excess jargon. She rejected the idea that op-eds must avoid controversy or "critical race" themes. *Her New York Times* piece titled "Chicago's Racist Cops and Racist Reports" proved that one can combine strong critique with clarity. The sociological imagination itself, showing that individual experiences reflect broader systems, is profoundly public. Practically, she suggested studying successful op-eds the way scholars study journal articles: note word counts, paragraph lengths, and where the main idea appears. She recommended keeping a few 700- to 800-word drafts ready so that when relevant events break, one can update and publish instantly. She illustrated this with her article on Colin Kaepernick: when Trump attacked NFL players, she inserted new paragraphs overnight and became the first sociologist to comment publicly, setting the agenda for subsequent debate. Preparation is key: "When the moment hits, you'll be the first one out."

Following the previous discussion, the challenge might also appear between the author and the editors. Zhang invited panelists to share their experiences with the **requirements of journalists and editors**, and how these differ from what sociologists look for.

Van Cleve emphasized speed and timing. Journalists might ask, "Can we get an op-ed in three hours?" Sociologists must be ready to respond quickly or lose the opportunity. She described the tangible impact of such exposure: an op-ed in The New York Times can drive thousands of book sales in a day. But more importantly, it changes public discourse. She writes not to sell but to persuade: "I want people to say 'racism,' not 'racial inequities.' She linked this to a broader reflection on vocation: "What does it mean to live for sociology today?" If scholars only publish for each other, she argued, they fail the discipline's moral purpose. Public engagement is how sociologists "change minds, funds, and institutions."

Zhang emphasized both the importance and the challenge of public-facing writing for graduate students starting or preparing for it. Thus, she invited Elena van Stee to discuss her experience writing articles, organizing panels, and starting podcasts about sociology.

Van Stee described her experiences writing for *Contexts* and *The Conversation*. Editors often push for simpler phrasing, sometimes to the point of distortion. For example, a nuanced piece on parenting and class inequality was edited to focus on "three ways to be a better parent," which missed her point. Still, she values the discipline of rewriting complex ideas plainly; it clarifies one's own thinking and expands reach. She also noted that doing public work after academic publication can amplify impact and visibility—both inside and outside the discipline.

Van Cleve praised van Stee's efforts and encouraged graduate students to experiment safely by writing outside their core research area. Her first op-ed, co-authored with a friend, analyzed gender and the NFL concussion scandal, a topic she cared about but that didn't overlap with her policing research. That made it "low risk": if the piece flopped, it wouldn't affect her scholarly reputation. The lesson, she said, is to "dabble in the public arena" with issues that move you but don't endanger your main line of work.

The audience raised questions about the d**ifferences in status between sociology and psychology regarding public reception**. Why hasn't sociology captured public attention like psychology or neuroscience?

Van Cleve recalled how sociology once changed her own life: reading Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift* in a gender class made her rethink relationships and domestic expectations. Sociology, she argued, already has the tools for personal and social insight: it just needs to communicate them. She urged a return to C. Wright Mills's sociological imagination, helping readers see how their private troubles connect to public structures. Van Cleve suggested one practical strategy: build on one another's research when writing publicly. She often cites fellow sociologists, such as Robert Sampson, in her op-eds on crime control. Quoting colleagues legitimizes the piece and extends sociology's collective visibility. Public essays, she said, can be lively without being reductive: "You know there's no 'four easy steps' to fix inequality, but you can still explain what sociology says about how people navigate choices."

Pugh responded from a different angle, critiquing the dominance of "evidence-based" thinking as itself a cultural ideology, an expression of power that values distance and individualism. She often inserts brief methodological notes in her public writing ("this finding was only possible through ethnography") to remind readers that sociology's evidence stems from relational and collective observation, not laboratory detachment. That simple acknowledgment helps differentiate sociology from psychological empiricism.

Then, another audience member asked about the **relationship between career-building in academia and the path of public-facing writings**. How can early-career scholars build credibility through public writing?

Pugh said that public visibility can sometimes travel "backward" to academia. Her most recent book received wide media coverage before scholarly attention followed. Public interest, she argued, can legitimize research in the academy rather than diminish it. She also noted that journalists often appreciate sociological insight; their evidentiary standards differ, but are not necessarily lower. The main challenge is learning to meet them halfway—writing vividly enough for journalists to recognize the work's value.

Van Cleve reframed the question in terms of privilege and voice. Academics already hold institutional power; public writing is a way to use that power ethically. Sometimes it means serving as a conduit: amplifying stories of those who cannot write op-eds themselves. She distinguishes two kinds of public writing—reflective essays that humanize and narrative exposés that confront power. Both are legitimate and necessary. She rejected the idea that sociologists always need a "landing voice" or detached neutrality: "I don't need a study to show prejudice in power and action, I can tell you from my narrative." Storytelling, she argued, is itself evidence. To "animate the people" is to restore their dignity, which is what public sociology should do.

Lastly, an audience member asked about **social media as an important platform for public-facing writing**. It is powerful and also could be controversial. What could be the role of social media for public sociology?

Van Stee described social media as a testing ground. When developing a piece, she posts short reflections or questions online to gauge engagement. Strong responses can indicate topics worth developing into full essays. Used this way, social media functions as an informal peer review for ideas.

Van Cleve shared an example from the pandemic: she posted an open letter to her students, urging them to "create your own joy and peace." The letter went viral, becoming her most widely read piece of writing. Though it wasn't a formal scholarship, it had a real social impact. Social media, she said, can amplify empathy and pedagogy, "a way to teach the masses." Even as platforms change, she encouraged experimenting with new digital forms such as video lectures or master-class threads.

Manning Zhang concluded by reflecting on the panel's title. The organizers had debated whether to call it "Writing Culture for the Public" or "to the Public." The day's discussion, Zhang said, showed that cultural sociologists have agency in both directions: they decide what to write, for whom, and how. Public writing is not a final product but an ongoing conversation between sociology and society. She encouraged participants to continue the dialogue beyond the session.

Interview with Gordon Brett

By Yijie (Coco) Fang

Yijie (Coco) Fang is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara

Yijie Fang: Thank you so much for accepting the interview! To start off, could you briefly introduce yourself and your research?

Gordon Brett: My name is Gordon Brett. I'm currently an assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong. I got my PhD from the University of Toronto in 2023, which is a great place to study culture. In terms of my research, I focus broadly on culture, cognition, and creativity, and the work that I do tends to be theoretical or conceptual in nature. Theoretically, I'm probably most interested in explaining how culture shapes action, and how sociological research on that question can be enhanced by **attending to the cognitive processes through which culture is acquired, activated, and then mobilized**. I've always agreed with and been inspired by Paul DiMaggio's argument that in order for the study of culture to become a cumulative enterprise, we need to clarify and assess the cognitive presuppositions that are behind our theories of how culture works. I write papers that are purely theoretical or conceptual on these topics, but I'm also interested in exploring them through empirical cases like improvisational theater. I also wrote my first ever published article on Mixed Martial Arts, and I was really struck recently by all the attention that Mixed Martial Arts has been getting in the wake of Donald Trump's presidential campaign and re-election. And so my students and I collected data on mixed martial arts over the summer, and I'm hoping to write more about that in the near future as well.

Y. F.: Thank you for outlining your research agenda and for letting us know a little bit about where you see your work in your near future. So I guess the next question is how you first became interested in the sociology of culture, and how you became involved in this broader subfield in sociology?

G. B.: So I remember being an undergraduate student and feeling a little bit lost in sociology. Actually, the only thing that I knew for sure was that I really liked sociological theory. Beyond that, there are so many topics that one could study in sociology, and I just didn't latch on to anything in particular. But because I like theory, I was recommended this course at the University of Toronto called "Culture and Cognition" that was taught by Vanina Leschziner. I took this course, and just immediately got hooked on it. It was really theoretical, but we were talking about interesting things related to culture and interpretive sociology. We were introduced to cognitive sociology with Zerubavel, and then we got to read really cutting-edge and exciting work being done in culture and cognition at the time. Around the time when I was an undergraduate student, people like Omar Lizardo, Karen Cerulo, Steve Vaisey, and Gabe Ignatow were writing these really innovative and interdisciplinary papers on culture and cognition, and I just thought it was fascinating. So I really got hooked into culture as an undergraduate student taking Vanina Leschziner's class, and that made me realize that I wanted to do a PhD, and I wanted to study culture and cognition more. And so after my master's degree, I came back to the University of Toronto, mainly to study culture and cognition, and Vanina was my advisor. And so really, I kind of stumbled into it as an undergraduate student.

Y. F.: It's like the undergrad training planted a seed in your mind, and then you went back to and really expanded on that during your grad work. So, as you said, your work features cognition and how our understanding of cognition aids in our understanding of culture. So the next question is, in your work, I noticed that you consider cognition, which is often understood as varying across individuals, as central to understanding the cultural process. At the same time, your work also illustrates how the social environment structures cognitive practices, for example, the way improv artists deliver their jokes and interact with audiences. How do you integrate these

cognitively and institutionally oriented approaches in your work? Do you see any tensions or balances that cultural sociologists should be mindful of when combining the two?

G. B.: I'd say a big focus of my research is **variation in automatic and deliberate processing**. You know, these dual process models that have made their way into cultural sociology, I think, they've been really generative and instructive for explaining a variety of cultural processes. And my entry points into these conversations that I think sociologists hadn't recognized and incorporated the pretty common-sense notion that people vary in their propensities for automatic and deliberate processing, and that this variation might be socially patterned. And I think that really matters, not only for refining these models that we've been using, but as I've tried to show, it helps us to explain how different groups of people acquire, use, and create different forms of culture, and that includes small things like creating jokes, and big things like developing beliefs about our own agency and our own control over our lives. But at the same time, you're right that **cognitive and cultural processes don't operate in a vacuum; they happen within social, material, and institutional contexts, and those have their own demands**. And honestly, I don't think I'm going to say something revolutionary, but I think that a purely situationist or purely dispositional explanation of either culture, cognition, or their relationship can be useful in their own right, but they're probably less instructive than those that try to bring them together in some fashion, right? **I think it's helpful to try to bring a consideration of situations and dispositions, the individual and context together in some way**. And that applies to how we theorize culture, cognition, and action, but I also think it matters for things like research design.

Y. F.: Your theoretical focus reminds me of your empirical work on improvisational art, which is a great empirical case through which we can study these two together. So I'd like to start by asking a few questions about your empirical work on improvisational art. I know it's a burgeoning topic. We've seen a rise in talk shows and improv performances not only in the U.S. but also across Asia and other countries. There's been a lot happening both on television and in offline venues, and it's become a really fascinating social phenomenon to study. But people often think of improvisation as a spontaneous act that only those "quick-witted" people can perform. But your work reveals to us that it is still a socially constructed process. I'm sure many people have already asked about this, but I'd like to hear more about how you became involved in this subject and how you think cultural sociology aids in our understanding of this particular artistic form.

G. B.: First of all, I'm happy to hear that you think it's a burgeoning topic!. So I actually got into improv by chance or by suggestion. When I was trying to figure out what cases I wanted to explore for my dissertation research, I had this idea that I would choose multiple cases, and the conceptual focus would be creativity. And so I'd use multiple cases to build out a broader theory of how creativity works, using what Diane Vaughan calls "analogical theorizing". And so I remember I initially had three cases, and none of them were improv. And basically, my dissertation committee said, you know, any one of these three cases that you've talked about would be more than enough for a dissertation. And maybe you might be better off focusing on one or two cases. But they shouldn't be cases that you have to do an immense amount of background learning to get into. And so one case that I had chosen, and I knew pretty well, was mixed martial arts. After a conversation with my committee, I specifically remember Ann Mullen saying, "What about improv?" I think she had done some improv classes in Toronto. But Toronto has this very large improv scene, it's one of the biggest improv cities in the world. And my committee member, Dan Silver, said, "Actually, you don't really need to have a ton of background knowledge on improv, because it's this really ephemeral art form". And he was right; it doesn't matter that a million improv shows have happened before that you haven't seen. Long story short, I ended up having the two cases, I ended up dropping Mixed Martial Arts, and I ended up with the one case that I didn't originally propose. I think that was a smart recommendation from my dissertation committee, and I'm really thankful that they did. There are a lot of special things about improv that make it a good case for studying culture, creativity, and cognition that I didn't think I realized at the time, but now I'm like, "Oh, it's such a great case for all these things."

In terms of cultural sociology, I should first say that I think cultural sociology, at this point, has developed such a rich and diverse set of analytical resources that I think it can help sociologists better understand everything from health and migration to race and gender, right? I think there's no real limit, or there are very few things that cultural analysis can't illuminate in some way. But when I think about how improv works, it's really culture and interaction through and through. So, to be concrete about this: when improvisers get on a stage, they have no plan. And **the first thing that they want to do is establish what they call the "who, what, where" of a scene**. Who are the characters here? What's their relationship? What's the setting? So maybe we're brother and sister who are fighting in our parents' house or something like that. And basically, what **they have to do when they get on stage is they have to collectively generate a "frame" or a "definition of the situation" from which they can work.** Frames are a big concept in culture. As they keep going, they look to develop a satisfying narrative, right? **They want to tell a story**. They want their improv show to have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Narratives are also a big part of cultural sociology. **To do these things, they, of course, have to rely on "conventions" so they don't step on each other's toes.**

And you know, as they do all of these things, **they also always have an ear to the audience**. And so when they listen to audience reaction, they want to figure out what things are "resonating" with audiences, and also **what the kind of "symbolic boundaries" are between acceptable and unacceptable humor**. So when we think about what's happening during an improv show, all these relevant kinds of cultural concepts come up. And I really think that when you look at it through the lens of cultural sociology, improv is just culture and interaction from the ground up. Cultural analysis, in a lot of ways, illuminates what's happening on an improv stage, which oftentimes, if you're just a casual viewer, can seem like kind of hilarious chaos.

Y. F.: Yeah, so you mentioned that improvisational art shows create their own small interactional context. And as I understand it, in your work, you use ethnographic observation to collect in-the-moment data, such as how performers interact on stage, how they engage with the audience, and so on. You also draw on interviews with the artists themselves. So I'm curious about your methodological approach. As you know, when doing ethnography, we often encounter unexpected challenges in the field. What kinds of practical obstacles did you face when studying improvisational art, and how did you turn those challenges into insights that helped illuminate your analytical points?

G. B.: I think improv as a case has some major advantages and some challenges, and those speak to the way that I studied it. So the major advantage is that improvisers really want to talk about improv! A lot of improvisers I talked to brought up the fact that improv is usually the butt of the joke. If you watch enough TV and film, people will always make jokes at the expense of improv, like you'll have a movie scene where you get improvisers saying things that are really unfunny or corny, and they're often portrayed as these kinds of loser types, for lack of a better word. A big reason for that, actually, is that improvisers are often hired to write for comedy shows and movies, and so they're making themselves the butt of the joke. But in general, I think it's not a case that many people take an interest in. Even in a big improv scene like Toronto, something the improv community struggles with is the fact that in most improv shows, the majority of the audience are other improvisers. So there's this struggle with getting non-improvisers interested in the art form. Because of this, they were very open to me being an academic studying improv and wanting to talk to improvisers. This was true even though many of the improvisers that I interviewed were some of the best-known improvisers in the Toronto improv scene, and would regularly appear in Canadian film and television. I think **the real challenge came from the fact that improv happens at the speed of light**. So much is happening in a short amount of time. There are different forms of improv, so the short form and long form, and especially in this short form improv, it's so fast-paced that you could spend like 40 minutes analyzing two minutes of a short form improv scene.

Y. F.: Can I ask a clarification question about the "short form" and the "long form"? Is the difference characterized by the duration of the show?

G. B.: It's funny, improvisers talk about the fact that improv is maybe the only art form where the genres are defined exclusively in terms of their time. The basic classification is that there are short-form "games" which are only a few minutes long, and where audiences are made aware of the structure of the game. So the "game" might be that everything you say has to be a 4-word sentence, and the audience knows you have to improvise a scene with that constraint. Long-form improv can go up to an hour long, and it also has a "structure," but one that is not revealed to the audience. So that's the main difference. And so you can imagine, in these like two-minute scenes, a lot happens, right? There's a ton of dialogue back and forth. There's a lot of physical movement. People are using chairs and curtains. They're interacting with audiences. And so, sitting in an improv show with a notebook trying to capture all the interesting things that have happened: the dialog, the interactions with the audience, with the physical space—I found it to be nearly impossible. After going to a few improv shows, I realized that just sitting there trying to take field notes wasn't cutting it. I couldn't capture the richness or the sheer amount of things happening in such a short time. There were so many important and interesting moments that I needed to record, and field notes alone weren't enough.

So, **what I quickly realized is that I need to audio record shows, so that I have a recording of both the dialogue and the audience response**, so you can hear the jokes that really land with audiences. You can hear the kinds of laughter that audiences give to certain kinds of jokes or lines. And then you can not only see, but also have an audio recording of the words that are said. And so what I ended up doing is focusing my field notes on the physical aspects of what's happening on stage, the stagecraft, and then taking analytical notes, and then **bridging my audio recording and my field notes together** when I'd come home from an improv show. And it actually speaks to the experience of a lot of ethnographers. I don't consider myself a super hardcore, serious ethnographer, but ethnographers will talk about the fact that you spend several hours in the field, and then you come home, and you try to piece together all these important events and bits of dialogue from memory. That's a really difficult thing to do. So the value of recording devices, I think, is becoming much more widely recognized amongst ethnographers. And so improv in particular taught me that a lot can happen at once, and you just can't deal with it all. That's also the virtue of things like video recording and analysis, that you can capture these really micro-level events that really matter, that could just blow by you in a second if you blink. So it taught me that technological aids have real advantages in observational research.

Y. F.: I can imagine that in an improvisational art setting, there's a huge amount of activity happening all at once, which makes it really difficult to take notes in real time. So it seems like a very wise methodological decision, given both the volume and the variety of data you're dealing with. So, just to wrap up our conversation on improvisational art: how do you think your research in this area contributes to the broader field of the sociology of culture?

G. B.: I think the thing that I've learned studying improv is that there are very few cases better suited for studying creativity as it happens, as well as what role the immediate social, cultural, and material contexts have in this process. When I think about the major works in the sociology of creativity, a lot of it is historical. For example, **Randall Collins's *The Sociology of Philosophies***, which I think is one of the best sociology books on creativity, or **Michael Farrell's *Collaborative Circles***, which I also consider one of the strongest works on the topic. These studies are historical, and that comes with advantages—mainly that you're studying people who are unquestionably creative and examining broadly recognized creative achievements. It also allows you to trace their relationships, their broader networks, and other contextual factors. Then, similarly, there's work in the sociology of culture that studies creativity, but it usually studies finished works, such as artwork, music, and literature. And often they only get retrospective access to the process through which these finalized works came together. And improv in this context is kind of a special case, because first, no two improv shows are ever the same. I've been to a lot of improv shows. There are patterns that you spot (recurring relationships, settings, etc.), but they are always this unique thing. Second, in improv, what makes it a bit special is that **the process is the**

product, and that process is collaborative. It's totally emergent; it's distributed across not only the improvisers but also everything in the context in which it takes place.

This includes the audience, but also material contingencies—things like someone dropping a bottle, a curtain falling, a light bulb going out, or the band upstairs suddenly starting to play loud electric guitar in the middle of the show. All of it makes itself a part of this emergent process. And so I think there are a few cases of creativity that are as thoroughly social and as accessible as improv. That allows it to provide some unique insights into the social and cultural nature of creativity. I'm not sure that I've communicated this effectively in my own work yet, but I hope to do so more in the future! I think there's something uniquely valuable about improv as a case for studying creativity.

Y. F.: I'm also curious about what your next steps are for this project, since it's your dissertation topic. Are you planning to turn it into a book, or do you have another direction in mind?

G. B.: I don't plan on publishing a book, but I'm currently working on an article that talks about how the material setting of improv shapes creativity, using affordance theory. Specifically, what I've identified is that there are a bunch of different improv venues in Toronto, and improv shows are highly structured by these venues. So if you go to certain theaters, because of their physical structure, the shows will tend to be faster paced, or they might be much more dramatic and presentational in their style. This paper uses affordance theory to explain how it is that physical contexts structure improvised creativity.

Y. F.: So, it's a paper that focuses on the materiality of the setting where the show takes place. And I remember that one of your earlier articles looked at how artists interact with the audience. You focused a lot on that engagement between performers and spectators. So I imagine this new paper would be a great supplement to that work and help to give us a fuller picture of the improvisational setting.

G. B.: In my dissertation, I had a chapter that was mainly about cognition, a chapter that was mainly about the material context, and a chapter that was about audiences, social interaction, and social skills. So I published two of those, and the materiality one is the one I have yet to publish.

Y. F.: As we come to the end of the interview, I want to ask a question we always ask at this point: What advice would you give to graduate students who are interested in the sociology of culture?

G. B.: I think that given the current job market and the competitive nature of graduate programs, there's a growing sense of urgency—this feeling that you have to start publishing right away. There's also a related pressure to specialize very quickly. So, if you study culture, you might feel pressured to immediately declare, for example, "I'm a computational person," or "I focus on popular culture," or something like that. There's just a lot of pressure to narrow your focus early on. **One interesting insight is that major breakthroughs often happen when people shift from exploring ideas to exploiting them**. You spend a long time reading widely, taking in all kinds of ideas, and then you find a niche, whatever it is, and start digging into it deeply. That moment, when you shift from the exploration phase to the exploitation phase, is often when people produce their best work. And I think that in today's kind of academic climate, people don't take enough time to explore, and they immediately try to exploit ideas and find some sliver of academia that they want to contribute to. They rush the exploration phase. I think we'd all be better off—though it's easier said than done—if we spent more time thinking and reading broadly, instead of rushing to identify the one thing we're going to focus on.

Speaking of culture, in a lot of ways, I find culture to be a kind of messy subfield of sociology, right? There are so many different approaches and perspectives you can take, and I think reading all of them and finding things that you find insightful and valuable is useful. And so, I'd say a big thing would be **just to read really widely**.

And another thing that you learn once you get a job is that actually, there's not that much time to read. As a graduate student, this is the time in your life to commit to reading as much as you can. You'll be much more up to date on the current literature in culture than your advisors will be. So really, I think, just keep reading a lot and keep reading widely, and that'll serve you well.

The other thing is, when I look generally at the landscape of the sociology of culture, there's a big trend towards computational social science. I know a lot of students will be tempted to brush up on their computational skills and do that kind of work, and I think that work is really valuable. But I also think, when I look at some of the really exceptional work happening in the sociology of culture today, they're making great use of 'bread and butter' qualitative methods. Look at some of the recent winners of the Geertz Book Award in the ASA Culture Section: Karen Cerulo and Janet Ruane wrote a great book using focus group data about dreams (***Dreams of a Lifetime: How Who We Are Shapes How We Imagine Our Future***). Claudio Benzecry wrote a great book about creative work through a "global ethnography." These works are qualitative, theoretically rich, and deeply engaging. I still think there's room to do that kind of work, and many culture scholars are doing it exceptionally well. So, if that's the kind of work you want to pursue, I don't think you need to conform to current trends out of fear that you won't get a job or won't be successful.

The other quick point is that, for people who study culture, the main challenge is often figuring out how to make non-culture scholars care about your research. It's always an uphill battle to sell the general value of a project like improv, and the key is to connect it to ideas people already care about. So it's important to remember that not everyone will care about your specific case; I don't expect people to be inherently interested in improv, but you can make broader connections to sociological theories, topics, and concerns. That's an essential skill that students of culture need to develop.

Book Review: *Listeners Like Who? Exclusion and Resistance in the Public Radio Industry*, by Laura Garbes (Princeton University Press, 2025)

By Jiwon Yun

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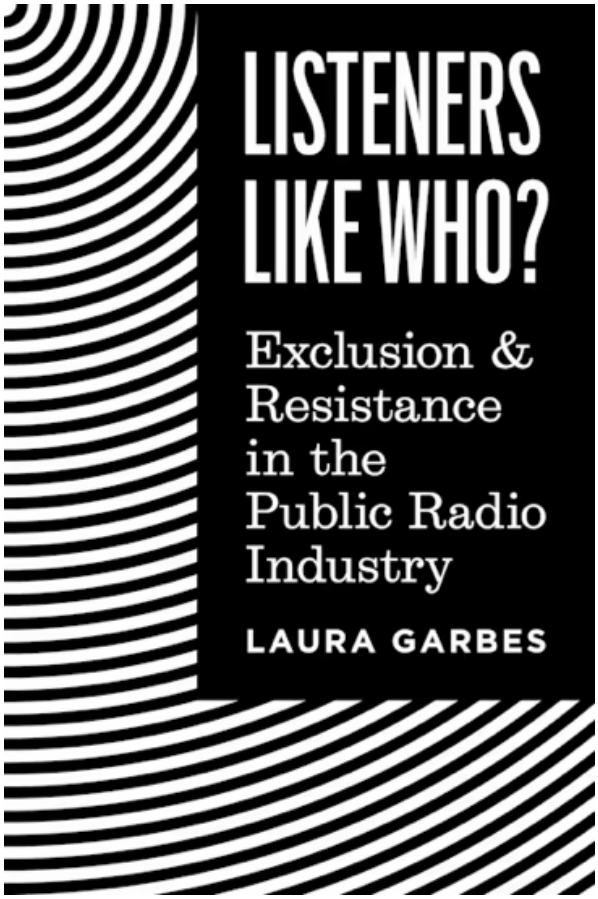

"Anything is possible when you sound Caucasian on the phone." (87) This high-school yearbook quotation from Savannah Tomlinson illustrates bluntly, yet cheekily, the unfortunate reality of the US soundscape that privileges white voices over nonwhite voices. Laura Garbes' monograph, Listeners Like Who?: Exclusion and Resistance in the Public Radio Industry, brings together theoretical insights from scholarship on racialization, cultural production, and sound studies to dig deeper into this phenomenon. In particular, Garbes focuses on how racial inequality of voices has become institutionalized in the world of National Public Radio (NPR), a sector where one's voice can make or break a show, a career, and even an entire industry. In doing so, she offers us valuable insights into the historical reproduction of the preference for white voices and what this means for nonwhite voices living in the 21st century.

Central to Garbes's analysis is the notion that what counts as a "neutral" or "authoritative" voice in public radio is racially coded as white. Garbes' main arguments are twofold. First, she argues that white institutional spaces reproduce the sonic color line, defined as the "racialized evaluation of nonwhite voices as nonnormative" (14). This is the process by which white voices gain recognition as the generic, color-neutral voices that are suitable for public broadcasting. Voices that do not possess similar qualities are considered unfit to be on air. Yet, because whiteness is universally coded as normative, it is difficult for white individuals to recognize the processes by which the sonic color line is produced. On the other hand, the same processes are very visible to nonwhite employees of NPR, who eventually develop a sonic double consciousness, "an awareness of the racialized evaluation of voice in white institutional space" (13). From this stems Garbes' second argument, that the sonic double consciousness of nonwhite, nonnormative voices in a white institution can lead to a sense of responsibility to communities with nonnormative voices.

Supporting these arguments are Garbes' extensive archival research, primarily sourced from the National Public Broadcasting Archives, and in-depth interviews with 83 people of color who were or had been working in the US public radio industry. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 primarily draw on archival analysis to demonstrate the historical processes that have shaped NPR into the white, racialized organization it is today. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 rely largely on interview data to offer a contemporary critique of the sonic color line and its consequences for how nonwhite employees, stories, and sources are evaluated.

Although Garbes divided the book into two parts by research method, there is a subtle symmetry in the way the chapters are laid out. Chapter 1 illustrates how whiteness was institutionalized within NPR from its very beginning by sketching the nonprofit radio programming landscape on which NPR was founded and the organization's workings in its first ten years. Chapters 2 and 4 form a pair that examines the hegemonic white

speaking voice of NPR and its consequences for present-day nonwhite broadcasters. Specifically, Chapter 2 follows the footsteps of the "Founding Mothers" of NPR — the most authoritative female voices in NPR's early history — to reconstruct how a white, feminine voice became the hegemonic speaking voice on public radio. Chapter 4 turns to the present, analyzing voice performances of nonwhite speakers who must evaluate themselves against this golden standard — or white standard — of public radio voice. Garbes discovers that such evaluations lead nonwhite speakers to have a greater consciousness of their voices, to the point that one person declares she has a "relationship" with her own voice (98). Many respond by learning to "whiten" their voices, although this strategy also comes with drawbacks, such as being falsely accused of being a white person inappropriately covering stories for people of color.

Much of voice policing occurs through audience feedback, and Chapters 3 and 5 illuminate the power of this hegemonic white listening ear. In Chapter 3, Garbes discusses how the nonprofit nature of NPR ironically makes it dependent on the privileged "listener-members" of the public who are not representative of the US public demographically. Financial dependence on individual donors and corporate underwriters incentivizes NPR to cater to the tastes and ears of well-educated, affluent white listeners who are most able to donate themselves and most attractive to corporate underwriters. This creates an interesting irony that NPR claims to serve the public, but it serves white members of the public more. Chapter 5 investigates how this disposition to prioritize white ears is materialized in the form of "NPR driveway moments," a story that is so captivating that it "keeps you in your car after you've reached your destination, just to listen" (113). However, because the listeners that matter to NPR are imagined to be white, reporters of color must learn to pitch, frame, and narrate "diversity stories" that satisfy white curiosity.

Chapter 6, the last empirical chapter of the book, examines the relationship that reporters of color cultivate with their sources. Learning that their sources' voices are subjected to the same racialized evaluation as their own voices, these reporters often become the biggest supporters of non-normative sources, pushing back against editorial decisions, offering to translate, and protecting the sources from the white institutional space of NPR. This chapter offers a powerful counterpart to Chapter 1. The book began with a version of NPR that conflated public radio with white-serving radio; it concludes with a hope for NPR reporters who not only serve the white public but also advocate for marginalized communities with nonnormative voices.

In summary, *Listeners Like Who?* provides a rich analysis of how seemingly "neutral" institutional practices effectively reproduce unequal outcomes. Garbes' prose is engaging and excels at exposing the contradictions and ironies embedded in the institution of NPR, such as how reporters of color are constrained by norms of white voice and white ear while also tasked with diversifying newsrooms. Similarly, the public radio model's dependence on a donor base of white, affluent listener-members ultimately undermines its mandate to serve the broader US public. Another strength of the book is that each chapter is self-contained with sufficient theoretical and empirical details to make it legible without knowledge of other chapters. This makes it a valuable educational resource that can be taught in chapters to address specific aspects of the public radio industry or as an entire monograph to motivate class discussions on the relationship between racial inequality and cultural production.

The Silence of Intellectuals

By Muhammad Amasha and Nicolás Rudas

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The sociology of intellectuals has hitherto focused on their speech but has often overlooked their silences. Centering on the silence of intellectuals is, admittedly, a risky endeavor, as it can easily open the door to personal polemics rather than analytical insight. This essay, however, invites cultural sociologists to take silence seriously—especially in the contemporary moment. While intellectuals' writings and public statements are readily treated as "data," their silences are typically not. Some may dismiss silence as "missing data," but we argue that it should not be. What intellectuals choose *not* to say, too, is a meaningful cultural act that demands our attention.

Why Silence?

Intellectuals provide people with ways to understand the world and act in it. This often happens through writing, speech, or artistic forms. But intellectuals, including public intellectuals, hardly comment on all issues or equally engage with all events. This is beyond human capacity. But identifying what intellectuals do not engage with can be as informative as what they engage with. The potential causes of intellectuals' silence provide sociologists with information about those intellectuals and their social world.

First, intellectuals may not engage with certain events because they don't even know about them. While those events may be important to many people, the intellectual in question has a social environment that prevents her from accessing information about those events: e.g., she listens to specific media outlets that do not cover them, and her social network is not interested in such issues. While no one will have a social environment that allows them to know everything in the world, intellectuals still often play a role in choosing which media outlets they listen to, which sections of the news they are interested in, and which colleagues they consider trusted sources of information. In that regard, as we all know, we shape social structures as much as they shape us. Of course, audiences do not expect intellectuals to comment on everything. Still, there are relevant issues that intellectuals are expected to know, where relevance is often defined by observers/audiences. Studying this type of silence reveals intellectuals' sources and networks of knowledge.

Second, intellectuals are sometimes silent on specific issues they feel they know too little about to provide an informed opinion. Here, intellectuals are aware of the events and issues important in the public sphere, but they abstain from commenting because they feel they need to learn more before expressing an opinion. This is especially true in cases where intellectuals view themselves as experts whose intervention in public opinion should be based on specialized expertise, rather than "public intellectuals," many of whom view themselves as responsible for commenting on broad topics beyond narrow specialization. In this situation, intellectuals either educate themselves to contribute to the discussion or neglect the topic. Initial silence in the former case and continuing silence in the latter show what intellectuals value and invest in.

Third, intellectuals can sometimes remain silent due to self-censorship driven by fear.[1] Fear has degrees. Some may fear losing followers or friendships if they have controversial opinions, a phenomenon that came to be called the fear of being "canceled" in recent years. Fear can also stem from losing symbolic and material advantages, such as positions, awards, fellowships, and invitations. In authoritarian contexts—which exist in both autocratic and "liberal democratic" states—fear becomes about one's existence. Existential fear begins with fear of losing one's livelihood. It becomes more extreme when intellectuals become direct targets of state repression: detention, torture, placement on terrorist or "wanted" lists that restrict their ability to work or travel,

the stripping of citizenship, intimidation or persecution of family members, and even assassination. Under the Pinochet dictatorship, for example, Nicanor Parra—one of Chile's most influential poets—carefully avoided public political commentary. His strategic silence, widely debated after the transition to democracy, exemplifies how intellectuals may retreat from the public sphere not because they lack convictions, but because the costs of speaking can be existential. This type of silence is helpful in understanding how intellectuals interpret their political context and assess risks.

Fourth, intellectuals can be silent to protect others. In this case, intellectuals are not afraid of being personally harmed if they speak, but they believe that speaking would hurt people who should not be harmed. A familiar example for many academics is anonymizing data to protect their interlocutors. But this can manifest as silence on specific topics that intellectuals consider harmful to groups that they feel vulnerable. Intellectuals, for example, may omit the wrongdoing of certain groups while emphasizing that of others, or highlight specific aspects of an event while disregarding others. Such forms of selective silence reveal who intellectuals perceive as vulnerable, and whom they feel obligated to shield. In Egypt, for instance, the protection of al-Azhar—a millennium-old scholarly institution encompassing universities, pre-college schools, and research centers—played a crucial role in shaping the political silence of its president, Ahmed al-Tayyib (a professor of Islamic theology and philosophy). As the 2013 military coup consolidated its power, al-Tayyib became increasingly silent, despite having initially criticized the regime's human rights violations and despite those violations continuing.[2]

Finally, when intellectuals face situations in which not all positions are desirable, their silence can indicate the dilemmas they face. This was evident in the globally influential Muslim intellectual Yusuf al-Qaradawi's month-long silence on the Bahraini uprising, despite his active engagement with most other simultaneous Arab uprisings in 2011, as he faced a dilemma between supporting the protestors' demands for justice and opposing what he considered their potential sectarian agenda.[3]

Forms of Silence

Another way to approach intellectuals' silence is to study its temporality, partiality, and degree.

The temporality focuses on the timing of silence and speaking, which can yield a great deal of information for social analysis. The timing of breaking the silence can be crucial to investigate when intellectuals do so: when it is safer, when they are called out, when they learn more, when things become personal, and so on. But it is also insightful to see when intellectuals become silent after speaking: e.g., when repression increases, when they feel that speaking barely changes anything, or when other issues take their attention.

Studying the partiality of silence focuses on the reasons for silence on specific issues, rather than on relevant others. It is comparative in nature. It studies, for example, when intellectuals defend freedom of speech when it concerns their own remarks, but remain silent when it concerns others. It investigates the selectivity and tribalism of intellectuals.[4]

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[1] While external censorship could explain intellectuals' silence in the past, where one's output had limited outlets that are controlled by others, this is hardly the case in the world of social media where intellectuals can write almost whatever they want on different platforms.
[2] Amasha, M. 2023. "The Ideals and Interests in Intellectuals' Political Deliberations: The Arab Spring and the Divergent Paths of Egypt's Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib and Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa." *American Journal of Islam and Society* 40(3–4):41–76. doi:https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v40i3-4.3280.
[3] Amasha, M. 2023a. "Political Judgment, Fiqh al-Wāqiʿ, and the Egyptian ʿUlamāʾ's Response to the Arab Spring (2011–2013)." *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 8(2):49–86. doi:https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.00015.
[4] Amasha, M. 2025. "Speaking Truth to Power in Challenging Times: Lessons from the Arab Spring Politics of Muslim Jurists." https://canopyforum.org/2025/04/10/speaking-truth-to-power-in-challenging-times-lessons-from-the-arab-spring-politics-of-muslim-jurists/.

Approaching silence through its degree transcends the dichotomous view of silence/speaking. That is because publicity has degrees: from open-access outlets accessible online to restricted-access public spaces like "friends/followers-only" social media posts, closed groups, mailing lists, or offline public spaces. Speaking in the restricted-access public spaces is silenced for those without access. Degrees of silence are also relevant because speaking has degrees of clarity: it can be clearly addressing an issue, its actors, and provide a clear position, but it can also be ambiguous about the case, the actors, or the position taken. Studying different levels of silence publicity provides crucial information about how deep the silence is and the reasons behind it.

Silence and Audience: "Silence" as a Moral Accusation

From a cultural-sociological perspective, the silence of intellectuals can be understood as an active and ongoing social process. Silences do not merely exist; they are also *produced*. This makes it essential to examine the role that audiences play in shaping those silences.

In a recent publication, a group of sociologists renewed the argument that public intellectuals could be conceived as "dramatic" figures[5]—individuals who craft eschatological narratives about the present, offering apocalyptic visions of looming societal dangers alongside hopeful images of utopian redemption. These narratives only acquire social force when they are taken up by broader audiences, who then dramatize the moral binaries at the heart of the intellectuals' discourse, through mass mobilization or attempts at political reform.

Audiences are never passive recipients of intellectuals' pronouncements. Although they may be emotionally moved by the intellectuals' charisma, authority, or aura of wisdom, they always retain a margin of critical skepticism. This distance is crucial, for it enables audiences to confront intellectuals when their claims appear inconsistent or selectively applied. One of the most common ways they do so is by making intellectuals' silences visible. For example, audiences frequently level accusations of double standards: *Why did you denounce X so vigorously in one context but refrain from showing the same energy in an analogous situation?*

In this sense, "silence" becomes a moral charge through which audiences frame intellectuals as hypocritical and their broader project as an inauthentic performance. What is exposed is not merely a lapse of commentary but, allegedly, the revelation that the intellectual is not engaged in a sincere, good-faith effort to understand the world, but is instead advancing a personal agenda or a sectarian program. Intellectual inconsistency is thus interpreted as a moral failure—signaling cowardice, opportunism, or corruption.

In August 2025, Omer Bartov, Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University, illustrated this dynamic with outstanding clarity. Reflecting on the response to the mass atrocities committed against Palestinians in Gaza, he lamented that the silence of his colleagues constituted a profound violation of the very moral compass their field claims to uphold. As he put it, "to this day, only a few scholars of the Holocaust … have issued warnings that Israel could be accused of carrying out war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing or genocide." Such "silence", he contented, has "made a mockery of the slogan 'Never again,' transforming its meaning from an assertion of resistance to inhumanity wherever it is perpetrated to an excuse, an apology, indeed, even a carte blanche for destroying others by invoking one's own past victimhood."[6]

Accusations of "silence" are ruthless and chronic in intellectual life. Even Bartov—the accuser—found himself on the receiving end of a similar charge, when another genocide scholar criticized him for taking too long to break his silence on the genocidal nature of Israel's campaign.[7]

[5] Pérez-Jara, J. & Rudas, N. (Eds.) (2025*). Dramatic intellectuals*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[6] Bartov, O. 2025, July 25. I'm a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When I See It. *The New York Times.*
[7] Shaw, M. 2025. "The Genocide that Changed the World." *Journal of Genocide Research,* pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2025.2556575

Accusations of "silence" do not arise only from antagonistic audiences; sympathetic ones also voice them. In such cases, identifying silences can become a powerful engine for advancing intellectual debate. This often happens when new public concerns or sensibilities emerge, and an intellectual's oeuvre begins to feel dated or incomplete. In the 1980s, for example, several scholars close to the Marxist tradition began to question his (lack of) ecological thinking. One author, for example, argued that Marx covertly espoused the capitalist ideology of productivism—denouncing the exploitation of human beings while remaining complicit in the exploitation of nature[8]. This charge of silence served both as an acknowledgment of the limits of the Marxist framework and as a call to move beyond it to construct a genuinely ecological program. At the same time, the critique mobilized Marx's defenders, who sought to demonstrate that this supposed silence did not exist. Several of these interventions helped give rise to and position a new intellectual and political current, such as ecosocialism[9]. In this way, audiences can become actors who "correct" the perceived (or misperceived) omissions of their intellectual idols, turning claims of silence into opportunities for theoretical expansion and creative renewal.

Accusations of "silence'' are often fueled by feelings of irritation and frustration, and in some cases, they can spark grassroots movements with significant social impact. Through the collective practice of "calling out," such accusations may escalate into forms of pressure or even "cancelling," framing intellectuals as "sellouts." In other words, attributing "silence" can itself result in the actual silencing of intellectuals.

Yet in specific contexts—particularly under authoritarian or repressive regimes—silence may carry a very different meaning for the audience, functioning as a powerful expression of integrity and courage. In France, for instance, the refusal of certain intellectuals to speak publicly during Vichy's regime—intended to avoid legitimizing the regime—was retrospectively framed as an act of heroism: a form of quiet resistance that signaled non-compliance with the occupiers and solidarity with those opposing collaboration.[10]

Whether audiences' accusations of "silence" toward intellectuals are normatively desirable or troubling, they reveal a crucial sociological fact: the interpretive agency of audiences vis-à-vis intellectuals. Importantly, this agency is often exercised through the very cultural frameworks that intellectuals themselves have produced, allowing audiences to turn an intellectual's own moral and symbolic repertoire back onto them.

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[8] Benton, T. 1989. "Marxism and Natural Limits: An Ecological Critique and Reconstruction." NLR I/178.
[9] Saito, K. 2017. *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capital, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy.* NYU Press.
[10] Baert, P. 2015. *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 38.

Call for Nominations – Section's Awards

Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book

Books published in the calendar year 2025 (as per the print edition) are eligible for this award. Authors must be section members to be eligible. In case of co-authored books, at least one author must be a section member. Authors should nominate their book through this online form. The deadline is **February 15th, 2026.**

When their nomination is received, authors will be sent details of the preferred postal addresses of committee members. To be considered, all the committee members must receive hard copies of the book by **March 1st, 2026.**

Please direct any inquiries to committee chair Shai Dromi (shai.dromi@g.harvard.edu).

Committee Members

Shai Dromi (Chair)

Guillermina Altomonte

Laura Halcomb

Lyn Spillman

Rachel Skaggs

Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article

Section members may nominate articles and original chapters of edited collections published in calendar years 2024-2025. Self-nominations are strongly preferred. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. In case of co-authored articles, at least one author must be a section member.

Please make submissions through this form. Submissions that are not accompanied by an explanation for how the article contributes to the sociological study of culture will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is **March 1st, 2026**.

Please direct any inquiries to the committee chair, Bart Bonikowski (bonikowski@nyu.edu).

Committee Members:

Bart Bonikowski (Chair)

Omar Lizardo

Gözde Güran

Kevin Kiley

Taylor Laemmli

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 through this form. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. In case of co-authored articles, at least one author must be a section member.

Email an electronic copy of the paper to each member of the award committee. Submissions that are not accompanied by an explanation for how the article contributes to the sociological study of culture will not be considered for the prize. The deadline for receipt of nominations and articles is **March 1st, 2026**.

Please direct any inquiries to the committee chair, Fiona Greenland (fg5t@virginia.edu).

Committee Members

Fiona Greenland (Chair)

Kristen Miller

Cherry Ji

David Arditi

Laura Backstrom

Stuart Hall Award for Advancing the Study of Racial or Ethnic Inequality

The annually organized Stuart Hall Award in Cultural Sociology recognizes a mid-career sociologist whose work holds great promise for advancing the cultural study of racial or ethnic inequality. The winner must be a cultural sociologist who uses cultural theories and/or methods in their research. A nominee must be a mid-career scholar who has established a significant body of research and has typically received a Ph.D. no less than six, but no more than 20, years before their candidacy for the award. The winner will be expected to deliver a lecture in the course of the academic year following the award, most likely as part of the Section's Culture and Contemporary Life Series. This lecture (or a revised version of it) will be published in *Poetics*.

A nomination letter, CV, and publication that best exemplifies the nominee's contribution to the advancement of the study of culture and racial or ethnic inequality should be submitted through this form. Self-nominations are encouraged. The nomination letters should make a strong, substantive case for the nominee's selection and should discuss the nominee's past work and anticipated future research trajectory as they relate to the study of both cultural sociology and the sociology of race and ethnicity. The deadline for complete nominations is **March 1st, 2026**.

The committee may, in any given year, decide not to give the award.

Please direct any inquiries to the Committee Chair, Hannah Wohl (hwohl@ucsb.edu).

Committee Members

Hannah Wohl (Chair)

Emily Handsman

Manning Zhang

Olivia Hu

Publications

Rodriguez, Cassaundra. 2025. "The Affective Bargain: How the Latino Children of Immigrants Create Joy, Love, and Pride Through Mariachi" Ethnic and Racial Studies. Online First. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2025.2502602

> Mariachi education is expanding in the United States. However, social science research has overlooked what mariachi means to young people. Pulling from ethnographic data and fifty-seven interviews, this paper examines the role of mariachi participation in young people's lives. I find that young people – specifically, the Latino children of immigrants – perform acts of love for their immigrant families through mariachi. Further, mariachi participation allows young people to participate in what I call the affective bargain, which captures how young people honor their parents' culture. Mariachi also creates space for young people to inspire family pride locally and across borders. This research highlights the need for scholarly inquiry on Latino joy, love, and pride. It also contributes to the existing scholarship on immigration by showing how the children of immigrants do not demonstrate love and joy solely as a response to racism, economic inequality, or immigration violence.

Guo, Weirong. 2025. "Echoes of Silence: How Student Migrants Navigate Political Taboos Across Borders." Social Forces, 144. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaf144

> People migrate from authoritarian to democratic regimes seeking greater freedom of expression, yet many continue to avoid politics in their host country. This study examines how Chinese international students in the United States navigate political taboos across borders and why they still avoid political expression despite newfound freedoms. Drawing on participant observations and 93 in-depth interviews with Chinese students at two American universities and one Chinese university, I find that students develop three avoidance strategies—pragmatic disengagement, veiled allegiance, and closeted activism—as they navigate two distinct fields of political taboos. In China's "forbidden zone," where state-imposed taboos are intuitively understood but constantly shifting, avoidance is largely habitual—students perceive politics as dangerous and irrelevant, frame patriotism in apolitical terms, or engage in activism discreetly to avoid repression. After migrating to the US "landmine zone," where political taboos are decentralized, scattered, and socially enforced, these tactics evolve—students pretend to be apathetic to sidestep ideological pressure, downplay nationalism to prevent conflict, and confine activism to trusted circles to evade peer, institutional, or transnational consequences. This study bridges political sociology and migration studies by challenging the activism bias in transnational politics and the assumption of unilateral political incorporation. It also calls for a reassessment of educational institutions' roles in sustaining or challenging the culture of avoidance.

Guo, Weirong. 2025. "From Engagement to Detachment: Divergent Cosmopolitanisms Among Transnational Chinese Students." Social Problems. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaf056

> What does it mean to be cosmopolitan, or a global citizen? Often perceived as a privileged state of cultural consumption and mobility, cosmopolitanism is frequently critiqued as a new form of social stratification and discussed in relation to nationalism. This article reconceptualizes cosmopolitanism by foregrounding its moral and affective dimensions, framing it as both an ethical, deliberate practice and a forced adaptation to structural constraints. Drawing on interviews with 60 Chinese international students in the United States, I identify two distinct forms: activist

cosmopolitanism, marked by moral engagement and collective activism, and cynical cosmopolitanism, characterized by individual autonomy, skepticism, and emotional detachment. Both emerge from shared experiences of liberal arts education, community engagement, and relational assimilation, but diverge in response to discrimination, residential mobility, and gendered adversity across sending and receiving contexts, with consequences for mental health. Lacking communal support, cynical cosmopolitans adopt individualist coping strategies and may develop a stance of "non-identity" as a protective mechanism. This study challenges dominant views of cosmopolitanism as either elite capital or a natural outcome of mobility. It highlights how Chinese students, despite their privileged status, can cultivate varied forms of cosmopolitan orientations, offering new insight into their potential for global social change.

Hilmar, Tim. 2025. "Narratives of Disruptive Economic Change: Claiming and Contesting the Social Order." Sociological Theory. OnlineFirst, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/07352751251362172

This article develops an analytic framework composed of six narrative forms through which disruptive economic change is interpreted and legitimized. Drawing on two eventful contexts—economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing climate transformations—I identify six narrative forms: redistribution, creative destruction, individual resilience, moral economy, decline for all, and growth for all. Each narrative constructs legitimacy through distinct temporal logics, visions of the state, and constructions of the social order. The analysis integrates insights from economic sociology, political sociology, and eventful theory to trace how narratives stabilize (in)equality and justify varying degrees of state intervention. The narrative forms all relate in different ways to crisis egalitarianism, the idea that disruption affects everyone equally; this interpretive tendency can legitimize postcrisis inequalities as natural or deserved. By treating narratives as eventful meaning-making devices, the framework advances a sociological understanding of legitimacy as a temporal construct.

Jiang, Ann. 2025. "Book Review: In Our Interest." International Migration Review. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183251370704

Lee, Jina. 2025. "Gendered Pathways to Perpetual Fame: The Selection of Elite Korean Novelists into the Literary Canon." Poetics, 112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2025.102024

This study identifies the mechanisms through which gender inequality persists in literary canonization. Using a mixed-method analysis of 267 elite Korean novelists, I examine how contemporary recognition translates into long-term canonical status and find systematic disadvantages for women in this critical transition. Quantitative analysis demonstrates that while gender alone does not affect anthology inclusion when controlling for other factors, receiving professional reviews increase men's probability of canonization significantly more than women's, showing reward-dualism where equivalent achievements yield unequal outcomes. Qualitative analysis uncovers gendered devaluation in critical discourse: Korean literary traditions developed evaluative repertoires where both men's and women's autobiographical writing receives recognition for its authenticity, contradicting Western cases where authenticity is predominantly associated with women. This pattern emerged from Korea's colonial history, which legitimized the use of personal narratives in literary writing as a means of restoring ethnic identity. However, literary scholars systematically elevate men's contributions to universality and historical significance while confining women's works within gender-specific categories. This demonstrates that apparent gender parity in evaluative repertoires can mask persistent inequality

operating through different pathways. By documenting these culturally adapted mechanisms, this research challenges Western-centric assumptions about how gender hierarchies are maintained in artistic evaluation and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender shapes long-term artistic recognition across different cultural contexts.

Yazdiha, Hajar and Courtney E Boen. 2025. "The Affective Strategies of White Unknowing: How Police Violence Reveals the Expression of Racialized Emotions on Twitter." Social Forces, 128. https://academic.oup.com/sf/advance-article/doi/10.1093/sf/soaf128/8244575

Racism shapes the ways racialized actors and groups feel about the social world, but how does racism get reproduced through affective politics, the unequal ways White and Black Americans express feeling—or unfeeling—and consequently act—or don't act—in response to racist violence? We use Twitter data and a combination of computational sentiment and qualitative content analyses to document and interrogate the racialized expression of emotions in response to two high-profile cases of racist police violence—the murders of Michael Brown and Tamir Rice. Using computational analyses, we first examine the racialized distributions of emotions before and after these murders. Results from these analyses showed especially high levels of negative emotion among Black women and men following these events and striking increases in negative emotion for both Black and White users in the wake of the murders. We then use content analyses to hand-code a random sample of White users' Tweets to critically interrogate their affective expressions in response to racist police violence. Content analysis of White users' Tweets revealed patterns of both White feeling and "un"-feeling. White feelings expressed through anger, fear, hope, and sadness emerge largely to protect rather than interrogate White dominance and complicity in White supremacy. White users evoked modes of apathy like humor and logic in service of minimizing, delegitimizing, and altogether evading racial reality. Our study highlights the utility of mixed-methods approaches to the study of racialized emotions, with findings holding implications for studies of inequality, politics, and emotions.

Leipnik, Olena. 2025. *Trump and Putin in Media Mythologies*. London: Routledge.

Trump and Putin in Media Mythologies provides an account of the media portrayal of two presidents—Donald Trump of the United States and Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation—as mythologized figures. The book delineates the mythologizing strategies media employ to build these two leaders' narratives and the logic of mythologization of the overall political process. It addresses the construction of the two presidential imageries and the political and cultural needs fulfilled by the archetypes they embody. The volume provides a comparative analysis of two culture-specific narrating strategies that resonate with the two—American and Russian—electorates. This interdisciplinary account combines the areas of media studies, myth studies, political anthropology, and cultural studies. It will also be an essential read for scholars and graduate students interested in political communication, public relations, and cognitive marketing.

Phelps, Michelle S. and Daniel Cueto-Villalobos. 2025. "Making Racial Demands: Tracing the Struggle over Public Safety in Minneapolis." Social Problems. Online first.

In May 2020, the world erupted in protest after officers with the Minneapolis Police Department murdered George Floyd. In response, abolitionist activists pushed forward a ballot initiative that would "end" the police department by creating a new Department of Public Safety. This proposal sparked fierce debate. While both sides staked their claims on what would make Black residents feel safe, their understandings of safety diverged, with charter supporters arguing for a move away

from the "police-only model" and opponents arguing for "real" police reform. Bridging racial formation theory and work on social movements, we argue that the charter debate in Minneapolis illustrates how social movement organizations work to construct public perceptions of what is in minoritized groups' interests, a process we conceptualize as making racial demands. Analyzing campaign flyers, debates, and op-eds, we trace three steps in this process: (1) supporters and opponents positioned their side as the authentic representatives of the community; (2) each side deployed diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames to support their conceptualization of safety; and (3) both campaigns envisioned a speculative future constrained by the boundaries of racial redress. The results demonstrate the importance of considering movement, racialization, and policy development processes in tandem.

Woźny, Anna. 2025. "Varieties of Mediation: Ideational Heterogeneity, Cultural Fluency, and Market Intermediaries in Japanese 'Marriage Hunting'." Qualitative Sociology. Online first.

How do market intermediaries assist individuals in navigating exchanges? This article theorizes how intermediaries act as cultural guides in the marketplace by arbitrating between heterogeneous ideas and values and acclimating clients to different scripts of exchange. Drawing on an ethnographic study of the Japanese "marriage-hunting" industry, including 127 interviews with market professionals and their clients, participant observation in dating events, and archival research, I identify how specific varieties of mediation shape the interactions and sensemaking of clients unevenly versed in market rules. Intensive mediation substitutes clients' cultural fluency, or the knowledge of and ability to enact market scripts, moderate mediation enhances it, while weak mediation compels individuals to mobilize their own cultural fluency. Although intensive mediation facilitates more efficient searches, it is less socially valorized; conversely, because weak mediation approximates the dominant ideal of a romantic relationship it is more valued. As these varied modes of cultural guidance dovetail with broader hierarchies of desirability, they produce a tiered structure within the market and encourage prolonged utilization of dating services.

Zabala Ortiz, Pamela. 2025. "#PeroNoSomosRacistas: Examining Dominican (Anti)Blackness in a time of Global Racial Reckoning." Ethnic and Racial Studies, 1–17. Online first. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2025.2531297

Black Lives Matter 2020 broke beyond the borders of the U.S. and spurred antiracist demonstrations across the world, showing both the pervasiveness of global anti-Black racism and the ways in which social movements can be adapted and applied across contexts, including the Caribbean and Latin America. I draw from in-depth interviews with Dominicans and Dominican Americans in the aftermath of Black Lives Matter 2020, and on data from X (formerly Twitter) around the online use of the #PeroNoSomosRacistas hashtag to examine how diasporic Dominicans in the U.S. and Dominicans in the Dominican Republic received, engaged with, and adapted the Black Lives Matter 2020 moment to address Dominican anti-Blackness. I find that this moment created a transnational space for Dominicans across contexts to engage in antiracist discourses that both reinforced and disrupted prevalent ideas about Dominicans and Blackness.

Acosta, Laura. 2025. "Fabricating Communists: The Imagined Third That Reinvented the National Fault Line in Mid-Twentieth-Century Colombia's Civil War." American Sociological Review. Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224251371066

Contrary to the classical sociological view that social conflict reinforces preexisting political divisions, this article argues that civil war can reinvent them. I examine this phenomenon through the evolution of civil wars in Colombia in the mid-twentieth century, a period initially marked by a Liberal–Conservative conflict that developed into a civil war between the state and communist guerrillas. Drawing on archival records, oral histories of civilians and combatants, and newspapers, I demonstrate that when one party invents an "imagined third"—an actor, external to the original conflict dyad, who lacks any connection to an actual military or political threat—to blame for the violence in civil war, a self-fulfilling logic turns the imagined third into a tangible enemy of the nation, thereby creating a new fault line. In Colombia, politicians' baseless accusations and preemptive actions against Communists activated three mechanisms of fault line formation—enemy legitimation, boundary demarcation, and identity shift—that materialized the very revolutionary threats they claimed to prevent. This analytic framework of fault line formation in civil war opens new avenues for examining how political discourse can become self-fulfilling, how international threats are transformed into local enemies, and how wartime actors' opportunities for action evolve—including the conditions necessary for sustained peace.

Alex, Heba. 2025. "Fuzzy Boundaries: A Mechanism for Group Accumulation of Advantage" Sociological Theory, Online First. https://doi.org/10.1177/07352751251378516. Online first.

This article describes a strategic mechanism, fuzzy boundaries, that groups use to accumulate advantage. In contrast to the dominant view that rigid, well-defined boundaries maximize group rewards, I argue that ambiguity in membership criteria can, under certain conditions, more effectively secure and promote group benefits. Fuzzy boundaries are defined by two features: an intentionally ambiguous criterion for inclusion and the selective, inconsistent application of that criterion to adjust the insider-outsider line as needed. I illustrate the operation of fuzzy boundaries through a historical analysis of occupational boundary drawing in the nineteenth-century United States. Ultimately, the study offers a generalizable framework for understanding how strategic ambiguity in group boundaries can serve actors seeking to preserve privilege across domains, such as education, hiring, and professional accreditation. Unlike well-defined qualifications, the malleability of fuzzy boundaries often insulates them from legal challenge, making them an effective mechanism for maintaining social and institutional advantage.

Ayala-Hurtado, Elena. 2025. "Qualities and Configurations of Insecurity in the United States and Spain." Work and Occupations. Online first. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/07308884251382499

In recent decades, socioeconomic insecurity—encompassing employment precarity and economic instability—has become increasingly widespread. However, insecurity manifests differently across contexts. How do people interpret the insecurity in their own contexts? Drawing on 164 crossnational interviews with young college graduates, most facing insecurity, in the U.S. and Spain, I find that respondents in each national context perceive insecurity as having starkly different qualities. While Spanish respondents perceive insecurity as narrow, unambiguous, and transitory, American respondents perceive it as broad, ambiguous, and recurrent. I develop a framework that illuminates, first, how these perceived qualities of insecurity are underpinned by people's understandings of the structural conditions of insecurity in each context— or "configurations of insecurity"— and second, the consequences of these perceptions. This study examines the meanings ascribed to structural conditions of insecurity, reveals the multidimensionality of perceived insecurity, and develops a framework that elucidates the sources and consequences of those perceptions.

Blume Oeur, Freeden (Guest Editor). 2025. "New Adventures in Racial Sincerity: Twenty Years of Real Black by John L. Jackson Jr." Current Anthropology 66(5).

A book symposium featuring essays by Corey J. Miles, Savannah Shange, Chelsi West Ohueri, and John L. Jackson Jr.

Cueto-Villalobos, Daniel, Laura Gilbertson, and Penny Edgell. 2025. "'There Wasn't A Playbook For This': Local Congregations and the Crises of 2020." Sociology of Religion (published online October 8, 2025). https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sraf023. Online first.

Using 18 months of immersive ethnographic fieldwork in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, this paper highlights how religious congregations made sense of and adapted to the "unsettled time" of 2020, prompted by the onset of COVID-19 and the police killing of George Floyd. These events prompted congregational leaders to adapt organizational routines to accommodate pandemic safety measures, address member demands, and maintain legitimacy in an increasingly polarized religious field. Drawing on theories of inhabited institutionalism, commitment, and culture in action, we find three strategies of action leaders employed in 2020: Introspection, Avoidance, and Mobilization. Our analysis of twelve Christian and Catholic congregations sheds light into the unique challenges voluntary organizations face and offers models of institutional survival in an era of intensified polarization and partisan sorting. This study has implications for studies of organizations, politics, and religious life in 2020.

Marom, Oded. 2025. "Banal Radicalism: Free Spaces and the Routinization of Radical Practices in Far-Right Movements." The British Journal of Sociology. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.13213.

How do free spaces become radicalizing spaces? Studies of far-right radicalism have highlighted the role of insulated movement spaces in radicalizing their members. In these spaces, participants can flaunt their radical ideas and infuse them into everyday practices, forming these ideas into comprehensive and resilient worldviews. However, the salience of radical ideas in free spaces has also been found to be inconsistent and rare. This contrast makes it unclear when and how exactly free spaces contribute to the spread and persistence of radical ideas. Drawing on a 4-year ethnographic study of a radical right-wing libertarian movement in the US, this study shows how activists both highlight and downplay radical ideas creatively to solve situationally emergent challenges of coordinating action. Thus, while the movement's free spaces created circumstances that imbued some everyday mundane practices with radical political significance, they also facilitated an opposite process: they created conditions that obscured or even undermined the political meaning of otherwise radical practices. As I argue, rather than stifling the spread of radical ideas, this banalization of radical practices is a critical component of the radicalization process itself, allowing activists to coordinate radical action among a diverse group of people and across varying situations. In this way, free spaces contribute to the coordination of radical action, even among participants who do not necessarily express radical political motivations. Thus, the findings show how people's motivations for radical action are often articulated in the moment, in response to specific situations and the challenges they present.

Ricucci, Rachel, and Grant Blank. 2025. "The limits of platforms: Why disintermediation has failed in the art market" *New Media & Society* https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448251316498

Platforms have disintermediated the markets for books, film, television, and music, but the online art market has reproduced offline structures, leaving intermediaries intact. This study explores the limits of platforms by describing why disintermediation failed in the art market. Along with museums and other intermediaries, the most important function of galleries is to co-create artistic

value. They not only sell art but also form a central part of the status system of art. We examine #artistsupportpledge (ASP) on Instagram. ASP uncovered a market for art that had no place in the existing system. ASP facilitated direct sales to consumers while allowing artists to maintain links to galleries for reputation, career development, exhibitions, and sales of large, expensive work. The art market experienced unique partial disintermediation under narrow conditions with continued allegiance to existing intermediaries and status structures. We conclude by discussing four implications for the theory of platforms.

Hagan, Ryan, and Denise Milstein. 2025. "Repertoires of Repair: Managing Ontological Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic." Social Forces. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaf178

This article examines the practices used by people who, while in a state of crisis, attempt to restore the sense of continuity and dependability in their environment that is a prerequisite for meaningful social action. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 115 people conducted during the catastrophic first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in New York City, we identify major categories and triggers of disruption as well as what we call the "repertoires of repair," socially learned practices employed to bridge these ruptures. We find two main categories of repair work: changes to the socio-material environment of action, and changes to cognition. We refer to these categories as "agentic enactment" and "cognitive grounding" respectively. In our conclusion we suggest some implications of seeing ontological security as an ongoing relational achievement rather than a latent state of individual psychology. Challenging a transformational bias in sociology, we call for further research on the cultural work people do to produce continuity against continual disruption, and how even these efforts can paradoxically result in unintended social change.

Hanley, Margot, and Hannah Wohl. 2025. "Producing Shifting Personhood: How Designers Anthropomorphize Artificial Intelligence." Big Data & Society, 12(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517251392067

Anthropomorphized artificial intelligence has become increasingly ingrained in the fabric of everyday life, yet sociologists know little about how it is produced. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with 21 voice assistant (VA) designers at major technology companies, we examine how designers of VA devices think about how to design anthropomorphization in order to produce a specific user experience. Extending Erving Goffman's theory of personhood, we find that designers do not always seek to construct devices that convincingly mimic human interaction, even when this is technologically possible in certain ways. Instead, designers selectively build social and personal identities into VA devices as they seek to design devices that are helpful and engaging, broadly appealing, and representative of company values. As a result, devices express what we call shifting personhood, whereby anthropomorphic qualities are conveyed to varying degrees across different moments of interaction.

Mosseri, Sarah. 2025. *Trust Fall: How Workplace Relationships Fail Us. University of California Press.*

How do millions of Americans navigate today's demanding and unpredictable work terrain without the protection of strong labor laws, unions, or a reliable social safety net? They turn to trusted colleagues and supervisors to help find a way through the chaos. But is interpersonal trust truly a solution, or just another source of vulnerability?
In Trust Fall, Sarah Mosseri delves into the intricate web of workplace trust. Drawing on years of immersive research across diverse industries—from bustling restaurants and tech startups to marketing agencies and ride-hail circuits—she uncovers how the very bonds workers rely on to manage instability and insecurity often deepen their exposure to risk and exploitation.

Blending vivid storytelling with sharp sociological insight, Trust Fall reveals the seduction and costs of workplace trust. It gives readers the language to recognize and challenge the unspoken bargains workers make to belong, thrive, and survive in today's precarious labor landscape.

Saguy, Abigail C. 2025. "The Social Constructions of Gender." Sociological Forum. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.70007

The concept of social construction—i.e., the premise that something is created through social interactions, rather than being God-given, natural, or otherwise inevitable—is foundational to gender studies and to the sociology of gender subfield. Through most of the twentieth century, when feminist scholars said that "gender is socially constructed," they were disputing the idea that women's subordination was inevitable. Instead, they maintained that it was produced through childhood socialization and enforced by social institutions, laws, and through social interactions. Toward the end of the twentieth century, some scholars extended social construction arguments to our understanding of men and women as "opposite sexes" or the idea that there are two and only two sexes. Moderate constructionists limited their claims to ideas about, or categories concerning, sex. Radical constructionists denied that there was any pre-discursive reality to sex. For some scholars, activists, and activist-scholars, "assigning" any infant to the category of male or female at birth was not only arbitrary. It constituted an act of violence that enforced a harmful sex binary and denied people the right to self-determination. Recently, some activists have taken up the assertion that sex "assignment" is socially constructed while also maintaining that gender identity (whether one knows oneself to be male, female, or nonbinary) is innate—thus repudiating earlier theories of gender identity as a blank slate. This paper traces this intellectual history and discusses how these distinct—and conflicting—understandings of what it means for gender to be socially constructed inform contemporary debates.

Bryant, Jesse Callahan. 2025. "Front-Stage Politics: Visual Identity and Discourse on the Far Right." The Sociological Quarterly. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2025.2581317.

This article investigates how visual and textual practices together sustain collective identity in contemporary movements, shifting attention from ideology and identity to the mechanisms of collective binding and showing how integrating visual with textual data offers a richer, multimodal understanding of collective identity-related processes. It approaches this topic inductively through a multi-study visual analysis of avatars on the most prominent white nationalist forum as persistent front-stage "props" in Goffman's sense of the term. A preliminary analysis of textual references to "avatars" shows that these user images anchor recognition, project self-presentation, and serve as sites of audience policing. Next, using a Vision Transformer (ViT), an analysis of a novel dataset of more than 8,000 avatars reveals a broad distinction between portrait-based and symbol-based avatars that corresponds to charismatic and ideological forms of collective identification. A third analysis examines how these patterned divides correspond to differences in textual discourse across more than 300,000 posts of user text. By integrating computational visual tools (ViT) with traditional qualitative analysis, these studies contribute to sociological understandings of collective identity by showing how "masks" vary within movements, how charismatic and ideological forms of belonging predominate, and how everyday visual and textual performances of self align.

Schwenck, Anna, Aleksej Tikhonov, and David-Emil Wickström. 2025. "Introduction. Sounds in times of war Popular music, (contentious) politics and social change since Russia's war on Ukraine." *Baltic Worlds* 18 (3): 4–9.

This Special issue focuses on sounds, music, and the role and power of it in times of war. Sponsored by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies in this issue to keep hope for the future in war-torn Ukraine — or at least to bear the burden of today. The articles on the Russian music scene show how popular music is a tool in legitimizing the installed power; the underlying message in popular music videos and lyrics is, to this end, celebrating traditional values, glorifying patriotism, and the nation.

Schwenck, Anna, and Anastasia Bondarenko. 2025. "Performing Homeland and the De-/Legitimation of War. A Multimodal Analysis of Music Videos." *Baltic Worlds* 18 (3): 32–42.

How is war legitimated and delegitimated in music videos? We seek to answer this question using the example of depictions of Russia as a homeland in contemporary music videos. Advancing a multimodal, sound-oriented method to analyze music videos, we engage with the interplay of sound, moving images, and lyrics. How is homeland performed in music videos? Analyzing music videos and performances by Sobor (Ukrainian pro-separatist), Shaman (Russian), and Zemfira (in exile), we find that violence remains hidden in pro-war performances, while emphasizing a Russian-Soviet way of life. Depictions of traditional food and binary gender roles play a central role in pro-war, imperial-nationalist renderings of homeland, while performances mixing Russian food with hand grenades and questioning traditional femininity subvert such romanticization.

Kurakin, Dmitry. 2025. "Emotions in Meaning-Making: Toward a Sociological Theory of Cathexis." *Sociological Forum*, online first. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.70039

The role of emotion in meaning-making remains undertheorized in cultural sociology. This article argues that emotions and affect are intrinsic to meaning-making and proposes cathexis—the attachment of emotions generated in social interaction to objects, symbols, and ideas—as the fundamental mechanism by which emotions co-constitute cultural meanings. Durkheim implied this constitutive role of affect in his theory of collective emotions and model of collective effervescence, but left it unnamed, obscuring the emotional dimension of culture in later research. To address this gap, I reinterpret Freud's concept of cathexis within a Durkheimian framework, reengaging cultural sociology with this crucial insight. Recognizing cathexis as inherent to meaning-making moves us beyond the linear subject-object framework toward understanding meaning-making as extended and enacted within its environments, animated by cathected objects of diverse kinds. I then outline cathexis's key features and their consequences—persistence, thresholds of intensity, boundary-making and surface creation, spontaneity, and the mutual enactment of cathexis and affordances—each offering tools and strategies for future research. Consolidating these insights, the theory culminates in a research program on the "energetic" architecture of environments of action, laying the foundation for a more emotionally attuned cultural sociology.

Adam, Ilke, Jean Beaman, and Mariska Jun (Eds.). 2025. *A New Wave of Antiracism in Europe?: Racialized Minorities at the Centre.* Cham, Switzerland: IMISCOE Springer Books.

This open access book provides a way to understand the current manifestations of anti-racism in Europe, including changes that became particularly visible with the Black Lives Matter related protests beginning in May 2020. The so-called 'new' anti-racism is often described as being led by racialized minorities themselves, foregrounding structural racism, and drawing connections between contemporary racism and the colonial past. But are these features truly new? And can

we speak of a new 'wave' of anti-racism, and what does wave-thinking clarify or obscure? The chapters in this volume explore anti-racist struggles and practices across a range of European contexts, tracing both change and continuity over time. They illuminate how several features of antiracism, now considered distinctive - including the leadership by racialized minorities, have deep roots, though they were pushed to the margins, unrecorded or silenced by the mainstream. Today, these voices are beginning to rise, echoing -sometimes modestly - in the centre. By providing a solid empirical portrait of current and past anti-racist movements in different parts of Europe, this book is a vital resource for students and scholars of race, anti-racism and migration in Europe, as well as for activists and policy-makers navigating the evolving terrain of anti-racist thought and action.

Benzecry, Claudio E. 2025. "For a Strabismic Sociology: A View from the Southern Cone." *Sociological Theory* 43(4):287- 30. https://doi.org/10.1177/07352751251382141

This article, adapted from the 19th Lewis A. Coser lecture delivered in 2024 at the American Sociological Association Meetings, presents three intertwined and sometimes overlapping arguments. First, I examine the limitations of the category "Global South" for studying Latin America. Second, I develop this critique by proposing a perspective distinct from both Northern theory and Global South approaches—what I call a "strabismic" standpoint. Third, I demonstrate this perspective in situ through the case of Argentine sociology, tracing the circulation of knowledge from an intermediate field of sociological production, where the center–periphery duality is but one among multiple relevant dimensions. Taken together, I aim to provincialize current constructions of Global South theory and highlight how in their effort to develop new critiques of the existing canon, scholars—given the dominance of English as a lingua franca—may inadvertently reproduce the very ethnocentrism they seek to challenge.

Halley, Jeffrey A. 2025. "Domination, Weirdness, and Art: On Michael Thompson's Twilight of the Self." *Logos.* 24,1-2.

Halley, Jeffrey A. & Perez, Timothy. 2025. "The Corrido, The Narco Corrido, and The Migra Corrido on the Mexican US Border: From Cultural Resistance to State Ideology." *Revista de Sociología.*

Texas-Mexican corridos, central to the U.S. immigration experience, are a tradition told through ballad form about border conflict and crisis encountered by Mexican-origin people. The corrido is shaped by and shapes a socio-cultural reality, as a form of resistance to ongoing border conflict and state domination. The dialectic of music and migration entails how music is shaped by the migrant experience, and how that, in turn, shapes that experience. We frame music as non-static, transpiring across traditional social boundaries and constituting identities, institutions, and values. Corridos are understood as a reflexive establishment of identity centering around Mexican migration experience. We examine three main corrido forms: the original corrido, the narco corrido, and the migra corrido, discussing their relations to the border, Mexican identity, and social conditions of resistance to power. Tracing the development of the corrido, early 20th century corridos were a form of cultural resistance. The narco corrido, with references to Prohibition and drug laws, celebrates the drug smuggler as social bandit and hero. Finally, the newer U.S.-Mexican government mandated migra corrido serves as a US/Mexican government ISA, developed as a media-based response to increased US immigration. It appropriates but inverts the corrido's critical nature as a cultural form.

Skotnicki, Tad. 2025. "Two Ways of Arguing with Culture." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology.* Online First. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-025-00274-8.

> Arguing with culture—that is, making claims with and about culture—seems to require one to assert something about what culture does. But I propose that such a requirement unduly limits sociologists to an invariant, positivist form of argument. By examining claims making with and about culture in terms of mereology, or part-whole relations, I distinguish two modes of arguing with culture: fragmentary and constitutive. The former revolves around claims wherein parts are potentially autonomous bearers of distinct forces; the latter revolves around claims wherein parts mediate one another, and their relations evince distinct forms. Moreover, these two modes of argument entail different ways of appealing to wholes. Fragmentary arguments treat wholes as analytically insignificant residuals. Constitutive arguments treat wholes as analytically crucial. Thus, attention to how people argue with culture opens the space for careful reflection on and debate about explanatory practices.

Welch, Levin. 2025. "Nimiipuu/Nez Perce persistence: From time immemorial to the future." *Critical Sociology.* Online First. https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205251376692

> Hundreds of millions of Indigenous People persist worldwide as members of distinct socio-political groups, affecting political economy from their ancestral land bases. Dominant Western social science tends to frame the persistence of Indigenous Peoples in capitalism as a paradox of irreconcilable times and ways of life, partially because of the analytical tools available to make sense of social life. Analyzing 120 publications from the Nimiipuu/Nez Perce about their social worlds before and since Western imperialism, I name and critique imperial chronology as a research orientation that reifies abstract imperial time-measuring concepts and substitutes symbolism for human behavior. According to Nimiipuu/Nez Perce publications, they persist because they have been adapting inventively to new conditions in their homeland since "a time immemorial." In this paper, I show how Nimiipuu/Nez Perce consciously coordinate changes and tradition vis-à-vis their ancestral lifeways of storytelling, husbandry, and community to produce (im)material resources that they consider necessary.