

SECTION CULTURE



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Word from the Chair

Geneviève Zubrzycki, University of Michigan



My fellow cultural sociologists,

As you will see within these pages, the State of the Section is strong! We had a great meeting in Chicago: Panels were diverse, papers excellent and discussions lively. The Section's two invited panels, "Culture and its intersections" and "Sources of Cultural Power" were exceptionally well-attended even though one was at 8:30 am and the other occupied the much-dreaded final slot of the ASA program. We're happy to showcase interventions made by Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Fernando Domínguez Rubio and Claudio Benzecry on "Culture and its Intersections" and feature reviews of other Culture panels by section members in special section of the newsletter.

Chicago is behind us, but we're already quite busy preparing our next meeting in Seattle: Although our membership has dropped slightly, we still have seven panels allocated for the 2016 meeting in Seattle, so we look forward to receiving your submissions in January. We also look forward to receiving nominations for our section's awards (see page 2 for award committees information and the ASA's website for full submission instructions).

And of course we are thrilled that a prominent member of our section, Michèle Lamont, was elected President of the ASA! As President-elect and chair of the 2017 Program Committee, she chose "Culture, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion across the Globe" as the theme for that year's meeting, which will take place in Montréal. Proposals for thematic sessions are due Friday, November 13. Please see specific instructions here: http://www.asanet.org/meetings/member_suggestions.cfm. And don't miss the interview with Michèle Lamont on page 4!

Finally, I look forward to working with you this year to develop a mentoring program for our graduate students. Please email me suggestions on what form(s) it could take. I hope to put something in place later this fall so it can be announced in our January newsletter and fully launched this winter.

Best wishes for the Fall, Geneviève

CULTURE SECTION AWARDS 2015

Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book

This year's committee for the Sociology of Culture Section's Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book, was chaired by Jason Rodriguez (U. Mass. Boston) and also consisted of Karyn Lacy (U. Michigan) and Richard Ocejo (John Jay College). They are pleased to report that the winner of this year's Douglas Prize is Fatma Muge Gocek (University of Michigan) for the book, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009*, published by Oxford. The committee agreed this is an extraordinary and impressive book. It examines over 300 memoirs (among other sources) to explain the cultural and structural layers of the denial of state violence against the Armenians. Gocek's book is a masterpiece and is especially relevant given the ongoing crisis in Turkey. The book helps readers to understand why the conflict ensued and the degree to which the government is complicit, fanning the flames. One committee member couldn't think of any other book that fills this void. What is impressive about Gocek's book is how she extends her theory of denial to time periods that predate the genocide itself. Much of previous literature has only focused on what happens after such a traumatic event takes place. Committee members loved that aspect of her book, and think it makes a wonderful contribution. Join us in congratulating her!

The Douglas Prize Committee also bestowed honorable mention on Gabriel Abend's *The Moral Background: An Inquiry in the History of Business Ethics*.

Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article

The committee for the Sociology of Culture Section's Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article was chaired by Katherine Giuffre (Colorado College) and joined by Jordanna Matlon (American University) and Stephen Vaisey (Duke University). In "Classification and Coercion: The Destruction of Piracy in the English Maritime System," Matthew Norton (University of Oregon) ingeniously uses English reaction to predatory maritime activity in the 17th and 18th centuries to develop the notion of a cultural infrastructure as a way to conceptualize the connection between systems of meaning-making and the concrete exercise of state power. Norton analyzes the cultural dynamics that informed state action, especially the capacity for violence, focusing on the interplay of codes, interpretive institutions, and social performances. Using fascinating historical case studies and an incisive analysis of legal codes, Norton examines the way in which cultural classification was used to succes-

fully produce and legitimize coercive state power when earlier attempts at the destruction of piracy had failed. Well beyond the context of the 18th century, Norton's work is relevant to discussions of the ways in which coordinated classification and cultural infrastructure are not only important for understanding state formation, but also for understanding how culture can support or constrain any state's use of power, including against its own citizens in the forms of policing and the regulation of populations. Join us in congratulating him!

The committee also bestowed two honorable mentions: Elena Obukhova (McGill), Ezra Zuckerman (MIT) and Jiayin Zhang's (MIT) "When Politics Froze Fashion: The Effect of the Cultural Revolution on Naming in Beijing." and Isaac Reed's "Deep Culture in Action: Resignification, Synedhoce, and Metanarratives in the Moral Panic of the Salem Witch Trials."

Richard A. Peterson Prize for Best Student Paper

This year's committee for the Sociology of Culture Section's Richard A. Peterson Prize for Best Student Paper, was chaired by Vaughn Schmutz (UNC Charlotte) who was joined by Fiona Rose-Greenland (U. of Chicago) and Caroline Lee (Lafayette College). The winning paper, "From Legal Cynicism to Situational Trust," by Monica Bell (Harvard U.), offers a penetrating examination of poor African-American women in Washington, DC and their relationship to the Metropolitan Police Department. Bell confronts an empirical paradox: findings consistently show that poor, urban, black Americans deeply distrust police, yet they also call for police assistance more often than other communities, controlling for crime rates. Based on seven months of field work, including interviews with 50 low-income African-American women, Bell demonstrates that legal cynicism should be understood not as a binary, structural phenomenon but as a graded, cultural one. Rather than being a monolithic or static cultural orientation, Bell convincingly argues that legal cynicism involves a richly textured cultural repertoire that offers alternative strategies of action in response to structural and situational dynamics. Situating her conceptual framework at the intersection of culture and poverty and sociological studies of law and institutions, she makes a valuable contribution to the growing concern among sociologists with inequality and cultural heterogeneity. In doing so, she skillfully applies the tools of cultural sociology to a timely issue and compellingly demonstrates their relevance to the pressing matters of public policy. Join us in congratulating her!

CALLS FOR PAPERS AND PROPOSALS

"Decolonial Options for the Social Sciences" Mini-Conference at Eastern Sociological Society Meeting. Boston, March 17-20, 2016. Contact: Alexander I. Stingl. Email: nomadicscholarship@gmail.com. Details at <https://decolonialsocialsciences.wordpress.com/>

"Can Comparative Historical Sociology Save the World?" *Mini-Conference of the Comparative Historical Sociology Section* of the American Sociological Association and the Equality Development and Globalization Studies (EDGS) program at Northwestern University. Friday, August 19, 2016 in Seattle, Washington. Contact for questions: Johnnie Lotesta (johnnie_lotesta@brown.edu). Submission *Submission deadline for paper proposals: January 30, 2016. Details of call at <http://asaculturesection.org/2015/10/29/can-comparative-historical-sociology-save-the-world-cfp-jan-30-2016/>*

Special issue of *The Sociology of Development on Professionals and the Professions in the Developing World*. Contact: Nitsan Chorev (nitsan_chorev@brown.edu) and Andrew Schrank (andrew_schrank@brown.edu), editors. Deadline: Dec. 2, 2015. Details of call at <http://asaculturesection.org/2015/11/01/cfp-professionals-and-the-professions-in-the-developing-world/>

"Food Systems and Health" (*Advances in Medical Sociology, Volume 18*). Brea L. Perry, Series Editor and Sara Shostak, Volume Editor. Deadline: January 15, 2016. Please send your proposal to Sara Shostak, volume editor, at sshostak@brandeis.edu. Details of call at <http://asaculturesection.org/2015/09/15/cfp-food-systems-and-health-jan-15/>

JOB SEARCH

The Department of Sociology at Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia) invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the area of Culture, with a substantive focus on Chinese culture and society, to start Fall 2016. Deadline Nov. 12. See full job description on p. 25 of this Newsletter.

2016 Culture Section Award Committees:

Mary Douglas Book Award

Lyn Spillman (chair)
Professor
University of Notre Dame
spillman.1@nd.edu

Virág Molnár
Associate Professor
The New School
molnarv@newschool.edu

Ronald Jacobs
Professor
University at Albany
rjacobs@albany.edu

Clifford Geert Prize for Best Article

Matthew Norton (chair)
Assistant Professor
University of Oregon
mnorton@uoregon.edu

Rhys H. Williams
Professor
Loyola University Chicago
rwilliams7@luc.edu

Ming-Cheng Lo
University of California-Davis
mmlo@ucdavis.edu

Richard Peterson Award for Best Graduate Student Paper: Deadline Feb 29th

Terrence McDonnell (Chair)
Assistant Professor
University of Notre Dame
terrence.e.mcdonnell@nd.edu

Ruth Braunstein
Assistant Professor
University of Connecticut
ruth.braunstein@uconn.edu

Monica C. Bell
Doctoral Candidate
Harvard University
monicabell@fas.harvard.edu



"The structural study of inequality has been a gigantic enterprise for the social sciences, but our understanding of cultural processes is still at a relatively early stage. We approach the program as an occasion to foster theoretical developments along these lines."

Michèle Lamont

CALL FOR INVITED SESSION PROPOSALS

"Culture, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion across the Globe."

112th Annual ASA Meeting, Aug. 12-15, 2017 in Montréal, Québec, Canada.

Deadlines: Nov. 13, 2015 ("Thematic Sessions") / **Feb. 5, 2016** (all other sessions including Workshops, Courses, Special, Regional Spotlight, and Author Meets Critics).

Details of the call at http://www.asanet.org/meetings/member_suggestions.cfm. Submission through the ASA member portal only: <https://asa.enoah.com/default.aspx>

Q&A with Michèle Lamont, ASA President-Elect

Alexandra Kowalski, Princeton University

Raised in Québec, Canada, Michèle Lamont was trained as a student in Toronto and Paris, and as a scholar at Stanford and Princeton. She has been teaching at Harvard University since 2002, where she is currently the Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies, Professor of Sociology and African and African American Studies, and Director of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. Michèle Lamont is one of the most distinguished contemporary sociologists of culture, and her recent designation as President-Elect of the American Sociological Association is a sure sign of a very special two upcoming years for the Culture Section. We asked her questions about the program she is putting together for the 2017 meeting, as well as about the connections between this program and her intellectual biography. We thank Michèle warmly for her time and generosity responding to our queries.

How does it feel to be the next president of ASA, Michèle?

First, warm thanks to you, Alexandra, for proposing this interview. This is a great opportunity to reflect on our 2017 ASA program and on where we hope to be going.

It is an immense honor to be nominated and elected, of course. The most exciting and attractive part is certainly the opportunity to set an intellectual agenda for the discipline. Having the responsibility to choose the theme for the 2017 meeting felt like a wondrous gift. I see this as an occasion to make our discipline more aware of the questions that cultural sociologists have been asking,

our analytical tools, and our research. Conversely, we can use this opportunity to make our subfield less inward-looking. I have been arguing for a while that cultural sociologists need to set their sights on influencing the social sciences as a whole, including public health, political science, demography, and criminology (some of the fields where 1960s-style views of culture remain influential, with baggage that includes pernicious arguments about the culture of poverty, culturalism, and more). As you can see if you look at the description of [the thematic program](#), "Culture, Inequalities and Social Inclusion across the World," the program committee drew inspiration from the

literature many of us work with. The structural study of inequality has been a gigantic enterprise for the social sciences, but our understanding of cultural processes is still at a relatively early stage. We approach the program as an occasion to foster theoretical developments along these lines. Fortunately, the ASA staff runs a well-oiled machine so we can focus on the intellectual part and it is just really fun! I encourage section members to look at [our list of questions](#) for more information on what kinds of sessions we have in mind and to send in proposals (deadlines are November 13 and February 5!). Of course, we are open to all kinds of other ideas beyond our list.

Let's talk a bit about the call and each of its terms, especially "culture" and "inequalities".

Of course. The practice has been for the president to connect the theme to their own research agenda. So I proposed the theme and refined it with considerable input from a diverse and creative program committee. After culture (a polymorphic term par excellence) comes "inequalities" in the plural, so it's not only about class or income inequalities, but about all forms of inequalities. The next term, "social inclusion," suggests that we're looking at inequality through both the politics of distribution and the politics of stigmatization/recognition (to borrow Nancy Fraser's formulation). I drew inspiration from a co-authored book due out by the 2016 ASA

meeting, where my collaborators and I analyze how ordinary people who belong to stigmatized groups make sense of how they go about responding to experiences of ethno-racial exclusion. This book is about the politics of recognition and its impact on inequality, and on ongoing social change processes. The 2017 ASA program call challenges the discipline to think about these two dimensions of distribution and recognition together. Another idea is to elicit new or more systematic reflection on causality and social processes.

"The question of how to bring sociology to American audiences, how to make it more central to our civic sphere (which is so dominated by economics and cognitive psychology) should be crucial to us. More generally, we need to think about the shape and place of sociology across national contexts and how we can contribute to social change."

Michèle Lamont

Where else do the key ideas for this program come from?

In a 2014 paper in the *Socioeconomic Review* titled "What is Missing? Cultural Processes and the Making of Inequality," my coauthors Stefan Beljean, Matthew Clair and I endeavored to think about cultural aspects of phenomena such as racialization, stigmatization, commensuration, and standardization as unfolding processes that open or close paths of action and inequality. This paper is part of a broader agenda, a response to Charles Tilly's book *Durable Inequality* where the monopolization of resources is central (as much as Tilly wanted to become more identity-centric). We are interested in the other side of the coin, togetherness and connectedness, which also feed into inequality. We need to broaden the agenda for a more multidimensional approach to inequality along these li-

nes, and my hope is that the Montreal meeting will be an opportunity to do that.

The next notion in the program title is "around the world" which invokes ideas of international, transnational or global approaches. Is it an implicit call for US sociologists to open up to the world? In relation to your work, does that also represent a global turn of sorts? Is it perhaps also a nod to the rising "global" and "transnational" foci in sociology?

Yes, the 2017 ASA program will give a little push for American sociology to open up. We function in a huge discipline in a huge country, so it's easy for people to not be aware of how "American" their research questions can be (and like fish in water, to not have an awareness of their distinctive habitat). ASA is not the International Sociological Association of course, but given that the 2017 meeting will take place abroad, in Montreal, it is an interesting opportunity to "decenter" a bit.

I want to add that, in my view, the transnational/global and the national cannot be thought about without one another and one does not erase the other. I am now the director of the Weatherhead Center for International Studies, one of the two largest social science centers at Harvard. My role is strictly one of intellectual leadership and it is an opportunity to help shape the social sciences on our campus. We mobilize our resources to foster international, comparative, global, and transnational research and, in most cases, graduate students and faculty anchor their work in deep knowledge of national cases.

What about Canada? Is there a plan to do something

with Canadian sociologists?

The Canadian Sociological Association reached out to us and asked if we'd be interested in having them take the lead on some sessions. We are very eager for their involvement. Cultural imperialism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism, may be topics to be featured (with star philosophers like Will Kymlicka and popular writers such as Naomi Klein). More generally, cosmopolitanism, diversity, and belonging are important in the context of Quebec and Canada. But nothing is decided yet. The program committee will meet in mid-December and in February and everyone will be contributing ideas.

I also hope the meeting will consider how sociology is covered by the media in other countries. France for instance has stellar journalists such as Sylvain Bourmeau, the host of an amazing radio program on France Culture that covers sociology in a very sophisticated way. The question of how to bring sociology to American audiences, how to make it more central to our civic sphere (which is so dominated by economics and cognitive psychology) should be crucial to us. More generally, we need to think about the shape and place of sociology across national contexts and how we can contribute to social change.

Going back to the question of inequality and its place in your work: how would you say your approach changed over the years, if at all? I am thinking in particular about the most recent and upcoming volumes, *Getting Respect* and *Worlds of Worth*.

With each book I have moved to a new intellectual terrain. That's the only way I know how to remain engaged. But yes, the relationship between culture and inequality has remained the red

thread or *fil conducteur*, with a focus on symbolic distinctions and the construction of worth.

If you think of my books, *Money, Morals, Manners*, or *The Dignity of Working Men*, or *How Professors Think*—they are all books about morality, scripts of excellence, evaluation, group hierarchies, and how boundaries operate. *Money, Morals and Manners* (1992) and *The Dignity of Working Men* (2000), my first two books, set an agenda for the comparative study of racial and class differences and cultural repertoires (see also the collective book I coedited with Laurent Thévenot, *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology* (2000)). Since *How Professors Think* (2009) I have focused on a range of other issues having to do with evaluation, neoliberalism, and destigmatization. I studied with Bourdieu in Paris in the late seventies and early eighties; so it was relatively easy for me to develop a critical agenda when his work gained visibility here in the eighties, in part because I understood its blind spots and was in close conversation with those interested in developing a post-Bourdieuian agenda in the French context (Boltanski and Thévenot, and some of the French pragmatists who are only now gaining some attention in the US, but also Latour and others).

Recent books such as *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era* (2013) and *Successful Societies* (2009), which came out of the [interdisciplinary program](#) I have codirected with Peter A. Hall for thirteen stimulating years, are different because they are deeply interdisciplinary and concerned with how collective capacities are fostered by cultural and institutional dynamics. After *Getting Respect* (on which we are now putting the very last touches), I am working on a book for a broader audience, *Worlds*

of Worth, which is based on the Adorno lectures I gave in Frankfurt in June 2014 and at the College de France in May 2015. Piketty has given economic inequality center stage and heightened popular awareness of this massive problem. Is it possible to also tell a story about the cultural mechanisms that contribute to growing inequality, a story that can be appealing to a larger public (and that is certainly different from the story economists tell)? I want to revisit questions that were central to my first two comparative books. In a way I still think of myself as an immigrant, as I tend to look at US society as an outsider (I never thought I'd end up in the United States until I landed here at 25!).

Can you tell us a bit about the other end of the arc — your formative years as a junior culture sociologist and faculty member at Princeton?

When I was recruited as an assistant professor at Princeton in 1987, the place was not the rich collection of culture scholars that it became in the 1990s. Bob Wuthnow was there and, shortly after, Paul DiMaggio and Viviana Zelizer were recruited. My growth as a sociologist, before I got tenure in 1993, was determined by that: Those were the major scholars for whom I was writing in my head — though there were a few others such as Ann Swidler, Bill Sewell, and Wendy Griswold — and I saw the bar as very high. With the distance, I have become more aware of how much my interests were in conversation with each of their research agendas. We are still editing together the Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology series at Princeton University Press, which will soon celebrate its twentieth

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ASA Meeting 2015



From the Invited Panel “Culture and its Intersections”:

Cultural Sociological Intersections and Informings: Art, Literature, Philosophy Robin Wagner-Pacifci, The New School

I start, as so much of sociology does, with a puzzle. What are events? How do they take shape? Why are they so riveting and repulsive at the same time (drawing our fascinated attention and making us queasy)? Events highlight the age-old existential and sociological issue of the relationship between continuity and change, but they seem to do so in specific ways. Having a puzzle I had to figure out how to investigate it, how to trace the phenomenon.

Everything is or can be data in this endeavor and myriad ways exist to interrogate them. Actor-Network theorist Michel Callon calls the process of locating and following “data” translation or free association; Bruno Latour terms it a relay race; but I think of it more as tracking — following sociological intuitions and electrical charges as events move through one informing after another. Which brings me to a large disciplinary question: how can sociologists best investigate things like events, things that both take shape and move?

One approach is to think about the nature of eventful infusions, the way that events move through many forms on their aspirational ways to coherence or sedimentation. This shares much with a processual approach, but with a difference. Process and structure are both *in the picture*. This is where art, literature, and philosophy (among other media and modalities of communication and expression) come in — each deals with form and flow in its own ways. Sociologists, especially sociologists of culture, can make it their business to know these forms and their capacities — can try to know them from the inside

Semiosis Beyond Culture: An Ecological Approach

Fernando Dominguez Rubio, UC San Diego

For this year’s ASA conference, we were invited to participate in the panel “Culture and its Intersections” with the specific remit of reflecting on the future of the discipline through its intersection with other fields of inquiry. What follows is a version of the paper I presented at the conference, which revolved around the idea that, if cultural sociology is to maintain its relevance today, it needs to move beyond the idea of “culture”. Admittedly, this may sound a little bit outlandish, to say the least. For, what is cultural sociology if it is not the study of culture? My answer to this question is that cultural sociology should be understood, instead, as the study of what we could call, following Charles Peirce (1955: 282–5), “semiosis”, that is, the study of the generation of meaning.

What I want to argue in this brief note is that the study of semiosis—i.e. the study of how meaning is generated—has been unduly constrained by what I would like to call the “cultural view”. By this I mean that view according to which beliefs, values, norms, etc., are linked to one another constituting a more or less coherent and autonomous system, called “culture”, which is said to live in people’s minds and bodies in the form of, among other things, mental schemata, linguistic systems, or bodily dispositions. Following this view, the mission of cultural sociology has been understood to be that of providing a causal explanation accounting for how “culture”, thus understood, shapes how we act, how we think, and how we communicate.

The problem with this cultural view, I want to argue, is that it provides us with a very

WAGNER-PACIFICI PAPER

as well as the outside, that is, can know how those who study such things as art, literature, and philosophy have developed their own analytic approaches.

Here, I want to highlight two things I learned about events by approaching them through art, literature, and philosophy.

I call the first revelation “The Pause.”

I began to recognize the importance of the pause for events when, in writing about the French Revolution, I contemplated Jacques-Louis David’s painting, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*.

The painting highlights an encounter occurring several years after the Romans had abduc-



ted the women of the neighboring Sabines (alleged to have taken place during Rome’s early history in the 8th century B.C.E.), when the Sabines are about to plunge into battle to reclaim their women. This painting features a woman at its literal and narrative center. She is Hersilia, the daughter of Titus Tatius, leader of the Sabines, and now wife of the founder and leader of Rome, Romulus. Hersilia positions herself (and her several children by Romulus) between the warring forces. Her arms are raised and outstretched toward the two leaders who are about to raise their swords against each other. Multiple women join Hersilia in the painting’s center, their heads up, their gazes seeking the eyes of the imminently attacking battle antagonists. In the midst of the chaos of soldiers, swords, lances, horses, women and babies, Hersilia stops the violent encounter. And she does so through a revelation that simultaneously indexes and performs a transformation. The revelation is that the existence of the offspring remakes the identities of the enemies – they are now all members of one family. Genealogical recognition clarifies and reroutes this event – it is the event. Hersilia’s contrastive indexing of the past, (the ‘then’ of enmity) and the

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RUBIO PAPER

restricted understanding of semiosis, one in which action, language, and cognition are taken to be the main—and very often the only—relevant *loci* to understand the generation and negotiation of meaning. Thus, according to the proponents of this cultural view, if we are to understand how meaning is generated and negotiated, our attention should be placed on things such as “symbolic patterns” (Douglas 1966:3), “cognitive schemata” (DiMaggio 1997; Patterson 2014), “toolkits” and “strategies of action” (Swidler 1986), “performances” and “rituals”(Alexander et al., 2006), “motivations and mechanisms”(Reed 2011; Vaisey 2009), “symbolic boundaries”(Lamont and Fournier, 1992), or on how people “interact with one another” (Khan 2015)

What I want to claim is that, although this cultural view has played an extremely important role in legitimating the study of meaning as a proper field of sociological enquiry, and although it has proven to be useful to analyze certain registers of semiosis (especially the discursive and the interactional), it is ultimately unsatisfactory since it fails to recognize several other important registers of semiosis. And as I hope to show in what follows, many of these unexplored registers of semiosis are crucial to understand how meaning is produced and maintained in contemporary societies.

So to put it in a nutshell, the argument that I want to make is that we need to study semiosis beyond the straightjacket of “culture”. More specifically, I want to argue that we need to widen our exploration of semiosis by moving towards an “ecological” view which does not take cognition, action, or language to be the only relevant *loci* in the study of semiosis.

At the ASA meeting, I exemplified this ecological approach exploring three underexplored registers of semiosis: things, built environments, and technological infrastructures. I will explore briefly the first two, and will dwell in a little bit more detail on the third one, since I think these technologies and infrastructures have become extremely important to understanding how meaning is being generated today, but have been so far sorely neglected by American cultural sociologists.

THINGS AND THE CORROSION OF MEANING
My argument here is simple: things are important to understand the temporality and fragility of the semiotic systems we analyze. To illustrate

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present (the ‘now’ of kinship) is succinctly accomplished through her hand and arm gestures of pointing out that reality and foreshadowing the battle.

Art historical criticism has drawn a contrast between two David paintings, the *Oath of Horatii* and the *Intervention of the Sabine Women* as regards the role of women. Norman Bryson has written: “[I]t is to be noted that the women in this [*Sabine*] painting are not content with being marginalized as decorous images, like the women in the *Oath*...they force their image into the visuality of the males...” But this analysis is limited, satisfied with noting the women and then drawing attention to the painting’s historical genesis in David’s post-Terror, post-imprisonment altered perspective on the trajectory of the French Revolution and his changed personal and marital (divorce then reconciliation) circumstances. Other critics have offered ambivalent assessments of the work by suggesting that its scene of “détente” decompresses the narrative action. For example, Michael Fried argues that the painting departed from the “compositional strategy basic to earlier pictures, the evocation of a single, highly specific moment of tension or crisis...in favor of a less actively temporal mode of representation that might be said to depict a moment of a sort but one that has been dilated, expanded, almost to the point of no longer serving to advance the action and within which the actors themselves have been made to relax, to suspend their efforts, in a general détente...[in] [t]he de-dramatization of action...” Both Bryson and Fried express ambivalence toward this painting - Bryson both appreciates

how it draws the image of the female into the ambit of the visuality of the male but claims the painting reverts to an explicit theatricality; Fried appreciates the painting’s paradoxical anti-theatricality in replacing the pose for excess drama, but argues that it dilates (relaxes, suspends, de-dramatizes) and does not advance the action. Neither allows as to how the *pause* (or *pose*) effected in the painting may *be* the action, how the painting participates in a reconceptualization of action, and thus of historical events generally.

As well, the theme of the role of the witness to events is raised when the pause is put in the foreground. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Sabine Women*, witnesses become protagonists through their very *imposition* of the pause. Thus the refusal, by a nominal witness, of an event as an event makes it an event of a different sort.

But pauses are themselves complex features of semiotic interaction and articulation (in William Sewall’s terms). Events occasion a sense of acceleration and urgency, often an urgency to forge and follow the event in its path toward its (unknown and unknowable) destination. There is no abstract way to assess the ontology of pauses outside of specific empirical cases in which they operate. Are they breaks in the momentum? Are they interruptions that stop an event in its tracks? Are they simply slow-downs? Are they events in their own rights? Pauses stop events, pauses re-route events, pauses are events. And it was partly through looking closely at paintings and reading what art historians had to say about them that I realized that.

I call the second revelation “The Trigger Gave.”

It is striking how often guns and triggers are featured in ana-

lyses by philosophers of language as they try to get a bead on events in life and in sentences. It’s more than a little ironic that “ordinary language” philosophers exploit examples of sentences in which someone is (extraordinarily) shot (see examples in Lecture VIII of *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin and in Donald Davidson’s book *Essays on Actions and Events*). Such philosophical exegeses provide another set of analytical approaches to event contingencies, ruptures, and causal sense-making.

In philosophical, fictional, and real worlds of violent interactions, scenes of triggers firing are sometimes experienced and represented as surprising ruptures where the shots seem to come “out of nowhere” but are subsequently drawn into an “event.” One such iconic scene in literature is the fictional shooting of the “Arab” who is lying next to a stream near the beach (an Arcadian setting) in Albert Camus’ novel *The Stranger*, a shooting carried out by the existentially alienated protagonist Meursault. In that case, the “event” into which the shooting is drawn is actually the recent death of Meursault’s mother, rather than the death of the shooting victim himself.

Another scene of an unexpected trigger firing involves the real-world shooting in 2012 of a seventeen-year-old African American, Trayvon Martin, by George Zimmerman, a self-identifying Hispanic American (though also with Germanic parentage) on the pathways of the townhouse development “Retreat at Twin Lakes” in Sanford, Florida. In that case, the firing of the gun erupted during a physical confrontation between the two as Zimmerman, a Neighborhood Watch volunteer, tracked Martin walking home from the store to

his father's girlfriend's house. In this case, the emergent event's trajectory wove its way through legal and political framings of self-defense, stand-your-ground, murder, and manslaughter.

In both of the sites of gunshot we encounter the eruption of violence in an ostensibly Arcadian setting — the trigger “giving” to shatter the putative calm. In the case of the shooting of Trayvon Martin, the gated residential development of “Retreat at Twin Lakes” had been described as Arcadia-like. A reporter from the *Tampa Bay Times* wrote: “Developers...planned a gated subdivision just 10 minutes from downtown — a cloistered community near the interstate, close to good schools, outlet malls and the magic of Disney World. The idea, as always, was that people could live peacefully in a paradise where nobody could park a car on the street or paint the house an odd color.”

Nevertheless, both of these apparent Arcadias were revealed to contain more sinister and contradictory underbellies. Camus' book, published in 1942, takes place against the harsh backdrop of French colonialism in Algeria, a colonialism that would eventually end after a 7-year-long war of independence (1954-1962).

The situation in the “Retreat at Twin Lakes” at the time of Trayvon Martin's shooting also compromised its alleged Arcadian ideality. Following the 2008 financial crisis and attendant “Great Recession,” home values in this development declined rapidly. Homeowners and investors were propelled to rent rather than sell, residents were more transient, an increasing number of properties were uninhabited, and robberies increased. Throughout, the neighborhood maintained its racial diversity, but George Zimmerman

— a particularly vigilant resident then Neighborhood Watch volunteer — grew increasingly preoccupied with the category “black male” as potential interlopers and law-breakers.

Both violent encounters described here thus focus on charged social identities that rely on categorical assumptions and stereotypes of race and ethnicity. And in both cases, there is violence that appears unmotivated by strict narrative causality. In such settings, action takes on a provisional life of its own and the acts' multiple “authors” must attempt to fill in the gap between the (Arcadian or ex-Arcadian) ground and the rupture of the gunshot. Hence, in *The Stranger*, the text reads: “Then everything began to reel before my eyes... Every nerve in my body was a steel spring, and my grip closed on the revolver. *The trigger gave, and the smooth underbelly of the butt jogged my palm.* And so, with that crisp, whipcrack sound, it all began. I shook off my sweat and the clinging veil of light. I knew I'd shattered the balance of the day, the spacious calm of this beach on which I had been happy. But I fired four shots more into the inert body, on which they left no visible trace.”

The use of the passive voice in the description of the first shot (“the trigger gave”) - but interestingly not the last four - has multiple resonances. As the philosophers of language point out, such sentence constructions grammatically separate action from intention, and anticipate multiple meanings and consequences for their uptake. In this particular novel's context, it might be understood as the logical action-outcome of a passive, alienated personality like Meursault. It might also be Camus' way of highlighting the existential meaninglessness of human action. It might also be a way to

signal that events erupt out of the blue, with an inevitable gap between intention and action. Whatever else it does, this grammatical distance seeks to insulate an actor from the action. In this way, grammar is distinctly political.

The grammatical work with acts and intentionality in the George Zimmerman trial was just as intense and revelatory as that presented in *The Stranger*. Passive voice combined with negative infinitives, as Judge Debra Nelson gave nearly incomprehensible instructions to the jury on their way to deliberations: “In order to convict of manslaughter by act, it is not necessary for the State to prove that George Zimmerman had an intent to cause death, only an intent to commit an act that was not merely negligent, justified, or excusable and which caused death.”

In all of these examples from legal discourse and literary prose, from philosophical sentence fragments highlighting grammar, and from paintings doing the work of reconfiguring history and revolutions, sociologists can find events flowing through the media in which they live. Motives for the firings of guns are discerned or made by novelists conjuring fictions and jurists on the trail of the facts. Motives for the non-raising of weapons are discerned or made by painters conjuring genealogical networks. Sociologists can find their own analytical quarry, sometimes indirectly, by looking at paintings, reading novels, and parsing sentences with humanist confreres.



RUBIO

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this, let me focus on a phenomenon that, for all its insidious ubiquity, has hardly been discussed by cultural sociologists (for some exceptions, see Benzecri, 2015; Domínguez Rubio, 2014; McDonnell, 2010; Zubrzycki, 2013). And this the fact the things through which we build meaning into the world are always falling apart, wearing down, and malfunctioning and, as a result, they have to be constantly mended, repaired, retrofitted or repurposed. Examples abound.

Think, for example, about how those seemingly timeless monuments through which collective narratives are built [slowly crumble away](#); or how those artworks and cultural products through which we weave our symbolic universes [wane and perish](#), sometimes [without leaving a single trace behind them](#); or, more simply, think about the wear and tear of all the mundane physical paraphernalia through which we build the symbolic boundaries that make possible our cultural identities on a daily basis. What these examples reveal is something that is as evident as it is easily dismissed, and that is that “*culture*” *corrodes*.

More specifically, they show that processes like corrosion or physical degradation cannot be simply seen as “natural” processes taking place somewhere outside “culture,” but must be seen instead as some of the very processes through which semiosis takes place. This relentless process of physical change is, among other things, partly responsible for the fact that meaning is never given once and for all, but is always precariously achieved and has to be continually maintained over time — something which, as it turns out,

requires a [massive and ongoing work of maintenance and repair](#).

Interestingly, this kind of cultural work of repair and maintenance has remained largely ignored by cultural sociologists. Indeed, while we have paid plenty of attention to how we produce cultural objects (e.g. “cultural production paradigm”) or how we interpret and consume them (e.g. “reception studies”), we have not paid much attention at all to the work devoted to maintaining and repairing them. Something that, when you come to think about it, is actually quite strange, since a great deal of our daily toil — and budgets! — consists, precisely, in trying to keep things legible as effective and meaningful cultural objects. This is why we are *constantly* maintaining, mending and repairing stuff, and in so doing, why we are constantly engaged in the process of tweaking, changing, or stabilizing the physical fabric of meaning.

So what I want to argue is that there cannot be a full sociological understanding of semiosis without paying attention to the ongoing and never-ending process of maintenance and repair that make it possible to keep our symbolic systems up and running. What this means is that, if we are to have a full account of semiosis, we cannot simply focus on production and consumption practices, but we also need to pay attention to the largely invisible and ungrateful cultural

work produced by other cultural actors who, despite their importance, do not tend to feature much into our accounts. Think, for example, about gardeners, cleaners, plumbers, technicians, mechanics, or conservators, and how they are constantly performing those largely invisible adjustments on the backstage of our lives through which different semiotic systems and boundaries are constantly negotiated, [on a daily basis](#). As we all know, were it not for this ongoing cultural work of maintenance and repair of these actors, the meaningful objects that furnish our lives, as well the systems of meanings and value that are generated through them, would simply [collapse in front of our eyes](#).



Fig.1. When maintenance and repair stop and meanings collapse. Abandoned headquarters of the Bulgarian communist party. Photo by [Thomas Jorion](#).

THE SILENT SEMIOSIS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The second semiotic register I would like to explore is what I call “the built environments of meaning”. Here, my aim is to draw attention to the fact that, exceptions aside (e.g. Chandra Mukerji, Harvey Molotch, Thomas Gieryn, or Virág Molnár), the analyses of cultural

sociologists have tended to be largely “aspatial”. For the most part, the built environment has played a very modest support role in the accounts of cultural sociologists, either playing the rather dull role of the “external physical background” providing “inputs” to be processed by the “internal” cultural software installed in our bodies and minds,

meanings produced elsewhere, but are, in fact, *one* of the sites in which meanings are actually generated and negotiated. Hence, I argued the need to see semiosis as a three-dimensional process, if we are to understand how those seemingly banal elements that make up the environments in which we operate — like walls, stairs, bridges, win-

are **now capable of accumulating amounts of data** that traditional cultural repositories, like the library or the museum, could never have dreamt of. Just as an example, hosting the server capacity of a company like Facebook would require more than 30,000 Libraries of Congress. Now, what is interesting about these digital infrastructures is that they are much more than simple silos of cultural content. They are, first and foremost, powerful semiotic machines with the capacity to reshape the internal grammar of different cultural practices and categories.

Let’s take, for example, the case of taste — an all-time favorite object of study for cultural sociologists. Following the traditional cultural view, the idea has been that, if we are to explain taste, we have to look at things such as the categories and hierarchies produced by relevant social groups and actors, their practices of consumption, as well as their economic and cultural capitals. Needless to say, all of these variables should be included in any sensible attempt to account for contemporary processes of taste-formation. And yet, albeit necessary, they are no longer sufficient to provide a full understanding of how taste works today. Indeed, any

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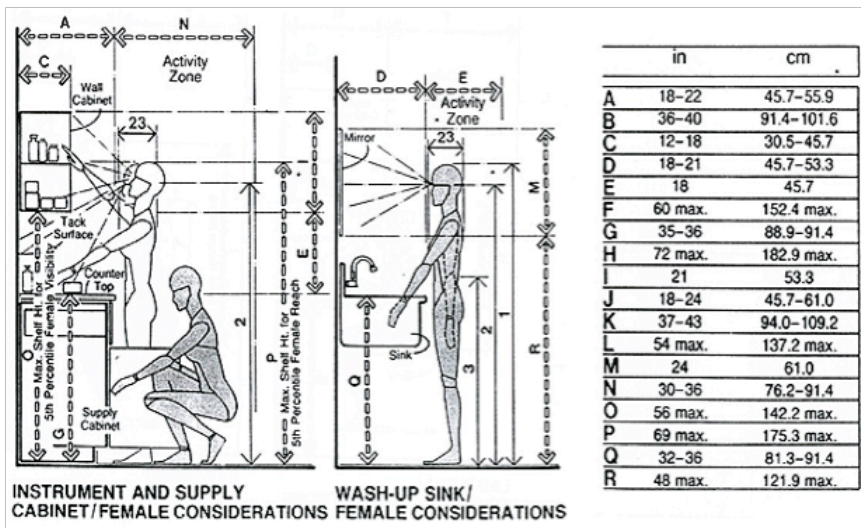


Fig. 2 Some of the silent standards and codes underwriting the process of semiosis. Image from “**Human Dimensions and Interior Space**”, Julius Panero & Martin Zelnik

or playing the even duller role of the dormant physical surface onto which we “externalize”, “project”, or “inscribe” cultural meanings and symbolic systems.

These kinds of explanations provide a very limited understanding of how the built environment participates in semiosis. For example, one of the things these accounts miss is how the built environment makes possible a specific register of semiosis, a *silent* register, which quietly shapes how meaning acquires physical and temporal extension and how it becomes a powerful reality. At the ASA, I illustrated this “silent register” by taking examples from **experimental psychology**, **urban history**, **defensive architecture**, or **nudge architecture**, and showing how these architectures do not merely “represent” or “inscribe”

dows, doors, even **cans!** — silently shape how **behaviors**, **meanings**, and **beliefs** are patterned and transacted on a daily basis.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES AND ALGORITHMS: A NEW SEMIOTIC MACHINERY

It is remarkable to see how, in the short span of just a few decades, digital technologies have become one of the most critical infrastructures in the contemporary process of semiosis. Take, for example, data centers like the one pictured below. These infrastructures



Fig. 3 Data Centers are becoming integral parts of a new semiotic infrastructure.

“CULTURE AND ITS INTERSECTIONS” PANEL RESPONSE PAPER

What are sociologists learning from the sciences? And what from the humanities?

Claudio E. Benzecry, NorthWestern University

Sociology emerged as a third term mediating the arts and sciences. It has been positioned within a disciplinary space between the so-called “two cultures.” To establish its relative autonomy and to justify its scholarly status, sociology has been subjected to a double ordeal: it must pass the test of epistemological validity dictated by the empirical sciences while also undergoing the trial of aesthetic appeal typical of the arts and humanities. It is this interstitial character of sociology, gabled between literature and science, that has caused “friction” to exist (as David Stark would define it) and that accounts for some of the most innovative sociological work.

The works of both Robin and Fernando are exemplary in demonstrating how this tension plays out. Especially so in this context, as they were both asked to answer: What are sociologists bringing from the sciences and what are they bringing from the humanities? They both bring a lot to the table to respond to our query: speech acts and *détentes*, materials as the constitutive medium of culture.

The papers are also, albeit obliquely, aiming to answer a second question of central importance for those who read this newsletter: Now that culture has “won,” how are we going to “spend” our riches?

1) Incorporation by obliteration, as taken on by programs that make culture, cognition, attitudes, and even materiality one dimension among other variables?

2) Formalization, as in the search for cross-case mechanisms and processes in a way that

replaces causal variables but keeps the explanatory logical formal structure?

3) Modelization, as in the attempt to categorize and systematize the different existing approaches (or the constant and exhaustive search to describe “what’s new in Argentinean literature between the first week of November and the last of December!”)?

4) Or rather, we see in these two cases, instantiation and specification that locates when and how culture matters in precise research practices and objects?

Of course, these are very dissimilar papers, but I still want to explore what they have in common.

a) They both explore the role of double contingency — as Parsons called it — in explaining social action. In Robin’s skillful prose it becomes a story of the creativity that flourishes in the temporal lag before action. In one case — when things come almost to a standstill — it produces a new definition of the situation that becomes believable and effective. In the other one, when things accelerate, it is about the struggle to impute reasons behind the action of a man — that on a previous interpretation was ghosted — only present as a cipher of the existential anguish of the protagonist.

In Fernando’s presentation it becomes about a new other for that double contingency — the algorithmic city, the machine that produces semiosis, or the devices that coordinate with one another and reach decisions. How do we make sense of the new other and does it make sense of us?

b) The papers both deal with

“It is this interstitial character of sociology, gabled between literature and science, that has caused “friction” to exist (as David Stark would define it) and that accounts for some of the most innovative sociological work. The works of both Robin and Fernando are exemplary in demonstrating how this tension plays out.”

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the question of immanence. For Robin, the question is how can you do politics when the possibility of transcendence has evaporated? The tragedy of tragedies is precisely the loss of *datum*, the disappearance of a world traversed by signs of a manifest destiny, against which heroic figures have to fight in order not to perish, defeated by inevitability. In analyzing this, Robin explores the ways in which temporality and cultural forms go (or don’t go) together.

For Fernando, the analytical distinctions that tragically organized the world don’t make sense anymore (if they ever did!): here culture, there objects; here commerce, there classification; here representations, there the work of sustaining the materials; here symbolic boundaries, there the built environment. The world is flat, but not less exciting, as a result.

c) They both deal with issues of temporality. In Robin’s paper, it is about standstills, accelerations, and the intersection between the *longue durée* and moments in which action precipitates. Robin playfully presents what happens when we go from the *chronos* of our everyday sequential temporal horizons (including ideas of projecting into

the future and peeking at the past) to the Kairos of the time of opportunity, the time-lapse in which everything (and anything) can happen.

For Fernando, it's about the paradoxical work of conservation, and the interesting things that result from it: how, in the active fight against decay, we move into a flowing temporality counted in minutes; and yet how we can find among its consequences both the production of permanence — of an object that does not change — and, at the same time, an index for history. After all, the museum has always been a chronological and genealogical machine.

But let me concentrate now on what each paper individually does, and what are potential lines of criticism and inquiry about them.

For Robin:

The general US tendency towards scientism remains strong and has distorted subfields like the sociology of culture, which might have been expected to bring forth more literary, interpretative, and even lyrical contributions, and to relate more strongly to interdisciplinary cultural research. Robin attempts to subvert that by showing the role of metaphors, analogies, and figures of speech.

The paper contributes, in a second way, by exploring the role of writers, painters, and art historians in helping us carve out sociological analysis. If we were to think of which authors from the humanities have made

it into the canon and why, the list would be reduced to either pragmatists or fellow travelers from structuralism (Geertz, Burke, Ricoeur). They would all adhere to the idea that culture structures action in set ways. Robin's paper is an interesting challenge, because she opens the door in two directions — a *dé-tente* and a catalyst — and in both of them she takes a post-structuralist (think of Deleuze, Badiou, Latour) friendly stance on how events happen. In looking at the pause and the trigger, Robin plays with how it is that actions precipitate in the speed of the articulation of discrete units of semiotic interaction.

i) But I have a bone to pick: I'd like her to be more explicit (almost curt) in explaining whether events exist by themselves or whether there is semiotic work in defining them as such from the outset, and who has the ability to do that work. Sometimes it reads like there is a minimum threshold that qualifies some historical occurrence as an event; other times as if it is just the result of inertia and semiotic processes, but without any actors or stakeholders; yet again as if there is some occurrence that is potentially eventful regardless of those aforementioned dimensions.

ii) Is there any gradient of eventfulness? Is the death of a long-time authority, for instance, always an event? Are people running on the street a set indicator of eventfulness? Or is it always contingently dependent on the previous history and inertia?

iii) Is there any way to conclude, then, for events to be a particular kind of cultural form/template, in a continuum but distinctive from social dramas, performances, or genres, for instance?

For Fernando:

His paper navigates the withering waters of US cultural sociology in a counterpoint manner: not to say, "this is how things have to be done," but rather to bring in ways in which things have indeed been done but maybe ignored. So, despite the polemical tone of his presentation, I'm convinced that, invoking the work of previous scholars like Karin Knorr-Cetina, Chandra Mukerji, Tom Gieryn, or Harvey Molotch, he claims and sustains a competing interpretation of the past of cultural sociology and of what is to be done now. Fernando, to summarize, argues for the importance of cultural materials in how semiosis happens. He does so by distinguishing between objects as means and medium, by focusing on the work of maintaining things as constant objects, and also by exploring how new technologies participate in generating semiosis. All in all, he advocates for an ecological approach to how culture is produced and sustained.

I have three queries for him, all related to how compatible this approach is with others already existing in the sociology of culture:

i) What is the relationship between the materiality of the object and the general character of the processes of maintaining objects? Are objects so specific that we would not be able to produce a Simmelian formal study of repair and maintenance work?

ii) In a longer version of the paper, he discussed how

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Claudio E. Benzecry

SESSION REVIEW

Evolving Meanings and Messages in Organizational Settings

Clayton Childress, University of Toronto

I had the pleasure of serving as discussant on the “Evolving Meanings and Messages in Organizational Settings” panel, and the papers presented were uniformly excellent. One of them should be in print by the time you skim past this sentence, and I have no doubt the other three will be soon to follow. Rather than taking up roots in meaning proper, what most bound these four papers together was an interest in cultural change.

Chris Bail’s “Cultural Carrying Capacity: Organ Donation Advocacy, Discursive Framing, and Social Media Engagement” is about how at the micro-interactional “messaging” level

organizations try to foment large-scale action. What role does the deployment of diverse frames by message-senders play in increasing engagement by (ostensibly) diverse receivers? The relationship is a parabolic one, which is a bit different from the ‘categorical imperative’ story that may be the first hypothesis for some. This is a story of how culture (read: frames) causes action, and it’s one worth both telling and reading. Per usual Bail’s methodological creativity should serve as yet another gentle reminder to the rest of us to up our games.

Terrence McDonnell, Amy Jonason, and Kari Christoffersen’s “Seeing Red Wearing Pink: Trajectories of Cultural Power in the AIDS and Breast Cancer Ribbons” shares a natural affinity with Bail’s paper, but here the discourse is symbolic objects and the question is a longitudi-

nal one. The red-ribbon-for-AIDS had a meteoric rise and fall. It was the Young MC of symbolic advocacy; a 1990s one-hit wonder that disappeared with the same speed that it emerged. In turn, the pink-ribbon for cancer rose more slowly, but rather than being left to exist as a free floating and multi-purpose signifier among the general public, what it signified was subjected to organizational control and was institutionalized. Like the multi-purpose red ribbon,

As meanings are made collectively (says the sociologist), making meaningful studies of meaning is also a project that would probably best be engaged in collectively. The accumulated scholars on this panel got off to a rolling start.

Clayton Childress

would Bail’s benefits of frame diversity work better as a short-term strategy but worse in the long-term? It’s an open empirical question, but McDonnell, Jonason, and Christoffersen might suggest the answer is yes.

In turn, Kim de Laat’s “Analogical Dissensus: Mapping the Transition from Material to Immaterial Product Conceptions through Discourse” looks to how analogies are deployed to make sense of changes that have already occurred, or are simultaneously occurring. Her site is the field of recorded music in North America during times of digital transition. It’s as much a sense-making story as it is a coping one. De Laat’s respondents are industry insiders watching the world change around them, and they use analogies to the past or other extant business models in different industries and markets to talk away or minimize uncer-

tainty in their own field. From the first two papers the process is reversed in that, rather than telling stories to the wider public, here, organization and industry insiders are telling stories to themselves as they imagine futures in which what are believed to be large-scale changes will only require small changes on their part, or no change at all.

Lastly, Paul DiMaggio, Manish Nag, and David Blei’s “Defining and Measuring Cultural Change: The Evolving Environment of Representations of U.S. Arts Policy, 1986-1997” comes bearing two gifts: an LDA analysis of NEA arts funding controversy reporting over time, and a more generalizable accounting device for studying cultural change. Think of the latter like Peterson’s “six facet” model for studying industries, Griswold’s diamond, or Schudson’s four “R”s, but for cultural change in particular rather than the study of culture more broadly. It’s the type of thing that probably doesn’t reach the hallowed grounds of full blown theory but, as an orienting framework, it’s all the better for it. I found it incredibly productive to think with, and in my session comments even used it to make sense of the other three papers. If you’re thinking about launching a project on cultural change, it’s a great place to start, and to keep returning to as you check off its boxes.

If you’re interested in cultural change and were at this panel, you left satisfied and full. Where does this all leave us with the study of meaning, though? By this point, I think we can safely say that when talking meaning we’re more interested in *their* meanings than *our*

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SESSION REVIEW

The Micro-Dynamics of Creating and Using Meanings

Shyon S. Baumann, University of Toronto

The second of our four regular section sessions, “The Micro-Dynamics of Creating and Using Meanings,” was a collection of excellent papers that highlighted ways in which meanings are constructed by actors at the micro level. These papers complemented one another through their shared focus on individual-level analysis that pointed to a range of ways individuals actively construct meanings that result in diverse consequences. Together, they show how this vein of cultural sociological research is essential for understanding important social phenomena and social problems through explaining the processes by which individuals construct meanings that, in turn, produce particular courses of action.

The paper “Narrative Dynamics and Social Structure: The Case of Prisoner Reentry Narratives,” by David J. Harding, Cheyney C. Dobson, Jessica J. B. Wyse, and Jeffrey D. Moron systematically and insightfully studies the re-entry narratives of former prisoners in order to understand why the stories they construct about their past and present can be subject to change. People employ narratives to make sense of their lives, and such sense-making can also guide and constrain future actions, which is especially important for understanding recidivism. These narratives are often resistant to change, but can sometimes realign when aspects of the networks and institutions in which people are embedded are incompatible with them.

In “The First Link: Theorizing the Human Cost of Seeing Like a State,” Phoenix Chi Wang’s fascinating and absorbing study reveals how 911 operators

interface between a state bureaucracy and an extremely messy social reality. Based on ethnographic and interview data with the operators, she examines how they convert the information they receive from callers into bureaucratic codes that allow for effective organizational responses. This moment of meaning-making is both a tool and a burden for them. As they filter and categorize the dramatic information they receive on the phone, they impose and reproduce state classifications: But the experience is one that takes an enormous emotional toll.

Through a revealing comparison of two different industry contexts, David Scheiber’s paper convincingly shows how the meanings that individuals create are heavily influenced by both cultural norms and structural incentives. In “Money, Morals, and Condom Use: The Politics of Health in Gay and Straight Adult Film Production,” Scheiber shows that the meaning of and expectations for condom

use varies in ways that cannot be explained by the actual risks involved. Rather, performers and producers in the gay and straight pornography industries, when confronted with the decision to use condoms, tend to make divergent decisions that reflect very different understandings of what condom-use means.

Roscoe Scarborough’s paper, “Culture of Solidarity: A Micro-

Sociological Analysis of Culture in Interaction,” employs ethnographic and interview research with firefighters, CrossFit patrons, and medical professionals in order to analyze how face-to-face encounters produce group belonging and inequality. He persuasively develops a sophisticated argument: while demographic characteristics like gender, race, and class can initiate contact between individuals, it is in the meanings that arise in interaction moments that individuals are able to produce shared culture, which in turn can facilitate powerful and enduring connections. In the absence of such interactional moments of cultural

We are learning about the conditions under which particular kinds of meanings are made, and to what effect. We also can see how vital this vein of analysis is for our understanding of both quotidian situations and rare or extraordinary situations where identities are forged, resources are allocated, and symbolic boundaries are drawn.

Shyon S. Baumann

production, opportunities for situational hierarchies and scorn arise and can facilitate social inequality.

We learn from these papers together that the state of sociological knowledge about individual-level meaning making is making important advances. We are learning about

the conditions under which particular kinds of meanings are made, and to what effect. We also can see how vital this vein of analysis is for our understanding of both quotidian situations and rare or extraordinary situations where identities are forged, resources are allocated, and symbolic boundaries are drawn.



SESSION REVIEW

The Cosmopolitan Nation: The Politics of Cultural Representation in a Global World**Olga Sezneva, University of Amsterdam**

What kind of project exactly is “cosmopolitanism”, and who may be its main “executive”? In what relation does it stand to the national project? What are the institutional repertoires in which national or cosmopolitan ideologies are articulated, their subjects consolidated, and the registers of speech and practice are perfected? Special session 271, titled “The Cosmopolitan Nation: The Politics of Cultural Representation in a Global World,” targeted these questions through four papers ranging in their topics from a French TV program promoting cultural patrimony in the ninety-sixties (Alexandra Kowalski’s “Circulating Immobiles: TVs, Cameras, Historic Sites, and the Birth of National Heritage in 1960s France”), to museums around the world struggling for cultural relevance in the twenty first century (Peggy Levitt’s “Artifacts and Allegiances: How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display”), to the revival of Jewish culture and identity in the ostensibly “monocultural” Polish society of today (Genevieve Zubrzycki’s “The Institutional Rediscovery of Jewish Poland and the Creation of Cosmopolitanism in a ‘Monocultural’ Society”), and to the global wave of media piracy of the last decade (Olga Sezneva’s “Pirate Cosmopolitics and the Transnational Consciousness of the Entertainment Industry”).

In spite of their thematic diversity and differences in theoretical toolkits deployed, the four papers pushed strongly the central claim of the session: cultural institutions create local, national, and global citizens at once, not in isolation or opposition to one another. The task that cultural sociology faces today when dealing with globalization, the papers suggest, is to theorize the national and the cosmopolitan in a relational and mutually constitutive way, rather than as opposites. The task is therefore also to uncover the various registers through which “local,” “national,” “transnational,” and “cosmopolitan” are articulated in practice and rendered meaningful.

While aiming at similar goals, each paper ope-

rated in different ways and through distinct material. Three papers (Kowalski’s, Levitt’s and Zubrzycki’s) focused on the nation as a form, emphasizing its ideational, ideological and affective dimensions. The nation has been, and is still, apparently, awe-inspiring and venerable. The historical and geographic diversity of registers in which it comes together, however, is remarkable. The cult of banal, vernacular “antiquities” and other ancient knick-knacks emerged as a new register of national identification in 1960s France, as an effect of mass media representations, for example. By contrast, the grandeur of Qatar today is being achieved through grand architectural projects such as I.M. Pei’s Museum of Islamic Art, whereby Qatar’s pan-Islamic nationalism is construed through collection and display of contemporary art works, sometimes in tension with the cultural tradition they represent. In contemporary Poland, building the nation’s image as a “modern polity” has meant inventing cultural diversity in an ethnically, religiously, and culturally highly homogeneous country. The striking Jewish revival movement is explained as a key device in this process of cultural invention.

These papers look at a dimension of culture, cultural identity and heritage that is considered inalienable and protected from the market. In contrast to them, Sezneva chose to discuss culture as produced for the market, and to examine what kind of cosmopolitan stances are enabled by its global, commerce-driven circulation. Building on the familiar dictum that markets are the most “internationalizing” forces, she followed what happens to music and movies when they enter the uneven landscape of technological development, purchasing power, and politically-motivated taboo. She showed how two different logics of the circulation of culture — one as a semiotic text that gravitates toward the unrestricted flow and another a commodity whose value can only be realized under scarcity — result in two different cosmopolitics: the politics of the transnational public and another of the global consumer.

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Olga Sezneva

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SESSION REVIEW

Art, Money, and Meaning**Hannah Wohl, Northwestern University**

Fiona Rose-Greenland organized the panel, “Art, Money, and Meaning,” and papers were discussed by Erica Coslor. The papers focused on the valuation of creative objects, from contemporary art to advertisements. Valuation is central to the sociological study of creative industries, because individuals’ valuations influence how creative objects circulate and because these valuations are shaped by individuals’ social interactions. Together, these papers capture the complex dynamics that structure processes of valuation. Patricia Banks’ study of inequality in contemporary art sales and Rojas’ and Lista’s examination of determinants of selection in a contemporary art biennale reveal how valuations of creative objects are influenced by social contexts, including actors’ credentials, social networks, and social categories. Hannah Wohl’s analysis of contemporary artists’ decisions during creative production and Stefan Schwarzkopf’s exploration of advertisers reaction to economic measurement systems show how actors simultaneously negotiate two forms of value in creative industries – creative value and economic value – as well as how perceptions of creative value can be at odds with or congruous to perceptions of economic value. Brief recaps of each paper follow:

In “Prices for Art by Female and Male Artists of African Descent in the Auction Market,” Patricia Banks examines the underexplored topic of race and gender inequality in the contemporary art market by using an original dataset of contemporary art auction sales records. She reveals that collectors pay the lowest top prices for art by black females and the highest top prices for art by white males; however, she also finds that, in recent years, collectors have purchased art by black female artists for higher prices, nearing the price they pay for white female artists. This suggests that, while gaping racial and gender inequalities persist, cultural elites are beginning to include nondominant groups to a greater extent.

In “Picking the Next Art Stars: Curators and their Social Ties in the Whitney Biennial,” Fabio Rojas and Peter Lista study determinants of artists’ inclusion in the Whitney Biennale, one of the highest markers of institutional acclaim in the contemporary art world. Examining data from the 2012 and 2014 Whitney Biennale, they compare each curator’s network of artists to the artists that were included in each biennale, both within and outside of these networks. They find that “out-of-network” participants have traditional signs of

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Hannah Wohl

prestige, such as solo shows, and that being in the curator’s network increased the chances of selection. This lends credence to two existing theories of how individuals gain prominence in their professions – credentialing and social networks.

In “Art in the Shadows: Producer as Gatekeeper,” Hannah Wohl extends studies of valuation to producers by analyzing how contemporary artists decide which work to produce and present. Drawing upon interviews and fieldwork with contemporary artists, she finds that artists tend to select works that they deem to be visually and conceptually consistent with their previous work and produce and present work with increasing consistency as their careers develop. This occurs due to two intertwining logics: creative logics, as artists produce new work by varying and holding constant certain visual and conceptual elements of previous work, and market logics, as artists perceive that dealers and collectors are more likely to respectively exhibit and purchase works that seem to conform to artists’ signature styles.

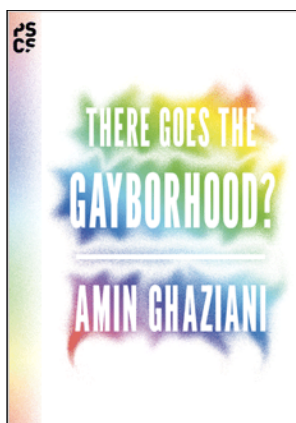
In “Value Measurement Systems, Professional Narratives and the (Un)Making of Market Regimes in Advertising,” Stefan Schwarzkopf explores how and why advertising designers successfully contested the use of Starch Advertisement Readership Service in the 1920s. As advertising designers increasingly identified as artists, and judged their work in terms of creative value, they resented the unidimensional category of economic value by which their work was judged via new measurement systems. Advertisement agencies drew on the narrative of artistic genius to deny authority to advertising metrics. This analysis shows that the act of measuring does not merely shape the behavior of those being measured; rather, those who employ these market devices also require shared expectations about their legitimacy in order to effectively influence actors’ decisions.

AUTHOR MEETS CRITICS

***There Goes the Gayborhood?* (2014) By Amin Ghaziani, UBC**

Gay neighborhoods, like the legendary Castro District in San Francisco and New York's Greenwich Village, have long provided sexual minorities with safe havens in an often unsafe world. But as our society increasingly accepts gays and lesbians into the mainstream, are "gayborhoods" destined to disappear?

Amin Ghaziani's new book, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (2014, Princeton University Press, Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology series) was the subject of an Author Meets Critics panel at the 2015 ASA meetings in Chicago. The book was widely reviewed in the press (see our Sociology of Culture in the Media section on page 24). The buzz surrounding the session inspired a symposium in *Environment and Planning A* (vol. 47 (2015)). The following are excerpted remarks from Harvey Molotch, Andrew Deener, Iddo Tavory, and Mary Pattillo.



"While *There Goes the Gayborhood?* is rich with the voices of gay men and lesbians in Chicago and across the country, my comments focus on the voices of the 'straights' in the book. (...) Ghaziani presents their viewpoints but does not answer their question. 'Isn't that what gays have al-

ways wanted?' a woman asks, referring generally to residential integration. 'This is what *you* wanted,' the man rants in defense of his decision to move into the gayborhood. Both of these comments reflect Ghaziani's finding that heterosexuals feel a growing 'cultural sameness' between themselves and gays and lesbians, and they see their residence in gayborhoods as an important indication of their tolerance. Still, they sense resistance to their presence in the gayborhood, which confuses them and motivates their somewhat dismissive, somewhat insistent inquiry: 'What is it that *you want?*' (...) In *The Souls of Black Folks*, W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 2015) wrote: 'Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question... How does it feel to be a problem?' (p. 3). The slightly exasperated question 'What is it that *you want?*' similarly conjures the problematic nature of marginalized communities in the eyes of the privileged and, consequently, the problematic nature of the former's political demands. Du Bois rebuffed such questions. 'I answer seldom a word,' he wrote. Perhaps Ghaziani's intent was to also invoke this righteous silence."

Mary Pattillo, Northwestern

"Gays come to the city; this is an old story. But how they come and what happens next, that is a newer story and one that informs Amin Ghaziani's *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (...) The distinctive demographic and cultural texture of a particular group has transformed the meaning of places and their occupants. Before there were gay people, there were "homosexuals" relegated to the "zone of transition" — the city's social dumping ground where investments ceased while awaiting the higher and better uses to come. Granted some degree of refuge through this neglect, gay people's beings could not be discussed, much less be featured, in urban analysis. The muck of deviance was residual. What a flip! In the new model of urban dynamism, gays come to be branded as creative hearts."

Harvey Molotch, NYU

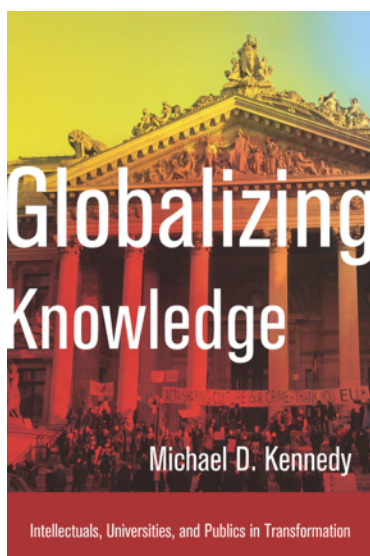
"There goes the gayborhood? It is a wonderfully complex question and opens up a range of responses into how cities, neighborhoods, and groups endure and change in relationship to each other. (...) Ghaziani's contribution to the study of the gayborhood brings sexuality to the surface of the classic map of group and place representations, highlighting cultural approaches to place identity. This work raises additional questions for urban studies, about whether the changing gayborhood is a distinct phenomenon or part of a new age of a more general openness toward dense urban life, which has in turn created new conflicts over neighborhood belonging. How such cultural approaches and situated spatial approaches influence each other is part of the necessary conversation that can hopefully continue to move urban studies forward."

Andrew Deener, University of Connecticut

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

BOOK REVIEW

Globalizing Knowledge: Intellectuals, Universities, and Publics in Transformation
(2014, Stanford University Press) By Michael D. Kennedy



Review by Hillary Angelo, UC San Diego

In a recent book launch and discussion at New York University, Michael Kennedy explained that he titled his new book *Globalizing Knowledge* precisely because the phrase has become such a popular and empty keyword in higher education today. Kennedy is a Profes-

sor of Sociology and International Studies at Brown University, but has also been an administrator of “globalizing knowledge” as the University of Michigan’s first Vice Provost for International Affairs. The project of the book is to give substance to this phrase by examining globalizing knowledge from an impressive range of perspectives, based in part on Kennedy’s administrative experience and as a sociologist who conducts much of his own research outside of North America.

Kennedy remarks in the preface that “to be cosmopolitan is no longer a philosophical attitude” (xiv). This simple statement captures the book’s main argument: that the people, institutions, networks, and content of higher education increasingly operate in a global field. Kennedy describes his book as an “agent-focused” sociology of this process (10). Historically, conceptually, and empirically, he examines how “globalized” people, institutions, networks, and content are produced; their potential benefits and pitfalls; and how they might be made more democratic and equitable.

Concretely, Kennedy shows how knowledge has gone global in four main ways. First, knowledge *institutions* have globalized, as universities now compete for international money, students, and reputations, and across new geographies, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. Second, new internet and media outlets enable *informa-*

tion to spread more quickly and easily across the globe—in forms such as the independent “ezine” *Jadaliyya*, which publishes free, high-quality content online in Arabic, French, English, and Turkish. Third, the knowledge *produced* in particular universities has changed as a result of incorporating understandings of different, usually far-away places. And fourth, a wide variety of *individuals* now represent “intellectuality” globally, including administrators, experts, and celebrities, as well as the academics.

The great strength of the book is that Kennedy takes the question of globalizing knowledge so far outside of universities, both in terms of its contributing factors and its visible effects. For example, he identifies Pussy Riot and Ashraf Ghani as cases of globalizing knowledge, positioning them alongside Michael Burawoy’s call for

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Hillary Angelo

public sociology and the Social Science Research Council’s international knowledge networks. In each case he examines, Kennedy also explains how material conditions affect how knowledge globalizes — discussing the technology, funding, institutions, and energy flows that shape these individuals, institutions, and publics — as well as the influence of time and place. Politically, Kennedy is oriented toward the question of how knowledge can globalize without homogenizing — how to avoid such problems as institutional isomorphism in universities and cultural imperialism in classrooms. The large-scope perspective he offers on the issue is original and not necessarily obvious: One might have expected a book focused far more narrowly on the globalization of knowledge institutions, such as the politics of NYU Abu Dhabi or Yale-NUS College in Singapore.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

Send your proposals for book and special issue reviews to the newsletter editors at alexandra.kowalski@gmail.com. Advanced graduate students interested in working with editors are welcome.

Of Refugees and Migrants: Stigma, Politics, and Boundary Work at the Borders of Europe

Raia Apostolova, Central European University

(...) The current debate over migrants and refugees is directly derived from the meaning that international law gives to these terms. According to the UN, the notion of migrant applies to “all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of ‘personal convenience’ and without intervention of an external compelling factor.” The bifurcation between “voluntary” and “involuntary” migration in this definition is striking. As a legal notion, the solid boundary it erects between two types of subjects is both symbolic and material. It distinguishes “economic migrants” from “political” ones. It is along this original line that all binary categories of migrants are invented, hierarchized, and disputed in political discourse today — the “good” vs. the “bad” migrant, the legal vs. “illegals”, the *Gastarbeiter* vs. the “asylum seeker”, the “refugee” vs. the “migrant”, the “refugee” vs. the “invader”, the “refugee” vs. the “terrorist”.

The dichotomy between economic (voluntary) migrant and political (involuntary) refugee was introduced in international law after World War II, when political migration was differentiated from “labor flows.” Both were formerly lumped under the single category of “international migration” and overseen by the International Labor Organization (ILO). In 1945, the United Nations was created and took over the function of regulating movement perceived to have a political rather than an economic origin. The new division of labor between international organizations was part of the institutional decoupling between political and economic activities described by Pahuja in *Decolonizing International Law: Development, Economic Growth and the Politics of Universality*.

Born out of macro-historical institutional dynamics, the dichotomy opposing refugees to migrants is a social construct in the traditional sense of a contingent reality. At the same time, it is rooted in a deep (i.e. ancient, and objectively inscribed in institutional setups) structure of meaning through which migration processes are framed and acted upon in the international political field. This structure is binary and strictly differentiates political from economic migrants, while construing the former as victims of force and the latter as free agents driven by the hope for economic gain. When we advocate for one of the terms of this polarity, we might think we are being critical,

but we only play with the tools of a cultural kit inherited from history. The kit’s history is one of Western political dominance and economic exploitation in the aftermath of World War II. (...)

Some political activists and critical academics advocate for a continued use of the notion of “migrant” in the political sphere, however.

This movement, made of grassroots organizations and politically committed academics, argues that a homogeneous notion of “migrant” should be used so that migrants are not differentiated and discriminated according to projected motivations and causes. This alternative sense deliberately blurs the boundary between “economic migrants” and “refugees,” between “legals” and “illegals,” in an attempt to bring this boundary to consciousness and to de-naturalize it. The aim is to inscribe in the term and in its use a critique of the institution that distinguishes, divides, and discriminates.

The purpose is also, doing so, to retribute to migration its double meaning, both political and economic. This is not only because refugees are almost always economic migrants. This is also because economic migration is an outcome of the workings of global capitalism, and as such the “problems” it generates are inherently political. In this critical version the term ‘migrant’ retains its function as a signifier of social class — a dimension which the individualistic frame latent in the fiction of the voluntary “economic migrant” erases.

The linguistic and symbolic distinction between ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ followed from the institutional rift that formally separated economic from political affairs under capitalism. Scholars such as Karl Polanyi, Pierre Bourdieu, or Ellen Wood (among many others) have shown, however, that such separation is contingent, and that it comes with heavy ideological baggage. Good intentions need to be kept in check if we want to avoid mistaken conclusions—such as the belief that calling a migrant a refugee today will help them tomorrow, for example.

Read the full post here: <http://asaculturesection.org/2015/09/14/of-refugees-and-migrants-stigma-politics-and-boundary-work-at-the-borders-of-europe/>



116th Street Festival 2015

A Photo Essay by Manolo Guzmán-Estavillo

Manolo Guzmán-Estavillo (Marymount Manhattan College) is a sociologist whose research has focused on the intersection of race and sexuality in the Puerto Rican diaspora. More recently, he has been exploring the use of photography to document the intimate relationship between social identity and the claims made over space as groups of people make a place for themselves in the world.

The 116th Street Festival in New York City is held the Saturday before the Puerto Rican Day Parade (second Saturday of June), and takes place in El Barrio, considered by many the geographical focus of Puerto Rico in NYC, despite Puerto Rican relocation across the city and the influx of new populations, such as Mexicans from Puebla and whites who can no longer afford to live below 96th Street. The people, the merchants, and the musicians — men, women, and couples — are all beautiful. However, the gratuitous presence of a militarized police force and their display of the potential for state-sanctioned violence is overwhelming. Pushed out of the streets, crammed into railings meant to secure them under the guise of safety, and under the vigilant eye of the state, Puerto Ricans thrive, find joy, and a place to breathe in spite of the heavy toll of political odds stacked against us. I dedicate this essay to all those who are wrongfully imprisoned, pacing elsewhere, and otherwise unable to join the festival.

Visit our website to see the “116th Street Festival” series in its integrality. Other photographic work by Manolo Guzmán-Estavillo [on flickr](#). Contact: mguzman@mmm.edu

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

- Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan*, Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Phaedra Daipha, *Masters of Uncertainty, Weather Forecasters and the Quest for Ground Truth*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Justin Farrell, *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict*, Princeton University Press (Studies in Cultural Sociology Series), 2015.
- Wes Markofski, *New Monasticism and the Transformation of American Evangelicalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Lauren Rivera, *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*, Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Deana Rohlinger, *Abortion Politics, Mass Media, and Social Movements in America*, Cambridge UP, 2015.
- Julia Rothenberg, *Sociology Looks at the Arts*, Routledge, 2014.
- Violaine Roussel and Denise Bielby, *Brokerage and Production in the American and French Entertainment Industries: Invisible Hands in Cultural Markets*. Lexington Press, May 2015.
- Joachim J. Savelsberg, *Representing Mass Violence: Conflicting Responses to Human Rights Violations in Darfur*, University of California Press, 2015. (online-open access edition at: <http://www.luminoso.org/site/books/detail/3/representing-mass-violence/>)

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Corey M. Abramson and Daniel Dohan, "Beyond Text: Using Arrays to Represent and Analyze Ethnographic Data." *Sociological Methodology* 45:272-319, 2015.
- Rogers Brubaker "The Dolezal Affair: Race, Gender and the Micropolitics of Identity" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, doi=10.1080/01419870.2015.1084430, 2015.
- Victoria Reyes, "Global Borderlands: A Case Study of Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines" *Theory and Society* 44(4):355-384, 2015.
- Ana Velitchkova, "World Culture, Uncoupling, Institutional Logics, and Recoupling: Practices and Self-Identification as Institutional Microfoundations of Political Violence," *Sociological Forum* 30:698-720, 2015.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Volume 3 Issue 3 of the American Journal of Cultural Sociology (Oct. 2015) is a special issue of responses to Monica Lee and John Levi Martin's article "Coding, counting and cultural cartography" (AJCS, Vol. 3: 3). With an introduction by Jeffrey C Alexander (Measuring, counting, interpreting: Our debate on methods continues) and responses by Richard Biernacki (How to do things with historical texts), Isaac Ariail Reed (Counting, interpreting and their potential interrelation in the human sciences), Lyn Spillman (Ghosts of straw men: A reply to Lee and Martin); and a rejoinder by Monica Lee & John Levi Martin (Response to Biernacki, Reed, and Spillman).

The **Special issue of the journal Poetics on Cultural Policy and the Public Funding of Culture in an International Perspective (Volume 49, April 2015)** brings together experts in various fields to discuss two main themes: the social forces that drive persistence and change in public spending on culture over time and the contours of emerging models of public cultural spending. The two themes are discussed from different angles and with different emphases rooted in country contexts.

Vol 43 of *Poetics* (April 2014), *Art at the Crossroads*, is a special issue edited by Victoria D. Alexander and Anne E. Bowler. The issue features ten original articles on the state of the arts and arts scholarship, including recent work by Terence E. McDonnell and Steven J. Tepper (Culture in crisis: Deploying metaphor in defense of art); Katya Johanson, Hilary Glow and Anne Kershaw (New modes of arts participation and the limits of cultural indicators for local government); Richard Lachmann, Emily Pain and Anibal Gauna (Museums in the New Gilded Age: Collector exhibits in New York art museums, 1945–2010); Jennifer C. Lena and Danielle J. Lindemann (Who is an artist? New data for an old question); Yra van Dijk (Amateurs online: Creativity in a community); Marco Pedroni and Paolo Volonté (Art seen from outside: Non-artistic legitimation within the field of fashion design); Dongyoub Shin, Kangsan Lee and Hakbae Lee (Neoliberal marketization of art worlds and status multiplexity: Price formation in a Korean art auction, 1998–2007); Pierre Pénet and Kangsan Lee (Prize & price: The Turner Prize as a valuation device in the contemporary art market); Volker Kirchberg and Robin Kuchar (States of comparability: A meta-study of representative population surveys and studies on cultural consumption)

DOCTORAL THESES

Finch, Jessie K. 2015. “Legal Borders, Racial/Ethnic Boundaries: Operation Streamline and Identity Processes on the US-Mexico Border.” PhD dissertation, School of Sociology, University of Arizona. Co-Chairs: Dr. Celestino Fernández; Dr. Robin Stryker.

SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE IN THE MEDIA

Amin Ghaziani's new book, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (2014, Princeton University Press, Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology series), has received a remarkable amount of **global media attention**—85 print, radio, and television interviews in Canada, Colombia, England, France, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States. Notable features appeared in *The New Yorker*, *American Prospect*, and *Time* magazines; *Salon* and *Slate*; BBC and CBC radio; NPR stations in Chicago, LA, Seattle, Washington, DC, and Wisconsin. *Vox* and *Vice*; *the Globe & Mail* and *National Post*; *Bloomberg Business*; the *Los Angeles Times*; *USA Today*; and *Yahoo! news*.

Akiko Hashimoto, University of Pittsburgh, was quoted in the June 27 *Washington Post* “Japan has a flag problem too”; July 11 *Japan Times* “The politics and pitfalls of war memory and apology”; in the August 12 *Wall Street Journal* “World War II Anniversary Opens Old Wounds in Japan Over How Much to Apologize”; in the August 12 *Mainichi Shinbun* “The Never-ending Postwar”; in the August 15 *Japan Times* “Abe statement was vague in all the wrong places”; and in the September 10 *London Review of Books* “Short Cuts.”

Corey Abramson, Assistant Professor of Sociology at University of Arizona and author of *The End Game: How Inequality Shapes Our Final Years*, was quoted in a 10/13/2015 *New York Times* article entitled “Income Inequality Grows With Age and Shapes Later Years.”

Justin Farrell's book, *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict* (Princeton University Press), 2015 was reviewed in the Jan 3rd, 2015 issue of *The Economist* which called it “the most original political book of early 2015.”

David Grazian's Book, *American Zoo*, was reviewed in the *New Scientist*, the *Washington Post* and in the “Books in Brief” section of the journal *Nature*.

Lauren Rivera's *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (Princeton University Press) was reviewed through an author interview in the *Washington Post* blog *The Monkey Cage*.

JOBS

The **Department of Sociology at Emory University** (Atlanta, Georgia) invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the area of Culture, with a substantive focus on Chinese culture and society, to start Fall 2016. This substantive focus on China could include (but is not limited to) such topics as popular culture, consumption, cultural capital and education, social / symbolic boundaries, love and identity, urban scenes, or organizational culture. The candidate hired for this position will also have the honorific title of Confucius Institute Assistant Professor.

Funding for this Assistant Professor position, which will be housed fully in the Department of Sociology, will come from The Confucius Institute for five years, with funding for the next five years split equally between The Confucius Institute and Emory College of Arts and Sciences; after that, all funding will emanate from Emory.

Candidates should be prepared to teach culture courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels, with aspects of China being featured prominently in those courses. Candidates should have native or near-native fluency in Chinese and English. We would look favorably on those candidates whose research and teaching overlap with other key emphases in our department – namely, social psychology, health, and inequality.

The deadline for application is **November 12, 2015**. Candidates should have completed the PhD or be very close to completing the PhD by Fall 2016. Candidates should submit a letter of application, curriculum vitae, research statement, teaching statement (including summary of teaching experiences and evaluations) and no more than two samples of publication to https://sjobs.brassring.com/1033/ASP/TG/cim_home.asp?partnerid=25066&siteid=5043 (Emory's Brass Ring System).

Three letters of reference are to be sent to sociologysearch@emory.edu.

Please address procedural questions to Ms. Patricia Hamilton (phamil2@emory.edu). Address all other questions to Prof. Timothy J. Dowd (tdowd@emory.edu), Chair of the Search Committee.

Emory University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Disability/Veteran employer. Women, minorities, persons with disabilities and veterans are encouraged to apply.

LAMONT Q&A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

anniversary. It's been a lot of fun and very rewarding: When we meet we can see how much we still share intellectually. Since leaving for Harvard in 2002, the cultural sociology dimension of my work has remained salient (the Culture and Social Analysis workshop has been going strong since 2004 and attracts 20 to 30 members at its bi-weekly meetings) while the comparative inequality dimension has gained in prominence, given Harvard's amazing strengths in both the study of inequality and in international/comparative research. I have been extremely fortunate to have a string of amazing partners/coauthors/graduate students along the way who now have leading reputations in our subfield, ranging from Abigail Saguy and Virág Molnár at Princeton to Christopher Bail and Lauren Rivera at Harvard. Of course, the list is much longer and I'd love to name everyone here, but I can't.

Let's talk about women since we are talking about inequality. Why aren't women more present in your work?

When I started *Money, Morals and Manners*, the idea was to study gatekeepers, the upper-middle class, in the spirit of Kanter's *Men and Women and the Corporation*. That group is mostly composed of men and that's why I started with them. With *The Dignity of Working Men*, I wanted to study the working class and ethnoracial boundaries, and stayed with men to facilitate the comparison. While my original plan was to produce a parallel book about women, I ran out of steam and turned my interest to higher education and the sociology of knowledge (my first love, since the publication of my first important piece in

English, "How to Become a Dominant Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida" (AJS 1987). However, I'm very much a feminist in my life. I've worked closely with a lot of women graduate students and collaborators over the years. I was senior advisor on faculty development and diversity at Harvard for two years. I was helping the Dean of the Faculty of Art and Science to think about how to diversify faculty and support tenure-track professors (a gendered topic if there is one). In that context I read tons on mentoring, so I am very much attuned to these issues. It may be that the research designs of my books didn't let me make women as central as they should have been. But in my personal and scholarly life, I feel very connected as I find my friendships with women to often be enormously sustaining and reciprocal.

Will gender be a focus during your presidential term?

Yes. The program committee includes several sexuality and gender experts so I have no doubt it will be featured. I am thinking in particular of Kristin Shilt, Kathleen Gerson, and Mary Romero. Shilt is recently tenured and very much in touch with the most recent trends in the study of gender and sexuality. I, personally, am a fan of the concept of gender pleasure, an essential complement to our traditional focus on exclusion and opportunity. I am as interested in boundary bridging as I am in boundary work. I believe that cross-pollination between areas central to the study of inequalities is crucial and generative.

What about the future of the field? How do you see it?

Cultural sociology has a lot to bring and I am generally very optimistic. The field has stayed clear of some of the internal scandals that are tarnishing related subfields. I think it's important that people keep writing big books and work on papers of intellectual significance. As long as we do that, I think we'll be in good shape. The real battle is on the side of public discourse — in particular, with economists. This is partly why I am collaborating with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as they are launching their new culture of health initiative. We are coediting an issue of *Social Science and Medicine* and a number of cultural sociologists, communications, and social movements scholars are involved. Working with Mabel Berezin, we have made the foundation aware of the existence of a cultural sociology literature, which they find very useful in developing their new program. This follows directly from the Successful Societies program. Of course one does not frame one's work the same way when speaking to sociologists of culture or to epidemiologists. But the point again is that we have to get out of the *entre nous* if we want to have an impact on how questions are framed in the social sciences as a whole.

The direction I personally will follow is in line with the *Socioeconomic Review* article, "What is Missing?" where we invite colleagues to focus on all the processes we study (including exploitation, segregation, domination, and racialization) in cultural and social terms. I have come to think this is the core of what sociology is about. It's not a traditional topic of cultural sociology, necessarily, but to the extent that meaning-making is at the center of developing theorization of inequality, it has the potential to be really significant. Of course, there are many other

important and generative trends, which I love to cover when I teach graduate seminars, as I will this spring. As you know, I am all for “let one hundred thousand flowers bloom” and for methodological pluralism. This is how cultural sociology will remain influential and it is more fun than single-mindedly pushing one agenda. People vote with their feet, i.e. by what they read and engage with. I feel that I have been truly fortunate in this respect and all I can hope is that others will want to continue to engage with my work moving forward.

As you say there’s tons of fascinating work out there — as reflected in our section — and many new directions and topics are emerging — value, matter, nature. Yet one wonders sometimes — when one thinks about the big texts and debates of the 1980s and 1990s on culture, structure, agency, etc. — if the big battles are not behind us. Are there still major stakes in the culture agenda today?

I don’t know what the battles ahead might be and I would rather not predict our future developments (this would require an hour at least). But I can say that during the last thirty years or so, as I have been maturing as a scholar, I have seen the field of cultural sociology grow into this large, diverse, and inclusive tent. Many people became involved in the section, in part, because there was a sort of implicit agreement for everyone to do quality work without engaging in unnecessary territorial fights. The networks, which I expanded when I chaired the section, also provided space for younger scholars to create their own worlds. The section quickly grew from a few hundred members to become the largest section of the

ASA. Prior to the foundation of the section in 1986, culture had been marginalized as a small field. I believe we had a feeling that we were institutionalizing something that could redefine US sociology from the inside too. This has happened, to the extent that all of the top departments had hired sociologists of culture by the late 1990s. It was a huge change and, frankly, in my view a huge success. Electronic forums for gaining network centrality were not available. At the risk of seeming like a nostalgic old-timer (but note that I am an enthusiastic if irregular twitter user!), I’d hypothesize that peer review was more central to reputation building back then, and I do believe in the value of peer review for quality control. In fact, it is a sacred value to me, as anyone who reads *How Professor Think* will quickly understand. I view it as the keystone on which our professional autonomy rests.

Relatedly, I want to warn us about the gendered dimension of ongoing changes in our subfield: Let’s not be blind to that. We know that men are likely to use one another as points of reference and interlocutors on blogs, Twitter and other media, as many have noted. We have seen some of this on the main sociology blogs, and my friend Julia Adams has been conducting an ingenious study of gendered editing on Wikipedia and elsewhere: her and her RAs are finding a lot of “mansplaining” and guys who love to edit women’s postings. Of course, cultural sociology has always had a strong share of women stars, which is one reason why I found the field inspiring when I moved to the US in 1983. But I worry that the wind is changing, especially when one considers the premium increasingly attached to technical and quantitative skills, which we know men are develo-

ping more than women. We have to be reflexive and vigilant and call out how the Matthew Effects repeatedly operate illegitimately in gendered ways. For my money, Herbert Blumer’s classical writings on “sense of group positioning” remain unsurpassed as a tool to help us understand what happens when women move beyond what some believe is their legitimate (lower) station in the academic world..

Would you conclude with a word of advice for junior cultural sociologists?

I would encourage them to stay focused on writing important books and substantial papers, develop an ambitious intellectual agenda and stay focused to carry it through. You will gain a lot of satisfaction from this creative (if, at times, painful) endeavor and it will keep you going for the long-term, over what may be a forty- or fifty-year career of intellectual stimulation (many academics stop writing after tenure). Think about what is meaningful to you, intellectually and personally. There is no faking it in this business. Keep it real!



RUBIO

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account of the contemporary process of taste-formation is bound to be incomplete if it does not include the kind of cultural work performed by the [algorithms processing, categorizing, clustering, and hierarchizing](#) the vast oceans of data stored in data centers like the ones pictured above.

The importance of these algorithms for taste-formation is manifold. For one, these algorithms have made possible a new register of semiosis that operates beyond the traditional scale of human action. For example, [the work of categorization](#) generated by a service like Netflix operates at a speed of more than [10 million transactions per second](#), crawling over [the data and metadata](#) generated by more than 65 million users distributed around 40 countries. In addition to this temporal and spatial dislocation of semiosis, these algorithms require a very different set of logics and infrastructures [to transform data into meaning](#).

Interestingly, these algorithms do not simply reproduce existing categories and relationships, but are capable of producing new ones, thanks to their capacity to learn from the data environments in which they operate. Good examples are the kinds of [personalized categories](#) produced by sites like Netflix, or the categories emerging from the “matching” and “playlist shuffle” algorithms operating in music sites like [Pandora](#), [Last.Fm](#) or [Spotify](#), which are resulting in [new practices of consumption and taste-formation](#)

So, as we see, these algorithms are currently performing an important kind of cultural work by making possible new processes of categorization and hierarchization that are resulting in new *regimes of worth*. Yet,

although important and interesting, the capacity of these digital technologies to participate in the cultural work of hierarchization and classification is perhaps not the most important one. What is arguably much more important is that these digital technologies are also becoming increasingly integrated in the process of abduction itself — the process which has long been considered by philosophers and social scientists as *the* most fundamental operation in the process of semiosis.

At its simplest, abduction can be defined as what we do when try to make sense of what other people do. A more elaborate definition could be that abduction is the operation whereby we render observed behaviors as “meaningful actions” by imputing intentions, reasons, or motivations to those behaviors. Although this may sound a bit cryptic, there is actually nothing

strange way and we start wondering why she did it by imputing plausible reasons for that behavior: “Was it because she is mad at me? Perhaps because of something that I said? Is she trying to tell me something? Or was it just that she had something in the eye?” It is through this abductive work that we weave the endless network of interpretations (and misinterpretations!) that constitute the rather imperfect choreography of our daily lives.

Now, what is interesting about our current predicament is that we are no longer the only ones doing this kind of abductive work. Algorithms are now also active — and increasingly powerful — participants in the business of abduction. Thanks to the increasing ubiquity of digital technologies in our lives, these algorithms have the capacity to register our behaviors and create algorithmically-generated inferences and interpretations that

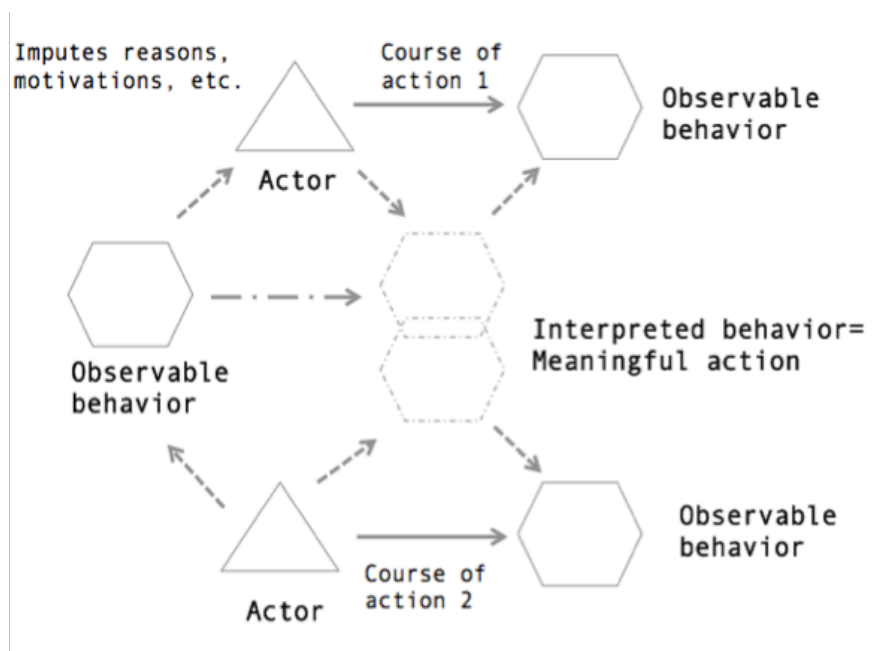


Fig. 4 Meaning-making process through the traditional work of abduction

as banal and quotidian as abduction. As a matter of fact, we are almost always in one way or another engaged in the work of abduction. For example, abduction is what we do when someone looks at us in a seemingly

try to make sense of our actions and to anticipate our future course of action. Although this may sound esoteric, we are by now extremely familiar with the products of this abductive work in the form of, among other

things, endless “personalized” suggestions about what we may want to watch (e.g. Netflix), buy (e.g. Amazon), listen to (Spotify), or where we may want to work (LinkedIn), whom we may want to date (Tinder) or befriend (Facebook), or how much we should exercise and eat (Fitbit). These algorithms operate today as powerful cultural engines populating our worlds with interpretations (and misinterpretations) about ourselves. Interestingly, some companies, like [Affectiva](#) or [BeyondVerbal](#) are taking this abductive work a step further by moving it beyond the conscious level, and locating it at the unconscious level of facial gestures or voice intonation through what they call “[emotions analytics](#)”.

All this leads to an interesting question for cultural sociologists, since it seems that the old traditional Geertzian idea according to which “man [sic] is

an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun”(1973: 5) is perhaps not the best framework to make sense of how meaning is produced and how we organize our actions in our daily lives. The reason for this is that we now operate in environments in which we are not merely confronted with the interpretations and expectation made by our fellow citizens, but we are also confronted with algorithmically-generated interpretations and expectations about our future behaviors, preferences, and choices — interpretations that are now part and parcel of our decision-making processes. Thus, it seems reasonable to say that at least *some* of our choices and behaviors cannot be simply understood as the results of underlying “cultural schemas,” “individual motivations,” “personal beliefs,” “habitus,” or the “interaction between people”, since they are the effec-

ts of more-or-less-fortuitous encounters with algorithmically generated options. I don’t know about you, but my life has certainly become filled with a lot of “[algorithmic serendipity](#)”!

One of the places in which the effects of this new semiotic machinery are becoming more palpable is in the context of urban environments. Over the last few years, [cities across the world](#) have begun a massive process to harness the abductive capacity of these digital infrastructures. One of the best examples of this process is precisely the city where we had our last ASA meeting, Chicago, which is spearheading the project of incorporating the abductive capacity of these digital technologies into some of the core services of the city. The city has begun building a permanent infrastructure designed to collect data through environmental sensors and cellphone signals. One of the pilot projects, called

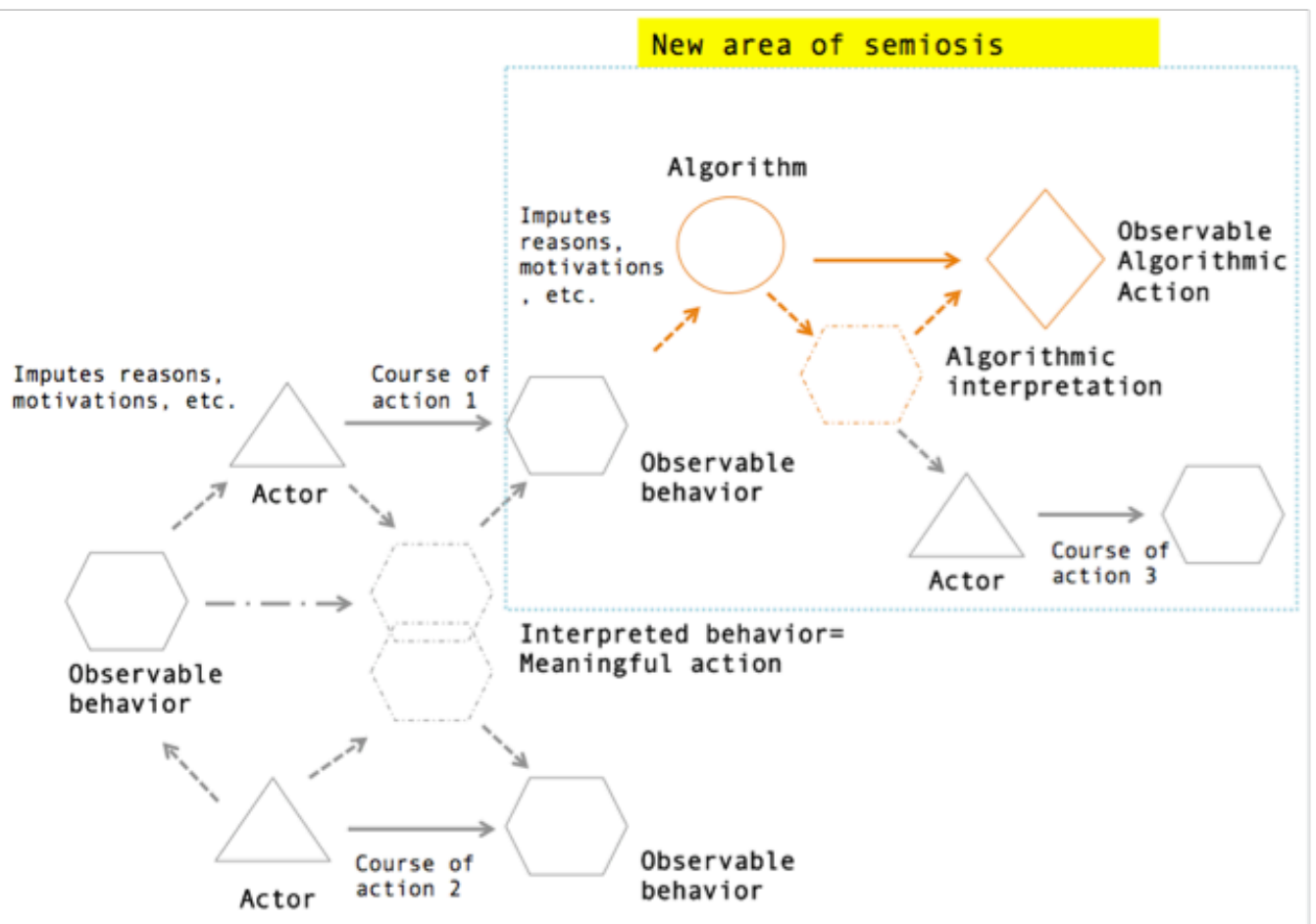


Fig. 5 Abduction in the algorithmic age

the “Array of things” is already collecting 7 million rows of data a day. The project, which is set to be the first open-source, predictive analytics, urban platform, is designed to aggregate and analyze data in an attempt to help make “faster decisions and prevent problems before they develop” in areas such as traffic management, pest control, child obesity, and — perhaps more worryingly — public safety and policing. As part of the latter, the Chicago police department has already been using a proprietary predictive policing algorithm to classify and rank a “heat list” of the 420 people most likely to be involved in violent crime in the future.

At this point, you may be wondering — and rightly so — why cultural sociologists should care about all these developments. My response would be that cultural sociologists should deeply care about all of this for at least three reasons.

The first one is that these digital technologies are giving way to a *new ecology of semiosis* by creating new ways for linking behaviors, categories, meaning, and persons, as well as different logics of abduction, classification, and categorization. Moreover, these digital infrastructures are radically transforming the built environments and objects through which we think, act, and communicate. These are no longer merely passive objects and environments exerting some sort of blind force upon us: We now operate amidst objects and environments capable of registering and categorizing our actions and making sense of them — something that is only likely to increase as this new semiotic machinery becomes increasingly integrated into different aspects of our lives through, among other things, the *gradual implementation of the Internet of Things*.

The second reason why paying attention to these digital in-



Fig. 5 Some of the new semiotic infrastructure of the smart cities. Images from “The Array of Things” project in Chicago.

frastructures is important is because they are giving way to *new forms of cultural work*. This semiotic infrastructure is making possible a new way of building meaning into the world, which is requiring a profound redistribution of existing roles, attributions, and capacities. One of the driving forces of this process is automation, which aspires at making it possible to perform various kinds of cultural work, such as abduction, definition, or categorization, with little (or no) human input. As a result of this, many cultural operations have already been partially delegated to this digital machinery. For example, digital technologies are already actively participating in the cultural work of defining and organizing categories such as *taste, talent, creativity, or crime*, and — perhaps more worryingly — they are also expected to participate in moral decision-making processes, such as in

the case of the so-called *lethal autonomous weapons* or LAWS (oh the irony!), which hold the promise (or the threat) of making life-and-death decisions without what their proponents call the interference of “*negative*” *human input*, such as emotions, fear, stress, overreactions, or self-preservation instinct. Needless to say, the dream of automation is still that: a dream. Despite all the hype surrounding these technologies, the fact is that Google’s automated algorithm still finds it difficult to tell the difference *between a dog and a horse*; services like Pandora

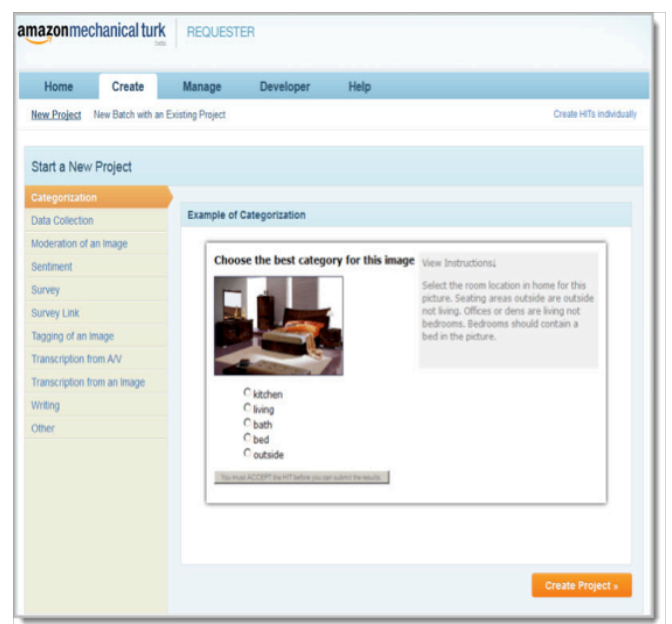


Fig. 6 A new site of cultural classification: Turk workers tagging and classifying images.

rely heavily on human experts to [supervise algorithmic classifications](#), financial markets need a “[human touch](#)” to avoid algorithms from wreaking havoc every now and then; and [Amazon Mechanical Turk](#) needs to hire massive armies of people on a daily basis to repair, amend, or complete the cultural work of classification and hierarchization made by these algorithms.

Finally, the third reason why these digital infrastructures are important for the process of semiosis is because they are giving way to *new forms of cultural conflict*. This is particularly evident in the new “classificatory struggles” emerging where these algorithmically-based forms of abduction are participating. Famous examples are the miscategorization of [people as criminals](#) by policing algorithms; the “[racist bias](#)” of different classificatory algorithms, as in the case of Google’s algorithm [labeling black people as gorillas](#); or the misclassification of cultural contents, as in the famous case of the Amazon algorithm mislabeling [all gay novels as pornography](#). These new types of classificatory struggles are becoming increasingly important sites where different cultural categories, like race, are being *literally* coded and [become effective and powerful realities today](#).

TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL VIEW OF SEMIOSIS

My main argument has been that, if we are to make sense of the contemporary process of semiosis, we need to move cultural sociology beyond the “cultural view” that has dominated it so far. More specifically, my argument is that, if we want to understand how semiosis works today, we cannot do it simply do it by reference to a set of underlying cultural schemas, beliefs, or motivations, or simply by focusing on how people interact

with one another. These narrow causal explanations, with their almost exclusive focus on the scale of human action and interaction, are simply unfit to explore the manifold registers and logics through which the process of semiosis is taking place today.

Now, my argument is not only that we should move beyond this “cultural view” because of its heuristic inadequacy, but also because it is politically necessary. Indeed, as a result of the restricted focus of the cultural view, we are failing to pay attention to the some of the most important transformations taking place today, which are radically transforming how meaning is built and becomes a powerful reality in our daily lives. Thus, while we continue to discuss whether meaningful actions are best understood as being “caused” or just “motivated” by internal cognitive schemata, we are failing to pay attention or to analyze how companies like [CISCO](#), [Siemens](#), [Google](#) or [Amazon](#) — to name just a few — are radically re-shaping the physical and symbolic milieus in which we operate; and as we continue to discuss whether morality should be understood as a set of “implicitly learned cognitive schemas” or as the result of “institutionalized beliefs,” we are neglecting other important sites and processes where moral categories are being done and implemented in our day-to-day-realities, like algorithmic policing, nudge architectures, or lethal autonomous weapons.

If we are to make sense of these contemporary transformations, and if we are to have a voice in them, we need to abandon the restricted view of semiosis imposed by the “cultural view” and move towards a general view of semiosis, which I would call “ecological”. By this I mean an approach that moves away

from the idea of “culture” as some sort of semi-autonomous system woven through people’s actions, discourses, and cognitive operations, towards a wider analysis of the different *sites and materials* (physical, technological, cognitive, discursive, etc.) through which different forms of meaning-making become possible in the world (for a more detailed explanation see Domínguez Rubio, Forthcoming). To do this, we will benefit immensely from joining the wider interdisciplinary conversations that have been taking place over the last decades amongst anthropologists (such as [Gabriella Coleman](#), [Christopher Kelty](#), and [others](#)), cognitive scientists and philosophers (like [Edwin Hutchins](#) or [Andy Clark](#)), urban geographers (such as [Stephen Graham](#) or [Adam Greenfield](#)), media and communication scholars (like [Nicole Starosielski](#), [Jussi Parika](#), [John Durham Peters](#) and [others](#)), or information science and STS scholars (like [Steve Jackson](#) or [Paul Dourish](#)) from which the voices of cultural sociologists have been almost entirely absent. If we do not do this, and keep insisting on the particularly restricted genre of explanation proposed by the cultural view, we may face the ironic risk that our way to study meaning can become increasingly meaningless to understanding our contemporary social reality.



FOR REFERENCES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE:

RUBIO

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BENZECRY REVIEW

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American football would be a very different practice if the ball were a different one. So how does his explanation coordinate or articulate with organizational isomorphic explanations that might help to make sense of what is equivalent between football, basketball and baseball in the US (e.g. dependence on public subsidies, presence of luxury boxes, reliance on hordes of assistants, engagement in data analytics), despite their obvious differences?

iii) Fernando shows how machines went from being the inscribing object of culture to producers of culture themselves. How different is this new classificatory machine from the previous Hacking-friendly “constructivist” work of evaluating people and objects, in which agents that systematically engage in the production of categories are key participants in the production of those behaviors? Is there a role for human agents? Is this the augmentation of a pre-existing logic? And how do those

algorithmic suggestions map out in relationship to pre-existing consumer “preferences”?

Thanks to Genevieve for organizing the ASA panel, and to the authors for presenting such interesting papers.

CHILDRESS REVIEW

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meanings. Sometimes by “meaning” I think we really mean “evaluation,” which sequentially may come right after meaning or — apologies for the pessimism to follow — come right before it. Other times, by “meaning” I think we really mean “frames,” which is a reasonable, if less intellectually sexy, substitute for meaning. Other times, by “meaning” what we really mean is “automated textual analysis,” which interestingly most typically also means “frames,” albeit frames we can ostensibly study more objectively by having uploaded God from the scholar and into the machine. As meanings are made collectively (says the sociologist), making meaningful studies of meaning is also a project that would probably best be engaged in collectively. The accumulated scholars on this panel got off to a rolling start.

SEZNEVA REVIEW

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Comments by Peter Stamatov encouraged the presenters to reflect on the material in such a way that a robust conceptualization of “culture” could be devised across the institutional fields represented in the papers. Going back to the established theoretical tropes in cultural sociology, he argued, might prove productive. Are we looking at the “culture” of one and the same order, he asked, when we address the cultural heritage of the nation and cultural goods of a corporation? Does it matter that the former is inalienable and the latter for sale? The discussion that followed probed into the adjacent areas of politics — asking, for instance, whether piracy can be interpreted as resistance to corporate appropriation, and how to balance the rights of a nation to protect its integrity, with the demands of cultural inclusion imposed by globalization. Together, the presentations, comments and discussion made up a lively session, the insights of which were appreciated by scholars of migration, transnationalism, religion, Jewish studies, and popular culture.

GHAZIANI BOOK

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“[O]ne of the oldest tropes of sociology is that of the loss of face-to-face community and its replacement with cold and distanced contractual relations. Faced with this tradition of longing, it is remarkable that Ghaziani manages to keep the tone of his book ambivalent. At times he mourns the loss of the gayborhoods he once knew; at other times he is palpably excited about the new possibilities and selves that are now open to LGBTQ people in the United States’ major cities. (...) In doing so, Ghaziani brings to mind the kind of ambivalence that was the mark of some of the most exciting works of urban thought. For Simmel, of course, ambivalence was the name of the game. The money economy was both incredibly exciting as it translated the world into the language of pure potential, while it simultaneously destroyed quality with its translation in quantity. The modern city was both a space of incredible freedom and of blasé-like alienation. But this is also the tone that makes one of the most important precursors to Ghaziani’s book — Louis Wirth’s *The Ghetto* (1928) — such a classic work. For, in Wirth’s telling of the Ghetto, the Jews who leave the Chicago ghetto often found themselves in a world they could never truly be a part of—a world that accepted them nominally, but never deeply. They ended up both lamenting their freedom and celebrating it. Some rediscovered their Judaism: Others tried in vain to blend in. Social transformations, as Ghaziani reminds us, are never politically or existentially clear cut. It is this ambivalent sociological telling that allows *There Goes the Gayborhood?* to so powerfully capture our attention.”

Iddo Tavory, NYU



KENNEDY BOOK REVIEW

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This strength is also the book’s weakness. Kennedy intended the title *Globalizing Knowledge* to challenge an empty catchphrase, but his approach will frustrate readers hoping to quickly grasp what he means when he uses it. Conceptually, the book’s contextually specific, complex, multi-layered perspective resists simplification by design. Topically, its breadth and intellectual curiosity makes reading rough going at times, and most readers are unlikely to be familiar with all of the many people, places, and social movements Kennedy cites. These challenges make the book better suited for academics and global administrators than undergraduates, and may leave readers a bit mystified about what globalizing knowledge is, or should, properly be about.

Still, *Globalizing Knowledge* is a formative and well-informed treatment of a critical, timely issue. Kennedy argues persuasively that “globalizing knowledge” is many things, and that a number of characteristic features of contemporary society — the globalization of higher education, the internationalization of the media, the increasing ease with which individuals can reach international audiences — might productively be examined as instances of this phenomenon. The main thing the book leaves me wishing for, given Kennedy’s administrative background, is that he had been more transparently prescriptive within the university context. Even as Kennedy shows us knowledge globalizing far beyond universities, administrators and faculty would surely benefit from a narrow set of concrete recommendations that he is so well-positioned to provide.

