PERSPECTIVES
NEWSLETTER OF THE ASA THEORY SECTION

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
Table Talk, at a Simulacratic Table
John R. Hall - University of California - Davis

The sociological attraction of the dinner with engaging companions is that it facilitates table talk across a range of topics, everyone freely expressing opinions, maybe floating excessive claims over the third bottle of wine, perhaps in response to someone else's rather bold assertion, testing the possibilities of shared understandings efficiently and in ways that bring forth topics and points of view otherwise elusive. Habitus, as Bourdieu rightly understood, finds its strongest stamp at the dinner table. In *Perspectives*, engaged table talk about theory has its quasi-simulacrum, and the editors, past and present, are to be commended for throwing the dinner party. Here, in memory of my late fellow Louisvillian Hunter S. Thompson, I want to exploit this table talk-ish culture by advancing gonzo-esque claims about the prospects of sociological theory today, claims that would be impossible to justify either amidst the clink of stemware and clatter of dishes or in this short text.

Last fall, **my essay for *Perspectives*** both noted the vital energies in theory today and waxed somewhat melancholy about the seemingly dim prospects of general theory. We have seen significant developments of theory on diverse fronts – theories of cognition and agency, field theory, governmentality, postcolonial theory, theories of intersectionality in stratification and identity, feminist theory, critical race theory, actor-network theory, theories of social justice, cultural theory: this list could be longer, and still incomplete.

Amidst the striking new directions, what are the

prospects for general theory? Might the most intellectually compelling new developments find accommodation or synthesis within some comprehensive framework? To be sure, Talcott Parsons worked for decades to establish such a synthesis, but his attempt could not survive the political tumult of the '60s and, when not ignored, it is often deemed an epic failure. But was Parsons wrong to make the attempt? Might we now fare better, having cleared away some epistemological and ontological underbrush and pursued good empirically engaged theoretical work?

We are in a better position than Parsons to advance general theory for any number of reasons. A short list includes:

- the abandonment of analytic dualisms, notably, the modernist structure/agency divide, and the related collapse of arguments for the primacy of one or another "level" of analysis in favor of acknowledging the simultaneity and interplay of processes, such that any privileging of a "level" is arbitrary (to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, it's turtles all the way up and down);
- the end of the critical realist versus constructionist and interpretivist standoff in a draw, or actually, a convergence on real constructionism, in which any differences seem more symbolic than real and the best empirical analyses undertaken under the two rubrics are strikingly similar in character;
- the rejection of a static conception of society as a thing, in favor of embracing the processual-

activity thesis long held by Simmel, Weber, symbolic interactionists, and others, concerning the social as relational unfolding in episodically connected interactions; and thus,

- the end of the artificial divide between sociology and history, deepening the understanding of historicity via temporalized theorizations of meaningful action in relation to institutional structurations of temporality, codified pasts, the unfolding present, and anticipated futures, from theorists as diverse as Andrew Abbott, Jenny Andersson, Nina Eliasoph, Ivan Ermakoff, Ann Mische, Iddo Tavory, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Eviatar Zerubavel, and myself.

What might these interconnected emergent understandings imply about possible directions for general theorizing?

I have long been intrigued by the prophetic note that Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Orloff sounded in their introduction to *Remaking Modernity*, where they remarked, "meta-narrative and synoptic grand theory are making a comeback" (2005:60–61). They rightly invoked S. M. Eisenstadt's work on multiple modernities, but that seemed the only exemplar they could offer. Thirteen years later, the agenda of "remaking modernity" seems, if anything, all the more urgent. Yet a synoptic grand theory remains elusive. The reasons are well understood. Any metanarrative or general theory, arriving under a cloud of suspicion, immediately becomes subject to Derridean deconstruction, to identify its absences. With Richard Rorty (1979), most theorists have renounced all hope for a "correspondence" approach to theory. Under the circumstances, and with Richard Swedberg's (2015) encouragement, projects of theory have become less searches for an *edifice* – a structure of interrelated concepts – and more activities of theorizing, *practices*. Yet practicing theory requires concepts with which to practice, and getting those

concepts requires a different kind of practice, devoted to the general elaboration and critique of theories themselves, in terms that exceed empirical analysis.

At its best (or at least, most consequential), sociological theory also has provided a metaphor or imago of society, relevant for its institutional development (think Parsons and systems theory) or revolutionary change (Marx), and it has enabled "situational history" – informed theoretical analysis about agency in relation to a political moment (Lenin, "What is to be done?"). To be sure, recent theoretically rich accounts by scholars like Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman do provide vivid imagoes for understanding the social in the wake of the decline of modernity as a progressive ideology. Yet for the project of "remaking modernity," Beck and Bauman offer more diagnostic documentation and lament than conceptual tools to gain clarity about public choices and political action in our historical moment.

We never were modern, Bruno Latour tells us. Now it seems we never will be. Too late! We have reached a point of real postmodernity, not just a fancy occasion of cultural *bricolage*, rather, a time when the social in its "structured" totality could be described conceptually seems lost. That theoretical circumstance reflects a fragmentation of the social itself.

Certainly any modern social theory that presumed secular or dialectical progress failed to appreciate emergent social challenges – climate change; new gravitations toward patriarchy, racism, nationalism, authoritarianism, and autocracy; and the triumph of the simulacrum upon which your reading here depends – the consolidation of a set of internet and cloud processes that increasingly organize social life, sometimes subjecting us to new forms of propaganda and technological manipulation – all under conditions of ever increasingly extra-national capitalism. Is it possible that these developments herald an apocalyptic "end of the world as we know it" – the passing of liberal

democracy, as Wendy Brown (2015) has it, or even what Wolfgang Streeck (2014) announces as the "end of capitalism," to be displaced not by some new social order, but by the interregnum of morbidity that Gramsci anticipated?

To interrogate such post- or anti-modern complexities is to wonder whether they exceed the grasp of contemporary sociological theory, still centered, much of it, on the implicit assumption of institutional order. Field theory, in either its Bourdieusian or West Coast dispensation, has the strongest current claim to chart social competition and conflict within relatively institutionalized settings. But field analysis is inherently partial: as its uses by scholars like Monika Krause, Tom Medvetz, Stephanie Mudge, and others already demonstrate, there is more going on "within" fields than field analysis brings to light, and less institutionalized social phenomena occurring "between" or "outside" fields defy capture by field analysis *per se*.

To index one example, even if Bourdieu had much to say about antinomies between democracy and the political field, no bounded field-theoretic analysis adequately captures the challenges to democracy afoot today. Yes, there is the putatively encompassing "field of power," but power is now enveloped in new apparatuses, technologies, and stratagems that exceed any "rules of the game." Moreover, power can be productively theorized in ways beyond field analysis (Reed 2017). Thus, although even transnational and global phenomena such as colonialism can be analyzed in field-theoretic terms, field analysis will have to find its place within broader theoretical discourse and, possibly, a more general theory that draws specific theories into relation with one another.

Charting out a new program exceeds mere table talk. And sociologists today can embrace diverse programs of synthesis and theory-building. We may sing Kumbaya together without sharing an agenda.

Yet I would be remiss to leave the table without hinting at my own broad desiderata, hopefully in a way that you find suggestive and open to discussion. We ought to be looking to find new imagos and general frameworks, flexible enough to chart the "liquid" flows of social instantiation (Bauman), specific enough to identify alternative social constellations that matter today (Eisenstadt), empirically relevant in ways that connect theory with programs of research, concrete enough to facilitate "political" and "situational" inquiry, infused with enough humility to forswear dictating theoretical answers to complex questions in advance.

Theodor Adorno held that epistemology is necessarily historical and emergent: we should suspect the same for theory. And even sociologists disinterested in general theory might be hard put to purge its implicit presence in their work (we may read a lot of functionalist sociology these days whose authors may be unaware that they are using it). Far better for general sociological theories to be explicit. Concerning myriad recent theorizations, we should ask, is their variety a sign of incommensurability, or rather, an indication that we have not yet done the general work that can place recent theoretical advances into some broader, theoretically informed conversation? Jürgen Habermas has offered us an early exemplar of the possibilities: yes, theories of (post)colonialism have their origins in the analysis of states and their internal and external subordinations of subject populations, but can't colonization be found in relations between "the system" and "the lifeworld"? …and perhaps in other analytic circumstances as well?

To generalize from the example of lifeworld colonization, we should acknowledge that like biology (!), sociology has no singular totalizing theory. Rather, we may expect to find different but linked arenas, worlds, domains, spheres, situses, and fields of action, separately and in their interrelations subject to distinctive and historically emergent processes,

mechanisms, pathways, channels, and narrative scripts of action. If this is the circumstance under which theorizing proceeds, and keeping to the thematization of temporality and historicity identified above, one basis for constructing a general framework of theoretical analysis would be to recognize that social temporalities are constitutive of linkages among relational action, meaning, figurations, and, sometimes, orders of interaction, as well as organizations and institutions. I can't elaborate this claim at the dinner table, but a comparative, structural, institutional, and hermeneutic phenomenology of alternative social temporalities and their concatenations offers a basis for identifying where and how various processes and scripts operate (Hall 2009: 207-20; Glaeser 2014). Such an approach, done right, avoids essentialism or reductionism, embraces the manifold realities of the social and their distinctive processes – both more and less institutionalized – and thus warrants a comparative and historical approach to sociological theorizing, one that identifies how the play of action in a religious organization will differ qualitatively from that of a political struggle, in ways that cannot be reduced to alternative forms of capital, and even if sometimes lines of action within one appropriate the logic of the other, and sometimes elective affinities connect the two.

Despite the historicity of theory, it does not "evolve." We exercise *will* to bring theory into being, we theorize, in concert with one another. We choose how to develop theory, when, in relation to what. How to do this now? What specifications of general theory might offer leverage for under postmodern crisis of authoritarianism, de-democratization, the great unraveling? That is the question of the summer of 2018.

Hopefully, you, I, and others will consider this and other questions in the Theory section events in Philadelphia: the **sessions on power and philosophy** organized by Anne Marie Champagne and Isaac Reed, **the "trespassing" sessions** that Simeon Newman and I organized, **the roundtables** organized by Alison Gerber, the business meeting, where we will honor **Theory section award and prize winners**, the **Coser Salon lecture by Gabriel Abend**, and the **Theory section reception**, to be held from 7:30 to 9:30pm on Sunday, off-site, at the oldest continuously operating public house in Philadelphia, **McGillan's Olde Ale House, 1310 Drury Street**, a mere block and a half south of Market Street, off 13th Street (see Theory section award/prize winners and ASA schedule elsewhere in this newsletter). To conclude, I extend my sincere thanks to the chairs and members of the section's standing and award/prize committees, the other section officers, and the editors of Perspectives for all their efforts and support. It is truly a privilege and a pleasure to work with such a great group of sociologists.

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2018 JUNIOR THEORISTS' SYMPOSIUM
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
August 10, 2018

8:30 - 9:00 | COFFEE AND BAGELS

9:00 - 10:50 | POWER AND THE STATE
Matty Lichtenstein (UC Berkeley) - Theorizing State Power
Fauzia Husain (University of Virgina) - When Agency is Empty: Gender and the Engines of Authority in the Pakistani Police
Jing-Mao Ho (Cornell University) - The Criminological State

Discussant: Margaret Somers (University of Michigan)

10:50 - 11:00 | COFFEE

11:00 - 12:50 | RACE, SPACE, AND PLACE
Jan Doering (McGill University) - Political Uses of Race & Ethnicity
Elyas Bakhtiari (College of William and Mary) - Health Disparities Formation: Upstream Causes of Between-Group Outcome Differences
Steven Tuttle (Layola University, Chicago) - Towards a Theory of the Racialization of Space

Discussant: Alford Young (University of Michigan)

12:50 - 2:00 | LUNCH

2:00 - 2:30 | JUNIOR THEORIST AWARD WINNER'S PRESENTATION
Larissa Buchholz (Northwestern University) - From a National to a Global Field? Deciphering Global Transformations in the Contemporary Visual Arts

2:30 - 4:20 | STUCTURE AND MEANING
Madeline Pape (UW Madison) - Insitutional Resistance to Complexity: The Case of Sex and Gender
Jackie Joslyn (University of Arizona) - Measuring Experience as Structure: The Ghost Node in Theory and Analysis
Hajar Yazdiha (University of Southern California) - Integrating Collective Memory and Strategic Action: Social Memories, Cultural Knowledge, and Muslim Rights Mobilization

Discussant: Nina Eliasoph (University of Southern California)

4:30 - 5:45 | AFTER-PANEL: "GETTING OUT OF OUR HEADS: TAKING THEORY INTO THE BODY, SPACE, AND PLACE"
Rene Almeling (Yale University) - Rebecca Hanson (University of Florida) - Ellis Monk (Harvard University) - Vanesa Ribas (UC San Diego)
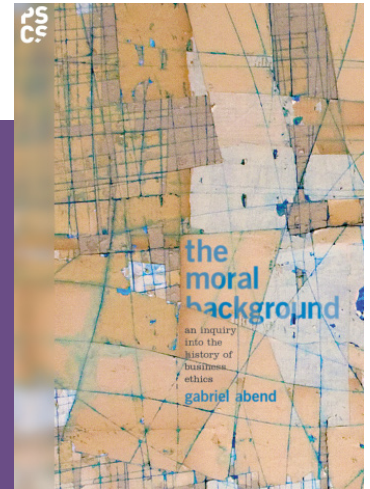
5:45 | THEORY IN THE WILD: BEER, WINE, AND GOOD CONVERSATION

2018 THEORY SECTION AWARDS
Theory Prize | Co-winner

GABRIEL ABEND
*The Moral Background: An Inquiry into
the History of Business Ethics*
(Princeton University Press, 2014)

Abend's *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics* and the theory developed within it invigorate and extend classical research on morality for a contemporary audience at a time when sociologists are returning to serious considerations of the issue in their research. Much recent work on morality asks whether and to what extent moral values as embodied culture motivate or justify behavior. Abend takes this conversation one step further by distinguishing between first- and second-order morality, compelling theorists of all stripes to ask how a particular practice, claim, norm, person, or category of people becomes classified as belonging to the moral realm in the first place. Thus, first-order morality concerns moral behaviors, norms, and values related to a specific field of action at a particular time in history. Second-order morality, however, undergirds these actions, norms, and values by setting the boundaries around what is and is not considered a part of the moral domain. Abend develops his theory of the moral background by analyzing shifts in the meaning of business ethics in the U.S.: he carefully parses through archival documents from business associations, schools, and key actors in the business field, and he judiciously weighs alternative explanations for his findings throughout the text. But far beyond the peculiarities of his case, Abend successfully convinces the reader that the moral background is an important consideration that can, and indeed ought to be, seriously considered in any study of morality moving forward. We expect that scholars will work with these important and compelling ideas for years to come.

JOSH PACEWICZ
Partisans and Partners: The Politics of the Post-Keynesian Society
(University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Pacewicz's *Partisans and Partners: The Politics of the Post-Keynesian Society*, like much great theory, analyzes a particular time and place, but its categories, questions, and logics of inquiry will inspire similar analyses in other times and places. In a new era of theorizing, Partisans and Partners shows local political life has changed since the 1980s in two small cities in the US in relation to changes in the state, market, neighborhood, and family life. As an intervention into an urgent political debate, the book explains how Americans started to feel that local politics had become unhinged from national parties, and how this disconnection paradoxically spawned both apathy and dogmatic attention to hot-button issues. Before the 1980s, elites and workers in the two American cities Pacewicz studied could clearly "see" how political controversy was meaningful and necessary, because national policies gave local people power. You knew where you stood in the world, not because you had a political theory and knew about the candidates' policies, but because you knew what policies people "like you" liked. After the '80s, local controversy became harder for ordinary people to "see," because national policies changed, moving the locus of power away from Main Streets. The "after" picture shows a world abuzz with words like "flexibility, diversity, inclusivity, and competition," but with no loyalty, and little sense of membership, and no easy cues for ordinary citizens to place themselves in the world of politics. We expect this approach to analyzing ordinary people's ordinary processes of political articulation to change the ways sociologists think about political engagement, the state, public-private partnerships, and local sociability.

Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda Setting

JULIAN GO

As stipulated in its founding document, the Coser Award, given yearly since 2006, is decided by a committee of diverse members – this year, John R. Hall, as Chair of the Theory Section; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva of Duke University, the President of the ASA; Iddo Tavory of NYU, the previous year's Coser Award winner; David C. Lane of the University of South Dakota, the sociologist designated by the Society for the Study of Social Problems; and Amanda Lewis of the University of Illinois-Chicago, the designee of the ASA President. We are all very pleased to announce that the 2018 winner of the Coser Award is **Julian Go**, Professor of Sociology at Boston University. Professor Go will give the lecture at the Coser Salon during the 2019 ASA meetings in New York.

For a good 20 years Julian Go has pursued a clear and strong substantive agenda of historical/comparative (and some quantitative) research directed to the study of colonialism. Especially in the past decade, his research has inspired Julian to advocate for a major theoretical reconstruction of sociology as a whole on the basis of engagement with postcolonial theory. This agenda raises a variety of theoretical issues that Julian both begins to address and lays out as an agenda for all of sociology, most strikingly in his book, ***Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*** (Oxford University Press, 2016). Engaging as it does with critical perspectives found mostly in disciplines of the humanities, Julian's agenda poses a direct challenge to the hegemony of conventional sociology and encourages us to reconceive and transcend older understandings of the relationship between social science and ideology. To put the matter in the terms of one of Julian's journal articles, he invites us to "decolonize" sociology. In an era of global social, political, and climatological challenges, no agenda for theoretical agenda-setting could

Junior Theorist Award
ERIN METZ MCDONNELL

The Junior Theorist Award goes to Erin Metz McDonnell of University of Notre Dame for her 2017 article, **"The Patchwork Leviathan: How Pockets of Bureaucratic Governance Flourish within Institutionally Diverse Developing States,"** *ASR* 82(3). Drawing on organizational comparisons across a set of current and historically developing states, McDonnell introduces to the field of political sociology the concept of "interstitial bureaucracies" to account for her findings that high performing state organizations in developing countries invert the canonical model of Weberian bureaucracy. The Junior Theorist Award committee, chaired by Kristen Schilt (University of Chicago) and composed of members Alvaro Santana-Acuna (Whitman College), Larissa Buchholz (Northwestern University), and Jordanna Matlon (American University), also awarded an **honorable mention to Joshua Wakeham** (University of Alabama) for his 2017 article **"Bullshit as a Problem of Social Epistemology"** (Sociological Theory 35(1). Warm congratulations to Erin and Joshua, and a deep thank you to the committee members.

Shils-Coleman Memorial Award
for Best Student Paper
TALIA SHIFF

This year's winner of the Edward Shils - James Coleman Memorial Award for Best Student Paper is Talia Shiff (Northwestern University), for her paper, "Evaluating the Case: Encounters of Schematic Accordance and Schematic Discordance in Asylum Adjudications."
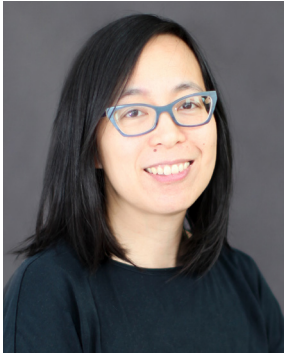
Honorable Mention was accorded to:
Arvind Karunakaran (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), "Reconfiguring Accountability: Organizational Accountability in the Age of Smartphones and Social Media."
Mikell Hyman, University of Michigan, "When Policy Feedbacks Fail: 'Collective Cooling' in Detroit's Municipal Bankruptcy."

Breaking Down the Iron Cage for Democratic Ends:
Reflections on Studying the Burning Man Organization and a Democratic School

Katherine K. Chen - The City College and Graduate School, CUNY

While I knew I wanted to study organizations, I did not start out with the intention of researching democratic practices. I felt frustrated that much of organizational research, both classic and contemporary, slavishly detailed the myriad dysfunctions of organizations; yet, these studies provided few clues on how to rectify these ills. Like many sociologists, I believe that our discipline excels in documenting and questioning the taken-for-granted. However, most research examines conventional institutions, and we don't offer practitioners – including ourselves – equivalent insight into alternatives. This omission partly reflects selection bias, as it's easier to find well-established survivors that persist because they replicate conventional structures. To understand other possibilities, we should follow Burawoy's (2013) and Graeber's (2004) recommendations to undertake more studies of how groups, particularly nascent ones, resist reproducing the status quo.

If I had to summarize my journey to understand such status quo-challenging groups, I would say it has been in pursuit of the following puzzle: how can collectives expand democratic options in a society where most organizations often ignore the input and interests of multiple constituents? Given existing research's dismal conclusions about conventional (and even alternative) organizations, I wanted to understand how organizations could integrate and support, rather than suppress, their members' interests. When considering possible research sites where I as a then-graduate student could conduct ethnographic research, I took a gamble, one that initiated a lifelong journey of studying democratic practices. I decided to study the practices and activities of the organization underlying the annual **Burning Man event**, a temporary arts community that now attracts some 80,000 people to the Nevada Black Rock Desert. Since I had not yet attended an event (I have now attended so many that I am considered a "long-timer"), I relied upon the then-new website and newsletters to get a sense of Burning Man's **countercultural aspects**, including a barter turned gift economy where no money – other than purchasing ice, tea, and coffee – is exchanged.

After gaining permission to study the organization,

I conducted qualitative research, including several rounds of observations and participant-observations during a period when the organization was solidifying its practices. From this research, I learned that the Burning Man organization not only produced an unusual output, but also had distinctive organizing practices that were novel for its members. For instance, meetings operated by "modified consensus," where people had to come to an agreement about discussed issues, and members could develop their roles around their interests, rather than being placed into responsibilities by their skills or experiences. Moreover, a shared mission and connection to the larger collective motivated members. During interviews, some juxtaposed their Burning Man experiences as engaging interests and talents overlooked by their workplaces and other voluntary associations.

While I was muddling through analyzing this organization's practices, Peter Marsden handed me a book, **The Cooperative Workplace: Potentials and Dilemmas of Organizational Democracy and Participation** by Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt. This moment initiated a major turning point for my research, demonstrating how researchers integrate theoretical and empirical work. Using qualitative studies of worker cooperatives, alternative schools, and other organizations, Rothschild and Whitt (1986) expanded upon value-rational authority, a form of authority that Weber had typologized but not fully specified. Rothschild and Whitt outlined conditions under which they expected collectivist-democratic organizations to survive, which included recruiting homogeneous membership and staying small.

Grappling with empirically informed theory provided a crucible for understanding how to break out of the iron cage. As I puzzled over the seeming particularities of the Burning Man organization and its event, I eventually realized that its issues – how to recruit members, how to retain members, how to manage relations with other entities, etc. - applied to many organizations, not just ones that have unusual practices or outputs. I found that the Burning Man organization combined bureaucratic practices so that these supported collectivist-democratic practices, and they used collectivist-democratic practices to check coercive authority and bureaucratic pressures.

Most importantly, the collectivist-democratic practices allowed people to experiment. These practices encouraged organizers and members to respond to members' changing interests and reshape other actors' demands and claims, including those posed by media, law enforcement, governmental agencies, and individuals and organizations seeking to appropriate Burning Man imagery or names for commercial purposes. Instead of stifling efforts with coercive authority and bureaucratic practices, people used bureaucratic practices to support and enhance democratic-collectivist practices (Chen 2009). My research also revealed that contrary to Rothschild and Whitt's (1986) contention, limiting growth is not the only survival option for an atypical organizational form (Chen 2016).

In addition, I found that the Burning Man organization facilitated a shift in how people viewed their volunteer work. Burning Man excels at what I call communification:

> Rather than devaluing labor as a commodity exchange, Burning Man encouraged what I call communification by infusing actions with meaning and values that emphasized individual persons' connection with the larger collective. At Burning Man, communification involved the following three checks against commodification and alienation: (1) revaluing of work, (2) building relationships among community members, and (3) supporting and integrating members' perspectives and interests (Chen 2016: 88).

The organization and its event also have provided a platform for discussing issues that threaten to undercut democracy in larger society, like growing socioeconomic inequality (Chen 2015).

Since I first started studying Burning Man in 1998, Burning Man has continued to grow and now regularly sells out of tickets. Larry Harvey, one of Burning Man's co-founders and visionary, and other Burning Man devotees whom I interviewed and observed have passed, reminders that human lives are finite but that their influence endures through embodied values and connections practiced among the living. Even with these changes, Burning Man's reach extends beyond its nine days in the Nevada Black Rock Desert. Inspired by their Burning Man experiences and organizing practices, people have set up their own projects and organizations in local communities across the US and worldwide. These efforts include FIGMENT, a collection of family-friendly festivals of interactive art that started at Governors Island, a short ferry ride away from Manhattan, New York, and has spread to other cities (Chen 2011).

For my newest project, I am studying another "extreme case," in a different organizational field serving a wider, mixed-age population. Now that I am a parent as well as a professor, I wanted to study how collectives can use democratic practices to foster learning. Currently, I am observing how a small school explains its unconventional practices to stakeholders through trainings, tours, and meetings and how its members contribute to a growing, worldwide network of like-minded groups and organizations. This collective has innovated democratic practices so they can expedite meetings but still address individual concerns – curbing the "**freedom is an endless meeting**" criticism of democratic deliberation – and testing of possible practices governing their community.

When entering this network, some – particularly the adults who have been educated in traditional systems – must unlearn a singular reliance upon bureaucratic practices, such as hierarchical authority and unyielding rules. Even for someone like myself, with expertise and experience with collectivist-democratic organizations, the grooves of the iron cage run deep. Nonetheless, the synergies of bureaucratic and democratic practices offer an invigorating catalyst for exploring otherwise taken-for-granted beliefs about the ideal-types of organization.

How different stakeholders understand and wield practices of democratically fostered learning (and organizing) become visible only through repeated, reflexive observations and participant-observations that test assumptions. Right now, my field notes detail the experiences of a newcomer (myself) stumbling – including an unanticipated faceplant on the playground – through unfamiliar practices and situations, including meetings, interactions, and activities, with different parties. After inadvertently violating a practice or a norm, the ensuing conversation has helped me to adjust my understanding of organizing practices and their underlying rationales. Through such "missteps," researchers can constantly clarify "what's happening?", accelerating **abductive analysis** that can generate or refine theory (cf. Stuart 2016; Tavory and Timmermans 2014).

When I started studying Burning Man, I did not realize I would be able to continue researching organizations and democratic practices in other venues and join a growing community of scholars interested in these issues. I have found it particularly invigorating to discuss research with both well-established experts like Joyce Rothschild and meet up-and-coming researchers at various conferences. At the moment, I'm co-organizing **SASE's** "Alternatives to Capitalism" network; we'll be meeting in Kyoto for 2018 and will meeting in NYC for 2019. I'm excited about this chance

to explore the emancipatory potential of democratic practices in organizations and hope that others will make similar journeys with theory and data.

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It's the Political Economy, Stupid: A Polanyian Take on American Politics in the *Longue Durée*

Josh Pacewicz - Brown University

American politics is in the gutter, and a key long-term cause is the polarization of the two parties: Democratic and Republican politicians uniformly take opposing positions on virtually all issues. This phenomenon may appear less pressing than Trump's brinkmanship and racially divisive appeals, and a full accounting of Trump certainly requires attention to other issues like the politics of racial backlash. But, on the other hand, Trump's ability to endure countless scandals and breaks with GOP orthodoxy while maintaining near-total party support is unimaginable except in a scenario wherein Republicans oppose Democrats across the board. Party polarization is what created conditions of possibility for a figure like Trump.

My work examines the political-economic roots of party polarization, and—I think—illustrates the ways in which analyses that focus on political-economic institutions counter the normative intuitions of both formal and folk political theory, particularly the presentist mindset with which some commentators approach analysis of our current historical moment.

To understand party polarization, one needs look at the relationship between parties and society, because the phenomenon is historically cyclical and only tangentially related to voters' preferences. People say that partisan polarization has increased recently, which is true, but the short term perspective misses that we are regressing to levels of polarization reminiscent of the 19th and early 20th Century (McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2016). The 1930s to the late 1970s—roughly, the New Deal Period—was the real historical anomaly for politicians' high rates of bipartisan policy commitments. Explanations that look primarily to voters put the cart before the horse. The polarization of politicians, which began in the 1980s, precedes the polarization of voters by two decades, and the latter has also not gone nearly as far. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a majority of Americans, 79% in 2014 according to Pew, hold some mix of Democratic and Republican views.* The key question is what institutional factors account for the unusually depolarized nature of New Deal Era politics, and what changed in the late 1970s.

The distinctive feature of New Deal era politics was grassroots political parties that were dominated by community economic and social elites—as shorthand, *politics embedded in community governance*. My book illustrates this via a historical analysis of two Rust Belt cities, wherein local business owners dominated the GOP and the Democratic party was largely an extension of the labor movement. This arrangement was specific to my cases, but other studies from the period also point to party politics as extension of factional community conflicts. In contemporaneous Cleveland, for example, Michael McQuarrie (2017) describes conflict between downtown, Republican business interests and an African-American dominated coalition based in the neighborhoods. Such factional community conflicts were partially the product of federal policies. Financial sector regulation and anti-trust enforcement discouraged corporate acquisitions, sheltering robust local business communities. Other policies encouraged labor union formation, empowering large locals that could pay full-time representatives to engage in community work. Federal social and urban programs also transferred discretionary dollars to cities, which led elites to construct their interests as local and encouraged them to mobilize supporters in conflicts over federal funds.

This system depolarized politics, because community elites coopted grassroots parties. GOP meetings frequently occurred at the country club, whereas the Labor Temple served as de facto Democratic headquarters. The result was a mode of public engagement that political scientists identify as conflict displacement: community elites focused party politics on the issues of economic redistribution that motivated their local engagement and literally did not allow activists focused on other causes near the microphone. My interviews with older voters showed that this led many to see national politics as an extension of community cleavages. The distinctive feature of the mid-20th Century electorate was voters that were highly committed to one of the parties, but ambivalent on most political issues. This was possible because voters used their experience of community affairs to make sense of the national politics—they saw political significance in their job, associational activities, neighborhood, and leisure activities. They saw local business and labor leaders as proxies for, respectively, the national GOP and Democratic Party.

The political-economic transformations of the 1970s and 80s decimated such traditional community relations. Financial deregulation set off the largest corporate merger movement of the 20th Century, which robbed cities of locally-owned businesses and their local business communities—a loss of local business influence, which mirrors business leaders' contemporaneous loss of collective voice at the national scale (Mizruchi 2013). Unions too went into decline. Simultaneous cutbacks in federal funding led remaining elites to identify their interest with an ability to market their city to outsiders. They began avoiding conflict with one another in favor of partnerships to attract investment, whether competitive funding or corporate employers. In the process, local elites adopted a professional, post-partisan ethos than made them allergic to the partisan commitments of their predecessors.

In my book, I describe the consequences as *politics disembedded from community governance*: community affairs are dominated by those who focus on place-marketing, party politics by those who play no role in community governance. On the GOP side especially, this created an opening for the disaffected, hyper-partisan, and reactionary. After local business leaders left the local party, activists motivated by the day's hot button issues, and thereby partisan news outlets and PACs, took over. Arguably, this state of affairs is not all bad. Following McAdam and Kloos (2014), progressive and conservative social movements alike now more easily influence the two parties. But, on the other hand,

recent events suggest a political system stripped of its guard rails; it is difficult to imagine the xenophobic and conspiratorial turn of the GOP occurring under the watch of local business leaders. The successor to the elite-mediated partisan speech of the New Deal era may be a lot of bad speech.

To my eyes, political economic-perspectives are valuable primarily because they counter the presentist assumptions of liberal democratic narratives. The public is understandably hungry for research that promises to bridge the empathy gap, adjudicate whether Trump voters were driven by economic anxiety or racism, and otherwise reveal the true character of the politically dispossessed (to a limited extent, I've written some publicly-oriented stuff like this myself).

Social scientists can and should feed the public's anthropological curiosity in the politically dispossessed, but it'd be nice if we could also lead the discussion by providing historical context.

It is hard to see the 2016 election as anything but a historical turning point, and one generally explains these by looking at institutional factors. Contrary to prevailing conventional wisdom, politics frequently runs ahead of public opinion—following De Leon, Desai, and Tugal (2009), political actors construct rather than reflect political cleavages within the population. In my work, for example, I spoke to voters who expressed veiled and not-so-veiled racial resentments, but voted for Obama anyway and did so enthusiastically— largely, I think, because the 2008 and 2012 elections closed with familiar appeals to middle and working versus upper class identities that resonated with voters' traditional community cleavages. One informant explained that, "the blacks have suffered" and that Obama would therefore look out for "the little guy."

Following Mudge (2018), we can think of 2016 as marking the collapse of moral market, which— via a constellation of translocal socio-economic institutions—translated the daily frustrations of many white voters in the industrial Midwest into working or business class identities and, in its absence, appears to have left reactionary populism hegemonic within the political field. A political-economic approach is one tool at hand for analyzing how such broader societal changes amplify or suppress taken for granted political identities, including and especially the scary political identities mobilized in 2016. To me, the latter prerogative is core to Polanyi's notion of freedom in a complex society: to formulate analytical narratives that equate democracy or departures from it not with individual attitudes, but rather institutions that either do or don't increase people's appreciation of social interdependence and engender meaningful representation.

* See http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/section-1-growing-ideological-consistency/

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Equality Projects in Argentine Worker-Recuperated Businesses

Katherine Sobering - University of North Texas

In March 2003, Gisela and a group of her former co-workers gathered on a street corner near Hotel Bauen, a twenty-story tower in downtown Buenos Aires where they had once worked. Once a luxury hotel and conference center, the vacant business was one of many that shut down during Argentina's 2001 crisis, leaving Gisela and many others out of work.

Unemployment can be a deeply disruptive experience. As plenty of sociological research in the U.S. and abroad shows, unemployment not only impacts a person's financial livelihood and future earning potential, but it can also be a stressful and isolating experience. A very different series of events took place in Argentina. As unemployment rates ticked up, collective action blossomed: residents formed neighborhood assemblies to organize basic services, *piqueteros* blocked streets to demand jobs, and unemployed workers occupied their former workplaces with the goal of restarting them without a boss.

For Gisela, work in Hotel Bauen had long been insulated from the political and economic issues of the day. Looking back, she described herself as a "simple worker" who "didn't get involved in politics." But newly unemployed, work for Gisela suddenly became political. So on that March day, the group of workers from Hotel Bauen joined the movement of worker-recuperated businesses by occupying the property, forming a worker cooperative, and eventually reopening the hotel for business. Ever since, Hotel Bauen has been operating around-the-clock, providing overnight accommodations, conference facilities, and a street-side café that workers voted to name "Utopia."

How can we make sense of such attempts to reorganize work without a boss? Based on my long-term ethnographic research in Hotel Bauen, I found that workers envisioned, implemented and continue to evolve what I call an *equality project*: a collective effort to challenge the values and practices that justify inequalities at work.

A series of formative experiences and fortunate opportunities guided me to the heavy glass doors that usher you off the street and into Hotel Bauen. As an

undergraduate in search of community and affordable rent, I joined a student housing cooperative and inadvertently began a crash-course in cooperation. The next year, I made the trek from Austin, Texas to Ann Arbor, Michigan for the annual conference of the North American Students for Cooperation (NASCO), where I learned about worker-recuperated businesses for the first time. Intrigued by their stories, I seized an opportunity to study abroad in Argentina, where I began this long-term ethnographic project.

Worker-recuperated businesses like Hotel Bauen—which now number over 300 in the country (Ruggeri 2016)—were formed to not only "recuperate" jobs, but also to create *better* jobs. Unlike many alternative organizations that are created anew, the BAUEN Cooperative was formed in the shell of a previous organization. Efforts to reorganize around principles of democracy, cooperation, and self-management have thus been deeply shaped and sometimes challenged by the spatial arrangement of the hotel, workers' prior socialization into deferential service work, and their familiarity with templates of managerial control.

As an ethnographer, I struggled to make sense of the innovations and resistances alongside failures and inequalities that I observed in the field. Over time, my sociological training had prepared me to identify the causes and consequences of domination, precarity, and inequality in the workplace. But it did much less to help me understand my informants' attempts to resist domination, reject precarious working conditions, and promote equality in organizations. This tension first came into relief when I analyzed how gendering processes shaped the organization of work in the hotel. Drawing on my initial periods of fieldwork in Hotel Bauen, I found that the cooperative both produced and reduced gender inequality and I used my case study to refine the theory of gendered organizations to better account for inequality-reducing processes at work (Sobering 2016).

Ethnographic research of alternative organizations and other so-called "extreme cases" is ideal for developing and refining social theory. For example, theories that have long focused on the exploitative nature of work and mimetic tendencies of organizations can be broadened through the fine-grained study of how workers practice inclusion, experiment with work process, and attempt to change the "rules of the game." While all ethnographic research plays out through twists and turns, the study of "extreme cases" requires a careful attention to removing the burden of explanation from our respondents. As I learned more about the aspirations and struggles of worker-recuperated businesses over time, I refined my research questions and evolved my position as an ethnographer. This evolution was supported by fellow students and faculty in UT-Austin's Urban Ethnography Lab, many of whom became familiar with my project and helped me map my winding path from "how" to "why" (Katz 2001).

As is now clear, workers in Hotel Bauen reorganized work around principles of democracy, cooperation, and self-management, enshrining political equality through democratic decision-making. Yet formalized political equality does not simply translate into greater social and economic equality. Equality, observes Rueschemeyer (2005), is not so much a feature of democracy but a "critical dimension along which the quality of democracy varies." Although they often focus on democracy at the societal level, political theories of democratic governance offer a useful starting point to understand not just the implementation, but the quality of democracy at work.

In the BAUEN Cooperative, I found that efforts to reorganize work gave concrete form to the goal of greater equality: workers not only shared the responsibilities of decision-making, but they integrated the division of labor and equalized pay. Today, all

members of the cooperative are worker-owners who enjoy the *formal right to vote* on major decisions and appeal any decision made by their elected officers. The cooperative also practices a system of *job rotation*, whereby workers with very different skills can move from one sector to another to accommodate changing schedules, fill important vacancies, and ultimately broaden their understanding of work processes in the hotel. Finally, members receive the *same base pay rate* that is transparent and approved by the collective.

In each of these initiatives, members have confronted challenges and setbacks as they balance the complexities of managing a conference hotel with their attempts to work differently. In my ongoing research, I understand these complicated and sometimes contradictory efforts as part of an equality project, whereby members address inequalities in access to power, opportunities, and resources by reorganizing and revaluing the categories that orient social action. In this case, the characteristics that merit authority, the skills that determine eligibility for jobs, and the values that deserve compensation.

Studying equality projects invites an engagement with both political theory and sociological research.

In worker-recuperated businesses like the BAUEN Cooperative, members regularly navigate the ideals of democracy and equality in the context of complex inequalities produced and reinforced in the workplace. At this nexus, the fine-grained study of these lived experiences provides insights into the interplay of values and practices to better understand the quality of democracy in organizations and efforts to create alternative ways of doing and thinking about work.

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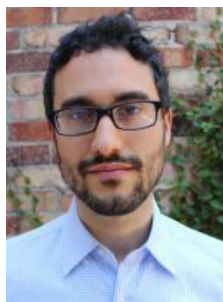
Ethnography and Theory:

Benjamin Shestakofsky - University of Pennsylvania

Upon being asked to contribute a reflection on how theory plays a role in my ethnographic research, I began to ponder whether there is any aspect of my work—and the work of ethnographers more generally—in which theory does not play a role.

Ethnographers dwell in the time and space of others. Using our bodies as research instruments, we participate in and observe social action, inscribing our interpretations to the page. Some researchers caution that ethnographers must be careful to undertake such activities without allowing theoretical presuppositions to color their observations. In practice, however, ethnographers can never escape theory, which may take the form of either explicit or tacit models of activity in the social world. Other scholars' research and our own personal experiences inform our interest in the topics we choose to study. Once ethnographers have entered a social setting, we find that the field is an infinite manifold. It is theory that focuses our attention on particular aspects of the activities we observe. As we begin to gather data, we cannot help but draw it into dialogue with existing concepts as we develop insights and repeatedly return to the field to test our assumptions. Analysis of data is informed by reflections on how one's positionality shapes one's observations. And our writing requires us to make decisions about whose voices will be included or suppressed as we weigh considerations of audience and genre.

And, of course, ethnographers theorize as we attempt to link the particular to the general (Snow, Morrill, and Anderson 2003). Because we typically examine how events and interactions unfold in great depth within a specific setting or small number of sites, ethnographers generalize not to populations, but instead to theory. Some studies mobilize observations of social processes to generate original theoretical propositions. Other works aim to extend existing constructs by importing prior understandings of social types or forms into novel settings. Still others refine theory, bringing anomalous ethnographic data to bear on prior theory to further elaborate social processes or the conditions under which particular phenomena may occur (Burawoy 1998).

I take the latter approach of theory reconstruction in my own research, which intervenes in debates surrounding the future of work (Shestakofsky 2017). Discontinuity theorists predict that advances in artificial intelligence are poised to render workers across the economy obsolete. Continuity theorists counter that humans will continue to hold a comparative advantage over computers in fulfilling some tasks, and that new forms of labor will emerge in and around digital infrastructures.

In spite of the recent influx of interest in the future of work, we still know surprisingly little about the conditions under which software systems function autonomously, and when they rely on the assistance of complementary human workers, in real-world settings. Most contemporary research into the future of work operates at a high level of abstraction divorced from the concrete social contexts in which software algorithms and workers interact. Ethnographic researchers are thus uniquely positioned to shed new light on the relationship between software automation and human labor.

I draw on 19 months of participant-observation research at a high-tech startup company I call AllDone, spanning work sites in San Francisco, the Philippines, and Las Vegas. AllDone aimed to transform local service markets in the U.S. by using technology to more efficiently connect buyers and sellers of services ranging from house cleaning to wedding photography to tutoring and beyond. Each phase of the firm's development revealed mismatches between humans and machines generated by the company's shifting strategic imperatives. To address these problems, the company relied on two forms of complementary labor performed by a distributed, online workforce. When computers alone were unable to complete an operation, workers located across the Philippines provided computational labor, performing routine information-processing tasks to support or stand in

for software algorithms. Workers in the Las Vegas area performed emotional labor aimed at helping users adapt to changing software systems. Instead of perfecting software algorithms that would progressively push people out of the production process, managers continually reconfigured assemblages of technology and human helpers, developing new forms of organization with a dynamic relation to technology. My study provides support for continuity theory while also revealing its limitations: Existing approaches fails to account for what I call the "discontinuity in continuity," or how the texture of continuity is itself dynamic and discontinuous, the result of repeated transformations in human-machine configurations.

Recently I have begun to undertake an extension of this project in which I examine how members of each of AllDone's three work teams experienced the firm's rapid organizational flux. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to share an early draft of this work at the 2018 Chicago Ethnography Incubator. On March 8th and 9th, organizers Kimberly Kay Hoang, Kristen Schilt, and Forrest Stuart welcomed four faculty fellows and seven graduate student fellows to the University of Chicago. The first day featured a panel discussion on ethnographic practice featuring Tianna Paschel (UC Berkeley), Laurence Ralph (Harvard), and Iddo Tavory (NYU). Mary Gray's (Microsoft Research) arrival was delayed by a blizzard, but she was able to join the group for the second day's workshop. Before the workshop, the graduate student fellows shared one-page overviews of their dissertations, as well as 10-page empirical excerpts of their work in progress. Each graduate student's writing was allotted a 45-minute session that included detailed commentary from three of the faculty in attendance, followed by a discussion with the full group. The workshop ended with a panel discussion on publishing featuring representatives from the University of Chicago Press and Stanford University Press.

In reflecting on the Incubator, I am particularly impressed by the depth of participants' engagement with social theory—not to mention their generosity in engaging with with each other's work. Each of these projects deserve far more space than I have been allotted to describe them:

- **Paul Michael Atienza** (UIUC) studies gay and bisexual Filipinos in Manila and Los Angeles who use social media, dating apps, and mobile messaging platforms to establish intimate relationships. Atienza asks how digital technologies shape these individuals' notions of space and time, emotional attachments, self-presentation, and concepts of difference.

- **Annie Hikido** (UCSB) analyzes the experiences of women in black townships in South Africa who have turned their modest homes into guesthouses to host tourists. Hikido shows how these women trade on notions of "cultural authenticity" to make ends meet, aligning themselves with state-sponsored images of progress while also revealing the limitations of national economic development projects.

- **Dana Kornberg** (University of Michigan) worked alongside informal garbage collectors in Delhi. Kornberg's study contributes to economic sociology by providing an in-depth account of the social and institutional underpinnings of an "informal" market, including a blend of patrimonial practices and bureaucratic bookkeeping.

- **Jeffrey Omari** (UCSC) examines the relationship between digital technologies, state, and society in the favelas of Rio de Janerio. Mobilizing fieldwork conducted among community organizers, activists, and residents, Omari reveals how state-sponsored projects ostensibly designed to foster democracy and digital inclusion are received—and, at times, resisted—by citizens.

- **Melissa Osborne** (University of Chicago) compares the experiences of college students from historically underrepresented populations across four institutions. Drawing from interviews with and observation of 150 undergraduates, Osborne uncovers how variations in campus institutions and resources provided by philanthropic foundations impact student trajectories in higher education.

- **Ande Reisman's** (University of Washington) research centers on women who remain behind in Nepal when their male partners find migrant work abroad. Reisman examines how women's use of remittances reconfigures the freedoms and responsibilities that they confront both at home and in their communities.

Throughout the workshop, faculty fellows emphasized the delicate balance that ethnographers aim to strike in mobilizing theory without allowing one's data to be subsumed by it. Many of our conversations touched on the importance of focusing first on inscribing one's (always partial) observations of concrete social practices, forestalling the work of explicitly linking one's observations to existing concepts that might be used to describe them (e.g. "patriarchy," "equality"). Constructing novel categories to explain what is going on in a field site allows one to enter into dialogue with existing theoretical distinctions, and ultimately to draw out their limitations in relation to one's observations. Such an approach enables ethnographers to mobilize observations of everyday interaction to call into question—or, as Laurence Ralph put it, to "trouble"— taken-for-granted analytic categories. For example, Kornberg's work complicates distinctions between "formal" and "informal" markets, while Omari's research forces us to ask what we mean when we use phrases like "inclusion" or "democracy." To this I would add that existing theory may be backgrounded during the initial writing process, but ethnographers ignore it at their own peril. Those who put prior work aside until later in

the research process risk recreating existing theory de novo and failing to extend or advance research in their area of study.

Another notable feature of the Ethnography Incubator was that it brought together sociologists and anthropologists under the same roof. As Tianna Paschel pointed out, sociologists tend to prefer to engage with solving theoretical puzzles, while anthropologists are more apt to dwell in the "messiness" of the social world. At this workshop, however, there was little friction to be found between members of the two disciplines. Although theory was not an explicit focus of the Incubator, it was all around us. And that is just as it should be at a meeting of ethnographers.

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 12

8:30AM - 10:10AM | SOCIAL THEORY AND POLITICAL MODERNITY IN CRISIS: AUTHORITY, POWER, AND VIOLENCE #1270 - MARRIOTT: FRANKLIN HALL 6, LEVEL 4

Isaac Ariail Reed and Anne Marie Champagne, organizers and presiders.
The rise of new nationalisms, the breakdown of governmental norms, the reconfiguration of the post-1989 order: the world outruns theoretical schemas designed to comprehend the trentes glorieuses and the Reagan era. What conceptual resources can be made available for both identifying and explaining the prevailing social and political trends of our own era? And what can these concepts help us comprehend about the relationship between authority and authoritarianism, power and crisis, symbolic violence and bodily harm? This session will explore these themes, with a particular eye towards the crisis of liberal politics.
- *Julia Adams, Yale University*
- *Michael Rodriguez, Northwestern University*
- *Jeffrey Goldfarb, New School for Social Research*
- *Dylan Riley, University of California, Berkeley*

10:30AM-12:10PM | SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY IN CONVERSATION

#2266 - MARRIOTT: FRANKLIN HALL 2, LEVEL 4

Isaac Ariail Reed and Anne Marie Champagne, organizers and presiders.
Sociology was born, in part, via engagement with philosophy, and sociological thinkers routinely engage philosophical themes. What are the particular points of communication between philosophy and sociology today? How can philosophical concerns with epistemology and ontology inform social theory, and vice versa? How can sociologists and philosophers think together about definitions and conceptualizations, evidence and argument? And what might we say about the intersection of political philosophy and empirical sociology?
- *Fuyuki Kurasawa, York University*
- *Luvell Anderson, University of Memphis*
- *Paige Sweet, University of Illinois at Chicago*
- *Christopher Muller, University of California, Berkeley*
- *Christopher Winship, Harvard University*

12:30 - 1:30 | THEORY REFEREED ROUNDTABLES - MARRIOTT: SALON G, LEVEL 5
Alison Gerber, organizer

1:30 - 2:10PM | THEORY SECTION BUSINESS MEETING AND AWARDS
#2383 - MARRIOTT: MARRIOTT: SALON G, LEVEL 5

2:30 - 4:10 | COSER SALON, GABRIEL ABEND - THICK CONCEPTS AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH #2471 - MARRIOTT: FRANKLIN HALL 7, LEVEL 4

The Coser Salon features a lecture presented by the winner of the previous year's Coser Award to a "mid-career sociologist whose work holds great promise for setting the agenda in the field of sociology. Although the award winner need not be a theorist, her or his work must exemplify the sociological ideals that Lewis Coser represented, including resisting the fragmentation of sociology, maintaining the discipline's critical edge, and ensuring the predominance of substance over method."

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12

7:30 - 9:30PM | THEORY SECTION RECEPTION
McGillan's Olde Ale House, 1310 Drury St, Philadelphia, PA
Joint with Section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity

MONDAY, AUGUST 13

8:30AM - 10:10AM | TRESPASSING/POACHING/RAIDING/TRANSCENDING
SESSION I: SCHEMA, CONCEPTUALIZATION, AND TOOLS FOR SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

#3168 - MARRIOTT: FRANKLIN HALL 4, LEVEL 4
John R. Hall and Simeon Newman, organizers
John R. Hall, presider
Is the era of what C. Wright Mills called 'grand theory' past? What are the prospects for less holistic but still 'general' theory? What about 'social theory' that transcends the critical and normative boundaries of conventional sociological theory? Few sociologists today search for the cohesive conceptual framework of someone like Talcott Parsons--the object of Mill's critique. Yet robust projects of bounded theorizing continue accross diverse topoi, however constructed. This session focuses on how sociologists can use both classical and more contemporary sociological theories, separately or in relation to one another, to connect research across subfields, topics, arenas, and varieties of social phenomena.
- **Risto K. Heiskala, University of Tempere** - *"For a Holistic Social Science: From the IEMP Model to the NACEVP Model"*
- **Daniel A. Sherwood, City University of New York** - *"The Reality of Structural Racism: Knowledge, Critique, Emancipation"*
- **Paul Joosse, University of Hong Kong** - *"Gender and Charismatic Authority: On the Prospect of the Contemporary Relevance of a Classical Concept"*
- **Whitney D. Johnson, University of Notre Dame** - *"Hearing Value: Taking Time for Embodied Perceptions and Judgement"*
- *Discussant: Ann Mische, University of Norte Dame*

10:30AM-12:10PM | TRESPASSING/POACHING/RAIDING/TRANSCENDING
SESSION II: CULTURE, ACTION, PRACTICE, AND OCCASION

#3268 - MARRIOTT: FRANKLIN HALL 4, LEVEL 4
John R. Hall and Simeon Newman, organizers
John R. Hall, presider
Is the era of what C. Wright Mills called 'grand theory' past? What are the prospects for less holistic but still 'general' theory? What about 'social theory' that transcends the critical and normative boundaries of conventional sociological theory? Few sociologists today search for the cohesive conceptual framework of someone like Talcott Parsons--the object of Mill's critique. Yet robust projects of bounded theorizing continue accross diverse topoi, however constructed. This session focuses on how sociologists can use both classical and contemporary sociological theories, separately or in relation to one another, to address the complex of issues connecting culture, action, practice, and structurations of social life.
- **Jason Turowetz, University of Siegen, Anne Warfield Rawls, Bentley University** - *"Garfinkle, Parsons, and the Discovery of Culture"*
- **Mary Shi, University of California, Berkeley** - *"Reflective Action as an Object of Sociological Inquiry: Bourdieu and Beyond"*
- **Michael Strand, Brandeis University** - *"The Two Main Varieties of Practice Theory"*
- **Abigail Jorgensen, University of Norte Dame** - *"A Theory of Occassions: The Presentation of the Self in Non-Everyday Life"*
- *Discussant: John Levi Martin, University of Chicago*

DISSERTATION SPOTLIGHT

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"The Occlusion of Empire in the Reification of Race: A Postcolonial Critique of the American Sociology of Race": In a series of case studies, I problematize the reification of race in the American Sociology of race from a postcolonial perspective. I argue prominent theories within the American sociology of race tend to essentialize race as a cause of racial inequality in the United States. These theories assume the existence of racial categories and then discuss how other entities become racialized into racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997), or racial projects (Omi & Winant 1994). These theories emphasize national structures, but occlude empire. I argue the occlusion of empire in the American sociology of race, particularly in theorization of racial categorization, is problematic. Empire is the structure that links race to class inequality, and produces race as a social category of exclusion. Therefore, a sociological theory of American racial inequality, which does not analyze imperialism as a structure that produces race, and rather focuses solely on national-structures, or a definition of capitalism severed from imperialism, cannot provide a thoroughly structural explanation for the persistence of racial inequality in the United States.

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My dissertation is a study of religion and race in the context of contested globalization. I examine contemporary movements within African American Christianity that engage with Israel and Palestine. These vary from Christian Zionists that work closely with the religious right, to Palestinian solidarity activists that emphasize a common emancipatory project between African Americans and Palestinians. Considering a wide range of black church responses to the conflict, I approach questions about what black churches are, how they understand their social role, and how race, religion, and politics converge within American Christianity. I analyze expressions of black religious politics in the United States that diverge significantly in their interpretations of the Bible, their public theologies, and their modes of political engagement. But, across the theological and political spectrum, I find that the Christians I study all concern themselves with understanding the implications of their faith in the context of the global Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I argue that black religious politics can be studied as a field of contestation, analyzing connections between national- and global-level fields of black religious politics.

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"Marriageable Us, Undesirable Them: Reproducing Social Inequalities through Marital Boundaries": Previous efforts applying a one identity at work model suggest that upward mobility serves as an engine for marital assimilation. However, it does not fully explain the racial and gender asymmetry associated with intermarriage. My dissertation is based on evidence culled from interviews with highly achieving, Chinese-speaking immigrants residing in the San Diego area. I am applying an intersectionality approach to addressing issues concerning why, when and how group differences affect the construction of marriageability, defined as marital boundaries based on distinctions between "us" and "them." I found that although Taiwanese immigrants are very similar to Chinese ones, the former generally views the latter as "them" because of the group's strong feelings of Taiwanese national identity. Yet, both groups show similar patterns in terms of redrawing their marital boundaries along race, class, and gender lines. Generally, white supremacy makes the immigrants embrace white people regardless of their class differences. Yet, one's upper-class background can mask his/her undesirable racial and ethnic differences. Further, the immigrants' essentialist approach to care manifested by their evaluations of their non-Chinese in-law's performance has sufficient power to undo marital boundaries, suggesting that gender trumps on the family level. Finally, I found that morality serve as sources of legitimacy for the immigrants' preferences. I identify dynamic movement between marital and moral boundaries by showing an arbitrary relationship among perceived moral traits and group difference perceptions.

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"The Unequal Neighborhood: Poverty, Privilege, and Beautiful Blight in Detroit": How do poverty and privilege live in the same places? My dissertation draws on nearly three years of ethnographic fieldwork while I lived in Northwest Detroit to answer this question. Northwest was an extremely depopulated poor black neighborhood. Residents spotted wild deer as often as they heard gunshots. Nevertheless, since 2010 white urban farmers had moved into Northwest, who bought houses from $500 and started gardens on vacant lots. In seven substantive chapters, I newly theorize the relationship of disadvantage and advantage to the city. Moving beyond a geographical understanding of place inequality as only distributed in space, I show how historical and contemporary inequalities shaped how residents differently experienced place. I develop the concept of the "unequal neighborhood" to explain how disadvantage and privilege, and stigma and distinction, can co-exist and be (re)produced in the same place. My chapters examine street life, violence and trauma, relationships to the home, nature, and blight, and racial politics in Northwest, to better understand how unequal experiences emerge, co-exist, and may depend on each other in place.

JOEL MICHAEL CROMBEZ
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"The Anxiety and the Ecstasy of Technical Vertigo: Developing a psycho-sociological framework for critical socioanalysis": My research is rooted in critical theory and comparative historical methodology. My goal is to demonstrate the social roots of anxiety, to explain how anxiety developed and transformed throughout the history of modern (and postmodern) societies, to frame the role that political economy and technology play in the spread of anxiety as they shape social and identity structures, and finally to propose a method to improve the diagnosis and treatment of anxiety. I call this method critical socioanalysis. It shares common elements with psychoanalysis, including a foundation in talk therapy which places the onus for defining the ailment on those who suffer from it, while creating a space and time for guided conversations with the self, designed to unblock anxiety. Critical socioanalysis focuses on the psychosocial structures that shape our thoughts and actions throughout the life course as direct consequences of the logic of capital and the technologization of our reality and builds on the theories developed by Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, the first-generation of the Frankfurt School, and French social theory.
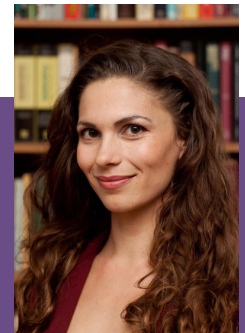
HELANA DARWIN
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"Redoing Gender: how non-binary people navigate the gender binary system": Gender scholars have begun to adjust gender theory to account for the experiences of transmen and transwomen; however, these adjustments fail to account for the experiences of those who reject the gender binary altogether, such as non-binary/genderqueer people. This oversight is unfortunate, given that those who defy binary gender classification are uniquely well-positioned to illuminate a new angle of the sex/gender/sexuality nexus. Redoing Gender: how non-binary people navigate the gender binary system advances gender scholarship by exploring how 47 non-binary people from around the world experience and navigate the gender binary system—or the institutionalized belief in two and only two genders (man and woman). These interviews illuminate the regulatory impact of the gender binary system, as well as the effect that this ideology has upon people's gender identity, gender expression, relationships with their bodies, relationships with others, and interactions with institutions. More broadly, this research contributes to sociological efforts to understand the social mechanisms that enable—and inhibit—social change.

ANYA DEGENSHEIN
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In my dissertation, "Lawfully Entrapped: The Creation of Risk in the 'War on Terror,'" I ask how domestic terrorism sting cases with numerous indicators of entrapment prevail in federal court despite case law designed to prevent these very policing practices. Employing a narrative-approach to the legal construction of innocence and guilt, I analyze over 5,000 pages of court filings and trial transcripts, supplemented with in-depth interviews with current and former legal practitioners and law enforcement officials. I find that the peculiar nature of the entrapment defense—as it has developed over the 20th century—is particularly vulnerable to exploitation by government officials granted broad legislative leeway and unprecedented surveillance capabilities in the pursuit of national security. I argue that the judicial branch is ill-equipped to adjudicate cases laden with such national security exceptions. The result is a system of speculative justice that targets—and overwhelming convicts—primarily Muslim men of color based on vague "threat assessments" rather than clear intent to do harm, and induces the kinds of risks it simultaneously seeks to prevent.

KERICE DOTEN-SNITKER
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In late medieval Europe, emperors, landgraves, guilds, and town councils wrestled over determining the relevant authority over Jews in a patchwork landscape of overlapping jurisdiction. My dissertation examines urban expulsions of Jews as policy decisions reached within a political economy that placed increasing value on religiously-based concepts of the political community. My project accomplishes three key contributions. First, I center political dynamics as the relevant backdrop against and through which expulsion occurs. I have developed a new geocoded data set that tracks city and regional political institutions alongside Jewish community development and anti-Semitic pogroms and expulsions. Second, I give closer attention to the intersection between political and religious values. Drawing on sociological research, I include several conceptions of the presence of religiosity in medieval life. Third, I am producing a quantitative and systematic analysis of what is often narrative and not theory-driven. Historians have produced excellent regional and period-specific accounts of expulsions of Jews, but there is limited social scientific research, none of which identifies expulsion as a unique political outcome.

WHITNEY JOHNSON
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"Learning to Listen: Knowledge of Value in Auditory Culture": Though auditory culture is quickly emerging in the gallery arts, with exhibitions popping up at prestigious museums around the world, the art world is still learning to listen. Based on 105 semi-structured interviews and four years of ethnographic observation in Chicago, New York, and Berlin, this dissertation considers the relationship between the senses and aesthetic value. Disciplinary boundaries are not only worked out in organizational contexts, but actors also contest the definitions of what objects constitute their own disciplines. Sound art has had to rely, paradoxically, on conceptual texts for understanding. These textual value devices are the tools of economic agencement, rendering the aesthetic economic. Hearing is an embodied sensory process particular to the attention, adumbration, and affect of the listener, and it is unclear if sonic percepts are heard in common by evaluators. These findings suggest that language is the rhizome rendering the aesthetic economic. If embodied listeners are free to associate meanings without a mediating text, these emancipated spectators may engage in expanded discourse.

HADI KHOSHNEVISS
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In my Ph.D. dissertation project, titled "Geopolitics of Race and Contours of Whiteness: Census Categories and Racialization of People from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the United States," I draw on historical documents, ethnographic research, and qualitative interviews to study why, despite their century-old fight for achieving "whiteness," Middle Eastern and North African Americans have shifted their identity campaign for a racial re-categorization to the MENA category on the U.S. Census. My findings illustrate that theories of assimilation, which assume an "irreversible" and "progressive" move towards the middle class white center, are incapable of explaining the MENA campaign as a move in the opposite direction. These theories leave whiteness unexamined, psychologize racial differences, and due to their neglect for the structural barriers, hold immigrants responsible for their lack of integration. I also argue that theories of assimilation which center their analysis on "objective gains," ignore, subjective aspects of belonging which, according to my participants, are impacted by global geopolitics and historical relationship between the metropole, namely the US, and the periphery.

GINA MARIE LONGO

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My dissertation, "Caught between Rights and Vows," investigates how U.S. citizens negotiate immigration officials' demands that they prove their marriages are authentic to obtain their spouses' green cards. U.S citizens who have intimate partners in regions that U.S. Immigration defines as having "high marriage-fraud risk" face the challenge demonstrating their marriages are "real." Using a multi-forum, self- help U.S. immigration website containing 2.2 million conversation threads, I conduct quantitative and qualitative content analysis on their postings along with a two-year virtual ethnographic immersion on the site. I show how gendered constructions of race/ethnicity, age, and family structure the ways that marriage fraud is debated. I argue that the virtual space allows petitioners, in their interactions with one another to essentially become border patrollers even before a case might reach an actual immigration authority. Policing the border is fundamentally connected to the petitioners reifying and reinforcing hegemonically racialized, gendered and ageist sexuality and family norms that define the criteria for legitimacy. This is the power the petitioners' citizenship confers on them. However, that power is differently experience by women and men petitioners as framed by intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class and age. The onus appears to be higher on women, whether petitioners or beneficiaries to prove their compliance with the hegemonic norms.

AMANDA MCMILLAN LEQUIEU

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I study the social consequences of economic crisis. My dissertation explores how the structural and cultural processes of industrialization shaped the economic and social precarity characterizing contemporary, post-industrial communities in the United States. My contention is that industrial corporations played an undervalued role in shaping contemporary structural and cultural precarity. More generally, I show that non-state, institutional power structures can and do organize and constrain localized experiences of economic change, even generations after those institutions dissolve. Ultimately, I argue for a new framework for understanding deindustrialization: companies as governments, and workers as citizens, and deindustrialized regions as living landscapes of both sacrifice and promise. I use archival sources, interviews, and ethnography to analyze trajectories of economic history, cultural negotiation, landscape-scale change, and political economies of growth and decline. This project is part of my broader research agenda, which centers on how historical structures of capitalism–social, spatial, and economic–inform localized outcomes and lived experiences of home and community. I am interested in how place-based, working class communities adapt to globalizing economies and changing environments over time.

KATRINA QUISUMBING KING

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I study racial exclusion from a historical perspective that foregrounds the state's authority to manage populations. I focus especially on how the state defines colonized populations and how these people fit into the U.S. racial order. In my dissertation, entitled The Political Uses of Ambiguity: Statecraft and U.S. Empire in the Philippines, 1898-1946, I extend theories of state rule. I demonstrate how, in addition to projects of legibility, states institutionalize ambiguous classifications to expand their legitimacy. When the United States acquired the Philippines in 1898, U.S. lawmakers were faced with new questions about how to define the United States and its acquisitions. To resolve competing viewpoints about the scope of the constitution and the rights of colonial subjects, the Supreme Court decided that the territories would be considered "foreign in a domestic sense." They belonged to, but were not part of the United States. For the next half century, ambiguity allowed the U.S. politicians to classify the Philippines and Filipinos in multiple, co-existing ways, exclude Filipinos from citizenship, and maintain geopolitical supremacy abroad.

RYAN SPORER

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"The Politics of Circumvention: The Off-Grid Eco-Housing Movement of Earthships": This ethnographic study of Earthship home dwellers examines the agentic capacities of nonhuman materials in the processes of social caging and circumvention. Historically as humans began enrolling nonhumans into assemblages they conjuncturally gave rise to more delineated social relations. From artificial irrigation to electricity grids and the subsequent deontologies, individuals are discouraged from enacting a politics of escape, exodus, or in my language the Politics of Circumvention. The off-grid movement is the latest attempt at self-extrication from dominant socio-material relations. To make this lasting, off-gridders overcome labor specialization by connecting with other off-gridders. Together they terraform an assemblage that heats/cools itself, collects/reuses rainwater, treats waste, generates electricity onsite, and grows produce. This assemblage allows limiting relationships to the "grid," generally defined as material and political relations that produce feelings of insecurity, harm, and dependence. While never completely off-grid, proponents practice voluntary simplicity, personal responsibility, and autonomy. Drawing off of Science Technology Studies, New Materialism, and other fields I develop a framework for an Object-Friendly Sociology.

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"America Versus the Environment? Nature, Humanity, and the Sacred, 1884-2014": My dissertation combines social theory with historical and statistical analysis in order to examine the role of religious traditions in cultivating, or attenuating, environmental concern in the United States. Existing historical research anchors American environmentalism in specific religious denominations, while recent decades have seen an increase in calls for environmental action among religious leaders. Using data from the General Social Survey, I analyze changes in environmental concern across religious groups by birth cohort (from 1884 to 1996), religious upbringing, and calendar year (1973-2014). I also examine how religion differs in salience by race, class, gender, and political party affiliation. Finally, I analyze official church documents (such as Papal Encyclical letters in the case of Catholicism) to triangulate the statistical findings. Thus far I have uncovered evidence indicating that religious traditions exert variegated influences on believers with regard to environmental concern, but that a general upward trend in levels of environmental concern is present across the majority of faith traditions, which is in part influenced by official church pronouncements on environmental issues.

JUSTIN VAN NESS
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My dissertation examines the micro and cultural processes enabling and constraining campaigns for social equality and cultural inclusion. Empirically, I draw on my in-depth ethnography with a social movement of religious minorities. This organization mobilizes for a range of causes including gender discrimination, preventing practices of female genital mutilation, and to "reclaim the swastika" as a peaceful religious symbol. By integrating theory from cultural sociology, microsociology, and cognitive social science, I create a framework for analyzing the situational conditions influencing the production and reception of protest events. I develop my dissertation in three main chapters. The first article integrates Goffmanian concepts and the dual process framework to explain how actors experience and resolve situations with emotionally conflicting meanings. The second chapter explains how the unequal distribution of attention structures interaction and the social organization of collective action. The third article uses embodied cognition to explain the mechanisms undergirding the situated of experience of shock, while explaining how shock becomes a mechanism enabling activists to use interaction for cultural change.

LAWRENCE H. WILLIAMS

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In my dissertation, I address recent sociological debates about how culture shapes action. To do so, I re-construct the history through which recent debates emerged and analyze three sets of data: conversations between pedophiles on a public Web Forum; 39 secondary in-depth interviews with British seniors tasked to think about death and dying; and 32 in-depth interviews conducted with individuals living in the Toronto, Canada area who work in sales. By re-constructing the history of current debates, I demonstrate how the rejection of Parsons had the unintended consequence of leading sociologists to frame the internalization of cultural elements as unmediated by individuals' broader identities. This tendency becomes most visible in recent uses of the dual-process model where individuals are framed as relying on shared schematic information that they seamlessly internalize through everyday experience. In my data analysis, however, I find that individuals demonstrate great – yet patterned – variation in the extent to which they understand and mobilize such information. I draw on recent developments in the study of intuition to make sense of this finding.

MEMBER NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS
Member Awards

Chad Alan Goldberg's book *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).
Finalist for the **2017 National Jewish Book Awards in the category of Modern Jewish Thought and Experience**.

Cohen, Andrew C. and Shai M. Dromi (equal co-authorship). "*Advertising Morality: Maintaining moral worth in a stigmatized profession*". Theory & Society 47, no. 2, 175-206.
Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity section's 2018 Outstanding Published Article Award.

Francesco Duina's *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country* (Stanford University Press 2018)
2018 Independent Publisher Book Award (Current Events Category).

Julie C. Abril received the **Bonnie S. Fisher Victimology Lifetime Career Achievement Award** from the Division of Victimology of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) during the 2017 Annual Meetings of the ASC in Philadelphia, PA in November. This award goes to the scholar who has made a significant contribution in the area of victimology over the course of their lifetime. Dr. Abril has studied victimization among Native Americans throughout her career. Her work has centered on cultural differences in the meaning of and responses to victimization among Native Americans within the context of criminological theory. Based on her research and lifetime achievements, the committee felt that she has made a significant contribution to an area that is core to victimology and has shed light on an under-examined topic in the field.

Member Publications

Darwin, Helana. 2018. "Redoing Gender, Redoing Religion." Gender & Society 32(3): 348-370.

Darwin, Helana. 2018. "Omnivorous Masculinity: Gender Capital and Cultural Legitimacy in Craft Beer Culture." Social Currents 5(3): 301-316.

Delano, Daisha Lee & J. David Knottnerus. 2018. "The Khmer Rouge, Ritual and Control." Asian Journal of Social Science 46: 79-110.

Eck, David & Stephen Turner. 2017. "Cognitive Science," in Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Social Science. London: Routledge.

Gibson, Will & Dirk vom Lehn. 2018. "Institutions, Interaction and Social Theory," in Themes in Social Theory 1st ed.

Hechter, Michael. 2018. "Norms in the Evolution of Social Order." Social Research 85(1).

Joosse, Paul. 2018. "Countering Trump: Toward a Theory of Charismatic Counter-Roles." Social Forces (advanced access).

Joosse, Paul. 2017. "Max Weber's Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy." Sociological Theory 35(4): 334-358.

Kalberg, Stephen. 2017. "Reconstructing Weber's Indian Rationalism: A Comparative Analysis." Max Weber Studies 17(2): 235-53.

Kearney, Matthew. 2018. "Escalating Moral Obligation in the Wisconsin Uprising of 2011." Social Forces 96(4): 1569-1592.

Kearney, Matthew. 2018. "Totally Alive: The Wisconsin Uprising and the Source of Collective Effervescence." Theory and Society 47(2): 233-254.

Menchik, Daniel. 2017. "Tethered Venues: Discerning Distant Influences on a Fieldsite." Sociological Methods and Research (online first).

Savelsberg, Joachim J. 2018. "Punitive Turn and Justice Cascade: Mutual Inspiration from Punishment and Society and Human Rights Literatures." Punishment and Society 20(1): 73–91.

Savelsberg, Joachim J. 2018. "Criminology in the United States: Contexts, Institutions and Knowledge in Flux," in The Handbook of the History and Philosophy of Criminology. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Skovajsa, Marek & Jan Balon. 2017. "Sociology in the Czech Republic: Between East and West," in Sociology Transformed. London: Palgrave Macmillan (Pivot).

Staubmann, Helmut & Victor Lidz (Eds). 2018. "Rationality in the Social Sciences." The Schumpeter/Parsons Seminar 1939/40 and Current Perspectives. Cham: Springer.

Turner, Jonathan H., Alexandra Maryanski, Armin Geertz, & Anders K. Petersen. 2018. The Emergence of Evolution of Religion: By Means of Natural Selection. New York & London: Routledge.

Turner, Jonathan H. & Richard S. Machalek. 2018. The New Evolutionary Sociology: Recent and Revitalized Theoretical and Methodological Approaches. New York & London: Routledge.

Turner, Stephen. 2107. "Naturalizing the Tacit," in Das Interpretative Universum. Wurzberg: Konighasen & Neumann.

Turner, Stephen. 2017. "Durkheim as a Neo-Kantian Philosopher," in The Sacred and the Law: The Durkheimian Legacy. Frankfurt: Vittorio Klosterman.

Turner, Stephen. 2018. Cognitive Science and the Social: A Primer. New York & London: Routledge.

Turner, Stephen. 2018. "Thinking About Think Tanks: Politics by Techno-Scientific Means." in Time, Science and the Critique of Technological Reason. St

Member Announcement

NCSA CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The journal of the North Central Sociological Association (NCSA) called Sociological Focus will be carrying a special issue guest edited by J. I. (Hans) Bakker on "grounded theory". Kathy Charmaz wrote a Foreword and five excellent contributions have been accepted. Hans would be interested in comments concerning his "Introduction". It is entitled "Grounded Theory Methodology and Grounded Theory "method": Introduction to Special Issue" Write to Hans at **hbakker@uoguelph.ca.** Professor J. I. (Hans) Bakker is retired from the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. To some extent Grounded Theory is not so much a "theory" as a Methodology. But the Logic of Method and the general philosophical aspects of this Qualitative, inductive (and "abductive") approach are important. Some researchers regard it more as a technique but the contributors all touch on the more theoretical issues involved.