American Sociological Association
Culture Section

Guide to Graduate Students on the Market
2013 - 2014
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Areas of Specialization:  
Cultural Sociology, Political Sociology, Global/Transnational Sociology and Research Methods

Dissertation:  
Constructing Global Womanhood: Women’s International Non-Governmental Organizations since 1870

In her dissertation, Rachael describes women’s international non-governmental organization (WINGO) structure—indicated by foundings, national memberships, and organization categories—and WINGO presidential discourse from international conference reports since 1870. Primary WINGO data is from the Yearbook of International Organizations, with a final sample of 183 WINGOs. Presidential addresses and resolutions from international conference reports were collected from myriad sources for three WINGOs--International Council of Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Soroptimist International. The dissertation’s final chapter offers an Event History Analysis observing the effect of WINGO structure--measured by national memberships--and discourse--measured by WINGO categories--on the establishment of women’s ministries within governments in order to show the effect of world culture on the expanding scope of governments to include women. Dissertation committee chair Evan Schofer is joined by members Catherine Bolzendahl, David Frank, and Ann Hironaka.

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Areas of Specialization:  
Culture, Education, Qualitative Methods

Dissertation:  
Post-secondary Planning Paradoxes: How Regular Kids Plan for the Future in the College-for-All Era

I am currently a visiting Assistant Professor at Grinnell College, having received my Ph.D. in Sociology from Rutgers University in 2012. As a sociologist interested in culture and education, my work focuses on how social structures are produced and reproduced through peoples’ daily interactions. Specifically, I engage questions of social disparities in the high school to college transition. I find that, in the face of a widespread college-for-all ideology in a school where fewer than half of students go on to four-year colleges, post-secondary planning becomes structured by a key paradox: ‘everyone should go to college, but college is not for everyone.’ School staff and structures contribute to a cooling-out process in which students adjust their aspirations and plans. I build on practice theory and models of cultural reproduction to show intergenerational inequality in educational processes. Two years of ethnographic research were supported by an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant.
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Areas of Specialization:
Cultural Sociology, Social Movements, Political Sociology

Dissertation:
Everything but the Funnel Cake: Cultural Display and Performance in the University of Puerto Rico Student Occupation of 2010

My dissertation asks how and why art and culture played an integral role in the occupation by students at the University of Puerto Rico in 2010. Drawing upon two years of ethnographic data, including on-site and virtual observations, 31 in-depth interviews, and movement documentation, the data illuminates that art and culture performed three roles in the occupation. One, art and culture created a sense of solidarity among protesters and supporters, confirming existing literature. However, I also found that art and culture were used to convey difference and diversity of protester identity, extending the existing literature. Lastly, I find that while too much diversity in the identity of the movement can lead to fighting between different groups, art and culture has the potential to ease tensions and avoid fragmentation.

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Areas of Specialization:
Economic Sociology, Culture & Theory, Political Sociology/Sociology of Law

Dissertation:
Intellectual Property: A Study in the Formulation and Effects of Legal Culture

Despite its current pervasiveness, intellectual property – a legal category that includes patents, copyrights, trademarks, and trade secrets – has not always existed. My historical and comparative dissertation – which covers England, Germany, France, and the United States, as well as international treaties – shows that intellectual property emerged in the Eighteenth Century, as part of the modern nation-state. The theory of semantic legal ordering that I develop in the dissertation explicates the social process through which cultural understandings and practices rooted in Roman legal traditions have contributed form and meaning to these quintessentially modern institutions. Drawing on contractual sources from the history of the telecommunications industry, and from diplomatic sources connected to intellectual property treaties, I also show how the process of semantic legal ordering has contributed form and meaning to the global expansion of intellectual property through transnational contracts and international treaties. Drawing on Robert Bellah’s theory of cultural traditions, together with Max Weber’s sociology of law and property, I argue that certain experiential characteristics of our modern, globalized economy – the immediacy of electronic exchange, and the radically disembodied way in which that exchange takes place – have been...
shaped, in very real ways, by legal traditions with deep historical roots, as seen in the case of intellectual property.

**Alison Gerber**  
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*Areas of Specialization:*  
Economic Sociology, Arts and Popular Culture, Work and Organizations

*Dissertation:*  
Art Work?: Employment, Markets, and Valuation in the Visual Arts

My dissertation examines variation in the ways that artists define the value of their activities in order to investigate mechanisms that influence monetary valuation and occupational commitment. The study, based on data from 80 semistructured interviews and ethnographic observation in four regionally defined art communities, aims to develop a theory of valuation and its variation within occupations. I explore patterns in artists’ accounts, and show how artists use varied frameworks to account for their investments in artistic practice and for the value of their practices and products. A chapter discusses different routes to commensuration as well as nonmarket valuation, and the dissertation concludes with a discussion of the practical ramifications of these variations in sensemaking. The dissertation aims to illuminate valuation outside of stable employment relationships in order to contribute to our understanding of artists as well as economic and working life more generally.

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*Areas of Specialization:*  
Sociology of Culture, Political Sociology, Quantitative Methods

*Dissertation:*  
The Emergence of Newsworthiness: Inclusion, Exclusion and Inequality in Political News and Online Media

Why do some political ideas gain prominence in the news, and not others? Based on a series of quantitative studies, I argue that writers decide whether to re-print an idea based on how it is presented to them. In Chapter 1 (published as a stand-alone article in Poetics), I show how the scheduling of press conferences ultimately influences journalists’ norms of objectivity over the past 30 years. Conferences presented as minor events get more deferential coverage. In Chapter 2, I show on a statement-by-statement basis how reporters are less likely to print phrases that do not directly respond to a journalist’s question. I created a data set of over 34 million observations for Chapter 3, examining how phrases spread through the Internet during the 2008 election, particularly phrases dealing with race, gender and sexuality.
Once these phrases appear on leading liberal websites, diffusion slows down, suggesting bloggers (like reporters) are influenced by how they learn new information.

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*Areas of Specialization:*  
Gender, Work and Occupations, Culture

*Dissertation:*  
A Taste for Distinction: Gender, Class, and Race in Private and Personal Cheffing

This dissertation explores how private and personal chefs – workers ambiguously positioned between high- and low-status, male- and female-dominated work – negotiate their identity and status. Private and personal chefs benefit from the admiration now directed at culinary professionals, but their legitimacy is questioned by other chefs. Their work approximates the domestic labor long performed by women of color, yet most of these chefs are white and highly educated, like those who hire them. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and survey data, my research examines how these chefs draw symbolic boundaries to resolve ambiguities about who they are and/or want to be as people and as workers. I argue that private and personal cheffing open opportunities to individuals for whom a commercial culinary career would be challenging or unattractive. However, the boundaries the chefs draw have the potential to reproduce inequalities within the culinary profession, as well as within society at large.

**Da-Wei Hsu**  
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*Areas of Specialization:*  
Cultural Sociology, Social Theory, Social Psychology

*Dissertation:*  
Post-disaster Meaning-making and the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake

I study the meaning-making of the survivors of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake in China, asking: How do social actors interpret the meaning of the disaster, life, and death? How do they regain sense of security and control through meaning-making and social actions?

The earthquake impacted the social fabrics and normal functioning of everyday life. And the society took efforts to regain control over, and rebuild meaning upon the world, and upon human beings themselves. I draw on major concepts in social theories. The first is Durkheim’s idea of social norms and solidarity. Disaster creates situations in which social norms about what is right and wrong are challenged and reaffirmed. Second, Weber’s emphasis on meaning is helpful to understand how social actors make
meaning of suffering and death. Third, Marx reminded us the linkage between consciousness and social positions. Different social actors may have different interests that conflict with each other.

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Areas of Specialization:
Science and Technology Studies, Arts and Music, Human-Animal Relations

Dissertation:
The Social Life of Noise: perception, technology, and culture

This work concerns the meaning of “noise” as a sonic concept in audio engineering and American music education. Through ethnographic studies, Joseph approaches sound as meaningful material produced by technologies of perception and epistemology. Where the meaning of sound emerges through a dialectic of sounding objects and listening subjects, there is great variation between situated experiences of sound and ways of understanding sound. This work engages theories of knowledge, practice, and cognition to address issues of meaning and meaning-making, expertise, space, aesthetics and communication, and objectivity.

Nicole Butkovich Kraus
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Areas of Specialization:
Stratification/Inequality, Race, Class, Gender, Quantitative Methods

Dissertation:
Constructing Xenophobia: Geography, Gender, and Generation of Nation in the Russian Federation

This dissertation is an analysis of contemporary xenophobia in the Russian Federation. My first chapter analyzes the effect of geography on attitudes toward non-Russian ethno-religious groups. I test economic and socio-demographic theories of prejudice using hierarchical linear models of nearly 10,000 ethnic Russians nested within 46 regions of the Russian Federation. In my second chapter, I propose a new theoretical conception of prejudice, synthesizing literature from social psychology and nationalism. Extending Allport’s classic definition, I propose we think of prejudice as a spectrum of emotional-types including hostility-prejudice and fear-prejudice. Using logistic regression models for nine non-Russian, ethno-religious groups, I demonstrate what we gain from this reconceptualization and from analyzing
intragroup variation. In the final chapter, I contextualize Russia among European nations, relying on European Social Survey data to analyze anti-immigrant attitudes comparatively. I posit Russia is best compared to recent immigrant-receiving nations rather than former communist countries.

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Areas of Specialization:
Sociology of Religion, Social Change, Culture

Dissertation:
Re-envisioning American Institutional Cultures from the Inside Out: A Comparative Analysis of the Emergence of Contemplative Practice in Science, Education, and Business

My dissertation explores how Buddhist meditation has become mainstream over the last several decades, while other religiously-inspired scientific movements such as Transcendental Meditation have been stigmatized and circumscribed by opposition as they tried to expand into secular fields. Examining this understudied yet quickly expanding elite-driven movement provides insights on how the boundaries between public and private space and between the religious and the secular can be breached. I trace how contemplative leaders bring meditation into their workplaces through the "back door". In marginal spaces in their organizations, they adapt, translate, and innovate meditation to produce new field-specific forms of secular “contemplative” practice rather than religious “Buddhist” meditation. These secular field-specific forms of contemplative culture break down the boundaries between the private “religious” and public “secular” spheres and make the movement very difficult for outsiders to challenge. This allows new cultural forms to take hold and transform organizations from within.

Maria Malyk
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Areas of Specialization:
Culture and Cognition, Social semiotics, Social psychology of influence and persuasion

Dissertation:

My dissertation is dedicated to identifying and analyzing mixed messages in communication called “cryptosemes”, with the primary focus on unintended / unconscious backhanded compliments. A cryptosemic compliment is a message in communication that is routinely exchanged on the virtue of its good intentions, while closer semiotic scrutiny reveals another, unspoken-yet-implied, obscured dimension of meaning that subverts the implied praise, yet goes unperceived or ignored by all parties involved. Cryptosemic compliments are rooted in reified, taken-for-granted notions of what is ‘normal’
and ‘true’ and serve as a window into the subtle cultural double-standards operating under the veneer of praise. Drawing on Goffman’s concept of ‘face-work’ as well as Brown and Levinson’s framework on politeness, I argue that cryptosemic praise is a ‘face-saving’ discourse strategy and offer an interdisciplinary analysis (cultural, semiotic, socio-psychological and cognitive) to probe the language of inequality underlying some of our popular compliments.

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Areas of Specialization:  
Economic Sociology, Sociology of Culture, Sociology of Work

Dissertation:  
Making Value, Crafting Price: Labor, Aesthetics, and Use in the Production and Pricing of Crafts

My dissertation investigates prices as cultural forms by looking into how contemporary craftspeople determine the prices for their crafts. I focus upon the ways in which differing values are combined and conceptualized as bases for varying price forms; I pay special attention to aesthetic value, use value, and labor value as three theoretically important values within craft. I compare and contrast both online and in-person craft markets while utilizing a multi-method approach (semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and content analysis). Altogether, my dissertation aims to work through additional ways in which culture informs economic inter/action and how the economy influences cultural objects.

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Areas of Specialization:  
Social Movements, Culture, Sociology of Science

Dissertation:  
Mobilizing Epistemic Conflict: The Creation Museum and the Creationist Social Movement

I shift the analysis of longstanding controversies surrounding creationism to a new setting: a natural history museum. The Creation Museum in Kentucky was built in 2007. I link insights from this distinct case study with broader scholarship to address a core sociological question: how is cultural authority acquired and negotiated by social movements in the twenty-first century? To understand this, I use over two years of fieldwork, twenty interviews with organizational leaders, and a unique historical dataset of over 1,000 internal documents. Given the historical importance of resources and the political opportunities for contestation, cultural institutions like museums have been overlooked as viable movement targets. Furthermore, while sociologists have revealed museums as spaces for negotiating
collective memories, they rarely examine museums as sites of resistance for social movements. I find the adoption of the natural history museum-form occurred through ideological repositioning, efficacious leadership, and a willingness to adapt to the broader environment. In doing so, I identify how and why other social movements may also endure by constructing alternative institutions as they seek to acquire cultural authority.

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Areas of Specialization:
Media Sociology, Cultural Sociology, Social Theory

Dissertation:
Political Reporting in the 21st Century: An In-depth Analysis of Press Corps in the U.S. and Germany

This dissertation examines the intersection of journalistic cultures and political public spheres in the US and Germany. It is based on ethnography (68 interviews, 400 hours of observation) and news discourse analysis of statehouse press corps in New York and Bavaria. It looks at journalistic professionalism in the context of politics-media relations and recent changes in the news industry (economic, technological) that triggering a crisis of journalism across Western democracies. The tension between professional control, on the one hand, public service and increasing participatory obligations, on the other, is of particular interest: Political pressure and professional jurisdictional concerns create a continuous need of autonomy while the shift towards networked journalism requires fluid boundaries, interconnectedness and involvement. Ultimately, this study seeks to address and evaluate the perpetual influence of journalism on the formation of political will in different cultural and political circumstances.

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Areas of Specialization:
Globalization, Economic Sociology, Culture

Dissertation:
Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines: A Case Study of Global Borderlands

Drawing and expanding upon borderland and global city literatures, my dissertation examines what I call “global borderlands,” semi-autonomous, geographical locales where international exchange occurs. They are specific, territorially defined locations where distinct international, state, and subnational legal orders overlap, and include sites such as overseas military bases, special economic zones, and tourist resorts. Through a case study of one contemporary Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ) business and a survey of SBFZ hotels, I investigate four particular contexts in which asymmetries among foreign visitors, local
visitors and local workers exist: socio-spatial organization, legal authority, work, and consumption. I show (1) how the semi-autonomy of global borderlands provides different regulations depending on identity, (2) how its socio-spatial order directly and indirectly excludes the poor, and how moral categories (of who and what is “good” or “bad”) as well as concepts of order and disorder vary by location, whether within or outside the SBFZ and (3) the ways in which their semi-autonomy and their geographic and symbolic borders reproduce unequal relationships.

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Areas of Specialization:
Sociology of Culture, Comparative-Historical Sociology, Nationalism, Political Sociology

Dissertation:
Ruling Culture: Tomb Robbers, State Power, and the Struggle for Italian Antiquities

My dissertation examines the production of national culture in Italy, beginning in the early 19th century and up to the present. In analyzing the social processes that consecrate particular modalities of aesthetic expression as quintessentially Italian, I focus on three main practices: cultural policymaking and its enforcement, scientific excavation, and tomb robbing. Using ethnographic and archival data, I trace the institutional and social entanglements of these practices and their practitioners. The official censure and popular demonization of looters emerge as crucial mechanisms for defending the use of state power to control the circulation of antiquities. “Ruling Culture” challenges existing theories about the origins and solidity of nations' material cultures and sheds new light on the people who study, covet, and protect national treasure.

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Areas of Specialization:
Cultural sociology

Dissertation:
The Making of a National Cadastre (1763-1807): State Uniformization, Nature Valuation, and Organizational Change in France

I study how cultural and biosocial objects emerge, institutionalize, and survive after their original context of emergence disappeared. In previous work I dealt with the questions of the emergence of novelty in literature and how a literary work becomes a classic by studying the case of the novel ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude.’ In my dissertation I investigate the nationalization of the cadastre (a property register and map) in France between 1763 and 1807. Researchers customarily analyzed its nationalization as part
of a process of monolithic state centralization and disregarded the organizational changes driving the training of cadastral experts. The dissertation tackles these questions and examines other aspects of nation-state formation, nature valuation, and scientific expertise that were empowered by the emergence of the modern cadastre.

Jill Smith
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Areas of Specialization:
Sociology of Education, Stratification/Mobility, Sociology of Culture

Dissertation:
The Role of Independent Educational Consultants in the College Application Process

This interview-based project explores the role of independent educational consultants in the college application process, with a focus on families' motives for hiring IECs and the "edge" that they believe these services confer.

Allyson Stokes
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Areas of Specialization:
Culture, Gender, Work

Dissertation:
Fashioning Gender: A Case Study of the Fashion Industry

My dissertation is a case study of fashion as a cultural industry. I address the cultural and organizational reproduction of gender inequality in fashion, and how gender intersects with sexuality, class, and age. Data include 63 in-depth interviews, media texts, industry statistics, and field observation. The dissertation is a sandwich thesis of three articles. The first article addresses the cultural devaluation of femininity and feminized work. Unpacking five devaluation processes, I show that devaluation varies by context and has both material and symbolic consequences. The second article combines field theory and the glass escalator to investigate gendered attributions of symbolic capital in fashion design. I argue that male designers walk a glass runway of advantage constructed through intersections of gender and sexuality. Third, I address the gendered organization of creativity in cultural industries. Organizing logics of entrepreneurial labor and passion construct a gendered, classed, and age-biased "ideal creative worker."
Ana Velitchkova
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Areas of Specialization:
Global and transnational sociology, Conflict and violence, Theory

Dissertation:
Cosmopolitanism behind the Iron Curtain: The Making of Modern Publics and Selves

My dissertation traces the organizations and practices behind the institutionalization of unique forms of internationalist/cosmopolitan socio-cultural modernity in state-socialist Eastern Europe following World War II. Manifested in widespread cognitive schemas, evidence of which can be found after 1989, these forms of modernity developed on the basis of three sources: lived communism, world-cultural models, and pre-existing local institutions and practices. The most typical transnational movement for the region during the period, the Esperanto movement, exemplifies these processes. The constructed international language Esperanto aimed at equal and neutral communication across borders and across ideological barriers. A multi-faceted organizational infrastructure at the local, national, and international levels allowed Eastern European cultural elites to experience themselves as part of a modern international public. Esperanto organizations coordinated direct and mediated public and private cross-border exchanges of ideas and practices. A local fellowship ethics founded on emotional investment in strong personal ties provided guiding interactional principles.

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Areas of Specialization:
Religion, Culture, Theory

Dissertation:
Reformed Resurgence: A Field-Theoretic Model of Religious Strength in Advanced Modernity

Is American Evangelicalism still embattled and thriving? Unlike past work that focused on the relationship between Evangelicalism and its broader secular context, my dissertation investigates and explains American Evangelicalism as a field of internal contestation and struggle. To do so, I combine Smith’s subcultural identity theory with the recently articulated framework of strategic action fields to develop a new, field-theoretic model of religious strength in advanced modernity. In particular, this project maps the structure of the field of American Evangelicalism, focusing on the “New Calvinist” pocket that some fear is seeking to gain power over the field. Data are from participant observation at three Calvinist mega-churches, interviews with pastors and other Evangelical leaders, and content analysis of printed and online materials. Findings explain how American Evangelicalism has turned in on itself such that the strength of one pocket comes at the cost of the increasing weakness of the entire field.