SKATOLOGY

Spring 2023 Issue

Newsletter of the ASA Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology

INSIDE

A poster with people holding up different signs, such as "health benefits", "minimum wage", "the weekend". Image Source: Ricardo Levins Morales Art Studio (https://www.rlmartstudio.com/)

Chair's Column

Dear Colleagues,

We are looking forward to welcoming you to Philadelphia for the upcoming ASA Annual Meeting in August 2023. We have a lively set of paper and roundtable sessions planned. Our award committees have been hard at work reviewing an amazing array of submissions. *Please note: the SKAT section day will be Saturday, August 19, 2023.*

As I continue to translate and advocate for sociology on my campus and more broadly, I have focused on two phrases–social innovation and imagining new, more equitable futures–to describe a few of our field's contributions. We, of course, have many others.

There is a lot of hype about technological innovation in the United States. The wonders of tech innovation saturate media and university headlines, marginalizing the importance of and need for *social innovation*. As SKAT

scholars, we know that the social and technical are deeply intertwined. But, what if we highlighted social innovation to challenge the emphasis on technological innovation? What about highlighting new ways of organizing identities, daily lives, institutions, and organizations? I've been watching the push for a 4-day work week and ranked voting with interest, seeing the potential for impact.

On top: 8 hours for work, 8 hours for rest, and 8 hours for what we will. Bottom: The Labor Movement, the folks who brought you the weekend. Image Source: Ricardo Levins Morales Art Studio (https://www.rlmartstudio.com/)

As sociologists of science, knowledge, and technology, we bring insights into and ideas for social innovation to the table. What kinds of organizational structures promote equity in science? What kinds of knowledge, policies, and actors facilitate energy transitions? What new kinds of institutional arrangements might support elders in a way that puts elders' priorities and lives front and center? What if social innovation, that is, new arrangements for living and being in community, led innovations in technology?

Building on this idea of social innovation, we can also (and do!) collaborate with our various communities and networks to imagine new, more equitable futures. Although we often critique existing institutions of science, technology, and knowledge, we have the tools to imagine new possibilities that pave the way for more just and equitable social arrangements. We can and do use our theories and methods to provide examples of ways of organizing medical knowledge, laboratories, urban infrastructures, energy systems, and the like that challenge the status quo.

As I get tired of critiquing the same problems with medical knowledge and technology in the US, I've started to think about new projects through the lens of social innovation and imagining new futures. These ideas are shaping how I choose research topics/sites and design my studies. I know that many of you actively construct research projects with these ideas in mind. And, if you are not already doing so, I invite you to explore this path.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Philadelphia in August.

With best wishes,

Kelly

Kelly Joyce, PhD
SKAT Chair
Professor, Drexel University

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2022-2023

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Anti-Racism in SKAT (selects winners of the Emancipatory Practice and Duster-Wells Prizes as well as continue to identify ways to advance anti-racism in and through SKAT)

Susan Bell, *Drexel University*, Chair
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Stay up-to-date with SKAT through our **website**: http://asaskat.com
And on **Mastadon**: @ASA_SKAT@sciences.social

A note from the newsletter team

We hope you enjoy this issue of SKATOLOGY. Should you have any suggestions for our Summer 2023 issue, please contact us!

Communications Committee:

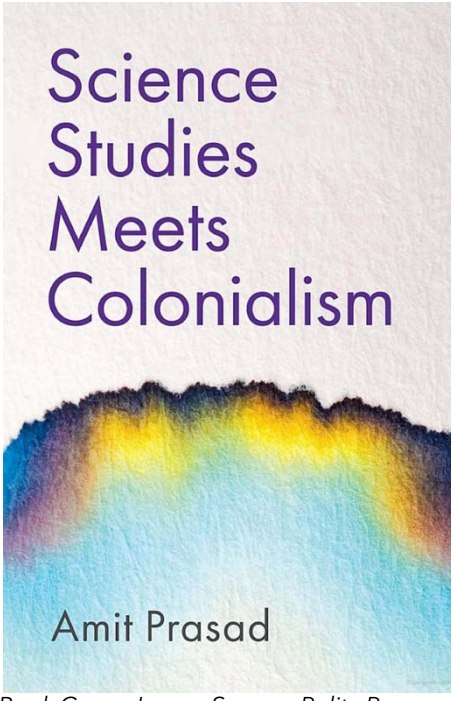
Larry Au, *The City College of New York*, lau1@ccny.cuny.edu, Chair
Nicole Foti, *University of California, San Francisco*
Zheng Fu, *Columbia University*
Cristian Morales, *Boston University*

Section Event: Author Meets Readers with Amit Prasad (April 8, 2023)

Blurb provided by Kelly Joyce

A screenshot of the virtual event featuring the author and readers. Image Source: Kelly Joyce.

SKAT hosted its first virtual Author Meets Readers session on Friday, April 7, 2023. The session focused on **Dr. Amit Prasad**'s new book *Science Studies Meets Colonialism (*Polity Press, 2022). Prasad's book carefully demonstrates how colonial sensibilities animate science studies scholarship. 24 participants attended, creating a lively discussion about ways to decenter colonial models of studying science, knowledge, and technology. Dr. Amit Prasad is an Associate Professor in the School of History and Sociology at Georgia Institute of Technology.



Book Cover. Image Source: Polity Press.

Readers at the event included:

- **Dr. Dwai Banerjee**, Associate Professor, Program in Science, Technology & Society, MIT,
- **Dr. Susan E. Bell**, Professor, Sociology Department, Drexel University, and
- **Dr. Joy Y. Zhang**, Reader in Sociology, Founding Director, Center for Global Science & Epistemic Justice, University of Kent

Program Spotlight: The Trust Collaboratory

By Cristian Capotescu and Gil Eyal, Columbia University

Attendees of the TrustWorkers Project PhotoVoice Exhibition. Image Source: The Trust Collaboratory.

Trust is one of the twenty-first century's defining social and political issues. Trust, or lack thereof, shapes how citizens interact with media, information technology, and expert systems. Despite, or perhaps precisely because trust undergirds our ability as a society to share physical as well as virtual public space and because it is at the core of our most intimate and our most technologically mediated social relationships, it is perpetually fragile, and it is often perceived to be in crisis. This sense of a crisis of trust in institutions, government, science, media, and expert systems has gained particular salience in the public debate since the beginning of the pandemic. But as concerning and real as this crisis is, we do not believe it is an entirely new phenomenon. Nor is the crisis of trust an issue reducible to the onset of new social media platforms, the rise of populist movements in our body politic, or the spread of mis-and disinformation. Based on this premise, the Trust Collaboratory launched in the fall of 2022 at Columbia University as one of the first research centers in the nation chiefly dedicated to the study of the social dynamics of trust. Under its founding director, Gil Eyal (Sociology), the center started with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2020 as the Mellon Sawyer Seminar on Trust and Mistrust of Science and Experts. Today, the center has grown beyond its initial footprint and is set to engage in the coming years with three programmatic arenas: Science and medicine; information technology and algorithms; and media and journalism.

Our focus on these three areas around which trust is built, shaped, and negotiated is deliberate. Liberal democracies in general, and the United States polity especially, rely on a system of "checks and balances" that shores up confidence in a well-functioning democracy. Alongside the constitutionally codified executive, legislative, and judicial branches, American democracy is also safeguarded by informal checks and balances, including the "fourth estate" (the media) and the "fifth branch" (science, especially

regulatory science). Because media and science lack the constitutionally mandated powers of the other branches, they can only perform this crucial role as long as they enjoy trust and command the respect of the citizenry. However, as Emile Durkheim warned about this trust dilemma more than a century ago, "all the scientific demonstrations in the world would have no influence if a people had no faith in science." Durkheim was among the first to recognize that trust shapes how citizens relate to scientific knowledge and public institutions. But trust is brittle, and the ease with which it can be lost is disproportionate to the efforts required to regain it. This situation creates significant challenges for maintaining trust in our democracy and the viability of its checks and balances. Building trust in the democratic project requires prolonged trust-building efforts untethered from the short-termism of election cycles and moral panics.

Attendees interacting with the PhotoVoice exhibits. Image Source: The Trust Collaboratory.

The Trust Collaboratory, therefore, puts at the center of its intellectual mission the following question: How are we to fortify trust when our profession and other academic fields provide few robust insights into what trust *is* and how it can be studied? "Trust barometers" common in the polling industry often flatten and obscure how trust operates in the intricate social webs, beliefs, and meanings of daily life. Trust remains stubbornly unquantifiable, and we believe that unpacking its multidimensionality in theory and practice requires concerted interdisciplinary efforts. Responding to these challenges, the Trust Collaboratory builds a multi-dimensional research architecture to translate scholarly insights and findings into public interventions. Housed within the INCITE Institute at Columbia University, the center drives new research and publicly-engaged activities to bring the rich analytical insights of the social sciences and humanities to bear on this foundational and often taken-for-granted infrastructure of modern life. At the heart of our work is the recognition that trust is not merely an object of study in the classical sense. We reckon that trust is also a lived scholarly practice because academia requires the trust of the communities it works *for* and *with*. For this reason, the Trust Collaboratory's institutional mission incorporates community-academic collaboration principles based on a practice of *co-production* and *consultation*. They are at the forefront of our work as we draw on the expertise and contributions of scholars as well as external stakeholders, including journalists, community advocates, non-profit professionals, policy experts, and policymakers in NYC and beyond.

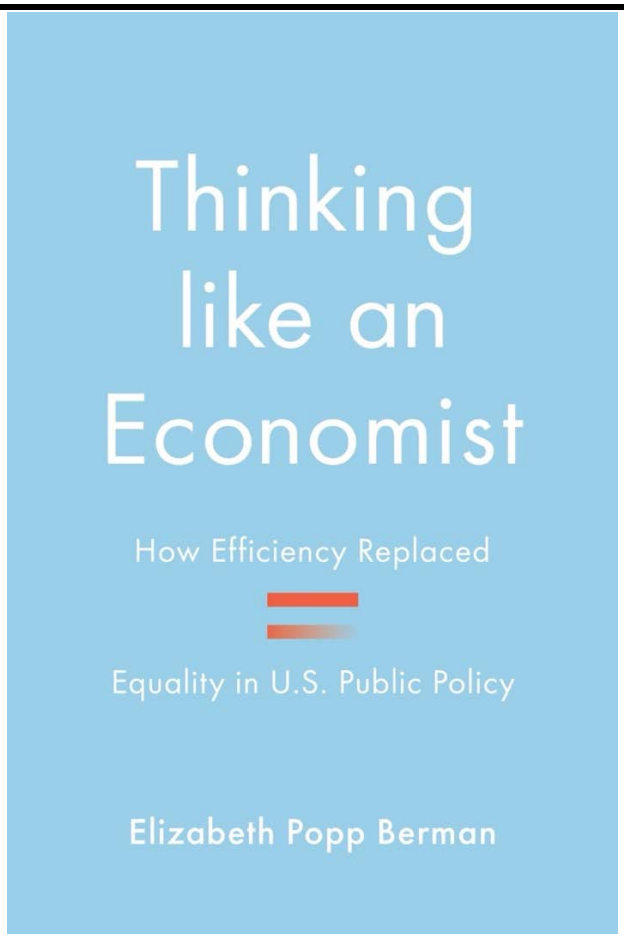
The Trust Collaboratory's inaugural series of activities in the academic years 2022–24 encompasses the *Covid-19 and Trust in Science Project* (CATS). This transnational research initiative analyzes the experiences of Long Covid patients in the United States, Brazil, and China. Our ongoing TrustWorkers Project, in turn, explores how frontline workers in America's public health sector—Community Health Workers (CHWs)—operate as trust mediators between local communities and medical institutions. We are also launching new projects in 2023 that study the job market challenges of the millions of employees suffering from Long Covid as well as the role of AI and algorithms in criminal justice and hospital medicine.

Interested in collaborating with us? Visit us at TrustCollaboratory.org for more information.

New Books Q&A with Elizabeth Popp Berman, Author of *Thinking Like an Economist*

Interviewed by Zheng Fu on March 31, 2023

Elizabeth Popp Berman is the Richard H. Price Professor of Organizational Studies and (by courtesy) Sociology at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *Thinking Like an Economist: How Efficiency Replaced Equality in U.S. Public Policy* (Princeton, 2022) and *Creating the Market University: How Academic Science Became an Economic Engine* (Princeton, 2012).



Book Cover. Image Source: Princeton University Press.

Q: I want to discuss the relationship between "efficiency" and other values. Your book shows quite clearly that in practice, "efficiency" took over as a value, driving experts to find less costly policy solutions, which are at odds with values like universalism and equality. There is a gap between the promise of "efficiency" as a neutral guiding principle to find the best solution given an end, and what happens in practice, where "Kaldor Hicks efficiency" (38) comes to decide what government should prioritize. I am curious whether economists see the difference between efficiency of means and efficiency of ends? Are both of them seen as equally value neutral? Do you think it is inevitable that efficiency as in finding best means will be coupled with efficiency as in finding the best ends? Can we separate one from the other? In other words, is there a world in which economists could have provided the answer to questions like: what would be the most efficient way to reach universal health care, if the policy priority of "universal health care" has been established? Or, from a pragmatist tradition, maybe we can only see the "end in view", that is, the experts can only see the ends that their means have primed them to see. In other words, do the economists lean towards policy goals that prioritize saving costs because these are the goals that they are better at solving using cost-benefit analysis?

A: Well, economists use efficiency in several different ways—productive efficiency, allocative efficiency, Kaldor-Hicks efficiency—which I elide over a bit in the book, but which also get elided over in policymaking practice. The efficiency of means that you're talking about—where you choose what the policy goal is—say, to reduce poverty by 50%--and then consider the least expensive way to get there—is essentially the same as cost-effectiveness. And in this formulation, you can very explicitly separate (or at least try to) the piece that is political from the piece that is technical.

So you can say, oh, well it's the politicians who choose the ends; we're just looking at the best means to get there once we've been given those ends. Kaldor-Hicks efficiency and allocative efficiency, by contrast, get closer to the "efficiency of ends" that you're talking about.

So for example in regulation, the question might be "do all the costs of this regulation"—say it's some kind of limit on pollution—"outweigh all the benefits." And if they don't, you don't recommend the regulation. This is using efficiency to decide what the ends should be: that we should implement environmental regulations whose benefits exceed their costs. Which might be a sensible way to do things—but we also might just want to say, "we should keep pollution below X amount regardless of cost"—perhaps for moral reasons, or perhaps we think that the benefits are hard to measure sufficiently. So in the first case, efficiency has become the end. But in the second case, we might look for efficient (meaning cost-effective) means to achieve our goal of keeping pollution below X amount, but efficiency itself is not the end goal.

Certainly economists distinguish between these technically different forms of efficiency in their work, but I don't think a lot of them have thought very carefully about what it means for efficiency to be an end: that that in itself it a value choice. I think, instead, that they typically just see efficiency as a good thing—because no one really advocates for inefficiency for its own sake—and don't recognize that it is a choice about the ends of policy that might actively be competing with other ends of policy—like wanting a social welfare program to be universal, rather than targeted, for moral or strategic reasons, rather than economic ones.

I think that efficiency as means *can* be separated from efficiency as ends, and its implications are less conservative if that is the case. Because you could have some really ambitious goal—say, our goal is to make college free—what is the most efficient way to get there? Although the other kind of efficiency quickly creeps in, because then the first thing someone is going to say is, well, this is not the most efficient way to spend our money; if our end goal is efficiency there is some better way we can be using that money and people can pay for college themselves. So yes, there is a world in which you could set a policy end and then just focus on the most efficient way to get there—and that's sort of where things started, in the 1960s—but it's hard for people who value efficiency to stay there, and not start saying, "well, that policy end isn't the most efficient one so it's not really good."

And yes, I absolutely think that part of this is only being able to see problems through the lens of the toolkit you've been given. And this is perhaps even a bigger deal for people trained in policy schools, where cost-benefit analysis is taught as *the* way of evaluating good vs. bad policy.

Q: I want to expand a little bit how efficiency works as an end. I think it is difficult to talk about efficiency without thinking about efficiency for whom and for what. For example, I have read some articles about how the US healthcare system is not efficient in the sense that healthcare spending accounts for 19 percent of the US GDP and the health outcome in the US is not that great compared to other developed nations. A lot of money end up getting spent on administrative costs like insurance. So market efficiency in the eyes of some might lead to less efficiency if examined from the view of the society as a whole. Is there a default (or hidden assumption) in the mind of those arguing for efficiency, especially in terms of efficiency for whom? Whose efficiency or what kind of efficiency are people trying to maximize when efficiency is promoted as a value?

A: Well, first of all, I do think the modal U.S. economist thinks the U.S. healthcare system is pretty terrible and that single-payer healthcare—whether their first-choice policy or not—would be preferable on efficiency grounds to what we've currently got. So no one is defending the current system as ideal. But there are two things we can separate out here.

One is the extent to which you think that trying to correct market failures is the path to improving

A view of the dome on Capitol Hill. Image Source: trec_lit (Flickr)

the system. So, do you think that we should treat healthcare as just another market but one that has to be structured carefully because the incentives don't work like they do in a simpler market—there are all sorts of information problems and agency problems and externalities and so on. If that is your perspective, then what you want to do is consider how to increase competition, how to prevent adverse selection, how to make sure all players have skin in the game, and so on. Historically, this has been the standard economic approach, and you see it reflected in the Affordable Care Act. I think a growing number of economists have moved away from this position, though, perhaps because all our efforts so far to better structure healthcare as a market have been so unsuccessful at containing spending.

The point you are also getting at, though, is "what about distribution." Who is it that is benefiting from an efficiency improvement, and are there also people who are losing? And here, the question of "efficiency for whom" is often bracketed. It's set aside as being a political question, not an economic one, or as a problem that should be solved downstream of the point at which you are evaluating efficiency. This has come up a lot in cost-benefit analysis: the Kaldor-Hicks efficiency criterion endorses policy changes in which those who are made better off could hypothetically compensate those who are worse off (and still be better off themselves). Well, first, the compensation is completely hypothetical. So a policy with a group of big winners and a group of medium losers is just that—the losers aren't actually compensated. Second, it ignores *who* the winners and losers are. Are the winners rich or poor? What about the losers? The logical extreme of this position is the memo Larry Summers once wrote pointing out that it makes standard economic sense to send dirty industries to the poorest countries, because the health effects will be the least costly because they will fall on the lowest wage-earners! Of course most economists do not think that impacts on the rich and poor should be treated that way, but a common position is to say that it is better to handle distributional concerns through taxes and transfers, rather than by incorporating them into cost-benefit analyses. Of course, that may just mean that they don't get considered at all.

Q: What would be an alternative to "efficiency" when it comes to judging the best means for a given policy goal, if social scientists are to go beyond the economic way of thinking? Does there exist a truly value-free standard that social scientists can lean on when it comes to judging means?

A: No, of course there's no value free standard and I don't think there's some single alternative concept that should replace it as a core value. And a lot of time efficiency may be a good goal, or the best goal, in some particular circumstance anyway. I think the trick, though, is recognizing it as a value in competition with other values—so that it doesn't become this trump card, where of course the more efficient option is always the better one—instead, it becomes a consideration, but one that is explicitly recognized as a value,

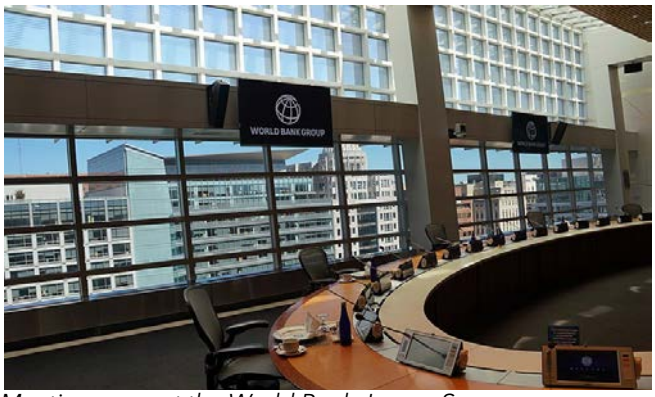
rather than being seen as simply this value-neutral technical tool.

Q: It struck me that both your previous project on economization and economic way of thinking contribute to an understanding of neoliberal policy consequence that is not just about the right-wing pushing their agenda, but about the power of certain style of thinking. But at the same time, it is much more difficult to think about how to combat a style of thinking and its network compared to combatting a certain group of people. What do you think are the implications of your projects on combatting policy trends that increasingly conceptualize the world in economic terms?

A: I think there are pretty clear things that you can do to destabilize this—because you don't have to get rid of economic reasoning entirely; it should remain a tool in the toolkit. But it needs to be understood as such. And so I think that it is in places like policy schools or law schools that we can be teaching young people who are first encountering such frameworks that they are a way of thinking about problems, that they are not value neutral, and that if one prioritized different values, something else might look like the "best" policy.

I also think that just recognizing when this kind of reasoning is going on is itself an important tool for being able to push back against it. At some level some of my motivation for this project was having always felt frustrated that policies I thought were desirable from the standpoint of values could just be dismissed as "bad policy" or "unreasonable"—meaning not consistent with the economic style of reasoning—and not quite being able to nail down what was going on behind that dismissal. I think that recognizing when the economic style is the roadblock is an important tool in being able to change it.

Finally, I also think that it points to the importance of building spaces that are explicitly not buying into this framework. Which can be think tanks, or disciplinary spaces, or offices in government—but really recognizing that those sources of power



Meeting room at the World Bank. Image Source: WikiCommons (UK in USA)

have to be built over the long term.

Q: Economists were able to wage such big influence in policy partly because of their influential network of economists in think tank, government agencies, research institutes and politicians. Economists can move between industry and academia with ease. In comparison, in sociology, industry jobs after PhD training are considered much less prestigious than an academic job and there are no existing pipelines between PhD to industry. My main question is: why are the economists so successful at establishing connections beyond academia? Or, from an expertise point of view, why has the economic way of thinking been so successful at establishing networks across institutions, and disseminated across such a wide audience?

A: Well, to be honest economists have a technical toolkit that is much more practically useful than sociologists or other social scientists do. So all the economists at Amazon who are using auction theory or doing market design—they actually have something to contribute that increases the bottom line in a way that other disciplines do not. To me the real question is why did those skills happen to get located in the discipline of economics when that was not inevitable; it's not so clear that it's "natural" in some way for auction theory, or game theory more generally, to be located in the discipline of economics—they are basically applied math, and that work could have been developed in other spaces like operations research, or engineering. And here I think you get into the power economics has as a discipline, and

the fact that part of how its power has reproduced and increased is by bringing lines of work that are economically valuable in the real world into it. Of course you can argue about how useful or effective something like macroeconomic forecasting really is, but economics is fundamentally comfortable developing and applying its tools in the interest of industry in a way that sociology is not.

Q: Your response regarding economists comfortable developing and applying tools in the interest of industry reminds me of an article by Michael Burawoy on the different affinity between disciplines to different fields outside of academia. He talked about sociologists being connected to civil society. How do you think sociologists have fared in developing and applying tools for the benefit of civil society, compared to how economists have done so for the industry?

A: That is a really interesting comparison, and you prompted me to go back and reread Burawoy on public sociology. I think I am less convinced that there is an inherent alliance between sociology and civil society, unless you define "civil society" fairly narrowly to mean something like organized labor and social movements. There are a lot of ways in which broadly economic tools are more practically useful to, say, a large nonprofit that wants to improve its operations than the structural critiques that sociologists (not excluding myself) tend to offer. And I think a sociology allied with civil society would be much more focused on Durkheimian questions of social order—how do we strengthen the social fabric—whereas the discipline, for better or worse, has moved pretty decisively away from those questions in recent decades.

I do think sociologists have unique contributions to make to our understanding of social movement dynamics and collective action, among other aspects of civil society, and that those have practical implications. But the dominant tendency in sociology is not toward tool-building, but critique. And as a discipline, we really center understanding the effects of social structure and how it is reproduced—which makes us collectively pessimistic about the possibilities of change, particularly incremental change, and less motivated to focus on tool-building. That could change, but only in the context of a broader evolution in the discipline.

Q: In the years that economists expanded their foothold in the policy world during the period of Great Society, how were other social science disciplines (and other disciplines like math and physics that contributed to the policy field early on) responding to opportunities like the need for robust academic research to evaluate policies (112)?

A: This is a great segue from the last question—because those fields were also seeking to respond to the demand for policy research, but they were kind of subservient to economics from the beginning. The University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty was a response to demand for research that came out of the War on Poverty; many sociologists were affiliated with it from the beginning, and continue to be today. But as one report on its efforts said in the early 1970s, perhaps tongue in cheek, that while IRP was not "of the economics discipline," it was "disciplined by economics"—and this is something you see elsewhere. Sometimes this is because economists have better tools for solving particular types of problems, as was the case at RAND in the 1950s; economists did a better job of coming up with a toolkit for decision-making in the Cold War context than the mathematicians and physicists had been able to. But I also think there's a history to it; economics built its ties to government in the first half of the twentieth century and increased those during World War II—so they already had an institutional edge as well by the time of the Great Society.

Q: How have economists and those in the field of public policy received your book?

A: I would say the reception has been…mixed? I have been pleasantly surprised that it's been getting read at all. Certainly there have been some critical reviews; Jason Furman, chair of

Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, wrote a long one in *Foreign Affairs* that I felt sort of missed the point, in that he was emphasizing how little power economists had, while I was trying to make an argument about the impact of their way of thinking. But I've also had some very positive reception, particularly from economists who are more focused on inequality, from some in policy schools, and certainly from heterodox economists. The reception from policy school *students*, in particular, has been extremely positive.

Q: What is your next project?

A: What I'm really interested in right now is thinking about how new hegemonic frameworks for thinking about the economic world are put into place. This is motivated by the very practical question of "what comes after neoliberalism" that lots of sociologists would like the answer to, and that an increasing number of foundations are asking as well. And I don't have the answer to what the next hegemonic framework should be. But I do think that if we are to have any hope of maintaining a livable planet, it's got to come in part from a really serious reframing of what we think the purpose of business, its relationship to government, and how we should regulate it.

A sign outside a restaurant that says "please wear a mask". Image Source: WikiCommons (G. Edward Johnson)

A lot of my work has been on the last big hegemonic transformation of this kind, which is neoliberalism, basically. But really looking at the period leading up to that—the 1950s—made me think about the taken-for-granted framework about business, government, and the economy that existed at that point—one that seems appealing in some ways, in that there was more expectation that business should have some social purpose, and more acceptance of the idea of a "public interest," and more of an interest in limited certain kinds of corporate power—but had lots of problems of its own. But that led me to the question of how *that* framework was put into place—because it, too, had to take over and become hegemonic. And that transformation really took place in the Progressive Era. So what I'm doing right now is really trying to understand how a hegemonic economic framework was put into place in the Progressive Era, so that I can compare it to what happened in the neoliberal era, with an eye toward thinking about what a similar transformation might look like in the present.

Q: I found it interesting that contingent events like WWII and the Cold War were very important in setting up connections for economists beyond academia at the very beginning. To what extent do you believe recent contingent events, like the COVID-19 pandemics, have offered opportunities for sociologists to showcase their value?

A: Well, to some extent I do; the mention of COVID makes me think of the recent long piece in the New York Times Magazine on the COVID oral history project initiated by sociologists Ryan Hagen and Denise Milstein. Like any other disruption, COVID creates a space of fluidity where social change can occur. But, of course, the default tendency is for existing patterns of power and influence to be reproduced: which you see in how prominent economists were in COVID discourse around school closings, or masking, despite these not superficially looking like very "economic" topics. If sociologists are going to find their moment to shine, though, I think there's a very good chance it will come at some kind of moment of disruption.

New Books Q&A with Oliver Rollins, Author of *Conviction*

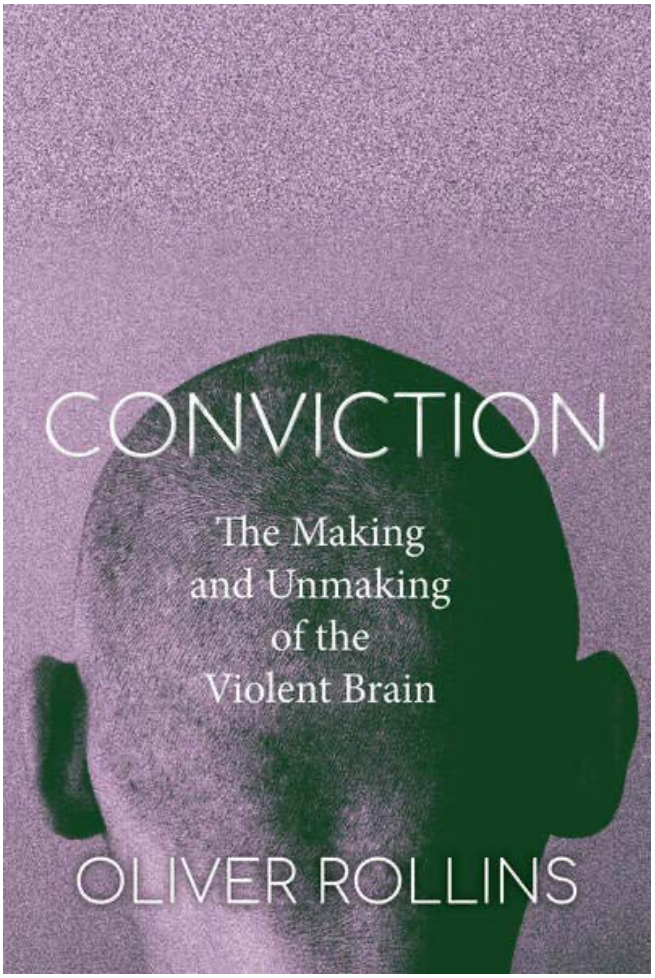
Interviewed by Larry Au on February 22, 2023

Oliver Rollins is an Assistant Professor in the Department of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington. He is the author of *Conviction: The Making and Unmaking of the Violent Brain* (Stanford, 2021). He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, San Francisco.

Q: I read in the preface that you once considered entering medicine, and after completing your Bachelor's, you went on to pursue a MA in Pan-African Studies, before completing your PhD in Sociology. Could you talk about how you first become interested in studying the neuroscience of violence?

A: Like a lot of us, I accidentally became a sociologist. I didn't have plans to go do a PhD, and definitely not in Sociology. I started off in Biology. Toward the end of my undergraduate career, I had no desire to go to med school. Instead, I got interested in Black Studies and that's what helped me think much more like a social scientist and raise questions about what I was studying in Biology. I ended up going to the University of Louisville, doing my MA in Pan-African Studies, and it just so happened that my mentors there were sociologists and so they were like, "Well, you know, if you want to really take these questions about race and health to a level, think about Sociology". And so, I went to UCSF to work with Howard Pinderhughes to study violence as a health problem.

While I was at UCSF, I was also taking classes with Janet Shim and Adele Clark, which forced me to come back to this question of science. They were the first people to introduce me to the idea that you could raise questions about science, its me to



Book Cover. Image Source: Stanford University Press.

me to come back to this question of science. They were the first people to introduce me to the idea that you could raise questions about science, its relationship with the social, and the social implications of the making and dissemination of scientific knowledge. From that point, I ended up changing my research direction. I had already finished qualifying exams and was getting ready to work on a dissertation about violence prevention. I went to Howard and said, "I changed my mind," and he was 100% supportive. Following in the footsteps of folks like Janet Shim and Troy Duster, I wanted to understand how neuroscientists thought about race in their work. Neuro-technologies were booming at that time, in the early to mid-2000s. I ended up interested in exploring the way neuroscientists studied violence with biomedical models, because I thought such research had to wrestling with the question of race; although that was not the case exactly. That was the original dissertation. It

slightly changed with the book, however, where I placed emphasis not just on the complexities of race in the science, but the way this science tried to deal with continued critiques of the biology of violence, and especially how today's neuroscientists of violence understand the "social" in the conceptualization, making, and potential application of the "violent brain" model.

Q: It's always great to hear about the contingencies of academic careers. One of my favorite chapters in the book was your discussion of the "taboo of race". As you write, there is a "fear of discussing race within public *and* professional spaces" (p. 107) amongst neuroscientists, which results in respondents telling you that they were "'not looking too much into race' … [which] materializes in studies of the violent brain as ignoring the impacts or race altogether, a *race-neutral* logic" (p. 108). How did you manage to get scientists to overcome this taboo and start talking about race? Could you also say something about the process of conducting this research and how you were able to overcome some of the hesitance of some neuroscientists to talk to a potentially critical sociologist?

A: I approached this research using multiple methods. I began with qualitative content analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and books on neuroimaging of anti-social behavior and violence from the late 1980s up until around 2012. I also relied on some ethnography of conferences, particularly at conferences around neuroscience, violence, and the law. I did some training in neuroscience courses, which helped me think through how neuroimaging works. But the content analysis gave me a sense that race was not being talked about in contemporary research on neurobiology and violence. It was really hard to find any discussion about race beyond demographics, or this idea that they "controlled for race". At first, I didn't even know how I was going to do the dissertation. I remember, my advisor Howard saying, "That's not actually a bad thing. It's a good thing because now you need to try to figure out how they do this work on violence without actually thinking about race". However, it was really difficult to get these scientists to agree to be interviewed. Two things happened when I tried to recruit scientists for my interviews. First, when I was reaching out, I wasn't finding anyone who wanted to or would talk about race. This is a science that had already been plagued by these notions of racism, eugenics, and sexism from the early part of the 20th century, and many scientists were trying to leave that stain in the past. Second, I think me being a Black man played a role too. Most of the scientists I needed to recruit were white men, and I believe they were not too comfortable being asked questions about the ethics this science, and especially about race or racism in their work from me. Not necessarily because they don't care, but because there are larger taboos around talking about race in this research program. Taboos about race, which I learned through the interviews that I did get, that inconspicuously structured how the research program is operates. I remember one neuroscientists telling me that "you're not going to get a lot of people to talk to you". I was just naming other scientists that I would like to talk more with, and the respondent said, "yeah, they're not going to go on the record talking about these issues".

It was less difficult to get them to open up once you got them in the room. No one had a problem, talking about race once the interview began. Other researchers who study this in genomics, like Janet Shim told me that, "people will talk about these things more openly than what you think". They're not necessarily hiding it, because this is not necessarily seen as problematic. Many of the researchers frame their work as a way to help historically marginalized and racialized communities because violence is thought to disproportionally impact these communities in a particular way. I think about this a lot today because in neuroscience—post-2020, post-

George Floyd and Breonna Taylor—there's been a change in Science; all of a sudden, scientists are talking more frank about systemic racism. I think if I conducted my book project today, I would likely have more neuroscientists willing to be interviewed. But at the time it really did make it difficult. As I wrote the book, I thought a lot about, or with, the work of Amade M'charek, particularly M'charek's conversation regarding the "absent presence of race." My argument is that race, and especially the racial past of the biology of violence, continue to haunt the science today; actively policing what can be discussed and how, and therefore shaping science without being formally recognized as such. More recently, I've been thinking about how to accurately and empirically capture the absent presence of race in scientific research. For SKAT researchers, this is going to be a key question: how to show the impacts or effects of race or racism, in scientific and biomedical settings, that seemingly operate as race neutral practices or when scientists acknowledge that race is "social" and has no biological meaning or purpose in their research.

Q: You invoke Troy Duster's description of the "unenviable task", or how "researchers must figure out how to effectively consider racialized experiences without 'endowing race with a false sense of biological determinism'" (p. 121). How, in your view, should neuroscientists engage with social science in order to understand how racism and structural inequality shapes neuroscience? Are there any examples of anti-racist neuroscience that comes to mind?

A: How to do this in a more collaborative way, to get scientists to think about these things, is something we in SKAT should continue to work on. I'm thinking about this task in two new projects. First, I'm trying to focus more exclusively on elucidating the ways that race and scientific racism actually impact the making of neuroscience research by investigating how do neuroscientists study implicit racial bias. This is a different group of neuroscientists than those in my first project. They are more people of color and more women in this science. Their research thinks about the relationship between the brain, both how people recognize racial identity of the other and self, and how people mitigate their implicit racial biases. This science raises some interesting questions about the potential for neuroscientists to be anti-racist, and, at the same time, it also raises questions about the potential neuro-biologization of racism. Dorothy Roberts and I wrote a about some of these issues in an article in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. I'm also starting a new project to think through the relationship between social justice and neuroscience. Here, I am asking: What are the links between social justice and science? Are those things even compatible? Can neuroscience actually attend to social justice issues like anti-racism?

As for examples of anti-racist neuroscience, I would say if we following Ruha Benjamin and others, then we understand that some technologies operate under and help remake particular types of racial logics, but these racialized outcomes are not necessarily something that's naturally endowed within the technology itself. Instead, the key here is the ways in which the values of society get normatively reconstituted through scientific practices. I do not think this is as simple as saying that researchers' or developers' implicit racial ideologies are being baked into these machines or algorithms. I think it's a bit more complex. For example, what do we count as good neuroscience in the first place? How do existing, relied upon neuroscientific modalities, techniques, and guidelines for "good science" create and recreate the conditions for neuro-knowledges and technologies to readily support and supply avenues for racial thinking and racialized violence to be reconstituted in society?

I also think here about things like the Black in Neuro Movement, which came out right after George Floyd's murder in the Summer of 2020.

Here's a group of young, mostly black neuroscientists in grad school, postdocs positions, or early career professorships, who began to coalesce together and think about ways in which they could change their research to address issues of scientific racism, both within their field and outside of it. Now they have mostly focused on increasing the number of Black neuroscientists and creating better support for those who are their now. But still, they can be seen as an example of how anti-racist logics are starting to be picked up in the neurosciences. Whether or not that can lead to something anti-racist in the future is an open question; it will certainly have to move beyond the politics of representation. In my third project, I want to focus on groups like Black in Neuro. However, I also want to historicize such social movement type activities. Thinking about science in the 1960s, I think about young researchers and scientists who were in grad school in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-War Movement, and other types of movements which were affecting their politics, and potentially their wants to produce a particular type of "socially just" science. Yet, when look at the 1980s and 1990s, we didn't necessarily see a dramatic shift towards a democratic or social justice oriented new science. I want this third project to help outline and interrogate some of the social and structural barriers that have and continue to stand in the way of any movement towards anti-racism; in order to help outline ways in which scientists like those in Black in Neuro may join us in the struggle against racism and other systemic social inequities. Anti-racism is a constant struggle. Translating that into a technology or a science is going to be hard. There is no finish line where you get to say, "look, this is an anti-racist neuroimaging machine". However, we must start to think about the steps toward an anti-racist science and the technologies and practices that may help move us toward this goal.

Q: You discuss how advances in neuro-imaging, measurement, and visualization, such as from CT scans to the advent of sMRI and fMRI, have enabled neuroscientists to claim more accuracy in pinpointing the neuro-biological roots of violence while drawing on the cultural authority of these "objective" images. How much of this is a story of technology and the promise of ever-improving precision in the tools? How are these technological developments tied to broader social concerns and anxieties?

A: Two things come to mind. First, from talking with Troy Duster, we should be wary of following the newness of technology and not thinking about the continual ontological commitments within science. You can have new technologies all you want, but what he forced me to think about is what are the ontological commitments in the sciences, and what are they doing in the first place. One of them that I explore in this book is the idea that: "We can separate criminals from non-criminals within society". That is a particular type of ontology that this science relies on to conceptualize and properly actualize this research on violence. To be fair, I think this commitment applies to much of Criminology too; some of that science also buys into this idea that violent and non-violent people are two uniquely distinctive groups. Second, I think about what Du Bois meant by "progress". In Sociology, we read Marx in many ways, often going well beyond

MRI machine in background. In foreground, a researcher examines bsrain scan produced by MRI imaging on display. Image Source: Florey Institute (Flickr).

thinking about capitalism or well beyond thinking about economic markets; people have Marxist critiques to think about all kinds of power dynamics within society. My use of Du Boisian framing of progress in the book's preface is sort of my way of saying that we could, or should, do something similar with Du Bois. Racial theory isn't only a niche thing; it can be used to interrogate more generally the power dynamics, structure, and organization of society.

For example, I use Du Bois's critically analysis of progress to think about similarly ways that US society frames the ideas of racial (or social) progress and scientific progress: The idea that science is constantly moving towards something good or improved with new technology–that moving the scientific knowledge forward means the field is always advancing (for the better), seems to be very similarly to the idea that the further we are away from the period of enslavement or Jim Crow, the better or more advanced our society has come on the question of race. Du Bois didn't buy this accommodating narrative about progress in the early 20th century, and I don't think many of us buy it today. I would say my critique of the neuroscience of violence is very much tied to questions about the technological precision and prowess, yet such advances or progress have never fully quelled the concerns that the public has about biological research on the roots of violence. And, it's pretty clear that the neuroscience of violence has not done a better job of addressing these concerns or anxieties. Using technologies like neuroimaging to compute and predict one's risk for antisocial behavior or violence has failed to capture certain, vital, risk factors, particularly complex embedded inequalities. So, these new biosocial models of risk may do a good or better job of recognizing the entwined relationships between social and biological variables, but systemic inequality, like systemic racism, is a social factor that is not easily quantified or controllable in these models. Complex social practices, then, are omitted from these risk models. Neuroscientists that I spoke with know that this is a problem, but they don't know how to capture or calculate these forces in a neurobiological model. But, we can ask, and should ask then, who are these models of risk for then. These neuro-technologies are supposed to capture whether or not someone is a criminal and their "risk", or risk scores. How do you predict that without dealing with systemic inequalities–it doesn't make any sense! How can we talk about whether or not a young Black kid in an inner-city neighborhood is going to be violent or not by just looking at their brains, without capturing systemic inequalities such as racism or capitalism?

Neuroscientists that I talked with would say that crime or violence are social products, here making a distinction between criminality and "antisocial behavior"–as a neuropsychological disorder. Yet, when neuroscientists rethink violence through a biomedical lens they reduce its meaning through a brain-logic–particularly, they focus on two areas of the brain: the amygdala, because violence is reduced to lack of emotional control, and the prefrontal cortex because violence is seen as a lack of impulse control or bad decision-making. They limit violence, then, to emotional control, impulsiveness and decision-making, reframing it as a biomedical disease. However, this uncritically limits the kinds of violence and people that matter for them in their research, and implicitly is remaking what violence means. This is another way in which these biosocial models can fall short of fully comprehended the dynamic role of the social. And so, we should talk about what the technologies do and the spaces their use opens up to litigate and maybe transform our existing social knowledges, for good or bad. We have to keep sight of the social-ness of the technology itself, then, keeping in mind that certain types of social factors, arguments, politics, and ideologies, are often easily grasp upon by both scientists and the public to help rationalize these neuroscientific claims about violence.

Q: You also describe the underlying promissory undertones of neuroscientific research into violence, and the therapeutic promise of "fixing" the "violent brain". What responsibilities do neuroscientists have when it comes to the implications and interpretations of their work?

A: This gets at the intersections of Sociology and Bioethics. First, we should ask, "what are scientists constructing as the problem, and do we agree with this scientific framing ?" This question is really getting at, what type of solutions are possible from the way science has approached and framed the societal problem that they view as in need of better knowledge or technological fixing. For example, I don't buy the idea that we can use neuroimaging to scan the brains of particular people in order to alleviate crime and violence within society. Even though today's neuroscientists are not necessarily advocating for brain-based interventions for crime, like Duster, I still think this is a dangerous idea to reintroduce today. In part because violence and crime are social products that are complexly entangled in our society's unequal racial, gendered and class politics—social forces that this science has already admitted are not part of the neurobiological risk prediction models they design.

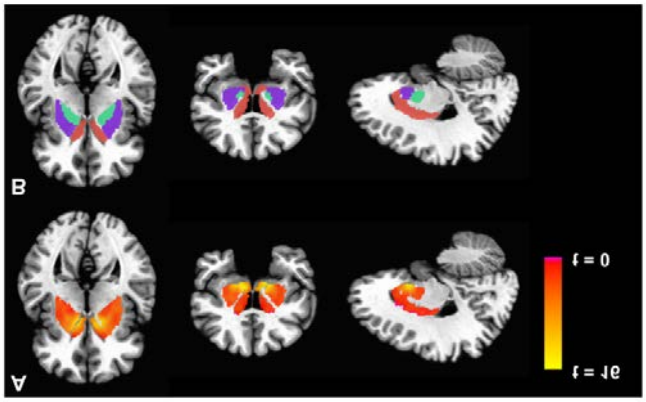
Doctor examines patient's tomography scan for brain injuries. Image Source: WikiCommons (US Air Force).

Probably the most interesting thing I found in relation to the "therapeutic promise" is that most of the proposed interventions are things that social scientists have been saying for decades. Like improving childhood nutrition or eliminating poverty, the twist here is that these scientists all say this is necessary to build better brains, that will then decrease one's risk for a biomedical disorder and therefore their risk for violence. This is also why many of these neuroscientists have limited their empirical focus to so-called psychopaths or people who present some features of anti-social behavior, and are trying to figure out what's the best way to help those people. That is also at the heart of a big tension in this science: Some researchers seem to see this as a science about the risk for biomedical or DSM-defined disorders, which increases the risk that one my engage in violence or criminal behavior. Others, however, see the neuroscience of violence as a way to improve our understanding of crime in general. This important debate within this science has not been resolved. The bottom line, however, is that when scientists talk about the neuroscience of violence most are talking about imaging "people who have psychopathic tendencies", but the public will likely interpret this science and its interventions (social or biological) as one about crime and criminals in general, and will likely always read race and other social practices of power and inequality into these scientific findings or uses.

Scientists have a responsibility of talking about what their science *can* and *cannot* do. There's been more work around how these imaging processes are coming into the courts at different stages, and there's a responsibility of neuroscientists to talk about it—and many of them do! The idea of *showing* brain scans, to "see" where a brain is problematic, seems to have way more power on jurors and judges. One of my respondents says, "unfortunately the only way we can convince people that this is a problem is we have to show pictures to judges". For me, this means we must also pay close attention to how

scientists are engaging with their work once its translated into new social worlds. This will help understand how this politic of responsibility that's being adopted by some of these scientists actually looks in practice.

There's another question that you have in there too, about thinking about neuroethics as a sociologist, I think it's interesting because it raises the question of the types of problems that ethics can't answer. Ethics may not be the right framing, and I want to raise questions as to whether ethics can properly address issues of social justice. If social justice or antiracism is only framed through a question of ethics, such conversations may not include larger sociological structures. Ethics may reproduce a particular type of normativity in science. An argument I have in the book is that we're *not* talking about racist scientists, and we're *not* necessarily talking about a very reductionist or deterministic science. But part of the bigger problem is that it's very normative science. That it can't actually be used within a criminal justice system and then deal with the systemic racism and inequalities within the justice system. All it's really doing is making that system more efficient. For me that goes beyond a moral conflict concerning if we can or should conduct this science better. It's a question of how and where society aims to pick up and apply these knowledges and technologies. This is something I think neuroscientists should be able to speak to. We should hold them accountable to talk about how they think their work will be taken up outside of the lab. Encourage them to speak to if and how these neuro-technologies and knowledges manage the impacts of existing power dynamics that help shape the functional purpose of certain social worlds and institutions. Maybe then this will help scientists think more about the questions they're asking in the first place. If you can't actually deal with those things, should we even be asking questions around the brain and violence? Are there better uses of neuroimaging within society, uses that deal with things besides these questions around violence?



fMRI scan of a patient with chronic fatigue syndrome. Image Source: WikiCommons (PlosOne).

Q: As someone outside of this field but somewhat plugged into broader debates about the ethics of biomedical innovation, I see a lot about discussions about neuroethics around things like Neuralink and neural implants. As you write in the end of the book, one of the "ultimate goal of neuroimaging research" is neuroprediction or "brain-reading" (p. 137). What do you anticipate to be some of the ethical, social, and political issues that arise with further advances in this area of research? What should SKAT scholars pay attention to?

This is actually something I'm trying to work through in an essay now. The book was written two years ago. With the idea of prediction, it raises a question: Why are we predicting certain things in the first place? What are we actually using this prediction for? To me, prediction, the way in which someone is placed "at risk" often entwined with the way we construct our visions or meanings of historically marginalized communities. When we calculate "someone's at risk for violence", aren't we inviting society to start treating them as if they're already a criminal? And so, we have to think about whether or not prediction is actually even the right logic to be thinking about health or social behaviors. Are there better ways in which we can think about prevention of violence or crime? Prevention, perhaps, beyond wanting to predict who will and who will not be a criminal in the future.

Moreover, I want to recognizes how these scientific technologies about violence, or any behavior, shape our larger democratic understandings of safety and normality. There's something about the way in which the idea of the "violent brain" shapes what we consider to be a "normal person", the other side of criminality. Neuroscientists, as they do this work, have a very narrow understanding of whatever normal is: Not having any psychological diseases, not having any head lesions, etc. Who actually fits into this idea of normal? With the BRAIN Initiative, there will be a lot more technologies to come, and there's a lot more questions that sociologists need to raise about their potential use in society.

We should also think about what actually counts as risk factors in some of these models, and what doesn't get measured as risk factors. Racism is not being measured as a particular type of risk factor in the neuroscience of violence. This is really important for the new BRAIN Initiative where the whole focus is to bring about new technologies. Many more scientists are trying to think about social context in a way. That still raises some questions around "what do they mean by social context". When we hear about the social environment, one of the things that we have to question: What actually are you counting as the environment or as the social? I'm again thinking with the idea around the "absent presence" and how do you capture these larger social structures and mechanisms that we, as sociologists say, absolutely, impact our behaviors. What are the limits of these technologies, and can they actually capture this? Where does social theory impact this? In an article, we wrote about how neuropsychology currently thinks about race and neuroscience. One of the recommendations was to just ask neuroscientists: How do you think about social theory? There's a lot of theory out there. How do you think about these questions of race, and where does that come into your work?

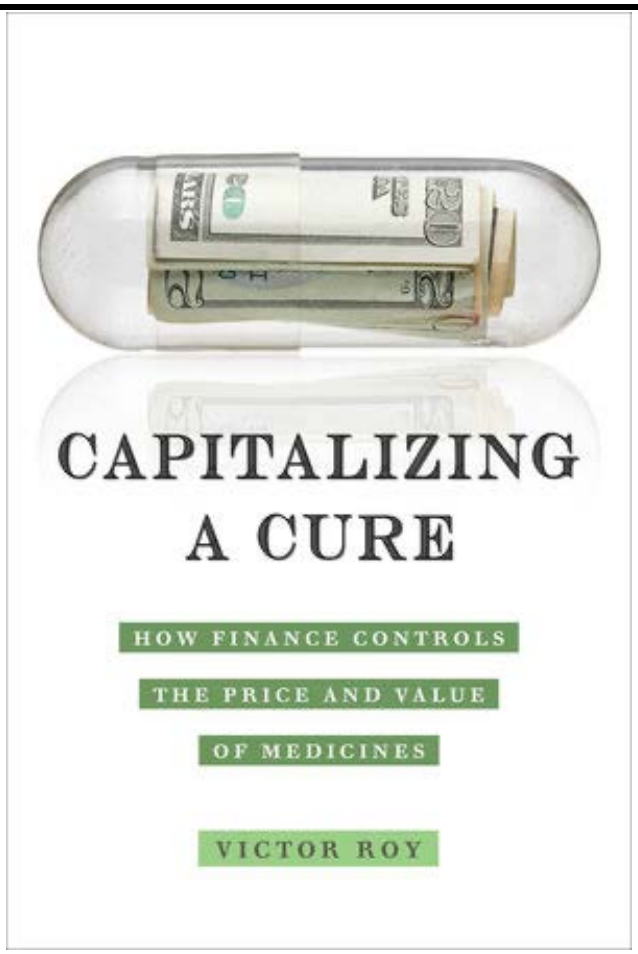
The other thing for those of us in STS, as much as we talk about imaging machines as technologies, I'm convinced that *the brain itself is the technology that's being created here*. The neuroscience of violence is not just about scanning a brain to detect the biological roots of crime. Really, it's a research program based on the idea that one can filter or test a bunch of ideas through special access to the brain and the brain, once opened up, or made readable, is going to spit out hidden or missing facts that will complete or fundamentally change our (limited) understanding of violence. If we think about the way in which scientists think the brain is this meeting place between the biological and the social, then it makes sense then that they're saying that certain things are going to be explained if we just know more about the interworking of the brain. The brain is being continually worked up, technically assembled into an empirical construct that can show how anatomical, cognitive, emotional characters of violence, and a material site to work upon, predict, pursue, and fix our deviant thoughts and unhealthy behaviors.

A neuroscience conference exhibit in 2016. Image Source: WikiCommons (ZEISS Microscopy).

New Books Q&A with Victor Roy, Author of *Capitalizing on a Cure*

Interviewed by Larry Au on February 27, 2023

Victor Roy, MD, PhD, is a family physician and sociologist, and currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University's National Clinician Scholars Program. His work touches on the political economy of health technologies and health equity. His recent book, *Capitalizing a Cure: How Finance Controls the Price and Value of Medicine* (University of California, 2023) is available open access.



Book Cover. Image Source: University of California Press.

Q: I wanted to start by talking about how you came to be interested in studying drug pricing. So, in addition to being a sociologist, you also have a MD and you're a practicing family physician. Could tell us a little bit about how this career trajectory has shaped your approach to the topic?

A: As a physician, I see every day what we call the social and structural determinants of health. I see how these determinants show up in the lives of my patients. Along with the journey of studying medicine, I'm deeply committed to studying and acting on these structural drivers of health. A lot of MDs go to public health school or they'll get a MBA to try and learn about these systems. I took a different route. For MD/PhDs, you do first two years of clinical book learning, then you work in the lab. And when you finish your PhD you come back and get your clinical training on the wards. You then combine, further residency training and try at the end of that to start a lab or do a postdoc. I did my PhD, but the "lab" was the social world. Sociology gave me a set of tools to think with in terms of both the social systems at play, the discourses that actually shape a lot of public health and medical policy making, as well as the political economy around a lot of the issues that we face. In the case of hepatitis C, we see an example of how the political economy and discourses surrounding drug pricing really limited access to care for patients that were already structurally marginalized: people who have histories of addiction, injecting drug use. Unpacking this challenge required a combination of my doctor's understanding of the stakes for patients with a sociological analysis of the forces shaping the challenge of accessing new treatments.

Q: What was the process of research for this book like? I saw in the Appendix that you marshal a wide range of sources: archival and documentary sources, earnings call transcripts, observations of policy meetings, and interviews with key stakeholders. What was it like to navigate this space, and to secure

interviews with corporate executives who may be skeptical of sociologists?

A: Firstly, I relied on a lot of documentary analysis, looking at media articles, medical journals, review articles, and publications around the science to build a historical timeline of what happened around Hepatitis C drug development and pricing. Through this, I also identified and mapped out the key actors, who I engaged further in terms of either securing an interview or actually getting documents that were related to that organization. Finance wasn't necessarily the angle that I took at the beginning. It emerged as a focus because I recognized that a lot of these financial dynamics were driving the whole conversation in a way that wasn't made explicit.

One of the key sources then became the earnings calls transcripts, which allowed me to understand both the pharmaceutical corporate executives and the Wall Street financiers, and how that then ends up influencing and shaping public health policy. These earning calls transcripts became an important data source that I relied on heavily and coded systematically. The other source for this project became the U.S. Senate Investigation. It's perhaps not often that sociologists dig deep into Senate Finance Committee's documents. But in this case, the internal corporate documents provided in the report were shared as part of the investigation, and these documents became really useful in terms of triangulating what was actually going on in this case.

On interviewing the pharmaceutical executives, at the time, my approach was just really trying to understand what the innovation process looked like. People were so proud about this innovation. If you just approached with real, earnest curiosity about "How did this innovation process take place? Can you share a little bit about your role in it?" People were willing to share their piece of what they were involved with. Ultimately, I didn't choose to actually use the quotes of the corporate executives or even other insiders, mostly because I actually found that what was publicly available was already so compelling. This also tells us something about how naturalized the system is, when the folks within firms are talking so openly – especially to the business and Wall Street community. The interviews were still useful in terms of triangulating and making sure I had the historical timeline and the steps in the right order, and to know what the key influences were from their perspective. But it was really helpful just to have so much of what was said out in public.

Q: You build on Marianna Mazzucato's discussion of the "entrepreneurial state" in highlighting the pivotal role that public funding played in the early stages of sofosbuvir's development. Yet, in public accounts of pharmaceutical innovation, the role of the state in financing these technologies is often omitted. Why do you think that this is the case?

A: Much of the entire framing around the state and innovation is about essentially fixing market failures. In this case, in the innovation system around biomedical research and development, the state's role is centered on fixing the market failure: that basic science doesn't get funded because there's no commercial potential from it. That's a public good that the state provides. In a way, it can almost be written off and taken for granted—we can say, that's just the role of the state, and the private sector takes on all the risk and does all the work that makes science into useful products for society.

That's part of the prevailing discourse that has gotten so drummed into the minds of the public and the policymakers that we actually fail to conceptualize the fact that a lot of what the state does, first of all, isn't just basic science. The basic science, even when it is termed in that way, often times are actually technologies that even if they're early or upstream in the process, create whole spaces for the next generation of innovation to happen around technology. And then you actually look at the vehicles of state investment: they actually go further downstream. The U.S.

A protest demanding treatments for hepatitis C in Madrid in 2015. Image source: Adolfo Lujan (Flickr).

government is actually involved in helping finance directly—in many situations—what are essentially start-ups. Additionally, this also provides a market signal to venture capitalists to say that these are the startups that already have our stamp of approval. Not only did they get the public funding for the basic sciences and earlier stage sciences, but now the start-ups are getting the direct funding.

In the Covid-19 example, of course, the government took on even greater risk, and went all the way downstream into helping companies perform clinical trials and manufacture the actual vaccines. A lot of what needs to be re-framed, then, is a certain way of conceptualizing the state that is easier to write off as: this is what a non-market actor is supposed to do, here's what the market is supposed to do, and we need to make sure that the state doesn't intervene anywhere in this market.

Q: You also engage with the literature on financialization, and new work on assetization, in discussing how "the speculative and extractive logics of financialized drug development shape drug pricing and public health policy" (p. 75). You locate these shifts in drug pricing towards financialization within larger structural changes to U.S. economy, such as deregulation and the rise of shareholder value. How, in your view, does financialization run counter to the logics and the values that we hold dear in public health, medicine, and science?

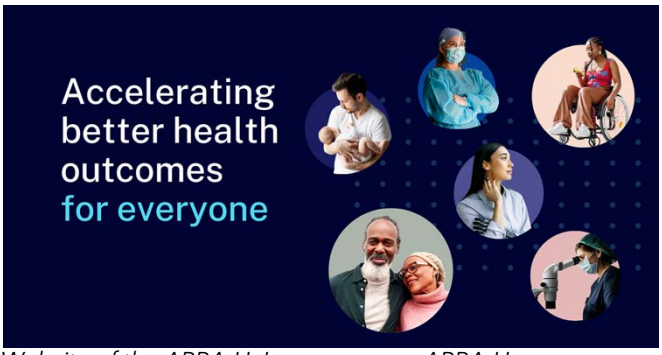
A: I unpack financialization through a couple of different mechanisms. These mechanisms operate around maximizing shareholder value and the ways in which the political economy of MSV has fragmented investment in biomedical research and development across a bunch of different financial actors. No longer do we have one firm saying, "I'm going to bring a product from beginning to end and I'm going to take on all the risk". This is more about how multiple financial actors are involved, with each taking on one slice of a process and trying to maximize their return on that part of the process. What really matters here is not just profits, but *growth in profits*. When you take biomedical research and development for new treatments – which can take years, and often over a decade – but then you overlay that into a financial system that says, "we need to create growth annually" and "we're going to compare your earnings from this quarter to the same quarter last year"…this dynamic creates all sorts of changes in the structural organization of the whole system.

For example, in the Hepatitis C case, Gilead is a company that is doing really well in terms of profitability in 2011 with the HIV/AIDS treatments making billions of dollars. But because the growth is not increasing at a particular rate, they're then incentivized structurally—or expected by Wall Street—to spend the money that they have to buy Pharmasset, which is a company that essentially is the product of public investment, for $11 billion. And so, that logic around constant growth and then channeling that growth toward shareholders becomes an engine for the inequality that we see in terms of access to treatment. I argue that this runs counter to a more embedded way of understanding value at the health systems and at the physician-patient level. The calculations on pricing and value today drop this view of value from view – and doctors and patients are left in the wake of all of that and have to navigate the fallout.

Q: In the later chapters, you invoke the idea of "countervailing power" and the Polanyian insight on the "counter-movements" to show how the hegemonic position of pharmaceutical companies may be challenged as the excesses of financialization comes to the fore. Moving forward, where do you see as the role of patient advocacy and health activism in altering the chokehold that finance has over drug pricing?

A: I see this working out in at least two different directions. One direction is going to be around activism and organizing around actual public production, and what I call "public options" in the book. These are different ways in which the state itself can really take on those last stages of the innovation process to make sure that what is developed with a lot of state funding ultimately then is able to be put in the service of public health. The regional production hubs around mRNA technologies in Brazil and South Africa is an example of this. In the U.S., we're seeing in California a movement around using public production to make insulin, in response to high prices for insulin. So those examples are one direction where activism is going to be really important, and it has already created certain openings for more structural change.

The other big area is going to be looking at the ways that the existing system operates and looking for the big cracks that can be changed and transformed. You have some important activism around intellectual property, with groups like I-MAK, the Initiative for Medicines, Access & Knowledge, that are doing really important work with the standards that we use to grant firms intellectual property around medicines. They're really working on trying to raise those standards and that's one important route. For example, looking at the existing system that you would be able to basically de-financialize the system by changing the standards around what types of knowledge can be turned into a financial asset. It has to meet a certain threshold before is able to be granted intellectual property protections.



Website of the ARPA-H. Image source: ARPA-H.

There are other parts of the existing system with drug prices. One area is demanding that the government do a better job of negotiating over drug pricing. That's something that's new and that's happening in the U.S. for the first time in the coming years. Recent new legislation now makes it possible for the U.S. government to look at a small subset of treatments, but that there will be important organizing to study how that happens and whether more treatments the government could really take on the public interest in negotiating access and pricing. These are just a couple of examples: transformative directions around public production, and looking at the existing systems around direct pricing and things like intellectual property and organizing around that.

Q: Relatedly, do you have any opinions on ARPA-H (Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health), and how current reforms around it are trying to move the United States towards investing more in the applications and downstream innovations, and taking a more active role managing these innovations?

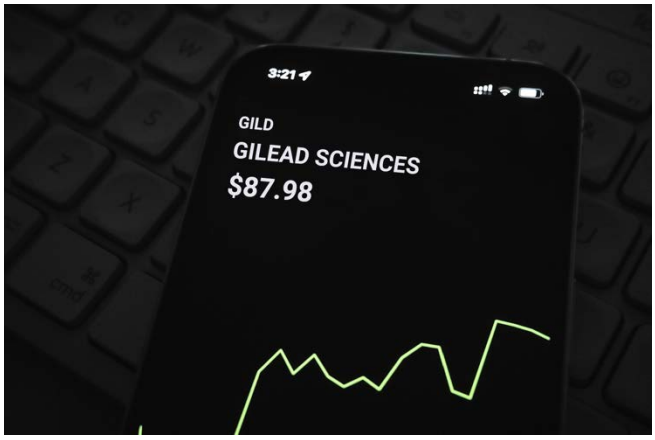
A: What happens with ARPA-H is going to be really interesting because, ultimately, it can go in two directions. One direction would be that it becomes just another public subsidy to the private sector where the state takes technologies really far in the process through state investment. But then it basically becomes something that is capitalized on by private actors. In many ways, that's what the prevailing policy thinking is and there's the belief that that how it should be. But

again, it goes back to that earlier point I was making about the role of the public sector. Is just to de-risk private actor? The challenge here is that the actual purpose with which these investments are being made then don't get seen through. We have this problem of breakthrough but not follow-through because that's not what financial actors and private actors are really trying to accomplish by themselves. That the big area here to watch.

The other direction is, does ARPA-H actually think about its social contract with the private sector? To use the ecological metaphor, there can be symbiotic relationships between the public and the private, when there are conditions set on its public funding. If certain technologies emerge out of ARPA-H's investment, we should ask: What are the conditions around access and pricing and affordability around intellectual property, and around reinvestment in innovation? Is the government going take a stake in the firms that it makes huge investments in? Are recipient companies going be also allowed to buy back their shares with public funding? These are all conditions that the government could consider in its contracts, that would allow for a different type of innovation system to emerge.

Q: Your focus in this book is primarily on the United States, as it plays an outsized role in pharmaceutical innovation. Yet, you also note how actions taken in Egypt (where Gilead agreed to sell sofosbuvir at $10 a pill), in India (where Gilead licensed sofosbuvir with generic manufacturers), etc. play a crucial role in shaping the pricing strategies of pharmaceutical companies like Gilead. What can global health policymakers do to advance equity globally? How can countries work together to secure access to essential medicines?

A: This is going to be, especially with the emergence of gene therapies and breakthroughs with new genomic technologies, a huge and ongoing frontier for activism and organizing. Just in the *New York Times* a few weeks ago, there was



The stock price of GILD around Dec 2022. Image Source: Alpha Photo (Flickr)

an important piece about Novartis selling treatments for spinal muscular atrophy (S.M.A.)—an infant condition—in Brazil for $1 million dollars for each treatment. And what is really striking about that example is that actually the private sector can use the fact that Brazil's has a human right to health in its constitution to actually mobilize patients and the judiciary to hold the government accountable to that human right to help. And Brazil's government is actually allotting a significant amount of funding to this treatment. That's actually one way that activism and organizing could go: where drug companies are able to say, "well look, you need to provide access to this treatment and so you should pay up". But, of course, that has huge consequences on public budgets for other areas of health. We need a more structural version of organizing, which has to learn some of the lessons around HIV/AIDS access to medicines movements from the 1990s and the 2000s, and translate these lessons to different areas around really high price treatments that are going to be in the hundreds of thousands, or maybe even in the millions of dollars. In these cases, what's going be important goes back to my earlier answer. The key frontiers are ultimately intellectual property in a lot of these cases. We will need to se where governments or activists can really place pressure—either through the court system, or through other types of public venues. And so again, I-MAK has been really at the forefront of a lot of this work.

The mRNA hubs are a really important example of regional and global production. Moderna didn't share the mRNA technology with technology transfer for the production of vaccines. But these actors in South Africa and Brazil as part of the World Health Organization mRNA hubs are actually trying to build these platform technologies themselves. If they can build platform technologies that can then be used to produce a bunch of different treatments, then that will be a huge breakthrough. Of course, Moderna wants to guard this platform. That's the key difference. Whereas the drug companies ultimately created licensing agreements in the 1990s and the 2000s over specific drugs. This new era will be centered on how do companies pursue forms of intellectual property protections around specific platforms that could make lots of different breakthrough treatments because of genomic technologies. Organizing around the platform technologies might look a little bit different. The mRNA platforms are one early example of how this might play out.

A vial of mRNA vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 being held by a gloved hand. Image Source: Prachatai (Flickr)

Q: What are you working on next? Anything that you can preview for the SKAT audience?

A: I am working on two things. One is smaller in scope, and it was recently published in BMJ, titled "Financing Covid-19 mRNA vaccines". I connect dynamics around financialization to the Covid-19 vaccine case in a more explicit way by connecting how public played a pivotal role in the development of Covid-19 vaccines. This feeds into part of my work that connecting what's happening around the financialization of pharmaceutical innovation to more cases. Hepatitis C is one important case, but it's really happening with lots of different types of treatments as a systems-wide phenomenon. Part of the work is actually just understanding, linking, and unveiling how these dynamics are playing out in a lot of different areas.

And another one is understanding how political economies of finance and value are operating elsewhere in health and health care. In our discussions and health policy debates, I'm trying to trace and understand how some of the political economy of health care financing ends up producing certain logics of value, and stabilizes certain political economies and relations of power. In the U.S., we're seeing the intensifying financialization of healthcare, with a lot of private equity involvement. That's an area that I'm also interested in investigating and helping to unpack some of those dynamics that I look at in the pharmaceutical sector.

Reflections on the Job Market: Recent Experiences from SKAT Members

By Nicole Foti

In this article, SKAT members **Dr. Santiago Molina** and **Dr. Aaron Panofsky** are interviewed about their experiences with the SKAT job market. Dr. Molina recently navigated the hiring process as an applicant. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University in the Science in Human Culture Program, and he will be starting this Fall as Assistant Professor in Sociology at Northwestern. Congratulations, Santiago! Dr. Panofsky is an Associate Professor at University of California Los Angeles and Director of the Institute for Society and Genetics. He has helped design and been a part of several search committees in recent years. Interviewing Santiago and Aaron is SKAT Student Council Member **Nicole Foti**, who also recently navigated the job market. Nicole is finishing her PhD in Sociology at University of California San Francisco and will be starting in the Fall as a Hecht-Levi postdoc at Johns Hopkins University.

Interview with Santiago Molina:

Nicole: Thank you for offering to chat about your experiences on the SKAT job market! Let's start with the basics. When did you graduate and begin navigating the job market?

A view of UC Berkeley. Image Source: WikiCommons (brainchildvn).

Santiago: I graduated in 2021 from UC Berkeley Sociology Department, with a designated emphasis in Science and Technology Studies. I guess the filing, or the graduation date, is linked with the job market, because when you decide to file, is a function of whether or not you are getting a job. So that was something that was new to me. I went on the soft job market the year before, but that doesn't mean I was like ready to file. A lot of my colleagues like will stay in the program until they're successful in the job market, and then they'll make like a big push to get their dissertation done before they have to start their new position. I know for some people, like if you're hitting year 6 or 7, some places will just say, "we're not giving you any more positions, or we're not gonna give you any more funding." So you have to get external grants, and some places won't even let you accept external grants, because they still have to be managed through the university, which is bogus.

Nicole: Right, it definitely varies between different PhD programs. Can you tell me about your job market experience? How many positions did you apply to, and what types of positions, that sort of thing?

Santiago: I was mostly looking at postdocs. I applied to the UC President's postdoc. And I applied to an NIH postdoc. That was 2020 actually. I applied to I think three postdocs and wasn't successful. I got an interview for one but wasn't successful. Then I ended up getting like a research assistant position that was potentially going to turn into a postdoc the year after. That at least gave me some confidence that if I filed, I would still have a job in 2021. So I got that, and I kept applying in the following cycle, because those first few applications were in, I wanna say March, and the UC President's was due earlier, but you don't find out about it until way later, around April. So I took this position with Harvard as a research assistant, with the idea that it would turn into a postdoc. I told them that I would still be applying to other things, and they were cool with that, thankfully. I applied to the Northwestern Science in Human Culture postdoc, and I applied to the UC President's again that same year. I got the Northwestern postdoc to start in late 2021. I was also applying to positions as they came out.

The Northwestern and UC President's ones have protected time. The others I applied to did not. The NIH postdoc and this Harvard postdoc was like that. It wasn't like a postdoc where I could work on my own stuff. It was like very much in my wheelhouse of my research, so that was good but it wouldn't be working on my main project. And I was able to work part time. But then I got the Northwestern postdoc, which was for two years, and I told them that it was more beneficial to my career, and that I'd rather take that because of the teaching opportunities that it presented. And it paid a little bit better. I also wanted to be in Chicago more than I wanted to be in Cambridge. So that was my experience with the postdoc job market.

Also, I knew I wanted to do a postdoc, because I wanted some time to incubate my research. I didn't have any solo author publications from my thesis. I wanted to keep working on that and to think about like I would need to do to turn my dissertation into a book. I wanted a postdoc that would give me that kind of support and flexibility. I felt like it would've been like too much of a push to go straight into a tenure track position. My first year in the postdoc, I was very measured about like applying to tenure track positions. I really only applied to positions that were very niche like in my area. I applied to one R1 university, and I got an interview but didn't get the position. But it was really good experience. I know some people are big advocates for an "apply to everything" strategy so you get used to giving your job talk and things like that. And I think that's great. I ended up interviewing for a job that I really, really wanted, which meant that I tried really hard. And so I got that practice. I had applied to like a few other postdocs that I just never heard back from, and that is always annoying. I was thinking maybe I can get a second postdoc, or something like that.

Nicole: It sounds like you applied to postdocs that had protected time, and also ones where you worked on other folks' projects, as well as tenure track positions. Did you apply to any non-academic positions?

Santiago: No, I didn't. I looked into like positions at 23&Me and some other genetics companies, but I didn't end up doing it. I figured it would be something that I explored if I wasn't successful on the academic job market. But I definitely kept that in mind.

Nicole: And how did you find positions? How did you search for them?

Santiago: Mostly through the ASA job website. I'm also on Twitter a lot, so I was checking there; I follow the people who are at institutions where I'd want to work. So I saw some job postings that way. The Harvard research assistant position, somebody forwarded to me who thought I'd be a good fit.

Nicole: Great, and then you applied to more positions, is that right? Tell me how you went about getting your current position as Assistant Professor at Northwestern.

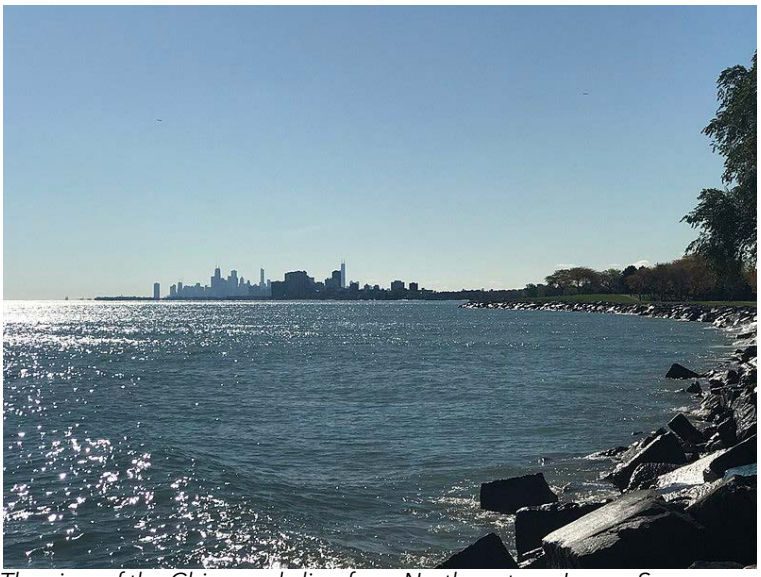
Santiago: Yes. So in 2022, I taught and had a really good first year in the postdoc and then started prepping for the job market in summer of 2022. I started to see positions, and I told myself I would apply to anything general sociology, not just STS positions. I was really nervous doing that, because my area of of focus is sociology of science, and I know it's like not always top of everybody's mind when they're hiring. I was still open to STS positions, too. I applied to 18 jobs. I was actually really considering international jobs too. Universities in Hong Kong and Singapore had open searches. I applied to a lot of stuff. Managing the letters was a lot more work than I anticipated, too. I wasn't teaching that quarter, which I knew I needed, and I just put all my energy into the job market.

I went to ASA that year and it was my first time going thinking "I'm on the job market." So I definitely tried to meet with a lot of people, and I wanted to find the people who were actively doing searches who were in SKAT, who either I knew or I wanted to meet. So I went to a bunch of the social events, and I talked to a few folks who were doing a search and who I was interested in learning more about their search. That was a good move because I was encouraged to apply for positions I wouldn't have considered because of the posted areas of interest in the job postings. Somebody reached out to me from another university that was doing an open search. I think my advisor had suggested I meet with them. That was helpful because it really got me in the mindset of like, "okay, maybe if a general search is open, I shouldn't think they're gonna want somebody that's not STS or biomedicine or CRISPR." Like I felt my work was so niche. But it helped me think about my work as having a broader appeal, and helped me think about how to translate what I do in terms of broader sociological interests. So I spent a lot of time thinking about that for my statements.

I tried to touch base with both graduate students and faculty at other R1s doing an open searches. That helped me understand what their priorities were in their search. I've learned that when there's a search, there's all this like backstory or like backstage decision-making that's going on about what the priorities are for the department. And unless you have friends, other graduate students in those programs, it's kind of hard to get a sense of what they're looking for from a generic job ad. Because ads don't look the same from one institution to another. You have to get good at like reading between the lines. Like asking your own advisors if they know who's on the search committee and things like that can really help because then you get a better sense of who you can direct your questions to. Also, it helped me feel more confident when writing my cover lette, to feel like you're addressing it to the right person. Doing research on each of the positions really thoroughly, that's really key. It also helps you understand that there's also stuff that's completely out of your control when you're applying that has literally nothing to do with the quality of your work. It's really demoralizing to apply to a lot of jobs and then either get ghosted entirely, or you don't hear for months. And there's no feedback. You don't know what it was, and I feel like that's just hard.

Nicole: I totally agree with that. And so what advice did you receive while you were navigating the job market? And what kinds of lessons did you learn yourself?

Santiago: I definitely learned to do hella research on the department and on their search, if possible. Because organizationally, on the one hand there's like hard and fast routines and bureaucratic structures that determine what the job search is gonna be. And then there's like a completely separate set of like priorities and debates and discussions that are happening at the department level with faculty or with students in terms of what they're looking for. I also learned that it was super, super key to have basically a group of people who are also on the job market, who I was meeting regularly, just like to vent. That was so important. And we would learn from each other's experiences, like if someone got an interview, learning what the first phone call would be like.



The view of the Chicago skyline from Northwestern. Image Source: WikiCommons (Raquel Baranow).

One of the pieces of feedback that I got early that I tried to keep in mind was that, when you apply to a job and you write your statements, you end up imagining your life in that place very concretely. If you have family or a partner, you have to think about that. What is the school gonna be like for my kids? What is my partner gonna do when we get there? What is the department like? Do I like the city? You might have a family or a friend that lives in the same city, and you might write to them and be like, "what do you like about living there?" And you get a sense of what that life might be like. You have to put a lot of stories together to create that image for yourself to even hit send on the materials. So when it doesn't pan out, you're essentially grieving that entire future. And you do that like times 15 or times 20, or however many jobs you apply to. That's a lot of grief. The advice I got was that those feelings are unavoidable and you're just gonna need emotional support, either from your partners or friends that are not academics.

Having friends that aren't academics is really helpful, because they can remind you how weird and archaic the process can be. There's not very many other professions where the job search is as strange as the academic job market. I felt just really lucky to have that community that would support me and ask me questions and that I could talk to about the hard stuff. I think that's really key for surviving the job market. I felt lucky that I had people who were junior faculty who were reaching out to me who were like, "oh hey, like tell me more about your research. I just got this job and don't know what I'm doing, but I want to hear about what you're doing" and who were excited about me being on the job market.

Nicole: What was your experience like after receiving an offer?

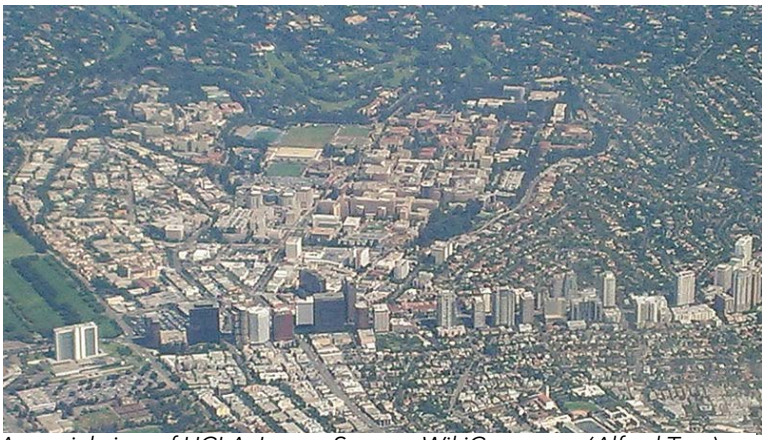
Santiago: I think for people who are lucky enough to be successful on the job market and who get to the point where they're negotiating or waiting for an offer, there's a whole other set of like skills that we're not taught around that. Especially if you don't have experience applying for jobs outside of academia or going through that process. You really need to just think about it like it's any other job. You don't owe the people that you're negotiating with anything. You should be polite, but you're negotiating with a large corporation for the most part. Even public universities, you should be thinking about it that way. I tried to be formal. There are different camps about negotiating. Some people say the best way to do it is over the phone, like on a personal note and informally, and then send follow-up emails to confirm things that have been said. I just don't have the demeanor for that. So I tried to keep my communications brief and always over email. I wrote a formal letter response to my offer letter, outlining the things I felt were important for me, line by line. I was lucky that the chair of the department was willing to like go up to bat for me, and that's not always the case. Northwestern also was able to give a pretty quick turnaround with the offer letters, which I know isn't always the case. I have friends who are applying elsewhere, and they have verbal offers, but they've been waiting more than three months to receive a formal offer. That uncertainty I think is really hard to manage.

Nicole: Yes, the uncertainty can be one of the hardest things. Is there anything else that you'd recommend? Any other big takeaways that people who are about to navigate the job market or who are currently on the job market might benefit from?

Santiago: Sharing your statements with like as many people as possible is key. Having different versions of them is key. And having some kind of file naming system where you can tweak a core version. The variety of lengths, and the different focuses that you get is really all over the place. So you need to have a version of your cover letter that also has information about your diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, because that particular position doesn't require a DEI statement, so how do you convey that? Some places have like more of a personal statement, where they ask you to both describe your personal trajectory and your DEI work. Some places want an abstract of your dissertation that's two pages long. Some people want an abstract of your dissertation that's only half a page long. You have to be comfortable wordsmithing, rereading, and making sure the information that you want is conveyed well in each of those statements. I asked my friends who were successful in the job market the year before if I could see their statements. That really helped me understand structurally what kinds of things could I be talking about. I think we can forget the amount of service work that we end up doing just for free as grad students, and we aren't trained to talk about those as skills or marketable things. So learning to keep track of those things was important. It's definitely worth having a website. Putting yourself out there can be really hard, but I think having that visibility both like in the professional networks that you're a part of at ASA or at 4S is really helpful, especially if you're early on in your career. Getting involved in the section is also a great way of connecting with people in the field who might be your colleagues in the future. It's a great way of meeting other graduate students. It's work that isn't paid, but I think professionally it was really helpful for me in terms of seeing what the community was like and thinking about it as community building more than networking. It helped me not feel so alienated from the process, and that was really helpful. It can be lonely, but try not to put it all on yourself. Think of it like a collaborative endeavor with folks navigating it together.

Interview with Aaron Panofsky

Nicole: Thanks for being here! Let's kick off with you telling us about your experience on hiring committees – how many job searches have you been part of in the past? How many in the last 5 or so years? What types of positions have you hired for?



An aerial view of UCLA. Image Source: WikiCommons (Alfred Twu)

Aaron: I've been on hiring committees in a couple different capacities. I participated as a member of a couple of them. I have also participated in the prior, in the design of the job search in a couple of instances, and the composition of the committees. So as department chair, I have not been on some committees, but I have also composed them and then sort of taken the recommendation from the committee. But I have been on committees prior to that. And so how many committee job searches have I actually been a member of? Probably about like four or so that have actually been a member of, but then there's probably an additional four that I have been in this sort of more impresario role. Kind of like setting the terms and then sort of participating in the search, but basically by being the chair. Do you have the frame of how that normally works?

Royce Hall at UCLA. Image Source: WikiCommons (Satyriconi).

Nicole: Do you mean how search committees are put together? Not really, actually.

Aaron: Let me go through the broad process. What will happen often is, at least here at UCLA, the department has, probably every year or so, has a kind of hiring plan. There's two or three pathways that happen. The modal one that everyone enjoys the most is the department has a plan for what they want to do, like we need to hire in these areas. They write up a little report about that. Then they pitch that to their dean. The dean then goes back to her office, takes everyone's plans and says, "Okay, here's who is retiring. These are the lines we're gonna search for this year. This is how much money we have."

And then they go back to the department chairs and say, "You asked for these three things. You can do this one." Then it's usually the department chair's role to- Or if places that have an academic personnel committee or a vice chair that helps with that stuff, they usually then write up the job description with a hiring plan. Then that gets posted. The hiring plan usually has the job description, but it also has the requirements of what someone's asked to submit, and have. Like, do you have to have the PhD in hand? Do you have to have training in a particular area? Et cetera. It will have the kind of evaluative criteria.

It's supposed to have things like "We're looking for a scholarship or amounts of publications, public impact of publications, evidence of teaching excellence," these kinds of things with a little bit of a qualitative description of what that means to you and then to us. And we have a plan for how the committee is going to follow that. Are we gonna produce a rubric, and everyone reads every material and then scores everyone, and then discusses? At least at UCLA, you can't just be like, "We're gonna search in this area." You have to lay out a rubric, a process, a set of criteria, and a procedure that we're gonna follow.

And then the chair also names the search committee. With our searches, we usually try to name a committee that has three or four members. They usually like to have an odd number, so in case you have ties, there can be some kind of vote. We like to have some mostly internal members and an external member. That's helpful to have a member who's from another department or has some external expertise who can just help kind of give a different perspective than the department itself. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and so, uh, that reminds me, just write a quick note to myself, a person I have to email. So that's kind of the broader process.

I've been involved in that process three or four times already by this point, doing the designing and thinking about those things. We have hired at the Institute for Society and Genetics (ISG), but it's a interdisciplinary space that has life science folks and also social science, humanities, STS people. So it's sort of a combination of these two. We've actually hired in both areas. We run three ordinary searches. Two in the life sciences domain. So looking for an interdisciplinary life sciences scholar.

Students at UCLA. Image Source: Flickr (Ignacio Andrade)

And then one that's been looking for more of an STS scholar. The other two were actually splitting between two departments. That's the other pathway that happens, is that they might run their search and then say, "Hey, this is a person that would be good for your department." Then they'll approach you and say, "Would you like to put a person on our search plan? And would you be interested in being involved in the interview process with this person for a possible split appointment?" Or something like that. That's another way that this happens.

Then there's also what we call an opportunity hire. That's usually for a full professor-type person, or someone who has a very specific research program that's extremely exciting. That's usually not available for junior people. But that's the kind of thing where it's like, we know that superstar X wants to move, and they might be willing to come to LA. You go to your dean, "Hey, is this something that we could do? We think we can get them." And that's when you apply for a waiver of search, and then you see what you can kind of build together. Then there's a middle one, what I was mentioning earlier, where it might be the Institute for Society in Genetics knows they want to hire a humanities person, but we don't have a preexisting relationship with any humanities department. So we say any humanities person who does STS work or biology work can apply, we gather all the appointees and our top candidate. Say we have two top candidates, one's a philosopher and one's an English literature person. Then I would go to those two departments and say, "Hey, Philosophy, we have this person. Would you be willing to be a partner with us in evaluating this person?" Or, "Hey, English department, we have this person." So that's sort of a third way.

Nicole: That's so interesting. Would you say that is a common path for SKAT folks, since we're often interdisciplinary?

Aaron: I think by far the most, like 80% of the situations are going to be the first, the more traditional departmental hires where there's basically a departmental line. But with SKAT positions, I think these are actually quite amenable to this kind of job, for example, there might be an engineering school that it has money to do an AI ethics position, or an environmental ethics, or social dimensions of AI, social dimensions of the environmental crisis, etcetera. They're the ones with the money and the line, but they know they can't, as an engineering school, they can't evaluate a social scientist properly. So then they might spawn out and partner with the sociology department or history department.

In those situations, it's always incumbent on the candidate to be able to talk to multiple audiences and to really lean into that interactional expertise and to be able to represent themselves in a way that is legible to two audiences, usually simultaneously. Because it's not like you give a talk in the sociology department and then give a separate talk in the engineering department. You give one talk that has to kind of weave together and convince both that you're a bonafide scholar that, that they would be curious and interested in.

Nicole: That's super helpful. Can you tell us some of the most important qualities that search committee tend to look for? Maybe you could touch on the more obvious ones, but also what are some of the less obvious things, the kind of hidden curriculum, as people call it?

Aaron: The stuff that I was saying earlier about how we design our searches and we have a whole explicit search plan, part of that comes out of UCLA's, attempts to be a more equitable and inclusive institution. I think even 10 years ago, or five years ago, there'd be a lot more sociology departments doing an open hire: send us your applications, your cv, letters of recommendation and two writings. That's it. Then whoever's on the search committee would flip through it in their own random way, with their own sort of criteria in mind. Now we, I think the trend across the United States at least, is to be more explicit about what the criteria are and to be more equitable, so that there are these seven or eight things we're looking for. And we're going to do a one to five score, at least initially, to kind of get a sense of who's performing well or not.

So I think it's very fair to ask. If the search committees does a good job in crafting their job description, all that stuff will be in there: we're looking for scholarly excellence, teaching excellence, commitment to xyz, special attention is given to projects that span the public sphere and academia. That means they want a community component, that sort of thing. You do have to read very carefully the search description and see what each one of these things is, the criterion that they're looking for. And you should represent yourself so that you should try to hit every one of them. Obviously you can't hit them all equally, but you need to touch on all of them.

I think it is very fair as an applicant to contact the search chair or the chair of the department and ask about some of those hidden items. Like, "I noticed that there's a special attention to such and such." Don't be shy. Now, it may be difficult, because if you're applying to an open position, there might be 250 applicants for it. So they may not have much time for you. But especially if you're applying to a weirdo position, like the kind of things that we often advertise for being outside of a traditional department, I think it's actually really important for an applicant to ask and try to have a 20 minute conversation with the search chair to see what are the criteria, "I see a line here in the job description that says this, can you really help me unpack that and tell me what you're really looking for?" Because really search committees want people to put their best foot forward. They don't want to be cryptic. They don't want be like, "Oh wow, we were really looking for an international focus. And when we wrote the word global, it turned out that people just started talking about neoliberalism as a global phenomenon. But what we really wanted was international comparison. Darn, since we articulated that wrong. And since no one asked, we got the wrong thing."

It's worthwhile as a candidate to definitely ask what kinds of things matter but are maybe a little bit hidden curriculum. For example, commitments at an R1-type place, the research is gonna really be the number one. Being able to represent your research program in a way that's not too inside baseball, but in a way that people can see that "So what." Not just the sophisticated methods you use, not just the esoteric theory you're doing, but like why should someone who has an important problem now -- that doesn't necessarily have to be mean that you're gonna cure cancer and, and homelessness, it doesn't have to be like an applied answer -- they have to understand what is the scholarly thing that pops here. I'm addressing an age old problem in social theory about this versus this, whatever it is, but then you have to explain why that problem is important and how you address it. I think that's even true for like people who are studying the problems of the day. Nothing is self-justifying, even if you think there's an urgent social problem. That I think is really important. Make it so that when people are reading that one page letter, that they can understand, "Ah, I see what Nicole is like. I see what her problem is. And I see why that's important." Then that's going encourage them to look deeper and really put you in that long list where they're gonna read the articles, read your stuff in more depth, read your letters, because actually this is an important thing I just realized. I think the first thing that people will read, that's how they create a long list, and then they create a short list, and the shortlist is invited.

You want to get yourself on the long list. If you're before the long list, probably your letters are not being read, and your papers and writing are not being read. If you get onto the long list, then it is being read. That's how you get onto the shortlist. So how do you get on the long list? It's with that first letter. Your letter of intent or your letter of purpose, you need to very quickly let them know who you are and why you're important. It should be more than a narrative-ization of your CV. Rather, it should be your research passion, that short elevator pitch. I see why this is important. And then they go to your CV, and they flip through and see, "Okay, a couple publications, a couple things in review, etc." And then they're like, "Okay, Nicole's thing is in the long list pile. I'm gonna rank her highly." Then they're going on to the next, the other 150 that they have to read. Once you get onto that long list, that's when they're going to read the papers, read your teaching plan, read your other stuff in more detail. So you want to definitely get past that first screen. I think that's the elevator pitch.

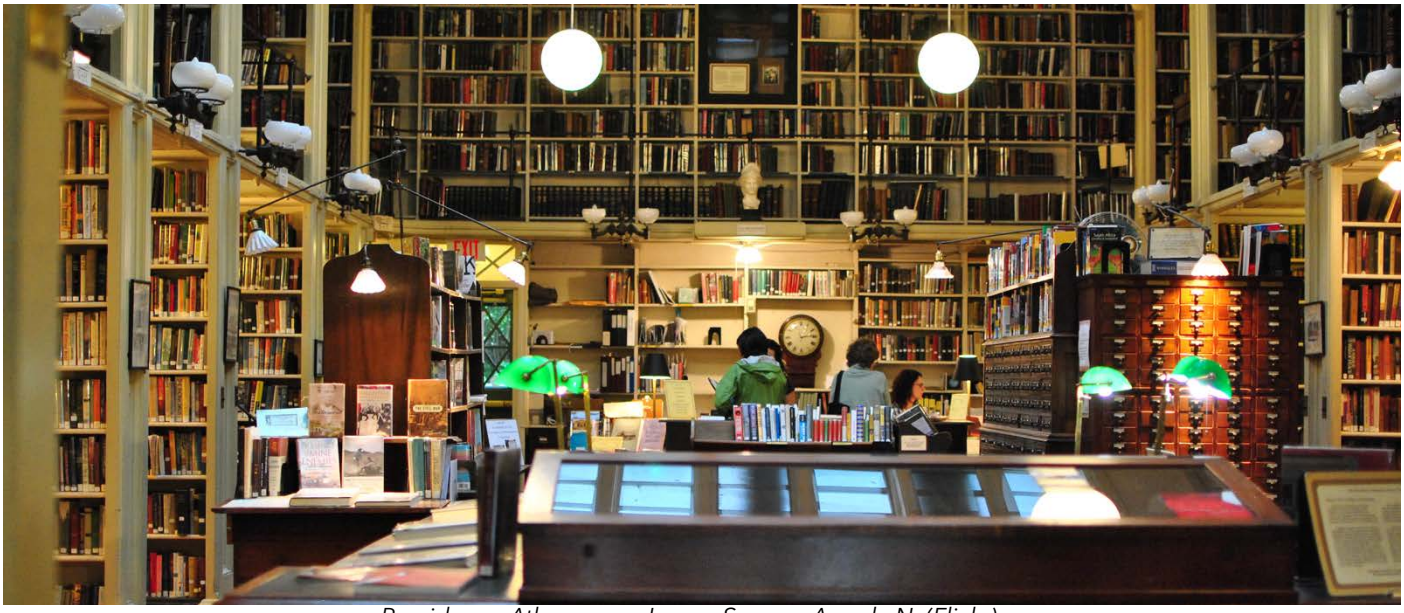
Another thing, I do think that teaching matters, some teaching experience, some ideas about teaching excellence, inclusion, how you ensure student success, some kind of evidence of that. Quick descriptions of exercises you might use. The last thing, I think one of the hidden curriculum things that actually really matters is a commitment to diversity, inclusion, inclusive excellence, things like that really do matter. They're both an explicit and an implicit criterion usually in our searches. You cannot launch a search at UCLA without asking for a statement of diversity and inclusion. Even for a scholar who feels like they maybe don't come from an underrepresented background, but their commitment as scholars and as teachers can speak to those issues, and their actions as representatives of this profession can speak to those issues. And I think it's really important to strong things to say about how you're driving the process of diversity and inclusion, and kind of weaving that through your work. Even if it's not, say, work on inequality or race and ethnicity. You can still talk about how your work is inclusive in other ways.

Nicole: I'm very glad to hear DEI work is taken seriously. Is there any other advice you want to add, maybe something that you've seen that's really impressed you?

Aaron: I think everyone says this they're hiring a colleague, right? They're interested in you, but you need to prove you're interested in them. Figure out who the people are you're going to be meeting face-to-face if invited to visit, and do research on each of them. That doesn't necessarily mean reading their articles, but it certainly means knowing what they study, understanding a couple key contributions that they make, and being prepared to engage them in a conversation about that. That, I think, is really crucial. I know that for people in your position, there's always this sense that you have to have published so much before you even get a job. Everyone who's getting the jobs has already been an assistant professor somewhere else. How am I going to even compete? This is generally true, but part of that is because those folks usually know how to play the game of representing themselves really clearly. They have a certain level of polish to their presentation, being able to relate their work to the concerns of others, and being a sort of confident ambassador for their own work. The last hire we did, the person we hired was the least experienced on paper. But she wowed everyone with her intellectual curiosity, the maturity and the complexity with which she was able to explain her project, and the way she was able to have detailed conversations with everyone that she met with. They all went away thinking , "Yeah, I can imagine collaborating with her. No problem." It could be talking about what to put in a grant application, or co-teaching, or something else, something that shows you're really interested in being there and can be viewed as a colleague. I know it's a little bit abstract, but you definitely know when you see it, right? People who really know how to connect to others.

Nicole: That's a perfect point to end on. I think you gave us a lot of really valuable information about the hiring process and some of the implicit and explicit qualities hiring committees look for. We thank you again for taking the time to share your insights!

Recent Publications from Section Members



Providence Athenaeum. Image Source: Angela N. (Flickr)

New Articles

Shiv Issar. 2022. "Walking simulators and an ethics of care: An essay." *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 14(3): 313-330. https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw_00064_3

Julien Larregue and Mathias Wullum Nielsen. 2023. "Knowledge Hierarchies and Gender Disparities in Social Science Funding". *Sociology* (OnlineFirst). https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385231163071

Stephanie Medley-Rath. 2022. "How Do Sociologists Know What They Know? An Examination of Sociology Textbooks for Evidence of Sociological and Scientific Thinking". Socius 8. https://doi.org/10.1177/237802312211387.

Jeffrey W. Lockhart, Molly M. King, and Christin Munsch. 2023. "Name-based demographic inference and the unequal distribution of misrecognition". *Nature Human Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01587-9

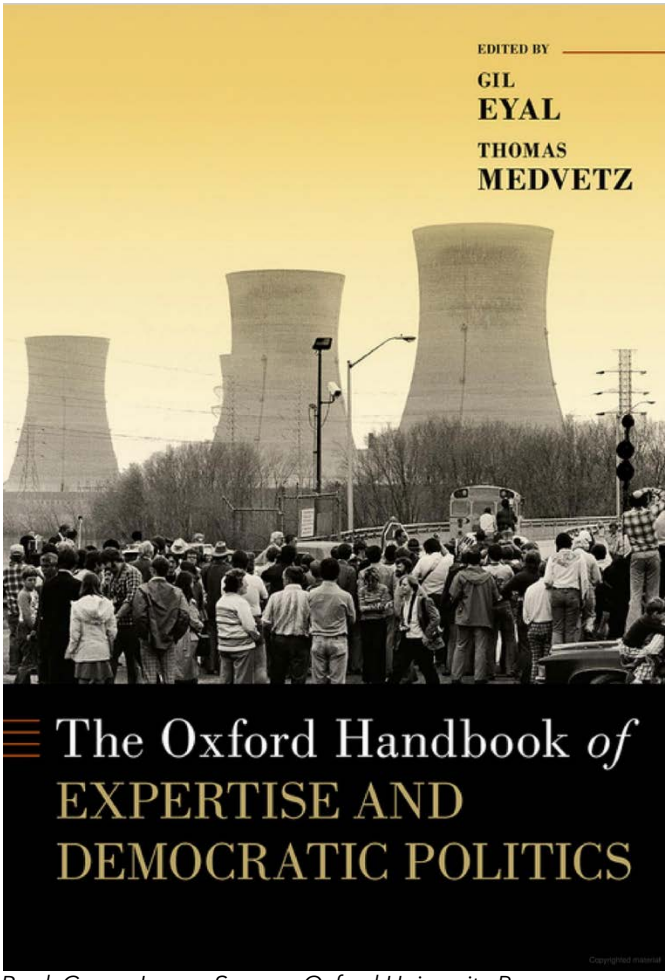
Torin Monahan and Jill A. Fisher. 2023. "Partnering Through It: Confronting the Institutional Challenges Facing Dual-Career Academic Couples". *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* 29 (3): 87–101. http://doi.org/10.1615/JWomenMinorScienEng.v29.i3.40

Andrew Nelson, Callen Anthony, and Mary Tripsas. 2023. "If I Could Turn Back Time": Occupational Dynamics, Technology Trajectories, and the Reemergence of the Analog Music Synthesizer". *Administrative Science Quarterly* (OnlineFirst). https://doi.org/10.1177/00018392231163178

Michael W. Raphael. 2022. "Artificial intelligence and the situational rationality of diagnosis: Human problem-solving and the artifacts of health and medicine". *Sociology Compass* 16(11): e13047. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.13047

New Books

Gil Eyal and Thomas Medvetz. 2023. *The Oxford Handbook of Expertise and Democratic Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-expertise-and-democratic-politics-9780190848927



Book Cover. Image Source: Oxford University Press.

"In the last several decades, there has been a surge of interest in expertise in the social scientific, philosophical, and legal literatures. While it is tempting to attribute this surge of interest in expertise to the emergence and consolidation of a "knowledge society," "post-industrial society," or "network society," it is more likely that the debates about expertise are symptomatic of significant change and upheaval.

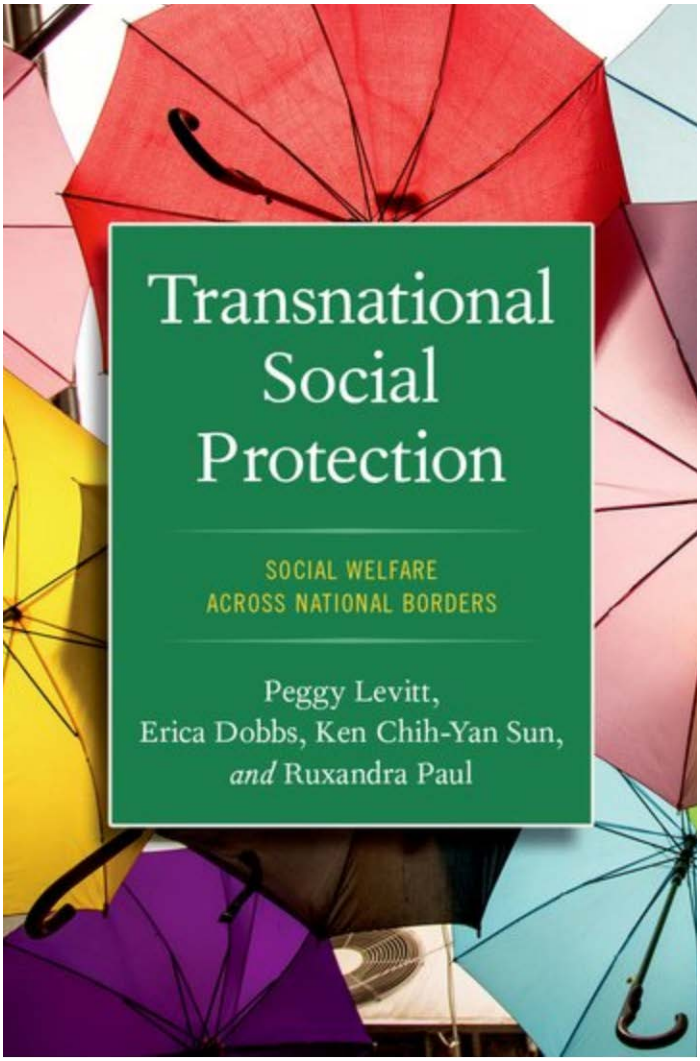
As the number of contenders for expert status has increased, as the bases for their claims have become more diverse, and as the struggles between these would-be experts intensified, expertise became problematic and contested. In *The Oxford Handbook of Expertise and Democratic Politics*, Gil Eyal and Thomas Medvetz have brought together a broad group of scholars who have engaged substantively and theoretically with debates regarding the nature of expertise and the social roles of experts to examine these areas within sociology and allied disciplines. The analyses take an historical and relational approach to the topic and are motivated by the sense that growing mistrust in experts represents a danger to democratic politics today. Among the topics considered here are the value and relevance of the boundary between experts and laypeople; the causes and consequences of mistrust in experts; the meanings and social uses of objectivity; and the significance of recent transformations in the organization of the professions.

Bringing together investigations from social scientists, philosophers, and legal scholars into the political dimensions of expertise, this *Handbook* connects interdisciplinary work done in science and technology studies with the more classic concerns, topics, and concepts of sociologists of professions and intellectuals."

Contributors: Madeleine Akrich (Mines ParisTech), Jenny Andersson (Sciences Po), Jakob Arnoldi (Aarhus University), Maria Azocar (College of the Sequoias), E. Summerson Carr (University of Chicago), Harry Collins (Cardiff University), Robert Crease (Stony Brook University), David Demortain (French National Institute for Agricultural Research), Darrin Durant (University of Melbourne), Steven Epstein (Northwestern University), Wendy Espeland (Northwestern University), Robert Evans (Cardiff University), Denis Fischbacher-Smith (University of Glasgow Business School), Tal Golan (University of California, San Diego), Zachary Griffen (UCLA), Ruthanne Huising (Emlyon Business School), Andrew Lakoff (University of Southern California), Brice Laurent (Mines ParisTech), Daniel Navon (University of California, San Diego), Aaron Panofsky (UCLA), Frank Pasquale (Brooklyn Law School), Theodore Porter (University of California, Los Angeles), Vololona Rabeharisoa (Mines ParisTech), Alexander Ruser (University of Agder), Paul Starr (Princeton University), Nico Stehr (Zeppelin University), Eleanor Townsley (Mt. Holyoke College), Stephen Turner (University of South Florida), Martin Weinel (Cardiff University), Peter Weingart (Bielefeld University)

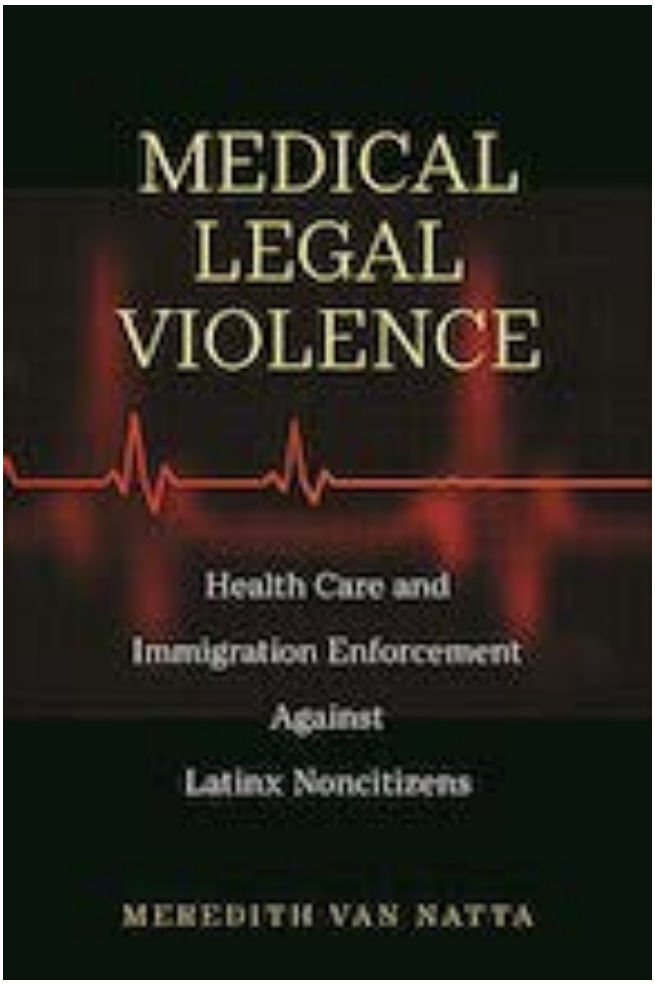
Peggy Levitt, Erica Dobbs, Ken Chih-Yan Sun, and Ruxandra Paul. 2023. *Transnational Social Protection: Social Welfare across Nationaln Borders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/transnational-social-protection-9780197666821

"The idea that social rights are something we are eligible for based on where we live or where we are citizens is out-of-date. In Transnational Social Protection, Peggy Levitt, Erica Dobbs, Ken Chih-Yan Sun, and Ruxandra Paul consider what happens to social welfare when more and more people live, work, study, and retire outside their countries of citizenship where they receive health, education, and elder care. The authors use the concept of resource environment to show how migrants and their families piece together packages of protections from multiple sources in multiple settings and the ways that these vary by place and time. They further show how a new, hybrid transnational social protection regime has emerged in response to the changing environment that complements, supplements, or, in some cases, substitutes for national social welfare systems as we knew them. Examining how national social welfare is affected when migration and mobility become an integral part of everyday life, this book moves our understanding of social protection from the national to the transnational."



Book Cover. Image Source: Oxford University Press.

Meredith Van Natta. 2023. *Medical Legal Violence: Health Care and Immigration Enforcement Against Latinx Noncitizens*. New York: NYU Press. https://nyupress.org/9781479807420/medical-legal-violence/



Book Cover. Image Source: NYU Press.

"Of the approximately 20 million noncitizens currently living in the United States, nearly half are "undocumented," which means they are excluded from many public benefits, including health care coverage. Additionally, many authorized immigrants are barred from certain public benefits, including health benefits, for their first five years in the United States. These exclusions often lead many immigrants, particularly those who are Latinx, to avoid seeking health care out of fear of deportation, detention, and other immigration enforcement consequences. *Medical Legal Violence* tells the stories of some of these immigrants and how anti-immigrant politics in the United States increasingly undermine health care for Latinx noncitizens in ways that deepen health inequalities while upholding economic exploitation and white supremacy.

Meredith Van Natta provides a first-hand account of how such immigrants made life and death decisions with their doctors and other clinic workers before and after the 2016 election. Drawing from rich ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews in three states during the Trump presidency, Van Natta demonstrates how anti-immigrant laws are changing the way Latinx immigrants and their doctors weigh illness and injury against patients' personal and family security. The book also evaluates the role of safety-net health care workers who have helped noncitizen patients navigate this unstable political landscape despite perceiving a rise in anti-immigrant surveillance in the health care spaces where they work. As anti-immigrant rhetoric intensifies, *Medical Legal Violence* sheds light on the real consequences of anti-immigrant laws on the health of Latinx noncitizens, and how these laws create a predictable humanitarian disaster in immigrant communities throughout the country and beyond its borders. Van Natta asks how things might be different if we begin to learn from this history rather than continuously repeat it."

Calls for Papers

Call for Abstracts, "A Sociology of Artificial Intelligence: Inequalities, Power, and Data Justice" Special Issue of *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*
[**Abstract Deadline:** June 1, 2023]

Description: Investments in artificial intelligence have sparked broad-ranging conversations about AI's impact on how we live, learn, and work. Software applications ranging from clinical algorithms, predictive policing, and generative AI such as ChatGPT provoke strong controversy across multiple institutional spheres, and public and private investments in AI suggest many more sociotechnical systems will be developed in the coming years. Sociology, with its focus on inequalities, power, and social justice and its robust methodological and theoretical toolkit, has much to offer to the critical study of AI.
This special issue seeks to outline an emerging sociology of AI, algorithms, and machine learning. We aim to highlight new work in this area, building from our original call for sociological research into AI and inequalities (Joyce et al. 2021, *Socius*) as well as the White House's Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights under the leadership of sociologist Alondra Nelson. We welcome a wide range of submissions on sociological examinations of AI, including but not limited to:

- Empirical studies of AI, algorithms, and data-intensive technologies in social practice;
- Intersectional research on AI inequities by gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability;
- Public construction of AI-related social problems, such as surveillance and automation;
- Comparative scholarship on AI across institutional, structural, and/or global contexts;
- Methodological pieces that investigate how to study AI technologies; and
- Reflexive accounts of interdisciplinary collaboration with computer and data scientists.

We seek contributions from all subfields of sociology, including science and technology, culture, work and occupations, health and medicine, politics and policy, race and racism, education, criminal justice, gender and sexuality, aging and the life course, and global and transnational sociology. We particularly welcome submissions from graduate students and early career scholars, as well as scholarly contributions with a thematic focus on inequalities, power, and social justice. We welcome traditional manuscript styles and encourage short papers providing interesting empirical findings that may spark innovation and future work.

Journal: *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* is the American Sociological Association's open access journal that aims to make new research readily available. It provides an online forum for the rapid dissemination of peer-reviewed empirical work, produced in time to be relevant to ongoing debates. For more information, please visit the journal's website: https://journals.sagepub.com/description/SRD.

To Submit an Abstract: Prospective contributors should send an abstract up to 300 words to Kelly Joyce, kaj68@drexel.edu, and Taylor Cruz, tacruz@fullerton.edu by June 1. Name and contact information of author(s) should be included in the submission. Abstracts should clearly demonstrate the proposed paper's sociological importance for the special issue. Invitations to submit full papers will be issued by July 1. An invitation to submit a full manuscript does not guarantee acceptance; all manuscripts must undergo the journal's rigorous peer-review process. Full papers should be submitted by November 1 to ensure timely publication.

Guest Editors: Kelly Joyce, PhD (Professor, Sociology Department, Center for Science, Technology & Society, Drexel University Kaj68@drexel.edu) and Taylor M. Cruz, PhD (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, California State University, Fullerton tacruz@fullerton.edu)

Call For Paper, "Unequal Care: Trans Medicine and Health in Dangerous Times" in *Social Science & Medicine*
[**Submission Deadline:** September 1, 2023]

This special issue will include innovative empirical research on transgender medicine and healthcare during a moment of hyper-visibility and dangerous times and is shaped by the overarching irreverent though apt question: What the hell is wrong with trans medicine and healthcare how can we fix it?

We welcome submissions on a wide range of topics related to:

1) emergent intersectional inequalities in trans medicine, health, and healthcare;
2) socialization and medical training for providers of trans medicine and healthcare;
3) centering patient experiences and embodied knowledge; and
4) the social, political, and legal construction of health, healthcare, medical knowledge, practices, and culture in trans medicine, health, and healthcare.

Guest Editors: Dr. Stef M. Shuster (Michigan State University, sshuster@msu.edu), Dr. Carla A. Pfeffer (Michigan State University, cpfeffer@msu.edu), and Dr. Anna Kirkland (University of Michigan, akirklan@umich.edu)

For the full call, please use this link: https://tinyurl.com/UnequalCareinDangerousTimes

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SSTNET Virtual Workshop 2023 (11-15 September, online)
[**Submission Deadline:** May 31, 2023]

The workshop will comprise five thematic strands:

1) Trust in Health Data: representations, reflections and diffractions, conveners Paraskevas Vezyridis (Nottingham University Business School, UK) and Aaro Tupasela (University of Helsinki, Finland)
2) Building 'trustworthy' AI for public sector, conveners Marta Choroszewicz (University of Eastern Finland, Finland) and Heta Tarkkala (University of Helsinki, Finland)
3) Publish, or Perish. Is that the question?, conveners Paolo Parra Saiani (University of Genoa, Italy) and Luís Junqueira (ISCTE-IUL, Portugal)
4) To be defined
5) To be defined

We invite proposals for the two remaining strands until the 15th of April. Please send a short description, including both the thematic content and format for the strand, and the name of two conveners, who will be responsible for selecting the abstracts, to: ana.delicado@ics.ulisboa.pt.

The call for papers for the five strands will be open between the 1st and the 31st of May.

The full text of the call is at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1stoMQZXjX2AHkOe1tzoc5KRlko2FflO2/view