

## CRITICAL-RETROSPECTIVE ESSAYS

### The Study of the History of Sociology and Neighboring Fields

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*Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences*, by **Peter Baehr**. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010. 248 pp. \$57.50 cloth. ISBN: 9780804756501.

*The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America*, edited by **Fernanda Beigel**. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 290 pp. \$119.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781409431862.

*Zygmunt Bauman: Why Good People Do Bad Things*, by **Shaun Best**. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 152 pp. \$104.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781409435884.

*Social Science in Context: Historical, Sociological, and Global Perspectives*, edited by **Rickard Danell, Anna Larsson, and Per Wisselgren**. Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2013. 288 pp. \$52.95 cloth. ISBN: 9789187351044.

*A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research*, by **Christian Fleck**. Translated by **Hella Beister**. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 406 pp. \$75.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781849660518.

*Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge*, by **Daniel Huebner**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014. 349 pp. \$35.00 paper. ISBN: 9780226171401.

*Auguste Comte: Die Macht der Zeichen*, by **Wolf Lepenies**. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2010. 208 pp. € 19,40 paper. ISBN: 9783446235724.

*Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*, by **Michael Savage**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 282 pp. \$44.95 paper. ISBN: 9780199587667.

*The Frankfurt School in Exile*, by **Thomas Wheatland**. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 440 pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780816653676.

What do the following three have in common: East Europeans (according to Friedrich Engels), Ronald Reagan (according to his doctor), and sociology (according to this author)? Two things at least. They can be studied by sociologists, and all three have (or had) only an incomplete, fractured awareness of their own history. Engels and other Western European Marxists claimed that particular people living to the east did not have a history of their own because they lacked agents of nation-building. An increasing number of elderly people suffer from Alzheimer's disease, as former U.S. president Reagan did; and due to their growing dementia they cannot remember their own lives. In the case of sociology, the causes of the alleged Alzheimerian status have yet to be discovered. But the diagnosis is clear: the discipline's memory is rather limited.

Both sociologists as a group and sociology as a discipline are less interested in the past of their peers and institutions and less concerned about changes in the status of their field over time than other disciplines. A simple indicator for measuring a discipline's interest in its own past is whether there exist specialized journals for its history. We can find such publications in biology, economics,

medicine, philosophy, psychiatry, and psychology, but not in sociology. An attempt to start one in the United States failed in the 1980s, and similar stories could be told for French and German attempts.<sup>1</sup> The survivors are only journals with a broader range—"behavioral sciences" or "human sciences"—or highly specialized ones like *Durkheimian Studies/Études Durkheimiennes*, now in its twentieth year, or *Max Weber Studies*, now in its fourteenth year, but not the *Simmel Newsletter*, renamed in 1999 after nine years to *Simmel Studies* and discontinued in 2003.

Missing journals are the direct consequence of an insufficient number of potential contributors. Analogous to the non-evolution of a nationalistic discourse in environments lacking both surplus income and educated individuals who could start studying and inventing the past of their compatriots (which was the explanation for the backwardness of the so-called people without history), in sociology too few members are committed to studying their own discipline and its past continuously. Obviously, one reason for this disinterestedness lies in the lack of representation of the history of sociology (HoS) in sociology's curricula. Not only in the United States, but also in Europe, one only rarely finds courses on the history of sociology beyond the level of Classical Sociological Theory. Lack of teaching opportunities produces lacunae on the textbook side. Admirers of Humboldt and his plea for unity of research and teaching would be delighted to come across this instance of their hero's pedagogy, even if it is an inverted one.

However, this assessment is not the complete truth; there are small enclaves where research on HoS is accomplished. What follows is a helicopter view of HoS's

publication record over the last five years. As much as possible I will omit both journal articles and edited volumes. To systemize the discussion, I will arrange the literature according to subjects. On a not-too-generalized level one could differentiate contributions to the history of any scientific discipline as studies of one (or more) of the following aspects: people, ideas, instruments, institutions, and contexts. Analytically, I prefer to inspect the books from a methodological point of view. This means that the "how" is more central than the "what." In connection with the perceived disinterest of sociologists in sociology's past and the dementia diagnosis, answers to the "who" question are of particular interest. HoS is no closed shop; therefore, a critical-retrospective essay has to look beyond the territory reserved for sociologists.

### People

The most popular unit of analysis addressed by HoS authors is people, in particular, individuals. Echoing the genius ideology, a single man or, since a generation ago, woman is onstage. The result is a biography, sometimes with an addendum like "intellectual." The format is mostly unspectacular and old-fashioned, and the hero's life is presented in conventional order: parents, birth, childhood, early experiences, continuing chronologically down to death, followed by the afterlife called reception and legacy. Readers of such biographies cannot recognize from the text whether the author is a sociologist or not; the discussion of theories and other insider topics seldom transcends advanced textbook coverage, most probably due to the publishing houses' pursuit of buyers.

A majority of the scholars in this area devote their whole career to their hero. Mary Pickering started her affair with Comte as a doctoral student in history at Harvard in the 1980s and finished the third volume of her biography in 2009. Dirk Kaesler wrote his first paper on Weber before he earned his Ph.D. and finished four decades later his authoritative portrait of the "Prussian, thinker, and mama's boy" (as the subtitle has it) in 2014. The nature of the relationship between the biographer and the subject is seldom as disinterested as the scientific

<sup>1</sup> See Jack Nusan Porter, "The Journal of the History of Sociology: Its Origins and Scope." *The American Sociologist* 35(3) (Fall, 2004), pp. 52–63. *Sociological Origins's* last issue dates from Fall, 2010. The last issue of the *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* dates from 2011, after 25 volumes; *Tracés* started in 2002 and is still running with three issues per year. The German *Jahrbuch für Soziologiegeschichte* stopped appearing in 2007 and restarted recently under a new title: *Zyklus*.

ethos would call for. Like long-term imprisonment, long-term research changes the captive. Why does one sociologist receive the attention of biographers while others do not? From a casual reckoning, we have now at least four biographies of Weber, three of Theodor W. Adorno and C. Wright Mills, and two of Alfred Schutz, but none on Vilfredo Pareto, David Riesman, or Talcott Parsons.<sup>2</sup> Writing a biography is something that needs justification if the resulting book wants to belong to sociology. One life and one biography remain always just one case, but case of what? and why this case? Sociologists-as-biographers seldom address these questions. On the other hand, since biography writing is a time-consuming task, it would be unfair to ask authors to develop a comparative approach and use it for several cases. Lewis A. Coser's still highly readable *Masters of Sociological Thought* ([1971] 1977) could be named here as the exception which proves the rule.

A third particularity lies in the fact that one can write a biography only if the author under investigation left enough stuff behind, as did Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The better organized the *Nachlass*, the more probable it is that a biography, or more than one, will appear. Therefore we never will get a full-fledged biography on Georg Simmel, because his papers were looted when his son Hans fled the Nazis. If admiration is one prerequisite for writing a biography, well-organized—or, at least, available—papers are another.

It is not only narrow-minded sociologists who could mock this kind of literature as essentially non-sociological because it focuses on an individual instead of social entities like groups. However, one should keep in mind that producing books is seldom done by writers alone; the role of publishers and their marketing specialists have to be considered as factors as well. Marcel Fournier, biographer of Durkheim (2013) and Mauss

(2005), hinted at the fact that both his French and British publishers vetoed titles with no individuals' names in them.<sup>3</sup> It is to Fournier's credit that both his books embed their main characters in their personal networks and social environments as far as possible.

Similarly rich descriptions are offered by a series of recent biographies, including Jeremy Adelman's biography of Albert O. Hirschman (2013), Lawrence Scaff's *Weber in America* (2011), and Jonathan Sperber's *Karl Marx* (2014). Joseph A. Schumpeter loved to read biographies in bed (as some of his now half-dozen biographers reveal), and he would have been happy with these because they make good reading, even if one recognizes that biographies seem to be a country for old men. I prefer not to share my experiences with catastrophic examples of biographies, but at least one observation needs to be made: the authors of the aforementioned books are all historians by education, whereas the failed biographies have been produced by sociologists proper.

Much less often one comes across studies on groups of sociologists. Some schools, in the broad meaning of people devoted to the same worldview forming what Ludwik Fleck (unfortunately, no relation) called a "thought collective," are covered more prominently than their rivals for no obvious reason. One virtually over-researched group is the one under the leadership of Max Horkheimer: the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Quite recently, the American historian Thomas Wheatland added some new insights in *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (2009) by investigating the Columbia University archives; I examined other American sources in *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research* (2011). Wheatland emphasizes that Horkheimer's group was seen as leaders in empirical social research by Columbia's authorities and therefore received an offer to complement the theory-heavy department there. The

<sup>2</sup> It would go beyond the scope of this essay to cover the genre of *Festschrift* for HoS. Obviously each of them reveals much about the celebrated, like status in the discipline and reputation among disciples; and the lists of contributors could be used to start investigating communication networks.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Fournier, "Biography in the Social Sciences: The Case of Marcel Mauss," in *Knowledge for Whom? Public Sociology in the Making*, ed. by Christian Fleck and Andreas Hess, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014, 19–26; and personal communication.

newly arrived German mandarins declined the invitation cordially and chose a looser bond with Columbia. Ten years later, the same group of exiles was in financial turmoil, and Horkheimer was forced to change his mind. He lobbied the American Jewish Committee to hire him and his entourage. Forced to work like an ordinary white-collar employee made Horkheimer sick. He flew to Santa Monica and took Adorno with him as his personal assistant. With AJC money they hired Californian psychologists who then designed and administered the study published as Adorno et al. *The Authoritarian Personality*. The alphabetical sequence of the authors' names attributed, by implication, much more credit to Adorno (born Wiesengrund) than to the three others (who were kept away from any communication with the AJC bosses in New York). Both recent studies on the "Frankfurtists" (Bertold Brecht's malicious label) challenge the conventional wisdom that bemuses the Critical Fans; most likely, however, they will not change the myths surrounding this group.

Larger units than groups the size of schools or departments are studied only rarely. Pursuing collective biographies, what historians call "prosopography," would make it possible to go beyond the highly visible, well-established, tiny minority of "top dogs." Despite the difficulties of collecting enough comparable data, the outcomes are both revealing and rewarding. An analysis of two "generation units" (a Mannheimian term) of German-speaking social scientists—one going into exile because of the rise of the Nazi movement, the other remaining in their places of origin—reveals that on average the exiles climbed up the career ladder more quickly than the "homeguards" (Fleck 2011, Chapter Four).

In HoS, conventional social-research techniques are applied on rare occasions only. Sociologists seem to avoid bothering their peers with surveys and questionnaires, and as a consequence we do not know even basic socio-demographics about the members of our discipline: father's occupation, religion, and marital status are secrets, and nowadays not even data on age are at hand. Autobiographies become the only sources where such data are revealed occasionally, but even in the age of the chattering class only a minority

participates in this activity.<sup>4</sup> The question whether today's sociology professoriate (at the local, national, or international level) is socially different from that of the interwar period (or any other period) cannot be answered. Stephen P. Turner (2014), who claims that U.S. sociology today is in the hands of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) activists, does not provide supportive data that meet sociological standards. Perhaps the data are not available; but as long as there is no chance to prove his hypothesis, one cannot suppress the feeling that Turner got something wrong: the obviously growing number of female sociologists might go hand in hand with an increasing amount of pressure from groups such as SWS and lip service (or more) to their demands, but anecdotal observations are no proof of a conspiracy of women. Historically informed people should recall similar allegations vis-à-vis Jews when their numbers in academia rose sharply.

## Ideas

For easily discernible reasons, many HoS publications belong to this corner. Since the first appearance of the sociology of knowledge nearly a century ago, practitioners of this approach still prefer to study highbrow products like theories. Sociological theorizing proceeds not by the generalization and abstraction of empirical data and lower-level propositions, but by interweaving personal ideas and brainwaves with the close reading of any sample of contributions produced over the last century and a half. Therefore, a text which contains massive quotations from and references to G. H. Mead or Hannah Arendt, for example, does not reveal on first sight whether it is a HoS investigation of past authors or a contribution to

<sup>4</sup> The production of autobiographies by sociologists is quite uneven. Besides shorter invited contributions to edited volumes (e.g., Deflem 2006) or to the *Annual Review of Sociology*, some sociologists write this kind of text and others do not. Three recently published interesting examples are from Edith Kurzweil (2007), Renée C. Fox (2011), and Arthur J. Vidich (2009); all contain extensive coverage of the subjects' social backgrounds.

contemporary debates. This is no criticism toward this kind of work. The only thing I want to highlight is that it is not always easy to judge publications fairly because of the difficulty of locating them properly in the increasingly confusing field of the social sciences. There are no rules separating contributions to contemporary theory from those belonging to HoS. In the spring of 2014, German television stations celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Max Weber and aired 90-minute debates held in the halls of the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Munich. One of the debates was titled, referring to a famous Weber chapter heading, "Prefatory remarks on the process of rationalization—150 years after Max Weber," and the late M. Rainer Lepsius tirelessly argued in favor of Weber's contemporary relevance (for example, as the idol of postwar Germany's political elite). In his voluminous biography, Kaesler (2014) argues persuasively against bringing Weber and Weberian concepts too much into the present day, in very much the same way that Sperber (2014) portrays Marx as a nineteenth-century thinker. Weber is just the most telling instance of a man dead for nearly 100 years but alive like a coeval, at least for his admirers.

Peter Baehr's *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences* (2010) is an excellent study about Arendt, her view on sociology (unfavorable!), and her position vis-à-vis others on the then heatedly discussed topic whether there are similarities or not between Hitler's and Stalin's dictatorships. Examining Arendt's communication with contemporaries and contrasting her viewpoints with other authors form Baehr's analytical strategy; sometimes he quotes data from unpublished sources, but his dominant methodology is close reading. He does not conceal his conviction that Islamism in the present day is another instance of totalitarianism, and therefore Arendt's insights are fresh even forty years after her passing. From Baehr we can learn that at times analyses of past texts are even better than using standard primary data collection.

Daniel Huebner's *Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge* (2014) does not aim to influence present-day controversies, but it is a thoroughly academic

study inside the walls of HoS. Confronted with the puzzle that someone became "known in a discipline in which he did not teach for a book he did not write" (Huebner's characterization of Mead), Huebner chose the best approach by going into the archives to reconstruct the making of one of the most multifaceted American philosophers. Huebner excavated hitherto unknown manuscripts, originating from public lectures Mead gave over the span of two and a half decades; some of them became small articles published in unusual outlets, like a piece on hypnotism that was published in *The Dental Journal* in 1895 (Huebner found it thanks to digitalization). Later this year Mead's most famous book, *Mind, Self, and Society*, will come out in a revised edition due to Huebner's effort to locate additional notes taken by cohorts of Mead's students over a period of nearly forty years.

I do not want to be forced to choose between the two styles of research for which Baehr and Heubner function here as examples (and I am sure both are able to pursue the approach of the other); more work from either orientation would be useful. Studies like those by Baehr and Huebner support their arguments by examining sources beyond what is available in print, usually materials stored in archives accessible to specialists only. In the digital age, the wall between the unpublished and the published has become increasingly porous. One would expect that HoS researchers would have adapted to this new situation. But the truth is, they have not. Digitalized sources and text collections such as JSTOR offer new paths into the unknown and provide options for analyses unthinkable a generation ago. To give just two illustrations of potential new paths of research in HoS: Scholars interested in historical and sociological semantics can locate early appearances of new concepts without even leaving their desks (or their online computers); and the dissemination of sociological terminology into the larger public, which is sometimes accompanied by adopting sociological insights out there, can now be studied in such detail that comparative research (between disciplines, countries, thought collectives, etc.) is a sound option—but the number of people picking

up on these opportunities is very small, tending toward zero. In 1995, Robert K. Merton and Alan Wolfe published a small piece on “consumers” of sociological knowledge by counting how often words coined by sociologists were used in major U.S. newspapers. One must recall that when this research was executed, the Internet was invented but not used widely. Today such a study could be done on a much broader scale, but over the last two decades the Merton & Wolfe paper from 1995 did not get any resonance: it has been quoted only five times in Web of Science and twenty times according to Google Scholar.

I would not go so far as to let studies off the hook when they avoid the new opportunities. But of course, there are some new studies that deserve to be taken seriously even though they were executed very bookishly. In March of 2007, a celebrity sociologist's past caught up with him when a German-Polish historian made public in a German newspaper that Zygmunt Bauman was “Agent Semyon” in his youth, an informer for the military intelligence and a member of a counter-insurgency unit devoted to killing anti-communist resistance fighters. This was not news for the Poles, but outside Poland Bauman was seen as a victim of Polish anti-Semitism. On the Internet, the revelation traveled quickly, and since then no one could claim not to know about the affairs Bauman was involved in—but no one cared. Bauman reacted like all who have a skeleton in their closet: he blamed the bearer of the unwelcome news. He denied any wrongdoing and has received award after award since then. Very weird, and clearly a topic HoS researchers should attend to. Shaun Best took it up, using a traditional methodology but with appealing results. The subtitle of his *Zygmunt Bauman* makes his perspective clear: *Why Good People Do Bad Things* (2013). The author was interested in how Bauman became the PoMo pillar-saint by downplaying his Stalinist youth and reinventing himself after his 1968 forced exile. Best did pure library research, and he does not explain why he did not do more than that (such as archival research in Poland or elsewhere). Nevertheless, the book contains a revealing story, and as such it makes good reading.

## Instruments

Whereas nobody could be surprised to come across studies on people and ideas in HoS, one needs to search harder to find investigations of scientific instruments. It is not really astonishing that the study of instruments is not well developed in sociology. Some people might even question the existence of instruments in sociology if one wants to go beyond paper and pencil, typewriters, or nowadays notebooks and smart phones. Of course, we do not have colossal machineries like CERN's Large Hadron Collider, and we do not even participate in functional magnetic resonance imaging studies as some of our neighbors from economics departments started doing some years ago. Even compared with psychologists (at least before brain scanning became *le dernier cri*), our sociologists' toolbox contains much smaller and cheaper instruments.<sup>5</sup> But there are some, and these few require at least some time if one is to command them sufficiently well.

Andrew Abbott (2011) argues persuasively that the only tool humanists need is a well-stocked library, one that offers direct access to huge numbers of publications assembled according to a not-too-arbitrary system of classification. Sarah E. Igo, a historian by education, was not primarily interested in the development of social research instruments when writing *The Averaged American* (2007), but more in the consequences of their results on wider audiences. Nevertheless, her widely acclaimed work contains more on social research instruments than most books written by professional sociologists about the same period. Igo's narrative of the field trips of the Lynd couple to Muncie, Indiana, the victory of the Gallup surveys over the *Literary Digest's* postcard returns, and the celebration of Kinsey's expeditions into bedrooms does not reveal much for readers of the original or secondary literature. But Igo developed an understanding that empirical social research techniques did something to those under investigation after they became readers of the

<sup>5</sup> The Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron houses a remarkable collection of artifacts and runs exhibitions. To my knowledge nothing similar exists for sociology.

aggregated presentation of their own stories. Knowing how often the average American practiced particular sexual activities transformed a number into a norm. Whether it is correct that these studies established a “mass public” must not be discussed here in detail, but what is astonishing when reading Igo is her nearly complete ignorance about what happened in sociology (and neighboring disciplines) at the very moment when *Middletown in Transition* (1937) or *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) came out in print. Neither the SSRC-sponsored *Studies in the Social Aspects of the Depression* (a dozen volumes in 1937) nor Riesman’s *Lonely Crowd* (1950) are even mentioned by Igo.

Mike Savage is not only a sociologist by profession but is one of its leading exponents in the United Kingdom today. His *Identities and Social Change* discusses what happened in the then still-immature discipline of sociology in his country from 1940 onward. He starts by analyzing the very British Mass Observation (what should one call it?) movement by going to its archive and examining both the instructions given to volunteers and the reports they sent in. Then Savage does something similar with the field reports of interviewers from one of the big studies in the fifties and the Goldthorpe/Lockwood study on Affluent Workers from 1963, plus some studies less known outside England. Here and there a non-British reader gets lost and finds it difficult to follow Savage’s argument, but overall this is a model of reflective investigation of what happened in sociology some decades earlier by applying today’s sociologists’ toolbox. My favorite finding is from page 100, where Savage characterizes Charles Booth’s data collection technique as “wholesale interviewing” because this pioneer distrusted ordinary people and spoke instead with members of the local elite. (Savage should have revealed the originator of the expression and could have added a footnote indicating that Weber did the same when he investigated the life conditions of rural workers east of the Elbe.)

### Institutions

A broad definition of instruments could include even such abstract entities as

paradigms, either in the loose understanding of Kuhn or applying the more refined and clear-cut version elaborated by Merton. Paradigms of all pedigree function as instruments because they mold what one wants to say about the subject under investigation. The role paradigms played in the history of the sciences and the history of the “inexact sciences” (a term coined in 1958 by the philosophers of science Olaf Helmer and Nicholas Rescher that did not become widely used, let alone famous) is researched much less frequently than the catchword is used. Joel Isaac, a British intellectual historian, reconstructs in his *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (2012) the decade before *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* appeared and almost immediately became the beacon of the anti-positivist mood. For his Ph.D. thesis, Isaac examined the papers of Parsons, Kuhn, and others stored in the archives at Harvard and MIT, and he identifies rightly the “Harvard complex” as the place where much of the development happened. Isaac is able to relate many new things, in particular about the Pareto Circle at Harvard that previously had become known through autobiographical revelations only.

But Isaac’s concentration on the papers stored in the Boston area narrows his view. He completely underestimates scholars with very close relations to Harvard, like Merton, and he does not care about career patterns and prejudices. Kuhn is presented as a reader, thinker, and discussant, but not as someone in need of the next job, angry about affronts, or potentially a victim of anti-Semitism. The reader therefore learns Kuhn’s reading list from 1949, but Ludwik Fleck is never mentioned in Isaac’s book. Similarly, Kuhn’s connection with the neopositivist International Encyclopedia of the Unified Science, where *Structure* came out initially as the last issue, is one-sided. Papers of the Unity of Science Movement and of Charles W. Morris at Chicago tell a story which is a bit different from the one Isaac extracted from archives in Cambridge.

Instead of listing some more minor dubiousness, I would like to take Isaac’s case as an illustration of the difficulties and hindrances one encounters in analyzing institutions. Focusing on one place, even if it is as

diverse and populated as the Boston area, forces one to ignore others. Academic micro-environments seldom are monads, but when interconnected with other small worlds, they form a discipline—with annual meetings, committees, panels, and journals, operating a labor market with its prestige order, financial resources, and so on. Intellectual historians regularly underestimate these forces, whereas sociologists exaggerate the non-cognitive side of scholarship sometimes. Research on HoS, including the literature from neighboring disciplines, is anything but well-organized and does not profit from a division of labor, a.k.a. cumulative research. Of course, a Ph.D. candidate cannot examine all potentially relevant archives or publications, but it seems to require no justification to say that more collaboration would be advantageous. Only seasoned scholars like Lawrence Scaff are in a position to draw their conclusions from the broad foundation of former consultations of dozens of different archives in different cities.

Again, there are some small examples where what one demands is executed. Fernanda Beigel's edited volume *The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America* is such an exception. Under her directorship, a group of graduate students and young post-docs examined the South American landscape of academic research and higher education. The results transcend HoS, but what the Argentinians have to say should get the attention of the Northerners. Academia is seen here truly embedded in larger affairs such as diplomatic competition between neighboring countries. Foreign aid and intervention apparently shaped South American societies, and therefore also the academic world. Whereas European and North American contributions to HoS very often ignore state and inter-governmental agencies, Beigel and her group examine both well-known institutions like UNESCO's midwifery role for the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (FLACSO), a unique transnational research organization, and also the lesser-known, like the World University Service-UK that helped refugee scholars to return to Argentina when the generals stepped down. Despite the turbulence, the authors stress that even under dictatorship there were options for

academic autonomy. The Beigel book conveys to us Gringos at least the lesson that we should demonstrate more openness toward research from other parts of the world.

### Contexts

One of the trendiest ideas in all parts of the history of science and scholarship is the plea for context and contextualization. On closer inspection, this postulation starts to become slippery. Peter Galison (2008) tried to clarify whether context could function as an explanation of anything. Pointing out different modes of context offers no resolution but could help organize future research: for example, textual vs. non-textual and further differentiation of the non-textual into political, institutional, industrial, and ideological contexts. Making use of these classifications and referring to them explicitly might at least help readers know what authors want to highlight.

One of the finest contextualizers is the German sociologist Wolf Lepenies, a stylist and independent thinker whose scholarly home lies somewhere beyond the small world of ordinary disciplines. His latest book, *Auguste Comte: Die Macht der Zeichen* (The Power of Signs), sets the founder of sociology in one particular context: his marketing machine. Lepenies adds some revealing findings to the well-known facts and trivia (Brazil's flag, the mirror in front of Comte's desk). One of Comte's concerns was his portraits; one could say he was obsessed with the dissemination of his visual presentation, and this around 1830 when even daguerreotype had not been invented (he lived to see the first daguerreotypes of himself in the 1850s). He commissioned series of busts, lithographs, and medals, thought about the appropriate color his movement should use for flags (green, as the color of hope, won), and created slogans to unite his supporters like "L'amour pour principe, l'ordre pour base, le progrès pour but" (love as principle, order as foundation, progress as goal). Lepenies always keeps a distance and never stoops to an oppositional attitude, which would be very easy to do when studying a whimsical eccentric and founder of a new religion.

The chapters of *Social Science in Context: Historical, Sociological, and Global Perspectives* transcend the boundaries of HoS both conceptually and with regard to the subjects covered. Sociologists and historians of science and ideas build the core of the group of mostly young scholars who are the authors. Their chapters address topics ranging from “gendered co-production of social science” to the “use of behavioural science in post-war Sweden”; they examine the “cultural history of the social sciences’ politico-didactics” and “newspaper enquêtes 1900–1920”; and they discuss the fate of German sociology under Nazi rule and the formation of scholarly specialties like business administration, geography, men’s studies in educational research, and the indigenous epistemologies of Sámi reindeer herding. Beyond these details, the book is of interest here because of its fruitful transgressions of conventional wisdom and disciplines. To thumb one’s nose at conventions feels good and sometimes provides new insights. Per Wisselgren studies the first public lectures by early sociologists in Stockholm, with a focus on how their publics were recruited and composed; Jonas Harvard describes the transfer of social research techniques into newspapers. Richard Danell covers international citation patterns and detects an increasing internationalization of citations in the social sciences: inhabitants of large countries tend to look inward more than researchers living and publishing in small countries. If this result is valid, it is still an open question whether it would hold for HoS, too. My fear is that the answer will be negative because, as a specialty, HoS is not integrated enough; it is, for the majority of its practitioners, not the paramount and constant field of activity, and lines of communication are less advanced than would be desirable. As a consequence, people affiliated with HoS know each other and each other’s work, but cannot cite each other because the topics of study are too far apart.

### Concluding Remarks

Publications on HoS do not execute an ascribed function but do have two advantages at least. The whole historiography of

the 120+ years-old discipline has not influenced the identity of the discipline; insofar as it needs a shared picture of its trajectory, those who draw the picture do not utilize the publication record of the small group of HoS scholars. One of the advantages of this situation is that it is easy for authors to report something new, to tell an unearthed story or to point to hitherto ignored aspects of our discipline’s past. Second, in most cases the narratives avoid jargon and fancy pseudo-theories; their authors tend to stick to an old-fashioned epistemological realism and positivism of facts without any reservations. It is quite refreshing to read a whole book without encountering phrases about the social construction of everything or similarly overused insights.

On the other hand, there are also quite a few shortcomings. First, the number of sociologists doing HoS is too small, at least in the United States, to establish the field as respectable specialty. Second, instead of collaborating more closely, those who do HoS studies work on topics too distant from each other. As a consequence, the field under investigation is diffuse, and every newcomer looks for parts of the site yet to be mined. Some of the most superfluous contributions are sentimental tales about neglected predecessors and sidelined members of the discipline: the only thing you could learn from these kinds of texts is that the vast majority of members of any discipline sink into oblivion, sometimes even during their own lifetimes. So what? Third, in carrying out their research, HoS scholars of all disciplines do not make use of available sociological data-analysis techniques, not to mention that both HoS and the much larger group doing history of science do not examine the options of Big Data or digitalization in any detail. Fourth, the mutual influences between sociology of science/social studies of science and historio-sociological studies of the social sciences (HoS could be seen as part of this group) are weak: some might join me in feeling good about not encountering actor-network theory or other gonzo statements; but on the other hand, the neglect of what happens in neighboring thought collectives cannot be to the advantage of a still underdeveloped field.

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## The Climate Moment: Environmental Sociology, Climate Change, and the Left

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*Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective*, by **Paul Burkett**. Chicago: Haymarket, 2014. 318 pp. \$20.00 paper. ISBN: 9781608463695.

*This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, by **Naomi Klein**. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014. 566 pp. \$30.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781451697384.

*The Capitalism Papers: Fatal Flaws of an Obsolete System*, by **Jerry Mander**. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2012. 257 pp. \$26.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781582437170.

*The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*, by **Naomi Oreskes** and **Erik M. Conway**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. 91 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN: 9780231169547.

*The Wrath of Capital: Neoliberalism and Climate Change Politics*, by **Adrian Parr**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 216 pp. \$29.50 cloth. ISBN: 9780231158282.

On September 21, 2014, the largest climate march in U.S. history took place in New York City, as more than 300,000 protestors signaled to UN delegates arriving for climate talks that more desperate measures were needed to protect humanity and other species. The massive demonstration, though representing a wide array of social and political viewpoints, had its origins on the Left. The radical intellectual thrust of the movement was apparent the day prior to the march, when a vast "People's Summit/Teach-In" was led by two organizations—Global Climate Convergence and System

Change Not Climate Change—that have arisen out of the left, particularly from the ecosocialist movement, and have been influenced to a considerable extent by U.S. environmental sociology.

Naomi Klein was the keynote speaker at the People's Summit, where she presented the views developed in her newly released book: *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Klein's remarkable treatise represents a shift in the discourse on climate change and the environment to focus on the conflict between capitalism and the climate. She cites a host of sociologists in her book, including John Berger, Patrick Bond, Robert Bullard, Robert Brulle, Brett Clark, Riley Dunlap, John Bellamy Foster, Bruno Latour, Andreas Malm, Aaron McCright, Kari Marie Norgaard, Raj Patel, Eugene A. Rosa, Juliet B. Schor, and Theda Skocpol—as well as closely related environmental social scientists and commentators such as Joan Martinez Alier, Tom Athanasiou, Paul Baer, Jeremy Brecher, Herman Daly, Sam Gindin, Alf Hornborg, Wes Jackson, Michael Klare, Martin Khor, Larry Lohmann, Tadzio Mueller, Richard B. Norgaard, Christian Parenti, Arundhati Roy, and James Gustave Speth. The majority of these environmental scholars are associated with what has come to be known as the ecosocialist movement, or the closely related, also left-inspired, "degrowth" movement. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Klein quotes from Marx's ([1863–1865] 1981:949) formulation of ecological crisis, in which he referred to capitalism's tendency to "provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself" (p. 177).

Understanding how ecosocialism gained such a powerful role in today's climate movement is important and requires an examination of the evolution of U.S. environmental sociology. From its first appearance in the 1970s and early 1980s, environmental sociology in the United States has emphasized two primary ideas: (1) that capital accumulation or "the treadmill of production" is the central factor in global environmental degradation (though not excluding other factors such as technology and population growth) (Anderson 1976; Schnaiberg 1980), and (2) that sociology and social

science generally in the post-1945 period have adopted a naïve human-exemptionalist rather than truly ecological (co-evolutionary) paradigm in their approach to the nature-society relation (Catton and Dunlap 1978; Dunlap and Catton 1979). These two primary emphases gave U.S. environmental sociology its radical edge and critical realism, connecting it to grassroots environmental activism and to fast-moving developments in ecological science. This outlook distinguished U.S. environmental sociology from its European counterpart, which, under the influence of the various Green parties, stressed ecological modernization (not just as a practice but as an overall conceptual framework). The European approach resulted in the greater incorporation of environmental issues into state policy in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands (Mol 2001). Environmental sociology in Continental Europe thus found itself in conflict not only with that strand of the classical sociological tradition coming out of Marx, which linked environmental questions with those of class and crisis, but also with the classical view of Weber, which was at odds with crude notions of inevitable linear progress and evolutionary modernization with respect to the society-nature nexus (Foster and Holleman 2012).

By the early 1990s, these radical tendencies of U.S. environmental sociology were deepened by the creation of two peer-reviewed academic journals: (1) *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, launched by James O'Connor and a number of graduate students at the University of California-Santa Cruz, and (2) *Organization & Environment*, which in its first decade and a half had a strong critical-left, environmental sociology emphasis. O'Connor's (1994) notion of the environment as constituting a "second contradiction of capitalism" opened up a whole new area of discussion on the left about the interrelation of economic and environmental crises. New infusions from Marxian political economy entered into environmental sociology, along with the incorporation of environmental justice and ecofeminist perspectives (Bullard 1993; Salleh 1997).

In 1999, the recovery of Marx's ecological analysis engendered a major theoretical departure (Burkett 1999; Foster 1999, 2000).

While previously environmental sociology and ecological economics were concerned almost exclusively with scale—i.e., economic growth and carrying capacity—this new perspective had as its starting point a dialectical systems theory, geared to the contradictory relation between capitalist production and the earth system. The immediate effect was to build a bridge between environmental sociology and world-systems theory, giving added impetus to both. York, Rosa, and Dietz (2003) soon brought the ecological footprint, metabolic rift, and world-systems perspectives together in a pioneering inquiry into “Footprints in the Earth.”

Within a few years there was an explosion of work by a broad array of ecosocialist and ecological Marxists and other critical-left thinkers (for example, Dickens 2004; Burkett 2006; Foster, Clark, and York, 2010; Schneider and McMichael 2010; Williams 2010; Magdoff and Foster, 2011; Urry 2011; Carolan 2012; Moore 2011; Jorgenson and Clark 2012a). Their contributions derived principally from Marx’s classical work but also drew on the legacy of critical theory, generating an incipient synthesis that York and Mancus (2009) dubbed “critical human ecology” or CHE. This time period saw a mushrooming of environmental-sociological investigations into topics as varied as climate change, soil degradation, deforestation, ocean pollution, freshwater usage, the urban environment, and factory farms (Clausen and Clark 2005; Clement 2006; Mancus 2007; Gundarson 2011; Dobrovolski 2012; Longo 2012; Wishart 2012). A key contribution was Clark and York’s (2005) influential research into capitalism and the carbon metabolism. Others delved into questions of unequal ecological exchange (Jorgenson and Clark 2012a; Foster and Holleman 2014). Norgaard (2011) cast an investigative eye on climate denialism. As is invariably the case in times of revitalization on the left, this work was only secondarily academic and had its main manifestations in wider intellectual forums and movements worldwide, such as the struggle against the global dumping of environmental toxins (Pellow 2007), the rise of La Via Campesina (Wittman 2009), and the debate on environmental degradation in China (Wang, He, and Fan 2014).

The publication, after fifteen years, of a second, expanded edition of Burkett’s influential *Marx and Nature* provides us with a unique perspective on these developments. By examining the theoretical breakthrough associated with Burkett’s book, we can better situate recent work on society and climate change such as Mander’s *The Capitalism Papers*, Parr’s *The Wrath of Capital*, Klein’s *This Changes Everything*, and Oreskes and Conway’s *The Collapse of Western Civilization*. All of these works rely (implicitly or explicitly) on a sophisticated notion of capitalism as a system of socio-economic metabolism that exists in alienated relation to the earth system.

Burkett’s book is reprinted unchanged in the new edition, except for the addition of a foreword by Foster and a long, theoretical “Introduction to the Haymarket Edition” by the author. The original text consists of a systematic exploration of the deep ecological dimensions of Marx’s political economy. Burkett demonstrates how Marx wove society-nature relations into every element of his theory of production, consumption, exchange, distribution, and reproduction. A central focus is placed on Marx’s theory of socio-ecological metabolism. Following Marx, Burkett insists that environmental crises under capitalism cannot be subsumed under economic crises; rather, they exist somewhat separately, reflecting the fact that environmental costs are not fully valorized under capitalism, with the environmental depredations of production externalized on nature and society as a whole. Nevertheless, the root causes of environmental disruptions, like economic crises, can ultimately be traced to the overriding role of class-based capital accumulation and the social-systemic conditions it brings about.

Burkett knocks down common criticisms of Marx, such as that he neglects the environment or gives it only marginal concern, including the notion that Marx adhered to a simple “Prometheanism” or a crude fetish of industrialization. He highlights Marx’s questioning of the progressive nature of the system where socio-ecological conditions are concerned. Marx, he indicates, provides a holistic vision of the socialist/communist future that is best described as one of sustainable human development.

In the new introduction, Burkett emphasizes not so much the negative achievements of his work in overcoming earlier, shallow criticisms of Marx's ecological outlook, but rather his positive achievements in helping to transform eco-social analysis by reaching back into Marx's corpus and showing how it provides us with the needed dialectical understanding of people-nature relations. "The point is that if we want to understand capitalism's specific forms of interaction with nature, we have to look at the complex dialectical interplay of the value and material dimensions of capital accumulation" (p. xviii). Here he provides an informative treatment of the various types of environmental crises that characterize capitalism. He also incorporates a synopsis of his later inquiries into Marx and Engels's analysis of thermodynamics and their role in the development of ecological economics (Burkett 2006). He concludes with a discussion of how Marx's prescient critique of class-based, ecologically alienated production is coming into its own in our imperiled age, where such a critical-realist, eco-social vision has become a necessity for human survival. As Foster says in his foreword to the new edition of Burkett's book: "Mainstream environmentalism only describes the ecological crisis engendered by today's society; the point is to transcend it" (p. xiii).

Mander's *The Capitalism Papers* reinforces Burkett's analysis, providing a powerful indictment of the capitalist system centered on the present planetary emergency. In Part One of his book, Mander presents three chapters: "Economic Succession," "Going Global," and "The Copenhagen Conundrum." The title of the first chapter is drawn from a comparison with "natural succession" in the ecological field. Mander declares he is not a Marxist or a socialist, but he is nonetheless a critical thinker on the left who has been directly influenced by some of the social theorists referred to above. He employs a Marxian definition of capitalism, which depicts it as a class-based system geared to endless capital accumulation. Capitalism, he argues, has led to a more economically developed civilization with numerous benefits (as well as costs); but the system is now "obsolete," and it is time to move on to "post-capitalist economic

designs that are no longer oblivious to the limits of the planet" (p. 14). A little more than a half century after the first articulations of the vision of unlimited global development, it is now "obvious that to keep arguing that such a system, dedicated to expanding growth in a finite system, can survive much longer amounts to capitalist utopianism" (p. 29).

The rest of *The Capitalism Papers* consists of a series of chapters in Part Two on "The Fatal Flaws of Capitalism" and a brief Part Three, consisting of one chapter: "Which Way Out?" In the former part, Mander indicts capitalism for its intrinsic immorality and inequities, its privatization of democracy and consciousness, its endless treadmill of production, its ever more desperate social-economic-environmental distortions as it seeks to grow within the "closing circle" of the planet (Commoner 1971), its propensity to militarism and war, and the near-total alienation it fosters.

For academics, Mander's direct intellectual onslaught on the system may be a little too forthright, lacking the endless qualifications, the "grey in grey," that contemporary social science typically demands (Hegel [1821] 1952:13). But the vivid colors in which he presents his ideas are animated by the larger radical critique of capitalism's relation to the planet, a critique that is increasingly forceful in our time.

Although the subtitle of Parr's *The Wrath of Capital is Neoliberalism and Climate Change Politics*, the scope of her book is much broader. Its contents include, after two initial chapters directed at climate change, six chapters focused, respectively, on the population problem, the privatization of water, the food system, animal rights, the green city, and oil spills. She confuses matters by providing seemingly conflicting definitions of "neoliberalism," which she describes as (1) "a more virulent strain" of the liberalism inherited from Adam Smith, (2) "a cultural mode of production that in turn defines the political economy," and (3) a particular "agenda" (pp. 2-3, 16-17, 124). She then proceeds to conflate neoliberalism seen in these multiple ways with capital, capitalism, and the law of value—as if these concepts could all be used interchangeably and at the same level of abstraction.

Nevertheless, Parr's core argument has an elegant basis, drawing at least implicitly on Marx's notion—developed in his Hegel-inspired dialectic of barriers and boundaries (Marx [1857–1858] 1973:334–335; Foster, Clark, and York 2010:39–40)—that capitalism treats all boundaries or limits as mere barriers to be surmounted. In her distinctive formulation, “capitalism appropriates limits to capital by placing them in the service of capital; in the process, it obscures the inequities, socioeconomic distortions, and violence that these limits expose, thereby continuing the cycle of endless economic growth that is achieved at the expense of more vulnerable entities and groups”—and at the expense of the natural environment (p. 11). Changes that are presumably “green” in the ecological sense quickly become nothing more than the color of money.

With this critical perspective, and making frequent reference to Marx's value analysis, Parr demonstrates that attempts to introduce environmental reforms under capitalism are transformed into new circuits of capital (M-C-M'). In the process, she provides penetrating analyses of numerous dimensions of the contemporary ecological problem, from carbon markets to LEED-rated buildings, from “Animal Pharm” to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Parr's critique of capitalism's environmental deprivations is far-reaching and uncompromising. She closes her book with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's statement at the 2009 Climate Summit in Copenhagen, in which Chávez, drawing on Marx's metabolism argument as presented by Mészáros (1995), declared: “Let's talk about the cause. We should not avoid responsibilities, we should not avoid the depth of this problem. And I'll bring it up again, the cause of this disastrous panorama is the metabolic, destructive system of . . . capital and its model: capitalism” (p. 146).

Klein's *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* is both a reflection of this explosion of critical work in environmental sociology in the United States, drawing at crucial points on Marx's environmental critique, and also an outgrowth of the climate movement itself in which Klein has long been a participant. (Although Klein

[2014:5–7] says that she only came to a full realization of the importance of climate change five years ago, I was present at a protest with her at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in fall 2002, where it was clear that she was on her way to learning that lesson.)

Klein represents a deeper, broader, more urgent approach to the question of climate change, in line with the ecosocialist movement System Change, Not Climate Change. She focuses not on neoliberalism, which she generally refers to as “deregulated capitalism,” but on capitalism itself. As she puts it, “The things we must do to avoid catastrophic warming are no longer just in conflict with the particular strain of deregulated capitalism that triumphed in the 1980s. They are now in conflict with the fundamental imperative at the heart of our economic system: grow or die” (p. 21). She makes it clear that she is not concerned primarily with the mechanics by which a transition to a low carbon, environmentally sustainable economy would take place, but rather with the issues of power and ideology (i.e., directly sociological questions) that have thus far prevented society from moving down that road. The principal problem is a system organized around capital accumulation within a finite environment. The result is a war between capitalism and the planet, in which thus far “capitalism is winning hands down” (p. 22). Until this issue is confronted and a new logic of change is implemented, even small steps in the direction of protecting the world's population become virtually impossible. Taking a cue from Marx's concept of metabolic rift (and much recent sociological literature), she argues, “The Earth's capacity to absorb the filthy byproducts of global capitalism's voracious metabolism is maxing out” (p. 186).

What makes Klein's book so indispensable for socio-ecological analysis is her very clear incorporation of the message that climate scientists have been delivering with ever-greater urgency. Boiled down to its essence, this message is that the planet is facing a point of irreversibility somewhere around a 2° Celsius increase in global average temperature, after which we will likely

lose our ability to limit climate change or to get back to a relatively stable 350 parts carbon dioxide per million in the atmosphere (which defines the Holocene, our geological epoch). After a certain point, “where the mercury stops is not in our control” (p. 13). That point, though it cannot be determined with precision, is fast approaching under business as usual. Climate science is haunted by the specter of such a planetary tipping point. Put another way, once climate change reaches a certain threshold, positive feedbacks on a planetary level—the decreasing albedo effect from the disappearance of Arctic ice; the melting of ice sheets in Greenland, Antarctica, and the world’s glaciers; the release of methane from the permafrost; a massive dieback in Amazon species; changes in the ocean’s capacity to absorb carbon—will cause climate change to spin out of control. If a 4° Celsius increase is reached, leading climate scientists such as Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research argue that the continuation of human civilization will become virtually impossible (Klein 2014:13). There is, then, no time to waste in confronting the social system that is threatening us not only with climate change, but also *runaway climate change*.

Klein’s argument places its emphasis squarely on the nature of our social system. The first chapter of her book is entitled “The Right is Right.” By this she does not mean that the climate-change denialists are correct about the science, but rather that they are right (in a way that middle-of-the-road “warmers” are not) in recognizing that the changes required to avoid climate change are so massive that they would mean a revolutionary reconstitution of the socioeconomic order; that there is, in short, no compatibility between the law of value imposed by capitalism and the laws of nature imposed by the biosphere. Economic growth would need to be limited and forms of democratic planning would need to be introduced if we were to confront the planetary emergency head on. There is no other way of promoting ecological sustainability and enhancing social justice (each of which, she insists, requires the other). Klein argues that the plutocratic elites that now run our society can see the writing on the wall. They are digging trenches to defend a system

of which they are the main beneficiaries against the impending struggles of humanity to ensure its own survival. The “core problem” is “the stranglehold that market logic” has “secured over public life” (p. 19). Today’s global capitalism, she observes, is a “uniquely wasteful model of production, consumption, and agriculture” (p. 20). We can do a lot better.

Much of Klein’s book is spent driving home the point that climate change is really a problem of “the reigning economic paradigm”—an argument that she develops by looking at the role played by economics and ideology in the present system (p. 63). She also criticizes what she calls “the extractivist left,” particularly in Latin America, in which societies, caught up against their will in the self-same system, build their economies on the extreme extraction of fossil fuels and other resources rather than promoting a true ecosocial transformation (pp. 176–182). Latin America’s “Twenty-first Century Socialism,” she believes, captures part of the necessary transition (p. 182). But insofar as it is still entrapped in the larger world-capitalist growth economy, it is clearly not enough. “Magical thinking” is Klein’s label for another target of critique: the notion that such Lone Rangers as Big Green business, new physics-defying technologies, capitalist philanthropic foundations, and geoengineers will suddenly appear on the horizon complete with silver bullets to rescue humanity.

Klein’s solutions are movement solutions. The last part of her book thus documents the struggles of people who, despite the barriers erected by the system, are “starting anyway” (p. 291). She tells the stories of “Blockadia”: new climate warriors fighting the Keystone XL pipeline and blocking coal trains with their bodies; the progress of the fossil fuel divestment movement; the indigenous-led Idle No More, mobilizing against extreme fossil-fuel extraction in Alberta; and the global South’s struggle over ecological debt. These are democratic peoples’ movements that are trying to counter the power of capital with the power of humanity, inspiring greater collective action by their courage.

Klein’s conclusion, entitled “The Leap Years: Just Enough Time for Impossible,” is a firm declaration that there is still time

and that what is necessary can be accomplished by massive global struggle (p. 449). As Marx once observed, even when the tempo of historical change has slowed down so much that it would be wrong to conceive of “20 years as more than a day,” we can look forward to and promote the return of “days into which 20 years are compressed” (Marx and Engels 1975:468). Klein insists that “pockets of liberated space” won by relentless struggle can create the Archimedean point from which to leverage a winning-back of the entire global commons. “The stakes,” she writes, “are simply too high, and time too short, to settle for anything less” (p. 466).

Klein’s persuasiveness is a testimony to the influence that environmental sociology, with its critique of the logic of capital, has had on the climate movement. At the same time it reminds us how far removed sociology as a discipline remains from these pressing planetary issues and how wide the gap between a rapidly radicalizing environmental sociology and the larger discipline has now become. Meanwhile, with environmental sociologists underrepresented on the ground, a host of others, from physical scientists to science historians to science fiction writers, are trying to fill the gap in the sociological imagination.

*The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* is, at the time of this writing (October 2014), the best-selling book on the environment on Amazon.com. Respected science historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway provide a plausible and very sociological history of Western civilization up to its final collapse in 2093. This collapse is traced to the “Penumbra Age,” commencing in the 1980s, in which society put “capitalism”—defined as a “form of socio-economic organization” in which “the surplus value produced by workers [was] funneled to owners, managers, and ‘investors’” (p. 54)—before the preservation of a livable environment. Oreskes and Conway’s fictional future historian describes in realistic detail how reductionism in science, the growth of neoliberal capitalism, and a lack of sociological imagination led to the failure of Western nations to respond to climate change before it was too late—a failure graphically illustrated in their book by

a map of the underwater “former state of Florida (part of the former United States)” (p. 50). China, with its more centralized economy and penchant for planning, led the way in adapting to the new circumstances, relocating its population inland in response to sea-level rise and responding systematically to other threats, thereby ensuring a survival rate of 80 percent—far higher than elsewhere. Despite being “science fiction,” *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, which grew out of an earlier contribution to *Daedalus* (the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences), is meant to be taken seriously in its role as a warning. The book ends with an interview of the authors in which they explain the bases of their concerns and projections.

With such worst-case scenarios now being broached by leading scientists and intellectuals on the left and by a rapidly radicalizing climate-change movement—encouraged by the path-breaking work of environmental sociologists—it is important that *all* sociologists now make the issue of the coevolution of society and nature their own. More important, it is time to act.

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## REVIEW ESSAYS

The Black Child-Savers, Criminal Justice Discretion, and the Ghost of George Stinney, Jr.

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As I write this, protests roil the United States in the wake of several police killings of black men and boys: Michael Brown, Eric Garner, John Crawford, and a 12-year-old child, Tamir Rice. At times it seems the entire U.S. criminal justice system is filled with the bitter harvest of black male disadvantage. The scale of black male incarceration is astonishing, and this disproportionality is a key source of social disadvantage for black men and their families, social networks, and communities (Alexander 2010). There is much discussion in the criminological literature about the roles of the different stages of the criminal justice process and the production of black male disproportionality in punishment (see reviews by Bushway and Forst 2013; Baumer 2013). Others have pointed to the role of sentencing policies, such as mandatory minimums and certain sentencing guideline provisions, and their differential impacts on black men (Frase 2013).

What nearly all of these contemporary treatments lack is a sense of historical perspective on how we got, and remain, here. Geoff Ward's book, *The Black Child-Savers*, gives us this perspective. *The Black Child-Savers* won the American Society of Criminology's 2013 Hindelang Award for most outstanding book (disclosure: I was chair of the awards committee).

Ward's title keys off Platt's (1969) *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, and he presents to us the lost history of the once-vibrant "black child-savers" movement. He shows how U.S. criminal justice, North and South, has been shot through with either overt racism or racialized system logic (Bonilla-Silva 2013). The *Black Child-Savers* documents, throughout U.S. history, the construction of black youth, even children, as

*The Black Child-Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice*, by **Geoff K. Ward**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 336 pp. \$32.00 paper. ISBN: 9780226873183.

singularly dangerous, morally inferior, or as *just not worth the practical resources and effort to save*. Incidentally, these are exactly some of the theoretical mechanisms behind black male punishment disparity today (Ulmer 2012). This book provides a compelling historical backdrop to our predicament and discourse on race and criminal justice now. However, the book is not just, or even primarily, a story of oppression. It is also a story of agency and organization. The book focuses on the valiant efforts of those who sought to change this negative construction of black youth through history.

In the introduction and conclusion to the book, Ward presents two figures (Figure 0.1 and the more detailed Figure 8.1) that show the percent of non-white male youth, compared to white youth, confined in juvenile correctional institutions. In 1880, 10% of youth in juvenile institutions were black males and the rest were white. The percentage of black youth rose steadily, spiked in 1910, declined and fluctuated, and then began a steady rise in 1950, until about 65% of youth in juvenile corrections confinement were black males in 2000. This book is the historical narrative behind these graphs and a powerful explication of that narrative's implications for justice, citizenship, inclusion, and race in the United States. Ward relies on extensive historical material on Jim Crow juvenile justice, lesser-known

primary and secondary source material on the black child-savers movement, and aggregate statistics from historical and contemporary times.

The first part of the book describes Jim Crow juvenile justice and the general exclusion of black youth from the liberal rehabilitative and service ideals of the larger child-savers movement described by Platt (1969). This is generally well-known terrain to most scholars of race and justice. But in describing this history, Ward keeps his eye on the implications of this black youth exclusion from rehabilitative juvenile justice reform for the overall black exclusion from full citizenship. In this section, Ward explains why the low percentages of black males in juvenile institutions from the 1880s to the middle of the twentieth century, depicted in Figures 0.1 and 8.1, were markers of exclusion from full citizenship and worth. Black youth were largely sent to adult prisons, chain gangs, work camps, and even gallows, while white youth were placed in reform-minded (if less than ideal and effective) juvenile institutions. This section features a piteous mug shot and story of fourteen-year-old George Stinney, Jr., who was convicted in 1944 (mistakenly listed as 1941 in the book) of murdering two white girls. The all-white jury deliberated for ten minutes after a two-hour trial. Stinney later became the youngest person to be executed in the twentieth century; he died in the electric chair less than three months after conviction. Indeed, there were 65 black youth state executions (72 percent of the total) between 1900 and 1930, compared to 21 white youth executions, and 97 black youth executions (82 percent of the total) between 1931 and 1959, with 17 white youth executions (Table 4.3, p. 117). Nearly all of these occurred in the South, and the increase in the frequency and disparity characterizing black youth executions coincided with the growth of the post-war civil rights movement.

The second part of the book focuses on the influence of black agency and the black child-savers movement, starting at the end of the nineteenth century. The black child-savers movement originated in the black women's clubs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which generally followed the "racial uplift" self-help

ideology of Booker T. Washington, as many of the early leaders were steeped in the Hampton-Tuskegee educational and organizational model. The black clubwomen were no small voice, with a national organization (the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs) that by 1916 boasted 1,500 member clubs. As Ward explains, "Viral expansion of black women's clubs provided a critical network for building oppositional consciousness and coordinating and funding civic initiatives in response to a host of social problems" (p. 131).

This second section on the black child-savers movement is the most novel and informative part of the book, for the black child-savers movement has been hitherto known to only a handful of sociologists. Ward spent about a decade unearthing and examining its historical record. His research interest in the black child-savers movement was fostered by Vernetta Young of Howard University, who had maintained an archive of records, articles, photographs, and writings from the movement.

Ward details how the black child-savers eventually established an influential and partially institutionalized presence in juvenile justice that attempted to serve the developmental needs of black youth and represent black community interests, with the NAACP being crucial to the institutionalization of the pursuit of racial justice in the juvenile system. This era of influence spread from 1930 to 1954, and 1954 to 1970 represented a "post-integration period" of great potential and optimism. This growing integration of black youth and black voices in the juvenile justice system explains the growing presence of black youth in juvenile institutions, and more diversion away from adult corrections, from the mid-twentieth century.

Unfortunately, as Ward asks in the book's conclusion, "In the twentieth century, non-white youths gained greater access to institutions, but what did *inclusion* mean?" (p. 238, emphasis in original). The promise and potential of the post-integration period and the gains of the black child-savers foundered on the rocks of the "get tough" era of the 1970s–1990s, which emphasized "accountability," crime control, and punishment. In these years, black presence in

juvenile institutions took on a different meaning: black youth were now institutionalized in more punitive and custodial juvenile corrections facilities, while white youth were more likely diverted into non-custodial sanctions. Furthermore, serious black youth offenders were, and are, comparatively more likely to be waived to adult court and to receive adult-type sentences than white youth. Thus, the promise of racial justice and full black youth citizenship envisioned by the black child-savers of the 1950s was hampered by the punitive crime-control politics and mass incarceration of the 1980s and beyond. Ward concludes: "Racial inequality in juvenile justice did not increase as much as it persisted and mutated over the course of the past century" (p. 257).

Ward's discussion in the last two chapters implicates a paradox of structured decision-making and policies. Juvenile justice policies were, and are, ostensibly intended to promote fairness and uniformity and combat bias, but they have had the effect of blunting the ability of local decision-makers, like those in the tradition of the black child-savers movement, to consider the rehabilitation needs and service needs of black youth. According to Ward, "Rigid principles of accountability-based juvenile justice, standardized decisionmaking technologies, and a narrowly redistributive agenda of racial justice are examples of developments that have limited the potential for black communities to impose their concerns, insights, and judgments on modern ideas and practices of American juvenile justice" (p. 247). This paradox mirrors a larger dilemma between formal and substantive rationality in criminal justice decision-making recognized by scholars (see Savelsberg 1992; Ulmer 1997). Formally rational policies and structured decision-making criteria such as sentencing guidelines, risk-assessment scores, parole guidelines, etc., are intended in part to reduce racial or other kinds of bias and are a reaction to the legacy of racial disparity characteristic of the Jim Crow era. Yet, too tightly constraining the discretion to individualize justice can prevent the consideration of legitimate, substantively rational concerns, such as offender needs, educational and environmental disadvantages, and rehabilitative potential, as well as victim and community interests.

I would like to highlight two of many possible overall societal lessons from *The Black Child-Savers*. First, it seems that the visibility of criminal justice processes is a key and underappreciated mechanism for exposing and correcting racial disparities. Outcomes like juvenile and adult sentencing are relatively visible, but police decisions to arrest and use force, prosecutors' decisions to charge and to seek waivers of juveniles to adult court, and the guilty plea process by which upwards of 90 percent of criminal cases, adult and juvenile, are disposed, are all relatively invisible. Rather than make more formally rational rules that constrain discretion (see the risks of this above), it seems a great deal of headway could be made by making records of all pre-sentencing decisions (anonymized or aggregated to mitigate defendant privacy concerns) for juveniles as well as adults publicly available. Many sociologists might be surprised to learn that good quantitative data on these criminal justice processes are relatively difficult to obtain, and may not be kept at all in some jurisdictions. When and where racial disparity exists, such visibility would expose it and would raise important questions for criminal justice organizations and communities.

Second, it seems like what is most needed to address the criminal justice system as a site of racial disadvantage is more of the relentless organization, resource mobilization, and pressure of contemporary black child-savers. As Ward implies, continued agency and organization channeling the energy of the early-1900s-era black clubwomen would expose the social construction of black males as categorically dangerous, morally lax, and "not worth the effort" for the destructive lie that it is. With relentless pressure on the state and the criminal justice system's complex levers of influence, perhaps the vision of the black child-savers will be institutionally realized.

Another thing happened as I was writing this review. On December 17, 2014, South Carolina Judge Carmen Tevis Mullen vacated the 1944 conviction of George Stinney, Jr. at the request of his remaining family, stating that Stinney did not receive even minimal due process protections. Incredibly, the current local prosecutor's office opposed

the move. Thus, the struggle to save black children, even long dead ones, grinds on.

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## Finding Meaning in a Rough Country

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Robert Wuthnow's *Rough Country* is an ambitious sociological account of how American religion interlaces with politics, economics, and racial and ethnic identities. It is also an original work of history, chronicling religious developments in Texas from the 1840s to the present. Because it is a book about Texas, evangelicals take center stage and Southern Baptists the leading role. This is not to suggest that other religious traditions are neglected. Wuthnow's encyclopedic study covers an almost unfathomable range of events, houses of worship, civic organizations, and personalities, all meticulously documented in more than one hundred pages of endnotes, including thousands of citations.

The events described in *Rough Country* range from well-known pivots in history such as the 1916 "Waco horror"—the lynching of an innocent 18-year-old, Jesse Washington, burned alive under the watchful eyes of the city's elites—to curious historical footnotes such as the 2010 attempt by Pastor David Grisham Jr.'s "Army of God" to burn a Quran in Amarillo, only to be foiled by a skateboarder who snatched the sacred text. Wuthnow's book juxtaposes historical

*Rough Country: How Texas Became America's Most Powerful Bible-Belt State*, by **Robert Wuthnow**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. 654 pp. \$39.50 cloth. ISBN: 9780691159898.

narratives of churches that courted mass audiences, like the First Baptist Church of Dallas, the largest Southern Baptist congregation for most of the twentieth century and a national center of influence for fundamentalism, with detailed accounts of smaller churches like the University Baptist Church of Austin that desegregated its worship services in 1948, ordained women in the 1970s, and ordained a gay deacon in 1990. *Rough Country* describes giant enterprises in civil society like the evangelical and charitable foundation formed by R. G. LeTourneau in the 1930s from the wealth he amassed producing earth-moving machines, but does not neglect operations run on a shoestring budget like the fledgling union of Mexican farmworkers organized in Crystal City that same decade by Father Charles

Taylor. The book also complements rich biographies of personalities as outsized as Rev. J. Frank Norris, once arraigned for killing a man in his own pastor's chamber and made (in)famous by his public attacks on everyone from heretics at Baylor University to civil rights advocates who dared to claim blacks equal to whites, with glimpses into the religious lives of ordinary Texans drawn from their diaries and letters. In its empirical scope, the book is monumental; yet something feels missing.

Wuthnow argues that the "most neglected aspect of American religion occurs in the middle range at the level that bridges families and congregations with the nation" (p. 2). *Rough Country* is devoted to describing how religion extended through this middle range to "give meaning" to "the symbolic boundaries" shaping the politics, economics, and identity of the Lone Star State. It discusses theological developments and disputes, in particular the rise of "premillennial dispensationalism" and how it was shaped as a defense against German "higher criticism," but these abstract dynamics of symbolic meaning-construction take a back seat to the pragmatics of building churches and seminaries. The book touches on the intimate meaning of religion, in particular the personal solace and security sacred myths and rituals provided Texans in the face of the disease, violence, and disorder of life on a rough frontier; but the practical relief and collective order created by religious charities and hospitals and the ritual sanctification of court and vigilante justice receive more attention.

Eschewing the abstract and the intimate for a middle-range empirical focus has a clear payoff. It reveals the organizational genius of evangelicals and, in particular, Southern Baptists. By the time evangelicals entered Texas, their leaders were already well practiced in the art of gathering a flock and sensitive to what communities would and would not support. Their social influence in the state stemmed from this practical art of building and expanding on a following. Preachers built on what they knew worked in congregations small and large to imagine new organizational forms, becoming trailblazers in megachurches, specialized parachurch organizations, and radio ministries.

Throughout the historical narrative, Wuthnow provides the reader a clear sense of the scale and proportion of organized religion in Texas. For each era, from the antebellum period to the present, he catalogues the number of churches and leaders by denomination and surveys the level and form of religious activities in education, social services, media, and politics. Wuthnow carefully grounds his analysis in material objectivity and value neutrality; but as with his earlier work, critics will undoubtedly see in it a flight from meaning into social structure (Kane 1991; Alexander and Smith 1993). Whether it is flight or oversight from his middle-range focus, I think something important is passed over.

Readers of *Rough Country* unversed in the early history of American evangelical Christianity might be surprised to learn that from its popular inception the evangelical movement went to war with the worldly orders of the communities it raided for converts. Max Weber argued that "an important fraction of all cases of prophetic and redemptory religions have lived not only in an acute but in a permanent state of tension in relation to the world and its orders . . . [and] the more religions have been true religions of salvation, the greater has this tension been" (1946:328). In Wuthnow's account of white evangelicals in Texas, you get very little sense of tension with worldly orders. Only very late in the historical narrative, after the 1960s, do "embattled evangelicals"—to borrow Christian Smith's (1998) term—really make an appearance.

Wuthnow describes how evangelical leaders sanctified the boundaries drawn by conservative white communities protecting racial privilege, patriarchal order, and the power of economic elites. From his account, white evangelicals do not appear to have experienced much tension with the worldly orders of class, race, and gender. Wuthnow's exhaustive review of historical records does not give much voice to women, and this raises questions about the apparent lack of tension. That said, this apparent ease would seem to suggest that either evangelicals and, in particular, Southern Baptists sold out their religion of salvation or Weber was wrong to strongly identify prophetic and redemptory religion with tension toward

the material orders of the world. Many on the left believe the former, but they are poor ethnographers (and social historians). In *Rough Country*, I think Wuthnow implicitly supports the latter conclusion. I want to suggest an altogether different explanation: the tension only appears to be missing because Wuthnow's middle range does not bring it into focus.

Whether Weber is right or wrong, it is puzzling how the emancipatory religion of the Great Awakening turned into a bulwark of racial, gender, and economic inequality in the South. The evangelical movement crossed into the South in the mid-eighteenth century led by Separatist Baptists from New England and "log college" Presbyterians from the middle colonies. By the end of the century, Methodists had joined and energized the movement. In their southern incursion, evangelicals rejected clerical authority and transgressed the social distinctions established around class, status, and even gender and race. Their movement resonated with a restless middling class of whites, but it also converted slaves and free blacks. It was resolutely anti-political—not because of a principle of church and state separation (that ideological stance would come later), but because politics was of this world. If it avoided politics, it rankled the Southern social order all the same. It drew fierce resistance from lower-class white males and elite gentry. Poor white men resisted its egalitarian spirit because it threatened the slim privilege they held in lording it over blacks and women. The gentry disdained the leveling spirit of the socially striving saints because they showed a dangerous disregard for the deference owed to their betters (Mathews 1977).

Beyond class and status, the movement irritated many because it demanded so much of them in terms of moral discipline of the body. Within their inward-turning communities of believers, evangelicals policed intemperance and sex with a passion that seemed indelicate to elites and intrusive to plebeians. The original American evangelical movement was, in Weberian terms, broadly at war with the worldly order and its claims to secure social value and distinction—including the standing orders of politics, class, race, gender, and sex. Within

little more than a generation, the movement eclipsed the influence of the Anglican Church for all but Southern elites and set the foundation for what we now call the Bible Belt.

By the time whites with their slaves started to flow into Texas, the point at which Wuthnow picks up the historical narrative, Southern evangelicals had foreclosed their egalitarian spirit with regard to racial and gender distinctions. Crossing the Sabine and Neches rivers did not soften their racism and sexism. The two forms of discrimination intertwined in the male Anglo's anxious imagination, filling it with threats of black and Indian "outrages" against his women. Wuthnow devotes considerable space to these "outrages." As some of their evangelical counterparts in the North turned against the sin of racism, white Texans became fluent in a racist theology of the community of saints. And while northern evangelicals moved to unleash the moral leadership of women, Texans demanded women to know their place for their own protection in a "rough country" of racialized scoundrels.

If Texas evangelicals had grown comfortable with the economic, gender, and racial order of the South, they still kept the authority structures of their religion at a safe distance from party politics. The separation from politics was honored in part out of fear, as religious leaders saw the treatment of evangelicals who dared to voice their abolitionist and, later, desegregationist sentiments. Wuthnow describes how during Reconstruction religious leaders who entered the political fray were attacked, verbally and physically, as carpetbaggers who did not share the good sense of Southern ministers to stay wide of politics. Becoming comfortable and adept at engaging institutional politics took considerable time even for those who did not imagine crossing the color line. Conservative evangelical leaders did not do so wholeheartedly until the 1970s and 1980s—not just because of the secular checks on them, but also because of long-standing religious convictions that the political was inherently of this world and corrupting.

Over the century prior to this political turn, if the evangelical war with the worldly persisted, as I think it did, it narrowed to the

tension with bodily pleasures. For evangelicals, sexual sin has always been deemed the most coercive of the sins. The sociology of religion underappreciates the agonistic dimension of the sexual probation of the "born again." The evangelical call to strict sexual discipline is made within the sublimated erotic power of the beloved community of saints. From the inception of the evangelical movement in the eighteenth century, its leaders thought and talked about the flesh as much as anything, save possibly salvation. Their style of worship was physical, almost lusty. They greeted brothers and sisters in Christ with a kiss, physically embraced during prayer, washed each other's feet, and shared the heart-breaking confession of personal failings (Mathews 1977). In the South, all this intimacy was encouraged and expressed in the face of a culture that enforced distance and coolness across the defining social distinctions of class, race, and gender. This spiritual tension with the sexual proved creative in the institution-building of evangelicals from the eighteenth century to the present. Strict churches pulsed with sexual tension and thrived. Even in the postmodern mega-church, this social sublimation of intimacy continues to prove powerfully popular. Describing the Rev. Criswell's First Southern Baptist Church in Dallas in the 1990s, Wuthnow quotes one of Criswell's pastoral assistants, who said this most famous mega-church represented for aspiring preachers "something in the spiritual realm akin to sexual lust in the fleshly" (p. 339).

It goes without saying that many evangelicals fail their sexual probation. In the 1980s a series of televangelists failed gloriously before a national congregation. Embarrassing as these scandals have been, I see no reason to think that the conservative religious struggle with "illicit" sex will somehow implode in the near future under the weight of hypocrisy or antiquatedness. The current culture war over the power of the erotic sphere will not abate. The struggle between a postmodern promise for the erotic sensation of "salvation" in a disenchanted world and the redemptive feast of the body and blood of Christ, as some evangelicals frame the war, has proven a great recruitment opportunity. It has also been a license for evangelicals to cross the church-state divide.

Wuthnow's book shows how this played out in Texas at the middle range of religion—even if it takes some reading between the lines. He chronicles how religious organizations gradually started to convey the intimate matters of evangelicals into the larger political dynamics of the state and nation. The first political issue to significantly "de-privatize" religion in Texas was the battle over drinking alcohol. The political contest between wet and dry Texans started to erase the bright line between church and state. In the 1911 referendum for state Prohibition, evangelical ministers took public stands for the political vindication of God's law as they argued for abstinence and pitted the power of the church against the corrupting influence of the saloon. In the wake of national Prohibition, evangelical leaders mixed anti-Catholicism with the fear of a wet and tipsy future to justify their political intervention. In the 1928 presidential election, they sounded the alarm that papist designs and the liquor trade lurked behind the presidential campaign of Al Smith. A half-century later, facing another moral battle over the body, evangelicals would bury the hatchet with Catholics and join them in the political fight against abortion. In the early days of fighting to keep abortions illegal, the political issue for vocal evangelicals was mainly about sex. Evangelical leaders spoke about the loose morals of unwed mothers rather than the lives of unborn children. By the 1980s, conservative evangelical leaders added a host of "life politics" issues to their political agenda—including anti-homosexuality, resisting state intervention in child rearing and education, and controlling public-school curricula on sex, science, and religion—and started to court in earnest the Republican Party as their representative in the halls of power.

In Texas, demographic forces may soon challenge the political influence Southern Baptists gradually developed over the twentieth century. With the political rise of Mexican Americans, if evangelical leaders are to retain this influence they will have to look beyond the white communities that have been their wellspring. Wuthnow's historical analysis of how conservative Southern Baptists became tightly interlaced with white

communities and white identity shows how difficult a task this will be. The power of the women's movement and the movement for LGBTQ rights may also diminish evangelical influence over younger and future generations. But the evangelical war with "worldly" orders of sex will undoubtedly continue. And now that the lines between church and state and Protestants and Catholics have been crossed, the future political potency of this religious war in Texas and America should not be underestimated.

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