Hello from Kent State! I hope you’re having a productive yet relaxing summer. The ASA meetings are coming up, so if you haven’t registered, you’ll want to do that soon. After July 10th, registration fees increase.

Now for the good news and the not-so-good news. In terms of the latter, our section membership is currently 88 members, down from 126 members at the end of 2017. While other sections have seen the same downtrend, and while we expect an uptick this summer, please encourage others to join. The good news, in fact great news, is that we were successful in petitioning the ASA to avoid probationary status due to our low membership (click [HERE](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PQVKHMC) to read the arguments we submitted).

However, we still need to work hard to build up the section. Toward that end, please consider giving a gift membership. To do so, login to your ASA account and click on “Purchase a gift section membership” under Contribute/Give. Only those who are members of the ASA are eligible for gift memberships. After you check out, the person will be notified by email that you personally purchased a gift membership for them. If they decline the gift within 30 days, you will receive a full refund. Note that gift memberships are not tax deductible and that the deadline for purchasing them is July 31st.

Thanks to Jon Overton for putting together another great newsletter! Below you’ll see a link to a short survey. There has been some chatter about changing our section’s name, so please take a moment to provide your input by completing the survey. On page 2 we reveal the winners of this year’s section awards. Congratulations! Please join us at the section business meeting on Sunday, August 12th to formally recognize them. And special thanks to those who graciously agreed to serve on the award com-
Section Events at ASA 2018
Philadelphia

JOINT RECEPTION
Sat, Aug. 11, 6:30—8:10
Sections on Evolution,
Biology & Society,
Rationality & Society, and
Mathematical Sociology

SESSION
Sun, Aug. 12, 12:30—1:30
Incorporating genetic
information into
sociological research

Panelists
Hexuan Liu
University of Cincinnati

Brea Perry
Indiana University

Daniel Adkins
University of Utah

Organizer
Rosemary Hopcroft
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

SECTION BUSINESS MEETING
Sun, Aug. 12, 1:30—2:10

Organizer
Will Kalkhoff
Kent State University

SESSION
Sun, Aug. 12, 2:30—4:10
Neuroscience: Fundamental advances and applications

Presentations
“Bridging capital and cognitive reserve: Social network
moderation of neurodegeneration in older adults.”
By Brea Perry
Indiana University

“An evolutionary neuroscience: Octonionic theory of social
relations, emotion, and cognition.”
By Warren D. TenHouten
University of California, Los Angeles

“A neurosociological theory of identity and its implications.”
By Anne Frances Eisenberg
State University of New York, Geneseo

“An fMRI investigation of the effects of individualistic vs.
collectivist priming on responses to social exclusion.”
By Rengin Bahar Firat and Linzie Taylor
University of California, Riverside;
Georgia State University

Discussant
Douglas Massey
Princeton University

Organizer
Will Kalkhoff
Kent State University

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SECTION AWARD WINNERS

Best Book Award
Rosemary L. Hopcroft
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Evolution and Gender: Why It Matters for
Contemporary Life

Dalton Conley and Jason Fletcher
Princeton University; University of Wisconsin, Madison

The Genome Factor: What the Social
Genomics Revolution Reveals about
Ourselves, Our History, and the Future

Best Student Paper Award
Robbee Wedow, Meghan Zacher, Brooke
Huibregtse, Kathleen Harris, Benjamin Domingue, and Jason Boardman

University of Colorado, Boulder; Harvard University;
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Stanford University

“Education, smoking, and cohort change:
Forwarding a multidimensional theory of
the environmental moderation of genetic
effects.”

Forthcoming in the American Sociological Review
New section handbook published

In a single volume, Rosemary Hopcroft’s edited work, *The Oxford Handbook of Evolution, Biology, and Society* unites research by a wide array of social scientists: sociologists, political scientists, criminologists, and anthropologists in the United States and elsewhere. Of interest to section members, its chapters include work from neurosociology, evolutionary sociology, and biosociology.

This work can be purchased in physical form or borrowed as an eBook from many university libraries. We expect this to be a helpful resource for section members and students alike.


Highlighted chapters by current section members

“Introduction: Evolution, Biology, and Society.”

–Rosemary Hopcroft

“Sociology’s Contentious Courtship with Biology: A Ballad.”

–Douglas A. Marshall

“The Neurology of Religion: An Explanation from Evolutionary Sociology.”

–Alexandra Maryanski and Jonathan Turner


–Michael Hammond

“Sex Differences in the Human Brain.”

–David D. Franks

“Human Sociosexual Dominance Theory.”

–Kristin Liv Rauch and Rosemary Hopcroft

“The Evolutionary Approach to History: Sociocultural Phylogenetics.”

–Marion Blute and Fiona M. Jordan

“Why Sociology Should Incorporate Biology.”

–Rosemary Hopcroft

For a complete listing of chapters in this volume, see the Table of Contents

Other section member publications


Biologicizing across the curriculum:
From ‘Sociological Social Psychology’ to ‘The Social Animal.’

By Douglas Marshall

Like many of us who do sociology from an evolutionary and/or biological perspective, I’ve created and taught courses specifically about these approaches, and, where possible, have incorporated both into my introductory classes as well. Hopefully, such strategies ameliorate the obliviousness about, and/or derision toward, such approaches that many of our sociological colleagues convey to their students.

But I’ve come to believe that in order to substantively impact the discipline as a whole, evolutionary and biological thinking need to be integrated into courses across the curriculum, demonstrating its applicability and explanatory power to the full panoply of sub-fields and topics that make up our discipline. The domains of gender and religion immediately suggest themselves as prime candidates for such infusion – but in both cases, it’s also the case that there is so much material to work with that the biology can quickly come to dominate the course, which makes for a great course, but one which is different from – and thus one that arguably augments rather than replaces – standard courses on the “Sociology of Gender” or the “Sociology of Religion”.

A perhaps less
“Sociological Social Psychology” in my current program, I renamed it “The Social Animal: Self and Certainty” and began incorporating more biological and evolutionary segues and asides throughout. The reading list, constructed around the classics of the field – Mead, Berger & Luckmann, Goffman, Simmel, Hochschild, etc. - has remained essentially unchanged, but these touchstones have been reset within an explicitly biological context.

For example, the course begins with the observation that social psychology is a “frontier” field that straddles two major disciplines: Psychology and Sociology, the need to differentiate between which lands us squarely in a discussion of parts, wholes, and how best to relate them to one another that draws upon Simmel (form vs. content, social geometry) and Durkheim (sui generis, social facts) to critique both simplistic reductionism and holistic puritanism, and to establish Durkheimian emergentism as a viable alternative to both.

We then move on to Mead, who anticipates a truly comparative sociology (e.g. his contrasting of societies with colonies and herds), and whose explicit biologism (e.g., his insistence on monistic parallelism – to the point of explaining the importance of the spinal column in his model) is widely overlooked by sociologists. After working through his argument for its essentially social nature of the mind by way of language and symbol, we draw upon Dunbar’s social brain hypothesis, some of Turner’s & Maryanski’s recent work, and other accounts to demonstrate that such models seriously underestimate just how thoroughly and fundamentally social the mind really is. Meanwhile, Mead’s behaviorism (also studiously overlooked by much of the discipline) provides an opportunity to contrast such general-purpose processor models - the failures of which were the undoing of ontological behaviorism - with prepared learning models, culminating in a discussion of the “Swiss Army Mind” and Homo Duplex alternatives.

Later in the course, Berger & Luckmann’s concept of “world openness” (another intimation of inter-specific sociology) and their elaboration of the mechanisms by which the nomos is acquired, goes hand in hand with a consideration of neural development processes and of the mirror neurons which make contagion and imitation primary means of socialization. Likewise, their treatment of the habituation – legitimization cycle facilitates a neat discussion of the evolution of the automatization and cognitive dissonance mechanisms which drive it.

When the course turns to issues of selfhood, we begin again with Simmel – this time his treatment of the evolution of the self as an artifact of the dissipation of the primordial tribal identity – and use that background to both engage again with Mead, and to elaborate the modern burdens of selfhood a la Gergen, and the physiology of escaping from it a la Baumeister.

At other points in the course, Mauss launches an exploration of reciprocity as part of the human moral quiver, Goffman’s focus on given-off signs opens a discussion of the primacy of the preverbal in human sociality, and Hochschild’s concept of deep acting nicely merges with research on facial feedback mechanisms.

Since I’m sure the reader can easily generate their own, and likely better, ways of sowing biological and evolutionary seeds into the rich soil of social psychology, I won’t belabor my point any further. I hope that what I’ve conveyed is that at least in this domain, and surely many others, it is entirely possible to reframe much of the sociological canon in terms of Biological and Evolutionary thought in ways that demonstrate to the next generation of sociologists (and citizens) their mutual compatibility and conisience across the curriculum.
Book Review


Review by Rosemary Hopcroft

In this book, Barrett critiques what she refers to as the “classic view of emotion.” She describes this classical view of emotion as follows: we all have emotions built in at birth and that are activated when something goes on around us. We broadcast our emotions to the world by way of our facial expressions and body language, and others can read those facial expressions and body language. The collection of changes that occur inside and outside our body when we feel a particular emotion are distinctive and can be referred to as a “fingerprint” of that emotion. Our emotions are artifacts of evolution, having long ago been advantageous for our survival. As such they are universal, found in every person in every part of the world. Last, emotions are at odds with rationality.

In Chapter 1 of the book, she rebuts the idea that each emotion has an associated collection of changes that occur inside and outside a person’s body when they feel an emotion, or its own distinctive “fingerprint”. She says that the search for a single distinctive physical fingerprint of the bodily signs of each emotion has not been successful, whether it be measures of heart rate or measures of the electrical signals that make the facial muscles move. The conclusion has to be that the same emotion involves different bodily responses across different contexts, individuals and studies. Variation is the norm. She does note that the statistical patterns found in brain imaging studies of emotion do correlate with whether the subject is feeling happy or sad, and these patterns are significantly different, but argues that they are averages, not a particular fingerprint for an emotion. No one individual is likely to display this statistical average.

She also gives evidence (Chapter 2) that there is no one fear center in the brain. Neuroscience shows that any particular brain area or network contributes to many emotional states. She uses this to argue against the model of the “triune brain” the idea that the brain has layers with cognitive circuitry layered on top of the emotional circuitry, and says the brain regions cannot be divided up that neatly.

In Chapter 3, she argues that facial expressions are not a reliable diagnostic fingerprint of emotion. She notes that the studies used to have people sort photographs according to the emotion being felt by the person in the picture always have a list of words for different emotions displayed next to the picture. In the absence of those words, when people have to freely sort pictures based on the portrayed emotions they do much less well. She argues that this shows that there is no one universal “face” for each of the different emotions that is universally recognizable by all.

Barrett describes the generation of emotions (Chapter 4) in the brain as follows. She says that pleasant or unpleasant feelings come from an ongoing process inside you called interoception. She describes an interoceptive network of interconnected regions in your brain that creates emotion. To simplify, she describes this interoceptive network as having two parts. First, there is the region that represents sensations inside your body which she refers to as your primary interoceptive cortex. This receives sensory inputs from the heart, lungs, kidneys, skin, muscles and so on. Second there is the body budgeting region. Using its past experience, the body budgeting regions makes predictions about what is going on using the sensory feedback from your body as regards the best way to keep you alive and well. This region makes predictions, which become simulations of sensations and movements. The neurons in the primary interoceptive cortex compare the simulation to the incoming sensory input, computing any relevant prediction error, completing the loop, and ultimately create your interoceptive sensations. Sometimes these interoceptive sensations are transformed into sights, sounds, thoughts, memories, and sometimes they are transformed into emotions (page 69).

How does this happen? This is described in Chapter 5 as follows. You categorize some of those sensations using concepts you have learned during childhood. Your brain employs concepts to make interoceptive sensory signals meaningful, creating an explanation for where they came from, what they refer to in the world, and how to act on them.”

“Your brain employs concepts to make interoceptive sensory signals meaningful, creating an explanation for where they came from, what they refer to in the world, and how to act on them.”
EMOTION

Continued from 5

can make you sick, how the classical view of emotions influences the law (not well), and whether animals experience emotion (no, we just think they do).

In a nutshell, Barrett’s argument is that the classical view of emotion is entirely wrong. Emotions are not innate, although the capability to create them is. They are not universal but vary from culture to culture, they are not triggered, but created by individuals. “They emerge as a combination of the physical properties of your body giving sensory input, a flexible brain that wires itself to whatever environment it develops in, and your culture and upbringing, which provide that environment.” Emotions are real, but only real in that they are a product of human agreement by people in the same society.

While the book is a good overview of current understanding of how the mind works by simulating and predicting and correcting those predictions using sensory input from the world, Barrett overstates her case for the importance of culture in creating emotion. She sets up something of a straw man in stating that the classical view implies a single distinctive “footprint” for each emotion. As she notes, there is no single distinctive footprint, but rather a range of various ways of expressing and experiencing a particular emotion. Yet just because a particular emotion, say, fear, is expressed and experienced differently by different people at different times, that is not the same thing as saying there is nothing that we can label as the emotion “fear.” Just like there are a huge variety of dogs, there is a set of creatures we can label under the heading dog that distinguishes it from other four legged creatures. She herself notes that her own lab has found statistical patterns in the brain scans of people who are experiencing a particular emotion, and these patterns do differ significantly by the emotion being experienced, but she dismisses these patterns as statistical averages and not as distinctive “fingerprints.”

She uses the same straw man argument to critique Darwin’s The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals. Because Darwin suggested that there are some universal emotions experienced by all humans that are found across the animal kingdom, she accuses him of essentialism and claims that he suggests that each emotion has a specific, consistent fingerprint, which they don’t have. Yet Darwin would not have denied that universal emotions may manifest in a wide variety of ways depending on the individual and the situation, but that didn’t mean that there is nothing that we can de-label to a photo of a person experiencing an emotion if they are given a set of labels to choose from rather than if they are asked to freely assign an emotion to a face is tenuous. Rather than meaning that people cannot recognize facial expressions of emotion without prompting, this may just show that emotions can be ambiguous (particularly in photos). It does not necessarily mean that people across cultures cannot recognize various universal emotions in the face, particularly in real life. Further, Barrett may overstate the difference in accuracy between the two types of studies. Other cross cultural studies show similar accuracy in forced and free choice of associations of photos with emotion words (e.g. Haidt and Keltner, 1999).

Barrett also overstates the demise of the usefulness of the concept of the triune brain. While and interpretation of emotions without accepting that emotions are therefore entirely social constructions.

“We can accept that culture and culturally based concepts play a role in the expression and interpretation of emotions without accepting that emotions are therefore entirely social constructions.”

REFERENCES