

PERSPECTIVES

NEWSLETTER OF THE ASA THEORY SECTION

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SOCIAL PROGRESS AND SOCIAL DECAY

THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF SOLIDARITY



Marion Fourcade - *University of California, Berkeley*[1]

“Researchers in the sciences of society are bound up with the human equipment of life together: their intervention is not limited to observing and modelling but contributes unfailingly to the elaboration of this equipment in virtue of the systematic viewpoint they adopt.” (Thévenot, 2007, p243)

For the past two years, I have been having an on and off conversation with my colleague Christopher Muller on the topic of solidarity, a concept made salient by recent political shifts in the US and throughout the world [2]. Metaphors of societies infected by pathological organisms, fraying at the seams, imploding from the center, or on the verge of erupting into open conflict easily fill our disciplinary imagination as we try to make sense of the contemporary social and political environment. Our times feel unusually precarious and unpredictable, roiled by economic and technological disruption, widespread defiance and divisiveness, and

shifting power plays across the globe. What is it that will hold individuals and groups together in the future?

These collective woes feel very real, and Chris and I both nod in agreement because we think we know what it is that we are missing. At the same time, we would be hard-pressed to explain it with any real precision. *Solidarity* is easy to invoke, but hard to grasp. Eminently intuitive but fundamentally underspecified, it means different things to different people. To the sociologist, solidarity will refer primarily to models of human sociality, to the types of ties that bind people and groups together, like forms of exchange, gift-giving, and association. The political economist might, instead, associate the notion with the redistribution of resources from rich to poor, with insurance against risk, and with the meaning and function of the public household. To the student of politics, solidarity might evoke collective mobilization, the dynamics of ideology and affiliation, a self-fulfilling belief in a common fate (Ansell 1991),

as in the eponymous Polish trade union, Solidarność. The psychologist, meanwhile, will be reminded of the communicative and emotional processes by which feelings of empathy, understanding, and affinity are generated.

The social sciences are built on the premise that the success of human society depends on the successful accomplishment of solidarity in some form or other, from the development of common understandings, collective goals and ideals, to the intensity of exchange, cooperation, and reciprocity. For sociologists especially, this presumption gives a sense of coherence to the idea of “society” itself, and which in turn may underpin our epistemological confidence that the world can indeed be explained. While “solidarity” itself is too vague an idea to be a directly observable in the world, our disciplinary commitment to its latent presence underpins all manner of measures and diagnoses of interpersonal and intergroup dependencies, collective responsibilities, common interests, emotions and sympathies.

Holistic metaphors of unity and coherence have been with sociology since its beginning, from Comte to Durkheim, from Spencer to Parsons (Levine 1995). Social theorists have long mixed the sheer fact of “living together in the world” (Arendt 1958) together with endorsements of particular forms of society. Solidarity sits uneasily between the descriptive and the normative, blurring the distinction between the object it claims to qualify (the social process) and the qualification itself (normal/pathological; good/bad). As sociologists we tend to value solidarity as such, but the concept is Janus-faced. In practice, the politics of collective belonging

and organization is rarely unconditional. Some of our most celebrated solidaristic achievements were built on exclusion and division (Rana 2014). Think, for instance, of how the US labor movement often chose white solidarity over class solidarity (DuBois 1999); or of the nativist and racist nature of the extension of economic and social rights during and after the New Deal (Quadagno 1996, Fox 2012, Katznelson 2014); or of the persistence of beliefs about those deserving and undeserving of public assistance (Bloemraad et al. 2019). We can also recall the classist, and sometimes racist, myopia of many recognition-focused social movements (starting with the early women’s movement), the anomic splitting up of recognition claims into ever smaller “groupist” subcategories (Brubaker 2002), the difficulty of deriving social power from claims

of social injury (Brown 1995), and the propensity of “affirmative” recognition remedies to generate resentment and backlash from those in the unmarked category (Fraser 1995).

While it is easy, in retrospect, to acknowledge these pathologies of solidarity, the concept’s double-edge persists in subtle ways even amongst those nominally committed to inclusive and expansionary conceptions of society. In a dilemma at least as

old as Durkheim, for example, we may have come to look at the subjective experience of others as radically different and intrinsically unbridgeable, and regard this very state of affairs as a form of violence. Solidarity’s political conundrum is that (to use Nancy Fraser’s terms) the cultural politics of recognition often trumps the socioeconomic politics of redistribution.

And yet, as Fraser foresaw, another tension is possible, between a “transformative politics” which plays down

“...we tend to value solidarity as such, but the concept is Janus-faced. In practice, the politics of collective belonging and organization is rarely unconditional. Some of our most celebrated solidaristic achievements were built on exclusion and division...”

group boundaries *in both* the economic and cultural spheres, and an “affirmative politics” which makes them more salient. That tension is surfacing today. On the one hand, progressives aspire toward ever more inclusive economic, social and cultural rights, such as universal health care, basic income, free college tuition, marriage equality, gender equality and un-differentiation, climate action (which by its nature has to be global), the thinning out of the distinction between legal and illegal migration, or the celebration of spontaneous acts of unconditional “fraternity” against growing institutional restrictions on it. On the other hand, an affirmative politics of a different kind has asserted itself, determined to promote deservingness as a criterion of inclusion, to take away cultural rights in the name of the affirmative beliefs and feelings of “the majority,” to turn the national polity into a symbolic and material fortress, and to restore pride in an unsavory historical past. Both of these politics arguably feed off of each other. Each side poses a threat to the other side, and thus their confrontation provokes a stronger response from both. (Mizrachi 2016) The re-appropriation of affirmative recognition and redistribution by the political right may have the effect of driving the left away from group-based claims and toward the transformative terrain of economic and cultural universalism –and vice versa. Whether we are witnessing the last and foul gasp of a disappearing world, or the painful birth of a new one, who knows (Fraser 2019). But in the uncertain struggle between the two lie the promises and perils of solidarity in the 21st century.

Notes

[1] My thanks to Chris Muller and Kieran Healy for comments and suggestions.

[2] This conversation has motivated the two invited 2019 ASA panels, on “Social Theory and Social Progress” (organized by Chris Muller), and “Social Theory and Social Decay” (organized by yours truly).

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THEORY SECTION ASA SESSIONS

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2019

8:30-9:30am

Sheraton New York, Second Floor,
Empire Ballroom East

Theory Section Refereed Roundtables

Organizer: Jordanna Matlon (American
University)

9:30-10:10am

Sheraton New York, Second Floor,
Empire Ballroom East

Theory Section Business Meeting

10:30-12:10pm

Sheraton New York, Lower Level,
Chelsea

Social Theory and Social Data

Organizer and Presider:
Kieran Healy (Duke University)

Social theory has a productive but uneasy relationship with the data sources of its time. Theorists often of necessity go “beyond the data” as they make their arguments, but fruitful periods of theoretical innovation tend to coincide with the development of new tools for collecting and analyzing data. This session will explore the practical relationship between theory and data, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities facing social theory in an era often characterized by the scale, scope, and social character of data.

Presenters:

- **Philip Soeren Brandt** (University of Mannheim), *Data (and) Science(s): The Double Movement of Continuity and Experimentation in Knowledge Production*
- **Vincent Yung** (Northwestern University), *Sociometry and Group Dynamics: Early Visions for the Quantification of Social Structure*
- **Jen Schradie** (Sciences Po), *The Great Equalizer Reproduces Inequality: How the Digital Divide is a Class Power Divide*
- **Angèle Christin** (Stanford University), *Theorizing Data: A Typology of Effects*

Discussant: Juan-Pablo Pardo-Guerra (UC San Diego)

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2019

2:30-4:10am

**Sheraton New York, Second Floor,
Empire Ballroom East**

This panel will be devoted to analyzing the transformation of social and political bodies as illiberalism, autocracy and violence take root. Panelists are invited to reflect on how old and new waves of exclusion, destruction and democratic decline throughout the world challenge both existing social theories and the practices and policies these theories might have inspired.

Social Theory and Social Decay: Illiberalism, Autocracy, and Violence

Organizer and Presider: Marion Fourcade (University of California - Berkeley)

Presenters:

- **Jason Ferguson** (University of California-Berkeley), *The Great Refusal: The West, the Rest and the Geopolitics of Homosexuality*
- **Aliza Luff** (University of California-Los Angeles), *Connecting Symbolic to Physical Violence and the Possibilities for Disruption*
- **Kim Scheppele** (Princeton University), *The Life and Death of Constitutional Democracy*
- **Evan Schofer** (University of California-Irvine), **Julia C. Lerch** (UC Irvine), and John W. Meyer (Stanford University), *Illiberal attacks on the university: political repression of higher education 1975-2018*

Discussant: Miguel Centeno (Princeton University)

4:30-6:10pm

**Sheraton New York, Lower Level,
Gramercy**

Lewis A. Coser Lecture And Salon

Organizer: Greta Krippner (University of Michigan)

Julian Go (Boston University)

Race, Agency, and the Epistemics of Empire

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2019

8:30-10:10am

**Sheraton New York, Third Floor,
Liberty 1**

While sociologists have always been keenly interested in the future conditions and likely trajectories of humanity, they are perhaps more reluctant “futurologists” than are other social scientists. This session rejects this reticence. What might the social, economic, and political world of our grandchildren look like? How do existing social theories help us make predictions about it, and/or do we need to craft new social theories to understand it? Panelists are invited to take up questions of what is likely to continue and what could – or must – change, in relation to any number of topics (e.g. climate change, genetics, artificial intelligence, war, populism, multiculturalism, capitalism, etc...).

Social Theory for Our Grandchildren: Humanity's Future in Theoretical Perspective

Organizers: Rebecca Elliot Marion Fourcade (University of California - Berkeley)

President: Alondra Nelson, Columbia University, Social Science Research Council and Institute for Advanced Study

Presenters:

- **Zeke Baker** (University of California-Davis), *A Political Genealogy of Meteorological Government*
- **Lindsey A. Freeman** (Simon Fraser University), *Cosmonaut in the Post Office: A Sociology of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone*
- **Albert J. Bergesen** (University of Arizona), *Max Weber in Outer Space*
- **Jacob Gates Foster** (University of California-Los Angeles), *Is Sociology Ready for its Copernican Moment?*

Discussant: Rebecca Elliott, London School of Economics

2:30-4:10pm

**Sheraton New York, Lower Level,
Sugar Hill**

This panel is devoted to the past and present uses of social and political theory for crafting hopeful futures. Panelists will explore—and critique—the ethical foundations, concrete implementations, and prospective designs that have fostered or may foster practices that enhance solidarity, freedom, democracy, and equality. Panelists are invited to reflect on the successes and failures of these efforts, as well as on the role that the social sciences have played, or might play, in them.

Social Theory and Social Progress: Freedom, Solidarity, Democracy, Equality

Organizer and President: Christopher Muller (University of California - Berkeley)

Presenters:

- **Ruha Benjamin** (Princeton University), *Real Utopias & Racial Fictions: Experimenting with Speculative Methods from DuBois to Data4BlackLives*
- **Monica Prasad** (Northwestern University), *Did it Work in Theory? Lessons from Graduate Students Conducting Problem-Solving in Sociology*
- **Gianpaolo Baiocchi** (NYU), *We, the Sovereign*
- **Elizabeth Wrigley-Field** (University of Minnesota), *Contagion and Consent, Autonomy and Expertise: Democracy in the Context of Infection Disease*

6:30-8:30pm

**Papillon Bistro & Bar
22 E 54th St. New York, NY 10022**

THEORY SECTION RECEPTION

Joint reception with the Culture and the History of Sociology Sections

New York, NY, August 9th, 2019

JUNIOR THEORISTS SYMPOSIUM

THE NEW SCHOOL'S STARR FOUNDATION HALL
Room UL102, University Center, 63 5th Ave, New York

8:30 – 9:00 | Coffee and Bagels: sponsored by the Department of Sociology, The New School

9:00 – 10:50 | Session 1: Future, Memory, Rupture, and Collective Meaning-Making.

Discussant: Isaac Reed

- **Zachary M. Wilmot**, Brown University. "Towards a Theory of Revolutionary Formations: How Revolutions Shaped Social Change in Iran and Nicaragua, 1979-1990."
- **Birgan Gokmenoglu**, London School of Economics. "Politics of Anticipation: Temporality and Social Movement Theory."
- **Lily Ivanova**, University of British Columbia. "Understanding Genocide: Advancing a Sociology of Thinking for Theory and Culture."

10:50 – 11:00 | Break

11:00 – 12:50 | Session 2: Navigating the Politics of Place, Space, and Objects. Discussant:

Amin Ghaziani

- **Jaclyn Wypler**, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Queer Farmers: Re-theorizing Queerness and Rurality"
- **Andrew McCumber**, University of California, Santa Barbara. "Killing for Life: Species Eradication and the Ecology of Meaning in Ecuador's Galapagos Islands."
- **Brian R. Schram**, University of Waterloo. "Objects of Desire and Desiring Objects: Assembl(ag)ing an Object-Oriented Sociology of Online Sexuality."

12:50 – 2:00 | Lunch

2:00-2:30 | 2018 Junior Theorist Award Winner's Presentation

- **Erin McDonnell**, University of Notre Dame. "Patchwork Leviathan: How Pockets of Bureaucratic Governance Flourish within Institutionally Diverse Developing States."

2:30 – 4:20 | Session 3: Institutional processes of categorization and racialization. Discussant:

Adia Wingfield

- **Katherine Jensen**, Tulane University. "Racializing Refugees: The Racial Logics of Asylum in Brazil."
- **Amanda Cheong**, Princeton University. "Legal Omission as Political Strategy: Motivations for and Consequences of Deliberate Contractions of the State's Administrative Power."
- **James Jones**. "How Congress Works." Rutgers University, Newark.

4:30 – 5:45 | After-panel: "Teaching Theory: Debates, Tensions, and Future Directions."

Robin Wagner-Pacifici (The New School), **Stefan Timmermans** (University of California, Los Angeles), **Shamus Khan** (Columbia University), and **Fabio Rojas** (Indiana University, Bloomington).

5:45 – ? | Theory in the Wild: Beer, wine, and good conversation (off-site venue TBC)

JTS is student-run and relies on donations:

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DE-COLONIZING THE CANON: THE PLACE OF 'RACE'



Zine Magubane - *Boston College*

When postcolonial theory arrived on the academic scene nearly three decades ago it transformed the humanities. Anthropology was hit particularly hard by the injunction to examine how its structures of knowledge were implicated in the political and economic structures of colonialism. Sociology has, until now, managed to skirt many of the messy academic realities that Anthropology was forced to face, given its position as the academic discipline devoted to studying 'the Other'. Sociology, which defined itself as the discipline that studied 'modern societies', escaped scrutiny precisely *because of* how colonial structures of knowledge positioned it vis-a-vis Anthropology. And yet, this day of reckoning is finally here. Sociology must also face whether, how, and to what extent its interpretive frameworks, core analytical categories,

methods of analysis, and data have been impacted by the colonial encounter.

In 1997, with the publication of the pathbreaking article 'Why is Classical Theory Classical,' Raewyn Connell led the charge by demonstrating that the sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism. The somewhat provocative claim that sociology provided a 'fix' to the contradictions that empire posed for liberalism by "displacing imperial power over the colonized into an abstract space of difference" was met with some resistance (1530). In a rejoinder whose title was anything but subtle, Randall Collins dismissed much of what Connell said as a 'Sociological Guilt Trip'. Just shy of two decades later, Aldon Morris faced a similar kind of response to his book *The Scholar Denied*. At a 2016 ASA town hall meeting, Morris was accused of "trashing white sociologists" when he suggested that sociology's "white origin story" was wrong (Morris 2017: 207). The hostile response that Morris and Connell received points to three substantive subject

areas wherein the decolonization ‘rubber’ meets the sociological ‘road’: ‘race’ and the classical canon.

Sociologists are, amongst the social science disciplines, the most attached to the idea of a canon. One of the reasons for this peculiar attachment is the diffuse and imprecise character of our presumed object of study—society. Whereas economists have ‘the market’, historians have ‘the past’, political science has ‘government’, and anthropology has the ‘other’, sociology has ‘society’—the ultimate abstraction. Furthermore, sociology has a proliferation of subfields that don’t even begin to approach unified coherence—culture, sports, history, gender, race, organizations, global (just to name a few) all boast their own sections

“[D]ecolonizing the discipline will require a thorough reexamination and revision of sociology’s history, with particular attention being paid to how sociology dealt with the so-called ‘Negro Problem’”

under the broad disciplinary umbrella. We have neither a single unifying theory nor agreed upon method. The canon thus has a uniquely integrating function. Not in the sense that it provides a single theory or method, far from it. Rather, it provides a shared ritual. Every graduate and undergraduate student must take it, every working sociology professor (in the United States at least) has taken it and every department teaches it. And the departments all seem to teach the same core people (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) although clearly not in the same way and, of course supplemented by a dizzying array of other scholars, depending upon

how individuals and departments choose to define the canon. What is important here is that sociologists rely on a shared sense of their own history in order to create the type of unity and coherence that other disciplines seem to have.

When Connell deconstructed the canon, she made a point that is, although less amplified and controversial in the text’s reception, is no less important. Mainly, that after the disciplinary crisis that struck the discipline after WWI, when its core organizing principle of *progress* was evacuated of legitimacy, sociology centered itself not only on the abstraction ‘society’ but also in practical terms turned its attention to “difference and disorder within the metropole” (Connell 1997: 1535). A point that Connell does not make, but that I feel is central to understanding the deep implications of decolonizing sociology, is how central the issue of race was to the ‘difference and disorder’ in the metropole that Connell identifies as the practical (yet unacknowledged) ‘substance’ behind the abstraction ‘society’. For much of its history sociology “monopolized” empirical inquiry into the plight of African Americans (Stanfield 1985: 20). This empirical focus gave the discipline a distinct identity and legitimacy. Indeed, during the 1920s, the period that Connell identifies as having ushered in the focus on ‘difference and disorder’ in the metropole in practice and ‘society’ in theory exactly coincided with the period wherein sociology established itself as “the one among the social sciences most persistently committed to a social understanding of race in American life” (McKee 1993: 101).

Although sociology was committed to understanding racism in American life, it did not do so very successfully. James McKee noted that one of the more spectacular pieces of evidence of the discipline’s failure was its utter inability to foresee the massive social explosions of the 1960s. McKee attributes this failure, in no small part, to the standpoint of the people who stood (and oftentimes continue to stand) at the

center of the discipline: people who are gendered as male, categorized as White, and who hail from the professional managerial class. Gurinder Bhambra summed up the essence of the problem well with her observation that:

Race was viewed as politically important except by those who benefitted from its contemporary organization and who, in the process of being professional sociologists and ignoring the reality of the political conditions of their time legitimated the existing social inequalities of class, race, and gender, within American society (2014: 478).

Crucially, therefore, the shift in focus to ‘difference and disorder in the metropole’ (and thus ‘race’ in a peculiarly American way) coincided with sociology’s deep suppression of the discipline’s roots in colonialism via the construction of the classical canon which bestowed sociology with a new ‘origin’ story. The fact that “the making of the canon deleted the discourse of imperialism from sociology” (Connell 1997: 1545) is deeply connected to the ways in which race is positioned epistemologically in sociology’s conceptual and interpretive architecture. Therefore, decolonizing the discipline will require a thorough reexamination and revision of sociology’s history, with particular attention being paid to how sociology dealt with the so-called ‘Negro Problem’. This historical reexamination also holds general implications for how we might lend concreteness to the very expansive and sometimes inchoate process we call disciplinary ‘decolonization’.

Counter-Histories and Connected Sociologies: Remembering the Past Differently

Why is it that attempts to decolonize the discipline are so readily misperceived as ‘trashing’ one group or another or trying to pull a ‘guilt trip’? One of the sources of the misunderstanding stems from a lack of

understanding on the part of at least some sociologists that the ways in which sociology’s origin story was constructed has important conceptual implications. Connell notes that “none of the elected fathers actually motivates the empirical activities of post-1920 sociology at all well” (Connell 1997: 1545). This is precisely

“A key aspect of declonizing... involves reading the classics differently... seeing how many of the concepts that are central to sociological thinking took the shape that they did because of the founders’ engagement with what Bhambra (2013) usefully terms ‘the colonial global’”

because of how even the discipline’s recognized founders are remembered. Take, for example, Auguste Comte. Although he is not well recognized for having done so, he did write quite a bit on slavery—a fact that has been written extensively about only in one journal, however, *The Journal of Negro Education* by a sociologist working at a historically Black college, Fisk University (Ireland 1951). The author of the three-volume definitive history of Comte’s life, Mary Pickering, also saw fit to write an article, “Auguste Comte and the Return to Primitivism” which described how Comte “repeatedly condemned missionaries in West and Central Africa for their disrespect of primitive populations” (1998: 65). Comte was not the only one

of our recognized founders to take on issues of slavery and colonialism. The work of Andrew Zimmerman (2016) and Kevin Anderson (2016) demonstrates that Marx also wrote extensively about American slavery and European colonialism. Andrew Zimmerman (2006; 2010) and Lawrence Scaff (2011) have also written extensively on how Max Weber's analysis of the 'Polish Question' in Germany and the 'Negro Question' in the United States and West Africa "fundamentally shaped his social scientific work" (Zimmerman 2006: 53). Likewise, Emile Durkheim not only relied heavily on ethnographic work on Native Americans and indigenous people in Australia to make his arguments on organic and mechanical solidarity on *The Division of Labor in Society*, he also wrote specifically about the relationship between ethnology and sociology, noting that "ethnography rendered great services to sociology when the latter was formed" (1907: 209).

A key aspect of decolonizing the sociological canon, therefore, involves reading the classics differently, with an eye to seeing how many of the concepts that are central to sociological thinking—the social organism, the social group and the processes that are central to our understanding like social cohesion, social disorganization—took the shape that they did because of the founders' engagement with what Bhambra (2013) usefully terms "the colonial global" (295). Max Weber, for example, first developed the ideas that would one day be expressed in their fullest form in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* from his interest in forced labor in the American South. Schiff (2011) demonstrates convincingly that Weber's contact with W.E.B. Du Bois and his travels through the American South were eventually abstracted from their immediate socio-political context, reworked, and made a key part of the conceptual apparatuses of his work on class, status, nationality, domination and authority.

Weber's connection to Du Bois, explored by Schiff

(2011), Zimmerman and (2010), and Morris (2016) all point to another key part of the decolonization effort—the restoration of intellectuals that were excluded. The period that Connell identifies as the period during which the canon was formed—the 1920s—was also the time when America was a thoroughly Jim Crow society. This dynamic worked its way into the writing of sociology's new origin story in a particularly insidious way. Just as sociology determined that 'difference and disorder in the metropole' would be its substantive content, while the canon would provide a new disciplinary genealogy, sociology was also professionalizing as a 'Jim Crow' discipline. As Bhambra points out, "U.S sociology has been historically segregated in that, at least until the 1960s, there were two distinct institutionally organized traditions of sociological thought—one black and one white" (2014: 472). As a Jim Crow discipline, sociology did not include the thought or writings of African Americans, who were writing about difference and disorder in the metropole from an entirely different vantage point—one that recognized that their 'difference' was neither a function of their innate qualities, nor even a true social fact. The construction of African Americans as 'different' stemmed primarily from a racist social ontology. Likewise, what mainstream sociology defined as 'disorder' African American sociologists recognized as being quite functional for the American social system. Hence, Anna Julia Cooper observed that American social thought had yet to develop "intelligent and sympathetic comprehension of the interests and special needs of the Negro" (1886: 31). There are many other names besides Cooper and Du Bois that can be added under the general heading 'African-American founders'. Charles S. Johnson arrived at the University of Chicago in 1917 and wrote *The Negro in Chicago*, which was the first comprehensive social scientific analysis of American racism in the post WWI era. Johnson also wrote *In the Shadow of the Plantation and Collapse of the Cotton Tenancy*. The former was a descriptive study of African American farmers in

Alabama. The latter was about agrarian reform in the plantation south. Monroe Nathan Work was the first African American to publish an article, "Crime Among the Negroes in Chicago," in the *American Journal of Sociology*. In the article he refuted the idea that "Negro degeneracy" was the root cause of rising crime rates and instead proposed that "the economic stress under which he has labored appears to be the main factor" (223). Johnson, Work, DuBois, and Cooper did not seek to erase the history of colonialism, slavery, and racism. Nor were they afraid to make America's participation in these systems of oppression a key component of their sociological analysis. Thus, a revision of the canon would not only include them as so-called 'different voices' but would insist that 'difference' actually "make a difference to the original categories" (2007: 878, emphasis in original). Central to the decolonization effort as well will be to rigorously engage these scholars in ways that interrogate and emphasize their intellectual disagreements. It is long overdue that we treat these scholars as representative of particular strains of thought, each of which engaged not only modernity, but also the interpretive categories of sociology differently, rather than lump them under the homogenizing label of 'African-American thought'.

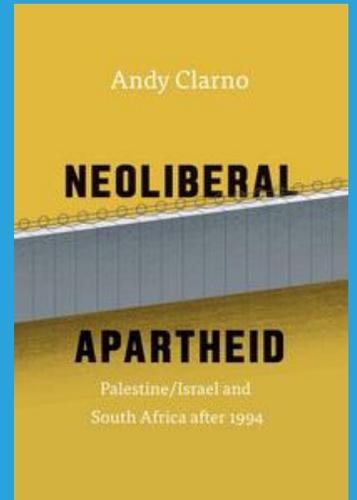
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BOOK SYMPOSIUM

NEOLIBERAL APARTHEID: PALESTINE/ISRAEL AND SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994

BY ANDY CLARNO



Real Type Formation through Global Comparative Work



Larissa Buchholz
Northwestern University

Andy Clarno's book *Neoliberal Apartheid* is not an obvious choice for me to write about [1]. I am a sociologist of culture and my work

engages with the dynamics of cultural production and art markets in a global context. I am not a specialist of the political economy of the Global South, let alone, of South Africa and Palestine. Nonetheless, through my substantive global research, I have developed a strong interest in what I call transnational/global theorizing. After years in which global and transnational sociology has primarily focused on the critique of methodological nationalism, we need more work that interrogates the

distinctive challenges and strategies of constructing concepts and theories across borders per se in-depth. It is from this angle, that is, the angle of transnational/global theorizing, that I want to discuss Andy Clarno's book.

To foreshadow my argument, I would like to suggest that Clarno's book offers us an exemplary study of how comparative and global analysis can be articulated to pursue a unique path to concept formation—which George Steinmetz and Phil Gorski have discussed under the heading of a “real type,” which they contrast with Max Weber's well-known “ideal type” [2].

Before I go into explaining more what they mean by

real type and how I think it applies to the core concept that the book develops, namely “Neoliberal Apartheid,” let us first examine the empirical puzzle that animates the book and that informs its analytical approach: Clarno begins by invoking the beginning of the 1990s, when both South Africa and Palestine/Israel underwent political negotiations for greater liberation. Fast forward to the new millennium and we now know that these negotiations had rather different outcomes: Black South Africans established a democratic state and gained formal legal equality. The majority of Palestinians on the other hand won neither freedom nor equality, and—as the book reveals in gripping detail—are in certain ways even worse off.

A conventional comparative analysis might stop here and declare *this* as the main puzzle for investigation. The goal would be to find out what accounts for these dissimilar political trajectories, and perhaps through applying the well-trodden path of Mill’s method of difference, to identify the necessary and sufficient causal factors that underlie successful *political* decolonization.

But that is not Clarno’s actual interest. Looking beyond the political side of the transitions in South Africa and Palestine/Israel, his puzzle is how *despite* these political differences, there are striking similarities in the *socio-economic* transformations in the same period: growing inequality, racialized poverty, and advanced security systems for policing the racialized poor.

It does not take long until the book tells us the main suspect for these striking similarities: over the past two decades both contexts went through radical neoliberal restructuring. It also tells us that the adoption of neoliberal policies by the Palestinian Authority, on the one hand, and by the newly formed South African democratic state, on the other, were due *both* to power imbalances during political negotiations—including vis-à-vis international financial institutions and what Clarno calls the “global capitalist elite”—and by their inherent ideological appeal: market based economic policies with their quasi “color-blind” emphasis on individual achievement seemed to offer a meritocratic approach to overcome decades of racialized capitalism. The rest of the book then goes on to detail through an in-depth

comparative analysis how exactly the opposite happened. Clarno gradually develops the concept of “Neo-liberal Apartheid” to argue that in both South Africa and Palestine/Israel a new form of *socio-economic racial domination* has emerged and to carve out the essential characteristics of this distinctive form of racial domination.

Now, let me return to my initial point about real types, which we can best understand if we contrast it with Weber’s definition of an ideal type. I quote:

“An ideal type is formed by the one-side accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena,

“Clarno gradually develops the concept of ‘Neo-liberal Apartheid’ to argue that in both South Africa and Palestine/Israel a new form of socio-economic racial domination has emerged and to carve out the essential characteristics of this distinctive form of racial domination”

which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct ... In its conceptual purity, this mental construct ... cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality" [3].

By contrast, a real type does not hinge on the abstract idealization of empirical phenomena in the above sense. Rather, it seeks to capture social structures in accordance with their actually existing ontological characteristics. Instead of the "one-sided accentuation" what is at stake is a mode of "conceptual abstraction" that seeks to "understand why a particular social structure or a particular class of social structures are the kinds of structures that they are and have the sorts of causal powers that they do" [4]. In other words, the formation of a real type is, above all, about "identifying a set of elements and their interrelations without which those social structures would be something else and/or would not have particular kinds of causal powers" [5].

To better grasp how the idea of a real type is distinct from Weber's ideal type, we need to recognize how it is grounded in a critical realist ontology. The latter differentiates between three ontological levels: the actual, the empirical, and the "deep" real (in a metaphorical sense) [6]. The actual refers to observable events. The distinction of an empirical level underlines that any event can be experienced in rather different ways. The third level, the deep real, in turn, stresses that events do not simply happen, but are governed by various generative mechanisms or causal powers. In view of such a threefold stratification of reality, ideal type abstraction can be located at the

level of the empirical, as the quote by Weber above conveys [7]. Real type formation, in comparison, seeks to break through to the third, the "deep" dimension of reality--to delineate distinct kinds of social structures with distinct causal properties [8].

Having briefly sketched how Steinmetz and Gorski define a real type, let us look at how Clarno's articulation of comparative analysis and a global outlook has served him in his own formation of a real type like concept.

“‘Neoliberal Apartheid’ offers us an intriguing view into how comparative and global analysis can be articulated to animate a particular kind of concept formation: namely that of a real type with potential global generalizability”

On the one hand, the global perspective contributes to his comparative analysis, first of all, by helping to identify the common factors that stood at the beginning of the striking similarities in the systems of socio-economic racial domination that emerged, namely the adoption of neoliberal policies as they were propagated by

international financial institutions and the "global capitalist elite" around that time. The message is clear: we cannot understand the developments in both contexts if we approach them solely in endogenous nation-state terms and look only e.g. at local elites and their negotiations. So far so good.

Yet, on the other hand: what is the job that the insertion of a comparative framework into a global perspective performs in his book and how does it serve his real type formation? On the surface, the book shows us how global dynamics--like the spread of a global policy paradigm--never play out homogeneously in local contexts. Rather, they become articulated with local histories, power structures, and cultures, entailing what he refers to at some point as "hybrid neoliberal

configurations.” For example, in both South Africa and Palestine neoliberalization went along with the growth of security systems: in one context this growth is driven by a private industry, in the other it is rather state led.

But that is, I believe, not the main innovation for theorizing in global analysis per se. We already have very insightful global comparative work by e.g. Marion Fourcade and Sarah Babb [9] or Monica Prasad [10], for example, which showed us *exactly that* in regard to neoliberal transformations for other cases. More generally, by now the argument to pay attention to the interaction of the global and the local is well-established for transnational theorizing, and there has been, indeed, a proliferation of various concepts to capture *exactly that*: not just hybridization, but also bricolage, localization, creolization, or glocalization etc.

But Clarno is actually not so much interested in developing yet another proof that there is no easy homogenization at work when we examine the diffusion of a global (economic) policy paradigm. I believe that in terms of transnational/global theorizing, something else is going on here, something that reveals how the comparative framework has served him in the construction of a real type:

By examining in detail how the adoption of neoliberal policies played out on the ground within divergent political transitions and within context-specific dynamics and configurations, Clarno creates a rich substantive basis that allows him to extract—in a grounded way and by exploiting the heuristic powers of analogy--what both settings share in the emerging systems of socio-economic inequality on a deeper level, despite empirical surface differences. That is, he looks for commonalities beneath epiphenomenal variation to carve out generic processes: namely marginalization, securitization and the proliferation of crises. The comparison thereby allows Clarno to identify these as necessary elements of a distinct kind

of socio-economic racial domination, which he then interrelates in his core concept “Neoliberal Apartheid.”

Importantly, we should not equate this approach with mere induction. Induction operates from the specific to the general, but remains at the same ontological level. What seems to be at issue here, by contrast, is a movement *across* levels (as explicated above), from the actual and empirical to the real dimension. And this analytical movement is what Critical Realists distinguish as retroduction, as a step in theorizing that aims “to arrive at what is characteristic and constitutive” of certain social structures and their “causal processes” [11]. In short, the comparative perspective on the local impact of a global policy paradigm provides the basis for an empirically grounded approach to abstraction that then draws upon retroduction to break into an ontologically deeper level of concept formation, which Steinmetz and Gorski so aptly call real type formation.

The specific comparative back and forth between South Africa and Palestine/Israel thereby informs also the particular critical charging of Clarno’s concept development. And it heightens the punch line for the moves of extension that he suggests at the end of the book: starting with South Africa, the apparently shining example of liberation and decolonization, that is, the exemplary case of a “post-apartheid state,” Clarno’s analysis uncovers growing inequality and a deeply racialized economy. Thus, he concludes, political apartheid has given way to economic apartheid. Once this conceptual move is made, and apartheid is extended beyond its legal-political definition, it becomes possible to transpose it further to Palestine/Israel, because on a deeper level of conceptual abstraction, the same generic processes of socio-economic racial domination are at work there too: growing inequality, marginalization, securitization and crises.

And once this generalization is made, and the real type “neoliberal apartheid” is constructed as a distinctive

kind of social structure across two cases, Clarno concludes by suggesting that it might be extended to other contexts worldwide, too. In regard to the latter, I wished that the book would have told us more. Yet it might not be difficult to imagine how “neoliberal apartheid” can arm analysts with a sharp and critical concept to look at not only what goes on in the Global South, but also in the very centers of the Global North: the ghettos of exclusion in the big cities of the US, the banlieues of Paris, or the racialized outskirts of London, and their very entrenchment in neoliberalized systems of racial economic domination.

Nonetheless, the main point of this contribution is to highlight that—at a more general theorizing level—the book “Neoliberal Apartheid” offers us an intriguing view into how comparative and global analysis can be articulated to animate a particular kind of concept formation: namely that of a real type with potential global generalizability. And perhaps it is the fact that we are dealing with a concept that, as I suggest, was formed as a real type rather than a one-sided accentuated ideal type, that the book may offer us powerful conceptual ammunition for critical analyses beyond South Africa and Palestine/Israel.

Notes

[1] This essay was originally written as a contribution to a panel on “Globalizing Ethnography: Comparison in the Sociological Imagination,” organized Claudio Benzecry and Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz at Northwestern University in November 2017. I thank the organizers for the invitation and the participants/audience for the inspiring discussions. Special thanks go to George Steinmetz and Julian Go for comments on an earlier version.

[2] While the notion of real type has a longer history in

the social sciences, George Steinmetz has introduced it into American Sociology from a critical realist perspective and has been collaborating with Phil Gorski on refining it as a distinctive realist approach to sociological concept formation, cf. Steinmetz and Gorski 2017.

[3] Weber 1903-1917/1949, 90.

[4] Gorski in Steinmetz and Gorski 2017.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bhaskar 1978.

[7] Steinmetz in Steinmetz and Gorski 2017.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002.

[10] Prasad 2006.

[11] Decoteau 2016, 71.

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“A Proper Book About San Francisco:” Response to Larissa Buchholz



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In *Neoliberal Apartheid*, I analyze political-economic restructuring in South Africa and Palestine/Israel since the early 1990s [1].

When I present my research, someone in the audience usually comments that the analysis could apply to the place where they live or work. More often than not, the person is an activist or politically-engaged scholar. They express a sense of familiarity, a recognition that the dynamics reshaping social relations in Johannesburg and Jerusalem are not entirely different than the dynamics in Chicago, Los Angeles, the US-Mexico border, or southern Europe. When the book was released, a scholar/activist in the Bay Area read the title and exclaimed: “Finally someone wrote a proper book about San Francisco” [2].

Neoliberal Apartheid sets out to address a paradox. The transitions of the last 25 years in South Africa and Palestine/Israel have produced radically different trajectories of state restructuring alongside surprisingly similar social and economic transformations. While the South African state was democratized and deracialized, Israel remains a settler colonial state. Yet both societies are increasingly

marked by vast inequality, concentrations of racialized poverty, and advanced strategies to protect the powerful and police the racialized poor. To explain this convergence, I analyze the articulation between efforts to negotiate an end to settler colonial domination and to restructure racial capitalist regimes along neoliberal lines. In both contexts, these efforts have generated a combination of marginalization and securitization. These are the dynamics at the heart of what I call “neoliberal apartheid”; they are also the characteristics that resonate with readers and audience members.

In her penetrating review of my book, Larissa Buchholz suggests that neoliberal apartheid is best understood as a “real type” [3]. Building on the work of George Steinmetz and Phil Gorski, who introduced

the concept of “real type” into the social sciences, Buchholz uplifts my work as an example of a global and comparative approach to real type concept formation. Whereas a Weberian ideal type is an abstract concept constructed from concrete phenomena, a critical realist real type is an effort to describe underlying mechanisms that generate actual social structures [4].

“I want to expand on [Buchholz’] argument by outlining two benefits of a real-type analysis, raising a question about ontological depth, and discussing the utility of real-types for engaged sociology”

As a graduate student, I came to appreciate and embrace critical realism, with its focus on ontological

depth, contingency, and conjunctural analysis. Although I cannot claim that I set out to develop the concept of neoliberal apartheid as a “real type,” I fully endorse Buchholz’s insightful reading of my work. In this short response, I want to expand on her argument by outlining two benefits of a real-type analysis, raising a question about ontological depth, and discussing the utility of real-types for engaged sociology.

By encouraging attention to degrees of ontological depth, a critical realist framework allows us to fully embrace an analysis of both commonality and difference. We can recognize that processes like racial formation play out in historically and contextually specific ways (at the level of the actual) without losing sight of deeper dynamics such as colonization, capitalism, slavery, and genocide that shape these processes (at the level of the real). Lisa Lowe’s recent book, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, offers a brilliant example of such a transnational real type analysis [5]. In my work, as Buchholz points out, it involves moving beyond Mill’s method of difference to address a more complex puzzle that requires attention to similarity and difference simultaneously.

A real type analysis also allows us to add depth to the notion of “actually existing” social relations. Neil Brenner, Nik Theodore, Jamie Peck, and Adam Tickell revolutionized the study of political-economy by analyzing neoliberalization as a context-specific process in which market-based projects attempt to transform entrenched patterns of social organization

[6]. Rather than pure expressions of neoliberal ideology, the study of “actually existing” neoliberalism requires attention to uneven, incomplete, contested, and contradictory processes of change in particular times and places. Their terminology (“actually existing”) maps perfectly onto the critical realist depth chart. But a critical realist framework highlights the importance of also analyzing deeper mechanisms that combine to produce these processes of change. Perhaps we could call them “really existing” mechanisms. While analyzing neoliberal restructuring as a context-specific

process, we can also situate these local manifestations in relation to deeper dynamics and more global patterns. Marginalization and securitization, for instance, are dialectically related processes generated by neoliberal restructuring that can be analyzed at different scales and in different contexts around the world. Buchholz contends that this approach allows us to identify “commonalities beneath epiphenomenal variation.”

In his webinar with Gorski, Steinmetz argues that the concept “real type” should only be used to describe underlying, durable mechanisms at the

deepest level of abstraction. But, following Buchholz, I’d like to make a case for conceptualizing real types as combinations of “really existing” mechanisms that operate closer to the surface. To be clear, I am not proposing that they operate at the level of the “empirical,” but rather that there is a range of durability and depth within the realm of the real. The deepest, most foundational mechanisms that I analyze in Palestine/Israel and South Africa are racial capitalism and

“...I’d like to make a case for conceptualizing real types as combinations of “really existing” mechanisms that operate closer to the surface. Whereas racial capitalism and settler colonialism are deep mechanisms, I understand neoliberal apartheid a combination of mechanisms that are ontologically closer the level of the actual”

settler colonialism. During the 1990s and 2000s, these mechanisms were restructured through a combination of neoliberalization and political negotiations. The result, in both cases, are actually existing social formations marked by extreme inequality, racialized marginalization, advanced strategies of securitization, and constant crises. I refer to the combination of these characteristics as “neoliberal apartheid.” Whereas racial capitalism and settler colonialism are deep mechanisms, I understand neoliberal apartheid as a combination of mechanisms that are ontologically closer to the level of the actual.

This has implications for public engagement. Towards the end of their webinar, Steinmetz and Gorski discuss possibilities of using a real type analysis for public or engaged sociology. Gorski suggests that critical realists can identify what is at stake in conflicts and clarify the normative relationships built into our social structures. Steinmetz goes further to argue that critical realists can also uncover and clarify the relationship between struggles taking place throughout the social order. Steinmetz’s formulation resonates with my work, which seeks to identify the underlying dynamics that connect structures of oppression and struggles for liberation. For instance, while most discussions of Palestine/Israel invoke a sense of exceptionality, I attempt to situate Palestine/Israel in relation to processes reshaping social relations throughout much of the world. By invoking the concept of neoliberal apartheid to understand the ruling regimes in South Africa and Palestine/Israel today, I hope that my work can be useful for organizers seeking to build transnational connections between struggles for social justice. Identifying real types that are definitive of a particular era makes it easier to draw out these connections. And, importantly, these connections extend beyond South Africa and Palestine/Israel to other communities confronting combinations of extreme inequality, racialized poverty, and militarized policing. Buchholz wished that I said more about global generalizability in the book, and perhaps I should have.

But this is precisely the dialogue that takes place when organizers and activist scholars engage with my work. That is my goal. And it is the reason I appreciate the recognition that *Neoliberal Apartheid* could properly be a book about San Francisco. One way to determine its value as a real type is to measure the extent to which neoliberal apartheid becomes a useful framework for building links between movements confronting racism, capitalism, colonialism, and empire.

Notes

[1] Clarno 2017; [2] Facebook post, February 2017; [3] Buchholz 2019; [4] Steinmetz and Gorski 2017 [5]Lowe 2015; [6] Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002.

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THEORY SECTION AWARDS

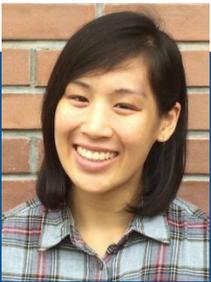


THEORY PRIZE

Jaeun Kim - University of Michigan

"Migration-facilitating Capital: A Bourdieusian Theory of International Migration." *Sociological Theory* 36.3 (2018): 262-288.

Prize Committee: Sarah Quinn (chair), Linsey Edwards, Yan Long, Josh Pacewicz, Sourabh Singh



SHILS-COLEMAN AWARD (CO-WINNERS)

Amanda Cheong - Ph.D Candidate, Princeton

"Legal Omission as Political Strategy: Motivations for and Consequences of Deliberate Contractions of the State's Administrative Power," Unpublished.



Neil Gong - Ph.D Candidate, UCLA

"That Proves You Mad, Because You Know it Not: Impaired Insight and the Dilemma of Governing Psychiatry Patients as Legal Subjects," *Theory and Society* 46(3): 201-228 (2017).

Honorable Mention:

Fauzia Husain - Ph.D. Candidate, University of Virginia.

"Hobbled Leadership; Gender And The Engines Of Authority In The Pakistani Police," Unpublished.

Prize Committee: Rhacel Parrenas (chair), Angèle Christin Mustafa Emirbayer, Jacob Habinek, Anna Katharina Skarpelis

LEWIS COSER AWARD FOR THEORETICAL AGENDA SETTING



Monika Krause - London School of Economics

Prize Committee: Marion Fourcade (chai), Julian Go, Arthur McLuhan, Mary Romero, Saskia Sassen

JUNIOR THEORIST AWARD (CO-WINNERS)



Daniel A. Winchester and Kyle D. Green - Purdue University and SUNY Brockport

"Talking Your Self Into It: How and When Accounts Shape Motivation for Action" (forthcoming in *Sociological Theory*).



Honorable Mention:

Arvind Karunakaran - McGill University

"Truce Structures: Minimizing Protracted Jurisdictional Conflict between Symmetrical Professions" Unpublished.

Prize Committee: Stefan Bargheer (Chair), Carly Knight, Erin Metz McDonnell, Ellis Monk

DISSERTATION SPOTLIGHTS



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My dissertation explores the factors that facilitated state-sponsored population expulsions in Botswana and Zimbabwe, for the sake of attempted commodification/capitalization of subterranean diamond reserves in two locales. Using a comparative and historical approach, I locate structural, strategic, and discursive selectivities across spatio-temporal horizons that [try to] impose modest degrees of regulation on commodification and capitalization processes, in order to create stable regimes of accumulation. This work challenges prevailing theories of ‘resource curses,’ ‘conflict diamonds,’ and ‘miracle [developmental] states’ by locating (inter)national forms of statecraft and coercion that influence states’ and MNCs’ ability to violently access and extract diamonds. Recently, I have also worked on several projects pertaining to theory building and expansion in the domains of globalization, culture, and political economy, including; (1) a manuscript bridging the insights of the late Nicos Poulantzas with current theories of globalization and development [forthcoming in *Progress in Development Studies*]; and, with a colleague at UC-Irvine, (2) a manuscript that puts World-Systems Analysis in dialogue with the Cultural Political Economy approach, creating a holistic framework for studying the interplay between semiotic and material phenomena as it pertains to social movements, populism, and more [forthcoming in *Critical Sociology*].

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The Political Development of Urban Clientelism in Twentieth Century Latin America: Mexico City, Lima, and Caracas in Comparative-Historical Perspective

Since Tönnies, social theorists have tended to think of urbanization as central to modernization, and to qualify clientelism—informal and hierarchical quid-pro-quo relations mediated by brokers—as nonmodern and destined for extinction. Through a comparative-historical analysis of three twentieth century Latin American cities, I challenge these views by showing that urbanization underwrote clientelism. From the 1940s to the 1980s, that region experienced the fastest and most extensive urban growth in world history, during which vast squatter settlements were established around its large cities. Focusing on Mexico City, Lima, Peru, and Caracas, Venezuela, I show, first, that this gave rise to informal quid-pro-quo relations between squatters and the state which were mediated by brokers, relations characteristic of clientelism. Second, I find that urban growth bolstered brokers’ power: urbanization generated conflicts between older and newer squatter generations which drove the latter into urban brokers’ arms for protection, giving brokers the ability to mobilize them to extend control over settlement turf and extract rent. By linking the rise of clientelism to a central aspect of modernization, these conclusions may force us to revisit and rethink basic assumptions in political development.

MEMBER AWARDS & PUBLICATIONS

AWARDS

Jason Mueller

Albert Szymanski-T.R. Young Marxist Sociology Graduate Student Paper Award from the ASA section on Marxist Sociology, for a paper entitled: "What Can Sociologists of Globalization and Development Learn from Nicos Poulantzas?"

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MESSAGE FROM THE ASA LGBTQ CAUCUS

Hello!

As we gear up for another ASA Annual Meeting, we would like to encourage you to become involved with the LGBTQ Caucus. The Caucus aims to support and empower all LGBTQ sociologists, regardless of what areas they work in. Our full mission statement is on our website: <https://www.lgbtqcaucus.com/about-us>. At the upcoming ASA meetings, we will have paper awards and graduate travel awards, a coffee hour, a business meeting, and a reception joint with Sociologists for Trans Justice. Outside of the Annual Meeting, you can get involved via our listserv or facebook page, or by reading or contributing to our new quarterly newsletter.* You can also help us build community by telling your colleagues about the Caucus.

* The next **LGBTQ Caucus Newsletter** is open for submissions! Did you publish something this year that we can signal-boost for you? Do you have questions about being queer at ASA or on the job market? Do you have an announcement? Are you on the job market? If you answered yes to any of these questions, we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at soclgbtqcaucus@gmail.com.