God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics
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In *The Tender Cut*, Patricia Adler and Peter Adler present the largest, to date, qualitative sociologically-grounded investigation of the lived experience of a non-clinical population of people who self-injure. Drawing on data from over 135 in-depth life history interviews, the authors go beyond the interpersonal and psychological dynamics behind the “self-injurer” to examine the larger world that situates, provokes, and even reinforces the need to engage in self-injury for people who clearly are not a homogeneous population. The social transformation of the practice of self-injury as it has increased in social acceptability and moved beyond the act of an isolated individual to that of a person embedded in a “real” or cyber community (where they note it is still possible for a self-injurer to feel excluded) is documented, as well as the self-presentation of self-injurers on the internet (e.g., the roles different people take in the groups) and the relationships between people who self-injure. The patience, empathy, and understanding of the authors is also evident as they neither demonize the act, nor stigmatize or alienate those who shared their stories; rather they expose in a dignified manner the turmoil, angst, fear, impulsivity, ritual, stress and pain, among other factors, behind the act of self-injury.

The strengths of the book are multifold. Adler and Adler present self-injury (broadly defined to include behaviors such as cutting, burning, hair pulling, picking, and bone breaking) as a way some people cope with the challenges, stresses, and difficulties they experience in life. They explain that there is no typical self-injurer or typical start to the injurious career; the only commonality among many self-injurers is the experience of stress. They note the role of social living and personal experiences or exposure in the instigation of the self-injurious career. The authors also take into account how self-injuring has moved from a psychological “disorder” into a learned social trend—a “sociological occurrence” (p. 3) situated in subcultures and, even at times, resembling a “fad.” It is established, via sampling a “sociological population” of self-injurers that ranged from youths to persons in their mid-fifties, that self-injury is more common among the population than the authors initially anticipated. They noted similarities and differences between the struggles of self-injurers across all ages and described the increased alienation felt by older self-cutters, as the normative attitude suggests these older self-cutters should have “grown out of it” (p. 34). Theoretically, the manuscript adds support to the feminist critique of the medical model’s “disempowerment of self-injurers,” theoretically addresses the gendered context in which self-injury is framed, and expands interactionist and other theoretical views.

Although methodologically strong, the authors do not provide an overview of the demographics of their sample. Given that the experiences of people who self-injure appear, on many levels, to parallel those of people who self-harm through other means or use other negative coping behaviors (e.g., alcoholics, drug users, bulimics, anorexics, etc.) and that some interviewees were noted to practice other negative coping behaviors, extended reporting of demographics could assist the reader to substantiate the sample. Moreover, providing additional information on these explicit factors may clarify what aspects of the self-injurer experience result from their injurious career, or if some part of their experience or motivation to continue to self-injure is more appropriately viewed as a consequence of other negative coping mechanisms.

The weakest point of the book is the lack of an explicitly embodied analysis of self-injury. The reader is left wondering how the scoring...
and act of self-injury itself—its effect on the body—affects how the injurer negotiates their identity. It appeared that many people had multiple presentations of self (one where they are open about their self-injury and another where they hid it); as such the act of self-injury impacts sense of self and identification. Thus a more explicit theoretical grounding of these struggles and negotiations would be intriguing and insightful. Moreover, the authors touched on how the scars of self-injurers were viewed differently for men and women yet they never continued into an exploration of gender differences in experiences of corporeality among self-injurers. The authors also did not acknowledge the role of the consumerist culture in which we live on the self-acceptance of this behavior, or how this culture shapes the ideologies behind this behavior (or the need to hide it). Thus, perhaps an inclusion of the body and/or identity literature in relation to consumerist society would add an additional and interesting dynamic to the manuscript. Perhaps, this literature could help to explain why the evolution of self-injury has taken the path that Adler and Adler document.

Overall, this book is an informative and innovative approach to self-injury and a much needed addition to the literature. As a teaching tool, it is carefully written such that it can be used as a whole or each chapter can stand alone to provide isolated yet unique insights into explicit realities within the realm of self-injury. Beyond the academy, uniquely and most valuably, this book could provide some comfort, inspiration or perspective for the population of people who self-injure. Perhaps, if this manuscript becomes known within such communities, it may help them to understand more fully that they are not alone in their struggles and perhaps their behaviors can be attributed to something beyond their personal choice to injure. Moreover, the explanations of how some have “quit” or exited the world of self-injury, with or without relapses as they learn to manage their pain in some other way, may give inspiration, motivation, or even peace of mind to active self-injurers—give them hope that there is an end and provide a comfort that may be unattainable elsewhere.


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Given the explosion of new courses on the sociology of the body, there is a need for a book of essays like this one edited by Chris Bobel and Samantha Kwan. This is a field where the theory is often inaccessible to undergraduates. Furthermore, agency is often absent in discussions of the ways in which social forces and cultural values limit bodily expressions even as the body controls the range of social expectations. The essays in Embodied Resistance are about oppositional behavior around the body. They include many types of resistance: BDSM, roller derby, anorexia as a choice, and public breastfeeding to name a few.

The book is organized into four sections, each representing different types of resistance to expectations about bodily appearance and behavior. Most of the essays look at social impacts on the body, but a few consider bodily limits themselves. Part I is “Rewriting Gender Scripts,” and it deals with behavior that is inappropriately gendered. Part II, “Challenging Marginalization,” examines the lives of those who might be seen as defying the marginalization that can appear, for example, as people age, or find themselves outside cultural definitions of attractiveness. Part III, “Defying Authoritative Knowledges and Conventional Wisdom,” consists of essays about behavior which challenges medical expertise, or other beliefs about deviance and acceptability. Part IV, “Negotiated Boundaries and Meanings,” examines the ways in which individuals practice resistances large and small. In “Living Resistance” at the end of each section are two personal narratives illustrating the themes of that section.

Many of the essays are fascinating in their own right. Danielle Lindemann in an essay on pro-dommes, with the clever title of “Is That Any Way to Treat a Lady?” illustrates...
how the women she interviewed subvert gender scripts by challenging dominant behavior rules that men are in charge of, yet rely on them by incorporating expectations of chivalry and nurturance into their practices. In the same first section, Natalie Peluso’s essay “Cruisin’ for a Bruisin’” on women’s flat track roller derby makes a similar argument about the women in this sport who wear a striking combination of highly sexualized clothing, head gear, and tattoos. At the same time, they allow women of any size and shape to participate, and they revel in visible injuries, even those to the face.

Notable essays in the rest of the book include an amusing essay on pregnant belly dancers by Angela Moe; a disturbing piece on young people who cut themselves by Margaret Leaf and Douglas Schrock; and an essay by Lynn Davidman describing the double lives led by those in the process of leaving orthodox Judaism, a religion where bodily practices represent adherence to the faith.

Not all the papers hang together so well. For example, all but one of the essays are about resistance in America. For this reason I found the inclusion of a paper about male to female transgender persons in South Korea to be a curious addition. The topics of other papers seemed quite trivial compared to the serious defiances of many of the book’s subjects. For example, Breanne Fahs and Denise Delgado describe an experiment they did in a women and health class where they persuaded their female students not to shave for the semester. Likewise M. Elise Radina and colleagues describe an organization of women aged 50 and over who have lunch together wearing red hats and other bright colors to show their resistance to the stereotypes plaguing older women. Other papers appeared to have little oppositional behavior in them. A paper about women with a mysterious ailment involving female genital pain did not seem to be resisting so much as suffering. And the point was unclear in the paper about menopausal women and hot flashes: some women hid them and others did not—a conclusion that appears somewhat trivial.

One final criticism is of most of the essays under “Living Resistance.” While some of the stories were quite moving, for example, a story about how a woman learned to lift her paraplegic partner, others were trivial compared to the stories in the analytical essays, many of which described seriously transgressive behavior. A story, replete with picture, of an attractive young woman who cut her hair short for a while, and one of a woman who figured out how to pee decorously and standing up in a boat with no bathroom by using a small funnel, in the same category as anorexia, trivializes the topic of embodied resistance.

I hope the authors have success with the book and that more examples of the myriad ways individuals practice human agency and defy gendered bodily expectations become available to them in a second edition. The strongest accounts are those that show a complex negotiation of accepted scripts while transgressing their meaning. The book is a good start to a more nuanced understanding of the interconnections between complicity and transgression.

References


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A common assumption is that the digital communication revolution has brought with it an unprecedented flow of news and information, giving consumers the opportunity to diversify their knowledge as never before. However, in this carefully-researched book, Pablo Boczkowski makes it clear that this utopian vision does not reflect the reality of contemporary journalism and news consumption, and that this poses potential threats to informed democratic participation.

Boczkowski argues that we have actually seen a homogenization of news, as journalists try to tame a deluge of digital information and beat out the competition, while audiences attend to news in a relatively distracted way, leading to “a state of affairs that neither journalists nor consumers like but feel powerless to alter” (p. 6).

This volume is a fitting follow-up to Boczkowski’s excellent 2005 book, Digitizing the

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News: Innovation in Online Newspapers, which established him as leading voice in the scholarly debate about the changing nature of journalism. His new work draws from ethnographic fieldwork in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he interacted with journalists at two competing newspapers, Clarín and Lanación, and their online counterparts, Clarín.com and Lanación.com. In addition, he conducted interviews and observations with news consumers, bringing production and consumption together in a way rarely attempted.

Combining content analysis with interviews, Boczkowski shows the effects of the intense pressure on reporters to respond to the influx of information, especially in terms of hard or breaking news. They must attempt to stay ahead of their competitors at all times, which results in a decline in investigative and enterprise reporting, and an increasing reliance on wire services and other shared resources. Since competitors are all using the same sources, the resulting homogenization is almost inevitable.

Journalists try to put their own stamp on the stories, but Boczkowski shows this is often superficial. He offers several examples of major stories, carried by both newspapers, which were basically identical in wording, even though each carried the byline of its own reporter. More generally, he identifies consistently high levels of content overlap across the board. This is even more pronounced online than in print, and he notes that this represents a major change from his observations in 1995.

As he points out, competing news outlets have always monitored each other in the race to be “first.” Now, however, this constant surveillance takes on a desperate air, as journalists transform from creative content producers into content managers, always with one eye over their shoulders to see what others are doing. The importance of this analysis goes beyond its impact on workplace practices—as Boczkowski argues, this new reality “creates a fertile terrain for a media landscape marked by the dominance of generic content shared across many outlets, a narrowing of the resulting news agenda, and the concentration of power to set this agenda among a smaller number of players than before” (p. 180). Where, he asks, does this leave the traditional watchdog role of journalism?

Turning his attention to news consumers, Boczkowski shows how changing readership habits exacerbate the problem. Increasing numbers of people now get most of their news online; studies are showing that younger people are no longer taking up the habit of newspaper reading as they mature, as did previous generations. Boczkowski notes that large numbers of people now read the news online at work, flitting between attending to news and regular work duties. Fewer and fewer actually sit down and read long, detailed news stories. Furthermore, the stories to which they do pay attention are typically sports, entertainment, and other “soft” categories. This of course is not new—a traditional frustration faced by journalists is the disconnect between topics they consider important and the stories which readers prefer. An additional twist in the online environment is that journalists imitate because they are desperately trying to attract readers by being first—yet Boczkowski’s audience interviews show that they are increasingly turned off by the sameness they encounter, which pushes them even more away from hard news and toward entertainment and gossip.

Perhaps salvation lies with the potential of interactivity? Now more than ever, consumers can participate actively in news creation and dissemination, through comment features, blogs, and so on. However, Boczkowski reports that although his research participants were very internet-savvy, few ever used interactive capabilities, and if they did, they were not especially interested in reading the comments of others. Meanwhile, a look at the discourse of those who do interact reveals a very high level of negativity, a point made by other researchers. At the same time, he reports that journalists felt very aware of the online commentary, and believed it affected their work in adverse ways. Unfortunately, online interactivity may facilitate the dominance of angry, disaffected insults, rather than reasoned discourse.

Clearly more work needs to be done in other contexts. Boczkowski makes a good case that Argentina is quite representative, in that its news organizations have quickly embraced technological innovation. One could note some characteristics that might
not be as true elsewhere. For instance, he cites government influence as one important factor in homogenization; this may be less of a factor in Western Europe or the United States. Nevertheless, it is refreshing to see a Latin American country constituting such a compelling case study, rather than the assumptions typically drawn from the United Kingdom or United States. In an appendix, Boczkowski makes some preliminary comparisons with U.S. contexts, suggesting that the same forces are at work, and we can look forward to more analysis in the future.

Although Boczkowski concludes that this move towards homogenization should not be seen as inevitable or irreversible, the message we are left with is ominous. This provocative and well-written book is important reading for anyone interested in the crucial role of news media in maintaining a democratic society.


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My daughter and I were recently working our way through a maze in the magazine Highlights. She recognized what Menno Boldt knows: how we will get there is puzzling, but the ultimate destination is not really in question. For Boldt though, the target is not the finish line in some game, but nothing short of the fabled good society in which people are decent to one another.

The numerous factors aligned for further degradation of human society are well accounted for here. Nevertheless, ideas matter and we could conceivably make a multi-generational commitment to embark on a pathway divergent from our current trajectory, toward the good society, by embracing different ideas. Indeed, the author avers, history demonstrates an ineluctable pattern in human society for increasing unity and order. The first step toward a humane world is to grasp the main problems of this one.

Inventorying and theorizing these problems is the primary agenda in A Quest for Humanity.

Pivotal ideas rooted in the Enlightenment underlie the failed leadership of current “elect bodies” (i.e., elites) in the West. In an attempt to wrest political control from the Church and its “synthetic” moral authority, Enlightenment philosophers successfully made the case for a secular, “amoral mode of social-order authority” (p. 80). (Synthetic moral order involves centralized control as opposed to the diffuse social influence of authentic moral order.) Dressed in morally neutral language, the subsequent constitutionalization of human rights enabled the commodification of legal rights in general, which is overseen by elect bodies to their own benefit—and has resulted in the loss of any authentic moral order. Likewise, instead of the appealing prospect of people collectively governing themselves, that is, the authentic democracy ennobled during the Enlightenment, we have a system controlled by money—a synthetic democracy. Despite only a minority of the citizenry taking part in political processes, this ruse is effectively hidden by a facade of partisanship that obscures oligarchic domination.

Such perverted expression of promising ideas is central to the dysfunctional confusion on the part of elect bodies who fail to understand or accept a fundamental pattern in social life: when two or more people interact, their relations increasingly become guided by a sense of interdependence. “Deterministic forces,” Boldt maintains, “bring all powers, authorities, and peoples into a unitary jurisdiction” (p. 15). There are countless bumps along the way, some of them calamitous such as world wars, which represent dysfunctional responses to the evolutionary globalizing tendencies of humanity. But over time, in the context of shared knowledge and understanding, different spheres of power realign to coincide with new, larger spheres. The current patterns of what is known as “globalization” involve uneven awareness of interdependence. Hence the need to explain it in this treatise.

That is also why, the author concludes, we need a new mythology that sets aside the fetishes and certitudes of both science and theology. This new consciousness must be built...
on a transcendent sense of humanity and mutuality that animates the causal power of love. Such a mythology could then facilitate the social power of authentic democracy and moral order in which the people’s interests and values are carefully negotiated and reflected in productive governance. There is much to admire in this wide-ranging and learned book. The critique of the amoral rationality extending from the Enlightenment is especially illuminating. To recognize certain precepts of the Enlightenment as problematic in terms of logic and implication is not, Boldt suggests, tantamount to pre-modern anti-intellectualism or post-modern nihilism. An intelligible theoretical argument provides an edifice on which insightful empirical assessment of major institutions is offered. The picture of how the government, economy, law, religion, media, and family currently contribute to the misuse of power is not pretty. How the American power elite in particular wields its influence domestically and internationally to such unproductive or “dysfunctional” ends is vividly elucidated.

The author clearly defines familiar terms and introduces novel ones, but never lets burdensome jargon get in the way. His book articulates a sophisticated argument that will be of interest to scholars but could be read by a lay audience. It strikes a hopeful stance in light of the arc of history without ignoring the wretchedness of our time. For this sociologist, the most important deficiency is an insufficient link between the abstract theoretical argument presented up front and the review of empirical patterns that follows. Needless to say, the functionalist presumption of order here cannot ultimately be proven or disproven. However, the penetrating critique of Western culture Boldt himself offers strains such optimism. For instance, it is hard to see how the radical dysfunction of ruling elect bodies will not continue to define the new normal. The most recent century entailed unprecedented expansion of human rights and the bloodiest conflicts in human history. The empirical patterns documented here are historicized in revealing ways. But the theoretical argument about them includes inadequate consideration of temporality and contingency. What theoretical factors account for key exceptions (e.g., dysfunctional leadership) to the deterministic model?

This disconnect is exacerbated by two other problems. First, in an attempt to present his own ideas in a lucid manner, Boldt makes the interesting choice to provide no specific citations in the text to the 350 references listed at the end. Relatedly, his disquisition barely refers to extant theories of power, morality, civil society, democracy, world systems or other important social forces. This does make the book more fluid in some ways, but diminishes the overall stock of evidence and how it relates to theoretical considerations.

How can we realize the human potential for decency and justice on a massive scale? This is an ambitious, difficult question we must keep asking even if the answer is elusive, as it is in A Quest for Humanity. Despite that inevitable problem and the other shortcomings mentioned above, the ongoing inquiry of this worthy topic will be enhanced by Boldt’s broad knowledge and nuanced insights.


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Anglophone sociology has yet to appreciate fully and apply the insights of the research of Luc Boltanski and associates on forms of normativity in social life (Boltanski 1999; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). In refreshing contrast to the dominant sociological view of actors internalizing norms and only exceptionally becoming critical of values and practices, they view social actors as normally reflexive and capable of critique. On Critique steps back from such studies and reflects on how critique in sociology should relate to critique in everyday life. Although it is based on three talks contributing to a series of Adorno Lectures in Frankfurt, Boltanski departs from the inward-looking ruminations on philosophical founders that typify critical
theory literature and primarily addresses recent sociological research, so that the subject is more critical sociology than critical theory.

The first chapter discusses the research of Bourdieu (with whom Boltanski once worked) which inadequately acknowledged actors’ reflexivity and their evaluative stance toward an uncertain world. It set up an “asymmetry between the sociologist enlightened by the light of his science and ordinary people sunk in illusion...” (p. 23), and led to “an unduly powerful explanatory system, whose mechanical utilization risked crushing the data (as if sociologists already knew in advance what they were going to discover)” (p. 23). In reaction, Boltanski and others developed what he terms a “pragmatic sociology of critique.” While others in Britain, particularly Margaret Archer, have emphasized lay reflexivity and actors’ evaluative relation to the world (e.g., Archer 2007), Boltanski and associates have developed a more focused analysis of disputation and justification. Although he defends this move, Boltanski acknowledges that in focusing on actors’ own, often restricted perspectives, we risk losing the more radical critiques that the more structural and overarching sociologies provide. The rest of the book attempts to reconcile the two approaches.

There is a lengthy chapter on institutions as “bodiless beings” which can provide justifications for the social arrangements they construct that escape the suspicions of self-interested action that tend to haunt justifications given by individuals. Although the constructed reality is one among many possible worlds, institutions tend either to deny this or reject alternatives as inferior. Nevertheless they can rarely achieve a closure wherein rationales are smoothly confirmed in practice; usually there are imperfections, deviations, unintended consequences, and possible alternatives.

Boltanski coins the term “hermeneutic contradiction” to highlight two problems for institutions that make them vulnerable to critique. One is the fact that although institutions are bodiless beings, they can only be defended by particular spokespersons, whose neutrality may be challenged. Second is the inevitable disjunction between the semantic realm of discourse regarding what is officially supposed to happen and the practical realm of know-how and judgment in dealing with contingency and uncertainty. Together these mean that there is always a space for possible disputation.

Both the attempts at confirmation and critiques of institutions take the form of “tests.” Institutions themselves deploy “truth tests” in order to confirm the status quo by establishing token situations in which there is a correspondence between symbolic forms and actual states of affairs. There are secondly “reality tests” in which differences between what is and what ought to be are highlighted; these of course have a reformist character. Finally, there are “existential tests,” which appeal to experiences such as a sense of injustice or humiliation or joy, beyond the institution in question. While these are more radical challenges, they are vulnerable to being dismissed as merely “subjective.” Further, they tend to be successful only where they become the basis of collective movements.

There is then an interesting though somewhat gestural analysis of the contemporary managerial form of domination which is responsive to accounting and/or jurisdictional frameworks and does not need to deploy ideological discourse or truth tests; its spokespersons merely invoke the necessity of accepting change in the face of apparent imperatives of globalization rather than local needs.

While the case for critical sociology to engage closely with the sociology of critique in everyday life is, in my view, undeniable, there are problems with the book. It begins with unconvincing assertions that power is observable and domination unobservable, and without defining power. Many of its concepts and distinctions—particularly that between reality and world—are poorly explained, and there are several unnecessary neologisms. In the many highly abstract passages on critiques and institutions one is left wondering what the particular cases are that the author presumably had in mind; although some examples are given, they are poorly integrated into the argument.

Moving from style to content, the reason why critiques should be overwhelmingly seen as progressive and emancipatory, and conservative argument in defense of
institutions bad, is never adequately explained. More generally, in the absence of any argument regarding the nature of the good, we are left with a somewhat formalistic and crypto-normative analysis that tends more toward iconoclasm than justified critique. Despite his recognition of the critical capacities of people, Boltanski views them as primarily self-interested. There is no acknowledgement of their capacity to form commitments to causes, such as the public good, which enable them to identify both rationally and emotionally with certain institutions in a way which is not reducible to mere satisfaction of self-interest. In these respects it is a pity he did not discuss the work of neo-Aristotelians like Alastair MacIntyre (1985) and Joseph Dunne (1993) who provide rich insights into lay normativity within practices, and in relation to practical judgement across orders of worth. However, despite these reservations, On Critique provides important resources for the reinvigoration of critical sociology.

References


As Jacqueline Botterill observes, in introducing Consumer Culture and Personal Finance, the cultural history of money and personal finance has tended to pass under the radar of both economic and cultural analysts of consumption. Economists, she argues, have been intent on mapping aggregate shifts in consumer spending and credit, and have thus largely ignored the social dynamics of everyday financial actions. Alternatively, Botterill contends, cultural studies scholars have found the concept of money to be boring, and have thus concentrated on exploring spectacular forms of consumption rather than on documenting the mundane financial practices that enable us all to be “consumers.”

While one can take issue with this characterization of consumption scholarship as obsessed with the general or the spectacular, this book is on solid ground in arguing the need for a concerted cultural analysis of how we (or, at least, citizens of wealthy nations) have come to think about and manage our personal finances. Just as the study of consumer culture has, over the last decade or so, moved to analyze so-called “ordinary,” or everyday rather than luxury, acts of consumption, Botterill usefully directs us to the quotidian and culturally framed aspects of saving, borrowing and spending—at least in the United Kingdom.

The result is a detailed and useful book, though not one that is immediately engaging. Unfortunately, the introduction appears rushed in the drafting, is mechanical in delivery, and is riddled with proof-reading errors. This awkward start belies the quality of the text overall, although the writing does remain, in places, a little clunky and plodding. These shortcomings aside, Botterill delivers, in the first five (of eight) chapters, a fast-moving historical overview of the


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gradual expansion in Britain of mass financial institutions and practices. The core task here is to historically situate the Thatcherite remaking in the 1980s of the British financial sector.

We first step back, in these opening chapters, to the Victorian “age of thrift,” tracing the ethos of frugality, efficiency, and financial respectability so well appropriated by Thatcher in voicing the neoliberal mantra of deregulation. This was the age of correct consumption and financial self-restraint in which money making was coupled with wise investment rather than unrestrained spending; and in which the British financial sector began to modernize. What Botterill successfully does throughout these chapters is illustrate, through an attention to both class and gender, the gradual “financialization” of the British populace from the mid-1800s to the 1990s.

A British taste for institutionalized saving and borrowing begins both with the nineteenth-century expansion of middle-class home ownership and with the working-class and lower middle-class use of penny banks, provident, friendly and insurance associations, and building societies. Notions of thrift and expenditure, however, underwent constant adjustment as a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century consumer culture took shape, centered on women’s role as manager of the respectable and well-adorned household. Along with this came the financial instruments of mortgages, installment plans, hire purchase, and retail credit. Yet, as Botterill illustrates, until well after the Second World War credit remained tainted in the British mind as less than respectable, while the “gentlemanly” U.K. banking sector remained aloof from the bulk of the British workforce. By the economic boom of the 1960s attitudes had changed. While the British state established the post office savings scheme and the National Savings Bank, corporate banking vigorously marketed new products to an “under-banked” populace; thus building a customer base, extending branch networks and introducing credit cards as well as ATMs. It was left to Margaret Thatcher, in the context of a renewed economic globalization, to fully deregulate the British financial system in 1986. This ensured the late-twentieth-century global financial dominance of the City of London while unleashing in the process, not Thatcher’s dreamt-of return to sound Victorian prosperity, but to an uncontrolled boom in credit and spending. New Labour in the 1990s, Botterill observes, positively championed such a consumer-based economy.

It must be said that Botterill’s overview does not add much to existing historical knowledge (although the book does offer some adept readings of financial advertisements in the second half of the twentieth century). Instead, Botterill offers an eclectic synthesis of existing secondary literature in order to illuminate the overlooked history of personal finance. This synthesis is done well. In places, however, the book cries out for some greater ethnographic depth, especially in relation to the everyday, felt realities of personal finance. Concerning the rise of ATMs, for example, we are left wanting to know something more about how people responded to this change. Yet Botterill’s work sticks closely to a reading of the written text.

The final three chapters shift the emphasis from history to contemporary media and textual analysis. Botterill carefully documents the contradictory media stories that were told in the first decade of the twenty-first century in relation to easy credit and hyperconsumption: from those that promoted a credit economy as a positive sign of affluence, to those that questioned the lending practices and massive profits of the banks, to those that raised the alarm about the supposed pathology of the contemporary consumer. With a particular focus on gender, Botterill skillfully deconstructs recent psychological literature on compulsive shopping, and detours into an entertaining cultural reading of Sophie Kinsella’s novels on the shopaholic.

Enjoyable as these chapters were, they were also vaguely unsatisfying as a way to end the book. They are heavy on piecing-together dominant discourses and light on offering a consolidating analysis of the long history of personal finance in the United Kingdom. Botterill seems more comfortable working with a rather “distanced” critical documentation of media and expert commentary than with offering a fully fledged critique of the neo-liberal experiment or of British consumer capitalism (although
something of this does finally come through in the short conclusion). Perhaps this speaks of both the strength and weakness of the book. There are lots of good syntheses, important detail and implicit critique in Botterill’s work, but less of an overall thesis. What is mostly in focus is the imperative to tell a cultural history of saving, borrowing and spending in the United Kingdom, not to theorize its trajectory. Within these parameters, this carefully constructed book contributes much to our understanding of a neglected field.


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The Urban Racial State by Noel Cazenave is a well-written and well-argued examination of the urban landscape of the 1960s and 1970s: an analysis in many ways long overdue. It chronicles the rise and fall of community action programs in New Haven, Connecticut and Syracuse, New York using concepts of the racialized state, managers of state apparatuses, and systemic racism to hone his analysis. Cazenave exposes the exploitation of the urban black population not only on Congress Avenue in New Haven and the mean streets of Syracuse’s Fifteenth Ward but in the halls of Congress in Washington, DC. In particular, he shows how the community action program, viewed by some as a radical attempt to undermine accepted social reform, was little more than an attempt through traditional social services to bring minor reforms to populations desperate for more meaningful change.

But Cazenave’s goal is not merely to depict a history of neglect but to argue that the “chief function of the urban racial state is the maintenance of the racial status quo.” It is, he claims, the big picture of racial oppression not the neutral, colorblind political structure that has characterized much of the urban research since the Civil Rights movement. Political leaders, as important members of the state apparatus, have the specific task of managing competing racial demands. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was white progressive mayors who supported in the main sentiments of the power elites and other segments of the white population, and addressed only in special circumstances the contested racial demands of the African Americans. Police suppression was always in the background for battles unresolved by other means. Indeed, Cazenave argued that it was the nimbleness of the urban racial state in making small, easily manageable adjustments that generally forestalled the need for far-reaching changes.

Focusing on programs to prevent juvenile delinquency and wars on the poor was precisely intended to highlight the cultural deficiency and bad behavior of the ghetto residents and to keep the spotlight off the systemic racism that invaded every state institution within city limits. It also bypassed the social dislocations of urban renewal policies and practices that had destroyed African American neighborhoods on much of the east coast. In Syracuse, it was only after CORE protests in 1963 that the mayor agreed to concessions of “enforcement of housing codes, establishment of a human rights commission, and a promise that families of color would not have to move into a block already more than one-third people of color.” These were the victories.

But the greatest strength of this work, a systematic exposure of the urban crisis in black and white in the 1960s and 1970s, by definition ignores the more complex oppression of what came next. Cazenave is aware of this short coming as he invites scholars “to fix what is broken and expand upon what remains to be fleshed out.” But his theory balanced between local white racial resentment, white elites, and African American protest fades in a present with urban populations victimized by a de-industrialization that closed urban factories in record numbers, an informal economy that used crack cocaine as currency and jailed as many young black males as could be found. It also undermined much of the assumed power and privilege of the white working class, many now jobless or forced to the inner-ring suburbs and their mushrooming low-skilled employment. All
were left with a downward mobility that made class trump race in ways that it had not in the past.

For those who fled the “darkening” cities, their movement to the suburbs would be at great expense and at a sacrifice of stable urban neighborhoods that had been their home for generations. Middle-class whites also lost their stronghold on state employment as urban problems necessitated skills like navigation of new welfare and immigration policies and bilingualism, absent in their prior employment. They were also threatened by the growing presence of black mayors who, while not championing the demands of black constituents any more than their white predecessors had, did reduce white access to the coveted machine employment of the past.

New legal immigration from the Caribbean, Latin American, and Asian countries, further segmented the racial portrait of America with black and white conflicts morphing into conflicts with the inconclusively white, brown, yellow, and black populations who in turn competed for housing, employment, and neighborhood supremacy. Concentrated poverty areas filled with a so-called underclass of many nationalities, living in the shadow of both successful and unsuccessful urban ethnic enclaves, and gentrified districts of upwardly mobile professionals who had renovated the homes formerly rented and sometimes owned by the once prevalent black and white working class. Answering questions like “how to define who is there” and “what are they doing,” the starting point for Cazenave in the 1960s research, suddenly was a lot more complicated in the present. The urban racial state became the urban racial, ethnic, class and gendered state, constantly changing, with racism its most ubiquitous characteristic.


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Although Susan E. Chase does not explicitly situate her Learning to Speak, Learning to Listen in the literature on unlearning prejudice, one of the merits of her study of “how diversity works on campus” is that it contributes to it. The prejudice in the present instance is racism, although Chase suggests that her narrative inquiry approach would be applicable to other forms—sexism, homophobia, ableism, and the like; the campus site of her research is a private, urban university of less than three thousand undergraduates, which Chase calls “CU.”

Chase’s interest in CU is sparked by two incongruent facts: its student population has less than 20 percent students of color, and discussions of race and racism are predominant, albeit contentious, in CU’s “narrative reality.” Identifying and describing the role of both narrative environment and narrative practice in enabling, supporting, and encouraging attention to, and understanding of, race and racism on a predominantly white campus is a primary goal of Chase’s work.

She sets it in the Alfred Schütz-inspired tradition of phenomenological sociology, citing Berger and Luckmann, Harold Garfinkel, and C. Wright Mills, among others, taking the tradition toward narrative inquiry. Her contribution, she indicates, is the close study of a specific case. Chase does not propose revisions or new directions in the tradition on which she says she builds, instead using it to “bring to light what is present but usually goes unnoticed” (p.7) in studies of diversity in higher education: “the narrative reality that is a central feature of social life on any university campus” (p.7).

Chase employs the version of narrative inquiry developed by Gubrium and Holstein, which emphasizes narrative reality as understood through “narrative practices”—the ways in which speech constructs both
identities and social realities, and “narrative environments”—the contexts in which we speak, “both local and general... spatial and temporal” (p.5). Chase identifies three “conflicting discourses” that significantly shape discussions of race and racism at CU: social justice discourse, political difference discourse, and the discourse of abstract inclusion. Readers are challenged to recognize and appreciate “the two-way relationship between narrative practices and environments” (p.xi).

Chase reflectively reports on interviews with members of student advocacy organizations, such as the Women’s Coalition, GLBT Organization, Students for Disability Rights, and Black Collegians, interviews with student affairs administrators and staff, and members of a “Faculty Diversity Group,” as well as on content analyses of Student Government meeting minutes, student newspaper articles, class schedules, the university events calendar, and the university website. Detailed descriptions of the methodologies and questionnaires used, and results obtained, are printed in the book’s appendices.

Chase’s reconstruction of CU’s narrative reality discloses the ways narrative practices and environments enable “cognitive and emotional shifts [to] undermine conventional understandings of race relations that take white privilege for granted” (p. xi). At the core of such transformations, Chase discovers, is a narrative reality in which white students are learning to listen and students of color are learning to speak. The transformative narrative practices of the students, argues Chase, are dependent on continued institutional support for structures that explicitly promote such student transformations—both in and out of the classroom. There is, then, much to learn from Chase’s book, which is well composed, explains theories, contexts, and unfamiliar terminology, and accomplishes the goals it sets at the start. In the era of President Obama, moreover, Chase’s topic is timely.

When persons actively participating in university life read her painstakingly detailed analyses, however, their interest in Chase’s text can flag, as the present reader’s did. Those of her readers who, at predominantly white colleges and universities, promote classroom discussions of race and racism, and mentor students of color toward finding their voices, have likely already learned to listen in the ways Chase suggests, and thus might not find compellingly new material in Chase’s pages.

Yet, I am dissatisfied with such a response. Many faculty fail to appreciate the very claims Chase sets out to prove in her book. First, we think of student affairs and student life as less important than, even unrelated to, what we do in the classroom. Second, we fail to appreciate that we, too, are in need of transformation. Citing Chesler, Pascarella and Terenzini, Chase explains: “much of the research on student learning about diversity in higher education focuses either on curriculum, pedagogy, and classrooms, or on student affairs programming and student organizations,” and in everyday practices “barriers often exist to connections between student affairs and academic affairs” (p.225). At CU, however, the normal barriers do not exist.

Chase refers to the faculty, student affairs staff, and student advocacy group members involved in informal collaborations at CU as “the interconnected group” and argues that this barrier defying group, made possible through institutional commitment to faculty, student and staff offices, groups, and organizations, plays a central role in increasing “opportunities for students to learn to speak and listen across differences—and opportunities to work together to bring about institutional change” (p.224). And, crucially, it is the many, detailed interview excerpts and analyses, the passages too easily dismissed as not saying anything new, that evidence this to the reader.

After each interview excerpt, Chase describes what was said, how it was interpreted, and what it is in CU’s narrative reality that explains the why of both. In doing so, Chase consistently makes visible “what is present but usually goes unnoticed.” A meditative reading of Chase’s text undertaken while going about the business of university life—attending meetings, classes, extracurricular activities—provides an opportunity to practice what Chase models in her interview analyses, and in doing so brings to light the factors contributing to our campus communities’ successes and failures in helping students learn to listen and learn to speak. Chase’s text is also of use for advanced
undergraduate and graduate courses discussing narrative inquiry; it is a fine example of how to employ the methodology effectively.


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Democracies involve complicated arrangements and negotiations to enact policies and practices. Health and health care issues continue and will continue to be issues that are very difficult to resolve in the United States whether seriously tackling patient safety, initiating health care insurance reform, or changing people’s behavior to decrease their susceptibility to ill health. These issues, particularly what are defined as public health issues, are contentious and activate many players and debates, especially when the balance between individual rights and a collective good are central concerns.

The extent to which health issues are political, not just medical, is clearly articulated in Epidemic City on the workings of the New York City Department of Health in the second half of the twentieth century. New York may be different from other cities due to its size, the particular players, and history, but most city or state public health organizations are faced with many of the same issues. This book, by historian James Colgrove, does not claim that the story is generalizable; it is a very careful and detailed study of New York City and all the players involved in a series of public health issues. After reading this well-written and meticulously researched book, one sees the many efforts at broad generalizations by sociologists to be avoiding the nitty-gritty of how decisions are actually made.

The picture that emerges from this perceptive work is one of a very fragmented system of “health” with territorial conflicts over which organizations should be doing what, what is a “public health” issue, who should get funding, what level of government (city, state, or federal) should be involved and when, and which players outside the government agencies should be listened to. “Public health” continually has to be defined and redefined as most private doctors do treatment and “curing,” which some consider more important than prevention, the purview of public health. “Curing” is left to public health only when treatment or medical care is for the poor, pregnant, or the patient has illnesses such as tuberculosis or venereal disease. Given all the rancorous debates and often unwillingness to fund, it is surprising that anything gets done and that sometimes it gets done very well. Colgrove shows that the heroes who identify important issues and are able to accomplish their goals tend to be outstanding individuals with great insight into the problems and the process of solving them, and have excellent interpersonal and political skills. They work very hard.

Epidemic City clearly documents in detail how the New York public health system has in the last fifty years dealt with outpatient care for the poor, lead paint poisoning, abortion, heroin addiction, childhood immunizations, infant mortality, AIDS, homelessness, drug-resistant tuberculosis, West Nile Virus, bioterrorism, tobacco use, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Each issue brought to the fore different players and a different set of issues for the department. From the story told, no issues were easy to resolve and with all the contests, most of the issues were at least partially resolved, even those problems related to poverty and costly in human lives.

For sociologists, one of the interesting threads in this book is the way public health issues raise and need to resolve conflicts between individual rights and collective good. The tensions are clearly illustrated in the efforts to eradicate drug-resistant tuberculosis. Taking the antibiotics necessary to rid the body of tuberculosis is unpleasant and long term. People quit taking them when they feel better but are not cured, and then continue to spread the disease through the air. How to get people to take and complete their medications becomes a changed political issue. A different issue emerges in even defining the consumption of saturated fats and cigarette smoking as public health issues. Despite the demonstrated
relationship between smoking and forms of cancer and saturated fats and diabetes and heart disease, many support the “it’s my body” argument. Providing information only does a little to deter these behaviors. These tensions pervade our society and are continually confronted by underfunded public health departments with little political support.

Colgrove aptly shows the importance of local politics on the public health. Not only is local funding necessary with our state and city systems of public health, but to accomplish their goals, the support of local politicians is required. But local public interest groups can be on almost any side of the issue and can be very vocal. Mayors of New York were often tentative in their support of public health policies and waited until their second terms to provide support or withdraw it. This made enacting and carrying out policies difficult. Mayor Bloomberg, nevertheless, has been an activist willing to push public health initiatives that are consequential to very large numbers of people such as anti-smoking laws and providing funding to those who wish to stop. It was his support that led to the ban on bar and then restaurant smoking. He also supported the posting of calorie counts and the banning of saturated fats in restaurants to try to decrease the incidence of diabetes and heart disease. How they were able to get around the “infringement on individual’s rights” to put whatever they wanted into their bodies is a fascinating story. These last initiatives were more difficult to define as public health issues, Colgrove argues, as they are more directly individual problems that do not spread to others such as tuberculosis or influenza do.

This book should be of great interest to anyone interested in public health and health care, but also should be read by those concerned with local politics and how we make decisions that work to balance individual rights and the public good.


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In The Price of Progressive Politics: The Welfare Rights Movement in an Era of Colorblind Racism, Rose Ernst uses theories of identity politics, intersectionality, and social movement theory to discuss the tenuous position of the contemporary welfare rights movement in the United States. Ernst begins with a look at the 1966 creation of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), and the National Organization for Women (NOW). Referencing the intersection between gender, class, and race that marginalizes the welfare population, she argues that the different constituencies and strategies of these two women’s groups affected the success of welfare rights advocates in the 1970s, and that these differences continue to disadvantage the welfare rights movement. For example, NOW represented predominantly middle-class, white women, while NWRO represented predominantly poor, African American women. These differences affected things like the two groups’ divergent definitions of “dependence.” While NOW sought employment reforms to create opportunities for women to gain economic independence from men, it was hard for NWRO’s poor women of color to imagine empowerment from their most common employment opportunities: cleaning, doing laundry, or watching other women’s children. Those in NWRO recognized their marginalization at the intersection of gender, poverty, and race, but these were not the issues on the agenda of NOW, and in fact, the successes enjoyed by NOW would continue to leave welfare mothers behind.

Against this backdrop, Ernst explains two concepts of colorblindness that frame discussions of welfare. First is traditional colorblindness in which human problems like poverty are imagined to transcend race and
systemic racism. Second, Ernst introduces the concept of cosmetic colorblindness in which race is taken into account but is simply considered one among many traits and not an important impediment to social justice in its own right. The problem with cosmetic colorblindness is that those in welfare rights groups, especially white women in these groups, see race but not racism; rather, they minimize the importance of race as a key factor affecting the structure and implementation of the welfare system. Ernst argues that a more deliberate race consciousness frame is required of those seeking social justice on issues of poverty and welfare.

Using a series of 49 in-depth interviews with leaders of welfare rights organizations in eight states across the nation, Ernst investigates the differences in welfare/poverty frames used by those of different races and in different states/regions. Her interviews expose the problem of both traditional and cosmetic colorblindness among welfare rights leaders, particularly white leaders, that ignores the intersectional nature of marginalization among welfare parents. For example, for many of her white interviewees, gender is the reference point, while for others, class is the reference point. Although the intersection of gender, class, and race is identified as an important barrier to social justice by women of color interviewees, white women rarely frame the problem with the same level of race and class consciousness. In fact, with one exception, intersectionality is only identified by white women in a single welfare rights organization in Minneapolis; further, all of the white women in the Minneapolis organization use the frame of intersecting points of marginalization. This finding leads Ernst to look more deeply into the structure and culture of this unique welfare rights organization. Not surprisingly, she finds that it differs from the other seven groups in her study: the Minneapolis organization has a flat, almost leaderless structure in which women of multiple racial backgrounds form the core; the organization’s culture facilitates the honest reflections about race, class, and gender that Ernst argues are required to generate social change over time.

One important criticism of *The Price of Progressive Politics* is its lack of context and detail about the contemporary welfare rights movement. Ernst spends less than two pages discussing the contemporary movement in Chapter One; a more thorough discussion of when these organizations were formed, what are their strategies, and what are their goals was needed. Further, the short discussion she includes is a bit confusing. For example, she dates the contemporary movement at 2006 on page 11, but in her concluding chapter refers to the national Welfare Rights Coalition beginning in 1996 with the end of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. It is not until the final chapter that she discusses the 1996 welfare system reforms, including the important switch from a fairly unified, federal entitlement program to a block granted program, essentially implemented as 50 separate state programs. As Ernst notes, these changes have important implications for the efforts of welfare rights organizations, especially at the national level. Readers without a good deal of prior knowledge about the welfare system will be at a disadvantage in understanding the full scope of her argument.

Rose Ernst has undertaken this study in a period of welfare rights movement abeyance—when issues of welfare and poverty are not on government agendas and these groups can do little more than seek to protect existing programs and rights. It is, however, an important time to bring to light the intersectionality that marginalizes welfare populations, because the fallout from the Great Recession is quite likely to put issues of poverty and the welfare system back on the radar of both politicians and the public. Those interested in issues of social justice and poverty policy should use Ernst’s findings to better understand these problems and conceptualize workable solutions to this complex system.

Throughout the book, Ernst uses Ronald Reagan’s “welfare queen” trope as the perfect incarnation of the welfare system’s intersectionality: in the public conscience, a welfare recipient is a poor, African American woman dependent on society’s largesse. The enduring nature of this image speaks to the veracity of Ernst’s argument.
New media is typically received by people with emotions, which run the gamut from joy to hostility. The rise of cinema we tend to see in hindsight as a glorious age, but did you know that the cinema was censured by many serious prominent citizens, politicians, and educators, including sociology’s own Herbert Blumer who believed film was dangerous to the moral education of youth? In our time, it is information technology (IT) that has been an object of loathing as much as unbridled application and consumption in the various sectors of society. Inevitably, celebrations of the power of the technology have been accompanied by fears that IT is a sign of a runaway world of communicative distortion and control. Reading Virginia Eubanks’ book, *Digital Dead End*, can have the very significant and important effect of making one realize how vulnerable, like everyone else, we in the scholarly community have been to the distractions of such mood swings.

Eubanks’ book comes from a sociological standpoint that steers clear of the epiphenomena of technophobia and technophilia. Nor does she rely on the mindless assumption, so often taken for granted by adopters and detractors alike, that “technologies” are products of experts and administrators of industries and governments that are gradually, inevitably in the process of being adopted by a public. In fact to the contrary, one stated *raison d’être* of her work is to unravel the “magical thinking” that promotes uncritical belief in technological utopias and dystopias. In this book about social justice there is no Grantian technological will-to-power that needs to be loudly lamented or shouted down. There are only people unwilling to examine the reproduction of inequalities in our new socio-technical formations, unwilling mostly because the prevailing ideology tells us that technologies grant us pathways to individual and collective success or failure.

The subtitle of Eubanks’ book, *Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*, flags our historical situation. In an early chapter, she sets up her conception of the kind of social justice needs that are evolving with a contextual analysis of “The Real World of Information Technology.” Immediately, she abuses us of the dichotomy so common in “digital divide” approaches, which single out haves and have-nots. IT is a commodity, but a commodity is a social relation loaded with assumptions about use, production, and consumption. We have work to do, you will hear her loudly and clearly saying, to find out how ordinary people actually enter into the social relations of technology. And when we do, we will find that some may “have” access to the technology but for certain reasons experience the requirements of the relation as an onerous discipline rather than as just another cool download. More often than not it is the former that is what “a successful path” has come to mean for many in our contemporary neoliberalized world. This perception of an imposition of agency that affects significant groupings of folks mediates the same people’s conceptions of the forms of inequality that can be addressed as IT spreads. The task therefore, as presented by Eubanks, is to look for correlations between such perceptions amidst the actual technological practices of those affected, and to stimulate conversations about remediating inequalities that are located within the context of the specific situations in which such correlations arise.

After much frustrating experience trying to understand the effects of IT from the perspective of the digital divide, Eubanks tells us that she found it necessary to turn to the model of participatory action research (PAR). In my assessment, her choice is justified on epistemological grounds and not merely on normative grounds. The normative grounds, as she tells us, became plain as she witnessed the effects of how IT programs get rolled out. In her study, Eubanks examined poor and working-class people—in particular women—in upstate New York who have been subjected to the social relation of technology by the optimistic plan for...
the region to become a leader in IT. Working with her local YMCA to get involved with women participants on IT projects over a fairly lengthy (several years) period of time, she evolved the idea that through collaborative analysis with her participants she could discover the rich and creative lived experiences, tactics, and meanings of the technologies that her participants are forced to grapple with. A key outcome of her work is her model of popular technology—a ground-up way of understanding the rich variations and lived experiences with technology in terms of the actualities of use, production, and consumption. As both a process and an outcome of a PAR approach, popular technology is not merely ethnographic or experiential in nature. Nor is it rooted in an a priori assumption about structures of inequality or an automatic suspicion of technology. Eubanks’ work is in fact outstanding as a model of mixed methods research, capable of illuminating problems through statistical analysis as much as through teasing out meanings from conversations.

The typical contemporary sociologist will feel on very comfortable ground with Eubanks, and there is no doubt that sociologists should embrace popular technology and further it. The epistemological grounds for her PAR approach are just as important as the normative grounds and they work closely together. It is not as much the real as the actual that matters in Eubanks’ approach. This stance is necessary to mount a concern for social justice rooted in specific situations. Without her concern for social justice for her participants, she would not have had the motivation to perceive the specific actualities of popular usages of, resistances to, and even contributions to, technology—and without delving into the latter she would not have evolved her social justice approach. By rooting herself in the actual, Eubanks finds that IT is a social relation that encourages its adopters to imagine the social as groups of people with certain possessions, (i.e., the computers and the skills that go with them). In her view of digital media, specific actuals (the practices of actors) are deployed in relation to a specific virtual (popular technology), and it is salutary to see the true meaning of the virtual as merely a specific, local diagram of actualization, and not as is all too common, some kind of new reified world.

Eubanks’ approach to social justice in her book, Digital Dead End, lays bare the collusion between the IT industry's favored fiction of progressive technological adoption and the traditional distributive paradigm of social justice. IT now pervades and permeates our workplaces, our communications, our thought processes, our homes, our schools, our governments, our industries, our social relations, our love lives, our imaginative ideals, our fantasies, and our identities. Ours is a world that is changing, requiring us to monitor how rights and goods are distributed. But Eubanks argues that we should dispense with the notion of the real, popular among policy makers, that rests on imagining “the people” and what the latter must want or need. Only by researching the specificities of actors’ involvements with IT can we locate the origins of the desire that turns into perceived need. Only with such specificities in mind is it revealed that IT has been built—not just marketed—to encourage the assumption that those who lack it, want or need it. For Eubanks’ part, she convincingly argues that the change that is occurring has just as much to do with an internal distancing that varies by social location. This internal distancing has to do with how people in privileged social locations tend to imagine they are adopting IT as a tool and ignore how it is a social relation. The great value of Eubanks’ approach to the subject of technology and social justice is her unquiet spirit that doggedly pursues the cracks and fissures in these unequal social realities of the information society, and amplifies the voices of the marginalized.
Epidemics conjure up images of a grand scope and wide reach, as they saturate dispersed geographic areas with panic, fear, and death. This expansiveness leads historians and sociologists to study epidemics through a wide lens in research that focuses on their national or international reach. While understandable, this macro orientation can skew our understanding of the lived experiences of epidemics, in which the effects on communities and their victims are felt locally. Patricia Fanning’s examination of the 1918 influenza epidemic in the town of Norwood, Massachusetts therefore offers a refreshing complement to most research on epidemics.

In Influenza and Inequality, Fanning draws on the case study of Norwood to illuminate the social and political dynamics of epidemics. Her findings along these lines—the messy intertwining of politics and public health, the scapegoating of immigrants and minorities, the disconnect between elites and working classes that fuels resentment and suspicion—are all too familiar to medical historians and sociologists. Nevertheless, while the book may not offer much in the way of new insights into these dynamics, it is a needed contribution to the sociology of epidemics, as it brings to vivid life how these general dynamics unfold in a specific local setting.

Drawing on a unique combination of conventional archival sources and oral histories, Fanning traces the epidemic in Norwood, which serves as a microcosm of disruptions that immigration, industrialization, and suburbanization brought to small town America during the turn of the twentieth century. These disruptions to the town’s traditional hierarchy were complicated by the arrival of a dizzyingly diverse group of immigrants, which included Finnish, German, Irish, Italian, Lebanese, Lithuanian, Polish, Swedish, and Syrian immigrants, all looking for work in the town’s industries. The town’s elite responded to these immigrants in two distinct, but interrelated ways. Some embraced Progressivism and assumed a paternalistic posture toward the new immigrants, instituting educational programs to Americanize the immigrants. Others retreated into Nativism, which denigrated the immigrant communities and worried about the cultural purity of their country, demonized the new communities, portraying them as dens of squalor, corruption, and radical politics. Both responses treated them as second-class citizens. The influenza thus hit a town divided, and the local response to the epidemic reproduced, and intensified, these tensions with the institution of policies that amalgamated the worst of both Progressivism and Nativism.

Fanning recounts the response to the epidemic with a fine eye for detail. Of particular strength is her identification of enmeshment of the epidemic with World War I. Many have noted the manner in which the Great War facilitated the horrific epidemic, as the disease followed troop movements and the war drove officials to distraction. But Fanning uncovers another link between the two crises that has often gone unnoticed. The local organizations charged with controlling the epidemic were the same organizations charged with responding to the war. In Norwood, the Committee of Public Safety commissioned with ferreting out enemies of the state and ensuring Norwood’s patriotism, was literally the same organization that took the lead in responding to the epidemic. Unsurprisingly the committee carried out a public health program with a suspicious eye toward immigrant communities. In response to the invasive inspections and centralized control, immigrants avoided coming under the committee’s watchful eye at all costs, often hiding the ill from inspectors. Fanning therefore offers a stunning, and quite frankly upsetting, account of the interrelationship of wartime politics and public health, a link recognized by macro histories of the epidemic, but rarely rendered with such human detail.

The shortest chapter in the book, “The Epidemic Experience” is in many ways its most powerful. Fanning creatively examines Norwood’s two cemeteries to understand not
only the social processes of memory and forgetting. The town burials serve as a mirror of the social division of class and ethnicity, in which remembrance was an elite privilege. The poor immigrant communities not only suffered the brunt of the epidemic, but their experiences were forgotten, as their headstones literally misspelled their names. Through such careless misidentification, the dead were de-memorialized. Fanning thus uses the cemeteries as enduring data on the politics of erasing the historical experiences of communities deemed not important enough to remember, a poignant example of the politics of forgetting.

The book’s few weaknesses stem from its overall strength—namely, its rigorous focus on the local. For example, from the local practices of forgetting in Norwood, Fanning makes the argument that the influenza epidemic has been largely forgotten in the United States. But in laying out a laudable goal to reclaim forgotten memory, Fanning overstates the degree to which the great influenza has been erased from the American collective conscience. While it may be that the epidemic no longer looms large in the popular imagination, I am not sure if it is any more “forgotten” than World War I or the labor unrest of the period. Collective memory typically follows the passing of generations, and with the last American World War I veteran dying in 2011, it is not surprising that the events of the period have retreated from the forefront of the American narrative. Fanning makes between local depth and general breadth a bit too imbalanced toward the local. The book could do more to embed Norwood within the general national context, especially as it pertains to the spread of the epidemic, as there are times when the Norwood experience comes across as curiously isolated.

Nevertheless, Influenza and Inequality remains an important, worthwhile read not only to those interested in epidemics, or those interested in the historical period, but to all sociologists and historians interested in the intersection of health, class, and ethnicity. Fanning brings a much needed local perspective to the history of epidemics that serves not only as a complement to macro histories, but also as an imperative reminder of the human element behind the gross mortality statistics of epidemics.
Throughout her book, Gao draws on existing knowledge based on Western, especially U.S., experiences to compare with developments in China. The book is well structured into seven chapters. The introductory chapter provides an overview of social change and illegal drug use and trafficking in China. This is followed by a careful description and discussion of how the author chose the research site, reached out to potential interview subjects, and conducted in-depth interviews and onsite observations. Gao provides a summary of the characteristics of the 90 women heroin users she interviewed and is careful to note the limitations of the study. The sample consists of only women heroin users in Kunming and thus allows us considerable insight into the lives and behavior of the sample, but the sample design also limits the study’s generalizability on a variety of issues.

In the rest of the book, Gao adopts a “career perspective”—initiation, escalation, maintenance, and discontinuation—to describe and organize the lives of the heroin users. Chapter Three provides information on the family, school, and post-school life of the users in the sample. One would welcome comparison with the general population here. While many members of the sample have low education and abusive families, such factors do not automatically turn these women into addicts—there are numerous children in poor and dysfunctional families who have avoided dangerous drugs.

Chapters Four through Six are especially informative as they discuss these women’s initiation into heroin use, addiction and crime, and efforts at rehabilitation. Gao notes that, unlike in the United States, most of the women in the study had not engaged in serious deviant behavior or committed crimes prior to their heroin addiction. Importantly, 49, or nearly half, of the 90 subjects took up heroin in the five years of 1988–1992. The author claims that at this time heroin became popular among these subjects and more generally in the region. As Chinese society opened up to material pursuits, business people in the region took the lead in using heroin, often in social venues, thus making heroin use an upscale and fashionable habit. Gao’s data also demonstrate the importance and patterns of social relations in women’s heroin use initiation, and there were striking differences in how single versus married women started the heroin habit.

Drawing on her field interviews, Gao then presents a compellingly familiar picture of how heroin use altered the lives of the women into vicious cycles. We learn details of the users’ transition from smoking, snorting to intravenous injection as well as the physiological and financial reasons for such transitions. As the Chinese government has increased policing efforts to crack down on illegal drug trafficking and use, illegal drug sales have become less visible in Kunming and the drug users adopt a variety of tactics to avoid arrest. For example, under Chinese law, a woman nursing a baby cannot be taken into custody and it is not a surprise that the author observed women carrying babies making heroin purchases, with the police looking on (p. 98). Then the challenges of maintaining continued usage soon developed. After they exhausted legitimate sources of income, including funds from family, male partners, and friends, the subjects tended to turn to prostitution, drug trafficking and other crimes to support their addictive habits. Drug addiction thus leads women to expand the number of users in order to sustain their own habits, thereby becoming a major route for HIV transmission.

Gao makes scathing remarks on the practice of compulsory rehabilitation in the city of Kunming and argues that it ignored women’s needs, making the women prone to relapse after they were released. She calls for more effective social services targeted at the community and the schools. Gao’s own information suggests that things are improving in recent years. She notes that “the current culture is no longer favorable for heroin use, and therefore more women heroin users experience social pressures to quit drug use” (p. 154). Since China’s anti-drug law enacted in 2007 also gives emphasis to the development of community-based drug treatment programs. While she complains of the ineffectiveness of the programs, her follow-up interviews refer to greater state investments in treatments, particularly community-based after-care programs which are highly praised by her subjects and are promising. She reports that “the number of daily heavy drug users was diminishing significantly”
and efforts are also underway to link drug-free behavior with the allocation of social benefits. Given the way the book is written, it is hard to know whether these promising developments are only adopted locally or are more widely practiced.

In conclusion, in spite of the study’s limitations and its need for tighter editing for consistency, Huan Gao has produced a valuable contribution to our understanding of Chinese society.


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Kristina Gibson’s book, Street Kids, is a passionate glimpse into the lives of New York street youth. Adopting a critical feminist ethnographic approach, the study involved a total of five years of field-work (the summer of 2004 to the summer of 2006 and then return visits from 2007 to 2010), much of which was done when the author worked as a volunteer street outreach worker. Theoretically, the analysis is primarily framed by human geography, but the book is interspersed throughout with sociological insights.

After setting the stage in the first chapter, where a series of questions were posed that were effectively addressed throughout the book—a feat unfortunately neglected in some scholarly books—Chapter Two provides the reader with an excellent review of the three main paradigms that have framed youth homelessness, beginning not long after the Civil War. What impressed me most about this part of the analysis was how the history and ideologies about street youth were shown to inform the development of professionalized social services. From the child savers, to mainstream studies of delinquency and subcultures, to the current era where the processes and contextual experiences of street youth are explored, the chapter does a nice job reviewing key materials in each era, in addition to making the important point that social services tend to lag behind social change and the needs of street youth. The material in this chapter would be useful reading for those interested in shifting paradigms about who street youth are, and why they end up roaming our streets.

The ethnography begins, in earnest, in Chapter Three where the life of “Blacc,” a street kid from Queens, is profiled. This case study is used to illustrate the common trajectories that lead many young people to take to the streets, including: childhood poverty, foster care, and a non-heterosexual orientation. Moreover, Blacc’s case study revealed the many challenges that confront youth once they become seriously street-involved, including: making money in the illegal street economy (e.g., bending Metro cards for subway patrons and sex work), alcohol and drug use, police harassment, and discrimination.

From here the analysis turns to the practice of “outreach” where social service providers reach out and “engage” street-involved youth. Along with a discussion about the history, philosophy, and practicalities involved in outreach, Goffman’s work on performance is used to show the reader how outreach workers learn to establish credible identities with various street audiences, ranging from drug dealers to the police. This work was shown to be emotionally draining, not very well paid, with high levels of worker turnover.

A little more than halfway through the book, Gibson examines changes that have taken place in policing homeless people in New York City. After reviewing the well-known and controversial practice of zero-tolerance policing that began in the mid-1990s, the author argues that this style of law enforcement has negatively affected the lives of street youth by altering their patterns of mobility. Street youth now need to be constantly on the move in order to avoid getting ticketed or arrested by the police. According to Gibson, this has made it much more difficult for outreach workers to locate and help homeless youth because they are now constantly on the run. Not only are youth more on the move that in the past, but this “hyper-mobility” has pushed street youth away from busy public spaces which

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used to be used for money-making and leisure to more secluded and dangerous areas of the city. This was the most interesting yet disturbing finding of the study.

Apparently these mobility patterns had noticeably changed between the author’s first two years of field work—ending in the summer of 2006—and her final observations which were made in 2010. Since disorder-policing has been in existence since the mid-1990s, it would have been interesting to know if such policing has intensified over the past 15 years, thus explaining the differences she observed in youths’ mobility patterns over this relatively short period of field work. Annual data from 2004 to 2010 on how many tickets have been issued to youth by New York’s Finest would have helped to explain these mobility shifts. Indeed, such activity has taken place in other North American cities over this same period. For example, in Toronto, Canada the number of tickets that have been issued by the Toronto Police Service for violations related to panhandling and squeegee cleaning have increased by over 2,000 percent over the past decade. Unfortunately, similar sorts of statistics were not presented in this study.

Even though the analysis was couched within a feminist standpoint, most of the book focused on the lives of male street youth. This may simply reflect the fact that males outnumber females on the streets and that their presence may be more visible to outreach workers. Yet there was not much discussion about whether changes in youths’ mobility patterns were gendered. Since the streets are predominantly male-dominated spaces, are these new mobility patterns experienced in the same ways for homeless young women as they are for homeless young men? Unfortunately the reader was not provided with an answer to this question, but it would be an ideal question for future research.

In sum, this well-written book should be required reading for street outreach workers, and is highly recommended for academics and budding ethnographers who are interested in the study of youth homelessness.
intuitively, the beauty premium is greater for men than for women, supposedly because unattractive women opt-out of the labor force to stay at home. How much more time and money the good-looking workers spend to maintain these advantages, Hamermesh does not speculate, but there we have it: Beauty Pays.

For the second part of the book’s title, Why Attractive People Are More Successful, Hamermesh relies mostly on irrational preference-based discrimination, which sets up his conclusion that ugliness can be considered a disability eligible for legal protections. This, however, avoids a potentially rich discussion of the mechanisms through which looks translate into outcomes. Partly this is a necessary outcome of how he has defined beauty, or rather, not defined it. Hamermesh establishes that a package of attributes is scarce and valuable, relying on survey data to show that there is some non-random consensus within specific societies that makes some faces cluster at the high end and others at the low end of a 1–5 rating scale. There are lots of interesting patterns in these data alone: some societies inflate looks more than others; respondents are more discerning of women’s looks than men’s; perceptions of beauty decline steeper with age for women than for men.

Drawing from these survey results, Hamermesh claims that facial beauty, as determined from ratings of headshots, has effects independent from height, weight, dress, and personality. This makes for an unsatisfyingly narrow idea of beauty, which misses all kinds of factors we suspect should matter in real life, from presentation of self, the smile, sexiness, confidence, stylishness, and so on. Aside from brief reference to psychology findings that babies can recognize beautiful faces and that facial symmetry is important, the contents of what makes someone fall on the scale of 1–5 remain a closed box.

Another difficulty in answering the Why question is the choice-based economics approach Hamermesh employs. He conceptualizes beauty as a scarce good that people can trade for better economic outcomes, like wages and mates. In this model he assumes stable and given preferences for what is beautiful, sidestepping how such preferences arise, how they change across cultures, over history, or within the life course. This disregards the roles of, for instance, the media, group rituals, gender norms, and other contextual factors giving rise to specific forms of beauty; such concerns are noted as “beyond the scope of this book.” When dealing with a quality of inherently subjective value, it would seem that context is crucial. There are probably some conditions under which looks matter more because they substitute for missing information, for instance in loan applications, a situation of high uncertainty. While in some fields a particular look is highly prized, in others it may be a liability. Beauty as a social sorter gets tightly bookended within Hamermesh’s version of economic analysis.

Thus Hamermesh sticks close to the survey data, some of which are dated (the only nationally representative dataset of beauty ratings and earnings comes from 1971). Several key sources are unpublished manuscripts, making it tough to evaluate the criteria for good research in beauty studies. The methods here are important, especially given the minefield of confounding variables, such as class, which is largely absent.

Ultimately the book raises more questions than it answers, and this is good news for the study of beauty. With the rise of the service economy, the large scale entry of women in the workforce, and the increasing display of our digitized selves, future lines of research will have many contributions on this topic, for which Hamermesh gives us a solid foundation.


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Some of the most important sociological analyses of authority relations in organizations have been done in medical settings (e.g., Coser 1958). The medical professions, perhaps more than any other professions, and hospitals, as much as any other type of
organization, rely on the exercise of authority to get things done. Patient outcomes depend on doctors and nurses smoothly dividing complex and precise tasks among a team of professionals and then ensuring that those tasks are properly carried out. The decision-making authority and task structure of medical organizations have become firmly entrenched in a status hierarchy of doctors, residents, and nurses, which is itself buttressed by a complex system of formal and informal rules and legitimating accounts.

Katherine Kellogg’s book, *Challenging Operations: Medical Reform and Resistance in Surgery*, looks at what happens when outside reform changes one those integral rules. The reform was a rule change that required hospitals to reduce the number of hours that surgical residents could work in a week. Before the reform, intern residents regularly worked 120 hours a week. Faced with increasing pressure from external groups that were distressed by the high rates of error associated with sleep-deprived residents, in 2003 the American Council for Graduate Medical Education instituted a new rule that residents could not work more than 80 hours per week. Although the rule change covered all hospitals with residents, few hospitals fully implemented the reform. As Kellogg ably demonstrates, many doctors actively resisted the reform. She seeks to explain why some hospitals were able to overcome intense pressures to ignore the reform.

Before getting into the details of the book, it should be said that Kellogg’s fine-tuned observational skills and attention to the details of organizational life, her clearheaded analysis, and her accessible writing style make this book worthy of any praise lauded upon it. And surely it will receive much praise. The book is distinctive in at least three ways. First, Kellogg uses a comparative ethnographic design that maximizes her ability to identify the reason that most hospitals failed to fully reform. She observed the surgical wards of three hospitals that were similar in almost every way, except that they varied in their ability to implement the rule. One hospital never successfully implemented it, another hospital implemented it but then eventually reverted to its prior ways, and a third hospital was able to successfully reform despite strong initial opposition. The comparative nature of her study design allows her to delve into the rich texture of the implementation process while also eliminating alternative explanations. Second, because of the subject matter, the book makes contributions to four major subfields in sociology: organizational sociology, law and society, social movement theory, and medical sociology. In addition, the analysis touches on important issues in the study of gender and culture. Third, Kellogg’s explanation for why one hospital successfully implemented reform brings to light two important conceptual innovations: relational spaces and transient reformers.

The first part of the book introduces the reader to one of the major sources of resistance to the reform—the culture of “iron men” surgeons who believed the reform undermined the authority relations of the hospital and their deeply valued identities as “heroic surgeons.” In addition, we learn about the beliefs and values that motivate challengers to reform the system, including the need to lead more balanced lives that departed from the macho image of the traditional surgeon. The second part of the book details the problems challengers faced when trying to implement reform in the three hospitals and shows how surgeons in two of the hospitals were able to initially overcome these problems by creating relational spaces. Relational spaces were spaces isolated from defenders that allowed face-to-face interactions among residents from all work positions. Creating relational spaces helped challengers overcome resistance at each position where practices were targeted for change. If an intern was to leave at the end of a shift, the intern needed to be able to smoothly “hand off” the patients’ information to another resident. Successful handoffs involved coordination of tasks carried out by a chief resident, senior resident, intern and “night float”—a resident specifically designated to handle the extra tasks of an intern who had ended his or her shift. If any one of these doctors resisted the reform and failed to cooperate, some crucial aspect of a patient’s care could have been missed. By creating relational spaces, challengers of the status quo were able to generate solutions to this coordination problem, finding ways to
work around defenders of the status quo and create the emotional energy needed to persist in implementing the reform.

Ultimately, only one hospital succeeded in fully reforming. Kellogg shows that this was because of the presence of transient reformers, interns pursuing a career outside of general surgery who were both less committed to traditional roles and less dependent on defender rewards than general surgery interns. These reformers played a critical role in the change process by engaging in collective disruption—refusing to back down in the face of new practice rejection, ignoring verbal insults, and withstanding stigmatization. By collectively disrupting day-to-day activities, transient reformers forced defenders to accommodate new practices if they were to meet their own goals.

Kellogg’s book shows that authority relations in organizations are indeed sticky—in fact, the hierarchy presented in Rose Coser’s 1958 analysis is almost identical to a figure in this book plotting the structure of contemporary surgical wards. But there is hope for change. Reformers can successfully challenge authority relations when they coordinate across different positions in the hierarchy and collectively disrupt practices that legitimate traditional relationships. Illuminating this process of change makes this book an important contribution to our understanding of how meaningful organizational reform can be realized.

Reference


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Women remain underrepresented in science and engineering, but whereas they have made steady, if slow, progress toward equal representation in most science and engineering fields, computer science stands out as a glaring exception to the trend. Despite the increasing educational attainment of women and the inroads they have made into other science fields, the representation of women among computer science majors in U.S. universities and in the information technology (IT) workforce has declined steadily since the 1980s. The authors of Gender Stratification in the IT Industry attempt to identify the mechanisms that explain this paradox.

Kenneth W. Koput and Barbara A. Gutek draw together insights from the social network, sex-role spillover and status literatures to identify the interpersonal processes that perpetuate and intensify gender stratification in the IT field. The first chapters present a thorough review of the theoretical and empirical literatures related to social capital, social networks, and how gender roles and social status influence the flow of information in networks to perpetuate status differentials. From this literature the authors derive precise propositions specifying the mechanisms that maintain significant female deficits in participation, employment, and pay in the IT industry. This is a notable contribution to the literature on gender differences in science which often attributes the observed disparities to influences such as discrimination, personal preferences, and social constraints, without specifying the micro-mechanisms by which they operate.

The empirical analysis presented in the book uses longitudinal data for five cohorts of undergraduate students enrolled in a management information sciences (MIS) program at a large university between 2001 and 2003. The data speak only to a subfield
of computer science, from a single institution, and for a limited period of the life course, but they include an extensive set of measures not available in any data source that has been used to examine career progress in science and engineering. The data are collected from administrative records and multiple surveys of the students and cover the students’ last two years in the program and their job search experiences. They include rich measures of the students’ social networks, interactions with fellow MIS students, leadership experiences, responsibilities outside of their academic pursuits, sex-role attitudes, career orientations and attitudes, human capital, and job placement.

The authors aim to identify the mechanisms influencing student progress, retention, and job placement in the MIS field, and they use multiple measures to capture the multidimensionality of each outcome. To operationalize retention, for example, they analyze behavioral measures of students’ programmatic participation, including dropout and on-time completion of required courses, as well as attitudinal measures of students’ orientation, including self-reports of commitment to the field and plans to work outside of the field after graduation. The focal explanatory concepts, social capital and sex-role spillover, are also measured multidimensionally. Drawing on their unique multi-year student network data, the authors use the number of social contacts and average cohesion among contacts to operationalize social capital. Sex-role spillover is measured using a combination of attitudinal scales, reports of outside responsibilities, and leadership activities.

The results of the analysis are presented in Chapter Four and discussed extensively in Chapters Five and Six. The statistical models are necessarily sophisticated to accommodate the richness of the predictor and outcome variables and complexity of the processes the analysis aims to identify. For example, in all analyses the focal predictor variables are interacted with gender to assess how social capital and sex-role spillover operate differently for men and women and which outcomes are most affected by those disparities. Despite the complexity, the empirical results are presented in clearly organized summary tables (complete statistical results are presented in appendix tables) and described concisely in non-technical language. The authors consistently focus on the substantive importance of the statistical results, emphasizing their relevance both to the theoretical propositions they aim to test and to our understanding of the processes that influence the cultivation of an inclusive scientific labor force.

The authors find that women are more likely than men to drop out of the MIS program before graduation despite better grades and rates of progress through the program. Among the students who remain in the program, women are nearly shut out of student leadership positions, and they receive fewer job offers and lower starting salaries than men. These results are consistent with extant research—so the real value of this book is in the insights it offers into the network and social capital mechanisms that sustain these disparities. The student networks are acutely segregated by gender and they operate in gendered ways. A primary contribution provided by the study is a detailed analysis of the double-jeopardy women face in professional networks. On the one hand, connections with men are essential for women’s professional success: since men predominate at the core of the networks, connections with them provide essential access to information and legitimacy. On the other hand, connections with men heighten the experience of sex-role spillover among women and thereby jeopardize their continued network inclusion and professional standing. The results of the study illustrate the gendered dynamics of social networks as they operate to influence both the success of the MIS students during their years in the training program as well as their job-search experiences and employment outcomes when they graduate. In the concluding chapters, the authors enhance the discussion of the quantitative results with added qualitative illustrations of the interpersonal interactions that underlie the network mechanisms.

In sum, this is a clearly written presentation of a complex analysis that contributes to multiple theoretical literatures and to our understanding of the mechanisms that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in science generally and their diminishing representation in information technology
specifically. Although the study presented in *Gender Stratification in the IT Industry* cannot definitively identify the causes of the historical trend, the insights it provides will prompt further research and policy approaches that promise to reverse the trend.

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In sociology, emergence refers to the process by which micro-level behaviors appear as a macro-level social phenomenon different from the aggregation of individual behaviors. At the macro level, sociologists assert a covering law, typically a statement of a linear relationship between variables. The problem with covering laws is that they ignore the social processes and complex mechanisms at the micro level that can explain the observed relationship at the macro level.

In the context of criminology, covering laws tend to assert a relationship between a condition (e.g., poverty) and crime, without indicating the specific micro-level processes by which the macro-level outcome is produced. This volume’s call for attention to the emergence of crime entails concern not only with individual risk factors and situational risk factors, but also with the interaction of these two sets of factors, and with the feedback of the outcomes of these interactions on both individual risk factors and situational risk factors. Attention to process is the key, which means that studies need to be longitudinal, need to contain rich data about individuals and situations, and need to use analytic techniques that can identify patterns unlikely to be apparent otherwise.

In this edited collection of twelve chapters, the notion of crime emergence is addressed by a strong mix of philosophy, summaries of theories, literature reviews, methodological discussions, mathematical modeling, game theory, geographic information analysis, summaries of lines of research, and summaries of individual studies. The structure of the book is clear and cumulative. The initial chapters describe emergence, the second section looks at the development of the concept for specific crimes and contexts, the third section describes studies employing the concepts, and the final section covers methodological issues. At the beginning of each chapter are a nice summary of the material and explicit links describing how the material in the chapter relates to discussions in other chapters. In contrast to many edited books, the editors here did a very good job of unifying the book.

However, as with almost all edited books, there is an uneven quality in the chapters, including one that presents “preliminary” findings. Nevertheless, most of the chapters are interesting, novel, helpful, and excellent integrations of material. Chapters by R. Keith Sawyer, Per-Olof Wikström, P. Jeffrey Brantingham and Martin Short, and Patricia Brantingham and colleagues are particularly strong.

Sawyer’s chapter summarizes philosophical accounts of emergence, a discussion that served as the basis of the first paragraph of this review. The chapter is well-written, logically structured, and highly informative. Greater development of this material would have been helpful for two reasons. First, most criminologists are unlikely to be familiar with the philosophical underpinnings of concepts like mechanism, system, and complexity. Second, this unfamiliarity is reflected in the inconsistency across chapters in this book with precisely how the term “emergence” is used.

Wikström’s chapter presents his Situational Action Theory as an example of how the concepts of emergence can be used to better understand the causes of crime. Wikström clearly defines basic philosophical concepts like causation, as well as criminological concepts like crime, and he makes a point of using a Coleman diagram to show the links between micro- and macro-level factors over time.

P. J. Brantingham and Short nicely illustrate the use of mathematical models to identify patterns in the data. Importantly, their models also incorporate feedback loops showing how police activity affects the person-place interactions at those locations.
The chapter by P. Brantingham and her colleagues provides an excellent summary of simulation methods. The authors’ focus is on their own simulation modeling technique, analogous to models used in computational biology and computational physics, which extends their earlier work on the geometry of crime. The authors acknowledge that there are different ways in which emergence can be conceptualized, but their model captures much of what is important: longitudinal consideration of information about offenders, information about places, and their interaction. Their work on repeat burglars suggests that simulations can do a reasonably good job of tracking actual data, and their models lead to recognizing patterns that would otherwise be missed.

This book comes at the right time in criminology. The past few decades have led to a solid knowledge base, and there are strong motivations, including external incentives, for a better understanding of crime. Moreover, sophisticated mathematical models are being developed and used in many academic fields, and, as Brantingham et al. noted, these tools can be adapted to create a computational criminology.

Despite the overall strengths of this book, I have two concerns. The first relates to the lacuna regarding any discussion of reductionism. No one in social science would seriously argue that behavior is not complex and multidetermined or that interactions and process are important to understand. However, given that parsimony is also a virtue in scientific explanation, it would have been useful if one or more authors had pitted this book’s focus on complexity with the advantages of a simple explanation, particularly if that simple model can explain about as much behavior as can more complex models.

My second concern relates to the tension resulting from the fact that “[m]ost mechanisms are reductionists and methodological individualists, whereas most covering law sociologists are not” (p. 30). Most of the empirical work in the book was written by sociologically oriented criminologists. An emergent perspective would seem to be calling for collaboration between scholars studying mechanisms at the micro level and scholars developing covering laws at the macro level. In criminology, that would involve more collaboration between psychologists and sociologists, and books such as this one would be a good place to evidence that sort of interdisciplinary activity.


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This book asks a simple question: In the face of the ideological retreat from class as an organizing category in society, has class consciousness among British union activists been replaced with other motivating elements of consciousness? The answer: Perhaps not surprisingly, it’s complicated. But in analyzing those complications, Sian Moore sheds a great deal of light on the changing nature of class and the changing nature of labor activism and labor activists. Though grounded in British experience, her work has important implications for these same issues elsewhere in the world.

Moore’s book builds on five smaller studies on varied topics: statutory recognition campaigns (what in the United States would be called union organizing campaigns), Union Learning Representatives and Equality Representatives (relatively new union staff positions mandated by New Labour Legislation), and migrant worker activism. The research is based on in-depth interviews with a total of 30 activists, ranging from five in the migrant worker activism study (though one of the statutory recognition activists was also an immigrant) to thirteen Equality Representatives. The activists were concentrated in the UNISON union (public sector workers), with a secondary concentration in Unite (mainly manufacturing and transport) and a few from other unions. Moore frankly acknowledges that the sample is by no means representative of British labor activists. Still, though 30 interviews might seem a slim reed on which to support a book, the depth of the interviews provides a rich account of activists’ consciousness and how it connects with action.
The backdrop for the book is the United Kingdom under Tony Blair, whose New Labour politics reintegrated elements of social democracy into what remained, and remains, a fundamentally neoliberal structure of public policy and labor relations. Thatcherism remains a potent legacy, both in terms of the reduced power of unions and in terms of the marginalization of class as a category of public discourse (a marginalization captured in Thatcher’s ringing statements that “There is no alternative” and “There is no such thing as society [but only individuals]”). In this context, it is not surprising that Moore had to search to find class consciousness.

Still, Moore finds strong evidence of both “residual” class consciousness nurtured by older activists and “emergent” class consciousness present in incomplete forms among younger ones—in both cases relatively latent. Moreover, though the activists she interviewed did not readily speak in terms of class, it is also rare for them to define their activism primarily in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation (though interestingly, a few gay male activists were the ones who most explicitly made the connection between identity and activism). In general, Moore finds an absence of coherent and thoroughly articulated ideologies of social change, but a presence of multifaceted, shifting, and sometimes mutually contradictory ideological elements that combine class with other collective identities.

Learning Representatives, for example, speak the language of individual skills but also at times challenge the boss’ definitions of skill and workers’ potential; Equality Representatives use an individualized discourse of fairness and diversity, but also collective frames of racism, sexism, and the need for worker unity and mutual support. Given the importance of work in structuring identity, and given the importance of the trade union as an organization in unionized workplaces, union activism provides a “home” for many pieces of these kaleidoscopic identities and ideologies, and a way to translate them into action in concrete ways.

Perhaps Moore’s most interesting findings are those examining how activism itself changes consciousness. Some such trajectories are familiar to social movement theorists and grassroots organizers alike, as in the account of “Piotrek,” a Polish immigrant activist who brought a deep suspicion of unions from his native land but step-by-step became a leader in a union-organizing drive. Other examples are quite fresh, such as Moore’s conclusion that the Learning Reps with the strongest commitment to collective action are not those who brought that commitment to the role, but those for whom attempts to help workers build skills led to an awareness of the need for collective struggle to ensure that skill-building. (To her credit, Moore does not simply state this pattern, but also explores under what circumstances this awareness is more likely to arise among the Learning Reps.) Some of her findings are even touching: for example, a number of the Equality Reps are white men who took on the role in order to find out more about their new coworkers, and got a crash course in inequality and discrimination.

There are three areas in which further analysis from Moore could have strengthened the volume. Amidst the focus on individual consciousness, she could have given more attention to union strategic responses to workers’ fragmented consciousness. A very provocative but brief four-page discussion of community unionism stands out in this regard. Second, Moore criticizes the presumption that gender or race translates into a particular consciousness as essentialist, but does not subject her own assumption of the appropriateness of class consciousness to the same scrutiny. Third, though it is a lot to ask of a 2011 book, it would have been fascinating to read Moore’s thinking on how the fragmented consciousness she describes might be reshaped by the 2008 slump and subsequent stagnation, the austerity policies of the new Cameron government (formed in 2010), and the militant protests reacting to those policies.

These gaps notwithstanding, this is a valuable book on the understudied topic of class consciousness, all the more salient at a time when the Occupy movement and “the 99 percent” have reintroduced a discussion of class into U.S. politics. The complicated consciousness of Moore’s activists examines the links between structural position, consciousness, and action in ways that resonate and illuminate not just labor movements, but the range of modern social movements.
This book is based on Diana Mutz’s experience in launching (with Skip Lupia) Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS), a large infrastructure project funded in 2001 by the National Science Foundation. The mission of TESS is to promote methodological innovation through the use of population-based survey experiments. As of 2009, Mutz indicates that TESS is under the direction of psychologist Penny Visser of the University of Chicago and sociologist Jeremy Freese of Northwestern University.

A population-based survey experiment uses survey sampling methods to produce a collection of experimental subjects that is representative of a targeted population of interest. The experimental subjects then are randomly assigned to conditions by the researcher with treatments administered as in any other experiment. The researcher controls the random assignment of participants to variations in the independent variable. But, rather than being required to show up in a laboratory in order to participate, subjects receive the experimental conditions as part of the survey itself. This method thus combines the advantages of experimental designs for causal inferences with the sampling of participants (“real people”) from targeted populations as opposed to undergraduate subject pools.

After an introductory chapter, the book contains three parts. Part I has four chapters that describe alternative treatments that have been employed in population-based experimental designs: (1) treatments to improve measurement, (2) direct and indirect treatments, (3) vignette treatments, and (4) treatments in the context of games.

Three treatments to improve measurement are discussed. The list treatment or item count technique is designed to allow the endorsement of sensitive or controversial positions and behaviors without requiring a respondent to directly admit to them. Rather, the respondent answers indirectly by reporting the number of items that are applicable to self from a list of several activities. One of the items, the target, is on the list for only a randomly selected half of the sample. A second set of techniques aim to improve measurement by altering the way people think about a question they are asked and the process by which they come up with an answer. Anchoring techniques are a third approach to improving measurement; these techniques are based on the premise that if respondents are given anchors or reference points, such as information about the frequency of a behavior in the general population, they will be able to estimate more accurately.

Direct treatments refer to those in which the manipulation is what appears to the survey respondent, such as a photograph of a person the respondent is asked to judge. In indirect treatments, the goal is to induce an altered mood, goal, priority, or thought process through a treatment with other ostensible purposes, such as increasing the salience of a respondent’s ethnicity by asking a series of questions about ethnicity in one experimental condition but not in another.

Vignette treatments are a form of direct treatment in which the goal is to evaluate what difference it makes when the actual object of study or judgment, or the context in which that object appears, is systematically changed in some way. For example, in a study of factors that cause respondents to be more likely to blame a crime victim for his or her predicament, the victim of a crime could be described as male in one scenario and female in another, or black in one scenario and white in another, or wealthy in one scenario and poor in another.

Population-based survey experiments also are administered in the context of games. This category includes real games people play for fun and entertainment. In other cases, they are economic games typically played in laboratory settings with a fiscal incentive rather than an entertainment one. A third variety of games involves online “microworlds” or “virtual worlds” that simulate real world experiences and make highly involving and complex treatments possible.
Two other sections complete the book. Part II includes a chapter on questions and guidelines for the execution of population-based survey experiments and a chapter on randomization checks, sample weighting issues, and the use of covariates in the analysis of population-based experiments. Part III situates population-based survey experiments within social science methods. Its first chapter takes on issues related to external validity of such experiments. A final chapter assesses the role of population-based survey experiments and argues that they are a key to establishing the boundaries of the more universalistic theories in the social sciences: in telling us that X causes Y with certain kinds of people in certain kinds of situations, but not in others.

All in all, this book will be useful for some methods courses, and as a reference for social scientists and students for entry into the methodological literature on population-based survey experiments. Many sociologists already are familiar with one or another of these methods, as for example, list and vignette treatments and direct treatments with photographs have been incorporated into a number of national sample surveys that we analyze. My one suggestion to improve the book, at least from my point of view, is that it would have benefitted from the specification of complete details on a small number (three to five) of population-based survey experiments in the introductory chapter which then could have been followed in later chapters with details on numerical analyses and inferences—with convincing details on how the studies improved on existing knowledge. The bottom line, however, is that because of the many positive features of population-based survey experiments, we undoubtedly will see population-based survey experiments used quite frequently in years to come.


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Martin Ruef’s excellent new book opens with a simple yet profound point: entrepreneurs are groups of people, not individuals. Despite the common assumption that entrepreneurs are individuals—the “myth of the solo entrepreneur” (p. 13), as Ruef terms it—he estimates that only 16 percent of entrepreneurs are true solos. If entrepreneurship is a group activity, then becoming an entrepreneur is an exercise in collective action that involves finding and collaborating with partners, co-owners, advisors, investors, employees, and unpaid helpers. Co-ownership is particularly common, with nearly half of all entrepreneurs sharing ownership with others.

Entrepreneurial relationships during the business start-up phase form the basis for the questions that are the focus of Ruef’s study. The typical start-up, he notes, consists of three or fewer people (the largest category is two people). He asks how entrepreneurs decide whether to recruit others and whom to recruit, what kind of work responsibilities group members have, what level of effort they provide and what kinds of rewards they are offered, and what leads to organizational success or, at least, survival for one year. Along the way he points out some puzzling features of entrepreneurial behavior. For instance, the likelihood of a person’s becoming an entrepreneur rises steadily, before peaking at about fifty. This is not all that surprising, given that people might believe they need to gain a few years of business and managerial experience before striking out on their own. What is surprising, however, is their chosen partners tend to be close in age to them. Younger entrepreneurs do not, for the most part, go into business with older ones to create an optimal mix of technical and business skills. Age homophily trumps a more economically
rational mixture of talents, outlooks, and abilities.

Ruef answers these questions and solves these puzzles by using an approach known as "relational demography," which combines insights from both demographic and network analysis. The idea underlying relational demography is that people who share common demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, age, and marital status, accentuate each other’s positive attributes and form a positive social identity. In the case of entrepreneurs, relational demography would predict that collaboration in starting new ventures would be more likely among people who are homophilous and/or who have strong network ties to one another. Consequently, we would expect 50-year-old aspiring entrepreneurs to select as partners people similar in age and occupational background to themselves, of the same ethnicity, and whom they know well, as spouses, friends, or co-workers.

This is exactly what Ruef finds. Ethnic homophily is particularly pronounced (among both whites and minorities—in fact it is stronger among minority entrepreneurs than among whites), followed by occupation homophily and age homophily; gender homophily is much lower because of the tendency for people to start businesses with (opposite-sex) spouses and cohabitating partners, which illustrates the influence of strong networks. But why do entrepreneurs rely so heavily on homophilous and strong network ties, which come at the expense of benefiting from partners with different skills and non-redundant ties? The answer, Ruef suggests, is that familiarity breeds trust—new businesses are vulnerable, especially at the outset, and it is safer to depend on those who are known or who are sociodemographically similar than to collaborate with strangers.

The most striking findings of Ruef’s book—and certain to be the most controversial—emerge from his analysis of the effects of entrepreneurial homophily. The more homophilous the group the more likely it is that its owners will share ownership and control of the enterprise, that it will be innovative, and that it will survive its first year in business. The benefits of homophily are greatest for ethnicity, followed by gender, and then age and occupation; the latter two have little effect on one-year survival rate, whereas ethnicity has a positive effect on nearly every outcome. The only outcome for which there is no identifiable benefit from demographic homophily is entrepreneurial effort.

Some of the differences between homophilous and diverse groups are huge. For example, business partners who are co-ethnics are more than five times as likely to share control as are ethnically dissimilar partners. Diverse groups are 20 percent to 40 percent as likely to be innovative as non-diverse groups. Entrepreneurial groups whose owners are of different ethnicities and genders are eight times more likely to fail during their first year than are groups with owners of the same ethnicity and gender. In an era in which the benefits of diversity are widely touted and seldom questioned, it will be shocking to some to find that not just diversity does not make a difference but that it significantly disadvantages newly-founded organizations.

Ruef’s explanation of these results is considerably less developed and convincing than his analysis of them. In part this may be because the data that he draws upon, the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics (he uses both PSED I, which was conducted between 1998 and 2000, and PSED II, which was conducted between 2005 and 2006), does not appear to provide the evidence he would need to explore the motivations and actions of nascent entrepreneurs more deeply. Consequently, he is forced to speculate that familiarity—reflected in the reliance on homophilous associations and strong-network ties—is a kind of proxy for trust, which he identifies as the key problem confronting nascent entrepreneurial groups. This may be true, however it depends on two empirical assertions that are plausible but for which we have no data: (1) that homophily solves the trust problem and (2) that solving the trust problem leads to organizational success, such as being innovative and surviving at least one year. It is also not entirely clear why the benefits of ethnic homophily are so much greater than those of age and occupation homophily or, to put it another way, why the familiarity provided by being a co-ethnic is far more important compared to other forms of familiarity.
These minor concerns aside, Ruef has written an exceptional book. It deserves a wide readership among those interested in economic sociology and organizations.


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The photograph prominently placed on the front cover of this book aptly encapsulates its core thesis. The scene it depicts is immediately recognizable as a Protestant parade from Northern Ireland: red, white, and blue bunting and a Red Hand flag sway in the breeze above the heads of a group of boys and men in procession. A closer look at the banners they carry, however, indicates that there is something slightly different in this particular parade. They commemorate not battles or bands but townland history, identity, and myth; a unicorn cantering past the castle of a Scottish settler is juxtaposed somewhat incongruously with the U.S. and Belgian flags and the dates of the Second World War. In the book, Lee Smithey identifies the setting for this event as being the Broadisland Gathering: an Ulster-Scots festival that combines traditional music and dancing, historical military regalia, Presbyterian heritage and commemoration of emigration in a celebration of Ulster-Scots culture. The creation of townland banners, Smithey (p.99) quotes an organizer of the event as saying, was deliberately intended to add to the pageantry of the occasion without risking perceived sectarianism (which would be provoked by the inclusion of traditional Orange banners). The subtlety of this difference and the process behind it—finding a balance between honouring cultural tradition and adapting it for a new context conducive to conflict transformation—is an apt illustration of the author’s primary thesis.

In Unionists, Loyalists, and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland, Smithey argues that, because conflict in Northern Ireland was expressed through two mutually antagonistic ethnopolitical identities, conflict transformation must necessarily entail the redefinition of these identities. Smithey explains the rationale for this thesis meticulously, sewing social psychology, anthropology, peace studies, and constructivism together with the analyses of leading sociological studies on Northern Ireland. The thread uniting them all is that of identity, and its power to cause and to question intractable conflict. There are many quotable phrases in this book—students will appreciate Smithey’s skill in making theoretical discussion accessible and highly readable. It is therefore fair to cite his core argument in his own words: “By redesigning bonfires and murals… or choreographing Orange and loyalist band parades in ways that mitigate some of their most offensive facets, unionist and loyalist activists introduce new values carefully reconciled with long-held understandings of their collective identities. The result is a softening of a politically charged symbolic landscape and a reconsideration of polarized ethnopolitical identities” (p.6).

The book is the product of significant qualitative primary research, including sixty semistructured interviews in Northern Ireland, participant observation at cultural events and organizational meetings, documentary data, and video clips and photographs (a number of which are reproduced in the book, to good effect). Many of the photographs are of murals, the (changing) contents of which are logged and categorized by the author as a means of assessing new elements in the presentation and construction of Protestant, unionist, and loyalist identity in the period of his fieldwork (2005–2007). Added to this are his fieldnotes from other traditional celebrations of this culture, including the bonfires on Eleventh (July) night and parading on or around the Twelfth July commemorations. The book is structured in such a way as to ably support the Smithey’s primary contention that significant cultural innovation and subjective redefinition of unionist and loyalist identity is taking place. The first three chapters outlining the theoretical, historical, and social context for this change are followed by three detailing examples from murals, bonfires, parades,
and heritage events, before the book draws to a conclusion with a (crucial) consideration of pragmatic and strategic motivations behind such change. Such fascinating, broad and carefully-presented research forms the basis for some insightful and important observations by the author. His point, for example, that what is taking place “is not a post-conflict process but rather a continuation of conflict by other means” is well made and suggests that the book has potential to speak usefully to the growing trend of “agonistic” analyses of the role of conflict in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Two broad criticisms can be made of this book and claims as to its reach. The first is anticipated by the author but remains unsatisfactorily addressed: the “Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist” (PUL) community is, to all intents and purposes, undifferentiated in his analysis. The fact that, according to consecutive Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys, only about two-thirds of Protestants describe themselves as unionist (far fewer would be self-described loyalists), indicates the inaccuracy of automatically deducing an “ethnopolitical” identity from a non-Roman Catholic denomination. Furthermore, that internecine, quasi-paramilitary gang feuds continue to cause fear and insecurity in the poorest loyalist areas is a fact that surely challenges the author’s emphasis on a broad PUL ethnopolitical identity in paving the way to peace. Finally, to further the point about differing views and experiences within the PUL community: class matters. The fact that the bulk of the research interviews are conducted in two working-class areas of Belfast undoubtedly skews the picture; murals and Eleventh night bonfires are far less common in middle-class areas of Northern Ireland, no matter how “Protestant.” The strength of the author’s argument would have benefited from more direct acknowledgement of the bias in his sample, or at least of the diversity of expression and meaning of unionist and loyalist identity within the Protestant community.

Indeed, Smithey places such a predominant focus on the identity dimensions of the activities of his subjects that he appears to almost wilfully disregard the bigger picture. Is not the quest for cultural capital quite so important to these groups precisely because they are so poor in terms of economic, social and political capital? Despite acknowledging that “development concerns take priority over cultural traditions work among loyalist community workers” (p.195), the author quickly discounts this fact in order to remain within the restrictive confines of scholarly analysis of identity (re)construction. For such reasons, the book makes a brilliant and much-needed contribution to academic understanding about change (and resistance) among unionism and loyalism in the decade after the 1998 Agreement, but it has disappointingly less to say about what the coming decade might entail for this community in Northern Ireland or about the nature of conflict transformation within and beyond it.


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Rarely is a book written that has the potential to save and improve the lives of millions of people. This is such a book. God’s Century asks why, over the past forty years, has nearly every world religion come to play a larger, more public (and often more violent) role in politics across the world’s continents? How can this possibly be?

Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah argue that two factors are most important in understanding when and how religion influences politics. The first factor is the political theology of the religious group. That is, the set of ideas the group holds about political authority and justice. The second factor is the level of mutual independence/dependence of religious authority and political authority. By this they mean the formal and informal relationships between the institutions of religion and politics. Are they separate but equal? Does one control the other? Do they peacefully coexist?

Allow me briefly to unpack their argument, and then proceed to evaluate the...
merits and limitations of this must-read book. After establishing the unmistakable expansion of religious involvement and influence (peaceful and violent) in politics—what they call the rise of politically assertive religion—they set forth on their mission to show how their two identified factors—political theology and mutual independence/dependence—explain just how politically assertive religion will be. All religious groups have a political theology, and in the past half-century a substantial number of religious groups across the globe have shifted from viewing political involvement as unspiritual in favor of increasingly viewing political activism as a sacred calling.

Why? The authors argue that major causes of this shift were a crisis in secular ideologies—these ideologies seemed, after several decades, not to deliver what they promised—and the quest of religious communities for religious freedom from state control. This was influenced in part by the fact that religious communities have evolved from local gatherings into major transnational organizations that can exist beyond any specific state borders.

The second major factor for if and how religion will be politically engaged is the distance that religious actors and political authorities have from one another. Are these actors satisfied with the status quo, or does at least one of them consider it illegitimate? The authors outline the dimensions by which religion and the state can either keep a distance from each other or become enmeshed, including (1) whether a state constitution grants monopoly or primacy to a particular religion, (2) the willingness of states to allow religious actors the freedom to carry out their activities, and (3) the extent to which religious bodies have a transnational structure.

Before modernity, there existed what the authors call a “friendly merger” between religious and political authority, intertwined in relationships that were both consensual and integrated. As we entered into the era of early modernity (1450–1750), the authors argue that a move occurred from a friendly merger to a friendly takeover by political authorities, as political power greatly expanded across much of the globe. Then, from the late 1700s to the late 1900s, the authors say another shift occurred, which they call the state’s hostile takeover of religious actors (the French Revolution being one clear example). In reaction, beginning most clearly in the 1970s, religious actors countered via the rise of politically-assertive religion.

The question in current times then is not so much if religious actors will be politically engaged, but how they will be politically engaged. Sometimes they are engaged in expanding democracy—religious actors have played a democratizing role in 48 of the 78 nations that have experienced substantial democratization since 1972. Sometimes they engage in terrorism, leading to violence and bloodshed.

The authors argue that the linchpin variable shaping the “how” of political engagement by religious actors is the degree of institutional independence between religion and the state. Where religions are given significant independence and freedom to operate, they overwhelmingly work for democracy, the expansion of education, and peace. Where they are not granted independence—where one religion is favored over another or where restrictions are put on religious actors (think, for example, Muslims in France), religious unrest and terrorism follow.

So goes the argument of this important book. However, as the authors are political scientists, sociologists will notice significant gaps in the literature citations. The methods of this book often take a “trust us” approach, rather than clearly outlining how the data were collected, how measurement and classification decisions were made, and how relationships were tested. The book offers a great deal of evidence from around the world—it seems it would indeed take three authors to know as much about as many nations as this book does—but it lacks significantly in formal tests of its core hypotheses. Quantitatively-centered scholars will be disappointed. For its impressive comprehensiveness, China—where one out of every seven humans lives—gets little mention. And I kept wondering if the explanatory model offered in this book applied to China. I still don’t know.

But the book’s contributions much outweigh its weaknesses. The book concludes with ten rules offered to the world’s governments for “surviving God’s Century.” These
rules alone make the book worth its weight in gold because they collectively contain the answer to reducing religious/state violence, terrorism, and war. They include “acknowledge that religious actors are here to stay,” and “accept that the more governments try to repress or exclude religion from public life, the more such efforts will be self-defeating.”

In short this book, far better than any other I have read, helps us to understand what must happen so that religious actors can be the major advocates for democracy, peace, and freedom rather than taking up guns or forming dictatorships. I hope the world’s governments and religions follow this book’s lessons.


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Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and queer people, communities, institutions, and social movement organizations have, in many times and many places, had deeply troubled relationships with local and national governments. The spectrum extends from intense police surveillance, harassment, blackmail, and violence to heated struggles over employment, parental, and marriage rights, health care, sex education and other materials in public schools, and access to public accommodations. Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, and Carol Johnson asked 13 scholars of sexuality politics to answer two questions about the country or countries they have studied: To what extent has the state influenced the lesbian and gay movement? and, How has the lesbian and gay movement in turn influenced the state? The result is an international collection of case studies that share a central concern with the mutual influences of what the editors abbreviate as the LG movement and the state, which the editors introduce and then put into comparative perspective and use to set up further research questions in their conclusion.

The resulting collection of case studies will interest diverse audiences. Scholars of collective behavior and social movements will find concise historical overviews of specific countries and the ways institutional and discursive patterns in national and international politics can frustrate, facilitate, and otherwise shape social movement demands and strategies. Area Studies scholars will find cases from diverse geographic regions and institutional regimes. State scholars and theorists will find careful assessments of the limits and possibilities of contentious sexuality politics in states as different as the junta in Argentina, post-Communist Poland, post-apartheid South Africa, the multi-institutional United States, and post-colonial Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia (among others). Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and queer movement organizers, instructors in courses that grapple with the social and political aspects of sexuality, and students of comparative politics will find accessible case studies of change over time that encourage contrast and comparison even as they defy notions of convergence. Readers steeped exclusively in mainstream political science, which the editors note is traditionally heteronormative and usually defined in terms of a narrowly conceived “public,” will find much that is familiar in institutional accounts of states, social policies, and movement mobilization. Such readers may also be challenged by the notion that matters of sexuality, identity, and interpersonal relationships are a central terrain of struggle and study opening a wide window on the dynamics of national and transnational politics.

Even readers familiar with the politics of LG movements in their own countries, or readers engaged with other projects in comparative politics (which sometimes share a paradigm and data collection protocols that facilitate systematic comparisons), are likely to find compelling the insights that the chapter authors and editors derive from these case studies. The combination of historical detail, political overview, and the two shared questions from the editors means that the individual chapters offer insights.

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into many political processes. Democratization is an especially interesting theme in the chapters on Poland, South Africa, and Argentina. The chapters on Belgium, Poland, Spain, and the Netherlands all tackle the important issue of political organizing and governance in an era of transnational European politics and intranational diversity. Politics and social movement organizing in the global South are central to the chapters on Brazil, Argentina, India, South Africa, and Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The case studies from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States emphasize the difference that institutional arrangements and cultural frames make in the changing and nationally variable structures of political and discursive opportunities faced by social movements. Moreover, most chapters note the ways the globalization of the public health and political crises associated with HIV/AIDS have generated stigma and solidarity, repression and normalization, resources and backlash, for LG movements organizing with and against the state around the world.

Collections of case studies can be difficult to read, especially when the chapters share only a theme and some “How?” questions rather than the kind of common theoretical and empirical framework required for systematic comparisons. These chapters all feature their authors’ careful descriptive work, but despite what the title of the book proclaims, they do not share a single theoretical approach or even definition of “the LG movement” (or “the state,” for that matter). This lack of uniformity, although it may partly undermine the comparative ambitions of the collection, is (as the editors argue) ultimately a strength rather than a weakness. In fact, it helps the authors and editors avoid making tautological assumptions about the developmental trajectories of social movements that plague many comparative projects, especially those that center on culture and politics. The individual chapter authors are clear about the limits and specifics of both the framing questions they received from the editors and the cases they are describing. In addition, as noted above, many of the chapters grapple with general issues of interest to readers from a variety of disciplines, specialties, and theoretical traditions. Researchers and teachers will find different selections from The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State useful for different purposes, but all are great examples of the case study method and offer informed analyses of a set of issues sadly neglected in many other collections on social movements, states, and their reciprocal effects. As with many edited books, the more the reader brings to the topic, the more the reader will find to reward careful reading. But The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State is also an excellent introduction to a set of issues likely to stimulate a wide variety of readers in several disciplines and specialties, and the editors have asked two straightforward yet high-yield questions and held the authors to high standards of detail and clarity, with great results.


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Rural Protest and the Making of Democracy in Mexico, 1968–2000, by Dolores Trevizo, delves into understudied areas contributing to Mexico’s democratization; in particular the influence of social movements in the creation of a multiparty system that electorally challenged and defeated the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), the party in power between 1929–2000. Following McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, Trevizo conducted an event catalogue documenting protests and contentious incidents. The book illuminates movement-countermovement dynamics by mapping out events and reactions to them in a path-dependent causal model.

With this book Dolores Trevizo establishes herself as an astute observer of Mexican institutional and contentious politics. She is able to unveil an important pathway for the rise of Mexican democracy by looking at the longue durée and taking into account bottom-up politics. While most accounts are centered on dynamics in Mexico City or at the
most include the gubernatorial races, Trevizo looks at the combined and indirect national impact of local grassroots rural movements. She provides a narrative that is different from the prevailing accounts of democratization which stress social and party elites, and frame neoliberalism as pushed by technocrats and foreign actors. Trevizo’s interviews and archival research show how local capitalists had a part in validating neoliberalism and political opposition.

Large-scale agricultural producers in the northern states reacted against important land redistribution in the 1970s. For example, Manuel Clouthier was an agricultural businessman from Sinaloa who was affected by land expropriation. Clouthier played a key role in organizing other agro-capitalists from northern Mexico, along with Monterrey industrialists, into new business owner associations like COPARMEX (Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana) and the umbrella organization Business Coordinating Council (Consejo Cordinador Empresarial). These organizations ended up representing the interests of bankers and the very rich after the bank privatization of 1982. They pushed for neoliberal reforms as a way to end the role of the government in regulating land ownership and industrial policy. Thus they gave legitimacy to President Salinas’ economic policies and his signing of NAFTA. Furthermore, these new business leaders became neopanistas. Following gradual electoral reforms starting in 1977, neopanistas ran for office and changed the traditional PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) opposition to participate in the electoral field with the fear of legitimizing rigged elections. This electoral participation culminated with the election of Vicente Fox, a neopanista businessman in 2000.

In the introduction Trevizo remembers as a child how family members talked about their participation in the Mexican revolution. This was her inspiration to study Mexican politics. As a Mexican-American, Trevizo had simultaneously an outsider/insider perspective, and this particular social position allows her to observe things that could have appeared too folkloric or unimportant to a Mexican pundit, or harder to reach for a complete outsider. In the same vein, Trevizo does great work connecting and conversing with the literature on social movements and democratization coming out of both Mexico and the United States. Her command of English and Spanish sources makes this a particularly strong book with an authoritative and bilingual bibliography.

Unlike other works dealing with Mexican democratization and social movements, this book looks simultaneously at left-leaning peasant movements as well as the response by agro-industrialists from the right. Trevizo traces these processes back to social movements in the countryside, and a counter-movement led by large landowners. Her argument starts with the 1968 student movement in Mexico City. Its bloody repression by the state resulted in the radicalization of activists and their dispersal throughout the countryside where, under the radar, they organized peasants who would become engaged in local contentious politics. This grassroots organizing led to widespread support for the left-leaning PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) in the southern half of the country. In the northern half of Mexico, this would create a counter-movement by agrarian capitalists who organized independent non-corporatist organizations representing their interests and also joined and strengthened the right-wing PAN.

Trevizo’s argument is that growing popular contention since 1968 ended up fracturing the multi-ideology corporatist hold of the PRI. The left-wing PRD voices the concerns of the peasantry and the working class, and the PAN voices the interests of the capital owners and the upper middle class, thereby creating a party system along class lines, in contrast to the PRI corporatist system which acted as a broker between peasants, workers and business owners.

The government violently repressed the student movement of 1968 just in time for the Olympic Games hosted in Mexico City, radicalizing some of its members. In order to escape further government repression many hid in the countryside where they organized local chapters of the Mexican Communist Party and fueled rural protests. Through quantitative analyses, Trevizo shows how peasant labor organizations resulted in the support for Cuauhtémoc Cardenas in 1988, for the PRD thereafter, and how government repression of PRD organizers resulted in...
higher voting for the PRD. Peasant land invasions and mobilizations created a counter-movement by agro-business owners like Manuel Clouthier, who then revitalized and strengthened the PAN to represent their interests and those of conservative middle class people who did not feel represented by the PRI.

Trevizo cites interviews dating back to 1992. Thus the work benefits from 20 years of work. The result is an ambitious and mature book, rich in complexities and depth while keeping the big picture in focus. Using a mixed-methods approach she looked at primary sources in the United States and Mexico, conducted interviews, read participant auto-biographies, and did an extensive review of secondary sources, census data, national security archives, human rights reports, along with a quantitative analysis of peasant protests from an event catalogue constructed from reports in the then independent Mexican newspaper Excelsior between 1970 and 1975. Few stones are left unturned. The study cannot and is not meant to be the definite account of Mexico’s transition to democracy, but it is a welcome addition. This book is a worthy read for scholars interested in leftist social movements, right-wing counter-movements, democratization, and recent Mexican history.