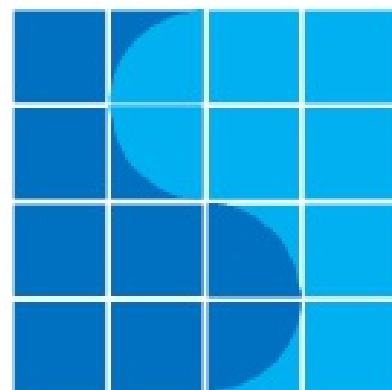


Trajectories

Newsletter of the ASA
Comparative and Historical Sociology Section
Vol 29 No 3 · Spring 2018



Chair's Message

Arguments for a Comparative and Historical Sociology Section of the ASA

George Steinmetz
University of Michigan

The very idea of an ASA section dedicated to “Comparative and Historical Sociology” may be puzzling to some sociologists. How do these two ideas, comparison and history, fit together, and how do they relate to sociology? It may seem to some like an unnecessary luxury to add this section to a discipline that already lacks a center and constantly generates new sub-specialties.

As American sociology retreats ever more resolutely into the present (to paraphrase Norbert Elias [1987]) and focuses ever more exclusively on the United States as its geospatial frame of reference, I want to pose some basic questions that I hope we can talk about at the mini-conference and the main conference in Philadelphia this August. Why should sociology be historical and comparative? What do comparison and history have to do with one another? Why is it important to have a separate section on comparative and historical sociology?

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CONTENTS

Page 7	CHS Mini-Conference Schedule
Page 10	CHS Events and Panels at ASA 2018
Page 13	Book session: <i>The Many Hands of the State</i> by Kimberley Morgan and Ann Orloff
Page 30	Roundtable: <i>Decolonizing Knowledge (Part 2)</i> by Nadin Heé, Manu Goswami, Alexandra Przyrembel, George Steinmetz, and Andrew Zimmerman
Page 36	2018 Section Award Winners
Page 37	Announcements and Recent Publications

All Sociology is Historical and Comparative

First, consider the problem of history in relation to sociology. On the one hand, sociology is always historical. Every analysis of the present becomes historical as soon as it is committed to thought, language, computer, paper. Every social object is historically constituted. To understand any social practice, phenomenon, object, or event we need to reconstruct its genesis and genealogy and its evolution and change over time. Even the most resolutely static and presentist approaches are unable to hide the historicity and mutability of their analytic objects. On the other hand, insisting on the historicity of sociology is a way of making sociology more critical, self-reflexive, and fruitful. Historical sociology is a way of “dispelling the illusions of false necessity” (Calhoun 2003: 384), and is in this respect an essential part of any critical social science. The history of sociology demonstrates how easily sociologists forget that (1) all social objects are shaped by their genesis and historical constitution and are in this respect arbitrary or contingent rather than universal and immutable; (2) historical processes do not take the form of uniform laws but are shaped by unique, contingent conjunctures of causes; (3) social objects are typically grasped using inherited and spontaneous categories that need to be reconstituted, criticized, and consciously reformulated; and (4), engaging in undistorted, dialogic, open-ended discussions with historians can actually make sociology more interesting and generate new concepts and theories (Steinmetz 2017).

Second, consider the problem of comparison. This is in some respects an even broader category than historicity. Thinking itself is impossible without comparison. Language is constituted through differences (among phonemes, letters, words, etc.). Such differences can only be perceived through comparative judgements. Categories, including scientific concepts, are constructed in language and are

therefore grounded in comparisons. Mental comparisons are essential to all forms of scientific method, including retrodution, which is an essential part of all social science (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Comparative methods in social science cannot be replaced by transnational approaches, even if the latter serve as an essential complement to comparison (Steinmetz 2014).

"Every social object is historically constituted. To understand any social practice, phenomenon, object, or event we need to reconstruct its genesis and genealogy and its evolution and change over time."

The *raison d'être* of the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section

If the arguments in the preceding section are correct, “historical and comparative” approaches would seem to encompass the entirety of sociology. One might therefore ask again: what need is there for a distinct ASA section on historical and comparative sociology?

There are still good reasons for maintaining a specific section. One is that the section’s work serves to continuously and emphatically remind the rest of the discipline that sociology is inherently historical and comparative. We need to maintain the CHS section alongside transnational and global sociology, since there were (and still are) societies without states (or “nation states”) and social processes that are neither transnational nor global. Sociology should not content itself with the small sliver of history since the rise of the modern state or since the rise “globalization.”

Making these sorts of arguments as a “collective intellectual” (Bourdieu), that is, as an entire section of the discipline, within the disciplinary field, is more effective than arguing individually or as “specific intellectuals” (Foucault).

For evidence of the pervasive presentism of US sociology one only needs to look at recent issues of *American Journal of Sociology* (AJS) and *American Sociological Review* (ASR). Titles of articles about the present – the vast majority of them -- usually do not indicate any era, period, or time frame, and are written in the *sociological present tense* (1). This convention conveys an image of the social world as being governed by unchanging universal laws and logics of necessity, undercutting policymakers’ good intentions about “changing the world.” The message is that the present is the same as the past, or that the past is simply not interesting, and that social objects are eternal and do not need to be historically reconstructed or contextualized in order to be explained and transformed.

"There are still good reasons for maintaining a specific section. One is that the section's work serves to continuously and emphatically remind the rest of the discipline that sociology is inherently historical and comparative."

Turning to comparison we should consider the pervasiveness of the syndrome of *Methodological Homelandism*. This is not unrelated to a different syndrome in Anthropology that Trouillot (1991) called its “Savage Slot”—the idea that Anthropology involves the study of the “primitive” Other. Sociology, it follows, involves the study of the “Self.” This ontologically meaningless (but

politically odious) scientific division of labor was rejected by social scientists from the colonized and colonizing countries during the middle decades of the 20th century (e.g. Mercier 1951; Elias 1963). In the newly created African and North African universities “anthropology was demoted to a subdiscipline of sociology” or banned outright (Colonna 1972). But this disciplinary division of labor was never attacked with much vigor in the US and it has returned with a vengeance almost everywhere since the 1970s.

The equation of sociology with the study of one’s own society undercuts efforts to dissolve the idea that the nation state is the default frame or unit of sociological analysis (Martins 1974; Bogusz 2018). For evidence of the robustness of methodological nationalism we can again peruse the titles of AJS and ASR articles (2). Articles about the US usually do not contain any indication of location or place in their titles, while the titles of articles about other parts of the world usually name those places. This practice communicates two possible messages. The first is sometimes made explicit, as in modernization theory (Knöbl 2001): the United States serves as a model for rest of the world. The second reading is that the rest of world simply doesn’t matter much (3). We should not assume that the US is unique in this regard. Even in India, Morocco, and other countries that passed through a phase of European colonialism, sociology tends to be defined as the study of the modern, national Self, Anthropology as the study of the more “primitive” Other (4). A section like ours can serve a bulwark against such rigorous presentism and self-centered parochialism.

Historical Sociology and the History of Sociology

The history of sociology is closely tied to historical sociology, as early American sociologists seemed to recognize (5). How does the history of sociology serve historical sociology?

First, as part of the self-objectifying approach to scientific reflexivity (Bourdieu). We may wish to understand where our own scientific categories and concepts come from and the origins of the extant division of social scientific labor in order to do better research. This necessitates a historical sociology of our own discipline.

Second, the history of sociology is important even if our main focus is something other than social science. Modern social science shapes social, political, and economic events and processes. If we are interested in government policy, we can analyze the intentional production and deployment of expert social scientific knowledge. Examples include Cameralistics, counter-insurgency research, modernization theory, behavioral economics, much immigration research and social policy research, and most of the field of law. In other instances policies and practices are shaped indirectly and *unintentionally*. The world's first welfare state in Imperial Germany was profoundly shaped by proto-sociological discourses on society and the social question (Steinmetz 1993). The basic parameters of modern colonial policies (especially "native policy") cannot be understood without reconstructing precolonial amateur and professional ethnography, Orientalism, and racial theory (Said 1978; Steinmetz 2002, 2004; Goh 2007).

Third, the history of sociology bolsters arguments for the value of historicist epistemologies in sociology more generally. Many sociologists regret the splintering of their discipline into myriad specializations. From this perspective it is worth examining in detail one period in which sociology was flourishing, self-confident, and taken seriously by the rest of the intellectual field, namely, Weimar Germany. I discussed this first "wave" of genuinely historical sociology in my first memo as Chair of the CHS section (in Trajectories Vol. 29, no. 1, Fall 2017). Nowadays in Germany, where historical sociology was invented, there is not even a permanent committee on historical sociology in the national sociological society, the

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie. I am not suggesting that American historical sociologists will suffer the same fate as their Weimar counterparts, but simply that they should remain wary of the various forces that pounced on historical sociology once the opportunity arose in 1933.

Conclusion

What better venue could there be to discuss these and other urgent topics than the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section's mini-conference on "The Crisis of History and the History of Crisis," to be held August 10th in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania? (6) I urge all section members and anyone else who believes that historical and comparative approaches need to remain alive and well in American sociology to attend the mini-conference and the special sessions sponsored by the section during the regular conference in the days that follow.

"I urge all section members and anyone else who believes that historical and comparative approaches need to remain alive and well in American sociology to attend the mini-conference and the special sessions sponsored by the section..."

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Endnotes

(1) *The sociological present tense focuses ontologically on the moment of research and writing. Works written in sociological present tense either ignore everything anterior to the moment of analysis or relegate the past to "background" conditions. This epistemological stance became part of the positivist methodological unconscious in postwar US sociology. It was so well codified that even a sociological study that drew on historical data could be divided into a present—the moment of the "dependent variable"—and historical "background."*

(2) *The most recent volume of AJS, at the time of writing (Volume 123) demonstrates this pattern. In issue no. 6 (May 2018) there are six articles, only one of which lists a time and place in the title ("Gilded Age America"). None of the articles in issue 4 list place names, and all of them are set in the United States (although one lists the Postbellum South in the title—places and spaces that are not the present day US both break the spell of positivist universalism). In issues 2 and 5 the only article titles that include a place name are set in countries other than the US (the sole exception is an article on Arizona). Krippner's article in issue 1 of volume 123 is the great exception to the rule, as it names both a time (the late twentieth century) and*

place—"America" (Krippner 2017). A non-systematic scan of the ASR, or of the AJS in earlier years reveals the same pattern: titles only situate their subject in time and space when it is not located the US or does not take place in the immediate present.

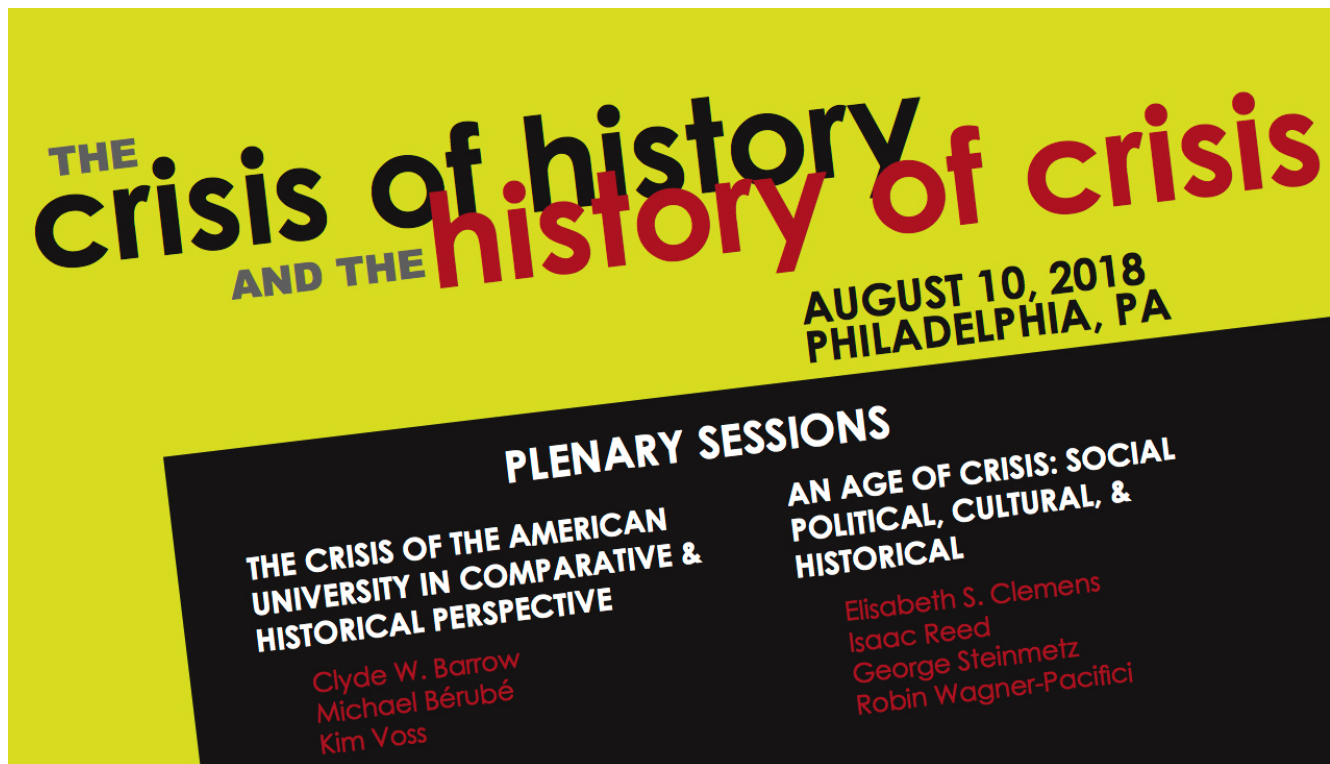
(3) *See interviews with department chairs of sociology (and political science and economics) departments in major US research universities in Stevens, Miller-Idriss, and Shami (2018).*

(4) *Interview by the author with anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi about sociology and anthropology in post-Independence Morocco, on May 10, 2018, in Princeton, NJ. For India see Bandeh-Ahmadi 2018; Uberoi, Sundar, and Deshpande (2007).*

(5) *In 1926 a "Division on Historical Sociology" appeared on the annual program of the American Sociological Society, with presentations on sociology in England, Germany, Russia, and Argentina (American Sociological Society 1927: 26-71).*

(6) *See <http://chs.asa-comparative-historical.org/the-crisis-of-history-and-the-history-of-crisis>.*

Mini-Conference of the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section



The 2018 mini-conference of the CHS Section of the ASA brings together sociologists and fellow travelers at all career stages dealing with crises of capitalism, empires, the state and other social institutions, authoritarianism, social unrest, imperialism, and knowledge production from historical-comparative perspectives. The mini-conference will be held the day before the Annual Meetings of the ASA. Here's the full schedule.

**Date & Time: 10 August 2018, 9am-6pm
(followed by reception)**

**Location: Ronald O. Perelman Center for
Political Science and Economics, 133 S. 36th
Street, Philadelphia**

9:00am: Welcome and Opening Remarks

**9:30-11am: Plenary – The Crisis of the
American University**

Speakers: Michael Bérubé, Clyde Barrow, and
Kim Voss

11:10am-12:40pm: Four Concurrent Panels

Panel I – Constructing Crisis

Julia Adams, Discussant

Josh Pacewicz and Ben Merriman, “A
Divergence, not a Rupture: State Political
Ecologies and the Disarticulation of Federal

Policy”

Alissa Boguslaw, ” Event Activism and the Transformation of a Crisis: The Case of Ongoing-Conflict Kosovo”

Constance Nathanson and Henri Bergeron, “”Crisis in Context”: Sagas of HIV Blood Contamination in the US and France”

Jean Louis Fabiani, “Crises in Education During the French Third Republic: Theories of Crisis as Building Strategies for Survival in the Field”

Atef Said, “Ongoing Revolutionary Crisis or Crisis in the Historiography of Revolutions: Notes from the Arab Spring and the Egyptian Revolution of 2011”

Panel II: Cities and Households in Crisis

Zaire Dinzey-Flores, Discussant

Xuefei Ren, “Housing Crises and Informal Settlements in Guangzhou, Mumbai, and Rio de Janeiro”

Ya-Wen Lei, “The Flexible Welfare State: Legitimation, Local Development, and "Housing for All" in China”

Luis Flores, “Splitting the American Oikos: The Household-Market Divide and Socio-Economic Transformations”

Oliver Cowart, "Capital, Locality and Power in the Epistemology of Local Governance"

Benjamin Bradlow, “Embedding Cohesion: Public Goods Distribution in São Paulo, 1989-2016”

Panel III: Crisis and Contentious Organizing

Eric Schoon, Discussant

Kristin George, “Embattled Terrains: The Duality of Religious and Political Struggle”

Hüseyin Raşit, “Competing Revolutionaries: Legitimacy and Leadership in Revolutionary Situations”

Luyang Zhou, “How the Bolshevik Revolution Made Itself Un-Replicable for Chinese Communists: A Comparative Historical Analysis of the Repression Regimes in Russia and China”

Stuart Schrader, “A Comparative Compulsion: Theorizing the Moving Map of Counterinsurgency”

Maryam Alemzadeh, “Bureaucracy of Brotherhood: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Revolutionary Institution-Building During the Iran-Iraq War”

Panel IV: Southern Solutions

Melissa Wilde, Discussant

Christy Thornton, “Capitalist Crisis and Global Economic Governance: Reform from the South”

Amy Zhou, “”For the Mothers and Children of our Country”: HIV Policy Innovation from the Global South”

Natalie Young, “Chinese Citizen or Global Citizen? Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism at an International School in Beijing”

Nada Matta, “Class Capacity and Cross-Gender Solidarity: Women Organizing in an Egyptian Textile Factory”

Chungse Jung, “Global Crisis and Popular Protests: Protest Waves of the 1930s and 2010s in the Global South”

Lunch: 12:40-2:10pm

2:10-3:40pm: Four Concurrent Panels**Panel I: Economic Change and Crisis**

Anthony Chen, Discussant

Paul Chang, "The Evolution of the Korean Family: Historical Foundations and Present Realities"

Dan Hirschman, "Transitional Temporality"

Pierre-Christian Fink, "The Leading Edge of a New Financial Regime: Crisis at Franklin National Bank"

Onur Ozgode, "Resilience Governmentality: Toward a Genealogy of Systemic Risk Regulation"

Beverly Silver, "Crisis, Class and Hegemony: The Current Crisis in World-Historical Perspective"

Panel II: The State and/in Crisis

Richard Lachman, Discussant

Alexander Roehrkaase, "Counting in Crisis: Measuring American Marriages, 1867–1906"

Yueran Zhang, "Preempting 'No Taxation without Representation': The Case of Taxing Private Homeownership in China"

Erez Maggor, "The Politics of Innovation: Lessons from Israel 1980-2008"

Chandra Mukerji, "The Wars of Religion and Sovereignty"

Johnnie Lotesta, "The Right and the Crisis of Labor"

Panel III: Crises of Democracy

James Mahoney, Discussant

Anna Skarpelis, "Beyond Aryans: Making

Germans in the Nazi Empire"

Barış Büyükokutan, "The Knowledge Trap: Turkey's Buddha Cult and the Crisis of Populist Power"

Marcel Paret, "From Passive Revolution to Fractured Militancy in South Africa's Democratic Transition"

Andreas Koller, "Democratic Crisis: 'Gobsmacked' Post-2016 Political Science and Self-Understanding of the American Public Sphere"

Mathieu Desan, "Crisis and Political Conversion: The Case of the French Neo-Socialists"

Panel IV: Crises and Mobilization

Charles Kurzman, Discussant

Laura Acosta Gonzalez, "Using Victimhood for Doing Politics: Why the Colombian Peace Referendum Failed"

Ahmad Al-Sholi, "Limits of a Labor-Free Democracy Movement: The Case of the Failed Arab Spring in Jordan"

Şahan Savaş Karataşlı, "Crisis and Nationalism in World History, 1492-Present"

M. Ali Kadivar, Adaner Usmani, and Benjamin Bradlow, "The Long March: Contentious Mobilization and Deep Democracy"

Jonah Stuart Brundage, "The Social Sources of Geopolitical Power: French and British Diplomacy and the Dynastic-Patrimonial State, 1689–1789"

4:00-5:45pm: Plenary – An Age of Crisis: Social Political, Cultural, & Historical Speakers: Elisabeth S. Clemens, Isaac Reed, George Steinmetz, & Robin Wagner-Pacifici

Reception: 6-9pm

Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association: *Full List of CHS Panels and Events*

11-14 August 2018

**Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown
Philadelphia, PA**



The Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association draws over 5,000 attendees and provides the opportunity for professionals involved in the scientific study of society to share knowledge and new directions in research and practice. Approximately 600 program sessions are convened during the four-day meeting, featuring over 3,000 research papers and invited sessions.

The Comparative-Historical Sociology Section is attending the meeting with 3 paper sessions, 1 invited session, 1 roundtable session converging four different topics, as well as its annual business meeting and reception.

Date: 11-14 August 2018

**Location: Pennsylvania Convention Center
and the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown**

Saturday, 11 August 2018

**8:30-10:10am: Epistemology, Theory, and
Method in Comparative Historical Sociology**

*Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100,
107AB*

Organizer: Danial Karell, Presider: Elisabeth Anderson, Discussant: Emily Anne Erikson

Isaac Ariail Reed, Paul R. Lichterman, "A Pragmatist Approach to Comparison and Causality in Historical Sociology"

Anna Katharina Skarpelis, "Archival Bodies: Epistemology and Historical Comparative Research"

Sunmin Kim, Armando Lara-Millan, Brian James Sargent, "Where is the Archive in Historical Sociology? The Case for Ethnographic Disposition"

James Mahoney, Laura Garcia, "The Logic of Critical Juncture Analysis"

10:30-12:10am: Orlando Patterson: The Sociology of Slavery in the Long Durée

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 107AB

Organizer: George Steinmetz, Discussants: George Steinmetz, Orlando Patterson

John Bodel, "Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideologies: Orlando Patterson and M. I. Finley among the Dons"

Fiona Greenland, "Second Populations and the Cultural Process of Parasitic Dishonor"

Renisa Mawani, "From Slave Revolts to Social Death"

Michael Ralph, "The Treasury of Weary Souls"

2:30-3:30pm: Refereed Roundtables

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 106AB

Organizers: Zeke Baker, Phyllis Handan Jeffrey
Table Presiders: Jacob Habinek, Maria M. Akchurin

Table I: Locating Paths to Social Power and Expertise

Guanghai Pan, "Determinants of Entering Bureaucratic System in Imperial China: Family, Village, and District Effects"

Hanisah Binte Abdullah Sani, "From Traditional Rule to Professional Experts: The Growth of New Religious Elites in British Malaya"

Table II: Nations and Nationalisms

Joseph Sterphone, "'Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland': Nationhood and Orientalism in Contemporary Germany"

Jeffrey Weng, "Stop the Presses: Character Simplification in China under the Nationalists, 1935–1936"

Jennifer Elise Triplett, "Writing Nationalism, Rewriting History: La Condesa Merlín and Cuba's Nationalist Literary Canon"

William F. Danaher, "A Travel Ban is Nothing New: Chinese Immigration to the United States"

Table III: Power and Dominance: Legitimacy, Coordination, Conflict

Laila Bushra, "Dissecting an Insurgency: The Contours and Trajectory of Islamist Violence"

Maryam Alemzadeh, "Wars That Make Shadow States: 1979 Kurdish Conflict and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Rise to Prominence"

Huseyin Arkin Rasit, "Competing Revolutionaries: Legitimacy and Leadership in Revolutionary Situations"

Zhicao Fang, "Offense, Defense, Civil-Military Relation and State Legitimacy: The Case of Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.)"

Jean-Baptiste Gallopin, "Securing Pacts: Dynamics of Agreement in the Aftermath of Personalist Regime Breakdown"

Table IV: Revolution and Protest: Mobilization and Contention

Olena Nikolayenko, "Women's Engagement in Contentious Politics: Findings from Ukraine"

Sara Jean Tomczuk, "Accommodation and Confrontation in European Romani Activism: Assessing Group Threat in the Political Opportunity Structure"

Jordan Christopher Burke, "Riots as Social Control: Disciplinary Riot to Compensatory Rebellion, 1917-1967"

3:30-4:10pm: Comparative and Historical Sociology Business Meeting

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 106AB

4:30-6:10pm: Violence, Memory, and Human Rights (Cosponsored with Section on Human Rights)

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 105AB

Organizer: Fiona Greenland, Presider and Discussant: Fatma Muge Gocek

Charlotte Lloyd, "Governing the past through National Reconciliation: Containment vs. Integrative Approaches"

Ioana Sendroiu, "Human Rights as Uncertain Performance During the Arab Spring"

Molly M. Clever, "Historical Trajectories in Civilian Victimization in War: 1816-2016"

6:30-8:10pm: Reception (Cosponsored with Section on History of Sociology; Section on Global and Transnational Sociology; and Section on Human Rights)

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Salon J

Sunday, 12 August 2018

8:30-10:10am: War, States, Money and Culture: New Approaches to Classic Concerns in Comparative and Historical Sociology

Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 105AB

Organizer: Stephanie L. Mudge

Alex DiBranco, "Anti-Catholicism to Anti-Trumpism: Collaborations and Cleavages on the Christian Right"

Pierre-Christian Fink, "Hammers for Nails, Screwdrivers for Screws: Identifying the Right Tool for the Job in Historical Institutionalism"

Jajob Feinig, "Rethinking Popular Involvement in Money Politics - Revisiting 'The Color of Money' (Carruthers and Babb)"

Vasfiye Betul Toprak, "Rethinking Revolutions through the Turkish Case: A Critical Overview of the Establishment of the Turkish Republic"

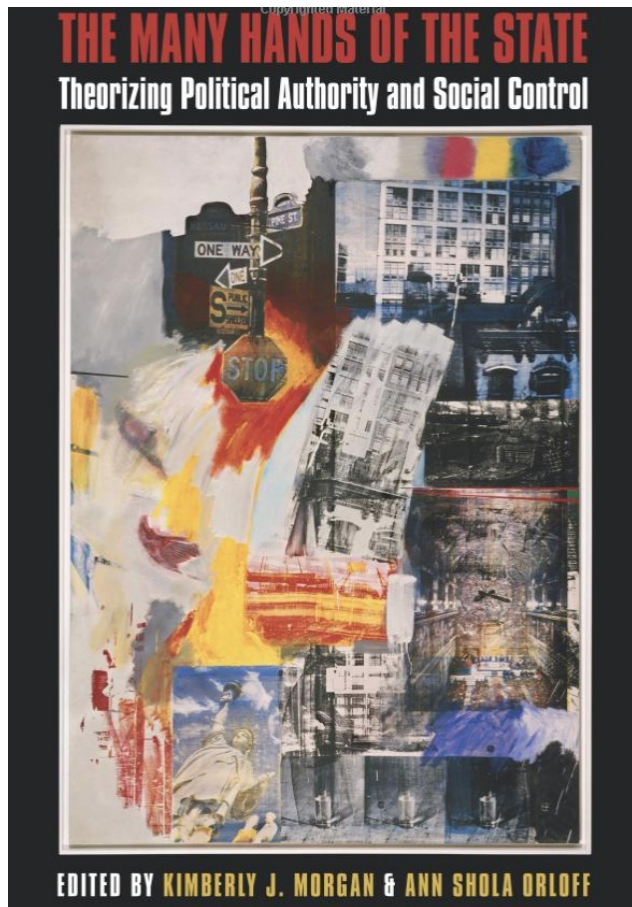
Yuval Feinstein, Andreas Wimmer, "Why Wars Made States Only in the West: Revisiting Tilly's Bellicist Thesis"

***Looking forward to
seeing you all at the mini-
conference and the ASA
meeting in August!***

The Many Hands of the State:

Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control

Edited by Kimberly J. Morgan and Ann Shola Orloff



Introduction

Aliza Luft

University of California, Los Angeles

On Saturday, November 4th 2017 in my hometown of Montréal, Québec, a packed room gathered to hear Professors Cedric de Leon, Debra Thompson, and Matthew Mahler reflect on Kimberly Morgan and Ann Orloff's new edited volume, *The Many Hands of the State*.

After their presentations were done, many hands, in fact, were raised, leading to a lengthy and thoughtful “mini-seminar” of sorts where a room full of comparative-historical sociologists debated how, exactly, we ought to theorize “the state” and the promises and pitfalls of our ideas, past and present. In the end, our discussion extended until the last possible minute, testifying to the ongoing centrality of the state as an object of analysis in our subfield, but uncertainty about how to approach the state and its practices in our research.

In the introduction to their book, Morgan and Orloff explain how there has been a proliferation of modifiers used to characterize states since Skocpol, Evans, and Rueschemeyer's (1985) *Bringing the State Back In* — states are now characterized as “ambidextrous, administrative, associational, austerity, capitalist, carceral, clientelist, competition, consolidation, delegated, developmental, disaggregated...” (2). The list goes on for four more lines! Thus Morgan and Orloff introduce their metaphor of “many hands” as a novel way to consider the complexity and multiplicity of the actors, organizations, and institutions that comprise the state. None of these “hands” can replace the state, but, they explain, paying attention to each helps us understand how states work. Below, the aforementioned scholars engage with this idea, as well as many others put forth in this volume that will surely provide for fruitful theorizing in the years to come.

On the Possibility of a Political Sociology of Race

Cedric de Leon

Tufts University

In a co-authored paper Michael Rodriguez-Muñiz and I argue that an analytic double bind inhibits the formation of a political sociology of race. On the one hand, the social constructivist orientation of the sociology of race has counterpoised the primacy of the social against the biological. On the other hand, the Weberian reaction to Marxism has insisted upon the autonomy of the political against the social. This twin tendency relegates race to the social, where it is treated as nonpolitical. For illustration, consider two influential projects in the fields in question.

The dominant sociological paradigm for theorizing contemporary race relations in the United States has been Bonilla-Silva's (2003) theory of colorblind racism. As a social discourse, colorblind racism allows whites to support civil rights while opposing any structural alteration to white privilege. Politics are more central in Bonilla-Silva's earlier racialized social systems approach (Bonilla-Silva 1997), but the main thrust of colorblind racism is the claim that the racial order is reproduced and maintained by everyday whites, and thus cannot be attributed or reduced to the machinations of political elites (Bonilla-Silva 2000).

Though the concept of colorblind racism is a monumental contribution to contemporary sociology to be sure, it nevertheless runs into limitations, especially given the current historical conjuncture. First, as Picca and Feagin (2007) remind us, it de-emphasizes overt white supremacy. While colorblind racist discourse may prevail in multiracial "frontstage" spaces, in homogenous "backstage" spaces – out of the prying eyes of people of color – whites continue to engage in the traditional overt racist practices that Bonilla-Silva and his collaborators argue are no longer hegemonic. This is especially

important given the racial dynamics that have emerged since the election of Donald Trump and that are partnered with a populist challenge to economic neoliberalism that Trump strategist Steve Bannon has called "economic nationalism." Second, one gets the impression that race relations center primarily on the subtle racism of whites, with relatively less attention to subaltern insurgents like Black Lives Matter whose challenge to the racial order is part of the ongoing struggle to make and unmake race. Third and in a related vein, colorblind racism operates on the ground: it is conceived of as fundamentally social in nature and not a political project of the state or other political entities.

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Nor does the social movement literature loosen the double bind, for though one might assume that scholars in this area of inquiry counterpoise the social to the state, in point of fact social movement research has similarly insisted on the autonomy of the political. The result is perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the field: though many of the leading lights of social movement theory used the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to make their foundational contributions, race and racism have remained stubbornly beside the point. The resource mobilization and political process models, which are aligned and dominant within the literature, blackbox the social in an analytical category called "grievances," which comprise a diffuse mass of discontent that is not yet "mobilized." The unintended result of this analytical pivot is that the decisive factors explaining the success and failure of social

movements are mobilizing and political opportunity structures, not complaints, say, about being at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Moreover, with a few exceptions such structures are themselves not racialized, gendered, or otherwise social: they are instead “resources” or “internal conflicts” within the state.

There are a few notable exceptions to the double bind that have accumulated over the course of a century. Morgan and Orloff’s *The Many Hands of the State* (2017) has contributed at least three such exceptions in just one year, five if we count Julia and George’s chapters toward the burgeoning literatures on settler colonial states and the racial state as empire. These exceptions, however, advance competing approaches to a prospective political sociology of race.

In the “subaltern” approach, scholars forefront the contributions of challengers to the racial order. Thus, whereas advocates of the political process model in social movement theory tend to emphasize the importance of elite structures in shaping the fate of the Civil Rights Movement, Aldon Morris (1981, 1984, 2000) has argued that black people themselves – their networks, tactics, leaders, and cultural frames, especially in the black church – are also critical to understanding the spread and success of the movement. Here race is inseparable from mobilizing structures, political opportunities, and framing.

Iza Hussin in this volume offers a postcolonial take on the subaltern approach. She traces the contemporary Muslim state to the colonial period, when jurists like Syed Mahmood worked to institutionalize Islamic law in British India. Local elites or “middlemen” like Mahmood engaged in a two-fold maneuver that Hussin calls translation and conflation and that rendered India legible to the British empire. Translation entailed equating Muslims with other “confessional” religious groups like Anglicans in ways that the British could understand instinctively. Conflation involved subsuming the otherwise distinct realms of personal, family, and

common law under personal status, and in doing so established the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion according to their respective tenets and denied the prerogative of the colonial state to punish Muslims for engaging in what might otherwise be interpreted as heterodox or disorderly conduct. Unlike James Scott’s account of the high modern state, then, Hussin insists that the state cannot “see” unless it is rendered legible by colonial subalterns.

A second “elite institutional” approach visualizes the inseparability of race and politics within the state instead of social movements. For example, Omi and Winant (1986) are critical of scholars who depict the state as merely “intervening” in race relations, for instance in the 1960s. They suggest that “the state is inherently racial. Far from intervening in racial conflict the state is itself increasingly the pre-eminent site of racial conflict,” for instance in the ways that racialized persons are categorized differently in the census and the law (p. 82). Aligned but distinct from Omi and Winant’s elite-institutional approach is Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT advances what Bracey (2015) calls an “instrumentalist view of the state,” according to which whites use state resources, especially the law, to subordinate racial others.

In a similar but distinctive way, Tiana Paschel’s chapter posits a racial state but one that is fundamentally disaggregated. The point of her chapter on recent Brazilian affirmative action policy is that though the state has shifted from a disingenuous posture as a racial democracy, in fact, the racial state engages practices that are ambivalent toward Afro-Brazilians. On the one hand, you have government arms like SEPPIR that have done considerable work to integrate public universities, but on the other hand, the police and military arms of the state continue to suppress Afro-Brazilian protest, led by the very Black NGO activists who pressured Brazilian elites to address persistent structural inequalities in the first place.

There is also third “synthetic” approach, one that is exemplified by Du Bois’ *Black Reconstruction* ([1935] 1977). On the subaltern side, DuBois sought to reverse the dominant historiography of his time, which claimed that black people were the beneficiaries of white Radical Republicans, a theme that is echoed in political process theory’s emphasis on elite-controlled political opportunity structures. He argues instead that “the black worker” was critical to the abolitionist movement and later to Reconstruction. At the same time, Du Bois emphasized the ideological power of the state and the ways in which white supremacy underpinned the legal apparatus, especially in conventions like the slave codes and the Fugitive Slave Law, according to which blacks had “no rights which a white man was bound to respect” (p. 10). On the monopoly of the means of legitimate coercion, the *sine qua non* of Weber’s canonical definition of the state, he wrote that a massive police force of poor whites explains the variation in the failed slave revolts in the United States and the successful slave revolution in Haiti. Du Bois’s explanation thus hinges upon an analysis of state institutions like the police as themselves racialized.

King and Lieberman advance an account of the many-handed state that is distinct but no less synthetic than that of DuBois. The “Civil Rights State,” they argue, has numerous dimensions: 1) the administrative apparatus exemplified by agencies such as the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, which increases the capacity of the state to enforce racial equality; 2) a standardizing dimension, typified by the work of the federal courts to establish best practices in employment law; 3) a fragmented state in which power over racial discrimination is shared by federal and state governments as in the Little Rock Crisis of 1957; and 4) an associational dimension connecting the state with a range of subaltern actors from the KKK to the NAACP.

By assembling these three very different takes on the racial state, Morgan and Orloff do political sociologists of race like myself an incalculable service. The volume forces us to rethink how

racial domination operates in practice, primarily by disaggregating the state into its component and often contradictory parts and continuing to highlight the role of actors whom we do not typically emphasize. For example, if Morris foregrounds the role of black activists, and Belinda Robnett (1996) illuminates the role of women in doing the mobilizing work of the Civil Rights Movement, Hussin takes us outside the United States to contemplate the role of subaltern jurists and middlemen in the formation of the Muslim state.

Overall, then, I am a big fan of this volume. My questions for Ann and Kimberly, which follow, are therefore questions that I ask myself and my collaborators to help overcome the double bind that impedes research at the intersection of political sociology and the sociology of race. I divide these questions into three moments that I think will help all of us sharpen our thinking as this important project moves forward. With respect to the “subaltern” moment of the racial state, I am curious to hear whether we should conceive of local intermediaries as primarily oppositional actors, collaborators, or both vis-à-vis the racial state? The accent of Morris, Robnett, and now Hussin is primarily oppositional, but as we know intermediaries can be collaborators, too.

My question for the elite institutional and synthetic moments is the same: how many handed is the racial state really? For example, one could rewrite Paschel’s chapter in a less complicated way that does not necessarily entail internal institutional contradictions. Brazilian political elites like diplomats who are keen to project the image of a racial democracy, are stymied by black activists who expose the structural inequalities that affect the life chances of Afro-Brazilians. The state then concedes with a vigorous affirmative action policy, but only goes so far, namely, to the water’s edge of juridical rights such as expanded access to higher education. When black activists protest for more, the state then uses force to demonstrate for one and all the line in the sand that demarcates just

how far black civil rights may go. This feels an awful like a coherent liberal democratic racial state to me, not unlike that of the United States. This brings me to King and Lieberman. Here I ask, “why do we need all these different dimensions of the Civil Rights State? Again we can connect the dots between the Civil Rights movement and the Voting Rights Act in a way that is different from the account in that chapter. For example, we might say that racial domination prompted an oppositional civil rights movement, which in turn forced the state to institutionalize a racial democracy complete with a fancy Civil Rights division in the Justice Department. However, because the United States remains a white settler colonial state, political elites then coerced and contained the movement through mass incarceration among other mechanisms, when people of color attempted to go outside the Civil Rights compact to address structural issues like school and residential segregation.

This question makes Morgan and Orloff’s injunction at the beginning of the book all the more important. “Our challenge,” they write, “is to disaggregate and reaggregate, dissect and reassemble, always taking into consideration the multiplicity of state forms and functions as we try to understand what in some instances binds those parts together and, in others, subjects them to varied centrifugal forces” (Morgan and Orloff 2017: 18). For some chapters that bear on the political sociology of race, I am certain that analytical disaggregation has happened, but they do not go far enough to reaggregate and reassemble. Here I think Julia Adams’ chapter provides a useful corrective in the sense that colonial and imperial projects were part and parcel of state formation projects in the early modern era. This approach, which under my schema is elite institutional, finds a strong echo among scholars now trying to rethink Omi and Winant’s concept of the racial state. For example, Moon-Kie Jung (2015) draws on constitutional law to demonstrate that U.S. state formation has always entailed the racial construction of colonial spaces and the racial

subjection of colonized and non-colonized people.

The Many Hands of the State is a deliberate pulling back and organization of the extreme proliferation of state studies. We require the same kind of synthesis if we are to envision a political sociology of race. Thank you.

Authors-Meet-A-Critic-That-Is-Mostly-a-Fan

Debra Thompson

University of Oregon

Book roundtables are kind of odd. These chapters are not works-in-progress; they are multi-year project that have gone through substantial revisions from colleagues, editors, and reviewers. Any criticism that I could offer has probably already been considered and dismissed with good reason, and any constructive criticism isn’t necessarily constructive, since the book has already been published.

That being said, there’s not much criticism I could offer anyway. This is a fantastic volume that fills an important theoretical void in the literature on the state. It offers four theoretical innovations in the introduction and the empirical chapters are organized along these same thematic lines. The chapters each stand alone, but are also explicitly integrated (and integrated quite well, actually) with the others. I really wish the book had been published sooner, so I could have used it while writing my own book on the political development of racial classifications in national censuses. It would have saved me years of wading through these dense literatures on my own.

And I think that it says something that the authors in this volume have grappled with the same question and come to the same key conceptualization I did: the analytical need to move away from the state as a unitary actor in order to reconsider it instead as a multiplicity of institutions, with varying forms and levels of

interpenetration into civil society, with multiple and potentially contradictory logics. The authors emphasize the necessity of disaggregating and then reaggregating the state in order to understand the shifting and variable components of the state without ignoring the powerful binding agents of state legitimacy, autonomy, and capacity, as well as the core state functions of governance, redistribution, representation, and too often, repression.

My own interest in the state grew out of my experiences working as a bureaucrat in the Canadian government. I had learned about this thing called “the state” in political science classes, and even about the dynamics of policy-making processes. Sitting in my windowless cubicle, as my colleague’s screen saver ticked down the years, months, days, hours, and minutes until his retirement, it immediately became clear that the lessons my professors had so convincingly offered didn’t come close to what I was experiencing as a so-called agent of state power.

The four theoretical innovations offered in Ann Orloff and Kimberly Morgan’s introduction of the volume align much closer with my experiences and my work. Let me give you some examples.

The first theoretical innovation posits that states are entities whose internal and external boundaries are shifting and malleable, reflecting political contestation over the state’s meaning, purpose, and resources. The fundamental question here concerns the boundaries of the state. This is especially pertinent in the age of neoliberal governance, as the boundaries between public and private, as well as those between state and society, are increasingly blurred. For example, in chapter two Maryl and Quinn argue that the attempts to attribute certain actions as state or non-state are, in fact, a key instrument of power. The state is therefore not so much hidden as it is misrecognized for reasons that may have little to do with policymakers’ intentions.

In my own work on national censuses, the problem of fuzzy boundaries is most apparent in the recent and extensive use of public consultations when determining racial census classifications. From the state’s point of view, these consultations are a necessary part of ensuring that the public understands the syntax and taxonomy of the racial categories that will appear in the census. If the categories aren’t recognizable – if no one understands who an “East Asian” is supposed to be or segments of the population can’t “see” themselves in the question, response rates will falter, resulting in a census policy failure. From the public’s point of view, these consultations are part of a deliberative democratic process whereby the public gets to actively participate in the determination of racial schema. These are two very different understandings of what public consultations are about, with the potential for conflict over the boundaries between state and society – who, exactly, is driving the bus, and what happens when the imperatives for legibility and the desire for recognition diverge?

The move away from the intentions of policymakers is also crucial. One of the first tasks I was assigned while working at what was then called Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) was to participate in a program review. The Deputy Minister wanted a comprehensive overview of all the laws and policies that formed the massive legal framework under which the department was currently operating. As a naïve undergraduate student that had just finished a class on the various models of policymaking – rational, administrative, political, garbage can, and so forth – I was shocked. Did this directive mean that nobody in the entire department knew the entirety of our legal framework? A conclusion that I drew from that experience and many others was that one would never talk about the state as having intention if one knew what a disordered internal mess the black box of the state actually can be.

The second theoretical innovation understands states as powerful forces for social stratification

whose effects are nevertheless subject to negotiation and change. State authority can shape and reshape hierarchies of social difference, stratifying people along lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, class, immigrant status, and the like. This theoretical insight once again speaks directly to my own work, which considers the power of states to authoritatively name, define, and rank order populations in the racial project of the census. In this work, I create (yet another) identifier of the state – the schematic state – to illuminate the role of the state in creating racial schemas. However, I understand these efforts to be something like plans that have yet to come to fruition. The state might design the prototype, but it never retains full control over how these labels are interpreted and reinterpreted in the social realm.

The chapters in the second part of the book all speak to this theme: Orloff's chapter on gendered labor policies; Htun and Weldon on states and gender justice throughout the world; King and Lieberman's exploration of the civil rights state; and Paschel's examination of the so-called racial state in Brazil. These chapters were all phenomenally done, spoke to the major themes of the volume, and pushed the literature on the racial state and the gendered state in important new directions. In Orloff's chapter, for example, she focuses on two processes involved in the transformation of gendered labor policies: destructive processes, which eliminate the underpinnings for male breadwinner/female caregiver households, and a constructive process, which builds support for maternal employment. Importantly, she notes that these transformations can be uneven and multiple – when we destroy certain policies, we don't necessarily know what's going to replace them. Likewise, Paschel's work is innovative in its exploration of the interaction between transnational and domestic imperatives that drove Brazilian race policies in the early 2000s. Though the Durban World Conference Against Racism in 2001 is widely regarded as a colossal failure – recall that both the United States and Israel withdrew from the conference over allegations that Zionism was

racist – the conference spurred major action in Brazil, as activists used the alignment of domestic and international political fields to push for change.

In each of these cases, change is incomplete and fundamentally contradictory. It is entirely possible for the state to combat racial discrimination or gendered violence in some ways, while working to actively uphold policies that disadvantage women or lead to the mass incarceration of black people. This is, these chapters demonstrate, the nature of the state. I believe these insights raise an important question for those interested in the politics of race or gender: can the state be emancipatory? Is the state really the last, best hope that racial minorities have for achieving a racially just society? The answers provided in these chapters should give us pause about the possibilities of state action. While things aren't likely to get better without state action, as King and Lieberman suggest, there are good reasons to remain skeptical of the state's ability to solve social ills.

The third theoretical innovation conceptualizes states as organizations with claims to legitimate monopolies over material and symbolic force, but whose control must be constructed and continually affirmed. This is the state that I think the most about. This is the state that allows its agents to kill unarmed and legally armed African Americans anywhere, anytime, and without consequence. While white children tour police stations and ride on fire trucks, this is the state that black parents tell our children to be wary of and to evade at all costs. Here, the emphasis on both material force (e.g., what could get you killed) and symbolic force (e.g., that which makes it seem like victims deserved what they got) are incredibly important. We constantly underestimate the power of symbols – but they're everywhere and they are critical to understanding the nature of state power.

A personal anecdote: my brother once also worked for the Canadian government as an

immigration agent at a major Canadian airport. He once told me that the evolution of his uniform told its own story about the image of the state. When he first started working for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the uniforms were something akin to standardized business casual. A few years later, agents were required to wear khaki colored pants and navy blue short-sleeved polo shirts with the Department's logo. By the time he left that position, immigration agents were fully militarized – navy pants and navy long-sleeved shirts with badges and name tags, Kevlar vests, batons, handcuffs. In essence, immigration agents were made to look like police officers. For visitors or new immigrants coming to the country, this image of state power promotes and projects order and discipline alongside a clear message about who and what authority holds the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence in the territory known as Canada.

Finally, the volume examines nation-states as one form of globally embedded rule that has parallels with and emerged from empire. I am sure others will have more to say on this particular innovation, but let me just add to the chorus that considers this topic critical to our understanding of the state. We may now live in a world of states, but it wasn't always this way, nor did it have to be.

"...the volume examines nation-states as one form of globally embedded rule that has parallels with and emerged from empire."

Since my expertise is in the area of race politics, let me end with what I think are three important contributions of that this volume makes to the study of race and other social signifiers, such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, and

nationality. First, the contributors to this volume understand both time and space as constructed. Temporal logics are certainly important, but they are not determinative; in fact, a nuanced understanding of temporality and spatiality reveals the highly contingent nature of both. Transnationalism, for example, is the movement of people and ideas, and the ways that phenomena change as they travel. It is increasingly important, I believe, in the face of the growing global threat of populism, to examine the ways that macro-level ideas (that is, worldviews) exist beyond any one nation-state, as well as how these ideas are shaped by exogenous forces, including the ways that ideas become institutionalized in other places.

Secondly, this volume takes careful account of both contestations within the state apparatus as well as contradictions in state-driven outcomes. This was the point I tried to make with the identifier, the schematic state. It is meant to explore the ways that the state names, labels, and classifies by race, but also references the root-word scheme: sometime the state schemes, or acts in duplicitous ways. The chapters by Orloff, Htun and Weldon, King and Lieberman, and Paschel each explore the race- and gender-making functions of the state. But even those states that position themselves as the liberal defenders of equality and justice often surreptitiously work to maintain hierarchies in sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, and often contradictory ways. Many may have celebrated when former FBI Director James Comey testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee, but the counterpublic space known as Black Twitter was highly skeptical – since when has the FBI ever worked to help black people?

Finally, *The Many Hands of the State* is an important contribution in how seriously it takes the more squashy realms of the social sciences – that is, the role of ideas, norms, and symbols. Truly, the state is one of the most powerful ideas that the world has ever known. And just because ideas and norms are difficult to operationalize

does not detract from their importance. As Toni Morrison once said, “invisible things are not necessarily not-there.”

On the Ontology and Politics of Many-Handed States

Matthew Mahler

Yale University

The Many Hands of the State is a remarkable book. Like other seminal edited volumes that have come before it, such as Evans, Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol's *Bringing the State Back In*, Steinmetz's *State/Culture*, or Adams, Orloff, and Clemens' *Remaking Modernity*, it promises to be an agenda setting text for a generation to come. Its introduction serves as a powerfully synthetic statement about where historical, political scientific, and sociological research on states stands today, while the individual chapters richly illustrate the diverse array of conceptual understandings and empirical material that scholars are bringing to bear on the study of states and empires today.

The book is divided into four main sections, each of which is centered around a major theoretical concern of recent social scientific work on states. The first four chapters take up the question of how the boundaries of states – that is, what is and is not thought to be a property of states or a consequence of state action – are themselves produced in and through ongoing political contestation. The next four chapters examine the sometimes contradictory ways in which states act as engines for (de)stratification, while the third group considers how states' monopolistic control over physical and symbolic violence is born out of their interactions with other competing actors. The final chapters consider how the capacities and characteristics of (nation) states are often anchored in, affected by, and emerge out of their sometimes-imperialistic relations with other states. While the discussions in each of these sections run somewhat independently of one another, they also simultaneously speak to each other (sometimes

quite explicitly) and in so doing, help to reinforce the broader thematic arguments that cut across the text, which is a particularly worthwhile feature – one, it should be noted, that is rarely found in edited volumes.

One of the happy, if unintended, consequences of the text is that because it so lucidly documents the state of the field today, it frees us up to think a bit more synoptically about where we are as a field and where we might be headed in the coming years. Rather than critiquing either the text as a whole or individual chapters – an exercise which would have little analytic value given how successful each is at what it sets out to accomplish – I want to engage with the book at this more “macro” level – using it to think a bit more broadly about the challenges before us and the avenues by which we might most expeditiously circumvent them. In particular, I want to focus on two main subjects: ontology and politics and the various ways in which the book (explicitly or not) underscores them as issues of (continuing) importance for scholars today.

The Ontology of Many-Handed States

In their introduction to the book, Morgan and Orloff argue that one of most important innovations in contemporary political theorizing has been a move away from conceptualizing states as unitary things or actors. The danger with this earlier mode of theorizing, they explain, is that it “risk[ed] subsuming sprawling, complex concatenations of governing institutions under one presumptively unified bureaucratic apparatus” (7). Rather than viewing states as simple, bureaucratic monoliths, it is, thus, better to see them as complex agglomerations of institutions, actors, and processes, performing any number of different functions, through myriad means, with often-contradictory results. While Bourdieu's suggestion that states are comprised of a right and a left hand, with the former exhibiting more paternalistic tendencies and the later more maternalistic ones, was

therefore an improvement over earlier, more monolithic, understandings of states, it was, according to Morgan and Orloff, nevertheless inadequate for capturing the fully multiplex nature of states, which are not just two-handed but many-handed – hence the name of the book. As they note, “[O]ur title, *The Many Hands of the State*, aims to capture [this] pervasive move away from conceptions of states as unitary actors and toward an understanding of states as encompassing multiple institutions, varying forms of interpenetration with civil society, multiple scales of governance, and multiple and potentially contradictory logics” (3). It is their hope, they say, that this metaphor of a many-handed state will inspire scholars to “understand states in all their profusion and multiplicity” (8).

If the chapters in the book are any indication, this metaphor is indeed one that will catalyze a great deal of important new research on states. Time and again, the authors take up this charge with alacrity and document how the workings of states cannot be adequately understood without a properly many-handed analysis. To give just a few examples:

- In her examination of the gendered labor policies of the United States and Sweden, Orloff (131 – 157) avers that states often have “contradictory gendered effects” (141) – (re)producing gendered inequalities while simultaneously supporting and empowering women, sometimes in surprising ways.
- Htun and Weldon (158 – 177) similarly argue that states and their effects on gender justice must be understood “multidimensionally” (172); specifically, they highlight how certain factors (e.g. how closely political authorities have been aligned with religious institutions historically) that play a significant role in shaping some aspects of how states treat women (their family law policies), have much less influence over other policy realms (e.g. violence against women legislation) whose structure is proximally determined by other factors (strength of feminist mobilization).

- According to King and Lieberman (178 – 202), “the architecture of the civil rights–upholding state” in the United States is “uneven,” with some domains being stronger and more capable than others. But this unevenness is not simply a matter of some areas being weaker/stronger than others. It is also, they point out, a matter of the inherent “ironies and complexities” (180) of the state’s civil rights infrastructure, which, on one hand, has been responsible for advancing the cause of minorities, while, on the other, having been the cause of and/or tacit accomplice to their continued mistreatment.

- Paschel (203 – 226) argues that the racial project of Brazil is “multiple and contradictory” (207), pointing out that while Brazil has undergone a profound shift from colorblind policies to ones that explicitly take race into account, those changes did not lead to a wholesale transformation in the state’s racial logic. They were instead, “partial, contingent, and... in contradiction with the many other hands of the state” (205).

In their quest to fully capture the complex structure and functioning of states, some authors posit that states might even be more than just many-handed. Instead of just having many hands, perhaps it is better to think of them as having many digits on many hands, or even many digits, on many hands, on multiple arms. In the context of twentieth century American political development in which the state often off-loaded its work to ostensibly non-state-like associations, Clemens (35 – 57) even suggests that the more appropriate metaphor might be that of “a leviathan with prosthesis” (42, emphasis mine). In his efforts to theorize the constitutive differences between states and empires, Steinmetz (369 – 394) proffers his own two images: the state as an octopus and the empire as a hekatonkheire (the hundred-handed and fifty-headed beast of Greek mythology).

If this desire to adequately capture the manifold character of states is a useful prophylaxis against

the pitfall of reductionism, one cannot help but wonder whether it does not also come with its own dangers. In particular one worries whether it sends us down a rather slippery slope, searching for endless complexity and difference, with the end result being one in which we come to view the state as a fractally multifarious entity – that is, one which at each of its different levels of administration, organization, policy, etc., what exists is not some distinctive traits or sets of relations but boundless variation. Were that to be the case, it is hard to envision how researchers might ever gain the analytic leverage needed to say much at all about states qua states.

Certainly, Morgan and Orloff are not unaware of the dangers of endless disaggregation. Indeed, they note that if this analytic turn toward complexity is not coupled with what they term a “reaggregative” moment, then we risk losing the phenomenon of stateness all together – that it will, in a sense, slip through our fingers. “[T]o understand states,” they, thus, explain, “we must both disaggregate and reaggregate, being attentive to the variable and shifting components of states without losing sight of that which binds them together” (3). Therefore, at the same time as we pay heed to the distinctive features of the state’s many hands, we must also always hold onto some more general understanding of what it is that makes the state a state and not just some generic collection of things or parts.

Throughout the book, there are two main, somewhat overlapping, arguments that the authors make as to what it is that allows states to cohere despite their often also existing as a loose, even discrepant collection of parts, organizations, actors, etc. The first is that states possess extensive coercive capacities (both physical and symbolic) which distinguish them from their rivals, making them the “the distinctively powerful governing structures of our time” (13). The second argument, deployed with great success in the first section of book, “The Problem of Boundaries,” is that the very state-ness of states is something which is socially constructed in and through the ongoing

ideological and cultural labor of both state and non-state actors who, throughout their everyday lives, (re)enact the lines that differentiate states, state actors, and state effects, from those things, actors, and effects which are not-state or not-state-like.

Both of these arguments have long been ones that have figured centrally in how social scientists how thought about states. But that is what makes me wonder about both of these arguments. What are the gains from thinking about states as being many handed, if the end result is largely the same as before? More specifically, if the argument is simply that states are only able to monopolize physical and symbolic violence in select cases and that when they are unable to do so, they function in the more uneven, contradictory, or many-handed fashion documented by the authors in this book, then the conceptual result is one that is significantly watered-down. Rather than their many-handedness being a distinguishing feature of states, it would be but a derivative of some other, more basic, more important characteristic (the degree to which they monopolize violence), in which case, our primary concern as researchers would not be to document the essential many-handedness of states but to identify the extent to which they monopolize violence – The Relatively Violent State as not the The Many-Handed State. If this is not the case, and the many-handedness of states is in fact a distinctive feature of states and not just a by-product of some other more fundamental process, then we are back to much the same question we started with: what is it that allows many-handed states to cohere as states despite (or perhaps even because of (?)) their inherent contradictoriness, complexity, and/or contestedness.

Likewise, if the argument is that the coherence of states is a constructed coherence, what the chapters of this book also show is that this coherence is also always a contested coherence – that is, a coherence which is only ever partial and provisional insofar as any efforts aimed at

conclusively demarcating that which is state-like from that which is non-state-like necessarily leaves behind some excess or some remainder which resists any efforts to fit it comfortably within an explicit classificatory logic. Here, too, then, we are led back to the question we started with. If the constructed coherence of states is only ever partial and provisional, then what are the emergent processes by which the very “state-ness” of states becomes such that “states” are no longer just some arbitrary or haphazard agglomeration of discrepant parts, but a state *qua* state?

To be absolutely sure, the upshot of all of this for me is not that it somehow undercuts or negates the power of the analytic set forward in the book. What I do think it suggests, however, is that questions about the ontology of (many-handed) states are not likely to go away and indeed should not go away. If states are in fact beings with many hands – or many arms, hands and digits – then we cannot side-step questions about just what type of political being it is that exists in just this type of way and what the morphological processes are that have led it to take that form (and not another). If we are to counter what some see as the growing tendency to view states as “unthinkable” (Novak 2017: 45), then we must continue to ask ourselves exactly what these many-handed states are.

"If states are in fact beings with many hands ... then we cannot side-step questions about just what type of political being it is that exists in just this type of way and what the morphological processes are that have led it to take that form."

The Politics of Many-Handed States

If much is said in the book about the nature of states and the variable ways in which they operate, we hear much less about what makes them specifically political. That this is the case

is perhaps not all that surprising, given the extent to which Hobbesian thought continues to dominate our thinking about states. States are by their very nature – by their very concentration of violence (or to add a Weberian twist, legitimate violence) – political, or so this standard line of thinking goes. As those entities that enforce and/or construct an order that would not otherwise be possible, states cannot but be political. To analyze states is, thus, to analyze the workings of formal bureaucratic politics.

The trouble with such an understanding is that it, paradoxically, has a tendency to de-politicize politics insofar as it (intentionally or not) sees politics as being little more than a logical continuation or extension of the pre-existing character of things (e.g. states and societies, but also commonly states and societies and those things that mediate the relationship between them, including culture, institutional structure, and/or history). If some state is able to get its way vis a vis some rival, it is typically believed to be able to do so because it has amassed greater means of physical and symbolic violence than that competitor, or because it has some other distinguishing feature which uniquely benefits it. Likewise, if non-state actors protest state rule, it is believed that they do so because they view that state's actions as being against their interests (*I*). What cannot easily be accounted for with such an understanding is how things at time $t+1$, thanks to political action, might ever be something more or other than what they had been at time t . Even Bourdieusian analysis – one which foregrounds the importance of strategic action and the ongoing efforts of social actors to (re)construct (re)presentations of reality – and would thus seem to sidestep this trap (at least, better than others), can fall back into it insofar as it, or at least, certain ersatz versions of it, see the outcomes of such battles as being determined by the varying amounts of capital possessed by actors prior to their ever acting.

I point all of this out because I think these questions about the place of politics are part and parcel with ones about the (de)coherence of

states, and I think that this is the direction that more research will and should go. To the extent to which we can manage to hold together an understanding of states as things that are coherent without ontologizing them as simple bureaucratic monoliths, we will also need better understandings of politics or rather, perhaps more appropriately, of how political logics emerge out of the ongoing inter- and intra-relations between states and the societies they govern. This is, I think, importantly, the direction that a number of chapters in the book point to, even if only indirectly. Novak, Sawyer and Sparrow (229 – 257), for example, argue, drawing on Emerson, Dewey and Merriam, that a more empirically exacting account of American (un)exception(alism), requires an alternative political genealogy – one that does not see American political outcomes as simply being read off of the (pre-determined) traits of (American) political institutions and the society they govern but as the emergent product of the democratic relations between the two. I think the section on empires also very much points in this direction as it highlights how in order to understand the logic of state and imperial formation, we must comprehend how certain (mis)understandings cohere in and through the world-making labor of actors across time, space, and different levels of aggregation.

Conclusion

Perhaps the best measure of any academic text is how much of a pleasure it is to think with. The *Many Hands of the State* meets this standard and then some, and all those who put it to work examining states will know its delights – delights that, if my reading of the book is right, will not only lead us closer to knowing states “in all their profusion and multiplicity” as Morgan and Orloff and suggest, but also lead us to focus even more intently on answering questions about their ontology and politics.

Authors' Response

Kimberly J. Morgan and Ann Shola Orloff
**George Washington University and
 Northwestern University**

We are most grateful to Aliza Luft for organizing the “editors meet critics” session at the November 2017 Social Science History Association meeting, as well as to the commentators on the panel for their astute and thoughtful remarks. Their engagement with the themes of the book continues the conversations we began at SSHA several years ago and carried out over the course of successive sessions with our contributors, when we set out to reflect upon where we, as scholars, had been in our efforts to make sense of states -- in the years since the publication of canonical volumes such as *Bringing the State Back In* and *State/Culture* -- and where we might be going next. Drawing upon the empirically rich chapters in our volume, we developed five analytic claims in our introductory chapter about the current and future study of states.

First, our authors and the introductory chapter affirm that the state remains a bedrock concept that scholars cannot replace with other contenders, such as governmentality, governance, or institution. States remain the distinctive governing structures of our time, the dominant units in international relations, the entities in the name of which human beings claim and wield power, and the governing bodies to which many people turn for redress, protection, or support. Because of this, states remain distinct from other institutions in their potential to accrue and wield power. State agents do more than just deploy force, however, but also make claims about the legitimacy of their power.

In reflecting upon processes of state legitimation, we arrived at a second observation: that states amass and use both material and symbolic power. Looking beyond the typical scholarly focus on how state agents monopolize physical force within a given territory, we draw attention also to the efforts of these actors to make use of cultural or symbolic power as well as to the

unintentional effects of the cultural categories and systems of classification instantiated in state organizations and practices. State officials may threaten coercive physical action against challengers; often they preempt the need for raw repression by inducing acquiescence in those they rule. We see this subjective element of state power as especially important, as it draws attention to how state policies and practices can influence perceptions of the state itself as well as the categories and concepts that govern public and private life.

A third observation guiding our volume concerns the highly varied ways in which states actually govern. States delegate responsibilities to non-state and subnational actors, but also share obligations and responsibilities, more or less voluntarily depending on the particular circumstances, with international, transnational, and supranational bodies. The result may be a pervasive blurring of boundaries, complicating efforts to identify where states start and end. Even so, we counsel against the tendency toward a blurring of conceptual boundaries that would see all forms of power as the same. As several of the contributions in our volume show, there is much to be learned from mapping the shifting boundaries between state and non-state so as to better analyze when and where the boundaries are blurred and why this might be the case.

Fourth, we should keep an eye on the international and transnational arenas – where we chart the actions of powerful firms, transnational political and social movements, international and supranational organizations, as well as other powerful states -- without assuming that these forces are eroding state power everywhere. States are not being eclipsed, but they are enmeshed in forces operating both below and beyond state boundaries. In our volume, we draw upon the study of empires as one way to reflect upon the ways in which states have been, and continue to be, situated in hierarchical global relationships.

Finally, our metaphor of the many hands of the state highlights the complexity and multiplicity of actors and institutions within the state, pushing us to get beyond treating states as uniform, cohesive entities. Doing so draws attention to contradictory or incoherent forms of state action, as well as to instances where similar logics govern state institutions. It also helps us think about processes of state transformation, which most often occur unevenly across institutions. And, finally, it can allow scholars to analyze state institutions with few capacities, or which are limited or constrained either by other organizations within the same state or by other governing entities. Should we continue to use the concept of the state, given our move to highlight the complexity, variability, and contradictory logics? We see the “many hands” approach as offering greater precision in understanding the operations and effects of states (2). Our challenge as a dual one: to both disaggregate and re-aggregate, dissect and reassemble, always taking into consideration the multiplicity of state forms and functions as we try to understand what in some instances binds those parts together, and in others, subjects them to varied centrifugal forces.

It is the “many hands” metaphor which has perhaps most provoked our critics, for this symbol condenses the multi-faceted critique we are making of simplifying assumptions about states as unitary, or, at least, coherent actors (3). Scholars often rely on simplifying moves to make sense of the actions emanating from organizations that are part of, or connected to, states. The move to disaggregation was one way to tame that complexity which tries to avoid having to make judgments about the logics and impacts of the totality of state organizations and their linked organizations (in cases of delegated governance, public-private partnerships and the like). Yet it is hard to resist the urge completely, and analyses devoted to one or one set of state institutions often end with some conclusions about “the state,” modified, in what we call the “modifier state literature.” Thus, looking at our own bookshelves, we found books and articles

titled the “ambidextrous, administrative, austerity, carceral, centaur, clientelist, competition, consolidation, delegated, developmental, disaggregated, emergency, familial, failed, gendered, hidden, hollow, imperial, Keynesian welfare, laissez-faire, motherless, neo-liberal, patriarchal, penal, phantom, polymorphic, predatory, racial, regulatory, rentier, Rube Goldberg, Schumpeterian workfare, security, standardizing, straight, submerged, taxing, theatre, uneasy, warfare, woman-friendly, workfare, and zombie” state. Here, analysts have investigated a particular arena or set of organizations, and come to an understanding of the dominant logic at play, then applied that to the entire state, at least for purposes of a title. Yet this is almost never put in the context of the broader range of state organizations and practices, which is the ultimate – not yet achieved -- aim of the “many hands” approach.

But if the analyst resists the “modifier state” urge, critics may demand an accounting -- a re-aggregation, in effect. While Debra Thompson has in her comments captured the spirit of our editors’ perspective on states as lacking coherence and as not entirely explicable in terms of state actors’ intentions (4), both Cedric deLeon and Matthew Mahler explicitly challenge us on the question of states’ coherence, albeit from slightly different perspectives.

Cedric de Leon asks us just how many-handed the state actually is with respect to racial hierarchies. He offers an insightful overview of earlier scholarship on racial hierarchy, highlighting the canonical work of Aldon Morris, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, and W.E.B. du Bois. These analysts identify different key factors in the political construction of race: subaltern actors’ resistance (as rooted in their networks and organizations), elites’ instrumental use of the state, and the effects of racial ideologies and the legitimation of state coercion. He puts some of our Many Hands authors in conversation with these leading scholars of race, who are central to the development of what de

Leon calls the “political sociology of race.” (5) The big question he raises is about the coherence of states’ effects (through policy, or law) vis-à-vis racial hierarchies.

This question arises as de Leon (and our authors, and we) contemplate the limits placed on progressive initiatives partly endorsed and supported by some “hands” of the Brazilian or US states, or any other state in our modern times, built as they have been on the legacies of violent encounters between Europeans and others and the obdurate structures of racial hierarchies and white domination. As de Leon puts it, “we might say that racial domination prompted an oppositional civil rights movement, which in turn forced the state to institutionalize a racial democracy complete with a fancy Civil Rights division in the Justice Department. However, because the United States remains a white settler colonial state, political elites then coerced and contained the movement through mass incarceration among other mechanisms, when people of color attempted to go outside the Civil Rights compact to address structural issues like school and residential segregation” (our emphases) (6). He asks why should we care about “internal institutional contradictions” if we end up with the same hierarchies and very limited concessions -- concessions which are also state-constrained? We contend that we should care for both political and analytic reasons.

Analytically, we cannot impute elite intentions and effectiveness from “results” vis-à-vis the maintenance (or change, for that matter) of hierarchies. In our group discussions of the volume, mass incarceration repeatedly came up as a caution against concluding that the US state and states (for so much action is at the state and local levels of government) have made a decisive turn towards supporting civil rights and racial progress. But this shouldn’t take us back to a notion of a unified state or political elite (executive committee of the bourgeoisie, anyone?), even if we want to reject any particular view of progress. Careful historical

studies reveal several distinctive – and not entirely anti-black – trajectories of political and institutional actions leading to the development of mass incarceration (7). Meanwhile, others (including Many Hands contributor Armando Lara-Millan [in a forthcoming article]) show that there are now some moves towards decarceration, led by local officials responding (diversely) to judicial mandates against overcrowding; of course, how this will interact with other institutional actors to reshape racial hierarchies is as yet unclear, but this is the kind of exploration invited by the “many hands” approach. Thus, we still must be careful about making blanket statements about “political elites” – they are multiple, as are the mechanisms through which different political elites operate. A more comprehensive and satisfying political sociology of race, in our view, will only emerge from our collective efforts to re-aggregate our various studies of the different dimensions of state and other political action, in the context of racial hierarchies sustained both informally and through formal institutions. In other words, we think that the move to re-aggregate here is premature, even as continuing violence done to African Americans and other racialized groups has to be central in our accounting. (Similar points can be made about gender, violence and politics.)

"A more comprehensive ... political sociology of race ... will only emerge from our collective efforts to re-aggregate our various studies of the different dimensions of state and other political action, in the context of racial hierarchies..."

The analytic tasks that face us in accounting for continuing racial – and other – hierarchies are also significant for political efforts at change. To put it simply, pushing back white supremacy (or masculine domination, or other forms of hierarchy) will require not only resistance by those subordinated and their allies, but specific

institutional changes informed by scholars' understanding of how hierarchies are sustained and what kinds of arrangements sustain more egalitarian relations among citizens and denizens of given states. We know there have been progressive arms of the US state and states, variably empowered or disempowered depending on the administration in office, attacking some elements of the still-white supremacist racial order; better understanding of their operations can give us clues – and inspiration – in making them more effective.

But De Leon's remarks raise a broader question, made pointedly by Mahler in his comments, about what is left of “the state” after we have disaggregated it into component parts and recognized its multiple logics, institutions, operating principles, governing arrangements, and variable boundaries. Does this emphasis on the many hands of the state run the risk of a slippery slope, making it difficult to gain analytical leverage over a “fractally multifarious entity,” in the words of Mahler? If one is to engage in both disaggregation and reaggregation, how would we do the latter? What makes states potentially cohere such that we can continue to use the term “state” with meaning?

These questions get at the heart of our project, which counseled against analyzing “the state” as a singular, unified, black-boxed entity. Yet in calling upon scholars to not only disaggregate the state but also gain understanding on when a state is, in Mahler's words, “no longer just some arbitrary or haphazard agglomeration of discrepant parts, but a state qua state,” we are asking scholars to put themselves in an uncomfortable, even unstable, position vis-à-vis the object of study. Thus, analysts must not only disaggregate but also ask what holds disparate parts together, in particular countries, world historical moments, and political arenas (8). We ask that they recognize the possibility of incoherence and coherence, in the same governing entity. And we would push for continued work on boundaries – on understanding where the boundaries are drawn

between state and non-state, how such boundaries and understood by political elites and mass publics, and how much politics occurs precisely at those interfaces of state and non-state power. Our approach to the state is one that highlights processes, without a teleological vision of change: processes of institutional creation, destruction, and reform; of stasis and movement; of force and contestation. With this approach, we hope that our volume will stand as an open invitation to begin or to continue the rich and creative work on states that has characterized our field, as well as to engage in the collegial conversations that lead to theoretical and empirical advance, and, perhaps, that allow us to contribute to the political work of harnessing states to the needs and demands of us all.

Endnotes (combined)

(1) *Whether those interests are thought to be real ones – grounded in the actor's social-structural position – or ones that merely reflect the actor's perceptions of what does or does not "really" matter to him or her – varies depending on the perspective. What generally does not vary, however, is the explanatory structure. In both cases, the actor's interests (whether perceived or real) are thought to be determined in advance of any ongoing political action (by cultural schemas for the former, and social-structural position for the later).*

(2) *Thanks to Yannick Coenders, PhD student at Northwestern, for reminding us of this point, and noting the potential link to studies of articulation as forwarded by Stuart Hall and others.*

(3) *We should mention that as we discussed the metaphor throughout our writing, we noted that it does miss some things: the boundary issue, for instance, and the links, hierarchical or otherwise, between different many-limbed bodies that is seen in the case of empires and imperial spaces. We have also learned in the course of presenting the book to various audiences that it*

also betrays a certain stance vis-à-vis the state: that it comes from those of us who wish to understand things from the point of view of state organizations and actors – it does not capture the ways that state organizations appear to different "on-the-ground" political actors, for example.

(4) *Hannah Arendt, among others, forcefully argues against notions of political sovereignty for precisely this reason: we can act with intention, but the results are beyond our control, for we operate on diverse political terrains on which other actors are also pursuing projects. The combination of these actions evades the sovereignty of any one actor. See Linda Zerilli's *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago, 2005) for a compelling account of Arendt's approach to politics.*

(5) *De Leon is particularly interested in seeing such a political sociology developed, for he is concerned that race has been too often relegated to "the social" alone, and then treated as non-political. There are similar challenges when thinking about a political sociology of gender, as Orloff argues in her chapter on gendered states.*

(6) *Note here the terminology: "the" state and "political elites." This loses precision in specifying which actors and organizations are doing what.*

(7) *See, for example, Michael C. Campbell, and Heather Schoenfeld, "The transformation of America's penal order: A historicized political sociology of punishment," *American Journal of Sociology* 118, no. 5 (2013): 1375-1423.*

(8) *This, too, is a question of articulation. Some years ago, we experienced a scholarly enthusiasm for the concept of "regimes," which is a form of (partial) reaggregation. While many found the regime concept too static, it strikes us as one potential starting point for efforts to reaggregate – but only one. Here, too, we counsel analysts to explore these questions through multiple avenues and theoretical traditions.*

Decolonizing Knowledge (Part 2)

Roundtable on New Directions

in the History of Knowledge and Postcolonial Theory

Interview with Manu Goswami (NYU), George Steinmetz (IAS/Michigan), and Andrew Zimmerman (GWU) by Nadin Heé (Free University of Berlin) and Alexandra Przyrembel (University of Hagen, Germany).

This interview grew out of an International Workshop at the Freie Universität Berlin on February 16-17, 2015 on "(De-)Colonizing Knowledge: Figures, Narratives, and Practices". The conversation is broken into two parts; the first part can be found in the previous (Winter 2018) issue of *Trajectories*.

Question: Andrew, we would like to come back to Manu's observation that we in the academic world currently experience a transitional crisis. Would you agree? Do you think that a focus on economic processes of transitions could add to current debates in the history of knowledge?

Response - Andrew Zimmerman:

I do not think that we are in a transitional crisis like the one Gramsci experienced in the 1920s, as Communist Parties in Italy, Germany, and of course the Soviet Union seemed likely to defeat dictatorships of the bourgeoisie with dictatorships of the proletariat. Yet, in another sense, colonialism and capitalism are always in a transitional crisis. As Marx and Engels wrote in the Communist Manifesto, a "more or less veiled civil war" is "raging within" capitalist society. Capitalism is defined by irreconcilable class and other biopolitical conflict, including patriarchy,

compulsory heterosexuality, colonialism and racism. Whether the conflict between property and democracy takes place at the level of the shopfloor, the mortgage foreclosure proceeding, the struggle for the right to healthcare, or the colonial occupation, every capitalist transaction is a potential transitional crisis. So I would agree with Manu that academia is in a transitional crisis, but primarily because academia exists as part of a political and economic world that is essentially a transitional crisis.

The question of decolonizing knowledge forces academics to situate themselves explicitly in relation to this ever present transitional crisis. Decolonizing is an operation we can perform on dominant forms of knowledge, such that they are no longer colonial and, at the same time, it is also a type of knowledge that itself combats colonialism. The knowledge that we might term decolonizing could be forms of criticism revealing the ways in which knowledge underwrites colonialism. Said's *Orientalism* is paradigmatic in this regard. It could also be knowledge that is itself decolonizing, that is, not an operation performed on the knowledge of colonizers, but rather a form of knowledge that operates on colonialism itself. For the sake of clarity we might, following Ranajit Guha and the early Subaltern Studies Collective, term this second form of decolonizing knowledge insurgent knowledge. Guha and others worked out their approach not only in relation to Gramsci's concept of the subaltern, but also in relation to their contemporary Maoist Naxalite insurgency in India.

Antonio Gramsci captured with especial clarity the place of insurgent decolonizing knowledge in a transitional crisis. As Gramsci wrote, “the problem of the identity of theory and practice is raised especially in the so-called transitional moments of history.” Determining a decolonizing, insurgent knowledge, for Gramsci, involved constructing “on a specific practice, a theory which, by coinciding and identifying itself with the decisive elements of the practice itself, can accelerate the historical process that is going on, rendering practice more homogeneous, more coherent, more efficient in all its elements, and thus, in other words, developing its potential to the maximum” (Gramsci 1971, 364-65). The university is not capable, on its own, of constructing insurgent, decolonizing knowledge in Gramsci’s sense, but it is capable of constructing theory in relation to specific insurgent practices, theory that would both learn from, and contribute to, these practices. Again, I can think of no better example of such theory than much of the work of Subaltern Studies.

If knowledge is to become decolonizing, knowledge must also be decolonized at the point of its production, that is, at all levels of education, from primary schooling to the university. Neoliberal assaults on education through specious metrics, privatization, and the subjection of teachers and students to various technological regimes (‘smart’ classrooms, online learning, and the like) are widespread. Sometimes the aims of these self-styled educational ‘reformers’ are ideologically transparent, as in the attempts in various state in the US to enforce patriotic history teaching in public education. More often, it is simply an assertion of the power of economic elites over the classroom and the research university as a site of production and reproduction of knowledge. If there is any comfort to be taken here from those committed to the production of decolonizing knowledge, it is that political and economic elites have recognized schools and universities as hostile territory, and that teachers and students at all levels have been able to fight back.

"The university is not capable, on its own, of constructing insurgent, decolonizing knowledge in Gramsci's sense, but it is capable of constructing theory in relation to specific insurgent practices..."

In 1969-1970, Jacques Lacan, responding to the Maoism of his own students in Paris -- part of the global Maoist insurgency that also included the Naxalites in India -- offered a fourfold schema of types of knowledge, or discourses: the discourse of the university, the discourse of the master, the discourse of the hysteric, and the discourse of the analyst. Lacan cautioned his students that their revolution might amount to a demand to replace the discourse of the university with the discourse of the master. That is, according to Lacan, students might push the university discourse of objective knowledge (with the identity of the scholar-speaker remaining secondary) into a knowledge based on the proclaimed identity of the speaker (the master, the master revolutionary). Lacan, of course, favored, at least for his analytic students, the paired discourses of the analyst and the hysteric. Lacan did not recognize, it seems, that the discourse of the hysteric, the one who seeks knowledge in the unmasterable, unknowable, finally absent presence of the analyst, is precisely the discourse that Gramsci identifies as insurgent knowledge. The discourse of the hysteric and the revolutionary constitutes itself in relation to the practice of insurgent subalterns. It is neoliberal, so-called educational reform, in fact, that seeks to turn the discourse of the university into the discourse of the master -- where something becomes true, a basis for education, because Bill Gates or some other

billionaire claims it is true. Decolonizing knowledge can only be the discourse of the hysteric, one that exists in relation to, that awaits its truth from, a variety of insurgent practices, many of which already exist on and off our campuses and others which remain to be discovered.

Thus, the history of knowledge, the process of decolonizing knowledge, demands a reflexivity that is not only epistemological but also political economic and, finally, militant: engaging as militant hysterics in the “more or less veiled civil war” that continues to mark our societies and the institutions of knowledge production and transmission in which many of us work. We could begin by inventing forms of academic politics that do not simply include, but also give leadership roles to, the precarious majority of academic workers, including graduate students, non-tenure-track and part-time faculty, and unemployed scholars.

“...the process of decolonizing knowledge, demands a reflexivity that is not only epistemological but also political economic and, finally, militant.”

Question: You very much emphasized the political dimension of decolonizing knowledge. Do you have any suggestions how we could integrate this in our empirical work as historians? Would it help to bring in the aspect of economy not only on the level of discourse but also when we analyze the practices of knowledge production?

Response - Andrew Zimmerman:

Even more important than bringing in the

economy into our historical analyses is bringing in class conflict, in its economic, but also in its political, cultural, national, and other dimensions. Scholars from Karl Marx to Timothy Mitchell have shown how the economy emerged as an object of knowledge from specific power-political conjunctures connected, more or less directly, to empire. Decolonizing the economy as an object of knowledge would thus involve recovering the insurgent and counterinsurgent knowledges at work in this, as in all, concepts. The work of Mikhail Bakhtin remains an essential methodology here. Writing a decolonizing history of any particular knowledge includes recognizing, analyzing, even anticipating, the existential conflicts foundational to it. This means not only recognizing knowledge as the partial ideology of ruling classes but also as the appropriated knowledges and practices of plebeian actors.

Question: Andrew and Manu very much emphasized the political dimension of decolonizing knowledge by – paradoxically referring to ‘Western’ theories (See questions and responses below). Do you agree with their positions and do you have any suggestions how we could overcome this bias? And what are the consequences for our empirical work as historians? Would it help to bring in the aspect of economy not only on the level of discourse but also when we analyze the practices of knowledge production?

Response - George Steinmetz:

Historians should not blow the debate between postcolonial theory and Marxism out of proportion. This debate does not represent any larger polarization between “social” approaches to historical explanation, on the one hand, versus a rejection of universal categories or models on the other hand. As I noted in my previous comment, the postcolonial critique of universal categories has strong affinities with the variants of historicism and neo-historicism that insist on the singularity of events, cultures, and

individuals. Postcolonial theory has predecessors in German Romanticism and Historicism, from Herder to Dilthey and Mannheim, and other more distant relatives in the conservative critique of modernity, from Heidegger to Gehlen and Schelsky. What is important to notice in this lineage is the presence of social, even sociological approaches (in Weber, Mannheim, Gehlen, and Schelsky), alongside the explicitly anti-sociological thrust of Dilthey, Heidegger, and other conservative thinkers (Rehberg 1985). For a non-historian observing historians' intellectual, epistemological, and aesthetic habits over several decades, the most striking thing is the widespread agreement across divergent groups of historians on the historical non-universality of categories and the uniqueness of historical events. The alliance between deconstruction, postcolonialism, and history is in this respect a natural one, even if it offended another aspect of the modal habitus of historians, namely, the regulative idea of a single empirical truth. But it is crucial to keep in mind that many other schools of thought, including the critical realist philosophy of Roy Bhaskar and other post-positivist philosophies of social science, have rejected the idea of universal concepts and general theory in the social sciences.

"Historians should not blow the debate between postcolonial theory and Marxism out of proportion. This debate does not represent any larger polarization between "social" approaches to historical explanation ... versus a rejection of universal categories or models on the other hand."

Given this, I was somewhat surprised to read Manu Goswami's comment that intellectual history has reached "an impasse generated by, on

the one hand, the challenge-and-riposte structure between abstract universalizing frameworks (whether beholden to orthodox Marxism or variants of modernization theory) and, on the other, the epistemology centered version of negative dialectics that key strands of poststructuralism and postcolonial theory forged." I am not at all convinced that this conflict is unique to a given historical moment and I am therefore also skeptical that this moment "has now passed." Certainly this conflict takes different forms in different times and places. But I would submit that history and the human sciences have been traversed by this same deep structure of disagreement since the late 18th century. Over a century ago much of the German historical profession rallied against Leipzig Historian Karl Lamprecht and his version of universal history. Historians in the United States and Germany during the 1960s-1980s were divided over modernization theory. I doubt that History will ever escape from the confrontation between universalizing and particularizing frameworks. The present condition is not so much an "impasse" as a particular configuration of a recurrent opposition that structures humanistic disciplines, especially those that are more exposed to the nomothetic, positivist scientism prevailing in the harder social sciences and the natural sciences as well as foundations, government and private agencies. I would be surprised not to see the emergence of a new split between universalizing and anti-universalizing epistemologies in history--perhaps one rooted in the universalisms of the life sciences and genetics.

This brings me to a related point, which is that History, like other academic disciplines, is rarely a settled field in the Bourdieusian sense or a "paradigmatic" science in the Kuhnian sense. Those who worry about an "age of fracture" are therefore simply acknowledging a typical state of affairs; they are also working towards a hegemonic realignment around a single dominant approach. I agree with Manu that "the orientation of 'actually existing' historiographical practices seems to suggest less

a single-stranded or decisive cyclical movement (from social to cultural approaches or the rise of big history) within histories of knowledge than a kind of open-ended juncture.” But I would avoid calling this a crisis, in light of the normal understanding of crisis as something evil or threatening. New objects and practices of knowledge are incubated by all sorts of situations, including unsettled fields, dominated subfields, interdisciplinary spaces, and conditions in which knowledge is being produced entirely outside disciplines and fields. I still would not argue in favor of non-fielded knowledge spaces insofar as fields are defined partly in terms of their relative autonomy. Fields provide more protection for knowledge production. And academic history, including the sorts of Marxist and postcolonial thinking discussed by Manu and Andrew Zimmerman, is most definitely located within disciplinary fields in the strong Bourdieusian sense.

The question of whether academia is in crisis can also be posed in a way that does not have to do with the professional debate between postcolonial and universalizing forms of history but with the fact that, as Andrew Zimmerman writes, academia “exists as part of a political and economic world that is essentially a transitional crisis.” I want to insist, however that transitional crisis is not defined simply at the political economic level. Bourdieu’s complex vision of the social allows one to perceive different sorts of crisis located below the social-epochal or political-epochal levels. Once we distinguish between the field of power, the academic field, the history field, and the intellectual history subfield, we can move toward a more nuanced discussion of crisis. Fields can decline, die, and be reconstituted; they can continue to be governed by a single species of symbolic capital for an extended period of time; they can undergo a “specific revolution” that changes the universally agreed upon type of symbolic capital constituting the *illusio* of the field without the field going under. Fields also undergo less drastic changes involving the valorization of different styles of thought, performance, and

habitus, leading to the rearrangement of hierarchies of distinction. Subfields such as intellectual history or historical sociology can also be analyzed using these categories. And this means that Intellectual History, like other sub-disciplines, can enter a crisis -- by losing its relative autonomy, becoming domesticated or swallowed by the surrounding discipline, for example.

"Once we distinguish between the field of power, the academic field, the history field, and the intellectual history subfield, we can move toward a more nuanced discussion of crisis."

What is happening at the level of academia as a whole, as Zimmerman writes, is “assaults on education through specious metrics, privatization, and the subjection of teachers and students to various technological regimes.” Bourdieu may also help us understand these sorts of interventions. At the most obvious level Bourdieu privileged what Lacan called the “discourse of the university” over “the discourse of the master” –the collective intellectual (Bourdieu) or specific intellectual (Foucault) over the Sartrian “total intellectual.” Bourdieu also polemically rejected Lacan as a sort of mandarin total intellectual like Sartre (conflating, in my view, Lacan’s intellectual stardom with Sartre’s public interventions in politics). Bourdieu argued that social analysis needs to make an initial epistemological break with immediate forms of social knowledge, which he called “spontaneous sociologies.” This would seem to distance Bourdieu from the “discourse of the hysteric,” who inhabits his spontaneous symptoms. At the same time, Bourdieu argued that social scientists “can find in literary works

research clues and orientations that the censorship specific to the scientific field tend to forbid to them or to hide from them” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 206). He took Flaubert (and Flaubert’s fictional character Frédéric in *Sentimental Education*) as his guides to understanding the genesis of the French literary field and the problems of social inheritance and refusal of inheritance among the French elites in the 19th century (Bourdieu 1996). And what is Flaubert if not a specialist in the male hysteric?

I am also in complete agreement, finally, with Manu’s point concerning the need for a critical and reflexive notion of comparability within histories of knowledge (and for that matter within histories of anything else). I have been arguing for an approach to comparison that rejects thinking about it as a quest to find transposable models and that instead traces the effectiveness of powerful structures (or causal powers) across different historical contexts. This approach does not look for general theories or Humean “constant conjunctions of events,” but assumes instead that every major historical event is radically overdetermined by a unique combination of causes. I agree with subaltern and postcolonial theories that some causal powers are radically discontinuous across time and space. Yet this does not mean that we cannot carry out comparisons or seek explanations. Explanations may combine causes that are geohistorically specific to some non-western setting with causes that have a more widespread purchase, such as capitalism or the nation-state form. This approach would obviously open the door to “non-Western” theories (or more precisely, theories of events, practices, and causal powers that are specific to non-Western places). The polarization between theories of universal (“Western”) processes and theories of objects that are specific to non-western places is misleading if we imagine the social as being more like a rainforest of causal powers and less like a machine.

"I am ... in complete agreement ... concerning the need for a critical and reflexive notion of comparability within histories of knowledge (and for that matter within histories of anything else)."

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Comparative-Historical Sociology Section 2018 Award Winners



Each year, the Comparative-Historical Sociology Section confers awards to recognize some of the best works in the field. Congratulations to the 2018 award winners!

Barrington Moore Book Award

Tri-Winners:

Krishan Kumar, *Visions of Empire: How Five Imperial Regimes Shaped the World*. Princeton: 2017.

Angel Adams Parham, *American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race*. Oxford 2017

Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. Cambridge 2017.

Committee:

Jonathan Wrytzen, Tianna Paschel, Mabel Berezin (chair)

Charles Tilly Best Article Award

Winner:

Greta Krippner, "Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in Late Twentieth-Century America." *American Journal of Sociology*, 123(1).

Committee:

Barry Eidlin (chair), Matt Desan, Yingyao Wang

Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award

Winner:

Charles Seguin, "Making a National Crime: The Transformation of U.S. Lynching Politics, 1883-1930" (PhD, University of North Carolina, 2016).

Committee:

Shai Dromi, Robert Braun, Moon-Kie Jung

Reinhard Bendix Best Student Paper Award

Winner:

Yueran Zhang, "Preempting "No Taxation without Representation": The Case of Taxing Private Homeownership in China."

Honorable Mentions:

A.K.M. Skarpelis, "Beyond Aryans: Making Germans in the Nazi Empire".

Katrina Quisumbing King, "The Sources and Political Uses of Ambiguity in Statecraft".

Committee:

Matthew Norton (chair), Nick Wilson, Aliza Luft

Comparative-Historical Sociology Section Announcements and Recent Publications

CHS Job Candidate & Dissertation Spotlight: Ben Manski



Dissertation: *The Constitutional Revolution*
(University of California Santa Barbara)

ben@umail.ucsb.edu; www.BenManski.com

Research Specialization: Social Movements,
Law & Society, Sociology of Constitutions,
Environmental Sociology, Political Sociology,
Comparative and Historical Sociology

Committee: Richard Flacks, Noah Friedkin,
John Sutton, Verta Taylor, Howard Winant

Dissertation Summary: Campaigns to democratize the U.S. Constitution are emergent features of contemporary politics. Yet evaluating the possibilities for campaign success is hampered by the lack of recent U.S. cases; the last major amendment was ratified in 1971 and the last formal constitutional revolution took place with Reconstruction. Elsewhere the story has been different. One third the world's countries adopted new constitutions at the end of the 20th century; democracy movements played important roles in many cases. My research compares these cases in seeking the various

configurations of originating conditions, movement strategies, and interactive dynamics of constitutionalization that proved necessary and/or sufficient to bring about substantive democratization. In so doing, I assess an object often missing in studies of constitutional change: The strategies of democracy activists attempting to constitutionalize democratic reforms. This assessment not only provides practical perspective relevant to contemporary U.S. campaigns, it also contributes to future scholarship. In centering popular agency in the constitution of society, this approach offers balance to certain top-down institutional accounts of law and democracy. In bringing constitutionalism further into the purview of social movement studies, it makes available a terrain on which macro, meso, and micro social movement theories of contention, identity, and praxis converge

Recently Published Books

Pula, Besnik. 2018. *Globalization Under and After Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe*. Stanford University Press.

The post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe have gone from being among the world's most closed, autarkic economies to some of the most export-oriented and globally integrated. While previous accounts have attributed this shift to post-1989 market reform policies, Besnik Pula sees the root causes differently. Reaching deeper into the region's history and comparatively examining its long-run industrial development, he locates critical junctures that forced the hands of Central and Eastern European elites and made them look at

options beyond the domestic economy and the socialist bloc. In the 1970s, Central and Eastern European socialist leaders intensified engagements with the capitalist West in order to expand access to markets, technology, and capital. This book enriches our understanding of a regional shift that began well before the fall of the wall, while also explaining the distinct international roles that Central and Eastern European states have assumed in the globalized twenty-first century.

Skovajsa, Marek and Jan Balon. 2017. *Sociology in the Czech Republic: Between East and West*. Sociology Transformed Series. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

This book offers the first comprehensive overview in English of the history of sociology in what is today the Czech Republic. Divided into six chapters, it traces the institutional development of the discipline from the late 19th century until the present, with an emphasis on the periods most favorable for sociology's institutionalization: the interwar years, the 1960s and the post-1989 era. The narrative places the institutions, persons and ideas that have been central to the discipline into the broader social and political context. Marek Skovajsa and Jan Balon show that sociology in the Czech Republic has been wedded to the dominant political projects of each successive historical period: nation- and state-building until after WWII, the communist experiment in 1948-1989, liberal democratic reconstruction after 1989, and internationalization after 2000. This work will appeal to social scientists and to a general readership interested in Czech culture and society.

Goldberg, Chad Alan. 2017. *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought*. University of Chicago Press.

Chad Alan Goldberg brings us a major new study of Western social thought through the lens of Jews and Judaism. In France, where antisemites decried the French Revolution as the "Jewish Revolution," Émile Durkheim

challenged depictions of Jews as agents of revolutionary subversion or counterrevolutionary reaction. When German thinkers such as Karl Marx, Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart, and Max Weber debated the relationship of the Jews to modern industrial capitalism, they reproduced, in secularized form, cultural assumptions derived from Christian theology. In the United States, William Thomas, Robert Park, and their students conceived the modern city and its new modes of social organization in part by reference to the Jewish immigrants concentrating there. Goldberg rounds out his fascinating study by proposing a novel explanation for why Jews were such an important cultural reference point. He suggests a rethinking of previous scholarship on Orientalism, Occidentalism, and European perceptions of America, arguing that history extends into the present, with the Jews—and now the Jewish state—continuing to serve as an intermediary for self-reflection in the twenty-first century.

Articles and Book Chapters

Joachim J. Savelsberg. 2018. "Punitive Turn and Justice Cascade: Mutual Inspiration from P&S and Human Rights Literatures." *Punishment & Society* 20(1):73–91.

Joachim J. Savelsberg. 2018. "Criminology in the United States: Contexts, Institutions and Knowledge in Flux." In: *The Handbook of the History and Philosophy of Criminology*, edited by Ruth Triplett. Routledge, pp. 437-452.

Marcel Paret. 2018. "The politics of local resistance in urban South Africa: Evidence from three informal settlements." *International Sociology*. 33(3): 337-356.

Marcel Paret. 2018. "Migration politics: Mobilizing against economic insecurity in the United States and South Africa." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 59(1): 3-24.