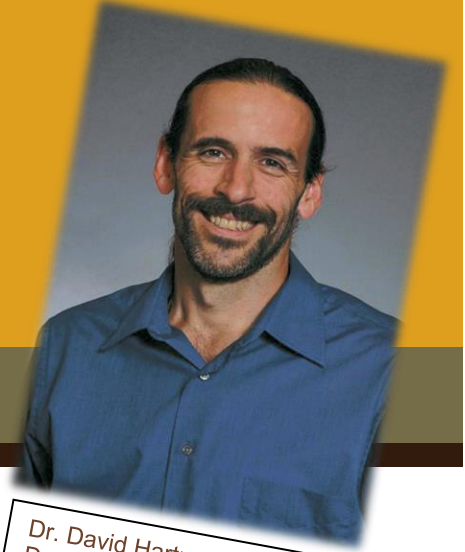


The Socializer



WESTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY



Dr. David Hartmann, Chair
Department of Sociology

This is Not a Test

By Dr. David Hartmann

Theory and method have a common goal in explanation and that end is only even coherent when they work in combination. That much is widely though imprecisely agreed to. Our greatest need is therefore to work out the appropriate forms of combination and put significant effort to their pursuit. Unfortunately, as theory and methods have become specializations in almost all important ways, a working competence at their intersection is becoming less common. It is likely, moreover, that the opportunity to address this state of affairs may be fleeting. Specialization is generally marked by separation, in the extreme by isolation, and the increasing separation of courses and faculty and journals and grants around the theory and method divide will make things worse over time as the respective communities find fewer reasons to rely on each other for their bearings and their work.

There have been many roads to this specialization and many reasons to lament it but today I will discuss only one: that the intersection of theory and method is too often (and) too narrowly defined by the logic of hypothesis testing. In particular, the turn to method oriented inquiries - inquiries motivated by paradigms of methods and data - will increasingly weaken the conceptual coherence of our explanations because the mutual contributions of statistical testing and theory are almost always marginal. Turner put the

Inside....

Page 2 This is not a test (cont.)

Page 3 Faculty News

Page 5 Alumni News

Page 6 WMU well
represented at SSSP

Page 7 Welcome to our new
graduate Students

Page 8 Congratulations!

This is not a test (cont.)

point forcefully about 15 years ago in “The Maturity of Social Theory” (2003, p. 152), “Causal modeling never does, never can, break out of its dependence on background knowledge ... So it is dependent on the very concepts that are the subject matter of social theory. But the questions of social theory are largely independent of the “facts” of causal modeling.”

This is an important insight and worth thinking through. What results from an identification of theoretically informed empiricism with hypothesis testing is a reification of our scientific tendencies at the expense of the conceptual articulation that has always been the heart and the real business of social theory. Turner continues, “In spite of the fact that Parsons and Merton were themselves historically sophisticated, and indeed knew very well that one would learn more from reading a neglected passage in Simmel than from another social survey conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research, they nevertheless pretended this was not so and proclaimed not only their own connection to the activity of empirical sociology but their ultimate dependence and obeisance toward it.” (p. 154). Now if two such as these, who in fact knew better, could put a misplaced public approval in the computations of increasingly complicated models, how many lesser lights have been led astray?

Turner’s critique may be overstated but its emphasis is in fact supported by what is probably the standard epistemic stance on the dynamics of change in scientific beliefs- the Duhem-

Quine Thesis. This states that science is not a series of falsifiable claims which may be independently evaluated (as a naïve reading of Popper might suggest) but a complex web of more or less loosely tied claims, assumptions, concepts, evidence and preferred methods that “faces the test of experience as a whole,” as Philips (1987) puts it. He goes on to point out that “negative evidence can require that an accommodatory change be made” (though the more usual response is to ignore, rationalize or bracket it), “but this change can be made in any part of the network (so long as secondary changes that are necessary in other parts are made).”

The belief that we are testing theory by conducting hypothesis tests in complex modeling is therefore far removed from the reality of conceptual progress in science. Such testing is a necessary part of the evaluation of scientific explanation but it is almost never decisive. Turner’s point is deeper – that it can never be decisive.¹

At the same time, theory cannot long survive if its ties to whatever counts as observation and evidence become too attenuated. We are risking this in sociology. Our theory does survive such abuse and such neglect in spite of us because it does matter – but it matters in its own terms – those of conceptual elaboration and clarity and application. Tests are always local and limited and can never really make much difference to the fundamental work of theory.

So the answer, or rather the path, is to break down the

tendencies toward specialization, first in graduate training and then in the professional institutions of reward and advancement. That our disciplinary resources and rewards are not so arrayed at present is a serious and growing obstacle. What is needed is more consistent and penetrating attention to the assumptions and weaknesses at the interstices of our conceptual and empirical work. We test and progress through multifaceted critique and statistical hypothesis tests are only a small and conceptually quite distal part of that probity.

¹In addition, while the argument I have made to this point is applicable across the sciences, there is reason to believe it may be reinforced in the social sciences by special considerations having to do with the nature of our empirical evidence. Two among this list of considerations are the narrowness of scope and the method dependence of our empirical generalizations (c.f., Nagel 1961; Fiske and Shweder 1986). These are even apart from the usual worries about specification, measurement error and mechanisms of causal effect in any particular test or tradition of testing.



Sangren Hall

Faculty News



Dr. Whitney DeCamp

Publications: DeCamp, Whitney. (2019). Parental Influence on Youth Violent Video Game Use. *Social Science Research*, 82, 195-203.

Foster, Jennifer M., and Whitney DeCamp. (2019). A Quasi-Experimental Investigation of a Group Intervention for Adult Survivors of Polyvictimization and Complex Trauma. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 44, 152-169.

Zaykowski, Heather, David A. Smelson, and Whitney DeCamp. (2019). Reducing Victimization Among Chronically Homeless Adults with Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders: An Examination of Housing Placement and Risky Lifestyles. *Victims & Offenders*, 14, 712-726.

Additional:

Dr. DeCamp has been selected to serve as a member of the Committee on the Economic Status of the Profession, which is part of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The committee oversees the AAUP Faculty Compensation Survey and prepares the Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession. DeCamp's term on the committee runs 2019-2022.



Dr. Chien-Juh Gu

Publications: 2019. Bargaining with Confucian Patriarchy: Money, Culture, and Gender Division of Labor in Taiwanese Immigrant Families. *Qualitative Sociology*.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11133-019-09427-x>

2019. I am American! Taiwanese Immigrant Women Battling Everyday Racism. In: Brittany C. Slatton and Carla D. Brailey (Eds.), *Women and Inequality in the 21st Century*. Pp. 78-91. New York: Routledge.

<https://www.routledge.com/Women-and-Inequality-in-the-21st-Century/Slatton-Brailey/p/book/9781138239784>

2019. Interviewing Immigrants and Refugees: Reflexive Engagement with Research Subjects. In: Steven J. Gold and Stephanie J. Nawyn (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies* (2nd edition). Pp. 565-581. New York: Routledge.

<https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-International-Handbook-of-Migration-Studies/Gold-Nawyn/p/book/9781138208827>

Dr. Gu (cont.)

Conference presentations:

2019. Qualitative Interviewing with Taiwanese Immigrants: A Reflexivity Methodology. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. University of Urbana-Champaign.

2019. Burmese Refugees' Alcohol Misuse and Its Impact On Integration. American Sociological Association annual conference. New York City.

Dr. Gu was invited by American Sociological Association to host a roundtable discussion for department chairs at the ASA pre-conference. She shared her experience working with honors students and discussed various strategies for recruitment and how to strengthen sociology education.



Dr. Snyder and PhD student **Ashley Chlebek** were in Ireland this summer presenting "Experiential Learning for Sociology and Criminal Justice Majors," at the Twenty-sixth International Conference on Learning, Belfast, UK, July 25, 2019.

Faculty News (cont.)



Dr. Angie Moe and Sunny

blend and complement existing first and second responder agencies, including FEMA, Salvation Army, American Red Cross, and, as well as fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and schools. The



process of becoming a certified crisis response team involved a lengthy application, extensive and ongoing background checks, a multi-hour screening, and 30+ hour training intensive. Ongoing education on mental health first aide, human and canine first aide, and advanced ICS is also required. Angie and Sunny have been working together in the area of trauma recovery for two years and see this as a natural progression of their efforts. They are the first and only HOPE AACR team in SW Michigan. Included here are a few pictures from the training process.



Dr. Elena Gapova wrote, “I never thought I could do four different conference presentations in three months, but I did. In March, I presented my paper “What is to be done? Looking for space between class and discourse” at *Sex, Politics, and the Life of LGBT in Central Asia* Conference at American University in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). In May, “Redistribution and Recognition After Socialism: in Praise of Labour Feminism” at *The Future with Marx* Conference in Moscow. In June, I spoke at a conference “Social Theory of the Changing World” in memory of Belarusian political philosopher Vladimir Fours. The conference took place at European Humanities University (from where I came to WMU in 2006). This is a Belarusian ‘university-in-exile’ which currently operates in Vilnius, Lithuania. Finally, in June it was a paper on the politics of memory of WWII at ASEES (Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies) Summer convention in Zagreb, Croatia.



Dr. Jesse Smith

Publication: Smith, Jesse M. and Ryan T. Cragun. 2019. “Mapping Religion’s Other: A Review of the Study of Nonreligion and Secularity” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 58(2):319-335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.1259> **Publications:**

Smith, Jesse M. 2019. Review of *Atheists in American Politics: Social Movement Organizing from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries*, by Richard J. Meagher. *Political Science Quarterly* 134(2): 359-360.

Workshop presentation: Jesse was invited to Pitzer College to discuss a new international research project, *Understanding Nonreligion in a Complex Future* funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Alumni News



Dr. Flora Myamba



Dr. Flora Myamba earned her doctorate from our program in 2009. Since then she has become a widely recognized expert on social protection and gender in Tanzania, and throughout Africa. She founded and leads a newly registered NGO called “Women and Social Protection Tanzania” (www.wsphelp.org). Dr. Myamba also serves as a consultant for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Center for Global Development to research and promote women’s economic empowerment and digital financial inclusion, particularly for Tanzania Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) Program. Moreover, she has consulted for FAO, UNICEF, Oxford Policy Management, UNDP, EU-OECD, ILO, World Bank, and REPOA-Tanzania on multiple related projects, and for Government of Tanzania in de-veloping the National Social Protection Policy. She was on the Technical Experts Teams for the preparation of the UN-Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-63) at global, Africa, and Tanzania levels. Flora is one of the master trainers for the African Union owned-TRANSFORM Training for Social Protection Floors. She has published in local and international outlets including Oxford Development Studies, Cambridge University Press, Global Social Policy, and African Development Review. We are certainly proud of all Dr. Myamba has accomplished!

Notice to Sociology Alumni: Please keep WMU updated! The Sociology Department loves to hear from our alumni. Please send any information we can publish regarding your career to: ann.browning@wmich.edu.

We also want you to know about the Bronco Alumni Spotlight feature on the career services website. Click here to see some alumni that are featured, and we encourage you to also submit your information to be featured in the future. <https://wmich.edu/career/brancospotlights>

Illuminating the Social in Social Problems at SSSP

Illuminating the SOCIAL in Social Problems



The Department of Sociology at WMU was well represented this summer in New York City.

Four members of the Department (Dr. Susan Carlson, Fernando Ospina, Karolina Staros, and Kristen Witzel) presented papers at the annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems held in New York City in August. Dr. Susan Carlson is the Treasurer of the organization.



The Roosevelt Hotel, NY

Papers Presented:

“Student Loan Debt as a Social Problem: Reframing the Issues,”

Susan M. Carlson, Western Michigan University.

“Antiracism Workshops as an Intervention to Reduce Health Disparities,”

Fernando A. Ospina, Western Michigan University and Eric Hill, Albion College.

“Ending Rape Culture: Expanding the Conversation and Supporting Secondary Survivors,”

Karolina Staros, WesternMichigan University.

“Crowdfunding Campaigns for School Shootings: Who are theWorthiest Victims?”

Kristen R. Witzel, Western Michigan University.

Welcome to our New Graduate Students

At the beginning of fall semester, the department welcomed six new students to our graduate programs, and had one student, Ashley Chlebek, matriculate from the master's to the doctoral program. Among the department's new students are the first two students enrolled in the accelerated master's program.

Ph.D. Students

Rebecca Creager completed her bachelor's degree in sociology (magna cum laude) with a minor in women's studies, and master's degree in sociology at Western Illinois University. Rebecca's research interests include gender, sexuality, stratification, and media. Her master's thesis, *Sexual Scripting through Netflix: LGBT Representation in Film*, used content analysis to examine sexual scripting in LGBT-targeted Netflix offerings.

Trevor Myers completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University. Trevor's research interests include capital punishment, institutional corrections, cyber-crime, intimate partner violence/violence against women, juvenile delinquency, state crime, and applied research. His master's thesis, *Capital Punishment and Race Disparities in the Modern Era: An Empirical Analysis*, examines racialization in capital punishment and how it has been disproportionately applied to African Americans throughout history.

Joseph Schuetz completed his bachelor's degree with a double major in anthropology and comparative religion, and a master's degree in spirituality, culture and health in the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University. Joseph's general research interests are in the areas of social psychology, medical sociology, and sociology of religion, with particular interests in the significance of embodied spiritual and religious experience in alternative medical contexts. His paper, "Quantifying the Spiritual: Toward a Holistic Approach to Spirituality for Scientific Analysis in Healthcare," was published in the *Hilltop Review* in 2017.

M.A. Student

Abigail Kubiak completed her bachelor's degree with honors at Lindenwood University, with a major in sociology and a minor in anthropology. Abby is passionate about doing sociological research. In her undergraduate studies, she completed an independent research project, "Development of Sexual Identity in Undergraduate College Students," that she presented in poster sessions at Lindenwood University's Social Science Student Symposium and the 2019 annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society in Chicago.

Accelerated M.A. Students

Armen Idriss is completing his bachelor's degree with majors in sociology and criminal justice, and a minor in psychology. He is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta. Armen enjoys studying human behavior and looks forward to the challenge of furthering his knowledge of sociology in the accelerated M.A. program.

Andrew Mazzone is completing his bachelor's degree in sociology with a minor in Arabic. He is certified to teach English as a second language. Andrew served as an undergraduate teaching assistant in the lab for SOC 2830 Methods of Data Analysis. He is passionate about doing sociological analysis and honing his research skills in the accelerated master's program.

Congratulations to Jacob Riccioni



Riccioni, a Sociology Major, was accepted to the American Sociological Association (ASA) Honors Program. He presented a paper, "Climate Change and Society: Religious Redemption of Our Ravaged Planet," at the ASA national conference in New York City in August.

Jacob is a member of the Alpha Kappa Delta International Sociology Honor Society and the Founder and President of the Sociology Club at WMU.



Congratulations PhD Students

Completed Area Exams

Katherine Brown, Fall 2019 - Criminology

Brian Lunn, Spring 2019 - Criminology

Byron Miller, Summer I, 2019 - Methodology

Christine Strayer, Summer II, 2019 - Methodology



Department of Sociology
1903 W Michigan Ave
Kalamazoo MI 49008-5257
Facebook: SOC-WMU
Web: www.wmich.edu/sociology
Phone: (269)387-5171