

# STATES, POWER, & SOCIETIES



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dana R. Fisher

American University

When I last wrote, we were bracing for the arrival of the second Trump Administration. Since then, we have all experienced the ways the Administration has moved quickly to dismantle the bureaucratic structures that maintain and sustain our democracy, including our federal agencies, our scientific institutions, and the academy itself. Many of us have seen our universities become less tolerant of free speech on campus and more repressive of campus members, while we have lost federal funding, our alumni have lost jobs, and our international students have become targets.

There's no question that these are unprecedented and scary times.

In the last newsletter, I wrote: "Although nothing about what is coming in the next Trump Administration is certain, what we can be certain of is that political sociology will be even more important in the coming years." I believe that more now than ever before!

ASA2025 will take place in Chicago this summer. Although the system is imperfect and we will miss the many international scholars who have decided not to join us due to the policies and practices of the Trump Administration, this year's annual meeting will provide a much-needed space for us to come together to share ideas, exchange insights, and support one another.

Here is an overview of the political sociology offerings at this summer's annual meeting:

The Council decided to have open submissions for ASA2025. As a result, section and open political

sociology panels were organized together to complement one another.

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The process yielded an exciting set of sessions, including those on political

engagement, democracy and authoritarianism, electoral politics, political organizations, and narrative strategies in political sociology.

In addition to the sessions we organized, our section is co-sponsoring the following panels: Right-Wing Politics, Mobilities, and Immigrant Conservatism (with the Section on International Migration); and New Directions and Emerging Studies of Politics in Science and Technology:

Changes in Governance, Political Economy, Labor, and Work (Co-sponsored by Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology).

Beyond the political sociology panels and roundtables, there are mini conferences on the outcomes of social movements and climate change that should be of interest to many of us.

We will be hosting a joint reception with CBSM and Marxist Sociology on

Sunday night at the hotel and our business meeting will take place on Monday right after the roundtables. For those on the Political Sociology Council, our council meeting will take place at 7am on Monday morning (don't hate the messenger; it's always this early at ASA).

I look forward to seeing everyone in Chicago and having the opportunity to connect with and learn from you all through these uncertain times!

## Symposium

In this issue's Symposium, Linda Lobao and Benny Witkovsky provide sociological perspectives on the interplay of politics and resistance at local and state levels in the face of federal pressure.

### The Local, State, and National Politics

Linda Lobao

The Ohio State University

Taking the size of the U.S. state as measured by employment, a common metric, about 23.6 million workers comprise the civilian public sector. Of these workers, 64% are local, 23% are state, and 13% are federal. Local governments are more than seven times the size of the military as measured by personnel.

While all eyes are on the federal state, the local state is what people experience on a day-to-day basis when encountering government. Yet despite its size and reach, it is the level of the state we know least about in any generalizable manner in concrete

information and theorization. We know little about the governing path of the local state in part because no systematic data on its policies and programs exist across the U.S. over time. Certainly, there are small-*n* studies of cities and other localities—and some generalizable information from the Census of Governments which unfortunately has been underfunded for decades with recent censuses increasingly unreliable. Theorizing about the local state in the contemporary political environment too often has been based on exceptional cases (such as cities in bankruptcy) or read-off

from theories about nation-states and transferred in an isomorphic manner to subnational governments.

Among the nations of the global north, the U.S. is an outlier along many lines but especially when it comes to local governments. The distinctiveness of U.S. center-local relationships (often termed “fend-for-yourself-federalism”), variety of capitalism, and welfare state situates it among western nations with the greatest spatial inequality in the rights of citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Poorer localities and residents are most likely to lose out because public service provision is constrained by local tax capacity and weak upper-level governmental support, with localities raising most of their own funds. U.S. failure to protect interterritorial equality in the social safety-net leads to wide local variations in welfare administration and services relative to other nations.<sup>2</sup> Pressures to cut back on spending are a persistent feature of U.S. local governing and less a function of periodic downturns as more typical of Europe.

Local governments’ relationship to federal and state government is further marked by several trends in national politics today. First, localities continue to experience long-term “state rescaling” in which functional responsibilities have been dumped down to them especially since 1996 federal welfare reform. Most Americans live in states where welfare provision has been devolved to

county governments. Second, federalism has become increasingly partisan where upper-level governments turn to pre-empt local policies to solidify control and rally their base. Republican controlled states tend to engage more in pre-emption. Finally, under the Trump administration we appear to be entering a period of accelerated state rescaling: federal government is cut touting familiar conservative ideology that states and localities are closer to and better able to serve the people when the goal is to shrink the state overall and dump down even more responsibilities on underfunded and understaffed subnational governments.

Over the past twenty-five years with a team of collaborators, I’ve been tracking how local governments navigate the challenges they face from upper-level governments and the broader political economic environment. Motivating this work initially was whether the local state was following neoliberal policy paths that national governments were assumed to follow. With unique primary data collected in four waves of studies from 2000-2019, we study local governments across the nation, focusing on counties which deliver much of the social safety-net and provide similar public services as municipalities. Counties and municipalities are general purpose governments similar in bureaucratic size. Counties, however, also span rural areas.

I started out this research with a skepticism about local governments, assuming they were widely engaged in privatizing and cutting back services, promoting business at the expense of public interests, and directing resources to business attraction over social services in a race-to-the-bottom. I have come away with a quite different view. Generalizing from our data (and other work with counties), these governments are

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Sellers, Jeffery M., Marta Arretche, Daniel Kubler and Eran Razi (eds.). 2017. *Inequality and Governance in the Metropolis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>2</sup> See Lopez-Santana, Mariely. 2015. *The New Governance of Welfare States in the United States and Europe*. Albany, N.Y.: The State University of Albany Press.

underfunded, doing the best they can to support public well-being under trying circumstances, and make little trade-offs between pursuing growth and redistribution. Privatization rates have not grown substantially over time and formerly privatized services are often brought back under county control. Moreover, local partisanship isn't typically a key factor in service policy provision. While exceptions always exist, these relationships tend to be found broadly across the U.S.<sup>3</sup>

As the federal government reduced aid to localities from the 1980s onward (with the exception of the Biden years), state governments became an important avenue of support. This has added to spatial inequality as states vary in capacity and willingness to redistribute funds. Across the decades of our research, counties have consistently reported cuts in federal and especially state revenue. In 2019, 84% of counties identified the loss of state revenue and 73% loss of federal revenue as a "somewhat" or "very important" problem for their finances. Over half of counties report moderate to significant levels of fiscal stress. State-level demands and restrictions make coping and policy formulation more difficult. Two-thirds of counties report the state has affected their recent policy making. Counties further find themselves between a rock and a hard place with residents,

pressured by them to reduce taxes (66% reporting) yet not to cut public service spending (57% reporting).

What local governments do is critical for sociological theory, research, and most importantly the protection of populations as the nation slides into authoritarianism. As the federal government becomes more chaotic and further abdicates responsibilities for the nation's well-being, communities are left to pick up the pieces. While we have long had a patchwork of varying quality in local governance, social protections, and the rights of citizenship, this spatial inequality is about to get much more extreme.

**Dr. Linda Lobao** is Professor of Rural Sociology at the Ohio State University.

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<sup>3</sup> For greater discussion of relationships reported here, see: Lobao, Linda, Lazarus Adua, and Gregory Hooks, 2014, "Privatization, Business Attraction and Social Services across the United States: Local Governments' Use of Market-Oriented Neoliberal Policies in the Post-2000 Period" *Social Problems* 61(4):644-672; and Lobao, Linda and Paige Kelly, 2024, "Urban Austerity Theory, Politicizing Space, and Cutback Policies across Urban and Rural Communities" *City & Community* 23 (2):87-109.

## **A Politics of Standing in The Gaps**

Benny Witkovsky

Department of Sociology at UW-Madison

On April 25, Milwaukee County Judge Hannah Dugan was arrested and charged with concealing a person from arrest and obstructing a federal immigration proceeding. The previous week, according to prosecutors, Judge Dugan had held ICE agents at the door of her courtroom and allowed an undocumented person, a criminal defendant before her, to exit through another door.

This is a moment nearly ripped from the pages of Tocqueville. Tocqueville saw the local, decentralized administration of American life as one of the key bulwarks against tyranny. A nascent despot, even if he gained control of federal power and cultivated minions across the country, would be slowed by the fragmented and independent institutions that controlled local life. Tocqueville specifically understood local judges as having a unique ability to cool political passions and slow the advance of centralized power. Standing in the gap between federal agents and a local subject is exactly what Tocqueville would have hoped from a county judge.

Today, local politics is about standing in the gaps. The Trump Administration's agenda seeks to exercise immense federal power, extending its reach into every aspect of local life, from law enforcement to education, social services, and medical care. But federal influence in these realms is rarely self-executing. There are complex networks of local actors, institutions, and regulations that the Administration's demands must confront. Each of these creates space between national ideologies and local

realities; each provides opportunities for local actors to produce friction in the advancement of a national agenda.

Here in Wisconsin, there have been several key instances of local officials taking stands since Trump's inauguration. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction refused to participate in the Department of Education's new plan to certify compliance with a ban on DEI in public schools. The Madison Police Department has limited how its officers can cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. And there have been more than a dozen protests in the small, rural communities across Wisconsin that Trump won overwhelmingly in 2024.

These forms of resistance can be partial, imperfect, and haphazard. They depend on individuals making critical decisions in tense situations with limited knowledge about what their impact will be. While every moment of local resistance may feel small, the cumulative effect can be a significant block to federal power. One task for political sociologists at this moment is to discern the structure in what often appears to be structureless. We can help identify those cracks between federal ambition and local Administration. We can examine attempts to exploit those gaps, trace them across time and place, and evaluate their success. We can work to reveal the strength (or weakness) of local resistance as a cumulative process across communities, regions, and the nation.

At the same time, it is critical for us not to fall prey to easy fallacies in this discussion.

Local government is not unitary. Just as there are cracks in federal power, so too there are cracks and divisions at the local level that national actors can exploit. For example, due to several historical factors, there are significant institutional gaps between county sheriffs and local police that makes sheriffs uniquely partisan, conservative, and unaccountable. Something the Administration has exploited to great effect. Since Trump's inauguration in January, the number of cooperation agreements that Wisconsin sheriffs have signed with ICE has nearly doubled.

Neither are local communities singular nor cohesive. There are longstanding divides within our communities that national actors can be manipulate. There are refugees in Wisconsin and across the country who have never been fully welcomed and are still greeted with skepticism and suspicion despite years in our communities. As the Administration works to revoke protections and restart deportations to hostile and unsafe countries, will they find allies and enablers among the people who have never quite accepted their neighbors?

Finally, local actions aren't inherently more moral, representative, or democratic than

their national counterparts. It was not so long ago that local resistance to national imperatives was the primary strategy of opposition to civil rights. For decades, local leaders were standing in the door to block federal demands for integration, justice for racial violence, equal treatment for LGBT people, and much more. Even as we study—and perhaps celebrate—local resistance as a counterbalance to policies under this Administration, we must remain attuned to the potential for its abuse.

Judge Dugan now faces criminal prosecution—the man she allegedly shielded from ICE faces deportation. But Wisconsin schools have, so far, suffered little consequence for refusing to comply with the Administration's orders on diversity, equity, and conclusion. A task for political sociology in the coming years is to develop a framework that helps make sense of the unclear and sometimes contradictory impact of local resistance.

**Benny Witkovsky** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology at UW-Madison. These opinions do not reflect those of his employer.

## 2025 Annual Meeting Section Activities

The entire conference program can be viewed here:

<https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/asa/asa25/>

## Joint Reception

### Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements, Section on Political Sociology, and Section on Marxist Sociology

Sun, August 10, 7:00 to 9:00pm, West  
Tower, Hyatt Regency Chicago, Floor:  
Gold Level/B Floor, Regency B

### Political Engagement

Mon, August 11, 8:00 to 9:30am

Presider: Caroline W. Lee, Lafayette College

Bridging the Civil: Bridge-building,  
Depolarization, and Civility Emily B.  
Campbell, Rhode Island College

Depopulation and the Polling Booth: Political  
Participation in a Declining Rural America  
Meghann Norden-Bright, University of  
Wisconsin-Madison

Direct Democracy in a Time of Political Crisis  
Benjamin Steinhardt Case, Arizona State  
University

Hashtags, Hymnals, and Homeless Shelters:  
Untangling Young Adults' Engagement in  
2024 Kyle Rose, Florida State University;  
Deana Rohlinger, Florida State University;  
Levi Mitzen, Florida State University; Yuki  
Proulx Maynor, Florida State University

### Section Roundtables

Mon, August 11, 10:00 to 11:00am

### Section Business Meeting

Mon, August 11, 10:00 to 11:00am

## Democracy and Authoritarianism

Mon, August 11, 2:00 to 3:30pm

Presider: Josh Pacewicz, Brown University

Adapting to Authoritarianism: Hong Kong  
Academics under the National Security Law  
Anthony J. Spires, The University of Melbourne

Austerity, Immigration, and the Rise of the  
Far Right: The EU and US Cases, 2009–2024  
Michael Gould-Wartofsky, Columbia  
University

From critical citizenship to compliant  
citizenship: The transformation of citizenship  
norms during autocratization in Hong Kong  
Gary Tang, The Hang Seng University of Hong  
Kong; Chi Kit Chan, Hang Seng University of  
Hong Kong; Francis L. F. Lee, The Chinese  
University of Hong Kong

Impact of Meritocratic Culture: Declining  
Trust in Institutions and Rising Right-wing  
Populism from World Value Surveys  
Joonghyun Kwak, Ohio State University; Pil Ho  
Kim, Ohio State University

Political Authoritarianism and Political  
Participation Adam Loesch, University of  
Wisconsin-Milwaukee

## Electoral Politics

Mon, August 11, 4:00 to 5:30pm

Presider: Carol B. Lee

Beyond Cosmopolitans and Nationalists:  
Territorial Identities in European Cleavage  
Politics Martin Lukk, University of Toronto

Expanding the Racial Threat Hypothesis:  
Structural Pathways of Resentment,  
Partisanship, and Policy Opposition Thomas

Anthony Frost, New Mexico State University;  
Heather Harper, New Mexico State University;  
Mackenzie Brooklyn Dybvik, New Mexico State University

God or Cash? Unpacking Support for Right-wing Populism during the 2022 Presidential Elections in Brazil Jacinto Cui, Université libre de Bruxelles; Margaux De Barros, Université de Rouen; Frédéric Louault, Université libre de Bruxelles

Stalwarts, Socialists, and Reformers: The Contested Meaning of Nonpartisan Politics in Progressive Era Wisconsin Benjamin Hirsch Witkovsky, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Carter Burg, University of Wisconsin - Madison

What Comes First? The Intertwined Effects of Insecurity and Social Status on Populist Attitudes in Europe Lorenza Antonucci, University Of Birmingham; Andrei Zhirnov, University of Exeter

### **Narrative Strategies in Political Sociology**

Tue, August 12, 8:00 to 9:30am

Presider: Neal Caren, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Beyond Protest Events: Cascades of Coverage and News Quality for America's Most-Prominent Challengers Edwin Amenta, University of California-Irvine; Neal Caren, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; Weijun Yuan, University of California-Irvine

Feathering their own nest: Towards a sociology of corruption talk Sacha Hilhorst, London School of Economics

From Liberté to Free Speech: How Political Context Shapes Support for Disinformation

Regulation Jen Schradie, Sciences Po - Paris; Isabelle Langrock

Secondary Political Messaging: Sociopolitical Cues in Nonpolitical Media Maya Jenkins, Johns Hopkins University; Andrew J. Perrin, Johns Hopkins University / School of Arts & Sciences

Mapping Ideological Frames: Examining Left-Right Rhetoric in Brazil's Congress Thaitany Andrade Nunes, Northwestern University

### **New Directions and Emerging Studies of Politics in Science and Technology: Changes in Governance, Political Economy, Labor, and Work (Co-sponsored by Section on Political Sociology)**

Tue, August 12, 8:00 to 9:30am

Presider: Mariana Craciun, Tulane University

Carbon Time Machines: The Techno-politics of Carbon Capture and Silicon Valley's Climate Future Andrew Jaeger, University of California-Berkeley

Fair Use or Copyright? Navigating Sociological Discourses between AI Companies and Creative Workers Hayoung Seo, Vanderbilt University; Jenny L. Davis, Vanderbilt University

Knowledge and Power: The Political Economy of Postwar University Military Research Jasmine Cha Sausedo, Johns Hopkins University / School of Arts & Sciences

Knowledge brokers in the gaps of globalization: the P-value politics of global health beyond the WHO Clay Davis, Northwestern University



Do Moral Agency and Bureaucratic Discretion  
Survive Black-Box Algorithms? Evidence from  
Big Data Taxation in China Yingyao Wang,  
University of Virginia

### Political Organizations

Tue, August 12, 10:00 to 11:30am

Presider: Arman Azedi, American University

Participation in Social Networks: The Case of  
the American Legislative Council and  
Arkansas State Legislators Melanie Hoskins;  
Andrew Dowdle, University of Arkansas; Song  
Yang, University of Arkansas

Spinning Fast and Slow: The Moral Careers of  
Revolving Door Lobbyists Wendy Y. Li, Johns  
Hopkins University

The Formation of the American Political Field,  
1872–1924 Stephanie L. Mudge, University of  
California-Davis; Shahar Zach, University of  
California-Davis

Theorizing a Meso-Level Approach to  
Political Articulation: The Role of Civil Society  
Organizations Tomas Gold, Brown University;  
Nicolas Torres-Echeverry, University of  
Chicago

The Strategic Advantage of Polarization: Why  
and How Parties Enact Fringe Legislation  
Johnnie Lotesta, Appalachian State University

## 2025 Award Winners

Congratulations to the ASA Political Sociology Section Award Winners.

Thank you to those who served on the Awards Committees.

### The Distinguished Career Award in Political Sociology

WINNER: Craig Calhoun

The Distinguished Career Award Committee:  
Dana R. Fisher (chair), American University  
Caroline Lee, Lafayette College  
Ching Kwan Lee, UCLA

### The Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award in Political Sociology

WINNER: Stephanie Ternullo's *How the  
Heartland Went Red*

Ternullo, Stephanie. 2024. *How the Heartland  
Went Red: Why Local Forces Matter in an Age  
of Nationalized Politics*. Princeton, NJ:  
Princeton University Press.

The Committee has asked that the short list  
of books considered for the award be  
included.

Bradlow, Benjamin H. 2024. *Urban Power:  
Democracy and Inequality in São Paulo and  
Johannesburg*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton  
University Press.

Cheng, Tony. 2024. *The Policing Machine: Enforcement, Endorsements, and the Illusion of Public Input*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, James R. 2024. *The Last Plantation: Racism and Resistance in the Halls of Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Long, Yan. 2024. *Authoritarian Absorption: The Transnational Remaking of Epidemic Politics in China*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Said, Atef Shahat. 2024. *Revolution Squared: Tahrir, Political Possibilities, and Counterrevolution in Egypt*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.

Schwenck, Anna. 2024. *Flexible Authoritarianism: Cultivating Ambition and Loyalty in Russia*. United States of America: Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### Committee:

Daniel Laurison (chair), Swarthmore College  
Bart Bonikowski, New York University  
Leslie Gates, Binghamton University  
Julian Go, University of Chicago  
Bo Yun Park, University of Richmond  
Shivani Choudhary, Yale University

### **The Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship for an Article or Chapter Award for Political Sociology Co-Winners:**

Tomás Gold and Ann Mische for  
“Channeling Anti-partisan Contention”  
and

Amanda R. Cheong. “Racial Exclusion by  
Bureaucratic Omission”

Tomás Gold and Ann Mische. “Channeling  
Anti-Partisan Contention: Field Structures  
and Partisan Strategies in a Global Protest

Wave (2008–2016).” *American Journal of  
Sociology*, 129(6): 1660–1719.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/730144>

Amanda R. Cheong. “Racial Exclusion by  
Bureaucratic Omission: Non-Enumeration,  
Documentary Dispossession, and the  
Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar.” *Social Problems*,  
spae003.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spae003>

#### Committee:

Mohammad Ali Kadivar (chair), Boston  
College  
Hajar Yazdiha (chair), University of Southern  
California  
A.K.M. Skarpelis Department of Sociology,  
CUNY Queens College  
Kristopher Velasco, Department of Sociology,  
Princeton University

### **Best Graduate Student Paper Award (Co-Winners)**

Emily H. Ruppel - "How Work Becomes  
Invisible: The Erosion of the Wage Floor  
for Workers with Disabilities"

María Ximena Dávila — "Building a  
Longed-for State: How Local Actors Shape  
the Meaning and Materiality of  
War-Aggrieved Institutions"

#### Committee:

Lynette Ong (chair), University of Toronto  
Mathieu Desan, University of Colorado  
Zheng Fu, Columbia University  
Livio Silva-Muller, Geneva Graduate Institute

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## Tales from the Field

Brittany Friedman on Carceral Apartheid

For over a decade, I researched and wrote what became my new book *Carceral Apartheid: How Lies and White Supremacists Run Our Prisons*. During those years I learned that bearing witness to political warfare and state violence is a form of care—and that truth-telling, when done with reverence, is a method all its own. This led me to dedicate my entire methods appendix to what I term “Truth-Telling as Method.”

I center the voices of Black elders who came of age under Jim Crow, many of whom migrated with their families from the Deep South to California to escape racial violence and were later incarcerated and criminalized for their political commitments. I also include the experiences of incarcerated white supremacists who came of age at the same time, also migrated to California, and explore how many faced and feared extralegal sanctions by corrupt correctional officers if they did not abide by what I term “white above all” and refused to be used as hitmen against incarcerated Black political leaders.

This methodological undertaking was not simply a scholarly pursuit. It was also ceremony and community building. The people I conducted life history interviews with are carriers of memory—people who had survived the long machinery of racial violence, who had often migrated west in search of freedom and instead found new forms of containment. Their truths had been silenced, distorted, or disappeared from the

scholarly record altogether. My work was to listen. Not just to what was said—but to what pulsed between the words and account for emotion and people’s personal transformation.

I sat at kitchen tables with my recorder, surrounded by their family, listening to life stories that had once been weaponized by the state. Often, loved ones would say “wow dad I never knew you experienced that in that way.” These were people who had been locked away in solitary for months, even years, who had been betrayed by comrades, and tortured under the guise of penal reform attempting to readjust their political beliefs in prison Adjustment Centers. I ended up dedicating an entire chapter based on once obscured archival records, memoirs, and life history interviews to make a significant contribution to the historiography of a little known penal innovation – the Adjustment Centers—and how they link to a eugenicist framework of transforming political prisoners into desirable tame subjects, and how the California Department of Corrections allowed the chief surgeon at San Quentin to perform over 10,000 human experiments claiming to transform men he deemed “at their worst.”

To write this book I learned to tap into a depth of wisdom and grace that doesn’t necessarily come with our academic training. I showed up in the field with presence, patience, and the intention to build something deeper than simply a citation.

Alongside my training as a historical sociologist, I leaned on the practices that have long sustained my spirit—spiritual herbalism, ceremony, and the ethics of care work. These tools shaped how I approached each interview with transparency and patience to build trust. I engaged in grounding rituals for myself before conversations, clearing space for their truths to emerge without force. I treated each moment as a portal—not just an exchange of information, but an act of witnessing that could ripple outward. In those spaces, truth-telling became a method of liberation. Storytelling for them became a method of survival.

But there were barriers that needed to be overcome. Some elders had passed on. Others were wary, shaped by decades of surveillance and the looming threat of re-incarceration. Trust had to be earned through time, transparency, and consistency. I had to be vouched for many times. Sometimes weeks would pass before I heard back. But when the invitations eventually came, I showed up, again and again, not to take—but to tend a necessary relationship.

There were institutional roadblocks too: sealed and restricted archives, missing records, and even now, sometimes having plain clothes law enforcement show up to my public book talks.

But I had already been taught—first by my grandmother and her experiences protesting sharecropping, then by the elders I interviewed—that when official archives go silent, memory speaks through the body and through the voice. Through the unbroken line of community testimony. That's why I turned

to life history and oral tradition—not simply as a supplement to the vast archival dataset I built, but also to intentionally bring human voices that are still living and breathing to light before they pass on.

There were also internal reckonings for me. Carrying these stories—the grief, the beauty, the rage—required ritual release because if not, there were times where I struggled with vicarious trauma after spending years in the field with formerly incarcerated survivors. Breathwork, prayer, time with the earth, and my herbalism training supported me. These weren't side practices, but instead a self-care structure that made the work possible.

Ultimately, *Carceral Apartheid* is not just a book. It is a living archive of resistance. A constellation of truths that refused to be buried. It's also a mirror of the dark underpinnings that don't just run our prisons, but our society. In writing this book I have learned we must face the world with courage, creativity, and a commitment to using our voice even if you're the only one.

We never stand alone for long. It's only when you are uniquely speaking in your voice that your community, and your people can find you and stand along side you.

*Carceral Apartheid: How Lies and White Supremacists Run Our Prisons* (2025) is available from University of North Carolina Press.

**Dr. Brittany Friedman** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California.

## Selam Kidane on Migration

What is freedom? A simple question that many may think has a straightforward response, often referencing the dictionary definition. Merriam-Webster defines freedom as "The quality state of being free such the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action; liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another; the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous." However, as I wrap up my dissertation work, I constantly reflect on what it means to be free. One aspect of my project aims to understand the reasons for the constant migration of Eritrean immigrants. There were 580,000 Eritrea refugees and asylum seekers in 2023 (Human Rights Watch 2023). Migration pathways out of Eritrea are limited; therefore, migrants often resort to taking treacherous journeys on foot through sub-Saharan Africa, frequently interfacing with human traffickers and taking perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea. As an Eritrean born in the US shortly before Eritrea obtained its independence and "freedom," I grew up hearing narratives of independence as the pillar of developing a strong national foundation and the basis of providing fundamental human rights. However, I could not rationalize that in a time of independence and purported freedom, a migrant crisis would exist. Freedom was much farther than I imagined.

As a mental health professional and researcher, there are gaps qualitative research can address to better understand how migration affects mental health among Eritrean immigrants. One interesting finding is the reflections on freedom and independence. There was consensus that

Eritrean independence meant sovereignty. However, many participants in the same breadth highlight that freedom ceases to exist in many aspects, even under the context of sovereignty. The overarching themes mentioned were the absence of fundamental rights, forced indefinite military conscription, the absence of choice, and hopelessness. Another key finding was the innately stigmatized nature of mental health. Many participants shared there is a lack of a basic understanding of what mental health is in the Eritrean community. When mental health was discussed, participants often noted stereotypes as a way of understanding it. For example, mental health indicates that one is "crazy" or has "lost their mind." I continue to think through how independence, freedom, and mental health speak to one another. Some questions that guide this work include, can independence exist without freedom? What is freedom? How can understanding mental health illuminate the effects of living under repressive forms of governance? What can comprehending mental health as a result of repression contribute to sociological knowledge?

These questions are of profound relevance in our current global climate. As we observe a serious threat to American democracy, ongoing genocide in Palestine, war in Ukraine, and violence in Sudan and Congo, among other social crises, understanding how politics and mental health converge will be paramount. This recognition will not only elucidate how social and political conditions impact mental health and well-being while acknowledging mental health as more than a personal issue. Implications of this work will

challenge sociologists to explore how concepts like independence and freedom are applicable in political and apolitical settings. This scholarship will also challenge scholars' understanding of biomedical approaches to managing health and illness.

**Selam Kidane** is PhD Candidate in Sociology at University of California, San Francisco.

### Nima Dahir on Community

Perhaps unexpectedly, Columbus, Ohio is a city where the presence of Somalis commands attention, we are woven into the fabric of the city's neighborhoods. As a young Somali American woman growing up in Columbus, I was molded as a scholar in the living rooms across the city. Amongst my community, I learned to ask questions about what brought us to this unfamiliar Buckeye state and what it means to build community in a place that never fully anticipated our presence.

Still, I grew up watching us make space for ourselves. We transformed banquet halls into mosques, strip malls into bustling markets, and apartment complexes into community centers. These were places where vision and resilience were ever-present. In observing these transformations, my sociological imagination was born. I wondered: what did it mean to build places of our own to live, eat, shop, and pray, and what impact did these places have on us?

These early curiosities led me to graduate school, where I was given the tools to understand the complexities of social life. As I gained fluency in the theoretical and empirical language of sociology, my mind kept returning to my early experiences asking questions in my community.

Now, I've come home to Columbus as an assistant professor at the Ohio State

University. Upon returning home, I knew that the questions that once stirred quietly in my childhood would now shape the heart of my research agenda. To this end, I have recently undertaken a project focused on Somali community building and the everyday practices of placemaking. Using oral history and participant observation, I trace how our community makes meaning in the places we inhabit.

This project has brought me into the spaces that shaped me long before I knew they would one day become field sites. I have conducted interviews with community elders who remember arriving when Columbus looked far different than it does now, and discussed with younger members of my community how they navigate multiple identities in their daily lives. Through all this, I form a living archive as I listen to the stories and observe the rhythms of daily life we have established.

There is a deep privilege and responsibility that comes with doing this work from within. Being from my community offers me unparalleled access, but it also demands unparalleled accountability. Questions of audience, who our stories belong to, and whose voices deserve amplification follow me into every interview and every observation.

What brought me to this project is more than academic curiosity, it is also a commitment to archive what might otherwise be lost. To

write about my community is to try to hold us with care. I do not write solely to explain who we are to others but to reflect our story back to ourselves, so we can see how far we have come and imagine where we might still go.

**Dr. Nima Dahir** is Assistant Professor and Provost's Fellow of Sociology at the Ohio State University.

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## Political Sociology Bookshelf

***The Politics of Disablement* by Michael Oliver (1990, Palgrave Macmillan, London)**

Jamie M. Sommer  
University of South Florida

I recently re-read "The Politics of Disablement" by Michael Oliver while teaching a graduate seminar in the Sociology of Disability at the University of South Florida (USF). Oliver focuses on the ways in which capitalist society has influenced the medicalized and individualized views of disability. The culture of capitalism creates and maintains the normative idea that much of our value as humans comes from the individual work we produce. This can deliver the idea that there is a certain way to be a human—as useful and productive, as compared to, perhaps, worthy of life in general, without stipulations. Moreover, neoliberal ideologies that support capitalism push for individual responsibility in disability accommodation (such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) in the U.S.), while also cutting disability services spending. This puts the onus of responsibility on the individual, while also limiting support, which can undermine state action.

As someone who mostly studies the politics of climate change and community resilience, I couldn't help but make the connection that the same ideologies that have constructed disability are also behind how nature is defined, and how this influences the price of natural resources and who has access to them. Furthermore, I saw parallels to Oliver's work in how states construct the responsibility of addressing climate issues on the individual, and how neoliberal policies tend to cut environmental spending.

The major point Oliver makes that stuck with me on this re-read is that the ongoing disability movement has counter-hegemonic potential, in that its existence is antithetical to ideologies that legitimize power structures. Put differently, challenging ableism is challenging capitalism and the structures and ideas it supports. The same logic can be applied to climate action, which can be counter-hegemonic when it addresses environmental problems at the root of capitalist production and consumption. In sum, Oliver reminded me of the counter-hegemonic potential in many areas of interest to political sociologists, and perhaps this can continue to remind others of the importance of our work in social change.

**Jamie M. Sommer** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of South Florida.

***Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny***  
by **Kate Manne (2018, Oxford University Press)**

Sophia Boutilier  
Fresno State University

In a current paper, I'm using Manne's formulation to understand popular backlash to affirmative consent policies. These policies, which aim to increase consent communication and comprehension, validate women's sexual agency, increase accountability for sexual violence perpetration, and reduce instances of sexual assault, have been met with anxiety and cynicism, despite their widespread adoption since the mid-aughts. My data show that respondents see the policy as:

1. a foil for the persecution and entrapment of innocent men and boys,
2. an indication of women's and girls' incompetence in sexual communication (just grow up and say no or live with the consequences)
3. an abandonment of women's rights as they are asking for "special treatment" (e.g., sexual freedom and autonomy in the context of widespread inequality and violence), alien to "normal human behavior"
4. and, generally, a bitchy thing to want.

Before reading *Down Girl*, I'd developed several theoretical lenses to make sense of the rejection of a policy that has the potential

to, albeit imperfectly, increase the safety, security, and enjoyment of people of all genders engaging (or not) in sexual encounters. Was it the exoticization of sex as somehow outside of normal social interactions? A desire to maintain a veil or a fog of war around sex? A failure of our culture to endorse effective sex education? A fear of women's sexual autonomy, even while the policy was often framed in terms of liberating their desire? All of the above?

These explanations do indeed help to explain the puzzle at hand, but Manne's reframing of misogyny is the most comprehensive and the most elegant. That's when I recognized that the "problem" with affirmative consent is that it challenges key components of patriarchal power (rape culture, testimonial injustice, control over sexual interactions, and what Manne calls "[himpathy](#)" - the disproportionate concern directed at men when their behavior compromises their future comfort (think Brock Turner or Brett Kavanaugh).

The logic of misogyny organizes the many anxieties affirmative consent provokes by showing how the policy challenges an unequal relationship of giving and taking consent along gendered lines. Regardless of its potential benefits to men, its threat to a patriarchal status quo leaves it dead in the water. And yet, because we are all fish in this very water, seeing this anxiety as misogyny is often hard to pin down. Instead, post hoc rationalizations for the policy's impossibility abound - *what, will we need a lawyer in the bedroom now?!* No, we'll just need to wrap our heads around women taking what they deserve.

**Sophia Boutilier** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Fresno State University.



## Job Market Candidates

### Zhaodi Chen

Indiana University

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Zhaodi's research lies at the intersection of political sociology, communication, information technology & media sociology, and digital inequalities. Central to her inquiry is understanding how digital technologies mediate and transform social and political visibility and how such processes shape social control and inequalities in both authoritarian and democratic contexts. Her dissertation investigates the contested politics of attention surrounding social injustices in the digital era, focusing on how violence against women survivors in China use social media to seek justice and under what conditions these efforts succeed or fail in gaining public attention. Methodologically, she uses a range of tools, including computational methods, survey experiments, and in-depth interviews.

### Yana Mommadova

Northeastern  
University

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I am a political sociologist with a background in political science and economics. My research focuses on the dynamics of power and governmentality, using a Foucauldian framework to analyze the role of think tanks in modern public policy. My dissertation examines how power circulates within a world-renowned think tank, illustrating how epistemological boundaries are drawn to support neoliberal agendas. Through a case study of the think tank's operations in Washington, D.C., I show how the state is reconfigured as a unit of economic management and how democracy is hollowed out in favor of technocratic efficiency. I rely on extensive original qualitative interviews and ethnographic notes gathered during my fieldwork, as well as a detailed analysis of organizational practices. My research interests center on the power to define the boundaries of knowledge in the policy domain, especially in the ways that elites shape what is considered possible, knowable, and actionable within the political sphere.

### Benjamin Rohr

University of  
Mannheim

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I received my PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago in 2022 and am currently a postdoctoral

researcher in the Department of Sociology at the University of Mannheim, Germany. As a political and historical sociologist, I use quantitative and computational methods to study the formation and transformation of political institutions. My main research project, which was funded by an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant, examines the emergence of the first political parties in American history (1777-1820) and their relationship to state formation, drawing on newly collected data on political elites' social attributes, networks, career trajectories, and legislative voting behavior. In addition, my broader research agenda includes studies of the changing structure of elite recruitment in the American state (1850-2000), career mobility of political elites during China's reform era (1978-2011), and the dynamics of political discourse in Renaissance Florence (1376-1378). My latest project applies computational text analysis to a newly digitized corpus of parliamentary debates from the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) to examine the structure of elite interactions in moments of democratic instability. My research has been published or is forthcoming in the *American Sociological Review*, *Sociological Methods and Research*, *Social Science History*, and *Poetics*.

### **Kayla Preston**

University of Toronto

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I am currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto where I am also an R.F. Harney Graduate Research Fellow in Ethnic, Immigration, and Pluralism Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public



Policy. In the fall of 2024, I was a visiting graduate student in the department of Sociology at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. My research examines how young people become involved in far-right politics in the United States and Canada. For my dissertation, I conducted an 18-month ethnography with young political activists in a city in Canada and in the United States. Along with my ethnographic data, I also conducted 126 life course interviews with young political activists. In this study, I ask, what factors contribute to youth's right-wing activism? Second, to what extent do these processes of participation vary by country? I found that participants identified adverse life course events as a foundation for becoming involved in right-leaning activism.

### **Simon Yuan Xi**

University of Virginia

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Simon Yuan Xi is a political, historical, and cultural sociologist whose research focuses on state formation, elite conflict, and political discourse. He holds a B.A. in Public Affairs Administration with a minor in Philosophy and an M.A. in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago. His dissertation investigates the competing state-building projects pursued by warlords, provincial autonomists, and revolutionary forces in early twentieth-century China. It integrates archival research, dynamic network analysis of elite relations, and computational text analysis of newspapers and political documents. The project explains how

fractured centers of power generated divergent and unstable political imaginaries, raising broader questions about how political authority is claimed, contested, and legitimated during moments of crisis and reconstitution. Driven by this overarching question, his other two in-progress papers examine the role of intellectuals in shaping the formation of the Chinese empire and explore how multiple-imperial legacies have influenced the making of modern China.

### **Gabriel L. Suchodolski**

Georgetown

University

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<https://earthcommons.georgetown.edu/research/eco-fellows/#gabriel-l-suchodolski>

I am a political sociologist of development and environmental governance, with a PhD in Sociology from UCLA. I am currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Georgetown University's Earth Commons Institute. My research investigates how states and civil society can deliberately reshape natural resource use, particularly in the Global South. Drawing on over a decade of ethnographic fieldwork, comparative-historical methods, and large-scale administrative data, I analyze the co-production of state capacity, contentious politics, and environmental change. My work contributes to political sociology by advancing a relational theory of bureaucratic effectiveness and illuminating how social conflict, clientelism, and institutional design shape governance outcomes in resource frontiers. My book project, *Grounds for*

*Sustainable Development: State Performance and Legibility in Amazonia*, explains subnational variation in the performance of Brazil's national land agency (Incra) in making land 'legible' and securing property rights for smallholders—a key condition for inclusive development and environmental governance in a global climate tipping point.

### **Ruanzhenghao "Shiruan" Shi**

University of Chicago

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My research interests lie in political sociology, with a particular focus on non-democratic regimes, as well as social movements, qualitative methods, historical sociology, social media, and youth cultures. My dissertation examines the 2018 Chinese #MeToo Movement, with a focus on the interplay between authoritarian citizenship and state responses to grassroots mobilization. In addition to my research, I have a strong passion for college teaching and am currently exploring the pedagogical challenges of teaching social science in the age of AI.

### **Jesse Yeh**

Northwestern

University



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Jesse Yeh is an assistant professor of instruction of legal studies at Northwestern University. Jesse received his Ph. D. in public policy and sociology from University of Michigan in 2024. Jesse's research focuses on how US rightwing movements construct and navigate social differences, especially under the competing imperatives of group threat backlash and colorblind rhetorics. Jesse's current project explores how school districts experience overlapping mobilizations against LGBT rights and against the teaching of race and how different social differences matter. More broadly, Jesse's research and teaching interests include race and immigration, gender and sexuality, law and crime, and politics and social movements. Jesse's research has been published in *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* and *Law and Society Review* and has been awarded Best Paper Award by the ASA Sociology of Law section.

### **Phattra Marbang**

University of Georgia

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I am a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology, UGA. My research aligns at the intersection of international education and immigration policy. My dissertation project studies the relationship between the federal government's monitoring system and international education initiatives at universities nationwide, focusing on how workers who work with the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

navigate competing objectives, such as the advancement of research and academic achievement vs. national security. Theoretically, I move beyond a uniform practice of student visa implementation to better understand the role of street-level bureaucrats' responsibilities and use of discretion. In my case, I also suggest that state power operates beyond the federal infrastructure and is embedded in other social entities, such as private sectors. My research also provides strategic advice on easing international students' stress regarding student visa revocations and a highly restrictive immigration climate, which in turn contributes to the multi-level growth of international education at institutional, state, and national levels.

### **Jessica Stallone**

University of Toronto

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Jessica Stallone is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. She is an ethnographer who studies identity, politics, and inequality—as it intersects with age, nationhood, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and religion. Her dissertation examines how dominant-group seniors conceptualize and enact their ethnonational identities and political worldviews in their everyday lives as they live collectively in retirement communities. Her work sheds light on the understudied relationship between aging, nationalism, and politics by showing how the process of aging and life course experiences inform seniors' support for nationalist politics and ideas about secularism and demographic change.





**Mariam M. Kurtz**

George Mason University

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Mariam M. Kurtz is a journalist and the author of *Recolonizing Africa: An Ethnography of Land Acquisition, Mining, and Resource Control* (Routledge, 2024) and is doing research on resource extraction, intersectionality, social media, and global affairs, with an emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa. She is a Visiting Scholar at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, where she earned her Ph.D. She has been an Associate Fellow at Harvard University's Center for African Studies and an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and George Mason University Korea. She co-edited the two-volume *Women, War, and Violence: Topography, Resistance and Hope* (2015) and has published articles in peer-reviewed journals and encyclopedias. Dr. Mniga is also an experienced journalist who was a social media specialist at the Voice of America and has lectured at universities in China, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States.

**Jonathon Acosta**

Brown University

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In one strand of work, I use the community study method to understand changes (demographically, socially, and politically) in

cities across the urban northeast undergoing similar transformations. These mid-sized cities (20K-100K residents) are characterized by several observable phenomena: 1. Declining population in the post WWII era followed by steady modest growth driven by foreign born migration and the share of the population that identifies as Latino; 2. Contemporary migration from multiple origin countries; 3. A transition from collocated work and residence to a bedroom community for the broader medium sized metro area and; 4. The emergence of a new panethnic local politics. My dissertation, *THE PANETHNIC POSTINDUSTRIAL CITY: New Immigrants in New England*, asks who migrates to economically declining cities like Central Falls, RI—where I've lived, worked, served on the city council, and been elected to the state's General Assembly— and how both the city and the immigrants are changed in the process. I use Central Falls as a case study of the panethnic postindustrial city and blend historical archives, in-depth interviews, enumeration data, GIS spatial mapping, and data from an original representative household survey to illustrate the role of these cities in contemporary migrant incorporation to American society.

**Baylee Hudgens**

Purdue University

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Baylee Hudgens is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Purdue University with research interests in political sociology, law and

society, and social movements. Her work focuses on the role of policy and law in the repression of protest. Her dissertation uses a mixed-methods approach to study the development of repressive legislation in the United States at the state level. It investigates the conditions influencing the introduction and passage of such laws, the rhetorical strategies legislators use to justify them, and how lawmakers navigate legal and cultural constraints to enact repressive policies.

### **Shumaila Fatima**

University of South  
Florida

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I am a sociologist with a passion for making a positive contribution to community development by practicing my qualitative and quantitative research skills, teaching skills, and program development and evaluation skills. I received my PhD in Sociology from the University of South Florida, my master's in International Affairs from the Pennsylvania State University, and my bachelor's in International Affairs from the University of South Florida. My research interests broadly fall under global political sociology, cross-national comparative studies, migration, sociology of development, sociology of violence, and organizational sociology. Particularly, I inquire into the evolutions caused in states and communities by global forces, causes and implications of migration, and what these dynamics reflect about the state-society relationship and citizenship. I am also interested in inquiring into the causes and implications of global and

social inequalities from a policy perspective to generate effective community development programs.

### **Oded Marom**

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I am a sociologist of political culture and currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California. My work explores the way complex social problems such as political polarization, partisan intolerance, and radical extremism take shape in people's everyday lives. In my research, I use diverse qualitative methods to analyze how civic organizations establish internal interactional mechanisms that sustain varied political behaviors and attitudes, including partisan animosity, radical action, and political incivility, and render them sensible and appropriate to their members. My work has been published in leading journals such as Sociological Theory, Theory and Society, and The British Journal of Sociology.

### **Snigdha Kumar**

University of Minnesota

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Snigdha's work broadly focuses on the political economy of capitalism, technology,

and inequality. Specifically, they examine the political and economic origins and effects of new digital technologies permeating into and transforming India's financial industry. Snigdha's dissertation-to-book project, *In Data We Trust: Rebooting Finance as a Platform Industry*, explores a novel phenomenon in the contemporary global economy: how and why has data become a leading frontier of capital accumulation in the 21st century? Based on 18 months of fieldwork studying the world's third largest digital platform finance industry in India, *In Data We Trust* argues that the platformization of finance and its built-in pursuit of data is not just a product of developments in markets and technology but also a deeply political process wherein a new group of "techno-elites" from the software industry forged a unique partnership with the state to find techno-capitalist solutions to poverty through financial inclusion, creating the infrastructural and policy conditions for platformization. Conversely, *In Data We Trust* finds that platform capital and its pursuit of data compels both the state and older forms of capital, specifically finance capital, to transform into data-driven institutions organizationally, materially, and ideologically.

**Steven  
Lauterwasser**

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Steven Lauterwasser is the Senior Research Scientist at A Healthier Democracy and a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at

Northeastern University. His research draws on diverse quantitative and computational methods to study the co-constitution of identity and political conflict, the personal determinants of civic engagement, and the way knowledge spreads through systems. At A Healthier Democracy, Steven leads research on the intersection of civic engagement and health, including on voter registration and benefits enrollments interventions in hospital settings. Previous projects and other ongoing collaborations have focused on the production of politicized knowledge in academia, immigrant collective action and social movements, and how voters reason in polarized environments. Steven received his BA in History from the University of Chicago and PhD in Sociology from University of California Berkeley, where his dissertation investigated how polarization in the US differs among partisans, not only as a matter of degree, but as a matter of kind.

**Isaac Dalke**

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California,  
Berkeley

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Isaac is completing his PhD in Sociology at the University of California-Berkeley and will be starting a joint postdoctoral fellowship in fall 2025 at the Northeastern University Network Science Institute and the Harvard Institute for Policing, Incarceration, and Public Safety. His dissertation investigates the development of community-based violence prevention efforts in California to shed light on dynamics of reform, resistance,

and co-optation in the penal state. Using a mix of interviews, ethnographic observation, and historical methods, he shows how alternatives to policing have emerged and been incorporated into different levels of the state through nonprofit contracting. The upshot has been to make it increasingly easy for historically marginalized residents of high-violence and highly-policed neighborhoods to experiment with alternatives, but difficult to institutionalize them. The findings speak to and reformulate our understanding of the punitive turn in social policy, as well as the democratic potential and limits of nonprofits as vehicles of social change. In other work, he combines interpretive techniques and Natural Language Processing methods to examine bureaucratic reason-giving in the penal state and the symbolic role of nonprofits within U.S. policymaking.

### Steven M. Karceski

Colby College

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Description of my research: My research falls into the areas of environmental politics, political and fiscal sociology, and public opinion. I am a multi-method social science researcher with experience using a wide range of quantitative and qualitative methods. My work has been published in climate, public health, political science, and economics journals, on topics such as the connections between air pollution and mental health, tax systems and good governance, economic growth and the size of the state, and political ads and electoral outcomes, and tax structure and support for carbon taxes. Currently I'm

working on several projects, including studies of national-level carbon tax adoptions, public opinion on climate policy, perceptions of corruption in the United States, and attitudes toward tax and spending policies.

### Greer Mellon

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Greer Mellon received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Columbia University in 2023. Greer is a sociologist of organizations, inequality, and politics. She focuses on two main substantive areas. Her primary research focus is K-12 educational politics and governance. She examines whether partisan politics influences the appointment of superintendents, how district leaders make educational policy decisions and impact student-level outcomes, and how individuals navigate educational transitions. She also conducts research on the intersection between school district leadership and school finance. Her second research focus is gender inequality in the high-skilled labor market. She examines how firm-level differences contribute to persistent gender inequality in earnings in the United States, and gender inequality in corporate governance. She has received support for her research from the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship and the Russell Sage Foundation. Her research has been published in *Sociology of Education* and *American Sociological Review* (in press).



**Betsy Priem**

University of Chicago

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Betsy Priem is a PhD Candidate of Sociology at the University of Chicago who specializes in political, environmental, and urban sociology. She uses qualitative methods to analyze how governance processes inform decisions about adapting to climate change, including risk conceptualization and time horizons for action. Her research has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Social Sciences.



interviews, oral history interviews, government documents, and newspaper articles. My research advances political sociology, economic sociology, the sociology of morality, and the sociology of expertise, and it earned me spots at the Medici Summer School, the Early Career Workshop at the Society for the Advance of Socio-Economics, and the Junior Theorists Symposium.

**Elizabeth C.****Newman**George Mason  
University

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Elizabeth is a researcher whose work examines the intersections of race, media, power, and technology. Her current research explores how knowledge, ideologies, and misinformation move from the physical world into digital spaces, and how these transfers shape social and political realities. Drawing from a unique global perspective gained through her service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger and over 16 years of federal government experience managing international programs and engagements, Elizabeth brings a critical, intersectional lens to the study of digital ecosystems. Her research interests center on understanding online harms, digital oppression, and the societal implications of a rapidly automating world. Using mixed-method approaches, Elizabeth aims to advance research that informs public policy and supports the development of safeguards for individuals and communities navigating modern technological environments. She is particularly interested in collaborating with scholars and practitioners committed to

**Rafferty Thompson**State University of New York at Stony  
Brook

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I study political prediction markets (PPMs). PPMs are digital sites where traders swap shares of upcoming political events, and I examine why the histories of PPMs are so contradictory in the US and UK. In the US, journalists cite PPMs as forecasts of upcoming elections, regulators classify PPMs as financial markets, and citizens moralize PPMs as either boons or destroyers of democracy, but in the UK, journalists disregard PPMs as forecasts of upcoming elections, regulators classify PPMs as gambling markets, and citizens consider PPMs morally innocuous. I resolve this puzzle through a comparative-historical process-tracing based on in-depth

addressing the structural inequalities embedded in digital technologies.

**Alessandro  
Giuseppe Drago**

University of Notre  
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I am a Postdoctoral Researcher specializing in far-right social and political movements. My dissertation examines the white supremacist movement in the United States and Canada through a mixed-methods approach that combines inductive qualitative coding with computational text analysis. Broadly I am interested in understanding how and why individuals are drawn to and become involved in far-right organizations. My other projects explore how far-right political parties and candidates deploy populist rhetoric to undermine democratic rights and institutions. My current postdoctoral work investigates the intersections between online far-right communities, disinformation networks and their offline consequences, including events such as the January 6th insurrection and the 2022 Freedom Convoy protests.



**Yao Lu**

University of  
California, Davis

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My research explores how African states inherited and transformed colonial systems of racial and ethnic classification. I draw on archival data, census reports, interviews, and oral histories from Zambia and Zimbabwe to examine how post-independent statecraft, international statistical norms, and domestic politics have reshaped the boundaries of race and belonging.

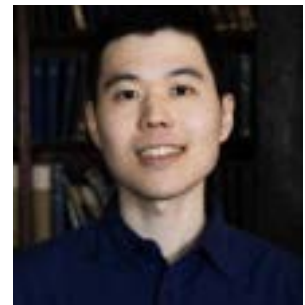
**Keitaro Okura**

Yale University

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Keitaro Okura is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at Yale University. His research interests include immigration, race/ethnicity, and politics, with a particular focus on examining the boundaries of national and ethnoracial group membership. His dissertation employs experimental and survey methods to understand how Americans include and exclude others from the imagined national community. Keitaro's research has been published in academic journals such as *International Migration Review* and *Sociology of Education*, and has received awards from the American Sociological Association and the American Educational Research Association. His work has been supported by the Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Rapoport Family Foundation, and the ASA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant.



**Rachel Brown-Weinstock**

Princeton University

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My research broadly explores how Americans experience, interpret, and enact macro-level political and social change in their everyday lives. I have published co-authored work on the structural and cultural changes affecting American families in *Social Problems*, the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, and *PNAS*. My current scholarship is motivated by an interest in how peoples' political ideas and behaviors are mediated by places and institutional contexts, like churches and families.

### **Morgan L. Henson**

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Wisconsin–Madison

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Morgan L. Henson is a sociologist specializing in race, nationalism, and far-right movements across transnational contexts. His research examines how racial ideologies are constructed, weaponized, and digitally mobilized by extremist groups, with regional expertise in the United States, the former Soviet Union, and Germany. His master's thesis analyzes how racial hierarchies are historically embedded in Russian statecraft and leveraged by far-right groups to justify exclusionary policies. His dissertation investigates how far-right groups evolve their digital tactics—platform migration, coded language, and algorithmic radicalization—as affiliated parties (e.g., AfD, MAGA) gain electoral power. These projects trace (1) continuities between imperial-era racialization, Soviet legacies, and

contemporary xenophobic movements, offering a nuanced critique of "racism without race" in post-Soviet spaces, and (2) how legal and cultural environments shape extremist adaptation, from Germany's encrypted apps to U.S. "free speech" platforms. His research bridges political sociology, cultural studies, area studies, and digital ethnography, offering insights into democratic resilience and algorithmic radicalization.

### **Emma Brandt**

University of Waterloo

Website:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/communication-arts/profiles/emma-brandt>

My work focuses on the intersections of media, belief, and trust; in particular, in "environments of disbelief." I am interested in what happens when shared information systems break down; how do people seek out trustworthy information in a context when expert and government sources are seen as corrupt and manipulative? My current book project, *Media Metaphors: The Politics of News Consumption in Serbia*, looks at youth social media use and media literacy organizations in Serbia, particularly how news is related to democracy and authoritarianism. More broadly, my work aims to further our understanding of public spheres across cultural contexts, looking beyond North America and Western Europe. My next project will focus on alternative health movements online in a comparative and transnational context. Prior to coming to Waterloo, I completed a Ph.D. in Sociology at Northwestern University and have spent time teaching and researching in Serbia, Jordan, and Indonesia.

**Benjamin Kaplow**

Yale University

Website:

[www.benjaminkaplow.com](http://www.benjaminkaplow.com)

I am a political, environmental, and comparative-historical sociologist, specializing in resource politics and state-building in colonial and postcolonial North Africa. My research combines archival, qualitative, quantitative, and geospatial methods to investigate the links between colonial resource politics and postcolonial agricultural development. Bringing together social theory with archival, micro-historical, and spatial analysis, I explore the complex interaction of political institutions and agency to explain the legacies of colonial rule in state formation, land reform, and local development. In my dissertation, I explored the continuity of colonial and postcolonial land politics and state-building in Morocco. In *Levels of Legibility* (forthcoming), I demonstrate how the structure and role of the French colonial administration influenced the construction of legibility and state knowledge. Another paper, *Recurrent Continuity and the Reproduction of Colonial Policy in Independent Morocco*, draws upon archival analysis to explain how patronage politics led to the reproduction of land policy in Morocco across independence and its implications for current environmental and resource inequality. In 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?', I construct a novel longitudinal and geospatial dataset of colonial landholding in Morocco to explore how postcolonial land reform shaped the departure of European colonists and the return of agricultural properties to Moroccan ownership.

**Luna Vincent**

Northwestern University

Website:

<https://sociology.northwestern.edu/people/graduate-students/profiles/luna-vincent.html>

I am a transnational sociologist of inequality who examines cases of grassroots resistance to inegalitarian governance to clarify the relationships between discourses of oppression and material inequality. As a methodological pluralist with a current expertise in historical and survey methods I use both qualitative and quantitative methods to trace how people's political imaginaries shape their strategies of resistance, how these strategies actually impact laws and policies, and how these laws and policies change or reproduce material inequality. Though not without exception, I primarily study instances where racial beliefs impact racial inequalities through social movements as case studies revealing how political imaginaries relate to material inequalities. My research efforts also seek to determine how the ideas produced by social scientists, specifically, reproduce and deconstruct social inequality in both discursive and material ways. Relying on conceptual tools from historical sociology, global sociology, sociology of race, critical social theory, and anti-colonial thought, my dissertation puts forth a sociological theory of race that accounts for the relationship between race as an idea and race as instantiation of material inequality, and thoroughly de-naturalizes racial categories by pointing to their colonial substance.



**Carlo Sariego**

Yale University

Website:

[www.carlosariego.com](http://www.carlosariego.com)

My research sits at the intersection of political sociology, reproductive governance, and transgender studies. I study how gendered and racialized structures of state power shape access to reproductive care, and how trans people navigate, challenge, and reimagine these systems. Drawing on qualitative interviews, legal case analysis, and critical theory, my work advances the concept of doing reproduction

to foreground reproduction as a socially mediated and politically contested process. My current book project, *Conceiving Transgender Reproduction in America*, is the first monograph to chronicle the historical, legal, and speculative dimensions of trans fertility in the U.S. The manuscript situates transgender reproductive life within broader reproductive hierarchies shaped by racial capitalism, binary sex logics, and settler colonialism. Across this and other projects, I aim to build bridges between political sociology, reproductive justice, and transgender studies to expand the sociological imagination of family, futurity, and state power.

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## New Publications

### Academic articles or chapters

Agarwala, Rina and Poulami Roychowdhury. 2025. "The Perils and Promises of Unequal Democracy: Insights from the Sociology of India." *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 51.

Bin Xu, Lingxiao Chen, Xueqia Zhang. 2025. "How to Say "Black Lives Matter" in Chinese?: Race, Democracy, and Discourses of a Movement." *Social Problems*. (Online first): <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaf024>

Foertsch, Steven, and Kevin D. Dougherty. 2025. "Worshipping with the US Flag." *Religions* 16 (6): 690-702. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/16/6/690>.

Huft, Justin, Matthew Grindal, and Kristin Haltinner. 2025. "Ethnic-Racial Socialization and Far-Right Support Among White Young Adults." *The Sociological Quarterly*, January: 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2024.2446527>.

Leeds, Tyler. 2024. "The influencer-intellectual tactic and social media advertisements: How PragerU advances partisan knowledge." *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241294014>

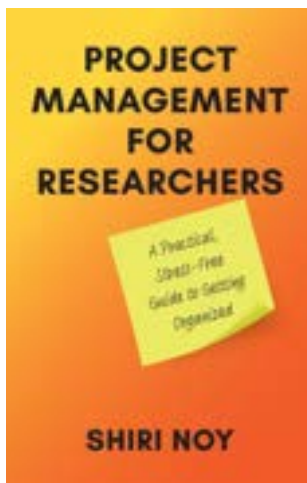
- Levenson, Zachary and Marcel Paret. 2025. "Absorbed in Struggle: South Africa's Passive Revolution from Below." *Critical Sociology*. doi: 10.1177/0896920525133090.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08969205251330900>
- Martínez, Caroline. 2025. "Indigenous Identity and Struggles for State Recognition in Ecuador." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (Online First): 1–15.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23326492241310171>
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- Mueller, Jason C. 2025. "Youth Politics and Cognitive Mapping in the United States: From #OKBoomer to #BlackLivesMatter and #CeasefireNow." *Peace Review*, Online First:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2025.2456169>
- Rastogi, Ankit, and Daniel Laurison. 2025. "Higher Turnout, Greater Inequality? A Precinct-Level Analysis of Income Inequality in U.S. Presidential Voting, 2016 to 2020." *Socius* 11:23780231251338441. doi:10.1177/23780231251338441.
- Rohr, Benjamin. 2025. "Elite cohesion in the American administrative state, 1898–1998." *Social Science History*. Published online 2025:1–28. doi:10.1017/ssh.2025.16
- Sariego, Carlo. 2025. "Transfeminist Pregnancy: Reproductive Speculation, Genre, and Desire." *Feminist Theory*. (Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1177/14647001251326047>.
- Silva, Fabiana, Irene Bloemraad, and Kim Voss. 2025. "Frame Backfire: The Conundrum of Civil Rights Appeals in the Contemporary United States." *American Sociological Review*. (Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224251333087>
- Witkovsky, Benny. 2025. "Cities and Their Neighbors: Examining the Rural–Urban Divide on a Local Scale." *Urban Affairs Review*. (Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874251314851>
- Uba, Katrin and Cassandra Engeman. 2024. "Defenders of the Status Quo? Energy Protests and Policy (In)Action in Sweden." *Social Forces*, soae166. DOI:10.1093/sf/soae166
- Zhang, Yinxian. 2025. "Tracking Ideological Changes in an Authoritarian State Using Retweeting Ties: The Case of Chinese Opinion Leaders." *Sociological Methods & Research*, (Online First): <https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241251343580>

## Books



Graizbord, Diana. 2025. *Indicators of Democracy: The Politics and Promise of Evaluation Expertise in Mexico*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

The spread of democracy across the Global South has taken many different forms, but certain features are consistent: implementing a system of elections and an overarching mission of serving the will and well-being of a country's citizens. But how do we hold politicians accountable for such a mission? How are we to understand the efficacy of the policies they put forth? In *Indicators of Democracy* Diana Graizbord exposes the complex, often-hidden world of the institutions that are meant to ensure democratic accountability and transparency. Taking the case of Mexico's National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), Graizbord provides a deep theory of what happens when democratic aspirations intersect with technocratic ambitions. Analyzing what it takes to establish and sustain monitoring and evaluation as a form of official state expertise, Graizbord is able to put forward the contours of technodemocracy—a democratic political project that hinges on the power of experts to shape politics in unexpected but profound ways.



Noy, Shiri 2024. *Project Management for Researchers: A Practical, Stress-Free Guide to Getting Organized*. University of Michigan Press.

Learning how to organize and manage research is important for both the researcher and for advancing research. However, graduate students are often trained in theories, methods, and disciplines, but rarely in the organizational, administrative, and metacognitive skills required to manage research projects. Moreover, several disciplines are decrying a reproducibility crisis, with a concerted academic push toward open-access approaches. By clearly organizing research, graduate students and researchers can ensure that they are able to account for their methodological, theoretical, and other research decisions: to reviewers, to funding agencies, and to support the development of new

ideas and exciting offshoots of projects.

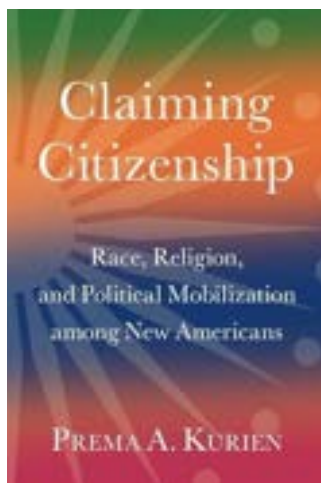
*Project Management for Researchers* tackles the how, what, and why of project management. It offers step-by-step guidance on choosing tools and developing a personalized system that will help the reader manage and organize their research so that steps and decisions are documented for accountability and reproducibility. Readers will find worksheets they can adapt to their own needs, priorities, and research as well as practical tips on issues ranging from emails to scheduling. Suitable for work across methods, experience levels, and disciplines and adaptable for those working alone, with others, or as team managers, this book will guide readers between various research stages—from planning, to execution, to adjustment of research projects big and small.



Swartz, David L. 2025. *The Academic Trumpists: Radicals Against Liberal Diversity*. Routledge Press.

There has been an outpouring of research on populist conservatism since the advent of the Trump presidency and extreme right movements

in Europe. Much less studied, however, is the growing political conservatism in the American academy and how it relates to populist sentiment. *The Academic Trumpists* addresses a gap in the research literature by looking at the impact of Trumpism on conservative faculty. It compares 109 professors who publicly support Trump to 89 conservative professors who oppose Trump. All 198 function as public intellectuals who advocated publicly their views. Drawing on recent research in the sociology of intellectuals and Pierre Bourdieu's analytical field perspective, this book offers a fielding political identities and practices framework to show how these two groups of professors (Trumpists and anti-Trumpists) differ in where they teach, their intellectual orientations, their scholarly productivity, their political rationales, where they network with think tanks, scholarly professional associations, and government agencies, and their stances on key controversies surrounding the Trump presidency (Covid-19, the two impeachments, the November 2020 election lost, and the January 6 mob assault on the United States Capitol). The academic Trumpists embrace the right-wing populist wave mobilized by Trump and the conservative critics resist this move. This polarization of views between these two groups of conservative professors is enduring and rooted in two distinct social networks that connect their positions in the academic field to affiliations with conservative think tanks that reinforce their respective political identities and radical right-wing anti-establishment thinking in America more generally. This book will appeal to readers interested in the politics of higher education, the sociology of intellectuals, political sociology, and research on conservative and right-wing populism politics in America today.



Kurien, Prema A. 2025. *Claiming Citizenship: Race, Religion, and Political Mobilization among New Americans*. Oxford University Press.

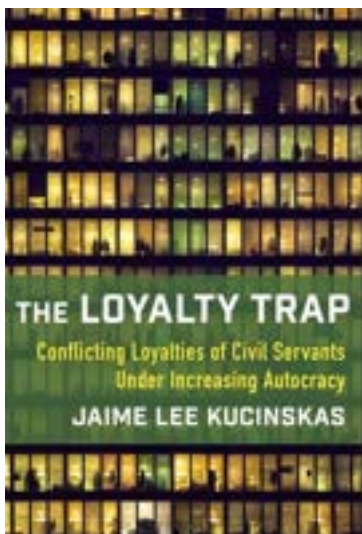
*Claiming Citizenship* focuses on Indian American civic and political activism in the U.S. public sphere around U.S.-based and India-based issues. Indian Americans are a rising political force whose patterns of activism do not follow the unified model of mobilization of other powerful American ethnic groups. They have multiple types of advocacy organizations: those mobilizing around an Indian American identity; a South Asian American identity; organizations for Indian Americans of Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist backgrounds; organizations representing Indian American Democrats and Republicans; and even combinations of these such as the Republican Hindu Coalition that

mobilized around Donald Trump's candidacy in 2016. There are also generational differences between second-generation members and the immigrant generation. Unified ethnic mobilization is rare and does not take place through a single professional advocacy organization, or even through well-coordinated campaigns.

The book examines the dialectical process through which immigrants conform to the structures and cultures of the society they have immigrated to, but also work to transform it to accommodate their unique needs. It shows the relative roles played by domestic and international influences on the political mobilization of immigrant groups in the United States as well as the importance of social media in shaping these mobilizations. *Claiming Citizenship* presents an excellent template to understand how religion, national identity, race, and pan-ethnicity interact

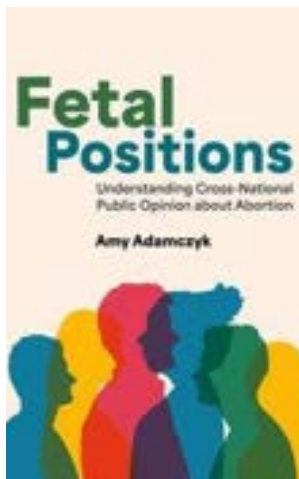


in ethnic politics, in addition to examining the role that generational status plays in determining some of these patterns.



Kucinkas, Jaime Lee. *The Loyalty Trap: Conflicting Loyalties of Civil Servants Under Increasing Autocracy*. Columbia University Press.

The Loyalty Trap explores how civil servants navigated competing pressures and duties amid the chaos of the Trump administration, drawing on in-depth interviews with senior officials in the most contested agencies over the course of a tumultuous term. Jaime Lee Kucinkas argues that the professional culture and ethical obligations of the civil service stabilize the state in normal times but insufficiently prepare bureaucrats to cope with a president like Trump. Instead, federal employees became ensnared in intractable ethical traps, caught between their commitment to nonpartisan public service and the expectation of compliance with political directives. Kucinkas shares their quandaries, recounting attempts to preserve the integrity of government agencies, covert resistance, and a few bold acts of moral courage in the face of organizational decline and politicized leadership.



Adamczyk, Amy. 2025. *Fetal Positions: Understanding Cross-National Public Opinion about Abortion*. Oxford University Press.

Fetal Positions offers the first book-length exploration of the factors shaping abortion attitudes around the world. Drawing on original interviews with Chinese and American experts and a cross-national analysis of data from over 200,000 people in 88 countries, the book unpacks the complex forces and processes that influence abortion views, laws, and behaviors globally. Insightful and timely, the book sheds light on how cultural, political, and religious contexts shape public opinion on one of the most contested issues of our time.

### Public sociology and other venues

Ruth Braunstein. 2025. When the Wolves Came: Evangelicals Resisting Extremism.

<https://www.ruthbraunstein.com/podcast>

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