Happy 2015 everyone! I hope your semester is going well and you are feeling strong as we look towards the end of this academic year. The last couple months have been busy with conference preparation, including organizing the Teaching Social Problems sessions for the 2015 SSSP Annual Meeting. We received many strong submissions and are looking forward to great conversations in Chicago! Please note we also have two invited panels: “Lifting the Veil: Experiential Learning” and “Education Labor Strikes: Implications for Underrepresented Faculty, Staff, and Students.” Thank you to William Cabin, Corey Dolgon, Lynn Green, Brian Grossman, Daina Harvey, and Mindy Stombler who helped organize sessions for this year.

I received wonderful submissions for our 2015 Outstanding Student Paper Award and am happy to announce this year’s award went to Molly Sayre! Sayre is a doctoral student at University of Kentucky, and her paper is entitled “Reification and Recognition in the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program.” In recognition of her outstanding paper, Sayre receives a monetary award, plaque, and SSSP registration - I hope you will join me in congratulating her when you see her in Chicago.

Other items in this newsletter include an interesting way to use OkCupid data in the classroom; Rachel La Touche takes us through this lesson step-by-step and shares all the information you need to implement it. There’s a shout-out to Rita Shaw who was on her local NPR station speaking on prisons. And, Corey Dolgon writes a provocative and necessary response to Orlando Patterson’s recent critique that sociologists are making themselves irrelevant. The newsletter closes with some member publications and announcements of interest.

Always feel free to email me with your ideas, suggestions, and questions (hstrmicp@coastal.edu)!

In solidarity, hephzibah
An Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program course is held in a correctional facility in which roughly half the students are from the university (“outside students”) and half are residents of the facility (“inside students”). The author participated as a teaching assistant in an Inside-Out social work course on drugs and crime that was offered in a prison for men and interprets the observed and reported experience of students using Lukács’ concepts of recognition and reification as discussed by Axel Honneth (Honneth, 2008). This paper explores the implications of the Inside-Out course for outside students’ reification and recognition of people who are incarcerated, and by extension, members of groups that typically receive social services. The pedagogical elements of Inside-Out courses that promote recognition and the limitations of the program are discussed.

“Inside students were partners, colleagues, knowledgeable informants, and, within the limited time and physical space of the course, friends.”

“The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program offers an educational experience to social work students that simply cannot be gained in a traditional classroom. Ms. H., an outside student, wrote, “[The course] has restored my faith in the education system because school is more than textbook learning” (personal communication, December 8, 2014). It is also particularly important for social work students, who are preparing for a career of engagement with persons in a variety of reified populations.”
It is no small feat to bridge theory with real-world examples in a way that cultivates learning for undergraduate students. The exercise described below, which makes use of publicly available data from OkCupid, aims to do exactly this, and is easily adaptable for courses such as Sociology of Gender, Research Methods, and Introduction to Sociology. Consistent with the sociological imagination (Mills 1959), this exercise aims to connect events and circumstances in individuals’ everyday lives. Students use an online platform, OkCupid, as the data, and analyze forces at the macro level, particularly gendered expectations and performativity i.e. “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). Therefore, this exercise is best suited to an introductory or mid-level course and is effective for solidifying students’ understandings of sociological theory by making use of the “think, pair, share” format.

OkCupid Exercise

Note: It is helpful if students have been assigned a basic reading on social theory – including Feminist/Gender Theory, Critical Race Theory, Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism, and Conflict Theory – before tackling this exercise. The reading should cover basic definitions, key scholarly contributions/works, and criticisms. In addition, it may be helpful if students are somewhat familiar with basic data analysis (e.g. identifying the axes of a graph), but this is not required.

1. Start by dividing your class into small groups of 3-4 students (this may be adapted depending on class size, but works best for classes of 40 persons or fewer).

2. Distribute one copy of the graphics from OkCupid to each group. Ask students to examine the data on gender (pages 2 and 3), income and age (pages 4-7). Data can be retrieved here: http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/the-biggest-lies-in-online-dating/

3. Give students 8-10 minutes to thoroughly examine the data and consider the research question, “Who is more likely to lie in online dating profiles?” This is not intended to be a trick question, but rather to encourage students to critically examine the data, debate among themselves, and identify an answer for each of the socio-demographic groups listed above: Who is more likely to lie? Males or females, individuals of high or low income, or the old or young? At this point you may choose to regroup the class and determine (by a show of hands) whether there is consensus in the answers. However, you can also move on to the next step of the exercise and regroup at the end.

4. Once each group formulates their answers, ask students to take a few minutes to develop an explanation for their answers, using a sociological theory covered in class. For example, if a group of students determine that older individuals are more likely to lie on dating profiles than their younger
counterparts, ask them to speculate why this is, using a sociological theory.

It may be necessary to narrow the list of theories that students can apply here, but it may also be fruitful to let students have creative license at this point in the exercise.

During this portion of the exercise, it is helpful to walk around and listen to students as they brainstorm ideas. Encourage them to move from cultural understandings of dating habits to more sociological understandings, which requires staying within the scope of the data and finding the best theoretical fit.

5. Regroup the entire class and ask individual groups to share their findings. Encourage each group to cite what components of the data they found persuasive in reaching their conclusions. Further, ask students to identify how they used process of elimination to weed out theories that did not apply to their “findings”. Students are very creative in their application of theory and this makes for an effective teaching moment, because it allows you as the instructor to demonstrate how scholars apply, shape and combine theories to develop explanations for social phenomena.

6. Depending on the course, there are a number of ways to incorporate this exercise into pedagogical goals, and leave students with something to think about at the end. For example, in a Sociology of Gender class, you may end by asking students whether their conclusions about the data are influenced/skewed by heteronormative assumptions (the data do not make reference to sexual orientation/preference, but many students rely on assumptions of a gender binary and heteronormativity).

In an Introduction to Sociology course, you may end by highlighting patterns in the data across groups, noting that the differences are particularly interesting from an intersectional perspective (e.g. older men and women are more likely to inflate their income than younger men and women). In a Research Methods course, you may focus your attention on the strengths and limitations of the data, discussing the implications of these elements for the students’ interpretations – e.g. strength: size of dataset = 1.51 million active users, weakness: OkCupid dataset is not directly comparable to the US population.

**Limitations of the Exercise**

There are a number of limitations of this exercise, the most notable of which is that OkCupid data does not satisfy the conditions of rigorous, scholastic work. For example, in upper-level, substantive courses, the seemingly trivial issue of “dating” may not resonate with contemporary social problems. However, for new instructors, many of whom teach introductory courses, an exercise like this is well suited for students who will likely move on to careers outside the discipline. This exercise can help all students become critically engaged in connecting theory to practical examples with a hands-on approach that privileges analytical skills. Ultimately, this exercise can be easily adapted and incorporated alongside other course assignments and is effective for engaging students in fruitful, collaborative discussion about theory and methods.

**Works Cited**


MEMBER IN THE NEWS:

"Smart Talk: What's Behind the Dramatic Increase in Women Prison Inmates?"

Rita Shah
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Elizabethtown College

On February 23, Dr. Rita Shah, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Elizabethtown College, was a guest on WITF's Smart Talk. Smart Talk is a news program hosted on the Harrisburg, PA based NPR station that focuses on local news of interest. The topic of the segment, "What's behind the dramatic rise in women prison rates?", was a discussion of Dr. Jill McCorkel's latest book, Breaking women: Gender, race, and the new politics of imprisonment. Shah provided commentary on the state of incarceration generally.

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For All Program Participants

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CULTURAL OF POVERTY REFLUX: ORLANDO PATTERSON & THE CULTURAL DEFICIENCY OF FAT CAT SOCIOLOGY

COREY DOLGON

This piece originally appeared in The Humanist Sociologist, Winter 2015 issue (Newsletter of the Association for Humanist Sociology). Reprinted with permission of Corey Dolgon.

Reading Orlando Patterson’s latest screed [http://chronicle.com/article/How-Sociologists-Made/150249/] blaming sociologists for their own irrelevancy reminded me of that bad taste you get in your mouth after eating really fatty, greasy food. It’s like the Marxian dietary adage—first time tragedy, second time bleccchh. For those of us activist academics in the trenches of applying our research and scholarship to community organizing and economic and educational reform, Patterson’s rant is simply absurd. That he uses false claims and factually incorrect accusations to buttress regurgitating culture of poverty theories offers an even bitterer pill to swallow. Sometimes it is better to just ignore these things until they pass, regardless of how foul a wind. But given the emotional bloatedness already building from the week’s news about Grand Jury negligence and more unarmed Black males killed by white police officers, I needed to find some elixir. So I sat in a field, munched on some grass, and out came this diatribe.

Patterson wonders why Obama’s recent Promise Keeper task force didn’t include any sociologists and...
then builds his entire argument on the assumption it is because sociologists have “made themselves” irrelevant. Firstly, why not actually FIND OUT why this committee didn’t have any sociologists. It’s called research. Secondly, by ASSUMING it had to do with sociologists desire to be “academically pure” (which it ends up is really Patterson’s phrase for those politically correct sociologists who discredit his culture of poverty argument) Patterson creates a conundrum from which he tries to build a strong case after already hoisting himself on his own petard. For instance, sociologists have almost ALWAYS been irrelevant when it comes to government policy making (read Max Weber or look back at the conference presentations of last year’s Society for the Study of Social Problems [SSSP] annual meeting where so many bemoaned the fact that a half-century of poverty research on structural inequality and racism found deaf ears among policy makers looking for evidence that tax cuts and personal responsibility would solve poverty and discrimination]. The gap is so large between what sociological research tells us about poverty and what kinds of policies have actually been passed. Good sociological research rarely makes for good political fundraising or campaigning, especially in the current political climate where republicans waiver between “blame the victim” and “kill the victim” and democrats triangulate their way into being 1980s moderate republicans (I remember many argued that Clinton was the best Republican President since Eisenhower, until Obama out-Republicaned him. And a brief aside—the reason Republicans could fight tooth and nail against Obama’s healthcare reform act without offering their own plan was that Obama’s reform plan WAS the Republican’s plan. They just couldn’t give him credit). When politicians DO cherry pick, they generally find sociologists whose research and writing can best suit their own political goals. For the sociologists with the integrity to avoid the bastardization of their work for the political goals of opportunist politicians, they do choose to leave the halls of power. For the rest of us, we don’t ever get invited. But Patterson also begs an interesting question? What actually does he MEAN by academic purity? How could demanding rigor and validity be “largely irrelevant in molding the most important social enterprises of our era?” Wouldn’t we want the BEST research? Wouldn’t we want the science to NOT be bastardized? If Patterson is suggesting we compromise our findings to be heard and included, we are better off speaking truth to power and avoiding the big government consulting contracts or getting to pal around with Bill Cosby.

2. I find Patterson’s claims about public sociology and engaged scholarship and pedagogy ignorant and insulting. He writes, “We need to reinvigorate public sociology. To be clear, I’m not talking about general volunteer work—helping at a Habitat for Humanity project or a drug-rehab facility, for instance—though those are noble and worthwhile efforts. I’m talking about using our expertise to help develop public policies and alleviate social problems in contexts wherein the experience and data can, reciprocally, inform our work.” In his contempt for public or community based engagement work, Patterson suggests having students or scholars themselves volunteer is admirable, but not the kind of public sociology he is talking about. While there is a serious critique of those who have reduced engaged pedagogy to basic and uncritical volunteerism, I would suggest that EVEN
basic service with Habitat or a drug rehab facility CAN be powerful pedagogically if wrapped around a good sociological investigation of social problems, structures of inequality and oppression and everything from the structural causes of homelessness and unequal housing markets to the profit-driven and paranoia-producing parameters of our drug policies. In other words, I know there are SOME service-learning projects that never do the analytical and scholarly work they should, but MOST do. Personally, I actually see these projects as first-tiered engagement work—good for an intro or survey class. I prefer to have advanced students engaged in economic development, capacity building-community organizing type projects. And this just scratches the service of community-based research [cbir] which more fully challenges Patterson's assumptions. In fact, CBR is exactly the kind of research that DOES integrate experience with data in collaboration among scholars and community organizations and residents.

3. But again, what DOES he mean by, “using our expertise to help develop public policies and alleviate social problems in contexts wherein the experience and data can, reciprocally, inform our work.” This IS what almost every applied sociologist I know does. This is what it means to be rigorous and analytical. Surely this process isn’t what makes us irrelevant? Ultimately, I find that Patterson simply creates straw sociologists on either side of his claims and simply dismantles his own credibility and seriousness. I do believe we could have a sincere debate about the forces of and tendencies towards professionalized pretensions, jargon, and the kinds of expertise that alienates and isolates scholars. Even more important, I think, we should consider a sociology that challenges expertise with the kind of popular sociology Gramsci suggested—an accessible and applicable discipline focused on leading, “a mass of people to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world.” But the kind of flippant back and forth Patterson proclaims here is useless chatter between himself and a bucket of red-herring. Besides, he is NOT referring to the kind of application where sociologists try to gain access to mainstream media and dialogue. Patterson is talking about entry into the halls of power. Perhaps he is just angry about not getting invited to this particular Promise Keeper’s party.

4. To continue an increasingly ludicrous argument, Patterson then frames his own study in what can only be a willful ignorance or an arrogant (political?) omission of decades of work by people like Elijah Anderson, Katherine Newman, Philippe Bourgeois, Annette Lareau, Michelle Fine and Timothy Black who have been taking culture VERY seriously for a very long time. Having “dissed” this group, he suggests that HIS study is the First to revisit culture. What I think he means to say is that his may be one of the first to revisit culture as THE most important determinant of poverty. This probably isn’t true as Fox news and Heritage Foundation ALWAYS seem to be able to find a sociologist who has a study that suggests that if young black men would just get good grades, pull their pants up, avoid getting shot by police, etc. they would succeed. Even better, if we put them into white shirts and ties and drill them like they were in basic training they could all become Colin Powell. Problem here, of course, is that it just isn’t true. And it’s bad sociology. It assumes that
individual agency can overcome structure on a structural level! Poverty is a structural problem that suggests an inequality of resources based on power. We can suggest as Parsons (and Gans in the uses of poverty) might that inequality is functional, but if the basic function of an economy is the production and distribution of the needs for economic and social reproduction, Patterson, et. al. make a dubious proposal at best. Regardless, poverty is a structural issue that could no more be solved by changing the values and behaviors of poor children of color than divorce rates could be solved by suggesting married people communicate better or that high unemployment rates were caused by workers who have bad attitudes and don't want to work. Not only is it bad sociology, it’s also unethical—done to prove an already misguided but politically desired and very fundable proposition: poor people of color are poor because they don't think or act right. No wonder he calls his naysayers “nervous nellies;” we Nellies have something to be nervous about.

5. Thus, when Patterson asks “where are sociologists’ voices in these public debates?” I would point to the ASA newsletter that lists only a fraction of the sociologists who are regularly featured in public fora on these issues and who are suggesting that poverty is a structural problem that needs to be solved by anti-racist and redistributive policies that create real equality. In other words, we need REAL anti-poverty programs that make available better education, job training, health care and housing, etc. But we must go further as sociologists and argue that structurally, the real cause of poverty is unregulated and unrestrained wealth. What WE REALLY NEED are policies that regulate wealth and power, policies that enforce greater democratic opportunities and make sure that public policies aren’t dictated by corporate think tanks and rich fascists like Koch brothers and Sheldon Adelson, and their cohort.

6. The Fair housing study he cites is an interesting anecdote, but undercuts his already dubious point—after all, had sociologists really become irrelevant 20 years ago who would have provided the ideological justification for more policing and prisons? Who would have written Giuliani’s anti-crime speeches and legitimized 3-strikes, harsh sentencing, and privatizing prisons? Besides, how can we continue to blame sociologists themselves for their own absence from the halls of power (government) and influence (media) when...oh I get it...it’s sociologists’ own fault for being irrelevant JUST the way it is poor peoples’ fault for being POOR. I get it. No one dare accuse Orlando Patterson of being inconsistent on this point!!!

6. Patterson ends up being stuck in his own ideological bubble. While he proposes that culture is not immutable, a good thing since it would be hard to argue otherwise (after all even biology is not immutable) he first had to create the straw men (hyper-structuralist sociologists) necessary to keep his plastic bubble intact. Then he makes this claim which still has me scratching my head. “Compare the remarkable dismantling

"But what can we say for sociologists who simply use them as tropes as Patterson does time and time again throughout the article?"
of the cultural system of Jim Crow or American values pertaining to gay people and same-sex marriage with the failure of structurally oriented policy to make a dent in inequality, despite the vast number of social, economic, and policy studies devoted to the subject.” Well, first I would suggest that these cultural changes were largely due to political and social movements that changed STRUCTURAL inequalities and hindered the system’s brutality and exclusion. Secondly, it was these movements that brought down institutional segregation and various discriminations against people of color and gay men and lesbians. Finally, I would point out that the organizing among oppressed people and their allies were led by people within these communities who recognized that the problems were not their own cultural deficits but the inadequacy of a system that did not allow their voices, talents, and capacities to be realized.

7. He concludes, “Third, black youth, and people generally, are not offended by attempts to change their values, habits, and even their modes of self-presentation if they are first persuaded that it is in their own interests to do so. Jackie Rivers and I learned this firsthand from our study of a group of inner-city youth, many with prison records, undergoing a demanding job-training program that aimed to alter those aspects of their cultural styles and attitudes toward work that made it hard for them to get or keep a job. None of them considered this a threat to their identities, as individuals or as black people.” I am not Black. But, this is one of the most insulting things I have ever read. I will let others comment on this, but suffice to say that WEB Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness is unfortunately alive and well and deeply embedded in the work of many professionals. More to the point, Patterson displays a limited understanding of culture and research. After all, how do WE know and how does HE know what people perceived as a threat or an insult. Cultural dialogue and performance demonstrates a complex ability for not only cognitive dissonance but also the ability to say one thing and believe others. I imagine many workers of varying races and ethnicities demonstrate varying levels of deference and punctuality, grooming and obedience while still FEELING constricted, exploited, offended, insulted or just disrespected. Patterson claims that too many sociologists treat their subjects like “cultural dopes” (a phrase he takes from Garfinkel). But I wonder who is treating who like a simpleton?

9. In concluding with Garfinkel’s rules, I would suggest the great ethnographers I mentioned earlier certainly do not treat their subjects as cultural dopes. Far from it. But what can we say for sociologists who simply use them as tropes as Patterson does time and time again throughout the article? And his last proclamation, “If you find that neighborhoods have no effects, you should be prepared to do the rational thing and go live in an inner-city neighborhood with its much cheaper real estate, or at least advise your struggling son or daughter searching for an apartment to save by renting there. If the thought offends you, then something stinks,” sounds more like misplaced self-righteous indignation than some parting note of ironic “gotcha.” The point is NOT about the individual activity just as it is not about whether a neighborhood has an impact or not. It's about changing the neighborhood by changing the policies that dictate so much of the neighborhood’s economic and social challenges. It's about changing the rules that
disinvest in public institutions and the policies that constrict the actual possibilities for poor people and people of color in these communities. But first and foremost, we have to realize that solving the problem starts with admitting there is a problem. The problem is wealth and unrestricted power. The problem is that wealthy and powerful groups continue to dictate policies that impoverish, not strengthen communities. The problem is that we could end poverty tomorrow if we redistributed resources seriously and changed policies away from profiting off of draconian drug laws and crazy immigration policies, privatized medicine and food production that encourages and subsidizes eating poison and destroying the planet. And the problem is we have sociologists doing really bad sociology but getting paid mega bucks by powerful, rich institutions to propagate the false idea that poor people could change poverty by learning to behave more like rich people, people of color could fight racial oppression by acting more like white people. I tend to agree with Chris Rock on this one. Racism is caused by white peoples’ craziness (or greed and arrogance and blood lust and brutality). I would suggest that poverty is not a poor peoples’ product—it’s a rich peoples’ one. Rich people and their institutions cause poverty and it will never be solved until we recognize and work from there. It’s not rocket science; it's sociology.

"Rich people and their institutions cause poverty and it will never be solved until we recognize and work from there. It's not rocket science; it's sociology."

MEMBER PUBLICATION

In the new Fifth Edition of Our Social World: Introduction to Sociology, three award winning teachers of sociology set out to inspire students to develop their sociological imaginations. Students learn how to see the impact of larger social structures and global trends on their personal lives and to actively engage with sociological issues. In each chapter, authors Jeanne H. Ballantine, Keith A. Roberts, and new co-author Kathleen Odell Korgen, relate everything back to the social world model to promote “deep learning” of a fundamental sociological concept: the micro-to-macro organization of society. Through this unique, easy to read, and innovative text, students acquire sociological tools to use throughout the course and beyond.

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The Betty and Alfred McClung Lee Book Award for 2015

Sponsored by the Association for Humanist Sociology. Authors, publishers, and AHS members may nominate books for consideration. The winner will be recognized at our annual meeting October 21-25, 2015 in Portland, OR. Nominations should be for Sociology or interdisciplinary social science books that approach their subjects from a humanist perspective.

Founded in 1976, the Association sees its mission to strive as professionals, as scholars and as activists to uncover and address social issues. We view people not merely as products of social forces, but also as agents in their lives and the world. We are committed to a sociology that contributes to a more humane, equal, and just society.

Eligible books should have been published in the calendar year 2014 or the first half of 2015. If a book was submitted for last year's consideration, it cannot be nominated again.

To nominate a book, authors/publishers/nominators should e-mail a letter of nomination with the subject line “Betty and Alfred McClung Lee Book Award Nomination” to Daina Cheyenne Harvey at dharvey@holycross.edu. Authors/publishers should send one copy of the book to each of the award committee members listed below. The deadline for nominations is May 15, 2015. Additional information about AHS is available at www.humanist-sociology.org
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PEDAGOGY SECTION, CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND REVIEWERS

Sociology of Race and Ethnicity publishes four issues a year, and every issue has a peer-reviewed pedagogy section with empirical and/or theoretical articles focused on the teaching of race and ethnicity. We are interested in advancing the teaching of race, from introductory undergraduate courses to advanced graduate courses. All submissions should be clearly informed by the current literature, and (if applicable) provide evidence of teaching effectiveness.

Submissions might address:

- Theoretically-informed reflections on topics to be included in race and ethnicity courses
- Teaching race and ethnicity from a particular standpoint or to a particular demographic: region, class size, type of university/college, and/or race/class/gender of students or instructor
- Integration of race and ethnicity into sociology foundation courses such as Introduction to Sociology or Social Problems
- Information focused on advanced race courses such as those on the sociology of African and African American, Asian and Asian American, or Latin@ and Latin@ American communities
- Original analysis of online resources, databases, and/or media useful for teaching a particular module
- Class exercises
- Service learning and community-based projects

The journal’s co-editors, associate editors, and editorial board members are committed to creating a high quality outlet for the most important work in the sociology of race and ethnicity through timely and constructive peer reviews, careful and engaging editorial decision-making, as well as drawing from all epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives and approaches. Only original articles will be accepted for publication. Submissions should follow the ASA Style Guide in terms of formatting and citations and should not exceed 3000 words in length, including references and notes.

Our submission portal can be found at: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sre. Submissions to the Race and Ethnicity Pedagogy Section should be identified as such in the submission process.

Additionally, we invite you to become part of our reviewer database. Register for an account through the website and please indicate areas of interest and expertise.