

CUSS Newsletter

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Publish Early, Publish Often, Publish Online

Jon Smajda
University of Minnesota

While staring at an empty page in my text editor considering how to begin this essay, one of my favorite online distractions – Twitter – provided an answer in the form of an insightful Tweet from programmer Steve Streetling:

Remember, experts are always wrong about disruptive tech, because it disrupts what they're experts in.

The timing was impeccable: in 140-characters, that is basically the problem I am trying to address here.

If you're reading this, you're an expert in sociology. You may not think about it much, but you're

also probably an expert in the traditional mode of knowledge production and dissemination in our field. You're comfortable reading journal articles and books published by academic presses, running research projects drawing on this source material, and then distilling your own findings in a similar form. You're comfortable presenting your work to a small audience of like-minded peers at academic conferences and training graduate students to follow in your footsteps. This is the shape of knowledge production in your field, and you're pretty good at the technology that enables it: printed articles, books, and lectures.

But, it appears, the internet is changing all of this. Traditional academic



presses are struggling to pay the bills in an age of the easily shared PDF and calls for "open access" publishing that undermine their business model. Every semester, you find students more reliant on using the internet alone for researching papers – not to mention new instances of Wikipedia plagiarism. You keep hearing that the internet is

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Chair's Message

Lily Hoffman, CCNY/CUNY

More chilling than the record snows and temperatures this past January has been the recently publicized attack by Glenn Beck and the right wing on the professor,

urbanist, activist, and former president of the ASA, Frances Fox Piven. Piven is well-known in sociological circles for her scholarly work—her many articles and books

(both with and without Richard Cloward) as well as for her commitment to advocacy (the Motor Voter Act).

Triggered by an article
Chair, page 2



Chair's Message from page 1

"Yet, a call for more responsible journalism and media on the part of the Glenn Becks, and the Fox network has not had any noticeable response."

-Lily Hoffman

Piven published in *The Nation* in December, calling upon the unemployed to mobilize and press the Obama administration for jobs, verbal attacks upon Piven have ratcheted up from diatribes about the "Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory" on websites such as Beck's *The Blaze*, to direct personal threats –hate email— calling for Piven's violent death. In the context of the recent Arizona shooting of Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who was also harried by hate email, these death threats are being taken more seriously. But, what to do?

There is an obvious link between calling Piven "the enemy of the Constitution" and "one of the nine most dangerous people in the world," and the hate mail posted on

the website as well as sent directly to Piven (her address was also posted). Yet, a call for more responsible journalism and media on the part of the Glenn Becks, and the Fox network has not had any noticeable response. Even after the Arizona shootings the suggestion that the inflammatory rhetoric be toned down a few decibels has been answered for the most part defensively with the rationale being that Jared Loughner was mentally disturbed.

Looking further into the case, I found that that there is a history of right wing criticism directed at the Cloward-Piven strategy, first articulated by David Horowitz who described it as "the strategy of forcing political change through orchestrated crisis," and picked up, ac-

cording to Richard Kim ("The Mad Tea Party," *The Nation* April 15, 2010) by such notables as Limbaugh, Joseph Farah, Stanley Kurtz and Jerome Corsi. They credit Cloward and Piven with the global financial crisis as well as the Obama election. These conspiracy theories would be humorous if they did not encourage such evil intent.

Over the past few decades we've talked about the dearth of public intellectuals. We also know how few of them have been or are women. Frances Fox Piven is a model female public intellectual and busy as we are, we should take it upon ourselves to keep informed about this ongoing situation and do what we can to publicize the facts and inform others.

Editor's Note

William Holt, Southern Connecticut State University

As those of us in New England are digging out from last month's snow storms, I am excited over the Winter Edition which focuses on communication and public sociology. Lily Hoffman's Chair's Message addresses the threats to sociologists who challenge what C. Wright Mill's called the power elite. Jon Smajda's feature article examines the changing landscape of academic publishing

looking at ways we can expand our research and teaching on the internet. Also, this edition marks the return of the photo essay. Deirdre Oakley's work explores the emergence of House Music with Atlanta's House in the Park annual Labor Day event.

The Spring/Summer Edition in June will wrap up our 2010-11 publishing year. This edition will include the final program

information for the 2011 ASA Meetings which have now been moved to Las Vegas due to labor issues in Chicago as well as information about our CUSS business meeting, awards ceremony and reception. We will include a feature article on the new host city.

Please contact me at holtiwi1@southernct.edu if you are interested in contributing to future editions or have any suggestions.

CUSS BY-LAWS REVISIONS

Lily Hoffman

CCNY/CUNY

David Snow

University of California-Irvine

We are happy to announce that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee to Revise the By-laws—in the works for the past two years, has finally been completed, approved by the CUSS Council, and accepted by the ASA Council. This means that in addition to voting on candidates for CUSS section offices, on the spring ASA ballots you will also find the revision of the CUSS by-laws. This revision aims to: 1) bring our section into line with other ASA sections; 2) clarify various officer

and committee duties; and 3) bring the by-laws into line with actual practice.

The most important item is the change in the term of the Chair from two years to one year. This is the length of term for chairs in all the other ASA sections. In reality, the CUSS chair has actually served three or four years because one is chair-elect for a year, with duties, and then there were duties (annual report, etc.) after stepping down. During the past two elections, neither candidate actually knew they were running for a two year plus term and might have declined if they had known this.

Indeed, it was very difficult to find candidates willing to run for this office this year, once the length of term was clearly presented to the potential nominees.

We have also specified the main duties of the chair, as these duties were not previously specified and are customarily asked about by candidates. The other changes were to specify other officer and committee responsibilities and to bring the by-laws in line with what we have actually been doing in the section. We hope you will ratify our first and long overdue by-law revision since the section's establishment in 1988.

NEWS & NOTES

•**Kevin Fox Gotham**, Tulane University has published two articles: "Resisting Urban Spectacle: The 1984 Louisiana Exposition and the Contradictions of Mega Events." *Urban Studies*. 48(1) 197–214, January 2011 and with Richard Campanella. 2010. "Toward a Research Agenda on Transformative Resilience: Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Ecosystems" *Critical Planning*. Volume 17, Summer 2010.

•**William Holt**, Southern Connecticut State University, has been appointed to the ASA Pan-

el on Climate Change. With a J.D., he has experience in environmental and energy law.

•**Zachary Neal**, Michigan State University, was interviewed by WKAR (NPR-East Lansing) and quoted by CBS Detroit, Crains Business Detroit, and *USA Today* about his work on the relationship between business airline traffic and urban job growth, which will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

•**Michael Wallace**, University of Connecticut, has published two articles: with Gordon Gauchat, Andrew S. Fullerton. 2011.

"Globalization, Labor Market Transformation, and Metropolitan Earnings Inequality." *Social Science Research* 40:15–36; and with Gordon Gauchat, Casey Borch, and Travis Scott Lowe. 2011. "The Military Metropolis: Defense Dependence in U.S. Metropolitan Areas." *City & Community* 10:25–48.

•**Rachael A. Woldoff**, West Virginia University, and her former students, Heather Washington and Yolanda Wiggins, coauthored an article entitled, "Black Collegians at A Rural PWI (predominately white institutions): Toward

a Place-Based Understanding of Black Students' Adjustment to College." Their article is forthcoming in the *Journal of Black Studies*. Dr. Woldoff mentored Washington and Wiggins as part of WVU's Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars), which offers students who are economically disadvantaged and/or ethnically underrepresented in graduate school an opportunity to prepare for graduate studies.

PHOTO ESSAY:

Sunday in the Park with a House Beat

Deirdre Oakley, Georgia State University

Weather permitting any weekend late spring through early fall is always a good time to have a picnic with family and friends. At these lazy, fun-loving affairs kids play, adults cook, socialize, and somebody is always tossing around a Frisbee or a football. But mix in some House Music and these leisurely warm weather occasions come alive to the beat. All afternoon and well into the early evening everybody – young and old -- dances, sweats, laughs and enjoys the soulful fellowship that the funky beats bring. Nobody wants it to end and everybody looks forward to the next one.



Multiply this by numerous families and friends; throw in a park, some hipsters, bikers, club-crawlers, and even a few aging Deadheads and you have House in the Park. Held in southwest Atlanta's Perkersen Park the day before Labor Day for the last six years, House in the Park is the brain child of DJ Ramon Rawsoul who realized that unlike Chicago or Detroit, Atlanta didn't have such a family-friendly House Music event. As some of the Nation's best House DJs, Rawsoul, Kai Alce, Kemit, and Salah Ananse spin the groove for free purely for the joy of bringing their favorite music to the picnic.



House Music emerged from rubble of the Disco scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By then popular culture had decided that "Disco sucks". Even the Bee Gees were booted off the stage at Shea Stadium. Not so for House Music. House initially catered mainly to an African American and Latino audience beginning in Chicago, and then spreading to cities like Detroit, Newark, New York City, Atlanta, San Francisco and eventually overseas. Although its popularity is now wide, it still remains a largely underground scene



Every city has its own brand of House Music, but its foundation is always Disco's steady four-on-the-floor beat with varieties of soul, funk, jazz, salsa, gospel and reggae over-dubbed. The result is a multi-layered, highly danceable mix without the more synthetic quality of Disco, a quality that became its downfall. Yet, perhaps it is because of the Disco beat blended with a mix of musical genres that House appeals to such a diverse group of people spanning multiple generations.



House in the Park has become known for attracting all sorts of people. No one is unwelcome – it doesn't matter what your age, gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation is: getting your swerve on is about peace, unity, and having a good time. In 2009 a crowd of over 4,000 showed up; this year almost 10,000 did. Perhaps it keeps growing because there's enough going on for everybody including the people who want to dance, those who want to socialize and just hang out, artists who want to paint the scene, musicians who want to jam along with the beat, and the serious barbequers who want to cook with their industrial-strength smokers. The delicious smells, the beat, the artistic creativity, the sweaty heat, the generosity of spirit, and the rhythmic movement of the crowd converge creating a vibratory atmosphere where the drink of choice is bottled water – and lots of it. Not everybody burns calories at House in the Park, but all leave feeling happy.

Deirdre Oakley is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Georgia State University and Editor of Social Shutter-<http://socialshutter.blogspot.com>. You can contact her at doakley1@gsu.edu.

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a bold new democratic experiment where everyone has a voice, but it often just looks like a chaotic, anonymous echo chamber where the newest idea is always the best idea. As scholars, our means of production, so to speak, appear to be under attack. It is easy to be discouraged.

That's one interpretation. I want to offer another. The internet is disrupting our profession, and has the potential to change not just the distribution, but the production of our work (from drafting to the peer-review process) as well as the substance of our work. The question is whether these changes are more or less consistent with the social scientific ethic to which we adhere. Our publishing regime should serve our larger scholarly goals, not the other way around. The current shape of our scholarly production came into maturity in the age of print. At the time, of course, this enabled the advancement of our craft. Now, however, I argue that the demands of print publication limit our productivity, influence, and enjoyment of work. No one knows what will save the publishing industry – let the publishers worry about that. In this essay, I want to point towards some examples of how the internet can help us become better scholars and how the shape of things to come may actually improve

Lessons from Blogging

In 2008, I helped launch an online network of social science blogs and podcasts now called The Society Pages. Our goal was to solve the “lost in the crowd” problem for prospective sociology bloggers: write for our network, and you'll be joining an established community of like-minded bloggers and readers. We've spent a lot of time talking to prolific social science bloggers to see what makes them tick. Why do they blog? How does this impact their research? Their teaching? Several themes emerged. (Many of these conversations were recorded for The Society Pages-Office Hours and Sociology Improv. You can listen to these conversations at thesocietypages.org. See, in particular, our Office Hours interviews with Jesse Daniels, Jose Marichal, Lisa Wade and Gwen Sharp, and our Sociology Improv episode with John Sides.)

First, while it is true that, blogging, as the stereotype goes, can be narcissistic and thoughtless, blogs are an open-ended technology that can be remarkably compatible with the scientific ethic when this is desired. Blog posts are written in the moment. I don't mean to suggest vapid, stream-of-conscious babbling, but rather that bloggers are self-consciously representing the present, limited state of the author's knowledge. Rather than perfectly crafted tomes conveying timeless truths,

blog posts are fragments that collectively add up to cumulative knowledge over time. They are open and collaborative: others – colleagues, competitors, students – can look over your shoulder and provide criticism and encouragement.

Compare this with traditional academic journal articles, which only see the light of day after months of drafting and peer review. Access to journal articles is expensive and exclusive, limiting exposure to fellow academics within your own field. The journal system is, of course, collaborative and cumulative, but the pace is slow. In other words, the internet preserves some of the best elements of traditional academic work – cumulative knowledge production in a collaborative, transparent environment – but speeds up the process and removes many of its barriers. Those who get the most out of blogging realize this and take advantage of it. Blog posts are a great way to try out new ideas or to work through specific arguments you're wrestling with in larger papers. For example, political scientist and blogger Jose Marichal told us:

A lot of times there are one or two blog items that I put in my “todo” file, that are research projects I would want to do at some time in the future. My collaborators and I have actually talked about building on some of these posts to present at a fu-

ture conference and to build a research agenda. With the blog you are sort of sowing the seeds for later research. It is a great way to generate ideas, it's a great way to make yourself get into the habit of writing.

Another political scientist, Andrew Gellman blogged extensively while writing his book, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State Poor State*, and blog posts were often early versions of book material. In other words, research and blogging need not be contradictory priorities.

But a second, connected, theme closely follows this rosy picture. The current state of academic publishing is often an impediment to taking full advantage of this new technology. While there are examples like Gellman, most of the bloggers we've spoken to confessed a closer connection between teaching and blogging than research and blogging. For a teacher, blogging can be a fun way to keep track of news clippings, videos, and other material to liven up classroom discussion. For example, Marichal assigns reading his blog and colleagues' blogs to students:

I have an assignment where students have to post to 10 blogs throughout the semester. I have done it a few times and most of the students respond and you usually have four or five other people from outside the classroom responding,

and sometimes I will use those comments in the classroom discussion. This is relatively low-risk career activity. On the other hand, “trying out” new research ideas on a blog can be liberating and fun, but it can also be embarrassing if the ideas don’t pan out. And young scholars, in particular, have incentives to “save” new theories or research ideas for their academic publications.

Rethinking Publishing

I do not bring up the case of blogging to suggest we should ditch journals and just start blogging. Instead, blogging is an early foray into online publishing that illustrates some of the promises and pitfalls of greater participation in online culture for academics.

On the positive side, the web facilitates self-publishing. It used to be that you had to publish on paper for people to be aware of you and your work, this is no longer the case. There’s no need to invent a euphemism like “open access” for the web: what you publish on the web is accessible to anyone, at no cost to them (if you wish) and at little or not cost to you. You may still decide to publish through a traditional publisher, but not because it’s the only option to reach an audience.

A change in the distribution of our work is only the start. The web encourages us to open up the entire process of how

we do our work. The faster pace of the web may, at it’s worst, cultivate a fleeting “flavor of the moment” mode of thinking, but the flip side to this is that it promotes an ethic of honest transparency: people get things wrong and change their minds. Viewpoints evolve. Rather than publishing a handful of articles every few years, bloggers are always publishing. In an intellectual climate like this, what is the place for journal articles that have been written over the course of years? That’s not a rhetorical question. For decades, journal articles and conferences were our primary ways of sharing ideas and evidence with our field. At minimum, these outlets now face increasing competition.

The conservative attitude towards self-publishing online is also, in part, a product of the status system in our discipline. Publication in *AJS* or *ASR* (founded in 1895 and 1936, respectively) has long been considered the gold standard of quality work in our discipline. Tenure is awarded based on publication in established, long-running print outlets, not in upstart online journals or personal websites. Journals are the trusted gatekeepers of quality, and status, in our field. Stepping outside that tradition is a daunting task for any individual scholar.

All fields do not share the strength of our attachment to the traditional

gatekeepers, though. For instance, arXiv.org, hosted at Cornell University, has become an alternate publishing route for many academics in math and science. Contributors can upload articles to arXiv and an “endorsement” system ensures a basic level of appropriate content. If the paper is strong, the community of scholars will recognize this, cite it, and build upon it. Most famously, Grigori Perelman, winner of the 2006 Fields Medal, uploaded his award-winning papers to arXiv.org, bypassing the traditional peer review system.

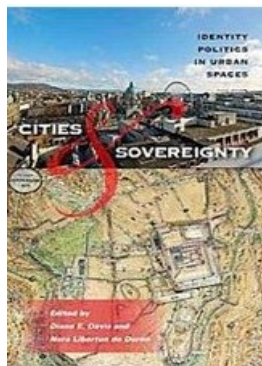
Such a transformation has not appeared yet in the social sciences. Much would have to happen first. Leaders in the field – the Perelmans of the social sciences, in other words – would have to break ranks with the established publishing system. But these are the scholars who have been best served by this system. Departments would have to adjust measures of academic productivity as well: if a certain number of peer-reviewed articles is a requirement for tenure, how to count self-published articles online? And, in defense of journals, they provide order to chaos. If an article is accepted into a prestigious journal, there is a guarantee that experts in the field have vetted it before it ever even crossed your path.

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“Now, however, I argue that the demands of print publication limit our productivity, influence, and enjoyment of work.”

-Jon Smajda

NEW BOOKS

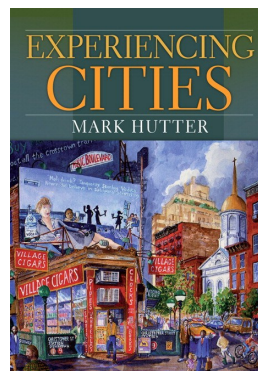


•***Cities and Sovereignty: Identity Politics in Urban Spaces***, Indiana University Press, 2011.

Edited by
Diane E. Davis, MIT
and Nora Libertun de Duren

Cities have long been associated with diversity and tolerance, but from Jerusalem to Belfast to the Basque Country, many of the most intractable conflicts of the past century have played out in urban spaces. The contributors to this interdisciplinary volume examine the interrelationships of ethnic, racial, religious, or other identity conflicts and larger battles over sovereignty and governance. Under what conditions do identity conflicts undermine the legitimacy and power of nation-states, empires, or urban authorities? Does the urban built environment play a role in remedying or exacerbating such conflicts? Employing comparative analysis, these case studies from the Middle East, Europe,

and South and South-east Asia advance our understanding of the origins and nature of urban conflict.



•***Experiencing Cities***, 2nd ed. Pearson, 2011.

Mark Hutter
Rowan University

Experiencing Cities is an introduction to urban sociology based heavily on microsociology and symbolic interaction theory—emphasizing the way people experience the urban world in their everyday lives, interact with one another, and create meaning from the physical and human environments of their cities.



•***Fire in the Heart: How White Activists Embrace Racial Justice***, Oxford University Press, 2010

Mark R. Warren
Harvard University

Fire in the Heart uncovers the processes through which white Americans become activists for racial justice. This first study of its kind reports accounts of the development of racial awareness drawn from in-depth interviews with fifty white activists in the fields of community organizing, education, and criminal justice reform. Warren argues that motivation to take action for racial justice is moral and relational and shows how white activists come to find common cause with people of color when their core values are engaged, as they build relationships with people of color that lead to caring, and when they develop a vision of a racially just future that they understand to benefit everyone—themselves, other whites, and people of color. The book also considers the complex dynamics and dilemmas white people face in working in multiracial organizations committed to systemic change in America's racial order, and provides a deeper understanding and appreciation of the role that white people can play in efforts to promote racial justice. <http://mark-warren.com/fireintheheart/>

CUSS will host one invited session, two open sessions as well as the referred roundtables at the 2011 ASA Meetings in Las Vegas.

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Visiting arXiv.org and viewing a long listing of recently uploaded PDFs does not inspire such confidence. These are difficult issues. But technical and institutional solutions are possible. Perhaps "journals" could transition from being regularly published collections of articles (print or online) to being credentialing institutions, guiding the peer review process and certifying the best articles written and published online, whether or not the "journals" themselves actually publish anything.

But, perhaps even more difficult than these

issues, is the fact that our disciplinary culture needs to change. We're trained to speak to a relatively narrow audience of peers, and we're often not comfortable with others listening in. We might be misunderstood. Our words may be taken out of context. The caveats and qualifications we add to our claims may be lost in translation. Talking about openness and transparency as abstract goods is one thing, but in truth, many of us don't want these things. We're comfortable having known experts who speak our language evaluating our work, but having others

do so, even potentially, is intimidating. We like the small room of our peers. Publishing early, often, and out in the open requires a change in our culture and attitude towards our writing, our research, and our self-image as scholars. However, early experiments in social science online self-publishing, such as blogging, suggest that the internet's disruption of our traditional publishing regime could end up being good for us, though it will require some risk, discomfort, and growth.

Jon Smajda is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota.

"Publishing early, often, and out in the open requires a change in our culture and attitude towards our writing, our research, and our self-image as scholars."

-Jon Smajda

Announcement

•We are excited to announce the formation of a new online journal for research conducted by undergraduates. The *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography* (JUE) seeks to distribute original student-produced work from a variety of

disciplinary areas. Our goal is to bring readers, especially other undergraduates, insights into subcultures, rituals, and social institutions. We expect crossovers with anthropology, sociology, American studies, urban

studies as well as programs in education and marketing. The call for papers deadline is April 15, 2011. For more information contact Jason Patch, Roger Williams University at jpatch@rwu.edu.

CUSS NEEDS NEW MEMBERSHIP

Ask not what you can do for CUSS, but what CUSS can do for YOU! Did you know that CUSS membership numbers are declining? Help the Membership Committee get the word out that CUSS membership provides excellent benefits including a subscription to *City & Community*, a strong community of scholars with common interests, an interesting listserv, many networking opportunities including the annual reception, and great sessions at the ASA meetings (we need 60 additional members to maintain the four sessions we have had the last few years). Please contact the

Membership Committee with your ideas: Robert Adelman, Chair (adelman4@buffalo.edu), Jennifer Darrah (darrah@post.harvard.edu), Mary Fischer (mary.fischer@uconn.edu), Andrew Deener (andrew.deener@uconn.edu), and Kevin Gotham (kgotham@tulane.edu).

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ASA 2011 Meeting

106th ASA Annual Meeting

August 20-23, 2011

Caesars Palace Las Vegas

Las Vegas, Nevada

SOCIAL CONFLICT:

MULTIPLE

DIMENSIONS ARENAS