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FORUM: TRUMP

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

by
CHRIS HERRING

The Berkeley Journal of Sociology is a graduate student-run journal that has been in publication since 1955. It has traditionally published research papers by graduate students alongside essays and articles by many of the leading sociologists of the 20th century—C. Wright Mills, Anthony Giddens, Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, Erik Olin Wright, Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse have all contributed to the BJS over the course of nearly six decades. Rather than hewing to a single theoretical, thematic, or methodological focus, the BJS has tried to engage the leading edge of sociological scholarship throughout its history.

The current volume is comprised of a selection of this year's most compelling essays, insightful commentaries, and critical reviews on public issues published in our online publication @www.berkeleyjournal.org. At the center of this year's volume is our forum that critically reflect on the rise of Trump in the political field during the 2016 election in the US and World, including implications for race, class, immigration, gender, politics, culture, media, the economy, and more. The volume also includes essays on the refugee crisis, the nature of new social movements in the US and Latin America, and a photo essay examining the sociological significance of Dead Pay Phones.

With the launch of our website and 2014 volume, the BJS has begun re-imagining the purpose of a publication that emerges from within the academy, but which does not take the discipline of professional sociology as its primary object of focus. We seek new audiences across new platforms to firmly root sociological knowledge within society, for society. The current informational landscape is marked by an over-abundance of news and a dearth of insightful analyses and perspectives from the social sciences. Flashy headlines often matter more than content, and clicks more than sustained critiques. We believe, too, that sociologists can provide unique insights, interpretations and analyses about history as it unfolds before our eyes – in our communities and the world.

ARTICULATING TRUMPISM

by
ZACHARY LEVENSON

The liberal strategy of simply exposing Trump's lies, pointing to his preposterously unscripted oratory, and hoping to convey some sort of "truth" as antidote to his base misses the point. Trump's brand of populism has sutured "the people" to the interests of big capital.

STRATEGIC MENDACITY

From cable news stations to the *New York Times*, mainstream media criticism of Trump is rooted in exposing his administration's lies. In early February, White House adviser Kellyanne Conway appeared on CNN. Jake Tapper grew irate as she refused to admit to a number of deliberately crafted falsehoods: multiple references to a massacre that never actually happened, completely fabricated murder rates, Trump's claim that American media do not cover terror attacks, and countless others.

The following week at a press conference, Trump continued the pattern. He insisted that he won more electoral college votes than any president since Reagan. When a member of the press corps pointed out that this was patently untrue, and that Obama, Bush, and Clinton had all achieved higher counts, Trump played it off as a ridiculous criticism. As he continued to rehearse a number of obvious untruths, bloggers and journalists had a field day, tarring him as "high," "racist," and "batshit crazy." Here was a thin-skinned president who couldn't take routine criticism from cable news contributors, let alone a random assortment of celebrities. Obviously this would affect his approval rating.

This is the problem: these media outlets refuse to actually empathize with his supporters in the sense of attempting to inhabit their subject positions. The liberal academic response to Trump's election has been to promote books like Arlie Hochschild's *Strangers in the Their Own Land*. While this is hardly the fault of Hochschild, the tendency among academics and liberal intellectuals has been to misread her analysis of empathy as an injunction to communicate with Trump supporters, effectively convincing them that they have something like false consciousness. An alternative has been to anoint J. D. Vance, author of the memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, as the pope of the rustbelt. But rather than actually trying to empathize with Trump's base, liberal cosmopolitans — precisely those figures they most detest — read these texts as novelties, exoticizing their subjects and refusing to understand the link between Trump's populist strategies and his consistent support in large sections of the country.

It is not *despite* Trump's lies that his supporters back him; we might go so far as to say it is because of them. What Trump's campaign has done in a matter of months is remarkable. The discourse of "fake news" emerged following the alleged Russian hacking scandal, in which dubious headlines were widely dis-

tributed on social media, frequently originating from Russian sources. This was of course nothing new. Clickbait from the likes of Infowars and Breitbart was an admitted source of information for Trump, whether it was his insistence that Obama was not an American citizen or his claims that Muslims in New York cheered the demolition of the Twin Towers on 9/11. But here's what's so remarkable: within weeks of the term "fake news" entering into popular usage, Trump's camp had already repackaged the term as the deceitful strategy of his adversaries. In other words, if the very concept was devised to describe potential Russian interference on Trump's behalf, he's completely transformed its meaning.

The official opposition appears more concerned with preserving some degree of decorum, not least of which is a presumed sanctity of the office, than they do with substantive political critiques of the Trumpist project.

Now "fake news" is primarily used to describe any media reports Trump doesn't like. When Democrats hear his bizarre rants against the media, they dismiss him as an irritable buffoon who isn't competent to govern. Their critique is largely couched in the framework of a rule-bound formalism tied to the Democrats' technocratic approach to politics. For the Democrats, the problem isn't that the DNC is rigid, anti-democratic, and out-of-touch; it's that Russians may've hacked our election. It's not that Jeff Sessions is a troglodyte racist; it's that he lied under oath. The official opposition appears more concerned with preserving some de-

Photo CC BY-NC 2.0 by Axel Drainville

gree of decorum, not least of which is a presumed sanctity of the office, than they do with substantive political critiques of the Trumpist project. Indeed, there is nowhere for workers to turn at this point but into the arms of the populist wing of the GOP. Hillary Clinton disdainfully refused to visit union halls in key battleground states, seemingly unworried about the widespread perception that she was closer to Goldman Sachs and J P Morgan than the UAW or AFSCME.

Trump knows exactly what he's doing when he violates decorum, and this is where Democrats and the corporate media miss the point. When NPR interviewed a few Trump supporters following the most recent press conference, a 69 year-old Mississippi resident's response was representative: "I'm sick of them making up stories. You know, we're intelligent people. We can make up our own mind on whether they're telling the truth." So what's going on? In the press conference, Trump was quite clear: "The people get it [but] much of the media doesn't get it." Note the opposition of "people" to "media." He continued, "Unfortunately, much of the media in Washington, D.C., along with New York, Los Angeles in particular, speaks not for the people, but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system. The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people."

Even if Trump is consistently caught fabricating various facts and statistics, his supporters view fact-construction as occurring in a field of power organized between two poles. On the one hand, "the people" are aligned with their representative Trump; on the other, "special interests" associated with major urban centers and most of the corporate media, the Democratic Party, and the establishment corners of the GOP continue to lie to "the people" in order to retain control. Given the mendacious presidencies of both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, as well as the apparent insincerity of Democratic candidates like Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, this isn't such a stretch. When a party that purports to represent the American working class spends decades championing unbridled trade liberalization, the charterization of the public school system, and the destruction of the social safety net, it's no wonder that critics of the status quo don't look to Democrats for an alternative. Hillary Clinton represented a cosmopolitan, city-dwelling business class seemingly more interested in giving speeches on Wall Street than meeting with unions in key battleground states. Her very comportment screamed elite and aloof, and the Democrats weren't deceiving anybody.

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE?

Meanwhile, Trump continued to take aim at the media, accusing them of distorting the truth. "But we're not going to let it happen," he remarked, "because I'm here again, to take my message straight to the people." Trump would bypass the established system, interpellating "the people" in the process. This is precisely the project that political theorist Ernesto Laclau described as populism. Populist strategy relies on what he called a "double articulation." First and foremost, populists construct a discourse around an antagonism between "the people" and what, borrowing from Poulantzas, he called "the power bloc." [1] As Trump's team would have it, this group includes Democrats and establishment Republicans,

1 Laclau, Ernesto. 1977. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. New York: Verso.

academics and cosmopolitan intellectuals, Wall Street, and the corporate media, all coming together in the figure of "the swamp." The next day he repeated the refrain, tweeting, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"

"The people" isn't equivalent to the category "voters" or "Americans." Note Trump's consistent strategy of denationalizing anybody who might oppose him. Obama is the most notorious example, of course, with his exclusion from "the people" through repeated allegations that his birth certificate was forged. Clinton is excluded by virtue of her presumed criminality. Her use of a private email server was no less secure than Trump's holding of top secret meetings in the Mar-a-Lago dining room, but by repeatedly asserting that her actions were "crooked" and insisting that we — again, interpellating "the people" — "lock her up," she too was excluded from this category.

> If "the people" is read as equivalent to the nation, or at least occupying its territorial space, the project of "making America great again" requires expelling "enemies of the people" from this territory.

But the move is of course not limited to politicians. Entire categories are expelled from "the people" by rhetorically stripping them of their membership in the nation. This is why nationalism is so essential to Trumpism: the entire enterprise revolves around protecting the rightful space of the "the people," which is of course an imagined national territory. If "the people" is read as equivalent to the nation, or at least occupying its territorial space, the project of "making America great again" requires expelling "enemies of the people" from this territory. (Despite repeatedly using this phrase, Trump does not appear aware of its historical ties to Stalin.) Muslims are the most obvious example, collectively represented as a constituting a monolithic terrorist threat to the domestic sphere. From his campaign promise of a Muslim ban through the travel ban imposed on seven predominately Muslim nationalities, this is an active project of protecting a sanctified private life from imagined violent encroachment. Black crime and Black Lives Matter are likewise assimilated into a uniform figure, represented as an attack on police, who (*pace* Giuliani & co.) are themselves represented as a key preserve of American national power and as defenders of "the people" against domestic threats. This takes on spatial significance when Trump promises "the people" he will protect "our inner cities," a phrase he deploys regularly, apparently unaware that city centers have seen a secular decline in violent crime since the turn of the millenium. Latinx are stripped of their membership in the nation, their ethno-racial identities transmuted into (inter)national ones. Trump's attack on a Latino judge in Chicago made this quite clear: Latinx residents are to be associated with Mexico and Central America; the courtroom is an inviolable national space to be protected from this threat. Likewise, the shop floor must be fortified against the inauspicious encroachment of cheap labor from the South.

And what about queer and trans people? They pose a threat to national vitality on two levels. Most obviously we might understand this homophobia as a pro-natal jingoism, preserving the twin sacred spaces of the bedroom and the bathroom from queer and trans people, respectively. But we might also think of this bigotry as an obsession with American masculinity. If male breadwinners' dignity and self-perceptions of masculinity were wounded as the rustbelt deindustrialized and as wages stagnated both absolutely and in relation to productivity, revivalist nationalism ("Make America Great Again") allowed the deliberate articulation of "the people's" collective feelings of self-worth to household economic fortunes. What Trump did for the people he did for the nation, for both of whom he promises to safeguard the sacred space of the home. In every case, these groups are denigrated not for their inherent inferiority (racism), but for the way they threaten a national space (nationalism), which in turn threatens household interests (class).

CAPITALIST ANTI-CAPITALISM

This is how Trump has consciously tried to resolve "the people"/power bloc antagonism, and quite successfully, I must add. As his critics continue to wring their hands over his falsehoods, certain that the latest *Washington Post* exposé will unmask him to his base, his reinscription of "fake news" as an elitist assault on "the people" has only gained him support. But Laclau wrote of populism as a *double* articulation. If the popular-democratic contradiction is discursively resolved, this is articulated to a second contradiction: class struggle. All political programs, Laclau insists, serve objective class interests. The key right-populist move is to resolve the popular-democratic contradiction without threatening the pockets of capital. And this is precisely what Trump has done. By the end of February, Bank of America stocks were up more than 40 percent from Election Day, with Goldman Sachs up 36 percent and Wells Fargo up 27 percent.

At the mid-February press conference, Trump declared, "We've issued a game-changing new rule that says for each one new regulation, two old regulations must be eliminated. Makes sense. Nobody's ever seen regulations like we have." Health, safety, environmental, and other workplace regulations are represented as "job killing" restrictions deviously implemented by representatives of the power bloc. In articulating the populist discourse of "the people" to the immediate interests of big capital, Trump has pulled off what the German historian Arthur Rosenberg called "a manoeuvre notoriously characteristic of populist nationalisms worldwide — namely, instigating a movement that serves the interests of big capital but *appears* anti-capitalist at public meetings."[2]

If we might think of a certain collective ire as resulting from both the 2008 crisis and from a more prolonged tendency toward deindustrialization, Trump's genius has been to redirect it from capital to the state, and more specifically, toward the figure of the professional politician. "I can't believe I'm saying I'm a politician, but I guess that's what I am now," Trump told the press corps. Collectively these politicians comprise "the swamp," working with their media henchmen against

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2 Rosenberg, Arthur. 2013 [1934]. "Fascism as a Mass-Movement." Pp. 19-96 in *Fascism: Essays on Europe and India*, edited by Jairus Banaji. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective.

the collective interests of "the people." He can thus nominate an Exxon CEO for Secretary of State without upsetting his resolution of the popular-democratic contradiction, as he's defined the problem as emanating from state administrators rather than capital. Tillerson is an "outsider" in this conception. One appointment after another, from Betsy DeVos to the failed nomination of Andrew Puzder, abets big capital, without appearing to threaten the terms of Trump's populist arrangement.

Given this suturing of "the people" to the interests of big capital, the liberal strategy of simply exposing Trump's lies, pointing to his preposterously unscripted oratory, and hoping to convey some sort of "truth" as antidote to his base misses the point. For even if we were to win them over on this count — and we won't, but even if we were — the left has no alternative hegemonic project in which it might incorporate them. From the Clintons through Obama, the interests of workers have been disarticulated from any populist project, with Democrats primarily running in a mode negatively defined: Obama wasn't W, and Clinton wasn't a fascist. But what is the *positive* project of the Democratic Party? The very fact that it remains unclear whether any of the Republican contenders were closer to Wall Street than Clinton, or whether the latest wave of deportations is of Trump's innovation or is a holdover from Obama's policies, leaves a vast vacuum gaping from the center-right to the far left.

Indeed, it wouldn't be a stretch to pin some of the most egregious moments of deregulation, trade liberalization, and welfare retrenchment on the Democrats. We can envision populist Republicans demanding that a nominee be immediately ushered into office on behalf of "the people," but such an utterance from a Democrat would be unthinkable. In shutting down Obama's Supreme Court nominee, Republican politicians represented themselves as a grassroots movement; but when Democrats do likewise, they come off as inept, merely going through the motions. As Christian Parenti put it recently (2016) in a brilliant analysis of Trump's use of language, "Ultimately, the Democratic establishment brought this loss on themselves. They spurned and tried to sabotage Bernie Sanders and his class message. [3] Trump took the Bernie-style populism, emptied it of real class politics, reduced it to a jumble of affective associations, and used it to beat-up the smug liberals of the professional managerial class. It worked." Without the Clintonism, there would be no Trumpism; without Corey Booker and Arne Duncan, there would be no Betsy DeVos.

TRUMPISM AS DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF CLINTONISM

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff (2016) gets the matter exactly wrong when he suggests that Democrats simply need to "give up identity politics," by which he explicitly means "women's issues, black issues, Latino issues." These are "human issues," he insists, taking the #AllLivesMatter line. Of course when he implores Democrats to address "poor whites" in the following sentence, he pretends that this doesn't constitute precisely the sort of identity politics he had just

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3 Parenti, Christian. 2016. "Listening to Trump." Non-Site (available at: http://nonsite.org/editorial/listening-to-trump).

rejected. Whites in his account constitute universal subjects. Bill Clinton should be the model, Lakoff insists, as he "oozed empathy." In other words, the content of the politics is irrelevant to his strategy; the idea is to engage in a project of hegemony as deception.[4]

As he proceeds, he calls for Democrats to focus on "values" rather than "facts" and for unions to go on the offensive, pretending to know nothing about sixty years of business unionism, with comprador bureaucrats aligned with a party that has actively undermined working class interests since at least the 1970s. While Lakoff may understand why Trump's rhetoric is effective, he hasn't a clue what might be effective in riposte. Trump's rise isn't solely attributable to his particular brand of charistmatic authority. Trumpism is the direct consequence of Clintonism, and as such, to conceive of Clintonism as a resurgent strategy for the left at this point is to willfully ignore a quarter century of partisan politics in this county.

When the purportedly left-wing alternative hollows itself out to the point where we can no longer be certain that its chief politicians weren't key players in bringing about the present crisis, we have nothing left to which we can win Trump supporters over. Even if they were to realize that the guy is a capitalist Judas goat, where else would we send them? To quote the late anthropologist William Roseberry, the point of hegemonic language is not to solidify a shared ideology, but instead to construct "a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination."[5] There's nothing in the Democratic program that even approaches this goal, and indeed, the party has actively undermined workers, people of color, queer and trans people, and women since before I was born. Carter brought us Reagan, Clinton brought us W, and Obama brought us Trump. Until Trump's liberal critics accept this fact, they'll either continue their righteous denunciations of his indecorous transgressions, or worse, simply repurpose his strategy for a hypothetical left divorced from the working class à la Lakoff.

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4 Lakoff, George. 2016. "Understanding Trump." Huffington Post (available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/understanding-trump_b_11144938.html?1469216981).
5 Roseberry, William. 1994. "Hegemony and the Language of Contention." Pp. 355-66 in Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent. Durham: Duke University Press.

DONALD TRUMP AND THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF REALITY TELEVISION

by DAVID SHOWALTER

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"How the Party convention was staged was determined by the decision to produce Triumph of the Will. The event, instead of being an end in itself, served as the set of a film which was then to assume the character of an authentic documentary... the document (the image) is no longer simply the record of reality; 'reality' has been constructed to serve the image."

Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism" (1975)

Though he originally made his reputation as a builder and landlord, Donald Trump spent much of the past two decades as a reality television star. Now the man who used to appraise the managerial qualifications of washed-up rock stars and Hollywood has-beens on *Celebrity Apprentice* is the President of the United States. What is the link between Trump the reality star and Trump the

politician? Journalists and biographers have shown how Trump used television to expand and burnish his public presence, and how he follows the reality genre's melodramatic tropes to manage the news cycle.[1] I argue that the two Trumps share a deeper connection than these, at the level of a unified political aesthetic. First, I sketch the rise and spread of reality television in the United States. Then I turn to how reality television handles politics, with regard to content and, more importantly for understanding Trump, with regard to form. I show how President Trump has incorporated the political aesthetics of reality television in his approach to governance. Finally, I conclude with a reminder of what happened the last time the United States was led by a professional entertainer, and some lessons it offers us for resisting Trump today.

THE RISE OF REALITY TELEVISION

Reality television's roots stretch back more than half a century. Early hidden-camera shows like Candid Camera put ordinary people onscreen and pioneered televisual voyeurism. Game and quiz shows like *Truth or Consequences* and *The $64,000 Question* purported to offer ordinary citizens an honest chance at a life-changing prize (at least until their rigged outcomes came to light) and added the biographical melodrama that is nearly ubiquitous in reality shows today. In 1973, PBS broadcast *An American Family*, a one-season documentary that followed the everyday lives of a middle class nuclear family in Santa Barbara. Producers unexpectedly captured the family's eldest son coming out as gay, as well as the wife asking her husband for a divorce. The show drew millions of viewers and fierce controversy over its veracity and sensationalism. It would later serve as an inspiration for the quasi-family situations concocted on MTV's *The Real World*.

Chad Raphael has shown how the modern reality genre emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s "in response to the economic restructuring of U.S. television." The proliferation of VCRs, cable channels, and independent stations fragmented audiences and eroded ad revenues, pushing producers and distributors to cut costs. Reality programming slimmed budgets by sidelining or eliminating (unionized) writers, professional actors, and crews. Early reality shows—many of which, such as *COPS*, covered crime, law enforcement, and emergencies—also embraced cheap, fast, and "low-end" production values as a form of aesthetic realism.[2] Since the premiere of *The Real World* in 1992, reality shows have increasingly focused on developing onscreen characters, relationships, and narratives that can drive entire seasons or generate spin-off series, creating a lean and

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1 Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher, Trump Revealed (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016); Kathryn VanArendonk, "How Reality TV Builds Narrative Is Crucial to Understanding Trump," Vulture, January 13, 2017 (http://www.vulture.com/2017/01/what-reality-tv-tropes-tell-us-about-trump.html).
2 Chad Raphael, "Political Economy of Reali-TV," Jump Cut 41 (May 1997): 102–109.

self-sustaining production model. In these respects, reality television represent-ed the extension of economic neoliberalism to the realm of cultural production. But reality television remained a small piece of the overall market until a wave of hit shows in the early 2000s: *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *American Idol*, and *The Bachelor*, soon followed by *The Apprentice*. The combination of low production costs and ballooning ratings sent networks scrambling to fill their schedules with reality programs. By 2008, more than 300 were on the air every year in the United States, and reality shows were monopolizing the top of the ratings charts.

Just as reality shows drew elements from their predecessors, tropes and devic-es from reality television have spilled over into scripted programming and onto other media. Some of the most popular scripted shows of the new millennium (in-cluding *The Office*, *Modern Family*, and *Parks and Recreation*) are "mockumen-taries," or faux-reality shows, based on the conceit of a crew filming a documen-tary about everyday people. Alison Hearn has shown how reality television stars pioneered the strategies used today by social media "influencers" to brand and monetize their identities and experiences.[3] *American Idol* and other competition shows have launched dozens of careers in a range of industries, and people now regularly parlay appearances on reality shows into endorsements, acting roles, even political candidacies—or just an endless sequence of reality gigs. Much of our contemporary multimedia landscape has been shaped directly or indirectly by the rise and spread of reality television.

THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF REALITY TELEVISION

Walter Benjamin reminds us in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that the media through which we perceive the world, and hence our perception of the world itself, are shaped by politics and history.[4] How has our perception changed in the era of reality television, and what does it re-veal about Trump's ascendance? In other words, what are the political aesthet-ics of reality television? With regards to *content*, on reality shows the political is often reduced to the personal. For instance, in 1994 MTV cast an openly gay, HIV-positive AIDS educator named Pedro Zamora on the third season of *The Real World*, a decision which burdened the show's everyday plot points—relations between roommates, arguments over hygiene and manners—with the deep fears of impurity and danger and bigoted calls for segregation and quarantine that characterized the conservative response to AIDS. Zamora won the hearts of all his roommates but one, the noxious Puck, who was eventually evicted from the house by the rest of the cast.

This basically Western, liberal political vision—that through frank exchange, personal understanding, and healthy competition we can overcome entrenched

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3 Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff, "From Celebrity to Influencer: Tracing the Dif-fusion of Celebrity Value across the Data Stream," in A Companion to Celebrity, edited by P. David Marshall and Sean Redmond (John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, 2015); Alison Hearn, "Trump's 'Reality' Hustle," Television & New Media 17(7): 656–659.
4 Walter Benjamin, Illuminations (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

social divisions and class conflicts—plays out again and again in reality television: the traffic in women [5] restaged as an undaunted search for a soul mate on *The Bachelor*; the exploitative corporate music industry toppled by an audition directly for the hit makers and the public on *American Idol*; "tribal" conflicts between races and classes recast as a series of teambuilding exercises on *Survivor*.[6] *The Apprentice* pulled off this trick too, distilling the vicious labyrinth of corporate capitalism to a face-to-face meeting with the big boss. In books like *Better Living Through Reality TV* and *Makeover TV*, Laurie Ouellette, James Hay, and Brenda R. Weber argue that, just as reality programming adopts neoliberal production strategies, their optimistic narratives of self-expression and individual achievement extol a neoliberal ideology of entrepreneurial citizenship. But while the *content* of reality programs may jibe with the demands of our contemporary political economy, their *form* has earlier origins.

Aesthtics, Sontag argued, had taken precedence over reality, in the sense that what was essential about the event was not gathering itself, but how it could be conveyed on film.

In her analysis of fascist aesthetics, Susan Sontag points out that Leni Riefenstahl's famous Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935) owed much of its success to the willingness of Party officials to design the Party Congress at which it was filmed around the "convenience of the cameras."[7] Aesthetics, Sontag argued, had taken precedence over reality, in the sense that what was essential about the event was not the gathering itself, but how it could be conveyed on film. Though *Triumph of the Will* has neither narrator, script, nor plot, it takes place nonetheless in a manufactured world, where human life, from the individual to the mass, is allowed to flow only along paths capable of being tracked by the camera's eye. Sontag's description also stands as an account of reality television's dominant aesthetic: "The event, instead of being an end in itself, served as the set of a film which was then to assume the character of an authentic documentary." Whether reality shows take place on a set created for the show or out in the everyday world, they tame the actions of their participants into segments of space and time that are legible onscreen, first in real-time through the movement of cameras and crews, and then in the editing room through the selection and arrangement of footage.

5 Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Toward an Anthropology of Women, edited by Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review, 1975).
6 Christopher J. Wright, Tribal Warfare: Survivor and the Political Unconscious of Reality Television (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2006).
7 Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," New York Review of Books, February 6, 1975 (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/02/06/fascinating-fascism/).

Frequently the continuity of cast members' lives is sacrificed for the coherence of an onscreen narrative. As Mariah Smith has documented in her *Jezebel* series "Keeping Up with the Kontinuity Errors," scenes on the Kardashian family's flagship reality series are often filmed out of narrative order and then reconstructed during the editing process, with the cast obligated to substitute the televised sequence of events for their own temporal experience.[8] HGTV's home buying show *House Hunters* is notoriously fake: a former participant revealed that it "is not really a reality show. You have to already own the house that gets picked at the end of the show."[9] The middle and late seasons of MTV's hit *Jersey Shore* included an after-show featuring members of the cast that was livestreamed immediately after each new episode. These segments focused specifically on the events of that week's episode, to the exclusion of all that had occurred but had yet to air, forcing the cast to temporarily revert back to a prior state of experience to preserve the temporality of the series. These small acts of forgetting and dissemblance become ubiquitous. In October 2011, *Jersey Shore* cast member Vinny Guadagnino rebuffed questions from a paparazzo about a large new chest tattoo, pulling his coat closed and chiding, "I can't tell you, that's season five," which would not premiere until January 2012.[10] As Sontag would say, a reality show "is no longer simply the record of reality; 'reality' has been constructed to serve the image."

THE REALITY TELEVISION PRESIDENCY

Donald Trump has spent more than thirty years in the tabloids and on television; it is no surprise that he is perpetually concerned with image and appearances. As Mark Danner has vividly reported in the *New York Review of Books*, Trump's campaign rallies were often held in airport hangars so he could use his Boeing 757 and private helicopter as spectacular backdrops and to amplify by echo the throbbing cheers of his supporters.[11] In *The Art of the Deal* and other books Trump boasts about his shiny Brioni suits, which retail for thousands of dollars, and writes lovingly and expansively about selecting the marble, glass, and fixtures for the lobby of Trump Tower. Though the President disdains reading anything that isn't condensed to bullet points, he was reportedly "delighted to page through a book that offered him 17 window covering options" for the Oval Office.[12]

In the White House, however, President Trump has elevated superficiality from a personal taste and media strategy to a bona fide philosophy of governance. Like

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8 See articles at (http://jezebel.com/tag/keeping-up-with-the-kontinuity-errors).

9 "Interview with Ted Prosser, Owner of Into the Mystic, Coral Bay," On-St. John (http://www.on-stjohn.com/template/tedprosser.html).

10 Vinny from Jersey Shore has a new chest tattoo [Video]. 2011. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5eevEe70Sc).

11 Mark Danner, "The Magic of Donald Trump," New York Review of Books, May 26, 2016 (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/05/26/the-magic-of-donald-trump/); Mark Danner, "The Real Trump," New York Review of Books, December 22, 2016 (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/12/22/the-real-trump/).

most reality show casts, Trump's cabinet is majority white but includes single representatives of the United States' most prominent non-white ethnic groups, all playing stereotyped roles. Trump nominated Ben Carson, a black man with no experience in housing or urban policy, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Nikki Haley, a woman of Indian descent with no foreign policy background, for Ambassador to the United Nations. Secretary of Transportation went to Elaine Chao, a longtime Republican *nomenklatura* who is married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The administration was "desperate to find a Latino for [Secretary of] Agriculture," but failed in the effort and eventually nominated Sonny Perdue, a white, conservative former governor of Georgia.[13] Trump's main advisors on Israel, David M. Friedman and Jason Greenblatt, are Orthodox Jewish lawyers who have never engaged in diplomacy. He has a habit of summoning ethnic tokens to meet with interest groups, calling in Jewish staffers to meet with a group of Jewish reporters, or touring poor, black neighborhoods in Detroit with former *Apprentice* contestant Omarosa Manigault in tow.[14]

When Trump isn't relying on tokenism and stereotypes, he instead follows the rules of his previous occupation: "he's very impressed when somebody has a background of being good on television because he thinks it's a very important medium for public policy," reports a longtime associate. Trump's

All of these decisions follow from Trump's belief that governance and public policy are not merely influenced by media perceptions but are inseparable from them.

favorite compliment for his nominees is that they look like they came from "central casting," a phrase he has used to describe Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—another candidate for that position, Bob Corker, was reportedly rejected for being too short[15]—and other potential hires. He praised Secretary of Defense James Mattis for his resemblance to George C. Scott's silver screen role in *Patton*, one of Trump's favorite films. Fox News pundits have received plum spots in the West Wing and the national security apparatus. All of

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12 Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman, "Trump and Staff Rethink Tactics After Stumbles," New York Times, February 5, 2017, A1 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/us/politics/trump-white-house-aides-strategy.html?_r=0); see also Corey Robin, "Interior Decorator in Chief," Jacobin, February 22, 2017 (https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/02/trump-interior-design-appearance-surface-art-of-the-deal-white-house-drapes/).

13 Tara Palmeri and Josh Dawsey, "Trump Makes Last-Minute Push to add Hispanic to Cabinet," Politico, December 28, 2016 (http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/trump-hispanic-cabinet-233020).

14 Peter Beinart, "What His Pick for Ambassador to Israel Reveals About Trump," The Atlantic, December 19, 2016 (https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/the-cabinet-from-central-casting/511022/).

15 Alex Pfeiffer, "Exclusive: Sen. Corker's Height, Business Dealings Hurt His Secretary Of State Chances," The Daily Caller, December 22, 2016 (http://dailycaller.com/2016/12/22/exclusive-sen-corkers-height-business-dealings-hurt-his-secretary-of-state-chances/).

these decisions follow from Trump's belief that governance and public policy is not merely *influenced* by media perceptions but is *inseparable* from them. Said the same longtime associate, "Don't forget, he's a showbiz guy. He was at the pinnacle of showbiz, and he thinks about showbiz. He sees [policymaking] as a business that relates to the public."[16]

The centrality of aesthetics to the Trump Administration extends beyond personnel to specific policies as well. Trump constantly refers to the "big, beautiful, impenetrable wall" that he will build along the Mexican border—even though in places the wall would be at best a fence or an electronic barrier. All experts acknowledge that physical fortifications are not a practical way to slow undocumented migration. But the big, beautiful wall is, for Trump, less a policy designed to achieve a measurable goal than a universal symbolic solvent for a host of threats to the nation, from decades of manufacturing loss to the drug overdose crisis that now claims more than fifty thousand lives in the United States every year.[17] Wendy Brown argues that border walls "stage... an aura of sovereign power and awe" and sustain a "reassuring world picture" of stability and state power even if they inevitably fail to keep the right people out or in.[18] In this respect the border wall epitomizes Trump's entire political program: to promote the image of sovereignty at the expense of its existence, or again paraphrasing Sontag, to construct a real wall in service of an imagined boundary.

REALITY TELEVISION AND POLITICAL RESISTANCE

Trump was the first reality television presidential candidate, but he may not be the last. Already some Democrats are convinced that if Trump has proven himself a political Superman, only Bizarro can save them. Mark Cuban—star of ABC's *Shark Tank,* essentially a venture capitalist spin on *The Apprentice*—spent the presidential campaign haranguing Trump, offering to serve as Clinton's vice presidential nominee, and bragging about his own electoral prospects.[19] Since Trump's inauguration, Oprah Winfrey and Dwayne Johnson have mused about running for president, and Michael Moore has suggested that Democrats run Winfrey or Tom Hanks. Beyond film and television, Kanye West boasted that he would run for president in 2020, and a number of corporate heads have also been rumored to be exploring bids, including Howard Schulz (Starbucks), Bob Iger

16 Philip Rucker and Karen Tumulty, "Donald Trump Is Holding a Government Casting Call. He's Seeking 'the Look,'" Washington Post, December 22, 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/donald-trump-is-holding-a-government-casting-call-hes-seeking-the-look/2016/12/21/703ae8a4-c795-11e6-bf4b-2c064d32a4bf_story.html?).

17 Rose A. Rudd, Puja Seth, Felicita David, and Lawrence Scholl, "Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2000–2015," Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 65 (December 30, 2016): 1445–1452.

18 Wendy Brown, Walled States, Waning Sovereignty (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 26.

19 Matthew Nussbaum, "Mark Cuban: I'd Consider a Future White House Bid," Politico, May 22, 2016 (http://www.politico.com/story/2016/05/mark-cuban-open-to-future-white-house-bid-223445).

(Disney) and Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook).[20] Trump's ascendance has given a fresh shock to the symbolic boundaries that previously separated business and entertainment from professional politics.

Of course, the United States once previously allowed a professional entertainer into the White House by the name of Ronald Reagan. Though Reagan's career was made largely in film, his presidency holds ominous lessons for our reality television era. Reagan was, like Trump, out of his depth in the Oval Office, ignorant of details and incapable of sustained analysis. As described in Lou Cannon's authoritative account, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, the Reagan Administration was almost literally stage-managed by a circle of aides who served as production assistants, guiding their affable but aloof star through eight years of concocted set pieces and extended plotlines. Reagan frequently quoted films in public and private remarks, and seemed to genuinely confuse cinema with reality, repeatedly citing scenes from war movies as if he had personally witnessed them on the battlefield. What was the result? Reagan escaped his scandal-plagued administration unscathed, was beatified by the conservative movement, and today is remembered as "The Great Communicator" who inaugurated a new era of American politics guided by free-marketeering and Christian moralism.[21] It's no wonder that Trump affiliates from Vice President Mike Pence down have already branded him the next Reagan.[22]

Unlike Reagan, however, Trump came into office with no experience in government, let alone as the chief executive of a large public bureaucracy. Those who worked with Trump in the private sector recall that he ran his corporation largely as a "family-type operation" with little organizational structure and no clear chain of command; one biographer described him as "a performance artist pretending to be a great manager."[23] Trump's fictive and chaotic executive style was reflected in the *Apprentice* boardroom, where he made elimination decisions on a whim, requiring producers to "reverse-engineer the show to make it look like his judgment had some basis in reality."[24] While this personality was well-fitted to reality television, where vertiginous boasts and escalating drama make for good ratings, it has not adapted well to government. Trump's instinct to respond to criticism

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20 James B. Stewart, "With Trump in the White House, Some Executives Ask, Why Not Me?" New York Times, March 9, 2017, B1 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/business/bloomberg-iger-business-executives-president.html).

21 Gil Troy, Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Sean Wilentz, The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974–2008 (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

22 Matthew Nussbaum, "Pence: Trump is the New Ronald Reagan," Politico, September 8, 2016 (http://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/mike-pence-trump-is-new-ronald-reagan-227899).

23 Michael Kruse, "'He's a Performance Artist Pretending to be a Great Manager,'" Politico, February 28, 2017 (http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/hes-a-performance-artist-pretending-to-be-a-great-manager-214836).

24 A.J. Catoline, "Editing Trump: The Making of a Reality TV Star Who Would Be President," CineMontage, October 12, 2016 (http://cinemontage.org/2016/10/editing-trump-reality-tv-star-who-would-be-president/).

with a more aggressive "counterpunch" has ignited or accelerated a web of controversies that now pose a serious threat to his presidency, from his flamboyant denials of collusion with Russia, to his ardent defense of disgraced former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, to his embittered dismissal of FBI Director James Comey. Trump seems not to grasp that as president, his claims and actions carry a symbolic, diplomatic, and legal weight that they did not as a candidate, and that unlike tabloid celebrities and reality stars, leaders of governments are judged more on the basis of the policies they enact than on the attention and controversy they foment.

So far, the reality television president has been his own worst enemy. The most effective way to undermine Trump may be to find ways to fuel his self-destructive impulses from the outside.

So far, the reality television president has been his own worst enemy. With Republican leaders in Congress doing their best to ignore the chaos enveloping the White House, and Democrats more or less shut out of institutional power until after the 2018 midterm elections, the most effective way to undermine Trump may be to find ways to fuel his self-destructive impulses from the outside. By all accounts, Trump is an emotional toddler: impatient and inattentive, demanding "regular doses of praise," fearful of stairs and heights, drenching his overcooked steak in ketchup and demanding two desserts.[25] Just as it is easy for talk show

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25 On Trump's attention span: Jane Mayer, "Donald Trump's Ghostwriter Tells All," The New Yorker, July 25, 2016 (http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/25/donald-trumps-ghostwriter-tells-all) and Michael Kruse, "Donald Trump's Shortest Attribute Isn't His Fingers," Politico, September 8, 2016 (http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/donald-trump-attention-span-214223); on heights and stairs: Richard Linnett, 'Human Logo': Reconstructing the Trump Brand," AdvertisingAge, August 18, 2003 (http://adage.com/article/news/human-logo-reconstructing-trump-brand/94792/) and Gabrielle Bluestone, "Donald Trump Can Absolutely Walk Up and Down the Stairs Like a Big Boy," Jezebel, January 29, 2017 (http://jezebel.com/donald-trump-can-absolutely-walk-up-and-down-stairs-lik-1791749860); on "regular doses of praise": Shane Goldmacher, "How Trump Gets His Fake News," Politico, May 15, 2017 (http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/15/donald-trump-fake-news-238379); on steak: Benny Johnson, "Inside Trump's Secret Dinner: A Side of the President You Don't Ever See," Independent Journal Review, February 26, 2017 (http://ijr.com/2017/02/810965-trump-ditched-the-press-to-have-dinner-heres-how-the-president-acts-when-no-one-is-watching/); on desserts: Michael Scherer and Zeke J. Miller, "Donald Trump After Hours," Time, May 11, 2017 (http://time.com/donald-trump-after-hours/).

crews to prompt, goad, or trick their guests into giving them "the money shot," the willful performance of their own humiliation, it is easy to provoke a person with Trump's personality into buffoonish and compromising outbursts using taunts, insinuations of illegitimacy, and unflattering comparisons to competitors.[26] On the campaign trail the damage of his tantrums was blunted by the electorate's nearly equal disgust for Hillary Clinton, but in power, and without a foil to blame, Trump's meltdowns threaten not only his agenda but the political futures of his Republican comrades. It has been clear for some time that the Republican Party will lash themselves to Trump until he is too politically or legally tarnished to enact their policy goals. The most expedient way to hasten their divorce may be to keep collectively practicing on the president the tactics honed on reality television to turn would-be heroes into heels and fools.

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26 Laura Grindstaff, The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Not Without Precedent:
Populist White Evangelical Support for Trump

by HANNAH DICK

Rather than signaling the end times for a unified conservative religious movement, Trump's election has given many white evangelicals the opportunity to be politically born again.

In 1980, Jerry Falwell mobilized his evangelical Christian Political Action Committee, the Moral Majority, to support the election of a movie star, Ronald Reagan, over a fellow evangelical, Jimmy Carter. On November 8, 2016, 81% of white evangelical Christians [1] voted for Donald Trump, mobilized in part by Falwell's son, Jerry Falwell Jr. [2] It was the highest evangelical margin for a Republican candidate since 2004, and exit polls suggest that the voting populace is reflective of broader demographics in America where evangelicals continue to make up 25% of the population. [3] However, major news outlets failed to adequately cover Trump's courtship of this enormous voting bloc, contributing to the narrative of shock in response to his win. Rather than treating evangelical support for Trump as exceptional, I read it as historically embedded in a racialized, populist politics of the American religious right. In this essay I briefly look at coverage of white evangelicals in mainstream news outlets during the election cycle.

The same refrain is repeated in nearly every story covering the evangelical vote, casting doubt on a strong or unified voting bloc in November: as a thrice-married, non-churchgoing Presbyterian, avowed sinner and lewd public figure, Donald Trump presents a moral contradiction for values voters.

One media narrative around religion in this campaign was that it was not a significant factor in shaping voting behavior – at least not Christianity, which has been much more visible in previous campaign cycles. Compared with the rhetoric of Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, and even Mitt Romney, Trump's sloganeering does not gesture towards a publicly visible evangelical audience. In March of 2016 CNN religion editor Daniel Burke declared Super Tuesday a death knell for the religious right [4] as Trump made significant

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1   http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/

2 Falwell Jr. said that he was offered the position of Secretary of Education in Trump's cabinet, which he declined.

3 http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/

4 http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/02/politics/religion-super-tuesday/index.html

Photo CC BY 2.0 by Jamelle Bouie

gains over more obviously religious candidates like Ted Cruz and Ben Carson. However, Trump's campaign recognized early on the significance of courting the evangelical vote, and last June 'the Donald' professed to be born again. The *Washington Post* embedded the conversion news within an opinion piece [5] about the Trump campaign's firing of Corey Lewandowski. Kathleen Parker explained that the two events were parallel strategic decisions. The *New York Times* deferred to the authority of conservative leader James Dobson in asking the question, "A Born-Again Donald Trump? Believe It, Evangelical Leader Says." [6] Reporters Trip Gabriel and Michael Luo note in the piece that in the process of interviewing Mr. Dobson, he "conceded that Mr. Trump did not exactly fit the typical mold of an evangelical." The frame that accompanied Trump's courtship of the evangelical vote underscored the contradiction between a religious voting bloc and an immoral, decadent, and vitriolic political figure. This established a media frame emphasizing the impossibility of a unified evangelical vote for Trump. The same refrain is repeated in nearly every story covering the evangelical vote, casting doubt on a strong or unified voting bloc in November: as a thrice-married, non-churchgoing Presbyterian, avowed sinner and lewd public figure, Donald Trump presents a moral contradiction for values voters.

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5 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-born-again-campaign/2016/06/21/
c36b94ac-37e8-11e6-8f7c-d4c723a2becb_story.html?utm_term=.701488ccd821
6 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-born-again-campaign/2016/06/21/
c36b94ac-37e8-11e6-8f7c-d4c723a2becb_story.html?utm_term=.701488ccd821c-
36b94ac-37e8-11e6-8f7c-d4c723a2becb_story.html?utm_term=.701488ccd821

By the fall of 2016 mainstream news outlets verified that Trump would cause an irreconcilable schism within evangelical communities. *New York Times* religion reporter Laurie Goodstein published an article on October 17th with the headline, "Donald Trump Reveals Evangelical Rifts That Could Shape Politics for Years."[7] Her November 11th headline reveals something of an about-face: "Religious Right Believes Donald Trump Will Deliver on His Promises."[8] In the week before the election both the *New Yorker*[9] and NPR's *All Things Considered*[10] ran stories on Russell Moore, the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention who spoke out forcefully against evangelical support for Trump. Reports that Liberty University was divided[11] over Falwell Jr.'s endorsement of the GOP candidate further advanced the narrative of schism. CNN reported on Trump's evangelical courtship during the primaries but their coverage of the white evangelical vote was eclipsed by Trump's bluster once he secured the GOP nomination.[12]

Trump's rhetoric is not religious. He is the first president-elect in three decades to fail to conclude his speeches with "God Bless America" (a phrase invented by Richard Nixon but popularized by Reagan in order to appease his evangelical supporters). However, focus on the contradiction between Trump's moral character and a religious voting bloc obscures the strategic political alliance between the religious right and GOP candidates since the 1970s. Evangelical support for Trump is neither exceptional, nor without historical precedent.

Since the 1920s American evangelicals have alternately participated in and retreated from the public sphere, depending on the perceived warmth of the cultural climate towards evangelical precepts. Even though the 1925 Scopes trial was a legislative "win" for evangelicals trying to keep evolution out of public schools, it was quickly met with broad public backlash. Following the trial many evangelicals retreated into the private sphere, only reemerging under Falwell's Moral Majority. Conventional narratives around the rise of the Moral Majority in the late 1970s suggest that it entered the public sphere in order to lobby against legal abortion. However, as Randall Balmer points out, it was not until six years after

7 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/us/donald-trump-evangelicals-republican-vote.html
8   http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/12/us/donald-trump-evangelical-christians-religious-conservatives.html
9 http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/07/the-new-evangelical-moral-minority
10   http://www.npr.org/2016/11/01/500105245/evangelicals-consider-whether-god-really-cares-how-they-vote
11   http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/10/trump-evangelical-falwell-liberty-university-christian-conservatives-214394
12 Burke, Daniel. "7 Types of Evangelicals -- and How They'll Affect 2016." *CNN*. N.p., 2 Mar. 2016. Web. 18 Nov. 2016.
---. "R.I.P. Religious Right, and Other Super Tuesday Takeaways." *CNN*. N.p., 25 Jan. 2016. Web. 28 Nov. 2016.
---. Hughes, Scottie Nell. "Why Christian Evangelicals Could Hold Key in November." *CNN*. N.p., 3 Oct. 2016. Web. 18 Nov. 2016.

Roe v. Wade (1973) that the Moral Majority was mobilized, and then it was in reaction to the IRS pulling tax exemptions from Christian schools that continued to practice segregation. [13, 14]

The tax issue was one reason that many white evangelicals backed Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election over Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter. Even though Reagan's support of abortion rights was ambiguous, Carter's administration took the blame for the IRS decision. Balmer penned an Op-Ed [15] in the *LA Times* in March of 2016 explaining evangelical support for Trump:

> *There is a kind of tragic irony in the religious right's embrace of Trump. A movement that began with the defense of racial segregation in the late 1970s now finds itself in bed with a vulgar demagogue who initially refused to renounce the support of the nation's most notorious white supremacist.*

At the very least, Trump's alliances with white supremacy have not alienated him from a white evangelical support base. Trump's Islamophobic rhetoric also appeals to a posture of victimization that the Christian right has assumed in the context of increasing religious freedoms for religious minorities in this country, but also in reaction to increasing federal rights for women and queer communities. Trump's unpredictability, his intense patriarchalism, [16] and even his anti-traditionalism all render him a charismatic leader in Weber's [17] sense of the term. As such, Trump inhabits a culturally familiar role for some evangelicals who have acutely felt the loss of the culture wars.

Beginning under Reagan's administration, the American political sphere became increasingly polarized over moral and cultural issues, including gay rights, abortion, and religion in schools. Pat Buchanan described a nation at war in his speech [18] at the 1992 Republican Convention:

> *There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side.*

The election of Bill Clinton was seen as a distinct loss in the war over the moral center of America. Under the Obama administration many evangelicals have felt further persecuted by expanded rights for LGBTQ communities.

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13 Balmer, Randall. *Evangelicalism in America*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016. Print.
---. *God in the White House: A History*. Zondervan, 2008. Print.
14 http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133
15   http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0303-balmer-trump-evangelicals-20160303-story.html
16 http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/11/donalds-dick/#.WEnVf6IrKqA
17 Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Trans. A. M Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947. Print.
18 http://buchanan.org/blog/1992-republican-national-convention-speech-148

In this vein, Hillary Clinton is culturally anathema for white evangelicals; they see her as a symbol for increasing (minority) religious freedoms, women's rights, and the attack on patriarchal family structure. As one white evangelical explained,[19]

> *Christians voted for Donald Trump because they felt that the threat a* de facto *third Obama term posed to Christian communities was an* existential *one.*
> *The attacks on Christians from the highest levels of government have been relentless now for nearly a decade. Obama wants to force Christian churches and schools to accept the most radical and most recent version of gender ideology, and he is willing to issue executive decrees on the issue to force the less enlightened to get in line.*

The white evangelical vote for Trump – and against Clinton – must be understood in the context of perceived declining rights for evangelicals who once held a privileged position in the American political sphere.[20] Trump's populist message spoke directly to a white evangelical population increasingly receptive to anti-establishment messaging. There is a distinct affiliation between the populist evangelical message and Trump's post-politics rhetoric.[21]

The white evangelical vote for Trump - and against Clinton - must be understood in the context of perceived declining rights for evangelicals who once held a privileged position in the American political sphere.

News media obliged the privatization of evangelical sentiment, and followed the lead of the two major party campaigns in not talking about religion. This obscured Trump's evangelical courtship, however, ultimately obfuscating the political power of the religious right. Since the election there have been a number of stories about the white evangelical voting bloc in news outlets like the *New York Times*[22] and the *Washington Post*.[23] Reporters are trying to make sense of a singular white evangelical voting bloc after having advanced the narrative of a frac-

19   https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/the-painfully-simple-reason-christians-voted-for-donald-trump-that-liberals

20 Sehat, David. *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*. Oxford; New York N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

21 Mouffe, Chantal. "The 'End of Politics' and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism." *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. Ed. Francisco Panizza. Verso, 2005. 50–71. Print.

22   http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/15/opinion/campaign-stops/god-loves-donald-trump-right.html

23   https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/18/secular-voters-didnt-turn-out-for-clinton-the-way-white-evangelicals-did-for-trump/

tured religious right. To be sure, not all evangelicals are white and not all evangelicals voted for Trump – or against Clinton. Indeed, there are numerous ways of defining and delimiting the concept of "evangelical" in the first place. However, to pretend that religious identity has little bearing on political preference, or that other identity markers like race, gender, and class supersede religious affiliation, is dangerous and misleading. The recent executive order on religious liberty,[24] while significantly toned down from a draft leaked in early February,[25] still indicates that the administration is invested in upholding the specific political aims of the religious right. The order removes tax penalties for religious organizations seeking a broader role in politics, including endorsing candidates or supporting them with donations. Rather than signaling the end times for a unified conservative religious movement, Trump's election has given many white evangelicals the opportunity to be politically born again.

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[24] http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/04/politics/text-executive-order-promoting-free-speech-and-religious-liberty/
[25] https://www.thenation.com/article/leaked-draft-of-trumps-religious-freedom-order-reveals-sweeping-plans-to-legalize-discrimination/

UNSETTLING "INDIAN AMERICAN HINDUS" AND MODEL MINORITY PROJECTS IN TRUMP-ERA "AMERICA"

by PRIYA RAJALAKSHMI CHANDRASEKARAN

South Asians have found themselves lodged between competing stereotypes: the docile and disciplinable "achiever" and the ungovernable "terrorist." Model minority myths inform "Indian American Hindus" of their proximity to "whiteness" while reinforcing a color line that is impossible and dangerous to cross.

Within a week of his inauguration, President Trump signed Executive Order 13769, intending to suspend the Syrian refugee program and halt the entry of people from seven of the world's fifty Muslim-majority countries under the rubric of "Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Entry into the United States." As the "Muslim Ban" rolled out chaotically (and was judicially blocked, redrafted, then re-blocked), contentions about immigration charged the national arena – especially because Executive Order 13767, issued two days earlier, called for the immediate construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border. Shortly thereafter, in late February 2017, a white military veteran man began harassing two brown-skinned immigrant men in a sports bar in Olathe, Kansas. Adam Purinton taunted Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani to "go back to their country" and about if they "had visas" and were in the country "illegally." Returning later that evening with a handgun, Adam Purinton killed Srinivas Kuchibhotla and injured both Alok Madasani and Ian Grillot, who had tried to intervene.[1]

This tragic incident was highly publicized, sparking widespread outrage in the following weeks. To their credit, and reflecting a shift in how public shootings by white males have often been psycho-pathologized in recent decades, most media accounts did not simply pigeonhole Adam Purinton as a deviant individual; they acknowledged, instead, that his violent act was driven by racism working on an ideological and institutional level: specifically, the white nationalist mission espoused by President Trump and many of his supporters. While complex reasons configure this acknowledgment, two oppositional, and relational, projects to remake racial relations in the US played a key role. On the one hand, Black Lives

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1 John Eligon, Alan Blinder and Nida Najar, "Hate Crime Is Feared as 2 Indian Engineers Are Shot in Kansas," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2017.

Matter, which formed in 2012 after the murder of seventeen-year old Trayvon Martin, along with anti-Islamaphobia and Latinx youth justice activism, has visually, rhetorically and historically linked what might be taken as disparate acts into a mainstream narrative about systemic racism. Just as Civil Rights and Black Power organizers contributed to the changes in immigration law that opened US borders to (initially professional) immigrants from many Asian (among other) countries, these contemporary movements have transformed how law enforcement (from the police to Immigration and Customs Enforcement to the FBI) is perceived in the public sphere. On the other hand, white nationalist groups, influenced by the media strategies of "alt-right" proponents like Steve Bannon and Richard Spencer, have grown in numbers and initiated tactics of openly voicing and celebrating xenophobic, racist and misogynistic beliefs, such as those which led twenty-one year old Dylann Roof to open fire during a prayer service at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015, killing nine people and injuring three others in the name of starting a "race war."[2] With Trump's election, insidious and underlying forms of state-sanctioned violence, which anti-racism activists have sought to expose, have blatantly combined with the most virulent and unambiguous expressions of white supremacy. If Adam Purinton was emboldened by this convergence, the mainstream media likewise could not evade it.

One detail broadcast widely by the mainstream media in the aftermath of the Olathe shooting was that Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani were from India and not Iran, as Adam Purinton had apparently assumed.[3] Purinton's fixation on their being "from Iran," a country named in Trump's ban, can hardly be coincidental. The response of many officials, businesses and media outlets was to affirm that Indians are "welcome here" and that "Indian Americans" are legitimate members of the US body politic. Most notably, Kansas recognized March 16th as "Indian-American Appreciation Day."[4] Though in some ways constructive (for example, the FBI eventually announced that it would launch a federal investigation because Kansas has no hate crime statute), the attention paid to the issue of misidentification is troubling. While illuminating the dangerous breed of racism that Trump's rise has legitimized and exacerbated, the persistent emphasis placed on Purinton's failure to appropriately identify the ethnicity of his targets also proliferates the idea that part of the tragedy here stems from the fact that Indian immigrant professionals were located, erroneously, on the wrong side of "the color line," and that their lives would have been safe had they been correctly identified.

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2 The nine victims who died in the Charleston shooting were Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson and Clementa C. Pinckney (the church's pastor and a South Carolina state senator).
3 Samantha Schmidt, "Suspect in Kansas bar shooting of Indians apparently thought they were Iranians," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2017.

In the first place, the very notion of a mis(taken) identification assumes some basis of accuracy, which, in this case, only superficially applies. Had Purinton's targets been from Iran, his association of them with terrorism or cultural invasion would have been no less arbitrary.

In other words, some of the attempts to address the social and racist nature of Purinton's actions have also bolstered faulty premises undermining that same cause. In the first place, the very notion of a mis(taken) identification assumes some basis of accuracy, which, in this case, only superficially applies. Had Purinton's targets been from Iran, his association of them with terrorism or cultural invasion would have been no less arbitrary.[5] For Purinton, "from Iran" did not reference an area defined by geographic boundaries or a place with a particular political history and structure of governance, but signified "possibly Muslim (therefore potential terrorist)," "culturally alien (therefore inassimilable)" and/or "brown and upwardly mobile in America (therefore threatening to whiteness)." In each of these cases, his identification of Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani was not mistaken. Despite the anti-Muslim Hindu nationalist project of some of its government leaders, India still has the third largest Muslim population in the world, much larger than Iran; furthermore, the proximity of India to Iran has contributed to undeniable cultural affinities over the long duree. These two men were brown and from a general region in Asia that, in Purinton's mind, collapsed together into a monolith assumed to be Muslim. The very real threat of this conflation echoed in the words of Alok Madasani's father days after the shooting, as his son lay in a hospital bed. He appealed to parents in India "not to send their children" to the US. In so doing, Mr. Madasani was addressing a segment of the population for whom the "Modern Indian" Dream culminates in a voyage to "America" – crossing the threshold into a place of perceived possibility, a place unfettered by corruption or infrastructural and bureaucratic impasses, a place that rewards individual achievement. Instead, he was informing them, "America" might also be a place where one's best efforts could end in grief, loss and death, and where Indians, even those upwardly mobile, were in peril.[6] They were hovering dangerously close to that aforementioned "color line."

Protestors Demonstrating Against the Trump Administration's Muslim Ban.
Photo CC BY 2.0 by Shelby Bell

This "line," it should be noted, is less a line than countless points of inflection, performance, violence, race baiting, policy-making, alliance formation, acknowledgement and disavowal that produce an effect of continuity and delineation. It is created, in part, by casting certain social groups as proximate to "whiteness"/"real Americanness" while, simultaneously, racializing them as incapable of being incorporated into the emblematic body politic. Because whiteness is not only a constructed identity, but also one that is constructed as ideal, it comprises the unstable foundation on which the prevailing "imagined community" and "Dream" of "America" teeters. Because it has no sound biological, logical or moral basis, it must be fabricated, and that fabrication must be reinforced, in a combination of aggressive and nuanced ways, which are tailored to specific historical circumstances, in order to masquerade as a justifiable, organizing principle for daily life and human aspiration. It is on these shaky grounds that the "color line," and its very production, becomes a kind of rope: tautly marking divisions; bending to accommodate or exclude particular bodies; becoming the high wire on which to precariously enact one's daily life; transmuting into lasso, lash or noose, undeniably bloodied by history; but appearing, also, to varying degrees and in varying ways, as a cord to clutch onto, or to release, for basic survival.

An opinion piece in the *Washington Post* by Raj Halder connects this Kansas shooting to a racial strategy employed by the Trump campaign in its eleventh-hour appeal to "Indian American Hindus" of professional classes in October 2016.[7] Trump's brief focus on this demographic before the November election was

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7 Raj Halder, "Indian Americans won't be safe as long as the White House is inciting fear," *Washington Post*, March 14, 2017.

largely instrumentalist, as he sought voters in the key swing states of Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio. His campaign put out a series of television ads styled after those of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the kurta wearing self-proclaimed "bachelor" who presents himself as a beacon of neoliberal development and conservative Hindu tradition. Modi, like Trump, also rose to power through populist rhetoric and financial ties; he too is linked to anti-Muslim nationalists (his BJP party is intimately linked to political Hindu fundamentalist groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Vishva Hindu Parishad, which have orchestrated xenophobic violence in India); despite his wholesome demeanor, he too has been ensconced in scandal (while cleared of complicity by official channels in 2012, it is important to note that Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002, presiding over Hindu-Muslim violence that resulted in at least 1000 deaths and many violent attacks including rape -- the vast majority of victims of which were Muslim).

These ads showcased Trump speaking some Hindi and wishing Hindus a "Happy Diwali" (a reference to the religious new year). They also incorporated images of the 2008 terrorist attack in Bombay and presented "a spin on a popular Trump campaign sign that says 'Great for America' — 'Great for US-India Relationship.'"[8] In addition, around this time, Trump held a publicized event in Edison, New Jersey. As Halder notes, this is a region where the self-proclaimed "Dotbusters" (referring to the *bindis* or colored dots many Hindu women wear on their foreheads) threatened immigrants in the late-1980s. As a shadowy precursor to the anti-immigrant sentiment that led in February 2017 to Srinivas Kuchibhotla's death in a bar in Kansas, this hate group formed during the epoch of Reagan's "trickle down" economics, when the wealthiest 1% of US society began its rise to astronomical wealth and when class anxieties for the poor and middle class intensified. Thirty years later, Trump and his staff, Steve Bannon chief among them, have been able to channel the economic anxiety, social isolation, stress, insatiate desire, shame and bodily fear that evolved out of that very trajectory – and which has, in many people's lives, manifest as debt, illness, foreclosure, imprisonment, stagnant wages and unemployment.

However, the Trump campaign had a challenge: "Indian Americans" lean overwhelmingly toward the Democratic Party. This has largely been true even for those who benefit from upper class tax breaks and might be (or perceive themselves to be) unaffected by cuts to social programs or the potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act. "When it comes time to vote," said Shalabh Kumar, who heads the Republican Hindu Coalition, "… they identify themselves as minorities."[9] This voting pattern might also reflect other motives, such as expressions of patriotism, and/or continued investment in "America" as a place of "equal opportunity." Regardless, the Trump campaign needed to diminish the identification of wealthy South Asian voters with both working class South Asians and a broader People of Color voting coalition, as well as to persuade them that alignment with

8 Maxwell Tani, "Donald Trump speaks Hindi in unusual new campaign ad aimed at Indian-American voters," *Business Insider*, October 27, 2016.
9 Ibid.

Republican "conservative values" would reduce the threat of exposure to anti-immigrant violence. As David Harvey lays out in a *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, contemporary political conservatism in the US represents a post-1970 alliance of the capitalist class and the Christian Right as a means of gaining electoral power via the working class vote. In contrast, the conservatism proffered by these ads and speeches targeting "Indian American Hindus," and by the broader Republican Hindu project, appealed to new citizens' ties to a non-Christian religion and a "foreign" country. Fiscal conservatism and class advancement, rather than cultural affiliation, could stand in as the embodiment of merit and belonging. Indeed, many identifying with this subset of South Asian Americans maintain a connection to India through their financial and geographic mobility: their wealth affords them the ability to visit India, where they had previously enjoyed class and caste privilege. Modi's rise, and that of anti-Muslim populism in India, has paralleled their own. In other words, these voters needed to see themselves both as different (a cultural minority) and as exceptional (a model minority): therefore, capable of belonging in an idealized "America" whose "greatness" preceded them.

Like the voters Trump was soliciting, Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani had come from India and were poised to live the "American Dream." In reality, immigrants who once belonged to professional classes often experience "downward mobility" in the US as they find their degrees or experience are not relevant or valued the same way. [10] However, as employees in the tech industry, these two men (and their families) seemed to experience success. They had received their Masters degrees at US institutions. Then they began work as engineers for a GPS navigation and communications device company. They lived in a middle-class suburb among neighbors with whom they identified. If narratives like theirs are affirming for affluent immigrants, confrontations with racist violence like Adam Purinton's serve as a reminder that, in the final instance, owning a home, however big, will not mean being at home or feeling safe in the Trump era.

Here we see how professional "Indian American Hindus" are being praised, on the one hand, and racially targeted, on the other. They are simultaneously being informed of their proximity to "whiteness"/"real Americanness" and reminded of a line that is impossible and dangerous to cross. Incongruous as it may seem, this dichotomy benefits Trump's brand of populist white nationalism, which, like many products bearing his name, sells something less golden than it purports: in this case, the "product" is

> *Here we see how professional "Indian American Hindus" are being praised, on the one hand, and racially targeted, on the other. They are simultaneously being informed of their proximity to "whiteness"/"real Americanness" and reminded of a line that is impossible and dangerous to cross.*

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10 Deepak Singh, *How May I Help You? An Immigrant's Journey from MBA to Minimum Wage* (Berkeley, CA: University of CA Press, 2017).

anti-populace, pro-corporate and pro-big bank (a la Goldman Sachs) capitalism. Political profits here are generated by exacerbating and capitalizing on racial, gender and class anxieties and inter-group hostilities, and doubling down on the value of "whiteness" as an identity.

This might explain Trump's belated response to the Kansas shooting. A brief, timely statement would have been an easy way to deflect some accusations of racism soon after his inauguration and highly criticized Executive Orders. This was, after all, just a few months after he had tried to solicit Indian American Hindu voters (it's certainly possible, however, that a lack of success with this constituency might have shifted his priorities).[11] In *The Atlantic*, Anand Giridharadas describes how his attempts to solicit a statement from the Trump administration met with silence until just before his article appeared online. He then received the elusive: "The President condemns all acts of violence against the American people." It took six days, Giridharadas observes, for Trump to publicly address what had happened; he did so in his first address to Congress, along with referencing the threats on and vandalism of Jewish Community Centers (JCCs).[12] In contrast to his earlier "'Great for America' — 'Great for US-India'" campaign, he did not allude to any bilateral alliance or exceptional immigrant status. Vijay Prashad notes that Trump's changing platform on Asians in US tech industry and his growing resistance to the H-1B visa program (which allows U.S. companies to temporarily employ foreign workers in "specialty" occupations) indicates his gradual progression towards Steve Bannon's long held antagonism.[13] Even if that is true, the transformation will remain incomplete. After all, fostering confusion and uncertainty are among the trademark strategies Trump brags about in *Art of the Deal*. Five months later, in August 2017, Trump came under fire for similar equivocation in his response to (and lack of outright condemnation for) the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which (mostly male) white supremacists, armed with guns, clubs and shields, shouted Nazi slogans and enacted lynching allegories.[14]

"Model minority" tropes are necessarily oxymoronic and unstable. They elevate those they diminish. They discipline both the groups they are attributed to and other groups, by reducing complex social trajectories rooted in class, caste, geopolitical, hetero-patriarchal privilege to refrains of merit crudely stamped onto a category of people; furthermore, the very process of "stamping" produces the category: in this case, "Indian American Hindus." Beyond its association with

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11 Kanchan Chandra, "Why most Indian American Hindus do not support Trump," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2016.

12 Anand Giridharadas, "A Murder in Trump's America," *The Atlantic*, February 28, 2017.

13 Vijay Prashad, "Inventing Enemies," *Frontline*, March 31, 2017.

14 Soon after this harrowing event, Steve Bannon was fired and returned to head the right-wing Breitbart News, where he claimed he would have more freedom to pursue his "war." It should be noted, furthermore, that the "protestors" in Charlottesville were dressed in camouflage, merging of white nationalism with a glorification and re-claiming of military power, which has been a mechanism of US global intervention. Heather Heyer was killed, and nineteen people injured, when a white supremacist man ran his car through a group counter-protesting this racist rally.

any social group as an identity or a stereotype, "model minority" reflects a strategy in line with what historian Cedric Robinson demonstrated as the prevailing logic of racial capitalism. "Minorities" in the US have repeatedly been set against each other to re-make and deploy racial capitalist projects at key moments of domestic transformation and empire expansion. Sara Ahmed writes, "The impossibility of reducing hate to a particular body allows hate to circulate in an economic sense, working to differentiate some others from other others, a differentiation that is never 'over,' as it awaits for others who have not yet arrived." [15] As a solidarity exercise, if we think of "minorities" as collectivities that must struggle against hegemonic power to advance for their social interests and whose alliances the ruling classes seek to fragment, then this concept also applies to disenfranchised white communities. Historical analyses by Theodore Allen and Pem Buck, for example, show how whiteness in colonial Virginia and Kentucky was constructed as a kind of model minority project, to distinguish poor "whites" from poor "blacks" to maintain exploitative systems of field labor and prevent revolution. [16]

The term "model minority" is attributed to William Patterson a half-century ago. In a *New York Times* article in 1966, he postulated on why Japanese Americans were "so different" from other nonwhite groups and able to climb the economic ladder over generations in a way he felt mirrored European immigrant groups that eventually passed as white, despite the fact that Japanese Americans faced racism and couldn't pass. [17] As with Daniel Moynihan's highly influential and criticized report on "The Negro Family" issued a year earlier, Patterson tried to find the answers to complex, historical and spatial inequities in the US within the realm of "culture" and national identity. Though Patterson meant this term to distinguish Japanese Americans from other Asian American groups, it became a broader stereotype. On the heels of the 1965 Immigration Act, the "Model Minority Myth" was deployed to instruct immigrants and their children to behave as grateful capitalist subjects and "Americans" while typecasting poor communities of color as culturally depraved (a la the "Moynihan Report"). It masked government disinvestment from social supports in cities. It obscured histories of racism and indenture that many Asian immigrants and Asian Americans faced. It ignored class and gender differences, geopolitical factors causing immigration and highly varied levels of social hardship within the category "Asian Americans." It distracted from the violence the US government was perpetrating abroad in Asian countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia and Afghanistan. It also stoked tensions with groups of white Americans who saw this "easy success" as a threat.

After 2001 and 9/11, South Asians have found themselves lodged between competing stereotypes: the docile and disciplinable "achiever" and the ungovernable "terrorist," the latter being a "figure.... mobilized in close proximity to the

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15 Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," Social Text 79 (2004): 123.

16 Pem Davidson Buck. *Worked to the Bone: Race, Class, Power, and Privilege in Kentucky* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002). Theodore W. Allen. *The Invention of the White Race Volume One: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London: Verso, 1994).

17 William Petersen, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," *The New York Times*, January 9, 1966. Accessed from *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times* (1851-2006), 180.

figure of the asylum seeker." [18] Even those who have gained wealth can often only move "freely" within a narrow space of expression. "Indian American Hindus" have gained some wiggle room (or the illusion of it) as an effect of political projects of cultural distinction and vulgarization: Prime Minister Modi's nationalism yoking their "country of origin" to Hinduism, a religion deemed "safe" to the US and global capitalist interests; passive stereotypes lingering from British colonial portrayals; and the depoliticization and commodification of "Indian culture" through the yoga and textile industries.

However, "Indian American Hindus" are not as readily or conveniently distinguished from groups being racialized as "terrorists" – either in actuality, in mainstream representations or in the minds of people like Adam Purinton; first, "Indian American Hindus" are themselves widely diverse and don't present as one unit; second, "Indian Americans" includes both Muslims and non-Muslims from the same region in India who often share more culturally than those from the same faith; third, many aspects of Indian culture and history are Islamic; fourth, "Indian Americans" share philosophical, cultural and physical features with people from other parts of South Asia and the Middle East North Africa [MENA] region; and finally, as Prashad writes, "Hollywood has made it a habit to hire South Asians to play 'terrorists,'" potentially further blurring the distinction between these groups. [19]

While the "Dotbusters" of the 1980's openly directed hostility toward Hindus as the symbol of the "immigrant enemy," contemporary violence targeting this group has most often been cast, ostensibly, as "misfire." Beginning in the wake of 9/11 and continuing until the present moment of this new "Trump Era," there have been a rash of documented incidences of racist acts targeting South Asians "mistaken for people of Arab descent": for example, the murders of Sikh gas station owner Balbir Singh Sodhi in Mesa, Arizona and Pakistani Muslim Waqar Hassan in his Dallas grocery store in the weeks following 9/11, and the slaughter of six people at a gurdwara (Sikh temple) in Oak Creek Wisconsin in August 2012 by a white supremacist, who was also a veteran. [20] Soon after Purinton's Kansas shooting, a man in Florida attempted to set fire to an Indian-owned convenience store because he wanted to "run the Arabs out of our country." [21]

But are these misfires? Prashad rightly challenges the idea that racism adheres to any kind of authentic or ethical standard: what matters, bluntly, is what one appears to be. Moreover, if race is "socially constructed," it is constructed, I would argue, out of intentionally slick material -- which is to say that religious, ethnic, national and racial identifications slide, slip and temporarily latch onto real bod-

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18 Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 79 (2004): 135-136.

19 Vijay Prashad, "Inventing Enemies," *Frontline*, March 31, 2017.

20 Emine Saner, "Why are Sikhs Targeted by Anti-Muslim Extremists?" *The Guardian*, August 8, 2012. Tamar Lewin. "Sikh Owner of Gas Station is Fatally Shot in Rampage." *New York Times*, September 17, 2001. The six victims who died in the Oak Creek shooting were Paramjit Kaur, Prakash Singh, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, Suveg Singh and Satwant Singh Kaleka (the gurdwara's founder).

21 Amy B. Wong, "A Man in a store assumed Indian owners were Muslim. So he tried to burn it down, police say," *Washington Post*, March 12, 2017.

ies, voices, places and practices, often following the gravitational pull of least ideological resistance. [22] This makes it difficult for "minorities" (social groups with scant institutional power) to secure a place in society or fasten solidarities. How do you get people whose bodies and families face existential peril to reinforce and re-inscribe the very ideology that threatens them? One way is to stoke their need to perform a prescribed "Americanness" – to behave in ways and support views that visibly distinguish them -- in order to build a visible racial "border wall" and secure (tentative) safety on the "inside."

For white men whose masculinity is rooted in the belief that a "good American man" materially provides for his family, the inability to do so can incite hatred, anger and frustration (at self and others). The brown-skinned model minority immigrant who can be that "good American man" is therefore emasculating, threatening to the assumption of white male potency.

In addition, the persistent stereotype of the hard-working Asian American has paralleled the rise of the tech industry and financial capitalism, assaults on and crises of unions and the failure of many small farms and manufacturing companies, as corporations have merged and gained power in a context of globalized "free trade" (as well as the rise of reality TV and Trump as a public figure). The job and financial insecurities of white Americans of the falling middle class in the context of corporate capitalism are symbolically tied to brown-skinned outsiders who appear to arrive and quickly achieve things like private homeownership. They are seen, Prashad points out, not only as "terrorists" but also as "usurpers of high-tech jobs." As a parallel, the post-9/11 violence against South Asian small business owners reveals a white supremacist response to something more than supposed "terrorism;" it is arguably also a white supremacist response to perceived threatening displays of entrepreneurship and meritocracy. It is striking how entangled stereotypes pathologizing the "negro family" in the Moynihan report were with heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions about the "white family" as a core tenet of the American identity and ideal. For white men whose masculinity is rooted in the belief that a "good American man" materially provides for his family, the inability to do so can incite hatred, anger and frustration (at self and others). The brown-skinned model minority immigrant who can be that "good American man" is therefore emasculating, threatening to the assumption of white male potency. The resulting violence is a hyper-expression of another masculine ideal: physical domination – making someone bleed. It often

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22 Michael Omi and Howard Winant. R*acial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).

gets channeled towards undocumented immigrants because they cannot harness (and are intensely subjected to) the power of the state.

Building on post-9/11 "anti-terrorism" fear and rhetoric, the new administration's xenophobic vision has widened the opening to discharge these class anxieties. For disenfranchised white voters, the renewed freedom of expression involves exerting power but does not actually empower. Moreover, the very criteria by which the elite among brown-skinned immigrants are encouraged to assert their worthiness and symbolic right to belong – being "professionals," climbing economic ladders and concealing the class backgrounds, caste privilege and social connections that paved the way for upward mobility – are the precise reasons why white nationalists seek to expunge them. In the eyes of groups that feel nostalgia for a sense of recognition, official celebrations of other groups might appear as affronts, thereby exacerbating, rather than diminishing, the potential for violence. Moreover, Trump's political rise has drawn on tropes and hallmarks of white supremacy to direct and fragment a commonly felt frustration about "dreams deferred" after four decades of national policies and transnational agreements that have enabled corporations and the super rich to not only accrue massive wealth but also wield phenomenal power in regional, national and global politics. Now, dual deceptions inherent in the ideal of "America" face exposure and crisis, and they are also coming to a head: that of whiteness as the embodiment of achievement (only because of its hidden guarantee of extra worth and capacity), and that of "a nation of immigrants" as the enactment of equal opportunity (even though class, race, ethnicity and gender have always, and systematically, shaped trajectories of possibility).

In the 1980s, Desis (peoples identifying/identified as South Asian) challenged the Dotbusters by building solidarities across different social identities; Halder calls for similar allied strategies now.[23] Building off previous efforts, groups like DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving) are organizing against the Trump-agenda through alliances such as the #NoWallNoBan movement that cut across lines of racial and class division.[24] One challenge now is how, in the face of Trump-era violence and existential threats that are often positioned against each other, differently situated groups can use this moment of exposure and crisis in the era of corporatocracy to, in fact, work against the divide and conquer logic of racism capitalism. Taking on this challenge means refusing stereotypes (of others or ourselves) that might, in the short term, work to our benefit and working to break free from modes of survival that are based on our distinctiveness, individuation or merit, because, ultimately, grasping for this kind of tentative security casts shadows in the places that need most sun. This means strategically and collectively rejecting the "model" status in order to destabilize the bedrock of "minority" making on which it stands.

23 Sameer Rao, "South Asian Americans Must Unite to Fight Trump Policies," *Colorlines,* March 15, 2017.
24 Nazia Kazi, "#NoWallNoBan: Muslims and Latinxs as Enemies of the State," *Truthout,* January 27, 2017.

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FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AS POST-ELECTION GO-BETWEENS

by STACY TORRES

Contrary to prevailing ivory tower stereotypes, many academics work in less of a bubble than it might appear. How do we engage students with different viewpoints and help them engage home communities and places faraway from academia?

Photo CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 by Ryan Yang

W ith the brute reality of a Trump administration sinking in, it's tempting to give up on talk. But as we move forward with taking action, I'd urge people not to abandon talking, especially to people of different political affiliations. Given the stakes, continuing conversations with people who disagree with us is critical to long-term organizing against the threats of Trump era policies that could reverberate for generations

Contrary to prevailing ivory tower stereotypes, many academics work in less of a bubble than it might appear. Take my institution, for example. I teach sociology at the University at Albany, SUNY, and my students come from a wide swath of New York State, including New York City, Long Island, the Lower Hudson Valley, and economically struggling areas upstate. For many the journey to college is

more profound than geography: Underrepresented minority students make up 40 percent of our undergraduate student body and 43 percent of students are the first in their family to attend college. The demographics are similar to many state educational systems nationwide, including the UC system in which underrepresented minorities comprised 27 percent of undergraduates and 42 percent were first-generation college students.

> *We shouldn't underestimate our working-class, first-generation college students as bridges to communities outside the proverbial ivory tower.*

We shouldn't underestimate our working-class, first-generation college students as bridges to communities outside the proverbial ivory tower. My students' journeys resemble something akin to immigrating to another country, as they learn new customs, gain exposure to new ideas, and develop new identities, political and otherwise. The liberal values we expose them to on college campuses will go home with them. We should try our hardest to understand where they're coming from and encourage them to talk to their different constellations of family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

I began this journey almost twenty years ago. Like many of my students I grew up working-class, the first in my family to attend college and the only to graduate. I have as many degrees as my younger sister has children. These days I straddle both worlds and don't feel completely at ease in either. At times in my academic life, I've felt as though I've wandered into the recent SNL skit, "The Bubble," where mostly white, similarly dressed people nod in agreement in an expensive, glass-encased urban area resembling brownstone Brooklyn.

I was surprised but not as shocked at the election results as many academic friends and colleagues. The outcome stirred memories of my conversations with people I've loved who voted Republican. While I didn't always agree with their positions, my proximity forced me to listen and find common ground where possible. One of the challenges to breaking down this bubble is that many academics from middle and upper-class backgrounds don't have much practice interacting with working-class or conservative folks. A grad school friend came from a family of PhDs, and academia was the family business. Several of my classmates' parents were professors. My father still has only the faintest idea of what I do. Even those of us from humble beginnings get rusty as we distance ourselves by choice and circumstance from the communities we grew up in.

I hadn't chatted with my father about the election (as a legal resident he cannot vote; as a skeptic, he thinks all politicians are corrupt anyway). But his reaction surprised me. "I'm very upset," he said the day after. He worried about Trump's hostility to undocumented immigrants and his racist and sexist language. I thought he'd be neutral or perhaps even support the outcome. Despite facing discrimination and forging diverse friendships (a natural byproduct of living in New York City for more than 40 years), my father internalized a lot of racism. He entered the United States as an undocumented immigrant from Chile in 1975 and received his share of ethnic slurs and other discriminatory behavior. Growing

up I felt horrified and ashamed at his misogynistic language and anger when he laughed with approval at Archie Bunker's racist quips on *All in the Family* reruns, a stark contrast to my mother's tolerance and the progressive views of my schoolmates' parents.

An office-hours conversation with my student, a young Dominican-American woman, reminded me of how far my father has come. Prior to the election she described a conversation she overheard in Spanish at a beauty salon in New York City between women Trump voters. "They said they hoped he kept out lazy immigrants," she told me, surprised. Other students, particularly white men, spoke about trying to understand Trump support in their home communities and their bumpy road to a political identity at odds with their upbringing. Today my father is a more tolerant and respectful person. I like to think my sisters and I contributed to his evolution, standing up to his bullying and disagreeing with his bigoted views over the years.

To support students beginning these discussions, we need to ensure they're comfortable in the classroom. That doesn't mean condoning intolerance, but we shouldn't assume the same outrage about the new administration. In past election cycles I remember my discomfort with subtle references to *we*, *our side*, and jokes about far-flung conservatives that people only interacted with during strained Thanksgivings. I rarely mentioned how the thoughtful people in my life felt let down by Democrats. My mother stopped voting Democratic in 1992, slighted by Hillary Clinton's remarks about choosing career over staying home to bake cookies. After losing her secretarial job in the early 1990s recession, Mom had no choice but to string together side jobs like selling Avon and stuffing envelopes while staying home with her four daughters. She baked cookies for us since she couldn't afford to purchase store-bought goodies. Or my Libertarian ex-husband, a poor kid from the Lower East Side who clawed his way out of a chaotic household and read Ayn Rand cover-to-cover despite growing up with a portrait of JFK in his family's tiny apartment.

Opening communication with students requires patience. I often need to remind myself of the topsy-turvy nature of forming political identity, especially for my first-generation college students who've traveled a great distance and feel pulled in all directions. Where do they come from and where do they want to go? The journey is scary but exhilarating with potential. I plan to redouble my efforts to put myself in my students' shoes and help them learn from each other.

How do we engage students with different viewpoints and help them engage home communities and places faraway from academia? Sociology lends itself to these exchanges.

How do we engage students with different viewpoints and help them engage home communities and places faraway from academia? Sociology lends itself to these exchanges. In a course I co-taught at NYU, we had students participate in

family policy debates and randomly assigned them to argue the conservative or progressive perspective. For our mostly liberal students, arguing "the other side" forced them to take seriously views different than their own. Last semester my students wrote an op-ed about any topic they wanted related to the course's focus on gender inequality. Many didn't believe at first they had enough "expertise" to say something. These assignments asked them to join the public conversation, to make a persuasive argument and support their opinion with facts. My seniors collected their own data for mini-research projects in which they interviewed peers, family members, and a range of community members including older adults, police officers, and a trans Latina neighbor.

For those students from more affluent backgrounds who hail from families with Republican and Trump supporters, sociology pedagogy can also help open these lines of communication, collaboration, and exchange. Students can interview family members about their backgrounds and the formation of their political beliefs. And sending them on their own data collection missions may help bridge other differences. For instance, students can take field trips to different campus-based political clubs and interview people with opposing views. I could imagine exchange programs that last a day to a semester between students in more liberal and conservative areas or at elite private universities and state and city schools (think a Stanford-Cal State or CUNY-Columbia exchange). Dialogue can also begin earlier than college. My department's "University in the High School" program representative consults with area high schools who want to offer sociology courses. The visits and feedback we provide offers another opportunity to build these bridges for discussion earlier in students' educational trajectories and a path to encourage studying sociology in the future.

I cannot predict what students will remember from my courses, if anything, but I won't regret asking them to present a coherent argument and to understand other people's perspectives on their own lives. Given collective fatigue and uncertainty, it's tempting to commiserate in the warm company of those who share our political views. But preparing students to participate in democracy requires that we encourage them not to dodge uncomfortable conversations. And as we academics strive to lead by example in this endeavor, we can deepen our empathy by learning from the dispatches of our first-generation college students as they traverse campus and home.

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TEACHING IN A TRUMP COUNTRY:
The Political Potential of Introductory Sociology

by SHELLY STEWARD

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Shelly Steward discusses the experience and challenges of teaching sociology at a community college in a conservative, rural area during the 2016 election cycle. She concludes that teaching introductory sociology can provide common tools for students to use that can bridge ideological divides, suggesting a need for quality sociology educators across educational institutions.

FROM BERKELEY TO NORTH DAKOTA

Berkeley, California and Williston, North Dakota are 1,470 miles apart. A lot changes when you make the drive. The landscape slowly flattens out, the air becomes drier, and rich green gives way to endless brown. Speed limits go up and populations go down. Roads get narrower and the sky gets bigger. There are other changes, too. When I headed east during the beginning of presidential primary season, campaign signs took a decidedly red turn; it was in Idaho that I

saw the first Trump banner. I came to the northwest corner of North Dakota in late 2015, planning to study workers' experiences of the shale oil boom. Like so many, I did not predict the turn national politics would take. I did not envision my research dealing with explicitly political ideas. As the primaries heated up, though, discussing the election became unavoidable, both with colleagues back at Berkeley and my subjects and friends in Williston. Many people working in the oilfields saw the election as a chance to counter a slumping industry with decreased environmental regulation. The people I talked to alongside oilrigs, in frack-sand trucks, and on the streets of Williston looked to the election to turn the tide of falling oil prices and vanishing jobs.

As a Berkeley sociologist living in Williston, I found myself caught between two discourses—one held by the oil workers I spent my days with, another among fellow academic sociologists. Based on contributions to political campaigns, academics and oil and gas workers make up the most ideologically liberal and conservative professions.[1] These differences run deep, and are rooted to the careers themselves. Many academics see freedom of speech and accessible education as central to their profession;[2] oil workers see environmental deregulation and privatization as central to theirs. I heard these two discourses daily and struggled to draw any lines between them; each side seemed closed to the other.

As the election cycle developed, so too did my discomfort with my research. What was my role as a researcher when the worldviews of my participants were at times so deeply misaligned with my own? How could I reconcile my deep concerns for the world with the daily task of interviewing for my emerging dissertation? What was the value in understanding the experiences of insecurity among this particular population of workers when there were pressing, disturbing realities that called for immediate action? I felt increasingly disillusioned by my research, isolated from social action, and doubtful of my discipline's role in instigating change.

> *As the election cycle developed, so too did my discomfort with my research. What was my role as a researcher when the worldviews of my participants were at times so deeply misaligned with my own?*

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1 Adam Bonica, Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections: Public version 1.0 [Computer file]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Libraries. Accessed July 1, 2017. ‹http://data.stanford.edu/dime›.
2 Neil Gross, Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

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TEACHING IN TRUMP COUNTRY

Once settled in Williston, I started teaching sociology at the local college, hoping to establish closer ties to the community and develop a sense of connection to the place I was living and studying. As with my research, I did not initially see this endeavor as holding political significance. Williston State College is a small 2-year college, one of 11 campuses of the North Dakota University System. It offers free tuition for local high school graduates, the result of a partnership between a private trust and matched public funds. It has a strong petroleum sciences department and several popular vocational programs. I was the sole sociology instructor.

As the primaries developed, I faced the dilemma—and the opportunity—of how to deal with the election in the classroom. Campaigns were increasingly permeating everyday discourse and occupying much of my own mental space. Dealing with electoral politics in the classroom seemed unavoidable. Nonetheless, initially, I avoided the topic, worrying that the emotion of the elections would detract from an inviting classroom experience. I was aware of vastly varying ideas, attitudes, and emotions among students, as well as a gulf between my own views and those of many locals. This was, after all, the center of Red-State America. New to the campus and an outsider to the community, I made a largely unconscious decision to avoid touching too heavily on politics. I pulled examples from seemingly neutral topics—local news developments, pop culture, campus goings on. I avoided what might be seen as loaded terms or a liberal bias; I did not want to limit conversation before it happened. Many students seemed largely disengaged. I worried; perhaps I had not avoided touchy topics enough and been written off as a Berkeley liberal. Or perhaps I had watered things down, avoided

controversy, and made class boring and un-relatable. I visited other classrooms—agriculture, anatomy, industrial safety. These looked more like the classrooms I was familiar with at Berkeley: some participation, some signs of engagement as students asked for clarification or related curriculums to their lives. I tried different approaches, introduced new classroom activities, and talked to other instructors. I rearranged desks and showed comedic YouTube clips. Most significantly, I turned to the students. I asked them relentlessly what they thought of concepts and ideas. I asked them what was interesting and what did not make sense. I got a lot of shrugs.

Once we as a class could see society as an object of study—as important, complex, and approachable—we could move on to further questions—why inequality is problematic, what is shared among citizens in a society, why we should question social structures.

Eventually, though, basic questions began to emerge—questions I had never explicitly answered before, questions I had always taken for granted. One student raised his hand for the first time in weeks to ask why we were still asking questions about society. Another shared over lunch in the cafeteria that she struggled to see herself in a discussion about gender in society. I had jumped too deep into topics that I assumed had relevance—gender, race, family dissolutions, economic insecurity. But students had a much more basic series of questions; they asked how studying the make-up of society could help them, and why understanding society was a worthwhile goal. They struggled to see themselves in questions of structure, gender, class, race, and even politics. These were questions underlying the topics I had introduced, but had not taken the time to explicate. I slowly realized the assumptions underlying so much of sociology were not nearly as universal as I had unconsciously thought. To me, society was inherently fascinating and studying it made sense; after all, I'd been doing it for more than a decade. When I took an introductory sociology course my first year of college, I started with an interest in social life and an understanding of myself as part of a larger system—one I wanted to understand then and continue to interrogate now. This interest has been shared by most of my students at Berkeley. But without that foundation, many of the students in my North Dakota classroom saw questions of society and inequality as removed, a distraction from their vocational aspirations rather than inseparable from them. Once we as a class could see society as an object of study—as important, complex, and approachable—we could move on to further questions—why inequality is problematic, what is shared among citizens in a society, why we should question social structures.

In other courses—like the agriculture and petroleum sciences lectures I had observed—students saw their connection to the material from the outset. These

students drove by oil derricks and through wheat fields every day. They understood their relationship to these industries. They did not have the same sense of familiarity when thinking about structural inequalities, institutions, or national policies. I had seen many students at Berkeley enter the classroom eager to discuss their relationship to these broad structures; I had expected the same from students at Williston State. I spent weeks articulating to myself, and then to students, how everyone is embedded in social relations, and that there's value in examining them.

> *"Why sociology?" provided a set of understandings, a framework for conversation, that was not political or emotional on its own, but that allowed students to engage with one another and current events using common themes and language, and to see connections to issues and candidates that extended beyond the campaign signs they saw in their neighborhoods.*

These conversations and clarifications provided a framework for so many more and more lively discussions—including the explicitly political. "Why sociology?" provided a set of understandings, a framework for conversation, that was not political or emotional on its own, but that allowed students to engage with one another and current events using common themes and language, and to see connections to issues and candidates that extended beyond the campaign signs they saw in their neighborhoods. Students asked one another questions, asked how their ideas, experiences, and opinions related to concepts like institutions, social norms, and culture. They began conversations that challenged their own views, using sociology as common currency. One student wrote in a response that he thought of himself as a part of a global society for the first time, paralleling the way he understood individual plants to be a part of a larger crop. He went on to write that issues at stake in the election—immigration, healthcare, education—mattered to everyone. For this student, a metaphor allowed him to realize the gravity of national politics in a way he had not previously.

As the term wore on, I continued to focus on examples and applications that were removed from electoral politics and hot-button issues. Conversations I had with both academic colleagues and Williston oil workers assumed the partisan politics of those involved. These conversations allowed for the frank expression of fears and concerns, and discussions of action and mobilization, but also would likely alienate anyone not in agreement. In my classroom, I tried to create a different atmosphere, where the commonality was an interest in similar questions rather than political persuasion. As a discipline, sociology has a liberal reputation that precedes it. This makes it an approachable ally for many progressive causes, and an obstacle or annoyance to many others. I learned that to engage students in this setting in meaningful debate, and in potentially belief-changing conversations, I had to get beyond this reputation. I had to introduce ways of seeing and

thinking that were not polarized, polarizing, or explicitly political. And that was the most politically effective thing I could do.

> *These lessons, students told me, helped them see why sociological thinking was relevant to them, and equipped them to think about politics as something more than posting campaign signs that matched their neighbors'. They began to see themselves as part of a wider society, and to place their own community in an increasingly divided nation.*

I tried to neutralize, as much as possible, the discipline, to move beyond its reputation. My goal was not to avoid politics; on the contrary, I envisioned creating a point of understanding for later debates, questions, and arguments. To do this, I had to fight my inclination to politicize content explicitly from the beginning. It was hard to watch an increasingly upsetting election cycle unfold, and then enter the classroom to talk about basic concepts applied to junior varsity basketball and the small-town diner that recently closed on Main Street. At first, these applications seemed trivial. When I began teaching at Williston State, I had worried that focusing on local and campus issues meant that I was ignoring pressing national politics, that I was retreating into an isolated classroom and ignoring what so loudly called for attention. Using everyday examples that seemed apolitical, though, allowed students to develop an understanding of society and their own relation to it. And that understanding held great political potential. For some students, it meant giving them a way to articulate the fear and discomfort they felt. For others, it meant coming to see the election as more than a distant news event or a one-issue matter. These lessons, students told me, helped them see why sociological thinking was relevant to them, and equipped them to think about politics as something more than posting campaign signs that matched their neighbors'. They began to see themselves as part of a wider society, and to place their own community in an increasingly divided nation.

As the year progressed, I began bringing more and more potentially sensitive or divisive topics into the classroom, always relating back to the premises that we had established, about the importance of society as an object of inquiry and students' participatory role in it. What I hope

> *As academic sociologists, we will likely never be asked to justify the belief that inequality is worth interrogating. But if we are unable to clearly justify it, we lose a large audience.*

to have accomplished was not an expressly political classroom, but a classroom in which students both came to see the importance of considering society as a unit of analysis and to see themselves as capable of that analysis, regardless of their preexisting and unfolding beliefs. That analysis could allow for dialogues and exchanges that were not happening elsewhere in students' lives, or in many places across the country.

As academic sociologists, we will likely never be asked to justify the belief that inequality is worth interrogating. But if we are unable to clearly justify it, we lose a large audience. The place for that justification is introductory classrooms at all types of educational institutions, especially those who might be most resistant to social inquiry in the first place, where sociology may be able to build a foundation for later conversations.

TEACHING AS TOOL OF CHANGE IN TROUBLING TIMES

There is great potential in rigorously studying the roots and implications of Trump's presidency. Many sociologists and others have begun to address these questions, to shed some light on seeming paradoxes, and to increase understandings of the divisions that permeate and threaten contemporary American life. Disseminating these findings and engaging in explicitly political conversations and debates is important.

But another task is also crucial: rather than approaching these divisions as topics of inquiry, we must also cross them as educators. This pedagogical work lays the groundwork for further conversations. Universities are widely seen as having a liberal bent. Many sociology classrooms provide rich forums for like-minded students and their instructors to come together, to analyze recent trends, to strategize for social change, and to support one another through the anxieties of political trauma. But in other classrooms, a different potential exists. There are countless institutions like Williston State around the country—schools with strong vocational focuses, schools that are accessible to a wide range of students and distanced—geographically and culturally from elite echelons of academia. These institutions, too, have great political potential.

For it to be realized, we need a professional respect of teaching at institutions like Williston State College. It's a slow road, it can feel disengaged and removed from pressing debates, and more than slightly frustrating. But it is on these campuses that some of our discipline's greatest political contributions may lie.

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DEAD PAY PHONES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

by SCOTT BRENNAN

E very landscape possesses a unique vocabulary. In Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, for instance, boulders scattered across the moraine below Long's Peak contribute to the landscape's singular identity, as does the edge of the meadowland lined with Engelmann spruce, aspen, and Douglas firs, the snowmelt creeks flowing down from the high country, down through the forest, and into the headwaters of the Big Thompson River which meanders between the rocks deposited by glaciers that disappeared hundreds of thousands of years ago. Each part of that valley contributes to beauty of the whole. A hundred miles to the east, the plains of Kansas, now mostly an engineered agricultural landscape, consist of vast fields of wheat, soy beans, or corn, and along I-70, as night begins to fall, one sees illuminated signs affixed to colossal metal poles rising high above the flat expanse, their advertisements announcing the next junction town's selection of gas stations, franchise restaurants, and chain hotels. The vocabulary of a landscape, whether it be natural, rural, or urban, is specific and also finite, and therefore it is, once one is attuned to it, readable, photographable.

The urban landscape possesses a vocabulary unto itself: street signs, parking meters, sidewalks, bus stops, restaurants, automobiles, laundromats, delivery trucks, light poles, mailboxes, traffic signals, graffiti, dumpsters, parking garages, strip malls, high rises, houses of worship, apartment buildings, alleyways, bridges, underpasses, chain link fences, auto repair shops, razor wire, warehouses. . . The list goes on, but not infinitely. In the tradition of wilderness landscape photography, I don't include people in my shots. Nevertheless, the human presence is visible upon the subject matter (just as the scar left by the glacier is visible upon the rock), for every inch of what is photographed in the city was engineered and built by human beings—almost all of it manufactured.

Several themes seem to attract me when I consider the urban landscape as subject matter for photography, one of them being communication, or the lack thereof. I am attracted to barriers of all kinds, walls, fences, gates, barred windows and reinforced doors—great shadow catchers, and also structures designed to impede access. I am interested in concrete, metal, glass, paint, and plastic, the manmade materials used to construct the built environment, and how those materials have replaced, concealed, or covered up the ground people might otherwise walk upon, the earth hidden under a hard, grey-black shell of concrete and asphalt. I am interested in how our dependence upon the automobile, and the need to park it when not in use, has caused native grasses, flowering plants, and the trees to be replaced by lots and colossal garages that take up thousands upon thousands of acres of city space.

Many objects punctuate the urban landscape and reveal the narrative of the people who designed and built it. The dead pay phone is one such object. As its intended use has faded over the past ten or fifteen years, it has been transformed from a practical, useful, profitable, utilitarian device into an empty totem, both hideous and significant. Rather than serving as a tool to connect individuals, the dead pay phone can now be seen as a representation of what

2017 VOL. 61

has happened to people cut off from the mainstream, a depressing depiction of the poor communities in which they are found. In Miami they can be seen in the neighborhoods of Opa-locka, Little Haiti, Little River, El Portal, North Miami, parts of Hialeah, and Wynwood. Dead pay phones have come to represent outdated modes of communication, social impotence, missed opportunities, missed connections, wasted resources, and most of all wasted time.

Phone

The pay phone has a long history, and in 1891 William Gray, anticipating its money-making potential, patented the first coin-operated device, installed on a street corner in Hartford, Connecticut.[1] For over 100 years public pay phones have contributed to the notion of universal access to basic communication services. The business model is (very soon we will be able to say was) rather strait forward. By an agreement with the landlord, either the phone company pays rent for the location and keeps the revenue, or the landlord pays rent for the phone and shares the revenue with the phone company.

Cellular phones, universally available in developed countries since the early 2000s, have caused the use of the public pay phone to decline at an astonishing rate. Rarely has a piece of technology become so rapidly obsolete. Consider this. The peak number of pay phones in the United States was almost 3,000,000 million in 1995. By the end of 2016, the number of functioning pay phones has plummeted to fewer than 200,000. [2] The pay phone—unnecessary, unprofitable, and obsolete in middle income and affluent communities—has become extinct. In those communities, the phones have been removed. Not so in poor neighborhoods, where they remain.

     Dead pay phones now exist as relics scattered throughout the urban land-scape. To prevent theft, pay phones were installed in a robust manner. The phone and its protective cowl is secured permanently to a thick steel stanchion imbedded in a concrete mass weighting hundreds of pounds. Sometimes the phones are affixed without the stanchion to an exterior wall of a building. In many cases, if the phone has become damaged or vandalized, it is more cost effective for the phone company or the landlord to abandon the pay phone rather than to have workers make repairs or remove it and rehabilitate the site. Unmaintained pay phones are vandalized, stripped of metal to sell as scrap, or the coin boxes plundered by desperate homeless people or drug addicts. In some cases, the pay phones have been partially removed, leaving behind only the vertical metal base. One can find dead pay phones at old gas stations, convenience stores, liquor stores, bodegas, sketchy motels, or coin laundry facilities. Too much of a bother and too expensive to remove (permits are re-quired, electrical conduits need to be safely dealt with, the waste needs to be hauled to a dump, invoices need to be created, people need to be paid), dead pay phones, the technological tombstones of a not-so-distant past, contribute to urban blight.

The dead pay phone series can be viewed as an archaeological endeavor, an excavation of the present. One can witness signs of the human presence left upon on them: the tag of the graffiti artist, the smashed receiver preserving the rage of the phone's final caller, the trash stuffed into the rectangular space by those passing by—the beer bottle, the soda can, the hamburger wrapper, the brown paper bag—the pay phone repurposed as a receptacle its nobody's job to empty. Dead pay phones represent poverty, forlornness, and indifference, as well as the problematic nature of modern communication, especially in the most vulnerable sections of the cities in which they are found.

1 Stamp, Jimmy. "The Pay Phones Journey from Patent to Urban Relic," Smithsonian. Sept. 18, 2014.

2 Kieler, Ashley. "5 Things We Learned About Pay Phones and Why They Continue to Exist," Consumerist. April 16, 2016.

RE(ART)ICULATING REFUGEES:
Spectacle and the Cultural Contestation of Law

by ABIGAIL STEPNITZ

> "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it."
>
> **–** *Bertolt Brecht*

From January 1 to July 31, 2017, at least 2,385 people drowned while attempting to cross the rough waters of the Mediterranean, according to the International Organization for Migration's "Missing Migrants" project. If this trend continues, 2017 may well be the deadliest year yet for migrants seeking refuge and opportunity in Europe. In total, 2016 saw more than 350,000 successful crossings and 5,000 recorded deaths. Since 2014, these deaths have received unprecedented media attention, despite the fact that since 2000 more than 46,000 people have drowned or gone missing on the various Mediterranean routes.[1]

As a result of Europe's current migration crisis, many states are grappling with the incompatibility of the legal limits on who *can* legally be classified as a refugee and the social reality of who is *understood* socially and culturally to be a refugee. The legal framework in which refugee decisions are made is based on the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. In order to be considered a refugee a person must fulfill three criteria. They must be outside their country of origin or nationality, they must have a well-founded fear of persecution in that country, and that fear must arise as a result of the categories that the Convention recognizes: race, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, or membership in a "particular social group."[2] World War II, the backdrop against which the legal definition of the refugee was first articulated, has had a lasting impact on the extent to which law is in line with social and political realities. The nature and scale of persecution witnessed during the Holocaust shocked the global moral conscience, but it also set a dangerously specific template that most of the world's currently persecuted populations cannot mimic. One of refugee law's challenges, then, is the persistence of these historical demands on migrants' experiences despite myriad social, political, and economic changes to the causes and consequences of displacement.

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1 International Organization for Migration. "Missing Migrants Project." https://missingmigrants.iom.int/. Accessed March 29, 2017.

2 United Nations General Assembly. 1951. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, UN Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137. Available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html. Accessed April 18, 2017.

The waning relevance of the law, coupled with the reality of a contemporary refugee crisis, creates a space in which the idea of the refugee can and must be challenged. Art has emerged as one form of expression in which such a rearticulation is taking place. Art engages with and questions law's boundaries by illuminating and appropriating the performative aspects of law, in particular its role in the creation of socially legitimated meaning. When law's role is performed in an artistic space, criticism can be levied in cultural terms. Turning away from the restricted codes of legal language, in turn, opens access to public discourse on legal ideas, concepts and limits. Through the work of a Berlin-based group called Center for Political Beauty, I explore one way in which art rejects the narrow, state-centered tests for refugee credibility and desirability, offering an alternative vision in which refugees are rearticulated first and foremost as human and welcome.

The Dead Are Coming

The Center for Political Beauty (CPB) describes itself as "an assault team that establishes moral beauty, political poetry, and human greatness while aiming to preserve humanitarianism."[3] In June 2015, the group launched an art project dedicated to performative burials in German soil of migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean, followed by the erection of a Roman-style arena in summer 2016 in which refugees were to be slaughtered by tigers. The group engages in political performance art, which they describe as an "expanded" approach to theater, one in which art "hurt[s], provoke[s] and rise[s] in revolt." [4] Practicing what they call "aggressive humanism" that marries European commitments to humanity with the kind of tactics usually reserved for demonstrations of military or economic might, CPB participants view their work as "action-art" that ruptures the benevolent, cheerful slumber of the casual supporter of human rights who would rather sign a petition than stage a genuine protest. Their work calls into question the assumption by average European citizens that the state is the guarantor of political and personal privileges, demanding instead the construction of a state which pursues "political beauty" grounded in "exceptional moral quality." [5] In this approach, acts of political beauty are seen as unique, combining the efficacy of a genuine political solution—not just a response, resolution, or initiative, but a real *solution*—with the imperatives of beauty, decency, and justice. That which "sounds too beautiful to be true" is the substance of such political beauty. [6] Yet it is through the use of the particular spectacles of mass, tragic death that the CPB seeks to foment such a revolution in European politics.

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3 Centre for Political Beauty. 2016. "About the Centre." http://www.politicalbeauty.com/about.html. Accessed March 29, 2017.

4 *Ibid.*
5 Center for Political Beauty. 2015. "Aggressive Humanism." *Medium,* March 18. https://medium.com/@politicalbeauty/aggressive-humanism-bbff64cf4296. Accessed April 21, 2015.
6 *Ibid.*

The migrant burial project is entitled "The Dead are Coming." Many of the drowned migrants are not buried with dignity, but are placed in trash bags, in makeshift warehouses or large refrigerators (such as the one pictured below), or in mass graves by the southern European states that recover their bodies. The CPB, working with the Red Cross, attempts to identify these victims and notify their families, followed by exhumation, transportation and finally, a public reburial in Germany. The spectacle of the drowning—traditionally followed by a silent, inhumane mass burial—is inverted with the dignity of performing the individual funeral as spectacle, as these events have attracted mass attendance and press coverage.[7]

Only a small number of re-burials have been completed, and there is some skepticism as to whether the buried coffins contain the actual remains of migrants, as CPB suggests, or if they are merely symbolic, designed to give life to an empty coffin, a face to thousands of dead. Shortly after the beginning of the campaign—and unrelated to the coordinated CPB movement—many symbolic graves began appearing all across Germany. Hundreds, if not thousands, of such graves now appear across Europe, with documented graves in Switzerland, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Turkey, Austria, Lithuania, and Lichtenstein. The markers of these graves read, for example, "Borders kill," "Nameless man," and "Escaped." Others are marked only with the geographic coordinates of sites where many have drowned, such as Lampedusa, a small island off the coast of Italy. It is the unexpected nature of these sudden graves that reminds viewers not only of the spectacle of

7 Center for Political Beauty. "The Dead Are Coming." http://politicalbeauty.com/dead. html. Accessed March 29, 2017.

Blood spills out of a refrigerator in a Southern European port town, where bodies of the dead are kept until they are identified. (Image courtesy of Center for Political Beauty)

A CPB burial in Berlin, June 2015.
Photo Credit: Erik Marquardt

Grave marker commemorating unknown refugees across Europe—Hanover, Germany, July 16, 2015. Source: unknownrefugees.tumblr.com

migrant death *en route* to Europe, but of the nearness of the responsibility for the lack of safe and legal migration routes. These graves can be observed amid the everyday lives of Europeans, while they wait at a bus stop or walk by a park. They serve as a reminder that citizen complicity in state failures has real and deadly consequences.

Symbolic graves offer a form of bottom-up resistance to the state and media-driven displacement of responsibility for refugees and migrants' death onto those making the perilous journey. These graves are quiet, powerful rejoinders to the images of heaving ships with nameless bodies. They remind viewers that each body is a human life and that the needless, politicized loss of each life is its own small, tragic spectacle.

EATING REFUGEES

During the summer of 2016, CPB erected a Roman-style arena in central Berlin, inside of which were four tigers and a keeper in traditional Roman attire. The group suggested that the arena would host an event in which refugees would be devoured for sport. Designed as a response to an agreement between the EU and Turkey to manage the processing of asylum claims, this art installation highlights the ease with which European states can determine life and death for refugees. Currently, migrants who make the perilous journey outside of legal channels and arrive physically in Germany (or another European state) have a greater likelihood of being granted some form of legal protection, while those who migrate through the official

legal channels have a greater likelihood of languishing in a camp or being deported from one of the states on the EU's external borders.[8] Through this installation, CPB wanted to draw attention to the fact that Germany could choose to facilitate safe and legal crossings for refugees, especially those with family already in Europe, instead of forcing refugees to make a perilous journey by sea. CPB's performative spectacle suggests that death by tiger could be prevented if the German government agreed to safely transport those who would seek asylum, and commit to such a practice regularly. A deadline was set; if it was missed, the refugees would be devoured.

In the end, the plane did not land, and the tigers could not bring themselves to participate in an artistic expression that would allow for the displacing of agency, or the suggestion that death is the answer. The day on which the "killings" were to take place the tigers were gone, leaving a letter which said in part:

> It would be wrong to bring something to a conclusion in the theater that is actually far from over. We will not be part of your logic of killing. We are predators, we kill to feed ourselves and our children, we kill when we face mortal danger... We are cancelling the finale, we are retreating. On behalf of the animals, we leave you alone with your dilemma. We are not the solution; we are the sad performers of your downfall. It is too real to be played.[9]

MOVING BEYOND LAW AND ART

When law decides who is a refugee, it is bound by administrative and conceptual limitations designed to keep the category as narrow and inflexible as possible. This rigidity ensures that states are willing to accept and accommodate any refugees at all. But law is not the only form of collective expression available to citizens of refugee receiving states. When art decides who is a refugee it is unburdened by the law's bureaucratic and legalized content, enabling it to contest established meanings and assert new understandings.

These political and artistic expressions are clearly powerful—but why are individual funerals and graves, or Roman arenas, important to humanizing refugees and encouraging critical reflection on Western legal responses? In what ways does the performance of burial, mourning and grief for the dead migrant indicate a new cultural logic, new forms of social solidarity, and how does it aid in the rearticulation of the refugee? In short, what consequences does a rearticulation of the dead have for the living?

When the people of Europe hold funerals or dig representative graves for those who die at their borders, they not only perform a normatively powerful social task by indicating the need for grief or mourning, but they also appropriate and reverse a role traditionally

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8 Not all are granted refugee status; many are offered various forms of subsidiary protection, often on a temporary basis. See also: Amnesty International. 2017. "The EU-Turkey Deal: Europe's Year of Shame." https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/the-eu-turkey-deal-europes-year-of-shame/ and Squires, Nick. 2017. "A Year on From EU-Turkey Deal, Refugees and Migrants in Limbo Commit Suicide and Suffer From Trauma." *The Telegraph,* March 14. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/14/year-eu-turkey-deal-refugees-migrants-limbo-commit-suicide-suffer/. Accessed March 29, 2017.

9 Center for Political Beauty. "Eating Refugees." http://politicalbeauty.com/eatingrefugees.html. Accessed March 29, 2017.

held by the state. Where the state regularly prevents the entry of or deports live bodies, the activities of the CPB and other artist-activists literally and figuratively bring dead bodies in. They make explicit the connection between watching the spectacle of death by drowning unfold in the Mediterranean and the idea of death-as-entertainment in the arena. The performance of the arena, in particular, brings the death sentence that deportation so often carries into the heart of Europe. The decision to deport—and the decision not to intervene in ways that could to prevent migration-related death—becomes a decision to kill and to be entertained by death.

Art is one way in which people make sense of current geopolitical events, including the official and administrative aspects that are embodied in law. It is a powerful frame that helps people to create order, form interpretations and—critically—to resist. The importing of the dead refugee body and the spectacle of death as entertainment speak not only to the humanity of the refugee but also have symbolic implications for how citizens must live with refugees. The ability to mourn dead refugees and to see the spectacle of their deaths as out of place in contemporary Europe may have the power to transform Europeans' cultural response to the living. Art also has the potential to enable a reconceptualization of the law. Current means of refugee recognition rely on a bureaucratized process that cannot grieve. CPB's works demonstrate that a new conception of the refugee could demand something else: full legal and social inclusion. The works of the CPB and others represent a critique of refugee law that also suggest the potential for a radically different representation of humanity.

While artists such as the CPB may not offer practical solutions for refugee law and policy, a symbolic critique may help to set the terms for a new conversation. As the power of outdated legal definitions wanes, the connection between citizen and refugee is being altered through meaningful cultural expression. Events such as the current migration flows into Europe do not become transformative until their meaning is consolidated after the fact, when the symbols and structures they have rearticulated become part of the dominant cultural landscape. [10] It will likely be some time before the full social and legal consequences of the current shifts are fully realized. For now, however, it is apparent that a new collective consciousness has taken root, expressed in part through radical artistic expression, as creative responses to the migration crisis are being imagined and performed. Laws that are incompatible with this shift are likely to face a comprehensive cultural assault on their legitimacy—and refugees will not survive without a renewed legal response.

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10 Sewell, William H. 1996. "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille." *Theory and Society* 25(6): 841-81.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT ECOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS:

UNPACKING THE NATURAL METAPHOR   *by BENJAMIN S. CASE*

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980's, social ecologist Murray Bookchin observed that the word "ecology" was proliferating in popular culture: "Often it is used as a metaphor, an alluring catchword, that loses the potentially compelling internal logic of its premises," thus neutralizing the radical thrust of the word.[1] In the past few years, the popular Momentum Training program, which coaches activists in approaches to movement-building, has been promoting a concept of *social movement ecology* (SME) to describe why a particular organization does not have to "do it all," but rather how each approach to change fits into an "ecosystem" of movement groups.[2] Momentum's content has reached thousands of activists in the US from a number of prominent organizations and networks, including Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, the Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network, Cosecha, and IfNotNow. The SME metaphor is intuitively attractive – it is about collaboration, it nods to environmentalism, and it appeals to the general desire to see the things one does as natural. However, despite the concept having quickly

spread beyond the reach of the training program from which it emerged, it has currently not been theorized beyond a superficial analogy. What are the consequences of applying an ecological framework to the understanding of social movement groups? Where does ecological thinking take analyses of collective struggle? A wealth of literature has conceptualized and critiqued "ecological" views of human organization, and the current appeal of the SME framework prompts this same level of theoretical rigor.

Other analytic frameworks capture much of what SME aims for from a variety of angles. Since the founding of the Comintern, revolutionary socialists have advocated a *united front* of radical and progressive groups acting autonomously but in concert against the forces of the right. Social movement scholars have conceived of *social movement communities*[3] and *social movement families*[4] to describe the ways that different activist cultures, organizations, and individuals interact and mobilize resources to their causes. Leninist and later anarchist *dual power* strategies outline the ways that different types of radical institutions can

1 Murray Bookchin. 1982. The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Society. Palo Alto: Cheshire Books. p. 21.
2 Ayni Institute website. (http://www.ayni.institute/movement_ecology) Accessed March 29, 2017.

3 Suzanne Staggenborg. 1998. "Social Movement Communities and Cycles of Protest." Social Problems. 45:2. pp. 180-204.
4 Donatella della Porta and Dieter Rucht. 1995. "Left-Libertarian Movements in Context." In The Politics of Social Protest. eds. J. Craig Jenkins and Bert Klandermans. pp. 279-72. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

work together to create a revolutionary situation. [5] What theoretical leverage does the ecology metaphor add?

In this essay, I will explore the internal logic of the SME premise and unpack some of its implications in terms of three broad problems with the ecological metaphor, which I will call the "boundary problem," the "agency problem," and the "interactions problem." I approach these issues as both a participant in and a student of social movements. This essay is intended as a contribution to the discussion around how we mobilize resources to make society more just from within unjust institutional structures. I will argue that the SME concept is fraught, and that in order to maintain its integrity as an organizing tool for social change, movement ecology must be attached to an explicitly radical ideology (or counter-ideology, if you prefer). Despite its problems, however, the ecological lens brings into focus a prefigurative vision for the way social movement groups interact with one another within a broader Movement.

MOMENTUM'S SOCIAL MOVEMENT ECOLOGY

The framework of social movement ecology as it is currently being popularized comes from the Momentum Training project, now a subset of the Ayni Institute. Founded in 2014, Momentum Trainings are designed to impart strategic tools to organizers and activists based on a combination of civil resistance theory, Paul and Mark Englers' theories of movement build-ing,[6] and the experience of activists from various social movements. The SME metaphor is meant to help organizers understand how their organization approaches social change, and how the different approaches other groups take are not necessarily wrong, but rather fulfill different roles. Activists are encouraged to see different approaches as working symbiotically to enhance the movement's overall power. According to the Ayni Institute:

> We use the metaphor of ecology to explain how many different organisms with sometimes competing interests can be in relationship with each other to maintain the health, diversity, and sustainability of the whole environment. We think we can create intentional and synergistic relationships between different approaches to social change to build a resilient movement ecology" [7]

This brief description tells us: 1) ecology is a metaphor; 2) organizations sometimes have competing interests; 3) it is a prescriptive model, advocating for a particular type of interaction; 4) the goal is synergistic relationships that create healthy environments.

According to Momentum's SME, movement organizations can be divided into three broad "theories of change" – categories of organizations based on their approach to achieving their goals. First, *dominant institutional change* fights to overthrow or win reforms from the state, corporations, or other official institutions of power. This first type is further broken down into three sub-types: "structure" (e.g.,

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5 Brian Dominick. 2012. "An Introduction to Dual Power Strategy." *Left-Liberty*. (http://left-liberty.net/?p=265) Accessed April 4, 2017.

6 Mark Engler and Paul Engler. *This Is an Uprising*. New York: Nation Books.
7 Quoted from the Ayni Institute's website, accessed March 29, 2017.

union organizing), "mass protest" (e.g., the Occupy Movement), and "inside game" (e.g., the Sanders primary campaign). Second, *alternative institutions* attempt to prefigure organizing models based on radical principles (e.g., cooperative businesses, communes). Third, *personal transformation* attempts to change the world one person at a time (e.g., youth mentoring, yoga classes). In practice, however, these categories regularly meld or overlap – inside game campaigns are likely to be highly structured, mass protest movements are often consciously prefigurative, and personal transformation might only be considered part of a movement when it is attached to an alternative institution or is attempting to change dominant institutions.

Erik Olin Wright [8] offers a more elegant tripartite breakdown of approaches to social change. In his terms, *ruptural transition* constitutes attempts to smash the system from the outside, *interstitial transition* attempts to build prefigurative institutions within the cracks of the state, and *symbiotic transition* involves challenging power by reorienting state and market institutions toward radical goals. (Wright's use of "symbiotic" is unrelated to Momentum's; Wright is talking about a type of struggle where the relationship between movements and the state is symbiotic, while Momentum is talking about SME in terms of intra-movement relationships. Nevertheless, the common usage of ecological language is noteworthy.) However, whereas Wright advocates for his "symbiotic" transition, Momentum's SME is not intended

to be prescriptive in terms of which approach is best. Instead, it is prescriptive in terms of how the approaches relate to one another. According to Momentum's SME, without intervention different types of groups typically interact with each other through non-constructive critique. Each theory of change has its pros and cons, but if each can see itself working "symbiotically" with the others, the collective pros balance out the cons and create a fertile environment for overall movement success. Invoking ecology as a metaphor is appealing, but it also raises some difficult questions, which, if left unaddressed, could lead in problematic directions.

THE BOUNDARY PROBLEM: WHAT IS THE MOVEMENT?

For the most part, biological ecosystems do not require researchers to place organisms in them; researchers observe what is there and analyze it. If the ecological frame is going to be applied to social movements in isolation from all of the other social phenomena around them, then the choice of which groups and individuals get incorporated into the movement ecosystem makes all the difference in what that ecosystem looks like – and how a group should orient within it. This requires drawing boundaries around which types of groups and individuals we consider to be part of The Movement. Momentum's SME is based on there being three broad approaches to social change (dominant institutional change, alternative institutions, and personal transformation), so in order

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8 Erik O. Wright. 2010. *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London: Verso.

to qualify as one of them, a group or individual must desire change, and take action to achieve it. But this does not tell us what kind of change or what type of action.

I will return to the question of action, but to the change question, SME excludes movements seeking change that would be considered undesirable. From afar, many right wing groups can appear to use similar tactics to the left. It might be worth considering what a movement ecology would look like if it was expanded to include all activists and organizations seeking change of any kind, but sticking with the way SME is applied, we will exclude the right. Once the right is excluded, boundary framing [9] around what is or is not part of the Movement becomes trickier. The Movement is often discussed implicitly using the Supreme Court's famously problematic criteria for pornography – "you know it when you see it." This casual approach risks prioritizing groups with recognizable forms and privileging style over content; it might not accurately capture the individuals and groups engaged in the most materially consequential movement work.

Determining which groups are part of the Movement requires an understanding (or assumption) that they generally want society to move in the same direction. Being too precise about the direction, and how far in that direction, are risky – a long list of left movements have fractured and collapsed into infighting over relatively minor details in their answers to these questions. At the same time, refusing to name the general direction leaves the door open to cooptation, "selling out," or promoting oppressive politics.

I use the capitalized term "the Movement" the way it is often used in the parlance of left activists and organizers – in social movement studies terms, as a form of master frame[10] – to indicate the loosely-coupled assemblage of activist social forces generally working towards a collectively liberated society. For example, the Movement for Black Lives, which is composed of a variety of organizations and individual supporters engaged in numerous campaigns, is in one sense its own movement. It also joins workers' movements, feminist and queer liberation movements, housing rights and eviction defense, and many others in something bigger – a *movement of movements*, or *the Movement*. The organizations and individuals who take part in the Movement sometimes connected by formal affiliations, personal relationships, and informal networks, but more than that they are bound in some way by common values. These values must be collectively *liberatory*, meaning that they orient around redistribution of society's resources and collective freedom from social or literal bondage. They might include solidarity with other groups, especially those that are oppressed or marginalized; mutual aid; respect for personal, community, and cultural autonomy; and the collective stewardship of our communities and the land we live on. Organizations, affinity groups, and

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9 Robert Benford and David Snow. 2000. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. Annual Review of Sociology. 26. pp. 611-639.

10 Benford and Snow.

individuals whose work is in line with these or similar values – for the left we might call this "radical ideology" – are part of the Movement. Without such an ideological orientation and vision there would be no soil from which to grow a conceptual SME.

THE AGENCY PROBLEM

E cology takes an overarching view, judging health holistically based on the biodiversity and sustainability of an entire ecosystem. Sociologists Michael Hannan and John Freeman are credited with bringing this ecological framework to bear on human organizations. They begin with the question: "why are there so many kinds of organizations?"[11] In order to find an answer, they switch the unit of analysis from the organization to *populations of organizations*. They look to biological ecology for their analysis, with individual organizations being analogous to individual organisms, forms of organizations being analogous to species, and the market in which they all compete for resources representing the natural environment. In the population ecology view, if we want to understand why forms of organizations "live" or "die" or how they change, we do not look at the decisions of their members or leaders, we look at the constraining factors of their environment.[12] This approach has major limitations; it ignores the agency of individual members of organizations and the taxonomy of organizations is far more subjective than biological taxonomy is for living creatures.[13] If population ecology has a benefit, it is in prompting us to examine organizations from a population-wide view as opposed to organizational or individual views only, focusing on how external constraints limit organizational forms or push them to adapt.

Population ecology was developed to study for-profit businesses in a "natural" market environment. For a business, continuing to exist in the market requires access to capital, so the analogy of biological organisms requiring sustenance to survive fits fairly well. Businesses that can find capital live, while ones that cannot, die. For social movement groups, however, the ultimate goal is (presumably) not longevity but to change society. The difference between surviving and winning is significant; one continues to exist within the norm, the other exists in order to change the norm. Of course, movements need to survive in order to win, but social movement groups that achieve their goals, whether reformist or revolutionary, at least shift in form and purpose after victory. It would be backwards therefore to analogize the end of an organization to "death" without taking into account whether or not it was successful in accomplishing its goals. This poses a fundamental problem for viewing movements through an ecological lens. In the "natural world" there is no goal *per se*, there is only which species survive and which do not. In terms of social movements, a

11 Michael Hannan and John Freeman. 1977. "The Population Ecology of Organizations." *The American Journal of Sociology*. 82:5. pp. 929-964.

12 Pamela Papielarz and Zachary Neal. 2007. The Niche as a Theoretical Tool. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33. pp. 65-84.

13 Ruth Young. 1988. "Is Population Ecology a Useful Paradigm for the Study of Organizations?" *American Journal of Sociology*. 94:1. pp. 1-24.

conceptual leap is required to connect a metaphor based in a harmonious status quo to a social formation aimed at altering the status quo. At very least, the environmental conditions for a SME need to be envisioned so that "survival" incorporates the goal of the movement.

This connects to a deeper problem in adapting the ecological metaphor to social movements: the bird's eye view of populations is a descriptive model. Like biological ecology, population ecology assumes the "goal" of species is to survive and nothing more. It is about the evolution and adaptation of organizational forms, and does not account for how actors actively change their environment. The concept of "organisms" needing to "fit" the environment means little if that environment can be consciously changed by the very same organisms, especially if the ones who exert the biggest changes over the environment are the ones considered to "fit" the best. For social movements, "survival" should not be based on fit within the current environment but on their ability to change the environment into something better. The missing variable is socio-political change in a particular direction. Once again, common ideology is required to gain leverage from the ecology metaphor.

THE INTERACTION PROBLEM

The primary goal of SME is to help activists interact productively with those who approach social change differently. The ecology metaphor summons the image of lush forests full of thriving creatures, but in reality the natural world can be as harsh and merciless as it is harmonious. For population ecology, organizations interact primarily through competition for resources, a singular focus that follows a capitalist mindset. Social Darwinists have long seen evolution as pertaining to intra-human relationships, arguing for a "dog-eat-dog" mentality. This was always a distortion of Darwin, first because evolution has to do with long-term survival of species, not individuals within a species, and second because there are many examples of organic "solidarity" both within and between species. Pyotr Kropotkin famously argued for a "mutualist" view of the natural world, in which species (most of all, humans) often survived and evolved based on their ability co-operate." [14] Still, even if the competition aspect of the ecology metaphor is downplayed, organisms and species still succeed or fail based on their ability to access the resources they require. So the questions become: "what resources sustain social movements?" and "how do organizations and individuals interact to get them?"

Whether or not we like it, in a capitalist economy social movement organizations require financial resources. The 2007 book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, edited by Incite!, lays out the abundance of ways in which capitalists (through foundations) and the state (through grants) use their financial influence to, among other things: "monitor and control social justice movements, manage and control dissent, re-direct activist energies into career-based modes of organizing, encourage movements to model them-

14 Pyotr Kropotkin. 1915. *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. London: Heinemann.

selves after capitalist structures," in a process they call the non-profit industrial complex. [15] Some organizations choose to engage with these forces and attempt to evade, mitigate, or ignore the control mechanisms, while others attempt to fund their activities through donations or cooperative businesses. Still, donation money comes from supporters' wages or other money-making schemes, and banks ultimately control the flow and value of financial capital, giving them systemic power over the market, [16] in which cooperative business must compete. Collaborative efforts for financial resources can only get so far within the current system before they run up against the competition of the market. Even if elements of the Movement were able to eliminate competition for financial resources between each other, they still exist in a broader market "ecosystem" characterized by competition for scarce resources.

Another answer to the sustenance question has been membership. [17] In this view, movements compete for members, and those that are able to maintain consistent or growing membership live, while others die. However, defining official membership in some forms of groups is challenging, and beyond that the membership answer still ignores movement goals. The amount of participation movements are able to mobilize has been linked to success,[18] but participation in actions is not necessarily the same as membership in an organization. So perhaps movements compete for mass participation. This resource is finite in the sense that there are only 24 hours in a day and people have limited time to devote to any activity. But once people are "activated" and join social movement networks, they often find more time for activism in general, not less; a person who joins a movement organization becomes more easily mobilized by other movements through networks and personal relationships. [19] And once we set appropriate boundaries around the movement of movements, any effective participation in one movement is likely beneficial to the Movement's collective power. Furthermore, while an overabundance of organizations of the same type might compete for participation, a diversity of types of organizations might well support overall increased participation in the Movement, just as biodiversity leads to higher overall ecological stability. [20] So we can say that groups require members and/or participation in their actions in order both to survive and to win, and in some ways they compete to access this resource, while in other ways they cooperate to generate more of it.

15 Andrea Smith. 2007. "Introduction." in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. Cambridge: South End Press. pp. 1-18.
16 Beth Mintz and Michael Schwartz. 1987. *The Power Structure of American Business*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
17 Mintz and Schwartz.

18 Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Nation Books.
19 Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema. 1987. "Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Towards Participation in Social Movements." *American Sociological Review*. 52(4). pp. 519-531.
20 David Tillman. 2000. "Causes, Consequences and Ethics of Biodiversity." *Nature*. 405:May.

We still have not addressed the most uncomfortable interaction problem – the food chain. Again, ecological health is judged holistically based on the biodiversity and sustainability of an entire ecosystem. Predator-prey and parasite-host relationships are integral parts of harmonious ecosystems. That the wolves killing the deer can be seen as serving a vital function in a flourishing ecosystem is hardly consolation for the individual deer being eaten. Ecology is concerned with the harmony of interacting species of organisms, not with the experience of any given organism in the ecosystem. Here the SME metaphor risks taking a dark turn. Viewing the Movement holistically could be deeply problematic if it resulted in individuals or groups validating predatory or parasitic behavior based on a claimed greater good for the Movement as a whole. Applying SME responsibly therefore at least requires addressing some difficult questions about how different elements of the Movement interact to create social change. Disagreements between the three approaches to social change that Momentum theorizes (i.e. dominant institutional change, alternative institutions, and personal transformation) are nowhere near the most contentious in the movement. Rather, the nastiest disputes are often between similar types of groups. Tactical approaches (disruptive versus conciliatory, violent versus nonviolent, etc.), key political positions, engagement with reforms versus repudiation of systemic fixes, identity claims and privilege, responses to interpersonal abuse and

sexual violence, access to capital and resources – these are sites of the most passionate infighting.

The big question here is: how do we distinguish between groups that are damaging to the health of the entire social movement environment and those that are serving a vital function in the creation of an overall healthy movement ecology that happens to come at the cost of another organization? Glossing over this question in constructing an "ecological" picture of social movements would not merely render the metaphor meaningless, it could authorize dangerous dynamics.

CONCLUSION

Ideas are powerful, and should not be taken lightly. Siegfried Kracauer analogizes "the idea" to a rock thrown into a pool. How big the ripples are and how far they go are functions of the size of the stone, the position of the thrower, and the character of the throw – but it will definitely create ripples.[21] Whether or not movement ecology was intended to be taken to such lengths, if we leverage an idea – especially one as potent as ecology, and especially in such a prominent place as a descriptor for how we change the world together – we must commit to theoretically exploring its implications.

The ecology metaphor is loaded with problems, and should be applied with caution. Attempts to use SME should thoroughly consider which types of groups and people are part of the envisioned "ecology," how each of them impacts that "environment," and

21 Siegfried Kracauer. (1963) 1995. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. trans. Thomas Levin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

how they interact with one another to access resources. Above all, in order to use SME responsibly, practitioners must ground it in a vision of a common goal for the Movement, and an understanding of the liberatory values that connect activists and movements to the movement ecology.

The ecological view has a benefit though. It pushes us to see the movement of movements holistically, as dynamic and alive, and as part of a grand social transformation that is larger than any of our individual-personal or individual-group concerns. This too could be taken in problematic directions, but it could also lead to a meta-prefigurative view of the Movement. The term prefiguration was coined by Carl Boggs in a 1970 essay on the failures of vanguardism and reformism,[22] and is often described using the old Industrial Workers of the World adage, "building a new world in the shell of the old." Prefigurative politics has been praised by some for both its experiential benefits and its strategic necessity,[23] and criticized by others for leading to insularity and apoliticism in groups that overemphasize their internal practices.[24] The prefiguration that SME

points to is not the attempted "manifestation of a better future now"[25] within a particular group or scene. Rather, it is about how the creation and practice of types of interaction between different liberatory forces during the course of struggle is related to ways groups will relate to one another in a revolutionary society if the forces of liberation are broadly successful. Inter-group interactions between activists, organizations, and movements in the Movement – whether these interactions be characterized by mutuality and solidarity or competition and callousness – is in a sense prefiguring a revolutionary order. In other words, if ultimately successful in *disordering* oppressive institutions, the "ecology" of the movement of movements will prefigure the order in which society as a whole becomes *reordered*.

Social movement ecology can push us to recognize the ways that it is not only our political struggles against oppressive institutions or the ways we attempt to create radical spaces within our movement groups, but it is also the ways we interact with each other between groups within the Movement – and with the parts of society that are not yet part of the Movement – that create the living environment we are struggling to seed the world with.

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22 Carl Boggs. 1977. "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control." *Radical America*. 11(6). pp. 99-122.

23 Marianne Maeckelbergh. 2011. "Doing is Believing: Prefiguration as a Strategic Practice in the Alterglobalization Movement." *Social Movement Studies*. 10(1). pp. 1-20.

24 Jonathan Smucker. 2014. "Can Prefigurative Politics Replace Political Strategy?" *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*. 58. (http://berkeleyjournal.org/2014/10/can-prefigurative-politics-replace-political-strategy/) Accessed August 3, 2017.

25 Smucker.

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON JONATHAN SMUCKER'S

HEGEMONY HOW-TWO: A ROADMAP FOR RADICALS by REBECCA TARLAU

Rebecca Tarlau reviews Jonathan Smucker's Hegemony How-To, and argues that in addition to building stronger working-class, anti-racist, feminist, LGBTQ, anti-imperialist movements in the United States, the political alignment we build should be international, connecting with the many other working-class groups that are fighting against the same oppressive political and economic system.

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Jonathan Smucker's [1] Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals [2] is a must-read for anyone who cares about how to organize for more progressive social and economic policies in the current U.S. political terrain. The book is based on Smucker's 20 years of experience working in and with social justice organizations, from Occupy Wall Street to the anti-War movement, and it draws on both historical examples of U.S social movements and many theoretical and academic concepts for understanding society and social change. As others have noted, [3] Smucker's book is one of the many re-

1 *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017).
2 https://beyondthechoir.org/2016/11/16/hegemony-how-to-a-roadmap-for-radicals-available-for-preorder/

3 https://newrepublic.com/article/142334/tough-love-letter-left

cent publications offering practical advice to the Left about how to be more effective and relevant. The book's subtitle "A Roadmap for Radicals" is a reference to Saul Alinsky's [4] *Rules for Radicals*, however, the book goes beyond simply offering a set of prescriptions. Instead, Smucker draws on an eclectic group social theorists, including Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci and German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, to develop an argument about how to form a broad-based political alliance that can shift U.S. power relations and make real economic and social gains for marginalized communities. And of course, this book could not be more timely, as Trump's electoral victory and the accompanying surge of white nationalism are unfortunate reminders that the left's current strategies are not working.

In the first part of the review, I highlight what I see as Smucker's three most original proposals for strengthening the Left in the United States: promoting strategic over prefigurative politics, prioritizing political engagement rather than the "life of the group" or exclusive political identities, and continually building out and expanding our movements. In the second part of the review, I describe six of my own reflections about this ongoing conversation, based on my experiences and research in Brazil working with the Landless Workers Movement (MST). [5] My first two points question Smucker's assumptions that strong identities and prefiguration are necessarily in contradiction to strategic politics. The third point is about the historical importance

of occupations as not simply a tactic but also a strategy for obtaining economic redistribution. The fourth and fifth points build on Smucker's suggested strategies for building a Left hegemony in the United States, emphasizing the importance of developing political education programs and building economic alternatives. Finally, the sixth point highlights the real contradictions that emerge when Left political alliances and social movement organizations take power. The goal of this review is to build on Smucker's book and continue advancing the conversation about how to build stronger working-class, anti-racist, feminist, LGBTQ, anti-imperialist movements in the United States.

The book starts off with Smucker's reflections on his own political trajectory, and his realization that most of the political groups that he has participated in have a communication strategy that speaks to "itself" (i.e., already-allied groups), with no strategy for growth. He discusses Occupy Wall Street as an incredibly powerful *potential* force, in that it created a new "floating signifier," the idea of the "99 percent," which was "amorphous enough for many different kinds of people to connect with and to see their values and hopes within the symbol" (p. 57). Thus, Occupy Wall Street had the potential to build a broad-based political alignment, but Smucker claims that it failed because a powerful current within Occupy Wall Street was allergic to power and refused to seize the opportunity to align with the many organizations that arrived at their doorstep.

Provocatively, Smucker argues that the prioritization of prefigurative over strategic politics was the downfall of Occupy Wall Street.

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4 *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1989).
5 http://www.mstbrazil.org/

In response to what Smucker sees as the Left's self-defeating tendency to disavow power and isolate, he offers a series of recommendations. The first recommendation is an unequivocal defense of "strategic" over "prefigurative" politics. In Smucker's definition of prefigurative politics, he writes that "prefigurative politics seeks to demonstrate the better world it envisions for the future in the actions it takes today. Connected to contemporary anarchist movements, prefigurative politics represented a major tendency within Occupy Wall Street" (p. 266). Smucker critiques the promoters of prefigurative politics, who viewed democratic decision-making processes and the physical occupation of space as manifestations of a better future, rather than tactics in a broader political strategy (p. 112). Smucker is not *against* prefiguration, or "manifesting our vision and values in our internal organizing," but he argues that these types of actions and organizational forms cannot substitute for a strategy that engages political power (not just electorally, but in other institutional realms). Provocatively, Smucker argues that the prioritization of prefigurative over strategic politics was the downfall of Occupy Wall Street.

A second major intervention is the idea of the "political identity paradox," which Smucker summarizes as follows: "while political groups require a strong internal identity to foster the commitment needed for effective political struggle, this same cohesion tends to isolate the group" (p. 96). Instead of creating a movement sub-culture based on strong but exclusive political identities, Smucker argues that the goal is in fact to become hegemonic, or to make our movements' moral and intellectual vision of the world dominant.

Rather than righteously condemning "common sense," the popular and contradictory ideas people hold about the world, he argues that we must engage and transform it. It is important to build each other up rather than prove that you are the smartest person in the room. Smucker describes Slavoj Žižek's apt warning to Occupy organizers: "Don't fall in love with yourself" (p. 116).

Finally, a third major intervention is Smucker's assertion that the goal of every political organizer, or member of a social movement core, ought to be to grow the movement's base by winning over new allies, continually plugging new people into movement tasks, and articulating a broad-based and diverse vision. This takes skilled leadership, which is why Smucker argues we need "leaderful movements" not leaderless ones. How do we do this? Smucker's answer is a pedagogically appropriate communication strategy, which engages people's interest by tapping into their common narratives and building points of connection between those narratives and concrete, winnable political campaigns. Smucker refers to this as "strategically branding" our movements, although he acknowledges that this term may grate against the ears of anti-corporate organizers. The other strategy to build the base of our movements is "to name a common enemy and simultaneously frame a different kind of solidarity as a basis for political mobilization" (p. 239). In other words, the left must articulate the type of "we" that can unite diverse groups, like the "99 percent" did during Occupy Wall Street. Smucker acknowledges the difficulty of doing this, given the class- and race-based fissures in U.S. society, but he argues that connecting disparate groups and individuals "with

fractured loyalties," is the key to "constructing a broad-based challenger alignment" (p. 247).

These are all critical suggestions. The aim of the rest of this review is to build on these interventions and offer some additional reflections about social movement strategy based on my experiences with the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST).[6] The MST is an important case study for anyone who takes seriously the arguments of *Hegemony How-Two*, because the MST has arguably had more success than any other contemporary global movement in implementing its economic and social goals in diverse political institutions, through a Gramscian strategy of continually engaging the state—although the movement is still far from achieving its goals of agrarian reform and social transformation.[7] Over the past thirty years, the MST has helped over 350,000 families access land through the organization of land occupations. In addition, the movement has established agricultural cooperatives in these new communities, developed educational programs for its members, created alternative media sources, and invested in public health, youth activism, and women's

and LGBT rights. I think there are six lessons that the MST offers, which speak directly to Smucker's arguments about social movement strategy.

The first reflection is about Smucker's idea of the political identity paradox. Smucker correctly asserts that, especially in the U.S. context, our lefty political identities often turn us into a subculture, which by its very name is limiting for making our politics mainstream and thus hegemonic. The case of the MST suggests, however, that the development of a strong *class identity* might be one of the most important strategies for building a mass-based movement. Indeed, the primary goal of the MST is to construct an identity among poor farmers as *sem terra* (landless people), even after these farmers have won land rights. The movement promotes this identity among hundreds of thousands of people across the country, through rituals such as singing the *sem terra* national anthem, producing music about being *sem terra*, publishing a *sem terra* newspaper, and even organizing *sem terra* soccer tournaments between different MST communities. This is implicitly a Gramscian political strategy, as Gramsci argues that the role of the political party (or in this case the social movement) is "ensuring that the members of a particular party find in that party all the satisfactions that they formerly found in a multiplicity of organisations".[8] The movement also coordinates annual festivals of *sem terrinha* (little landless children),

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6 http://www.mstbrazil.org/

7 Miguel Carter, ed., *Challenging Social Inequality: The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Agrarian Reform in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Rebecca Tarlau, "Coproducing Rural Public Schools in Brazil: Contestation, Clientelism, and the Landless Workers' Movement," *Politics & Society* 41, no. 3 (2013): 395–424; Rebecca Tarlau, "Education of the Countryside at a Crossroads: Rural Social Movements and National Policy Reform in Brazil," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42, no. 6 (2015): 1157–77.

8 Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffry Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 265.

which brings children between 4 and 14 together to participate in activities that help construct a *sem terrinha* identity. Even LGBT organizers within the movement promote their identity as LGBT *sem terra*. The fact that the MST has succeeded in constructing such a strong identity *does* distance itself from the broader Brazilian society—and promote the "life of the group"—but it *does not* prevent the movement from continually integrating new people into its ranks. Why does the political identity paradox not apply in this case? I would argue that—similarly to the identity of being part of the "99%"—the *sem terra* identity is not a paradox because it is inherently a class identity that includes all rural, working-class people, and implicit in this identity is a critique of the historical process of land concentration. The MST is doing exactly what Smucker suggests, constructing a strong "we" that unites diverse groups, and promoting this political identity through rituals, cultural practices, and social events. The success of this strategy suggests that political identity is not itself a paradox, but that the identities we construct for our movements have to be based on a broader working-class consciousness.

The second point I want to make is about prefiguration. Smucker writes that, "expressing values and living principles is not the same as strategically engaging society and political structures in order to win systematic change." The book convincingly argues that in Occupy Wall Street, the focus on prefigurative politics became a barrier to more strategic political action. However, the case of the MST contradicts Smucker's assumption that prefigurative and strategic politics are always in opposition to one another. To the contrary, I argue that prefigu-

> *I argue that prefigurative and strategic politics can feed off of one another. Every institutional space that the movement occupies and constructs—from autonomous movement schools, to public universities, to agricultural cooperatives—becomes a space for the prefiguration of the movement's political and economic goals.*

rative and strategic politics can feed off of one another. Every institutional space that the movement occupies and constructs—from autonomous movement schools, to public universities, to agricultural cooperatives—becomes a space for the prefiguration of the movement's political and economic goals. This process of prefiguration is not just an expression of principles, but an attempt to *practice* building the type of socialist society that the movement hopes to construct in the future. How will we know what type of participatory democratic system we want to promote, if we do not attempt some trial and error right now? How will we know how to work collectively, if we do not start completing our daily tasks in groups? These types of prefigurative spaces, from alternative school curriculums, to daily work tasks, to agroecological farming, are critical practices for movement members and allies to learn about the type of social world the MST wants to build. As a friend in a U.S.-based community organization expressed to me about the MST's national school, "the movement tells you the type of world it wants to create, and then it invites you into that world to

show you what it looks like." The MST's construction of real utopias, [9, 10] or spaces that prefigure the movement's social and political goals, is both an educational experience for its members and a political strategy convincing other potential allies of the importance of the MST's political struggle. Thus, although the push for prefiguration within Occupy Wall Street might have inhibited more strategic politics, this experience is *not* generalizable to all movements and global contexts.

A third point is about the power of occupations. Smucker offers a list of reasons (p. 58-59) why Occupy Wall Street's tactic of occupation, which was powerful in terms of its value as a "popular defiant symbol," eventually became unsustainable and ineffective. Smucker argues that we should not be tied to the tactic of occupation, as tactics are just our choice of action that should be connected to planning and long-term political strategy and vision. The MST, however, reminds us that the occupation is not simply another symbolic movement tactic, like a march or a rally. At this very moment, millions of people across the globe are engaged in occupations of housing, land, factories, and other assets. For them, the act of occupying is about reclaiming economic power, not simply a symbolic act. Certainly, successful occupations will have to be combined with other actions; however, occupying land, or the means of economic production, is not just another tactic. The MST's land occupations in Brazil have resulted in more than 350,000 families receiving

land access, while also serving as a space for the movement to prefigure political and economic goals (i.e., to govern itself and eat). Perhaps Occupy Wall Street functioned differently, because Zuccotti Park never represented a space of dispute over people's economic survival. However, by characterizing occupation as one of many tactics in a long-term political strategy, Smucker dismisses the historical and global role occupations have played in struggles for economic redistribution.

The fourth reflection is about Smucker's prescription for becoming hegemonic, which he argues is a symbolic contest of winning over common sense. Smucker writes, "An important aspect of a hegemonic contest then is the contest of the contents of common sense . . . common sense organizes the 'ground' of popular meanings. A political order's ability to resonate with and shape popular meaning is the basis of its legitimacy" (p. 145). Smucker argues that we win a "contest over common sense" by engaging in the field of culture, meaning, and framing. Smucker's suggestion for engaging in this process is to construct a pedagogically appropriate communication strategy that attracts more allies and wins over supporters. I agree, but I want to build on Smucker's suggestion and emphasize the equally important role of education in this ideological contest, not just communication. I have written previously [11] about how the idea of framing, or strategic social movement communication, often undermines the importance of developing a collective,

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9 Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010).
10 http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/ERU.htm

11 http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/edth.12067/abstract

critical consciousness.[12] In addition to effective communication, we need to offer grassroots educational programs that teach about the global political economy, the history of social struggle, geopolitical relations, and imperialism. These educational programs, like our communication strategies, must be based in a Freirean approach. This means not simply telling people what they should know, but rather, drawing out the "good sense" in people's popular, common sense understandings of the world, and turning this into a critical analysis of our political and economic history. For example, if the white residents of a working-class community believe that Latin American immigrants are stealing their jobs, and that this explains their unemployment, the "good sense" is that there are not enough jobs for everyone. The fact that the residents are blaming the immigrants for their unemployment is most likely a consequence of the dominant racist and nationalist ideologies. An effective educator will not simply critique this ideology, but rather, draw on the good sense of the original residents—that there are not enough jobs—and link this belief to a coherent political and economic analysis of why unemployment in that region exists, thus "renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity [perception of the world]."[13] This type of educational program is not simply

focused on training people in organizing and communication strategies, but teaching them the basics of political economic analysis. Building this type of educational infrastructure, which exists among many movements throughout Latin America, should be a major goal of our U.S. movements.

Fifth, and directly following this point, it is also important not to focus entirely on the terrain of ideological struggle, whether through communication or education. For Gramsci, common sense and ideology is in a *dialectical* relationship to the economic base, constantly shaping and being shaped by each other. Therefore, to become hegemonic there has to be a simultaneous struggle for alternative economic enterprises, from workers' collectives to agricultural cooperatives. Smucker gets at this a bit in his discussion of the interplay between symbolic and institutional contest, but I think it is still necessary to emphasize that changing people's economic opportunities has to go hand-in-hand with any symbolic and ideological struggle. This is why the occupation of economic resources and the means of production is both a tactic and potentially a strategy for building political power.

Finally, my last reflection is about the concept of political alignment. As Smucker writes, "Effective political challengers, in order to assemble an insurgent force strong enough to unseat or win substantial concessions from elites, must construct their own universalizing frames of a differently imagined unification—a differently framed we" (p. 246). I agree, but I also want to suggest that building this type of broad-based political alliance can produce a serious tension: how to grow a movement, without losing the ideals that began its struggle. The Brazilian

12 Rebecca Tarlau, "From a Language to a Theory of Resistance: Critical Pedagogy, the Limits of 'Framing,' and Social Change," *Educational Theory* 64, no. 4 (2014): 369–92.
13 Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 1916 – 1935, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 332.

Smucker makes a convincing case that we need to move out of our righteous corners and grow our organizations, but how do we know if and when it is justified to shift our political ideals to take power?

Workers Party (PT), a left-leaning political party that was in power from 2003-2015 in Brazil, is a perfect example. The party began as a social movement party in the 1980s, with a committed base of grassroots movements and unions that defined the party's political and social goals. Throughout the 1990s, in order to grow electoral clot, the party began to make alliances with other non-movement actors, including other parties and groups that were tied to elite economic interests. Before the 2002 election, the Workers Party (PT) presidential candidate, Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva, wrote a "Letter to the Brazilian People," communicating to his potential allies that he was not too much of a radical for them to vote for him (i.e., he would not change the fundamental economic structure of the country). It was this letter, and the diverse political alliances that the PT made over the previous decade, which allowed Lula to become president in 2003. While in power the PT was able to implement some of the most impressive social programs in the country's history, which transformed the lives of millions of people. However, the party did not attempt to transform Brazil's fundamentally neoliberal economic structure, and instead, invested heavily in a primary export economy and monoculture agro industrial production. What this meant for the MST was that the movement was able to deepen

its social proposals in many state institutions, and implement alternative economic projects in local communities; however, the PT redistributed *much less* land than the previous, neoliberal government. The PT became hegemonic, made many important social interventions, but lost its radical ideals. For some people on the left this was a necessary strategy to win concrete gains, for others Lula is a sell-out. Smucker makes a convincing case that we need to move out of our righteous corners and grow our organizations, but how do we know if and when it is justified to shift our political ideals to take power? The concrete experiences of the Left in Latin America suggest that taking political power is not sufficient for implementing the structural reforms needed to challenge the basic pillars of capitalist, patriarchal, and racist societies.

Smucker's *Hegemony How-To* is a timely call for us to think collectively about social movement strategy and how to build political power. I agree with Smucker that the most imperative task for U.S. organizers is to rebuild our social movement infrastructure. This book has already started to facilitate a discussion about how we should proceed in this process. Following Smucker's own recommendation that the Left not become to inwardly focused, I think it is also critical to draw on the many lessons from other social movements and the infrastructure these movements have built globally. Most importantly, it is critical that the political alignment we build in the United States is an international alignment, which connects with the many other working-class groups that are fighting against the same oppressive political and economic system.

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2017 VOL. 61