

In This Issue

- 1 Values of the Food System on Display
- 3 Is Healthy Food Too Expensive? Ask Those Who Know Best
- 5 Household Food Procurement, Gender, and COVID-19
- 6 Foodie Tensions in Tough Times
- 8 Why Refusing the Empire's Sugar Still Matters for Abolition
- 9 The Pandemic and the Distribution of Choice
- 11 Freedom Farmers: Black Agriculture and the Origins of Food Justice
- 13 Urban Farming: Tell All the Stories
- 14 Hops across Time and Space
- 16 Care and Feeding during the Pandemic
- 17 The Social Context of Healthy Eating
- 19 Food and Resilience during the Pandemic: Narratives from around the World
- 21 ASA News
- 24 Announcements

**Toward a More Equitable Food System**

*A collection of articles that highlight social justice issues related to the food system.*

*Tamara Mose, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, American Sociological Association*

Food not only takes care of our nutritional needs, but also reflects broader social contexts in which we live. This has become especially noticeable during the pandemic as many have come to learn how food is accessed—often unequally across communities. As a sociologist whose scholarship has in large part focused on food and foodways, I know that food has played a contentious role in our global history, which highlights cultural connectedness while also underscoring disparities among groups.

In this issue, sociologists studying

food and society write about a number of issues that ail our food system, from the complicated costs of eating healthily for low-income families to foodies confronting their own privilege during the pandemic; from how food consumption represents a central pillar of population-level health issues to privatization of supermarkets and corporate food distribution; from the harmful effects of sugar addiction among communities of color to the critical role of intermediaries who are increasingly responsible for getting food to our tables.

Articles also focus on food insecurity, strains on the food system, and ways food procurement and

family feeding have changed within households during the pandemic; how people's resilience is interconnected and defined by class across the globe; urban farming and gentrification; ways hops are traded and their impact on labor and agricultural landscapes; and the connection between food justice and the Black community.

This collection of articles illuminates a range of social justice issues that stem from the ways in which our food system works. The authors have approached their essays with different lenses and methodologies and suggest ways in which public policy can be deployed to create a more equitable food system. ■

**Values of the Food System on Display**

*Andrew Deener, Professor of Sociology, University of Connecticut*

As news of the coronavirus pandemic spread, grocery shopping became a significant concern for many. Some stockpiled food, fearing visits to supermarkets and the possibility of food shortages. Soon after, the focus turned to the dangers lurking in meat processing plants, fruit and vegetable packing houses, and shipping and distribution centers. These locations became transmission hotspots, which delayed shipments. With pressures mounting on both supply and demand, warehouse and supermarket workers struggled to keep the distribution system together and the shelves full.

While supermarket shoppers encountered empty shelves, demand for milk and fresh produce from restaurants, hotels, and schools saw a precipitous drop. As a result, dairy farmers dumped gallons of milk, and fruit and vegetable farmers plowed overflowing supplies back into their fields. Farmers had



Andrew Deener

neither the time nor the resources to repurpose the supply to meet the changing demand.

This food waste exists alongside millions of people going hungry. According to the [Brookings Institution](#), as of June 2020, 16 percent of families reported that their children did not get enough food on a weekly basis. The proportion of Black and Latino children was higher, about 33 and 25 percent respectively—part of the unequal burden of vulnerability during the pandemic. (See [Alison Hope Alkon](#), [Sarah Bowen](#), [Yuki Kato](#), [Kara Alexis Young](#), “Unequally vulnerable: a food justice approach to racial disparities in COVID-19 cases.”)

The emergency food bank system faces a parallel disruption. A U.S. census survey found that 26 million people are without enough food. [Feeding America](#), a national organization of 200 food banks, projects that the number could grow to more than 50 million in the coming months. Food banks have experienced [excessively long](#)

[lines](#). Nearly all the [food banks](#) across the country report increased demand, and 59 percent of them report diminished inventory.

**The Role of the Private Market**

While the coronavirus pandemic put a spotlight on the U.S. food system, the pandemic is not the cause of these problems. In fact, both food waste and food insecurity are normal features of the food system. The USDA estimates that between 30 and 40 percent of the food supply is wasted every year, and food insecurity has remained a constant policy issue for decades without the federal government ever developing comprehensive solutions.

[Agricultural economists](#) point out that the food system is currently failing in its flexibility, unable to connect production sectors with changing consumption needs. Underlying this issue is a sociological question about why a vital system is set up in this particular way. The food system was built to profit from abundance and convenience without creating reliable methods for solving

*Continued on Page 2*

## Values of Food System

From Page 1

other kinds of problems, including food insecurity and food waste.

Why were these particular market values integrated into a vital system? The answer requires looking back at the history of the modern food system, especially the rise and dominance of mass-merchandising as central to the consumer landscape. U.S. consumers rarely think about why supermarkets—let alone Walmart, Costco, or Target—are such fundamental parts of a vital infrastructure. And yet, almost 90 percent of the nation’s population purchases its food at a supermarket or one of these big-box stores. These private market interests have fundamentally reshaped people’s food tastes, nutritional lives, and consumer expectations.

### Supermarkets and Limited Food Access

As I explain in my book, *The Problem with Feeding Cities* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), the history of modern food distribution since the end of the 1800s is about the shift in the scale of the vital infrastructure, from a system of feeding cities to supplying an entire nation. The transition mirrored changes in the scale of other critical systems like electricity and water distribution. That is, as U.S. population became more urban and suburban in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, public and private alliances extended the means of resource distribution.

In the early 1800s, food distribution was made up of small-scale public markets and direct farm-to-market exchanges. With the expansion of grocery manufacturing, wholesaling, and retailing, the food system became

increasingly privatized. The urban grocery and wholesale system of the late 1800s and early 1900s connected food supplies to new neighborhoods and more consumers. Grocers opened hundreds of standardized outlets to meet the changing urban consumption needs and became skilled at managing many small stores at the same time.

Similarly, the supermarket system started piecemeal to solve a problem. During the Great Depression, entrepreneurs sought ways to lower food prices by linking volume and variety. So-called “cheapy” markets incorporated more types of products, initially by inviting vendors to set up stands in abandoned warehouse spaces. Over time, supermarket owners married self-service consumerism and the coordination of hundreds and then thousands of supply chains into the organization of supermarket aisles.

As the suburbs sprawled between 1930 and 1970, the federal and state governments financed the construction of new roads and highways. The auto and trucking industries replaced rail transportation. Grocery companies and food manufacturers experimented with reshaping supply chains, managing more branded goods and fresh foods. Supermarkets aligned with agricultural interests, trucking industries, and food manufacturing corporations, but a tension grew between high-tech and low-tech parts of the system. Manufacturers making everything from breakfast cereals to processed meats developed automated production lines. They made cheaper foods and relied on supermarkets to push them out in mass. Supermarkets, however, had high labor costs and minimal technology. They struggled to profit.

By the 1970s, supermarkets sold about 10,000 different products, but they made less than 1 cent on the dollar. The largest supermarket companies, many of which became

publicly traded to gain expansion capital and remain competitive, were at the whim of shareholders. Stores that did not turn a substantial profit—mostly smaller urban outlets—were forced to close. The financial pressures of the 1970s left behind a landscape of limited food access, part of the larger disinvestment of cities.

### Taking Overabundance for Granted

The modern food system was now pursuing a different collective interest altogether: the constant search for organizational and technical improvements in economic

efficiency. The food processing and consumer markets gained even more autonomy. Through the 1970s, different corporations—from regional and national supermarkets to discount stores like Kmart and Walmart—tried to integrate food, clothing, health products, beauty items, electronics, and other product lines into one-stop shopping. This consumer format proved difficult until retailers teamed up with information and communication technology companies such as IBM and RCA. Bar codes, scanning equipment, computers, and communication networks improved upon earlier profit-making inefficiencies.

Harvesting data became as important as harvesting crops. Corporations monitored and analyzed everything—from potatoes in the ground to frozen french fries at the checkout stand. More Pop-Tarts, sugary cereals, and potato chips were packed onto shelves. Big pharma joined in, not only filling prescriptions, but also filling aisles with over-the-counter cold and flu remedies and pain relievers. Sam Walton’s recipe was logistics: getting even more products to more places. Walmart put an entire supermarket into its older discount store format. Walmart Supercenters carry 125,000 items, more than a 12-fold increase

over what was considered “super” in the 1970s. Shoppers now take this massive overabundance for granted.

The federal government continued to play a role, too. In addition to subsidizing changes in transportation and suburban development, it helped finance the farming of commodity crops and created consumer relief programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). All of these efforts reinforced the prominence of mass-merchandising. SNAP benefits, for example, are used disproportionately at supermarkets and big-box stores, bolstering this aspect of the

**“Stores that did not turn a substantial profit—mostly smaller urban outlets—were forced to close. The financial pressures of the 1970s left behind a landscape of limited food access, part of the larger disinvestment of cities.”**

retail market. Likewise, agricultural subsidies neglect fruit and vegetable growers, and instead they mostly support growers of crops like corn and soybeans.

These ingredients are turned into corn syrup and soybean oil to create the abundance of soda, chips, and other cheap foods saturating supermarket aisles.

While foods are not widgets, companies now design them to fit the high volume and high variety merchandising platforms. Hyper-processed foods can sit in warehouses and on shelves for weeks, months, or even years. The *Twinkie experiment* is only the most famous example. Unlike homemade cakes, Twinkies defy time, making them easier to ship, stock, and sell.

Yet even fresh foods have become caught in this web. The produce aisle used to be seasonal, but now supermarkets have grapes and blueberries in the winter and apples and pears in the spring. Global shipping, cold storage, and precision ripening means that the food system caters to demand beyond the most processed foods, as long as the items are amenable to the industrial paradigm.

Each fresh product has a unique supply chain. *Tomatoes* are harvested when they are green, because they travel better when they are

Continued on Page 3



## Is Healthy Food Too Expensive? Ask Those Who Know Best

Caitlin Daniel, Postdoctoral Researcher, Nutrition Policy Institute, University of California, Berkeley



Caitlin Daniel

Is healthy food too expensive? This question is central to debates about why low-income people have less healthy diets than their higher-earning counterparts. It is also surprisingly contested.

Some scholars and advocates deem nourishing food too pricey. Highlighting that the cheapest calories come from refined grains, sugars, fats, and processed foods made from these ingredients, they conclude that poor people turn to insalubrious offerings to stretch their skimpy budgets. Others deem healthy eating affordable. Pointing to foods like sweet potatoes, oatmeal, peanut butter, eggs, and beans, they argue that wholesome, economical options cost no more than “junk.” From this perspective, the claim that carrots cost more than Twinkies is a “misconception,” if not “just plain wrong:” poor people don’t need more money; they need to use their dollars differently, swapping packaged items for whole ingredients; trading soda for tap water; and eating less meat.

Claims about cost are about more than facts. They are about politics.

Different assessments of affordability support divergent explanations of poor people’s eating habits. If

healthy diets seem too expensive, we conclude that cash-strapped consumers have no choice but to eat in harmful ways. If wholesome offerings appear affordable, we infer that they eat unhealthily for other reasons such as limited information or personal preference. In turn, these different explanations give rise to opposing moral judgments. While some observers blame unhealthy eating durable economic inequality, others fault what they believe are poor people’s skewed values, like putting pleasure over health, and convenience over thrift. These judgments have broader political implications. By framing low-income people either as victims or architects of their circumstances, they shape whether we support providing resources or encouraging better behaviors—or restricting the scant resources people already have.

Although food cost has sticky political implications, establishing whether healthy food is affordable should be a straightforward matter of dollars and cents. However, it’s complicated. There are multiple ways to measure food prices. Should

it be per calorie? Per serving? By weight? The choice of metric matters, as different measures change how affordable food appears, supporting different explanations and judgments of food choice in turn. Nutrition experts don’t agree on which metric to use, and when advocating one measure over another, they often infer how low-income shoppers perceive price, asserting, for example, that a quart of strawberries and a bag of chips are equally affordable because each one costs \$3.99. But absent from these debates are the perspectives of low-income people themselves. Without actually observing how this group views food cost, we can’t know if analysts’ hunches match consumers’ realities.

By talking to low-income parents and shadowing them at the grocery store, I found that these shoppers experience price in ways that researchers’ calculations don’t capture. As a result, healthy diets that seem affordable on paper can become pricey in practice.

### Factoring in Waste

When low-income parents think of food cost, they think of waste. Brittany wanted her six-year-old son Dustin to be a healthy and adventurous eater—healthier and more adventurous than she was. Self-

conscious of her weight, Brittany discussed her body size and eating habits with a disarming mix of earnestness and depleted self-esteem. Despite her wishes for Dustin, Brittany could only do so much. Having escaped a violent relationship, she was living in a transitional apartment, leaning on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families until her situation stabilized and she could start working. Brittany struggled to afford food, skipping meals at the end of the month so Dustin could eat instead.

When I asked how she managed high prices and low finances, she immediately focused on waste. “I get the things I know that my son will eat and like,” Brittany said. “I mean, I try to mix it up a little bit, like I’ll give him different fruits and stuff like that. But I try not to buy things that I don’t know if he’ll like, because it’s just, it’s a waste.”

Like Brittany, other low-income parents referenced their children’s preferences, waste, and financial loss in the same breath, revealing that they saw them as causally entwined: when children disliked a food, they rejected it, and when they rejected it, they eroded scarce resources. Food rejection is a natural part of children’s taste acquisition. Children approach new food with hesitancy,

*Continued on Page 4*

### Values of Food System

*From Page 2*

not ripe. At some point between the field and the store, tomatoes are sprayed with ethylene gas, a plant hormone that ripens them. Tomatoes turn red without gaining their full burst of flavor, one of the reasons supermarket tomatoes taste and feel more like plastic than backyard garden varieties.

Bananas are one of the best-selling fruits, shipped from all over Central and South America in their bright green and starchy state. When they arrive to U.S. ports, they go to ripening rooms where heat and ethylene gas set the ripening in motion. Some stores want bananas

yellow and ready for the shelves that day. Others want them greener, so they can keep bunches in the back and refill displays on demand.

### What Will it Take to Solve the Food System’s Problems?

The values of the just-in-time food economy—abundance, convenience, and profit-making efficiency—permeate every aspect of the system: the treatment of workers; the applications of pesticides to protect agricultural output; the invention of unpronounceable ingredients as product fillers and preservatives to extend shelf life; and the uses of automation, refrigeration, and communication to control time and space in production,

storage, and distribution.

As Instacart and other online grocery delivery services rushed to fill the gap between supermarkets and their customers during the pandemic, no comparable services—at least in terms of matching the sheer scale—have been established to eliminate food insecurity. In fact, as Janet Poppendieck discusses in her book *Sweet Charity?* (Penguin 1999), the emergency food bank system was never exclusively designed to eliminate hunger. Like other parts of the vital system, food banks serve the interests of the largest food manufacturers, processors, distributors, and retailers as an outlet for their waste and excess. Food banks are always at the whim of private dona-

tions, struggling to find new options as supply chains become leaner and emergencies accelerate the demand.

Most of the food system goes unnoticed until a disaster strikes and the world is turned upside down. Solving these food problems is not only about creating more supply chain flexibility and resilience during a global public health crisis. It is also about putting societal values front and center. It requires turning our collective attention to how vital infrastructures are built and finding ways to make health equality, food security, and environmental sustainability as mundane as the pursuit of economic efficiency. ■



## Healthy Food

From Page 3

spurning it multiple times until they learn it is safe. For low-income parents, refused food posed a real financial threat.

As Brittany admitted with trepidation, “I’m kinda scared to try new things ... I’m just scared to waste the money.” Cash-strapped parents like her played it safe, falling back on what their children liked, often processed foods with added sugar, fat, and salt. Brittany wanted Dustin to eat more healthily. But when food scarcity was a monthly reality, she said, “knowing that he’ll eat it, that’s a big thing for me.”

Brittany revealed what low-income parents know to be an economic truth: they pay for what their children eat and for what they waste. If an apple costs 60 cents, and a child wastes half, consuming half an apple costs a full 60 cents. But most food-cost calculations reflect only the amount that is eaten: half an apple costs just 30 cents. As a result, these food-cost estimates understate the true cost of healthy eating. In most cases, the true cost was enough to push struggling parents toward less healthy but more reliably eaten food.

### The Cost of Variety

Eating healthily on a tight budget has another underappreciated cost: variety. A host of wholesome ingredients may be cheap. But affordable healthy food is just a slice of what nature has to offer. After eating the same thing over and over, we start to like it less, and we turn our sights to other options. Called *sensory-specific satiety*, this phenomenon is thought to be an evolutionary adaptation to humans’ need for a wide range of nutrients from a wide range of sources. Once we get enough of one food, our body tells us it’s time to move on to something else. Often, sensory-specific satiety is used to explain why we enjoy the twelfth bite of burger less than the first. But it also applies to monotonous diets, like those that rest on a small set of healthy, economical staples. When cheap, healthy food loses its appeal, wholesome affordable diets may not be so feasible after all.

Tracey knew this well. Shortly before I met Tracey, her three children had started to rebel against their dinner plates. It didn’t matter that she cooked with love and sacrifice, standing over the stove through exhaustion and neuropathy-numbered feet. Her children were bored.

Tracey explained, “We have the same probably 12 to

13, maybe 14 staple items that I make for dinners, but they’re just sick of it ‘cause my shopping list is pretty much the same. I have to stick

to a budget.” Tracey used to cook other foods—vegetable lo mein, Chinese chicken wings, and crab Rangoon. She broke the boredom with a monthly splurge on take-out. She could afford to fill their plate with vegetables instead of offering just a few spoonfuls. But recent financial hits cut Tracey down to beans, rice, pasta, chicken quarters, frozen vegetables, tortillas, cheese, some fruit, and marked-down produce past its prime. But with this diet, her children’s patience was tried.

If anyone was going to eat healthily on a razor-thin budget, it was Tracey. Raised by an Italian mother who dried hand-rolled pasta over a broomstick, she knew how to cook. Tracey was resourceful, too, trawling the internet for healthy recipes and budgeting tips. Her Pinterest page had 219 recipes for hummus alone. But try as she might to placate her family’s shifting palates with yet another rendition of legumes, rice, and chicken thighs, her savvy had its limits. “They’ll actually not eat instead of [eating] something that they don’t like,” Tracey sighed. “I truly don’t know what to make them for dinner.”

Tracey’s children would have happily eaten something else. Tracey joked wryly that they would have happily devoured fast food every night. But homemade Chinese food, roasted vegetables, and salad also figured among their requests. They weren’t in the budget. With more

varied healthy food out of financial reach and monotonous healthy food out of the running, Tracey was left with the variety she could afford—Hot Pockets, packaged chicken nuggets, frozen burritos, and ramen noodles. She cringed with guilt. “I’m like, when did I become this? I used to do healthy food!” But for Tracey,

**“The discrepancy between per-unit price and out-of-pocket cost poses fewer problems when money is more forthcoming. But when consumers have just dollars to feed themselves, we overstate their ability to afford healthy food.”**

the choice was not between junk and filling staples. It was between junk and children who simply might not eat. A narrow range of healthy foods

did fit her budget. But when monotony shifts an eater’s tastes, what is affordable in theory might not be viable in practice.

### Packages of Food: More than I Need, More than I Can Afford

A protein- and vegetable-rich peanut stew costs \$1.06 per serving. That amounts to \$6.38 per recipe. The total cost of ingredients—not just the amount used—would be even more. Families could manage these larger sums when government food assistance or a paycheck came in. But toward the end of the month, when they have mere dollars to spend, even nourishing staples can remain out of reach.

Rebecca loved healthy food. Raised by a “health nut” mother, she called herself a “big vegetable freak.” In an ideal world, Rebecca would have bought fresh produce, unprocessed meat, organic dairy, and fewer starches such as pasta and bread. She did what she could, restricting juice and insisting that her three children eat vegetables at dinner before getting their entrées. But Rebecca worried about running out of food all the time. She would serve pasta for dinner later in the month. “Unfortunately, that’s all I have left in my cupboard right now, until we get money to go shopping again.” During these crunch times, when both cabinets and budget were low, Rebecca turned to fast food. She explained, “You could go to Wendy’s and get a 99-cent cheeseburger, or you could go

to the store and get [ingredients for] burgers for five bucks. So what are you going to do? You’re going to take your fast food option.”

Per serving, homemade cheeseburgers would have cost slightly less than their dollar-menu counterpart. But with just dollars on hand, Rebecca didn’t define affordability based on servings. She focused on total cost, weighing beef, buns, and cheese for \$5 against three 99-cent burgers, one for each child. In contrast, many diet-cost estimates reflect the price of what is eaten, not of what must be purchased for it to be eaten in the first place. From this perspective, three slices of cheese would cost 45 cents, even though it takes \$2.39 to buy the whole package. The discrepancy between per-unit price and out-of-pocket cost poses fewer problems when money is more forthcoming. But when consumers have just dollars to feed themselves, we overstate their ability to afford healthy food.

### Understand Perspectives

As these mothers show, low-income people view food cost in ways that outside observers might not expect. For them, price intertwines with practical issues such as waste, boredom, and cash on hand. These practical matters don’t just pile non-economic challenges onto a tenuous budget. Rather, they shift people’s very sense of what is affordable because they add unmeasured costs to the equation: the cost of food waste; variety; and entire bundles of ingredients, not just single servings. Because food-cost calculations largely omit these considerations, they risk understating how much money healthy eating truly takes—and because different assessments of affordability support different explanations of food choice, omitting these costs could lead to the wrong conclusion about why poor people eat what they eat, and about what policies would support eating more healthily. This conclusion is made possible not by imagining how cash-strapped shoppers view price, but by understanding people’s choices from their perspective—using the tools of sociology. To understand whether healthy food is too expensive, we need to ask those who know best. ■

# Household Food Procurement, Gender, and COVID-19

Michael Carolan, Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Affairs in the College of Liberal Arts, Colorado State University

## A High-Level View of Food Practices



Michael Carolan

The world is going through an unprecedented pandemic. In March 2020, one in five people around the world were under lockdown. By the end of that month, three in four Americans were following stay-at-home orders. Throughout 2020, public health officials have pleaded with the general public to maintain social distancing and restraint when engaging with others. This messaging has only become amplified during the holiday season.

As we approach the one-year mark from when reports of the coronavirus were initially picked up by the U.S. media, a picture is taking shape about certain impacts of the pandemic—from the psychological impacts of social distancing to the economic costs of lockdowns and the impacts (mostly positive) related to reduced travel and industrial output, as evidenced in data pointing to reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, noise pollution, and improved water quality.

Sociologically speaking, it is still too early to know the pandemic's full effects, although there are preliminary data to draw from. Consider virtual schooling—a responsibility that my wife and I, like many parents across the country, have had to negotiate for most of 2020. A *The New York Times* poll found that nearly half of the fathers surveyed with children under 12 reported spending more time on home schooling than their spouse, with only three percent of women agreeing with that assessment. Meanwhile, 80 percent of mothers surveyed reported spending more time on school matters than their partners. While peer-reviewed literature on the subject is only beginning to be published, what is available supports the thesis that the pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities.

We also have some clues on how people procure, prepare, and consume food since the outbreak, suggesting changes to these practices. In one survey of more than 1,000 American adults conducted in early April 2020, over half reported cooking more (54 percent), and almost as many said they were baking more (46 percent), than before the pandemic. Three-quarters of those claiming to cook more reported being more confident in the kitchen (50 percent) because of those experiences, with 73 percent saying they are either enjoying cooking more (35 percent) or as much (38 percent) as before.

The International Food Information Council conducted a survey of 1,000 U.S. adults during the same time period. Fifty percent of that sample reported doing less in-person shopping and 47 percent were eating more home-cooked meals. This is supported by data from Instacart, an independent grocery-delivery service in the U.S. and Canada, which has emerged in 2020 as a leader in grocery delivery with a 48 percent share of the market as of August, according to data analytics provider Second Measure. The company saw their order volume increase 150 percent from early March to early April, with downloads of their app multiplying sevenfold during that period. There are also survey data and countless media stories indicating that more people are buying in bulk now than prior to COVID-19. Finally, we have all likely experienced in some form how the pandemic has upended the food system and the supply chains upon which we are so dependent; not to mention the role played by the “essential workers” who populate those spaces, and who have risked their lives, so we can eat.

And yet, all these data lack granularity save for whatever we have been able to glean from our own lived experiences. We know

that food practices are neither evenly distributed across nor within households. But we currently lack post-outbreak data to effectively tell that story, which means we have a long way to go before we can unpack how COVID-19 has impacted food experiences at the level of everyday life.

## Gender Behaviors

I would like to spend the remainder of the essay discussing my efforts to fill some of these gaps, empirically. Data were collected over two stages. Stage one (late 2019) involved 41 households—70 respondents—from three Colorado localities, two rural and one located in a metropolitan county. Baseline interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, were then followed by a 30-day tracking period, where respondents had their macro-mobilities tracked using a GPS tracking app—Prey—that was loaded onto their mobile phones. Stage one concluded with follow-up interviews that lasted roughly two hours.

I wanted to examine how households procured their food and how these practices and mobilities varied across communities while interrogating such variables and concepts as gender, life course, care, food access, and a community's physical location. Findings from Stage one have been reported in the journal *Agriculture and Human Values*.

Enter COVID-19, which led to Stage two taking shape. Shortly after the Colorado governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order on March 25, 2020, participants were contacted again and asked for a little more of their time. Sixty-one of the original 70 participants—or 36 households—agreed to participate in the second stage, which was a combination of virtual interviews and having their movements tracked using Prey for two weeks. All tracking was completed before the statewide stay-at-home order expired on April 26. A thorough explanation of Stage two's methods and conceptual orientation can be found in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Sociological Quarterly*.

I would like to first run through some of the descriptive data, which document changes in food procurement across households between Time 1 and Time 2. Since the outbreak, respondents reported cooking/baking more frequently, from 3.6 ( $\sigma$  2.71) to 5 ( $\sigma$  1.81) times per week. They also reported higher rates of food hoarding, estimating having 5.6 ( $\sigma$  4.42) days of food at Time 1 versus 18.33 ( $\sigma$  5.45) days at Time 2. Respondents also expressed greater interest in gardening—either in terms of “expanding existing” or “starting one”—during lockdown than when interviewed prior.

Yet aggregated data gloss over heterogeneity, which in this case reflects differences not only in terms of class, gender, and age—the sample population was overwhelmingly white across all three communities. Geospatial location was also important, playing a significant role explaining why some households traveled in excess of 100 miles each way for groceries while others could get by traveling far less, with some residents hardly ever needing to leave their homes because of home-delivery coverage available to metropolitan residents.

All respondents reduced their travel, on the whole, during the stay-at-home period: 27 respondents reduced their travel by 81 percent to 100 percent; 14 respondents by 61 percent to 80 percent; 5 respondents by 41 percent to 60 percent; 5 respondents by 21 percent to 40 percent; and 11 respondents by 1 percent to 20 percent. Filtering for food procurement-related trips for each household, however, reveals a very different picture. This is especially apparent by the fact that, for some individuals, trips to grocery stores increased. Gender proved a significant variable for explaining this variation.

Men made up every instance ( $n=7$ ) where the tracking data reported an increase in food procurement-related travel recorded from Time 1 to Time 2. In addition, for the remainder of participants, where travel reductions were

Continued on Page 6

## Foodie Tensions in Tough Times

Merin Oleschuk, Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; José Johnston, Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto; and Shyon Baumann, Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto

Foodie culture has long walked a razor's edge of snob appeal and accessibility. Foodie culture celebrates eating styles that cut across lines of highbrow and lowbrow, upscale and down-market, home-grown and remote—from street-food festivals and truck-stop pecan pie to truffle shavings and French wines.

Navigating these tensions has always been a balancing act, but today's troubled times seem to

further complicate foodie culture's fraught relationship with culinary democracy and distinction. Amid a global pandemic that has brought death, illness, and economic hardship to millions, do people still value food fashions and pleasure-seeking food experiences? What challenges do the food system pressures and amplified inequalities prompted by COVID-19 pose to foodies?

First, and most obviously, foodie dining and shopping have become practically and logistically difficult. Supply chain pressures (especially early in the pandemic) made procuring certain food items difficult, and at times limited what people could cook at home. Similarly, dinner parties are, for the most

part, on pause for now. With rising infection rates, eating out has been highly restricted by social norms and regulations.

The dining restrictions prompted by COVID-19 have led to a wave of restaurant closures, sometimes referred to as restaurant "extinction." People who work in the restaurant industry have been profoundly hurt by the pandemic. In the United States, the National Restaurant Association's survey of its members in September revealed that there had already been 100,000 closures in the U.S. since March—an astonishing one-sixth of all restaurants, with another 40 percent of remaining operators predicting they would close permanently within six months

without an aid package. Although it is too early to know the final toll, it is certain that an enormous number of restaurants will go out of business, taking with them many entry-level jobs on which economically vulnerable populations have long relied. The innovation, experimentation, creativity, and diversity of urban restaurant culture cannot exist in the same way when economic survival is tenuous. Eaters are right to worry, and wonder what they can do to help their favorite restaurants survive the pandemic.

### Democracy Versus Distinction

Another challenge to foodie pleasure is less straightforward: how

*Continued on Page 7*

### Food Procurement

*From Page 5*

recorded men on average recorded lower percent changes than women, at least when the trip involved purchasing food for the household.

This finding is significant because the data also point to evidence supporting normativities tied to being, and reinforcing conceptions of what it means to be, a "good mother." Broadly speaking, this literature speaks to, quoting a seminal piece of scholarship on the subject, the "intersecting ideals of motherhood and ethical food discourse, whereby 'good' mothers are those who preserve their children's purity and protect the environment through conscientious food purchases." Not only do these societal expectations place an asymmetrical burden on women by making it their responsibility to procure "good food" for the household, they also reinforce neoliberal worldviews by emphasizing mothers' individual responsibility for securing their child's wellbeing.

This provides an important conceptual backdrop to understand some of the data. One father, for instance, talked about putting his "extra time to work" during lockdown by learning to bake because his wife "just can't do it anymore" due to all of her other new house-

hold responsibilities—homeschooling, extra at-home meals, additional house cleaning now that everyone was home 24/7. This aligns with prior scholarship, where men tend to "help" with housework, during times of crises and stress, rather than assume a leading role in feeding the family.

So, why the uptick among some men choosing to take up grocery shopping in the middle of a global pandemic? Think about this question in the context of established links between gender and responses to the pandemic, specifically, the finding that men are more likely to downplay the seriousness of the virus. A number of polls find that men in the U.S. are less likely to wear masks compared to women. The idea that "real" men respond in a particular way to the pandemic came out during the interviews. To quote one father talking about the stay-at-home order and the public health risks associated with the virus: "I'm not going to let some little ol' virus keep me from making sure my family is fed. Not now, not ever."

While minimizing risks associated with COVID-19, some of the fathers interviewed also played on those heightened risks to justify engaging in practices that were previously not their responsibility. The virus, you could say, helped to

de-feminize—or perhaps even masculinize—particular tasks, which in turn provided men symbolic cover to participate more directly in feeding the family because of the dangers involved rather than despite them.

Curiously, I also witnessed some of this hegemonic, performative masculinity on display among some of the women—rural women especially. One of these rural mothers, for instance, talked about how rurality to some degrees requires women to be "risk takers" if they and their children wish to succeed in this environment. "Living out here you got to be a risk taker," she said. "Blizzards. Forest fires. COVID is just another thing you learn to deal with. ... I've got a family. You got to be fearless, for them—to take care of them but also to show my kids that you've got to be tough. Life throws you a curve, you have to suck it up."

Another way to interpret these data: As opposing to doing masculinity, quotes such as the above demonstrate women who were challenging hegemonic femininity. This would parallel arguments made elsewhere, looking specifically at females in rural agricultural settings, such as an earlier study of French women farmers.

### Long-term Impacts

Admittedly, my longitudinal project ends up asking more questions than it answers. Take the question of whether the above changes will stick. The data do not provide a clear response, though we cannot entirely dismiss the power of new habituations and the competencies and materialities therein implied. Regarding those materialities, for instance: a number of respondents talked about buying new freezers post-outbreak, which aligns with reports of a rush in freezer sales in March and April. And as we know, storage space is positively correlated with over-consumption.

A non-COVID-related question raised by the study involves how we think about gendered household food practices in relation to metro and non-metro households: Namely, to what degree should place matter in all of this? Put another way: How do performances of rurality shape conceptions of being a good mother?

What I do know is that the sociological impacts of COVID-19 will be discussed, debated, and empirically tracked for many years to come. Finally, as we read reports about how food procurement and family feeding have changed since the start of the pandemic, let us be sure to ask how these changes are distributed within those homes. ■



Feature

**Foodie Tensions**

From Page 6

to manage the balancing act between democratic inclusion and exclusionary distinction in a time of hardship. Cultural sociologists since Pierre Bourdieu have recognized that food has a deep, enduring relationship to status, inequality, and social class.

Food is classed, for instance, through differences in access to food—especially whole foods—and differences in consumption patterns and tastes. Class differences in food preferences and consumption are widely recognized, and food’s role in status signaling is firmly established. Elite dining has a long history, and the contemporary iteration of high-end restaurants and expensive, fashionable ingredients are a continuation of this tradition.

The classed stratification of food, however, is complicated in an age of cultural omnivorousness where outright snobbery is shunned. In our early work on foodies, we describe this as a tension between “democracy versus distinction.” The core of that tension involved the paradoxical drive of foodie culture: to create a sense of democratic openness to new foods, cuisines, and ideas (against the orthodox elitism of French food snobbery), alongside a persistent drive to distinguish and legitimate foods of privilege. With the “democracy versus distinction” tension, we have seen the elevation of the foods of less privileged folks (e.g., re-creating Oaxaca street foods at home or romantically rhapsodizing about the sweet tea of Indian chai sellers), alongside the fetishization of expensive items, like aged balsamic vinegar, high-end cooking ranges, pricey Japanese chef knives, and tasting menus of the world’s acclaimed chefs.

Our most recent research on culinary capital shows that more ethical choices and preferences are themselves ways to signal elite status through food. A high-status



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chicken is certainly not bought at a budget supermarket, but its ethical and environmental credentials matter: it is a chicken that is free-range, cage-free, grown without the use of antibiotics, and preferably raised by empowered workers. This chicken, not surprisingly, tends to be valued by groups with high levels of economic and cultural capital. Crucially, the ethical concerns we see among foodies are circumscribed, prioritizing some issues, such as farmer livelihood, animal welfare, and sustainability, with less attention to others like wealth inequality, farm workers’ rights, and systemic racism.

Foodie discourse has been open to acknowledging environmental problems in the food system, favoring organic and local foods, but has tended to exist in a classless bubble, relatively oblivious to issues such as poverty, inequality, sexism, and institutionalized racism (with some important exceptions). Only recently have stories about the exploitation of farm workers (in the U.S. and Canada) and meat packers, and racism and sexism in the restaurant industry hit the press. By and large, foodie discourse has tended to exist far away from the mouths of the hungry or food insecure and has been largely oblivious to the ironies of serving a humble “hamburger” stuffed with foie gras and shaved truffles.

In recent times, the apolitical bubble of foodie culture has been harder to maintain as the pandemic has shone light on social inequalities exacerbated in pandemic conditions, including those embedded in food production, distribution, and consumption. For example, food insecurity is a major social problem that has noticeably worsened during the pandemic due to job losses stemming from the economic recession, school closures, and unstable childcare arrangements. During the pandemic, food insecurity rates in the United States have been

recorded between 10 percent and 52 percent in different areas of the country, hitting as high as three times that of the Great Recession early in this period.

Importantly, this phenomenon is not felt equally. Food insecurity has been shown to disproportionately affect BIPOC communities, and is especially challenging for families with children, where mothers disproportionately incur its burden.

**A Shift in the Cultural Terrain**

The statistics are distressing to read. The proportion of eaters who rely on assistance to meet their daily food needs are deeply disturbing. Under these conditions, where food insecurity and economic hardship are even more prevalent, how do the cultural meanings of high-status food appear to be shifting?

Even during the pandemic, many elite opportunities for foodie distinction have evolved and persisted. The foodways of the economically stable and elites are still there, and high-end options remain available for consumption (e.g., takeout from Eataly, to-go meals from Alinea, and a Sunday Market at Chez Panisse). Indeed, as has been the case with health outcomes, the pandemic has had an uneven impact on economic livelihoods, with financially stable individuals bearing a much smaller share of the pandemic’s worst affronts—health, security, and safety.

Yet as much as cultural inequality has predictably persisted, the cultural terrain seems to be shifting. It seems harder now for foodies to have their cake and eat it too. Cooking and eating with foodie abandon can come across as false and out of touch within pandemic circumstances. In the early days of foodie culture, it seemed relatively easy for privileged eaters to dabble in poor and/or racialized peoples’ food cultures and not be called out for it. While cracks in the seams were appearing prior to the pandemic, the extreme inequalities of the contemporary foodscape are harder to paper over today. It now seems more problematic for privileged people to celebrate the pleasures valorized in foodie culture. Although we don’t have systematic

evidence on this point, various trends indicate some significant shifts along lines of racial awareness, sexism, and class politics—especially compared to when we first started immersing ourselves in foodie discourse 15 years ago.

To be sure, unease with the stark racial-economic inequalities highlighted by the pandemic did not occur in a vacuum; the pandemic catalyzed already building anger with xenophobia, sexism, and classism embedded in foodie culture. Questions about cultural appropriation in elite food have been the subject of conversation for several years; however, the Black Lives Matter movement and, in particular, its momentum over the summer of 2020, provoked many within food media to explicitly reflect on racism within their own organizations and fueled a racial reckoning in many areas of the industry.

This led to the expulsion of a number of former gatekeepers and elites within food media, including *Bon Appétit*’s former editor-in-chief, Adam Rapoport, who was initially criticized for excluding BIPOC food writers at the magazine and later shown in brownface, as well as Alison Roman, who was swiftly cut down after criticizing two BIPOC women (Chrissy Teigen and Marie Kondo) for capitalizing on their fame. Food media’s racial reckoning falls alongside heightened awareness of sexism within the restaurant industry that was provoked by the #metoo movement that rose to prominence in 2018. This movement fueled a litany of stories exposing misogyny and sexual harassment in the restaurant industry, including by industry giants such as Mario Batali, John Besh, and Ken Friedman.

**A Time for Critical Reflection**

While much remains to be done to address the issues raised by these movements, they do seem to have fostered an atmosphere of critical reflection within foodie culture. They have provoked questions that will hopefully propel continued changes to our food system: is the pull to enjoy authentic and exotic foods so powerful that we can excuse the lack of attention

*Continued on Page 8*

## Why Refusing the Empire's Sugar Still Matters for Abolition

Anthony Ryan Hatch, Associate Professor and Chair of the Science in Society Program, Wesleyan University

servitude and figurative stand-ins for the institutionalized violence of food apartheid in the U.S.



Anthony Ryan Hatch

They are now culturally repackaged to suit woke consumers who had finally had enough of America's violence against Black people, consumers who would enjoy industrial and genetically modified rice and artificially flavored high fructose corn syrup

if it had a less racist face. Not only were Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben harmful culturally, because syrup and rice are metabolized as sugars in the body, they are also biologically harmful. Yet, changing the cultural face of empire often allows the material technologies of empire to remain intact.

It is easier to protest the empire's image rather than change the empire that is the inspiration for the image and requires its mass acceptance for cultural legitimacy and profit-taking. While the two icons got the boot, no one called for mass boycotts of Mars, Incorporated or the Quaker Oats Company as a response to the racist imagery of their brands.

Changing the image and structure of the empire involves both cultural criticism and consciousness-raising that expose the lies of the powerful and institutional analysis that reveals how power worked to produce the lie in the first place. For example, Cristin Kearns and her colleagues *uncovered* how the so-called *Sugar Research Foundation* (now the Sugar Association, Inc.), a pseudo-scientific creation of the modern-day sugar barons, paid Harvard University nutritionists to publish *false claims* that consumption of dietary fat is responsible for heart disease and downplay the truth about sugar's links to heart disease. Other obfuscations remain buried. As *Khalil Gibran Muhammad* reminded us in the 1619 Project, there is nothing "post" about the colonial food system that produces sugar. In 2020, racialized slave labor still produces sugar and racialized peasantry eats that

sugar. Kara Walker's "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby" faced more *backlash* than Domino Sugar. Walker's art raises urgent questions about the patterns of institutional and cultural racism that accompany the ongoing hyper-production and consumption of sugar.

Given all of this, how have Black people not cancelled sugar itself? Media scholar Meredith D. Clark *defines* canceling as "an expression of agency, a choice to withdraw one's attention from someone or something whose values, (in)action, or speech are so offensive, one no longer wishes to grace them with their presence, time, and money." Black people have cancelled celebrity chefs, clothing manufacturers, cosmetic companies, media companies, sports leagues and teams, pseudo-scientists and universities, police officers, and elected politicians for their contributions to anti-black racism. Yet, no contemporary mass movement fighting for the health of Black people has cancelled or refused sugar specifically because it is antiracist and abolitionist to do so, but perhaps it should.

### Sugar Consumption: It's Complicated

Measured in Black lives and limbs lost, sugar has played a leading role as one of the most racist actants that has ever been rolled out of the colonial factory of white supremacy. Sugar is responsible for a lion's share of Black pain and death. The current system forces us to binge on a staggering amount of sugar. Americans eat *22 teaspoons* of added sugar every day, far more than the recommended six per day for women and nine for men. Only 26 percent of Black youth and 34 percent of Black adults meet the standard for eating fewer than 10 percent of their daily calories from *added sugars*.

The *more available* sugar is in any given food environment, the higher the prevalence of diabetes in that environment. Black people of all ages disproportionately suffer the negative health effects associated with surplus sugar consumption, particularly in terms of diabetes and heart disease, two major pre-existing conditions that magnify the dangers of COVID-19.

*Continued on Page 9*

The pandemic has brought the absurdities of America's *food apartheid* into sharp relief. Food commodity chains are operating as super-highways for the transmission of COVID-19, carting the virus through groups of agricultural workers—especially in industrial animal manufacturing—and food service workers in warehouses, grocery stores, and restaurants. *New arrangements* now enable well-to-do customers to pay low-wage workers to deliver their food and *put it away in their kitchens*.

Pandemic-related job losses layered on top of extreme economic inequality have increased both food scarcity and hunger as well as *disordered eating*. People suffering from pre-existing conditions (many of which result directly from consuming sugar-rich processed foods) are in especially grave danger from COVID-19. The Trump administration's *actions* and inactions in this area have only made a bad situation terrible.

As Karen Washington's language of food apartheid suggests, scholars across the social and environmental sciences are reframing the conversation about food justice in terms of environmental racism and racial justice (see the empirically rich and well theorized volume *Black Food Matters* edited by Hanna Garth and Ashanté M. Reese). Perhaps it is the systemic nature of the food system itself that permits individual corporate actors (or sectors organized around particular commodities) to fly under the moral radar. The tactic has allowed food corporations to shirk responsibility for collective biological harms.

### Canceling Sugar

After decades of criticism, Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben finally got phased out in the middle of the pandemic in summer 2020. George Floyd's murder proved too much for the two cultural icons of Black

### Foodie Tensions

*From Page 7*

to pressing social problems in the food system? Can we enjoy take-out restaurant food without also doing something to help improve the employment conditions of the workers who made it, or help them get paid a living wage? Can we cook and consume abundant meals without advocating for the millions of people for whom such a meal is impossible? Amid the pandemic, the usual foodie practices and values bump up against a reminder to at least momentarily consider one's privilege before tucking into dinner.

To be clear, we do not intend here to ham-handedly pathologize the pleasures, comfort, and pride that many people enjoy when baking bread or cooking a nice dinner. These experiences involve privilege, but they are *not straightforwardly*

*restricted to self-described foodies or upper-middle class white eaters*. In a world of tremendous uncertainty and risk, preparing and enjoying food can feel deeply comforting, providing a soothing balm against the hardships of the outside world. We would also note that elements of foodie culture have worked to expose the harms of commonplace foods, like *burgers*, and to valorize the foodwork that many people (especially *women*) enjoy and take pride in. We don't believe that foodie culture is deserving of totalizing scorn or simplistic backlash, but what is clear is that the apoliticism and false universality of foodie discourse no longer seems as palatable to eaters in a pandemic. When the stark inequalities of our food system are laid bare across our collective dining table, the joys of a delicious home-cooked meal cannot help but taste a little bittersweet. ■



# The Pandemic and the Distribution of Choice

Laura J. Miller, Professor and Chair of Sociology, Brandeis University

Among the many surreal scenes of the pandemic during spring 2020 were those of empty shelves in supermarkets and long lines of people waiting to enter grocery stores and food pantries alike. An American population, for the most part, too young to have experienced the widespread destitution of the Great Depression or the ration cards of World War II, fell back on references to those historical events to make sense of their predicament.



Laura J. Miller

But the comparison with these earlier eras has its limits. The disruptions to habitual patterns of food procurement, which continue as the pandemic drags on, can find many of their sources within the largely invisible system of food distribution that has developed over

the last several decades. There are a number of dimensions of this system that the pandemic has allowed us to see more clearly. What they highlight is a system of enormous complexity and interdependence that in maximizing consumer choice, increasingly makes intermediaries responsible for sourcing and preparing food.

It is perhaps helpful to identify the various players involved in food distribution—how food is moved from producers to the eating public. They include food brokers who help producers find retail or wholesale buyers for their products; companies engaged in importing and exporting food; wholesalers who aggregate purchases from producers and then ship out to retail outlets or food service providers; wholesale markets for produce, fish, etc., which retail buyers can visit in order to select items; shippers with their temperature-controlled carriers to protect perishable goods; restaurants, caterers, food trucks, and other vendors of prepared

food; schools, hospitals, prisons, corporate campuses, and other institutional food service providers; grocery stores, bakeries, butchers, farmers markets, and other retailers with physical outlets serving consumers; online retailers and home delivery services; and food banks, food pantries, meal programs, and gleaners who bring food to people without the means to purchase it in the consumer market.

This complex network of intermediaries plays a key role in providing an enormous quantity and variety of food to much of the American population. And considering all the labor involved, the miles of travel, the extensive packaging to stave off spoilage, and the layers of handlers who each take a share of the final price, this food is cheap. The globalization of supply chains is one reason for inexpensive food in the United States. With buyers scouring the entire world for products, farmers and processors find themselves competing with counterparts across the globe.

Meanwhile, labor costs in the domestic food sector are held down through mechanization and the low wages that characterize jobs in agriculture, food processing, retail, and food service. Government subsidies for some commodities make the economics work for some (mostly large) growers, as do economies of scale that, again, benefit large growers as well as large retailers such as Walmart and Costco.

## Essential Goods

When it comes to basic necessities, Americans' spending patterns are different from those of the past; Americans now spend much of their income on housing and relatively little on food. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017, 13 percent of the average household's expenditures went to food (eaten both in and away from home) compared to 30 percent in 1950. At the same time, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this state of abundance left 10.5 percent of households food

*Continued on Page 10*

## Empire's Sugar

*From Page 8*

As opposed to America's food ecology comprising "food deserts" or "food swamps," we should use metaphors that reference **engineered environments** like landfills to describe Americans' relationship to food and sugar.

Strangely, neither the American Diabetes Association nor the American Heart Association—the two professional medical organizations that have the most at stake over the mass consumption of sugar—take the position that we should *eat less than these recommendations*. Popular diets, from Atkins to Paleo to keto, encourage people to abstain from eating sugar-based foods principally on scientific ideas about what constitutes a healthy diet and knowledge of the real biological risks of sugar consumption. But sugar abstinence, as Karen Throsby's **work** suggests, is unequal, falling primarily

into the domain white, middle-class healthism. Feminist, indigenous, and critical race scholars have engaged the idea of refusal as a guide for analysis and political action (see Audra Simpson, Ruha Benjamin, and Kim TallBear for starters). How might communities collectively refuse sugar as a part of an antiracist plan of action? As suffragettes and prisoners have demonstrated via the hunger strike, an individual endeavor of refusal to eat the empire's food takes on additional power and moral force through collective action.

## Go After the Profits

People didn't always abstain from eating the empire's sugar just because it was unhealthy. In the 1790s, British abolitionists called the Anti-saccharites refused to eat (or buy) sugar because it was produced by slave labor. The very first mass movement designed to promote the abstention from sugar was grounded in an abolitionist pol-

itics that had everything to do with ending slavery. The Anti-saccharites devised a powerful new tactic to put pressure on the transatlantic slave trade and colonial slavery. Refuse to buy or consume anything that had been made by enslaved people, especially sugar and rum.

In 1791, William Fox published a blistering abolitionist pamphlet titled *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum*. In it, Fox castigated his fellow Britishers for their participation in the crime of transnational slavery as practiced throughout the British colonies. He writes,

If we purchase the commodity, we participate in the crime. The slave-dealer, the slave-holder, and the slave driver, are all virtually agents of the consumer, and may be considered as employed and hired by him to procure the commodity. For, by holding out the temptation,

he is the original cause, the first mover in the horrid process; and every distinction is done away by the moral maxim. That whatever we do by another, we do ourselves (p. 4).

Whereas moral appeals to the fundamental humanity of slaves could be debated endlessly or ignored wholesale by slave traders and owners, direct action against the financial interests of these proto-racial capitalists was both an urgent and necessary tactic to achieve structural change. Civil rights leaders later applied this principle in the Birmingham Bus Boycott, a year-long abstention from the segregated public transportation system. Perhaps the central lesson from the Birmingham Bus Boycott ought to be revisited—when social movements go after the empire's ill-gotten profits, you are going after something it values and will defend at any cost. ■

## Pandemic and Distribution

From Page 9

insecure in 2019, meaning that household members did not have enough food for an active, healthy life throughout the year.

The pandemic and resulting unemployment greatly exacerbated the problem of limited access to nutritious, affordable, culturally relevant food, with [some estimates](#) placing the proportion of the population experiencing food insecurity at some point during 2020 at more than double pre-pandemic rates. As sociologists know, issues of food insecurity are closely connected to inequality and the inadequacies of public programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). But for now, I will focus on what happened to the abundance of food that is usually characteristic of the larger food system that has appeared to serve so many so well.

The extent to which a domestic market depends on global sources of food products became apparent when transportation disruptions cut off supply chains. Despite food being deemed an “essential” good, food distribution is not self-contained, but is integrated into a global transportation system that runs at full capacity, and therefore profitably, by handling countless unrelated goods and people. When passenger airplanes (which also carry freight) were not flying, and ships were not allowed to dock or let crews disembark, food supplies were deeply affected. Halted production of nonfood items and new sanitation and inspection measures also caused major delays in transportation. What had been a finely calibrated system—in which carriers always traveled with full loads, and containers and trucks were scheduled to be available at a particular place when goods were ready to be loaded and shipped—fell into disarray.

As we focus on the domestic front, other issues emerge. Certainly, some of the food shortages during the pandemic, exemplified by meat, stemmed from problems in production rather than distribution. Meatpackers who did little to ensure

the health and safety of their workforce time and again became centers of coronavirus outbreaks, leading to shutdowns and scaled-back operations. However, many other problems came from the fact that so many producers do not orient their operations to individual consumers, but instead serve various segments of the distribution system.

### Institutional and Restaurant Buyers

One of the surprises to those of us who had not been paying attention is how much supply chains have become focused on serving institutional and restaurant buyers rather than individual households. To use the well-known example of a nonfood item shortage, it was not simply that people were hoarding months’ worth of toilet paper (though they were). It was also that toilet paper producers were not equipped to suddenly retool and make household-grade and size rolls of toilet paper rather than the types used by workplaces, schools, hotels, and other larger buyers.

The same held true for all kinds of food items. Rather than institutional and restaurant bakers who would reliably buy 50 pound sacks of flour, demand came from individual households on a baking kick searching for 5 pound packages. When cooking for themselves, consumers seek out different kinds of food than in restaurants, with the result that demand for canned soups outpaced supplies while farmers could no longer be assured of a restaurant purchasing an entire crop of arugula. Cuts of beef were out of balance since consumers stopped ordering steaks in restaurants and instead increased their purchases of ground beef in grocery stores.

Along with temporary food shortages resulting from an inability to meet retail demand came adverse (and probably more long-lasting) environmental effects. The sudden refocusing on the household level necessitated greater amounts of packaging at the same time that grocery stores were required to stop selling bulk items that involve common usage of bins or implements. A surge in restaurant take-out similarly

brought additional packaging into circulation.

The flip side of a production system geared to institutional buyers is how dependent food relief efforts have become on waste generated from institutional sources. One of the achievements in food recovery operations during the last 25 years has been the loosening of restrictions on the ability to donate excess supplies of food to organizations that process or repackage it for re-distribution to people facing food insecurity. The federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996, and a range of state and local laws that give liability protections to donors, helped to increase the amount, variety, and quality of donated food. But at the same time as unemployment, health crises, and other effects of the pandemic increased, the amount of food relief and supplies dried up with the shuttering of restaurants, cancellation of catered events, and low inventory of grocery stores. As a consequence, food relief organizations have had to rely on inadequate cash donations to purchase food.

### The State of the Food Supply Chain

Now that many months have passed since the pandemic began, we can consider whether the food distribution system is showing signs of major long-term change. For the most part, the answer appears to be no. The centrality of long supply chains, global sourcing, and commercial and institutional food purveyors may have been temporarily shaken, but these defining features of a distribution system have not been dislodged.

To take the case of commercial food preparation, the pandemic underscored just how much Americans have moved away from cooking for themselves and how large a role the commercial food sector plays in the economy. Closures and diminished operations of food services and drinking places were responsible for [59 percent of the jobs lost in March 2020](#). Although people initially shopped and cooked for themselves at greatly increased levels, these new habits were quickly relinquished once eating estab-

lishments reopened. According to the [Hartman Group](#), by summer 2020, consumers were acquiring food from restaurants at almost the same levels they did the previous year. The major difference was that people were now more likely to eat takeout at home rather than dining at a restaurant. Meanwhile, industry members speak of “building resiliency” and “mitigating risk” in supply chains by using standard measures such as sophisticated technology and enhanced communication within and across networks. The focus is on fine-tuning rather than overhauling the system.

Although we are likely to return to the food landscape that prevailed before the pandemic, we might still pause and ask what is gained and lost by doing so. The pandemic highlights how important institutional food providers, such as school lunch programs, are in providing food to people who otherwise may not be able to access it. For those with stable incomes, a complex system of sourcing food from all over the world ensures that tens of thousands of items are regularly available in the average supermarket, with additional options found in specialty stores and online.

Commercial food providers sell a great variety of tasty, prepared options, especially in urban areas. But the downsides of this system also loom large, including the uneven benefits to a population, both domestic and abroad, marked by great inequality; the vulnerabilities of complex supply chains; the resulting amount of waste and environmental degradation; and a reliance on other people’s labor, much of it poorly compensated, in order to make food affordable to American consumers. Numerous recent books, by sociologists and others, document these various aspects of food distribution, including Andrew Deener’s *The Problem with Feeding Cities*, Laresh Jayasanker’s *Sameness in Diversity*, and Benjamin Lorr’s *The Secret Life of Groceries*.

Can we imagine alternatives to the current system? Indeed, we can, and the food sector is already replete with examples of producer

*Continued on Page 11*

# Freedom Farmers: Black Agriculture and the Origins of Food Justice

Monica M. White, Associate Professor of Environmental Justice, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Monica M. White

In the early days of COVID-19's wrath, Detroit was a hot spot. Black Detroiters were disproportionately impacted, especially those most vulnerable due to pre-existing, diet-related illnesses. The city's health-care system was unprepared and unable to manage the influx of patients in need of life-saving medical care. Lack of access to equipment and medical personnel in an under-resourced community created a preventable catastrophic event devastating to the Black community. Historical disinvestment and lack of access to preventative health care and nutrient-rich foods was the fuel and the virus was the fire.

At the same time, the virus exposed the vulnerability of the nation's food supply. Farm laborers, food processors, and those employed in food distribution were hit especially hard. The nation saw bare grocery store shelves and declared store clerks to be essential workers. These jobs pay minimum wage, are physically demanding, and often employ those who are impoverished and vulnerable. Food systems' workers have always been essential.

In this environment, Black Detroiters drew strength from the city's rich history of urban agriculture and African Americans' long history of food production as a strategy of community health and wellness. While some are willing to talk about Detroit as a city that was—one ready for autopsy, food justice voices in Detroit declare the city to be compost—a rich soil for organizing, cooperation and mutual aid.

Based upon their years of organizing in food policy, security, and sovereignty, members of the [Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#) (DBCFSN) took action to ensure residents in Detroit

would have access to nutrient-rich foods during quarantine. While not everyone accepted the new COVID-19 protocol, members and volunteers continued to work the 7-acre, organic farm known as D-Town Farm, the largest of Detroit's many gardens and farms. They started a seed-sharing program, distributing packages containing 6 to 10 common vegetable seeds and video tutorials detailing how to start a garden. The members collaborated with Alkebulan Village, which provides educational, cultural, and recreational programs to Detroit youth and their families, to create a raised-bed distribution of 4' x 4' garden beds, compost, and topsoil to 100 Detroiters. Oakland Avenue Urban Farm and DBCFSN teamed up to provide safe, curbside, contactless sale and produce pick-up through a joint online ordering platform.

The food-based resilience practices of DBCFSN, Alkebulan Village, and Oakland Avenue Urban Farm can be traced to African women braiding rice and other seeds in their hair before enduring the Middle Passage and demanding access to small plots of land to grow foods from their homelands and other crops. These provision grounds or "slave gardens" became an ongoing strategy of resistance and survival, providing nutrient-rich food to supplement the meager diets enslavers were willing to supply as well as products that could be bartered, sold, and traded between enslaved people. New Orleans retains the memory of the marketplace at Congo Square, where enslaved Africans shared music, religion, and food on Sunday—the only day when enslaved people did not toil sunup to sundown.

Denied the 40 acres and a mule that should have been the least of their compensation for centuries of drudgery, dehumanization, and endurance, Black farmers organized collectives and cooperatives throughout the south after emancipation. Among the largest, the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union, brought together the meager earnings and

the wealth of farming expertise of 1.2 million Black farmers. With trading posts in every southern state, members pooled resources to ensure freed people would eat in a society reluctant to give them the tools to survive.

## Food Justice

Civil rights and social justice organizations have engaged in what we now call food justice since emancipation. They viewed healthy food access as an important strategy of a healthy Black community and as a way to be liberated from social, political, and economic oppression. Marcus Garvey viewed Booker T. Washington as a mentor and was committed to including agriculture in the form of "industrial farming" as a strategy for the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the largest political movement in African American history.

The Nation of Islam (NOI) pursued food justice programs to educate the Black community about the importance of health and well-being in food consumption. NOI's Farms held 13,000 acres in Georgia and Alabama and supplied food through the organization's distribution arm, Salaam Agricultural Systems, which owned grocery stores and restaurants in predominantly Black neighborhoods and ensured that

members of the organization, as well as community residents, could feed their families healthy food. The Black Panther Party sponsored free breakfast programs in predominantly Black cities that were wildly successful and that are credited as the precursor for today's public school breakfast and lunch programs. These organizations recognized the importance of healthy food access and demonstrated that self-provisioning is critical to and an essential part of a liberation framework.

Access to public accommodation—the direct-action campaigns such as sit-ins and boycotts at the establishments that denied Black people service—have been better remembered as strategies of resistance in social movements. The fact that they are also forms of what we now call food justice has not been emphasized. In addition to refusing to vacate lunch counters, civil rights activists demanded an end to hiring discrimination and that supermarkets and grocery stores hire Black employees. The lens and language of food justice brings these strategies together and unites them with the work of DBCFSN, Alkebulan Village, and Oakland Avenue Urban Farm.

*Continued on Page 12*

## Pandemic and Distribution

*From Page 10*

cooperatives, local food networks, worker-owned restaurants, Community Supported Agriculture, and other direct-to-consumer operations. But in order to make profound changes in the food system, we need to keep a couple of things in mind. First, it is important to recognize that even with increases in cooperative ventures, government regulation, and public subsidies, food provision will largely remain a market-based activity. Despite a run on home canning supplies this past fall, there is little indication that Americans have the desire—not to mention the ability—to withdraw from a market system and become

truly self-sufficient or communal in food provisioning. Similarly, with historical failures in the background, one does not hear calls for a centralized state apparatus of food production or distribution.

Second, we need to grapple with not only the entrenched interests of a market system, but the expectations of an eating public for lots of choices, at relatively low prices. Too often, analysts focus on either the struggles of food laborers or the struggles of a public trying to adequately feed itself. We should not forget that these struggles are connected, and they often conflict with one another. Perhaps a greater focus on the intermediaries will enable us to better address these conundrums. ■



## Freedom Farmers

From Page 11

Black intellectual traditions that paid particular attention to the importance of agriculture as the cornerstone of Black community development complemented these applied approaches for food security, sovereignty, and increased healthy food access. These traditions can be attributed to Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and W.E.B. Du Bois—three “race” men who, over a century ago, led the Black community’s understanding of agriculture as a strategy of community self-sufficiency and community resilience.

Each was a crucial translator of what we now call food justice. Each drew on the legacy of places like Congo Square. Each contributed to our engagement with

agriculture, what the community knew, and the connection to what people needed in order to build community health and wellness.

### Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute

Before establishing the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, Booker T. Washington traveled by horseback throughout the Alabama Black Belt—an area known for the richness of its soil and the predominance of Black people among its residents. In what we now call fieldwork, Washington sought to incorporate the needs of Black farm families to shape Tuskegee such that it would support the self-sufficiency of its students, their families, and the broader community.

The resulting curriculum sought to cover everything needed for survival, including training in 33 different trades that spanned agriculture, horticulture, livestock, and dairying. The school had a student-run farm that was 2,300 acres by 1915, producing enough food for the faculty, staff, and

students and bringing the excess to a farmers market that fed many area families. Students who learned these skills and trades returned to their home counties, where they farmed and purchased land. Many started Tuskegee-like educational institutions. The proportion of land owned by Black people was highest in the country in the counties where these institutions were located.

Tuskegee is also the birthplace of Black cooperative extension. It began when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sent demonstration agents to the South to address a ravenous boll weevil

infestation that was destroying the cotton crop, therefore threatening the entire southern economy. For years, white agents ignored Black farmers and land workers, but

Washington referred Tuskegee alum Thomas Moore to the USDA, and he became the first Black field agent in 1903. Black farmers in Macon County, where Tuskegee is located, learned to control the boll weevil and other important agricultural lessons from Moore.

George Washington Carver taught at Tuskegee for almost 50 years. Most often remembered for his inventions with soybeans and peanuts, Carver was actually the founder of sustainable agriculture as we now know it. Affectionately called the “poor man’s scientist,” Carver committed his scholarship to improving the lives of Black farmers by making sure they had the means to provide nutritious food for their families during and after the growing season. He often referenced the medicinal value of the daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, a clear connection to food justice.

In support of sustainable agriculture practices, a contemporary marker of the food justice movement, Carver’s inventions and experiments provided findings in

support of the importance of crop rotation, composting, and the use of cover crops to protect arable land. The findings of his experiments were distributed near and far in a regularly published pamphlet through the agricultural experiment station. One of the most visual examples of meeting the “farmers in the field” is Carver’s work with the moveable school. Instead of expecting farmers to travel to Tuskegee, both Washington and Carver met Black farmers where they were. Supplied with state-of-the-art, hands-on equipment, these mobile schools demonstrated a variety of farming techniques, including animal inoculation and best farming practices to maximize yield while protecting the health and productivity of the soil.

W.E.B. Du Bois’ legacy in food justice has been even less remembered than Washington’s and Carver’s. He, in fact, did extensive work on the liberatory capacity of economic cooperatives and their development. His work offers us one of the earliest articulations of a systems analysis. Du Bois suggested that while Jim Crow segregation was the law of the land, African Americans would do well to create a systems approach, based on food production, that would allow one sector of the Black community to provision the needs of the others. Du Bois said that Black people could achieve “economic independence” by “letting Negro farmers feed Negro artisans, and Negro technicians guide Negro home industries, and Negro thinkers plan this integration of cooperation, while Negro artists dramatize and beautify the struggle.”

### Fannie Lou Hamer

These intellectual contributions to the importance of Black agriculture as part of a freedom strategy, these early articulations of a food justice frame, reached their greatest expression in the work of Fannie Lou Hamer. After many in her community, Sunflower County, MS, had been evicted for seeking to participate in the political process, Hamer established Freedom Farm in 1969. At its peak, the farm was 680 acres of affordable housing,

community gardens, commercial kitchens, community kitchens, food preservation and preparation, cooperative purchases, and many acres of food crops—all familiar to today’s food justice work.

Freedom Farm produced thousands of pounds of produce, 10 percent of which went to the “food bank,” a poverty amelioration program to serve the needs of those most vulnerable. Cash crops were sold for land mortgage payments. Freedom Farm represented a commitment to mutual aid, community care, and engaging food production and distribution for communities often excluded from the nutritious food supply. They fed and employed many, showing on the ground that, as she once said, “with a pig and a garden, no one can tell me what to do.”

What stands between Freedom Farm and D-Town Farm is five decades and thousands of miles. However, what connects them is the belief in the connection among land, food, and freedom. Hamer’s demonstration of agency in knowing that food was necessary for political, social, and economic participation and freedom has been an inspiration to today’s generation as they turn to food production, provisioning, and community care as strategies of survival in a time of neglect and crisis.

Black tenant farmers and sharecroppers who were evicted and fired for registering to vote, and laid off and unemployed autoworkers in Detroit whose labor was rendered no longer useful both participated in and established a community-based food system as a strategy of resistance and resilience. These origins and examples of food justice have been overlooked and overshadowed. Yet through the generations we have understood that, as Rev. Wendell Paris, a generational Black farmer and organizer of a Black agricultural cooperatives for decades, says, “You can free yourself, when you can feed yourself.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, we will draw strength from these examples of collective agency and community resilience for this newest assault, remembering our ancestors and their model of resistance. ■

“Du Bois suggested that while Jim Crow segregation was the law of the land, African Americans would do well to create a systems approach, based on food production, that would allow one sector of the Black community to provision the needs of the others.”

## Urban Farming: Tell All the Stories

Sara Shostak, Associate Professor of Sociology, Brandeis University

As sociologist Robert Wuthnow observes in *In the Blood: Understanding America's Farm Families*, “The way to gain an understanding of what farm life means, short of farming oneself, is to listen to farmers tell their stories.”



Sara Shostak

Understanding urban farming, as well, requires that we listen to farmers tell their stories. For while the stories that cities tell about urban farming are often intertwined with urban branding and gentrification, the narratives of urban farmers highlight reclamation, reparations, and resistance.

Sociologists have been at the forefront of documenting associations between urban agriculture and **gentrification** as they unfold through **economic processes**, such as the revalorization of land, and **cultural processes**, such as urban branding. As I studied urban agriculture in Massachusetts cities, I was struck by the use of agricultural histories in urban branding campaigns. For example, the history of “Clapp’s favorite pear,” first cultivated in the Boston neighborhood of Dorchester in 1840, has been hailed as “a symbol of the agricultural history of Dorchester” and celebrated in **public art projects**. Similar efforts have centered on the Roxbury Russet apple, named for the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury, which is believed to be the **oldest apple cultivated bred in the United States**.

These agriculture-centric narratives are consistent with the selective capitalization of local histories that is often part of branding campaigns. In Boston—and elsewhere—such narratives deploy bucolic imagery, in part, to elide the aspects of place identities that don’t serve the interest of growth coalitions. As documented in cities, including **Washington, DC**, **New York City**, and **St. Louis**, and as well as in **smaller towns**, highlighting the “golden age” of a location may support its claims to historical importance, authenticity, and charm. However, it often does so by erasing

the more recent histories of these places, and the aspirations and hopes of the people living there today, who may find themselves not only excluded in these narratives, but at increased risk of being displaced by gentrification.

The stories I heard from **urban farmers in Massachusetts** also draw on the past. They make connections, however, not to romanticized local agricultural histories, but to the deep roots of inequality that are the contexts for many contemporary urban agriculture projects. In their stories, urban farmers center long-standing racial injustices, including the legacies of slavery and sharecropping in the South and residential racial segregation in the North. They also emphasize the importance of “telling *all* the stories,” especially as a corrective to emerging narratives that make urban agriculture “look white and yuppie” and thereby erase “the people doing this work for so many years, with their hands in the dirt, in the ground” (Field notes, March 2016).

### “This Goes Back Generations”

At an **Urban Farming Institute of Boston** event on the history of Black urban farmers and “food as healing,” Demita hands out plates of a delicious root vegetable salad, dressed with homemade honey vinaigrette. She explains that she cooks “how her grandma and mom cooked—this goes back generations,” and recalls the beauty of their long, brown fingers rolling dough, which she watched, as a young girl, from her perch atop a phone book.

Demita offers us her health history as testimony to the healing power of whole foods. Demita’s story, however, is not just about her own health. Rather, she states clearly that healthy eating is “our birth-right, as a people...our health and our right to eat delicious food.” She points to the brutalities of the South in accounting for how this inheritance was disrupted, “...we have a lot of pain in us about the dirt. Painful things happened in dark hollows... My Mom got us out of Mississippi

as soon as she could, so we could have the life she wanted for us.” Nonetheless, she explains, there has been a consistent “need for country, a need to be close to the ground” (Field notes, February 2016).

Like Demita, many of the Black urban farmers and gardeners whom I interviewed opened their narratives with the extraordinary suffering, trauma, and cultural disruption that began when millions of people were torn from their homes in Africa and subjected to generations of slavery, sharecropping, legalized oppression, and violence in the American South. In their stories, the land and the dirt are described as holding both collective trauma and pain and tremendous possibilities for healing. In the words of farmer, author, and activist **Leah Penniman**: “Our families fled the red clays of Georgia for good reason—the memories of chattel slavery, sharecropping, convict leasing, and lynching were bound up with our relationship to the earth. For many of our ancestors, freedom from terror and separation from the soil were synonymous.” However, Penniman continues, while the land was “the scene of the crime...she was never the criminal.”

This narrative contends that reclaiming “reverent connection between Black people and soil” and cultural knowledge about food and herbs, offers possibility of deep healing from the trauma of slavery and its many **contemporary health consequences**. From this perspective, urban farming and gardening is also about reclaiming the sovereignty that comes from being in relationship with the land. As Nataka, put it, to be “in control of the land” is to be “in charge of our food, our health” (Field notes, February 2016). From a policy perspective, this narrative highlights, in particular, the importance of **reparations** to support Black, Indigenous and People of Color farmers, not only in the **Northeast** but **across the United States**.

### “There Wasn’t A Grocery Store for Miles”

Reflecting on her experience working at **Gardening the Community’s** farmers markets

and farm stand in Springfield, MA, Qamaria observes that “a lot of the residents here came from down south. They came up north to get away from farming back in the day...because they didn’t want to have that struggle anymore.” Initially, she tells me, “they moved up here, and they enjoyed...going to a grocery store and buying their vegetables and produce.” Over time, however, Springfield—like cities across the Northeast—was decimated by deindustrialization and white flight: “Springfield...was so wealthy, for a century...up until...the 1970s, when industry kind of went downhill. Globalization started at that time, so there was a lot of manufacturing that took place in Springfield that left. And for the city itself, there was a very large, white, middle-class affluent community, that—just like across the country—went to the suburbs.” As Springfield “changed,” Qamaria explains, grocery stores disappeared, and with them, access to fresh produce. The African American families that remained faced not only **food apartheid**, but also **environmental hazards in the vacant lots** left behind by the collapse of industry.

Stories like Qamaria’s make connections between contemporary urban agriculture and the **community gardening movement**. As Ruth, a longtime advocate, tells me: “If you go way back, it’s Victory Gardens, but really, the modern urban ag movement comes out of the community gardening movement, which [was a response to]...urban disinvestment.” Like Qamaria, Ruth highlights especially the experiences of African American families who came to northern cities as part of the Great Migration, and then disproportionately suffered the effects of urban disinvestment and decline. She also points to their role in reclaiming vacant lots, remediating the soil, and establishing thriving community gardens, in neighborhoods where food access was direly limited: “There’s a huge history of African American urban farmers in those communities who were originally from the South,

*Continued on Page 14*

## Hops across Time and Space

Jennifer A. Jordan, Professor and Chair of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



Jennifer A. Jordan

I've taken liberty with the theme of this *Footnotes* issue, turning my attention to the hop—a plant that is only edible for a brief moment in the spring, in the form of its tender early shoots, and is otherwise far more drinkable than comestible. The plant's inedible blossoms—and the all-important waxy yellow lupulin at the base of each flower's bracts—ripen in late August or early September in the northern hemisphere and in March in the southern hemisphere. That lupulin produces the bitterness that balances out the sweetness of the malt in much of the beer the world drinks today.

### Flow

Like the canals in Chandra Mukerji's work, hops flow through time and space. The walls of the canals stay put, although in ways that are also always changing—construction, reconstruction, repair,

erosion—the slow wearing away of stone by water. The water moves and changes as do the people and goods and vessels that navigate the waterways.

Hops, too, are both rooted in place and in constant motion. During their brief growing season on either side of the summer solstice, they shoot out of their dusty resting place in the earth, reaching lengths of up to 25 feet between late spring and late summer. Hops are rhizomatic, and most often new plants are generated by chopping up existing hop roots. Those roots are highly mobile, capable of being shipped around the world long before refrigerated trucking. Indeed, hop roots were shipped around the Baltic Sea and the North Sea in the holds of the vessels of the Hanseatic League.

Hop farmers in medieval Baltic regions grew hops for their Hanseatic trading partners, and today hop pellets and extracts jet around the world to meet brewers' and consumers' demands for a particular sensory experience—a

classic German Hallertauer grown in the Hallertau, or a piney Cascade in the Pacific Northwest. Today's high-performance hop fields—with their mechanized harvesters, boutique varieties, and high-tech drying facilities—bear little resemblance to past ways of growing and picking hops, but the old rhizomes lurk in the earth along the edges of modern fields.

### Consumers

For the thousand or so years that hops have been used in beer, farmers have cultivated them for one primary reason—to flavor beer (and, before pasteurization, to add some level of resistance to bacterial infection of the brew). There are also anecdotes about the medicinal use of hops, a close relative of cannabis, but brewing is far and away the dominant use.

Just as the plant's roots and flowers are mobile, the people who care for them and consume them have experienced layers of mobility as well. Flemish weavers brought their taste for hopped beer to the

south of England in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and that taste migrated outward to English drinkers as well, as hopped beer went from being the drink of supposed outsiders to a beloved beverage interwoven with regional and national identity. Then and now, hop cultivation often happens to satisfy the tastes of far-off people.

Century after century, humans have loaded up hops with financial and social value, with wild swings in the literal and figurative fortunes of the plant. The hop is a quintessential cultural object. It has, on the one hand, unchangeable physical limits. It mostly grows between 35 and 55 degrees latitude. It almost exclusively twines in a clockwise direction, and the summer solstice triggers a shift to the production of its reproductive elements. Quickly, in late August or early September, the tiny burrs turn to plump, papery cones. Each day the yellow lupulin in the heart of the cone grows yellower, less grassy, ever closer to the ideal balance of acids and oils preferred by brewers and beer drinkers. Harvest too soon, and the lupulin

*Continued on Page 15*

## Urban Farming

From Page 13

and came north, and [grew] food... because...there wasn't a grocery store for miles." Ruth is concerned that if we "forget where the movement comes from," it is more likely to fail to address "the issues now of gentrification and displacement..."

These stories, like many that I gathered in postindustrial cities across Massachusetts, highlight the legacies of racialized urban social processes, including deindustrialization, white flight, redlining, and arson. As I dug rows, planted spinach seedlings, and weeded raised beds alongside urban farmers, I was struck by the ways in which they call on the urban environment itself as a "witness" to these inequities. For example, while public health experts acknowledge that urban soil often is "contaminated," urban farmers describe it as "poisoned," by

industrial waste, illegal dumping, and environmental racism.

In Boston, urban farmers point to the cornerstones of houses that once stood where they now are growing vegetables, as they connect the patterning of vacant lots to local histories of arson in neighborhoods that were never rebuilt. Their narratives raise urgent questions about "who pays for the past?"—especially when that past includes decades of inequities, disinvestment, and municipal neglect—and have motivated community organizing to ensure that urban agriculture serves the needs and interests of the people in the neighborhoods where vacant lots are available to farm. Likewise, the narratives of urban farmers are part of the rationale for the founding of land trusts for urban farmland, which aim to protect land tenure for long-term residents of the neighborhoods where lots are available and ensure community stewardship.

## Recollecting and Reckoning

In Massachusetts and beyond, urban farmers are reclaiming cultural traditions linked to food, farming, and health; challenging systemic racism and injustice in the food system; remediating local legacies of municipal neglect and environmental racism; and moving toward their visions of more equitable urban futures. As they explore and establish new relationships between land, food, and community sovereignty and survival, today's urban farmers insist that "we can't start from now and pretend that the past didn't happen" (Field notes, June 2019).

The pasts that urban farmers raise, however, are quite different from those generated by urban branders and boosters. Rather, they remind us that "our agricultural system is built on stolen land and stolen labor. If you aren't willing to have this conversation, you aren't working

for justice, even if you're growing food..." (Field notes, March 2018). Urban farmers reclaim and extend the tradition of Black agrarianism and thereby challenge invidious cultural assumptions about "what a farmer looks like" and "who belongs on the land." They lift up urban agriculture as a practice of what sociologist Monica White theorizes as collective agency and community resilience. They insist that we historicize the social determinants of health and stop telling stories that naturalize health inequities. That is, they engage with the past, not to romanticize or commodify it, but because, in the words of Kimberlé Crenshaw, "The work of social justice is the work of narrative reconstruction, building new stories around facts that are often disregarded, invisibilized, and taken for granted as acceptable and unremarkable features of social life." ■



## Hops

From Page 14

will be underdeveloped and not up to the task of delivering its bittering and aromatic properties to the beer. Harvest too late, and you may lose the entire crop to aphids, hail, mildew, or rot.

Yet the blossoms resulting from that shift can take on myriad meanings and forms. Today, brewers and beer drinkers celebrate particular hop varieties as minor celebrities, heralding newly bred varieties like Cashmere or Zappa, or returning to the classics like Saaz or East Kent Golding. Hops are a way to turn sunshine and soil not into food, but into flavor and, in many cases, money.

Hops, ultimately, are non-essential. They provide no real nutrition for humans, nor do they intoxicate. But throughout human history, the pursuit of flavor and the pleasure that comes from flavor has propelled all kinds of horticulture, exploration, conquest, colonization, and labor. They are there to pleasure (or trigger) the sensors on the beer drinkers' tongue and the infinitely more complex aromas that waft across the palate and toward the olfactory bulb. The pursuit of that experience has driven an enormous amount of work, radical alterations of existing landscapes, great networks of global trade, and flows of workers and commodities.

Hops sweep across the globe and they settle in specific plains and valleys. They generate particular ecologies—skunks that creep about the hills eating grubs attracted to the plants. Piles of startling red and black ladybug larvae that writhe on the vines in search of aphid infestations. And rhizomes deep in the earth that push upward every spring on the edges of the fields where they once reigned, now supplanted by corn and soy and black & white spotted cows.

Landscapes of cultivated hops are made possible by the varied laborscapes that make them—the range of people who plant the roots, twine the young plants clockwise around trellises or poles, and harvest the sticky blossoms in the heat of August.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, growing hops for beer meant securing enough hands to pick hops in the brief moment between being under-ripe and risking it all with rot or another catastrophe. For commercial crops, family members were not enough to get the job done. Legions of hands arrived in the fields to strip the flowers and send them to the kiln, and then onward to breweries near and far.

The work of picking was (and still can be) joyful, deadly, monotonous, well-paid, or undervalued. Hop pickers died of cholera and drownings in 19<sup>th</sup> century England and succumbed to heatstroke in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century California and Wisconsin. But some of them also danced late into the night, met new sweethearts, earned money to send home, or joined with kin for rituals, games, and celebrations, as described by Bauer in his work on *Pomo hop pickers* in Northern California. Most of the hop fields of human history have now vanished, and the fields that thrive today in Oregon, New Zealand, Xinjiang, or Bavaria may turn to other crops as these locations face warming temperatures and shifts in rainfall patterns.

### Forgotten Hop Fields

The book I am writing began when I first read of hops growing in the outskirts of northern German towns in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in [Richard Unger's](#) work on medieval and Renaissance brewing. This so surprised me—knowing just a little about hops and thinking of German hops growing exclusively in southern Germany—that I began to dig deeper. I discovered a web of lost landscapes of hop cultivation. I initially planned a book that covered a thousand years of hop history, while focusing on the places where hops once grew and then disappeared. As I continued my research, entire lost agricultural Atlantises emerged before me, rising up out of the depths of Google Books, the Wisconsin Historical Society's well-kept archives, and digitized census rolls.

Two places once utterly fundamental to the global trade in hops (and thus to the supply of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century beer around the world)—but now entirely inconse-

quential to the big picture of hop cultivation—emerged: Wisconsin and California. The hop industries of these two states receive only passing mention in the many fine accounts of beer and hop history in the United States, while many stories focus on the alpha and omega of U.S. hop growing—New York State in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Pacific Northwest in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Despite growing up in California, living in Wisconsin, and spending a lot of time in northern Germany, until quite recently I had never known hops grew in any of these places. Yet each had once been a thriving center of hop cultivation. There are other crucial, “forgotten” sites of hop cultivation, beyond my linguistic reach—France, Belgium, Slovakia, and Poland.

In the U.S., while the Pacific Northwest quickly took over from New York as the dominant producing region as the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, first Wisconsin and then California played vital roles in the production of hops for the world's brew kettles. White settler farmers and the people they hired altered the landscape with their plans and their bodies. In Wisconsin, they drained wetlands, chopped down forests, and plowed up prairie grasses central to the livelihoods of Ho-Chunk, Potawatomi, Menominee, and other Native nations. They introduced hop roots imported from New York, England, and (here and there) Germany, killed plants that they categorized as weeds, and chopped down tamarack and birch saplings to make hop poles. As with other types of 19<sup>th</sup> century agriculture in the U.S., most of this production would have been impossible without violent theft of native land, the often unpaid labor of a diverse array of women, and the underpaid labor of a racially and ethnically diverse workforce, especially in California and the Pacific Northwest.

Through the Wisconsin Historical Society's archive, I have found nearly 2,000 hop farmers in just three Wisconsin counties from 1840 to 1870. There are gaping silences in this archive, but still far more information about hop farmers and the landscapes they produced than I ever expected

to find. It is impossible to recreate the precise interactions of hops and their landscapes and tenders in this period, but it is possible to begin to understand some of the details. Doing so offers a rich portrait of ways that people and places make each other, and in particular of how taste shapes place. That taste for bitterness among beer drinkers has led to special attention for this quirky plant, and particular landscapes, such as tamarack hop poles packed into loamy Wisconsin soil or early trellis systems in California's Central Valley.

The book I am writing asks a set of seemingly simple questions: What were the causes and the consequences of the arrival of *Humulus lupulus var. lupulus* in Wisconsin (and, space permitting, California)? How did the rise and fall of this plant affect people, plants, and places? Wisconsin goes from no *Humulus lupulus var. l.* to millions of pounds harvested, to almost nothing. This once-great hop industry is often just a moment glanced over with a sentence or two in the histories of hops that focus on places with larger and more sustained hop histories.

Plants don't speak, and every person involved in this story is dead, at least in Wisconsin (California is a different story). What's left? The scant archival traces, a few family stories, gravestones, and wild hop plants escaped from the bounds of their fields. This is, ultimately, a story of failure.

But that story repeats itself over and over in agriculture, and the landscapes we see around us today will eventually meet the same fates as the hop fields of 1860s Wisconsin. Taste is part of the story. Today's preferred hop profiles bifurcate into hops mild enough for the wildly popular lagers that dominate global industrial beer production and hops unique and variable enough to satisfy the significant segment of the market that is craft beer. Craft beer consumers are generally willing and able to spend more on their beer and a search for some combination of novelty, authenticity (a la [Johnston and Baumann](#)), rarity, and specific flavors and aromas. The variation in tastes produces a variation in landscapes and laborscapes across time and place as well. ■

## Care and Feeding during the Pandemic

*Alison Hope Alkon, Professor of Sociology, University of the Pacific; Kara Young, Independent Scholar; and Yuki Kato, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Georgetown University.*

Since March, haunting images have appeared across mainstream media showing long lines of cars waiting to receive emergency food donations. These staggering visuals demonstrate the severity and the scope of COVID-19's impacts on one of our most basic needs.

The USDA defines food insecurity as the “lack of access to enough food to live an active, healthy life.” In the U.S., just over 10 percent of families experienced food insecurity in 2019, but that number has skyrocketed to 25 percent in 2020. By one estimate, as of October 2020, nearly 23 million adults and 11 million children did not have enough to eat.

As sociologists whose research explores the concept of food justice—the ways that inequalities including race, class, and gender affect the production, distribution, and consumption of food—we know that these dire circumstances are most directly experienced by poor people, people of color, and female-headed households. The causes of food insecurity are complex but generally rooted in the combination of un- and underemployment and the lack of an adequate social safety net. Black, Latinx, Southeast Asian and Native American households, women, trans people, rural communities and families with children are disproportionately likely to experience poverty, unemployment, and work that does not provide an adequate wage. These disparities have only increased during the pandemic. But the dominant response to this massive food insecurity has generally been to bring food to people, rather than to address its structural causes.

While some scholars use a food justice lens to examine government programs and emergency food systems, others look to nonprofit and community-based responses that have arisen to fill the gaps created by meager and declining state funding for basic sustenance. Much of this research assesses the abilities of these programs to address—or failure to address—the inequalities at hand by focusing on power and structural causes of injustices around food production, distribution, and consumption.



Alison Hope Alkon



Kara Young



Yuki Kato

The pandemic has essentialized the already undervalued and underpaid work of food chain laborers. These 20 million workers—14 percent of the nation's workforce—are paid the lowest hourly median wage of any frontline workers in the United States, and 82 percent of food chain jobs are frontline positions. Even absent the pandemic, many of these jobs are also extremely dangerous. Farm work ranks as more hazardous than firefighting or law enforcement. People of color and women comprise the majority of these low-wage workers. Even before the pandemic, food workers were more likely than those in all other industries to experience food insecurity and rely on food assistance. Approximately 70 percent of those receiving federal food assistance work full time, with McDonalds and Walmart (which supplies the most groceries in the U.S.) among the top five employers.

For those in the restaurant industry, the pandemic has meant massive layoffs and unemployment. Farm and food processing workers have been deemed essential and experience higher-than-average rates of infection, illness, and death. For those food chain workers who remain healthy, there is no hazard pay, meaning that food insecurity persists despite the risks they take to

feed us all. Moreover, the pandemic has increased many Americans' reliance on the gig economy, as poorly paid workers increasingly deliver our food, again, without hazard pay or, in some cases, even basic safety protections, despite the sky-high profits garnered by their employers.

### The Safety Net

Sociologists know well that the social safety net in the U.S. is thin and tattered, especially when compared with other industrialized countries. Even with the passage of the CARES Act, unemployment insurance in the U.S. is far less generous than in Europe, and health insurance is not guaranteed. U.S. poverty rose by about 2 percent during the summer of 2020, with about 7 million additional Americans falling below the line as federal benefits began to run out, leaving less to spend on food.

The CARES Act did include approximately \$16 billion in funding for supplemental nutrition programs, allowing for some increasing benefits. In addition, this policy allowed states to temporarily suspend the usual 3-month limit on benefits and to simplify the application and eligibility-verification processes. However, the more than 7 million households that received the maximum allotment prior to the pandemic are ineligible for increased benefits, leaving a gaping hole through which the poorest households can easily tumble.

As a result of this insufficient assistance, charitable food banks and food pantries have seen skyrocketing demand. While we could not locate systematic national data, food pantries across the country report long lines, as well as a decline in key resources such as donations from restaurants and the volunteer labor of retirees who must now stay home to protect their own health. As the public initially stocked up, food donations fell. And according to sociologist Jan Poppendieck, supermarkets dealing with these initial shortages and ongoing safety standards have less time to cull their shelves for the foods that serve as food banks' primary source of donations.

In spring 2020, Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, projected a \$1.4 billion dollar shortfall. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' much-celebrated \$100 million donation is not only far less than this need, but glosses over the role of global inequalities and labor practices in creating food insecurity. Amazon's online grocery sales tripled during summer 2020.

### NGO Responses

In her address at the ASA Annual Meeting in 2004, novelist and activist Arundhati Roy argued poignantly that “NGOs are the indicator species of a declining state.” In the face of a tattered safety net, nonprofits have mobilized to fill the fraying holes. Perhaps the most prominent of these is chef José Andrés' World Central Kitchen (WCK). Founded to address the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, WCK works with chefs around the world to provide meals in the wake of natural and man-made disasters, and to address ongoing issues of hunger.

Within the U.S., WCK has served food to victims of hurricanes in Houston, Charleston, and Puerto Rico, and fires in California. The organization has also called attention to the human impacts of political turmoil by feeding workers in Washington, DC, furloughed by the government shutdown of 2019 and citizens waiting to vote in the 2020 elections. During the pandemic, World Central Kitchen first fed the passengers quarantined on the Grand Princess Cruise ship, and later turned many of Andrés and his colleagues' restaurants into soup kitchens and sources of food to be delivered to frontline workers.

Andrés has also advocated for a New Deal-style program where the government would pay restaurants to provide food to those in need, creating both sustenance and employment for restaurant workers. For his efforts, Andrés has been rewarded with the National Humanities Medal, the coveted James Beard Award, and favorable coverage in the food and general media.

*Continued on Page 17*

## The Social Context of Healthy Eating

Tom VanHeuvelen, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota; and Jane VanHeuvelen, Contract Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota

The food that we consume is, in many ways, a very personal decision. When an individual is interested in improving their health, we often see food consumption and dietary change as a key health behavior that can be successfully addressed.

Unlike many forces in our lives that feel or are beyond our control—from genetics to health care access to

pollution—food consumption is often depicted as a place where we can directly apply our willpower and agency to affect our health. It

is unsurprising then that food and diet decisions are the focus of a substantial amount of popular attention—from blogs and news stories to recipes and TV shows—with an emphasis placed on the agency and



Tom VanHeuvelen



Jane VanHeuvelen

choices of individuals. Among these sources, messages surrounding what constitutes a healthy diet vary. However, it has largely

been established that a diet based in a high proportion of fresh fruits and vegetables is associated with more positive health outcomes, while the “Western” style diet rooted in sugars, animal fats, and processed foods

is a way for food consumption to translate into lower health outcomes. While dietary advice varies substantially around this simplified scheme, many pieces of advice one observes for choices of food consumption emphasize the importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

In our research, we were drawn to think about health behaviors surrounding food consumption because of food’s unique existence across multiple levels of society. On the one hand, food consumption

*Continued on Page 18*

### Care and Feeding

From Page 16

Despite the far reaching efforts of national organizations such as World Central Kitchen and Feeding America, it is essential that we problematize these (male) savior heroes of the nonprofit industrial complex and their dominance in the field of food security solutions. One common insight offered by food justice research has been the realization that large, foundation-funded nonprofits often fail to connect to, and garner support from, the frontline communities they aim to serve.

Our own research has provided evidence of this in Oakland and New Orleans. There is often a racialized dimension to these circumstances. Geographers Kristin Reynolds and Nevin Cohen have found that, among food justice organizations in New York City, white-led organizations are better funded and more politically connected than those led by people of color, while BIPOC activists have called for big structural changes in mainstream foundations’ roles in promoting certain types of white-centered nonprofit work.

While it has not been systemically studied (and would make an excellent dissertation topic for an interested student) some activists have called into question the role that World Central Kitchen plays in the city, for its ties to ICE, internal labor practices, and

Andrés’ successful high-end dining restaurants’ contributions to the city’s gentrification. In other words, even though the nonprofit charity organization may be providing some jobs and feeding people, it is funded partly through the capitalistic mechanisms that cause the displacement of long-term residents and rely on vulnerable essential workers. More broadly, by creating their own programs, rather than supporting existing grassroots organizations, organizations like World Central Kitchen fail to share resources with those who have direct experience with hunger, and who know the landscape best. At best, these efforts fall short of empowering the communities so that they no longer need the external help; at worst, nationally funded organizations can compete with and stifle local, grassroots efforts to address food insecurity.

#### Community-led Responses

Around the world, small, nimble groups have come together to care for one another, mainstreaming and extending the idea of solidarity-based “mutual aid” that has long permeated social justice activism. Food is among the most common necessities around which communities are organizing. Some groups offer free grocery delivery to those in need. Others donate food, supplies, and funds directly. Some are new networks that have come together to address the pandemic, while others have grown out of the

long-standing work of neighborhood associations and community-based organizations.

Rooted in the writings of anarchist Peter Kropotkin, mutual aid differs from charity in its inherently political belief that everyone has contributions to offer and needs to be fulfilled, and that the giving and receiving of aid must be a step toward ongoing social transformation. It has been conceptualized as a decolonizing approach, a praxis of care in which those who receive aid are vital and equal members of their communities. In contrast to foundation-funded nonprofits, mutual aid groups tend to operate as voluntary organizations with scant resources and little-to-no paid staff. Many are aware of the racialized disparities in COVID-19 infections, illnesses, and care, as well as broader social, economic, and health disparities, and explicitly orient their work towards BIPOC communities, trans people, individuals in hard-hit industries, and unhoused people. Some are linked to ongoing food justice and community farming efforts, as well as activism aiming to address the unequal distribution of land and other resources necessary for food production.

These groups make valiant efforts to feed and care for those experiencing food insecurity but are unable to operate at the scale necessary to address the crisis. In addition, the micropolitics of racial and other privileges, and the meritocracy narrative that characterizes poor people

as unworthy and untrustworthy, can seep into these well-intentioned efforts. Like the nonprofit example above, when people try to give without a deep understanding of communities’ needs, they can become patronizing and create additional and unnecessary barriers for those receiving aid. The distinction between mutual aid and charity can be lost. Moreover, without external support, local groups can face dwindling funds and volunteer burnout as the pandemic drags on.

Sociologists studying inequalities have much to gain from taking food seriously. It is among our most basic human needs, and the ways that a society organizes to feed its members has much to say about how social life is organized and valued. Food is at once a material necessity and a set of cultural practices, and offers the opportunity to better understand the relationship between the work we do to survive, the work we do to care for one another, and the work we do to develop and express our individual and collective sense of who we are within complex circumstances.

Food overlaps with many more established areas of sociology, including race, class and gender, social movements, labor, and urban and rural (under)development. This is a particularly dire time to focus on hunger and health disparities, but the sociological insights to be gained will last far beyond this historical moment. ■



## Healthy Eating

From Page 17

is very much highly personal and agentic. On the other hand, food consumption decisions, knowledge of food healthiness, preferences for certain types of food, and paths to follow that enable food consumption decisions are also connected to such broader social systems as one's culture, social and kinship networks, and the system of institutions that produce and distribute different types of food to local populations.

Food deserts are a now classic example of the popularization of this way of thinking about the complexity and structural characteristics that constrain and enable individual food consumption. This is all to say that while food consumption does involve personal agency, the decisions about what foods to eat and how are fundamentally influenced by institutions and systems beyond one's immediate control.

### Population Health, Population Food, and Global Food Systems

Fruit and vegetable consumption is the focus of political, health, and social movements, which translate into sometimes sizable health differences between national publics. Over the past several decades, changes in the global food system have resulted in altering diets based on changes in the availability and accessibility of certain food bundles. Availability calls attention to the very presence—or lack thereof—of food options in a particular setting, and accessibility has to do with the resources necessary for acquiring available foods. Many governments, volunteer groups, and intergovernmental organizations devote a substantial amount of attention to the task of shifting individual diets through improved access and availability of food, and through shifting individual preferences and knowledge about food consumption. Furthermore, issues of access and availability highlight unique but interconnected structural factors that impact dietary behaviors. Because of their association with health outcomes, the inability to access or have available fresh fruits and vegetables represents important

structural inequality across countries and publics.

The reach of such inequality is captured in recent estimates, which suggest that global consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables falls short by as much as 50 percent of goals set by the World Health Organization. In fact, under-consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is one of the highest-ranked risk factors for attributable mortality, and is responsible for upwards of 3 percent of all deaths worldwide (WHO 2020). Notably, these deaths are disproportionately concentrated in middle- and low-income nations. Despite this, a central feature of modern global food systems is the increased provision of energy-dense and unhealthy food options, such as animal fats, vegetable oils, sugars, and cereals. In response, governments and intergovernmental organizations have initiated policy reforms and public health campaigns to increase the share of fresh fruits and vegetables in population diets. Thus, beyond individual choices, or even an individual-centered analysis of structure and agency, food consumption represents a central pillar of population-level issues of health.

### Where Are People Eating a “Healthy Diet” and Who Benefits?

These examples all suggest that the decisions to consume fresh fruits and vegetables, and the consequences of these food consumption decisions, may be at least partially influenced by broader social systems. In some of our published work, we examined the questions of who consumed fresh fruits and vegetables more frequently, and who was especially likely to benefit from such decisions.

To examine the multileveled nature of food consumption, we examined patterns across different countries, and we considered how individual-level associations systematically vary by a country's level of economic development. We find this approach to consumption decisions exciting because it highlights how food consumption decisions, and even the benefits of healthy eating decisions, are situated in a wide variety of contexts.

We examined how the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables varied across and within countries, using nationally representative samples from 31 countries ranging from middle-income countries such as the Philippines and Chile to high-income countries such as the United States and Norway. We examined the frequency that individuals in these countries consumed fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as the magnitude of the association between healthy eating and health outcomes. We examined how these factors varied across richer and poorer countries, and how these differences affected class and gender dynamics within countries. Our findings suggest that social context—both within and between countries—has a strong influence on who participates in, and who benefits from, healthy eating habits.

We found that individuals in richer countries ate fresh fruits and vegetables more frequently than individuals in poorer countries, and that individuals in richer countries tended to have better health than individuals in poorer countries. Access and availability to healthier food options tend to be greater among richer countries, suggesting that this broader social context provides greater opportunities for individuals to pursue healthy eating. At the same time, we found individual structural factors to also impact healthy eating. Individuals with higher incomes tended to eat fresh fruits and vegetables more frequently than individuals with lower incomes, and that women tended to eat healthily more frequently than men. However, we find a substantial amount of variation among these broad trends.

For example, while we find that more frequent consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables is associated with more positive health outcomes, this association is much

stronger among higher-income individuals in higher-income countries. The further away one moves from either one of these socioeconomic pillars, the association diminishes. Similarly, we find interesting gender differences in the relationship between healthy eating and health outcomes. Women who infrequently eat healthily in poorer countries have worse health than men who infrequently eat healthily in poorer countries, while women who eat healthily frequently have better health than comparable men in richer countries. In total, we found that to explain who eats fresh fruits and vegetables more

frequently, and what health benefits are associated with these consumption patterns, we had to think about how individuals are parts of multilevel systems

**“While food consumption does involve personal agency, the decisions about what foods to eat and how are fundamentally influenced by institutions and systems beyond one's immediate control.”**

that open and restrict opportunities for health behaviors. Simply put, the benefits and payoffs to similar people making similar food consumption decisions depends on a broader national context.

Two sociological theories can help us understand why this is the case. First, the work of Bruce G. Link and Jo Phelan (1995) suggests that certain social structures—in particular socioeconomic status—may operate as “fundamental causes” of health and illness. As a fundamental cause, socioeconomic status impacts access to key resources that may be utilized through multiple mechanisms, serving to mitigate risk or the overall consequences of illness. While individuals may make decisions that are not health promoting, for those with higher levels of socioeconomic status, their greater access to resources generally translates into improved health outcomes.

Second, William C. Cockerham (2005) draws attention to how health lifestyles are impacted by structural factors beyond social class, including social identities, roles, and living conditions. Our findings of gender

*Continued on Page 19*

## Food and Resilience during the Pandemic: Narratives from Around the World

Emilia Cordero Ocegüera, Doctoral Student, North Carolina State University (from Mexico City); Heather McCarty Johnson, Doctoral Student, North Carolina State University, and Exchange Student, Ghent University, Belgium; G. Solorzano, Doctoral Student, North Carolina State University; and Sarah Bowen, Professor of Sociology, North Carolina State University

During times of crises and struggle, food can be a source of resilience, creativity, and even joy. Dishes such as the Depression-era [water pie](#), made from hot water, vanilla, sugar, margarine, and flour, are rooted in people's ability to make a few simple ingredients stretch. For immigrant families, specific dishes and ingredients are often a way to [connect with](#) the places and people left behind.

It's not surprising, then, that people have turned to cooking for sustenance and reassurance during the pandemic. Comfort foods—warm, hearty, reminiscent of easier times—[have boomed](#). No longer able to travel, some people have learned to make dishes from far-off places. To avoid going to the store, others have developed creative ways of using the miscellaneous ingredients in their pantries. The resilience of one person is dependent on the labor of others. It is only possible for people to stay home and bake their

own bread because of the essential workers—supermarket stockers and cashiers, farmworkers and meat-packing workers—who risk their lives to make sure that the food chain keeps running.

Over the last six months, we have conducted interviews with families from varying social locations and from different parts of the world—Belgium, Mexico, and the U.S.—in an effort to understand how the pandemic has changed the way people eat, shop, cook, and gather for meals.

The “food stories” in this essay are narratives about uncertainty, stress, exhaustion, and gratitude. They show us how people use food to keep connections alive. They also show us that people's resilience is interconnected and defined by class. And social policies that support or ignore people during crises can reduce or exacerbate stark inequalities in how people experience the pandemic and its consequences.

### Cristina, Mexico City, Mexico

“*Fijate que sí cambió mi relación con mis vecinos* (you know, my relationship with my neighbors did change),” Cristina says. She recalls how during the first few months of the pandemic, she and her neighbors in her Mexico City middle-class neighborhood began shar-

ing food with each other. Although she had known her neighbors for years, it was not until the quarantine that they started really talking.

One night, Cristina brought her neighbor some lasagna, a dish she had learned to cook as a result of the extra time she had gained while working from home. A few nights later, her neighbor dropped off a casserole. For the next few weeks, they shared food with each other as a way to interact during a strange time.

Cristina, a part-time college professor, and her husband Eduardo, a consultant for the local government, are both in their 70s and live in the home they bought 35 years ago. Their daughter, in her 20s, lives nearby and comes to visit almost daily. When COVID-19 began to spread in Mexico in mid-March, Cristina and her husband began working from home.

Cristina no longer spends the morning battling Mexico City traffic and has more time to enjoy her meals. Her daughter comes to have breakfast with them every morning, and Cristina cooks things such as *huevos con tortilla*. In contrast, before the pandemic, she would guzzle a cup of coffee as she rushed out the door, grabbing a nutrition bar and yogurt for lunch.

But the work Cristina does around the house has also increased. [Data from the United Nations](#) show that women around the world are spending more time doing unpaid “care work” during the pandemic, including spending more time cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. In Cristina's case, and in the case of many middle-class



Emilia Cordero Ocegüera



G. Solorzano



Heather McCarty Johnson



Sarah Bowen

women, part of the increase is because families can no longer pay someone else to do this work. Previously, Cristina and her husband employed a woman, Isabel, who came to their house five days a week to do the cooking and cleaning.

There are 2.5 million [domestic workers in Mexico](#), and 90 percent are women—often indigenous women from rural areas who come to cities to find work.

Middle-class women like Cristina have made their lives work in part by relying on other women (often [poor women of color and immigrant women](#)) to perform some of the most intimate tasks for their families. The disruption of these ties during the pandemic has imposed costs on both the care workers and their employers.

During Mexico's stay-at-home order, Cristina paid Isabel to stay home. Cristina is now doing most of the cooking and cleaning in her household, while her work hours have not decreased. Her husband has not taken on additional housework. Cristina says she appreciates having the time to learn to bake new things, like *pan dulce* and *conchitas* (traditional sweet bread) that she previously would have bought at the bakery. But fusing her professional work and home routines is stressful. It is now common for her to be giving lectures and cooking at the same time, she laughs.

### Luisa, Raleigh, United States

“*Toca comer lo que hay* (you have to eat what is there),” says Luisa of cooking with the unfamil-

*Continued on Page 20*

### Healthy Eating

From Page 18

differences in eating behaviors and health benefits may be explained, in part, by a broader examination of the way gender operates at a structural level, influencing dietary choice through gender socialization, norms, roles, economic power, and practices surrounding fruit and vegetable consumption.

This work highlights the dynamic interplay between individual agency and broader structural constraints for a health behavior that many people perceive to be individualistic. The choices that we make to

improve our health undoubtedly contribute to our ability to live healthier lives. Yet the ability to make these health positive choices, and the payoffs to these choices, vary based on our social position and the economic conditions of our broader national context.

Our research highlights the importance of considering food consumption choices as part of a system of fundamental causes that operate at individual, country, and cross-national levels as individuals, advocates, and policymakers attempts to adjust individuals' diets and food consumption behaviors to improve population health. ■



## Food and Resilience

From Page 19

iar ingredients she gets from the food pantry. Prior to the pandemic, Luisa cleaned houses for middle-class families in Raleigh—one of the limited job opportunities available to immigrants who do not have legal documentation. Luisa is proud of her work, but it comes with unstable hours, no job security, and no benefits. And, like many domestic workers, Luisa lost her job at the beginning of the pandemic, with no compensation.

A National Domestic Workers Alliance survey found that by late March, more than 90 percent of domestic workers in the U.S. had lost jobs due to COVID-19. Six months later, the percentage of workers without any jobs was still nearly four times the percentage before the pandemic. Nearly three-quarters of workers received no compensation when their jobs were eliminated.

After losing her job, Luisa, a Mexican immigrant who has been living in the U.S. for 15 years, was forced to rely on food pantries to feed her family of three, which includes Luisa, her husband, and their 14-year-old daughter. They are ineligible for most of the social assistance programs that have helped other

U.S. families during the pandemic; Luisa's family didn't receive unemployment, a stimulus check, or the Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. An Urban Institute report found that there had been an increase in unmet basic needs in immigrant communities because immigrant families are ineligible for or reluctant to use key federal relief programs.

Growing up in Mexico, Luisa's family experienced frequent food shortages, and she learned to be resourceful and flexible with food. Recently, she started shopping with a friend who is teaching her how

to use coupons. It's not enough, though. With Luisa no longer working, her family is forced to choose between paying rent or buying groceries. Relying on food pantries often means relying on unfamiliar or unappetizing foods. Sometimes, Luisa gave the foods she received from the pantry to her neighbors because she didn't know what to do with them.

After trying unsuccessfully to find a food pantry offering foods that were familiar to Luisa and her family, she turned to her network of volunteers to ask where to go. It was difficult for Luisa to seek help; she was used to helping others. *"Desafortunadamente me toca a mi"* (Unfortunately it was my turn)," she says. Despite the legal and health risks, Luisa now drives over 30 minutes to a food pantry in Durham because it is organized by and serves mostly Latino/a/x/e immigrants. While many non-profit organizations have been working diligently to keep food pantries stocked during a period of unprecedented demand, less attention has been given to the particular foods provided.

### Elif, Ghent, Belgium

Elif glances at the photo of a stack of pancakes with three types of berries, bananas, and delicate chocolate shavings. Although it looks like it was taken in a restaurant, Elif, a 27-year-old Turkish-Belgian woman, made it herself.

Because they have been working less during the pandemic, Elif and her boyfriend have more time to cook. They started making new dishes for themselves and to share with Elif's three roommates. When asked if cooking new things is one of the ways she has dealt with isolation and lack of routine during the pandemic, Elif replies, "Exactly. I watched a lot of YouTube, [to find] recipes. I also made a lot of banana bread just for all the roommates. Having



something to eat together makes you happy."

Elif's experience sounds like that of many professional workers who have been insulated from some of the pandemic's worst effects as they have shifted to working from home. But Elif works in retail; when the pandemic began, she was employed as an hourly worker at a clothing store. Supported by a labor union as well as a government that provided stimulus money and bill deferral, many non-essential retail workers in Belgium were allowed to do just what epidemiologists and some policymakers have advocated: they were paid to stay home. Once the shops reopened and Elif went back to work in June, her hours were cut to 12 per week, but her labor union made sure that her wages wouldn't be reduced to below the amount stipulated in her contract.

Rather than having to choose between risking her health or facing food insecurity or eviction, Elif stayed home. And for the first time in a while, she had the time to slow down. "Before this, it was always like rush, rush, rush," she says. "You have to work, go to school, and do stuff. But [during that time], everything stopped. So, you have more time to read books and watch some documentaries. And a lot of people [did] that and I think that's a good thing for the future."

Elif's experience is not universal, even in Belgium or other parts of Europe. Poverty and food insecurity exist in Belgium, with food pantries reporting an increase in demand

during the pandemic, although not nearly as dramatic as what has happened in the U.S. One of Elif's roommates does not belong to a union, and experienced minor food shortages when she lost her job. However, Elif's experience shows that the way countries protect—or fail to protect—workers is a choice.

### Conclusions

The devastating effects of the pandemic—its effects on health and well-being, poverty and food insecurity, and even social relations—will reverberate for years to come. During these hard times, food and cooking have served as meaningful sources of comfort for many people. At the same time, food has also been a source of stress and strain, with rising rates of food insecurity and long lines at food pantries. In the face of all of this, people are resilient, finding new ways to connect with others, share food in a socially distanced way, and support those who are struggling. But this resilience is linked to inequality.

Sociologist Alison Alkon and colleagues argue that during the pandemic, it has become abundantly clear that many countries, including the U.S., do not have adequate resources to support food-insecure households or work protections to ensure that our lowest paid workers can make it through this crisis safely. During this crisis and beyond, we must build up our social safety net, to support all people and allow everyone the freedom to find spaces of creativity and connection, and care and comfort. ■



## 2022 Annual Meeting Theme: Bureaucracies of Displacement

Each year, ASA's President-elect chooses a theme on which to focus some of the programming for the ASA Annual Meeting—a tradition that ensures our meetings reflect the rich diversity of perspectives and subject matter in our discipline. 2022 ASA President-elect **Cecilia Menjivar** has chosen the theme Bureaucracies of Displacement. Her conception of the theme is below.

### Bureaucracies of Displacement

The COVID-19 pandemic, as it is the case with crises in general, has exposed and amplified multiple inequalities and assaults on vulnerable populations. The pandemic, along with the economic and political crises today, has brought to light inequities in access to a wide range of benefits, resources, and rights

that we as sociologists must grapple with. The theme for the 2022 ASA Annual Meeting, Bureaucracies of Displacement, will offer the opportunity to assess sociologically the depth of the issues we are facing today and their long-term effects.

As we do so, the 2022 ASA Program Committee invites sociologists to consider the role of the state in creating and amplifying the inequalities and inequities that a crisis makes so visible, and to provide a lens to examine long-term effects. Through laws and policies, and in multiple ways, the state—with its attendant institutions and everyday bureaucratic practices—actively pushes out certain groups, marginalizing, excluding, and containing them, and involving in these processes a wide array of non-state actors.

Therefore, *Displacement* refers to a lens through which to examine social, legal, economic, political, physical, geographic, intellectual, and similar dislocations and exclusions. *Bureaucracies* centers state actions (past and present) that produce and reproduce exclusions, expulsions, and marginalizations, as well as state inactions (such as disavowal, deregulation, neglect, and abandonment). This angle permits a focus on the manifestations of state power in everyday life, including but not limited to, immigration/detention/enforcement, undermining of reproductive rights, workplace regulations and the encroachment of workers' rights, school policies that disproportionately disadvantage certain groups, urban/city policies and housing policies, red-lining,

policing and the criminal justice system, health care system policies, policies that devastate the environment, expulsions from lands and physical spaces, and the erosion of Indigenous rights and lands.

Thus, the program committee envisions Bureaucracies of Displacement as a capacious theme that can involve many sub-fields of the discipline as it also opens the opportunity to attend to how groups and organizations respond to and resist state actions and inactions. This approach also has a critical policy-related component. This lens can generate concrete evaluations of existing structures that displace and marginalize certain groups, but also those structures that may integrate, and to invite thinking about tangible avenues for reform and social change. ■

## Meet Art Alderson and Dina Okamoto, the New *American Sociological Review* Editors

Brian Powell and Clem Brooks, Indiana University

a brilliant job with the selection of Indiana University professors

Being a journal editor can be a tricky job. Editors act as the judge, jury, and—in the minds of some sociologists—executioner. But editors also serve as mentors and cheerleaders. They are visionary, fiercely protective of the discipline, genuinely appreciative of the diverse substantive areas and methodologies in sociology, impeccably organized, incredibly patient, and extremely generous in their time, making decisions regarding an average of about 750 manuscripts each year.

Selecting journal editors who can resourcefully navigate the many responsibilities can be complicated. But the ASA Publications Committee and Council have done



Art Alderson



Dina Okamoto

Art Alderson and Dina Okamoto as the new co-editors of the *American Sociological Review*.

Alderson is a lifer (we hope) at Indiana University. He joined the institution as an assistant professor in 1997, went through the ranks, and was appointed the Allen D. and Polly S. Grimshaw Professor of Sociology in 2016. Okamoto, the Class of 1948 Herman B. Wells Professor, is a relatively recent addition to Indiana University. After spending a dozen years (2001-2013) as a professor at the

University of California-Davis, she joined the sociology department at Indiana University in 2013 and took on the directorship of the Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society (CRRES) the following

year. Okamoto also is an affiliated faculty member in the university's Asian American Studies, Latino Studies, and Southeast Asian Studies programs.

Alderson works in the areas of social stratification, economic and political sociology, comparative and historical sociology, and international development. He is currently doing quantitative research on income inequality; intercity relations and the global urban hierarchy; status, subjective well-being, and consumption; and the causes and social consequences of globalization.

Okamoto's interests lie in the areas of race and ethnicity, immigration, social movements, and social psychology. Her research has addressed intergroup conflict and cooperation, group formation and collective action, as well as immigrant civic and political incorporation. She is a true believer in methodological diversity: her research draws on interview, archi-

val, observational, survey, event, and text data, and uses both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Alderson and Okamoto may differ in their substantive interests, but they share an enviable record of scholarship and leadership in the discipline. Few scholars can match their publication record or their ability to contribute to multiple literatures and to generate novel, programmatic insights. Few scholars have demonstrated their lifelong commitment to the editorial process. In fact, even as graduate students, the two served as editors (associate editor of *Social Forces* and student editor of *Social Psychology Quarterly*, respectively).

Both Alderson and Okamoto are well known for their hands-on and committed graduate mentorship. Graduate students—current and former—hold both in high regard.

One former student of Alderson says: "I'll sing Art's praises for as long as anyone cares to listen. Art

*Continued on Page 22*

## ASA Awards Five FAD Grants to Advance Sociology

ASA is pleased to announce five Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline program awards from the June 2020 round of proposals. The FAD is a small grants program funded by National Science Foundation's Sociology Program through which ASA has supported nearly 400 research projects and conferences. Applications are reviewed by an advisory panel composed of ASA Council members-at-large.

The program focuses on supporting innovative proposals that have potential to advance the discipline of sociology, with special encouragement given to individuals who are in their early careers at community colleges or institutions without extensive support for research.

Grant recipients include:

**Daniel L. Carlson**, University of Utah, **Richard J. Petts**, Ball State University, and **Joanna R. Pepin**, University of Buffalo, for *The Long-Term Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Household Gender Equality* (\$8,000).

COVID-19 has profoundly disrupted the lives of nearly every American household, fundamentally altering paid and unpaid domestic labor in families. Stay-at-home orders and the sudden removal of care and domestic support providers have created a crisis of role conflicts among parents, threatening 60 years of progress toward gender equality. This study aims to understand how parents have responded to meet the challenges of the pandemic and how this response will shape the gendered division of labor over the long term. It does so by administering a survey questionnaire to a panel of partnered U.S. parents at six-month intervals until at least two years after the pandemic ends. Preliminary results from the first survey round demonstrate that the pandemic has both exacerbated and reduced gender inequalities in couples' divisions of labor. Gender inequality is a persistent and fundamental sociological issue that permeates all aspects of society. The findings from this study

will inform theoretical development on the gendered division of labor and work-family policy, and identify topics that are likely to become the subject of research for years.

**Lucius Couloute**, Suffolk University, and **Yolanda Wiggins**, San Jose State University, for *Black Women and Secondary Criminalization: Understanding the Diffuse Impacts of Mass Incarceration* (\$8,000).

Although we know much about the collateral consequences of justice system contact for those directly experiencing it, we know less about how our criminal justice system affects broader networks of people who are dealing with the criminalization of a family member. Drawing on in-depth interviews with Black women who have experienced a partner's incarceration, this study asks: how do black women conceptualize and make meaning of their experiences with the criminalization of partners? How has the rise of mass criminalization impacted this group, both socially and eco-

nomically? In what ways do black women respond to the incarceration and release of partners? And, how does the criminalization of a partner intersect with the criminalization of Black women themselves? This qualitative research project will help to unpack the hidden social and economic implications of the rise of mass incarceration and determine the extent to which its reach is wider than previously recognized.

**Angela R. Dixon**, Emory University, for *A Deadly Inheritance: Intergenerational Impacts of Kinship and Household Mortality* (\$8,000).

Blacks are more likely than whites to experience the deaths of multiple family members and experience them at earlier ages. While a great deal of alarm has been raised about recent declines in life expectancy among whites, Blacks still live on average four years less than whites. Though research indicates that experiencing death within one's family shapes survivors' health, relatively little research has analyzed

*Continued on Page 23*

### ASR Editors

*From Page 21*

was a caring and dedicated advisor. The number of pages of my papers, dissertation chapters, reviewer responses, etc., he carefully edited line by line during graduate school may not have equaled those in *War and Peace*, but they're close. Art was always available and supportive to discuss everything from big picture to minor modeling issues. He cared for his students...I found Art's balancing of roles as a parent and an academic deeply inspirational. His care and support for his family and kids were apparent during my time at Indiana, and I admired that he could be such a successful sociologist while also being so devoted as a father. I thought of him often and drew inspiration from him when I became a father."

Another former student: "Art Alderson is one of the coolest people I know—not 'cool' as in stylish, though he often is, but 'cool' as in

level-headed, even-keeled, low-blood-pressure, mild-mannered, chill, grounded. I am sure co-editing ASR will challenge that characteristic. The depth of Art's coolness is such that he can easily take the heat."

Okamoto's former student says: "Dina is an extremely generous collaborator—encouraging and inspiring her colleagues to put forward the best version of themselves. I can't say how many times I've gone into a meeting with Dina lost and unmotivated, and by the end of the meeting, I feel totally different—completely excited about the research project...Before I worked with her, I dreaded writing, but she was always so complimentary and reassuring, [it] vastly improved my relationship with the writing process. I'm so grateful."

Another former student notes: "Dina is one of the hardest-working academics, as well as one of the most positive and uplifting academics out there. I've found that it is rare to meet an academic who works so

hard, is so productive, and is also genuinely passionate, optimistic, supportive, and encouraging. She is particularly inspiring as a woman faculty of color who has dedicated her career to supporting graduate students of color and other faculty of color. Her focus on bringing together different fields and sub-fields to better understand the social construction of race and racial

hierarchies over time is crucial for our field of sociology."

Through their proposal to co-edit ASR, it's clear that Alderson and Okamoto believe in the journal, sociology, and sociologists. "The ASR editors play a role in shaping the journal's content and practices, but the journal belongs to the discipline and its members," they say in their vision statement. ■

## Candidates for 2021 ASA Elections Announced

We are pleased to announce the names of 2021 ASA election candidates running for the offices of president-elect, vice president-elect, secretary-treasurer-elect, Council members-at-large, and members of the Committee on Committees, Nominating Committee, and Publications Committee. Ballots for the elections will be distributed in April 2021.

All members as of March 31, 2021, with the exception of affiliates, will receive ballots and are eligible to vote in the ASA-wide elections and in the elections for the sections in which they have membership.

Click [here](#) for more information. ■

ASA News

**FAD Grants**

From Page 22

how network death contributes to health inequities. The objective of this study is to quantify Black-white disparities in familial and proximate deaths and their relationship to health disparities using longitudinal survey data. This project is innovative in its focus on: 1) racial disparities in death from broader social network ties outside of the nuclear family, and 2) the examination of the pathways through which exposure to death can contribute to adverse health for survivors.

**Renee Shelby**, Georgia Institute of Technology, for *Designing Justice: Sexual Violence, Technology, and the Law* (\$8,000).

Since the 1970s, citizen-activists have challenged how the justice system neglects assault by redesigning

the technology used for self-defense, reporting, investigation, and punishment. The institutionalization of these technologies is signaling a shift in the dominant paradigm from a legal to a techno-legal response to violence. Yet, few studies have engaged survivor, activist, and legal voices to identify the social and legal consequences of these objects, or examined how, if at all, anti-violence technologies could be redesigned to meet a broad spectrum of justice needs and contest the reproduction of racial injustice. The project traces this paradigm shift and examines its impact on racial justice, rape law, and social movement organizing. Through close examination of new narrative and participatory design sources, this analysis will analyze the legal implications of anti-violence technology, and articulates a framework for designing technol-

ogies that better serve those on the social, economic, and legal margins. Preliminary findings show that although well-meaning activists design these technologies to mobilize survivors and foster institutional accountability, they are a crucial site of enacting whiteness and uphold the racially unequal practices of the punishment industry. Addressing these inequalities through an anti-oppression lens is necessary to sustain long-term change.

**Blake R. Silver**, George Mason University, for *Labor Market Precarity and Higher Education* (\$7,840).

How does economic uncertainty shape the ways students navigate higher education? The last 50 years have witnessed a shift from relative stability to precarity in the labor market as steady, well-paying jobs have been

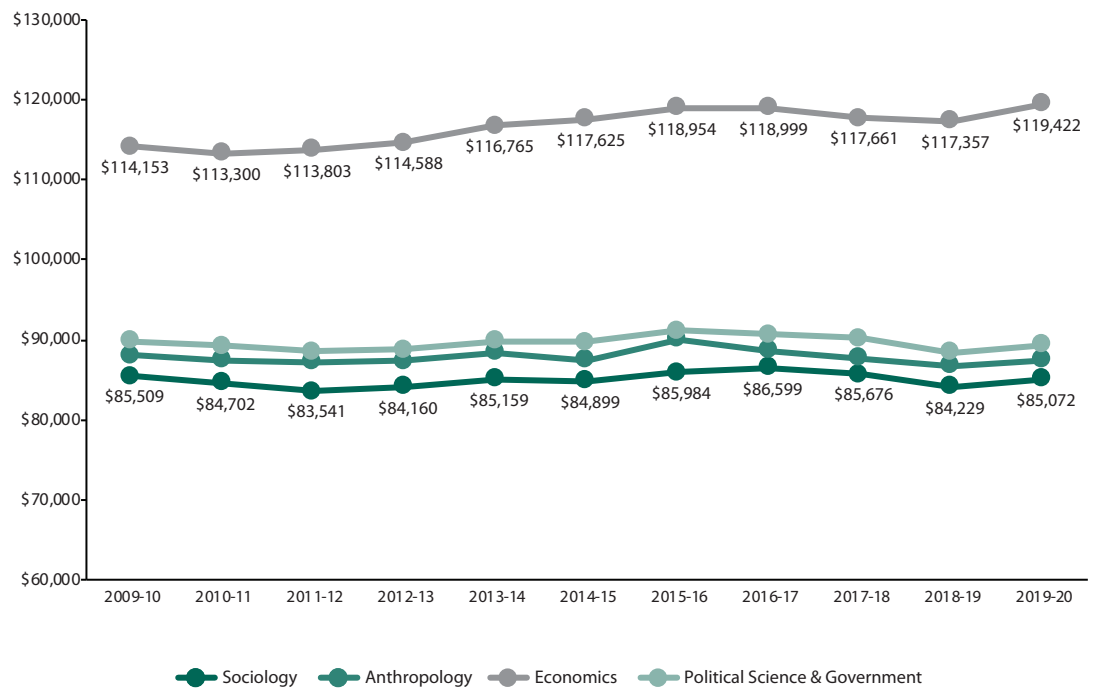
replaced by part-time, low-wage, and contingent work. These trends have been compounded in the 21st century, first by the 2008 recession and more recently by the COVID-19 pandemic. While research has documented the broad impact of economic uncertainty on higher education institutions, little is known about how individuals are experiencing this type of uncertainty within colleges and universities. By analyzing in-depth interviews with 80 college students, this project will explore how students navigate economic uncertainty within higher education. Moreover, with the support of an intersectional lens, the study will examine how the mutual constitution of race, class, and gender shapes experiences with and resources for managing labor market precarity. ■

## Research Snapshot: Sociology Faculty Salaries Comparable to Other Social Sciences

Over the past 10 years, faculty salaries in sociology, anthropology, and political science have been comparable, while economics salaries have been consistently higher, according to data collected by CUPA-HR, the association for Human Resources professionals in higher education.

After adjusting for inflation, the data show that after several years of decline, salaries across the disciplines saw a slight rebound between AY 2018-19 and AY 2019-20. Salaries in sociology increased by 1 percent to \$85,072, virtually making up for the loss experienced from the previous year. Economics experienced the most growth, but only by 1.75 percent. Additional comparisons of sociology salaries—by rank and institution types—are available on the [ASA website](#). ■

Mean Faculty Salaries by Discipline in Adjusted U.S. Dollars<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Average salary of full-time assistant, associate, and full professors at 4-year institutions; 'Adjusted U.S. Dollars' were calculated for inflation using the 2019 Consumer Price Index.

Source: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). Faculty in Higher Education Survey, 2009-2020. Analysis by ASA.



## Encourage Students to Apply to the ASA Honors Program

ASA encourages faculty members to invite undergraduate sociology students to apply for the 2021 Honors Program, which helps students get introduced to the professional life of the discipline. Accepted students will benefit from experiencing the virtual 2021 ASA Annual Meeting and developing long-lasting networks with sociologists. Sponsoring departments can provide a wonderful opportunity for their students to engage nationally.

Nominations from sociology faculty members are required for students to participate in the Honors Program. Students are required to submit [online](#) their completed applications, including the faculty nomination letter, by **February 18, 2021**.

The Honors Program is proud of its partnership with Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society. The three winners of the AKD Undergraduate Student Paper Competition are automatically eligible to be part of the Honors Program.

Click [here](#) for more information on the ASA Honors Program and email your questions to [honors@asanet.org](mailto:honors@asanet.org). Click [here](#) for more information on the AKD Undergraduate Student Paper Competition and other opportunities. ■

## Calls for Papers

### Publications

**Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research**, an annual series that focuses on cutting-edge topics in family research around the globe, is seeking manuscript submissions for a special volume. The volume, with the theme "Police, Courts, and Incarceration: The Justice System and the Family," seeks articles that cover a wide array of topics, including how policing, arrest, jail and court processes impact family members and their support networks; how prolonged incarceration impacts children and parenting processes and family coping; how intimate relationships are impacted during and after incarceration, including marriage and divorce and partner violence; and, whether system involvement leads to unintended consequences among family members. This volume will be coedited by Sheila Royo Maxwell, Michigan State University, and Sampson Lee Blair, University at Buffalo-SUNY. Deadline: March 15, 2021. Send questions to the editors at [maxwel22@msu.edu](mailto:maxwel22@msu.edu) and [sblair@buffalo.edu](mailto:sblair@buffalo.edu).

**Sustainability** plans to publish a special issue on "Moving toward Sustainability: Rethinking Gender Structures in Education and Occupation Systems." Guest Editors are Sandra L. Hanson, the Catholic University of America ([hanson@cua.edu](mailto:hanson@cua.edu)), and Enrique Pumar, Santa Clara University ([epumar@scu.edu](mailto:epumar@scu.edu)). *Sustainability* is a scholarly, international, cross-disciplinary, peer-reviewed, open-access journal. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Meetings

**2021 Junior Theorists Symposium**, held over Zoom on August 6 (additional dates TBD), invites submissions of précis for the 15<sup>th</sup> Junior Theorists Symposium (JTS). The JTS conference features the work of up-and-coming sociologists, sponsored in part by the Theory Section of ASA. The symposium invites all ABD graduate students, recent PhDs, postdocs, and assistant professors who received their PhDs from 2017 onwards to submit up

to a three-page précis (800-1,000 words). The précis should include the key theoretical contribution of the paper and a general outline of the argument. We invite submissions from all substantive areas of sociology, especially papers that are works-in-progress and would benefit from the discussions at JTS. Sarah Brothers, Yale University, and Laura Halcomb, University of California-Santa Barbara will review the anonymized submissions. Send an email to the-at-juniortheorists@gmail.com with questions. By mid-March, we will extend up to 12 invitations to present at JTS 2021. Plan to share a full paper by July 6, 2021. Deadline: February 19, 2021. [docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJXFAaPBzTuwuR84fZ3FckXYfrPwQ30zJqJNzbFTo2Ppcf/dA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJXFAaPBzTuwuR84fZ3FckXYfrPwQ30zJqJNzbFTo2Ppcf/dA/viewform)

### Meetings

**March 18-21, 2021**. Midwest Sociological Society Annual Meeting. Theme: "Precarity and Inequality: COVID-19, Neoliberalism and the Future of Faculty." [Virtual meeting](#).

**August 6-8, 2021**. The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) Annual Meeting. Theme: "Revolutionary Sociology: Truth, Healing, Reparations and Restructuring." SSSP is an interdisciplinary community of scholars, practitioners, advocates, and students interested in the application of critical, scientific, and humanistic perspectives to the study of vital social problems. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Funding

**The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship**. Persons identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Arab/Middle Eastern/North African, Asian/Asian-American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) from one of the aforementioned groups, accepted into an accredited doctoral program in any one of the social and/or behavioral sciences are invited to apply for the \$15,000 fellowship. Two students will be

funded. Applications must be received in their entirety no later than 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on February 1, 2021. Applicants will be notified of the results by July 15, 2021. All applicants must be a current SSSP member at the time of their application. With the exception of DACA students, who are also eligible, applicants must be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. Contact Dr. Anthony A. Peguero, chair, with questions concerning the fellowship: [anthony.peguero@vt.edu](mailto:anthony.peguero@vt.edu) or visit [www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/261/Racial/Ethnic\\_Minority\\_Graduate\\_Fellowship/](http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/261/Racial/Ethnic_Minority_Graduate_Fellowship/)

### In the News

**Elizabeth Popp Berman**, University of Michigan, wrote an article, "Biden's Transition Teams Mix Centrists and Progressives. But Keep an Eye on this Obscure White House Office," that appeared in the November 20, 2020, *Washington Post* "Monkey Cage" blog.

**Jessica Calarco**, Indiana University-Bloomington, wrote an opinion piece for CNN, "The U.S. Social Safety Net Has Been Ripped to Shreds—And Women Are Paying the Price," that appeared on November 18, 2020.

**Richard Carpiano**, University of California-Riverside, was quoted in a November 19, 2020, *Sacramento Bee* article, "California's Vaccine Plan Will Prioritize Blacks and Latinos, Among Others. Here's Why."

**Benjamin Dowd-Arrow**, Florida State University, **Andrew Whitehead**, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and **David Yamane**, Wake Forest University, were quoted in a December 3, 2020, *Desert News* article, "Understanding America: Is there a Connection Between Faith and Firearms?"

**Riley E. Dunlap**, Oklahoma State University, was quoted in a January 7 article in *Canada's National Observer* about climate change misinformation; in a February 20 column on the hyper-partisan nature of climate change and in a May 20 one about how mask wearing has become a partisan issue, both in the *New York Times*; in an August 26 report in *Grist* about how a device to measure individuals'

carbon footprints helps shift blame from industry to consumers; and in an October 11 interview with *German National Radio* on climate change denial. His online *Environmental Politics* article analyzing partisan differences in congressional speeches on climate change with Deborah Guber and Jeremiah Bohr was discussed in *Climate Wire* on July 21, *Climate Nexus* on July 24, and *Grist* on July 28.

**Charles Gallagher**, La Salle University, was interviewed regarding the power dynamics of a mayor overcrowding his bar and the implications for COVID-19, "No Action will be taken after video shows bar owned by Sea Isle City mayor not following COVID-19 restrictions over the summer" on CBS3 (Philadelphia) on September 17. Gallagher was also interviewed about Philadelphia's desire to move a homeless encampment "Sources: Philadelphia Police give homeless encampment 'final warning' to leave as stalemate with city continues" on CBS3 on September 12.

**Lanora Johnson**, University of Michigan, and **W. Carson Byrd**, University of Louisville, wrote an article, "Searching for the Real Appalachia in Netflix's 'Hillbilly Elegy,'" that appeared in the *Washington Post* on November 20.

**David G. Smith**, U.S. Naval War College, co-authored an op-ed, "Too many women are leaving the workforce during the pandemic. It's time for men to lean in and help," that appeared in the December 3 *Los Angeles Times*.

**Margaret Somers**, University of Michigan, wrote an op-ed that appeared in *The Guardian* on September 14, "Even the Republican 'Skinny' Bill Didn't Pass. How Do They Justify Such Suffering?"

**Gregory D. Squires**, George Washington University, wrote an article, "HUD's Disparate Impact Rule Is a 'Get Out of Jail Free' Card," for *American Banker* that appeared on October 2.

**Paige Sweet**, University of Michigan, was quoted in a November 24 *BBC Future* article, "The Hidden Victims of Gaslighting."

**Stacy Torres**, University of California-San Francisco, co-authored an

## Announcements

oped that appeared in the November 23, 2020, *Los Angeles Times* on the necessity of adding nurses to the Biden-Harris COVID-19 advisory board. She wrote an opinion piece about celebrating Día de Los Muertos in a year of loss that appeared in the November 2, 2020, *San Francisco Chronicle*. In her first column as a new member of *USA Today's* Board of Contributors, she wrote about isolation and senior citizens on October 20, 2020, "Isolation kills, especially seniors. Community spaces can be a vaccine for COVID loneliness."

## Awards

**Elizabeth Cooksey**, The Ohio State University, **Joane P. Nagel**, University of Kansas, **Kristen Olson**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and **Susan E. Short**, Brown University, were elected as 2020 American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellows. The AAAS fellowship honors members whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its applications in service to society have distinguished them among their peers and colleagues. The award was presented by the AAAS Section on Social, Economic and Political Sciences.

**Brian Gran**, Case Western Reserve University, was named as a Jefferson Science Fellow of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. He will work for the U.S. Department of State. In June, he received a NSF-RAPID grant to undertake research on derogation of human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Yuko Hara**, University of Maryland-College Park, received the 2020 DC Sociological Society (DCSS) Irene B. Taeuber Graduate Student Paper Award. She is the PhD recipient for "Changes in Family Roles and Subjective Well Being among Japanese Adults."

**Marley Henschen**, Catholic University, received the 2020 DC Sociological Society (DCSS) Irene B. Taeuber Graduate Student Paper Award. She is the MA recipient for "Union History and Child Death in the Global South."

**Felice Levine**, American Educational Research Association, received the 2020 DC Sociological Society (DCSS) Stuart A. Rice Merit Award for Career Achievements.

**Rashawn Ray**, Lab for Applied Social Science Research and University of Maryland-College Park, received the 2020 DC Sociological Society (DCSS) Morris Rosenberg Award for Outstanding Sociological Achievement.

## New Books

**Siobhan Brooks**, California State University-Fullerton, *Everyday Violence in Black and Latinx LGBT Communities* (Lexington, 2020).

**Kelly H. Chong**, University of Kansas, *Love Across Borders: Asian Americans, Race, and the Politics of Intermarriage and Family-Making* (Routledge, 2020).

**William C. Cockerham**, University of Alabama at Birmingham and College of William & Mary, *Social Causes of Health and Disease*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Polity, 2021); *Sociology of Mental Disorder*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (Routledge, 2021); and *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Medical Sociology* (Wiley Blackwell, 2021).

**William C. Cockerham**, University of Alabama at Birmingham and College of William & Mary, and **Geoffrey B. Cockerham**, Utah Valley University, Eds., *The COVID-19 Reader: The Science and What It Says About the Social* (Routledge, 2021).

**Joseph E. Davis**, University of Virginia, **Paul Scherz**, Catholic University of America, Eds., *The Evening of Life: The Challenges of Aging and Dying Well* (Notre Dame Press, 2020).

**Kathleen J. Fitzgerald**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Race and Society: The Essentials* (SAGE, 2020).

**Don Grant**, University of Colorado-Boulder, **Andrew Jorgenson**, Boston College, and **Wesley Longhofer**, Emory University, *Super Polluters: Tackling the World's Largest Sites of Climate-Disrupting Emissions* (Columbia University Press, 2020).

**Kathy Merlock Jackson**, **Kathy Shepherd Stolley**, and **Lisa Lyon Payne**, Virginia Wesleyan University, Eds., *Animals and Ourselves: Essays on Connections and Blurred Boundaries* (McFarland, 2020).

**Fred L. Pincus**, University of Maryland-Baltimore County, *Confessions of a Radical Academic: A Memoir* (Ade-laide, 2020).

**Sara Kärkkäinen Terian**, retired, *Positive Prejudice as Interpersonal Ethics* (Lexington, 2020).

## People

**Roberto Gonzales**, Harvard University, book, *Lives in Limbo*, is being adapted into a musical production that will dramatize its stories of coming of age undocumented in America.

**A. James McKeever**, Los Angeles Pierce College, has been hosting a podcast since August 4, 2020, *Sociologists Talking Real Sh\*t*, on practicing public sociology by speaking with sociologists about everyday issues and interests.

**Anna Mueller**, Indiana University-Bloomington, was named one of *Science News'* 2020 10 early- and mid-career scientists who are pushing the boundaries of scientific inquiry for her research on preventing teen suicide.

**Laura Beth Nielsen**, American Bar Foundation and Northwestern University, has been elected president of the Law and Society Association.

## Summer Programs

**28<sup>th</sup> Annual RAND Summer Institute, July 12-15, 2021**, Santa Monica, CA. Two conferences will address critical issues facing our aging population: Mini-Medical School for Social Scientists; and Workshop on the Demography, Economics, Psychology, and Epidemiology of Aging. Interested researchers can apply for financial support covering travel and accommodations. More [information and application form](#).

## Deaths

**Michael Blain**, Boise State University, passed away on July 21 at the age of 77. He joined Boise State in 1981 and served four terms as chair of the sociology department during his tenure.

**Philip G. Olson** died on August 5, 2020, at the age of 86. He came to the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1969 from Clark University as Chair and Professor of Sociology. He shaped the department to reflect a strong commitment to public advocacy, community development, and urban research. His research and writing focused most prominently on urban neighborhoods. Olson was president of the Midwest Sociological Society, 2002-03. He retired in 2011.

## Obituaries

**Arnold Birenbaum 1939-2020**

Arnold Birenbaum, Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Yeshiva University (NY) passed away on August 18, 2020, after waging a three-year battle with kidney cancer.

Birenbaum was born in the Bronx, NY, on September 19, 1939. He attended local public schools and Stuyvesant High School; earned a BA in Sociology from the City College of New York (CCNY) in 1960; and, in 1968, a doctorate in Sociology from Columbia University, where he studied with such luminaries as Robert Merton, Daniel Bell, and William (Si) Goode.

His first teaching job was at CCNY, followed by an appointment at Wheaton College (MA). He became a tenured professor at St. John's University (NY), where he spent 22 years teaching undergraduate and graduate courses to Sociology and Clinical Pharmacy students. Birenbaum's personal warmth and engaging manner led to decades-long relationships with former students, some of whom became colleagues.

Birenbaum was greatly influenced by sociologist Erving Goffman and his early article "On Managing a Courtesy Stigma," which appeared in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* in 1970, continues to be cited to this day. Be-

fore he retired, Birenbaum published more than 40 articles in peer-reviewed journals and 15 books. An early career highlight was an anthology "People in Places; The Sociology of the Familiar" (Praeger, 1973) co-edited with his colleague Edward Sagarin.

Birenbaum first became associated with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine early in his career when he was invited to participate in a research project at the Children's Evaluation & Rehabilitation Center. Over the years, he served as a consultant on projects there, and in 1993, accepted the position of Associate Director, Rose F. Kennedy University Children's Evaluation & Rehabilitation Center. As a medical sociologist/healthcare analyst, he wrote grants; presented papers; collaborated with peers at other university centers; participated in professional conferences and local, national and international meetings; and occasionally offered lectures on healthcare financing for medical students and allied professionals. Although he was not a medical doctor, Birenbaum's title was Professor of Pediatrics. He retired in 2015.

Birenbaum studied contemporary healthcare issues, including the development of new healthcare providers such as nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists; providing services to people with disabilities; and ways managed care works in the United States.

Long before it became fashionable to promote the need for healthcare reform, he was addressing the topic in his writings. A few important examples include *Resettling Retarded Adults in a Managed Community* with Samuel Seiffer (Praeger, 1976); *Community Services for the Mentally Retarded* with Herbert J. Cohen, (Rowman & Littlefield, 1983); *Managed Care: Made in America* (Praeger, 1997); and *Putting Health Care on the National Agenda* (Praeger, 1993, 1995).

After retiring, Birenbaum returned to his early and deep interest in social conflict and wrote *A Nation Apart: The African-American Experience and White Nationalism* (Routledge, 2019), which draws on sociology, history, literature, film, and contemporary journalism to examine systemic racism in the United States.

Birenbaum's cultural interests included literature, music and films. He was a congenial traveler and had a nose for unassuming restaurants and shops that served delicious food. A lifelong playground athlete, he played touch football, basketball, and, until his mid-70s, softball wherever he lived. He was proud to become a marathon runner in middle age.

Birenbaum is survived by Caroline, his wife of 56 years; elder son Jonathan, wife Elizabeth, and their two children, Samuel and Hannah; and younger son Steven, wife Emily,



## Announcements

and their two children, Naomi and Rebecca. Their close family enjoyed vacationing together on Cape Cod each summer.

In addition to all his academic writings, Birenbaum contributed to various newspapers and magazines op-eds and letters to editors. I found his proclivity for writing letters to be one of his most endearing qualities.

As his health declined, Birenbaum periodically updated family and friends about his health challenges. His emails always expressed admiration and appreciation for the help and support he received from his family, friends, and a myriad of health providers. Implicit within his letters was the belief that a well-expressed word or thought could be a helpful antidote to the person who was ill and those involved in the person's life. Indeed, this was the case for Birenbaum and for those of us who witnessed his indomitable spirit and successful efforts to continue living as full a life as possible, steadfastly refusing to succumb to a "sick role."

William Feigelman, Nassau Community College

#### Charles L. Bosk 1948-2020

Charles L. Bosk, 72, an influential medical sociologist who spent his career working at the University of Pennsylvania, died of a heart attack at home on August 30.

Chuck, as he was called by all, possessed a dazzling sociological imagination. He was also a true mensch, whose deeply ingrained contrarianism was balanced by a wry wit and pure devotion to his family, which included many of his former students and mentees.

A Baltimore native, Chuck earned his BA at Wesleyan University and completed a PhD at the University of Chicago before joining the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) in 1976, with appointments in Sociology, the Center for Bioethics, and the School of Medicine. His foundational work on medical education, medical errors and patient safety, the medical profession, social problems, bioethics, and the ethics of social science research spanned fine-grained, closely observed ethnography and richly reasoned, elegantly argued theory. His wide-ranging influence in sociology, medicine, and bioethics was apparent in his appointments as a visiting professor at numerous medical schools, including Johns Hopkins University, and as a fellow at the Hastings Center.

Bosk was one of those rare sociologists who managed to influence medical culture. He was an astute observer of specialized worlds, with a knack for questioning widely accepted knowledge. His first book, *Forgive and Remember: Managing*

*Medical Failure* (University of Chicago Press, 1979; expanded edition, 2003), provided an ethnographic account of how attending physicians deal with the inevitable mistakes made by surgeons-in-training. His incisive analysis not only became deeply influential within sociology, but in the medical profession as well. The book has been a bestseller in medical schools since its publication; generations of surgical residents have turned to the book to make sense of their own experiences.

His second book, *All God's Mistakes: Genetic Counseling in a Pediatric Hospital* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) explored the emerging field of prenatal genetic counseling. Most recently, Bosk was working on how hospitals might improve safety by addressing the culture in which healthcare providers work, rather than relying on technological solutions such as checklists. In 2006, Bosk began an ambitious study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Investigator Awards Program, which re-examined the system's approach to reducing error in medicine. This project eventually grew into a large multi-sited ethnography funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. In 2018, Bosk received a Guggenheim Fellowship to continue his work. At the time of his death, he was working on a book, *The Price of Perfection: The Cost of Error*, which promised to transform how we think about medical errors.

Bosk was an authoritative voice in academic and policy debates about patient safety and quality improvement, publishing widely within the medical literature and serving on multiple task forces, including at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Hastings Center, the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

He was an active member of the ASA Medical Sociology section, chairing the section from 2002-2003. In 2013, the section awarded him the Leo G. Reeder Award. That same year, he was elected to the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences.

Bosk was a deeply reflective scholar, whose ethnographic writing is marked by an engagement with the difficulties of representation and a genuine humility about the limitations of the craft. His experience with ethnography in ethically fraught medical settings propelled his scholarly attention to the ethics of social science research more broadly. He published two books on the ethical complexity of research, *The View from Here: Bioethics and the Social Sciences* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), co-edited with Raymond De Vries, Leigh Turner, and Kristina Orfali, and *What Would You Do? Juggling Bioethics and Eth-*

*nography* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), after becoming an invited fellow on bioethics at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, 2003-2004. His work challenged social scientists to take seriously the perplexity of qualitative research with and among fellow human beings.

Bosk was a gifted teacher who made a deep imprint on generations of undergraduate and graduate students. He received the Provost's Award for Distinguished Graduate Teaching and Mentoring from Penn in 2006. Bosk had a long-time affiliation with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—as a core faculty member for the RWJF Clinical Scholars Faculty Program, a member of the RWJF Health & Society Scholars Program's Steering Committee at Penn, and as a mentor for many graduate students who went on to become RWJF post-docs and scholars.

Bosk is mourned by a wide and deep network of colleagues and former students, who cherish his many "Chuckisms" and pass them along to their own students. Olga Shevchenko (Williams College) remembers, "What's the point of being an author if you are afraid to assume authority?" Laura Carpenter (Vanderbilt) holds onto this gem: "Never tell a reader what's wrong with your work before they read it, because they might not otherwise notice." Carla Keirns (Kansas) recalls Chuck commiserating with her about the frustrations of working in a hospital: "We as a society don't seem to be able to figure out that doing the right thing is often cheaper." Although we, the authors of this obituary, have too many Chuckisms to share, Betsy offers "Learn from your mistakes. Unfortunately, there's an infinite number of mistakes you can make for the first time." Joanna loved Chuck's most irreverent tips. On presenting at an ASA conference, "Don't worry. Nobody will remember what you said 15 minutes later."

Bosk is survived by his wife, Marjorie, children Abigail and Emily Bosk (Ethan Schoolman), two grandchildren (Milo and Finn), and his younger brother, Harry (Dana). Friends and colleagues are invited to share memories or send condolences to his family at [poppy.bosk@gmail.com](mailto:poppy.bosk@gmail.com). The Bosks have established the Charles Bosk Memorial Scholarship Fund ([www.plumfund.com](http://www.plumfund.com)) for a first-generation college student from Baltimore City College in honor of Chuck's own experiences as a first-generation college student.

Elizabeth Mitchell Armstrong, Princeton University; and Joanna Kempner, Rutgers University

#### Kathy C. Charmaz 1939-2020

Kathy Charmaz, Professor Emerita of Sociology at Sonoma State University and former director of its Faculty Writ-

ing Program, died of cancer on July 26, 2020 at home with husband Steve Charmaz, friend Fran Bedingfeld, and home hospice caregivers by her side. She was known internationally for developing and widely teaching constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as a method of qualitative inquiry and analysis; people flocked to the many CGT talks and workshops she did each year.

Despite teaching in a department without graduate students, Charmaz was also well known as among the most available and remarkable mentors in qualitative methods and medical sociology in the ASA, the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, the Pacific Sociological Association, and far beyond. Twenty people have confirmed contribution to a festschrift in her honor that will be published in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. It will be edited by Antony Bryant and Linda Liska Belgrave at the invitation of Norman Denzin. About half of the contributors are Charmaz mentees.

Charmaz was widely honored, receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award in Qualitative Inquiry from the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, the Leo G. Reeder Award for Distinguished Contributions to Medical Sociology from the ASA Medical Sociology Section in 2017, and the George Herbert Mead Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction in 2006.

She became a Distinguished Professor at Sonoma State in 1998 and received several awards for outstanding mentorship.

Charmaz was born in Wisconsin to Robert and Lorraine Calkins. Her father, a civil engineer, soon moved the family to Pennsylvania where she spent her early life. She received her bachelor's degree in fine arts and occupational therapy in 1962 from the University of Kansas and worked in that field in San Francisco for several years.

Charmaz then went to San Francisco State University for an MA in sociology where she fell in love with social theory and for which she did an ethnography of a rehab unit. In 1968, she entered the brand-new Sociology Doctoral Program at the University of California, San Francisco, receiving her PhD in 1973 with a dissertation on chronic illness. This became her first and still most famous medical sociology book, *Good Days, Bad Days: The Self in Chronic Illness and Time* (Rutgers University Press, 1991). It centered on transformations of self engendered by different chronic conditions, their limitations, and affordances. Charmaz was especially entranced by stories people told and silences they maintained, researching and writing



Announcements

on disclosure and self in chronic illness for decades.

She began teaching at Sonoma State College in 1972, moving up to Full Professor in 1981, and Professor Emerita on retirement in 2016. At Sonoma State, she made important contributions in sociology, gerontology, and research methods, also creating professional development courses for faculty researchers locally, nationally, and internationally.

Building upon yet also challenging Straussian grounded theory, circa 2000, Charmaz began developing constructivist grounded theory, which became the second heart of her career and which she continued to refine. First and foremost, she distinguished her constructivist approach from others' objectivist tendencies in grounded theory, developing the centrality of constructivist interpretive sociology to the qualitative endeavor, including in Strauss' legacy. Charmaz's version of CGT also made interactionist and feminist assumptions, and her exemplars of good CGT vividly demonstrated how it was taken up across many disciplinary boundaries and transnationally. As an interactionist, Charmaz was especially intrigued with the theoretical promise offered by CGT, and she wrote and taught seminars about using CGT analytics in interpretive theory-building. The power of stories and the potential of theorizing for social justice studies and for critical inquiry were also highly important in her work.

CGT is today a major research method in qualitative inquiry internationally and across disciplines and professions in both social sciences and humanities. Charmaz published two award-winning editions of her *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (SAGE, 2006, 2014) translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Polish, and Portuguese. Charmaz also co-edited with Tony Bryant two ambitious editions of *The Handbooks of Grounded Theory* (SAGE, 2007, 2019) involving scholars from many countries. She developed her own interests through applying CGT in critical social justice research.

Charmaz served as editor of *Symbolic Interaction*, president of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction and the Pacific Sociological Association, and served on the editorial boards of 23 journals in qualitative inquiry and medical sociology. She published 14 books, 63 chapters, 33 articles, 16 encyclopedia entries, and over 30 book reviews, while very actively mentoring many researchers in the U.S. and internationally. She was an invited guest professor at universities in Australia, Norway, Netherlands, Austria, New Zealand, and Japan.

While all these facts and figures are important, they do not convey

the care, concern, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness with which Charmaz mentored so very many of us—faculty and students alike. For Charmaz, being a colleague and mentee was blurred. She read and reread our chapters, articles, and books; wrote letter after letter on our behalves for jobs or graduate programs; and nominated us for awards. She always said yes, and I suspect that even during her last days, she was thinking of ways she could help someone.

Charmaz is survived by her husband Steve, niece Michelle Harbeck, grandniece Liz Peterson, nieces Nancy Juarez and Linda Schmitt, and nephews Dave Harbeck and Bob Harbeck. She is deeply missed.

Adele E. Clarke, University of California-San Francisco

**Ray H. Elling  
1929-2018**

Ray Elling, a remarkable person who influenced people worldwide through his work in medical sociology, comparative health policy analysis, and activism, died peacefully on November 23, 2018, at age 89.

Born to immigrant Swedish parents who lived in Minnesota, Elling was the youngest of three sons and became an avid and accomplished outdoorsman, fisherman, hunter, skier, and conservationist. His love for and interaction with nature continued throughout his life; he was an active member of Trout Unlimited's Farmington Valley, CT chapter.

In early adulthood, Elling joined the U.S. Army and served in the reconstruction efforts in Japan, and then in Austria where he met and married Margit Schreiber in 1952. He returned to the U.S. with Margit, began a family, and pursued graduate studies in the nascent field of medical sociology. He received his master's degree from the University of Chicago and his PhD from Yale University.

Elling's deep devotion to the dignity of all, but especially of marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups, found its professional expression in his research and teaching in comparative sociology, anthropology, and public health. Always one to build bridges, Elling sparked the development of several interdisciplinary graduate programs that introduced physicians, nurses, social workers, sociologists, epidemiologists, psychologists, and more to one another and to the people whom they sought to serve. His studies of health care systems and outcomes in a variety of cultures resulted in a two-year appointment in the early 1970s as a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Elling was one of the first academics to delve into the political economy of occupational health, which he regarded as the intersection of the

labor movement and the emerging environmental movement. He noted that compared to the general public, workers were at far greater risk for exposure to chemicals and other hazards. Elling led one of the first OSHA grants (based at UConn Health) to provide worker education on occupational health (The New Directions Program) in 1978, leading to the training of thousands of Connecticut workers. Later, he created a model for connecting medical students, graduate students, and physicians to workers and unions, which provided important education for all.

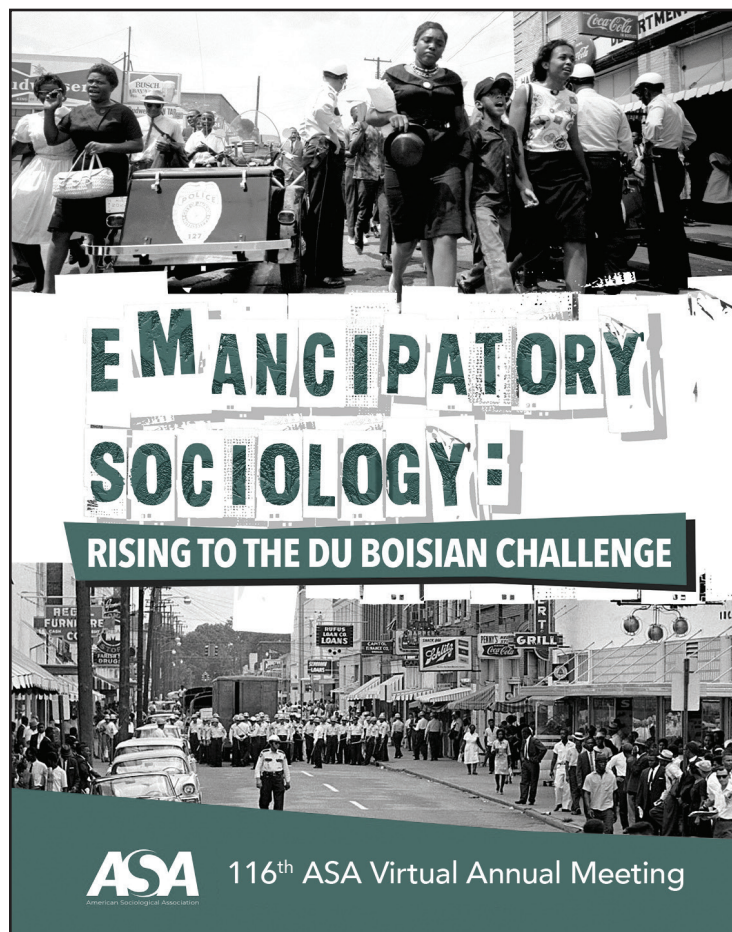
He was also instrumental in founding the labor-based advocacy group, the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH), Inc., one of the first COSH groups in the country. Elling always reminded us to recognize the progressive possibilities here based on his appreciation of advanced occupational health programs in other countries such as Sweden.

Elling was a prolific researcher and an accomplished writer and editor. His scholarly works included *Traditional and Modern Medical Systems* (Elsevier, 1981), *Struggle for Workers' Health: A Study of Six Industrialized Countries* (Baywood Pub Co, 1986), *Health and Health Care for the Urban Poor: A Study of Hartford's North*

*End* (Connecticut Health Services Research Series, 1974), and the recent collaborative *Unhealthy Work: Causes, Consequences, Cures* (Routledge, 2017).

Based on his passion for teaching, Elling leaves behind two generations of researchers, academicians, and practitioners. His final academic position was as a founding faculty member of the University of Connecticut Medical School. Even in retirement, Elling worked to make sure that UConn medical students were well instructed in the needs of the underserved and marginalized.

Though never a "politician" in the common sense of that word, Elling consistently engaged in politics. A long-time resident of Farmington, CT, he served on its Human Relations Commission and the Democratic Town Committee. But it was activism on behalf of the downtrodden and the oppressed that really engaged him in his private life. From his earliest years, he was an ardent peace activist, supporter of women's rights, champion of ethnic and race relations, and lately, an advocate for disability rights (partly stemming from his own problems of mobility following some complications of surgery).



## Announcements

In this latest role, he was an officer in the Citizens Coalition for Equal Access (CC=A) and successfully pushed local branches of the U.S. Postal Service to make its services properly accessible to people with disabilities. These successes led to concurrent resolutions calling for automatic doors in all federally funded buildings, which the U.S. Senate unanimously approved. Not content with federal buildings, Elling moved on to push for mandating the use of accessible "universal design" in all federally funded projects.

In the ASA, Elling was active in the Medical Sociology and Marxist Sociology sections. He often made constructive suggestions within those two sections, including a successful attempt to sponsor joint sessions that used Marxist analysis and methods to study questions in health and medical care. These joint sessions took place on stimulating topics during two ASA annual meetings. In his extensive contributions to the International Sociological Association and International Association of Health Policy, he also initiated a creative interweaving of medical sociology and Marxist analysis.

Elling consistently fought for academic freedom. For instance, when one of us (Howard) was fired from an academic job due to the political orientation of his teaching and research, Elling provided crucial support. Elling led an investigative committee for the ASA that led to a censure of the university for academic freedom violations.

He is survived by his wife of 27 years, Marilyn, his eldest son, Ron, his youngest son, Martin, his daughter-in-law, Xenia, his grandchildren, Tyson, Jessica, Jason, and Kristofer, and six great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife of 38 years, Margit, and his second son, Gerard.

Ellings's work and his life touched and benefited so many, most of whom he did not know. So we can say of him, as he often said to others, "Good on ya, mate!"

*Ron Elling, Ray's son; and Howard Waitzkin, University of New Mexico*

### Thomas J. Fararo 1933-2020

Thomas J. Fararo, one of the pioneers of mathematical sociology, died on August 20, 2020. Professor Fararo was born in 1933 and spent his academic career at the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). His book *Mathematical Sociology: An Introduction to Fundamentals* (Wiley, 1973), was one of the first three foundational books on mathematical sociology published in that era (Coleman in 1964 and Leik and Meeker 1975 were the other two). He viewed mathematical sociology as first and foremost a theoretical activity, an activity whose driving concern should be the unification of disparate theories and theoretical frameworks. Fararo set out these ideas in two books *The Meaning of General Theoretical Sociology: Tradition and Formalization* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Social Action Systems: Foundation and Synthesis in Sociological Theory* (Praeger, 2001).

After an undergraduate career at City College of New York, majoring in history and political science, Fararo did his graduate work in sociology at Syracuse University and participated in empirical studies of community power structure, both under the mentorship of Linton Freeman. During the years at Syracuse University, he developed interests in symbolic logic, finite mathematics, cybernetics, and general systems. In his dissertation, he applied Anatol Rapaport's biased net theory mathematical model to

study structural features of observed social networks.

Appointed an assistant professor at Syracuse, Fararo applied for and was awarded a three-year NIH postdoctoral fellowship for advanced studies in pure and applied mathematics at Stanford University from 1964 to 1967, to build his skills in mathematical model building. During the postdoc, he studied various branches of mathematics and published papers that used abstract algebra, absorbing Markov chain theory and nonlinear systems of differential equations to study status-related phenomena. He also developed long-standing ties to Joseph Berger and Buzz Zelditch, the founding figures in expectation states theory at Stanford University.

In 1967, Fararo joined Pitt as an associate professor and, in 1970, he was promoted to the rank of full professor. In 1998, based on his scholarly contributions, the university honored him with the title of Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology. He retired in 2006. During his time at Pitt, Fararo served as director of graduate studies for several years in the 1970s and as department chair from 1980 to 1985. Over the years, he served on the editorial boards of leading journals, including the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Networks*, *Sociological Theory*, and *Sociological Forum*. In addition, for many years he was an associate editor of *The Journal of Mathematical Sociology*. In the 1990s, he was elected to the Sociological Research Association. In 1998, he was elected chair of the ASA Mathematical Sociology section and in 2004 he received that section's James S. Coleman Distinguished Career Award.

Fararo's early authoritative text on mathematical sociology, *Mathematical Sociology: An Introduction to Fundamentals* explored three main ideas, all of which are of fundamental importance to the development not only of mathematical sociology but also of sociology and, more broadly, social science. The first theme pertains to theoretical sociology and involves the idea that the most effective theory is mathematically expressed. The second pertains to rigorous mathematical modeling of a vast array of processes at all levels of analysis and generality. The third idea pertains to cultivation of the tools necessary for successful mathematization of sociological theory. These three themes recur in all of his work.

In his masterpiece, *The Meaning of General Theoretical Sociology: Tradition and Formalization*, Fararo provides a cogent and comprehensive examination of theoretical sociology, its roots and traditions, methods, and key substantive questions. Fararo argues that

theoretical sociology comprises a single research tradition, that what appear as conflicting theoretical traditions are in effect "intersecting and communicating subtraditions" of the single tradition (p. 342). The key substantive questions concern the "emergence, maintenance, comparison, and transformation of social structures" (p. 62). To study these basic questions, he proposes a "process worldview" whose key idea is "recursive generativity": "The interactive nexus of human organisms generates transformations in both the individual humans as such and the advancing nexus they constitute" (pp. 47-53).

The process worldview leads naturally to a set of methods whose centerpiece is a nonlinear dynamical social systems framework. This consists of dynamical variables that define the states of the system and its possible trajectories through time and parametric variables that capture the relatively fixed conditions in which the system labors.

Within this framework, a principal goal is to formulate mechanisms that generate changes of state from which the possible trajectories are derived and then prove four types of theorems. The first two are the existence and stability of equilibrium states, states of the system in which the mechanisms postulated to produce change are balanced, and the conditions for which depend on the parametric variables defining the system.

The other two questions involve the relationship between parametric and dynamical variables: how stable equilibrium states vary with variation in values of the parametric variables, the comparative statics problem; and how dynamic outcomes vary if parametric conditions change, the structural stability or structural change problem. In the context of dynamical social systems, these are the four fundamental problems of social structure at the heart of scientific sociology: the existence and forms of social structure, the stability of social structures, the comparative statics of social structures, and the change of social structures (p. 109).

Fararo was an inspiration to many, admired for his straightforward and incisive intellect. He will be missed.

*John Skvoretz, University of South Florida*

### François A. Joseph 1961-2020

François A. Joseph, ABD in Sociology from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), was a former senator and former Minister of the Interior and Territorial Communities in Haiti, his birthplace and home. He was also a husband and father of two daughters.



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Announcements

A true organic intellectual, Joseph, a former priest, studied sociology with the goal of advancing social change in the place he called Ayiti (Haiti). His dissertation project was titled "Religious Practices in the Construction and Negotiation of Diaspora Identity among Haitian Immigrants in New York City," and William Helmreich, who also passed away in 2020, chaired the dissertation committee.

Rather than choose a more comfortable life in the academy, Joseph chose to work at the forefront of political action: he was an elected representative affiliated with a party in Haiti called the Organization of the People in Struggle. Joseph was a deep thinker and read heavy philosophy tomes for fun, and yet he had a wonderful sense of humor, creating a sense of camaraderie among his graduate school classmates.

His fellow students, particularly his cohort, which entered the doctoral program in 2004, shared their recollections.

"I was struck immediately by our classmate François' immense brilliance and generosity of spirit. We don't need more soulless academics; we need more soulful academics like François whose research was guided by social justice and a refined ethical compass. He will be deeply missed. Sociology has lost a great scholar and human being."

—Kim Cunningham, Fashion Institute of Technology

"François was a gentle soul and more observant than anyone in graduate school. I remember sitting in an ethnography class with him, where he knew I was studying Caribbean childcare providers. He wanted me to challenge my own gender norms as a researcher and asked if I would let him babysit my kids. I gave him a confused look, and we both just laughed because I knew he just wanted to see if I would indulge my social norm. He will be missed!"

—Tamara Mose, Brooklyn College and American Sociological Association

"François radiated calm and warmth. A large part of grad school involves collective stressing over exams, requirements, and research, but he was unflappable. François supported others who were struggling, always ready to walk us through some complicated theoretical argument that he had mastered (his knowledge was encyclopedic). He knew his sociological education had a higher purpose—to serve the people of Haiti. I think that's what kept him grounded and optimistic."

—Erynn Masi de Casanova, American Sociological Association

"François' love for Haiti was unquestionable. He made you believe in

its beauty and the resilience of its people. His mission in life was always to serve his home. To interact with François was to interact with the Ayiti. RIP my Caribbean neighbor."

—Carlene Buchanan Turner, Norfolk State University

He will also be fondly remembered and missed by his other graduate school cohort members and friends: Lauren Jade Martin, Andrea Siegel, Danielle Jackson, Kate Jenkins, John Andrews, Jules Netherland, Patrick Inglis, Aaron Weeks, Soniya Munshi, and others who were with him during his time at CUNY.

François achieved and experienced so much in his short time on the planet. Those who knew him loved him and learned from him. His example encourages us to apply sociological understandings to improve the lives of those in need, and to appreciate the value of both theory and practice.

Compiled by Erynn Masi de Casanova, American Sociological Association

**William H. Swatos, Jr. 1946–2020**

William H. (Bill) Swatos, former executive officer of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, passed away on November 9, 2020, at the CGH Medical Center in Sterling, IL. He was 74 years old. The immediate cause of death was complications from COVID-19, although Swatos had been struggling for several years with neurological impairment and the onset of memory loss and dementia.

Swatos received his bachelor's degree in sociology with honors (1966) from Transylvania University in Kentucky, and his MA (1969) and PhD (1973) in the same subject from the University of Kentucky. The Department of Sociology at Kentucky named Swatos its distinguished alumnus in 1989. Across five decades, he taught sociology, philosophy and religious studies—along with occasional courses in anthropology, geography and speech—at a succession of institutions. These ranged widely in size and character: from the small and denominational (King College—now King University—in Bristol, TN, and Augustana College in Rock Island, IL), to the small and public (Black Hawk College in Moline, IL), to the large and public (Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL, and the University of South Florida in Tampa). In 1982, Swatos received a Fulbright grant to perform research and lecture on religion in Iceland.

Swatos' working life combined four simultaneous yet distinct careers: research and writing on the sociology of religion, often with a noticeable Weberian bent; shepherding sociological articles and books by others into print as an academic editor; ad-

ministering professional affairs in the discipline through his management of scholarly associations; and serving Christian believers as a member of the ordained ministry.

In the first pursuit, Swatos authored or co-authored eight books, compiled 21 anthologies alone or in collaboration, and contributed more than 70 articles and chapters to religious or sociological publishers. He was always careful in his edited volumes not only to feature the work of established figures, but to also encourage and cultivate the participation of rising younger scholars. Personal and institutional prestige mattered little to Swatos: he was as happy (maybe happier) to recognize the research of a lesser-known individual as to publish a new manuscript from a prominent contributor.

As an editor, Swatos helmed between 1989 and 1994 *Sociology of Religion* (formerly *Sociological Analysis*), the official journal of the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR). After relinquishing that post, he revived and edited for a decade (2005–2015) *Religion and the Social Order*, ASR's long-running book series with Brill Academic Publishers. At the same time, he was managing editor (2004–2016) of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, a pioneering online outlet sponsored by the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University.

As substantial as all these accomplishments were, most sociologists who knew Swatos probably could trace their acquaintance with him to a friendly greeting that they received from behind the registration desk at a professional meeting. Swatos was the first executive director of the Religious Research Association, an organization that he served in that capacity from 1994 to 2015. Overlapping that service were his efforts as the ASR executive officer of from 1996 to 2012. In these jobs, Swatos handled a myriad of organizational duties, from managing money and balancing budgets, to maintaining mailing lists, to selecting menu items for meals and receptions at annual conferences. Few models preceded him in this work, and few then or now could exceed his standards for timeliness and efficiency.

At the start of his ecclesiastical career, Swatos graduated with an MDiv degree in 1969 from the Episcopal Theologi-

cal Seminary in Lexington, KY, where he taught classes on Greek and New Testament. The following year he was ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church and began serving a series of congregations of that denomination, first in Kentucky and then in the border area between southwestern Virginia and east Tennessee. His longest period of pastoral ministry, more than a dozen years, was as vicar of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Silvis, IL.

A move to the Gulf coast of Florida in 1997 found Father Bill filling in as clergy in parishes in Clearwater, Lakeland, and New Port Richey, among other communities. He returned to Illinois in 2004, but his unit of the Episcopal Church there, the Diocese of Quincy, in 2008 withdrew from the denomination in reaction to perceived departures from theological orthodoxy. Swatos went with it, and with it he eventually affiliated with the new Anglican Church in North America. With the Anglicans, he took charge of historic Christ Church, Limestone, in Hanna City, IL, for a decade while acting as Canon Theologian for the Diocese. He also was President of the American Region of the Society of King Charles the Martyr, an Anglo-Catholic devotional organization.

Swatos was born in West Milford, NJ. His marriage to Priscilla Lampman ended in divorce. He was preceded in death in 2017 by his second wife, Joy Anne Longstreet Swatos, and is survived by two sons: Giles S. Swatos of Tampa, FL; and Eric B. (Elizabeth) Swatos of Prophetstown, IL; and by four grandchildren. The Swatos family recommends that any memorial contributions be directed to the *Alzheimer's Association*.

Much of what Swatos achieved in life he did behind the scenes, in undertakings that would be noticed only if they were fumbled. Because such mishaps were rare, he risked missing the fullness of credit for all that he accomplished. This account is an attempt to rectify that imbalance and to suggest why—among scholars, academic readers, conference-goers, and people in the pews—he will be greatly missed.

Kevin J. Christiano, University of Notre Dame; Barbara Jones Denison, Shippensburg University; and Peter Kivisto, Augustana College

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