

# The AGORA

Newsletter of the Rationality and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

Winter 2018/Spring 2019

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## From the Chair's Desk (ASA)

Jun Kobayashi



Dear Rationality and Society Colleagues,  
Hope everything is going well with you all. I took over leadership of our section from Jane Sell at the last annual meeting in Philadelphia. She has, we all know, devoted herself in enhancing section vitality. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Jane.

Let me quickly look back past year's activities. In September 2017, Jane asked us to join the Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity section while asking them to join us. This ended up in beautiful reciprocity: Both sections obtained new members.

One story should be shared among us. Our section faced a possibility of probation. In January 2018, Jane had a phone conference with ASA officers and then submitted a report. Thanks to her efforts, in March we heard that the section was not to be put on probation. We cannot be, still, too vigilant about the membership.

Our Philadelphia meetings successfully demonstrated that our section was, as it has been, a small but (therefore?) vibrant one. We hosted two sessions. One was "Empirical Advances in Rationality and Society" organized by Katie Corcoran with cutting-edge three papers. The other was an invited session, organized by Jane, featuring a discussion of the general perspectives of Rationality and Society. The speakers include Jonathan Turner. While Peter Hedström was originally scheduled, a surgery interfered and so Jane and I served as discussants. We enjoyed rigorous but fruitful interactions.

The business meeting followed the invited session. James Coleman Award for Outstanding Article, chaired

by Damon Centola, was given to Mario Small's "Someone To Talk To" (see an article in this issue for details). An award plaque was handed to Mario. On the other hand, the Graduate Student Paper Award, chaired by Vincent Buskens, was unfortunately not given to anyone this year.

Then, we welcomed Pamela Emanuelson as Chair-Elect, Masayuki Kanai as Secretary/Treasurer, and Emily Erikson as Council Member. Rotating off the council were Past Chair Vincent Buskens, Secretary/Treasurer Neha Gondel, and Council Member Katrin Auspurg. We are very appreciative of their service. Many thanks to Jun Kobayashi (it's me) for chairing the nominating committee.

We discussed and decided to add a student member to our council. We realize that this would be a change in our bylaws but that such a change could add an important element in both outreach and mentorship. Also, thanks to Neha, pretty healthy finances were reported.

Now, what is expected toward the upcoming meeting in New York City? First, in chronological order, on April 26 the ASA elections open until May 31. Members will be sent emails to their online ballots. Pamela Emanuelson, as a chair of the nominating committee, is preparing for them. This year, we will be electing an incoming chair and a council member to replace Katie Corcoran.

Also in the elections, you will be asked whether you approve the bylaws amendment, which allows a student representative to the council starting in 2020. At the business meeting in August 2018, we decided this to increase student involvement. Once the amendment is approved, the position will be filled in for the 2020 council. See the full current bylaws at [http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/sec\\_33\\_rationality\\_and\\_society\\_bylaws.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/sec_33_rationality_and_society_bylaws.pdf).

Second, on August 9 in New York I will be hosting a pre-conference that will target potential members and make our section visible. Mark the date now! It will be the seventh US-Japan conference on mathematical and rational choice sociology (see an announcement in this issue). We have a continuing and growing partnership with Mathematical Sociology Section, Japanese Association for Mathematical Sociology, and International Sociological Association RC45 on Rational Choice, our sister organization. So, the pre-conference is cosponsored by these four

organizations.

Third, at the annual meeting in August 10-13 in New York, our section hosts two oral sessions ("Advances in Rationality and Society" and "Open Session for Rationality and Society," which lasts for one hour) and a business meeting. We also have, just like in the previous year, a joint on-site reception with Mathematical Sociology section and Evolution, Biology, and Society section.

Finally, I have to thank Masayuki Kanai (on the ASA side) and Wojtek Przepiorka (on the ISA) for editing this fascinating newsletter, *Agora*. I edited one edition of the newsletter for many years (since 2013) and I am so happy that Wojtek succeeded my position. This issue, though, is distributed later than supposed due to my delay.

"Small but vibrant" --- I am proud of this section identity. Please join me to maintain our rich tradition!

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### **The Seventh Joint US-Japan Conference on Mathematical and Rational Choice Sociology** Jun Kobayashi, organizer



A joint pre-conference will be held as follows. Organizers welcome any topics in the field, including preliminary results and work in progress. The conference will give you a good reason to visit New York, the world's most exciting city! Call for abstracts will be announced shortly.

**Date:** August 9, 2019 (a day before ASA meeting)

**Venue:** ASA meeting place in New York City

**Cosponsors:** ASA Sections on Rationality and Society, Mathematical Sociology, Japanese Association for Mathematical Sociology, and ISA Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice

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## Award Announcement from the Rationality and Society Section



### 2019 Rationality and Society James Coleman Award for Outstanding Article

**Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical or empirical work** in the tradition of rational choice approaches broadly construed. The prize is also open to work based on alternative decision theoretic frameworks and to researchers who are not (yet) members of the ASA Section on Rationality and Society. Eligible are **peer-reviewed articles** that have been published in **2017 -2018**.

We particularly welcome articles that fulfill the following criteria: (1) high originality of the research question; (2) sound empirical-analytical research based on rational choice theories or other mechanisms how micro-level behavior shapes macro level outcomes; (3) a high precision and rigor of the argumentation as well as clarity of the writing style; (4) a careful choice of the empirical research design and strong transparency regarding all steps of the methodological approach; and (5) a high scientific and/or practical impact of results.

Applicants will be informed about the results of the selection process by end of May 2019. The prize will be presented at the 114th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in New York on August 10-13, 2019.

**Nominations should be submitted** to Katrin Auspurg by email ([katrin.auspurg@lmu.de](mailto:katrin.auspurg@lmu.de)) by **March 1, 2019**. Please include a copy of the paper and author's name(s), institutional affiliation and contact information including preferred email address.

We are looking forward to receiving your nominations!

Committee members:

Katrin Auspurg, LMU Munich (chair)  
Mario Small, Harvard University  
Howard T. Welser, Ohio University

### 2019 Rationality and Society section award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student

Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical or empirical works in the rational choice tradition broadly construed, including alternative decision theoretic frameworks and applications of theory to empirical problems. Eligible authors are students currently enrolled in a graduate program who will not have received the PhD at the time of the 2019 ASA meeting. Multi-authored papers are eligible if none of the authors has a PhD.

Nominations should be submitted by email to Jane Sell ([j-sell@tamu.edu](mailto:j-sell@tamu.edu)) by **March 1, 2019**.

Nominations should include two electronic files: (1) A cover page with the paper title, paper abstract, author's name(s), institutional affiliation and institutional address, the name of the author's faculty advisor, and full contact information including preferred email address, telephone number(s) and mailing address. (2) The nominated paper, double-spaced, beginning with title and abstract but with author's name and other identifying information removed.

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### 2018 Rationality and Society James Coleman Award for Outstanding Article

Damon Centola, committee chair

We are pleased to announce that the 2018 James Coleman Award for Outstanding Book in Rationality and Society is awarded to Mario Small's "Someone To Talk To". This book achieves the rare and impressive goal of combining original ethnographic data on people's social network ties with analyses of large-scale empirical data in order to marshal both "micro" and "macro" level evidence for an empirically and theoretically generalizable challenge to a major structural theory of social networks and how they function.

For nearly half a century, sociologists have built upon the very important theoretical foundation developed by Mark Granovetter's "Strength of Weak Ties" argument. Granovetter's argument showed that our "strong" ties –that is, our ties that are imbued with intimacy, trust, strong affect, and frequent interaction – are also structurally "closely knit". In other words, our

strong ties tend to know each other. The normal assumption has always been that these ties are the locus of our most intimate conversations, confessions, and emotional support. “Weak ties” by contrast, are connections to strangers who do not know our friendship group, and thus are less likely to be trusted, have strong affect, be frequently interacted with, or be sources of meaningful support. Granovetter argues that while these weak ties are interpersonally not very important, they do play the very important structural role of bridging a large and complex population together. And, in so doing, they allow for information, diseases and behaviors to diffuse much more effectively than they would through strong ties.

The classic tension that remains after nearly fifty years of research on the strength of weak ties is that weak ties are “individually” the least important ties for any given person, but “structurally” they are the most important ties for understanding large scale diffusion across the network. Mario Small’s fantastic book turns this wisdom on its head by arguing that there are many situations in which weak ties are the greatest sources of emotional support and intimacy. Small shows that strangers, not close friends, can sometimes provide the most intimate sources of social support.

Small’s study empirically discovers a set of regular, even predictable, behaviors that emerge in people’s normal, day to day, social networks, which contradict our most well-accepted theories of how social networks function. These detailed empirical insights have large-scale theoretical consequences. Small’s ideas revolutionize James Coleman’s classic notions of social capital by suggesting that the value of weak ties is not just that they provide access to new information, but that they can also be important, indeed essential, sources of social support. In these situations, social closure can inhibit, rather than promote, confidentiality.

Small’s insights offer a new perspective on our classical assumptions about the privileged role of schools, neighborhoods, and churches, as the places where social support is found. Although people “say” that their close friends are their best social resources for disclosing private information, this careful study shows that their behaviors betray the opposite. In making these discoveries, Small’s work convincingly challenges decades of work on social capital, including Robert Putnam’s famous notion that “bonding” social capital only adhere in small, cohesive groups, while

“bridging” capital functions only to make connections across groups. Small opens up a new territory to explore: namely, the “bonding” experience among strangers. “Someone To Talk To” unveils an entirely new way of thinking about how the vast network of connections in a society creates opportunities for its members to have meaningful social exchanges with one another, and shows how the large, often accidental pattern of connection in a society, may offer vastly more forms of social capital for its citizens than we had previously imagined.

The general objective of Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice is to advance the development of Rational Choice Theory. This includes its application to various explanatory problems across social science disciplines, its empirical test, its theoretical development and comparison with alternative approaches. The RC tries to achieve this general objective by promoting the international exchange of scientific information across disciplinary borders.

### From the President's Desk

Jun Kobayashi



Hello again! I was elected to be the new president of our RC45 on Rational Choice last July at ISA World Congress of Sociology in Toronto. The responsibility lasts for four years from 2018 to 2022 until the next World Congress. We truly appreciate Guillermina Jasso's (Willie) volunteering for the Electoral Officer.

The new board consists of Masayuki Kanai as Secretary-Treasurer, Rense Corten (incumbent), Michael Hechter (incumbent), Christine Horne (incoming), Gianluca Manzo (incoming), Naoki Sudo (incoming), and Tobias Wolbring (incoming) as Board Members. Welcome!

Outgoing board members are President Antonio M. Chiesi, Secretary-Treasurer Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo, Board Members Guillermina Jasso, Kazuto Misumi, and Hanno Scholtz (also a previous president). Many thanks for their dedicated efforts in the four years!

In Toronto, we appointed Wojtek Przepiorka to be a new newsletter editor, who succeeded me, and Atsushi Ishida to be a new webmaster after Masayuki Kanai.

Personally, it was 1998 when I first attended ISA activities at the World Congress in Montreal. After 20

years I find myself responsible for RC45. Time flies.

My predecessor Antonio M. Chiesi has led RC45 extremely effectively. No one would, therefore, accuse me of following his successful framework. Here is our four-year plan that we discussed in Toronto.

On August 9, 2019, we cosponsor a pre-conference at the ASA annual meeting in New York (see an announcement in this issue). It focuses on mathematical and rational choice sociology in general.

In July 14-18, 2020, the fourth ISA Forum of Sociology will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The board decided to host sessions there. We organize ten sessions (including a business meeting). Abstract submission is due September 30, this year. The forum has a common theme of "Challenges of the 21st Century: Democracy, Environment, Inequalities, Intersectionality."

In 2021, however, we have no plan at this point. If you have any ideas, feel free to propose them.

In July 24-30, 2022, we will meet at the next ISA World Congress in Melbourne, Australia.

"Rational choice theory can be a game changer in sociology" --- I challenge to prove this in the next four years.

In this issue, Wojtek arranged an inspiring interview with Gianluca Manzo. Rational Choice Theories (RCTs) have not always been appreciated by sociologists and we believe that this is due to some misunderstandings about RCT that result from outdated notions of rationality and the partial clinging to empirical evidence proving them wrong. Indeed, hypotheses derived from RCTs have often been refuted, but that is what makes RCTs so convincing.

Let me explain. A proposition that can be wrong can be subjected to empirical tests, and in the last two decades we have seen an explosion of experimental and quasi-experimental research testing predictions derived from RCTs. As a result, actor models have been developed that better reflect what has been established by empirical facts – and this is not the end. It is exactly the cumulative research programs that RCTs facilitate that makes us convinced they are the right way forward.

In this edition of *Agora* we introduce a novel instrument with which we hope to reach out beyond the RCT community, help sociologists revise their set views about RCTs and open a dialogue with other



theoretical approaches in sociology. Starting with this edition, we will print a series of interviews with distinguished scholar who might help us better understand how RCTs are perceived by sociologists in general and enable us to better appreciate alternative approaches to the same research questions we all are most intrigued by.

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**Interview: Gianluca Manzo interviewed by Wojtek Przepiorka**



**WP:** Gianluca, you are a declared critic of rational choice approaches in sociology. At the same time, you are an active member of RC45. RC45 and its ASA sister section Rationality & Society are small and therefore grateful for every member. Is your membership an act of altruism?

**GM:** Human choices often respond to a variety of intertwined logics. I clearly feel very sympathetic with actor-centered explanations. Differently from other (structural) methodological individualists, however, I see rationality only as a specific way in which actions can be depicted. Rationality can in turn be conceived in many different ways, and it seems to me empirically proved that actors do not spend all their time to develop more or less elaborated systems of reasons. Thus it is with respect to the supposedly logical priority and empirical generalizability of (a certain type of) reason-based explanations that you legitimately can label me as “declared critic of rational choice approaches in sociology”. Several other core general features of this theoretical perspective instead –like abstraction, conceptual rigor, deduction, formalization, and micro-foundations– are perfectly in line with my own way of doing sociology. These fundamental, general features make me feel at home in RC45, in its sister ASA section as well as in the closely-related Math Soc ASA section. I have the impression that the kind of sociology I like is better represented in these sections than elsewhere. At the

same time, since, as you said, those sections are small, I think that, through my involvement, I can help a certain kind of sociology to survive. In sum, it seems to me that scientific identity (being part of a certain kind of sociology), intellectual self-interest (benefiting from discussions with colleagues who can understand better than others what I do), and disciplinary altruism (contribute to the existence of a small area of contemporary sociology) are all reasons that explain my involvement in RC45 and related professional groups.

**WP:** Your preferred methodology is agent-based modelling and simulation. It seems rational from a mere modelling perspective to start with the assumption that agents are rational and self-regarding in the pursuit of their goals and relax these assumptions later, if correspondence with the explanandum cannot be reached. What’s wrong with this logic of prioritization?

**GM:** The heuristic value of the principle of decreasing abstraction is indisputable to me. Like any assumption that we posit at the beginning of a modeling exercise, however, that of actors’ selfishness should be first assessed with respect to the available empirical evidence suggesting that this assumption is reasonable for the type of explanandum (and the context where it takes place) that we are trying to understand. Without sufficient empirical elements justifying this assumption, before choosing it as starting point, I would still consider its “companion assumptions”. By this I mean those assumptions that almost automatically follow from a given “mother” assumption, often to make this assumption treatable. With respect to self-selfishness, among these “companion assumptions”, two of them seem to me especially unrealistic: a/ homogeneity (all actors are assumed to follow the same logic of action); b/ solipsism (actors are assumed to develop their reasoning without communicating with other actors). Obviously it is possible to relax, or imagine turnarounds for those companion assumptions of selfishness, but this implies an increase in the model complexity and, in particular when interactions are introduced in the model, additional questionable companion assumptions like assuming actors’ cognitive abilities to make computations that are difficult to perform even for modelers themselves (think of the computation complexity of many advanced game-theoretic models). Thus, although I do not see anything wrong with starting the procedure of

decreasing abstraction with the assumptions of self-regarding preferences, I do not see any compelling reason to consider this assumption as a “natural” starting point. The often-quoted merit of this assumption —i.e. simplicity— goes in hand with the unrealism of some of its major “companion” assumptions. In this respect, the attractiveness of agent-based modeling is that its algorithmic nature allows the modeler to start with any assumptions that seem plausible, thus downgrading simplicity (and analytic tractability) from being the primary selection criterion in the choice of actor-level starting assumptions.

**WP:** Agent-based modeling is an approach many of us embrace with enthusiasm for the very reasons you outline above. But do these reasons make it a compelling approach? What is the empirical basis of plausibility, or what are its companion assumptions?

**GM:** This question in fact contains three different questions! Please let me be brief about the second one related to plausibility. This is indeed an epistemological question that does not seem to me specific to agent-based modeling. After all, a method simply is a procedure to transform some inputs into some outputs. Assumptions are part of the inputs. The various elements that we mobilize to argue in favor of the plausibility of a given assumption are always exogenous to the method we are using to deduce implications from that assumption. In this sense, agent-based computational models are not different from other formal methods. Now, as to the compelling character of agent-based modeling, the answer obviously depends on what you mean by “compelling”. To me, a method is compelling if the following four generic features are present: a/ transparency (i.e. the possibility to understand the way inputs are transformed into outputs); b/ inspectability (i.e. the possibility to inspect the internal functioning of the technical devices that allow the input-output transformation); c/ verifiability (i.e. the possibility to discover errors in the specific procedures that we write to move from inputs to outputs); d/ replicability (i.e. the possibility for an external observer to reproduce the procedures transforming inputs into outputs).

Agent-based computational models possess all these features. They are often attacked with respect to the supposedly lack of a/. I do think that this critique is based on a misperception. It is true that many of us, for intellectual laziness, lack of space, and/or lack of

sufficient technical skills, still use an agent-based model as a black-box tool. But a method’s weakness cannot be proved on the basis of its users’ incompetency. Bad practices should always be distinguished from methods’ intrinsic limitations. Finally, as to the companion assumptions of agent-based computational models, since any potentially explanatory mechanism can be designed from scratch within this modeling approach, its companion assumptions mainly depend on the primary assumptions posed to design the substantive mechanism of interest. I had hard time to find companion assumptions that are intrinsically attached to the method itself. On thought, however, “multilevelness” and “sequentiality” could be the answer. By “multilevelness”, I mean that an agent-based model requires to frame the research question in terms of transitions across levels of analysis. The explanatory mechanism must be posed at some lower level —or smaller scale, if you prefer— than the patterns to be explained. The method does not require a specific content for these levels but, whatever type(s) of entities you put at the lower level, you get the best from the method as long as your point is to say something about the generative power of the lower-level mechanism (which could itself represent several types of entities at several levels of analysis). In this sense the method is intrinsically reductionist. By “sequentiality”, I mean that, when programming an ABM, we are required to establish a temporal order among actions, interactions, and loops across levels of analysis. This does not mean that time cannot be itself modeled within an agent-based model but that, as long as the mechanisms of interest are designed and implemented on serial computer architectures, purely parallel processes can be approximated (through complex technical turnarounds) but not directly modeled.

**WP:** It is reassuring to read your maintaining “quality” criteria for ABM that also make (other) rational choice approaches (e.g., game theoretic models) compelling. It is indeed the lack of transparency, or better, my lack of understanding how inputs are transformed into outputs, that made me abandon ABM as a method for theory building. What do you recommend to those who feel that ABM is a valuable tool but find it lacking transparency, and what do you recommend agent-based modelers can do to change this perspective on ABM (on top of being competent and diligent)?

**GM:** As I said, an agent-based model is in its essence a numerical device implemented into a computer program. Its internal functioning can thus be inspected at length at virtually no cost. At the moment it is true however that there is no standardized procedure to accomplish this task. Some proposed to use existing mathematic techniques like differential equations or Markov chain models to describe the way simulated runs of a given model move from one state to another. My intuition is that we need procedures with higher granularity and tailored to the discrete nature of agent-based models as well as their dynamic multilevelness. I am not sure that sociologists have the technical skills to create on their own these methods but, in other fields, like the analysis of social networks, for instance, we observed that sociologists provided (and continue to do so) social statisticians and computer scientists with the inputs to invent and implement methods adapted to the specific needs of sociological inquiry. I do not see why agent-based models could not benefit from similar virtuous cross-disciplinary collaborations. In the meantime, I would recommend to follow three heuristics during the study of a specific agent-based model: 1/ if the model simulates several mechanisms, then try to introduce them sequentially, if possible from the simplest to the most complex; 2/ in addition to indicators quantifying the simulated outcome(s) of interest, collect data on how the value of agent- and network-level properties change during simulation runs; 3/ depending on the intuitions you have developed on the model's functioning after going through 1/ and 2/, make surgery interventions on some pieces of the model (turning off some of them, altering them, change their timing, and so on), and assess the impact of these modifications on the simulated output(s). The combination of these heuristics help to gain insights on the internal functioning of a given simulated model, which obviously is a crucial ingredient to maximize its explanatory value. Any diligent user usually performs these tasks in the background but this is rarely reported on in a systematic manner in the final publication. Thus my last recommendation would be always to write dedicated sections on "understanding the model dynamic" explaining how the simulation moves from the inputs to the outputs, and what procedures we followed to gain this understanding. I am not sure that this practice could persuade skeptical scholars like you but it should at least prove that the supposed lack of

transparency of agent-based models is a problem of research practices, and not an intrinsic limitation of the method.

Gianluca Manzo received a PhD in Social Sciences jointly from Sorbonne and Trento University in 2006. He currently is a research fellow in Sociology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. He holds visitorships at several places, including Nuffield College, Columbia University, European University Institute, and the universities of Oslo, Mannheim and Cologne. Gianluca investigates the concept of social mechanism, the notion of causality, and the history of analytical sociology; substantively, he studied educational inequalities, relative deprivation, reputation, and the diffusion of innovations through various combinations of statistical methods, social network analysis, and agent-based computational models. Gianluca's research was funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR) and awarded by the American Sociological Association (Outstanding Article Award in Mathematical Sociology) and the International Sociological Association (Best Junior Theorist Paper, special mention). He served as vice-president of the International Network of Analytical Sociology from 2012 to 2018.

The interview was conducted via e-mail between October 11 and December 6, 2018.

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### Recent Publications of Interest

- Erikson, Emily and Mark Hamilton. 2018. "Companies and the Rise of Economic Thought" *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 124, no. 1.
- Erikson, Emily. June 2018. "How Group Events Can Shape Network Processes" *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 36, Issue 2, p. 187-193.
- Erikson, Emily and Sampsa Samila. 2018. "Networks, Institutions, and Uncertainty: Information Flow in Early Modern Markets," *Journal of Economic History*.
- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2017. "Cognition, Emotions and Collective Alignment: A Response to Collins," *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(6): 284-291.
- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2017. "Shadow Plays: On Theory's Perennial Challenges," *Sociological Theory*, 35(2): 128-137.
- Opp, Karl-Dieter. 2018. "The Interdependence of Spontaneous Order and Institutional Design. Table Manners, Language, Daylight Saving Time and the



Erosion of Institutional Design under Communist Rule." Pp. 197-228 in *Sociology and the Invisible Hand*, edited by Adriana Mica, Katarzyna M. Wyrzykowska, Rafał Wiśniewski, and Iwona Zielińska. Frankfurt: Lang.

Opp, Karl-Dieter. 2018. "Do the Social Sciences Need the Concept of "Rationality"? Notes on the Obsession with a Concept." Pp. 191-217 in *The Mystery of Rationality. Mind, Beliefs and the Social Sciences*, edited by Francesco Di Iorio and Gérald Bronner. Wiesbaden: VS Springer.

Opp, Karl-Dieter. 2018. "Can Attitude Theory Improve Rational Choice Theory or Vice Versa? A Comparison and Integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior and Value-Expectancy Theory." Pp. 65-95 in *Einstellungen und Verhalten in der empirischen Sozialforschung. Analytische Konzepte, Anwendungen und Analyseverfahren. Festschrift für Dieter Urban zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Mayerl. Jochen, Thomas Krause, Andreas Wahl, and Marius Wuketich. New York: Springer VS.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2018. "What Can You and I Do To Reduce Inequality?" *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 42(4):186-204. Prepublished 10 August 2018, DOI: 10.1080/0022250X.2017.1343826

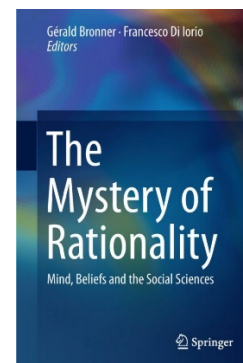
Are there things that ordinary people can do in their private lives to reduce economic inequality? And, if so, how would these things work? This paper first examines inequality measures and behavioral models that produce inequality effects, identifying five sets of inequality mechanisms which lead to levers that ordinary people can use to reduce income inequality, and next discusses the levers, with special attention to their feasibility, ease of use, and side effects. The five levers highlight transfers, equal additions, negative assortative mating, wage schedules that reward multiple personal characteristics, and compensation procedures with voting rules, many voters, diversity of thought, and secret ballots. This work raises new questions for research, such as the sources of diversity of thought.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2018. "Quantitative Methods." Pp. 235-241 in J. Michael Ryan (ed.), *Core Concepts in Sociology*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.

As a scientific discipline develops, it achieves increasing exactness, accuracy, and parsimony. Ideas

about the subject matter of the discipline become clearer; the essential operations and relations come more sharply into focus, and the epicycles fall away. This increasing clarity both arises from and spurs quantitative expression. Of course, disciplines develop at different rates. Some phenomena resist scientific description. And, within discipline, theory and empirics, though deeply intertwined, also develop at different rates. Fortunately, the methods of both theoretical analysis and empirical analysis rest on a common foundation of logic, mathematics, and statistics. And thus "quantitative methods" - like "qualitative methods" -- are methods for both theory and empirics, and methodological advances in one are advances for both. This article first considers briefly theory and empirics, then moves to three major elements in models of sociological phenomena - variables, functions, distributions.

**Bronner, Gérald and Francesco Di Iorio (Eds.). 2018. *The Mystery of Rationality. Mind, Beliefs and the Social Science*. Springer.**



### **Abstract**

This book contributes to the developing dialogue between cognitive science and social sciences. It focuses on a central issue in both fields, i.e. the nature and the limitations of the rationality of beliefs and action. The development of cognitive science is one of the most important and fascinating intellectual advances of recent decades, and social scientists are paying increasing attention to the findings of this new branch of science that forces us to consider many classical issues related to epistemology and philosophy of action in a new light.

Analysis of the concept of rationality is a leitmotiv in the history of the social sciences and has involved endless disputes. Since it is difficult to give a precise definition of this concept, and there is a lack of

agreement about its meaning, it is possible to say that there is a ‘mystery of rationality’. What is it to be rational? Is rationality merely instrumental or does it also involve the endorsement of values, i.e. the choice of goals? Should we consider rationality to be a normative principle or a descriptive one? Can rationality be only Cartesian or can it also be argumentative? Is rationality a conscious skill or a partly tacit one? This book, which has been written by an outstanding collection of authors, including both philosophers and social scientists, tries to make a useful contribution to the debates on these problems and shed some light on the mystery of rationality. The target audience primarily comprises researchers and experts in the field.

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5. Rationality, Irrationality, Realism and the Good  
*Paul Dumouchel*
6. First Generation Behavioral Economists on Rationality, and Its Limits  
*Roger Frantz*
7. Embodied rationality  
*Shaun Gallagher*
8. Rational Choice Explained and Defended  
*Herbert Gintis*
9. Rationality and irrationality revisited or Intellectualism vindicated or how stands the problem of the rationality of magic?  
*Ian Jarvie*
10. Rational life plans?  
*Daniel Little*
11. Dynamics of rationality and dynamics of emotions  
*Pierre Livet*
12. Pathologizing Ideology, Epistemic Modesty and Instrumental Rationality  
*Leslie Marsh*
13. Do the Social Sciences Need the Concept of "Rationality"? Notes on the Obsession with a Concept

*Karl-Dieter Opp*

14. Rationality of the Individual and Rationality of the System: A Critical Examination of the Economic Calculation Problem Over Socialism

*Ennio Piano and Peter Boetke*

15. Rationality and Interpretation in the Study of Social Interaction

*Emmanuel Picavet*

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## Community of Interest

### Asian Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (ANPOSS)

Francesco Di Iorio, Nankai University, China

The Asian Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (ANPOSS) aims to promote intellectual dialogues and research in the philosophy of the social sciences in Asia. That is, to facilitate academic discussion between philosophers and social scientists in Asian regions and in other parts of the globe, and to help the works and idea of scholars in Asia gain greater international recognition.

It is modeled on two preceding networks in the field: the Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable (POSS-RT) and the European Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (ENPOSS). ANPOSS closely collaborates with both these networks and we hope to be able to organize a conference together in the near future. ANPOSS plans to hold a conference every two year and to publish selected papers from the conference in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences journal. ANPOSS seeks to collaborate not only with the two networks and journal mentioned above, but also with other associations, journals and academic societies.

ANPOSS welcomes not only scholars of Asian origin, but also European, North American, and others working in Asia and different parts of the world. It also encourages the participation of women and scholars of other underrepresented groups. For more information about ANPOSS, please visit ANPOSS website: <https://anposs.com/>. ANPOSS first bi-annual conference will be held on June 1-2, 2019 at Nankai University, in Tianjin, China. Through special arrangement between ANPOSS and the editors of the journal, selected papers from the conference will be published in a special issue of the journal Philosophy

of the Social Sciences (SAGE). Keynote speakers: Professor Fan Guangxin (Nankai University, Professor Daniel Little (University of Michigan-Dearborn), Professor Uskali Mäki (University of Helsinki), and Professor Tang Shiping (Fudan University). Local Organizer: Professor Francesco Di Iorio ([francedi.iorio@gmail.com](mailto:francedi.iorio@gmail.com)).

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### Editors' note

Hello! RCTs have a bad reputation among sociologists and I would like to change this. I hope you like the idea of the interview series. Do not hesitate to write and let me know what you think about it. And if you have suggestions for potential future interviewees, please do let me know as well. (Wojtek)

It is my great pleasure to collaborate with Wojtek in editing AGORA. This summer, we are holding the Seventh Joint US-Japan Conference on Mathematical and Rational Choice Sociology in New York as a pre-conference of the ASA annual meeting. Looking forward to seeing our colleagues from North America, Europe, Asia, and other continents! (Masa)



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