

## 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

Summer 2019

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### From the Chair's Desk

Jun Kobayashi

Chair of Rationality and Society Section



Dear Rationality and Society Section Colleagues, Summer has come (in some areas) and our annual meeting is fast approaching in a month in New York. No one would deny it is the most exciting city throughout the world. The council has been working on the upcoming activities of our section.

Let me begin with a report on the election results of the section this year. I sent them to the section members on June 5.

**Chair-Elect:** Stephen Benard, Indiana University.

**Council Member:** Michael Maes, University of Groningen.

**Nominating Committee:** Pamela Emanuelson (chair), Yoshimichi Sato, and Mamadi Corra.

Welcome, Stephen and Michael! Rotating off the council are Jane Sell, the past chair, and Katie Corcoran, a council member. I am extremely appreciative of your service, Jane and Katie!

At the same time, amendment to add a student representative to the council was approved. We will, therefore, add that position to the council next year. Many thanks to those who volunteered for running. As always, we needed strong competitors. I appreciate Pam, Mitch, and Mamadi for serving the Nominating Committee as well as section members who voted.

Meanwhile, the section reviewed and selected this year's award recipients of our section as follows

(see articles in this issue for details). I sent the announcement to you on May 30.

**The James Coleman Outstanding Article Award goes to:**

Thijs Bol, Mathijs de Vaan, and Arnout van de Rijt. 2018. The Matthew Effect in Science Funding. *PNAS* 115 (19): 4887-4890.

**Committee:** Katrin Auspurg (chair), Howard Welser, and Mario Small.

**The Graduate Student Best Paper Award goes to:**

Antonio Sirianni. The Specialization of Informal Social Control: Fighting in the National Hockey League from 1960-2012.

**Committee:** Jane Sell (chair), Bob Shelly, and Arnout van de Rijt.

Many thanks to Katrin and Jane for leading the committees and reaching wonderful decisions. Also many thanks to Howard, Mario, Bob, and Arnout for your commitment.

What is to be expected in New York? Our section is assigned to the SECOND day of the annual meeting. That is, Sunday, August 11. We organize four activities: two sessions, a business meeting, and a joint reception. They start from one-hour Open Session for Rationality and Society from 8:30 to 9:30am. It features:

**Session Organizer:** Jun Kobayashi, Seikei University

**President:** Masayuki Kanai, Senshu University

**Individual Presentations:**

Invisible Polarization in Subjective Social Status:

Two mechanisms determining class identification  
Naoki Sudo, Gakushuin University

Ancient State Organizations: Were they Bureaucratic?

David Willer, University of South Carolina, Pamela E. Emanuelson, North Dakota State University

Social Norms of Bridewealth: A Systematic Analysis of the Impact of Polygyny and Social-Economic Conditions

Andreas Diekmann, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology ETH Zurich, Christoph Buehler,

Leibniz University Hannover

Our business meeting follows 9:30. Please join us to discuss our future and celebrate the award winners.

We have, then, another session on Advances in Rationality and Society from 10:30 to 12:10 as follows.

**Session Organizer:** Jun Kobayashi, Seikei University

**President:** Naoki Sudo, Gakushuin University

**Individual Presentations:**

Beauty Capital: Is Beauty Nature or Rational Investment?

Jun Kobayashi, Seikei University

Governing the commons: Why self-administered outlets flourish in Switzerland

Axel Franzen, University of Bern, Sebastian Mader, University of Bern, Sebastian Bahr, University of Bern

Endogenous preference change and group behavior in experiments

Sun-Ki Chai, University of Hawaii

The Unintended Consequences of Reifying Quality: Theory and Experimental Evidence

Fabien Accominotti, London School of Economics

Does Money Change Everything? Priming Experiments in Situations of Strategic Interaction  
Andreas Diekmann, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology ETH Zurich, Fabian Winter, Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods

The day ends by a joint on-site reception with Mathematical Sociology Section and Section on Evolution, Body and Society. It is held in 7:30 to 9:00pm. Carter Butts, Mathematical Sociology Section chair, is kindly arranging it.

A planned pre-conference was, unfortunately, postponed due to room shortage. See an article below for details. This was notified to you on April 22.

As always, I thank Masayuki Kanai and Wojtek Przepiorka for their editorship of this informative issue.

“Social dilemmas can be peacefully solved” --- I found this true by chairing the section for a year. So many times I was helped by the council members (Jane, Pam, Masa, Katie, and Emily) and section members. Without them, no doubt I could not finish my term. My remaining obligation is to transmit these beautiful tales to future generations.

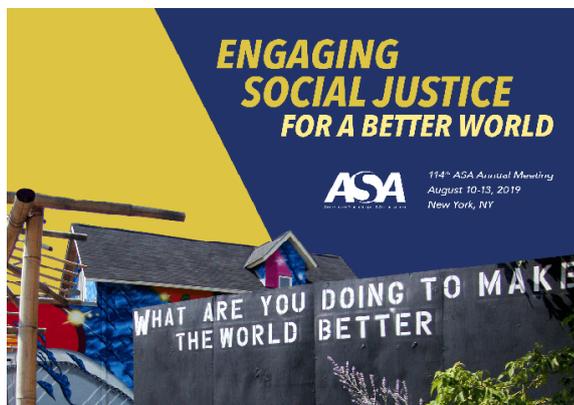
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### New Officer and Council Members at ASA Rationality and Society Section

The section welcomes **Stephen Benard** as the new Chair-Elect, and **Michael Maes** as a new council member for the upcoming year. Congratulations!

As always, we needed promising competitors for each position. Without them, we cannot maintain healthy voting. I sincerely thank those who volunteered to run.

The committee consisted of Pamela Emanuelson (chair), Yoshimichi Sato, and Mamadi Corra.



### 114<sup>th</sup> ASA Annual Meeting in New York, August 10-13, 2019

#### Section on Rationality and Society Program

Be sure to attend our **business meeting, Sunday, August 11, 9:30 to 10:10am.**

#### 1. Open Session for Rationality and Society

Sun, August 11, 8:30 to 9:30am, New York Hilton, Second Floor, Clinton

Description. The session is open for any topics and methods as long as they feature cutting-edge rational choice approaches.

#### 2. Section on Rationality and Society Business Meeting

Sun, August 11, 9:30 to 10:10am, New York Hilton, Second Floor, Clinton

#### 3. Advances in Rationality and Society

Sun, August 11, 10:30am to 12:10pm, New York Hilton, Second Floor, Nassau East

Description: This session will highlight recent theoretical, empirical, and methodological advances in rational choice sociology.

#### 4. Joint Reception: Mathematical Sociology Section, Section on Evolution, Body and Society and Rationality and Society

Sun, August 11, 7:30 to 9:00pm, Sheraton New York, Second Floor, Empire Ballroom East

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



We are pleased to announce that this year the award goes to **Thijs Bol, Mathijs de Vaan, and Arnout van de Rijt** for their paper on the “**Matthew Effect in Science Funding**”, published in 2018 in *PNAS* 115 (19): 4887-4890.

Congratulations to our award winners! And thanks to all who submitted their work, who nominated other’s work, or participated in the awards committee.

The committee consisted of Katrin Auspurg (chair), Howard Welser, and Mario Small (the winner of last year’s James Coleman Best Book Award). We received 20 nominations. All committee members evaluated in a first round all papers; in a second step the three papers with the most votes in this first round were reviewed even more thoroughly by all members and ranked 1-3; finally, the paper that was ranked best in this round (summarizing the votes of all committee members) was picked as the winner.

The winning paper by Bol, de Vaan, and van de Rijt uses data from a large academic funding

program in the Netherlands to study the classical thesis of a “Matthew Effect” in science: Are scientists who have previously been successful more likely to succeed again? And if yes, for what reasons?

Indeed, the paper finds a large Matthew effect in access to scientific funding. In a second step, the authors try to disentangle the mechanisms behind this finding. The paper stands out by using a regression discontinuity design, that allows for particularly high internal validity in separating differences in productivity (number of publications, citations etc.) from a higher recognition simply for having won earlier grants. Separating these effects is important to clarify to what extent the Matthew effect goes along with meritocratic ideals that only productivity (and talent) should matter for scientific rewards. The finding is that there is a Matthew effect beyond productivity, i.e. winners have a higher chance to get further funding than non-winners, even if both have same productivity.

For our award decision in addition an innovative theoretical contribution was decisive: The authors enlarge the understanding of the Matthew effect by what they call a “participation mechanism”: A significant part of the Matthew effect was caused by non-winners’ decisions to no longer partake in the competition for research funding. Future research might explore to what extent this mechanism is driven through discouragement and/or lack of resources. (First evidence suggests that better career positions might matter, as the authors also reported early career winners more likely to sort in successful academic career tracks, such as full professorships).

Taken together, this paper sheds new lights on a classical micro-explanation for self-perpetuating social inequalities (in science). It draws our attention to the (rational) decisions of actors at both sides: the demand side of “gate keepers” that was already studied in prior literature, but also the supply side of scientists who have to decide whether to compete or not.

We got an excellent pool of many papers, and this paper stands out: So many congratulations to the authors!

And to all non-winners, please note: An important practical lesson from this paper is that evaluation scores are often close between winners and non-winners (and this was also true for our

evaluation process). In our opinion, all nominations we received were important contributions. Thus, we encourage you to submit your future work again.

(Katrin Auspurg, Chair)

Committee: Katrin Auspurg (chair), Howard Welser, and Mario Small.

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### **2019 Rationality and Society Section Award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student**

We are pleased to award **Antonio Sirianni** the Graduate Student Paper Award for “**The Specialization of Informal Social Control: Fighting in the National Hockey League.**”

The committee found this paper to be an innovative analysis of general issues in social control: how can systems of social control emerge in systems where institutions are weak or not formalized? The article offers an empirical analysis of the evolution of a particular system of social control in the National Hockey League. The manuscript incorporates a 52 year record of close to 30,000 fist-fights in the National Hockey League.

While players are often penalized for “deviant” acts with in-game penalties by local officials (and occasional fines by the league), the National Hockey League (NHL) has rules that, in essence, permit fist fighting. Sirianni uses the extensive data to argue that the nature of fighting has shifted from “individual” acts to more specialized roles, such that only some players focus on fighting and enforcement.

(Jane Sell, Chair)

Committee: Jane Sell (chair), Bob Shelly, and Arnout van de Rijt.

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### **The Seventh Joint U.S.-Japan Preconference on Mathematical Sociology and Rational Choice Postponed**

The Sections on Rationality and Society and Mathematical Sociology, the Japanese Association for Mathematical Sociology, and the International

Sociological Association Research Committee 45 planned to cosponsor the Seventh Joint U.S.-Japan Preconference on Mathematical Sociology and Rational Choice. Unfortunately, the American Sociological Association could not provide space for the preconference the day before the annual meeting.

After careful consideration, the organizers decided to postpone the preconference until the following year. Currently, the plan is to hold the Seventh Joint U.S.-Japan Preconference on Mathematical Sociology and Rational Choice on August 7, 2020, a day before the annual ASA meeting in San Francisco.

We regret the change but look forward to seeing everyone in San Francisco!

(Jun Kobayashi, Richard Edward Gardner, Kikuko Nagayoshi, Kazuhiro Kezuka, and Gianluca Manzo, organizers)



**Research Committee on Rational Choice RC45**

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! The board of RC45 has started preparing for the International Sociological Association Forum of Sociology in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in July 14-18, 2020. Where is, by the way, Porto Alegre? It is on the Southern border of Brazil with Argentina.

The call for abstracts is now out. RC45 hosts nine (9) diverse sessions (see below). Some cover traditional topics while some address focused but innovative challenges.

**Program Coordinator:** Jun Kobayashi, Seikei University

**Sessions:**

- Causes and Consequences of Corruption:
  - Theoretical Models and Empirical Evidence
  - Computational Social Science and Rational Choice
  - How Do Rational Actions Explain Social Changes?
- Norms, Conventions, and Institutions: Advances from Evolutionary Game Theory
- RC45 Open Oral Session on Advances in Rational Choice Research
- RC45 Open Poster Session on Advances in Rational

Choice Research  
Rational Choice and Social Capital  
Social Interactions and Social Inequalities  
Wellbeing in the Context of Rational Choice

The submission system opens April 25 and remains open till September 30, 2019 at <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2020/cfp.cgi>. Why don't you submit your own current research as well as encourage your students and colleagues? We try to maximize presenting opportunities of submitters. If you are not sure which session to send, consider open oral or poster sessions. They worked well in Toronto and Vienna.

My special thanks go to Wojtek Przepiorka, Hiroki Takikawa, Naoki Sudo, Michael Maes, Masayuki Kanai, Yoshimichi Sato, Gianluca Manzo, and Carola Hommerich for organizing the fabulous sessions. Also to the board members (Masa, Rense, Michael, Christine, Gianluca, Naoki, and Tobias) for the discussion.

I understand that the venue is not very close to most of us. For me, it is almost the antipode on the globe. The Forum will, however, give you a good reason to visit such an unfamiliar place and experience its rich cultures.

Wojtek, following the previous issue, arranged another inspiring interview with Paula England. It highlights intertwined relationships of rationality, gender, and cultural norms as they pertain to labour markets in general and gender differences in labour market outcomes in particular.

**Interview: Paula England interviewed by Wojtek Przepiorka**



**WP:** Paula, you have, among other things, extensively studied the prevalence of the gender pay

gap over the last four decades. Despite increasing awareness of causes of gender inequality and efforts to close the gender pay gap, men still earn substantially more on average than women. Are men more rational than women?

**PE:** Is this SERIOUSLY a question you want me to answer? I will if you want but I can't imagine anyone would take it seriously.

**WP:** I had hoped that you would see my wink in this question. So here it is: ;o)

**PE:** OK, so I'll answer! First, economists, the purists of rational choice theory, certainly assume that both men and women are rational. For example, the economic theory of occupational sex segregation that I got tenure arguing against was by Polachek. He said that rational actors who plan intermittent labor force participation because they plan to leave employment for some years to be at home caring for kids will prefer jobs where the needed skills are not changing fast (e.g. from technological advances), because in such jobs those returning after several years will have obsolete skills and thus be paid less (economists tend to assume pay goes with productivity). Other economists said that a rational person planning intermittent employment will choose a job that has high starting wages even if that means giving up a steeper wage trajectory, since they may not stay long enough to benefit from the steep trajectory. The argument was thus that which jobs are optimal in terms of lifetime earnings differ for those planning intermittent paid work; since it is mostly women planning intermittent work, this might explain occupational sex segregation. One could critique this theory by saying that few women or men have enough information about wage trajectories of potential careers to base a decision on, and indeed in recent decades rational choice theorists have enriched their theories to deal with imperfect information. One could also critique the theory by saying that it seems to require calculation skills way above those of the average person (e.g. how much higher does the starting salary have to be to make up for what %/year lower wage trajectory); this is essentially saying the average person isn't rational enough to get these calculations right. While I believed both of these critiques, my approach was

different—I just showed that the predictions didn't fit the data: net of other things, compared to women in male-dominated jobs, women in jobs with a higher percent female don't have lower penalties for years out of the labor force, and don't have higher starting wages. That could be because segregation was really from discrimination, from gender socialization, or because women didn't have the rationality or information required by the theory. (I suspect it is some of each.) But, yes, I would say that rational choice theorists in either economics or sociology assume everybody is rational.

**WP:** Maybe women maximize something else than men. Are there any indications for that in your research?

**PE:** Regarding occupations and pay, what we do know is this: Compared to men, women are in jobs that pay less relative to their educational demands. What does this and other evidence tell us about whether men and women are maximizing in the service of different goals (or, as economists would say, utility functions)? The lower pay of jobs numerically dominated by women could mean that women are more willing (than men) to give up money to get the kinds of jobs they find interesting or meaningful, perhaps because of a greater cultural pressure on men to be breadwinners. There is probably some truth to this. It is also possible that men and women are approximately equally willing to trade off money for interest or meaning, but they have different—gendered—preferences or values about what is interesting and meaningful. For example, many women choose a job like social work because they value helping people. But I think those making these arguments (economists call it the theory of compensating differentials) ignore the extent to which many men would give up some income not to be in a job that is culturally seen as “feminine” because they see that as stigmatizing. If women and men prioritize nonmonetary values just as much, although those values differ, then we'd need a different explanation for why female-dominated jobs pay less. A lot of my work over several decades argued, based on somewhat indirect evidence, that employers engage in a form of gender bias when they set wage bands for occupations; they respond to the sex composition of a job, showing a

cultural devaluation of female occupations because of their association with women. This, I believe, is a big factor in why female jobs pay less than you would expect them to do from their educational and other demands. In short, I think women and men do maximize in the service of somewhat different (but overlapping) values. While many rational choice theorists treat preferences as exogenous and unchanging, this is quite unsociological, and if preferences are gendered, we should look for the sources of these differences. However, I also believe that different preferences on the supply side of labor markets don't necessarily lead to the pay gaps we observe. The broad cultural devaluation of anything associated with women, including "their" occupations, and the influence of this on employers' wage setting choices, is also a big factor in my view.

Paula England is Silver Professor of Sociology at NYU New York and is an affiliated faculty member at NYUAD. One branch of England's research concerns gender inequality at work and at home; she has written on the sex gap in pay, occupational segregation, how couples divide housework, and the wage penalty for motherhood. Her more recent work deals with changing family patterns in the U.S. and how they differ by social class. She studies the higher rates of unintended births among disadvantaged single young adults. She is also studying changes in sexual behavior among youth and young adults. England was President of the American Sociological Association in 2014-15 and was editor of the *American Sociological Review* in 1994-96.

The interview was conducted via e-mail between March 23 and July 6, 2019.

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### Recent Publications of Interest

#### Articles:

- Diekmann, Andreas and Wojtek Przepiorka. 2019. "Trust and Reputation in Markets." Pp. 383-400 in *The Oxford Handbook of Gossip and Reputation*, edited by F. Giardini and R. Wittek. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2018. "Frail Democracy." Pp. 47-60 in *Militant Democracy: Political Science, Law and Philosophy*, edited by Afshin Ellian and Bastiaan Rijpkema. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Gambetta, Diego and Wojtek Przepiorka. 2019.

"Sharing Compromising Information as a Cooperative Strategy." *Sociological Science* 6:352-79.

- Jasso, Guillermina, Robert Shelly, and Murray Webster. 2019. "How Impartial Are the Observers of Justice Theory?" *Social Science Research* 79:226-246.
- Kley, S. and S. Drobnic. 2019. "Does Moving for Family Nest-Building Inhibit Mothers' Labour Force (Re-)entry?" *Demographic Research* 40: 155-184. DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2019.40.7
- Nisic, S. and S. Kley. 2019. "Gender-Specific Effects of Commuting and Relocation on a Couple's Social Life." *Demographic Research* 40: 1047-1062. DOI: 10.4054/Demres.2019.14.36
- Reed, Isaac Ariail. 2019. "Performative State-formation in the Early American Republic." *American Sociological Review* 84(2): 334-367.

#### Books:

- Giardini, Francesca and Rafael Wittek (Eds.). 2019. *The Oxford Handbook of Gossip and Reputation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press



#### Abstract

Reputations can make or break citizens, communities, or companies. Reputations matter for individual careers, for one's chances of finding a partner, for a profession's credibility, or for the value of a firm's stock options – to name but a few. The key mechanism for the creation, maintenance,

and destruction of reputations in everyday life is gossip – evaluative talk about absent third parties. Reputation and gossip are inseparably intertwined, but up until now have been mostly studied in isolation. The present Handbook closes this gap, drawing on cutting edge insights from a multitude of disciplines, ranging from psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology and economics to philosophy, neurobiology and computer science. Being the first integrated and comprehensive collection of studies on both phenomena, each of the 25 chapters explores the current state of the art on the antecedents, processes and outcomes of the gossip-reputation link in contexts as diverse as online markets, non-industrial societies, modern firms, social networks, or schools. The volume is organized into seven parts, each of them devoted to the exploration of a different facet of gossip and reputation. Highly international in scope, the volume brings together some of the most eminent experts on gossip and reputation. Their contributions do not only help us to better understand the complex interplay between two of society’s most delicate social mechanisms. By pointing to new problems and a newly emerging cross-disciplinary solutions, the book also sketches the contours of a long term research agenda.

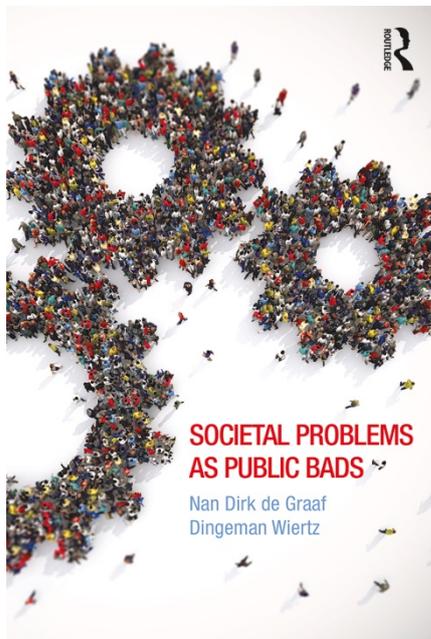
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de Graaf, Nan Dirk and Dingeman Wiertz. 2019. *Societal Problems as Public Bads*. London: Routledge



### Abstract

Corruption, crime, economic inequality, religious fundamentalism, financial crises, environmental degradation, population ageing, gender inequality, large-scale migration... This book tackles many of the most pressing problems facing societies today. The authors demonstrate that similar social mechanisms lie behind many of these seemingly disparate problems. Indeed, many societal problems can be traced back to behaviours that are perfectly rational and often well-intended from an individual perspective. Yet, taken together these behaviours can – paradoxically – give rise to unintended and undesirable outcomes at the society level.

In addition to addressing the causes of societal problems, the book explains why some problems rank higher on the public agenda than others. Moreover, it is shown how government intervention may sometimes provide a cure, yet other times exacerbate existing problems or create new problems of its own. This book includes an extensive amount of data on trends and geographic variation in the prevalence of different problems, as

well as telling examples – both recent and historical – from a variety of countries to support its key arguments.

Employing a bold multidisciplinary approach, the authors draw on insights from across the social sciences, including sociology, economics, anthropology, criminology, and psychology. Throughout the book, students are introduced to analytical concepts such as free-riding, herding behaviour, principal-agent relations and moral hazard. These concepts are essential tools for better understanding the roots of many societal problems that regularly make headlines in the news. This improved understanding will, in turn, be critical for ultimately finding solutions to these problems.

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### Editors' note

Let's celebrate Rational Choice Sociology. Have a great summer! (Wojtek and Masa)



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