

# The AGORA

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

Winter/Spring 2013

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[sites.google.com/site/rationalityandsocietysection/home](http://sites.google.com/site/rationalityandsocietysection/home)

## The Best Graduate Student Paper Award for 2012

The award went to Matthew D. Hoffberg of Cornell University. The title was “Prosocial Values, Reciprocity, and the Mediating Role of Perceived Motives in Direct Favor Exchange.” Congratulations!

## COMMITTEE

Karen Hegtveldt (Emory University), Chair

David Willer (University of South Carolina)

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## COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIR

This paper nicely identifies a gap in the literature and provides an alternative mechanism to account for a well-known relationship between prosocial values and reciprocity. As such, this paper has the potential to make an important contribution. Although the use of vignettes lowers the validity of the results, the cross-cultural data enhances generalizability to some extent. In future revisions of the paper, you should describe the measures more clearly and provide reliabilities. Plus, use of moderated mediation models in combination with SEM might counter critics who find the Baron and Kenny method outdated. Models may also be streamlined to first include background variables, then trust and task interdependence, followed by prosocial values in block 2, altruism in bloc 3, and then the interactions with perceived motives. Importantly, given that the data are self-reported, your discussion should consider whether the ordering of the variables is the only possible

ordering. Respondents might first determine if they want to reciprocate and then, based on their tendency to reciprocate, determine their answers to altruism and prosocial values. Additionally, you may need to consider whether prosocials, who are motivated to send favors because they expect reciprocation of favors, are acting in a prosocial manner when they project their prosociality on to others.

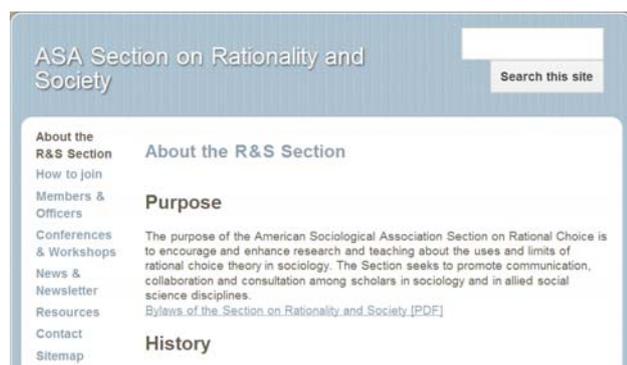
The James Coleman Award for Outstanding Article or Book award was not given.

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### New Webpage of the Section

Jacob Dijkstra, University of Groningen, launched a new webpage of the section at <https://sites.google.com/site/rationalityandsocietysection/>.

It contains information on section's purpose, how to join, members & officers, conferences & workshops, news & newsletters, and other resources. Thanks, Jacob!



### Preconference at ASA New York

Chair Rafael Wittek is preparing for a preconference of the Rationality and Society Section as follows. By now, 11 papers are supposed to be presented. Be sure to mark the schedule.

Date: August 9, 2013

Time: 9:00am-5:00pm

Venue: Hilton New York Midtown - Sutton South

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### Member Portrait: Hiroki Takikawa

Hiroki received PhD in sociology at the University of Tokyo. Now he is an Assistant Professor in International Advanced Research and Education



Organization at Tohoku University, Japan. His research interests are in mathematical sociology, social inequality, social capital, and social network analysis.

Currently he is working on mathematical models of social status hierarchy. His aim is to explicate how status orders among individuals emerge. Using game theory, he tries to show that status hierarchy emerges as a result of individual rational choices. The originality is that a status order is determined not dyadically but by the behavior of the whole system, that is, the behaviors of all involved players.

In another research project, he investigates determinants of social capital among elderly people in Japan, based on survey data. The question here is how life course events (re)structure social capital and to what extent the factors in the early life stage or even before birth affects social capital of elderly people. He adopted multiple measurements, such as position generator, resource generator, and the number of civic activity. This enables him to compare the structural characteristics among different dimensions of social capital.

He also starts a research project to examine adolescent friendship networks based on the whole network data. Specifically, he tries to explicate the mechanism of social influence related to social status hierarchy, using statistical methods such as ergm and stochastic actor-based model.



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From the President`s Desk

Hanno Scholtz

Dear RC45 members

May is a great time in many parts of the world, with flowers and flourishing all around in the nature and beyond, and I hope, it is so in yours and among all term duties you find some time



to enjoy it! In all parts of the world, May is a time of teaching when these duties reach a peak and many of us moan under the burden of students`s and colleagues demands in teaching and research. At last, in the Northern Hemisphere, May is the time when the summer break with its conferences comes into sight. This latter perspective is especially agreeable for us since we are looking forward to two meetings in the next two summers which have made considerable progress in the last weeks: Torino and Yokohama.

The summer school in coming August in Torino which will bring together some RC members with Italian colleagues and a selection of talented Ph.D. candidates who use Rational Choice theory in their theses. You all have received an invitation with the request either to apply for yourselves or to forward – thanks to all who did and thumbs pressed if you have applied for it. And thanks to Antonio Chiesi and his colleagues who make this possible!

Next summer many of us will meet at the next ISA world congress in Yokohama. The call for papers is included in this newsletter. We have been successful in arranging a high quality program and hope that many of you will find it worthwhile to come to Yokohama. Many thanks to all those who are willing to

engage as session organizers!

Looking ahead to the Yokohama meeting at the same time implies to put into perspective that we will elect a new board there, including a new president, secretary-treasurer, and newsletter editor. And this brings me back to the first and second aspects of May: If you want to let some ideas flourish, think of doing a service to the community by contributing to the work of our RC.

It is an addition to the work load we all bear, and it remains to be a challenge: Rational Choice theory has left the start-up situation of being a nested, innovative camp of conspiring pioneers. Today, Rational Choice theory is used everywhere, and many user find it more rewarding to search community in the fields of their applications. However, Rational Choice theory is still a toolbox which allows for fascinating links between different parts of sociology, and some of our topics are still unique. Hence, Rational Choice theory is still a rewarding field not only for application but also for enhancements. Think of adding to our committee in the 2014-18 term!

All the best for surviving the term-end and a productive summer.

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Call: Sociology and Political Science in Dialogue (due May 31)

RC45 sponsors an international workshop as follows. See the attached CFP for details.

Name: Sociology and Political Science in Dialogue on Rational Choice Theory and Applications

Date: September 19-21, 2013

Venue: Collegio Carlo Alberto, Turin, Italy

Application deadline: May 31, 2013



XVIII ISA WORLD CONGRESS  
OF SOCIOLOGY  
FACING AN UNEQUAL WORLD:  
CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY



13-19 July 2014

Call: World Congress in Yokohama 2014 (due September 30)

The next world congress of ISA will be held in 2014 as follows. See the attached CFP and <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/rc/rc.php?n=RC45> for details. This should be a great chance to exchange your ideas with researchers around the world.

Name: ISA World Congress of Sociology

Date: July 13-19, 2014

Venue: Pacifico Yokohama, Yokohama, Japan

Application deadline: September 30, 2013

President Hanno Scholtz proposed the following nine sessions for RC 45 (organizers in parentheses).

- 1 Attitudes and Rationality (Antonio M. Jaime Castillo)
- 2 Current Research in Rational Choice Theory (Hanno Scholtz)

3/4 Institutional Change in Times of Crisis: Rational Choices in Historical Sociology Part 1/2 (Hanno Scholtz)

5 Intimate Relations (Jun Kobayashi)

6 Rational Action and Trust (Antonio M. Chiesi)

7 Rational Choice and Network Dynamics (Masayuki Kanai)

8 Relationalism, Rationality, and Embedded Institutions (Kazuto Misumi)

9 Social Capital and Rational Choice Theory

(Yoshimichi Sato, Rafael Wittek)

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### Members Information

Stéphanie Cassilde became a researcher at Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable at Charleroi, Belgium from March 1, 2013.

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### Editors' note

From this issue, Jun Kobayashi takes responsibility of publishing The Agora. He thanks coeditor Jane for her many years' contributions of editing it. If you have any information to be shared with us, do not hesitate to send it to the editors!



Jane Sell

[j-sell@tamu.edu](mailto:j-sell@tamu.edu)



Jun Kobayashi

[jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp](mailto:jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp)



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Collegio Carlo Alberto

# International workshop Sociology and Political Science in dialogue on Rational Choice Theory and Applications

*Sponsored by the International Sociological Association (RC45)*

September the 19<sup>th</sup> – the 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013

Collegio Carlo Alberto  
Via Real Collegio 30, Moncalieri (Turin), Italy

Rational Actor approaches have enjoyed increasing interest both in sociology and in political science, thanks to recent theoretical and empirical developments. Experimental research has been largely encouraged by this approach and common theoretical perspectives have been shared in different disciplines of human behaviour and decision making. At the same time the concept of rationality has evolved in order to adhere to actual decisions of individual people, groups and collective behaviour. Models of rational actor have become softer and more complex. Relations between instrumental rationality and sentiments, selfishness and altruism, game theoretic assumption and cultural conditions have been experimentally checked, often bringing counter intuitive and even paradoxical results.

The aim of the conference is that of making scholars of both disciplines meet and discuss their approaches with the idea that a comparison between sociology and political science on the advancement of cutting edge research activities can open new perspectives, suggest future research and be of mutual benefit for both.

The international workshop is devoted to PhD students and young researchers.

## Organization of the workshop

1. Thursday, September the 19<sup>th</sup> evening, welcome dinner.
2. Friday, September the 20<sup>th</sup> morning, opening session with a double presentation:  
**Hanno Scholtz** (University of Konstanz, Chairman of the ISA RC45 on Rational Choice)  
**Iain McLean** (Nuffield College, University of Oxford, Professor of Political Science)  
Discussion of the presentations.
3. Friday, September the 20<sup>th</sup> afternoon, presentation of six selected papers (20 minutes each) and discussion (15 minutes each) with appointed discussants.
4. Saturday, September the 21<sup>st</sup> morning, presentation of five selected papers (20 minutes each) and discussion (15 minutes each) with appointed discussants.

Papers of sections 3 and 4 will be collected through a public call and selected by a panel of sociologists and political scientists within the ISA Research Committee n. 45.

Each paper is distributed in advance to the appointed discussant and copies are made available to all participants.

Discussants: Filippo Barbera (University of Turin, Italy), Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo (University of Malaga, Spain), Antonio Chiesi (University of Milan, Italy), Fabio Franchino (University of Milan, Italy), Iain McLean (University of Oxford, England), Hanno Scholtz (University of Konstanz, Switzerland).

## Application

Applications should be addressed to Dr. Paola Ghione (workshop.dss@unito.it) by May 31<sup>th</sup>.

Participants are asked to present a paper theoretical or empirical and will be selected according to:

1. the quality of their paper abstract (up to 500 words);
2. a brief CV (one page).

Notice of acceptance will be given by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Up to 12 participants will be admitted.

The workshop fee is 150 euro, which covers access to the workshop, coffee breaks and lunches, and accommodation in Turin. ISA members are exempted from fees.

Contributions to travel expenses are available for candidates from countries of cat. B and C of ISA.

## Organizing Committee

Filippo Barbera (University of Turin, Italy), Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo (University of Malaga, Spain), Antonio Chiesi (University of Milan, Italy), Fabio Franchino (University of Milan, Italy), Yoshimichi Sato (Tohoku University, Japan), Hanno Scholtz (University of Konstanz, Switzerland), Rafael Wittek (University of Groningen, The Netherlands).

This initiative is part of the project NASP-West (Network for the Advancement of Social and Political Studies in North-West Italy)

With the support of



Info at: [http://www.graduateschool.unimi.it/workshop\\_rcta\\_2013.html](http://www.graduateschool.unimi.it/workshop_rcta_2013.html)



# XVIII ISA WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY

FACING AN UNEQUAL WORLD:  
CHALLENGES FOR GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

13-19 July 2014

横浜  
YOKOHAMA



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## Research Committee on Rational Choice, RC45

### Program Coordinator

Hanno SCHOLTZ, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, [hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch](mailto:hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch)

### On-line abstracts submission

June 3, 2013 - September 30, 2013 24:00 GMT.

All sessions are in English. If you have questions about any specific session, please feel free to contact the Session Organizer for more information.

### Attitudes and Rationality

Session Organizer

Antonio M. JAIME CASTILLO, Universidad de Málaga, Spain, [amjaime@uma.es](mailto:amjaime@uma.es)

For long, the study of attitudes and values has been seen in a tension with a Rational Choice perspective: Critics of Rational Choice Theory argued that starting from interests and goals would pay no attention to values and attitudes, and indeed some economists and early Rational Choice theorists openly denied that values and attitudes are more than an incomplete mirroring of preferences which are better revealed through factual deeds. However, in recent sociological practice, Rational Choice theory and the study of values and attitudes are used in a much more reflected and hence much more productive way. Many Rational Choice models have been tested using survey data that measure attitudes and values producing a better understanding of the relationship between attitudes and preferences. The session is intended to give room for studies which combine these two aspects. The main goal is to integrate different approaches of empirical practice, but papers of theoretical or meta-analytic review are likewise welcome.

### Current Research in Rational Choice Theory. Part I

Session Organizer

Hanno SCHOLTZ, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, [hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch](mailto:hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch)

### Current Research in Rational Choice Theory. Part II

Session Organizer

Hanno SCHOLTZ, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, [hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch](mailto:hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch)

### Institutional Change in Times of Crisis: Rational Choices in Historical Sociology

Session Organizer

Hanno SCHOLTZ, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, [hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch](mailto:hanno.scholtz@unifr.ch)

In recent years, an actor-oriented understanding of historical processes has become a central toolkit of historical sociology. The identification of actors and their situations and resulting choices has been used to clarify both institutional paths in specific societies and the dynamics of institutional differentiation between societies as well as general aspects in the development of societies, and both in the understanding of historical processes and of current developments. In the recent phase of social development in which notions of „crisis“ are abound, these perspectives have the potential to be useful toolkits to understand current situations of social development with its chances, its retardations, and its perspectives. The session invites papers that use actor-oriented models to study macro-social processes of historical change, both in the present and in the past, with their micro-level underlying foundations.

### **Intimate Relations**

Session Organizer

Jun KOBAYASHI, Seikei University, Japan, jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp

This session focuses on intimate relationships, such as the family, the couple, love, and emotional attachment. Anthony Giddens argued that modern industrial societies have transformed traditional fixed intimacies into personal and thereby flexible ones. This should be the case especially in the era of globalization. One of the pioneering examples of Rational Choice sociology was the increase in divorce, resulting in changing roles of women and men. More recently we have observed increasing acceptance of homosexuality, nonmarital birth, and patchwork families. These relationships are in many respects similar to traditional families, but in other aspects different from them. The structure within intimate relationships depends on the distribution of resources as human capital, social capital, or cultural capital. All together, the sociology of intimate relationships is full of choice-oriented questions which shall be combined in this session. Theoretical and empirical papers are likewise welcome. Topics may include (but not limited to): cohabitation, international marriage, divorce, sexual division of labor, household work, declining birth rates, aging, care, sexuality, social stratification, and welfare states.

### **Rational Action and Trust**

Session Organizer

Antonio M. CHIESI, University of Milano, Italy, antonio.chiesi@unimi.it

The centrality of trust and reputation as well as trustworthiness in social relations has played an important role in traditional societies but has still a central function, which is even increasing in complex societies and global life. Trust and trustworthiness have long challenged rational action theory, because they imply emotional involvement and cannot be analysed only in terms of risk taking, i.e. estimating the chance of being betrayed. The recent interest in these issues has developed different levels of analysis (i.e. the distinction between interpersonal and generalized trust), different implications for adjacent fields (i.e. the study of social capital), and different technical tools (i.e. theoretical studies on conceptual clarification, ethnographical observation, game-theory applications, experiments, traditional survey approaches). The aim of the session is to gather different approaches to this issue and discuss the state of the art in the field. Both theoretical and empirical papers are welcome, as well as qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### **Rational Choice and Network Dynamics**

Session Organizer

Masayuki KANAI, Senshu University, Japan, mkanai@senshu-u.jp

The understanding of network dynamics has improved through a variety of methodological developments such as the stochastic actor-based model among others. As all models, these make specific assumptions on individual actions. How are these assumptions related to the traditional concept of rationality? This currently

understudied question is the main focus of this session which welcomes both theoretical and empirical papers including simulation studies. Especially invited are papers that challenge this issue from the perspective of the links between micro and macro level.

### **Relationalism, Rationality, and Embedded Institutions**

Session Organizer

Kazuto MISUMI, Kyushu University, Japan, kmisumi@scs.kyushu-u.ac.jp

In modern society most of social institutions are rationally designed (in a bureaucratic way); at the same time, they are inherently embedded in social structures to some degrees. As Putnam suggests, performance of social institutions might be efficiently enhanced by social structures (trust and norm of general reciprocity) surrounding the institutions. In a sense, embeddedness is a necessary factor to be considered when rationally designing social institutions. On the other hand, as Burt suggests, an embedded institution often produces unfair results because social networks within and surrounding it should have structural holes. If fairness or equality is a significant element, the influences by embeddedness must be carefully controlled when designing and managing social institutions. Specifically in those East Asian countries that commonly share relationalism, this paradoxical issue is significant because the default level of embeddedness should be deeper than other countries. In this session, by focusing on relationalism (or East Asian countries) in wider comparative perspectives, we explore a unique model of embedded institutions in that social structures are congruent with rationality. Theoretical approach, case study, and survey research are welcome; however, it is expected that discussions will refer to concrete institutional problems.

### **Social Capital and Rational Choice Theory**

Session Organizers

Yoshimichi SATO, Tohoku University, Japan, ysato@sal.tohoku.ac.jp

Rafael WITTEK, Groningen University, Netherlands, r.p.m.wittek@rug.nl

Social capital has been popular in social sciences, but it has also been criticized for its conceptual ambiguity. Rational choice theory can contribute to solving this problem by exploring how something social such as social networks is converted into social "capital." The session invites papers that study this conversion process as well as rational choice of social capital. Other topics about social capital and rational choice such as the study of the interaction of social capital at different levels (individual, meso, and macro levels), the analysis of the relationship between negative social capital and actors, and the study of social capital and reputation management are also intriguing. Both of empirical and theoretical papers are welcome.