
Organizations, Occupations, and Work

American Sociological Association
Fall 2003 Section Newsletter

Webpage: <http://www.northpark.edu/acad/soc/oow/>

OOW CONTACTS

2003-04 Chair

Don Tomaskovic-Devey, North Carolina State University
don_tomaskovic-devey@ncsu.edu

2003-04 Council Members

William P. Bridges, wbridges@uic.edu

Frank Dobbin (Chair-Elect), Frank_Dobbin@harvard.edu

Roberto M. Fernandez, robertof@mit.edu

Heather A. Haveman, hah15@columbia.edu

Jerry A. Jacobs (Past Chair), jjacobs@sas.upenn.edu

Leslie McCall, lmccall@rci.rutgers.edu

Christena Nippert-Eng, nippert@charlie.cns.iit.edu

Steven Vallas (Secretary/Treasurer), svallas@gmu.edu

Christine L. Williams, clw@la.utexas.edu

Web Coordinator

Frank Steinhart, North Park University
fsteinhart@northpark.edu

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V ð DO YOU HAVE NEWS? V ð

We welcome your news items, paper announcements, publication notices, and other materials of interest. Please send submissions to the current OOW Chair:

Donald Tomaskovic-Devey,
North Carolina State University
don-tomaskovic-devey@ncsu.edu

From the Chair

It is an honor and a privilege to be able to serve the OOW this year as Section Chair. I want to thank Jerry Jacobs for his fine work with the section last year and hope all who made it to Atlanta this past August enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of the ASA meeting and the OOW program. In this issue of the Newsletter we list the sessions planned for the 2004 ASA annual meeting in San Francisco. Of course, there will be many more OOW oriented sessions offered through the regular program committee and sections with overlapping intellectual interests to our own.

OOW is the size of many independent professional organizations. As such it runs the risk of being too broad for people to see as their intellectual home. The recent formation of new sections in economic sociology and sociology of the labor movement may reflect the need for more intimate interactions in fields that were once under the OOW umbrella. Sometimes fields need focused conversations to advance. When I look at OOW I see fairly distinct but certainly complementary intellectual traditions in the areas of work, organizations, and stratification. In this way we are not unlike social psychology which also contains three sub-areas; symbolic interactionism, status expectation, and structural social psychology.

Although it might seem a little old fashioned, I am a big believer in the need for coherent disciplinary discourse. I hope to start a conversation this year on our points of intellectual agreement. Anyone interested in participating in such a dialog in this newsletter should send me an email – or an essay!

We have the good fortune of including in this issue an interview with Bill Bielby, the immediate past president of the American Sociological Association. Bill's work has been very important to the intellectual and professional development of many people in this section. I count him among the scholars who have most influenced my own work. He is also a genuinely nice person, we thank him for this contribution to the newsletter.

Sincerely,

Donald Tomaskovic-Devey

North Carolina State University

A conversation with ASA President William T. Bielby

Few scholars manage to change the direction of scholarship in their field by staking out new and critical questions and then pursuing those questions with a research agenda that challenges the status quo. William T. Bielby has done just that during his career studying organizations and inequality in employment outcomes. His article, "Bringing the Firm Back In," with James Baron has become a classic in organizational studies. Equally important to the literature on gender discrimination, is his work with Denise Bielby. Bielby is regularly cited in disciplines aside from sociology such as social psychology and economics. For the last several years, he has been involved in an unusual enterprise, providing expert testimony in race/gender discrimination cases. The OOW newsletter is pleased to present this conversation with ASA President William Bielby organized by Lisa Torres (UC-Irvine)

OOW: Let's begin with a quick overview of your career. How do you characterize your work as a sociologist? What problems or questions have been important to you?

Bielby: One nice thing about our discipline is that we have the freedom to reinvent ourselves as our interests shift. My motivation to become a sociologist was an interest in inequality, and this is a theme that runs through almost all the work I've done since graduate school days. And, of course, the work I've done that's been most influential is on how organizations shape inequality in career outcomes. Even my more recent work on media and popular culture largely concerns issues of inequality.

OOW: I'm not sure if most members know that you've been an expert witness in race/gender discrimination cases, including several class actions suits that have received a great deal of public attention. Do you think of your legal work as a bridge between scholarly research and that of lived experience?

Bielby: My first experience was in 1990-91, in a large gender class action case against Lucky Stores in California that actually went to trial (most class action cases settle). The biggest and most complex case was Home Depot in the late 1990s, and overall I've been involved in several dozen race and gender class action cases in a number of industries. Outside of a litigation context, a sociologist would never be able to gain access to a large corporation's personnel records, written policies, internal surveys, and testimony, taken under oath, by the individuals responsible for designing and implementing personnel policy. It's been a

tremendous "reality test" for the stories sociologists often make up about what's going on inside of organizations, when the closest we can come to systematic quantitative organizational data is the limited information available from studies like the NOS or MCSUI.

OOW: How did you get your first case?

Bielby: By accident. Barbara Reskin was contacted and was not able to work on the Stender v. Lucky Stores case, and she gave the attorneys my name. They read a little bit of my work on gender segregation and decided that my research might indeed be relevant to their case. The fact that plaintiffs won at trial and the judge cited my testimony in her written opinion meant that other attorneys with similar cases quickly found out about what I had done to apply the results of social science research in a litigation context. This was also about the same time that psychologist Susan Fiske's testimony about gender stereotyping was endorsed in a Supreme Court decision. Since then, it has become quite common for organizational sociologists to consult as experts in discrimination litigation, although, surprisingly many sociologists with relevant expertise are reluctant to do so. One reason might be that the challenges to sociologists' testimony by the other side's experts have also become more sophisticated and intense.

OOW: In what ways has your legal work influenced your research or vice versa?

Bielby: I think many people who have never been involved as experts believe that it distracts from your scholarly work and compromises your objectivity. I've found just the opposite. In order to withstand an intense cross-examination, the expert has to be on top of all the relevant research in her or his field and related fields, and you always know that any opinion you express is a written report or at trial is likely to be scrutinized by opposing experts much more closely than even the most demanding ASR reviewer.

OOW: Do you get any reactions or comments from colleagues about your venture into the courtroom?

Bielby: Not too much. Mostly they ask about my band.

OOW: Going back to the idea of bridging academic research and the outside world, sociology hasn't been as successful as other disciplines in informing the public's understanding of social issues. The media routinely draws upon the research of economists, psychologists, and anthropologists when reporting on issues that sociologists

have a lot to say about. Why aren't sociologists on more reporters' rolodexes?

Bielby: I'm not sure academic psychologists or anthropologists are any more effective than we are. It's the economists who monopolize the public discourse, for reasons that Nelson and Bridges identified in *Legalizing Gender Inequality*--they have a succinct story to tell that resonates so well with the ideology of individualism in the U.S. And, of course, unlike sociologists, the vast majority of economists subscribe to exactly the same story about how economic (and increasingly, social) outcomes are generated.

OOW: What research projects are you working on right now?

Bielby: My big project right now is on the first generation of home-grown rock 'n roll bands of the immediate post-Elvis era. I'm interviewing musicians and others who were part of the music scene in the racially-mixed but hyper-segregated south suburbs of Chicago in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Mostly, I'm interested in how some teenagers were able to put together the concept of a "garage band" long before there was a model for doing so. I'm also working with Denise [Bielby] on a project about critics and criticism in popular culture. One project that is bringing together my expert witness work and my academic interests in organizational inequality is some research on the emergence of employment practice liability insurance and the move by corporate "risk managers" to define their role as key to organizational strategy rather than as a "back office" operation dealing with "shrinkage control" and "slip and fall" lawsuits.

OOW: Do you have any suggestions for OOW members as they think about their research?

Bielby: Student members should work hard on finishing their dissertations.

OOW: Always solid advice. Thank you.

Have a comment or suggestion for the newsletter?
Send it to Don Tomaskovic-Devey at don_tomaskovic-devey@ncsu.edu

OOW 2004 Call for Council Nominations

The nominations committee is soliciting nominations for section chair, secretary-treasurer and council members. If you would like to serve or know someone who should please send the nomination to the committee chair Peter Meiksens (p.meiksins@csuohio.edu), or to members Joyce Tang (jtang@qc.edu), Paul Hirsch (paulhirsch@northwester.edu).

OOW 2004 Call for Award Nominations

The Organizations, Occupations, and Work section invites nominations for its three annual competitions - the Max Weber Award, for best book published in the last three years; the W. Richard Scott Award, for best paper published in the last three years; and the James Thompson Award, for best paper by a graduate student. This award includes a cash prize.

Please send a letter of nomination, a copy of the work to be considered, and nominee contact information to the appropriate committee below. Nominations can be submitted by the author/s or by section members. Each committee has specific mailing instructions, so please read them carefully.

The 2003 Max Weber Award

The Weber Award is for an outstanding book published over the past three years. The nomination deadline is March 31, 2004. The selection committee for 2004 is

Jennifer Pierce, Chair, Department of Sociology, 909 Social Sciences Bldg, University of Minnesota, 267 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, pierc012@tc.umn.edu

Harland Prechel, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-43, h-prechel@neo.tamu.edu

Lisa Keister, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University, 313 Bricker Hall, 190 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210, keister.7@sociology.osu.edu

The 2003 W. Richard Scott Award

The W. Richard Scott Award for Distinguished Scholarship is granted for an outstanding contribution to the discipline in an article published within the last three years. The deadline for nominations is March 31, 2004. The selection committee this year consists of:

Miller McPherson, Chair

Department of Sociology, Duke University, Durham, NC
27708-0088, mcperson@soc.duke.edu

Mauro F. Guillen

The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 2016
Steinberg Hall-Dietrich Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6370

Guillen@wharton.upenn.edu

Sandra Harding

Faculty of Business, Queensland University of Technology
Gardens Point, PO Box 2434, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001,
Australia, s.harding@qut.edu.au

The 2003 James Thompson Award

The James A. Thompson Award is given for an outstanding graduate student paper written in the three years prior to the award. The winner gets \$500 for travel to a professional meeting and serves as a representative to the Section Council in the coming year. The nomination deadline is March 31, 2004. This year's Award Committee is

Catherine Zimmer, Chair, Odum Institute for Research in
Social Science, 22 Manning Hall, UNC-Chapel Hill, Chapel
Hill, NC 27599, cathy_zimmer@unc.edu

Julie Kmec, Department of Sociology, Washington State
University, Pullman WA 99164-4020, jkmec@wsu.edu

Christopher Marquis, Department of Sociology, 1225
South University Avenue, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor,
MI 48104-2590, marquisc@umich.edu

OOW Sessions -2004 San Francisco

In 2004, the OOW will offer four regular sessions and one roundtable presentation at the Atlanta meeting. Three of the sessions share an explicit theme of organizational dynamics. To submit a paper for one of these sessions, please consult the ASA website for instructions: <http://www.asanet.org>

1. Educational work and educational organizations, (Joint Session with Sociology of Education), Richard Ingersoll, rmi@gse.upenn.edu
2. The impact of economic change on organizations, occupations or work, (Joint Session with Economic Sociology), Arne Kalleberg, arnekal@email.unc.edu
3. Organizational and occupational change processes, Jim Baron, Stanford, baron_james@gsb.stanford.edu
4. Labor market and labor process dynamics, Vicki Smith, vasmith@ucdavis.edu,
5. "Organizations, Occupations, and Work Roundtables", Sheryl Skaggs, skskaggs@utdallas.edu AND Debra McBrier, dmcbrier@uta.edu.

Advice on Surviving the Job Talk – Lisa Torres & Heather Haveman following Woody Beck

Interviewing is nerve-racking, even if you've done it before. Here are the ten most common mistakes according to E.M. Beck, that everyone should keep in mind when giving a talk.

Ten Most Common Job Talk Mistakes

Being overly technical and complex

Presenting too many graphs and tables

Not distributing graphs & tables (when they could clarify your points)

Talking way too fast

Assuming your audience cares as much about your research as you do

Not giving enough background

Giving too much background

Talking too long

Reading your paper (Resist this crutch at all costs)

Trying to "wing it" (Admit it. It never works)

Now, Some Suggestions

Design your talk as if you were presenting your research to smart people you know outside your field.

Choose 1 or 2 points that are really important and hit them again & again

Start and end your talk by telling the audience what your research is all about--why it matters

Keep it short: 35-40 minutes for 1.5 hour time slot is plenty

Remember, your technical competence is not on the line---just your ability to explain.

Practice, practice, practice

And the most important suggestion of all: Keep it simple and never inflict yourself on your audience!

2003 Section Award Winners

2003 Max Weber Award

Charles Perrow, 2002. *Organizing America: Wealth, Power, and the Origins of Corporate Capitalism*. Princeton University Press.

Organizing America, the remarkable new book by Charles Perrow, takes on one of the most profound questions in organizational sociology: the emergence, in the United States, of a system of corporate capitalism. As he points out, in the United States in 1800, only 20 percent of all employees worked for someone else and no one worked for an organization with more than 500 employees. Over the next 100 years, the large, privately held (and lightly regulated) corporation came to dominate the American economic landscape; today over half of all employees work for companies with more than 500 employees. Perrow reminds us that until quite recently the emergence and growth of the large corporation was a peculiarly American phenomenon--yet another dimension of American "exceptionalism" that characterizes so much of the social and economic history of the United States in the industrial era.

Why, he asks, did the United States witness the emergence of the large corporation and why did Americans, with their tradition of individualism and their historical mistrust of concentrated power, accept these corporate giants? Perrow's answer is that this tradition and this mistrust had the paradoxical effect of encouraging the formation of large *private* organizations. It was because Americans were deeply suspicious of the power of a strong centralized state that the federal government—in contrast to the national governments of European states—remained small, divided, and weak. A weak state meant that there was no countervailing power to rein in large economic organizations when they emerged, unlike in Europe where traditional elites and centralized governments held private economic power in check. Not only were economic organizations in the United States unfettered by state power but as their own power grew they were able to remove the remaining legal restrictions that might have thwarted their pre-eminence.

Much of the appeal of Perrow's analysis lies in his repeatedly demonstrating that there was nothing inevitable about the rise of corporate America. He shows, for

example, that the legal foundations of corporate status—namely, the principle of limited liability and the right of an organization to own property in its own name--were established well before economic units had any need to accumulate capital on the kind of scale that incorporation makes possible.

Even with the establishment of the legal foundation for corporate capitalism, its triumph was by no means a certainty. For much of the nineteenth century, there was a viable alternative: a network arrangement of small specialty firms like the Philadelphia textile manufacturers. These firms were both prosperous and innovative but they did not concentrate wealth and power as effectively as corporations did. In two superb chapters, the first analyzing why the United States was the only industrial society to develop a system of privately-owned and operated railroads with virtually no government regulation and the second examining why the railroads' corporate model became the dominant one in the USA, Perrow unleashes the full force of his argument. The corporate model was not inevitable nor did it arise from a desire for efficiency. Organizational interests, i.e., the pursuit of wealth and power by those who had established these organizations, drove the corporate form forward. Organizational interests used fair means and foul; as Perrow notes, it was corruption, not efficiency, that ensured the dominance of corporate capitalism.

This is a book that is truly Weberian in scope and analysis. It is a compelling display of intellectual scholarship that challenges every recent account of the rise of the corporation. I, for one, eagerly look forward to the next volume in Charles Perrow's extraordinary effort to rewrite the history of American capitalism.

The committee for the 2003 Weber Award included Ivar Berg (University of Pennsylvania), William Finlay (University of Georgia), Elaine Draper (CalState-LA), and Beth Rubin (UNC-Charlotte).

2003 W.R. Scott Award

Guler, Isin, Mauro F. Guillen and John Muir MacPherson 2002. "Global competition, institutions and the diffusion of organizational practices: The international spread of the ISO 9000 quality certificates." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 47: 207-232

This paper examines the way in which the global spread of a legitimating organizational practice, ISO 9000 certification of quality standards, is shaped by the national and cross-national context of adopting firms. The authors draw on neoinstitutional and network theories to offer hypotheses about the impact of core national-level characteristics, including the centrality of the state, the level of technical knowledge development, and economic ties to

other countries, on the rate at which firms in a country become ISO certified. They examine these hypotheses using a large comparative data set, containing information from 85 countries, spanning a six-year period. The authors show that adoption rates by firms in a given country are positively influenced by the economic dominance of the national government, higher levels of investment by foreign multinationals, strong cross-national trade ties to countries with high rates of certification, as well as rates of certification in countries with similar trade profiles. These influences are interpreted in terms of institutional theoretic concepts of coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism.

Although factors that influence the transference of organizational practices, policies and ideologies from firms in one country to another have been examined in a number of previous, comparative case studies, this study offers the most broad-based, systematic investigation of patterns of global diffusion to date. Because of the scale of their data set, the authors are able to examine the role of national and cross-national influences on adoption patterns in a more comprehensive way than extant studies. Moreover, the focus on this particular practice, ISO certification, offers insights into a classic sociological problematic, understanding the forces that drive the rationalization of modern organizations. This is a problem that neoinstitutional theory was developed to address, and the authors skillfully draw on this theoretical tradition, as well as on the complementary perspective of network analysis, in constructing a clear and persuasive explanation for variations in the spread of certification among countries. Thus, while there has been much discussion of and speculation about the process and impact of globalization, this study exemplifies the level of theoretical and empirical sophisticated investigation of the sources patterns of cross-national isomorphism that is required to significantly advance understanding of this phenomenon.

The 2002 Scott Award committee included Pam Tolbert (Cornell) Richard Hall (University of Albany), and Liz Gorman (University of Virginia)

2003 James Thompson Award

Christopher Marquis, University of Michigan. "The Pressure of the Past: Network Imprinting in Inter-Corporate Communities."

The James Thompson Award is presented to the best paper written by a graduate student. This year's award goes to Christopher Marquis. Mr. Marquis is a doctoral student in the departments of sociology and organizational behavior at the University of Michigan. He received his B.A. in history from Notre Dame and M.A. in History and MBA in

Finance from Pitt as well as M.A. in sociology from Michigan. Prior to coming Michigan, Mr. Marquis had also worked for six years in the financial services industry. Not only is he interested in the influence of history on society, but Mr. Marquis also has a longstanding interest in understanding community elites and social structures. The genesis of his paper, "The Pressure of the Past: Network Imprinting in Inter-Corporate Communities," arises from both personal interest and professional experience.

Mr. Marquis's paper builds on the imprinting hypothesis to shed light on the structure of contemporary interorganizational networks. Results of a creative analysis of organizational networks in 51 U.S. cities show that organizational character reflects the historical conditions at the time of establishment. History not only matters but it also has a lasting impact on the formation of local inter-corporate networks. This conclusion underscores the significance of historical influences on the social networks of corporate elites. This paper lays the groundwork for comparative studies of network connections in other nations. In short, Mr. Marquis's paper is a fascinating study of network connections and takes organizational theory to a new level blending theory with data.

The Committee for the 2003 James Thompson Award included Joyce Tang (Queens College/CUNY), Jeremy Reynolds (University of Georgia), and Eileen Lake (University of Pennsylvania).

Work and Occupations

Work and Occupations invites you to submit your manuscript for peer review and possible publication. Now in its 30th volume, *WO* is a scholarly, sociological quarterly that publishes original research in the sociology of work, employment, labor, and social inequality in the workplace, labor market, and labor force. Consult the latest issue of *WO* for manuscript formatting and submission instructions. Manuscripts will not be returned. Send three copies of your paper to: Daniel B. Cornfield, Editor, *Work and Occupations*, Box 1811, Station B, Department of Sociology, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37235. E-mail inquiries may be directed to the Editor at this address: daniel.b.cornfield@vanderbilt.edu