Conference Program

2013 Qualitative Social Science at Harvard Conference:
Directions in Knowledge Making from the Harvard Faculty

Organized by the Qualitative Social Science @ Harvard Faculty Project
http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/qualitative/home

Friday April 5, 2013

Lower Level Conference Room,
Center for European Studies, 27 Kirkland St., Cambridge MA 02138

8:30am: Breakfast

9:00am: Welcome

Michèle Lamont, Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies, Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies

Rakesh Khurana, Marvin Bower Professor of Leadership Development, Harvard Business School

9:15-10:30am: MANIFESTATIONS OF RESILIENCE

Chair: Michèle Lamont, Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies and Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies,

“Urban Resilience in Situations of Chronic Violence among the World’s Most Violent Cities: Beyond Conventional Metrics and Methods”

Diane Davis, Professor of Urbanism and Development, Harvard Graduate School of Design

I will introduce a large collaborative research project on resilience conducted in seven of the most violent cities in the Global South. I will discuss theoretical and methodological challenges and insights made possible by comparative ethnography. Finally, I will argue that the concept of resilience presents many advantages over other available concepts (such as crime prevention or crime-fighting) for the study of violence in urban contexts.

“Thinking Collectively and Interdisciplinarily about Resilience”

Peter A. Hall, Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies, Harvard University Department of Government
How does an interdisciplinary group of scholars go about thinking about social resilience? This talk will consider challenges of bringing multiple perspectives to bear on a subject in ways that link the micro to the macro.

“Studying Agency in “History from Below”

Walter Johnson, Winthrop Professor of History and Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University History Department

I will discuss the concept of "agency" in relation to the history of slavery. First, I will argue that "history from the bottom up" is a necessary counterpoint to narrative and aggregate overviews. Second, I will question the usefulness of the idea of "agency", and third suggest a more robustly materialist approach to "history from the bottom up."

10:30 -11:00: Break

11:00am- 12:15pm: APPROACHING HIGHER EDUCATION CULTURALLY

Chair: Rakesh Khurana, Marvin Bower Professor of Leadership Development, Harvard Business School

“Manufacturing Morals: A View From Within the Harvard Business School”
Michel Anteby, Associate Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School

How are morals manufactured? To start answering this question, I will discuss my most recent book project titled “Manufacturing Morals: The Values of Silence in Business School Education" (University of Chicago Press, in press). With an initial goal of promoting "better” business standards, few organizations have aimed to produce higher morals as deliberately as the Harvard Business School. The project looks at faculty socialization at HBS as a window into this pursuit. In doing so, the project revisits the apparent contradiction between routines and morals, and uncovers the possible role of silence in shaping morals. My talk will also offer an opportunity to discuss auto-ethnographic writing.

“Culture, Status, and Diversity: What I Learned From Cross-National Qualitative Research in US and British Education Settings”
Natasha Warikoo, Assistant Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education Conducting

Discussing my book in progress on undergraduates attending elite US and British universities as well as my previous book, Balancing Acts: Youth Culture in the Global City (University of California Press, 2011), I will discuss the intellectual purchase gained from cross-national qualitative research. I will also address some methodological challenges, including drawing conclusions based on a small number of cases, and incommensurability.
“Merit and Privilege: The case of the Indian Institution of Technology and its Diaspora”
Ajantha Subramanian, Professor, Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard University

My research situates the making of Indian technical knowledge within histories of state, caste, and capital in late colonial and postcolonial India. It focuses in particular on one institution - the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras - and its U.S. diaspora to illuminate how and why the IIT graduate has been constituted as a uniquely meritocratic individual. More broadly, it interrogates tensions between meritocracy as a mechanism for social reproduction and meritocracy as a transformative ideal as seen in ongoing debates over equity and hierarchy in Indian technical education. In my talk, I will offer a narrative of my research process with a focus on how I arrived at my questions and the various strategies I have used for understanding the relationship between structure and subjectivity, and between continuity and change.

12:15-1:15pm: Lunch

1:15-2:30pm: VARIOUS KINDS OF EXPERTISE

Chair: Larissa Buchholz, Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows

“Expertise, Rulership and Law”
David Kennedy, Manley O. Hudson Professor of Law and Director of the Institute for Global Law and Policy at Harvard Law School

I will speak about the effort to understand global governance and international law as a project of people undertaken in a series of professional vernaculars, ranging from international economic law or regulation to war and human rights

“Researching the Origins of Scientific Expertise”
Alex Csiszar, Assistant Professor, Department of the History of Science

Studying the emergence of a particular socio-professional identity presents methodological challenges and pitfalls: How to avoid taking for granted the criteria that are used to recognize membership in that category? How to avoid taking for granted the right-ness, or natural-ness, of the category itself? My historical research focuses on the emergence of authorship as a primary activity by means of which a scientist’s identity as a certain kind of expert came to be recognized. In this presentation I’ll discuss the array of research strategies I have employed to avoid telling one-dimensional, teleological stories about how this occurred.
“God Talk: Investigating the Place of Expertise in Attitudes and Beliefs About the Role of Genetics and Other Factors in Smoking Cessation among African Americans – Implications for Health Disparities”

Alexandra Shields, Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

African American smokers start smoking later than white smokers, have a harder time quitting, and bear a disproportionate burden of smoking-related morbidity and mortality. They are also less likely to use medication in a quit attempt, and are more likely to rate “Having God’s Help” as the most important factor affecting a person’s ability to quit. I will discuss recent research on attitudes and beliefs about smoking among a nationally representative sample, and discuss results regarding smokers’ critical stance toward “expert” knowledge and emphasis on lay/cultural knowledge regarding the role of spirituality/religion in determining the success of quit attempts, and the implications of these findings for disparities in smoking-related morbidity and mortality.

2:30-3:00pm: Break

3:00-4:15pm: IDENTITY ACROSS PLACES

Chair: Jasmin Sandelson, Sociology PhD Candidate, Graduate Student Coordinator, Qualitative Social Science @ Harvard

“Songs That Speak: Using Music to Produce Knowledge Across Disciplinary Boundaries”

Kay Kaufman Shelemay, G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and Professor of African and African American Studies

Methods and materials from musical ethnography can produce social knowledge accessible to colleagues working beyond the boundaries of musical scholarship. This paper will focus on insights into creative processes, cultural histories, and multiple aspects of identity conveyed by and through song, drawing on examples from a genre of Syrian-Jewish hymns actively maintained and transmitted in diaspora locales from Brooklyn to Jerusalem.

“Studying Women Guerrillas in Rural El Salvador”

Jocelyn Viterna, Associate Professor, Harvard Department Sociology

Qualitative methods are often celebrated for their ability to “give voice” to marginalized peoples, and for helping to break down hierarchical modes of creating and distributing knowledge. But what does “giving voice” entail? Whose voices are chosen, and how? And should university scholars—with their associated political, economic and social power—presume to “give voice” to marginalized populations in the first place? Drawing from three years of fieldwork in rural El Salvador, I discuss why I chose to study Salvadoran women guerrillas, the perhaps surprising
ways I dealt with my concerns about “giving voice,” and how the qualitative research design I developed was in turn consequential for my findings about identity, social movements, and gender in the forthcoming book, *Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (Oxford University Press).

“Ethnography, Politics, and Ethics of Studying Transsexuality in Iran”

Afsaneh Najmabadi, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Over a period of three years (2006-09), studying history and current living practice of transsexuality in Iran posed important methodological challenges for me – more at home in the archives than on the streets. This talk will focus on how doing history and doing ethnography created reflexive spaces for thinking how we do history and ethnography in more similar ways than often we may recognize. It will also pose the question of where and when we ought to suspend our hermeneutics of suspicion without compromising our critical approaches.

4:15-5:00: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

Larissa Buchholz, Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows

Rakesh Khurana, Marvin Bower Professor of Leadership Development, Harvard Business School

Michèle Lamont, Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies and Professor of Sociology and African and African-American Studies

Jasmin Sandelson, Sociology PhD Candidate, Graduate Student Coordinator, Qualitative Social Science @ Harvard

5:00-5:50: Wine and cheese reception