

THE NORTH CENTRAL SOCIOLOGIST

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2108 NCSA Presidential Address

“Thinking About the Audience of Executions”
Annulla Linders, University of Cincinnati

In her insightful 2018 NCSA presidential address, Dr. Annulla Linders considered the historical role that audiences have played in executions, tracing the practice from the public scaffold to the invisible executions of the modern era. Below, she offers an overview of her fascinating research.

Capital punishment occupies a precarious position in the modern democratic state. For the state to kill one of its citizens is a serious matter. Much scholarship has addressed the political and judicial dilemmas associated with the death penalty. Here, I focus on the execution itself as a fraught state activity, placing the analytical spotlight on the audience of executions. Most generally, I argue that the audience is a critical component of executions, and hence has played an important role in the transformation of capital punishment over the past two hundred years. Since the early nineteenth century, the legitimacy of capital punishment has been – and still is – entangled with the audience of executions.

Three modal forms, or ideal types, of the execution audience – the crowd, professional witnesses, and family members of murder victims – highlight the ways in which the audience of executions provides the American death penalty with some of its key meanings, contradictions, and pressures to change. All three audience forms have co-existed since the early nineteenth century, but their respective roles in the execution drama have changed dramatically as have the meanings generated by their presence.

The horror many of us now associate with public executions is a

product of the nineteenth century, when the meanings of executions changed. The crowds gathering at public executions increasingly came to be viewed as too large, too lowly, too loud, too disorderly, too disrespectful, too drunk, and – in general – seemed to enjoy the occasion too much. Because the criticism directed at the crowd reflected back on the execution itself, state after state sought to rescue the execution from the public that tainted it. The result eventually became a much more curtailed affair, with fewer audience members and a preponderance of professional witnesses, including lawyers, doctors, scientists, and trained execution personnel.

Professional witnesses infused the execution with expectations of efficiency, speed, competency, and the absence of the spectacular features that characterized the public execution. Moreover, they took part in the execution as disinterested observers, with no stake in the execution other than their professional duty. During the last few decades, this audience arrangement has been disrupted again in a significant way, through the inclusion of family members of murder victims, or co-victims, in the witness box. These new audience members have brought an unfamiliar set of expectations and pressures to the execution. They are not there out of either curiosity or professional duty. Rather, they are seeking acknowledgement, and perhaps relief, of their pain and suffering. And this is something that cannot as easily be accommodated within modern executions, which render death almost invisible.

More broadly, the close focus on actual executions and their audiences also speaks to processes of institutional change. Although capital punishment generally, and the execution specifically, is clearly entangled in and affected by larger socio-historical forces, it is only through an examination of actual institutional practices that it is possible to discern how exactly change happens. That is, insofar as institutions change, they do so through the actions of the people who inhabit them, which in this case involves the audience of executions.



2018 NCSA Conference in Pittsburgh, PA

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Dr. Victor Rios (Center) Useem Plenary Speaker

Dr. Victor Rios delivered the 2018 Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



“Urban Dynamism, Sociological Double-Consciousness, and Paradoxical Resistance: Towards a New Paradigm for Studying Racialized Punitive Social Control”

The 2018 Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address

Dr. Victor Rios, professor, renowned activist, and public sociologist, delivered an inspirational Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address at the 2018 annual meeting of the North Central Sociological Association in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His much anticipated address artfully blended his own personal experiences of punitive social control with modern examples of resistance and social movements, insightful ethnographic work, and an examination of criminal justice system entrenchment as a form of racialized social control. Drawing from the classic work of Dubois on double consciousness, and the concepts of urban dynamism and paradoxical resistance, Rios proposed a framework for understanding the immediate and long term impact of the criminalization of black and Latino youth on activism, and the role that moral entrepreneurs (including academicians) play in the cultural narrative surrounding urban minority youth.

Key to his approach is the paradigm of urban dynamism, which involves examining how individuals alter their behaviors and attitudes based on interactions with powerful entities and institutions which exert controls that are frequently punitive in nature. Urban youth frequently encounter authoritative entities and institutions from a position of poverty, powerlessness, and blocked opportunities. As marginalized groups, they occupy multiple realms, aware of their social position, and aspiring to achieve conventional goals but being limited by power structures and the youth control complex, as well as cultural frames that undermine their efforts and reinforce harmful stereotypes.

Rios pointed to the increasingly influential role of the youth control complex, made up of schools, the criminal justice system, community organizations, media, family, public and private spheres, and moral entrepreneurs, in reinforcing the criminalization of minority youth. Notably, he points to the intertwining of criminal justice discourses with those of educational systems, strengthening justice system responses to minor acts of deviance, and producing the ultimate school to prison pipeline. Simultaneously, the criminal justice system's policies and practices have become embedded in family and community organizations, as the intrusion marginalizes disaffected youth

even more. In welfare institutions as well, criminal justice system involvement effectively excludes large swaths of the population from receiving necessary assistance. The impact has been particularly brutal for Black and Latino youth who have witnessed the criminalization of their bodies themselves, along with a wholesale discounting of their cultural frames. And, although academics have examined the lives and experiences of these youth, much of this research has adopted an unspoken norm of whiteness, serving to reinforce harmful discourses and frequently excluding the work of high quality ethnographies produced by people of color.

In addressing the cultural (mis)framing of black and Latino youths' experiences, Rios directed the audience's attention to the myriad ways in which the contributions and cultural frameworks of urban youth are delegitimized by formal and informal agents of social control. The disrespect they experience not only undermines their social position, and criminalizes their actions, but also tacitly and overtly advocates for punitive responses to forms of social resistance. Rios noted that although moral entrepreneurs have capitalized on the view that black and Latino youth react to criminalization with crime, they fail to acknowledge their resilience. By addressing the positive forms of political and social opposition they engage in as they attempt to find dignity in spite of systematic oppression, sociologists, media entities, and the public more generally can view the resistance of minority youth as an avenue for empowerment, and something to build upon, rather than criticize.

Perhaps the most compelling question Rios addressed was under what circumstances street-oriented youth become political and socially active. In considering this question, he discussed the *Black Lives Matter* movement, and other forms of resistance as the byproduct of the dehumanization and marginalization experienced at the hands of institutional forces. However, these reactions to the state, representing activism and the reclaiming of a cultural framework, can be viewed as central to marginalized youth's establishment of a political identity that encourages activism and a commitment to producing social change, as we have witnessed.

2018 Student Award Winners

Seidler Graduate Paper Awards

1st Place

Jaclyn Tabor, Indiana University

"Mom, Dad, or Somewhere In Between:

Ambiguities Facing Children of Transgender Parents"

Advisor: Brian Powell

2nd Place

Brittany Kowalski and R. Kyle Saunders, West Virginia University

*"My Fellow Americans: Role Congruity of Presidential
Candidates Impacts Public Perceptions"*

Advisors: Lisa Dilks and Lynne Cossman

3rd Place

Roshan K. Pandian, Indiana University

"World Society Integration and Gender Attitudes in A Cross-National Context"

Advisor: Brian Powell

President's Undergraduate Paper Awards

1st Place

Emily Baert, Saint Mary's College

"I'm Homeless but I'm Not Homeless:

How Guests at the Center for the Homeless Construct Identity"

Advisor: Leslie Wang

2nd Place

Alexis Hilling, Yasaman Jafarloo, Deryn Kenyon, and Casey Snyder

West Virginia University

"The Impact of Gender on Campus Sexual Assault: Where Does Responsibility Lie?"

Advisor: Lisa Dilks

3rd Place

Kristie LeBeau, Saint Mary's College

*"Support a School, Preserve a Community: A Content Analysis of a
Newspaper's Portrayal of a Rural School-Community Relationship "*

Advisor: Leslie Wang



2018 NCSA Award Winners

Scholarly Achievement Award (Book)

Christopher Dum, Kent State University

Exiled in America: Life on the Margins in a Residential Motel
Columbia University Press, 2016

Honorable Mention: Jean Beaman, Purdue University

Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France
University of California Press, 2017

Scholarly Achievement Award (Article)

Anne Warfield, Bentley University and Waverly Duck, University of Pittsburgh

Warfield, Anne, and Waverly Duck. (2017). 'Fractured Reflections' of High-Status Black Male Presentations of Self: Non-recognition of Identity as a 'Taci' Form of Institutional Racism. *Sociological Focus* 50 (1): 36-51.

J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Achievement

Theodore C. Wagenaar, Miami University

Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award

Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Valparaiso University

John F. Schnabel Teaching Award

Lissa Yogan, Valparaiso University

Butler A. Jones Minority Scholarship

Brittany Rabb, Case Western Reserve University



Christopher Dum



Theodore C. Wagenaar



Danielle Lavin-Loucks



Lissa Yogan



Brittany Rabb

From the Desk of the New NCSA President

Greetings! I am so looking forward to welcoming you all in Cincinnati on March 29th & 30th, 2019!

We are putting together an exciting and engaging program around the theme of “Storytelling: Sociological Methods, Motives, and Mantras.” One potential critique of Sociology as a discipline is that often our macro “big picture” approach can be inaccessible to the general public. As a result, powerful explanations are often overlooked for lack of a narrative thread or story to draw people into the message. One oversight of this critique, however, is that Sociology, as a field, is actually quite rich with story-telling traditions. We have research methods that exemplify the power of stories and work to give voice to stories unheard. Our work in teaching, scholarship, and service is inspired by stories about inequality, power, identity, and more. In fact, the field as a whole maintains stories and narratives that sustain the discipline itself. Some may inspire us and others may constrain us as we navigate our collective future.



The 2019 conference will explore these ideas through standard sessions, a Professional Development Series, as well as the Pre-Conference Workshop entitled, “Stories in the Classroom – How Student and Teacher Stories Impact Learning.” Plenary Teaching Sessions include *Story as Pedagogy*, *Qualitative Methods in Our Curriculum*, *Novels and Ethnographies in the Sociology Classroom*, and a reboot of *The Books I Love to Teach With*. Make sure to register for the pre-conference workshop when you complete your annual conference registration. In addition, our Professional Development Series will help us use social media to make the most of our digital public story and identify ways of thinking about the 5-year plan as a narrative of the synergy between teaching, scholarship, and service.

We will have the opportunity to listen to interdisciplinary stories, including how geography uses map making (GIS) and story maps in community-based research, and gain new insights from anthropology, including the use of visual ethnography in storytelling. The Useem Plenary Address, one of the cornerstones of the conference, also centers on storytelling, with Francesca Polletta (University of California-Irvine) detailing the role stories play in the public and private sphere, and discussing the profound role that discussions, narratives, ethnographic interviews, and discourse occupy in her research. And, do not miss out on the powerful voices from creative writing who can help us uncover the compelling story in our own research findings, and tell this story more effectively.

Join us as we explore the stories that drive our methods, inspire our research questions, enrich our classrooms, and remind us of who we are! Watch for upcoming announcements in the next few months and be sure to submit your work for inclusion in this dynamic event.



2019 NCSA Conference Preview



NCSA 2019 Annual Meeting Returns to Cincinnati, March 29th-30th

Important Dates

August, 2018

Online submission opens

November, 2018

Online registration/Hotel reservations open

December, 2018

Proposal information due to program organizers

Early January, 2019

Undergraduate paper submissions due

January, 2019

Notification of acceptance into conference

March, 2019

Hotel registration and Pre-registration closes

March 28, 2019

Pre-conference workshops held

March 29-30 2019

NCSA conference begins

In 2019, NCSA returns to Cincinnati to discuss how storytelling is inextricably linked to Sociology. From classic ethnography to storytelling as a form of pedagogy, the conference theme is broad enough to cover all areas of the field. Even though the conference submission system will not open until August, we encourage you to start thinking about potential ideas now. Remember that submissions can involve research and teaching projects you are involved in, closed sessions you may want to propose, panels you would be willing to organize, and roundtables that fit with the conference theme. Paper submissions outside of the conference theme, as always, are welcome.

Our next conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Cincinnati, conveniently located in the downtown area near Fountain Square. More details on local points of interest, including dining options, will be included in the fall edition of the *North Central Sociologist*. However, if you missed out on some of the sightseeing opportunities the last time NCSA was in Cincy, make sure to carve out a little extra time in 2019 to tour the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (amazing), the Newport Aquarium (they have a penguin experience), the Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, or the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden.

SOCIOLOGICAL FOCUS

Consider submitting your manuscript to *Sociological Focus*, the official publication of the *North Central Sociological Association* (NCSA). Published continuously since 1968, the quarterly journal is international in scope, covering a full range of topics of current interest to sociology and related social science disciplines. *Sociological Focus* is peer reviewed and committed to publishing high quality research on substantive issues of importance to the study of society. The journal's mission is broad in scope, encompassing empirical works (both quantitative and qualitative in nature), as well as manuscripts presenting up to date literature review of any field of sociology. Look for upcoming issues focused on a specific theme, and dedicated to timely topics. Current author and submissions guidelines available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usfo20#.VE-62fldWTM>

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NCSA Welcomes...

The NCSA is honored to welcome new council and committee members:

- ✕ President Elect: Robert Carrothers, Ohio Northern University
- ✕ Vice President Elect: Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Valparaiso University
- ✕ Council Member-at-Large: Paul Draus, University of Michigan – Dearborn
- ✕ Membership Chair: Robert Peralta, University of Akron
- ✕ Nominations Chair: Annulla Linders, University of Cincinnati
- ✕ Profession, Freedom, and Responsibility: Veronica E. Medina, Indiana University Southeast

Are you are interested in becoming more involved in NCSA and serving as an elected or appointed committee member? Please contact the Past President and Nominations Chair, [Annulla Linders](mailto:Annulla.Linders@uc.edu).

Contact Us

Keep up to date with NCSA! Visit us on **Facebook**, **Twitter** (@NCSA_Sociology), or the official **[NCSA website](#)** for association and conference -related information.

If you have items you would like sent to the distribution list, blog, or posted to Facebook, please send the materials for consideration to the **[NCSA Public Relations Coordinator](#)**.

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