Letter from the Chair

Dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to be writing the Chair’s Column for the CITASA newsletter. Our section hasn’t had a newsletter in a while but through the hard work of a lot of volunteers, we are (re)launching the section newsletter in hopes of keeping members up to date on section activities and business. Our goal is to have 3-4 issues a year (with 2 coming out during my remaining tenure as Chair, including this issue and one more issue around the ASA). This would fit into a larger communications strategy that would use social media for more immediate contacts, the website for more stationary information, and the newsletter as a way to highlight important news and achievements of the section and members.

We have a lot to collectively be proud of this year. As a section, we reached a membership high of 375 members. That puts us within spitting distance of the 400 we would need to get another ASA session, so we will be hard at work on getting renewals and new members before the September census date for ASA. We also passed new bylaws that will make it much easier to staff our award committees and to field candidates for election each Spring. In my view, this kind of institutionalization should help the section navigate membership growth and continue to thrive.

As you will see in the listing of the ASA sessions relevant to CITASA members, we have a lot to look forward to at the annual meetings. Please mark your calendars for the CITASA reception, which will be held on Saturday August 16, 2014 at Sugar Café (679 Sutter St, San Francisco). Sugar Café is only blocks from the convention hotels and should be a great venue for our reception. The first 100 section members to come through the doors will get a ticket for a drink and a cash bar will be open for the rest of the evening. We ordered some really good looking food, too, so with the great company of our colleagues in the section, it should be a fantastic reception. Please invite any friends who you think might have an interest in the section too!

In terms of sessions, there is a lot intellectually going on at the meetings. We have put together an initial roster of panels in the newsletter, which shows over 25 panels of interest to members! Please email me if I missed something (if I did, it wasn’t intentional, so please help me out by sending me info on panels I missed on communication, media, big data, digital life, or computing) and we will get that added to the list that I circulate online before the meeting.

I am particularly excited about the Invited Session that I assembled for this year’s annual meeting. With our funny acronym of CITASA as a name, it has sometimes been hard for non-section members to know who we are and what we are up to, even though our section’s work is so relevant to so much research. And, as more and more people investigate digitally-related phenomenon, our section continues to become ever more relevant.
Letter from the Chair (con’t)

In this invited session, presenters will discuss the history and future of CITASA-relevant scholarship, including work on digital communities and political engagement, big data, and media and communications. I hope you will put it on your schedule—it should be a great session.

Our pre-conference has sold-out and Laura Robinson, our Chair-Elect, has been working feverishly on the arrangements. The workshop is entitled “[New] Media Cultures” and is being held at UC Berkeley at Sutardja Dai Hall on August 15, 2014. Please check out citasasymposium.info for more information. Also, let Laura know via email if you had ideas for a preconference for next year. Thanks to Laura for her hard work!

As you likely already saw over email, we also have new section officers to welcome as of the close of next business meeting:

Chair-Elect: Andrea Tapia
Council Members: Barry Wellman & Anabel Quan-Haase
Student Representative: Erin Evans

Finally, we will be announcing the award winners on at the end of June online. Please look for a description of the award winning work in the next newsletter. I know I was amazed by the quality of work being done in the section and the diversity of entries; I think other award committee members have felt the same.

You can see that the section has been hard at work. As section leaders, we are really invested in fostering an intellectual space for a diverse set of researchers interested in communication, media, and technology. If you have ideas about other things we could do, or things we could do better, to foster that space for you, please drop me an email or catch me at the ASA meetings. Better yet, if you have ideas about how the section can serve you better, run for an office and help us build the best section we can.

I hope this finds you well and having a productive, rewarding, and at least somewhat relaxing summer.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Earl
University of Arizona
Gaps in the gaze: informatic practice and the work of public health surveillance

Coming from a “surveillance studies” perspective (Lyon 2007), Gaps in the Gaze intervenes both in surveillance studies literature, and in discourse that celebrates the big data revolution. It begins with the observation that many foundational works within the interdisciplinary field of surveillance studies cautioned about the rise of “big data” before it was named as such. In posing questions about new powers that might be derived from the merger of once discreet databases, these works paved the way for contemporary understandings of all kinds of surveillance, ranging from the (pre- and post-Snowden) activities of the NSA, to the commonplace monitoring of consumer behavior by private-sector companies, to a host of other mundane forms of tracking and self-tracking that are now ubiquitous in daily life.

Yet surveillance studies scholarship—like the euphoric rhetoric it has long critically engaged—has sometimes also bought into an underlying mythology, foundational to big data discourse, which holds that “large data sets offer a higher form of intelligence and knowledge…” (boyd and Crawford 2012: 663). Accordingly, in order to better trouble contemporary big data mythologies, Gaps in the Gaze calls for increasing social scientific attention to the everyday, pragmatic realities of IT. Where it departs from well-established social scientific analyses of IT, which have already made such calls, is in its development of a novel concept: informatic practice.

Informatic practice may be defined as the sum of labor or activity that materializes information, including, for instance, such mundane activities as data entry. Crucially, the study of informatic practice requires attention not just to the human effort, but also the non-human effort, that invests the IT-mediated gaze with power. To empirically illustrate the study of informatic practice, Gaps in the Gaze discusses process challenges associated with the implementation of a large-scale (or ‘big’), regionally interconnected public health information system in Ontario, Canada. Informed by science and technology studies and actor-network theory, it uses documentary evidence and interviews with 38 key-informants to describe informatic practice and to illustrate the mutations—the natural change—introduced into the IT-mediated gaze by everyday, material practices. This complicates both critical and euphoric claims about big data.

Below is a link to the full article http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/article/view/gaps

References


Recent Publications


Chesley, Noelle and Britta Johnson. 2014. “Information and Communication Technology Use and Social Connectedness over the Life Course”. Sociology Compass, Forthcoming.


Recent Publications (con’t)


Recent Publications (con’t)


Dissertation Profiles

Joseph Klett, Ph.D. Candidate | Year of graduation: 2015
Department of Sociology, Yale University
joseph.klett@yale.edu | www.josephklett.com

The Social Life of Noise

Joseph’s dissertation is titled The Social Life of Noise. The focus of this research is the social processes and material conditions that produce noise over signal in different organizational contexts. Joseph uses ethnographic studies of music education classrooms and an audio engineering firm in the United States to describe how teachers and engineers come to recognize and represent sonic phenomenon as so-called “noise.” His approach combines interpretive methods and practice theories of perception and embodiment to form a perspective on inequalities in aesthetic experience. In particular, he shows how sensory skills are differently-distributed across the population, in turn producing contrasts in qualitative understandings of the world. As this work shows, audio technology and sound-making instruments do not simply produce sound in the world; rather, these technologies develop at the same time as techniques for finding meaning in auditory experience. In this regard, Joseph’s theorization of audible noise contributes a hermeneutic method for studying the aesthetic and ethical experience of mediation. Following his dissertation work, Joseph plans to develop a cultural perspective on noise pollution as a public health issue. Joseph is currently a Junior Fellow in the Center for Cultural Sociology. He holds a B.A. in sociology (with a minor in music) from UCSD, and a M.A. & M.Phil. in sociology from Yale.
Dissertation Profiles (con’t)

Sean Fitzhugh, Graduate Student Researcher | Year of graduation: 2015
Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine
sean.fitzhugh@uci.edu | http://sites.uci.edu/seanfitzhugh/

The Space-Time Continuum: A Spatiotemporal Characterization of Online Communication During Disasters

Disasters are characterized by the disruption of social structures and routines. Informal communication is a key component of the initial response; however this communication has particular spatial and temporal signatures. Using keyword-driven streams of informal, hazard-related communication (via Twitter) from dozens of events, both natural and man-made, I characterize response to disasters across geographic space and time: prior to the event, during the event, and during the following recovery period. The first chapter examines variation in communication volume across time leading up to and immediately following a disaster, and across distance as we move further from the event epicenter. The second chapter examines how the content of this informal communication changes as a function of distance to the event epicenter and the amount of time until/since the event. Results from the first chapter indicate a surge in hazard-related communication near the event epicenter, but for some events (often events inducing extensive damage and casualties) I find distinct surges of hazard-related communication hundreds or even thousands of miles away, in areas that were physically unaffected by the event. While this may be due to factors such as news coverage, it may also be driven by social networks of those in the affected area. To measure this, I use simulated tie volumes from the epicenter to these distant areas to predict these patterns of secondary excitation. This dissertation builds on longstanding theories of communication and disaster response by determining where in time and space they predict informal communication in response to disasters.

Ian Sheinheit, Ph.D. Candidate | Year of graduation: 2014
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In with the New - Out with the Old? A structural and cultural analysis of the 21st century American political news media field.

This project explores the political news media field of the United States in an era of shifting boundaries. This research asks what, if anything, has changed in news and opinion content? How do different media formats and outlets define their legitimacy and authority? Are new media content sites, television and newspapers telling the same stories? Further, are they using similar codes, symbols and narratives? This project analyzes the articles, posts and transcripts (N=2413) from ten prevalent media outlets, three print (The New York Times, the Washington Post and USA Today), three televised (Face the Nation, The O’Reilly Factor and Countdown with Keith Olberman) and four digital (Dailykos.com, instapundit.com TalkingPointsMemo.com, and MichelleMalkin.com) during the 2004 and 2008 election cycles with a topical focus of the Iraq War. I argue that new media outlets, during the transition toward 2004 and between the 2004 and 2008 election cycles, expanded and re-ordered the cultural and structural environment that envelops media, politics and the public sphere. During these transitional time periods, a confluence of specific political, journalistic, and technological events created cultural and structural volatility within the media environment. This resulted in conflict and boundary negotiations in the form of reification, adjustment and creation. I find specific organizational structures and discursive codes that are reinforced and ossified. Simultaneously, however, I find transformations that represent an altered hierarchy of cultural symbols. In the end, I find three distinct media channels represented by three ideal typical discursive practices: Traditional Journalism, Partisan Journalism and Citizen Journalism.
1) CFP for Use of Internet, Activism, and Social Movements Datasets

From 2006-2012, I had a NSF CAREER Award to collect data on online protest across 20 different issue areas. That effort produced two time-series datasets: a panel dataset tracking about 1,200 websites across 5 years, and a cross-sectional dataset tracking new samples of websites each year for five years. Each of these datasets is really two nested sets: one on the overall websites and one on all protest actions that were hosted or linked to from study websites.

After discussions with potential users at the Collective Behavior and Social Movements pre-conference in Las Vegas, several data collection team members and I designed a data release process based directly on potential user input that is engineered to develop a strong and informed user base and reviewing community for the dataset. The first step in that data release process is a limited use period in which potential users can apply to use the data while it is still embargoed. In exchange for early access, these early users will agree to support the development of a user community around the dataset in a variety of ways. (For folks that don’t want to support a user community and just want their hands on the data, they will get that chance when the data is publicly released at the end of 2015.)

I invite you to read about the data release program at: http://jearl.faculty.arizona.edu/node/11
That page contains a call for proposals, with the first deadline on October 1st (with other deadlines following on a quarterly basis). Other pages linked from that page will take you to pages on how the data is being used already, potential collaborators from the data collection team, and detailed information on the dataset and documentation.

I hope many of you will consider contributing to this effort by submitting proposals and agreeing to join the user community. It’s a complicated dataset that over 60 people have put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into building. We are eager to help develop a community that appreciates the complexity of these data and is prepared to use these data in scientifically appropriate ways. By doing so, we hope to not just introduce new data, but introduce the needed skills to use the data wisely.

Best,
Jennifer Earl

2) Jen Schradie, doctoral candidate at the University of California, Berkeley in the Sociology Department and with the Berkeley Center for New Media, has accepted a post-doctoral fellow position at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse (IAST) and their Digital Society Initiative at the University of Toulouse, Capitole, France.

Table 11. Consumption, Consumer Behavior, and Access to Technology
Section on Environment and Technology Roundtable Session
Sat, August 16, 8:30 to 9:30am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Regular Session. Internet and Society
Sat, August 16, 8:30 to 10:10am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Regular Session. Media Sociology: Journalism, Politics, and New Media
Sat, August 16, 2:30 to 4:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Thematic Session. Inequality and New Media: Young People, Technology, and Social Divides
Sat, August 16, 2:30 to 4:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Invited Session

Table 12. Critical Media Studies
Open Refereed Roundtable Session 1
Sat, August 16, 2:30 to 4:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Section on Communication and Information Technologies Reception
Sat, August 16, 6:30 to 8:30pm, The Sugar Cafe (679 Sutter St, San Francisco)
Session Submission Type: Reception

Table 22. Media and Literacy
Section on Sociology of Education Roundtables
Sun, August 17, 8:30 to 9:30am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Section on Communication and Information Technologies Paper Session. Open Topic on
Communication and Information Technologies
Sun, August 17, 8:30 to 10:10am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Section on Communication and Information Technologies Roundtables
Sun, August 17, 10:30 to 11:30am, TBA

Section on Communication and Information Technologies Business Meeting
Sun, August 17, 11:30 to 12:10am, TBA

Table 07. Movements in the News
Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements Roundtables
Sun, August 17, 12:30 to 1:30pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable
Relevant ASA 2014 Sessions

Table 17. Information Technology and Movements
Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements Roundtables
Sun, August 17, 12:30 to 1:30pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Section on Communication and Information Technologies Invited Session. Intellectual Past and Future
Sun, August 17, 12:30 to 2:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Special Session. The Social Census of the Digital Age: Honoring the Contributions of Lee Rainie and the Pew Internet & American Life Project to the Public Understanding of Sociology
Sun, August 17, 2:30 to 4:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Invited Session

Social Media Workshop. Why Should I Use Social Media? (co-sponsored with Just Publics@365)
Sun, August 17, 2:30 to 4:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Workshop

Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements Paper Session. Social Movements and Media
Mon, August 18, 10:30am to 12:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Table 07. Communication and Information Technologies
Open Refereed Roundtable Session II
Mon, August 18, 10:30am to 12:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Table 15. Culture, Media, and Socialization I
Mon, August 18, 4:30 to 6:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable
Sub Unit

Table 16. Culture, Media, and Socialization 2
Mon, August 18, 4:30 to 6:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Table 01. Teaching in an Online World
Section on Teaching and Learning Roundtables
Mon, August 18, 4:30 to 6:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Regular Session. Technology
Mon, August 18, 4:30 to 6:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session
Relevant ASA 2014 Sessions

Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology Paper Session. The Sociology of Big Data: Knowledge, Technology, Security and Privacy
Mon, August 18, 4:30 to 6:10pm, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Table 17. Gender and Media Discourse
Section on Sex and Gender Roundtable Session
Tue, August 19, 8:30 to 9:30am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Table 08. Masculinities, Online Communities and Media
Section on Sex and Gender Roundtable Session
Tue, August 19, 8:30 to 9:30am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Refereed Roundtable

Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology Paper Session. Topics in Science, Knowledge and Technology Studies
Tue, August 19, 8:30 to 10:10am, TBA
Session Submission Type: Paper Session

Table 05. Technology/Innovation
Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology Roundtable Session
Tue, August 19, 10:30 to 11:30am, TBA

Credits

Newsletter Volunteers
Senior Scholar Article: W. James Siguru, University of Minnesota
Recent Publications: Didem Türkoğlu, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Dissertation Profiles: Jenny Ungbha Korn, University of Illinois at Chicago
Elizabeth Schwarz, University of California, Riverside
Announcements: Robyn Keith, University of Texas at Austin
Layout: Penn Pantumsinchai, University of Hawai`i at Manoa

Section Officers 2013-14
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Chair-Elect: Laura Robinson, Santa Clara University
Past Chair: Shelia R. Cotton, Michigan State University
Secretary/Treasurer: Katrina E. Kimport, University of California, San Francisco

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Timothy M. Hale, PhD Partners Center for Connected Health 2014
Hiroshi Ono, Texas A&M University 2014
Christopher A. Bail, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 2015
Jenny L Davis, Texas A&M University 2015
Student Representative: PJ Rey, University of Maryland 2014

Awards Officers
CITASA William F. Ogburn Career Achievement Award
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CITASA Paper Award
Chair: Katrina Kimport
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CITASA Student Paper Award
Chair: Jennifer Earl
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CITASA Book Award
Chair: Laura Robinson
Members: Gina Neff; Yuri Takhteyev; Tim Hale

CITASA AWARD for Public Sociology
Chair: Keith Hampton
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