

# The AGORA

Newsletter of the Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

**Summer 2024**

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## **From the Chair's Desk (ASA)**

Emily Erikson



Dear Colleagues,

I write from a train outside of Paris just hours after the conclusion of a wonderful conference celebrating and interrogating the legacy of Raymond Boudon, one of the great theorists and forebears of our section community. Organized by Pierre Demeulenaere and Gianluca Manzo, the conference hosted an amazing group of scholars and demonstrated the continued relevance and importance of Boudon's work. Perhaps we shall see a collected volume on his legacy in the near future!

I am thrilled to report that we have experienced a significant jump in membership this year. This increase follows on the heels of the section name change. I hope we keep this forward momentum going into the new year. We still have much room to grow.

We have also had a great organizing year for the section. Our indefatigable student representative Manning Zhang organized and led our first DMSNS mentorship event. A special thanks to the faculty who committed time and energy to this event: Tony Paik and Minjae Kim. This would be a wonderful beginning to a new tradition for the section.

On a much sadder note, we have lost another of the great influences on the section. Harrison White passed away

this May at the age of 94. I had seen Harrison only a few months earlier and can report his continued interest in young scholars and their research. Harrison's importance for the development of social network research and the advancement of network science cannot be overstated. He was an intellectual giant whose work continues to reward careful reading. He will be greatly missed, but we will celebrate his life and legacy at the August meetings of the ASA. A memorial session will be held in the Victoria Room of Le Westin Hotel, Saturday, August 10 at 5:45pm.

This year our section events fall on Monday, August 12. Please attend our business meeting and two panels, one organized jointly with the mathematical sociology section. Our focus for the meetings is on a consideration of the potential for applying the insights generated by our empirically grounded and theoretically rich approach to social science to some of the many social problems we face in the world today. The reception will be held jointly with the Economic Sociology and Organizations, Occupations, and Work sections of the ASA at the Restaurant Humaniti from 6:30 to 8:30pm the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>. I hope to see you all there!

Sincerely,

Emily Erikson

Chair, Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section

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### Award Announcement from the Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section



### Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section's James S. Coleman Outstanding Article Award

It is our pleasure and honor to give James S. Coleman Award for Outstanding Article to [Stallone and Braun \(2023\) in \*Theory and Society\*](#) as the winner, and [Broussard \(2024\) in \*Journal of Health and Social\*](#)

[Behavior](#) and [Park, Yu, and Macy \(2023\) in \*Science Advances\*](#) as honorable mention. Our notes on each paper are below:

On Stallone and Braun:

In this tour de force, Stallone and Braun provide a novel theory and findings as to why college educated women were more effective at rescue efforts during the Holocaust. Their theory identifies novel mechanisms through which college educated women could strategically use their social disadvantages in facilitating their geographically expansive rescue work. The authors also provide a mix of rich quantitative and qualitative findings, based on which readers get vivid pictures of why and how the dramaturgical strategies used to rescue victims of the Holocaust were possible only among college educated women but not others. The paper's analytically precise theory and careful empirics allow readers to further see how the insights from this particular case can be generalizable beyond the context of the Holocaust and to the broader recruitment efforts in social movements.

On Broussard:

Drawing on original survey data and in-depth interviews with women who attempted a self-managed abortion, Broussard describes the distinctive roles of weak and strong ties in women's health-seeking experiences. In doing so, she articulates how women choose not to disclose -- as well as disclose -- in order to elicit useful health information, resources, and emotional support. This work productively builds on work on strategic disclosure in micro-level communication and artfully identifies non-disclosure as part of people's arsenal.

On Park, Yu, and Macy:

Park, Yu, and Macy use a large dataset from airbnb to describe how one type of racial bias -- i.e., ingroup preference for same-race hosts -- interact with another type of racial bias -- i.e., ingroup preference for same-race recommendations. In their adept empirical work, they find that the two biases are offsetting and not reinforcing, that white guests largely overcame their racial bias in host selection against non-white hosts when those hosts were endorsed by previous white guests. This study identifies the first step to addressing

racial bias in online evaluation platforms that are ever more prevalent now.

Committee Chair: Minjae Kim, Members: Julia Melin, Fedor Dokshin

### Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section's James S. Coleman Outstanding **Book Award**

The winner of this year's James S. Coleman Prize for Outstanding Book goes to Steven Pfaff and Michael Hechter for their book, *The Genesis of Rebellion: Governance, Grievance, and Mutiny in the Age of Sail*, published by Cambridge University Press. Through a detailed analysis of mutinies in the Royal Navy between 1740 and 1820, *Genesis of Rebellion* helps to understand the causes and correlates of rebellion, finding that mutinies tend to occur when there is a conjunction of poor governance along with the capacity of disgruntled seamen to coordinate. Using detailed quantitative and historical analysis of ships that either experienced or did not experience mutinies, this book speaks to core questions in the fields of political sociology and social movements. Key to this endeavor is the insight that a ship at sea represents a tiny, isolated society; thus every voyage is an opportunity to understand the interrelations between external pressures, individual decision-making, and unforeseen events in contributing to--or detracting from--the established social order on board. Fascinating in historical content, yet widely applicable to the modern world, *The Genesis of Rebellion* truly is a remarkable achievement of scholarship.

Committee Chair: Patrick Bergemann, Member: Arvind Karunakaran

### Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Award for Best Paper by a **Graduate Student**

Benjamin Rosche, "Socioeconomic segregation in adolescent friendship networks: A network analysis of social closure in US high schools"

Benjamin Rosche's paper significantly advances recent discussions on socioeconomic segregation in adolescent

friendship networks by delving into between- and within-school factors, using state-of-the-art techniques, multilevel ERGM and micro effect on the macro structure, with multiple imputations and survey weights. Drawing from prior literature, Rosche decomposes within-school determinants of SES segregation (explaining half of the total segregation alongside the between-school components) into structural constraints (e.g., stratified courses, accounting for 25% of within-school segregation), students' preferences (homophily and aspiration, accounting for 75%), and relational mechanisms (e.g., triadic closure, with only a minor influence). The study's key findings indicate that racial homophily is the primary determinant, and that the unilateral nature of aspiration leads to the exclusion of low-SES students. This paper contributes to decision-making theory by dissecting the nuanced interplay between structural constraints and individual agency in network formation from a micro-macro perspective. Furthermore, the study advances social network analysis using innovative and promising techniques. Consequently, the committee determined that Rosche's paper merits the Decision-making, Social Networks, and Society Award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student.

Committee Chair: Masayuki Kanai, Member: Chen-Shuo Hong

The general objective of Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice is to advance the development of Rational Choice Theory. This includes its application to various explanatory problems across social science disciplines, its empirical test, its theoretical development and comparison with alternative approaches. The RC tries to achieve this general objective by promoting the international exchange of scientific information across disciplinary borders.

### From the President's Desk

Gianluca Manzo



Dear colleagues,

I hope that you are having the chance to enjoy the summer break! Despite the multiple tasks and commitments in which all of us are involved, the last months were productive for our research committee, too.

First of all, let me mention the survey that Ana Macanovic and I circulated between January and March 2024. The response rate was low among past members (~16%, i.e. 15 out of 93) but reasonable among current members (50%, i.e. 17 out of 34, based on April membership). Ana Macanovic and I independently analysed the data. The main take-home messages can be summarized as follows:

1. Those who left did so because they saw the RC's focus as too narrow or unclear;
2. Both past and current members however recognize the RC's potential academic interest as well as the attraction of meeting every two (or three) years at the ISA forum or world

congress;

3. This potential interest translates into clear intentions to renew membership (with average scores on a 1-10 scale being 6.3 among past members and 8.8 among current members);
4. Almost all respondents (30 out of 32) positively replied to the question "Would you, in principle, be in favour of changing our RC's name?";
5. When asked about how they would envision to reframe the focus of the RC's intellectual project, all respondents but one mentioned to "Enlarge the focus to social mechanisms underlying micro-macro dynamics";
6. Responses concerning possible future initiative to attract new members, especially young ones, are more disperse, the creation of a "reading/writing group" being the only item that appears with a high frequency (for 20 respondents out of 32).

Data are freely accessible at website for anyone who may want to delve into them and check our conclusions ([results](#)).

Given these general results, I then submitted to the RC a possible way to summarize what seemed to me a clear desire to reframe our goals and scientific projects. The proposed text looked like this:

"The scientific project of the Research Committee 45 on [*Name to be found*] is to advance the development of explanatory models connecting the micro and macro levels of social life. This includes the theoretical design of these models as well as the hard work needed to connect them to empirical data.

At the micro-level, the Committee is especially interested in the study of decision-making mechanisms as well as in the analysis of the complex ways in which actors' behaviours are shaped by their embeddedness in social networks.

At the macro-level, the committee is open to investigations including a large variety of substantive phenomena among which distributional inequality, segregation patterns, opinion polarization, norm evolutions, diffusion dynamics or long-term historical processes.

Although the Committee is especially interested in

cutting-edge statistical, computational and experimental techniques to build and test micro-macro mechanism-oriented models, qualitative and quantitative perspectives are both welcome as long as the chosen method and type of data are at the service of the analysis of mechanisms underlying micro-macro dynamics.

Thus, the general objective of the Research Committee 45 on [*Name to be found*] is to serve as an intellectual platform to make various forms of rigorous sociology proliferate and confront to kindred approaches including social complexity, network science or computational social sciences in a sustained interdisciplinary spirit.”

Reactions to this proposal were encouraging. Various RC members, including some of the father founders of our RC, approved it by sending e-mails to me or to entire section. But the discussion must continue: I would like to encourage more RC members to express overtly their approval and/or suggestions for amendments.

Should we collectively agree on the new formulation, the change would amount to a modification of the RC’s statutes, namely of its article 1 (and partly article 2). Our own statutes’ Article 13 indicates the formal procedure we have to follow to implement this change (<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/research-networks/research-committees/rc45-rational-choice/rc45-statutes>). The essential point here is that the modification cannot formally take place before our next business meeting, meaning in July 6-11 2025 when we will meet in Rabat.

Our internal discussion is less advanced however on the possibility to modify the RC name in order to make visible the change in the scientific focus. On this point, replies themselves to the survey are less clear. While, as noted, virtually all respondents were in favour of a name change, when explicitly asked for ideas about a possible new name, 17 out of 32 did not provide any suggestions (with no significant difference between past and current members); among the 15 respondents who provided a suggestion, there is no clear trend. The words “analytical sociology” is contained in 6 out of the 15 suggestions; the word “computation” appears in 3 proposals, and “social mechanisms” recurs in 2 suggestions. But there is no combination of words that recur more frequently than others. My sense is that a good compromise that well summarizes the general

spirit of the abovementioned possible new description of our scientific project would be “**Micro-macro modelling**”. But, once again, the discussion must continue: I would like to invite all of you to express overtly a “vote” in favour or against this new label and/or proposing alternatives.

As to a possible name change, the formal procedure is different from the one concerning the modification of the description of our scientific project. While the latter is a RC’s internal procedure, the former requires to be approved by ISA Research Coordinating Committee (RCC), the Executive Committee (EC), and the Research Council (ReCo). To this aim, a document must be provided to ISA instances including the members’ approval, a justification for the change (including the abovementioned proposal for the section’s objective change), the reasons behind the name change; we have also show that the new name and approach is still a unique focus, not covered by any other existing Research Committee (or WG/TG). If we are able to submit this document by October 31, 2024, our request will be included in the Research Council agenda for their meeting in January 2025, and if approved, the name change could be done before the 5th ISA Forum in Rabat.

I do believe that it would be a great chance for us to appear under a renewed form and name at that time because ISA forums typically are moments where membership boosts are the most effective.

Next ISA forum in Rabat, to be held in July 6-11 2025, precisely is the last elements to be mentioned, which shows how well we have collectively worked over the last months. Submissions for session proposals were open from May 2<sup>nd</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>. Our research committee was allotted a maximum of 16 sessions (including the business meeting one). Thanks to the cooperation of many RC’s members as well as various colleagues who are not yet members, we were able to fill all these slots. Here is the full list of session proposals we received:

1. Sociology as Open Science: Ways to Improve Reproducibility and Credibility of Sociological Research *by* Ozan AKSOY (University College London);
2. Theoretical and Methodological Developments in Cognitive Sociology: Dual Processes and Framing *by* Clemens KRONEBERG

- (University of Cologne) and Andreas TUTIC (University of Bergen);
3. *Advances in Decision-Making Theory* by Vincent BUSKENS (Utrecht University);
  4. *Empirical Applications of Decision-Making Models* by Masayuki KANAI (Senshu University) and Jun KOBAYASHI (Seikei University);
  5. *What Is Social about Pro-Social Behaviour? Norms, Frames, Networks and Social Identity* by Sara Romano (University of Turin), Filippo Barbera (University of Turin), Renzo Carriero (University of Turin);
  6. *Micro-Behavioural Mechanisms of Violence* by Ozan AKSOY (University College London);
  7. *Thinking/Saying/Doing -- from Presentation of Self to Models and Metrics for Detecting and Understanding Bias in Self-Reports* by Guillermina JASSO (New York University) (Joint Session with RC28 Social Stratification);
  8. *Social Capital and Social Mechanisms* by Kazuto MISUMI (Kyushu University);
  9. *Social Networks, Social Trust, and Pro-Social Activities* by Naoki SUDO (Hitotsubashi University);
  10. *Personal or Egocentric Networks in Sociological Research* by Raffaele VACCA (University of Milan) and Viviana AMATI (University of Milano-Bicocca);
  11. *Agent-Based Models of Social Networks* by Federico Bianchi (University of Milan) and Andreas Flache (University of Groningen/ ICS);
  12. *Micro-Macro Explanations with Data Driven Agent-Based Models* by Lucas Sage (European University Institute) and Marijn Keijzer (Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse);
  13. *Harnessing (Generative) AI for the Study of Decision Making and Social Processes* by Ana MACANOVIC (Radboud University);
  14. *Big Data Analysis and Decision Making* by Hiroki TAKIKAWA (University of Tokyo);
  15. *Educational Workshop: How to Teach Students about Social Polarisation?* by Agata KOMENDANT-BRODOWSKA (University of Warsaw), Nataliia Sokolovska (Alexander von Humboldt Institut für Internet und Gesellschaft) and Wander JAGER (University of Groningen) (joint session with RC04

Sociology of Education (host committee) and RC34 Sociology of Youth).

These sessions promise to cover an impressive range of topics and methods, and session promoters must be warmly praised for accepting to contribute to our RC life. Our next step for the Rabat forum then is to help session organizers to stimulate paper submissions, which will be possible from the 5th of August till the 15th of October 2024.

In a nutshell, this is an exciting time for our research committee. There are various professional institutional places where the type of sociology that we like can consolidate. To name a few, let us think of the ASA “methodology”, “mathematical sociology” and our sister section “Decision-making, Networks, and Society”; the now well established International Network of Analytical Sociology (INAS) conference as well as the newborn Sociological Science conference; national academies like the Academy of Sociology (AoS) in Germany or international ones like the European Academy of sociology (EAS) should be also mentioned. Our RC at ISA has the potential to work as an additional space, or “focal point”, to borrow the nice expression from Rense Corten’s reply to the survey, where those who believe that sociology can be a rigorous science feel legitimate to come to discuss their research.

I wish you a relaxing, energizing and productive summer!

Gianluca Manzo

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## Expand Your Academic Network with ISA RC45

Joining the ISA RC45 community has numerous benefits, including access to journals and publications. What's more, with ISA membership, you won't have to worry about renewing your membership every year as it covers four calendar years. If you are a part of the ASA section on Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society, we encourage you to join ISA RC45, our sister community.

### Membership fees

**Regular Member:** \$309 for 4 years (just \$77/year)

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**Recent Publications of Interest**

**Articles:**

Jasso, Guillermina. 2024. "Poverty, Redistribution, and the Middle Class: Redistribution via Probability Distributions vs. Redistribution via the Linear Income Tax System." *Frontiers in Sociology* 8:1334925. Published online 2 February 2024. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1334925> .

Huang, Peng, Carter T. Butts. 2023. "Rooted America: Immobility and Segregation of the Intercounty Migration Network." *American Sociological Review*, 88(6):1031-1065.

Huang, Peng, Carter T. Butts. 2024. "California Exodus? A Network Model of Population Redistribution in the United States." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 48(3):311-339.

Huang, Peng, Carter T. Butts. 2024. "Parameter Estimation Procedures for Exponential- Family Random Graph Models on Count-Valued Networks: A Comparative Simulation Study." *Social Networks*, 76:51-67.

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**Call for papers**

**Special Issue Organization Studies**

**Platform Organizations and Societal Change**

**Guest Editors:**

Cristina Alaimo, LUISS University

Annabelle Gawer, University of Surrey

Stefan Haefliger, Stockholm School of Economics & City, University of London

Evelyn Micelotta, University of Ottawa

Georg Reischauer, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business & Johannes Kepler University Linz

Submission Deadline

February 28, 2025

See full description of the call: [description](#).

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**Editors' note**

We wish you all a pleasant summer break and hope to see you in future events organized by our sections. (Masa & Lucas)



Lucas Sage  
lucas.sage2@gmail.com



Masayuki Kanai  
mkanai@senshu-u.jp