Dear Race Workshop participants,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this! I suspect you may find parts of my argument controversial or, more problematically, confusing; I have a bad habit of moving too quickly from one claim to the next when I write. Please know any “overexplaining” stems from this awareness and not any doubts I have of you!

I’m most eager to receive feedback on the following issues, roughly arranged from most concrete to most abstract:

1) I haven’t written an interview guide before and would love any resources on how to go about this, particularly for such an idiosyncratic project (also, IRB).

2) I recognize that many of these citations are fairly old. I welcome any recommendations for more recent work!

3) While the proposal is deeply rooted in sociology, I’d like to be in conversation with ethnic/Latino/Chicano/American/Latin American studies if anyone has advice on appealing to those audiences.

4) I recently rewrote and expanded the Theoretical Framework, which has become for me the throbbing heart of the dissertation. As such, it’s crucial that this section be clear and compelling, even—indeed, especially—if you ultimately don’t agree with it.

These are some of my personal anxieties, but perhaps the most valuable information of all would be if some other area entirely stands out to you. As Aristotle wrote, “most people are bad judges concerning their own things”…

Looking forward,

Brandon Sward
SONG OF MYSELF:
PROXIMITY, REFLEXIVITY, AND CARNALITY IN MIGRATION STUDIES

by
Brandon Sward

Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal

Spring 2020
“Every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may rest assured that the explanation is false.”

—Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*

**Abstract**

Much qualitative research in sociology is undergirded by a powerful, seldom articulated, and even more seldom challenged assumption: Social scientists shouldn’t study those with whom they have personal ties. Nevertheless, sociologists also readily admit the need to establish “rapport” with their informants. This paradox belies a contradiction that has tormented sociology since its inception; namely, how to deal with individual subjectivity. These issues are particularly urgent in migration studies, wherein the question who is an “insider” or “outsider” is especially fraught. By focusing on family members descendant from Mexican immigrants to the US, this project seeks to ascertain how a relaxation of the “personal ties” rule affects data collection and analysis, in the process exploring whether and how we might establish criteria for intellectual rigor without the assumption of a positivist “objective observer.”

**Literature review: Family as imitation machine**

The study of international migration has been central to sociology as a discipline since its inception, especially in the US. In 1928, Robert Park wrote, “Migration as a social phenomenon must be studied not merely in its grosser effects, as manifested in changes in custom and in the mores, but it may be envisaged in its subjective aspects as manifested in the changed type of *personality* which it produces” (Park 1928, 887 emphasis added). It’s a bit strange to read these

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1 The meaning of this subtitle will become clear in the next section.
words from the perspective of 2020, a time when sociologists seldom if ever talk about “personality,” a subject typically relegated to psychology.2

Some of the landmark studies of migration in US sociology devoted a great deal of attention to the individual. Consider the example of The Polish Peasant, which contains the lengthy autobiography of a single Polish peasant: Władysław Wiśniewski. In their preface to his testimony, Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas argue, “A social institution can be fully understood only if we do not limit ourselves to the abstract study of its formal organization, but analyze the way in which it appears in the personal experience of various members of the group” (Znaniecki and Thomas 1958, 1833 emphasis added). Again, this focus on individual subjectivity feels slightly out of step with contemporary sociology, which has attended more to a Durkheimian macro-social level than how a single person navigates these forces.

At the same time, there are also moments that resonate quite well with sociology as it is currently practiced. For example, Znaniecki and Thomas assert, “it is the very task of science to reach, by a proper analysis of the data, generally applicable conclusions” (Znaniecki and Thomas 1958, 1911 emphasis added). This emphasis on generalization and theory-building is still very much with sociology and has even experienced a renaissance through the efforts of Kiernan Healy, who has positioned “nuance” as an enemy, rather than an ally, of theoretical elaboration (Healy 2015). Pace Healy, however, there’s a great deal we stand to lose if we move too quickly to the level of abstract theory.

To take an example from the migration literature, Monica Boyd criticizes overly individualistic approaches to the study of migration, arguing instead that the study of networks

2 This debate around the role of individual subjectivity in sociology restages questions that have bedeviled the discipline since its foundation, as described in greater detail in the Theoretical Framework section.
“permits understanding migration as a social product—not as the sole result of individual
decisions made by individual actors, not as the sole result of economic or political parameters,
but rather as an outcome of all these factors in interaction” (Boyd 1989, 642). The problem here
is similar to the one Durkheim confronts in *Suicide*, wherein he bases theories of individual
behavior on what is essentially descriptive statistics (Durkheim 1997). Statistician David
Freedman has described this move as exemplifying the “ecological fallacy,” or unjustified
movement between two distinct empirical levels (Freedman 2002). The great value in meso-level
units of analysis is that they can help mitigate the ecological fallacy by inserting another casual
mechanism between the micro- and macro-level processes, giving us at least two opportunities to
check for logical breakdowns (i.e., between micro and meso, and meso and macro).³

Beyond merely asserting the importance of networks in the decision to immigrate, Boyd
further argues that the study of networks also has an important role to play in the lives of
immigrants in their new homes: “Settlement and integration processes are influenced by kin and
friendship ties…. These personal networks provide money to finance moves. They also provide
food, shelter, job information and contacts, information on health care and social services,
recreation and emotional support” (Boyd 1989, 651). Although she doesn’t use the term
specifically, Boyd certainly has what we’ve been calling meso-level analysis in mind when she
writes that networks “mediate between individual actors and larger structural forces. They link
sending and receiving countries. And they explain the continuation of migration long after the
original impetus for migration has ended” (Boyd 1989, 661). Having thus made the case for an

³ To anticipate the next section, Abrutyn and Mueller explicitly cite this possibility for meso-
level analysis that Tarde opens up as a reason they’ve turned to him in their suicidological
research: “the laws of propinquity and prestige allowed us to bridge the mesolevel nature of
closed social networks and the microprocesses that occur within those networks” (Abrutyn and
Mueller 2014, 715). Also see footnote 18.
attention to the meso-level, the question remains: What form should this take vis-à-vis the social scientific study of migration? Naturally, “meso-level” is obviously just an adjective that describes the argumentative centering of some social entity between the two extremes of the macro and micro.

While the decision to migrate can arise suddenly as a result of shifting socio-political contexts (to take but a single example, consider the current refugee crisis along the US–Mexico border as waves of Central Americans flee violent and unstable regimes), the process of acculturation immigrants undergo in their new homes can be quite lengthy. Gone are the days when migration to the US was driven by white Europeans whose children were quickly assimilated into US society once they lost their accents, even if their parents faced xenophobic backlash. In contrast to conventional meliorist narratives, scholars like Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou have identified at least three distinct trajectories that characterize the fates of newcomers to the US:

One of them replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight into the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and tight solidarity (Portes and Zhou 1993, 82).

These divergent patterns of socio-cultural adaptation have been collectively labeled “segmented assimilation,” which immediately poses “an important theoretical question of what makes some immigrant groups become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or to get out of this undesirable route” (Zhou 1997, 975). To be sure, one of the difficulties of answering this question is that “assimilation” is an incredibly overdetermined category (Althusser 1967). Consider but one important example: language acquisition. Reminiscent of Boyd’s call to bring networks into migration studies, David Cort criticizes the attention given to
the child bilingualism at the expense of familial acculturation and finds that “child bilingualism is indeed independent of familial acculturation” (Cort 2010, 313). Cort motivates his intervention in part through findings from developmental psychology which suggest “the family is one of the main social institutions where many of the important lessons concerning how to adapt to society at large are learned” (Cort 2010, 314).

Even when we zoom out to a broader level, however, the family remains a consequential site for the flow of cultural knowledge across generations. In *Legacies*, their joint study of the “second generation,” Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut readily admit that “individuals and families do not face the strains of acculturation alone but rather within the framework of their own communities” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 54). The demands of acculturation can even be so intense that they reverse normal family hierarchies, such that “children can become, in a very real sense, their parents’ parents” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 51–3). This is especially true of families that trace their origins back to Latin America due to their “High levels of cohesion and low levels of intergenerational conflict” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 201).

It’s precisely this “stickiness” that makes Latino/a families a particularly important case for social research.4 By “stickiness,” I mean a density of social ties that act at once as a survival mechanism and barrier towards upward mobility.5 For example, Matthew Desmond and Ruth Turley find that the same family support that helps Latino/a students succeed in high school is ironically the same factor that prevents them from attending highly selective colleges (Desmond and Turley 2009). These results reinforce other studies of marginalized communities in the US, such as Carol Stack’s classic *All Our Kin*, wherein the extension of kinship-like ties beyond their

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4 I use “Latino/a” with all of the caveats of its distorting effects (Beltrán 2010; Mora 2014).
5 See footnote 18.
normal limits in white communities both allows members of the community to get what they need while also preventing any one individual from rising out of poverty (Stack 1983).

Despite the lamentations of scholars such as Robert Putnam about the waning of social capital in the US, there’s also what some have called a “dark side” of social capital, or the admittedly obvious fact that social ties allow resources to flow in multiple directions (Di Falco and Bulte 2010; Putnam 2000). This is, of course, a fact we’ve known since at least the publication of Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift*, which linked the ideas of bond and reciprocity (Mauss 2002). In any case, the difference between Latinos/as and African Americans is that many of the former are much more temporally proximate to migration than the latter, which is especially true for Mexican Americans.

To return to Portes and Rumbaut, who devote a whole section of *Legacies* to the “Mexican Case,” there are several features that make this group distinct. First, “It is the product of an uninterrupted flow lasting more than a century” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 277). Second, “Mexicans come from the only less-developed country sharing a land border with the United States” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 277). Third, “Because of their numbers, poverty, and visibility, Mexican immigrants were targets of repeated waves of nativist hostility throughout the twentieth century” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 277). Together, these factors contribute towards a “slow-motion” acculturation process that has the potential to provide a richer range of data than cases wherein acculturation happens more rapidly.

Once we combine these insights with those of family as an important meso-level social institution, we can begin to see how tracing acculturation across generations of a single family

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6 “Dark side” is rather unfortunate phrasing inasmuch as the cases used by these scholars to support their theories are usually people of color. I’ll use this term since it’s already in circulation but must flag these racial connotations.
might illuminate aspects of acculturation that have been obscured by through the comparison of immigrants across families rather than within them. Even if we agree with Durkheim that science begins with comparison, it remains equally true that we can compare across time rather than across cases, thus generating a large amount of data with from a small number of individuals. Indeed, a family study offers us rare and powerful longitudinal data with which to tease out correlation and causation and ultimately build robust and portable social theories.

**Theoretical framework: The specter of psychology**

It will be useful to begin with the question, “What is sociology?” The word itself is a portmanteau of the Latin *socius*, “companion,” and Greek suffix, *-logy*, “the study of.” The study of companionship. Auguste Comte, the father of positivism, sociology, and the philosophy of science, aspired that that the new discipline be a “social physics” that occupied itself with “social phenomena, considered in the same light as astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena, that is to say as being subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the special object of its researches” (Comte 1877, 599). This aspiration profoundly influenced Émile Durkheim, who first founded sociology as a formal academic discipline and whose “social fact” bears clear Comtean traces. In his *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), Durkheim explains how social facts consisted of “manners of acting, thinking, and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a *coercive power* by virtue of which they exercise control over him [sic]” (Durkheim 2014, 21 emphasis added). Durkheim held fast to this belief throughout his life.

In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he describes how social facts are “vested with an

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7 From the *Rules of Sociological Method*: “By comparing associations designed for very different goals and sifting out what they have in common. In this way all the differences present by the special ends around which societies are constituted cancel each other out and the social form alone emerges” (Durkheim 2014, 142 emphasis added).
authority that we cannot escape at will. When we try to resist it, to free ourselves from some of
the fundamental notions, we meet sharp resistance. Hence, far from merely depending upon us,
they *impose themselves upon us*” (Durkheim 1995, 13 emphasis added).

From early on, Durkheim gazed longingly at psychology, envious of its exorcism of the
twin specters of prejudice and subjectivity; “Such an advance remains to be accomplished in
sociology, which must pass from the subjective stage, beyond which it has hardly progressed, to
the objective stage” (Durkheim 2014, 71). Although Durkheim’s vision of the discipline won the
day, his wasn’t the only alternative; his most prominent critic was Gabriel Tarde, a social
psychologist argued, “Collective psychology, *inter-mental* psychology, that is, sociology, is…
possible only because individual psychology, *intra-mental* psychology, includes elements which
can be transmitted and communicated from one consciousness to others” (Tarde 2010, 95).8

Durkheim’s motivations are relatively straightforward; if sociology were truly a
psychological subfield it would have no need for its own departments. We might even read
Durkheim’s *Suicide* (1897) as proof by example of how even an ostensibly subjective (read:
psychological) decision like suicide could be explained through objective (read: social) facts
(Durkheim 1997). Accordingly, Durkheim and Tarde miss one another like ships in the night. In
a famous 1904 debate between the two, Tarde asserted that “to formulate laws it is not necessary
that the sciences be definitely established. A directive idea is necessary in research. Social
sciences do not owe their progress to rules of objective method but to their development in the
direction of psychology” (Tarde 2010, 140).9 In a striking summary of their disagreement, Tarde

8 We’ll explore later the inappropriateness of classifying Tarde as a psychologist, social or
otherwise.
9 Bruno Latour and his collaborators acted out an imagined version of this debate in 2008 at the
McCrum Lecture Theatre of Corpus Christi College during the conference *Tarde/Durkheim:
Trajectories of the Social* (Vargas et al. 2008).
explains, “Between us is the debate between nominalism and scholastic realism. I am a
nominalist. There can only be individual actions and interactions. The rest is only a metaphysical
entity, mysticism” (Tarde 2010, 140).

Although Durkheim “won” their debate, Tarde has haunted sociology ever since. Indeed,
the tension between the Durkheimian and Tardean strands of the discipline is one of its
animating forces. In his introduction to an edited collection of Tarde’s writings, Terry Clark
articulates the difference between Durkheim and Tarde as “Cartesianism” versus “Spontaneity”
(Clark 1969). Cartesianism was associated with “reason, order, and authority, and housed in the
bureaucratic institutions exemplifying this esprit de géométrie [sic]: the church, the
governmental administration, the army, and the state university system,” whereas Spontaneity
was “a mentality of artistic creation, romantic subjectivism, and personal invention guided by an
esprit de finesse” (Clark 1969, 8). For Durkheim the Cartesian, the world is clean and orderly;
everything has its place. Society bleeds into the cosmos, all is Mozartesque cadences and neatly

10 Tarde’s argument ironically anticipates Comte, the ur-positivist himself. In “Comte’s
Sociologies,” McQuilken DeGrange retracts Comte’s argument, including its uncomfortable
exclusion of affect from sociology, with the result that “Affective phenomena, being neither
biological nor sociological, constitute a true isolate, and as such are the basis for an independent
science” (DeGrange 1939, 22). This in turns leads to the dethroning of sociology as the “queen
of the sciences,” insofar as these phenomena “are more special, more complex, and more
eminent than the others, relating as they do to man’s [sic] individual existence, his ultimate
reality, they must hold the highest rank” (DeGrange 1939, 22). As Comte became aware of this
problem, he realized “he had divided what is in fact indivisible. Feeling, thought, action, are but
aspects of the indivisible nature of man; they are the abstract elements of which individuality it
composed. To separate them places the mind in a false position” (DeGrange 1939, 22). The
consequence of this submerged history is that “if Comte’s work as a whole had the unexpected
result of revealing a psychological science at the summit of the scientific hierarchy, could it not
be said that Comte began by striving to be a sociologist and ended by becoming a psychologist?”
(DeGrange 1939, 24). Perhaps Tarde, then, is a truer Comtean than Durkheim.

11 For an overview of Cartesianism and its effects, see Emily Grosholz’s Cartesian Method and
the Problem of Reduction (Grosholz 1991).
tied ends (Durkheim 1995; Durkheim and Mauss, 1963). But for Tarde the Spontaneist, society doesn’t exist; only a mirage willed into existence by those who fear true complexity.

We can hear the echoes of these disciplinary birth pangs in much of the sociological literature. Consider *Body and Soul*, Loïc Wacquant’s journey from student to boxer (Wacquant 2004). An outspoken proponent of “carnal sociology,” Wacquant describes the knowledge he acquired through his training as “prediscursive” and “instinctual.” We are, in other words, firmly rooted in the Spontaneous, where intuition reigns supreme. Indeed, the terms *esprit de géométrie* and *esprit de finesse* come from Blaise Pascal, for whom

> Those who are accustomed to judge by feeling [*esprit de finesse*] do not understand the process of reasoning, for they would understand at first sight, and are not used to seek for principles. And others, on the contrary, who are accustomed to reason from principles [*esprit de géométrie*], do not at all understand matters of feeling, seeking principles, and being unable to see at a glance (Pascal 2006, 47).

And yet, Wacquant refuses to limit himself to one side of this dichotomy, claiming that ethnographers “are suffering beings of flesh and blood who… understand much of their topic ‘by body’ and then work… to tap and translate what they have comprehended viscerally into the conceptual language of their scholarly discipline” (Wacquant 2005, 467). For what is “translation into the conceptual language of a scholarly discipline” if not “reasoning from principles”?

At the risk of armchair psychoanalysis, Wacquant seems rather testy about where he falls on this proposed Cartesianism/Spontaneity or reason/intuition spectrum. For example, he objects, *Body and Soul “is not an exercise in ‘native anthropology,’ since I am a sociologist who became a boxer of sorts and not the other way around”* (Wacquant 2005, 469 emphasis added). This proclamation reads rather strange coming from an ethnographer who staked the novelty of his

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approach on the fact that he really became a boxer, thus making “participant-observation” truly worthy of its name. Exhortations like the following only underscore this anxiety: “‘Go native armed,’ that is… guided by a constant effort, once you have passed the ordeal of initiation, to objectivize this experience and construct the object, instead of allowing yourself to be naively embraced and constructed by it“ (Wacquant 2011, 88–9). But if Wacquant’s ultimate goal is to let knowledge pass into his body, to “become intuitive,” then from what basis does he “objectivize” this experience? And how does this square with his assertion that successful field work “binds” researchers to their subjects with “affective ties that encourage identification and transference” (Wacquant 2009, 122)?

It seems Wacquant wants to have his proverbial cake and eat it too, shifting between the register of the cerebral sociologist and the embodied subject with disarming brazenness:

The personal trials and ring tribulations of [Body and Soul’s] author are invoked… inasmuch as they inform us about… the multifaceted social alchemy whereby pugilistic agents are forged. The author thus enters into the ethnography not as the singular individual Loïc Wacquant but as “‘Busy’ Louie” (Wacquant 2005, 469).

This clean separation of Loïc Wacquant and Busy Louie belies how implicated Wacquant believes himself to be. At one moment, Wacquant valorizes “carnal entanglement with a mesh of forces pregnant with silent summons and invisible interdictions that elude the scholastic distinction between subject and object” and asks that “we revoke the dominant dualistic paradigm of embodiment, canonized by Descartes at the start of the rationalist revolution”

13 Though Wacquant himself readily admits falling prey to such seductions: “Completing this experimental study of pugilism… has entailed closing a chapter of my life that I wish would have remained open” (Wacquant 2005, 472).

14 The relevance of “transference” and “countertransference” for sociological research will be unpacked at length in the data section, below.
(Wacquant 2014, 10; 2005, 466). At another, he insists, “For carnal sociology, gaining a visceral grasp of the *vis viva* of the social world is not... a rejection of... the Durkheimian agenda of sociological reason but an indispensable means for its realization” (Wacquant 2014, 10). At times, Wacquant sounds the devout Durkheimian, asserting *Body and Soul* “firmly grounds its subjects in an objective social structure of material forces and symbolic relations,” an entirely fair characterization of Durkheim (Durkheim 1995; Durkheim and Mauss, 1963; Wacquant 2005, 470). But Wacquant simultaneously situates himself in “opposition to the *animal symbolicum* of the neo-Kantian tradition... on the one hand, and... the symbolic interactionists, on the other” (Wacquant 2011, 88).

The point here isn’t to accuse Wacquant of uncareful thinking; inconsistencies often appear for a reason, especially in talented scholars. So, let’s dwell here for a moment. The forefather of symbolic interactionism is George Herbert Mead, for whom, “The individual mind can only exist in relation to other minds with shared meanings,” and it’s precisely these “shared meanings” that make symbolic interactionism *symbolic* (Mead 1982, 5). *Animal symbolicum* is a reference to Ernst Cassirer, who proposed in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that, contra the Aristotelian *animal rationale*, humans are “symbol-making” or “symbolizing” animals (Cassirer 1965a, 1965b, 1965c, 1998). In his more accessible *An Essay on Man*, he argues, “Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man’s *sic* cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*” (Cassirer 1944, 44).

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15 Cf., the above discussion of Descartes vis-à-vis the Durkheim/Tarde debate.
16 Even if we grant that there’s a place for carnal sociology within the Durkheimian paradigm, there’s still the problem of Wacquant’s self-contradictory opinions of the symbolic.
17 This phrasing isn’t actually from Mead himself, but rather from David Miller’s “Introduction” to the edited volume *The Individual and the Social Self*. 
Wacquant’s suspicion of Cassirer is ironically similar to Tarde's of Durkheim. Wacquant worries opening the Pandora’s box of the symbolic will obscure us “suffering beings of flesh and blood,” just as Tarde worried that social facts unmoor us from material reality (Wacquant 2005, 467). But Wacquant sees a solution in his mentor Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, which “not only illuminates the variegated logics of social action” but also “grounds the distinctive virtues of deep immersion in and carnal entanglement with the object of ethnographic inquiry” (Wacquant 2011, 82).

Table 1: Tarde’s third, fourth, and fifth “laws of imitation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Emotional Imitation</strong></th>
<th>“The third law finds decision making, and even custom, as shaped by the underlying socioemotional moorings that tie people to each other, and to their group” (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014, 707).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prestige Imitation</strong></td>
<td>“Prestige and power impose a bias on lower-status folks, and thereby, we should expect the flow of innovation to be from high classes to low classes” (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014, 710).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Propinquity and Imitation</strong></td>
<td>“The greater a person’s propinquity and prestige, the greater his/her influence” (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014, 712).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another parallel between Wacquant and Tarde is their understanding of *imitation* as a crucial vector of social transmission. Wacquant explains how “Pugilistic knowledge is… transmitted by mimeticism or countermimeticism, by watching how others do things, scrutinizing their moves, spying on their responses… copying their routine, by imitating them more or less consciously” (Wacquant 2006, 117 emphases added). As the final clause of his quote evidences, this training works on bodily and affective levels simultaneously. It is this socioemotional

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18 Bourdieu (in)famously defined *habitus* as “not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure” (Bourdieu 2010, 166). For Neo-Bourdiesians like John Levi Martin who worry that “Bourdieu allowed himself to use the language of a pseudo-Durkheimian ‘grid of perception’ understanding of habitus… in which consciousness worked and played but of which it was never aware,” Wacquant represents a return to the “cognitive origins” of *habitus* (Lizardo 2004; Martin 2019, 120).

19 Sara Ahmed defines *affect* as “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects” (Ahmed 2010, 29).
quality of imitation that has drawn sociologists like Seth Abrutyn and Anna Mueller to Tarde in their attempt to account for suicide epidemics that the Durkheimian model can’t explain (Abrutyn and Mueller 2014; Durkheim 1997). Abrutyn and Mueller find Tarde’s five “laws of imitation” to be particularly helpful (especially the third, fourth, and fifth), which they term the laws of “emotional imitation,” “prestige imitation,” and “propinquity and imitation,” respectively (see Table 1, above). Wacquant describes his—or, rather, Busy Louie’s—coach as an “adoptive father” and that habitus is “cathectic (in the idiom of Talcott Parsons) or libidinal (in the vocabulary of Sigmund Freud). It entails the vesting of one’s life energies into the objects, undertakings, and agents that populate the world under consideration” (Wacquant 2011, 84; Wacquant 2014, 9). Although he proclaims time and again that his sociology is “not of the body… but from the body,” Wacquant’s affective language suggests he’s actually gone through the body to arrive somewhere else (Wacquant 2005, 446).

I’ve dwelt upon Wacquant at such length because he’s an ideal example of a struggle which has dogged sociology since its foundation. Its many names include: structure vs. agency, society vs. self, Cartesianism vs. Spontaneity, Durkheim vs. Tarde. Despite Wacquant’s self-proclaimed, if idiosyncratic, Durkheimianism, his rejection of symbolism and embrace of affect betray a red thread of Tardeanism. But it’s not as if Wacquant just needs to accept Tarde as “right” and Durkheim as “wrong”—or at least not as these two thinkers have been presented thus

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20 Indeed, Freud’s concept of the libido is explicitly linked to the family, particularly the parents. The first appearance of infantile sexuality is the oral stage, wherein “sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food”; namely, the mother’s breast (Freud 1995, 273).

21 This deep imbrication of mind and body will be explored more fully in the data section, below; see in particular its discussions of anti-Cartesianism and somatic countertransference.

22 These dichotomies are precisely those ANT seeks to unravel (Law 1999).

23 “Collective effervescence” only serves to reinforce this point, insofar as the ecstasy Durkheim describes is one that can only be felt with and through others; cf. “the Dionysian” (Durkheim 1995, 228; Nietzsche 1967).
far. Since the 1999 re-release of Tarde’s *Monadologie et sociologie* (“Monadology and Sociology”), however, we’ve witnessed a veritable “renaissance of *philosophie tardienne*” quite different from the Tarde that Clark presented three decades prior (Toews 1999). This is the Tarde that philosopher/anthropologist/sociologist Bruno Latour excitedly identified as a predecessor of his controversial “actor–network theory” (ANT).24 Despite its ability to open up new areas of social inquiry, many have struggled to accept how “actor-network theory may be understood as a *semiotics of materiality,*” which “takes the semiotic insight, that of the relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials” (Law 1999, 4).25

Latour dives directly into the most outlandish sections of *Monadologie et sociologie,* such as Tarde’s claim that

everything is a society and… all things are societies. And it is quite remarkable that science, by a logical sequence of its earlier movements, tends to strangely generalize the notion of society. It speaks of cellular societies, why not of atomic societies? Not to mention societies of stars, or solar systems. All of the sciences seem fated to become branches of sociology (Tarde 1999, 58).

*Monadologie et sociologie* borrows its eponymous “monad” from Gottfried Leibniz, who argues that “corporeal mass, which is thought to have something over and above simple substances, is

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24 In his “Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network,” science and technology studies scholar John Law explains how the “[heterogeneous network] lies at the heart of actor-network theory, and is a way of suggesting that society, organizations, agents, and machines are all effects generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials” (Law 1992, 380; cf. Hetherington 1999; Star 1991).

25 This decentering of the human might be epistemologically salutary for reasons John Levi Martin lists in his apology for field theory; namely, that “we have a great number of prejudices about our own constitutions that we cannot rid ourselves of, because we do not know what all of them are” (Martin 2003, 13). While we might imagine an ANT critique of field theory as yet another breed of sociological mysticism à la Durkheim, but Martin’s careful situation of field theory within the historical discovery of magnetism attains a much higher degree of specificity than the social fact. See also footnote 42.
not a substance but a phenomenon resulting from simple substances, which alone have unity and absolute reality” (quoted in Rutherford 2018, 374).26 The appeal is obvious: In his search for a stable epistemo-ontological foundation for his nascent discipline, the monad offered Tarde not only hard bedrock upon which to build, but also through which sociology reclaim its crown as the Comtean “queen of the sciences.”27

Despite its apocalyptic title, “Gabriel Tarde and the End of the Social” doesn’t herald the end of the social but its rebirth—this time purged of that sickly Durkheimianism which took “society as the cause instead of seeing that it is never more than a highly provisional consequence” and committed the sin of distinguishing “social laws from the agents acted on by those laws” (Latour 2002, 125). This new social is inoculated against Durkheimian mysticism, for “To speak of laws of nature which preside over the activities of blind atoms, is even more spiritualist than to endow those atoms with some will and purpose, since it implies that those laws are ‘listening to’ and ‘obeying’ some voice which has never been ‘uttered by anyone’” (Latour 2002, 128). Latour accordingly declares, “no sociology was ever further from psychology than Tarde’s,” and once we realize this individual is the monad, we see how this ostensible paradox in reality isn’t paradoxical at all (Latour 2002, 127).28 But in his eagerness to recruit Tarde for ANT, Latour overlooks a wrinkle noticed by almost all of Tarde’s interpreters.

For a sociologist bold enough to imagine societies of stars and planets, Tarde remains stubbornly attached to the family. While Durkheim “maintained… that the elementary social unit was the horde… Tarde retorted that it was the individual, or at least the household” and his

26 We might even trace the monad further back to Epicurean atomism as represented in Lucretius’s De rerum natura (Lucretius 2008).
27 See footnote 8.
28 Again, see footnote 8.
“preferred solution for… moral problems was… a renewed strengthening of family ties, the same solution that had been favored by conservative critics of industrialism” (Clark 1969, 18 emphasis added; Clark 1969, 52). More recently, theorists have pointed out the contradiction between Tarde’s familism and his vision of the universe as a jumble of monads. On the contrary, Tarde readily admits, “the family is the original starting point of sociality” (Toews 2003, 87). Why does Tarde do this? Why mar his radical argument with that most conventional of institutions?

To answer, we must return to the laws of imitation. Tarde cannot conceptually give up imitation because it’s how he explains social change, giving him an epistemological leg up on Durkheim, who “was much less precise in this area” (Clark 1969, 18). While he at times imagines a laissez-faire competition of ideas, Tarde also knew “Individual action was not simply a matter of imitating the best beliefs and desires,” but “was substantially determined by a kinship bond that preceded the act of imitation” (King 2016, 58 emphasis added). If it were untrue that “the family tie facilitated the coordination of imitative rays,” then we’d be left with a chaotic idea soup (King 2016, 58). But since the family too is not one, Tarde specifies that individuals

29 Findings from child development reinforce this hypothesis. Consider, for example, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Reminiscent of Tarde, Piaget understood “imitation as the process that ensures the transition from sensorimotor intelligence to representative imagery” (Piaget 1962, 509). From as early as the age of 8 months, “sensorimotor imitation clearly testifies to an effort to copy a presented model” (Piaget 1962, 509). For Piaget, “imitation constitutes a kind of representation, but in the form of acts in the strict sense of a material reproduction of the present thing,” though “still without any mental evocation or internal representation” (Piaget 1962, 510). During the 10- to 12-month period, “imitation is no longer subject to the prior condition that it can be initiated for a new model only when that model is present in the perceptual field,” a phenomenon Piaget termed “deferred imitation” (Piaget 1962, 510). By 15 to 18 months, “the act of intelligence, until then restricted by the necessity to proceed by trial and error, for the first time gives in the child to… momentary interruptions of action, followed by abrupt new reorganizations” (Piaget 1962, 510). See also footnote 41.
are predisposed to “the imitative rays coming from their kin and especially from their father” (King 2016, 58).30

If this isn’t the moment to turn to psychoanalysis, then there are no such moments. The field’s founder, Sigmund Freud, was among the first to theorize the psychic effects of the family, effects that lasted a lifetime. Freud could even explain the imitation of fathers specifically, inasmuch as an “identification with the father” was a successful resolution of his infamous Oedipus complex (Freud 1961, 32).31 And we anyways shouldn’t expect much help from Tarde, who “relied on the family “to initiate and unite imitative patterns,” but “never developed the concept of the collective adequately” and furthermore “never explored how group membership was possible nor how it had an overbearing influence on individual practice” (King 2016, 58).

This theoretical intervention might be described as a Freudian expansion of Latourian actor-network theory, which along the way clarifies Tarde and opens up new methodological possibilities. While ANT has extended the network to encompass nonhumans, its practitioners haven’t pushed much in the “other direction” (i.e., towards those “closer” to, rather than “further away,” from us). If atoms and cells are amenable to social analysis, then surely aunts and uncles

30 Indeed, the father embodies several of the qualities Abrutyn and Muller single out, such as emotional attachment, prestige, and propinquity (Abrutyn and Muller 2014).
31 This is, of course, only true for boys. Freud regards identification with the mother as the preferred course for girls; cf., Carl Jung’s proposed “Electra complex” (Jung 1915, 69–70). Even if girls come to identify with their mothers, however, this merely occludes their underlying penis envy, which “reaches its highest point in the consequentially important wish that she also should be a boy” (Freud 1916, 57). Indeed, even boys suffer from a sort of penis envy. Freud postulates that children assume everyone has the same genitals they do, a conviction “energetically adhered to by the boy and tenaciously defended against the contradictions which soon result, and are only given up after severe internal struggles,” which Freud calls the castration complex (Freud 1916, 56). This psychic need to constantly reprove masculinity parallels findings within the sociology of gender that masculinity “represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices” (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 841).
are too. But the stakes here are much higher than what is or isn’t “allowed” a social researcher; there are potentially profound implications for how qualitative researchers understand fundamental terms like “proximity,” “rapport,” “access,” and “bias.” And to return to Wacquant, this project also tests the boundaries of carnal sociology, for what could be more “entangling,” “visceral,” “libidinal,” “cathectic,” or “binding” than the family? Finally, attention to affect could help us answer Robert Park’s almost century-old exhortation to envision migration “in its subjective aspects as manifested in the changed type of personality which it produces” (Park 1928, 887). As a forefather of personality theory, Freud also has much to offer here, and the family analytically bridges immigrants as social actors and immigration as a social process, giving us a full picture of this powerful force remaking the globe.

Data: True entanglement

Table 2: Mother’s living first-, second-, and third-degree relatives, organized alphabetically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert Gabaldon</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrie Sward</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Colorado Springs, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Gabaldon</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Molina</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Gabaldon</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Purkey</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Gabaldon</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hatch, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Moncada</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Riverside, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Jensen</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sun City, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Gabaldon</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazlyn Sward</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kassie Jensen</td>
<td>Niece</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupe Gabaldon</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupe Jensen</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sun City, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Gabaldon</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Torrance, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Moncada</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hatch, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie Bonilla</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Huntsville, AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Moncada</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Gabaldon</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 See the literature review section, above.
The data for this project will principally come from 24 semi-structured interviews (see “Appendix” for interview schedule) with my mother, Rita Gabaldon, and her first-, second-, and third-degree relatives (8, 4, and 11, respectively). My mother’s family is originally from Mexico, though assimilation has been slow. My grandparents were the first to leave New Mexico, my mother and her siblings the first to graduate high school. My mother and her sister were the first to marry gringos and neither of them can speak Spanish, nor can one of their brothers. I’m the first person from my mother’s side of the family to graduate from college, let alone pursue doctoral-level studies.

As far as I can ascertain, I’m at least fifth generation, though possibly many more. There’s of course the question of “mixed status marriages,” but also the fact that my family began settling in the place which is now New Mexico before it was part of the US, before it was even part of Mexico (López 2015). The Hapsburgs established New Spain in 1521, and by the end of that century, many of my ancestors were crossing the Atlantic to settle in the Viceroyalty. By the early 1600s, they’d begun to cluster in the province of Santa Fe de Nuevo México. Beginning in 1810, insurgent groups took up arms against the Spanish Empire, eventually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rita Gabaldon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Lomita, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalinda Molina</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Idyllwild, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolph Molina</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pomona, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina Gabaldon</td>
<td>Niece</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hatch, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyler Sward</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 “First-degree” meaning parents, siblings, and children; “second-degree,” aunts, uncles, nephews, and nieces; and “third-degree,” cousins.
34 This is all by way of saying the question of “generation” can become especially fraught especially quickly, insofar as it measures time between “sender” and “receiver” countries as though these entities were transhistorical entities rather than what they are: delicate balances of ego, power, and greed. The task, in other words, is to perform what Pierre Bourdieu describes as an epistemological “break,” wherein the social scientist abandons “folk concepts” in order to conduct a theoretically rigorous analysis (Bourdieu 1991, 13; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 242).
winning independence in 1821. Unfortunately, the peace was soon interrupted by the outbreak of the Mexican–American War in 1846, triggered by border disputes between the expansionist President James Polk and the fledging state. By 1848, US forces had captured Mexico City and forced the chastened government to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which included the Mexican Cession, whereby Mexico ceded 529,000 square miles of territory to the US, the third largest acquisition of territory in US history after the Louisiana and Alaska Purchases.

As the segmented assimilation scholars have been pondering for decades now, how is it that Europeans of sufficient wealth to cross an ocean nevertheless produce progeny that in many cases continue to languish near the bottom of the US socioeconomic ladder? One way to proceed would be to use an approach like that of Tomás Jiménez, who hypothesizes that part of the answer lies in a century of largely uninterrupted Mexican immigration to the US (Jiménez 2009; cf. Portes and Rumbaut 2001 on the “Mexican case,” above). With level and clear logic, Jiménez selects two field sites: one wherein Mexican immigration had started and stopped, and another wherein it had remained more stable. In a curious way, we can hear within this design the echoes of another sociologist discussed at length above; in his *Suicide*, Durkheim similarly sought to draw inferences about individual behavior from a range of macro-level data, with all of the “ecological fallacy” problems Freedman identifies (Durkheim 1997; Freedman 2002).

And yet, switching our focus from the macro to the micro solves one problem only to create another. One can see the balancing act in complete clarity in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, when Wacquant warns, “as the mere execution of the model built by the analyst, objectivism ends up projecting into the minds of agents a (scholastic) vision of their practice that, paradoxically, it could only uncover because it methodologically set aside the experience agents

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35 See discussion of Freedman in the literature review section, above.
have of it” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 8). We hence find ourselves at an epistemo-
methodological impasse: Individuals exist and must be accounted for but any attempt to
understand them is liable to tell us more about ourselves than it does about others. Bourdieu was
certainly aware of this problem and we need not look further than the title of the aforequoted
work.

One of the first tasks completed by psychoanalysts-in-training is to undergo analysis
themselves. After all, both analysts and analysands share the peculiar affliction of being human.
One of the most immediately recognized consequences of this fact is what Sigmund Freud called
“transference,” of the redirection of the patient’s feelings onto the therapist: “The patient sees in
his analyst the return—the reincarnation—of some important figure out his childhood or past,
and consequently transfers on to him feelings and reactions that undoubtedly applied to this
model” (Freud 2013, 63). This is both a barrier to the therapeutic relationship, insofar as it
merely restages previous scenarios, as well as a great boon to it, insofar as it makes these
dynamics reworkable. In Freud’s words, “the transference, which, whether affectionate or
hostile, seemed in every case to constitute the greatest threat to the treatment, becomes its best
tool” (Freud 1977, 552). Of course, the therapist is also not some tabula rasa, but rather projects
neuroses onto the client “as a result of the patient’s influence on his unconscious feelings”
(Freud 1961, 144).

Though his views are the subject are complicated, Freud mainly saw
“countertransference” as an obstacle the analyst must recognize and overcome (Holmes 2014).
While Bourdieu was similarly anxious about the danger of projection in the scientific study of

36 This is problem is precisely what derails Freud’s treatment of Fräulein Elisabeth von R.; a.k.a.,
Ilona Weiss (Breuer and Freud 2009, 135–82).
social life, he is clearer than Freud was about how this difficulty was to be tackled: reflexivity. In his gloss of Bourdieu’s position on the matter, Wacquant specifies, reflexivity “fastens not upon the private person of the sociologist in her idiosyncratic intimacy but on the concatenations of acts and operations she effectuates as part of her work and on the collective unconscious inscribed in them” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 46). In other words, what’s important isn’t the particularities of the researcher, but rather how the researcher might subconsciously act out social scripts.

Although he was certainly aware of countertransference, Freud didn’t devote much attention to it, to such an extreme that he thought it was appropriate to analyze his own daughter, Anna, from 1918 to 1921 and again from 1924 to 1929. If the therapist were a mere conduit through which analysis flowed as Freud believed, then the same patient should receive the same analysis regardless of who performed it, at least if correctly conducted. Of course, this isn’t the case, and countertransference has gone on to become a major topic among psychoanalytic theorists to the present day. Even if we agree with these developments, the question remains of whether this bar against the study of our intimates holds in sociological, rather than psychological, analysis. I argue that the problems that beset countertransference, or the influence of personal feelings toward the research subject, isn’t as inherently problematic for sociologists due to the reasons Wacquant describes above: The influence about which Bourdieu worries is more one’s attitude toward groups than individuals.

As the son of a mailman who grew up in southwestern France and completed his military service in a revolutionary Algeria, Bourdieu would’ve stuck out like a sore thumb at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and École normale supérieure, two of the prestigious French schools he attended (Bourdieu 1960, 1977). It’s entirely unsurprising, then, that Bourdieu’s magnum opus be
"Distinction", a damning critique of the pretentions of Parisian taste (Bourdieu 1984). Related

Far from being a dispassionate observer, it’s clear Bourdieu had a stake in what he studied. Indeed, all researchers have *some* stake in their work, since they devote years, or even decades, to it. Nevertheless, many of those who work on subjects with which they have a personal connection can be dismissed as engaging in “me-search,” an epithet especially used to delegitimate scholars of color (Hoang 2015, 20). All the same, social science remains stubbornly committed to “neutrality” and “objectivity,” obsessions them stem from the Comtean “social physics” described above.

Through this lens, the legacy of Bourdieu appears quite differently. If we read Bourdieu as deeply concerned about the potential effects of subconscious or semi-conscious presuppositions upon his work, then the “carnal sociology” of his protégé Wacquant is an entirely logical progression. By putting his body “on the line” in *Body and Soul*, Wacquant
acquires that rarest and most precious form of data: The feel of another. Accordingly, those Allison Pugh dubs “cognitive culturalists” have praised Wacquant for his dedication to acquiring a deeply embodied knowledge all but opaque to the sociological gaze (Pugh 2013).

Martin describes how Wacquant “is in a unique position to describe the transformation of someone over whom the boxing field has no hold to someone who can be powerfully pulled and pushed by it,” but it’s difficult to believe that a grad student who could’ve studied anything (who indeed intended to work in an entirely different area), but chose to write about boxing—and even to become a boxer—is someone “over whom the boxing field has no hold” (Martin 2019, 129 emphases added). But we shouldn’t part ways with Martin entirely; if any attraction to what we study disqualifies our research, not only academic but human knowledge tout court would slip into the abyss. If we want to build an epistemologically healthy social science, it seems safer to simply admit these entanglements.

There’s certainly a difference between Loïc Wacquant and Busy Louie, but it isn’t helpful to think about this contrast in terms of “investment.” Again, it’s epistemologically safer to understand Loïc Wacquant and Busy Louie as different phenomenological modalities (Moran 2017). Martin readily admits, “good ethnographers work on talking to multiple informants, and seeing people at different times of day and in different social confirmations, and so on. But the problem is only aggravated for a carnal ethnography, where the ethnographer cannot do that—cannot try on different bodies” (Martin 2019, 130). While true for the Cartesians, what happens

37 Indeed, Bourdieusian ethnographer Matthew Desmond uses this phrasing almost directly as the title for his On the Fireline (Desmond 2007).
38 Pugh identifies John Levi Martin and Stephen Vaisey as representatives of this camp.
39 For an example of his “pre-pugilistic” research, see Wacquant’s “The Dark Side of the Classroom in New Caledonia” (Wacquant 1989).
if we admit the body is contextual, that it has different meanings at different moments in different places (Descartes 2017)?

Martin argues, “Wacquant’s work—precisely because it involved attacks on his body more than his mind—led him back to a conception of the habits… more in keeping with previous understandings of habitus (and habit) as an embodied way of being” (Martin 2019, 120 emphasis added). This mind-body dichotomy restages the subjectivity-objectivity dichotomy by privileging the body as a truer, more immediate, and hence reliable source of data. But many psychotherapists not only accept the interpenetration of mind and body in the phenomenon of “somatic countertransference,” or a therapist’s experience of the physical state of a patient, but see it as a resource rather than a liability (Athanasiadou and Halewood 2011; Booth, Trimble, and Egan 2010; Margarian 2014). Similarly, could the ties between sociologist and subject be a resource rather than a liability?

**Methodology: The double bind of proximity**

As argued above, Comte’s vision of sociology as a “social physics” has had a profound effect on the development of the discipline. To press the metaphor, an atom doesn’t care whether the eye on the other side of the microscope belongs to a white, black, or brown body—it behaves the same regardless. Positivism relies upon many this same assumption; Durkheimian social facts are “out there” in the world, patiently awaiting discovery, existing entirely independent of

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40 For the proverbial nail in the coffin of Cartesian dualism, see philosopher Gilbert Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle 1949).

41 Much of this work is reinforced by neuroscientific research on “mirror neurons,” which fire during both an action and the observation of that same action by another, and also provides a biological basis for both Tardean and Piagetian imitation (Keysers 2009; Piaget 1962; Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004; Tarde 2010). See also footnote 29.
us. The obvious problem with this position is that social scientists have the unenviable task of studying what they themselves are: humans.42

The racial example above wasn’t carelessly chosen, since it is from the perspective of race that the positivist wall between researcher and research has been challenged. Indeed, a central argument that made by many academic activists during the rise of ethnic studies in the late ’60s and early ’70s was that communities of color could only be truly understood from the inside. In his “Insiders and Outsiders” from 1972, Robert Merton notes regarding the establishment of programs of black studies that “it is proposed that some white professors of the relevant subjects might be brought in since there are not yet enough black scholars to staff all the proliferating programs of study. But… this is only on temporary and conditional sufferance” (Merton 1972, 13). Regardless of whether one agrees with this agenda, it makes visible the assumed whiteness of social research, and of the academy more generally, up until this moment of self-awareness.43

42 As John Levi Martin points out, “social science is the unique case in which the lower level appealed to by mechanistic accounts is ourselves, and we have a great number of prejudices about our own constitutions that we cannot rid ourselves of, because we do not know what all of them are,” concluding that “there are extremely good reasons to refrain from privileging automatically a theory that can be linked to mechanisms,” insofar as “mechanisms tend to involve action by individuals” (Martin 2003, 13). This is all well and good so long as we understand mechanisms as Martin does; i.e., as a reference to “some readily understandable causal sequence that explains some theoretically accounted-for pattern” (Martin 2003, 11). We might respond, however, that Tarde offers us a model that troubles such a distinction between “mechanism” and “theory” by explaining how the micro-level can aggregate upwards into macro-. See also footnote 25.

43 Merton goes on to criticize what he calls “social sadism” and “sociological euphemism,” the former referring to “social structures which are so organized as to systematically inflict pain, humiliation, suffering, and deep frustration upon particular groups and strata” and the latter to “the kind of conceptual apparatus that, once adopted, requires us to ignore such intense human experiences as pain, suffering, humiliation, and so on” (Merton 1972, 38). Hence, the forced ignorance of subjectivity that Durkheimian positivism dictates may have both epistemological and political consequences; first by neglecting the invaluable micro-foundation of the individual,
Some sociologists have attempted to reduce this gap between research and researcher, especially in ethnography, where part of successful research is the transformation of observation (i.e., “research”) into participation (i.e., “researcher”). These efforts have been made most forcefully by Wacquant with reference to his scholarship on boxing (Wacquant 2004). Wacquant advocates for a “carnal sociology,” or “sociology not of the body as sociocultural object but from the body as fount of social intelligence and sociological acumen,” which “starts from the brute fact that… the human agent is a sentient and suffering being of flesh and blood” (Wacquant 2015, 5). While this approach makes sense for an intensely bodily object of analysis such as boxing, it isn’t immediately clear how much relevance it has outside of this sphere.

Of course, migration comes with a corporeal cost, especially in early generations when immigrants are disproportionately likely work as various manual laborers, but this is for good reason not the focus of the migration literature, insofar international migration also often requires profound cultural, social, linguistic, etc. adjustment, a process that spans generations. Due to its temporal horizon and emotional nature, the study of migration is ostensibly opaque to a carnal approach, to say nothing of the fact that immigrating for the purpose of sociological research would be unfeasible for most at a practical level. Nevertheless, we may be able to reap some of the benefits of carnal sociology rather simply: by having immigrants study themselves.44

While we might justifiably laud Wacquant for the methodological dedication he showed in becoming a “real” boxer, and while this training may shed light on the “black ghetto” in which

and second by refusing to consider that the powerful insights of personal perspectives might indeed constitute data.

44 Perhaps suggestions made by anthropologists like Diane Lewis as far back as 1973 are just now being taken up in sociology: “I feel, along with a number of other Third World anthropologists, that the time has come for the study of culture from the inside, by the insider, as a dominant approach in the discipline” (Lewis 1973, 588).
his gym was located, we would never claim Wacquant had experienced the embodied reality of being a black person in the US and hence was unable to know what boxing meant to these men to the same extent that he could learn the sharp pain of a blow to the gut, the swollen heat of a black eye, or the dull ache of tired muscles (Harris 1972; Logan et al 2015; Marcuse 1998). On the other hand, it’s precisely Wacquant’s “outsider” status that allows him to see and describe boxing as a human practice.45

Even if one grants that Body and Soul is evidence of how Wacquant was successfully able to assume a bodily understanding of his subjects, we still haven’t gotten to what Comte calls “affective phenomena,” which relate “to man’s [sic] individual existence, his ultimate reality” (DeGrange 1939, 22). Although we ought not to downplay the importance and value of Wacquant’s reflexivity, it may be (to riff on his title) that he captured body but not soul. We need not, however, tread into religious territory to recognize the pretensions of many sociologists. As Geoff Payne remarks, it’s implausible that “residents can say ‘I’ve lived here 20 years and I’m still an incomer…’ [but] most sociologists seem to have had relatively little difficulty in gaining access and acceptance” within the course of a few months (Payne 1996, 24–6).

Rather than hopelessly attempt to make up for some sort of epistemological inferiority complex with regard to their quantitative cousins, qualitative researchers are increasingly realizing the limits of positivism (Small 2009).46 Reflecting on two years of fieldwork on grief and loss in school communities, Louise Rowling suggests that the “failure to acknowledge the

45 For Merton too “insider” and “outsider” have a strange symbiotic relationship with one another, such that “We no longer ask whether it is the Insider or the Outsider who has monopolistic or privileged access to social truth; instead, we begin to consider their distinctive and interactive roles in the process of truth seeking” (Merton 1972, 36).
46 Mario Small’s rearticulation of Richard Feynman’s airplane metaphor in his 1974 commencement address at Caltech in his “How many cases do I need” is especially relevant here.
possible emotional interchange in the research process can be viewed as a legacy of the positivist position… and signals the difference in power relationships between researchers and subjects/participants in quantitative and qualitative research” (Rowling 1999, 168). Indeed, Susan Krieger has argued it’s practically impossible for there to be a radical separation of researcher and researched (Krieger 1996).

But even if we accept the impossibility of such a radical separation of researcher and subject, this doesn’t necessarily mean we shouldn’t try to have some daylight between the two. The danger of neglecting this task has been traditionally dubbed “going native,” an unfortunate term that betrays the colonial histories of anthropology, the discipline with which this critique is most closely associated (Malinowski 1922). Raymond Gold specifies between at least four difference combinations between “participation” and “observation” in “participant observation,” ranging from “complete participant” to “participant-as-observer” to “observer-as-participant” to “complete observer.” One of the consequences of this model is that the danger of “going native,” or passing “the point of field rapport by literally accepting his [sic] informant’s views as his own,” is balanced on the other side by the danger of “ethnocentrism,” which “occurs whenever a fieldworker cannot or will not interact meaningfully with an informant” (Gold 1958, 222).

It’s quite telling how sociologists are primarily concerned with just one of these pitfalls: “going native.” And it’s easy to see why. The fear of “going native” resonates well with the positivist agenda of a sharp ontological disassociation of studier and studied. The charge of “ethnocentrism,” on the other hand, is ironically a critique much more familiar to anthropologists

47 Cf., the anxieties around countertransference explored in the previous section.
48 For Malinowski, however, the term was aspirational rather than cautionary; the goal for him was precisely that the fieldworker come to an understanding of a society in a way analogous to the “native” (cf. Wacquant’s “going native armed” in the Theoretical Framework section, above).
seeking to methodologically atone for the sins of their disciplinary forefathers (Lewis 1973; Pels 2007, 2008). While we might mitigate this historical imbalance by reintroducing some of our anxieties around ethnocentrism, it’s important to remember that none of the positions Gold outlines are “safe,” and that part of the force of his parsing is to alert us how we must remain epistemologically vigilant.

More recently, social scientists have begun to think more deeply about the positions like “insider” and “outsider.” While a wave of feminist and “postmodern” theorists have called attention to the oversimplifications the insider/outsider binary produces, the dismantling of these categories has been underway for quite a while in sociology (Griffith 1998; Naples 1996; Obasi 2012; Turgo 2012). Let us return to Merton, again writing from the perspective of the early ’70s that “the array of status sets in a population means that aggregates of individuals share some statuses and not others; or, to put this in context, that they typically confront one another simultaneously as Insiders and Outsiders” (Merton 1972, 22).

While “insiderness” and “outsiderness” vary contextually, they also vary with their degree of depth. As explicated above, Gold began moving in this direction, though more contemporary researchers have pushed their insights further, especially with regard to gradations of “insiderness.” Despite their citation of Merton, many of these scholars don’t seem to have understood his argument. For example, James Banks offers a four-part typology of “cross-cultural researchers” that relies upon which (singular) culture researchers were “socialized” within and whether they endorse or reject (binary) “the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture” (Banks 1998, 8). While

49 We could, of course, trace this line back even further, for example to the social theory of Georg Simmel, in particular his work on “The Stranger,” though Simmel describes being a “stranger” as a quasi-permanent status (Simmel 1950).
any typology is necessarily schematic, the mutual exclusivity of these categories may do more harm than good if they bear little correlation to how social actors experience the world.

In a more Mertonian taxonomy, Andreas Giazitzoglu and Geoff Payne present a tripartite model of “insiderness,” ranging from level one (i.e., “the fundamental, objective, shared markers of identity represented by gender and ethnicity”) to level two (i.e., “Identities that are shared on the basis of learned cultural acts and rituals; and a mutual agreement between researcher and researched about how to articulate and reproduce the Bourdieusian ‘rules of the game’ in a given field”) to level three (i.e., “Totally familiar with the nuances of the culture being ethnographically analysed; with the ethnographer being a competent player, as well as articulator, of the game”) (Giazitzoglu and Payne 2018, 1155).

Despite their Mertonian permutations, these scholars essentially think about insider/outside status the same: as being primarily about shared identitarian categories. As has been previously argued, this is rather simplistic. Consider the author of this proposal: a queer biracial monolingual English speaker. Am I an insider when I study Chicanos/as (thus “denying” my white ancestry) or an insider when I study white people (thus “denying” my Mexican ancestry)? Or perhaps insiderism occurs when I study other biracial people (despite the fact that Mexico as a colonized country is itself the product of miscegenation between Amerindians and Spaniards)? But what if those hypothetical biracial people are bilingual or monolingual Spanish speakers? And what if my sexuality sets me off from other Chicanos/as, or if my race sets me off from other LGBTQ people? It’s a strange irony indeed that Merton, a heterosexual Russian Jew

50 These sorts of critiques are obviously far from new and have come to be called “intersectionality,” though we’re perhaps still unpacking the epistemo-methodological impacts of arguments originally made within socio-political contexts (Crenshaw 1989).
who has been dead almost two decades, seems to have a more sophisticated understanding of these issues than many more recent authors.

To be fair, not all of these methodologists succumb to such reductive reasoning. For example, with her concept of the “outsider phenomenon,” Nancy Naples “does not describe a specific social identity as in Simmel’s construct or set of statuses as in Robert Merton’s... formulation,” but instead “refers to the interaction between shifting power relations... and the personal and interpersonal negotiations adopted by residents to resist further differentiation from the perceived community” (Naples 1996, 85). While Naples by that token begins to break away from reductive identitarian categories, she still doesn’t quite get down to the level of the actual socio-affective ties between social researchers and those they study.

In order to get to this level, consider Christina Chávez-Reyes, whose *Five Generations of a Mexican American Family in Los Angeles* involved her studying her own family (Chávez 2007). In her reflections on this process and review of “insider studies,” Chávez-Reyes laments how “little insider research and a lack of development of an insider methodology have failed to systematically describe what insiders actually experience” (Chavez 2008, 475 emphasis added). The consequence of this paucity is that “the development of new qualitative research methodologies, changes in conceptualization of the researcher role, and the increase in insider scholars has generated little discussion about the unique methodological concerns relevant to insiders studying their own communities” (Chavez 2008, 475). This project seeks to join those like Giazitzoglu and Payne seeking to answer Chávez-Reyes’s call in a way that moves beyond their schemas to give an account of what happens when we study those closest to us.

51 Such a focus on the impact of research upon researcher dovetails quite neatly with debates around countertransference within psychoanalytic theory.
Schedule

Spring 2020: Montana

Present proposal at Reproductions of Race & Racial Ideologies Workshop
Defend proposal
Apply for IRB approval
Begin “Chapter 3”
Complete PhD Certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
Apply for CSRPC Graduate Research & Travel Grant (internal)
Apply for Pozen Center Research Grant (internal)

Summer 2020: Montana/Los Angeles

Complete “Chapter 3”
Fieldwork, phase 1 (interviews 25% complete)
Global Impact Internship (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center)

Autumn 2020: Montana/Los Angeles/New Mexico

Begin “Chapter 2”
Fieldwork, phase 2 (interviews 50% complete)
Apply for César Chávez Predoctoral Fellowship (2 years, external)
Apply for Gaius Charles Bolin Dissertation Fellowship (2 years, external)
Apply for Penn Predoctoral Fellowship for Excellence (1 year, external)
Apply for Ithaca College Diversity Fellowship (1 year, external)
Apply for Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship (1 year, external)

Winter 2021: Montana/Los Angeles/New Mexico

Complete “Chapter 2”
Fieldwork, phase 3 (interviews 75% complete)

Apply for IUPLR/UIC Mellon Fellowship Program (1 year, external)

Apply for MIT Diversity Predoctoral Fellowship (1 year, external)

Apply for Gettysburg Consortium for Faculty Diversity (1 year, external)

Apply for Mitchem Dissertation Fellowship Program (1 year, external)

Apply for ASA Minority Fellowship Program (1 year, external)

Apply for CSRPC Dissertation Completion Fellowship (1 year, internal)

Spring 2021: Montana/Los Angeles/New Mexico

Begin “Chapter 1”

Fieldwork, phase 4 (interviews 100% complete)

Summer 2021: Montana/Los Angeles/New Mexico

Complete “Chapter 1”

Fieldwork, phase 5 (makeup or ancillary interviews)

Autumn 2021: Dissertation completion fellowship

Write “Chapter 4”

JOB MARKET

Winter 2022: Dissertation completion fellowship

Write “Chapter 5”

JOB MARKET

Spring 2022: Dissertation completion fellowship

Revisions, editing, formatting, bibliography, submission

Defend dissertation

JOB MARKET
Provisional outline

Chapter 1  “Leaves of grass”
Introduction; argumentative overview; biographical background

Chapter 2  “We were never positivists” (potential journal: Sociological Theory)
Theoretical framework; Comte, Durkheim, and Tarde

Chapter 3  “Anxiety of influence” (potential journal: Qualitative Sociology)
Social proxemics, reflexivity, and qualitative methodologies in migration studies

Chapter 4  “Becoming ‘Americans’” (potential journal: International Migration Review)
Presentation and analysis of interview data

Chapter 5  “Whither sociology”
Conclusion; proposed criteria for a non-positivist intellectual rigor
Bibliography

UNDER CONSTRUCTION
Appendix

UNDER CONSTRUCTION