

Altruism, Morality & Social Solidarity Forum

A Forum for Scholarship and Newsletter of the *AMSS* Section of ASA

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AMSS and the Holocaust: Stealth Altruism in the Concentration Camps

Arthur B. Shostak
Drexel University

Paradoxically, the Holocaust, one of the darkest aspects of the 20th century, offers sociologists some of the brightest possible insights into altruism, morality, and social solidarity. We can, for example, extract distinctive lessons from the record of the 25,000 or so “Righteous Gentiles” honored for exemplary altruism by Yad Vashem, Israel’s main Holocaust Museum. Similarly, we can draw on 52,000 revealing video interviews with Jewish survivors now being digitalized by the Shoah Foundation. *Continued on page 15...*

Starting Points of Positive Sociology

Margarita A. Mooney
Yale University

My keen interest in this new ASA section on Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity is closely tied to my numerous conversations with Martin Seligman, one of the founders of the positive psychology movement. In recent meetings with Seligman, I have been pondering questions such as: *What unique opportunities exist to build a new positive sociology movement focusing on human flourishing and the common good?* *Continued on page 23...*

An Initial Look at Generosity: A Social Psychologist’s View

Jan E. Stets
University of California, Riverside

Some of my research over the last half a dozen years has involved studying the moral self, moral behavior, and moral emotions (Stets 2011; Stets and Carter 2006; 2011; 2012; Stets, Carter, Harrod, Cerven, and Abrutyn 2008). My focus has been on theorizing about the self as a moral entity, and then testing some theoretical predictions through survey research and laboratory studies. One thing that I have found in the science of morality, in which generosity is subsumed, is that more research is needed on how we might theorize and study the individual as a moral actor. I think this is an important starting point in the study of morality, generally, and generosity, specifically. From my perspective as a social psychologist, I think it is important for us to draw upon what we know about the self from sociology, and how we can use this knowledge to build theory in the study of generosity.

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2012 Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity Elected Officers

Chair (1-year term) - Vincent Jeffries, California State University–Northridge

Chair-Elect (1-year term) - Matthew T. Lee, University of Akron

Secretary/Treasurer (3-year term) - Kyle Irwin, Baylor University

Council Members (3 year term)

Stephen Vaisey, Duke University

Jan E. Stets, University of California- Riverside

Edward Tiryakian, Duke University

Council Members (2 year term)

Steven Hitlin, University of Iowa

Robb Willer, University of California-Berkeley

Peter Callero, Western Oregon University

Graduate Student Representative (2 year term) - Shai Dromi, Yale University

Graduate Student Representatives (1 year term)

Sandra Nakagawa, Stanford University

Xiaohong Xu, Yale University

The Importance of Membership and Other Matters

Vincent Jeffries

California State University, Northridge

"The progress of a science is proven by the progress toward solution of the problems it treats. It is said to be advancing when laws hitherto unknown are discovered, or when at least new facts are acquired modifying the formulation of these problems even though not furnishing a final solution" (Durkheim 1951:35).

Emile Durkheim "did not waver from his allegiance to a cosmopolitan liberal civilization in which the pursuit of science was meant to serve the enlightenment and guidance of the whole of humanity" (Coser 1977:148-149).

Our section on altruism, morality, and social solidarity is now beginning its second year as an established section within the American Sociological Association. To mark the occasion, it is appropriate to consider some of the challenges we need to recognize and overcome, now and in the future. Some of these challenges will transcend the lives of even our youngest members, while others are more immediate and require our concerted attention.

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Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity ASA Sessions -August 2013

Invited Session: New Directions in Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity

Organizer: Edward A. Tiryakian, Duke University.

Chairperson: Christian Smith, University of Notre Dame.

"Does Moral Culture Promote Solidarity?" Steven Vaisey, Duke University and Liana Prescott, University of California-Berkeley

"Solidarity in a Multi-cultural World: A Durkeimian Approach on Morality" Raquel Weiss, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

"Five Sources of Altruism and Case Studies" Stephen Post, Director, Center for Medical Humanities, Stony Brook University

"New Ways of Solidarity in Spain: the Crisis of Conventional Politics" Alfonso Perez-Agote Poveda. Complutense University of Madrid

Edward A. Tiryakian, Discussant

Open Topic Session

Organizer: Peter Callero, Western Oregon University

"Channeling Solidarity: Social Organization and Blood Donation in Response to 9/11" Kraig Beyerlein, University of Notre Dame and Kieran Healy, Duke University

"Empathy and Identity" Kevin McCaffree, University of California-Riverside

"Living Life for Others and/or Oneself: The Social Development of Life Orientations" Steven Hitlin, University of Iowa and Mark Salisbury, Augustana University

"Moral Shock and Altruism in the Aftermath of the 2010 BP Oil Spill" Justin Farrell, University of Notre Dame

"No Body to Kick, No Soul to Damn: Responsibility and Accountability for the Financial Crisis" Olivia Nicol, Columbia University

AMSS Roundtables and Business Meeting at ASA - August 2013

ALTRUISM, MORALITY, AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY SECTION: ROUNDTABLES

Session Organizer: Vincent Jeffries

Table 1: Foundational Perspectives

Presider: Matthew Lee

"Explaining Virtuous Action: Jane Addams's Sociology of Ethical Behavior." Jill Niebrugge-Brantley, George Washington University; Patricia Lengermann, George Washington University

"Studies of Altruism and Social Solidarity in Russia: Tendencies and Perspectives." Dmitry Valerievich Efremenko, Institute for Scientific Information on Social Sciences, Russian Academy of Sciences

"God-Consciousness, Benevolence, and Youth Substance Abuse: Influences on Chemical Dependency Treatment." Paige S. Veta, Case Western Reserve University; Maria E. Pagano, Case Western Reserve University; Matthew T. Lee, University of Akron

More roundtables on next page...

ASA 2013 - Roundtables

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Table 2: Responsibility to Others

Presider: Ruben Dario Flores Sandavol

“Helping Strangers in Comparative Perspective: A Multilevel Analysis of 123 Countries.” Matthew Richard Bennett, University of Oxford; Christopher J. Einolf, De Paul University

“Ideology, Responsibility, and the Changing Face of Engagement.” David Harker, Boston College

“Moral Individualism and Human Rights in Russia: Reflections from the Individualism versus Collectivism Debate.” Aleh Ivanou, Sodertorns Hogskola, Sweden; Ruben Dario Flores Sandoval, National Research University - Higher School of Economics

Table 3: Analysis of Morality

Presider: Roscoe C. Scarborough

“Moral Reactions to Reality TV: Television Viewers Endogenous and Exogenous Loci of Morality.” Roscoe C. Scarborough, University of Virginia; Charles Allen McCoy, University of Virginia

“Moral Support, Moral Opposition, and Political Action: Self-Perceived Moral Minorities are More Politically Active.” Liana Prescott, University of California - Berkeley

“Rules vs. Solidarity: Durkheim and Hayek Reconsidered.” Alexander Bencionovich Gofman, Higher School of Economics

Table 4: Volunteerism

Presider: Jane Joann Jones

“Does Volunteerism Help You Get a Better Job?” Joonmo Son, National University of Singapore; John Wilson, Duke University

“Organized Giving: The Evolution of Black Charity.” Jane Joann Jones, Ursinus College

“Quantitative Stability, Qualitative Change? Changing Socio-economic Status and Value Perceptions of Danish Volunteers.” Morten Frederiksen, Aalborg University; Lars Skov Henriksen, Aalborg University

Table 5: Moral Systems and Social Structure

Presider: Shonel Sen

“A Theory of Generative Moral Systems.” J. Scott Lewis, Penn State Harrisburg; Scott Drew Deibler

“Number of Siblings and Generalized Trust.” Deniz Yucel, William Patterson University; Tufan Ekici, Middle Eastern Technical University - North Cyprus

“2-Sided Altruism: Do Intergenerational–generational Transfers Trigger Greater Childbearing in Developing Countries?” Shonel Sen, Pennsylvania State University

More roundtables on next page...

ASA 2013 - Roundtables

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Table 6: Solidarity and Social Crisis

Presider: Jason Manning

“Genocidal Conflicts.” Bradley Campbell, California State University – Los Angeles

“Suicide and Social Time.” Jason Manning, West Virginia University

“Motherhood in the Time of War.” John Holian

Table 7: Collective Creativity and Giving

Presider: Gordon C. C. Douglas

“Japanese Citizen Participation in International Development Aid.” Hiromi Taniguchi, University of Louisville

“A Sociological Explanation of Creative Answers – The Palliative Network in Aachen.” Michaela Thonnes, University of Zurich

“The Formalities of Informal Urbanism: Technical and Scholarly Knowledge at Work in Do-it-Yourself Urban Design.” Gordon C. C. Douglas, University of Chicago

Table 8: Social Structures and Processes

Presider: Monica M. Whitham

“Altruism, Egoism, and Social Ontology: Conceptions of Durkheim and Simmel.” Andrey Bykov, National Research University – Higher School of Economics

“Motivating Cooperation in Generalized Exchange: Categorical verses Entity-Based Social Identity.” Monica M. Whitham, University of Arizona

“Neoliberal Localism and its Discontent: A Rural Community in Contemporary Japan.” Cheng-Heng Chang, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Table 9: Attitudinal and Organizational Altruism

Presider: Elisabeth Schimpfoss

“Elite Philanthropy in Contemporary Russia.” Elisabeth Schimpfoss, University of Manchester

“American Attitudes to Organ Transplants are mainly Influenced by Scientific Worldviews.” Mariah Debra Evans, University of Nevada – Reno; Jonathan Kelley, University of Nevada – Reno

“Public Perceptions of the Just Allocation of Health Costs Entailed by Risky Conventional Lifestyles.” Mariah Debra Evans, University of Nevada-Reno

July 5 - 13, 2013
Château de Bossey (Switzerland)

5th
in **International Summer School**
AFFECTIVE SCIENCES

ISSAS 2013

Special topic: Emotion, Morality and Value

- The role of emotions in moral evaluations
- The relation between emotions and values
- The place of emotions in moral development
- Emotions and their impact on moral and political orientations
- The moral brain
- The history of moral emotions
- Specific moral emotions (contempt, disgust, elevation, shame)
- The metaphorical construal of moral emotions

Confirmed speakers include:

David Amodio, Antoine Compagnon, Fiery Cushman, Ronnie de Sousa, Johnny Fontaine, David Konstan, Kristján Kristjánsson, Tina Malti, Shaun Nichols, David A. Pizarro, Simone Schnall, Jan E. Stets, Christine Tappolet.

Deadline for applications: March 24th, 2013

More information: www.affective-sciences.org/issas

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Science of Generosity Project Update

The Science of Generosity initiative has a newly updated website (<http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/>) where visitors can easily access news, research and video updates on initiative research.

Science of Generosity researchers are now publishing their results in various scholarly journals. To see recent publications about how communication affects selfishness in giving situations; how generosity spreads within social networks; a gene variation associated with lower altruistic behavior in children; younger children's sharing and helping behaviors; or how Catholicism and Islam generate public goods, please go to the Project Publications page of the Science of Generosity website:

<http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/publications/>.

Researchers gathered in Philadelphia the weekend of October 18-20, 2012 to present their research projects to one another, as well as to some non-profit professionals. Some of the presentations are now available on the Science of Generosity Youtube channel, scigencomm:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/scigencomm> . All videos from the conference will soon be available.

The initiative also has two new videos, a general introduction to the initiative produced by NBC

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=hK6xbsn1jfw and a

discussion by three researchers of why interdisciplinary research is important <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Lsenpo7G1U>.

New Article Announcements

- Woodberry, Robert D. 2012. "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 244-274.
- Flores, Ruben (2013). 'When Charity Does Not Begin at Home: Exploring the British Socioemotional Economy of Compassion'. *Sociological Research Online*, 18(1).
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/18/1/17.html>>

Doctoral Dissertation:
Grace Under Fire: Altruistic Behavior and the Risk of Criminal Victimization

Andrew Davies
SUNY Albany

Abstract: Two studies investigate whether the perceived risk of criminal victimization reduces altruistic behavior as social disorganization theory predicts it will. The first study, of 160 nation-states, suggests not. Rather, the relationship depends on national culture. In highly religious countries, for example, the perceived risk of victimization actually appears to increase altruistic behavior. The second study, an experiment conducted on samples both of undergraduate students and internet users, suggests that certain individuals for whom the risk of criminal victimization may be particularly salient – volunteers worried they may be put in harm’s way, and fatalists paranoid about the inevitability of victimization – can indeed be deterred from altruistic behavior under conditions of risk. Juxtaposed, the studies suggest not only that the relationship between the risk of criminal victimization and altruistic behavior is more complicated than expected, but also that, like criminal behavior, altruistic behavior might be as much a product of ecological factors as of individual dispositions.

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Often, sociological knowledge about the self that has accumulated over many decades is left out of this research. It’s as if actors become disconnected from the very moral actions and feelings that are discussed. Yet, moral actions are almost by definition reflexive in their nature, which reflexivity emanates from the self. If we were to conceptualize individuals in moral terms including theorizing about the internal operations of the self, we might be in a better position of predicting moral judgments, action, and emotions within and across situations.

I also think that it may not be fruitful to study morality including generosity only through a sociological lens. Researchers in many disciplines are actively engaged in studying a variety of moral behaviors such as altruism, cheating, honesty, and generosity. They are psychologists, economists, political scientists, neuroscientists, philosophers, and theologians. By collaborating with scholars across disciplines, there is a greater potential of building knowledge in a cumulative, non-redundant manner. Further, the knowledge acquired could be more compelling because it would encourage researchers to study processes normally neglected in their own discipline, and perhaps provide a larger and clearer lens to understand morality.

Given these initial comments, let me share some preliminary thoughts I have had on the study of generosity.

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What is Generosity?

Generosity is commonly associated with the virtue of charity or love (the unlimited loving kindness toward all) which is considered the greatest of the three virtues in Christian theology. Jeffries (1998) maintains that charity sensitizes individuals to the plight of others, thereby motivating them to help indiscriminately and without expecting anything in return.

Generosity overlaps in many ways with other concepts such as “helping behavior” and “altruism.” Helping behavior can be defined as any voluntary or involuntary act that benefits others. The behavior might include providing instrumental aid such as money, food, clothing, or one’s labor and/or providing emotional aid such as advice, forgiveness, or empathy. Generosity generally implies action that is voluntary rather than involuntary. Altruism is any act that benefits others with some cost to the self. These aspects also are suggestive of generosity, but generosity also implies helping beyond the routine or standard level. It is exceeding the expected level, which often is not emphasized in altruism. It is the liberality or bigheartedness in helping. I think it is sometimes difficult to clearly discriminate generosity from helping behavior and altruism. Indeed, further research is needed on generosity to achieve greater clarity on its distinctive character.

An Interdisciplinary Snapshot

Across the disciplines, recent evidence reveals some interesting findings about the causes and consequences of generosity. In sociology, researchers discuss how prosocial behavior, which some see as acts of generosity, can increase one’s reputation in a group (Willer, Feinberg, Irwin, Schultz, and Simpson 2010). In turn, the development of a “good” reputation can lead to additional prosocial acts not only because one is motivated to improve his/her reputation, but also because one is learning that a reward will follow from behaving generously, thereby increasing the future rate of such acts.

Psychologists reveal that the experience of generosity includes both positive and negative feelings, for example, individuals may feel good about helping another but bad because they may feel exploited and not appreciated (Sommerfeld 2010). Psychologists also show that generosity reduces attitudes that certain groups should dominate in society in favor of a more egalitarian view (Brown 2011). Further, generosity builds trust and elicits lasting cooperation in the face of difficulties compared to a strictly reciprocal strategy such as “tit for tat” (Klapwijk and Van Lange 2009).

Economists find that generosity is positively related to happiness in the dictator experiment where one subject, the dictator, receives a fixed sum of money that may be shared (Konow and Earley 2008). Economists also find that giving is related to income growth (Brooks 2007). This association may be due, in part, to Putnam’s (2000) claim that charitable acts strengthen networks between people, which are an important factor in economic prosperity. Thus, generosity may not only have psychological benefits but also material benefits.

Finally, while research reveals that empathy, that is, understanding or feeling what another is feeling is related to prosocial behavior (Hoffman 2008), neuroscientists are identifying the brain mechanisms that produce the experience of empathy. Recent evidence reveals that inducing empathy by having participants view emotional scenes from a video significantly raises oxytocin levels, which in turn is associated with more generous monetary offers toward strangers in the ultimatum game (Barraza and Zak 2009). In fact, simply infusing individuals with oxytocin intranasally can increase generous offers in the ultimatum game (Zak, Stanton, and Ahmadi 2007).

Taken together, the recent findings across the social sciences provide some insights into generosity. However, what I think may be lacking in this research is a theoretical orientation that incorporates an understanding of the self as well as a broad approach that builds upon the advances made in other disciplines. Let me take each of these, in turn.

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Theory on the Self

I think we need to be careful that when we study generosity, we don't reduce the research to a variable analysis rather than a theoretical analysis. I also think we may need to better conceptualize the individual who is the very agent producing (or not producing) the generous acts. Sociologists can make an important contribution here by theorizing about the internal operations of these actors, how the internal mechanisms relate to their external behavior, how their behavior may be conditioned on the presence of particular situational characteristics and cultural meanings, and how we might empirically measure and test all of these aspects. Let me illustrate how this might be done by using a theory that I am most familiar with – identity theory. Other sociological theories may be just as fruitful.

What I think is important about identity theory is that it encourages us to simultaneously think of the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions of generous individuals. This avoids fragmenting the self into separate and non-overlapping dimensions by studying only the affective, behavioral, or cognitive aspects.

An assumption in identity theory is that people actively engage in goal-directed action that is always under their evaluation as they interact with the environment. Goal accomplishment involves individuals controlling their perceptions in the environment so that how they see themselves and how others see them in situations are kept near their internal identity standards. This is identity verification and it produces positive emotions. Identity non-verification leads to negative emotions, which in turn cues individuals to behave differently in their environment in order to produce perceptual outcomes that result in a better match with their internal identity standard.

When identity theory is applied to how individuals see themselves in terms of generosity, we need to keep in mind that individuals' self-views vary. For some, generosity importantly defines who they are, others hardly ever see themselves in these terms, and still others may be somewhere between these two extremes. Wherever the identity standard is set, researchers are encouraged to study the cognitive dimension of a person or the control of self-perceptions in the situation to match one's internal, identity standard; they are encouraged to examine the behavioral dimension or the degree to which one is acting generously given one's identity standard; and they are encouraged to address the emotional dimension given identity verification or the lack thereof.

In identity theory, the *meanings* that comprise people's self-views are important. For generosity, we might examine whether people define themselves in terms of the degree to which they should provide goods and resources to others, the degree to which they should help others in supportive, empathic ways, or whether both sets of meanings comprise their self-view. If people behave differently in a situation with some giving money and others offering advice, this variability may be related to the meanings in their identity standard.

We might also want to examine how the identity standard gets set to begin with. Who or what is the source of these meanings? And, how do actors emotionally respond when others say they are not being generous or, alternatively, they are being too generous given their identity standard?

Additionally, we might want to avoid studying generosity in isolation of all the other ways that individuals define themselves. People have many meanings or identities that define who they are. Therefore, it might be important not simply to examine whether generosity is activated in a situation, but how or why it becomes central and/or salient to individuals in a situation given all of the other ways in which they can define themselves. This suggests two things that may be important to study: 1) how the identity of being generous is arranged within the self given all of the identities that individuals claim as their own and why it is arranged in this way, and 2) the norms or cultural expectations that call forth particular identities in some situations and not others. Let me briefly explain each.

In prior work, I have conceptualized the moral identity as an identity that is tied to being a particular kind of person, thus it is a person identity. Person identity meanings may operate like a "master" status that influ-

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ence the meanings of people's role identities, for example, what it means to be a friend, spouse, or worker. Person identity meanings also may influence the meanings of people's social identities or the kinds of groups people decide to join. Stronger meanings associated with one's moral identity may be associated with more morally-laden meanings of the role identities and group identities one chooses. Thus, it may be fruitful to examine how the generosity identity influences the other identities that individuals claim and whether this influence operates in complementary or competing ways.

Second, some of my work shows that one's interpretation of a situation as moral (and here culture plays a role) importantly influences whether one's moral identity will be invoked in a situation. For example, deciding whether to help another who is in need carries stronger meanings of generosity than deciding what detergent brand to buy. Further, the status, power, and closeness of others to the individual in the situation may have more or less influence over how a situation is interpreted in terms of generosity and how an individual will behave. Thus, norms and the influence of others in the situation may need close examination.

In general, we have a self that is multi-faceted with an array of identities, and we have a complex environment of cultural meanings and influences. For this reason, I think we need to examine the dynamics of the self as well as the environment with an eye toward identifying the crucial theoretical dimensions that provide the most predictive power.

A Push for Interdisciplinary Research

Finally, I think that generosity research may be more compelling if it is carried out in an interdisciplinary manner. Disciplinary work uses the strengths of its own field to gain insight into phenomena. However, there is a trade-off because in focusing on some aspects given one's training, other aspects are missed. Thus, the development of knowledge is partial. An interdisciplinary approach might minimize the problems associated with research that is more narrowly defined in order to take an approach that considers multiple scientific processes that are at work. To avoid redundancy in knowledge and slow the pace of cumulative scientific advance, interdisciplinary work opens the possibility of science moving forward at a higher speed.

I became convinced of interdisciplinary work during my time at NSF as I began to see scientists in economics or political science or psychology working on similar problems, taking a slightly different approach, but each being unaware of the work in the other disciplines. Disciplinary work is good because you see the complexity of the problem from a particular perspective. But, if we integrated the different perspectives, we could understand the phenomena in a deeper way because we would be examining multiple perspectives simultaneously.

Interdisciplinary work, that is, bringing together individuals from different disciplines who are charged to integrate knowledge, is hard to do. One needs people who are willing to work with others outside their area, read across disciplines, and learn about different theories and methods. I see no reason why this could not occur for the study of generosity as well with attention to developing cumulative theory and integrating what is emphasized in different disciplines to create knowledge that is more unified than fragmented.

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The Importance of Membership and Other Matters

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We have formally established a field of study within the discipline of sociology. As scholars, our primary and long-range goal is to gather greater knowledge and understanding regarding our subject matter: altruism, morality, and social solidarity. An important part of the intellectual heritage of our field is certainly derived from the work of Emile Durkheim. The above quotes, from Durkheim and from Lewis Coser, highlight two foundational principles of our scholarly endeavors: the search for truth, and its elaboration and extension to the service of the good of the general social world.

With these principles as a motivational and guiding foundation, there are five basic issues to be considered in developing and establishing the identity of our field: (1) the nature of the subject matter and its forms, variations, and consequences; (2) the relationships and interdependencies among altruism, morality, and social solidarity that give coherence to the subject matter as a field of study; (3) the foundational ideas, theoretical perspectives, and research programs that will contribute to increasing knowledge and understanding, thereby developing the field to its maximum potential; (4) the policy implications of the subject matter, and the mechanisms for communicating relevant and important information to the general public; (5) why the field is important, both from a scientific perspective and in terms of potential contributions to the common good. Exploring and elaborating these issues is a cumulative process without end. As time passes, the scholarly work of each of us gives increasing identity and significance to the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity.

Building a community of scholars dedicated to this great task is a corollary and a more immediate problem. The section itself is our interactional and social base. There are some specific projects we can begin at this level.

Section membership is crucial. September 30th of each year is the end of the American Sociological Association's membership year. The number of members in the section on that date determines the number of sessions for the next Annual Meeting. The number of sessions at the Annual Meeting are allocated according to the following formula: less than 300 members, 1 session; 300-399, 2 sessions; 400-599, 3 sessions; 600-799, 4 sessions; 800-999, 5 sessions; 1000+, 6 sessions. Note the important threshold of 300 members in order to have two sessions. Looking further ahead, once we pass 400, we gain still another session.

On March 1st of this year our membership was 228. On the same date last year our membership was 248. This loss of 20 members represents an 8.8% decrease in our membership. We will need to add 72 members by September 30th to avoid losing a session for the 2014 ASA Meetings in San Francisco. The time to do this is now, before the spring term ends and people become dispersed. I will be asking for volunteers for a membership committee and will begin a membership drive shortly after you receive this Newsletter. In the meantime, as soon as you read this, please do something! Ask a colleague to join, or sponsor a graduate student, or, better yet, do both! We really need to reach 300 before the ASA Meetings in August. For a number of reasons, September is an unfavorable time to make a grand dash to the 300 members threshold.

Membership is also important in a long-term perspective. We briefly discussed the possibility of an ASA sponsored section journal in our Business and Council Meetings last year in Denver. A section journal could make a significant contribution to building the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity into a flagship field of study within sociology. To be eligible for this project, a section must maintain a membership of 500 or more for 4 years. So this is a possibility that can be more carefully considered by the membership and Councils in future years. When we reach 500 members for the first time, we can deliberate this decision with vigor. For now, we simply need to get 300 or more members. That reached, perhaps we can set a goal of 400 members for the end of the 2014 membership year.

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Altruism, morality, and social solidarity is now formally listed by the American Sociological Association as an area of specialization. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate to list our field as one of your areas of specialization in the Guide to Graduate Departments. I urge section members to consider doing this. Each year, in late August or early September, sociology departments are asked by ASA to submit their listings for the Guide. Early this fall would be the time to contact the appropriate person in your department regarding your entry in the 2014 Guide. It will be published in the spring of 2014.

Finally, we have a number of activities scheduled for the 2013 ASA Meetings in New York. We are presenting an invited session, a regular open session, and a roundtable session. The papers to be given are listed in this edition of the Newsletter. We are also having a Business meeting and a section reception. The reception gives us a good chance to meet each other and begin to form a real interacting community of scholars. Please try and attend all of these activities. We will let you know exact times and places as soon as that information is available.

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Section Homepage

Copies of the Section Newsletter and other documents are available on our Homepage:

<http://www.csun.edu/~hbsoc126/>

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The ASA website is www.asanet.org. From there go to "Membership Information," then "Join or Renew," and finally "Join a Section." We are on the list of sections: "Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity (47)." Check to join the section, then go "Payment," which is only \$10.



AMSS and the Holocaust: Stealth Altruism in the Concentration Camps

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As well, we have much to learn from over 10,000 survivor memoirs available in English, and an even larger number yet to be translated from Hebrew, Polish, Russian, Yiddish, and so on.

Sociologists, however, have little to nothing to learn about altruism, morality, and social solidarity in museums with Holocaust exhibit material worldwide (28 of which I have recently studied in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Washington DC, along with others in Austria, Canada, Croatia, England, Estonia, France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland). This unexpected omission warrants overdue attention, as it challenges our common assumption that AMSS will everywhere and always be honored.

To compound the matter there is a very special type of altruism that remains ignored by these museums, one I have labeled – *stealth altruism*. This was a non-militant high-risk form of care sharing that had Jewish prisoners resist dehumanization by defying fierce Nazi prohibitions against aiding survival. A scholar notes that “very often women [prisoners] cared for one another in modest but spiritually, symbolically, and practically significant ways ... they often committed to do so right to the end in the full knowledge that neither themselves or the others were likely to survive.” (1).

Survivor Jorge Semprun would have us understand that “... *in a camp a man becomes an animal who is capable of stealing a piece of bread from someone else, thereby pushing him towards death. But in the camp man also becomes an unconquered being who is capable of sharing his last fag-end, his last piece of bread, his last breath in order to bolster up his fellow beings.*” (2)

Survivor Zahava Szasz Stessel, held captive in Markkleeberg, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, remembered how Jewish prisoners “*maintained our humanity and integrity under the most stressful conditions,*” thanks in large part to “*culture and heritage ... the tradition that sustained the Jews in the thousand years of persecution was still with us in the camps.*” (3)

Specifically, Mrs. Stessel recalled the precious aid received from a fellow prisoner, Elza, who came from the same town. Elza unexpectedly received an apple from a civilian co-worker in the airplane factory where the Jewish women served as slave laborers. She quickly hid it, as possession put her life in peril. Although starving, she refrained from secretly eating it, but instead smuggled the apple back into the barracks. There she gathered five of her closest friends, including Mrs. Stessel, and, with great effort, obtained a knife and cut it into six pieces. As the women recited the *Shecheyannu* prayer of gratitude, they “recalled their town and home, and ‘*our tears blended with the piece of apple.*’” (4)

Six slices of apple – compassionately shared at personal cost – symbolize what is one of the least-known stories of concentration camp life. In 28 museums – visited annually by millions worldwide - I saw iconic horrific photos, terrifying instruments of torture, and scale models of death camps. But no artful recreations of women prisoners daring to share six slices of apple, or of men daring to share their last fag-end. For as survivor Arnost Lustig ruefully explains, while such behavior “*represented a triumph for humanity, nobody knows about it.*” (5)

Everywhere the presentation was of the Nazi Story, what “they” did to us, with hardly a word about what any Jewish prisoners tried to do for one another ... and certainly no full-flown exhibit explaining, as has Barbara Engelking, a Polish scholar, that prisoners who “did not become things in the hands of the Nazis

helped others to retain their faith in the dignity of man.” (6)

How common was stealth altruism in the camps? No definitive answer is possible, so great are gaps in the data. That notwithstanding, the recall of survivors warrants cautious consideration. Searching in recent years through 145 survivor memoirs I have found accounts of high-risk, self-sacrificing, “apple sharing,” and comrade-bolstering efforts in 143 of the 145 books. These appear also in the 35 Spielberg Video Interviews I have reviewed, and in almost all other oral histories I have studied to date (the research continues).

In 2005, Lynn Smith, the lead recorder of survivor oral life histories for the Imperial War Museum (London), wrote, “Although ... the law of the jungle prevailed in the camps, many instances of mutual support, goodness, and little acts of reciprocity are recalled ... There are countless examples of how, even in the most deprived, degrading, and cruel circumstances, people held firm in their humanity and steadfastly clung to the values their parents and communities had bequeathed them ...” (7)

My interviews with aging survivors have almost always brought to light first-person anecdotes of stealth altruism, although commonly not without gentle probing: many former prisoners tell me I am the first outsider to ask about the subject, so preoccupied are all others with only the dark side of captivity.

Survivors know concentration camps had the horror of desperate informers who betrayed others to get a slice of bread from the Gestapo. But they *also* had “Camp Sister” alliances whose members shared scarce resources with one another. The camps had torture chambers ... but *also* covert smuggling systems that enabled prisoners to secure life-saving medicines and extra food. The camps had murderous SS guards ... but *also* secret cadres of hardened political prisoners who could and did “reprimand” or even kill crazed persecutors.

Above all, the camps had singular “natural” altruists, such as survivor Ernest Braunstein. As an 18-year-old prisoner in Bor, a labor camp in Yugoslavia, he noticed an unconscious fellow prisoner suspended high up on a pole by his tightly tied wrists, which were tied behind him. Ernest chose to bring him water. Seen by an SS guard, Ernest was quickly strung up himself on an adjacent pole. When he blacked out from the pain, he was lowered, revived, and then hung up again. After about three hours he was sent back to his barracks where friends shared very scarce food with him, and dared to hide him until he had recovered enough to return to work. (8)

Some such altruists actually aided large numbers of fellow victims. Survivor Luba Tryszynska, a Jewish prisoner at Bergen Belsen, dared to protect orphaned children, in her case, 54 Dutch Jewish youngsters, some of whom were just babies. In December of 1944 they were abandoned by the Nazis to simply die outside at night in the snow a short distance from her barrack. Luba, however, heard their cries and took them “home.” She then persuaded her astonished starving barrack mates to join her in an utterly implausible effort to hide, feed, and keep the brood alive.

A camp nurse, Luba daily hid under her nurse’s cloak extra food given her at risk of life by sympathizers in the camp bakery, kitchen, and meat store. She also gathered scraps of wood from abandoned camp buildings and burned them to help warm the barrack (but only after dark when the smoke would not be seen). She actually convinced wives of guards to give her spare clothing for the children, and “if they knew about Luba’s children, they didn’t say a word.” (9)

A Jewish doctor, although equipped only with aspirin and bandages, helped, as did also the women in the barrack itself. They cooked, dressed the youngest ones, and used one wet cloth to keep 54 children as clean as they could. Even the children, although starving and weak, helped, doing chores, telling each other stories, acting out their own plays, and never ever crying or doing anything that would call attention to their secret place.

Toward the end, food became impossible for Luba to secure, and many of the children fell deadly ill with typhus. Nevertheless, when the British troops liberated the camp in April of 1945, they were astonished to find 52 of the 54 children still alive.

Fifty years later, at an April 1995 Amsterdam reunion of the children, now in their fifties and sixties, Queen Beatrix presented a smiling Luba with the nation's Silver Medal of Honor for Humanitarian Services. The courage of the child survivors is now thought to show that "strength, dignity, and hope can take root in even the darkest of places." (10)

Acts of stealth altruism always entailed extraordinary jeopardy. Typical was the daring-do of survivor Eva Brown. Driven to desperation by endless months of starvation, this teenage prisoner at Auschwitz learned from the grapevine that members of an official camp "orchestra" would receive an extra ration of bread at the close of that day's "concert" for camp guards and SS officers. She wandered over to where some of Europe's finest professional musicians – all now starving fellow prisoners - were about to begin a practice session. Noticing an available flute, she picked it up and sat herself down as the orchestra's newest self-appointed "musician."

In no time at all, musicians understood the ruse, and gently asked what in G-d's name did she think she was doing? She softly explained that, like them, she was starving and desperately needed to get some extra food. Everyone – including Eva - understood they would all be sent directly to the gas chamber if anyone detected the ruse, so little tolerance did the humorless SS have for actions at odds with their strict control.

This notwithstanding, and without lengthy deliberations, the musicians chose to go along. Those closest to her quickly taught Eva how to appear to be a polished flutist. At the concert's close, when the SS had gone and the orchestra members were finally able to breathe easier, they shared the precious extra bread with her. But they also made Eva promise to never again put them at risk of life – a ruse that had come close to assuring no more performances by any of them. (11)

Acts of stealth altruism could involve agonizing moral dilemmas. Survivor Giselle Perl, a Jewish doctor, was forced in Auschwitz to work for the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele. During the day, despite a lack of medicine, drugs, and related essentials, she tried to help infirm patients recover enough to avoid the regular selections that sent patients to the gas, even knowing they might be murdered later that same day or the next one for any or no reason at all.

At even greater risk to her, at night Dr. Perl secretly moved about the camp, dodging searchlight beams that endlessly played on the camp grounds, to perform abortions on about 1,000 otherwise-doomed prisoners (pregnancy was against Nazi rules). In a few cases, she had to smother the surviving newborn infant – an act of mutual aid *en extremis* – and, where possible, tell the new mother the child had been stillborn. (12)

All of which leads to two far-reaching questions – Why the neglect of AMSS? – and, So what? I am currently finishing a book that attempts some provisional answers, and I welcome related thoughts from colleagues in this ASA section, especially any willing to help by reading any part of my current draft. (I can be reached at arthurshostak@gmail.com).

Suffice it to say here that the neglect reflects a nearly 70-year-long complex, self-conscious, and controversial choice to emphasize abject victimization, and sideline attention to agency on the part of victims – a choice made by those I call "Keepers of the Memory," such as curators, donors, pundits, and others with decision-making power in memorialization matters. They emphasize the "done to" story, and neglect the "done by" aspects of the same reality. They focus primarily on Horror, and neglect Help.

As for the "So what?" question, Truth is obviously the biggest loser. A distorted, one-sided "sheep-to-

the-slaughter” characterization has been promoted since the 1945 end of the war, and Jewish victims have been denied the salute owed the willingness of some to take care-sharing risks to aid others. Yad Vashem has shown the way with its refusal to develop a category of “Righteous Jews” akin to its warranted awards to altruistic Gentiles, and Holocaust Museums worldwide have dutifully fallen in line.

It is a shame that “Keepers of the Memory” have not heeded the counsel of Survivor Livia Bitton-Jackson (Auschwitz and Plaszow). In her memoir she gently, yet firmly, explains that her stories tell “*of gas chambers, shootings, electrified fences, torture, scorching sun, mental abuse, and constant threat of death. But they are also stories of faith, hope, triumph, and love. They are stories of perseverance, loyalty, courage in the face of overwhelming odds, and of never giving up.*” (13)

Fortunately, there is reason to believe reform is underway. Certain key change-agents – progressive museum curators and pioneering Holocaust educators – are beginning to formulate a sound “both/and” approach, one which will responsibly include both Horror *and* Help, the better to acquit a solemn responsibility to the 6 million who fell, and the many thousands who survived.

Care is being taken to avoid grievous errors: A related 2012 essay collection notes “... the works herein do not challenge the primary significance of the grim fact of the murder of six million Jews; ... they are not presented as if the ‘triumphant human spirit’ can mitigate the murderous actions of the Nazis; and they do not serve as the ‘happy ending’ to the Holocaust.” (14) Every effort is made to avoid lionizing Jewish victims, romanticizing their struggle under Nazism, or employing insipid “feel-good” mythologizing.

Curators know the memorialization status quo no longer draws desired levels of museum attendance, adequate donations from supporters, and a deep-reaching equivalent of community appreciation. Troublesome whispers persist about “Holocaust fatigue,” especially as much that is exhibited “evokes perceptions of fear and despair, persecution and suffering.” (15) Many curators understand what survivor Arnost Lustig means when he worries aloud that a Holocaust Narrative consisting only of atrocities “*cannot inspire. It only scares.*” (16)

Progressive curators know research suggests American Jews, especially young adults, decline “to hold their lives hostage to a Jewish identity predicated on fear and defensiveness.” (17) Instead, these Jewish men and women reject a mentality of victimhood and siege. They echo here some little-noted words of Anne Frank, who wrote at the close of her 1944 dairy – “*I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death.*” (18) More and more American Jews seem to want “a Jewish world constructed on positives, not negatives . . . a vibrant, hopeful Judaism.” (19)

Summary. Sociologists intrigued by human behavior in extremis – as under genocidal conditions in the Balkans, Darfur, Ruanda, the Sudan, and elsewhere – could look for evidence of stealth altruism in all such settings, and thereby help round out our understanding of the significant part played there by AMSS. Likewise all such scholars would be welcomed in my ongoing campaign to help rectify a costly imbalance in the story told by the Holocaust Narrative. (20)

For as a child survivor and son of survivors, Pierre Sauvage, counsels – “*If we remember solely the horror of the Holocaust, we will pass on no perspective from which meaningfully to confront and learn from that horror ... If the hard and fast evidence of the possibility of good on Earth is allowed to slip through our fingers and turn to dust, then future generations will have only dust to build on.*” (21)

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Art Shostak retired in 2003 after 42 years of sharing ideas as an Applied Sociologist, the first six years at the Wharton School, and the last 36 at Drexel University. He has authored or edited 34 books, and in 2002 was awarded the ASA Annual Award for Sociological Practice. In 2011 he was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Drexel University College of Arts and Sciences. He can be reached at arthur-shostak@gmail.com.

Pitirim Sorokin Web Project

Pavel Krotov

Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation

Members of the section might find interest in visiting the website of the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation: www.sorokinfoundation.org. The idea for the website emerged in 2007 during the planning stage for the Sorokin Endowment in Canada at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. The purpose of the website is to provide public access to the Sorokin collection, which was located in this remote area, unreachable for most researchers.

The collection came to be housed there in 1968, when a former student of Pitirim Sorokin, Professor Richard DuWors, founded a new department of sociology at the University of Saskatoon and persuaded Pitirim to grant a major part of his personal library with the intention of creating a new international center for sociological studies. At that time the University of Saskatchewan committed to having annual Sorokin Lectures, which still occur. For example, at various times Carle Zimmermann, Immanuel Wallenstein, and several other eminent sociologists have given their presentations. However, with Richard DuWors' departure to the University of Calgary in 1974, the idea of the new center gradually faded. Thus valuable materials were cut off from the main stream of sociological communication for over thirty years!

The centerpiece of the Pitirim Sorokin Collection in Canada is his correspondence, which includes over a thousand letters covering the period from the 1930s through 1960s, when Pitirim was one of the leading figures in the world in sociology. Sadly, access to this resource could have benefited everyone who studied American and international sociology during that period. In addition to the letters, the collection also contains documents from the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, correspondence pertaining to the American Sociological Association presidential election in 1963, and a broad range of materials related to Pitirim's active role in academic and public life in the United States during these years. For example, the collection includes rare letters from President Herbert Hoover, Albert Einstein, Igor Sikorsky, Serge Koussevitzky, Albert Schweitzer and other famous figures of the twentieth century.

The project was completed and the collection went into a digitizing process at the Murray Library. Today a substantial share of this collection is available at the site <http://library2.usask.ca/sorokin/correspondence>.

With the growing worldwide interest in Pitirim Sorokin's intellectual heritage, especially in the context of the efforts of opening a new American Sociological Association section on the sociology of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity, and with the establishment of the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation during 2009-2011, the web project had to be revised. From its beginnings as a mere archival tool, it had to be transformed into an interactive medium.

During 2011-2012 the site was re-designed under the sponsorship of the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation (www.sorokinfoundation.org) by Dr. Pavel Krotov. It still remains the main form of disseminating information about Pitirim Sorokin by the Foundation, which was established by his younger son, Dr. Sergei Sorokin.

Although the site has a United States base, it attracts attention from other countries where Sorokin's ideas have their followers, such as Valerio Merlo in Italy, Michikuni Ohno in Japan, and Gregory Sandstrom in Lithuania. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most interest in Pitirim Sorokin's heritage has been in Russia and the post-Soviet countries. The reasons for this go beyond Pitirim's Russian background and his role in the history of the Russian revolution and Russian sociology.

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Pitirim Sorokin Web Project

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Pitirim's writing on various aspects of crises became important for post-Soviet societies. Social scientists there have been seeking theoretical grounds to analyze and understand changes driven by the collapse of the Communist system. These changes were not explained by the neo-liberal paradigm that was popular at the time. Certainly another big factor contributing to Pitirim Sorokin's renaissance in Russia is the opportunity to publish his books, which were banned during Communism and not translated into Russian until the 1990s.

Therefore, over the last twenty years, translation of his books, reprints of the early sociological writings, conferences, annual Sorokin Lectures, and new studies of his academic work all made a significant difference in the understanding of his system of thought. To encourage this interest, a separate website was designed in the Russian language (www.pitirim.org). In addition to what is on the United States site (parts about Pitirim, his bibliography, and contributions), the Russian-language site follows publications and events taking place in Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Alexander Y. Dolgov, who is a doctoral student in Sociology at the Institute for Scholarly Information in the Social Sciences (INION), is in charge of this project for the Foundation.

The primary purpose of the website today is educational for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as academics throughout the world. Yet it is not confined to the academic audience. The website has a wide range of visitors, which is hardly surprising considering Pitirim's extraordinary and eventful life.

His experiences began with church carpeting and traveling in the remote Finno-Ugric areas of the Russian North when he was only 10 years old. He later achieved the heights of academia, being one of the most published sociologists in the twentieth century. In this way, he exemplified patterns of social mobility, which he described in his book, "Social Mobility". He was an artisan, a factory worker, a journalist, and an editor of one of the major Russian newspapers. He was a revolutionary, a member of the Russian Parliament and a cabinet official, a social ethnographer, the founder of two major departments of sociology (St. Petersburg University in Russia and Harvard University), and an author of "Crime and Punishment, Heroism and Reward", in which he analyzed the penitentiary system of the Russian empire, in which he was three-times a prisoner. He was a revolutionary advocate and activist, as well as a victim of the revolution, having a death sentence hanging over his head while in a solitary jail cell. He was an author of lyric poems and fairy tales for children, and a philosopher of history with a unique concept of the development of Western civilization. In other words, he was an extraordinary man of many accomplishments and diverse experiences.

The central part of the website contains three sections aimed at providing an overall idea about Pitirim Sorokin and his contribution to the social sciences. The audio-visual section contains unique photographic galleries from the family photo archive, fragments of the rare audio lecture "Pitirim Sorokin: The Mysterious Energy of Love," recorded by the Campus World in the 1960s, video fragments of documentaries about Pitirim, videos from visits by Sergei Sorokin to Russia, and other interesting and informative exhibits.

The Web design has a unique feel inspired by the environment cherished in Sorokin's family, as remembered by Sergei Sorokin, the younger son. Pitirim, whose cultural preferences lay in classical music and Renaissance arts, had a special place in his heart for Ivan Bilibin, a Russian painter of the early twentieth century, who did illustrations for folk tales and children's books. Pitirim spun fairy tales himself as bedtime stories for his children. Bilibin's art is an essential element in the website design, along with images embedded in artifacts Pitirim and Elena Sorokin brought to the United States from Russia in 1923.

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Pitirim Sorokin Web Project

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At this time Pitirim was expelled from the country by the Communist government, as were over a hundred of the most famous Russian intellectuals.

The site today has over 70,000 hits every month from 13 countries. Despite substantial efforts spent on building the website, there is still more work to be done. One of the current priorities of the web project is to stimulate discussions on the site blog, where visitors could learn more about the discipline from the ideas presented by professional sociologists. The website was one of the platforms to mobilize the international sociological community in forming the new American Sociological Association section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity. Hopefully, this collaboration will continue and members of the AMSS section will participate in making the site more responsive to the needs of the section and the sociological community.

From the Editors

Matthew T. Lee and Vincent Jeffries

We hope that you enjoy the latest issue of our Section's forum for scholarship and newsletter. As always, we have important announcements and insightful articles. We would like to draw your attention to the three articles on the first page, to the Chair's statement on page 2, and to the list of our Section's 2013 ASA Meeting's sessions, presentations, and roundtables starting on page 3. Please note that the Section business meeting will be held during the roundtable session. We hope to see you all in New York City this August!

Our by-laws require that we transition the editorship of the forum/newsletter to someone else. We will discuss the process for doing this at the Section Council meeting, which will be held at the ASA conference. We have enjoyed working on this important publication and we hope that our efforts have helped contribute to the establishment of a field of study related to altruism, morality, and social solidarity. It will be good for a new editor (or co-editors) to put their stamp on this field. We thank all those who have contributed content to the forum/newsletter and we look forward to reading future issues!



Starting Points of Positive Sociology

Continued from page 1

How can positive sociology build on the successes and shortcomings of positive psychology? What are the next steps in launching a positive sociology movement? How might this new ASA section on Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity contribute to a broader movement to launch positive sociology?

To launch a dialogue about these questions, in November of 2012 I convened a group of eight sociologists (and one psychologist) to meet with Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center. This article summarizes some of the main points we discussed.

The positive psychology movement sought to redress the dominant psychological focus on disease and illness by developing a research agenda on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman's PERMA). Similarly, in recent decades, sociology has focused on the deficits that preclude human flourishing and the common good. Although sociologists have generated important knowledge about the causes and consequences of social inequalities, describing social problems is not the equivalent of describing the conditions that promote human flourishing or foster the common good. Similar to how positive psychology shifted the focus from disease to wellbeing, positive sociology will study the social preconditions of human flourishing and the common good.

Rather than seeing the human good as reducible to one main component (philosophical monism), positive psychology sees human goods as plural, and thus there are many versions of a flourishing life. Similarly, sociologists can describe great variation in culture, traditions, and narratives that influence what flourishing and the common good consists of.

Both psychologists and sociologists debate whether there is a common human nature and, if so, what its properties are. Positive psychology did not try to resolve the nature-nurture debate in psychology; yet positive psychology studies what *free* people choose to do. Similarly, positive sociology can reflect on human personhood in order to broaden without having to resolve philosophical debates about personhood. For example, acknowledging that human nature is influenced by social structures and culture does not necessarily require a relativistic standpoint regarding human flourishing or the common good. In fact, without some concept of a shared human nature and human freedom, the very concepts of human flourishing and the common good would not make sense.

Furthermore, acknowledging external influences and constraints on human behavior and consciousness does not have to eradicate human freedom. Without some concept of human freedom to resist or change social structures, it would be hard to imagine future-oriented behavior that would lead to social transformations.

Amartya Sen's capabilities approach to human development describes human freedom as both a means to well-being and end in and of itself; similarly, some degree of human freedom as a means and end is implicit in both positive psychology and positive sociology. Despite containing some assumptions about human freedom, like positive psychology and the capabilities approach, positive sociology is not a rigid ideology about persons or societies. However, to become a field of study, positive sociology should contain a set of paradigmatic principles to guide a research agenda about the social preconditions of human flourishing and the common good.

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Starting Points of Positive Sociology

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Positive sociology will thus unite various subfields in contemporary sociology and unite current sociological work with a deep historical understanding of the sociological tradition itself. Furthermore, in describing the causes of social inequalities, much contemporary sociology focuses on the past. Positive sociology will encourage a future-oriented sociological imagination that builds on Simmel's concept of the person as purpose-driven and future-oriented.

Although positive sociology acknowledges Max Weber's point that that values influence the formation of research questions and the interpretation of research results, positive sociology also holds that social science can describe the world as it is. Hence the goal of positive sociology is to create new knowledge about the social preconditions of human flourishing and the common good; this new knowledge will inform public policies but the definition of those policies rests on values and ideologies which positive sociology cannot define.

During 2013, we aim to expand the network of scholars interested in launching positive sociology—the study of the social preconditions of human flourishing and the common good. Positive sociology will be methodologically pluralistic, drawing on rich sociological traditions in ethnography, comparative-historical sociology, and survey analysis. The questions positive sociologists ask may be informed by various ideologies, values and worldviews.

This spring, I am teaching positive psychology and positive sociology in my two undergraduate classes. By reading works from positive psychologists such as Martin Seligman and sociologists such as Christian Smith, we students ponder: What do psychology and sociology tell us about a flourishing life? By reading work from Emile Durkheim and Alexis de Tocqueville, students inquire: what are the social conditions that contribute to the common good?

At our November 2012 meeting, Seligman mentioned that people who teach positive psychology found their courses extremely popular. My experience this spring confirms his comment: in my six years of teaching, I have never had more motivated and inspired students. Positive sociology is practical and easily applicable to students' everyday lives.

What articles or books have you read that would be instructive for the nascent positive sociology movement? What do you see as the strengths and potential pitfalls of positive sociology? Would you like to join the new network of positive sociologists?

Please email her with your comments about this article to margarita7@unc.edu

You can read more about her work on her website: www.margaritamooney.com

Professor Mooney also writes a weekly post for the Black, White and Gray blog, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/blackwhiteandgray/>

Book Review



Debt, Obligation, and Sociality: A Review of David Graeber's *Debt* By Dana M. Williams

Typically, “debt” is only viewed as an economic phenomenon, with very simple rules and principles: when someone owes another person something, then this debt is as official and non-negotiable as a contract. David Graeber dismantles this myopic conceptualization of debt via an expansive analysis of many millennia of human history. He finds that “debt” is not as simple or clear as most people assume. The most immediate observation readers will be struck by is that the etymology of many words are linked to the social concept of debt, including: honor, sin, guilt, forgiveness, reckoning, redemption, freedom, credit, and interest. It is helpful to know that the background of these words derive from centuries-old debates about debt or that their histories intersected with debt debates at some point in time.

According to Graeber, “debt” is a social obligation we hold to each other. Although debt is often considered only in monetary terms (“How much money do we owe someone for that product or service?”), it is much broader, and refers to all the ways in which we find ourselves obligated to each other (economically or otherwise). Since debt is ultimately about our social relationships, debt is therefore a social construction. The answer to the question “What do we actually owe to each other?” is never quite certain, since debt is socially-arbitrated and can, thus, be re-negotiated. Graeber goes to great lengths to demonstrate—philosophically as well as through copious anthropological evidence—that most people actually *want* to be in debt to each other. People enjoy doing things for each other, both feeling gracious for giving (and thus incurring other debt) as well as receiving gifts from each other (and landing in each other’s debt). Even though free-market economic theory pretends humans do not like this, the truth is that most of us actually seek out debt, because we enjoy the social relationships that come with exchange.

Much of Graeber’s *Debt* is focused on the oscillations between credit and money, which define general periods in human history over the last five-thousand years. Despite the popular assumption that pre-money economies operated on principles of barter (two parties exchanging things of equal value or desire), Graeber argues this is an unsubstantiated myth and that no society has ever been discovered which has operated strictly on the basis of barter. The reasons are self-evident, according to Graeber: squaring and settling one’s debts indicates a lack of desire to continue associating with others (“Okay, we both have what we want, so this transaction and our relationship is completed”). Thus, if direct, when bartered exchange happens it usually indicates that the people involved lacked *faith* in each other or are *strangers*, and they do not expect or wish to see the other person again. In other words, an “even trade” often indicates a lack of trust or that we are unsure of our ability to get what we are owed from that person in the future. Consequently, it is also usually uncouth, even offensive, to keep track of what friends and neighbors owe each other. This is clear in close, intimate relationships: friends or lovers who always demand an immediate, equal trade of kindness, pleasantries, or favors—and who keep track of any debt the other party has—are likely to be characterized as pathological.

Another reason why no economy has ever been based wholly upon barter is that it is generally impractical: what are the chances that two people have exactly what each other need? Instead, a loose system of “credit” is more practical; we approximate our general indebtedness to each other (at least in less—

Book Review *continued*

intimate relations) and we know that we can rely on the other party to help out when there is the need. A system of credit (accounting either goods or services) also mandates that we stay in each other's debt, thereby ensuring constant interaction and sociality. This is one of Graeber's most compelling arguments: human sociability (and, even solidarity) is premised on debt (i.e. social obligation).

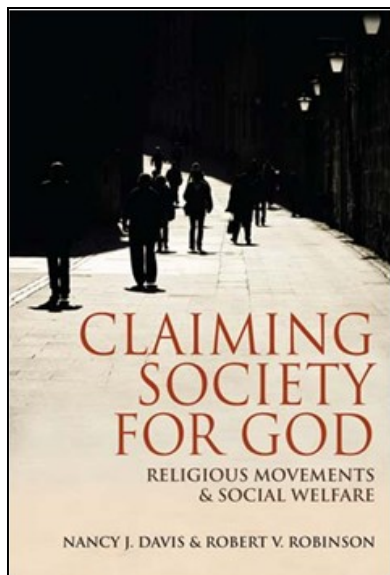
Graeber dedicates a sizable portion of *Debt* to discussing the epochal fluctuations between credit and money, starting during the early Agrarian period, then the Axial age (sometimes called the classic age), the medieval era, the industrial age, and finally the period following Nixon's decision in 1971 to detach the US from the gold-standard. During each period, the general human relationship to debt changed. Graeber argues that money, large-scale slavery, markets, and states arise alongside each other during the Axial age, in what he calls the military-coinage-slavery complex. Most of these phenomena disappear during the medieval period, shrink, or go into latency. Yet, the industrial age rekindles them again. For example, slavery (by definition, the consequence of a debt that cannot be paid back) makes a comeback and war begins, once again, to predominate relations between large, centralizing states, all of whom resume the use of coin money.

The present-day political ramifications of *Debt* could scarcely be clearer: debt is not only important to economies but is also fundamental to human relationships. To eliminate all debt—such as what Right-wing forces seek for the US federal government (as in the 2011 “debt ceiling” debate in the Congress)—is not merely preposterous, but would represent a deathblow to social relations. Contrary to popularly-incanted mantras, debt is not universally bad, nor is it something to avoid at all costs. A deeper question emerges for Graeber: why do we “have to” pay back our loans, especially for those debts that are created by unethical, hierarchical practices (e.g. International Monetary Fund-created debt for poor countries, decade-long crippling student loans, or predatory home loans that end in foreclosure)? Those who hold monetary debt over people tend to be wealthy and powerful people (i.e. affiliated with banks, landlords, loan-sharks, credit card companies), and, let's face it, they can handle losing the obligation that the poor “owe” them, which creates non-free relations more akin to slavery than mutual aid.

Graeber's suggested solution to the enslaving characteristics of some debt, and the socially constructed qualities that make it negotiable, is proposed at the end of *Debt*: he calls for a Biblical-style “Jubilee” to wipe-free the slate on these arduous forms of debt existing between unequal parties. Jubilee was a commonplace practice in many earlier periods of human history—in fact, it was regularly done, not only for purposes of social justice, but also to re-balance societies that were on the brink of revolution. The latter is likely the very thing that motivated the Saudi Arabian monarchy when it wiped-out some forms of consumer debt for its citizens, gave government employees pay raises, and offered cheap, subsidized loans—all in the wake of the Arab Spring. Autocratic regimes watched with fear as the Egyptian dictatorship was overthrown; so, instead of letting the burdens of debt become so extreme that they threaten the monarchy's hold over its citizens, the Saudi Arabian government deemed it smarter for the oil-wealth coffers to be used to soften the worst injustices of capitalism. Jubilee could help eliminate un-payable debt and thus return us to the socially-useful sort of debt that obliges us to keep working together in social communities (what Graeber simply identifies as “communism”).

While there is an abundance of wisdom to admire with *Debt*, Graeber's incredibly fine attention to detail sometimes distracts from the general argument. Also, although his prose is fascinating, Graeber has the odd habit of starting nearly every single paragraph via direct, yet non-obvious reference to the prior paragraph (e.g. writing “this” without indicating exactly what previous thing he is referring to). Thus, putting down and picking-up the book makes for a discordant experience. Yet, such minor aesthetic concerns aside, *Debt* is not only timely and consciousness-expanding, but also an entertaining read. Students of solidarity, altruism, mutual aid, and human relations generally would benefit greatly from *Debt*'s insights.

Books of Interest



Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare in Egypt, Israel, Italy, and the United States

By **Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson**

Across the world today, religiously orthodox (what some would call “fundamentalist”) movements of Christians, Jews, and Muslims have converged on a common strategy to install their own brand of faith at the center of societies and states they regard as alarmingly secularized. While many scholars, political observers, and world leaders, especially since 9/11, see this shared line of attack as involving armed struggle or terrorism, *Claiming Society for God* shows that the strategy-in-common of the most prominent and successful religiously orthodox movements is not violence, but a patient, under-the-radar effort to infiltrate and subtly transform civil society that the authors call “bypassing the state.” Telling the stories of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Sephardi Torah Guardians or Shas in Israel, Comunione e Liberazione in Italy, and the Salvation Army in the U.S, Davis and Robinson show how these movements, grounded in a communitarian theology, are building massive, grassroots networks of religion-based social service agencies, hospitals and clinics, clubs, rotating credit societies, schools, charitable organizations, worship centers, and businesses—networks that are already being called states within states, surrogate states, or parallel societies. Bypassing the state, rather than directly confronting it, allows these movements to quietly accomplish their theological, cultural, and economic agendas across the nation, address local needs not being met by the state, and establish a broad base of popular support that some of them use to push their agendas in the arena of party politics. This bottom-up, entrepreneurial strategy is not mere reformism or accommodation to the state; it is aimed at nothing less than making religion the cornerstone of society.

“...a brilliant piece of work—a beautiful example of sociology at its very best. It is very well organized, clearly written, focused on the four movements you have picked, central to major social developments in today's world, professionally researched and analyzed, both pragmatic and theoretical, overwhelmingly convincing, and an important corrective to a lot of current beliefs. It is the kind of book that I wish everyone will read and take to heart, including policy makers. It was also a great read—fascinating from beginning to end.” —Wendell Bell, Professor Emeritus, Yale University

"Illuminating intersections of religion and public life in four different nations, this book is topical. Given that two of these nations are in the Middle East and one of them is Egypt, it is timely, even urgent."

—R. Stephen Warner, University of Illinois at Chicago

On Facebook at www.facebook.com/ClaimingSocietyForGod

More books of interest on the next page...

Books of Interest (*Continued*)



INNER PEACE—GLOBAL IMPACT

Tibetan Buddhism, Leadership, and Work

Kathryn Goldman Schuyler

A VOLUME IN ADVANCES IN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY:
THEORY, RESEARCH, AND APPLICATION

Inner Peace—Global Impact: Tibetan Buddhism, Leadership, and Work

Edited by **Kathryn Goldman Schuyler**

A volume in **Advances in Workplace Spirituality: Theory, Research, and Application**

Series Editor Louis W. (Jody) Fry, Texas A&M University - Central Texas

INNER PEACE—GLOBAL IMPACT describes underlying principles of Tibetan wisdom traditions relevant for successful leadership in the 21st century as well as Tibetan teachers whose entrepreneurial actions were critical to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in the West. With first-person narratives, personal stories, scholarly research, and commentaries by noted social scientists, this book is written for everyone who wants ideas to revitalize leadership.

It is rich with vivid pictures of deep personal experience. Long-time Western Tibetan Buddhist practitioners describe how their practice has influenced them in fields as diverse as scientific research, social work, art, dance, and university teaching. The Dalai Lama is seen through the eyes of his long-time friend, eminent author Huston Smith, as well as through the experiences of Thupten Jinpa, his 25-year English translator. Sogyal Rinpoche shares his vision for transforming traditional ways of studying, while Lama Tharchin Rinpoche, a 10th generation Tibetan yogi, reflects on the challenges of teaching in a Western culture where perspectives differ so vastly from those of Tibet.

With insights from Tibetan lamas and Western thought leaders including Peter Senge, Bill George, and Margaret Wheatley, this book creates new visions for leadership and the workplace.

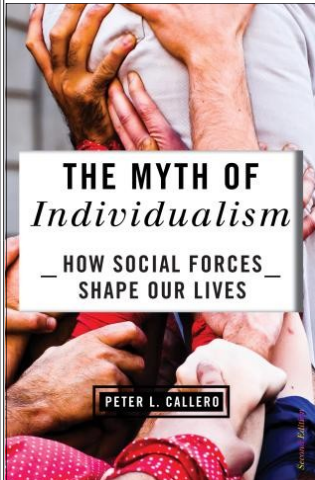
“When the very survival of our planet is at stake, a deeper understanding of practical ways to provide authentic leadership is needed. [This book] connects the wisdom teachings of Tibetan Buddhism and their relevance to the perils and promises of the modern world in a way that is timely and comes as a blessing to us all.” - **Tsoknyi Rinpoche**, Author of *Open Heart, Open Mind*; *Carefree Dignity*; and *Fearless Simplicity*
“I am amazed how the influence of the Tibetan People, a tiny population from literally the end of the earth, has become so great in modern society.

This book helps us understand this phenomenon. A fascinating read!” - **R. Adam Engle, JD, MBA**, Co-Founder and former President, *Mind and Life Institute*

“The stellar and impeccably credentialed writers Kathryn Goldman Schuyler brings to her volume are well chosen. Together, under her leadership, they powerfully make the vital connections between inner and outer peace.” - **Anne Carolyn Klein, PhD / Rigzin Drolma**, Author of *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse* and *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen*

“This fascinating volume is an essential reading for anyone who wants to know about this emerging paradigm.” - **Antoine Lutz, PhD**, Senior Scientist, Waisman Lab for Brain Imaging & Behavior, *Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, Univ. Wisconsin-Madison*

More books of interest on the next page...



The Myth of Individualism: How Social Forces Shape our Lives by Peter L. Callero

Once after giving an introductory lecture I was approached by an obviously anxious student who demanded to know if sociologists hold to the belief that “society controls individual behavior”. When I answered “no”, the student looked relieved and replied, “so individuals control their own future”. Again I answered “no”. Clearly frustrated, the student insisted on a straight answer. “It has to be one or the other, it can’t be both! Now which one is it?” Over the years I have found that many students approach sociology from a similar perspective and I suspect the conversation described above may sound familiar to anyone who has taught an introductory course. There is a tendency for our students to believe that an understanding of the individual-society relationship boils down to a simple distinction: either our personal actions and choices shape our life, or something called “society” is the master of our destiny. As sociologists we know that social life is more complicated and that the answer to my student’s question is that we are both free to act on our choices and, at the same time, we are shaped by very powerful social forces.

The Myth of Individualism: How Social Forces Shape Our Lives is intended as an introduction to sociological thinking and as an entrée to the complex dynamic of self and society. The typical American approaches sociology with a skeptic’s bias toward individual level explanations of the world. Indeed, most students struggle to reconcile the power of social forces and their own experience of autonomy and independence. Thus, before complex ideas of social structure and social system can be appreciated, students must first confront the myth of individualism. In this brief, supplemental text, I gradually develop a sociological perspective using historical accounts, personal stories and examples of social research. Without the confusion of multiple new concepts and theories students learn how their own self has been shaped by society and how society has in turn been altered by collective action. I have intentionally kept the book brief. There are six short chapters and each begins with a provocative story or example that serves to illustrate a key social force or “power”.

Chapter 1 – Individualism: The Power of a Myth

The goal of Chapter 1 is to expose the limitations of radical individualism and the hegemonic influence of this cultural orientation. It begins with the story of Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber) as a representative of the worst consequences of an extreme individualism. An introduction to economic and cultural individualism rounds out the chapter.

Chapter 2 - Becoming a Person: The Power of Symbols

This Chapter begins with a detailed description of the Salem witch trials and the execution of Bridget Bishop. It then segues into a description of the so-called “missing links” that were displayed and analyzed in the 19th century. These examples are used to illustrate the social construction of personhood and the power to define others. Content includes a discussion of language and symbols, the development of self and identity and the sociology of cognition and emotion. The work of G.H. Mead and Arlie Hochschild receive attention.

Chapter 3 – Conformity and Disobedience: The Power of the Group

The Chapter opens with a detailed description of a bizarre episode that occurred at a McDonald’s restaurant.

Continued on next page...

Books of Interest (*Continued*)

An employee followed bogus orders delivered over the telephone that gradually increased in severity and ended in a rape. The event was captured on video and received national attention. It was later learned that nearly identical episodes resulting in employee abuse occurred in over 70 fast food restaurants between 1995 and 2004. Research on obedience to authority is reviewed, including the Milgram experiments. Links to the military, rationalized organizations and deviant behavior are made. The chapter concludes with a discussion of group conflict and group competition.

Chapter 4 – Family Matters: The Power of Social Class

The opening discussion exams survey data demonstrating American's commitment to the belief that individual success is the result of individual effort. These beliefs are then contrasted with the economic reality of limited class mobility. The work of Annette Lareau is reviewed and two case studies from her book "Unequal Childhoods" are used to explore the relationship between social class and family life. The power of social class and the concept of cultural capital receive significant attention in this chapter.

Chapter 5 – Globalization: The Power of Capitalism

The chapter begins with the detailed description of the employment history of a United Airlines mechanic who is laid off and struggles to find economic security in the changing economy (borrowed from Louis Uchitelle's book "The Disposable American"). This leads to an examination of the new global economy, plant closings, outsourcing, and the inherent instability of capitalism. Both individual and community consequences receive attention. The second half of the chapter begins with a case study of a particular garments sweatshop in China and looks at the global link among laborers across the globe and the growth of wealth and income inequality.

Chapter 6 – From Me to We: The Power of Collective Action

The Chapter opens with a detailed examination of Rosa Parks famous act of resistance. I show that a dense network of community support and a history of political activism supported her defiant behavior. This leads to a discussion of the historical link between democracy and the first social movements. The chapter concludes with a personal story of the WTO protest in Seattle and an analysis of the globalization movement.

About the Author:

Peter Callero is Professor of sociology at Western Oregon University where he teaches courses on community organizing, social theory, research methods, deviance and the sociology of self. He holds a Ph.D in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has published extensively on issues of self, identity and politics. His other books are *Giving Blood: The Development of an Altruistic Identity* (with Jane Piliavin, Johns Hopkins University Press), and *The Self-Society Dynamic: Cognition, Emotion and Action* (edited with Judith Howard, Cambridge University Press).

More books of interest on the next page...

Books of Interest (*Continued*)

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT, BENEVOLENCE,
AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S LOVE

the heart of **RELIGION**



MATTHEW T. LEE
MARGARET M. POLOMA • STEPHEN G. POST

The Heart of Religion: Spiritual Empowerment, Benevolence, and the Experience of God's Love

By Matthew T. Lee, Margaret M. Poloma and Stephen G. Post

A theologian and two sociologists offer an in-depth exploration of the connection between religion and benevolence in America.

Beneath our culture's obsession with wealth and power, status and celebrity, millions of Americans are quietly engaged in a deeply religious struggle to wake up from petty selfishness and to embrace a life of benevolence and compassion.

Drawing on an extensive random survey of 1,200 men and women across the United States, Matthew Lee, Margaret Poloma, and Stephen Post here shed new light on how Americans wake up to the reality of divine love and how that transformative experience expresses itself in concrete acts of benevolence. The

authors find that the vast majority of Americans (eight out of ten) report that they have felt God's love increasing their compassion for others, one of many important revelations uncovered by the survey. In order to more fully flesh out the meaning of the survey's results, the authors also conducted 120 in-depth interviews with Christian women and men from all walks of life across the country who are engaged in benevolent service. Their stories offer compelling examples of how receiving God's love, loving God, and expressing this love to others has made a difference in the world and given their lives deeper significance. As a result, some provide community service, others strive for social justice, still others seek to redefine religion and the meaning of "church" in America. Interviewees who may have grown up with judgmental images of God tended to trade them in for a loving and accepting God more consistent with their own emotionally powerful personal experiences.

Based on equal measures of scholarly research and human insight, *The Heart of Religion* offers an unprecedented level of detail about the experience and expression of divine love.

"Lee, Poloma, and Post give an incisive analysis of what can be considered the core element of religious involvement: namely, love. Among the virtues of this volume are the national-level survey data and the qualitative data used to explore processes and experiences related to religiously inspired love. *The Heart of Religion* avoids simplistic portrayals of the subject by recognizing that godly love is often forged in the crucible of suffering, and that expressions of godly love vary across social contexts and life circumstances. This volume demonstrates that thoughtful scientific investigations can and must take seriously the dynamics and experiences that are central to religion. It will offer an important correction to a longstanding oversight in the social scientific study of religion."--John Bartkowski, Professor of Sociology, University of Texas at San Antonio

"God's love heals, energizes, and transforms. 'Super-charged' by divine love, people can accomplish great things. Blending sociological and spiritual perspectives, the authors provide powerful illustrations of how divine love leads people to respond to the needs of the world. In a world of hurt and brokenness, two themes especially stand out: (1) love transcends all of our differences, and (2) divine love makes it possible to love the unlovable. This is a book full of compelling and inspiring insights into the divine origins of the greatest commandment."--Robert A. Emmons, Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Positive Psychology*