

Transcript from

Dean's Symposium on Social Science Innovations: Inequality in America Initiative Annual Symposium 2023

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Division of Social Science Faculty of Arts & Sciences Harvard University

[00:00:24.86] LARRY BOBO: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Welcome in to our Inequality in America Symposium. As part of our dean symposia series on social science innovations. My name is Larry Bobo. I'm the dean of social science. I want to thank you all for joining us this afternoon for what I believe will be a very rich and thought provoking session.

[00:00:49.22] Just as a reminder, the Inequality in America Initiative is well into its fifth year now of full operation. And it has featured two key elements in our activities. One of them is a seed grant program for our internal faculty.

[00:01:11.81] And last year's symposia focused on presentations by our own faculty on some of the research they had conducted, which featured Stephanie Stantcheva from economics, Nathan Nunn from economics, Michele Lamont from sociology, and Walter Johnson from our history department.

[00:01:32.03] Today, we are focused on what really is the crown jewel of the Inequality in America program and that is our postdoctoral scholars program. And we will have two presenters who are representatives of our fifth cohort, which is a way of saying we currently have three completed cohorts of postdoctoral participants in our program and two current residential cohorts. And the cohort size is now up to four individuals.

[00:02:04.85] The initiative, of course, is one that reaches across all of the disciplines and fields in the social sciences. And we know that the postdoc program, not merely an aspiration, but I would hope that what we deliver proves to be a valuable setting and opportunity for our postdoctoral scholars and that we think this event will help spark further engagement with our postdocs and knowledge about the really important innovative work that they are doing.

[00:02:36.11] So we have two of the four members of our fifth cohort joining us here today and some of our own august faculty who will serve as discussants on their presentations. Our first presentation is going to come from Peter Harvey, who received his PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania and he also holds an MPhil in sociology from the University of

Cambridge. His research broadly engages on issues of culture, social inequality, and our schooling and educational systems.

[00:03:07.40] And our colleague and friend Jennifer Hochschild who is the Henry LaBarre Jayne professor of government here at Harvard, as well as professor of African and African American studies, and the holder of lectureships-- because Jennifer clearly doesn't sleep-- also in the Harvard Kennedy School, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and someone whose own work's on race, politics, and the political economy of race and politics in education, will comment on Peter's work.

[00:03:35.39] We are also then going to have another presentation from one of our IAI postdocs, Jessica Katzstein, who did her PhD in anthropology at Brown University. And her research focuses on how police officers both absorb, on the one hand, and on the other hand resist, reforms during times of legitimacy crisis.

[00:03:57.08] And she also was trying to understand why police reform efforts so often fail to realize their promise and in particular end up failing to curb racialized violence. Commenting on her paper will be a relatively new colleague, but very welcome one to the Harvard community, that is Sandra Susan Smith.

[00:04:17.51] She is the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim professor of criminal justice and faculty director of the program in criminal justice policy and management at HKS. She is the director of the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy and she also has the distinction of being the Carol Pforzheimer professor at the Radcliffe Institute.

[00:04:38.90] So without further ado, I think I would like to turn the floor over to Peter Harvey, who's going to talk to us about 'everyone thinks they're special, how schools teach children their social stations'. And I will just remind all of you that this session is being recorded.

[00:05:02.55] PETER FRANCIS HARVEY: OK, can you see my slides?

[00:05:05.71] LARRY BOBO: Yes, indeed we can.

[00:05:07.43] PETER FRANCIS HARVEY: OK, then I'll crack on. Firstly, I'm very grateful to be a member of IAI and the postdoc. It's a real pleasure and a pleasure to share this snapshot of a paper with all of you. The actual paper is forthcoming in the next issue of *The American Sociological Review*. So if what I say is too garbled and short here, hopefully, you can read it and I'll sound a bit better in full.

[00:05:32.31] Yes, I'll continue. So a variety of scholars from a variety of threads within psychology and beyond have argued very convincingly and shown that self-perception or self-identity matters for inequality in matters of actions, outcomes, and trajectories.

[00:05:53.99] For instance, scholars, including our own Michele Lamont has shown that self-worth and other cognitive concepts matter for various outcomes. For instance, low levels of self-worth are attached to negative outcomes ranging from self-doubt all the way up to so-called

"deaths of despair," whereas high levels are linked, particularly for marginalized groups, to various positive, such as stigma buffering, resilience, and so on.

[00:06:21.60] Now, there are some risks, particularly when other groups... the more privileged have too high levels of self-worth you might say, and I'll come onto that later in the discussion. But overall the point being that self-perception matters.

[00:06:37.35] And yet our scholarship on children and childhood socialization pays less attention to this fact and how it comes about. So we have amazing research in various domains on childhood inequality. For instance, work showing stratification that unequal economic resources lead to various unequal experiences and outcomes for children.

[00:06:58.22] Likewise cultural skills and dispositions vary amongst kids and these lead to different payoffs amongst cultural gatekeepers, such as teachers and employers. And likewise, discrimination by gender, race and so on has been shown to have a huge impact on children's lives and outcomes.

[00:07:17.72] And while many of the scholars doing this research posit implications for children's self-perceptions, they often don't directly show it. So I'm impatient. I'd like to see more of this, I'm keen to know more about it, so I did some of that research.

[00:07:34.42] And so the paper puts forward this term, which I came up with, Social Station, which basically I define as one's sense of their position and direction in the world: kind-of, where they belong, and their trajectory, where are they going. It includes various things, particularly individuality or what they're taught about being different or distinctive from others.

[00:07:55.87] Moral worth, or how valuable, or legitimate, or important they're taught to feel, and what I call situated prospects or their sense of agency and imagined futures. And this is intersectional in the sense that it is built upon children's structural backgrounds, and experiences, and teaches them about where they belong and where they're going through social space.

[00:08:21.56] Now, of course, scholars have touched on various aspects of this. Psychologists using various terms have looked at features usually heavily based upon lab-based experiments and primarily focused on White groups and on class variations, less so on intersectional aspects.

[00:08:39.20] Within sociology, there's been a lot of research from people who look at either children's sense of position in the world or direction in the world. So for instance, Carolyn Tyson's fantastic work highlights inequalities in what children learn about their academic self-concept and how racialized tracking plays a role in that.

[00:08:58.22] Allison Pugh shows how consumption and children's economic resources plays a role in their sense of worth and standing compared to classroom peers. So they're looking more at horizontal aspects, how children compare themselves into their position.

[00:09:12.05] Direction research focuses more on class trajectories. This is a classic class reproduction work showing how the looming labor market can often prefigure where children end up. But again, the scholarship often tends to be an either/or situation.

[00:09:28.39] There are studies that look directly at both and these tend to be school-based ethnographies. And what's interesting about these is that whether they look at elite boarding school children or those in under-resourced public schools serving the poor, they tend to find a meritocratic basis to the lessons that children receive about their social station.

[00:09:52.69] For instance, Shamus Khan finds that elite boarding school children at St. Paul's are taught they are the 'best of the best' because, he argues, they're taught to emphasize their purported hard work and intellectual brilliance. So they believe that they've earned their privilege.

[00:10:08.57] This is a change from the past, it's been argued, where it used to be people would emphasize their breeding or connections, their inheritance as legitimate. But Khan and others find a change where a meritocratic turn where elites try and justify their privilege by saying they have earned it.

[00:10:26.02] Conversely it's found that students in under-resourced schools are taught that their limited outcomes and options are sort-of their own failings. If they'd only learned more, tried harder, they would have a higher sense of their social station.

[00:10:41.15] And yet we know from other scholarship that as evaluative standards shift, so does childhood socialization. Particularly quickly, I might add, for elites or the middle-classes who try and keep ahead of the game and often are more attuned to the rules of the game.

[00:10:56.87] And we also know that there's been a growing emphasis on diversity, identity, and wellness, and other factors like this within schools and workshops. Not only in what people are obliged to talk about and engage with, but how they are recruited, the evaluative standards that play a role in these environments.

[00:11:13.74] So this makes us wonder, what if meritocratic achievement is displaced, or distanced, or decoupled from this social status and socialization and replaced or supplanted by other aspects such as lessons about identity? What might this mean for children's sense of self both as "distinction," and for social reproduction?

[00:11:34.92] So to query this I did 3 years of ethnographic observations in 2 elementary schools, or all names are pseudonyms. Both schools are racially diverse, but "Truman Academy" is a predominantly upper middle-class private K through 8 school, whereas Truman [n.b. meant Brighton] is a predominantly working-class public first through fifth grade school.

[00:11:56.18] And I spent most of my time in fourth or fifth grade classrooms. And from this time in the schools I ended up with about 3,000 single-spaced pages of field notes and another thousand or so pages of interview transcripts. And I should say that one of the benefits of doing this research in schools as opposed to say the family home is that it gives you access to the wide

array of lessons children receive both positive and negative about their social station, about their position and direction in the world.

[00:12:25.79] So whereas parents might show a lot of the class, cultural lessons, and so on, people have looked at this, parents tend not to racially discriminate against their own children. And yet we know that discrimination, particularly by race, is a huge aspect of education. And so I'm highlighting how children are taught these lessons through socialization and discriminatory practices.

[00:12:49.96] Now, overall I find that Truman children were taught they are always 'already special' based on their internal qualities, and I'll explain what that means in a second. Now, Brighton conversely, the public, working-class school, children were taught they are conditionally good provided they continually adhered to external rules.

[00:13:09.87] So in neither school did the socialization rest upon meritocratic narratives such that children at Truman could learn they were special regardless of how highly they achieved and children at Brighton could be good regardless of whether they struggled academically or not.

[00:13:29.43] Of course, learning was still valued by teachers in both schools, but it was not the basis upon which children were taught to lean upon for their social worth and beyond. But there were variations at both schools by race and class, which I will describe in a minute.

[00:13:46.88] So this table captures the main data of the paper. And I should emphasize that these lessons of social station were taught to children by a range of social actors, teachers, principal, support staff, and so on, and through a range of school practices, curricula, disciplinary systems, everyday teacher student interactions, and beyond.

[00:14:08.17] The three features that I highlight here of social station were those most consistently and forcefully messaged and they were also mutually reinforcing. So the Truman children being taught they were unique supported, and was in turn supported by, the idea they were inherently morally worthy.

[00:14:24.61] And often moments of interaction can carry lessons about all three of these aspects, or multiple of them, but I separate them here for [analytic?] clarity. So to get into the data, relative identity pertains to aspects of individuality. And Truman, the upper middle-class private school, children were taught to be distinctive and unique to play up these aspects of themselves, and this happened in many ways.

[00:14:52.80] For instance, the Truman children were taught about the timelines of ancient Greece and then they were encouraged to make "timelines of me." And they did this by having long strips of colored paper and they had to include several dates on them, some from before they were born and some from after.

[00:15:08.75] But rather than dating their timelines with years, the children were encouraged to use their own initials in imitation of BC as in before Christ. So Lucy Worthing's timeline was split into BLW, before Lucy Worthing, and ALW, after Lucy Worthing was born. Now, of

course, this had many educational functions, but it also encouraged Truman children to chart a history that was distinct and revolved around them.

[00:15:36.17] Each child was positioned as the pivotal historical figure thereby mythologizing their unique individual histories. More than this, children were taught to base their sense of uniqueness upon identity and they did various identity projects to do this. The fourth and fifth graders were taught the identity curriculum and this involved basic lessons about race, gender, ethnicity, and so on.

[00:16:01.46] And in doing these lessons and the curriculum, children had to complete surveys and self-reflections about themselves, identity, with particular sections on race, gender, religion, family structure -- almost never on class. Satisfactory completion of these tasks required children to claim as much options as important to themselves and explain their own personal reasons for why they mattered.

[00:16:24.40] As such, while Truman children were formally learning about community and inequality, they were also being taught to construct unique identities. And there are various other ways in this which was done. For instance, students had to build a shrine to their ancestors featuring many flags of Israel, or India, or wherever their grandparents and so on were from.

[00:16:45.07] So ultimately Truman's students were taught to base their uniqueness upon their personal internal qualities or who they are, not what they did. At Brighton things were not the opposite, children were not robbed of all individuality, but expressions of individuality must not threaten the collective obligations at Brighton, at the public school.

[00:17:08.71] For instance, every morning Brighton students had to rise, turn to face the flag in the corner, and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Normally, this occurred midway through the meeting of their free school breakfasts, but no children dared chew or resist. In fact, Miss Collins, the teacher I observed most in her classroom, described one moment in a previous year where students did try to resist.

[00:17:29.83] She said, last year I had three boys who were so bad, Afsha and then two others, Matt and Ben. So Afsha would say, I can't do this, I can't do that because he was Muslim. He was trying to get out of things he didn't want to do, like he wouldn't stand for the pledge. He was saying football players are kneeling. But I said, you're not a football player, you're standing.

[00:17:49.74] So at Brighton identity claims via structures like religion were seen as threats to collective duties earning them the label of "bad." Likewise lessons about race or history at Brighton were seen as useful for learning social facts, but not individualized or made about the self.

[00:18:08.46] For instance, the children had to learn from the textbook about five races and answer three questions. Why did they come to America? When did they come? And what did they bring? And the teachers and students were very disengaged from this, they found it very drab regardless of whether the race or ethnicity they were talking about or learning about matched their own.

[00:18:28.54] And in fact, one teacher told me that the students got most of the answers wrong on the test, they were writing that the European-Americans were the ones who were slaves. So at Brighton, history identity was treated as distant social facts, externally relevant perhaps as knowledge for tests, but irrelevant to themselves personally and their sense of their position in the world.

[00:18:52.27] So moral worth was the second of the three components and it concerns aspects of value, legitimacy, relates to things like self-esteem and status. And it can be seen in many ways, but disciplinary systems was the main and most obvious way in which it was taught. Now, the main system used at Truman was "take-a-break."

[00:19:12.64] And this involved say if a student was talking when a teacher didn't want them to they would say, "Steven, take a break," and Steven had to get up and go to the "take-a-break" chair in the back corner of the room and then decide for himself how long he wanted to spend there until he was ready to regain focus on work again.

[00:19:29.50] As teachers describe the "take-a-break" system to the classroom, they said you're not in trouble, it's not a way for us to tell you we're mad or you're not doing well, it's just a way for you to take a little time, think about what's bothering you and get back into a frame of mind where you can work again. And true to form, the system played out throughout the school year.

[00:19:46.99] And also general discipline at Truman was actually affirmative of moral worth, never critical. Students were never called bad or being bad at Truman. They were told, you're not being your best self and other similar phrases. Conversely, at Brighton students were readily called bad and told they were being bad.

[00:20:06.30] And the main system of discipline at Brighton was a behavioral chart hung prominently on most classroom walls. In Miss Collins's classroom, she used a five level chart. Students had their names on clothes pegs and each day they began at the neutral level, which with her airplane metaphor was 'taxiing.' then if they behaved well they could be moved to "taking off" or then "soaring" or downwards to "downward spiral" or "grounded."

[00:20:31.47] As Miss Collins said, grounded, that's when you're being seriously bad and there's going to be an email sent home to your parents too. So being grounded at Brighton is not characterized as a behavioral blip or due to an unruly fraction of the self, it is the product of categorically being seriously bad.

[00:20:48.93] Furthermore, ending the day on a positive position meant children were given little tickets, that at the end of the school year they could cash in for toys bought from the dollar store by Miss Collins. But if they finished in a negative position, they had tickets taken away and torn up in front of them.

[00:21:04.88] And the eradication of rewards for previous good behavior highlights the contingency of children's moral worth at Brighton. Moral worth is not inherent. Yesterday's merits do not discount today's failings. Thirdly, Situated Prospects. Now, children at Truman were taught that the world was pliable and they had a role in it, they could take advantage of it.

[00:21:27.31] This was seen in many ways. On a school trip to Chinatown, the children were told to interview adult passers-by and ask them where they were really from, notionally to understand that Chinatown was not just full of Chinese people, but full of various Asian groups and beyond. And students were confident doing this.

[00:21:45.88] And when they that afternoon went back to the school and reflected upon how it went, one student wrote in his journal that it turns out I was an expert interviewer. They were convinced that they could impose themselves upon the world and other people. And yet perhaps counterintuitively when asked about the future, most of them when you ask them what they wanted to do in the future, most of them would shrug and say, "I dunno."

[00:22:05.82] They all thought they were going to college, that was a default. And yet none of them had a clear idea of what they might do almost as if to name it would make it too ordinary. And so if I pushed kids and said oh, come on, you must have some ideas, they might say something like, oh, I'll be a vet, or I'll run a doggie daycare, or I'll be a cheerleader. But the answers would change from week to week as if they hadn't really invested that much really thought or energy into them.

[00:22:30.18] Nevertheless, the school taught children. as Miss Daniels said, at Truman "there are no losers, we're all winners." Conversely at Brighton, children were taught that the world did not cater to them, and this was taught in many ways.

[00:22:44.07] For instance, when the children were introduced to new multiplication methods for solving math puzzles, they were warned that you're going to like some and you're not going to like some, you're not going to cry and have a hissy fit about the ones you don't like.

[00:22:57.56] Even when being given treats like popsicles at the end of the school year, they were told, "You get what you get and you don't complain." There was no room for bartering, whereas at Truman there was constant bartering and negotiation. When I asked children at Brighton what they wanted to do in the future, they actually had fairly pragmatic clear-eyed ideas, such as teacher, nurse, army, and they were more consistent over time.

[00:23:19.59] In fact, when I was out on the playground with Miss Campen a fourth grade teacher and some of her higher achieving girls, I asked them, what do you want to do in the future? And Celina, the smartest girl in the year, quickly answered, not be a sociologist, which made the other girls and teacher laugh.

[00:23:35.72] And then Miss Campen nodded sagely and said, 'yYeah, you want to make some money. What if you get divorced? You need an income.' So she was reminding nine-year-old girls about the instability of marriage and their futures.

[00:23:48.59] In fact, when I describe some of the experiences at Truman to Brighton teachers, they were tearing their hair out. And Miss Campen, who was the most placid of teachers in the fourth grade said, "I'm sick of it now where everyone thinks they're special. Not everyone gets a trophy, that's not what life is like."

[00:24:07.41] So quickly onto the variations, these are both by race, and class, and gender to an extent. So at Truman certain girls, particularly Asian-American girls were disproportionately likely to be seen as insufficiently absorbing the lessons about being special. They were seen as too diffident, too quiet, not having enough opinions, and they were urged to be more forthright. "How are you going to be a chooser in life? You want to be a chooser, right?" They were told.

[00:24:32.55] As for our class differences, the majority of teachers at Truman were from stable middle-class backgrounds and endorsed these lessons about being always-already special. But the small minority of teachers from working-class backgrounds worried about this making kids increasingly entitled, making an already privileged kids more entitled.

[00:24:51.57] At Brighton variations were a bit more overtly discriminatory such that poor students and Black students of any class were taught that being "good" was more contingent, more out of reach for them than for others. For instance, two White girls, Leah and Rita, were both petite and would often kneel on their seats to get a better look at their desks.

[00:25:11.79] Rita, the lower middle-class girl, would be told warmly, "Don't sit like that, hon, I don't want you to fall off and hurt yourself." Whereas Leah, the poor White girl will be yelled at, "That's not how we sit. Now, sit on your bottom." I have a whole paper about this, so I could talk about it for hours. But it was rather depressing.

[00:25:28.41] Ashanti, for instance, a working-class Black girl who was in the small gifted program at Brighton was criticized by teachers for, quote, "Thinking she's hot shit" and also they doubted whether she had earned her place in the gifted program and was not actually in there because she was Black.

[00:25:47.27] And so overall the paper introduces the idea of social station, ones position and direction in the world. Truman children are taught they are always already special, where Brighton children were taught they're conditionally good. In neither school were meritocratic narratives the basis of these lessons.

[00:26:04.19] In fact, the Truman children were taught they were special and unique in part through leaning upon narratives about identity using notions of class, race, and gender. Sorry, not class. Race and gender, and experiences, and family, and religion, to bolster their sense of difference, perhaps to exploit it going forward.

[00:26:24.16] Whereas for Brighton students, who would have more benefited from a critique of structural inequalities, were taught to downplay this by their White teachers. And this play..., er, matches broader patterns where working-class Whites tend to be wary of discussions of race and racism in the US.

[00:26:42.43] Last slide, while it might sound obvious, a lot of research argues within sociology that inequalities in schools are brought from home and that schools are just static environments that do not play much of a role, and yet I find that they are important socializing environments.

[00:27:00.87] And contrary to the likes of Bourdieu and so on, teachers are not uniformly middle-class with middle-class cultural norms and imperatives, but rather they vary. Last of all, some of the lessons that Truman's children were being taught about being special, particularly those with an individualistic bent, resonates beyond the schoolyard.

[00:27:20.24] For instance, psychologists are looking a lot at academic entitlement from kindergartners through to grad school students: the idea that they deserve an A regardless of how much they work, and this is a growing worrying pattern. Lastly, in terms of say vaccine resistance, we found an increasing desire to opt out, particularly in the middle-classes who used to typically buy in, a free rider problem.

[00:27:45.11] And arguably, if you feel yourself more distinctive or different from others, this could play into that. And so the potential for these patterns I'm seeing at the elementary schools to go beyond, ripple beyond elementary school into broader aspects of society. Thank you.

[00:28:02.81] LARRY BOBO: Thank you, Peter, that was really terrific. Very, very exciting work that you're doing. Let me turn it over to Jennifer Hochschild for some comments and then if time permits, we'll do one or two questions from the audience before turning to Jessica's presentation.

[00:28:24.77] JENNIFER HOCHSCHILD: So thank you for inviting me. Thank you. I mean, this is a wonderful program. I've been involved in it for, I guess, before its inception. And I'm thrilled to see it developing, and having these scholars here, and watching it grow. So thank you, Larry, and Claudine, and various other people who are making this happen.

[00:28:42.65] So the first thing I want to say about the paper is it's just really fascinating. It's beautifully written. The quotations are compelling, sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes infuriating. What it does, I think, so well is it gives, and you've demonstrated it in this talk, very clear patterns.

[00:29:01.93] It's elegantly, analytically structured, but there's always room for variation, and for nuance, and for-- well, it's not quite as simple as it initially appears. So the ability to both demonstrate a very clear throughline of argument and to say, look, it's a little more complicated than the simple version of this or the simple version that other people have developed, it's just it's a really nice balance.

[00:29:26.08] So I mean, apart from the substance, it's just a really elegantly designed paper. So thank you for giving me a chance to read it. I have two kind-of social sciencey questions and then a couple of more policy/ inequality/ substantive questions.

[00:29:42.55] And I don't really have-- I'm going to make comments, but there's an implied or explicit question mark at the end of them, it's not like I have an argument that I want to make in response, it's a bunch of things I would like to hear what you have to say or maybe others have to say.

[00:29:55.21] The first is the assumption, assumptions may be too strong, the underlying starting premise is that children learn what they're taught. And as a parent I want to challenge that a little bit or at least get you to say more about it. So for example, you say the link between what children are taught about their sense of self and their actual sense of self.

[00:30:25.22] There's strong evidence, these are quotes here that how adults see themselves has wide ranging impact on children's lives. Lessons that children receive about their social station, what children are taught to see themselves as, to feel, agency in the futures they are encouraged to envision, and so on.

[00:30:41.13] So the underlying language at least is teachers are conveying explicitly and intentionally --or not-- an image of the world and how students fit into it. And students are absorbing that and that's helping to shape their identities.

[00:30:55.09] So first question is, should we believe that? Or better, under what circumstances, under what conditions should we believe that? So three alternative starting premises are: Children ignore adults. Teachers just talk at us and they're going to continue talking to us, and in some sense we absorb it. I mean, we aren't necessarily fighting it, it's just noise in the environment.

[00:31:24.70] A second logic is that children reject or oppose what adults are trying to teach them. So in the 1960s, the Port Huron Statement and all the literature about immigration generations that the parent, the immigrants want to become Americans and the children resist becoming American, and they want to find their old identity, and then the third generation figures, or there's a literature about the peer impact is what really matters more. People pay a lot more attention. We have lots of student mentoring and student to student, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:31:55.57] So question number one is, maybe this is the next paper, given what you are showing that teachers are teaching, what do we believe about what students are learning? And I mean, the pedagogical version is it doesn't matter what we teach, it matters what our students learn. And I mean, there's lots of variations on this, which I think there's some academic literature, not maybe fully developed. So that's question number one.

[00:32:27.90] Question number two, is, again, I think an explicit statement on your part that I want to push you a little bit on how much we should believe it, or under what conditions, or... identity shapes behavior. And of course, this is foundational to your argument. And as you show there's a huge literature.

[00:32:49.71] I'm not quite prepared to say that this entire sociological and psychological literature is just wrong, that'd be stupid. But it does seem to me that it's worth paying attention to alternative ways of thinking about the relationship between identity and behavior. So there's the old psychological theory that we remember who they-- I learned in college, in graduate school, I thought I was on a diet, here I am eating this piece of cake, it must be that I don't really want to be on a diet.

[00:33:20.74] So behavior is what... "revealed preferences" is what the economists call it. Behavior is what actually matters, not what I tell myself I'm going to do or even my identity. So another variant is this new literature about how multiracial individuals, people with mixed race background have highly contingent identities and they will explicitly say, in some circumstances I'm Mexican, in some circumstances I'm American, in some circumstances I'm both, or neither, or whatever.

[00:33:51.76] And so we're developing a new literature that's behavior or context shapes at least my presentation of identity and maybe my actual identity. There's a whole economics literature about revealed preferences: don't ask people what they think, look at what they do. I had a colleague once who was no longer here.

[00:34:14.58] But we were co-teaching a course on courts and I spent a lot of time talking about asking judges why they make the decisions they do, and doctrinal analysis, and blah, blah, blah. And his answer was, I don't care what judges think. What I want to know is what the decisions are. They don't know what they're doing.

[00:34:30.54] So anyway, there's a bunch of ways of thinking about behavior shapes or creates is more important than identity. The very old literature about hotel reception in the 1930s that hotels say they won't serve African-American clients, and then somebody comes to the desk, and they give them a room key anyway because they've got an empty room. There's behavioral therapy, there's desensitization therapy, there's a whole bunch of psychological therapies.

[00:34:58.14] In political science, work by Paul Goren, and work by our colleague, Justin Benedictus Kesner and Mike Hankison, my former student, "Financial and spatial self interests and partisanship shape public opinion," that's a quote from the abstract. So question number one is, do kids actually pay attention to what their teachers and adults are saying?

[00:35:20.60] Question number two is, do we actually care what they're saying? Because actually behaviors, context, circumstances, self-interest, immediate incentives, something, something, something shape identity, or at least say what matters, which is how we actually behave in the world.

[00:35:37.56] Now, they are the kind-of social sciencey questions, not necessarily having to do with inequality, but it seems to me relevant to the message that your paper is trying to convey. And then I have a couple of questions about the content, which is more directly relevant to the socialization of the forms of inequality that you're describing.

[00:35:57.20] And one of them, and you referred to it in talk, but also in the paper somewhat is, what's going to happen when these kids-- and let's assume for the moment that the kids do absorb the lessons that they're implicitly or explicitly being taught, already always special individualism, identity matters, you control your future, you're fundamentally morally worthy even though you sometimes deviate a little bit versus the alternative.

[00:36:28.85] So one answer is this is a pretty accurate representation of the world you're actually going to face. So that Truman students are, in fact, gonna encounter pathways that

permit agency, that permit individuation, that enable them to choose the direction they want to go, that enable them to think of themselves as already special all the time, and so on. They do win trophies for effort even if not for actually making good.

[00:36:55.14] Conversely, Brighton students are going to confront an unyielding world and uncertain world. So that these are accurate presentations of the world that the students are actually going to confront. We might wish that the world were different, we might wish the teachers taught differently, but these are pretty good prognostications of the world.

[00:37:13.85] A second logic that it is a more active agency framing logic, which I think is probably closer to what your message is, which is that Truman students are being taught that they can become special, they can make their lives individuated, they can shape their own identities, they can shape their pathways, and here's how to do it. So that's what they're being taught to do actively not just this is the world that they're going to move into.

[00:37:47.94] So the difference between number one and number two is intentionality and choice, they're being taught to be intentional and to make choices that encourage identity and so on. Conversely, the Brighton students are being taught that the world really-- that they're going to make-- again, a negative agency.

[00:38:10.36] They're being taught that they will live in and create an uncertain world, they will live in and create a world that is unyielding, they will create a world in which they are punished for bad behavior, implicitly they will punish other people for bad behavior.

[00:38:28.35] So it's not just that this is the pathway on which they're already moving and teachers are just articulating it, it's that the process of teaching inculcating these identities is going to make the students behave in ways that create the identities that they're being taught.

[00:38:46.58] The third possibility is that the Truman kids are snowflakes. They're being taught that the world is your oyster and then they're going to run into a circumstance in which it isn't and they're not going to know what to do. Wait, I'm special. Wait, I'm not a bad person. Wait, I have an identity. You're not recognizing my-- they fall apart.

[00:39:06.87] So actually what the consequence of the socialization they're getting is at least in some circumstances and some occasions actually going to harm them because it gives them no capacity; it doesn't teach them how to deal with a life which isn't going to work out the way the teachers are implicitly promising it's going to work out.

[00:39:27.26] So they actually not being helped or they're not only being helped; they're being set up for snowflake-dom and it's-- I mean, it's that they're being set up to not be able to deal with adversity or deal with people who refuse to recognize their goodness, their identity, their individuation, their agency, their whatever.

[00:39:50.63] Conversely, the Brighton kids are being taught how to live effectively in a world that's really hard, for them at least. The world is perhaps unyielding, contingent, quick to blame, quick to not recognize their individual desires.

[00:40:10.11] And they are learning defensive mechanisms that will enable them to cope with, to persevere, to engage effectively with a much tougher world so in the long run they won't necessarily be more upwardly mobile, they won't be more successful in conventional ways that the Truman kids will.

[00:40:27.84] But they're actually being trained more effectively to engage a plausible world that they're going to be encountering, whereas the Truman kids are not being taught to engage effectively with a world which they may encounter.

[00:40:42.25] So which is the right teaching? I think it's a little more-- I want to push you on what's going on here. How do we think about who's actually not just being realistically taught, but who's actually benefiting from the specialness versus toughness versus their learning.

[00:41:04.96] And then I guess the final question I have-- how am I doing on time? Yeah, I've got one more question. And this question may summarize a lot of what I've been asking about. And again, this is sort of research that you haven't done because I don't really have any complaints about the research that you have done.

[00:41:21.16] So I'm doing the classic thing of, what else? Because I don't have much to complain about what you do. What happens in schools in which there's a deliberate effort to teach counter-narratives? So for example, I'm doing some work on charter schools in Los Angeles and there's a big hoo-ha about charter schools in general and Los Angeles in particular.

[00:41:43.33] But the charter school teachers, administrators, creators, in Los Angeles at least, are claiming that what they're about is the promotion of social justice. They're exactly about, in effect, their version of what Truman is doing with their lower class disproportionately to that, disproportionately poor students.

[00:42:03.19] We're teaching them that, despite the way the world works, you really can have an agency, you really do matter. Police will treat you like shit, but you're not a bad person. So they're deliberately creating ... they think.

[00:42:17.44] I mean, I haven't done three years of ethnographic research, I no idea if it's actually happening, but they see themselves as creating a counter-narrative that looks more like Truman for kids who look more like the Brighton kids.

[00:42:30.39] Conversely, there are at least some schools, I think of Friends' schools, in particular Friends, meaning Quaker, the religious who are deliberately trying to teach community, equality, justice. They don't teach critical race theory because nobody teaches critical race theory in elementary and secondary school.

[00:42:49.85] But the underlying fundamental structures of American society in which you may be White and you may be middle-class, but this is not because you are special, or your family is special, or you deserve it, or anything, this is the way.... Anyway so you get the point that, how do we think about schooling that's deliberately trying in effect--

[00:43:07.17] It's a little too simple to say it's teaching the opposite story so that the poor kids are being taught the Truman lessons and the middle-class kids are being taught the Brighton lessons. It's not that simple, it's not a complete inversion. But to the degree that there are schools that are deliberately trying to teach some version of the opposite of what you are finding.

[00:43:30.65] Do we think they're effective? Do we think they at least-- this goes back to the question of whether the students actually pay any attention to what the teachers are saying. So how should we think about schools that are trying to counter the two quite distinct types of socialization that you're telling us about?

[00:43:50.09] And I guess I do have one final question, a quick PS. Is this really mostly about the teachers? You have this lovely paragraph or two at the end of the paper that say, well, actually the working-class teachers, you know, no matter which school they are in, think in one way, and the middle-class teachers, I mean.... You don't develop this because it's not the point of the paper, it's a separate argument,

[00:44:09.64] But maybe this is back to the social sciencey question, I'm not sure how to think about it. But maybe what this paper really is about is the teaching staff not to--

[00:44:20.92] LARRY BOBO: Well, you put a lot on the table for Peter. I want to let him have at it for a little bit.

[00:44:24.47] JENNIFER HOCHSCHILD: I'm going to stop. I don't expect you to answer any of those questions. This is just to suggest I hope how rich this paper is and how many things it made you think about. I don't anticipate that you have answers to any or all of these things. So I'll stop, Larry, I promise.

[00:44:38.28] LARRY BOBO: Thank you. Go ahead.

[00:44:40.56] PETER FRANCIS HARVEY: Thank you so much. How much time do I have to give some of the answers?

[00:44:44.97] JENNIFER HOCHSCHILD: You may want to just wait and we should have a conversation later and let people in the audience talk.

[00:44:49.65] LARRY BOBO: Yeah. Well, why don't you give it a quick shot now? Take two minutes, but then we'll come back because Jennifer did eventually ask versions of the two questions I had as well.

[00:45:01.43] PETER FRANCIS HARVEY: Yeah. So to start with the first question about socialization, do kids learn what they're taught? They absorb some things and they don't. And so I have a lot of evidence of them absorbing things, it was hard to make causal claims, but I can do that in a lot of ways.

[00:45:16.48] And I do this with other papers. I have a paper in the American Journal of Sociology looking at children's embodiment and how it changes over time through their time in

the school. And I can compare younger students to older students and new students who arrive that year in fifth grade and fourth grade, their period over time.

[00:45:32.77] So it gives me pretty strong compelling evidence of changes happening in them. And so I don't want to overstate things. Kids are taught in other ways, they have-- for sure peer-to-peer socialization is important, so is parental socialization. But I think one way in which schools are important, and you mentioned this in your final question about schools doing things differently, is where they can accentuate things that parents might otherwise not, or downplay them.

[00:45:57.54] And we see this in negative ways with discrimination, racial discrimination by teachers, or in the reverse, for instance, where we have progressive teachers trying to teach kids who are privileged about some of their privileges and parents being, 'I'd really rather they learned more math and didn't have to learn so much about gender, and race, and stuff.'

[00:46:17.04] So there are ways in which I had strong evidence of socialization playing a big role. In terms of behavior identity, so again, that other paper looks at behavior, particularly how children's bodies are, their comportment, changes over time. And so I don't want to-- this paper is going to be the first part of what, hopefully, will be a book manuscript.

[00:46:41.37] But I'm not divorcing it from dispositions at all. In fact, I think those two things are connected. But what most people in the sociology of culture tend to do is they put subjectivity or selfhood aside because it's too messy and not necessarily linked to action and they look at skills or dispositions, and that's really important. But I think those two are actually really strongly connected.

[00:47:05.43] But if you put subjectivity first or selfhood first, then you can see ways in which the skills they learn, such as middle-class forms of embodiment, such as doing public speaking, aged 5, actually undergird and support a sense of identity so that it's not just that you're being told you're important or that you have a voice, is you are being taught and shown that you have a voice through frequent practicing of public speaking and things like that. So I think there's an interrelation going on there between behavior and identity, I'm not divorcing those two.

[00:47:39.34] LARRY BOBO: Let me stop you there so we can rush ahead. But Jennifer is right, we will want to come back to this because there are a bunch of issues on the table here and it'd be interesting to see how they interconnect to the world of policing, police reform, and community safety issues.

[00:47:55.41] But thank you both. Thank you, Jennifer. Thank you, Peter. Wonderful session. Let me now turn to Jessica Katzenstein, who will be presenting on 'laundering militarization, professionalism, and the apolitics of police common sense.'

[00:48:15.13] JESSICA KATZENSTEIN: All right. Thank you. Thanks so much to Dean Bobo, and Jennifer, and Sandra for both the invitation and the support. I'm really looking forward to your feedback and questions. I really appreciate this opportunity to share my work along with

Peter and I'm also really looking forward to future presentations by my other cohort mates Alisha and DG. And I'm pretty sure I can keep this under 20 minutes if I talk fast.

[00:48:40.57] LARRY BOBO: Go for it.

[00:48:41.56] JESSICA KATZENSTEIN: Thank you. So in 2015 imagery from the germinal protests in Ferguson, Missouri of unarmed Black civilians facing down officers clad in riot gear, battle dress uniforms, and heavy weapons, spurred onlookers to compare the Saint Louis suburb to Gaza or Iraq.

[00:48:57.43] Critiques of US police militarization, the flow of military and military style equipment, training, and technologies to domestic policing started circulating widely amplified by later protests against anti-Black police violence in Baltimore, New York, Saint Paul, and elsewhere. And we saw similar critiques resurfacing during the summer 2020 protests after the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor when officers nationwide deployed tear gas, and flashbang grenades against protesters.

[00:49:24.49] As public backlash to such violence intensified, lawmakers, organizers, and reform groups renewed efforts to demilitarize police by limiting SWAT deployments and restricting transfers of military equipment arguing that, and I quote, "Weapons of war, excuse me, should never be used against the American people."

[00:49:43.72] And such efforts have found little concrete success. There were policy reforms under President Obama, which focused on the most visible avenue of militarization, which is the Department of Defense's 1033 Program, which transfers surplus military material to domestic police. In 2015, the Obama administration banned the program from transferring certain controversial military equipment, such as this wheeled armored personnel carrier although not-- sorry, that's the wrong caption.

[00:50:08.95] This is a tracked armored personnel carrier, whereas wheeled armored personnel carriers were still allowed, restrictions which the Trump administration promptly rescinded. President Biden's 2022 executive order renewed and expanded Obama's limited restrictions, but the order has faced criticism for its loopholes and insufficient enforcement mechanisms.

[00:50:26.71] Meanwhile, legislative attempts to codify these restrictions have consistently stalled out in Congress, and activist and policy efforts to address other forms of militarization, such as by tracking SWAT deployments have similarly found limited success. And other proximate reasons for these failures to demilitarize police are complex. And they're rooted in factors like the political influence of police unions and White backlash to Black led movements against police violence.

[00:50:51.94] Many critical and abolitionist scholars of the US have pointed to historical reasons as well, and they argue that the term demilitarization is something we should start by questioning that it wrongly suggests the possibility of disentangling forces whose histories, operations, and treatment of racialized enemies have always been enmeshed.

[00:51:10.03] So in other words, militarization according to these scholars does not index a novel seepage of warrior style policing into a normative guardian orientation, as many reformers and scholars argue. War and police powers have instead always operated together.

[00:51:24.64] And just to give a quick couple of examples, Southern police departments, as many more people are now aware, historically emerged from slave patrols and White militias, which worked alongside the federal military to control enslaved people.

[00:51:35.92] Northern departments, meanwhile, were patterned on the British Peelian model of policing, which relied on counterinsurgent tactics that were actually birthed in the British occupation of Ireland and use those tactics to quell labor organizing in the north.

[00:51:48.31] And some southwestern and southern police departments like the Texas Rangers were founded to protect White settlers. The rangers and allied groups massacred hundreds of Mexicans, Tejanos, and Native peoples in service of land dispossession. And today many scholars have argued that protecting the racialized class status quo remains the core function of US policing.

[00:52:07.78] Police have turned weapons of war on Black, Brown, and Indigenous organizers for sovereignty and racial justice, Arabs and Muslims particularly after 9/11, immigrants crossing the US-Mexico border as we see again today, Black communities targeted by the war on drugs, and protesters against economic inequality.

[00:52:25.34] So police militarization thus names an inseparability that's rooted in American racial capitalism, and demilitarization efforts that hinge on the impulse to purify policing of militarization then, according to this line of thinking, fabricate a non-militarized past that simply never existed.

[00:52:42.70] Such efforts can perform other work. They implicitly grant legitimacy to the notion that US police can be substantively reformed under racialized imperial military violence as seen in the quote earlier that 'weapons of war should not be used against American people'. But they can't neither restore policing to an imaginary era of benevolent democratic order maintenance nor bring it into such a future.

[00:53:06.81] These analysis of historical entanglements, however, don't fully explain how militarization persists in the present. Another significant, but less well-understood reason for the failures of demilitarization efforts, I argue, is the ideological labor of police themselves. And in this talk, I will locate the failures of demilitarization not only in the genealogies and inheritances of US policing, although also that, but as well in what I call police common sense.

[00:53:34.05] Drawing on interviews with officers and participant observation at SWAT trainings and academies in Maryland from 2015 to 2018, this talk will ethnographically look, at least gesture to, how US police-- and here I'm looking particularly at supervisors and SWAT team members, or what I call 'violence experts' to expand on a term for Micol Seigel-- inoculate themselves from demilitarization reforms by posing good militarization as a natural, legitimate, and inextricable element of modern police work.

[00:54:04.02] I'll argue that officers resist demilitarization efforts by recasting militarization not as this alien imposition that has to be cleansed from police work, but rather as an apolitical technical craft that actually counterintuitively reduces violence, what I call 'militarization as professionalism.'

[00:54:21.90] And I'll conclude that many demilitarization reform efforts operate in tandem with this logic to sanctify good militarization, quote unquote, thereby lending power to the notion of police as professional protectors of society.

[00:54:36.62] And just to briefly define my terms, this theme is a key aspect of police common sense, which I define as a systematized practical approach to the tensions of embodying both state authority and a deliberately constructed sense of vulnerability.

[00:54:50.84] And I'm borrowing here from Antonio Gramsci's formulation of common sense as an accretion of pragmatic received wisdoms. Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea argue, quote, "The virtue of common sense is that it is obvious. Its watchword is, "of course." It seems to be outside time," end quote.

[00:55:08.24] And police common sense moralizes and naturalizes certain forms of violence while presenting seemingly unquestionable rationales for police powers. Examining police common sense illuminates an underexplored facet of the failures of demilitarization reforms, how police thinking can render certain reforms impossible or even unimaginable.

[00:55:29.19] And now to offer a brief methods note before I get into the ethnography, as I discovered during fieldwork, the very obviousness of police common sense engenders a form of evangelism. Exposure to its wisdom is expected to cultivate accordance with its logics even for those like me outside the discursive circuits of policing.

[00:55:49.16] And yet it's important to note that the assumed ease of this cultivation is racially uneven. My whiteness and femininity not only afforded me a presumption of innocence, which undoubtedly shaped my interlocutors' willingness to admit me into their worlds, but also meant being hailed by some as a potential ally.

[00:56:06.47] Occasionally, this took the form of casual racist commentary to an audience imagined to be receptive. More often interlocutors implied that my objective research, quote unquote, "Where objectivity was prefigured as the domain of whiteness," would naturally conscript me into police common sense.

[00:56:23.72] Some of my interlocutors even clearly hoped that I would translate their narratives to a skeptical public. As whiteness and US policing are signs that are stuck enduringly together, so is embodied whiteness considered always-already recruited to police modes of thought.

[00:56:39.56] And I read these impulses as another instantiation of the ideological labor of police common sense, an effort to demonstrate to the assumed sympathetic researcher and hence to a wider audience the inherent legitimacy of police reason.

[00:56:55.28] So the idea that militarization does actually make police more violent is both intuitive and foundational to public critique, particularly since 2014. The violence experts with whom I worked, however, beg to differ. For many, military surveillance technologies like night vision goggles, military style uniforms, military tactics of clearing rooms, and securing suspects, and their own existence, was a good thing for everyone.

[00:57:20.88] These highly trained SWAT team members and supervisors argued that more professional, more technically skilled, and better equipped forms of force actually preserve public and officer safety. So in other words, militarization for them commonsensically produced rather than undermined security.

[00:57:37.58] Nick, a pseudonym of course, a county training supervisor summarized this approach as, quote, "Violence on the front end saves lives on the back end." Many of my SWAT interlocutors who regarded themselves as ultimate professionals therefore understood demilitarization efforts as making policing more violent, and less professional, and interrupting its trajectory of constant improvement.

[00:58:01.57] And this argument was founded on a shared notion of professionalism as apolitical expertise, which resonates with Pierre Bourdieu as critique of profession as a, quote, "Folk concept that dangerously proffers an appearance of neutrality."

[00:58:16.01] For my interlocutors, professionalism meant neutrally ever improving work performance, constantly seeking better training, upholding bureaucratic norms, and obtaining the tools necessary to conduct their work as experts. And this denotation was studiously apolitical in the sense that critical political questions, such as what those jobs were or who defined improvement or expertise, rested outside the frame.

[00:58:39.98] As Elif Babül argues, professionalism conveys universality and technicality making it the perfect tool for what she calls the politics of the apolitical. To make the case for apolitical militarization as professionalism, my SWAT interlocutors often pointed to the dangers of poorly trained officers.

[00:58:59.60] For instance, on one balmy June evening Kyle, a SWAT team leader, was replacing paper targets at a shooting range during a break from target practice. "These guys are pretty good," he said, showing me how team member shots had torn the cardboard backing through its center.

[00:59:14.24] "But if you could see patrol officers shooting, you would be scared to see how some of them shoot, you would ask why they're police officers." Because the SWAT team trained regularly, their marksmanship was superior to that of patrol officers who were only required to complete their certifications once annually.

[00:59:30.50] As importantly, regular range training was understood to restrain fear and impulsiveness. Knowing how to shoot well was meant to make officers less likely to fire unnecessarily and shoot innocent people. So for these officers, a SWAT professional in battle dress uniform like this one wielding a semi-automatic rifle, the very picture of what we might

consider the heavy-handed stormtrooper was paradoxically less violent and dangerous than badly prepared patrol officers.

[00:59:57.56] As Bob, a former police chief and current training administrator, explains succinctly, quote, "On the receiving end it's heavier, but it's usually safer." In other words, worse police violence stemmed not from militarized training or SWAT units, but rather the lack of both. Similarly, professional deployment of equipment was understood as key to preserving public safety.

[01:00:19.73] Steve, a county major and SWAT supervisor, explained that well-educated commanders combined with the proper military type tools could obviate needless violence. For instance, a camera equipped drone in the right hands could fly up to the window of a barricaded person to make visible whatever is happening inside.

[01:00:37.55] This would allow officers to avoid circling the perimeter themselves, putting their own safety and that of the barricaded person at risk. Steve emphasized that he wouldn't use this technology to spy on ordinary people. Even though technically no policies forbid it, professionalism dictated proper deployment.

[01:00:54.98] Similarly, when his agency handles search warrants or barricades, he said the protection offered by their armored personnel carrier allows them to avoid escalation, quote, "He, the suspect, starts shooting at us, and we don't need to shoot him, and we keep everybody safe," end quote.

[01:01:11.24] Yet he recognized that deploying such equipment in the wrong context could foment public backlash like in Ferguson in 2014. He believed that highly trained, formally educated supervisors like him could avoid the temptations and the excitement of hypermasculine militarism, playing war as commentators often say, and instead discern how to appropriately use what he considered necessary equipment.

[01:01:34.64] And part of this professionalism obtained through education entailed colorblindness. Professionalism and objectivity in their eyes precluded racism understood as personal animus. Professionals deployed military equipment on the basis of their apolitical expertise as far as they were concerned. A true professional would never assess the crowd's threat on the basis of race.

[01:01:57.72] So the point here for Steve, as well as for other similarly educated commanders who presented the same argument was to challenge equipment-focused demilitarization efforts shifting blame for militarized violence away from equipment accumulation and onto a lack of education. The common sense solution then was not less equipment, but more professionalism.

[01:02:19.43] And finally, professionalism also signaled proper paramilitary tactics when facing emergencies. During one SWAT training Kyle, the team leader I mentioned earlier, told his teammates that on the scene of certain crises their authority necessarily exceeded even that of patrol commanders.

[01:02:35.12] Remember that you know what you're doing and patrol-- even higher level officers-- don't, he said. You have to resist any pressure by a patrol command to put people where they're not needed. For instance, if commanders insisted that the SWAT officer should breach a door with patrol officers rather than waiting for his SWAT teammates.

[01:02:53.18] So in other words, the tactical training and skill set of SWAT officers should preempt the otherwise rigid chain of command because they know the correct techniques for preserving everyone's safety. You must think that we think SWAT guys are better than everyone else, Kyle told me afterward, but we really do have more training.

[01:03:09.45] For instance, he said one of his teammates was recently involved in a car chase where patrol officers surrounded their prey in a semi-circle. Had the driver fired on them, they all would have fired back, and hit each other. SWAT officers by contrast know to avoid crossing lines of fire. To be less professional, less of a tactical expert is to be more dangerous.

[01:03:29.89] Now, the logics at play in all of these cases would appear to verge on Orwellian doublethink. More violence in the form of SWAT units, military tactics, and military equipment somehow produces less. Militarization as professionalism though frames the violence not as more, but as better, not excess, but refinement of what already exists.

[01:03:49.18] This framing is only possible under the common sense assumption that police work naturally inevitably entails a certain amount and type of force and that professionalization means improving and minimizing that force. The directionality, scope, and stakes of that violence are left largely unquestioned.

[01:04:06.49] For militarization of professionalism, if the use of force will always be necessary it's simply best for the experts to do it and for them to have the most powerful tools possible at their disposal. At the core of militarization as professionalism is the conception of police work and specifically police violence as a specialized craft, this conception amplifies a key policing practice on which the institution's legitimacy partly hinges, the practice of rendering police violence as a technical concern.

[01:04:35.85] And here the anthropology of development offers useful insight. James Ferguson conceptualizes development programs as what he calls an anti-politics machine and that they depoliticize deeply political fields, such as infrastructure and poverty by constructing them as objects of technical intervention.

[01:04:53.73] Building on Ferguson, Tania Murray Li argues that development schemes, quote, "Render technical their field of intervention by problematizing a domain to be fixed and producing it as an intelligible field for whose problems development experts can provide answers." Such schemes tend to shun questions of, for instance, how poverty is inflicted through generational dispossession in favor of intervening in the capacities of impoverished people.

[01:05:18.87] Experts' assertions of expertise, quote, "Depend on their capacity to diagnose problems in ways that match the kinds of solutions that fall within their repertoire," end quote.

Similarly, militarisation as professionalism insistently reposes political questions about police violence as intelligible technical problems, which only experts can solve.

[01:05:39.55] Banished from the frame are questions of who benefits and who suffers from state violence and surveillance. The right questions are about the proper tactics and correct equipment. Militarization as professionalism diagnoses the problem of police violence, in other words, as one requiring police solutions, more training, technology, gear, expertise.

[01:05:59.60] The accidental killings of Breonna Taylor, Aiyana Stanley Jones, and other predominantly Black people in police raids are dismissed as anomalous because indeed even experts make mistakes.

[01:06:10.25] Similarly, every Parkland or Uvalde-- instances of officers failing to stop a school shooter-- is framed as a lack of training or personal cowardice while the police response to the recent Nashville attack was often considered a textbook operation, an instance of police professionals performing their work as trained.

[01:06:29.90] And the point here is not to dismiss the profoundly American reality of regular mass shootings, but rather to examine how police common sense depoliticizes and forecloses certain analyses. Police common sense translates violence from a method of enforcing white supremacy and maintaining class dominance into an apolitical means toward the righteous end of law enforcement.

[01:06:52.91] Militarization becomes not the masked agent of the state kicking down your door, but merely a tool required for well-trained and educated professionals to perform their jobs. And this is Ferguson's anti-politics machine, Li's rendering technical militarization as professionalism launders police violence. It frames militarization as beneficial for everyone's safety and as a fundamental aspect of the technical praxis of police work.

[01:07:16.55] So it's no surprise that my SWAT interlocutors experience demilitarization efforts as forcing police to regress. For many of them the history of US policing is that of a halting march toward enlightenment, becoming more judicious, accountable, and safe. Demilitarization seem to turn that trajectory on its head.

[01:07:34.10] If SWAT could not serve warrants, departments, for instance, might have to rely on less trained and more impulsive patrol officers placing civilians and cops alike at risk. Demilitarization effort reforms for these SWAT officers contradicted the mantle of authority, which their expertise allowed them to claim, and ripped from their hands the tools they needed to perform their professional duty to protect and serve.

[01:07:56.03] So just to quickly conclude, police common sense transmutes militarization from a logic of occupation in service of racial capitalism to a logic of professionalism. And it, therefore, contains a claim to legitimacy in a liberal democracy. US police reformers and the public now widely understand police legitimacy to stem from, the more they perform professionalism, the more they garner public trust and consent. Their legitimacy is founded on their professionalism.

[01:08:23.03] Police common sense is an expression of this reframing. It positions police as professional guardians of public order and hence legitimate, trustworthy, and perhaps unquestionable enforcers of security rather than an occupying force. And thus police common sense swathes itself in apolitics.

[01:08:40.87] Such an apolitics always performs political work. It allows policing to bound the imagination and circumscribe the possibilities of change, it naturalizes and moralizes the violence of a SWAT team bursting into a Black family's home by framing the team's militarism as a technical tool toward the apolitical end of security.

[01:08:58.18] Police common sense thereby attempts to foreclose political demands. It renders ending federal equipment acquisition programs, much less curtailing SWAT operations, nearly unimaginable. Even my most critical officer interlocutors repeated the common sense wisdom that police need certain military equipment tactics and training to do their jobs.

[01:09:17.14] And my primary point here has not been to contest this argument on empirical grounds as others have done, but rather demonstrate how it obscures the core functions of policing. Police common sense attempts to extract these functions from the realm of critical thought under the guise of practicality and neutrality.

[01:09:33.28] Final paragraph. Many demilitarization reform efforts, however critical, fall in line with police common sense. They often begin with the assumption that police can, in fact, be professional guardians who carefully calibrate appropriate uses of force. Many of my interlocutors protested reform proposals like limiting SWAT deployments, but their common sense vision of their role nonetheless aligns with that of reformism itself.

[01:09:57.41] A focus on limiting and accounting for police levels of militarization can implicitly sanction the notion that police should be professional violence experts. The debate then is simply about whether certain forms of militarization accomplish or hinder that goal.

[01:10:11.51] The issue as Tamara Nopper and Mariame Kaba remind us becomes the excess and the spectacular rather than what Saidiya Hartman calls, quote, "The terror of the mundane and quotidian that is normalized anti-Blackness." And the concern becomes the American people newly subjected to weapons of war rather than the Americans and non-Americans routinely terrorized by the violence of the American state. Thank you.

[01:10:36.77] LARRY BOBO: Thank you so much, Jessica. That was a wonderful and enlightening presentation and analysis. And I want to quickly turn it over to Sandra Susan Smith for her comments.

[01:10:48.50] SANDRA SUSAN SMITH: Well, I'll try to be as quick as possible. So just the paper that Jessica shared with me that is related to the talk is, as Jennifer said with regards to Peter's, extraordinarily well-written, considerably, just extraordinarily well-thought and conceived paper.

[01:11:07.04] It's the second or third paper of Jessica's that I've read and as a result have been a huge fan, invited her to give a talk at the program in criminal justice a few months back to showcase some of that work there.

[01:11:22.58] She presented on why police training doesn't do the work that we think it might in terms of producing much better outcomes as in this case really showcasing how it is that police common sense emerges in the context of training in such a way that actually elevates the fears that officers have so that they imagine imminent danger everywhere.

[01:11:45.89] So it actually escalates or increases the likelihood of risk and harm that police do. And so interestingly enough produced much worse outcomes than we would otherwise imagine. And I see this work very much... This work, which is related to the work on police training very much in the same vein. It's a terrific bit that I think does a lot to help us understand in the current context how it is that police are responding.

[01:12:11.48] I think much of the research that's been done over the last couple of years at least has focused on the reform efforts that have been put forward as a result of some horrific things that have happened, especially to people of color.

[01:12:25.40] So the police reforms related to body worn cameras, implicit bias training, oversight review boards, enhancing police use of force policies, diversifying police forces, demilitarization efforts as Jessica's point focused on, and police tactical training, which is another issue that Jessica has focused on.

[01:12:46.49] Many are interested in whether or not these efforts are working. Jennifer [n.b. meant Jessica] takes it to the next level. How is it that police are responding in a context of contestation? How are they responding in a context where they're expected to change who they are, what they do? And so I find this work extraordinarily enlightening.

[01:13:05.93] Jessica has been my go to person over the last few months, it may be not to her delight, but it's certainly helpful to have her as a member of my community of scholars now. I think she's one of the best new scholars to come out who's focusing on this question of or in this area of critical police studies.

[01:13:26.06] But I do have a couple of questions that I'd like to pose to Jessica and hopefully, I can get it out fairly quickly. One is related to this political, this ideological work that you note that police are doing, which it's extraordinarily believable. I don't doubt in any way that this is happening within this context.

[01:13:47.60] But I think to some extent, given the nature of the work that you've done, these ethnographic fieldwork following officers through their daily professional tasks and seeing how it is they talk about and respond in different ways, it, of course, focuses attention on the various logics that they describe and share with you that you're able to glean from these conversations.

[01:14:11.60] But what it does in a way is disconnected from this broader field that they're engaged in. The ideological work one imagines that they are doing, they're not doing alone.

[01:14:23.22] And so as I read your work and think about this issue broadly speaking, I'm thinking about the cast of characters who they're not just trying to inform, they are passing on a paper to you, here's what we think, please spread the word, and they're doing it to other folks, not just academics probably, folks in the media and other walks of life, but they're also receiving feedback input on how to think about the problems that they're facing and how to address it.

[01:14:53.09] And we get very little sense about this back and forth. It just becomes this world of police that seems to be somehow isolated, alienated from these other parties. And so when I brought up that... when I read the work I was reminded of Betsy Hodges, New York Times op-ed in 2020 soon after George Floyd was murdered. She's a former mayor of Minneapolis.

[01:15:17.99] And she talked about-- the op-ed was about how White liberals essentially block any real reform that happens in the context of Minneapolis and then essentially use police to do their dirty work. And every once in a while things go horribly wrong and they back away, we don't like that, we want to do these other things, but for the most part are backing police up in everything that they do.

[01:15:44.09] That sounds like a partner in this ideological work, but we don't get much of a sense of who it is that police officers or these departments are connected, these agencies or connected to in helping to develop these logics or ideologies that then come to inform you say how the rest of us come to think about it.

[01:16:05.81] And one imagines it goes well beyond what police are doing because it's so embedded, so diffuse throughout the broader society that it has to be getting to us in various ways, which I don't think gets talked about very much. So if we were to imagine this field where this ideological work is being done, what would that feel-- who would be in that field? And how are these exchanges happening in such a way that inform the police and then the police come out and inform the rest of us?

[01:16:35.00] Again, thinking about these other players like the other parts of the state, the media, the academy, for instance. So just some thoughts about that thinking much more broadly and pulling yourself out. You note some of the work, or you describe some of the work, by Micol Seigel, 'Violence Work' is the latest book.

[01:16:59.81] And Seigel notes that people often misunderstand the making of police, policing, and the state, but that this is not the ignorance that can be easily dealt with just by providing new information, here's the data on how things are, you've now corrected in terms of your perception.

[01:17:21.50] And you could think about this both in terms of how people think about police, generally speaking. The majority of work that police do actually has nothing to do with crime fighting or crime prevention even, and that even when crimes occur, police are really bad at solving those crimes. So a lot of what we expect police to do they fail at it, to be honest.

[01:17:46.88] But even if you were to tell people that it doesn't fundamentally shift how they are thinking about the police, right? I remember after your talk at the PCJ where you were very clear

that focusing on police training as a way to move beyond police brutality wouldn't get us very far because of what is happening in these training sessions.

[01:18:06.35] And a day later I had a conversation with someone who was at your talk, thought your talk was amazing, and then nodded her head and said, I just think we need to do more with police training. It just doesn't stick, which it gets to the point that Seigel is making.

[01:18:22.16] So I'd like to really ask you to work... What is it that we need in this space where people are so committed to this idea that the state is going to do right by us, protect us, that they can't imagine going beyond or thinking beyond the police or whatever alternatives there might be for getting us to places where we are safe and we feel safe?

[01:18:51.05] So can you speak to that issue and what that means about what your research can do in terms of informing public policy and shaping public opinion broadly speaking? You note throughout the paper that you're not really interested in addressing empirical questions around whether demilitarization works or doesn't work, and I get those are questions for others to deal with because you are focused on how it is the police are responding to, essentially, these threats that they're faced with.

[01:19:20.18] But I think there is a question about what do we know about what happens when we give police agencies so much of what we associate with war, both in terms of these hardware, but also in terms of other kinds of techniques like techniques of torture, et cetera, that we sense come to impact people's daily lives, especially in some communities.

[01:19:49.55] And then the final question I have is one related to a point that you made earlier, that you were able to immerse yourself in the professional lives of this police agency and one wonders how. Police are notoriously difficult to get access to for various reasons. And let's be honest, your politics and your own personal ways of thinking about the world don't lend you so well to get gaining access.

[01:20:16.94] So for those who are interested in doing this research, could you share more about how you were able to get in and be embedded and then be able to get the insights that you were able to glean from your research? Thank you for such amazing work.

[01:20:34.40] JESSICA KATZENSTEIN: Thank you so much, Sandra. Thank you for those incredibly thoughtful and engaged comments and I've been very happy to be on one go-to person. I mean, I'll try and just give maybe a couple of sentences to each because I know we're running late, but I would love to expand on these later.

[01:20:53.95] In terms of your first point about police don't do this work alone, that's absolutely true. And I think that's the limit of-- I mean, that's something I'm hoping to address more in the larger book project. But you're right, it's not really in this article. And I do see my work even in the larger project as complementary to the work that others do.

[01:21:13.16] But I do draw on them to talk about things... You mentioned, the way that the media reinforces this idea of police as-- and liberal Whites-- reinforce this idea of police as

needing this equipment. And I think something like San Bernardino was this like incredible moment where there was all this massive public critique of police racism and militarization.

[01:21:34.09] And then the moment there are these mass shooters who are Brown, suddenly CNN and everyone is lining up behind and cheering on these armored personnel carriers, and paramilitary tactics, and ways of hunting down these shooters, and breaking into their phones, and all of that.

[01:21:51.59] And so I think media legal justifications, as I mentioned in my PCJ talk, legal justifications for forms of police violence, of course, liberal, and centrist, and conservative people, especially White people, and many police studies scholars, as I'm sure you're very familiar with this whole debate in police studies about the value of police professionalism.

[01:22:18.76] And I really see my work as just a piece of trying to understand justifications for militarization. But you're absolutely right it fits within this broader universe. And in terms of your question about Seigel, also an excellent question and something I really struggle with. And as abolitionists have been pointing out for ages, there's this emotional investment in police as security particularly for non-Black people in the US and for upper class people.

[01:22:45.35] And I see the work-- I mean, you're right that things just don't stick. And that's part of what got me to the concept of police common sense, which I saw police using to ideologically recruit other people also, absolutely media, and scholars, and just ordinary people, drawing people into this emotional investment in police as the thin blue line.

[01:23:08.44] And I see the work of slowly over time working to disillusion people who hold those ideas very closely, or at least get people to be more critical about that framing, as largely the work of organizers, and activists, and academic activists, and that's something that I hope my work can help with and help give some insight from the interior of policing.

[01:23:34.72] And then the question about, I'll just quickly wrap up, about immersing myself in their professional lives and how did I do that. One, like I said, positionality obviously made a huge difference. But two, I came in very critical of policing, but I didn't come in with real abolitionist sympathies.

[01:23:51.19] It was actually seeing the ways that police operated, and that reform efforts played out, that pushed me in that direction. So that would have not been clear to them because it wasn't clear to me. But I came in framing it as 'I'm interested in understanding your logics and the way that you think,' which is true-- that is what my work is doing.

[01:24:08.38] But I obviously didn't give them the full rundown of, like, 'I'm going to be criticizing the social function of policing,' but saying that I wasn't interested in critiquing individuals or departments, which I don't do, I think was also very helpful. So thank you for those really 'as always' excellent comments.

[01:24:27.08] LARRY BOBO: Thank you. That was fantastic. And thank you, Sandra, that was really a terrific framing and engagement with Jessica's work. I think it was enormously illuminating. I'm sorry we're so short on time here.

[01:24:43.75] And you really did, Sandra, right at the end ask the question I had written down was, how did you get into this setting? I'm just so eager to-- and likewise I can say the same for Peter because schools and teachers are so frustrated with being poked, and prodded, and studied, and they're resistant also-- not nearly as much as police, but close.

[01:25:08.92] I wondered about the level of access you were both able to obtain. So I'll leave with the thought that on Peter's work, could you get a Truman ethos into the Brighton schools? Is that a sociological possibility? And if so, would it really change how children entered the world and thought of their own trajectories and potentials?

[01:25:40.47] And for Jessica, given what you've experienced now in this police setting, can you envision a way in which the dialogue really does get moved back to that position of militarizing police capacity with respect to our own domestic civilian population. It's almost fundamentally the wrong place to be, and/or do you have any hopes of creating that? I'll let Peter go first quickly. You each get about 45 seconds.

[01:26:23.28] PETER FRANCIS HARVEY: Yes. So there's research happening right now by Maia Cucchiara at Temple and Cheryl Ferguson at UC Irvine looking at these situations where they try and cultivate these aspects. I think one of the challenges is that, and I show in the paper about embodiment in the American Journal of Sociology, is that culture and structure go hand in hand so much that it's not just having the right teachers, or the right curriculum, or lessons, but having the resources to encourage them and see them as useful.

[01:26:52.98] And then there's also questions of: are the lessons we're trying to encourage valuable in themselves? So 'being special' for the children in Brighton could be valuable. But if it comes to shaping the bodies of poor students or Black students to be more like those of White upper middle-class students, well, that's more problematic. And so there's this line to be walked about what we're trying to achieve by doing so, yeah.

[01:27:13.59] LARRY BOBO: Yeah. No, thank you. So, Jessica, quickly.

[01:27:16.35] JESSICA KATZENSTEIN: Thank you. Yes, I'll be very quick. I mean, my project is a profoundly cynical one, so I can't say I have much hope. But I will say, I mean, I think there's some hope of harm reduction and there are some excellent organizations out there that are working to limit or even eliminate the 1033 Program, for instance.

[01:27:33.04] And I think the critique of police militarization is a much more widely known one now than it was back in 2014 and a more widely shared one even among people who aren't themselves subjected most of the time to militarized policing.

[01:27:45.78] But moving the needle even in terms of harm reduction depends on federal and state policy buy-in, and it's increasingly difficult in a country that is as gun-heavy as the US.

And we're constantly seeing these new incidents of mass shootings and that lends some validation to certain forms of police militarization.

[01:28:06.99] LARRY BOBO: Yeah. Well, let me again thank you both, and especially thank Jennifer Hochschild and Sandra Smith for joining us as commentators. I hope you all take away from this the impression that we have brought really remarkably talented young scholars to Harvard with the inequality program, and Peter and Jessica are great representatives of that effort.

[01:28:28.56] And as we all know, sites of the experience of inequality and the challenges we face as a result of inequality, such as our schools and issues of policing and community safety are urgent concerns for us as scholars and engaged citizens,

[01:28:45.45] so it's a great pleasure to be able to share this deeply original and thought provoking work with you. And I would be remiss if I didn't thank Jennifer Shephard for all the work she's done on organizing this and being the thread that knits our inequality program together. So thank you so much, Jennifer. And my thanks to you all for joining us. And be on the lookout for more from Peter, and Jessica, and the whole program. Take care.