

Society for Psychological Anthropology

Summer 2025 Newsletter



Edited by AJ Jones and Angela Leocata

Table of Contents

2025 Biennial Recap.....	3
Stirling Prize	4
Condon & Boyer Prizes	5
Lemelson Fellowships	7
Lifetime Achievement Awards	10
Featured Book	12
Invitation: CMS Book Series	14
Biennial Photos & Testimonials	16
Upcoming <i>Ethos</i> Issue: June 2025	18

2025 Biennial Recap

We are overjoyed to celebrate the **incredible success of the 2025 SPA Biennial Meetings** which took place April 3-6, 2025 in beautiful Santa Ana Pueblo, NM. Thank you to the Biennial Program & Planning Committees, our student volunteers, and all who attended.



The Biennial featured two riveting Presidential Plenary Sessions: **Subjectivity and Security**, with Angela Garcia, Byron

Good, Bridget Haas, Janis H Jenkins, Chikako Ozawa-de Silva, & Jason Throop; and **Eruptions of Liveness: Native American Health in the 21st Century**, with Thomas Csordas, Joseph Gone, Jennie Joe, Melissa Lewis, & Audra Simpson.

In this edition of the newsletter, we **spotlight the 2024 SPA award winners**, including Lifetime Achievement awardees Douglas Hollan and Claudia Strauss, all of whom were recognized at the 2024 AAA Meetings in Tampa, FL this past November or during the 2025 SPA Biennial in April.



Lifetime Achievement Awardee Claudia Strauss



Left to Right: SPA President Janis Jenkins, Lifetime Achievement Awardee Doug Hollan, and SPA President-Elect Jason Throop

At the end of the issue, you will find **additional photos and memories** from members who attended the Biennial. We hope you continue to reflect as you enjoy a restorative summer!

Stirling Prize

for outstanding contribution to psychological anthropology



Allen Tran

***A Life of Worry: Mental Health and
Vietnam's Age of Anxiety*
University of California Press 2023**

A Life of Worry is a powerful and beautifully written experience-near ethnography, which contains evocative life histories that show how individuals in contemporary Vietnam, more specifically in Saigon / Ho Chi Minh City, grapple with multiple social tensions in relation to mental health as they navigate through the country's period of economic renovation. The book offers original insights into the complex cultural politics of worry and anxiety in Vietnam and presents an eloquent analysis of the ways in which different modes of worrying have been imbued with moral and emotional significance within Vietnamese socialism, with the emergence of the neoliberal self, and amidst wider global reconfigurations of mental health. In addition to its ethnographic richness, Tran's book makes a substantial theoretical contribution to the anthropology of worry(ing) and anxiety by conceptualizing anxiety as 'a relation to the world' and thereby allowing readers to understand "anxiety" in multiple lights other than individualizing biomedical ones. Given these multiple strengths, the committee concluded that *A Life of Worry* will have a tremendous impact within the field of psychological anthropology and beyond.

HONORABLE MENTION: Joanna Cook, *Making a Mindful Nation: Mental Health and Governance in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press 2023

**We thank the 2024 Stirling Prize Committee:
Anita von Poser (Chair), Nick Long, and Jonathan Yahalom!**

Condon Prize

for best student essay in psychological anthropology

Lauren Medina

**“Care through Violence:
Professionals’ Experiences of
Moral Injury within US
Immigration Detention”**



This is an excellent paper that effectively combines rich ethnography focusing on lived experiences with a broad perspective that appreciates the complex forces that prevail in settings where people—often immigrants themselves—must enforce the carceral logic of immigrant detention.

HONORABLE MENTION: Anu Ahmed, “Psycho-pharmaceutical Entanglements: Managing and Creating ‘Excess’ Subjectivities and the Phenomenon of ‘Extra-adherence’”

We thank the 2024 Condon Prize Committee:

Sonya Pritzker (Chair), Larry Monocello, and Pablo Seward Delaporte!

Boyer Prize

for contributions to psychoanalytic anthropology



Julia Fierman (article)

**“Femme Populism:
Vulnerability and Desire in
Argentine Political Aesthetics,”
Ethos 2023**

Boyer Prize, cont.

Fierman draws on Lacanian notions of desire to reread gender in populist politics. Fierman argues that against usual masculine, authoritarian renderings of populist sovereignty, militant supporters of the former Argentine president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, refashioned populism through affective and libidinal languages of love and attraction, while simultaneously reinforcing phallogentric, heteronormative logics of populism.

Xochitl Marsilli-Vargas (book)

***Genres of Listening: an
Ethnography of Psychoanalysis in
Buenos Aires***
Duke University Press 2022



This monograph is an inventive synthesis of linguistic and psychological anthropology that explores the proliferation of psychoanalytic concepts, practices, and sensibilities in the Argentine mundo psi to formalize ‘a new theoretical framework for understanding listening as a social fact’ (Marsilli-Vargas 23). Building on the historical importance of psychoanalysis to academic and clinical institutions in Argentina, as well as the omnipresence of psychoanalytic discourse in contemporary popular media, Marsilli-Vargas charts the emergence of new forms of ‘wild analysis’ in novel group therapies and the extra-clinical spaces of the everyday—from the communal confrontations with unconscious processes in Multi-Family Structured Psychoanalytical Therapy to the casual claims to analytic interpretation made by *portenos* when, after listening carefully, they respond ‘When you say X, I hear Y’ (Marsilli-Vargas 20). In so doing, *Genres of Listening* offers an exciting new engagement with the forms of community that emerge when the ‘translation of the unconscious’ is not only taken for granted but serves as the basis for sociality in Buenos Aires (Marsilli-Vargas 96).

**We thank the 2024 Boyer Prize Committee:
Andrea Chiovenda (Chair), Emily Ng, and Michael D’Arcy!**

Lemelson Fellowship

for graduate student research in psychological anthropology

Faith Cole, UCLA

**Negotiating Care: An
Ethnography of Mental Health
Governance and Community-
based Services in Rio Negro,
Argentina**



This project investigates the ethics and expertise involved in mental health care and policymaking in Rio Negro, Argentina. It examines competing conceptualizations and interventions for serious mental illnesses (SMI), through fieldwork in Rio Negro's interdisciplinary Mental Health Review board and a community mental health care center combined with archival research. It asks: how do review board actors and patients negotiate and constitutes SMI and good care for SMI? How are debates about good care shaped by histories of political violence, neoliberal health reforms, and community mental health activism? And how do board actions impact experiences of people living with SMI?



Daisy Couture, Princeton

**Madness in the Age of the
Neural: Hysteria and the
Psychic Life of Neuroscience in
the UK**

This project explores Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), a contemporary neuroscientific model of hysteria. Through ethnographic fieldwork with clinicians, researchers, and patient activists in the UK, it traces the political, ethical, and affective horizons of neurological imaginaries. Bringing psychological anthropology, STS, and feminist theory into conversation, the project asks how the 'neural' intervenes in cultural sense-making about the relationships between social, psychic, and somatic suffering and the futures it simultaneously affords and/or forecloses.

Lemelson Fellowship, cont.

Cynthia Lazzaroni, McGill

La Bobera: Under the Spell of Forgetting and the Politics of Memory in the Shadow of Alzheimer's in Antioquia, Colombia



In 1995, Colombian neuroscientists diagnosed an early form of memory loss, understood as the curse of 'la bobera,' as early-onset Alzheimer's disease, a rare condition affecting families in Antioquia, Colombia. My ethnographic research explores how individuals and families navigate early memory loss across biomedical frameworks, local understandings of a curse, and Colombia's politics of collective memory. It raises several questions: How do individuals and families in Antioquia navigate early memory loss in a landscape where biomedical models, local understandings of forgetting, and charged politics of memory converge? How do individuals and their families make sense of life with forgetting? What knowledge emerges from viewing memory loss as a curse? How is early memory loss experienced in a place where forgetting and remembrance extend to the collective? In a region shaped by histories of violence, memory loss carries multiple layers of meaning, extending beyond the clinic into collective struggles over remembrance and forgetting. Through ethnographic encounters with families, sensory ethnography using sound, and archival research, I trace how experiences of forgetting exceed neuroscientific framings and unfold within Colombia's collective memory. I approach memory loss not only as a clinical symptom but as a method and a site of memory politics.



Annalise Mangone, WashU

How to Decide: Exploring Advanced Care Planning and Spirituality in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

This project investigates the place of advanced care planning practices in the relationship between spirituality, care, and the experience of dying in the United States. It seeks to understand the relationship between advanced care planning and spirituality by exploring how individuals make decisions about their advanced care planning wishes, documentation, or lack thereof. The project takes place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Lemelson Fellowship, cont.

Tomas de Oliveira, WashU

**Virtual Embodiments:
Psychological Anthropology and
the Circulation of Mental Health
Technologies Across Global
Contexts**



This project explores how virtual reality (VR) is developed and implemented as a re-embodiment technology in mental health care, with a focus on transnational circulations between Brazil and the United States. As part of a broader dissertation on the production of mental health knowledge with VR, the project examines how developers, clinicians, and researchers negotiate the therapeutic potential of VR in US-based conferences. Attending these conferences provides a lens into how VR is positioned within the epistemic, institutional, and material conditions of psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience. The project analyzes how VR may disrupt or reinforce conventional therapeutic practices and how these dynamics differ across sociotechnical contexts. By engaging debates in psychological anthropology and the anthropology of technology, the project investigates how embodiment, therapeutic authority, and technological legitimacy are reconfigured through VR in global mental health.



Ofir Tenenbaum, BU
**Family narratives of Israeli
immigrants in Berlin
under changing political
climate**

This project examines how shifting political climates in Israel since 2023 are influencing the narratives and experiences of Israeli immigrants in Berlin regarding their family life and sense of home. It seeks to explore the interplay between intimate family dynamics and broader socio-political conditions, asking how political upheavals in Israel reshape concepts like responsibility, loyalty, and belonging — both to kin and to the nation-state. The ethnographic fieldwork will be situated within the Israeli community in Berlin, focusing on individuals who are actively reflecting on their life settings in response to recent changes in either their family conditions or the political climate. Drawing on psychological anthropological approaches, the study will attend to their moral selves, emotional processes, and narratives, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of how they navigate and reconfigure their family relationships and national identities in turbulent times.

Lifetime Achievement Award



DOUGLAS HOLLAN

Jason Throop offered a moving introduction to Doug Hollan at the SPA Biennial, in which Throop recalled Hollan's participation as "an award-winning teacher (he won UCLA's prestigious Luckman Distinguished Teacher Award in 1995) and an award-winning writer (he won the SPA Boyer Prize in 2013)." Throop shared:

"...Doug's own thinking has been defined not by following academic fashions, but instead by moving with care to topics that are often undertheorized, often seen as marginal to the discipline, if not, completely overlooked. Working with care and attention to what Doug has insightfully called 'the person as context,' his lifelong commitment has been to remind us all that social theory, however ambitious, must always recognize its necessary, and unevenly distributed grounding in what William James once termed the 'individual pinch of destiny' [...] Thankfully, Doug's own individual pinch of destiny brought him to us – to psychological anthropology [...] Doug's own impact upon the field of psychological anthropology has been field-defining."

Lifetime Achievement Award, cont.

CLAUDIA STRAUSS

Mohaddeseh Ziyachi shared a powerful reflection on Claudia Strauss's myriad contributions to cognitive anthropology as well as her remarkable impact as an advisor and mentor. Ziyachi reflected: "Some people have favourite authors of novels; I had Claudia Strauss. Her work guided me through the intricate world of cognitive anthropology, helping me make



sense of cultural models and meaning-making [...] Claudia is just as brilliant, warm, and engaging in person as she is in her scholarship [...] As Claudia receives this well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award, I want to acknowledge not just her incredible scholarship but also her kindness, curiosity, and unwavering support for emerging scholars. Her work has not just shaped cognitive anthropology—it has shaped the scholars within it, myself included."

Congratulations Doug and Claudia!

Featured Book

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

Lessons Learned from IPARTheory

EDITED BY RONALD P. ROHNER AND SUMBLEEN ALI



Studies in Parenting



Featured Book, cont.

Global Perspectives on Parental Acceptance and Rejection: Lessons Learned from IPARTheory

Global Perspectives on Parental Acceptance and Rejection advances an understanding of the profound and lifelong effects that parental love (acceptance) and the absence of love (rejection) have on human development from childhood through to old age. It draws from interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory), an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development that focuses on the pancultural effects, causes, and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance-rejection throughout the lifespan. Edited by Ronald P. Rohner and Sumbleen Ali, contributions from leading scholars show how few experiences have as wide-ranging, significant, and predictable consequences for human behavior well-being as experiences of parental acceptance and rejection. Key topics of parental acceptance and rejection include long-term effects in childhood; adult intimate relationships; early life stress; parental alienation; child maltreatment; and forgiveness and vengeance. It also discusses the clinical implications and practical applications of IPARTheory. Providing vital information about parenting and human development worldwide, this book is essential for researchers, students, and practitioners in psychology, psychiatry, family sciences, sociology, human development, and the helping professions.

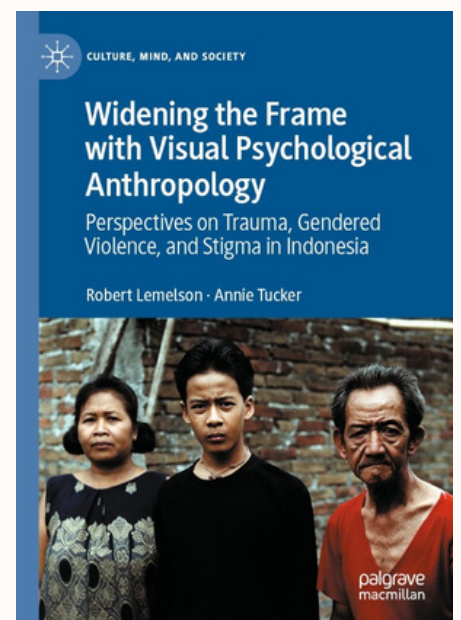
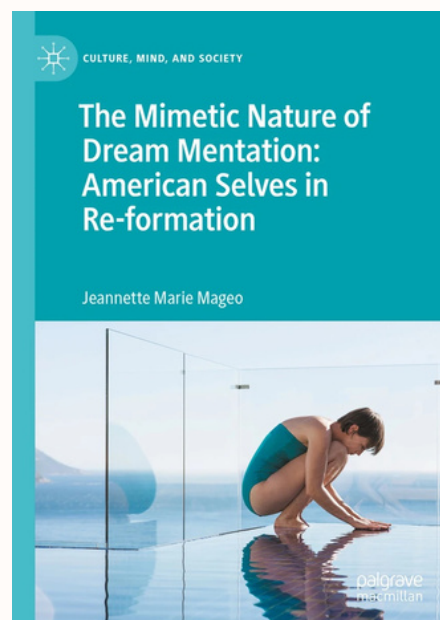
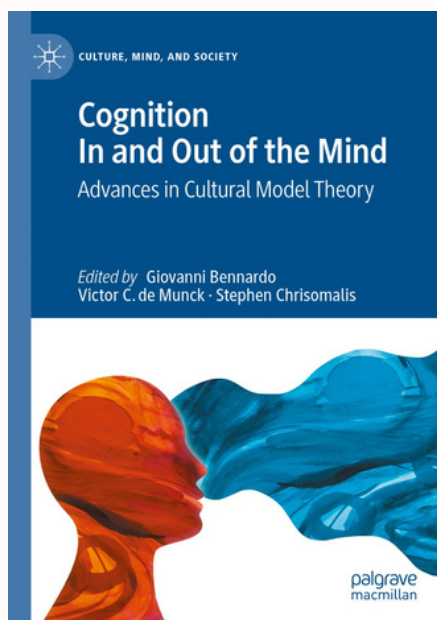


**editors Ronald
P. Rohner and
Sumbleen Ali
enjoying their
recent book**

Invitation: Culture, Mind, and Society Book Series

The SPA invites you to submit manuscripts to their Culture, Mind, and Society Book Series, published by Palgrave Macmillan (part of the Springer Nature Group)

The SPA – a section of the American Anthropology Association (AAA) – and Palgrave-Macmillan aim at publishing innovative research that explores the interface of human subjects (emotions, thoughts, and experiences) and their material, social, cultural, and political milieus. Psychological Anthropology is broadly defined in this book series. It includes all research in the diverse fields of psychology, biomedicine, psychiatry, and anthropology that examines human emotions, cognitions, ideas, actions, interactions, and their work in social micro-level sites and in connection with broad social fields, organizations, institutions, nation-states, and other power structures.



Culture, Mind, and Society

Book Series, cont.

The series welcomes proposals for either monographs or edited volumes – in the form of short books (25,000-50,000 words) or full-length (70,000-120,000).

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Palgrave editors regularly attend international conferences and meetings, including the AAA and EASA, to promote recent publications in the series and the Anthropology program broadly.

Potential authors can contact Cathy Scott, Commissioning Editor at Palgrave Macmillan (cathy.scott@palgrave.com), or Yehuda Goodman, our book series editor and SPA board member (ygoodman@huji.ac.il).

Biennial Photos & Testimonials

Celebrate the success of the 2025 SPA Biennial through the eyes and voices of our members!



Participants in the Roundtable 'Storytelling as political engagement and politicized healing' organized by Bridget Haas and Whitney Duncan.

It was a fabulous meeting – thank you!



Biennial Photos & Testimonials, cont.



The Sandia mountains were such a mesmerizing backdrop for the intellectually stimulating meeting. Contradictory and complementary at the same time. Thank you for such a beautiful experience.



Left to right: Sam Shonkoff, Brian Anderson, Sarah Lewis, Tanya Luhrmann, and Aidan Seale-Feldman. The panelists of the “Spiritual Emergencies” session.



Want to share your research and reflections on psychological anthropology? Email your **100-word blurb** and **image** to jaudrey@wustl.edu.

ETHOS

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Contents

SPECIAL ISSUE: PARENTING AS CONTESTED PRACTICE BETWEEN EXPERTS, AUDIENCES, AND SELVES

Guest Editors: Heike Drotbohm and Konstanze N'Guessan

Parenting as contested practice between experts, audiences, and selves: An introduction

Heike Drotbohm and Konstanze N'Guessan

What exactly is a family man? Performing and precluding respectable fatherhood in Dominica

Adom Philogene Heron

Making beautiful babies: Performative parenting, parental determinism, and personhood in Côte d'Ivoire

Konstanze N'Guessan

Motherhood amidst reprimands and advice: Parenting and class in Rio de Janeiro

Laura Lowenkron and Camila Fernandes

Contesting parenting expertise: Constructing good mothering and searching for dignity in Cameroonian Berlin

Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg

Aid workers parenting in the field: Children-as-audience and the generational transmission of privilege in

Senegal

Dinah Hannaford

Help can harm: Unintended consequences of child protection and parenting support for Vietnamese

immigrant families in Germany

Nga Thi Thanh Mai and Gabriel Scheidecker

Disrupting the social by centering the self: Life coaching and the politics of marriage, motherhood, and adult

sociability among Latinx and Latin American women

Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas

Contested parenting and its affective economies: A commentary

Claudia Fonseca