The Varied and Often Unassuming Sources of Scholarly Imprinting
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I. INTRODUCTION

I really enjoyed taking this time to reflect on Rogers' work, and on the nature of mentorship and scholarly influence more generally. I struggled a bit at first with how to approach the charge—which I took to be, more or less, to trace connections between some of Rogers' core works and our own. I felt like there was so much I could say, and I didn't really know where to start.

So, like a good Rogers student does when looking for some traction, I turned to the texts. I dug up my old UCLA files and flipped through my early paper drafts with Rogers' handwritten comments; I looked at my field exam essays; I dusted off my class notes and memos; and I went through my old 237 papers, as well as my annotated copies of Rogers' books and articles. As I sifted through these, I found myself reflecting on the nature of scholarly influence, and in particular, on how scholarly imprinting from advisor to student works.

What I came up with was a somewhat different answer to the question of Rogers' influence than I would have landed on had I not gone through this exercise. I also ended up with more of a meditation on scholarly influence than I had initially intended. But that's what happens when we write.

II. ON SCHOLARLY IMPRINTING

What do we talk about when we talk about scholarly influence? Perhaps most commonly, we talk about the range of possible reactions that an aspiring scholar can have when confronted with *truly impressive* written work—ranging from the impulse to want to emulate it to the impulse to want to deny its influence in order to supersede it.

I'll spare you a tangent into Harold Boom's (1997 [1973]) six different ways of reacting to the ego-threat that supposedly comes with being caught at having been (gasp) *influenced!* But I did make my way through enough of the *Anxiety of Influence* to be able tell you that this isn't really what I wanted to talk about today anyway. It'd involve a deeper dive into my own psyche than I'm interested in pursuing here. It's really about the neophyte's assumed drive toward *originality*—which is more about *denying* influence than understanding it. And it strikes me as a deeply disembodied and de-institutionalized way of approaching influence, being very much about the internal struggles that authors have with texts (and with their idealizations of the authors of those texts).

For today's purposes, I want to bracket this first set of concerns and focus instead on how scholarly influence *happens* through repeated, practical, everyday encounters of the kind that mentors have with students. I'll be using a language of *practical scholarly imprinting* to try to capture this.

What do I mean by practical scholarly imprinting?

First, there's the question of *what* exactly is being transmitted through this imprinting. Among other things, we could talk about the transmission of scholarly *values*, or of one's overall orientation to the pursuit of knowledge. We could also talk about the transmission of scholarly (or disciplinary) *habitus*, or of how one practically approaches the doing of scientific research.[1] And we could talk about the transmission of the substantive interests, theoretical approaches, and methodological concerns that a student is exposed to—and provoked to engage with—during their most formative years. *This* will be my main focus today.

Second, there's the question of *how* these elements are transmitted from advisor to student. There is, of course, the exchange of written text (in the form of publications, drafts, and comments). But this is by no means the only mode of transmission. We can also talk about transmission through hands-on mentorship in one-on one settings, as student and advisor work through the practical problems of research and writing. And we can talk about the importance of regular *collective* engagement around shared problems. In the best of cases, this characterizes what happens in our graduate seminars. But here at UCLA, it also characterizes the 237 workshop (and the lively conversations that followed). That is, scholarly values, habitus, and research concerns are all transmitted through ongoing, iterative interactions across a range of formal and informal settings.

At the same time, I'd note that you never know what offhand remark is going to stick with a student—that it's often the seemingly trivial or insignificant observation that can lodge in their brain for years to come. So it's important to remember that scholarly imprinting isn't necessarily about the transmission of the most obvious big ideas through the most obvious channels.
This leads me to the following set of propositions:

1. Scholarly imprinting is likely strongest in early formative periods, as suggested by scholarship on imprinting in organizations (Stinchcombe 1965), generations (Mannheim 1952 [1928]), and birds (Lorenz 1935).

2. For a PhD student, the stage when the dissertation project is being developed is likely to be particularly formative.

[1] As Rogers explains in his 1993 essay, "Social Theory as Habitus" (p. 213), "It is the sociological habitus that generates the 'regulated improvisation' (p.79) of sociological perceptions and operations through which one grasps the world as a sociologist. It is the habitus that determines the kinds of problems that are posed, the kinds of explanations that are offered, and the kinds of instruments (conceptual, methodological, statistical) that are employed. More important, the habitus determines the *manner* in which problems are *posed*, explanations *constructed*, and instruments *employed.*"

3. The work that an advisor publishes during (or shortly before) the student's most formative stage can feel *particularly* significant and timeless, especially given how compressed time horizons can be for early graduate students.

4. What the advisor is working on *at the moment* is perhaps even more consequential, since this tends to be the stuff with which they're most actively preoccupied.

Ultimately, if timing matters this much, then we've all been imprinted by a slightly different Rogers! Now, with this baseline in place, I can turn to what I found.

III. RESULTS: SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

I arrived at UCLA in the fall of 2001 and finished in March of 2009, so my time here was memorably bookended.[2]

But when going through my files, I was surprised at how *early* many of the most important seeds were planted. By the time I'd developed a plan for dissertation research, I was already churning on what would end up being core issues for me: sure, collective memory and populism, but also the cultural bases of political action, the interplay of determination and contingency, the relationship between the micro and the macro, and the role of comparison in social science. I may have only had the most rudimentary understanding of what was at stake in these debates at the time, but churning on them I was most definitely doing!

What was Rogers working on around this time?

I met him a few years after he'd published *Nationalism Reframed* (1996), as he was working on a series of essays that would eventually be collected into *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004), and as he was doing the analysis and writing of what would become *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (2006, with Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea) (see Figure 1). These works meant a lot to me, and they're the first ones that occurred to me when reflecting on Rogers' influence (supporting my third proposition). The original "Ethnicity without Groups" article (2002) was obviously a model for how I approached thinking and writing about populism. And the Transylvania book (2006) was deeply significant in multiple respects.

But when I started digging into my files, *this* (see Figure 2) is actually what I came up with as being particularly formative. To anyone else, these wouldn't be the most obvious touchstones. Only one of them is even a publication! But their *timing* was key for my impressionable brain.

(I'd also note—without presuming to know too much about Rogers' backstage intellectual development—that something else these three interventions share in common is that they reflect Rogers' own active engagement with a set of issues related to the Transylvania book, especially

[2] *Author's Note:* The accompanying slide, not included here, indicated that these bookends were the 2001 attacks of September 11th and the Great Recession of 2008-9.

concerning the on-the-ground resonance of political appeals, the role of comparison in social scientific research, and the relationship between micro and macro levels of analysis. Insofar as this is the case, it reinforces my point that scholarly imprinting may be as much about what an advisor is actively working on as it is about their most well-known published works.)

1848 in 1998

The first example I want to touch on appeared in print at just the right moment for it to make a strong impact on me (an impact that I only fully recognized through doing this exercise): "1848 in 1998: The Politics of Commemoration in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia" (with Margit Feischmidt), which came out in the fall of 2002 in *Theory and Society*.

In early 2003, I was at a critical inflection point in the development of what would become my first journal article when I asked Rogers for his comments on a draft. He asked me if I'd read the collective memory literature and, of course, I had no idea there was such a thing. Although it wasn't a primary area of focus for him, Rogers just happened to have recently published something on the subject. He suggested that I take a look at it as a gateway into the literature.

The article compares the 150-year commemorations of the 1848 revolutions in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. It argues that: (1) commemorations can vary in terms of whether their narrative frames are particularizing or generalizing and whether their performative moods are sacralized or desacralized; and (2) the histories of politics and public discourse in specific places constrain the commemorative options of memory entrepreneurs.

But what I took away from the article at the time was somewhat more general. I learned: (1) *that* there's a literature out there called the "collective memory" literature; (2) that the collective memory literature is relatively lacking in comparative studies; (3) that this literature tends to over-emphasize the manipulability of the past; and (4) that this literature tends to assume the importance of collective memory on the ground. In returning to that article now, it's almost embarrassing to realize the number of insights I'd long thought were my own that I'd actually absorbed directly from it.

The other two examples speak to some less formal sources of scholarly imprinting and relate to issues that Rogers was actively working on *en route* to the Transylvania book.

Beyond Comparativism?

Let me begin with "Beyond Comparativism?", which is actually a seven-page informal paper that Rogers circulated for 237 in 2003. (*I wonder if he even remembers writing it?*) Here's how Rogers introduced the paper:

> Last year, I was asked to participate in a panel addressing "the role of comparativism" as part of a conference on "Race/ethnicity, self/culture, and inequality." Noting that I had written on moving "beyond identity" and "beyond groupism," Michele Lamont introduced me by jokingly suggesting that I would speak on going "beyond comparativism." Since my own research trajectory had indeed taken me "beyond" cross-

> national comparative work, I took up this gambit and tried to think about what "comparativism" is and what—if anything—it might mean to move "beyond [it]." The following rough notes are no more than a starting point for discussion. (Brubaker 2003, p. 1)

Here are some of the main take-aways: First, comparison is fundamental to social analysis (if for no reason other than being fundamental to human cognition). Yet the "Skocpolian Moment" has passed and (relatedly) comparativism isn't in itself a distinctive method.[3] Rogers ends by asking: "Beyond comparison? Certainly not! Beyond comparativism, as an 'ism'? Well, why not?" (p. 6).

This paper was unpolished and, as Rogers said in the intro, was only meant as a starting point for discussion. But it set a high bar for what that discussion might look like.

Soc 230 (Nations and Nationalisms)

Now let me turn to Soc 230—"Nations and Nationalisms"—which I took with Rogers in the spring of 2002, just before he started co-teaching it with Andreas. I have a bit less to say here, because to say more would involve a lot of gesturing toward memos and ephemeral classroom interactions. Suffice it to say that the micro-macro question loomed large. Rogers was clearly moving in a more micro-analytic direction with the Transylvania book. There were even rumors going around that he'd taken Manny's CA class! And it was evident in how he approached 230.

I was reminded of this when I stumbled across my final paper, which I wrote on a question that Rogers had posed:

> The need to connect micro and macro levels of analysis is a recurrent theme of social scientific discussions in almost every substantive field. The study of nationhood and nationalism (and related phenomena) is no exception. Discuss the various ways in which this issue has been addressed (or left unanswered) in works we have read this term.

I'll spare you my answer; but I can't help but share my brilliant opening sentence with you: "Studies of nationhood and nationalisms necessarily require *both* micro *and* macro levels of analysis."

And of course, Rogers had plenty to say in response. Among other things, he reminded me that "…one would not want to equate 'the economic' or 'the political' as such with a macro approach. Economic, cultural, and political conditions and processes can all be analyzed in micro or macro-analytic ways" (see Figure 3).

Going back through my notes makes it clear to me the extent to which I've spent my career chasing answers to these questions—about comparison and micro vs. macro analysis—that

[3] As Rogers put it: "One might well embrace a wide range of *strategies* of comparative analysis as heuristically useful without asserting—and, happily, without needing to assert—that any of them provides an ironclad *method* for producing valid scientific results" (p. 4).

Rogers put on the table in these formative settings. In fact, it wouldn't be too far off the mark if I were to describe my book (2017) as the product of my own attempt to grapple with these two sets of abstract issues in a concrete, empirical case study.

IV. CONCLUSION

With that, I'll conclude. I've been trying to avoid an exercise in nostalgia, but my time here really did feel like a golden age for comparative-historical sociology at UCLA—of a particular style that could only be found *here*, *at that time*, with that *particular* configuration of scholars. It's only later that I've come to realize how truly special—and incredibly rare—that unique crystallization was. *Thank you, Rogers!*

FIGURES

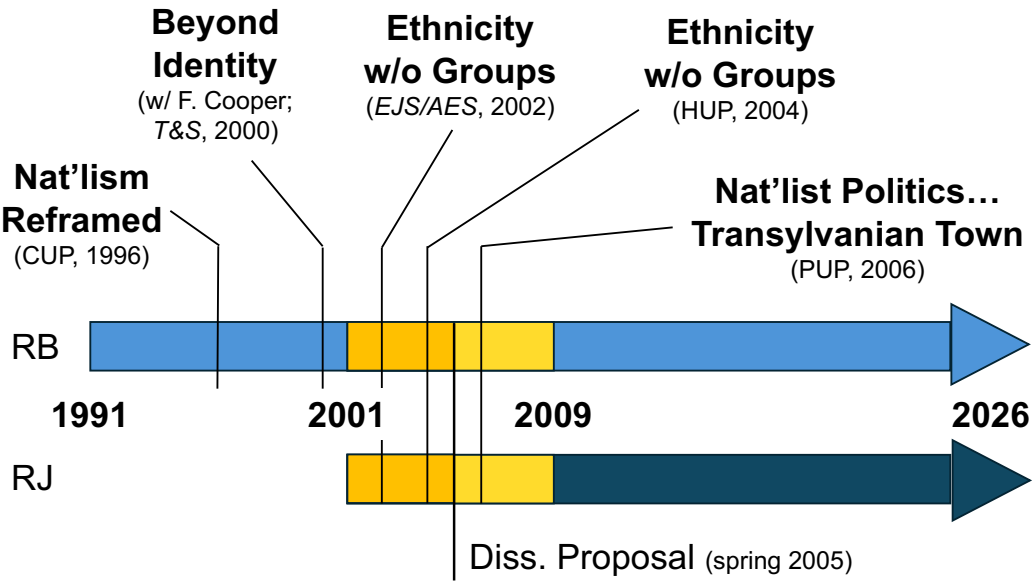


Figure 1: Influential Publications During (and Shortly Before) Formative Period of Scholarly Imprinting[4]

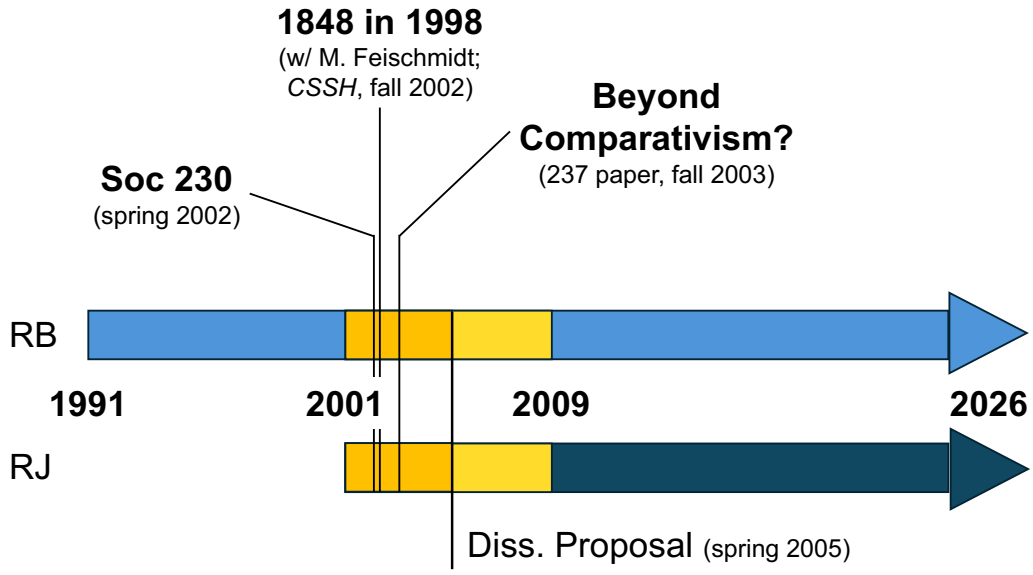
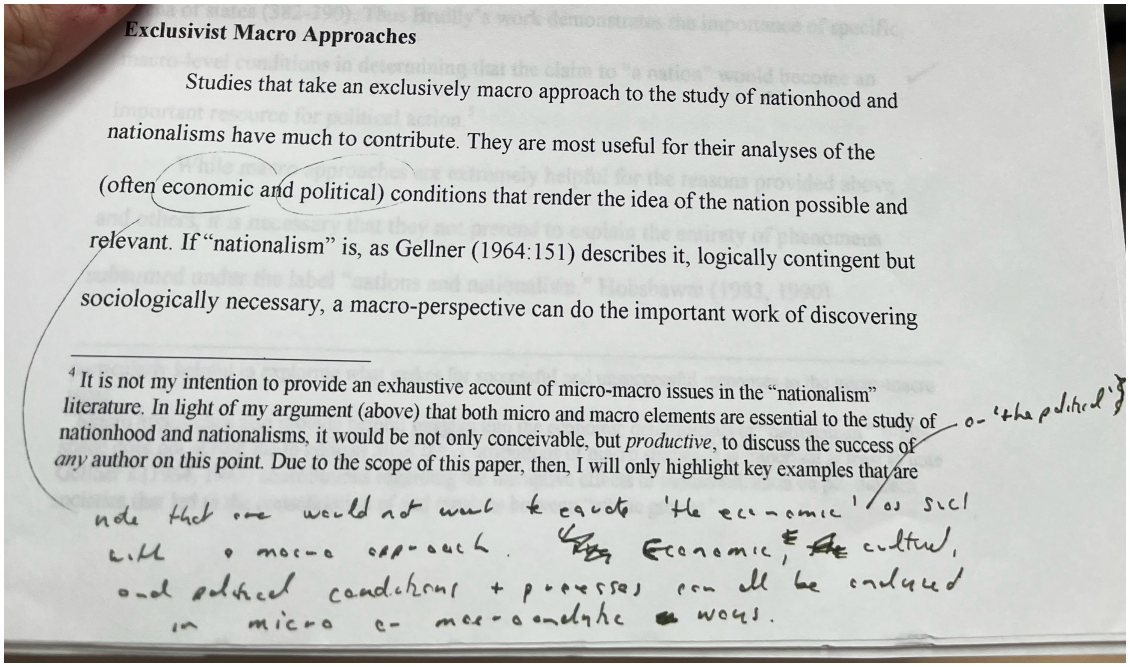


Figure 2: Imprinting Moments During Pre-Dissertation Proposal Period

[4] I thank Rogers Brubaker for his suggestion that arrows be added to the end of the timelines.



Exclusivist Macro Approaches

Studies that take an exclusively macro approach to the study of nationhood and nationalisms have much to contribute. They are most useful for their analyses of the (often economic and political) conditions that render the idea of the nation possible and relevant. If "nationalism" is, as Gellner (1964:151) describes it, logically contingent but sociologically necessary, a macro-perspective can do the important work of discovering

[4] It is not my intention to provide an exhaustive account of micro-macro issues in the "nationalism" literature. In light of my argument (above) that both micro and macro elements are essential to the study of nationhood and nationalisms, it would be not only conceivable, but *productive*, to discuss the success of *any* author on this point. Due to the scope of this paper, then, I will only highlight key examples that are

note that one would not want to equate 'the economic' / as such with a macro approach. Economic, & cultural, and political conditions + processes can all be analyzed in micro & macro analytic ways.

Figure 3: Rogers Brubaker's Handwriting on the Author's Final Paper for Soc 230

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