

RACHAEL D. STEPHENS

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SCHOLARLY BIOGRAPHY

Rachael Stephens is a PhD Candidate in Education and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the U.S. (sub)urban political economy and her interest is in better understanding—and transgressing—the everyday reproduction of social inequality. Her dissertation is an ethnography of public-school finance inequality, and was inspired by her work as an educator, community organizer, and filmmaker in under-funded public schools in Hartford, CT, and Philadelphia, PA. Rachael approaches her teaching and scholarship with the aim of building more equitable environments, both within academia and beyond. She uses community-based and multi-modal methods to make her work more inclusive and accessible, and since social ills are not beholden to disciplinary borders, she puts her 10 years of anthropological training in dialogue with education, political science, economics, and history.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

inequity, social change, political economy, (sub)urban United States, social ethics, real estate, school finance, politicization, community filmmaking, the politics of knowledge production

EDUCATION

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Dual Ph.D. in Anthropology (SAS) and Education (GSE)	Expected 2023
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY M.A. in Anthropology and Education	2016
College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA B.A., <i>Cum Laude</i> , Anthropology Major, Peace & Conflicts Concentration	2010

RESEARCH

Anthropology Department and Department of Education, Culture, and Society, UPenn
Principal Investigator, Preliminary Dissertation Research, Summers 2017-2020

- ethnography of school finance inequality in Greater Hartford, CT
- committee: Kathy Hall, Deb Thomas, Asif Agha, Adolph Reed

Education, Culture and Society Program, UPenn GSE, Philadelphia, PA
Research Assistant, Professor Kathleen Hall —Sept. 2016-Present

- assist with research on multimodal ethnography and the anthropology of neoliberalism

Anthropology Department, Teachers College, Columbia University

Principal Investigator, Masters Thesis: "How to Order Pizza: Segregating CT," 2014-2015

- ethnography of neighborhood segregation and urban fear in Hartford, CT
- advisors: Hervé Varenne and Raymond McDermott

Communications & Media Dept., Teachers College, Columbia U., NYC, NY
Research Assistant, Professor Lalitha Vasudevan —Sept. 2014- Spring 2016

- assist with ethnography of educational well-being at a youth filmmaking organization

Anthropology Department Senior Project, College of The Holy Cross, Worcester, MA
Principal Investigator— “Others for Men and Women?, ”Spring 2009-Spring 2010

- designed and executed applied ethnography of community service and politicization

Anthropology Department, College of The Holy Cross, Worcester, MA
Research Assistant, Professor Ann Marie Leshkovich— Fall 2008-Fall 2009

- assisted with ethnography of transnational adoption between Vietnam and the U.S.

COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

Community Education Project, collaboration with St. Joseph’s College (GSE), Hartford, CT,
Co-Director and Producer— 2020-Present

- developing a series of community workshops and multimodal educational materials (e.g., podcast, website) to detail the histories of educational inequality in Greater Hartford
- collaborating with Dr. Tony DeJesus, Professor of Social Work and Education

“Be Brave” Collaborative Film Project about School Finance, Penn GSE Films Philadelphia, Pa.
Co-Director and Producer— 2016-2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsaYS5PaatE>

- developed and co-led a youth participatory action research (YPAR) project for students at one of Philadelphia’s neighborhood high schools
- co-directed and produced film about how under-resourcing was experienced and resisted in their school (film available via [Philadelphia School District's YouTube channel](#))

Preventative Public Safety Initiative, West End Civic Association, Hartford, CT
Founder and Facilitator — Fall 2015

- convened residents—both neighborhood watch members and criminalized youth—to discuss the importance of shifting from a criminalizing to a preventative approach

Student-Driven, Film-Based Professional Development for Urban Educators
Facilitator, Director and Producer—2011-2014

- worked with high school students to develop and produce a “‘bout That Life” Video Narrative project, allowing students to share experiences of race, class, gender and place
- worked with students to use their video narratives to educate their teachers, most of whom came from far more racially and economically privileged backgrounds

Re-Thinking Community Service Curriculum Development, Student Programs for Urban Development (SPUD), College of The Holy Cross — 2008-2010

Lead Organizer and Director of Educational Programming

- drew on my ethnographic research, which suggested that community service without analysis of the structural roots of inequality can reinforce “blame-the-victim” ideology
- developed a new curriculum for the college’s 700 community service volunteers

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Stephens, Rachael, and Michelle Zhang. (Spring 2020). “From Builders to Their Tools: Crafting 'Poverty Knowledge' from ‘The Moynihan Report’ to Today.” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*. DOI: 10.1080/15595692.2020.1738111

Hall, Kathleen, and Rachael Stephens. (Conditionally Accepted). “Neoliberalism.” *Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology*.

Literat, Ioana, Anna Conover, Elizabeth Herbert-Watson, Karen Kirsch Page, Joe Riina-Ferrie, Rachael Stephens, Sawaros Thanapornsangsuth and Lalitha Vasudevan. (2017). "Towards Multimodal Inquiry: Opportunities, Challenges and Implication of Multimodality for Research and Scholarship." *Higher Education Research & Development*. Article ID: CHER 1389857.

Stephens, Rachael and Barbara Hartigan. (2015). "Equality, Justice, & Social Change: Teacher-Researcher Use of the Anger-Analysis-Action Praxis." *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 8(4), 266-277.

NEWS MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Stephens, Rachael. "'Tax Talk': Why it might be misleading our votes." *CT Mirror*, 11/5/2018. <https://ctmirror.org/2018/11/05/tax-talk-and-why-it-might-be-misleading-our-votes/>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"What's the (scholarly) value of mapping the sensory topographies of property value?" Screening Scholarship Media Festival; Remote Conference, Upcoming: April 2021.

"CAMRA Fellows Showcase: On Mentoring Multimodal Scholarship." Screening Scholarship Media Festival; Remote Conference, April 2021. *Coordinator & Presenter*.

"The Sensory Topographies of Real Estate Value." Society for Economic Anthropology Annual Meeting; Remote Conference, Feb. 2021.

"Successful Danger: an interaction analysis of urban segregation." American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. "Successful Failure: Methodological Possibilities and Alterities". Minneapolis, MN. Nov. 2016. *Coordinator & Presenter*.

"Moving from 'them' to 'us': Using interaction analysis to escape deficit ideology." American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. "Revisiting Research Methodologies" Session. Denver, Colorado. With Michelle Zhang. November 2015.

"Media as Scholarship: Broadening academic practice." Organizer, Roundtable Discussion. Teachers College Black Student Network's Annual Conference, NY, NY, May 2015.

GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

Society for Economic Anthropology (SEA) Halperin Memorial Fund—Summer 2020

- selected as one of two projects integrating anthropological theory and social engagement

Center for Experimental Ethnography at Penn Summer Research Grant— Summer 2020

UPenn Center for the Study of Ethnicity, Race & Immigration Grant— Summer 2020

UPenn Anthropology Department Field Funds, UPenn—Summer 2019

UPenn Penn Museum Summer Field Funds, UPenn—Summer 2019

Brady Family Endowed Scholarship, UPenn GSE— 2016-2020

UPenn GSE Summer Research Fellowship, UPenn GSE—Summer 2017, 2018, 2019

Balderston Scholarship, Anthro. Dept., Teachers College, Columbia—Spring 2015

- awarded departmental scholarship based on merit

Teachers College Scholarship, Teachers College, Columbia—Fall 2014- Spring 2015

- awarded college-wide, merit-based scholarship

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

Collective for Advancing Multimodal Research Arts (CAMRA), UPenn, Phila., Pa.
CAMRA Mentor, Spring 2020—Present

- mentor undergraduate students from underrepresented groups who are interested in pursuing doctoral studies, with particular attention to supporting multimodal research

Association of Political and Legal Anthropology. American Association of Anthropology.
Grad. Student Rep. Summer 2020—Present

- initiated, developed, and now running a new Junior-Senior Mentoring Program Screening Scholarship Media Festival, UPenn. *Planning Committee— 2018, 2020, 2021*
- Penn Ethnography in Education Forum, UPenn. *Volunteer— 2019, 2021*
- Media & Social Change (MASC) Lab, Teachers College, Columbia University NYC, NY.
Co-Lead Graduate Assistant— Spring 2015—2016
- co-led MASC Lab, a hub for multimodal scholarship and pedagogy

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

American Association of Anthropology. *2015—Present*
Association of Political and Legal Anthropology. *2020—Present*
Society for Economic Anthropology. *2020—Present*
Council on Anthropology and Education. *2020—Present*
UPenn Semiotics Lab. *2018—Present*
UPenn Center for Experimental Ethnography. *2018—Present*
UPenn Collective for Advancing Multimodal Research Arts. *2016—Present*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), Stanford Graduate School of Education.
Guest Lecturer, “Equity and Education”; Summer 2017

Education, Culture, & Society Department, UPenn Graduate School of Education.
Teaching Assistant, “Qualitative Research Methods”; Spring 2020
Teaching Assistant, “Master’s Thesis Seminar” 2016-2017; 2017-2018

Anthropology Department, Teachers College, Columbia University.
Teaching Assistant, “Education & Anthropology”—Spring 2015

Connecticut River Academy Magnet High School, East Hartford, CT
Instructor, Director of Extracurricular Activities October 2011-June 2014

Saint Mary Elementary School, Aberdeen, WA
Teaching Apprentice, Tutor, and Lead Summer School Teacher—Nov 2010-July 2011

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Coastal Community Action Program, Aberdeen, WA, *Housing Specialist— Fall 2010*
MA Dept. of Transitional Aid, Worcester, MA, *Legal Services Coordinator— 2006-2009*
MA Public Health Association, Worcester, MA, *Community Organizing Intern—2008-2009*
Mary O’Keeffe, Campaign for City Council, Worcester, MA, *Student Organizer—Fall 2009*
Office of the CT Secretary of the State, Hartford, CT, *Press and Policy Intern—Summer 2009*

REFERENCES

Kathy Hall; kdhall@upenn.edu; Associate Professor of Education and Anthropology, UPenn
Deborah Thomas; deborah.Thomas@sas.upenn.edu; Professor of Anthropology, UPenn
Asif Agha; asifagha@sas.upenn.edu; Professor of Anthropology, UPenn
Adolph Reed; reedal@sas.upenn.edu; Professor Emeritus of Political Science, UPenn
Ray McDermott; rpmcd@stanford.edu; Prof. Emeritus of Education & Anthropology, Stanford

MULTI-MODAL RESEARCH SKILLS

Documentary filmmaking and editing (Final Cut Pro), STATA, ArcGIS, QGIS