

David Peterson

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EMPLOYMENT

2026- Associate Professor of Sociology, Purdue University
2022-26 Assistant Professor of Sociology, Purdue University
2020-22 Postdoctoral Researcher, Sociology Department, UCLA
2018-20 Postdoctoral Researcher, the Institute for Society and Genetics, UCLA

EDUCATION

2018 Ph.D. in Sociology from Northwestern University
2009 MA in Sociology from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
2006 BA in Sociology and BA in Communication Studies from CSU Long Beach

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Science and Technology
Culture and Cognition
Qualitative Methods
AI and Automation

Data and Society
Metascience
Expertise
Theory

BOOK

Peterson, David. 2025. *The Unbuilt Bench: Experimental Psychology at the Verge of Science*. Columbia University Press.

- Reviewed by [Andrew Gelman](#)
- Reviewed in the [Journal of Peace Research](#)
- *Behavior Scientist* [Notable Book](#) of 2025

ARTICLES & CHAPTERS

Panofsky, Aaron, & **David Peterson**. 2026. "When Scientific Values are Weaponized Against Science: Rethinking Democratization and Autonomy." *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*

Peterson, David, Koch, Bernard, Natarajan, Ramya, & Aaron Panofsky. 2026. "Remaking the Landscape of Scientific Expertise: The Emergent Research Program of Total Automation in Science." *Big Data & Society*

Peterson, David, & Aaron Panofsky. 2023. "[Metascience as a Scientific Social Movement](#)." *Minerva*, 61, 147-174.

- Featured in [Psychology Today](#)

- Peterson, David, & Aaron Panofsky. 2021. "[Arguments Against Efficiency in Science](#)." *Social Science Information*, 60(3), 350-355.
- Peterson, David, & Aaron Panofsky. 2021. "[Self-Correction in Science: The Diagnostic and Integrative Motives for Replication](#)." *Social Studies of Science*, 51(4), 583-605.
- Freese, Jeremy, & David Peterson. 2020. "Replication." In C. Elman, J. Gerring, & J. Mahoney (Eds.), *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*. Cambridge University Press.
- Freese, Jeremy, & David Peterson. 2018. "[The Emergence of Statistical Objectivity](#)." *Sociological Theory*, 36(3), 289-313.
- Freese, Jeremy, & David Peterson. 2017. "[Replication in Social Science](#)." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43(1).
- Peterson, David. 2017. "[The Depth of Fields: Managing Focus in the Epistemic Subcultures of Mind and Brain Science](#)." *Social Studies of Science*, 47(1), 53-74.
- Peterson, David. 2016. "[The Baby Factory: The Production of Statistical Significance in Improbable Circumstances](#)" *Socius*, 1(2), 1-10.
- Featured in the [Slate.com](#), [British Psychological Society Research Digest](#), [Andrewgelman.com](#), and the [Hardest Science](#) blog
- Peterson, David. 2015. "[All that is Solid: Bench-Building at the Frontiers of Two Experimental Sciences](#)." *American Sociological Review*, 80(6), 1201-1225.
- Winner of Hacker-Mullins Prize Student Paper Award from the Science, Knowledge, and Technology Section of the American Sociological Association
 - Winner of Winch Award for the best paper presented or published by a Northwestern graduate student
- Peterson, David, & Daina C. Harvey. 2014. "[Kafkaesque Bureaucracies as Natural Breaching Experiments: Interactional Failures and the Search for Institutional Agency](#)." *Symbolic Interaction*, 38(2), 195-212.
- Winner of the Maines Narrative Research Award from the Carl Couch Center for Social and Internet Research
- Peterson, David. 2014. "[Ontology and Politics: The Problems of Emergence and Reductionism in Integrative Health Science](#)." *Social Theory & Health*, 12, 22-44.
- Peterson, David. 2013. "[The Ivy and the Trellis: Agency, Biology, and Socialization](#)." *Advances in Group Processes*, 30, 293-315.
- Winner of the Student Paper Award- Evolution, Biology, and Society Section of the American Sociological Association
- Peterson, David. 2012. "[Where the Sidewalk Ends: The Limits of Social Constructionism](#)." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 42(4), 465-84.

COMMENTS & REVIEWS

Koch, Bernard, & **Peterson, David**. 2025. "The AI History That Explains Fears of a Bubble." *Time.com*. <https://time.com/7340901/ai-history-bubble-benchmarks/>

Peterson, David. 2021. "[The replication crisis won't be solved with broad brushstrokes](#)." *Nature*, (594), 151.

Peterson, David. 2019. "The Other Big Science: Psychiatric Genetics and the Strategy of Going Big." *BioSocieties*, 14(4), 585-590.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Koch, Bernard, & **David Peterson**. "From Protoscience to Epistemic Monoculture: How Benchmarking Set the Stage for the Deep Learning Revolution." Preprint available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/2404.06647>. R&R at the *American Sociological Review*

Peterson, David, & Bernard Koch. "The Frost Wedge Hypothesis: Automation and Expertise in the Medical Profession." Manuscript available.

Peterson, David, Panofsky, Aaron, & William Wannyn. "The Weirdness of Normal Science: The Many Threats to the Performance of Scientific Objectivity."

GRANTS

2023 "The History of Early Efforts by DARPA and NIST to Make Science Visible and Measurable" (PI) from the Sloan Foundation, \$101, 651.00

2020 "The Study of the Formation, Practice and Effect of Adversarial Collaboration in Consciousness research" (Co-PI) from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, \$139.692.

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

2025 SOCRATES Center for Advanced Study Fellow at Leibniz University Hannover

- Spring semester spent at SOCRATES, a Centre for Advanced Studies funded by the German Research Foundation dedicated to interdisciplinary exchanges on scientific credibility and trust.

2024 ENGAGE Award, Purdue University

- \$10,000 to support the writing and publication of my first book

PRESENTATIONS

2026 "What the History of Evaluation in AI Can Tell Us about the Future of AI and Science" at Metascience and AI Summer School, Microsoft Research, Cambridge, MA.

- 2026 "Remaking the Landscape of Scientific Expertise: The Emergent Research Program of Total Automation in Science" at Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, NYC. (with Bernard Koch & Aaron Panofsky)
- 2025 "The Science of Progress: AI, Benchmarking, and the Future of Evaluation" at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Chicago
- 2025 "Dreaming the Robot Scientist: The Emergent Research Program of Total Automation in Science" at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science in Seattle
- 2025 "Going Meta: How Science is Understood and Why it Matters" at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science in Seattle
- 2025 "Sociological Perspectives on Reformist Metascience" at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland
- 2025 "How to Stop Thinking: DARPA and the Formalization of AI Research" at the Beyond Replication workshop at Leibniz University, Hannover, Germany
- 2025 "Metascience and the Fragility of Scientific Field" at SOCRATES colloquium at the Leibniz University, Hannover, Germany
- 2025 "From Field to Factory: DARPA and the Formalization of AI Research" at Disciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Boundary-Spanning Identities in Science, Engineering, and Science Policy workshop at ASU's Consortium for Science, Policy, and Outcomes in Washington, D.C.
- 2025 "Arguments Against Open Science" at Let's Talk about Science Reform workshop at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany
- 2023 "Why AI has Run Out of Ideas: How Benchmarking Made AI so Conservative" at American Sociological Association, Philadelphia
- 2023 "The Frost-wedge Hypothesis: Automation and Expertise in Medical Practice" at American Sociological Association, Philadelphia
- 2022 "Automation and Expertise" at the Centre for the Study of Knowledge, Expertise and Science at Cardiff University
- 2022 "Science is/in Crisis: On Metascience and Crisis Diagnoses" at the Association for Interdisciplinary Meta-Research and Open Science, University of Melbourne
- 2021 "Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste: Metascience, Automation, and the Future of Science" at the Centre for the Study of Knowledge, Expertise and Science at Cardiff University
- 2021 "Self-Correction in Science: The Diagnostic and Integrative Motives for Replication" at Society for Social Studies of Science Annual Meeting, Toronto
- 2021 Organizer for "How biology differs from other sciences, and why this matters for Metascience" at Metascience 2021 Conference
- 2021 "Metascience as a Scientific Social Movement." A Critical Analysis of the Scientific Reform Movement at the Center for Open Science
- 2021 "Metascience as a Scientific Social Movement." History and Philosophy of Science Seminar at the University of Melbourne
- 2019 "Objectivity in Social and Natural Science." Invited workshop on Objectivity at the University of Bergen, Norway.
- 2019 "Meta-Science and the Political Theory of Science Policy." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science
- 2019 "Transparency versus Autonomy: Meta-Science, Fields, and the Political Clash at the Root of Pure Science." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Science and Technology Panel
- 2016 "The Verge of Science: Expertise and Evaluation at the Frontiers of Behavioral Science." Invited presentation at the University of Oklahoma Emerging Scholars Series

- 2016 "The Categorization of Human Experience in Experimental Social Science." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociology of Culture, Roundtable
- 2015 "The Emergence of Forensic Objectivity: Transparency, Mechanical Replication, and the Meta-Analytic Mindset." (with Jeremy Freese) Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociology of Science, Regular Session
- 2015 "The Ethics, Pragmatics, and Logics of Competing Evidential Cultures in Social Psychology." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Science, Knowledge, and Technology, Roundtables
- 2014 "The Depth of Fields: The Optics of Scientific Disunity." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociology of Culture, Special Section
- 2014 "Beyond Hierarchy and Consensus: Bench-Building at the Frontiers of Two Experimental Sciences." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Theory, Roundtable Session
- 2013 "The Baby Factory: The Production of Statistical Significance in Improbable Circumstances." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Science, Knowledge, and Technology, Special Section
- 2011 "Ontology and Politics: Emergence and Reductionism in Integrative Health Science." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociological Theory, Special Section
- 2011 "From Culture and Cognition to Ideology: The Culture Structure of Economic Crises." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Culture and Cognition, Roundtable
- 2010 "Moving Beyond the Constructionist/Nativist Dichotomy: Toward a Richer Social Constructionism." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociological Theory, Roundtable
- 2009 "Evolutionary Coalition Formation Between Agent Groups Over Networks" (with Michael Wunder). Presented at the Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems (NICO) Complexity Conference, Poster Session
- 2009 "The Ivy and the Trellis: Socialization and the Aggregation of Schemata." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association- Sociological Theory, Special Section
- 2009 "A Theory of Extreme Resocialization." (with Ben Zablocki) Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Regular Session
- 2008 "Mirror Neurons, Social Theory, and Child Development." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, Regular Session

COURSES TAUGHT

Data and Society
 The Risks of AI
 Societal Impacts of Artificial Intelligence
 Health, Biomedicine, Culture, and Society
 Environmental Sociology
 Sociology of Science
 Contemporary Sociological Theories
 Development of Sociological Theory

SERVICE

- 2023 Undergraduate Committee at Purdue University Sociology Department
2016 Communications Committee- Science, Knowledge, and Technology Section of ASA
2014 Faculty Recruitment Committee- Northwestern Graduate Student Association
2011 Graduate Affairs Committee- Northwestern Graduate Student Association
2010 Social Affairs Coordinator- Northwestern Sociology Graduate Student Association
2008 Discussant- "Social Psychological Approaches"- Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association
2007-09 Board Member- The Student Forum Advisory Board of the *American Sociological Association*
2007 Co-chair- Graduate Union of Sociology Students, Rutgers University
2007 Discussant- Constructing Knowledges Conference

REVIEW

American Sociological Review
American Journal of Sociology
National Science Foundation
Theory & Society
Social Studies of Science

Sociological Forum
Science, Technology, & Human Values
Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior