

Sadie Dempsey

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SUNY University at Buffalo
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Academic Appointments

Aug 2025- **SUNY University at Buffalo** (Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Philosophy, Politics and Economics Program)

EDUCATION

- 2025 **Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison**, Department of Sociology
Minor: Political Science
Preliminary Exams: Political Sociology, Ethnography
Dissertation: “Expanding Democracy: An Ethnographic Study of Engaged Citizenship and Political Participation at the Margins”
Committee: Mustafa Emirbayer (chair), Jessica Calarco, Chad Goldberg, Lewis Friedland, and Michael Wagner
- 2019 **M.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison**, Department of Sociology
Thesis: “No Blue, No Red”: Movement-Party Dynamics, Populism, and Collective Identity Formation”
- 2014 **B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison**, Department of Sociology and Department of Gender and Women’s Studies

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Political Sociology; Democracy; Social Movements; Political Communication; Ethnography and Qualitative Research Methods; Mixed-Methods Research; Community-Engaged Research

PUBLICATIONS

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Dempsey, Sadie. “Mobilizing Potential: Pathways to Engaged Citizenship.” Forthcoming at *Qualitative Sociology*.

- Honorable Mention, 2024 Conflict Social Action and Change Division’s Graduate Student Paper Award, SSSP

Dempsey, Sadie, Jianing Li, Benny Witkovsky, Yiming Wang, Lewis A. Friedland, Michael W. Wagner, and Dhavan V. Shah. 2025. “Manufacturing January 6: How Republican County Parties Mobilized Anger to Promote #StopTheSteal.” *Politics & Society*.

Besbris, Max, **Sadie Dempsey**, Eva Rosen, and Brian McCabe. 2024. "Housing Insecurity during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 10(4): 207-224.

Dempsey, Sadie, Jiyoun Suk, Katherine J. Cramer, Lewis A. Friedland, Michael W. Wagner, and Dhavan V. Shah. 2020. "Understanding Trump Supporters' News Use: Beyond the Fox News Bubble." *The Forum* 18(3): 319-346.

PEER REVIEWED BOOK CHAPTERS

Dempsey, Sadie. 2025. "In the Shadow of Sunshine Laws: Open Meeting Laws and Administrative Burdens" in *Democracy, Governance, and Law*. Ed. Mathieu Deflam. Emerald.

Dempsey, Sadie and Jianing Li. 2024. "The Local Roots of January 6th: A Mixed-Methods, Multi-Level Approach to Political Communication" in *Media and January 6th*. Eds. Kadajah Costley White, Daniel Kreiss, Shannon C. McGregor, and Rebekah Tromble. Oxford University Press.

Friedland, Lewis A., Dhavan V. Shah, Michael W. Wagner, Chris Wells, Katherine J. Cramer, and John C. Pevehouse. 2022. *Battleground: Asymmetric Communication Ecologies and the Erosion of Civil Society in Wisconsin*. Cambridge University Press. **Co-author on four chapters:**

- Josephine Lukito, **Sadie Dempsey**, Jiyoun Suk, Jianing Li, Ellie Yang, Jordan M. Foley, Ceri Hughes, Monica Sansonsetti Busch, Zhongkai Sun, Zening Duan, and Charles Franklin. "Communication Ecologies, Social Structure, and Lifeworld."
- Jiyoun Suk, Josephine Lukito, **Sadie Dempsey**, and Jianing Li. "Immigration: Complex Issues and Conservative Asymmetries."
- **Sadie Dempsey**, Jiyoun Suk, Josephine Lukito, and Ellie Yang. "Healthcare: A National Issue with Lifeworld Implications."
- Josephine Lukito, **Sadie Dempsey**, Jiyoun Suk, and Jordan M. Foley. "Foxconn and Economic Development in the Local Communication Ecology."

REVISE AND RESUBMIT

Dempsey, Sadie. "Making Political Citizens: How Student-Centered Social Movement Organizations Facilitate Political Learning." *Revise & Resubmit at The Sociological Quarterly*.

IN PROGRESS

Dempsey, Sadie. "It Is Our Duty to Fight for our Freedom?: How Legacies of Political

Exclusion Shape Contemporary Activism and Attitudes.” *Invited to submit to RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences Thematic Issue, “Inequality in America: Beliefs, Attitudes, and Action.”*

Dempsey, Sadie. “The Mirage of Democracy: How the Political Process Undermines Democratic Values, Erodes Political Trust, and Nurtures Critical Citizens.”

- Selected for the Junior Theorists Symposium 2024, ASA Theory Section

Dempsey, Sadie. “We’re Cooked! Sarcasm, Snark, and Gallows Humor as Cultural Tools for Political Activism.”

Dempsey, Sadie, and Benny Witkovsky. “Mixing Qualitative Data Sources in the Study of Political Life.”

NON-REFERREED PUBLICATIONS

Dempsey, Sadie, Benny Witkovsky, Jianing Li, Michael W. Wagner, and Yiming Wang. 2024. “Swing-State GOP leaders amplified election denial in 2020 – and may do so again,” [*The Conversation*](#).

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2023 - 2024 **Research Assistant,** Qualitative Verification and the American Voices Project. PI: Max Besbris

2022 - 2023 **Research Assistant,** Building and Open Qualitative Social Science: COVID-19 and Housing. PIs: Max Besbris, Brian Cole, and Eva Rosen.

2018 - 2023 **Knight Fellow and Research Assistant,** Center for Communication and Civic Renewal, University of Wisconsin – Madison. PIs: Katherine Cramer, Lewis A. Friedland, Dhavan V. Shah, and Mike W. Wagner.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2025 **Teaching Assistant,** Racial and Ethnic Social Movements (Soc 220), University of Wisconsin – Madison.

2023 **Guest Lecturer** on Social Movements and Mobilization, Survey of Sociology (Soc 210), University of Wisconsin – Madison.

2016 - 2018 (4 semesters) **Teaching Assistant,** Criminal Justice in America (Soc 131), University of Wisconsin – Madison.

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

2024 UW Madison Department of Sociology Small Grant

2024 UW Madison Graduate Student Service Scholarship

2024 Morgridge Center Excellence in Engaged Scholarship Graduate Student Award

2024	Public Humanities Exchange (HEX) Grant
2024	Institute for Humane Studies Fellowship
2023-24	Mellon Public Humanities Fellowship
2023	Russell Sage Dissertation Research Grant
2022	UW Madison Department of Sociology Graduate Student Service Award
2022	UW Madison Department of Sociology Small Grant
2019	UW Madison Exceptional Service TA Award (nominated)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Philosophy, Policy, and Practice: A Pedagogical Toolkit” (w/ David Gray and Samantha Koreman)

- Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society Annual Conference. November 14, 2025.

“‘We Have a Duty to Fight for our Freedom’: How Legacies of Political Exclusion Shape Contemporary Activism and Attitudes.”

- Russell Sage Foundation Conference on Inequality in America. October 23, 2025.

“‘We’re Cooked!’ Sarcasm, Snark, and Gallows Humor as Cultural Tools for Political Activism.”

- Eastern Sociological Association, People-ing Politics mini-conference. March 8, 2025.

“Mixing Qualitative Data Sources in the Study of Political Life.”

- The Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montréal. August 10, 2024.

“Qualitative Verification: Challenges and Limitations.”

- Verification Workshop, The Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University, NYC. February 23, 2024. With Max Besbris.

“Mobilizing Potential: Pathways to Engaged Citizenship.”

- Society for the Study of Social Problems Annual Meeting, Montréal. August 9, 2024.

“The Mirage of Democracy: How the Political Process Undermines Democratic Values, Erodes Political Trust, and Nurtures Critical Citizens.”

- The Junior Theorists Symposium, Montréal. August 8, 2024.
- University of Chicago’s Spring Institute. April 5, 2024.
- The Chicago Ethnography Conference at Loyola University. April 15, 2023.

“The Local Roots of January 6th: Election Fraud Claims on Local GOP Facebook Pages.”

- Communication and Civic Life Amid Contention at University of Wisconsin – Madison. February 26, 2022.
- The Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Philadelphia, PA. August 19, 2023.

“Narratives of Mistrust: The Intertwining of Political Trust and Media Trust.”

- The Great Mediation Conference at University of Chicago (Virtual). May 6, 2021.

“‘No Red, No Blue’: Populism, Partisanship and Collective Identity.”

- Chicago Ethnography Conference, Northwestern University. March 16, 2019.

“Negotiated Politics: Navigating Ideology, Political Opportunities, and Strategies in Social Movement Organizations.”

- Chicago Ethnography Conference, University of Chicago. March 17, 2018.
- Minnesota Political Methodology Conference, University of Minnesota. May 5, 2018.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- 2023 Discussant, Qualitative Methods Working Group, School of Journalism and Mass Communication at University of Wisconsin – Madison. February 24.
- 2022 Panelist, “New Research Questions” at The Capitol Coup One Year Later hosted by George Washington University. January 6. Virtual.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING

- 2020-2022 **Lead Organizer**, Chicago Ethnography Conference 2022 at University of Wisconsin – Madison.
- Managed a team of graduate student volunteers for a one-day, virtual, graduate student-led conference featuring 100 student presenters, more than 500 participants, and keynotes from Jessica Calarco and Mario Luis Small.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 2025-present **Organizer**, People-ing Politics Writing Workshop
- 2018-2025 **Co-Founder and Graduate Student Coordinator**, Qualitative Methods Workshop.
- 2020-2025 **Leadership Committee**, Sociology Graduate Student Association Mentorship Committee
- 2022-2023 **Search Committee**, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Department of Sociology