Aidan Combs

*Curriculum vitae*

# Employment

https://aidancombs.netlify.app/

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| --- | --- |
| Assistant Professor of Sociology, The Ohio State University | 2025 - |
| Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Bamberg Fundamentals of Natural Language Processing Group (BamNLP), Bamberg, Germany  *and* Visiting Scholar, University of Stuttgart Institute for Natural Language Processing (IMS), Stuttgart, Germany | 2024 - 2025 |

# Education

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| **PhD** | Duke University, Sociology  *Qualification areas: Social Psychology and Measuring Culture Certificate in College Teaching* | 2024 |
| **MA** | Duke University, Sociology | 2021 |
| **BS** | University of Wisconsin-Madison  *Engineering Physics with scientific computing focus; Mathematics* | 2018 |

**Research Areas**

Computational social science, quantitative methods, cultural sociology, social psychology, natural language processing, toolbuilding for social data collection and analysis

# Peer-Reviewed Publications

2025 **Combs, Aidan**, Diego Dametto, Christophe Blaison, Renee Leung, Aarti Malhotra, Tobias Schroeder, Jesse Hoey, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. “Affective Connotations According to LLMs: Implications for Meaning Measurement and Cultural Bias.” *Forthcoming. Cognition and Emotion.*

Jacobs, Susan and **Aidan Combs**. “‘They Saw an Arrest’: Situation Definition, Polarization, and Affect Control Theory.” *Forthcoming. Advances in Group Processes.*

**Combs, Aidan**, Gabriel Varela, Dawn T. Robinson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Stephen Vaisey. “Studying Systematic Deviations from Cultural Consensus about Occupations: The Duality of Occupation Meanings and Americans’ Meaning Communities.” *Social Networks* 82:153–65. doi:10.1016/j.socnet.2025.04.003

Alfaro Hudak, Katelin M., **Aidan Combs,** Robert E. Freeland, and Elizabeth Mumford. “Occupational Prestige of Law Enforcement Officers: Quantifying Self and Public Perceptions of Prestige.” *Social Science Quarterly* 106(4):e70062. doi:10.1111/ssqu.70062

Bagdon, Christopher, **Aidan Combs**, Carina Silberer, and Roman Klinger. “Donate or Create? Comparing Data Collection Strategies for Emotion-labeled Multimodal Social Media Posts.” In *Proceedings of the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers),* pages 17307–17330, Vienna, Austria. Association for Computational Linguistics. https://aclanthology.org/2025.acl-long.847/

Schäfer, Johannes, **Aidan Combs**, Christopher Bagdon, Jiahui Li, Nadine Probol, Lynn Greschner, Sean Papay, Yarik Menchaca Resendiz, Aswathy Velutharambath, Amelie Wührl, Sabine Weber, and Roman Klinger. “Which Demographics do LLMs Default to During Annotation?” In *Proceedings of the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers),* pages 17331– 17348, Vienna, Austria. Association for Computational Linguistics. https://aclanthology.org/2025.acl-long.848/

2023 **Combs, Aidan**, Graham Tierney, Brian Guay, Friedolin Merhout, Christopher A. Bail, D. Sunshine Hillygus, and Alexander Volfovsky. “Reducing Political Polarization in the United States with a Mobile Chat Platform.” *Nature Human Behavior.* doi:10.1038/s41562-023-01655-0.

**Combs, Aidan**, Graham Tierney, Fatima Alqabandi, Devin Cornell, Gabriel Varela, Andrés Castro Araújo, Lisa Argyle, Alexander Volfovsky, and Christopher A. Bail. “Perceived Gender and Political Persuasion: A Social Media Field Experiment during the 2020 US Democratic Presidential Primary.” *Scientific Reports.* doi:10.1038/s41598-023-39359-0.

**Combs, Aidan**, Robert E. Freeland, Katelin Alfaro Hudak, and Elizabeth A. Mumford. “The Effect of Occupational Status on Health: Putting the Social in Socioeconomic Status.” *Heliyon* 9(11):e21766*.* doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21766

2020 Bail, Christopher A., Brian Guay, Emily Maloney, **Aidan Combs**, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Friedolin Merhout, Deen Freelon, and Alexander Volfovsky. “Assessing the Impact of the Russian Internet Research Agency on the Political Attitudes and Behaviors of American Twitter Users in Late 2017.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(1):243-250. doi:10.1073/pnas.1906420116

2019 **Combs, Aidan**, Jason J. Maldonis, Jie Feng, Zhongnan Xu, Paul M. Voyles, and Dane Morgan. “Fast Approximate STEM Image Simulations from a Machine Learning Model.” *Advanced Structural and Chemical Imaging* 5(2). doi:10.1186/s40679-019-0064-2

# Under Review

**Combs, Aidan**. “People Don’t Know What They Don’t Know: Political Knowledge and Perceptions of Influence in Political Conversation.” *Revise and Resubmit.*

# Selected Work in Progress

**Combs, Aidan**. “Prototypes and Boundaries; Disagreement and Entropy: Operationalizing Uncertainty in Affective Cultural Meaning at Two Levels of Analysis.” *Working paper.*

* *Winner of the 2024 ASA Section on Methodology Clifford Clogg Award for Best Graduate Student Paper*
* *Winner of the 2024 ASA Social Psychology Section Graduate Student Paper Award*
* *Winner of the 2023 Southern Sociological Society Odum Graduate Student Paper Award*

**Combs, Aidan**. “The Effect of the Killing of George Floyd on Police Identity Meanings.”

*Working paper.*

Freeland, Robert and **Aidan Combs.** “Polarization as Affect Control: Expanding the Feeling Thermometer.” *Working paper.*

# R Packages

**Combs, Aidan**. *bayesactR*. https://ahcombs.github.io/bayesactR/

*An interface that allows Bayesian affect control theory simulations to be run in R, facilitating more accessible and reproducible research on identity processes in interaction*

**Combs, Aidan**. *actdata.* https://ahcombs.github.io/actdata/

*A central repository for standardized versions of all publicly available affect control theory dictionaries*

# Grants, Fellowships, And Honors

ASA Section on Methodology Clifford Clogg Award for Best Graduate Student Paper, 2024 ASA Social Psychology Section Graduate Student Paper Award, 2024

Odum Award for Best Graduate Student Paper, Southern Sociological Society, 2023 Vorsanger-Smith Scholar Award, Duke Sociology Department, 2023

Duke Sociology Department Research Grant, 2021 and 2022 Duke Worldview Lab Research Grant, 2021

Duke Graduate School Summer Research Fellowship, 2019, 2020, 2021 Oxford Summer Institute in Computational Social Science Project Grant, 2019

# Teaching

*Instructor of record:*

Quantitative Analysis of Sociological Data (SOCIOL 333), Duke University, Summer 2023. https://soc333-sum23.github.io/

*Introductory statistics course for sociology students, taught in R with open-source materials*

*Formal pedagogy training:*

Duke Certificate for College Teaching

Kenan Institute for Ethics Teaching on Purpose fellow, Fall 2022 Southern Sociological Society STARTS fellow, Spring 2022

# Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

2025 American Sociological Association, August 2025 (Chicago, IL): *“Affective Connotations According to LLMs: Implications for Meaning Measurement and Cultural Bias.”*

ACT for Change: Harnessing Affect Control Theory to Solve Social Problems. July 2025 (Fairlee, VT): *“You Are What You Do: Measuring the Affective Meaning of Characters as Defined by Events”*

Sunbelt, June 2025 (Paris, France): *“Deviations from Cultural Consensus about Occupations: The Duality of Occupation Meanings and Americans’ Meaning Communities”*

Advancing Computational Approaches in Sociology, Political Science, and Linguistics Workshop, May 2025 (Heidelberg, Germany): *“You Are What You Do: Measuring the Affective Meaning of Characters as Defined by Events”*

Social Science and Language Models Workshop (SSaLM), April 2025 (Berlin, Germany): *“Large Language Models and the Dynamics of Affective Connotations: Estimating Meaning Inside and Outside of Event Contexts in the United States, Germany, and France”*

2024 Analytical Sociology Colloquium, Sociological Theory group at the University of Leipzig, December 2024 (Leipzig, Germany): *“Measuring Uncertainty in Cultural Meaning”*

Sociological Science Conference, May 2024 (Durham, NC): *“The Duality of Persons and Cultural Meaning Communities: Studying Systematic Deviations from Cultural Consensus about Social Identities.”*

Duality@50 Workshop, April 2024 (Ascona, Switzerland): *“The Duality of Persons and Cultural Meaning Communities: Studying Systematic Deviations from Cultural Consensus about Social Identities.”*

Southern Sociological Society, April 2024 (New Orleans, LA): *“The Duality of Persons and Cultural Meaning Communities: Studying Systematic Deviations from Cultural Consensus about Social Identities.”*

Eastern Sociological Society, March 2024 (Washington, DC): *“When You Don’t Know Who You’re Talking To: Modeling Uncertainty in Interaction Within and Between People.”*

2023 Group Processes Conference, August 2023 (Philadelphia, PA): *“Prototypes and Boundaries; Disagreement and Entropy: Operationalizing Uncertainty in Affective Cultural Meaning at Two Levels of Analysis.”*

American Sociological Association, August 2023 (Philadelphia, PA): *“The Effect of the Killing of George Floyd on Police Identity Meanings.”*

IC2S2: International Conference on Computational Social Science, July 2023 (Copenhagen, Denmark): *“Prototypes and Boundaries; Disagreement and Entropy: Operationalizing Uncertainty in Affective Cultural Meaning at Two Levels of Analysis.”*

Southern Sociological Society, March 2023 (Myrtle Beach, SC): *“The Effect of Occupational Status on Health: Putting the Social in Socioeconomic Status.”*

2022 American Sociological Association, August 2022 (Los Angeles, CA): *“Prototypes and Boundaries; Disagreement and Entropy: Operationalizing Uncertainty in Affective Cultural Meaning at Two Levels of Analysis.”*

Group Processes Conference, August 2022 (Los Angeles, CA): *“actdata, inteRact, and bayesactR: A Suite of R Packages for Transparent and Reproducible Research with Affect Control Theory and its Bayesian Counterpart.”*

Southern Sociological Society, April 2022 (Birmingham, AL): *“Situation Definition, Polarization, and Affect Control Theory.”*

2021 Group Processes Conference, August 2021 (Online): *“People Don’t Know What They Don’t Know: Political Knowledge and Perceptions of Influence in Political Conversation.”*

2020 American Sociological Association, August 2020 (Online): *“Gender Differences in Sermon Content: An Analysis of Duke University Chapel Sermons.”*

# Academic Service

*Research assistantships:*

Consulting researcher, NORC at the University of Chicago, National Institute of Justice grant number 2016-IJ-CX-0021, 2022-2023.

Research assistant, Christopher Bail, Duke University, 2019-2020

Research assistant, Nona Gronert, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016-2018 Research assistant, Dane Morgan, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016-2018

*Review:*

Ad hoc reviewer: American Behavioral Scientist, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, Academy of Management Discoveries, Frontiers in Political Science

*Computational Social Science:*

Member of the varycss collective, 2020-present.

*Duke University Department of Sociology:*

Professional development representative, 2022-2023 Graduate student representative, 2021-2022