

Toward a Regeneration of Revolutionary Theory

Benjamin Abrams*

Abstract

Revolutionary theorists are currently immersed in a critical debate about the future of the field. Allinson has argued that a fifth generation of revolutionary theory has passed us by without our noticing, while I have contended that it is revolutionary theory's fourth generation that is decidedly imperilled. Ritter and Beck – for their part – contend that we should reject the very idea of theoretical ‘generations’, and instead think of progress in revolutionary theory as a series of ongoing and settled debates about certain key topics. The pair contend that revolutionary theory has reached a consensus on two core debates: defining our object of study and determining appropriate methods. Contrary to this position, I argue that while there is much to praise about rejecting generational imagery, doing so necessarily entails that we also critique the self-proclaimed ‘fourth generation’ with which such imagery is intertwined. Furthermore, I argue that there does not yet exist consensus among revolutionary theorists about a single definition of revolution, or on the question of which methods to use. Finally, I call for a regeneration of revolutionary theory which moves genuinely beyond the generational mythologies of the past.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past decade, the intellectual project by the name of ‘Fourth Generation Revolutionary Theory’ has been principally sustained by a trio of scholars. George Lawson, Colin Beck, and Daniel Ritter, the collective heirs to a project primarily initiated by John Foran (1993) and Jack Goldstone (2001) some decades earlier. Breaking with Lawson (2016 114; 2019), who has recently called for scholars to “fulfil the promise of fourth-generation approaches to revolution,” Beck and Ritter (2021) now conversely argue that we should not only dispense with the notion of fourth generation revolutionary theory, but also the premise on which the self-proclaimed ‘Fourth Generation’ was built: the story of the prior three.

Though it once constituted the cutting-edge of revolution studies, there is by now much to welcome in moving away from the embattled fourth generation endeavour. I have previously written that Ritter and Beck’s “attempts

*Dr Benjamin Abrams is a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. He is Editor in Chief of *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*. Email: b.abrams@ucl.ac.uk

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2021 The Authors. *Journal of Historical Sociology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

to provide life-support to the otherwise faltering fourth generation¹” might “eventually lead to their breaking with the fourth generation project,” (Abrams, 2019, p. 381). This eventuality has now come to pass, and the self-identified ‘Fourth Generation’ has in essence passed with it.² Moving beyond such an overly elongated period of scholarly hand-wringing has the potential to usher in a much needed rejuvenation and regeneration of revolutionary theory. But as we put the fourth generation project to rest, what can we do to ensure a more fruitful future for our field?

In what follows, I welcome the rejection of the generational paradigm, and the fourth generation project to which it is inseparably linked. I nevertheless contend that the ‘fourth generation of revolutionary theory’ can still be meaningfully distinguished from the narrative history of a prior three. Rather than serving as a conceptual shorthand for a particular period of revolutionary study, the ‘fourth generation’ was instead a self-conscious programme for the study of revolution, advanced by a series of distinct actors. This, in turn, renders critique and discussion of the fourth generation project a meaningful exercise. I also critique the argument advanced by Beck and Ritter (2021) that – in place of the generational narrative – we should instead depict revolutionary theory as having reached a consensus on two core debates: defining our object of study and determining appropriate methods. I argue that there is neither consensus about a single definition of revolution, nor on the question of which methods to use. Finally, I call for a regeneration of revolutionary theory which moves genuinely beyond the generational mythologies of the past.

THE REALITY OF THE FOURTH GENERATION PROJECT

Breaking with the fourth generation paradigm to which they once ascribed, Colin Beck and Daniel Ritter's recent article, *Thinking Beyond Generations: On the Future of Revolution Theory*, has made a convincing argument that progress in the field of revolutionary theory would be best served by discarding the concept of theoretical generations altogether. This is a notable break from their past approach to the subject. Beck, for example, once considered it “clear” that “the social science of revolution has undergone notable generational shifts in theory and the phenomenon of study,” (Beck, 2017, p. 170) Ritter similarly explicitly deployed a generational account of revolutionary theory in his landmark volume on international politics and unarmed revolution, *The Iron Cage of Liberalism*, (2015 9-10).

While Ritter and Beck were once counted among the fourth generation school, they now eschew such thinking and instead encourage us to instead think ‘beyond generations’. In their article Ritter and Beck level a number of productive critiques against overreliance on the notion of theoretical generations. They note that while there is certainly some utility in the generational framework³, it is outweighed by the cognitive constraints it places on our understanding of the field, and the hidden knowledge obscured by generational thinking. While it has long been acknowledged that “classification of theories by generation is problematic,” (Foran, 1993, p. 1), Beck and Ritter skilfully draw attention to the great many scholars whose work has been eclipsed by the generational imagery derived from Goldstone's reviews of the field⁴, and highlight a variety of contemporary scholars whose analyses do not fit into the ‘fourth generation’ programme. Their analysis clearly demonstrates that refusal to move beyond an overly strict conceptualisation of theoretical generations has had an unhelpful impact on our thinking to the extent that today “generational imagery has obscured as much as it has illuminated.”

Fortunately, there are many useful alternatives to generational framings. Foran (1993:1) once suggested that “the best alternative is to group... theories by theme or approach,” and Ritter and Beck make a good case for recasting the history of revolutionary theory's early development in terms of a series of scholarly debates. We might also seek to reframe what we have called ‘generations’ as intellectual fashions, thereby preserving the observation of rising scholarly tendencies over time without subsuming pathbreaking work into a single rubric. There are many compelling reasons to explore at least one of these alternative frameworks where the history of revolutionary theory is concerned.

Despite the usefulness of their central proposition, I would certainly challenge Beck and Ritter's claim that the debate between myself and Allinson – about the fourth generation and its potential successors – “has taken place on false premises.” Regardless of the veracity of past reviews of the literature, it is impossible to deny the existence of an intellectual project by the name of ‘fourth generation revolutionary theory.’ It is precisely this intellectual project – and the potential for a break with it – that formed the central topic of our debate.

What have been commonly referred to as the first three generations of revolutionary theory were in fact a set of historical cases drawn-up by Goldstone (1980; 2001) in order to review the general changes in discourse between key scholars over various prominent topics in revolutionary theory. Unlike the facets of past literature reviews that constitute ‘Generations’ 1-3, the self-professed ‘Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory’ was not an attempt to categorize the past, but an ambitious attempt to propose a new future. This was a distinctive intellectual project in which an array of academics participated, and others declined to. It was actively and self-consciously cultivated and maintained by a network of scholars (e.g. Beck, 2017; Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1996; Foran, 1993; Goldstone, 2001; Lawson, 2016, 2019; Ritter, 2015)⁵, having been introduced in Foran (1993), Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996) and Goldstone's (2001) various manifestos for a fourth generation and continued in Lawson's (2016) more recent intervention on the subject.

A key part of the fourth generation's intellectual programme was the self-identification of its participants as members of a new ‘fourth’ generation of revolutionary theorists. This was grounded in a generational teleology that presented the self-proclaimed ‘Fourth Generation’ as the summation of three past ones identified by Goldstone (1980). By its own reckoning, the fourth generation project was to be a coming-of-age for the study of revolution, after which scholars would overcome the tendency for single-factor analysis, and instead adopt a holistic, conjunctural approach. It was at once “a self-conscious canon,” and “a project to be realized” (Lawson, 2016, p. 107).

As has now been well documented, the promise of the self-proclaimed ‘Fourth Generation’ theoretical project never truly came to fruition, despite some highly impressive initial progress by its champions, and valiant later attempts to redeem it by subsequent scholars.⁶ Its troubled history shows that Ritter and Beck are right to identify the pernicious qualities of generational thinking. As I have written previously, it was “the coincidence of the idea of theoretical generations with the emergence of a self-consciously ‘fourth’ generation” that encouraged the “peculiar tendency towards introspection” that plagued the fourth generation project (Abrams, 2019, p. 381). Such a tendency, as Ritter (2019:106) has noted, has prompted many scholars in our field to become “unnecessarily modest, anxious, and...too self-limiting.”

There are certainly benefits of thinking beyond generations, but doing so does not permit us to erase the fourth generation from existence. If we are to seriously consider dispensing with the concept of generations we must distinguish between the hypothetical three generations of revolutionary theory which Goldstone popularised and the proposed fourth generation which he, Foran and Lawson consciously advanced. Given the distinctive characteristic of the fourth generation of revolutionary theory as a self-professed project— an “agenda to be fulfilled” rather than an historical interpretation (Abrams, 2019; Lawson, 2016, p. 110)— discarding it as the latter would be a category error with pernicious consequences.

BEYOND AND WITHIN THE FOURTH GENERATION?

Despite its initial promise, the influence which the fourth generation project exerted on the field of revolutionary theory eventually became – for numerous reasons (see: Abrams, 2019; Allinson, 2019; Beck, 2018; Lawson, 2016; Ritter, 2019) – a limiting one. There are lessons to be learned from the fixation of a whole body of scholars on conjunctural modelling and ontological discourses intertwined with the progressive decrease in scholarly rigour observed by analyses of work in the field (Beck, 2017). Worse still, as Beck (forthcoming) has noted, it seems that “what we think we already know about revolution may very well be probably wrong.” Amid all the problems we

have encountered over the years, should we decline to consciously break with the conditions which cultivated them we risk doing more to preserve our field's current impasse than to move past it. We risk allowing the much decried maladies of the fourth generation project to become embedded in the complex web of scholarship that constitutes work on the subject of revolution. It is for this reason I would dissent from the suggestion that that the future of revolutionary theory demands that we "free ourselves from wondering what the fourth generation was or is, and what the fifth generation is or will be," (Beck & Ritter, 2021) Rather, reflection on where progress has tended to stall and how we might do better is vital to the renewal of the field.

Refusing to acknowledge the fourth generation project's initial promise, latter faltering, and eventual decline not only obscures the great deal of intellectual effort poured into its ultimately unsuccessful project, but also renders critical reflection on its scholarly agenda all the more difficult. This, in turn, might allow certain extant ideas associated with the fourth generation to remain as hegemonic than they have been in the past, yet also insulate them from critique. All this might leave us "profoundly in the thrall" of past perspectives – as Eric Selbin (1999, p. 10) once decried of fourth generation theories. Elsewhere, Beck (forthcoming) has rightly noted that "thinking of prior theory in generational terms has overstated the extent of consensus present at any time." The same accusation can be made against Ritter and Beck's claim about the extent of consensus present in our field today. While Ritter and Beck seem content to break with the practice of generational thinking, they nonetheless appear to present some of its symptoms by depicting as 'consensus' what are in fact still quite clearly matters of scholarly difference. This arises with respect to two crucial areas of revolutionary theory: the object of study, and method of inquiry.

Truly thinking beyond generations necessitates that we reject the notion that we have settled certain major debates in revolutionary theory and now need only to perfect our knowledge of revolution. Should we rid ourselves of generational language, but retain the biases of generational thinking – that certain matters are now off the table, and that our field has a single renewed purpose –we risk being trapped 'beyond and within' the fourth generation of revolutionary theory, having formally eschewed its aesthetic trappings, but unable to escape its more substantive shortcomings.

A contested object of study

It is tempting to think that theorists of revolution generally agree on what exactly it is that they are studying. In line with such a view, Ritter and Beck seek to claim that revolutionary theory's "object of study is clear to contemporary scholars." They argue that revolutionary theorists are united in studying "attempted and successful shifts in, at the very least, regimes or political structures that occur through mass mobilization." This is far from a consensual or established definition. Not only would it exclude, for example, much of the history of the French Revolutionary period (a classic case in our field), but also call into question the study of central questions in revolutionary theory such as ideology, culture, micro-mobilization and elite agency. This is not even to mention currently popular areas of focus such as revolutionary preconditions, regime collapse, revolutionary and counterrevolutionary outcomes (Allinson, 2019). Conversely, such a definition of revolution might puzzlingly include cases like the Obama-era Tea Party movement in the United States, which utilized mass mobilization in order to shift political structures (and arguably eventually the governing regime). The US Civil Rights Movement also substantially shifted political structures through mass mobilization, and – depending on how one defines a regime – one could even imagine a grassroots election campaign constituting an appropriate object of study as per Ritter and Beck's definition of revolution.

There is a substantial variety of definitions of revolution that differ widely from the one Ritter and Beck argue is 'clear' to contemporary scholars. One such scholar, George Lawson (2019:10), considers a revolution to constitute "a collective mobilization that attempts to quickly and forcibly overthrow an existing regime in order to transform political, economic, and symbolic relations." This definition shifts the onus from *mass* mobilization to merely collective ones, but also introduces new criteria such as speed and force, as well as economic and symbolic transformations. By contrast, Selbin (2008:131) considers revolution to be a "conscious effort by a broad based,

popularly mobilized group of actors, formal or informal, to profoundly transform the social, political, and economic institutions which dominate their lives; the goal is the fundamental transformation of the material and ideological conditions of their everyday lives.” This definition introduces ideas of intention, the source and breadth of mobilization, and the *extensive* transformation of various institutions as well as of material and economic conditions. Yet other scholars – such as John Dunn (2018) – have even contended that revolutions no longer occur, arguing that they are defined by a transformative ideology that present day cases lack. This line of contention has led to substantial recent disagreement over whether to define revolution as a political process at all, or whether a programmatic definition is preferable (Abrams, 2018; Abrams & Dunn, 2017; Ritter, 2019; Slim, 2018).

Such is the degree of difference over revolution as an object of study that Ritter and Beck's proposed consensus definition also breaks with ones they each have offered very recently. Ritter (2019) has recently defined revolutions as “simply an irregular overthrow of a political regime through mass mobilization.” Ritter thus excludes ‘political structures’ and ‘attempts’ from his definition. Beck (2016:17) has previously defined revolutions as “mass contention against an existing state [which] overthrows a regime, or creates lasting social change and establishes new political structures.” This is also a narrower object of study than the pair's joint definition: it specifies revolution as a state-centric phenomenon, and specifies that – in the absence of regime overthrow – durable social change should occur and *novel* political structures should be created rather than only shifted.

For my own part, I consider a revolution to constitute a popular overthrow of the power structures in an existing polity. These can of course be stipulated as successful, failed, ongoing, or even imagined. In some regards this definition is stricter than Ritter and Beck's: the US Civil Rights Movement – which notably altered, but did not wholly overthrow the power structure in the United States – would not be counted as a revolution. In other regards, this is a much more expansive definition: it unchains revolution from the state or regime, and includes in its scope the popular overthrow of power structures on a small scale (e.g. a workplace, locality, or institution) and a very large scale (e.g. the international order). All this is suffice to say that our object of study is still subject to a plurality of interpretations.

Methodological variety

Just as it is tempting to think that revolutionary theory no longer harbours disagreement about its object of study, it is equally attractive to think that “debates over method are... of a time that is passed.” (Beck & Ritter, 2021). Beck and Ritter argue that the solution to these debates is to be found in “a pluralistic methodology” that tends to (though might not always) combine quantitative and qualitative methods for optimal results. Such a line of contention was prominently advanced in Goldstone's *Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory* (2001:175), which concluded that fourth generation studies would “unify the results” of a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Just as Ritter and Beck contend that “we should not expect one subfield to solve the structure-agency problematic,” it is similarly unrealistic to suggest that revolutionary theory has solved the methodological one. Indeed, Beck (2017:533) himself has observed “a lack of consensus... and little convergence over time,” over issues such as case selection and research strategy. Elsewhere, he has remarked that the study of revolution exhibits “no convergence on the study design techniques that comparative methodologists recommend.” (Beck, forthcoming).

The mixed method studies to which Ritter and Beck assign preference are not necessarily superior to single-method modes of inquiry. Indeed, though they sometimes offer substantial benefits, mixed method approaches are at other times inappropriate, impractical, illogical, or unnecessary for attacking some of the most interesting research puzzles which we come across (Halcolmb, 2018; Loo & Alan, 2011; Symonds & Gorard, 2010; Timans, et al., 2019). Though analyses which bridge quantitative and qualitative approaches may indeed sometimes yield “the advantage of both,” there are also occasions in which a slapdash historical survey or a surface-level suite of descriptive statistics does little to enrich scholarly analysis, and yet efforts to produce them might still take up vital portions of an article's word count, or cut-short more enriching research pursuits. Conversely, there are also many cases in which profitable

mixing of methods occurs strictly within either the qualitative or quantitative methodological silos. On still other occasions, there are times where single-method studies yield new empirical or theoretical discoveries that were attained precisely because of the practitioner's commitment to honing and furthering their chosen method. Given the surprising methodological poverty in the study of revolution (Beck, forthcoming) it is particularly important that we should prioritise that methods be well executed, rather than that they be combined.

There are many opportunities available to revolutionary theory should we harness a greater number of methods than we have in the past, but this is not simply achieved by harnessing past methods simultaneously. Instead, we should be encouraging a greater variety of methods – be they singular or mixed– in order to further our understanding of revolution's multiple dimensions. Sometimes, this will take the form of Ritter and Beck's proffered "pluralistic methodology," but we must not allow excitement about such approaches to obstruct a broader pluralism *about* methodology. Only by paying attention to scholars with diverse and disruptive methods, as well as experts in established methods and mixed-methods analysts will we open the field for new and challenging discoveries.

Beck and Ritter are right to argue that we must pay careful attention to the "continuity of debates over the decades." However, we cannot simply regard these debates as settled merely because scholars no longer disagree as violently as we imagine they might have in the past. In my view, it is not so much that past debates have been settled in favour of a clear or consensual answer – as Beck and Ritter contend – but rather that other scholarly fashions rose to prominence. There are persisting differences regarding our object of study or how we might study it, and the empirical variety of revolutions and ways to study them have only increased. It is precisely by means of this increase in cases and studies that we have seen that there is a great deal more to talk about than the hypothetical perfection of definitions or methods.

While there are many compelling reasons to move past the classification of revolutionary theory into neatly organized 'generations,' a conscious and critical acknowledgement of the fourth generation project is nonetheless necessary. This is because of its status as a specific intellectual project, and its prominent role in many scholars' theoretical education. This role has not always been productive. As Ritter and Beck astutely note, the 'generational thinking' which accompanied the fourth generation's rise to scholarly prominence obscured valuable work, made invisible certain processes of knowledge accumulation, and is at this point limiting our theoretical imagination. Just as they note that this mode of thinking cultivated a "scholarly fear" of returning to past insights, we should not exhibit that same fear with regard to revisiting past debates.

Beck and Ritter are right to critique the generational framework used to chart the history of revolutionary theory, but dispensing with this notion does not mean that the fourth generation project should be given a free pass. When Beck and Ritter condemn generational thinking as a false premise, they condemn the foundational premise of the fourth generation project as equally false. Nowhere has the generational framework been more celebrated than in the work of self-professed fourth generation scholars, and the generational teleology of revolutionary theory is arguably more vital to 'Fourth Generation' accounts than any other attribute. It is precisely because fourth generation theory served as a backdrop for the obfuscation of scholarly history – rightly bemoaned by Ritter and Beck– that we should welcome a critical evaluation of its ideas, and open discussion of where we might go next.

REGENERATING REVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Ask any rising scholar in the study of revolution, and they will agree that our field finds itself in a pivotal moment. Allinson (2019) has argued that existing theories of revolution are failing to keep pace with empirical developments. Ritter (2019:106) and Beck (forthcoming) have gone even further, declaring the death and rebirth of our past approaches to studying revolution: "The Revolution is dead, but long live the revolution," as Ritter puts it; "Revolution studies is dead; long live revolution studies," as Beck does. But once we break with the thinking of the past and its generational imagery, what – as the old revolutionary question goes – is to be done⁷? How might we reopen our minds after decades of generational thinking and actively work to regenerate revolutionary theory?

With regard to our hopes for the future of revolutionary theory, there is much that Allinson, Beck, Ritter and I have in common. All of us call for a break with the past. Whether we call what comes next a new 'generation' or simply "a new future for the study of revolution," as preferred by Ritter and Beck, we all hope that it will be characterised by an influx of novelty, be it new theories, cases, phenomena, or interpretations. There are still more valuable sources of novelty in addition to those imagined by Ritter and Beck. We might also – for example - hope to see the arrival of novel research methods, ethical standpoints and practical tools. We might seek dialogue with new fields or reinvigorate our relationships with those we now tend to ignore.⁸

Regenerating revolutionary theory will require more than novelty alone. It is not enough to simply resume existing debates on the basis of uncritically inherited premises. We can and must go one step further and reopen old conversations, question received knowledge, and initiate new debates altogether. This means that we should not exclusively align the advancement of our field within the constraints of a rigid and immovable object of study, nor amid the strictures of methodological orthodoxy. Instead, we should make room for disruptive methods, challenging epistemological positions, dialogue with practitioners, and research from new or unexpected sources.

Casting aside generational thinking (and with it the strictures of the fourth generation project) may well be fruitless if we do not think carefully about where our field has gone astray, and how we might pursue more constructive directions. We risk the degeneration of revolutionary theory into either a false narrative of consensus or isolated siloes of study with disconnected debates and literatures. Thus, in the years to come scholars should consciously pursue the deliberate regeneration of our field: building connections between debates and fields, educating new scholars, casting aside honorific hierarchies, and celebrating disagreement and diversity.

If we are to advance the field of revolutionary theory we need to explore in multiple directions, lest we find ourselves on yet another winding path or risk making a wrong turn. Only an open field of study can provide insurance against such a fate. To join in what is a fast emerging scholarly trend: *the fourth generation of revolutionary theory is dead, long live the regeneration of revolutionary theory.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Jamie Allinson, Colin Beck, and Daniel Ritter for their critical interventions, thoughtful propositions, and words of encouragement. We have certainly made progress through the series of engagements published in these pages, and our field stands better for it.

ORCID

Benjamin Abrams  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8260-8148>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Beck and Ritter were the two pivotal figures in the "stimulating discussions about many of the points" which went on to form George Lawson's (2016: 123, 2019) defence of generational analysis, and manifesto for a renewal of fourth generation theory, "Within and Beyond the 'Fourth Generation' of Revolutionary Theory." In the aforementioned article, they are explicitly identified as "fourth generation" theorists alongside Foran and Goldstone.
- ² Beck (forthcoming) is particularly excoriating in his admonition of the fourth generation project, declaring that "fourth generation theory does not cohere as a theory or a generation at all."
- ³ Lawson (2016:107) identified "two benefits to thinking in generational terms: First, it works as a heuristic device by which to parse theories of revolution; second, it helps illuminate the buildup of a self-conscious canon in the study of revolutions."
- ⁴ Some of these scholars are very prominent indeed. As Foran (1993: 1-2) observed almost three decades ago, "de Tocqueville anticipated insights of all three generations-for example, by showing that the French Revolution was a "natural" outcome of aspects of the Old Regime, by anticipating Davies and Gurr on rising expectations as a cause, and by anticipating Skocpol on the outcome of a more strongly centralized state."
- ⁵ The development of this project is discussed at length in Abrams' (2019) A Fifth Generation of Revolutionary Theory is Yet to Come, as well as Lawson's (2016) Within and Beyond the Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory.
- ⁶ This is extensively discussed in work by Abrams (2019), Lawson (2016; 2019), and most recently Beck and Ritter (2021).
- ⁷ I focus here on the specific question of overcoming generational thinking, but I have made broader recommendations elsewhere (Abrams, 2019; Abrams, 2018).

⁸ There are, for example, numerous interesting developments in the field of social psychology that have been left relatively untouched by revolutionary theorists. Likewise, there is a reasonably long-running current of political economy that concerns the subject of revolution but which seldom interacts with revolutionary theory.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, B. (2019). A fifth generation of revolutionary theory is yet to come. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 32(2), 378–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12248>
- Abrams, B. (2018). The end of revolution, and its means: Processual and programmatic approaches to revolution in the epoch of revolution debate. *Contention*, 6(2), 86–94. <https://doi.org/10.3167/cont.2018.060208>
- Abrams, B., & Dunn, J. (2017). Modern revolutions and beyond. *Contention*, 5(2), 114–131. <https://doi.org/10.3167/cont.2017.050207>
- Allinson, J. (2019). A fifth generation of revolutionary theory? *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 32(1), 142–151.
- Beck, C. (2014). Reflections on the revolutionary wave in 2011. *Theory and Society*, 43(2), 197–223.
- Beck, C. (2016). *Radicals, revolutionaries, and terrorists*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Beck, C. (2017). Revolutions: Robust findings, persistent problems, and promising frontiers. In: M. Stohl, M. I. Lichbach, & P. N. Grabosky (Eds.), *States and peoples in conflict: Transformations of conflict studies* (pp. 168–183). Taylor and Francis.
- Beck, C. (2018). The structure of comparison in the study of revolution. *Sociological Theory*, 36(2), 134–161.
- Beck, C. (Forthcoming). Revolutions against the State. In T. Janoski, Cedric de Leon, J. Misra, & I. Martin (Eds.), *The new handbook of political Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Beck, C. J., & Ritter, D. P. (2021). Thinking beyond generations: On the future of revolution theory. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34(1).
- Emirbayer, M., & Goodwin, J. (1996). Symbols, positions, objects: Towards a new theory of revolutionary and collective action. *History and Theory*, 35(3), 358–374.
- Dunn, J. M. (2018). Reply to Hugo Slim. *Contention*, 6(2), 81–85.
- Foran, J. (1993). Theories of revolution revisited? Towards a fourth generation. *Sociological Theory*, 11(1), 1–20.
- Goldstone, J. A. (1980). Theories of revolution: The third generation. *World Politics*, 32(3), 425–453.
- Goldstone, J. A. (2001). Toward a fourth generation of revolutionary theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4, 139–187.
- Halcomb, E. J. (2018). Mixed methods research: The issues beyond combining methods. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 75(3), 499–501.
- Lawson, G. (2016). Within and beyond a fourth generation of revolutionary theory. *Sociological Theory*, 34(2), 106–127.
- Lawson, G. (2019). *Anatomies of revolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Loo, I. D., & Lowe, A. (2011). Mixed methods research: don't- "just do it". *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8(1), 22–38.
- Ritter, D. (2015). *The Iron cage of liberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Ritter, D. (2019). The (R) evolution is dead, long live the (R) evolution! *Contention*, 7(2), 100–107.
- Selbin, E. (1999). *Modern Latin American revolutions* (2nd ed.). Westview Press.
- Selbin, E. (2008). Stories of revolution in the periphery. In: F. John, L. David & Z. Andreja (Eds.), *Revolution in the making of the modern world: Social identities, globalization and modernity* (pp. 130–147). Routledge.
- Slim, H. (2018). Regime collapse and revolution: A response to John Dunn. *Contention*, 6.2, 75–80.
- Symonds, J. E., & Stephen, G. (2010). Death of mixed methods? Or the rebirth of research as a craft. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 23(2), 121–136.
- Timans, R., Wouters, P., & Heilbron, J. (2019). Mixed methods research: What it is and what it could be. *Theory and Society*, 48(2), 193–216.

How to cite this article: Abrams B. Toward a Regeneration of Revolutionary Theory. *J Hist Sociol*. 2021;34:142–149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12317>