Emotions are an underappreciated and undertheorized component of scientific work, scientific collaborations and scientific social movements. To help amend this situation, this presentation considers the role of emotions and social bonding within a coherent group – a tightly networked group of collaborators operating at the center of a burgeoning scientific social movement. Adopting a micro-sociological research approach, I examine how emotions and social bonding shape two intellectual processes central to all forms of scientific work: the birth of creative ideas and the management of skepticism. I further consider how emotions structure and are structured by the coherent group’s growth and development. Findings indicate that socio-emotive processes facilitate the rapid production of large amounts of highly creative scientific work, allowing the group to overcome resistance and skepticism from outsiders. Paradoxically, however, when these same socio-emotive processes are pushed to the extreme they can make skepticism both more likely and more difficult to manage. I also find emotional bonding to be critical for the growth and development of the coherent group, but that retaining the affective culture- which contributed to its initial successes- becomes increasingly challenging as the group becomes larger and more diverse.

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Parker received his PhD in Sociology from Arizona State University and is a post-doctoral scholar at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis. His most recently completed book, “Collaboration in the New Life Sciences” will hit the shelves this October; it explores how and why collaboration in the life sciences is changing and the effects of these changes on scientific knowledge, the work lives and experiences of scientists, social policy and society.

Thursday, September 23rd
6pm-7pm
Memorial Student Center
Ballroom C

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