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JENNIFER MCDONALD

EMPLOYMENT

Postdoctoral Research Scholar, Philosophy Department 2022 – 2024 Columbia University

EDUCATION

PhD Philosophy 2015 – 2022 The Graduate Center CUNY

Dissertation: *Actual Causation: Apt Causal Models and Causal Relativism*
Committee: David Papineau (supervisor), Stephen Neale, Graham Priest,
Jonathan Schaffer (Rutgers), Michael Strevens (NYU)

Abstract: The philosophy of causation has been recently galvanized by what might be done with *structural equation models* – formal models that effectively link up correlational information with causal information. The success of these models for causal discovery suggests they could serve in an analysis of what causation *is*. But attempts to analyze actual causation in such terms largely bracket the question of what makes a model appropriate or *apt*. My dissertation provides this needed account of aptness, uncovering something surprising in the process: these models represent situations *only* relative to some set of background possibilities. As they stand, accounts of actual causation in the literature existentially quantify over all such sets. But this delivers previously unrecognized counterintuitive causal verdicts. As an alternative, I propose and defend the view that takes this relativity at face value – *Causal Relativism* – whereby actual causation is a three-part relation holding between a cause, an effect, and a set of background possibilities.

MA Philosophy 2015 – 2018 The Graduate Center CUNY

BA Philosophy, *cum laude* 2005 – 2009 New York University

RESEARCH INTERESTS

AOS – Metaphysics, Philosophy of Science

AOC – Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Mind, Logic

PUBLICATIONS

“Essential Structure for Causal Models” (*Forthcoming, Australasian Journal of Philosophy*)

PAPERS IN PROGRESS (*drafts available upon request*)

“Aptness: A Vague Notion at the Heart of Interventionist Semantics” (*R & R, Mind & Language*)

“Causal Models and Contrastivism” (*under review*)

“What Causal Models Bring to the Table” (*under review*)

“Stable Models without Stability”

“Strong Proportionality and Causal Claims”

COLLOQUIA & INVITED TALKS

“What Causal Models Bring to the Table”

Kyosation: Workshop on the Phil, Psych, and Computer Science of Causation, Jun 24 – 26 2023

“Exploring Causal Relativism”

Method, Theory, & Reality Speaker Series, UMass Amherst, Apr 27 2022

“The Relativity of Actual Causation”

Johns Hopkins University Colloquia, June 12 2021

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS *(blind refereed)*

“What Causal Models Bring to the Table”

European Philosophy of Science Association 9th Biennial Conference, Sept 20 – 23 2023

“What Causal Models Bring to the Table”

Society for the Metaphysics of Science 8th Annual Conference, August 10 – 12 2023

“Apt Causal Models and the Relativity of Actual Causation”

Philosophy of Science Association 28th Biennial Conference, November 10 – 13 2022

“Essential Structure for Causal Models”

Society for the Metaphysics of Science 7th Annual Conference, September 6 – 8 2022

“The Relativity of Causal Models” – *[accepted, but could not attend]*

American Philosophical Association Conference – Pacific Division, April 13 – 16 2022

“The Relativity of Causal Models”

Society for the Metaphysics of Science 6th Annual Conference, September 1 – 4 2021

“The Relativity of Causal Models”

42nd Annual Grad Phil Conference, U of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, April 30 – May 1 2021

“The Importation Problem for Structural Counterfactuals”

Society for the Metaphysics of Science 5th Annual Conference, November 7 – 9 2019

“The Proportionality of Common Sense Causal Claims”

Philosophy of Science Association 26th Biennial Conference, November 1 – 4 2018

“Proportionality, Exhaustivity, and Exclusivity: Constraints on Variable Selection”

Society for the Metaphysics of Science 4th Annual Conference, August 22 – 24 2018

“Patterns and Abstracta: on Dennett’s Mild Realism”

CUNY-Milan Conference on Belief, February 15 – 16 2018

WORKSHOP & SEMINAR SERIES PRESENTATIONS

“A Distinct Puzzle for Causation”

Method, Theory, & Reality Conference, UMass Amherst, May 5 – 6 2023

“The Relativity of Actual Causation”

Logic and Metaphysics Workshop, The Graduate Center CUNY, April 4 2022

“Probabilistic Causation: De Facto Probability-Raising”

Philosophy of Logic Series w/Prof. Rohit Parikh, The Graduate Center CUNY, Jul 29 2021

“Causal Models as Relative to Modal Profiles”

Philosophy of Logic Series w/Prof. Rohit Parikh, The Graduate Center CUNY, Feb 25 2021

“Essential Structure and Apt Causal Models”

Logic and Metaphysics Workshop, The Graduate Center CUNY, Dec 7 2020

“Structural Counterfactuals and the Importation Problem”

New York Philosophy of Language Workshop, March 9 2020

“Preemption and Proportionality”

Dissertation Seminar Workshop, The Graduate Center CUNY, May 24 2019

“Structural Counterfactuals and the Importation Problem”

Logic and Metaphysics Workshop, The Graduate Center CUNY, April 15 2019

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

Philosophy Seminar: Scientific Theory	Columbia University	S2024
Methods and Problems	Columbia University	F2023
Topics in Cog Sci/Phil: Causation	Barnard College	S2023
Knowledge and Reality	Hunter College, CUNY	F2021/ S2022
Intro to Philosophy	Hunter College, CUNY	F2021
Major Issues in Philosophy	Baruch College, CUNY	S2019
Logic and Moral Reasoning	Baruch College, CUNY	F2017/ F2018
Global Ethics	Baruch College, CUNY	F2016/ S2017/ S2018

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS

Graduate Assistant Teaching Fellowship (Hunter College CUNY, 2021 - 22)

Fellowship to support graduate studies, as compensation for teaching two courses per semester

Graduate Student Cross-Training Fellowship (Society for Christian Philosophers, 2020 – 21)

Fellowship to train in developmental psychology providing stipend and research budget

Dean Harrison Fellowship (The Graduate Center CUNY, 2020 – 21)

Fellowship to support completion of dissertation

McGraw Dissertation Award (The Graduate Center CUNY, 2020 – 21)

Award to support completion of dissertation + tuition relief

Doctoral Students Research Grant (The Graduate Center CUNY, 2020 – 21)

Research grant awarded to support research-related expenses

Doctoral Students Research Grant (The Graduate Center CUNY, 2018 – 19)
Research grant awarded to support research-related expenses

Graduate Center Doctoral Fellowship (The Graduate Center CUNY, 2015 - 2020)
Five-year fellowship providing yearly stipend and tuition relief

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE @ *The Graduate Center CUNY, unless otherwise specified*

Writing Tutor, Writing Across the Curriculum Fellow, 2019 – 2020 (*Hunter College*)

Committee Member, Placement Committee, 2019 – 2020

Graduate Student Mentor, 2016 – 2020

Coordinator, Informal Dissertation Seminar, Fall 2019

Committee Member, Philosophy Library Committee, 2016 – 2019

Conference Organizer, 20th Annual Graduate Philosophy Conference, Spring 2017 (*w/Laura Gradowski, Leah Fortgang, & Vincent Peluce*)

Coordinator, Qualifying Paper Working Group, Fall 2016

Reception Coordinator, Colloquium Series, Fall 2015

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Journal Referee, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy; Philosophy of Science; Studies in History and Philosophy of Science; Synthese; Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*

Co-Coordinator, Method Theory and Reality Speaker Series, Spring 2023 - present (*w/Cruz Davis*)

Conference Organizer, Method Theory and Reality Conference, May 5 – 6 2023 (*w/Cruz Davis*)

Program Committee Member, British Society for Philosophy of Science Conference, 2021/2022

Budget Coordinator, SWIP-Analytic, New York Division, 2017 – 2019

Graduate Assistant, Residential Summer Program for Diversity in Logic, UMass Dartmouth, 2016

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Secretary & Board Member, Susan Elizabeth Stutz-McDonald Scholarship Foundation for Women Engineers, 2013 – present

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

European Philosophy of Science Association

Philosophy of Science Association

American Philosophical Association

GRADUATE COURSE WORK (**denotes audited*)

@ *The Graduate Center CUNY, unless otherwise specified*

Philosophy

Topics in Philosophy of Science (NYU)*

Intervention, Causation, and Decision*

Brad Weslake

David Papineau

Explanation (NYU)*	Laura Franklin-Hall/Michael Strevens
Naturalism in Phil of Science*	Alberto Cordero
Direction of Time (Columbia)*	David Albert
Causation	David Papineau
Leibniz's Metaphysics (NYU)	Anja Jauernig/Marko Malink
Nature of Necessity (NYU)*	Crispin Wright/Paul Horwich
Linguistic Pragmatism	Michael Devitt/Stephen Neale
Intention and Acts of Meaning	Dan Harris/Stephen Neale
Context* (CUNY/NYU)	Stephen Neale/Stephen Schiffer
Intro to Phil Language*	Stephen Neale
Naming and Necessity*	Saul Kripke
Mental Representation	David Papineau
Thought, Speech, and Content	David Rosenthal
Quine and Sellars	David Rosenthal
History of Mind	Peter Godfrey-Smith
Foundations of Metalogic (Columbia)*	Justin Clarke-Doane
Vagueness	Graham Priest
Logic for Philosophers	Joel David Hamkins
Adv. Intro to Epistemology (NYU)	Richard Foley
Belief and Imagination (NYU)*	Don Garrett/Jessica Moss
Plato: Philosophy and its Rivals	Nikolas Pappas
Ancient Chinese Philosophy	Hagop Sarkissian
Berkeley, Hume, and Shepherd on Causation and the External World (NYU)*	Don Garrett
Philosophy of Literature	Noel Carroll
Pragmatism and Neo-Pragmatism	Peter Godfrey-Smith
Proseminar	Graham Priest/Catherine Wilson

Psychology

Infancy*	Sarah Berger
Theories of Change in Human Development (Columbia)*	Dima Amso
Core Knowledge (Columbia)*	Koleen McCrink
Child Development (NYU)*	Andrew Getzfeld

REFERENCES

David Papineau (*supervisor*)

Professor of Philosophy
Kings College London
Email: david.papineau@kcl.ac.uk

Graham Priest

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
The Graduate Center, CUNY
Boyce Gibson Professor Emeritus
University of Melbourne
Email: priest.graham@gmail.com

Stephen Neale

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy & Linguistics
Kornblith Chair in Phil of Science and Value
The Graduate Center, CUNY
Email: sneale@gc.cuny.edu

Jonathan Schaffer

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
Rutgers University
Email: schaffer0@icloud.com

Michael Strevens

Professor of Philosophy

New York University

Email: strevens@nyu.edu

Thomas Teufel (*Teaching Reference*)

Associate Professor

Baruch College, CUNY

Email: thomas.teufel@baruch.cuny.edu