ACCOUNTS

IN THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chair
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In my earlier essay for *Accounts* I focused on the potential of an economic sociology that considers exploitation in market exchanges as the flipside of embeddedness. I asserted that we need to replace the notion of asocial arms-length relationships inherited from economics and recognize that asocial relationships are generally immoral. The opposite of trust and friendship is not indifference, but the freedom to exclude and exploit.

In this essay I focus on an economic sociology of the production of value. Economic sociologists have not been particularly interested in the production and distribution of value in economic systems, but, I believe, we already have the tools to advance a more useful model than simply the sum of capital and labor inputs, as conditioned by competitive markets.

First, some principles, which should be familiar to all economic sociologists. Both production and distribution, like market exchange, are governed by the relationships between actors, which can be cooperative—embedded if you like—or exploitative, but often are a complex dynamic mix of both. These value generating relationships happen between and within organizations in fields of relationships and institutional constraints, which steer actors toward some paths and close off others.

In the classical Marxian recipe, relationships in production produce value and are controlled by those who own the means of production who also exploit workers with nothing to sell but their labor. The Marxian approach encourages us to focus attention on power struggles over production and distribution with workplaces. The more general extension of this model is that power differences generate opportunities for exploitation and value is produced in social relationships. Conversely, and this is an aspect of the same idea we spend less time on, when actors are more nearly equal in their relative power, relationships are more likely to be synergistically productive and embedded.

So what does this have to do with the production and distribution of economic value? First, value is generated both by the relationships within production that produce goods and services and the power of organizations over the field of actors in their exchange environment: customers, suppliers, and the state.

The rapid rise of global superstar firms have now led economists to refocus on market power as an important attribute of markets, but still conceptualized as a deviation from the competition as the natural state of things. My position is that economic sociologists have the tools to transcend this notion of market power as deviation from perfect competition and adopt a larger relational-institutional framework.

For example, in the early 1980s Ron Burt showed that firms' profits could be understood as resulting from their network power in a field of suppliers and customers. He also showed that this was a network phenomenon that rippled across the economy, treating market power as an income extraction mechanism from the entire exchange network. At about the same time, Marxist sociologist Luca Perrone showed that these same network dependencies generate wage gains for striking unions. Thus, power in a network of market relations can be used by actors within the firm to claim greater gains for themselves, shifting some of the surplus captured in market relations onto powerful actors within powerful firms. Of course, economic sociologists, including Neil Fligstein, have long pointed out that market competition (or a lack thereof) is a social accomplishment in fields of exchange and institutional power. In addition, as Mark Mizruchi and others have shown, powerful firms attempt and often succeed at adjusting the basic legal and regulatory environment to favor themselves or their market. The rise of superstar firms, in which global resource flows are captured by increasingly fewer firms with increasing power over their employees, suppliers, customers and even the state, are clear examples.

Importantly, network power should be understood, not as an aberration from normal market activity, but as something that firms routinely seek out. As Harrison White instructs us, firms desire to avoid, not engage in, competition with other firms and develop business strategies, from seeking market niches to patent protection to collusion, as a means to protect themselves from market competition. To the extent that market power is a product of property rights and barriers to entry, they can be thought of as the product of processes of social closure, and when that power is used to extract higher prices from customers or lower prices from suppliers, exploitation is in play. When powerful firms lobby Congress to adjust regulations in their favor they are undertaking a claims-making process. Markets are social creations, emerging from networks of power relationships.

So far this essay has dealt with the power to extract resources, but has said little about the actual production of value. Here I turn to my work with Dustin Avent-Holt in which we argue that within organizations the production of value is a function of relationships in production and the relative power of organizations to set prices in exchange. Returning to the tension between embedded and exploitative exchange, we argue that embedded, trusting, cooperative relationships are more likely to be synergistic with stronger contributions to value creation. Exploitative relationships follow the logic of value extraction, reducing overall efficiency. We argue that this is the case both for firm-to-firm and within firm exchanges. Exploitation is the short-term strategy of theft, while embedded trade and production takes a longer-term, mutually regarding approach. Much of modern neoliberal/financialized corporate strategy has pursued a short-term exploitation centered approach.

But of course, exchange in a network perspective is simultaneously embedded and exploitative depending on the actors involved. If we take Amazon as an example, they have a classically Marxian labor process that combines technology and authoritarian management to drive maximum productivity out of their labor force, exert platform network power over the suppliers whose goods they sell, cater to customers with low prices and free shipping, and negotiate as near equals with governments over the rules of the game. In another, more academic example, in my work with Ken-Hou Lin and Nate Meyers we show that rising financial investments by nonfinancial firms led to reductions in total value added in the economy, but that the impact of the distribution of that value was neutral for profits and positive for debt holders and led to a reduction of employment and wages for workers while dropping tax revenue for governments.

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GIG ECONOMY AND WORKERS: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDREA RAVENELLE

Alexandrea Ravenelle is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Faculty Fellow with the Center for Urban and Regional Studies. She specializes in work, organization and occupation, social stratification, economy and society, and entrepreneurship. Her book, *Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy* (2019), portrays the success and struggles of the workers from Airbnb, Uber, TaskRabbit, and Kitchensurfing. Her recent work, funded by an NSF RAPID Response grant, focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on precarious and gig workers.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Alexandrea Ravenelle about her book on gig economy workers and the impact of COVID-19.

Ya-Ching Huang: Your book *Hustle and Gig* traced the lived experiences of gig workers from Uber, TaskRabbit, Airbnb, and Kitchensurfing. How does the sharing economy fall short of the promise of autonomy and flexibility?

Alexandrea Ravenelle: I grew up in a very entrepreneurial family: Both of my parents had businesses when I was young, and I started my own Baby-Sitters Club-inspired babysitting business—and summer camp—when I was 11. Before I went back to grad school for my doctorate, I had incorporated as a marketing and communications consultancy. So, I was an early adopter of the so-called sharing economy, and I believed the hype that I was an entrepreneur hiring fellow entrepreneurs.

But when I started to really look at the gig economy, and to interview the workers in this new economic movement as part of my dissertation, the more I realized that the marketing of this entrepreneurial ethos was really not based in reality. This is not entrepreneurship for the masses. This is a movement forward to the past, whereby generations of workplace rights and protections have been rolled back. It may be app-enabled, but this disruption is nothing new. It's simply the newest technological advancement in exploiting workers.

The peer-to-peer component of the gig economy often means walking into the home of a stranger who—thanks to these apps—is entirely anonymous. We hear a lot about the protections in place to protect customers, like background checks, but there's really nothing in place to protect the workers. And the risks are considerable, including financial risks, the risk of personal injury with no redress, socioemotional risks, and the risk of sexual harassment and sexually uncomfortable situations.

There's also a myth that somehow the only way workers can experience flexibility in the workplace is if they work as an independent contractor and are outside generations of hard-won workplace protections. The senior management team for these platforms have plenty of flexibility to go to the dentist on a Tuesday afternoon, and they are W-2 employees. Platforms benefit from the 1099 designation because they save on benefits and taxes, but this shifts the risks of slow periods onto workers. And, of course, while platforms market themselves as offering flexibility, the truth is that there's not always work whenever workers want. Especially during COVID times, we've seen that the work is not necessarily available whenever workers want, but that the availability of work is highly dependent on issues of supply and demand.

Y. H.: You identified three types of gig economy workers in the book: success stories, strugglers, and strivers. Could you explain a bit more about how social and cultural capital play a role in workers' trajectories in the gig economy?

A. R.: Stories of the sharing economy tend to revolve around the two extremes of the Success Story and the Struggler. The Successes are their own boss, they control their day-to-day schedule, and the sky seems to be the limit in terms of how much money they can make. The online "flexibility" of the gig economy for these workers means that they aren't tied to a desk or even a city; they can run their companies via app while lounging on a beach or passing time in a bar.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Strugglers. These are the workers who have turned to the sharing economy in a fit of desperation. In some cases, they're part of the long-term unemployed after the Great Recession or undocumented workers. In other cases, they are simply temporarily down on their luck: A job loss or personal crisis caused a major setback and they've turned to gig work to avoid the time consuming—and often rejection-laden—process of finding stable employment. The challenge here, of course, is that they may get "stuck" in the gig economy.

There's also a third possibility for sharing economy workers. The Strivers are those who have good jobs and stable lives who turn to the sharing economy for a bit of added excitement or additional cash. Unlike the Strugglers, they don't necessarily need this money to survive although it can provide a more comfortable lifestyle: the occasional vacation, additional funds in the bank, a bit more financial security.

For Strugglers the gig economy is an occupation of last resort. They don't have the financial or cultural capital to establish an Airbnb empire, so the work they do is often manual labor and often has higher levels of risk. While platforms, like TaskRabbit, often tell workers that if they feel unsafe on a task, they can end it and not be penalized, the truth is that after you spend thirty minutes communicating with a client via chat, schedule a several-hour task into your calendar, and travel an hour to the location, even if the situation seems questionable, a lot of workers are going to stick with it. The financial cost of going without work, and pay, that someone was counting on, is just too high. As a result, these workers find themselves in questionable, or even physically harmful, situations. While all gig workers encounter risk, workers who have less by way of financial reserves are generally more vulnerable and find themselves exposed to a higher level of risk.

Y. H.: In the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a black swan event. How has COVID-19 impacted gig workers? Could you talk a bit more about your recent work? What are your observations and findings?

A. R.: I'm currently wrapping up an NSF-funded mixed methods panel study that includes in-depth interviews with 200 precarious and gig-based workers to study the impact of the virus on their work. One obvious finding is that many gig workers are in jobs that are especially vulnerable to supply and demand. Uber and Lyft drivers experienced a significant decrease in demand for their services, and a resulting drop in their income, due to the various shutdown and stay-at-home orders in the spring. Other workers, such as dogwalkers for Rover and Wag, home organizers on TaskRabbit, and Airbnb hosts, also experienced considerable reductions in their work and incomes.

While the CARES Act and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) helped, workers often experienced considerable delays in getting assistance. Or, in some cases, unemployment assistance didn't take into account workers' polyemployment. For instance, some dog walkers kept their main jobs, but lost their "side hustle" work, leading to a significant reduction in their incomes, but their ongoing employment disqualified them from assistance.

After years of gig platform advertising noting that the work is readily available and provides entrepreneurship opportunities, it's not surprising that workers are turning to gig work and other informal work to make ends meet. I call this the "side hustle safety net." These are workers who turned to gig work during the pandemic because of knowledge, sociological, and temporal/financial barriers to getting unemployment assistance. Instead of collecting unemployment, these workers joined food delivery platforms such as Doordash, UberEats, and GrubHub, and grocery shopping apps like Shipt and Instacart. This is problematic in a number of ways: Long-time workers on these platforms complain about a flood of workers, leading to less work and reduced incomes, and, of course, more workers out and about means fewer people safely sheltering in place at home.

I have a paper, cowritten with Ken Cai Kowalski and Erica Janko, and recently published in the *Sociological Perspectives* Special Issue on COVID-19 and Society (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/07311214211005489) that addresses this issue in more detail.

In follow-up interviews, conducted roughly nine months to a year later, we see that the impact of long-term unemployment on precarious workers is considerable. While the PUA helped workers who were able to get it, the uncertainty regarding unemployment benefits, partnered with ongoing shutdowns and fear of losing unemployment benefits, has led workers to employ "strategies of survival" that may ultimately increase their legal and financial vulnerability. There are some happy stories here—like the restaurant worker who gambled on cryptocurrency and was able to get himself out of arrears on his rent—but many of the workers I've interviewed are still struggling.

As I wrap-up the last of these interviews, I'm beginning to draft my next book, *Down and Out in New York: Short-term Work, Vulnerable Workers, and Economic Collapse*, which is in contract with the University of California Press and will hopefully be published in 2023.

Y. H.: The regulatory regime and labor movement are significant contexts weaved into the rise of the gig economy. To what extent do you think government regulations and labor unions could help alleviate the labor issues?

A. R.: Regulation is not always the answer, but some regulation is definitely the answer. Platforms should be required to classify their workers as W2 employees—that's a first step towards providing a basic safety net of protections for workers—including unemployment insurance, workers compensation, minimum wage, and contributions to Social Security.

I'd also like to see labor unions doing more outreach to these workers and helping workers to create cooperative platforms. But we also need to see a concerted effort by labor unions to bring more attention to how they have, and can continue to, help workers. There needs to be more attention paid to counteracting antiunion messaging.

Y. H.: How do your research interests inspire and shape your course design? What is the message of bringing the gig economy into a class?

A. R.: Almost all of my students have used these platforms in some way and many have worked via an app or have known someone who did. The gig economy has numerous flaws, but it is a useful teaching tool when you're talking about the outsourcing of risk, the good job/bad job divide, or salary stagnation. The lived experience of these workers—and the challenges they experience from these gig jobs—really help to bring class concepts alive. •

AN INTERVIEW WITH LAUREN RIVERA

Lauren A. Rivera is a Professor of Management and Organizations at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. She is an academically and publicly renown sociologist who has received the ASA's William Julius Wilson Early Career Award and whose research has been featured in the *Atlantic*, *Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Fortune*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and NPR. She is the author of the award-winning book *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (2015) and is the recipient of numerous awards across ASA sections. Rivera's work investigates employer decision-making and the tools used to support it at key moments in the employment process, from hiring to promotions.

Meghann Lucy, Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Lauren Rivera about some of her recent research and how to make hiring processes more equitable.

Meghann Lucy: What sparked your interest in researching personnel practices at elite firms and academic institutions?

Lauren Rivera: I entered graduate school with a broad interest in how people evaluate social status. I had done some smaller studies investigating status processes in sundry settings, such as high school peer networks and high-end nightclubs, but had not yet found a topic I wanted to pursue for my dissertation. While I was contemplating different projects, I was selected to be the graduate student representative on my department's junior faculty search committee. When sitting in on committee meetings, I realized that hiring is one of the most consequential status sorts that takes place in organizations and has major implications for individuals' economic and social trajectories. I actually wanted to study academic hiring for my dissertation, but I couldn't get access (apparently having a PhD student observe committee meetings was too creepy). Prior to graduate school, I had worked at an elite professional service firm and had deep knowledge of that world and the stakes involved in getting one of these jobs, so that seemed like a natural fit. I ended up studying academic search committees later on, though. It was fascinating to see the similarities and differences in hiring for industries high in economic capital (professional service firms) versus high in cultural capital (academic departments).

M. L.: "Scaling Down Inequality: Rating Scales, Gender Bias, and the Architecture of Evaluation," winner of the 2020 ASA Granovetter Award for Best Article in Economic Sociology, describes how a seemingly neutral evaluation tool (numeric rating scales)—implemented partially to reduce discriminatory performance assessments in the workplace—can actually function to perpetuate or exacerbate discrimination, depending upon its design. Can you explain how the structure of these rating systems plays out in this context?

L. R.: In the article, András Tilcsik and I investigated how the architecture of evaluation, the design of tools used to judge merit, can shape gender inequalities in performance evaluations. To do so, we studied a type of performance evaluation that is close to home: faculty teaching evaluations. We exploited a quasinatural experiment at a large North American university, where a school shifted the number of scale points used in faculty teaching evaluations from a 10-point scale to a 6-point scale. This change was implemented for reasons unrelated to gender, but interestingly, it ended up eliminating a previously large gender gap in ratings favoring men in the most male-dominated academic disciplines.

While the field data enabled us to say that the specific numeric scale used mattered for gender gaps in teaching evaluations, they could not tell us why. To understand this, we conducted a survey experiment, where we presented all participants with an identical lecture transcript but randomly varied instructor gender and the number of scale points. This enabled us to control for instructor performance. We found that the number of scale points affected the extent to which gender stereotypes of brilliance were expressed in quantitative ratings of performance. The 10-point scale elicited images of perfection and brilliance, which run counter to how we generally think of women in the workforce, and how we think of female professors in particular. In the 10-point system, raters were more hesitant to assign the lecture a top score (a "perfect 10") when they believed the professor delivering the lecture was a woman (versus a man). The 6-point scale did not carry such heavy cultural connotations, and raters were equally willing to give men and women top scores in this ratings regime. Overall, the results highlighted how seemingly minor technical aspects of performance ratings can have major implications for evaluations of men and women. We are planning to do more work understanding how other aspects of evaluative architecture can influence evaluations and inequalities in organizations.

M. L.: In your forthcoming *Social Forces* **article, "Glass Floors and Glass Ceilings: Sex Homophily and Heterophily in Job Interviews" you and Jayanti Owens empirically test the prediction that female job applicants will have better outcomes in employment interviews when they are paired with female interviewers. What did you find?**

L. R.: Overall, we found that gender homophily is a contextually dependent process. In the organizations literature, there is a frequent assumption that in-group preference is a constant, invariable feature of interpersonal evaluation. This is at odds with a robust body of research across disciplines that suggests a much messier story: Birds of a feather sometimes do flock together, but sometimes they do not. In this article, we used detailed data on job interviews from a large, male-dominated professional service firm to understand whether the increasingly common organizational practice of pairing female job candidates with female evaluators results in more favorable hiring recommendations for women. In our data, each candidate underwent multiple, structured interviews with different evaluators, so we could analyze how the same candidate fared when interviewed by male versus female interviewers. We found that interviewer sex did not really matter for the interview ratings men received, but it mattered quite a bit for those women received. However, the direction of effects varied based on the perceived skill level of the candidate. We observed gender homophily at low levels of perceived skill, and gender heterophily at high levels of perceived skill. The data point to a cultural explanation for these findings: that male and female evaluators define and weigh merit in highly gendered ways. While this is just one study, we believe this idea of gendered scripts of merit is ripe for future research.

M. L.: Considering what you have found in your research so far on discrimination in employment interviews and evaluations, what suggestions might your give for making these practices more equitable for women?

L. R.: The number one thing I always recommend is to have evaluators discuss and commit to evaluative criteria in advance, whether this is for hiring, performance evaluations, or promotions. The people doing evaluations need to buy in to these criteria. This is why I prefer to have managers involved in the creation of criteria rather than mandating them top-down. Research shows that when we do not specify criteria in advance, evaluators invent (or reinvent) criteria to justify their emotional picks, and this disadvantages women and underrepresented minorities.

For job interviews, I think the first step is to figure out why you are doing an interview in the first place (i.e., what you are trying to glean from it) and whether an interview is really the best way to obtain that information. In many organizations, people just go through the motions and do interviews, especially unstructured interviews, because that's what we've always done or what we think hiring is supposed to be. But in many cases, interviews do not give us information about who will be better at the job and just end up adding noise and bias in favor of white, wealthy, attractive, nondisabled extroverts. There can be a legitimate case for doing interviews, especially when the job has high interactional demands, such as client- or customer-facing roles, but interviews need to be well designed and consistent across interviewers and candidates to tap job-relevant skills.

A good example of reimagining evaluation for greater equity comes from our own backyard: on-campus interviews for tenure-line faculty jobs. A big part of faculty hiring at many universities is having one-on-one interviews with faculty during the campus visit.

Yet, there isn't a clear idea of why we do these or what value they add. In many places, these conversations are completely unstructured and easily veer into illegitimate territory. For example, I found in my research on academic hiring committees that faculty were asking—and then later using to make hiring decisions—information about candidates' marital status, partners' occupation, and children. This information has nothing to do with whether someone will be a good scholar or a good colleague and biased decision-making against partnered women and mothers. Being on the receiving end of these questions can also be off-putting and alienate women or candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. If I were to redesign the academic hiring process—or any hiring process—for greater gender equity, I would ask for each stage of the process: "What are we trying to measure here?" "Why is measuring it important?" "How can we measure the things that are important to us in a way that is not systematically stacked against members of underrepresented groups?"

M. L.: Many white-collar jobs that were once office based have shifted online during the pandemic, with some companies considering whether or how much they will require workers to be in-person in the future. To what extent do you think hybrid or virtual workspaces might affect cultural matching in hiring efforts?

L. R.: I don't think hybrid or virtual workspaces will eliminate cultural matching. So much of the cultural matching piece happens in those initial moments of conversation when we first meet with someone or make small talk at the beginning of a meeting. These icebreaking moments do not go away with virtual work. Many people reported being in Zoom meetings more during the pandemic than they were in in-person meetings before the pandemic. But I do think it will be interesting to see if the weighting of cultural similarity compared to other criteria changes. If people are no longer in the office 24-7 or are not traveling together frequently, the legitimacy of selecting so strongly on cultural similarity may fade. Or maybe people will be so excited to have any social contact with another human outside their household that they will be less selective about whom they think would be an ideal playmate. But on the other hand, it's possible people will select more on it because of a stronger need for a feeling of connectedness or a desire for fun in a virtual or hybrid work environment. Only time will tell.

But the real question that keeps me up at night about the pandemic isn't cultural matching at all. It's the future of remote and flexible work arrangements. Many of the remote work accommodations that happened during the pandemic are things that women (especially mothers) and disabled workers had been pushing for decades, but were told were impossible. A lack of access to these arrangements kept people who needed them out of the paid labor force and, especially in the case of people with disabilities, pushed them into poverty. The pandemic proved that the world does not end when people work from home.

But now that restrictions are loosening and many people crave to get back to (their personal idea of) "normal," I fear that remote or flexible work will be stigmatized even more than it was before the pandemic. That the very idea of these arrangements may become triggers or symbols of the trauma and disruption of the past year, and leaders will try to purge them from their workplaces. I also fear that workers who need these accommodations will be negatively stereotyped in new ways (e.g., fearful/anxious, lazy) in addition to older stereotypes about work devotion. We are already seeing some troubling discourse along these lines in formal communications by CEOs and university administrators (groups that, interestingly, were substantially buffered from the pandemic by class, race, gender, and health privilege) about reopening and return to work strategies. If organizations decide to eliminate remote work or demote remote or hybrid workers, they will further roll back the gains women and disabled people have fought so hard for over the past 30 years.

M. L.: What is next for you research-wise? Are there any projects you are particularly excited about?

L. R.: I'm doing a few projects on disability discrimination. This is a type of discrimination we often do not talk about in economic sociology but touches so many people all over the world and became extremely salient during the pandemic. I'm also excited to work on projects that examine interventions that make workplace evaluations more equitable. We have amassed so much information on what goes wrong in workplace evaluations over the past several decades, but we know less about how to change things for the better. •

BOOKSHELF: METRICS AT WORK

Angèle Christin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and affiliated faculty in the Sociology Department and Program in Science, Technology, and Society at Stanford University. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from Princeton University. Broadly, her research focuses on how algorithms and analytics transform professional values, expertise, and work practices.

Elif Birced, a Ph.D. student in Sociology at BU, talked to Angèle Christin about her new book, *Metrics at Work: Journalism and the Contested Meaning of Algorithms*, which was published by Princeton University Press in 2020.

Elif Birced: Could you describe your research and the main implications of your book *Metrics at Work: Journalism and the Contested Meaning of Algorithms***?**

Angèle Christin: I rely on ethnographic methods to study the concrete impact of algorithms and analytics on professional identities and work practices. In my book *Metrics at Work: Journalism and the Contested Meaning of Algorithms*, published by Princeton University Press in 2020, I examine this question in the case of web journalism, a field that has been transformed by digital technologies of quantification.

Metrics at Work provides a cultural framework for the study of algorithms and analytics. To date, most social science studies of metrics and algorithms have examined their role as vectors of rationalization and standardization, or as forms of bias and discrimination. These questions are essential, but I felt that what was missing from the literature was how people interpret metrics and algorithms. Drawing on qualitative research in economic sociology—most importantly Viviana Zelizer's work on money as a symbolic resource—I became interested in whether people make sense of metrics and algorithms differently depending on their institutional contexts. Looking at journalism, the book focuses on the reception in web newsrooms of analytics software programs, which provide real-time data to journalists and editors about how online readers are behaving on the websites. I decided to compare how journalists in the United States and France used and made sense of these quantitative resources.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in web newsrooms in New York and Paris, complemented by a quantitative content analysis, the book argues that journalists often see different things when they look at traffic numbers. On the one hand, they see market pressures, and, as such, they tend to interpret metrics as a commercial encroachment on their professional identity and professional craft. On the other hand, journalists also view metrics as representations—admittedly incomplete and problematic ones—of what I call their "algorithmic publics": online publics that are mediated and represented through social media platforms, algorithmic curation, and analytics dashboards.

Metrics at Work examines the ramifications of these complex understandings of metrics on the daily life of journalists in web newsrooms. I look at the temporal flow of news production and how it has evolved differently in the two newsrooms. I also examine compensation practices and analyze how journalists' and freelancers' wages and rates are set depending on their traffic numbers. Overall, the book documents a process that I call "divergence within convergence." On the convergence side, I show how the professional landscape of web journalists is increasingly structured by digital metrics on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet the specific form that this structuration takes differs depending on the national field under consideration.

E. B.: How did you decide to focus on journalists to study the impact of meanings attached to digital metrics on work practices and professional identities? Also, how did you decide to do a comparative study on journalists in the United States and France?

A. C.: What is fascinating about journalism is that it started as a Fordist type of organizational model: large organizations, strong division of labor, clear hierarchies, a whole print and television advertising ecosystem behind it. All of these organizational forms came under stress when digital technologies challenged the revenue sources of news organizations. I was interested in looking at the impact of the transformation of these business models on the professional identities of journalists. I decided to compare the United States and France, two settings that have distinct journalistic structures and different relationships to market forces and economic repertoires. In France, journalism has been systematically regulated over the past century and a half, through public subsidies to news organizations and individual journalists, together with laws that define journalism as an industry and an occupation. In contrast, in the United States, the journalistic field tends to be more market-driven, financialized, and heteronomous. Consequently, my original hypothesis was that news organizations in France were probably going to be less affected by digital technologies and changing economic models than in the United States. However, what I found was quite the opposite: In fact, French journalists fixated on metrics more than American journalists.

The book argues that these distinct uses and understandings of metrics can be traced to the different trajectories and structures of the journalistic field in the United States and France. In the United States, journalists tend to view metrics as signals of market pressures. As such, staff writers typically pushed back against metrics and tried to keep them at bay, while editors in managerial positions embraced metrics and tried to maximize them. In other words, there was a strong division of labor between editors and journalists regarding metrics, which I relate to the traditional "wall of separation" between marketing and editorial concerns in American newsrooms.

In contrast, in France, journalists had a much more ambivalent attitude. They criticized metrics by using a critical and gendered repertoire, for example using the metaphor of prostitution to refer to the chase for clicks. Yet I realized during my ethnographic observations that journalists in France were also obsessed with traffic numbers and kept talking about them. As I explain in the book, this paradoxical reception should be understood within the broader context of the history of journalism in France. Since the Dreyfus Affair in the late 19th century, French journalists have seen themselves as public intellectuals in charge of guiding public opinion; they care a lot about having an impact and resonating with the broader public. Metrics, for better or worse, provide a quantitative representation of these fuzzy algorithmic publics. As such, for French journalists, they get wrapped up into professional identities and assessments of their value in the newsroom.

E. B.: In your book, you argue for moving beyond algorithmic determinism and suggest the "algorithms in practice" approach. How can a focus on algorithms in practice contribute to our understanding of platforms that operate in different parts of the world?

A. C.: There is a lot of interest right now in digital technologies and algorithmic systems. On the one hand, proponents of digital technologies and algorithms argue that artificial intelligence can save us by making us more objective and efficient. On the other hand, critics stress a number of negative aspects, emphasizing the opacity, discrimination, and filter bubbles created by algorithmic systems.

Yet most existing approaches focus primarily on the technology itself. I wanted to suggest an alternative perspective that would take into consideration the role of people, organizations, and institutions in using these technologies. Again, what really helped me was Viviana Zelizer's work, which makes a similar argument about money. Viviana has been a key inspiration, both intellectually and personally, over the years! As I was writing the book, I kept thinking that algorithms were not that different from money.

In the case of algorithms, however, one thing that I kept noticing was the gap between the intended and actual uses of metrics and analytics. For instance, when I talked to the developers behind web analytics software programs, they often said, "Listen, we care about quality journalism. What we hope is that our software helps journalists connect to their audiences." They wanted to help journalists reach their audiences and have an impact.

But when I looked at the ways in which these tools were used, I found that the actual experience of journalists differed significantly from these intentions. For instance, the book documents the emergence of a click-based mode of evaluation across newsrooms, which leads to a relative convergence of journalistic practices around clickbait headlines, slideshows, listicles, etc. This is not what the engineers designing web analytics software programs had in mind (or at least, this is not what they said they had in mind).

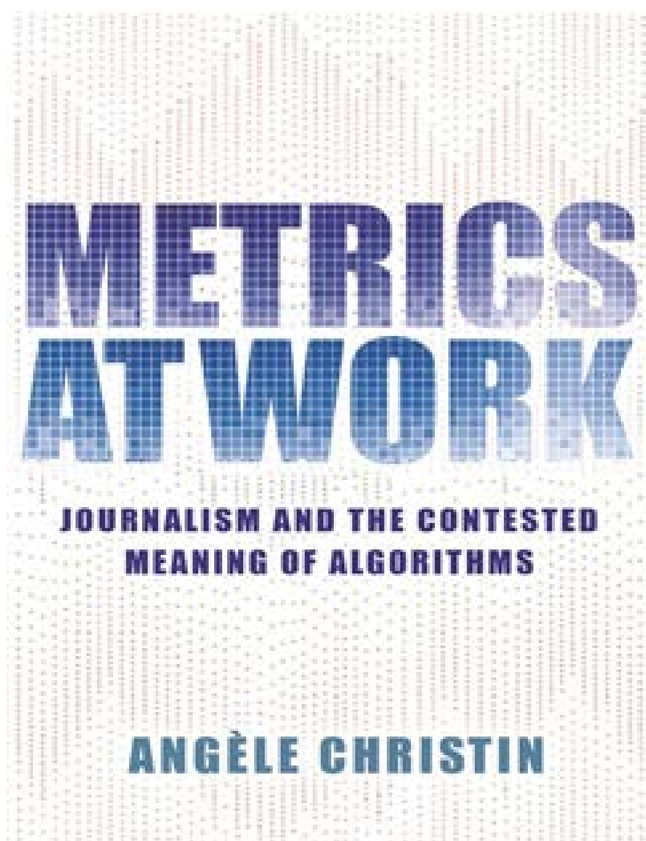
These kinds of circulations and translations—where the original goal of a technological artifact gets transformed by its users—are frequent in the history of technology, as Science and Technology Studies show well. It is now time to do the same kind of excavation work for digital and computational technologies.

E. B.: Lastly, what are the major insights that your current book can offer for economic sociologists? And how can economic sociologists build upon your work?

A. C.: As economic sociologists, we need to take digital technologies seriously. With a few notable exceptions, sociology has come pretty late to the study of digital media. Yet there is much to be gained by implementing the methods and frameworks of economic sociology to study algorithmic systems and digital platforms. Economic sociologists think carefully about the role of capital, firms, markets, and money in shaping economic and social activities. Against the "hype" of artificial intelligence or the mantra that digital platforms are going to "disrupt" everything, we need the robust methods and frameworks of economic sociology to carefully map what is and isn't changing with digital technologies.

A second thing I find interesting regards the kinds of objects that one pays attention to when studying digital technologies. As an economic sociologist, I have been trained to pay close attention to fields, markets, organizations, capital, and so on. After moving into the world of Silicon Valley, I became increasingly interested in the texture of algorithmic intermediation. For example, most of us are on Zoom most of our working day. What does it mean that all of our interactions are mediated through computational procedures and displayed through the specific affordances of Zoom? How does this change our interactions and incentives? What are the new opportunities but also forms of oppression that these systems create?

In recent years, thinking about these questions has made me pay closer attention to new research objects, for instance digital design and user experience (UX). Why do platforms look the way they do? How do engineers and designers create the homepages, profiles, dashboards, and metrics that we use throughout the day? How do developers and UX researchers understand their audience? How do they encode these representations into algorithms and platforms? We need much more work on the "architects" and builders of digital systems, their expertise, and their occupational communities. As digital technologies become increasingly central actors in the mediation of economic activities, such questions will only become more important for economic sociologists in years to come.•



SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA KIVIAT

Barbara Kiviat is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Stanford University. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Policy from Harvard University. Previously, she was a journalist at *Time* magazine. She specializes in economic sociology, cultural sociology, social inequality and stratification, and qualitative methods. Her research focuses on how cultural beliefs shape the pricing and allocation of resources, such as insurance, credit, and jobs, and justify the unequal consequences. Her work has been published in *American Sociological Review*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Sociological Science*, *Socius*, and other journals.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Barbara Kiviat about her research work and experiences with sociology as a vocation.

Ya-Ching Huang: How did you become a sociologist and specialize in economic sociology? What motivated you to study moral understandings of markets that draw on personal data to differentially allocate resources?

Barbara Kiviat: My path to sociology was roundabout. After college, I worked as a journalist, covering business and the economy. At a certain point I decided it was time to do something different and I went back to school for a master's degree in public policy. While there, I started doing research for an economist and taking sociology courses. I was quickly hooked on both research and sociology, so when people started suggesting I apply to Ph.D. programs, it wasn't a big leap. I often get onto a research topic because something about the world strikes me as not quite right. My guess is that's true for a lot of sociologists. In terms of the non-lending uses of credit data, years ago a potential employer wanted to see my credit report. That experience stayed with me.

Y. H.: In your article "The Moral Limits of Predictive Practices: The Case of Credit-Based Insurance Scores," you use the term "actuarial fairness." İCould you explain what it is? How is this idea, to some extent, challenged by policymakers?

B. K.: Actuarial fairness is the idea that insurance prices are fair when they reflect the chances that an insured person will file a claim or otherwise cost an insurance company money. In other words, that the right price is the one that has people pay for their own risk. In the case of car insurance, U.S. regulators and legislators get tripped up on this logic when certain information used to calculate risk—such as a person's credit score—seems unfair according to different moral standards. People with low credit scores might, on average, file more insurance claims, but does that really mean they deserve higher prices? Policymakers often conclude that they don't, especially when people have bad credit through little fault of their own. Companies of all sorts increasingly use personal data to make behavioral predictions, so this moral tension is one we are likely to see bubble up more and more.

Y. H.: Moving from the perspectives of car insurers and regulators, your recently published article, "Which Data Fairly Differentiate? American Views on the Use of Personal Data in Two Market Settings," focuses on how consumers evaluate if it is fair for companies to use specific types of personal data. What are your main findings?

B. K.: The theoretical punchline is that two classic insights about how people make sense of markets hold up in the "big data" economy. The first is Zelizer-style relational matching. For example, people think it's fair for car insurers to base prices on speeding tickets, but not for lenders to do so; for lenders, but not car insurers, to use credit scores; and for neither to use intuitively unrelated data such as social media posts and web browser history. This is true even after people learn that the data mathematically predict risk (i.e., the chances of filing an insurance claim or defaulting on a loan). The second take-away is that people rely on moral categorization. Deciding whether it's fair for a company to use data often comes down to understandings about what gives rise to those data and whether a person has behaved virtuously or not. For example, when asked whether it's fair for a car insurer to base prices on when a person drives, respondents who assume driving at night is about bar hopping are more likely to say the data are fair to use than people who assume nighttime drivers are coming home from working the late shift.

Y. H.: What are major insights and implications that your research can offer to economic sociologists? How could the usage of personal data lead to social inequality and stratification?

B. K.: There's a lot of great research showing how stratification processes play out as gatekeepers of all sorts increasingly use personal data and behavioral predictions to make decisions. What my work shows is the value of also examining the cultural beliefs that justify those modes of decision-making, and, in turn, their (often unequal) outcomes. Think about income inequality and the widespread belief that in America those who work hard get ahead. The latter often winds up rhetorically justifying the former. Similarly, belief in concepts like actuarial fairness justify giving different people different things, which, taken to the extreme, may mean radically different prices in markets for insurance, credit, and more.

Y. H.: Methodologically, you mainly adopt qualitative methods and also work with survey data. What are the benefits and challenges of qualitative and quantitative data?

B. K.: Each approach tends to be better suited to answering particular sorts of research questions, so I let the question drive the research design. I find that I tend to be more curious about questions better matched to qualitative approaches (e.g., those about meaning-making), so that's often where I start. But when my project leads me to a different type of question, I pivot as necessary. For example, I wrote a paper about how employers make sense of job applicants' credit reports, using in-depth interviews. From those interviews, it seemed the process might play out differently based on candidates' ascriptive traits. To test that hypothesis, I teamed up with Rourke O'Brien (at Yale) to conduct a survey experiment. Indeed, we found that hiring professionals react differently to bad credit based on a candidate's race and sex.

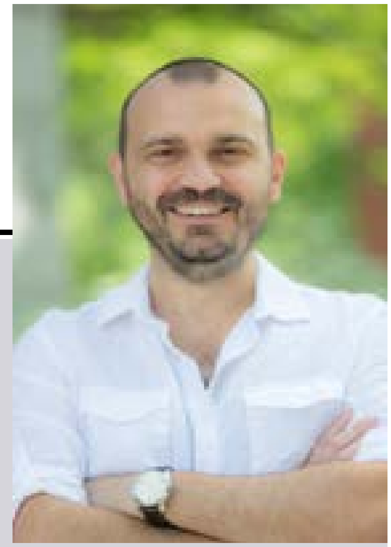
Y. H.: Could you please talk about your ongoing work or future research plans?

B. K.: I continue to be focused on three main questions. How do ideas about fair data use come to be institutionalized in markets and how do people contest those ideas? How do gatekeepers to economic resources make sense of data about people's pasts? And how do everyday Americans construe market fairness? On the first count, I'm turning my work on credit-based insurance scores into a book. On the second, I'm starting to analyze data from a new project about how landlords use background screening data (with Sara Sternberg Greene at Duke and a team of graduate students). And on the third, I'm working on papers about consumer perceptions of moral pricing (with Carly Knight at NYU) and how people construe market fairness when primed to consider conflicting moral standards (with Rourke O'Brien).

Y. H.: Looking back on your sociology journey, is there anything you wish you would have known earlier? What suggestions and tips would you give to doctoral students on the job market or at earlier stages of their careers, particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic?

B. K.: At the start of graduate school, someone told me that my fellow graduate students would prove just as important to me as my professors, and I thought that was ridiculous. But it's not. It's absolutely true. So, number one is to invest in your friends and future colleagues. Whether formally through study and writing groups, or informally through words of encouragement and enthusiasm, be there for one another. My second piece of advice is to share your work early and often. Doctoral students often want to wait until a piece of research is polished to present it, but sharing your work—having an audience and fielding feedback—is how research gets better. So, always keep communicating with those around you.•

AN INTERVIEW WITH OYMAN BASARAN



Oyman Başaran is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Bowdoin College. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is a qualitative researcher working in the fields of medicine, science, and gender & sexuality.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Oyman Başaran about his research, teaching and his experience with sociology as a vocation.

Gökhan Mülayim: Could you please tell us about your experience with sociology as a vocation? How did you become a sociologist?

Oyman Başaran: For me, becoming a sociologist was a combination of vocation—that is, calling—and chance. From the perspective of vocation, while majoring in philosophy as an undergrad at Boğaziçi University in Turkey, I became particularly interested in philosophy of science. Then, I took a couple of random courses from the sociology department and became intrigued by questions around gender and more specifically, masculinity. Sociology uniquely offered insight into deeply personal experiences. In Turkey, two "rites of passage" are crucial for men's lives: compulsory military service and male circumcision. I wanted to understand myself as a young man who grew up in a heteronormative, militarist, and patriarchal society. To that end, after completing my bachelor's degree, I researched compulsory military service for my master's thesis in Sociology at Boğaziçi University.

By the time I finished my master's degree, I knew I wanted to stay in academia but was not sure which field. Philosophy was still in my heart, and I thought I could study gender from a philosophical perspective. However, I applied to PhD programs in philosophy, anthropology, and sociology (not a good idea!) and, by chance, got into the sociology program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where I would go on to write my dissertation on the other crucial experience for men in Turkey: male circumcision. I'd initially planned to study boys' experiences of circumcision, but this approach turned out to be impractical. Perhaps counterintuitively, I ended up focusing on practitioners of male circumcision and their changing experiences from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present.

G. M.: As a sociologist working at the intersections of medicine and gender and sexuality studies, what are your thoughts on disciplinary boundaries and exchanges across them within the broader field of sociology?

O. B.: First, I would note that disciplinary boundaries (or lack thereof) can take on different forms in different contexts. Much has been said about American sociology's envy of economics, and desire to imitate a (misunderstood) model of natural science. One problem concerning disciplinary boundaries I noticed in the United States was/is overspecialization. In contrast, my sociological training in Turkey drew on multiple methodologies and various intellectual sources, including critical and postcolonial theory, cultural anthropology, cultural studies, feminist and queer theories, and historical sociology, to name a few. We were, for instance, introduced to bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, and Stuart Hall alongside Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Wallerstein.

In contrast, in the United States, I was struck by the lack of conversation across disciplines and curiosity about other intellectual traditions. Specialization, I thought, provided some kind of risk-free comfort zone. It seemed like once you are defined by a particular subdiscipline or research area, you don't need to know what is happening in other subdisciplines, let alone other disciplines. It was thus surprising to me that certain critical theories such as postcolonial thought were/are still struggling to gain legitimacy in sociology here. American sociology gave me the impression that it was oblivious of much more diverse curriculum in sociology programs in other parts of the world.

Doing sociology in a non-American context has been particularly challenging, thus revealing an extreme tendency towards Americentrism, even above and beyond the Eurocentrism that characterizes most social sciences. For example, a journal editor once stated that because my work was on Turkey, it must be "culture" rather than sociology, despite the fact that the article was very much situated within research on the sociology of professions. Similarly, while there are many positions seeking sociologists who focus on medicine and health, what hiring committees often have in mind are sociologists who study in the US context. Ironically, however, the pandemic combined with ongoing discussions about the general state of the American health system (e.g., Medicare for All) demands sociological awareness of health systems elsewhere more than ever before.

G. M.: How have you handled the transition to online teaching and/or research during the pandemic? For instance, what lessons have you learned in that transition? Are there any tips or innovations that you find helpful?

O. B.: I haven't done much online teaching this year since I have been on sabbatical during the 2020-2021 academic year. When the pandemic broke out in Spring 2020, like everyone else, we had to switch to online teaching very quickly and, to be honest, for the rest of the semester, my main concern was my students' mental health. Amid all of the uncertainty and anxiety, I prioritized connection over more routine gauges of student performance. Still, I'm aware of how exhausted my colleagues are due to this very difficult and draining academic year. That said, the pandemic did disrupt my sabbatical plans as I was going to go to Turkey for additional research for my book.

I think the lessons to be gleaned from the transition to online teaching is that we need a massive and radical transformation in higher education. There has been some conversation over the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching. But I think such conversation can't be isolated from broader structural issues that universities and colleges suffer such as the ongoing demise of tenure and the corporatization of higher education. The burden of the sudden transition to online teaching has not been shared equally across contingent and noncontingent faculty. I think no matter how unexpected and extraordinary this past academic year has been, higher education institutions would better weather this storm had there been stronger safety nets for the faculty, more secure jobs, and greater faculty autonomy. You can't devote yourself to your students—whether online or face-to-face—when you are constantly anxious about your job, healthcare, or childcare.

So, the only "tip" I have is for the noncontingent faculty: Stand in solidarity with the contingent faculty, fight to increase tenure-line jobs, and refuse the metrics of the corporate world for success in academia. The myth of meritocracy is still very much alive among noncontingent faculty. The emphasis on merit in a context where brilliant people can't find jobs is, I think, ridiculous, to say the least. We urgently need to change the conversation around success and failure in teaching and research in academia. Then I think we can have more a productive and honest conversation concerning different modalities of teaching. I have no fixation on face-to-face teaching, and I think online teaching can offer many new pedagogical possibilities. Yet, a more pressing issue is the kind of institutional infrastructure in which teaching is to be embedded.

G. M.: What is on the horizon? Could you please tell us a bit about your research plans?

O. B.: I am currently finishing my book manuscript on male circumcision in Turkey, which will hopefully get published in 2022. Provisionally titled *The Scientific Circumciser*, the project brings together the sociology of medicine, the sociology of professions, and political economy. For my future research, I'm planning to go back to where I started. Specifically, I plan to investigate the ambiguous boundaries between science and what is often called "pseudoscience." I am intrigued by the question of what sciences can and should do and can't and shouldn't do. It will be a multidisciplinary research project including sociology of knowledge, philosophy of science, and science and technology studies. •

ASA ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY SECTION SESSIONS

Work in New Economic Realities

Sat, August 7, 11:00am to 12:25pm EDT (11:00am to 12:25pm EDT), VAM, Room 17

Session Organizers:
Carly Knight, New York University and
Laura Adler, Harvard University
Presider: Nathan Wilmers, MIT

Presentations:

1. Anachronization: Loss as Lived Experience of the Changing Nature of Work - Kevin Woojin Lee, New York University; Beth A. Bechky, New York University

Commercialization has spread across nonmarket spheres of social life, altering the modus operandi of their members, organizations, and institutions. Scholarship has mainly emphasized people's cognition: how people living through commercialization have been thinking through this experience and its consequences. However, an emerging set of studies has uncovered deeply emotional instances of resistance to commercialization, suggesting a need to go beyond this cognitive institutional perspective. In this study, we examine an opera company which commercialized. Mirroring their field's emerging concerns about opera's ability to survive, the company's administrators made organizational changes that attempted to cut costs. However, these transformations compromised aspects of the company's work which had been supported by its older institutional context, evoking members' profound sense of loss as embodied in their intense feelings of frustration and sorrow. Looking closely at an organization's commercialization thereby allowed us analytical purchase on what we refer to as its members' "anachronization": they were left behind by the changing character of the times, were increasingly out of step with how their world – that is, their work and organization – was being structured, and were haunted by what had vanished. And in studying this lived experience, we found that value tethers people to institutions: the destruction of valued aspects of the organization and institution evoked members' passionate refusal to let go, and their affect-laden repudiation of how the nature of their work was changing. We therein breathe meaningfulness and feeling into our depictions of how people experience change, drawing attention to noncognitive aspects of life within organizations and institutions.

2. COVID-19, Public Charge Rules, and Immigrant Employment in the United States - Felipe Antonio Dias, Tufts University; Joseph Chance, Tufts University

This article examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected immigrant employment in the United States. It also provides first evidence about the impact of the new public charge rules on the employment behavior of immigrants during the post-outbreak recovery. It uses data from the Current Population Survey Basic Monthly files. The authors find that among immigrants below the earnings threshold, who are more susceptible to inadmissibility under the new rules, noncitizen status is associated with a 4.2% increase in employment among immigrant men and a 2.4% increase among immigrant women. This effect along the earnings threshold is robust to inclusion of controls for socioeconomic characteristics and various fixed effects, and it is concentrated for men in states with below average unemployment benefit take-up, where additional unemployment benefits from the CARES Act is less likely to play a role. Findings also show that the differential employment effect is stronger in state-months with higher COVID-19 case rates, suggesting that the impacted workers may be increasing their exposure to COVID-19.

3. Judo category strategy: Overcoming commitment concerns from diversification - Simon Friis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

What combinations and transitions between categories are audiences willing to accept? Diversification into new categories is often crucial to the survival of individuals and firms. However, a long line of research demonstrates that audiences are often penalize or ignore candidates who attempt to enter new categories because it raises concerns about capability and commitment. In this paper, I contribute to recent work about how individuals and organizations can overcome commitment concerns stemming from diversification. Drawing on the influential concept of "judo economics," I propose that individuals and organizations can signal commitment by diversifying into less popular but still related categories because it credibly limits growth opportunities. I test this in the context of Twitch, a livestreaming platform that is characterized by fads and fashion cycles such that streamers continuously face pressure to diversify into new categories. More broadly, this work speaks to a central theme in economic and organizational sociology about demand-side processes that create pressures for conformity and differentiation. Whereas pressures for differentiation are typically thought of as stemming from capability concerns, this work demonstrates how commitment concerns create an impetus for diversification.

4. Temporary Employment, Precarity Trap in Low-paying Jobs, and Wage Inequality - Halil Sabanci, IESE Business School; Marta Elvira, IESE Business School

By focusing on the distribution of temporary employment across different wage layers, this study examines the association between temporary employment incidence and wage inequality. We argue that a high share of low-wage jobs in total temporary employment leads to rent destruction in low-paying jobs, shifting rent allocation vertically from low to high earners, thus increasing wage inequality. We also hypothesize that the rent-shifting process is subject to some moderating factors. Specifically, we expect the effect to be amplified in industries with greater human-capital intensity and a smaller probability of temporary workers' transition to permanent jobs (which we name precarity trap); while being less pronounced in industries with greater concentration of large firms. We test our predictions with data on wages of a representative sample of the Spanish labor force, extracted from administrative linked employer-employee datasets, which include 784,206 individuals from 2006 to 2018 (total N=4,967,236 person-year observations). Employing heteroscedastic models that simultaneously examine the effects of both micro and macro-level covariates on within-industry wage variance, we find the expected positive association between the ratio of total temporary employment that is occupied by low-paying jobs and wage inequality at the industry-region-year level. The results also support our moderation hypotheses. Building on and advancing rent-destruction accounts of market-based employment practices, we introduce the disproportionately high concentration of temporary employment in the bottom of wage distribution as a structural source of wage inequality and discuss its theoretical and practical implications.

5. Why Might Hybrid Employment Increase Inequality? - Ankur Chavda, HEC Paris; Minjae Kim, Rice University

We develop and test a theory on why the employment inequality between novice and veteran workers may be exacerbated by more "hybrid" employment—where workers are initially tried out before achieving long-term employment. Prior work identifies two levers that determine the effect of hybrid employment on novice workers: 1) hybrid employment should give more opportunities to novice workers relative to standard employment, even though 2) veteran workers should still more likely "pass" the tryout. These levers imply increasing hybrid employment should drive down inequality, since more hybrid employment should only help novice workers who are disadvantaged under standard employment. But we predict the opposite: more hybrid employment may lower the share of novice workers employed long-term. The reason is that the two levers may be interdependent: increasing hybrid employment may elicit tryout of (a) more qualified veteran workers who would have otherwise been hired under standard employment and (b) less qualified novice workers who would have been left neglected, thus making the competition more lopsided in favor of veteran workers. We find empirical evidence supporting this prediction in the TV programming industry where programs are developed under either hybrid employment—"pilot" production, which evaluates the first episode before hiring actors for the rest of the season—or standard employment—"straight-to-series" production, which commits upfront to hiring actors for the full season.

Evaluation and the Moral Economy

Sun, August 8, 11:00am to 12:25pm EDT (11:00am to 12:25pm EDT), VAM, Room 17

Session Organizers:
Carly Knight, New York University and
Nathan Wilmers, MIT
Presider: Laura Adler, Harvard University

Presentations:

1. Cultural Foundations of Creditworthiness: Gender, Discretion, and the 'Ideal Borrower' in Colombian Microcredit - Kristen McNeill, Brown University

Access to credit is foundational in the modern world; it drives capitalist development, and shapes the individual and collective consequences of this development. Given its significance, sociologists have paid a good deal of attention to creditworthiness, but two important aspects remain under-researched: the role of loan officers, and the influence of gender. This paper uses the case of microcredit in Colombia to investigate how loan officers evaluate creditworthiness among loan applicants, and how this evaluation is gendered. Using mixed qualitative and quantitative data, I argue that when evaluating loan applicants, loan officers look beyond organizationally-defined, measurable criteria for creditworthiness, drawing upon shared cultural schemas to fill in the gaps left by these formal criteria. I theorize a novel schema, which I term the ideal borrower. I identify the characteristics of this ideal in this context, and investigate how this ideal affects loan officers' evaluations of male and female loan applicants. I find that women who more closely match the ideal borrower image are advantaged and women who deviate are penalized, as one would expect. Unexpectedly, however, men are not penalized when they do not match the ideal borrower schema. I argue that when men deviate from this schema, loan officers fall back on another cultural schema, the male breadwinner, which establishes men's default credentials as economic actors.

2. From Record to Rental: How Landlords Evaluate Credit Reports, Criminal Records, and Eviction Histories - Barbara Kiviat, Stanford University; Sara Sternberg Greene, Duke University; Hesu Yoon, Stanford University

Records of people's pasts increasingly determine what economic resources they get access to in the future. This means that individuals with blemishes on these records--whether credit reports, court records, or otherwise--are at a disadvantage when applying for jobs, housing, insurance, and other key economic resources. Yet this disadvantage does not arise mechanically. Gatekeepers, such as employers and landlords, evaluate these records and translate them into decisions. This article asks: under what conditions do gatekeepers ignore the mark of a negative record? In other words, what does it take for an individual with a normally disqualifying record to nevertheless gain access to an economic resource? To answer this question, we turn to the case of tenant background checks. Drawing on interviews with landlords and property managers in two U.S. cities--Durham, North Carolina, and San Jose, California--we document and theorize times when gatekeepers grant resources to people with problematic records. More specifically, we analyze times when landlords decide that a bad credit report, criminal record, or history of eviction will not stand in a person's way, even though, to a first approximation, a landlord's own practices suggest that it should. By focusing on such exceptions, we advance theories of the "street-level" use of personal data and predictive scoring in market settings and show how even proponents of data use justify the practice in part by admitting that economic decisions based on personal records are not always fair. We thus shed light on the moral foundations that legitimate the use of personal records in market settings.

3. Countering the Con: The Vulnerabilities of Check Cashing in Detroit-area Corner Stores - Vance Alan Puchalski, Princeton University

Research has analyzed how marks taken in confidence games face and cope with involuntary losses, a process Erving Goffman termed "cooling out." Yet it stands to reason that cooling out may not solely be the actions of the operators directed at the mark in confidence games. Individuals and organizations that engage in stigmatized activities and thus lack supports—or even sympathy—when dealing with involuntary losses may engage in cooling that is anticipatory and self-directed. I theorize countering the con to describe strategies for avoiding and dealing with involuntary losses brought on by fraud as potential marks cool themselves out while countering the con. Individuals operating in stigmatized financial service organizations cultivate a set of practices that provide themselves with reassurance in situations where information asymmetry is high and where they are likely to be targets of fraud. Drawing on six years of ethnographic fieldwork analyzing the provision of financial services within Detroit-area corner stores, I conceptualize strategies that owners employ to attenuate risks in check cashing. Reassessing "cooling out" has implications for how we understand a wide range of cases where service providers are stigmatized (and largely unprotected) and their clients may be motivated to commit fraud against them.

4. Purity Politics? A Civil Project to Purify Consumption - Tad P. Skotnicki, University of North Carolina-Greensboro

This paper provides a comparative historical genealogy of a contemporary consumer phenomenon: the tendency to present "ethical" goods as also high quality. Studies of ethical consumption suggest that this elision of ethics and quality results when businesses target distinction-seeking and desiring consumers. Yet by comparing the purity claims of pioneering consumer activists, the paper reveals this elision of ethics and quality as a civil project, not merely as a feature or result of cynical marketing campaigns and niche market segments. Drawing on primary source archival materials from late eighteenth century abolitionists and turn-of-the-twentieth-century consumer activists, the author demonstrates how these activists participated in an ongoing civil project to purify consumption in liberal capitalist democracies by eliding a) the treatment of the laborers, b) the quality of the labor, and c) the quality of the goods. To claim that goods were pure, in many instances, was also to claim that the laborers and the labor conditions behind those goods were as well. This civil project, further, entails both public and private ways of arguing for the elision of ethics and quality, as well as craft and modern visions of ethical labor. Rather than endless transformation, this paper presents a way to identify meaningful continuities in consumption as a capitalist social form.

5. The Moral Economy of Home-made Cloth Masks in the Times of COVID-19 - Ya-Ching Huang, Boston University; Alya Guseva, Boston University

Amidst the global pandemic, a rapid increase in demand for face masks has given rise to a war-like mobilization around making and distributing home-made cloth masks. Right away, mask makers were faced with questions of deservedness: who deserves the most to be protected, and even more importantly, who deserves getting masks for free? And some of them insisted that mask makers deserve to be paid for their work. Based on the data from a private Facebook group dedicated to sewing and remote interviews with mask makers in Massachusetts, we argue that in response to pandemic-induced scarcity, mask makers create a distinct moral economy with numerous distribution circuits of cloth masks: gift-giving, altruistic donations, partial donations of labor, and sales. The choice among these alternatives depends on how mask makers perceive their own vulnerabilities and deservedness and those of mask recipients. Recipients are deemed deserving of free masks based on their job-related risk of exposure, age/health status, or economic vulnerability. Nevertheless, some mask makers argue that they deserved to be paid because of their own economic vulnerabilities or because their time, skills and labor are valuable and need to be fairly compensated. This is not an economy of two different types of mask makers pursuing two distinct logics of distribution: the self-interested homo economicus and the altruistic community-oriented homo socialis. Instead, the same people may engage in multiple types of exchange circuits, and there are moral nuances in how they justify these choices. Thus in this case, scarcity results not in a competitive market where prices regulate supply and demand and facilitate allocation, but in a complex moral economy governed by multiple and sometimes contradictory arguments about some individuals and groups deserving to access scarce goods free of charge and yet others deserving to be paid for producing them.

Elites, Assets, and Inequality

Sun, August 8, 12:45 to 2:10pm EDT (12:45 to 2:10pm EDT), VAM, Room 15

Session Organizers:
Laura Adler, Harvard University and
Nathan Wilmers, MIT
Presider: Carly Knight, New York University

Presentations:

1. Ascribing Moral Motives: Examining Complementor Responses to Platform Governance Actions - Joey Van Angeren, Vrije University; Arvind Karunakaran, McGill University

Platforms are becoming increasingly prominent in many industries. Motivating complementors—both new as well as existing—to continually participate in the platform ecosystem through ongoing product introductions, therefore, is a critical area of concern for the platform provider. Prior research suggests that platform governance is instrumental to effectively orchestrating complementors' efforts. Platform governance is concerned with the design and deployment of mechanisms that regulate participation in the platform ecosystem. It involves a platform provider's choices about decision rights, incentive structures, and means of control. How do platform governance actions affect complementors' responses? We theorize that since complementors in platform ecosystems confront inference uncertainty, they ascribe moral motives to these platform governance actions, subsequently shaping complementors' responses. Moral motives could be negative or positive, depending on whether the action is interpreted as ad-hoc favoritism (favoring one complementor over another), extractive opportunism (advancing platform providers' rent-seeking at the expense of complementors), or mutual commitment (providers' committing to the platform ecosystem, while also inducing complementors to commit). Evidence for these arguments comes from Salesforce's platform ecosystem. We quantitatively examine complementors' responses to selective promotion (ad-hoc favoritism), vertical integration (extractive opportunism), and corporate venture capital investment (mutual commitment). We qualitatively unpack why complementors view corporate venture capital investments as a middle-ground governance action.

2. Elites on the Move: Explaining Millionaire Demand for Investor Visas - Yossi Harpaz, Tel-Aviv University

Investor visas allow wealthy foreigners to gain residence in countries like the U.S., UK or Portugal in exchange for a hefty investment. This paper examines a crucial yet overlooked question: what motivates millionaires to acquire such visas? I analyzed an original dataset on investor visas and millionaire populations to identify acquisition rates and between-year variations in demand. The study produced three key findings. Demand for investor visas was driven by millionaires from developing or non-democratic countries with low citizenship value. The highest demand was found in China and Russia, where over 5% and 3% of millionaires, respectively, have acquired such visas. Across origin countries, investor visa acquisition surged in response to declines in democracy and the rule of law. These findings show that investor visas are used by developing-country elites to convert wealth into access to higher-value citizenship and hedge themselves against risks associated with poor governance and autocracy.

3. Shareholder Power, Corporate Time Horizon, and Labor Earnings Inequality: How Private Equity Buyouts Reallocate Risk - Dylan Nelson, University of Michigan

New investor organizations emerged over the past thirty years to reconcentrate the ownership of public U.S. companies. During the same period, personal and household economic risk rose substantially. Yet, many of the leading studies of corporate organization and inequality find insignificant effects of concentrated, long-term institutional investors on vectors of inequality including total employment or managerial concentration. These institutional investors seem not to accelerate upward or downward worker mobility rates, challenging the prediction that increases in shareholder value power would change the claims-making power of other internal stakeholders. By extending the theory of corporate governance and worker risk, I predict that this increase in worker risk did significantly result from rising owner power, but that these effects were far stronger when investors and executives lengthened their time horizon. I test a series of hypotheses relating to the upside and downside risk of managers and non-managerial workers in the context of private equity leveraged buyouts.

Under private equity ownership, executives of previously-public companies are spared the constant pressure to increase stock market price, leading to more dramatic growth-oriented strategies and also more financial engineering. Private-equity-owned firms as a result show increased productivity but also higher rates of financial distress. I use quantile difference-in-differences regression to test how LBOs impact the average, variance, and skew of worker labor earnings distributions, analyzing restricted-access longitudinally linked employer-employee Census data on 100+ million workers matched to detailed worker demographic and company financial data. I show how managerial status and credit conditions moderate the worker risk effects of private equity buyouts. The results show that institutional investors, freed from the short-term pressure of analysts, co-investors, and hostile takeover threats, have significantly increased upside and downside economic risk among U.S. managers and downside economic risk among non-managerial workers.

4. The Dynamics of Privately Held Business Assets in the United States - Kim Pernell, University of Toronto; Geoffrey Thomas Wodtke, University of Chicago

Although privately held businesses are central to the American economy, little is known about how private business ownership is distributed within the U.S. population. In this study, we describe the household distribution of private business assets in the United States and examine whether and how this distribution has changed over time. Using data from the Survey of Consumer Finances between 1989 and 2019, we show that the relative number of business owners has remained stagnant at low levels and that the distribution of private business assets has become increasingly concentrated among the wealthiest owners over time. At the most recent wave of data collection, the top 1% of households controlled nearly 80% of privately held business assets, up from about 70% in the late 1980s. This pattern suggests that private business ownership is now one of the most unequally distributed forms of capital in the U.S. economy, and that this trend has only grown more pronounced over time. We take initial steps toward explaining this trend by evaluating how other key economic transformations—including skill-biased technological change, the transformation of banking in the financialized era, rising market power among established firms, and the transition to a service economy—have influenced the distribution of privately held business assets. Our findings suggest that this growth in asset concentration within the private business sector is explained, at least in part, by rising inequality in the valuations of businesses owned by more versus less educated business owners and by changing patterns of bank credit allocation in the financialized era, which favored owners of larger and more established businesses. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for research in economic sociology and social stratification.

5. The State Politics of Corporate Downsizings - Jiwook Jung, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Tom VanHeuvelen, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Much research in the comparative institutions literature suggests that class politics can have profound implications for the decision-making autonomy of businesses. However, direct tests of the thesis remain rare. Utilizing the geographical polarization of American politics, we examine how state-level politics shapes corporate downsizing decisions. Combining power resources theory and institutional embeddedness approaches in organizational studies, we propose that labor power resources at the state level, Democratic control of state government and state-level union membership, limit firms' ability to implement drastic job cuts within the state. Based on data on 683 largest, publicly traded U.S. firms between 1982 and 2005, combined with their establishment-level employment data from EEO-1 reports, our analysis shows that post-downsizing reductions in employment were less severe in states with a worker-friendly political environment. But the limited effectiveness of labor's power resources in Right-to-Work states and the American South suggests that there is considerable regional variation. Our findings provide a strong piece of evidence for political embeddedness of firms, by demonstrating the growing salience of political considerations in corporate decision making.

Racial Processes in Economic Sociology

Sun, August 8, 2:30 to 3:55pm EDT (2:30 to 3:55pm EDT), VAM, Room 5

Session Organizer: John N. Robinson, Washington University-St. Louis
Presider: Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, University of New Mexico-Albuquerque
Discussant: Max Besbris, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Presentations:

1. Embedding Racism: City Government Credit Ratings and the Institutionalization of Race in Markets - Davon Norris, The Ohio State University

How does racism and racial inequality manifest in contemporary markets? Historically, overt discrimination made the mechanisms generating racial inequality evident. However, this is not the case in the structural and "color-blind" era characteristic of the present moment as the material mechanisms that give rise to racial inequality often lack clear conceptualizations. Leveraging insights from the sociology of race and economic sociology, I highlight the ways that algorithmic ratings, rankings, and scores operate as key mechanisms institutionalizing racism in markets. Because these technical devices exclude race as a direct input, conceptualizations of racism rooted in overt discrimination are insufficient. Therefore, I adopt a perspective that outlines how ratings produce what scholars in the sociology of race refer to as an epistemology of racial ignorance. Specifically, I argue that while ratings and scores give a veneer of individualized objectivity, their actual inputs reflect decades of racial disadvantage. The use of such racialized inputs embeds historical racism in ratings allowing racial inequality to persist and escape cognition as seemingly race-neutral inputs "explain away" racial disparities. I demonstrate this argument using an original dataset to approximate the evaluative criteria used by a credit rating agency in rating city government creditworthiness. I show that cities with larger proportions of Black residents receive worse credit ratings when controlling for the non-racialized inputs in the rating agency's evaluative criteria. This racial disparity is only attenuated after the inclusion of the criterion median family income, which I argue is a fundamentally racialized input owing to the legacy of racism in the US. Empirically establishing this point provides key theoretical takeaways at the intersection of race and economic sociology as scores and ratings pervade more corners of social life and increasingly push up against the epistemological seams of how we understand and identify inequality.

2. Frontier Domesticity and the Municipal Separation of Spheres - Luis Flores, University of Michigan

An instrument of exclusion and accumulation in housing markets, land-use zoning is a central device of racial capitalism. Less appreciated is the intersection of zoning and labor dynamics. This paper explains the puzzling first case of residential zoning, emerging not in 1916 New York City but in the comparatively sparse western outpost of Los Angeles in 1904, examining the intersection of labor dynamics, domestic ideology, American empire, and municipal governance. Drawing late-19th-century white settlers as a haven for health and economic independence, Los Angeles settlers articulated a frontier domesticity that conditioned reactions against perceived industrial, labor, and racial threats, spurring municipal regulatory experimentation. The first residence districts were thinly veiled restrictions on Chinese-run laundries, where migrant workers lived and worked, which were expanded into "residential" and "industrial" districts. In addition to being an instrument of wealth accumulation, land-use zoning crystalized regulatory distinctions between work and home, curtailing avenues for non-waged self-sufficiency. Racialized and gendered distinctions between formal and informal, licit and illicit economic sectors in the 20th century were an outcome of how white workers pursued land-use zoning to achieve a new form of economic security in an era of industrial labor. The U.S. frontier was not only a "safety valve" for eastern industrial labor strife but also a social laboratory, where instruments of municipal governance emerged before circulating east. Examining the municipal separation of spheres allows us to appreciate the contemporary blurring of home and market, as cities consider mixed-use zoning, cottage food laws, and independent contracting rules.

3. Privilege, Promise, and Peril: Fiscal Precarity in a Majority-Black and Middle-Class Suburban County - Angela Marie Simms, Barnard College

In the United States, from the 1970s forward, governments have generally retreated from robust investment in public services and have been reluctant to raise taxes to improve service provision. This trend has resulted in many local governments struggling to maintain budgets sufficient for providing quality public services. Majority-Black jurisdictions are uniquely fiscally strained because these communities pursue fiscal resilience amidst decades-long cumulative effects of explicitly racist and racialized government policies and market practices. In addition, these jurisdictions attract and retain a disproportionate share of moderate-income and poor residents. I use ethnographic and publicly-available data to analyze how elected officials in Prince George's County (PGC), Maryland, the jurisdiction with the largest concentration of middle-class African Americans, prioritize spending. I examine how increasing public school system funding, which accounts for about 60 percent of the budget, requires trading off investing in other programs. Among the reasons county leaders increase school budget allocations is their desire to signal to upper-middle-class current and prospective residents that the county provides the balance of taxes and quality of public services they value. Local jurisdictions compete for high-income residents because, on average, economically advantaged people stimulate tax base expansion. In 2020, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) served 131,162 students, of which 55 percent were African American and 37 percent Latinx. Sixty one percent of students qualify for reduced-priced meals, reflecting PGC's economic position in the D.C. metropolitan area, whereby the county attracts and retains a disproportionate share of modest-means households. I also compare PGC's fiscal health with that of two non-majority-Black neighboring counties using per capita and per pupil spending to show PGC's relative disadvantage as a majority-Black county. PGC's experiences demonstrate how racism continues to shape Americans' life chances through inter-connected historical and ongoing policies and market practices.

4. Wealth Begins at Home: The 1944 GI Bill and the Making of the Racial Wealth Gap - Chinyere O Agbai, Brown University

Home equity is the largest asset that American families possess, making wealth inextricably linked to place. An extensive literature explores the contemporary racial wealth gap through the lens of homeownership. However, few empirical works elucidate how policy has contributed to its production and reproduction. This paper takes a historical approach to understanding current racial inequality in wealth by interrogating the impact of one of the largest housing policies in American history: the Home Loan Guaranty of the 1944 GI Bill (HLG). Using administrative data from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Census, I ask (1) to what extent was there racial inequality in the implementation of the HLG? (2) What impact did this policy have on racial inequality in homeownership and home value? Results suggest that because of racial inequality in HLG distribution, inequality in homeownership increased by twice as much among veterans relative to non-veterans between 1940 and 1960. The increase in racial inequality in home value among veterans was 1.7 times that of non-veterans. Results indicate that race-neutral policies can maintain and even exacerbate existing racial inequality. If the large racial wealth gap is to be closed, policy must not only remedy past wrongs, but also inhibit the same mechanisms that reproduced racial inequality in the past from doing so in the present and future.

5. When Banks Open: The Consequences of Bank Branch Openings on Credit Flows in Racially Segregated Areas - Asia Inez Bento, Rice University

Scholars assume bank branch openings and increased credit flows improve neighborhoods by generating economic opportunities. This assumption, however, overlooks the fact that residential racial segregation sustains a tiered credit market advantaging white segregated neighborhoods and disadvantaging black segregated neighborhoods. In response, the present study invokes opposing theoretical perspectives (e.g., locality of credit markets and racial capitalism) to investigate whether bank branches worsen economic disadvantage when they locate and lend in black segregated neighborhoods. Specifically, this study asks: when a bank branch opened, did census tracts nested within black segregated areas experience lower rates of mortgage lending over time, compared to those nested within white segregated areas? Analyzing data from the 2000-2008 FDIC Summary of Deposits (SODs, FDIC 2000-2008), and the 2000-2008 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA), I find bank branch openings predict decreased credit flows over time, in both black and white segregated neighborhoods. Thus, growing the presence of bank branches may not increase credit flows into segregated neighborhoods. Further, black segregated neighborhoods without bank branch openings experienced increased credit flows over time, compared to ones with bank branch openings. These findings likely reflect the 2000s subprime mortgage boom's racially exploitative lending practices. In support of racial capitalism, I conclude bank branch openings widened access to regulated mortgage lenders that likely steered borrowers away from subprime mortgage loans. Yet, borrowers became targets for such loans in black segregated neighborhoods without bank branches.

Economic Sociology at the Intersectional Crossroads

Sat, August 7, 12:45 to 2:10pm EDT (12:45 to 2:10pm EDT), VAM, Room 29

Session Organizer: Frederick F. Wherry, Princeton University
Presider: Lauren Rivera, Northwestern University

Presentations:

1. Value Fluidity and Value Anchoring: Race, Intermediaries, and Valuation Processes in Two Housing Markets - Max Besbris, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, University of New Mexico-Albuquerque

While examinations of the housing market continue to revisit the use/exchange value distinction in light of changing socio-economic conditions, we still lack a framework that resolves the myriad outstanding theoretical and empirical issues uncovered in previous research. Drawing on years of ethnographic observations of real estate professionals and homeseekers across various segments of the housing market in Houston and New York, this article develops the concepts of value fluidity and value anchoring to better describe how valuation occurs in the housing market and to better theorize how the valuation process itself reproduces neighborhood and ethnoracial inequality. It shows that use and exchange are mutually constituted in market interactions and, at the same time, how race critically shapes valuation. It concludes by arguing for the importance of theorizing valuation processes through observation of market interactions and by showing why investigations of the housing market must focus on intermediaries.

2. Do Job Candidates Discriminate Minority Founders? Evidence from a Field Experiment - Kaisa Elina Snellman, INSEAD; Peter Younkin, McGill University

Do job seekers consider the race or gender of an employer when applying for a job? While we have extensive research on employer-side discrimination, we know less about employee-side biases and their consequences. In this study, we examine how the gender and race of the employer shapes the willingness of prospective employees to apply for a job. To examine this, we conducted a field experiment where we randomized real job seekers into three conditions according to employer demographics. We find that job candidates are less likely to apply to a job when they learn that the founders are Black and when they did apply, they requested ten percent higher salary. In addition, the more qualified a candidate the less likely they were to apply to Black founders, leaving Black founders with a pool of candidates both smaller, worse, and more expensive than their white peers. We find no gender penalty for white female founders. Findings from two survey experiments suggest that the penalty is unique to white applicants evaluating Black founders and reflects a concern among white applicants that they will be less likely to fit within a firm and that the firm is less likely to be successful in the long run. We find no evidence of a widespread applicant homophily where all applicants favor founders of their own ethnic group, nor do we find evidence of widespread statistical discrimination whereby all applicants penalize Black founders for being atypical members of the entrepreneurial class.

3. Theorizing Marketplace Racism and Racially-Biased Exclusionary Treatment - Cassi L. Pittman Claytor, Case Western Reserve University; David K. Crockett, University of South Carolina-Columbia

At every leg of the consumer journey, and across a range of markets, evidence suggests that racism and racial exclusion is pervasive, race thereby being a critical force structuring market and the experience of the market for racial minorities. In this paper, we provided a comprehensive theory that draws from a diverse body of research on racism and racially exclusionary treatment in market settings to introduce a conceptual model that accounts for racism across a range of markets. We focus our attention on the consumer journey, revealing how racial stigmatization and discrimination emerge and impact the consumer experience. Our research reveals two critical takeaways. First, evidence suggests that racism is not only pervasive across a wide range of marketplace settings, but it impacts all customers, granting some preferential treatment and others exclusionary treatment. Second, racially-biased and exclusionary treatment affects consumers' journeys in two distinct ways: as a tax that raises the "costs" of normal progress, and as a pattern of exclusion and inequality that results in barriers and detours that end progress or distorts it for marginalized groups. This paper fills a much-needed void by theorizing racism and the underlying mechanisms that support it across a range of consumer markets.

4. Replacing the Irreplaceable: Conflicting Valuation of Damage of Historic Buildings hit by the Mexico 2017 Earthquakes - Daniel G. Fridman, University of Texas-Austin; Benjamin Ibarra-Sevilla, University of Texas-Austin; Eldad J Levy, University of Texas at Austin

This paper examines the valuation of cultural heritage assets as a social, technical, and institutional process in the context of natural disasters. As the recent literature on valuation in economic sociology shows, assigning value when dealing with 'invaluable goods' is a simultaneously moral and technical process. The choice and use of a valuation technique may depend on socially shared meanings, institutions, established forms of expertise, power struggles, legal frameworks, culturally acceptable uses of money, and on the standing of the valued good in society. We use the case of the September 2017 earthquakes in Mexico, which damaged over two thousand historic monuments, including many colonial churches, chapels, and monasteries that are federal property but are used by local congregations. In the aftermath of the disaster, officials at the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) had to assess the value of damage in order to pursue funding from federal disaster relief and private insurance. But valuing damage for restoration implies defining it and understanding the role and uses of the heritage asset, and therefore indirectly valuing heritage itself. We examine how different officials at the INAH, the insurance company, and local communities ascribe different values to the damage of cultural heritage, and thus negotiate their understanding of what restoration of the damage means and entails in a context of massive losses and low institutionalization of valuation procedures. Improvisation and negotiation were central features in the ability to assess damage and its value and furthermore, to fund and complete restoration satisfactorily. Data comes from 19 in-depth interviews with a variety of Mexican professionals, most of whom played a role in the immediate management of the 2017 earthquakes aftermath, including preservation experts, architects, conservators, contractors, and other public officials in the field of heritage management.

5. Raising Kids, Rising Debt: How does Having Children Impact Mortgage Debt? - Yader R. Lanuza, University of California-Santa Barbara; Nina Bandelj, University of California-Irvine; Erika Schutt, University of Miami

American households hold nearly $10 trillion in mortgage debt. Most current research on mortgage debt focuses on its link to the financial crisis and racial discrimination. Our project links raising children to rising debt. Could it be that a valiant goal of not only providing for, but investing in, children today is significantly related to families taking on mortgage debt? Does the contemporary moral imperative of intensive parenting have financial repercussions in whether families have mortgages and how large those mortgages are? How, if so, does the effect of having children on mortgage debt differ for different income groups? To address these questions, we use the six waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics data, between 1997 and 2017, using individual fixed effects, and difference in difference analytic techniques. These analyses show that having children up to 18 years of age significantly increases the likelihood of having a mortgage and the size of mortgage debt, controlling for the size of the household and other covariates. When probing these results, we find that the children-mortgage link holds for a broad swath of families across income, including those between the 10th and the 90th income percentile. We propose that these findings indicate how families' major economic decisions are guided by their role as parents, engaging in financially intensive parenting, and being willing to take on more debt to support their children. On the whole, this aligns with a perspective in economic sociology that places meaning and social relations as foundational to understanding financial decisions.

The Frontiers of Economic Sociology

Sat, August 7, 2:30 to 3:55pm EDT (2:30 to 3:55pm EDT), VAM, Room 29

Session Organizer: Frederick F. Wherry, Princeton University
Presider: Rourke O'Brien, Yale University

Presentations:

1. A Feel for the Game: Economic Dispositions as Micro-Foundations of Economic Inequality - Adam Hayes, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Megan Doherty Bea, University of Wisconsin-Madison

People make economic decisions for themselves all the time—insular decisions that are made entirely for and by one's own self. Conceivably, the life chances and individual outcomes of those people who are more inclined to make "beneficial" economic judgments for themselves will begin to differ and diverge from those who regularly make "detrimental" ones—as the consequences from decisions like these, large and small, compound over time. In this paper we use a Bordieusian theoretical framework to understand economic dispositions that promote "beneficial" vs. "detrimental" (i.e. "irrational") economic behavior. Our empirical study looks to one's composition of economic vs. cultural capital in explaining heterogeneity in individual-level loss aversion, a canonical example of an otherwise cognitive bias in behavioral economics. In doing so, we reveal that composition of capital does, indeed, influence individual economic choice, and with striking gender differences.

2. Novelty and New Venture Success - Likun Cao; Ziwen Chen, The University of Chicago; James A. Evans, University of Chicago

Early sociologists and economists described "creative destruction" as the mechanism through which the economy is renewed through transformative innovation, but there is no established, direct measurement of recombination in business. In this study, we apply new dynamic word embedding techniques on millions of documents from 119 business newspapers, magazines, and patents to construct a dynamic landscape of business discourse across 45 years, which reflects the social-economic features characteristic of teach period. This allows us to observe how business elements are recombined within a given new venture, and also how innovative it was in its own time and historical context. By locating new venture descriptions in this dynamic business landscape, we model the birth, growth, and death of start-ups with event history analysis. Our analysis reveals that the novel recombination of productive capacities is key to entrepreneurial success in the U.S., while technological innovation alone does not support independent business growth long-run. Technological progress that does not transform business capacity is absorbed into the existing business structure through organization growth and acquisition. The market rewards business insights and novel applications more than incremental technological improvements.

3. Policy Space and Structural Power of Finance: Post-Crisis Central Banking in South Africa and Turkey - Ayca Zayim, Mount Holyoke College

The predominant view in scholarship has been that capital mobility under financial globalization enhances the structural power of finance and constrains the policy space of states. These disciplinary pressures are especially acute in developing economies. Scholars argue that ample exit options of financiers and the anticipated consequences of any divergence from financial interests push policy-makers to conform to the financial community's policy preferences. But when do policy-makers diverge from these preferences, and with what consequences? Can policy-makers expand their room to maneuver? This paper analyzes the divergent policy decisions of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) and the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) after the 2008 financial crisis in order to explore these questions. Based on public texts and extensive interviews with central bankers in South Africa and Turkey and financiers in Johannesburg, Istanbul and London, the paper contrasts the SARB's orthodox approach to monetary policy with the CBRT's implementation of an unconventional policy framework between November 2010 and January 2014. Under this framework, the CBRT intentionally generated uncertainty around the future movement of short-term interest rates with the goal of stabilizing the exchange rate and protecting domestic businesses, banks and households against the volatility of international capital movements. The paper finds that ample global liquidity after the 2008 financial crisis led to a massive surge in capital flows to emerging economies. As low-cost, unconditional and ample funding opportunities temporarily reduced the structural power of finance vis-à-vis domestic policy-makers, emerging economies witnessed greater room to maneuver. However, the comparison between the CBRT and the SARB reveals that not all policy-makers exploited this policy space. The paper contributes to recent research on the power of the financial sector by highlighting the role of perceptions and intersubjective beliefs in how the structural power of finance operates.

4. Time and Punishment: How Individuals Respond to Being Sanctioned in Voluntary Associations - Laura Doering, University of Toronto; Amandine Ody-Brasier, Yale School of Management

Although sanctioning is a common feature of social life, researchers hold different expectations about how group members respond when sanctioned by their peers. One school of thought suggests that individuals respond to sanctions by becoming more cooperative, or prosocial, towards the group. Another line of research shows that individuals have negative emotional reactions to being punished and become less cooperative. In this study, we offer an avenue for reconciling these seemingly conflicting viewpoints in the context of voluntary associations, where cooperation is crucial. We build on social psychological theories of dependence and propose that individuals' responses to sanctions shift over time as they become increasingly dependent on other members to achieve valued outcomes. We draw on unique data from microsavings groups in Colombia to develop and test this proposition, using qualitative data to flesh out the proposed mechanism and longitudinal, quantitative records to test the hypothesis. We find that individuals initially respond to being sanctioned by reducing their prosocial contributions, but that their responses become increasingly prosocial over time. By taking concepts generated in laboratories and extending them to small groups in an economic development program, this study generates a fresh vision of sanctions as temporally- and relationally-dependent.

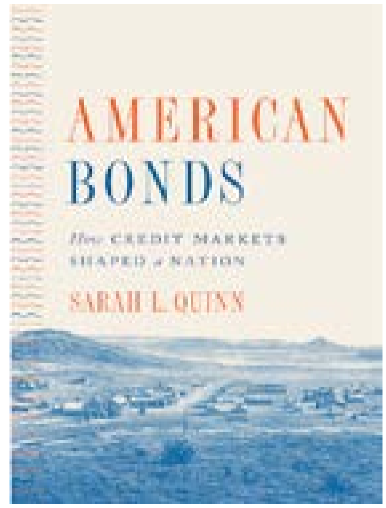
5. Trust on the Move: Wartime Migration and Informal Exchange Networks - Gozde Guran, Harvard University

How do trust networks scale up while continuing to be effective in enforcing commitments? This paper answers this question by examining the wartime expansion of hawala informal money transfer networks over the course of Syria's war. Despite being based on interpersonal trust relationships between participant brokers, hawala networks have effectively met the tremendous demand for money transfers in the form of remittances, aid, and trade finance, among others. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Syrian brokers in Lebanon and Turkey, I reconstruct two network narratives to explain hawala's remarkable scope and effectiveness. I argue that wartime migration helps create these pervasive, dispersed, and reliable hawala networks through two mechanisms: 1) the dispersion of rooted trust ties across space, and 2) the concentration of cultivated trust ties in safe-havens. Each type of trust, in turn, performs a crucial role in brokers' ability to avoid the tradeoff between trust-based exchange and scale. Rooted trust ties, based on a shared local identity, allow for long-term debt commitments; while cultivated trust, based on a shared experience of exile and displacement, forges trans-local cooperation in safe havens and provides key bridges between otherwise disconnected networks. By knitting together these two distinct types of trust ties, brokers are able to simultaneously guarantee their mutual obligations and extend their coverage across multiple locations. In this way, rooted and cultivated trust ties help sustain the flow of money even to the most isolated and hard-to-reach locations, bring together the many disparate hawala networks, and contribute to the reliability of the system as a whole.

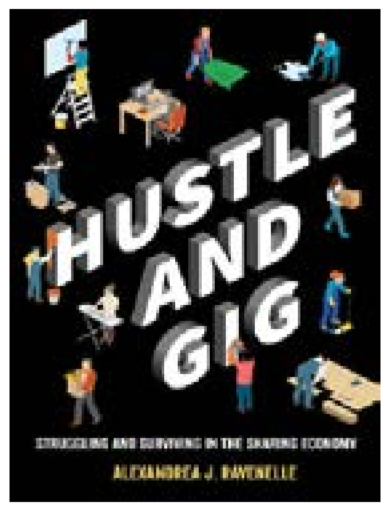
SECTION ON ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY BUSINESS MEETING

Sun, August 8, 4:15 to 4:45pm EDT (4:15 to 4:45pm EDT), VAM, Room 68
Outgoing Section Chair: Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
Incoming Section Chair: Emily Anne Erikson, Yale University

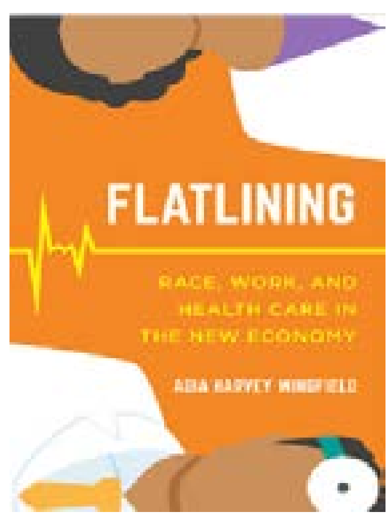
BOOK FORUMS



American Bonds: How Credit Markets Shaped a Nation
Sat, August 7, 12:45 to 2:10pm EDT (12:45 to 2:10pm EDT), VAM, Room 1
Session Organizer: Rachel Kahn Best, University of Michigan
Moderator: John N. Robinson, Washington University-St. Louis
Panelists:
Greta R. Krippner, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
Fred Block, University of California-Davis
Author:
Sarah Quinn, University of Washington



Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy
Sun, August 8, 12:45 to 2:10pm EDT (12:45 to 2:10pm EDT), VAM, Room 1
Session Organizer: Isak Ladegaard, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Moderators: Leslie Kay Jones, Rutgers University and
Marianne Cooper, Stanford University
Panelists:
Christine L. Williams, University of Texas-Austin
Tressie Cottom, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Daniel J. Schneider, Harvard University
Author:
Alexandrea J. Ravenelle, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

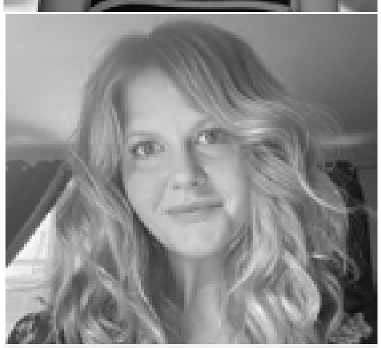


Flatlining: Race, Work, and Health Care in the New Economy
Sat, August 7, 4:15 to 5:40pm EDT (4:15 to 5:40pm EDT), VAM, Room 1
Session Organizer and Moderator: Vincent J. Roscigno, Ohio State University
Panelists:
Ellen Berrey, University of Toronto
Victor E. Ray, University of Iowa
Melissa Wooten, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Author:
Adia M. Harvey Wingfield, Washington University-St. Louis

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Gökhan Mülayim is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Working at the intersection of economic and cultural sociology; organizations, occupations, and work; and urban studies, he studies how the so-called extra-economic is being translated into the economic. He looks specifically into how peculiar goods and services are being economized, and how the markets for those goods and services are being constructed. Using ethnographic research tools, his dissertation examines the economization of security as a political, social, and affective good and service in the market for private security in Istanbul. He received his B.A. with honors in political science and international relations, and his M.A. in sociology from Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey.

Ladin Bayurgil is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Ladin's work spans urban and economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations; particularly asks questions around urban precarious labor. Her research looks at intersections of urban and economic sociology by examining the ways in which intimate ties generated by community relations in the city get infused into economic exchange and employment relations. Using ethnographic research methods, Ladin's dissertation analyzes how urban risk-mitigation strategies, specifically earthquake risk-driven urban transformation in Istanbul, Turkey impacts community and employment relations at times of political and economic turmoil.



Meghann Lucy is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her interests are in inequality, consumption, economic sociology, cultural sociology, and medical sociology. A recent project examines the roles of overconsumption and divestment in discourses of the self, class, and gender through a case study of "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo." Other research investigates the medicalization of overconsumption or overaccumulation, that is, of hoarding disorder. In this work she evaluates the extent to which socioeconomic status of individuals and neighborhoods influences how cities define, detect, and either treat or punish hoarding behaviors amongst residents.

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