

Plenary Sessions

Power, Resistance and Inequality in Tech: A Conversation with Ruha Benjamin, Anita Sarkeesian, and Tressie McMillan Cottom

Participants: (Session Organizer) Allison J. Pugh, University of Virginia; (Panelist) Anita Sarkeesian, Feminist Frequency; (Panelist) Ruha Benjamin, Princeton University; (Presider) Allison J. Pugh, University of Virginia

In 2017, Susan Fowler wrote an essay about her time as an engineer at Uber that pulled back the curtain on a culture of misogyny, harassment, and discrimination large and small. There was something about her frank, humorous style, her calm but outraged tone and her unflinching approach that touched a nerve. That year, *Time* magazine named her a Person of the Year as one of the “Silence Breakers,” the Uber CEO resigned, and 20 other people were ousted; Fowler is now an editor of the “OpEds from the Future” series at the *New York Times*, and author of the book *Whistleblower*. Tech has a justice problem, and like Fowler, Ruha Benjamin has helped to expose its roots in how technology is made. An associate professor at Princeton University, Benjamin is the author of *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, a book about machine bias, discriminatory design, and liberatory approaches to technoscience. She has written two other books and many articles that diagnose and explain racism in science and technology, and has been published in *Science*, the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, and *Theory and Society*. Her work has been covered by *Nature*, the *Washington Post*, *NPR* and a host of other venues, and funded by the American Council of Learned Societies, National Science Foundation, and the Institute for Advanced Study. In this event, Fowler and Benjamin will each speak for ten minutes, and then participate in a Q&A session moderated by Allison Pugh, a professor of sociology at the University of Virginia who is writing a book about person-to-person work, technology, and the stratification of human contact.

Critical Approaches to Sexual Harassment: Institutional Power, Lived Experience, and Social Change

Participants: (Session Organizer) Patricia Richards, University of Georgia; (Panelist) Nancy Chi Cantalupo, Barry University; (Panelist) Bernice Yeung, ProPublica; (Panelist) Estelle B. Freedman, Stanford University; (Panelist) Alexandria J. Ravenelle, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; (Presider) Patricia Richards, University of Georgia

The #MeToo movement has highlighted how institutions have failed to address sexual harassment as a critical source of power and inequality. Likewise, sociology as a discipline has failed to address sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence as a principal social problem. This panel will feature critical researchers whose work engages qualitative sociological, legal, and historical approaches in order to detail the mechanisms and processes involved in how institutions attempt to manage or contain sexual harassment and harassment

complaints, as well as how individuals understand and experience harassment and institutional responses to it. This plenary will have a “questions and answers” format, whereby panelists reflect on questions such as: What sorts of policies and practices obstruct or facilitate efforts to address sexual harassment and what are the mechanisms by which they do so? What factors and social processes contribute to how individuals understand their experiences with harassment and whether or not they report them? How have institutional responses and individual understandings changed (and what has remained consistent) over time? How are these processes shaped by various (and intersecting) systems of power (race, class, immigration status and sexuality as well as gender)? What would effective social change around sexual harassment look like?

Doing Diversity: The Work, the Workers, the Outcomes

Participants: (Session Organizer) Adia M. Harvey Wingfield, Washington University in St. Louis; (Presider) Christine L. Williams, University of Texas at Austin; (Panelist) Ellen Berrey, University of Toronto; (Panelist) Kirsten A. Dellinger, University of Mississippi; (Panelist) Frank Dobbin, Harvard University; (Panelist) Adia M. Harvey Wingfield, Washington University in St. Louis

At the top levels of most organizations, racial and gender diversity is virtually nonexistent. There are more men named John running large companies than there are women, and a paltry three black CEOs heading Fortune 500 companies (none of whom are women). With demographic changes looming in the nation and labor force, however, many organizations now state their commitment to achieving workforce diversity. But realizing this goal has proven elusive. Why is it that even as organizations tout their commitment to greater racial and gender diversity, they remain largely unable to translate these goals into results? Who, if anyone, is doing the work to diversify organizations, and what sort of systemic barriers do they confront? What efforts are necessary to diversify organizations throughout, and not just among leadership? Using a panel discussion format, this session will be a conversation about how diversity work has become commonplace in many organizations, what it means to do this work, and why the outcomes so often fall short. Panelists will consider both the work that gets done to create more organizational diversity as well as the implications for the workers tasked with this labor.