ACCOUNTS

MACHINE LEARNING AND INEQUALITIES: AN INTERVIEW WITH SHARLA ALGERIA

Sharla Alegria is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Toronto. Her research is primarily concerned with understanding how inequalities, particularly those at the intersections of gender and race, persist in institutions and organizations that reject discrimination and make commitments to equity. She focuses on scientific and technical workplaces, considering how inequality operates both in the organizations and in the technologies developed in these workplaces. Her work connects technology, its applications, and the conditions in which it was developed to better understand the persistence of race and gender inequalities in technologies and the workplaces that produce them.

Zhen Wang, a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto, spoke to Sharla Alegria about how data training biases in machine learning exacerbate existing inequalities.

Zhen Wang: *Your recent coauthored article "Machine Learning and the Reproduction of Inequality" with Catherine Yeh in the Fall 2023 volume of Contexts provides a comprehensive account on how artificial intelligence (specifically, machine learning) replicates social biases based on race, gender, and other inequalities. You advocate for a "sociological understanding" of machine learning and its underlying data. Could you expand on this approach, particularly how sociologists could contribute to this discourse through empirical research and theory building?*

Sharla Alegria: I hope the key takeaway from our article is that machine learning (ML) and lots of the AI tools that we see emerging are taking data from all kinds of places, applying some analysis to those data, making decisions based on that analysis, then usually packaging it in some way that is useful but usually obfuscates the underlying data and analytic processes. A sociological understanding of these tools might include examining where the underlying data come from and the social processes shaping the data and their construction; looking carefully at the analytic processes to understand the kinds of results

that become more or less possible; or investigating the social implications of the decisions, information, or other productions of these technologies. Sarah Brayne's book, *Surveil and Predict* is an excellent example of sociological work that identifies the social processes that construct data and inform how it's used and analyzed. Ruha Benjamin's *Race after Technology* and Safiya Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression* does some of this kind of work too, focusing more on the outcomes and social consequences of these technologies. Sociologists use data in a range of ways. Most of the time we are analyzing it to learn about the social world, but we also have a robust tradition of asking and examining what counts as data, how the context and conditions of the collection of information shape that information, and critically examining how the social locations of the people doing the analytic work get reflected in the work itself. Sociology has important insights to offer for making AI technologies more equitable and for identifying the consequences and limitations for equity in these tools.

Z. W.: *In "Machine Learning and the Reproduction of Inequality," you mentioned that there are four ways in which machine learning tools can reproduce existing race and gender inequalities, namely bias in the underlying data, spurious or misaligned data use, algorithms optimized to mirror social processes, and targeting vulnerable communities. Given these processes, what advice would you give to researchers who either study machine learning as a subject or utilize machine learning data for their own research?*

S. A.: For ML researchers, my first piece of advice is probably to work with a social scientist—but of course this works best if that social scientist is a valued member of the team. For researchers who use ML in their research, it's really important to understand any underlying bias and take steps to minimize or counter their effects, or to not use some tools altogether for certain applications. For example, word embeddings are a common tool in text analysis—they are a way of identifying relationships between words. But they are notorious for gender bias. Part of the underlying language has a

masculine bias. Computer science research has also shown that the relationships between words identified in the embeddings of the most common words also reflect an masculine-centric worldview. There are efforts to debias word embeddings, and depending on the use-context, that might be enough to not reproduce gender inequality in whatever the tool is being used for. In other cases, a tool that relies on word embeddings might not be appropriate.

Z. W.: *What do you see are the roles of economic sociologists in further understanding AI and machine learning processes and their propensity to reproduce existing inequalities?*

S. A.: I think of economic sociology as particularly good at understanding processes involving markets and other financial outcomes. It's important to keep in mind that most of these tools are developed and brought to market by for-profit companies. These companies have ethical obligations not to cause harm but they also have market-driven priorities. Economic sociology can be really helpful in understanding why certain products make it to market with particular flaws

or biases, and how companies evaluate various considerations around ethics and functionality when they make decisions about design, product development, and release, for example. Or to put this more broadly, economic sociology can be especially helpful in understanding the relationship between market considerations, the specific decisions around ML tools, and the consequences of those decisions in a broader social context. I think that might just be one broad example of what economic sociology has to offer. Economic sociology is a really exciting area with people doing really creative work—I'm excited to read the economic sociology research on ML that I never would have thought of.

Z. W.: *What are your thoughts on government oversight on machine learning? If you were to envision a regulatory scheme based on the findings from your paper, what could that look like?*

S. A.: This is such a complicated question. I'm sure that I would want there to be more regulation than what currently exists, but I also find these technologies exciting and don't want to prevent their development. There are aspects of their development that I find absolutely dystopian though. For example, so much of data collection relies on widespread collection and use of data that people are not really providing knowingly or willingly. I mean most of us are not reading those privacy notifications and even if we did read them and decide we didn't want to share our data in whatever way a company wants, what choice do we meaningfully have? Maybe I can opt out of using TikTok but it's much harder to opt of using a bank or an email application or smartphone. Then there are applications of these tools for things like facial recognition in public spaces or in airports that systematically disadvantage people of color—because the technology doesn't work as well on darker skin tones, and are disproportionately used on people of color and in marginalized communities generally. And if these situations were not already the source of plenty of science fiction novels, there is another large chunk of data collection and data management that is done by what Mary Gray and Siddharth Suri call "Ghost Workers"—people who

are getting paid, generally by the task, to do human intelligence tasks to train or otherwise support the AI. This means things like identifying pictures with fire hydrants in them for a penny each so that an ML program can learn to identify fire hydrants in images. Plus there are a range of copyright considerations and just general ethical concerns that when people make their work, writing, ideas, art, and other products of human intelligence available online, they did not expect it would be vacuumed up and used to train machine learning algorithms that are ultimately property of mostly for-profit companies. So where would I begin to envision a regulatory scheme?

Thankfully, I can reference the White House Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights that sociologist Alondra Nelson had a hand in crafting. I think that blueprint does a number of really great things, including emphasizing transparency, safety and effectiveness, potentials for the kind of discrimination that Catherine and I were identifying, and issues around data privacy. I appreciate that the document itself is forward-looking in that it contains a range of recommendations that are really hard to imagine enacting at this point and so push us to consider both future technologies and an ongoing project of not just building but also debating how to build a regulatory framework that can balance necessary protections along with the excitement of innovative new technologies.■

On the Job Market?

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THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTIONS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DANA KORNBERG

Dana Kornberg is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research, published in notable journals such as *Social Forces*, the *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*, *Local Environment*, *Critical Sociology*, and the *Economic & Political Weekly*, examines the processes through which urban institutions in India and the U.S. reinforce and reproduce cleavages of race, caste, and postcoloniality. Dr. Kornberg's ethnographic and qualitative research has focused on the politics of urban waste in Delhi, India, and water politics in Michigan. Her work, including a theoretical exploration of "practical legitimacy" in India's informal recycling sector, reflects on territorial stigma in urban governance and investigates resistance in contexts like the Flint water crisis. Her current project is a book manuscript titled *The Garbage Economy*, which is rooted in over 20 months of ethnographic research in Delhi and explores the persistence of informal garbage collection and recycling against threats from corporate waste management programs. To explain this, Kornberg theorizes the significance of "casted institutions," which form a basis for India's "caste capitalism," that state and corporate programs have trouble replicating. Kornberg's academic interests are driven by a critique of modern capitalist institutions and their impact on communities, culture, and the planet. Her research and teaching intertwine, shaping her commitment to social justice and transformative academic inquiry.

Dr. Gökhan Mülayim interviewed Dana Kornberg, focusing on her research and book project centered on the cultural politics of environmental institutions.

Gökhan Mülayim: *Thank you for joining us in this issue. I'd like to begin by exploring your journey into the field of cultural politics of environmental institutions. Could you share with us the story of how you became interested in this area of study?*

Dana Kornberg: Thank you for including me in this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to share my research with members of our section. My work theorizes the cultural politics of urban economic and environmental institutions. In particular, I have focused on infrastructures for waste and water because they connect diverse populations and, as large material projects, represent other social and cultural goals. I came to study these using the lens of economic sociology, which brought into focus their institutional elements, because of my training in economic sociology that taught me economic institutions have underlying social dimensions. My early interests were guided by my experience living and work-ing in Delhi before graduate school, where I met researchers and activists and came to understand urban environmental issues firsthand. Doing my Ph.D at the University of Michigan meant that I had the opportunity to study with some truly excellent economic sociologists, including Frederick Wherry, Greta Krippner, and Margaret (Peggy) Somers. These lessons joined with my training in environmental studies and environmental justice, South Asian studies, and urban planning. All of this came together to motivate my interest in looking at environmental institutions for water and waste as key sites where questions of distribution are informed by particular logics and practices. If we understand these as "cultural," we can also see how they cohere along racial, ethnic, and caste lines to justify the inequitable distribution of urban goods and services, like housing, water, employment, etc. Focusing on cultural politics helps us to understand not only that these patterns of distribution *are* inequitable and therefore unjust in their outcomes; it gives us the tools to trace *why* and *how* they are per-

petuated by locating the particular histories and logics that motivate and justify them.

G. M.: *Your upcoming book delves into the dynamics of formalization and the resilience of local communities, particularly focusing on their moral economy. Could you elaborate on the reasons and mechanisms behind their resistance to formalization?*

D. K.: *The Garbage Economy* addresses the case of attempts to modernize Delhi, India's systems for waste collection and recycling, which were entirely carried out within the informal sector, and replace them with public–private partnership (PPP) programs that introduced truck-based collection and incineration. Basically these programs introduced major capital from existing corporations, the government, and international organizations in order to try to appropriate household garbage as a source of profit. If it had been successful, it would have deprived hundreds of thousands of people in Delhi alone of their livelihoods and replaced recycling with incineration. The book looks at why this has not happened, expanding on an article published in *Social Forces* in 2020. There, I argue, this was not the result of social movements, as in the Latin American contexts that Manuel Rosaldo powerfully writes about, but was rather due to the fact that the new program could not outcompete the institutional realities of the informal collection system—and specifically its reliance on casted relations of servility, obligation, and responsibility. The book looks at the logics underlying the new programs, why local residents have continued using informal systems of garbage collection instead of formal PPP truck-based collection, and what makes the informal economy for garbage collection and recycling so robust.

Moral economies become relevant here because the two programs are structured by distinct institutions. On the one hand, the PPP programs aim for a familiar kind of modern capitalist standardization of operations, labor practices, financing, etc. The book identifies the particular social institutions on which these claims were grafted in the context of Delhi, particularly in terms of the

city's colonial past, postcolonial present, and upper-caste forms of expertise. It identifies how upper-caste officials and corporate actors drew on logics of postcoloniality and untouchability to replace the existing informal economy for recycling. On the other hand, it shows how logics such as casteist servility and community obligation structures the informal economy and creates robust forms of structure and legitimation. The result is two distinct institutional horizons and moral economies, which helps to explain why these formal programs have had only limited success in coopting or replacing the existing informal economy.

G. M.: *In your work, you introduce the concepts of "transactional pathways" and "casted institutions." Could you explain these terms and their significance in your research?*

D. K.: I use these terms to describe the particular relations, processes, and institutions that structure Delhi's garbage economy. Transactional pathways are useful because they invite us to consider what goes into various forms of exchange and what is

required in order to make a transaction successful. This can include particular logics, social positions and hierarchies, expectations, performances, etc. Coming from economic anthropologist Jane Guyer, the concept is useful because it has a historical basis and assumes forms of institutional hybridity that I would argue can be useful in any context, but is especially necessary in the context of informal economies. Transactional pathways operate at two levels: There is the practical or empirical level where a transaction actually takes place—for example selling used newspaper for money in Delhi's garbage economy. But it is the second level that becomes more important here, and accounts for how ordinary transactions relate to wider patterns of social reproduction. This is where casted institutions come in. If we consider the ways that transactional pathways operate, this raises questions of which actors and which groups get access to which things through institutions that structure possibilities for wealth and accumulation. On the other hand, which actors from which groups are prevented from accessing those things and therefore institutionally shut out from access to wealth and accumulation? In the context of racial capitalism in the United States, for example, these are questions that could be productively asked around cleavages of race and ethnicity. In India, caste is an overarching structure of social difference, which is upheld through identity formation, forms of discrimination, and, too often, violence. Looking at "casted institutions" contributes to the growing interdisciplinary literature and social movement concerned with addressing caste and casteism in South Asia today by identifying how caste continues to be relevant in Delhi's garbage economy and in urban South Asia more generally.

G. M.: *Your research is based on a rigorous ethnographic study of informal economies focusing on waste. I'm interested in hearing about your perspective and experiences concerning the challenges and advantages of engaging qualitatively with the informal economy in this sector.*

D. K.: I'll answer this question and also use it as an opportunity to speak to methodological and positionality questions that I think are always im-

portant to address. I was fortunate that Development Economics scholar Kaveri Gill had published an excellent book on Delhi's informal recycling economy around the time that I was conceptualizing the project. Although we have different subjects, her multimethod work usefully surveys a range of recyclers and offers data that quantitatively assesses their circumstances. My goal was to focus on Delhi's door-to-door informal garbage collection system as a de facto public service and examine how it was being affected by the new PPP programs. Rather than focusing on quantitatively-driven questions that would frame the informal economy as a population and/or balance sheet, I was interested in understanding how this space was iteratively structured by other forms of sociality, like migration processes, caste relations, gender, and religion—and how those were in turn affected by it. This required a qualitative, and specifically an ethnographic, approach. If that addresses the *why* of the qualitative approach, in terms of the *how* question, I was able to undertake this project because before beginning my PhD program I had lived and worked in Delhi for two years and had completed in masters in South Asian studies where I was fortunate to able to study Hindi as a second language. By the time I started this project, I had spent nearly 3 years living in India. That linguistic and cultural competence was essential for building relationships during fieldwork, where few people spoke English, and Hindi was a second language for many. I should also say that I was able to do this work because I had physiologically adjusted to so many of the difficult aspects of life in Delhi, which can be overwhelmingly hot, loud, crowded, and filled with air pollution and public misogyny. I was willing to live with this because I had already fallen in love with the city—its food, spring flowers, green parrots, layers of history, and even its proclivity for arguing—and had an existing support system. For this work, I was fortunate to be able to make connections with people through my network, and especially labor organizer Shashi Bhushan, who introduced me to people working in the waste collection and recycling economies. Throughout my time with these workers and their families, I was clear in understanding and

communicating, following the late Howard Becker, that I was on their side. Of course there were challenges, including that insurmountable distance between me as a white American studying at an elite institution who would leave manual garbage work behind while the informal collectors I worked with had few options. Still, the experience was tremendously rewarding, and I truly believe that for all of us.

G. M.: *As an ethnographer, how do you perceive the interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology and anthropology in your field of research, particularly given that interactions between these disciplines have intriguingly been limited for a long time?*

D. K.: This is such a great question. Especially in economic sociology, it is surprising that there isn't more overlap. I say that thinking about the fact that Karl Polanyi was himself an economic anthropologist, and Pierre Bourdieu also engaged in economic anthropology. Which is to say, some of the most drawn-upon theorists in economic sociology have produced famous work that we tend not to read in our discipline. Being a South Asianist means that it is impossible to ignore interdisciplinary work, and not only in anthropology but also history and geography. I think there is a lot of opportunity for economic sociologists to learn from economic anthropology, and in particular, that economic anthropology has much to contribute to those of us who work in the traditions of political economy and cultural–relational economic sociology, following Viviana Zelizer. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps the biggest one is the tendency in economic sociology to take for granted that economic institutions and organizations take particular forms. For example, when economic and sociologists engage in studies of firms and markets, it is difficult to avoid reifying them into the very economic objects that we as sociologists often seek to avoid. Economic anthropology can be helpful for getting us to look beyond the modern capitalist institutions of exchange, finance, and consumption to see them through more deeply historical and comparative frameworks. This means not only looking to other research sites, but more thoroughly absorbing Polanyi's insight

that "the study of the shifting place occupied by the economy in society is therefore no other than the study of the manner in which the economic process is instituted at different times and places." Economic anthropology puts this at the center of its work, addressing not only the historical and political circumstances in which economic processes are instituted, but the socialites and hierarchies of particular contexts. This has the potential to open up deeper questions that take seriously capitalist institutions but also go beyond the assumptions they contain.

G. M.: *Could you share with us what's on the horizon for your research? We would love to hear about your future plans and projects.*

D. K.: I am currently taking advantage of my good fortune having been awarded a one-year ACLS Fellowship to complete a full manuscript of *The Garbage Economy*, which is under contract with Oxford University Press. Alongside this, I am working on projects focused on Detroit, especially on residents' experiences with suburban water affordability. I am planning to begin a new project this year focused on the politics of Black-owned small businesses in Detroit—a majority-Black city where Black entrepreneurship has a long and vibrant history. Like the caste politics that structure Delhi's garbage economy, the history of Black-owned business in urban America shows us how structural deprivation can be consistently met with determination and ingenuity. I'm generally interested in understanding how Black small business owners understand their relationship to historical and contemporary institutions of racial capitalism, how they frame and navigate the competing values that motivate their enterprise, and through what measures they define success. The size and diversity of Detroit's African American community offers a rich context in which to understand how economic life is institutionalized in the context of racist divides and diverse approaches to Black liberation. Looking beyond this, I am interested in continuing my work on caste in Indian environmental and economic institutions and am also motivated to look at the global corporate recycling industry,

which is increasingly being understood as the greenwashing enterprise for the petrochemical industry that it is. One of the best things about being a sociologist is that you never run out of research ideas.∎

VALUE CAPTURE:
AN INTERVIEW WITH C. THI NGUYEN

C. Thi Nguyen is an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Utah. He works on trust, games, technology, intimacy, community, and the social and technological background of our reasoning and valuing. His first book, *Games: Agency as Art,* was published by Oxford University Press in 2020.

Michelle Rabaut, Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of Michigan, interviewed C. The Nguyen about value, valuation, and "value capture."

Michelle Rabaut: *Thank you for joining us for this issue! Your new article on "value capture" in the* **Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy** *critically examines key themes in economic sociology. Namely, you theorize processes of (e)valuation and the potential harms of "outsourcing" values to standardized metrics. Can you start by explaining how you define "value capture?" What counts as "value capture" and what does not?*

C. Thi Nguyen: Value capture happens when:

1. An agent has values that are rich, subtle, or inchoate (or they are in the process of developing such values).

2. That agent is immersed in some larger context (often an institutional context) that presents an explicit expression of some value (which is typically simplified, standardized, and/or quantified).

3. This explicit expression of value, in unmodified form, comes to dominate the agent's practical reasoning and deliberative process in the relevant domain.

Or, if you want a short version: value capture happens when a person or group adopts an externally-sourced value as their own, without adapting it to their particular context.

I'm thinking of cases like: going onto Twitter hoping for connection and communication, and coming out caring about Likes and Retweets. Starting to exercise for your health and well-being, and becoming obsessed with your step counts or lowering your weight. Going to school with a sense of curiosity—and coming out obsessed with your GPA. Or going into academia out of a desire to understand the world, out of love for wisdom, understanding, or knowledge, and coming out obsessed with the status of your publication venues, your citation rates, and the size of your grants. Groups and communities can also be value captured: A school district coming to target standardized testing outcomes; a law school can be captured by the *U.S. News & World Report*'s rankings. I'm interested in the gap between what metrics measure, and what matters.

Crucially, most of the literature in this space—which is full of fascinating stuff—focuses on the problems when metrics become incentive. But incentives aren't the same as values. You can be incentivized to chase a metric for purely instrumental reasons. I'm interested in describing the distinctive harms of the next, more intrusive step: When people internalize metrics and measures as their core values.

There are, for me, two general classes of value capture. The first is value capture in its purest form: When an agent changes how they would describe their values—e.g., when a dieter stops talking about health and just starts talking about hitting optimal BMI targets. We have some empirical evidence that this sometimes happens.

Even more common, I think, are cases of "proxy value capture." Those are cases where you don't change how you'd articulate your core value, but when it comes to a particular decision about how to act or how to evaluate something, you immediately turn to the metric. Like you may think to yourself that you care about writing good academic papers, but when you assess your papers, you immediately look at how often they've been cited.

M. R.: *What are the potential harms of value capture, and what institutional or structural dynamics contribute to it?*

C. T. N.: There's one tempting, and easy, route for somebody who was a knee-jerk existentialist as a kid, like me: that these are external values, not real values, so somehow inauthentic. But I have come to abandon this kind of dogmatic individualism, and come to think that our values are acquired socially, that we're deeply social creatures. And, a lot of value capture cases look wholly voluntary. People buy FitBits on purpose, as motivators. How could that ever be wrong?

My claim is that it's not merely the fact that a value has an external origin but that there is a particular form that institutional metrics and measures have, which makes them harmful to internalize as our values. And this is inextricably bound up with their function. Here I'm drawing on an incredible literature, much of it in science and technology studies, about the nature of bureaucracies and how quantification works in institutions.

Theodore Porter, historian of quantification, famously argues that quantification works in institutions through *engineered portability*. High-context information travels poorly between people with very different backgrounds. With institutional quantification processes, you typically see the isolation of a context-invariant kernel. That is, we strip off the nuance involved in high-context understanding, and create this comprehensible kernel that can pass through boundaries and be readily understood. Similarly, Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star argue that metrics depend on classification systems, which represent social and political choices about what to remember and what to forget—choices that are often made from the top and pushed down on

the users of the information system, and then get reified into background information infrastructure.

My claim is that values support the flourishing of individuals and small-scale communities when they can be adequately tailored to fit their specific local context and needs. But institutional metrics resist that tailoring, precisely because their institutional function depends on their being low-context, stabilized, and rigidified. So value capture results in taking on values that aren't tailored to your particular circumstance—your personality, your local environment, the local culture. Value capture involves internalizing values engineered at scale to meet the needs of low-context institutional functioning: low-context information transfer between fungible employees.

M. R.: *In order to work against or protect ourselves from value capture, you argue for "value federalism." Can you describe what this looks like in practice? Are there certain institutional arrangements that work in favor of value federalism?*

C. T. N.: So I don't argue that metrics are always bad. They are often necessary to serve the institutional function of organizing collective activity at scale. But exactly what makes them function well in that way—their stability and rigidity and decontextualized nature—makes them bad candidates for values for smaller-scale agents. So I end up suggesting that we should have value federalism for the same reasons that we have legal federalism. Some values are simple, clear, and best suited to large scale: carbon targets, vaccination rates. But individuals and small communities should avoid letting those large-scale formulated values dominate their own lives. We need space for both institutional values and local values.

I don't know exactly how to encourage value federalism. I do know that part of what gives institutional metrics their power is their pervasiveness. So steps to decouple small-scale evaluations from large scale ones are helpful. For example, I think the more I can do in the classroom to deemphasize grading and emphasize personal reasons for engagement, the more we foster value federalism.

M. R.: *You write about the importance of past sociological work informing your theory of value capture. How do you see your work expanding on the sociological scholarship that inspired you? Before settling on the concept of "capture," were you experimenting with any other metaphors to describe this process?*

C. T. N.: One of the key studies that helped in this work was Wendy Espeland and Michael Sauder's *Engines of Anxiety*, their landmark study of the effects of the *U.S. News & World Report*'s law school rankings on law school culture. They have incredible documentation of what looks to me like pure value capture cases—of prospective law school students starting to assume that their goal is just to get into the "best" law school, where "best" is straightforwardly given by the rankings.

The fact that value capture happens, the conditions under which it occurs, and its typical institutional consequence—I take this to be well-established by sociologists, anthropologists, and historians working in the space. I think I'm adding, with

my philosophical background, a couple of things. I think connecting this material with philosophical work on human well-being and flourishing can give a better picture of the harms of value capture. This is, for example, in the philosopher Elijah Millgram's work about our need to adjust and tailor our values to our own particular context, and Tal Brewer's work about the subtlety and specificity of value and the time it takes for us to really see the deep values in various activities. The sociological work helps me to draw the contrast between the slow and careful apprehension of subtle values and the process of tailoring and adjusting of values to our own needs, as well as the insensitivity and rigidity of large-scale metrics.

Right now I'm also working on connecting this stuff to the very rich tradition in the philosophy of law of thinking about the downsides of extremely precise rules and regulations, and how that might encourage automatic, unreflective action.

M. R.: *Science and technology studies (STS) is another field that has been influential to your work here. How do you see social media and other digital technologies reshaping, working against, or escalating processes of value capture? In other words, what is unique to value capture in the age of the internet?*

C. T. N.: STS offers a really incredible documentation of the cultural influence of quantification: from Porter and Bowker & Star to Mary Poovey's work recovering the origins of our modern notions of objectivity in 16th century Italian accounting, to Lorraine Daston's stunning work about the rise of algorithmic methods and rules and their relationship to cheapening labor. What STS has taught me is that what we're seeing is not new at all. It's the latest high point in a centuries-long move towards the consolidation of information at scale. What's new about digital processes is the ease and scope of that consolidation and the increasing pervasive availability of the measures. We've always had metrics and measures, but now you can buy a watch that updates those measures for you every second.∎

ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMICS OF PUBLIC POLICY: AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID PATE

Dr. David J. Pate Jr. is a visiting associate professor in the Departments of Consumer Science and Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS), School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is an expert on low-income African American men, fatherhood, and child support. Dr. Pate studies how Black men are affected by the social welfare system and the challenges that impede their ability to attain economic security. His research projects involve the use of qualitative research methods to examine life-course events of African American men and boys. Prior to entering the world of academia, Dr. Pate was a practicing social worker for 16 years in the areas of direct practice, administration, and policy advocacy. This professional experience has allowed him to develop an integrative approach to the analysis of his scholarly activities.

Erika Brown, Ph.D student at Texas Woman's University, interviewed David J. Pate Jr. about the intersections of public policy and poverty.

Erika Brown: *Pate, much of your research is around social welfare and poverty. Can you please tell us how you came to do this work?*

David J. Pate Jr.: Before joining the academy, I worked as a social worker in Chicago. Working as a direct service social worker for over fifteen years introduced me to a neglected corner of social welfare: poor, noncustodial African American fathers. Much attention has been paid to their partners, but they have been overlooked. In the mid-1990s monumental social policy reform ended "welfare as we know it" with the goal of helping unmarried mothers, a large share of them of color, achieve economic self-sufficiency. But the fathers, meanwhile, were largely ignored.

My research agenda includes a commitment to accurately and fairly represent poor, noncustodial African American fathers and the complex conditions in which they live. The challenges faced by the men I study are often undocumented or misrepresented, and I am part of a distressingly small number of researchers who are seeking to crack open doors into their lives. Furthermore, I was particularly interested in examining a parent's ability to take care of their children through a race and gender analysis for those with marginalized identities. As my career evolved over the years, moving from frontline social service delivery to social science research, each area of inquiry into these

men's lives has led to more questions. How are they affected by policy? What resources are available to them to improve their lives? What personal and societal barriers do they face? Since 2013, I have prioritized research that is collaborative and multidisciplinary, that targets policymakers and community partners as well as academics, and is informed by the perspective of the populations experiencing barriers and economic challenges.

E. B.: *You are leading an effort in a midsize city on the East Coast called Guaranteed Resources Optimize Wellbeing Study (GROW). Please tell us more about GROW's purpose, its constituents, and what you hope to accomplish through the program. Do you consider the program a universal basic income initiative, or something unique?*

D. P.: The main purpose of this study is to understand how additional financial resources support the wellbeing of the program participants. The participants are extended TANF (ETANF) or welfare-eligible participants with school age children.

This research study will help the city understand how additional income can support the wellbeing of extended TANF participants and their fami-

lies. The participants are in a program that provides a comprehensive set of employment-oriented services to those receiving public assistance benefits, including those who need specific help managing barriers to self-sufficiency. The participants in the program must be age 18 or older and ETANF customers. There is no cost to participating in the program. The ETANF program site served as our primary place of recruitment for the cash transfer (basic income) study.

The program enrolled 290 participants consisting of 51 randomly selected individuals who receive $500 monthly and will participate in both the qualitative and quantitative portion of the research study and 240 randomly selected individuals who will receive $50 dollars monthly and will only participate in the quantitative portion of the research study. Twenty of these 240 participants will be self-selected (volunteers) who will participate in both the qualitative and quantitative portion of the research study.

Our research study is part of a national movement to conduct unconditional cash gifts/guaranteed income programs to examine the impact of additional income on the physical, mental, and financial well-being of economically insecure parents and their children.

There are a few prominent centers leading the discussions and research on unconditional transfers/guaranteed income, such as the Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and the Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania (https://www.penncgir.org). These centers work to develop a common body of knowledge on unconditional cash transfers.

E. B.: *Can you please share insight into the funding source(s) for your research and how you were able to secure the funding for this initiative?*

D. P.: The primary funding source is the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) which is a federally funded block grant in the Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families, United States Department of Health and

Human Services that provides funds to states, territories, and tribes to administer to support services that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in under resourced communities. Tribes, territories, and over 1,000 local Community Action Agencies provide CSBG funded services and activities including housing, nutrition, utility, and transportation assistance; employment, education, and other income and asset building services; crisis and emergency services; and community asset building initiatives, among other things. Over 9 million individuals are served by CSBG-funded programs annually. The planned funding source is a combination of philanthropic and state and federal funds. In addition, we have secured private funds from a local private funding source. The current private funding source is from the city's Mayor's Office Fund.

E. B.: *In your literature review of the GROW study, you point to heightened surveillance that poor populations must navigate to receive support from various levels of government. How did you incorporate or address this reality in your research design?*

D. P.: Working with the Director Deputy for the city, we were able to procure protections from program eligibility surveillance while participants participate in this research program. All participants were notified by email and during the orientation/recruitment phase of the project that the cash received as part of this program is considered a gift, and not income. They did not need to report it on their taxes.

We received approval from the city Department of Human Services for a special eligibility waiver so the following benefits would *not* be affected by their participation in the project, and to exclude the cash received from being counted as income:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Medical Assistance

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

- The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Most of the public benefits they receive would not be affected. However, all potential participants were notified that there are some benefits (e.g. housing) that could be reduced if they participated in the research program.

E. B.: *What initial reflections do you have from working with TANF recipients in the GROW study?*

D. P.: The program is in its eighth month, and we are still in the process of data collection. We will conclude with all data collection in November 2024. Although we have not conducted any formal analysis of our data, our initial reflections are that many of these families are using the extra monetary gift on their children, household cleaning supplies, and paying off past debt.

E. B.: *Beyond your work on the East Coast, you also do research on Black fatherhood and*

child support. Can you please debunk any common misconceptions that you have uncovered through your research at the intersection of race, poverty, and fatherhood?

D. P.: The most common misconception I want to debunk is that Black fathers are not involved with their children. Many of the men who I study are fathers with children on cash assistance programs who are un/under-employed, and a portion or all their child support payment is garnished and retained by the state. This discussion requires another interview. The Child Support Services program (formerly the Child Support Enforcement Program) requires a much longer discussion because it is a complicated and complex program to understand.

E. B.: *You are currently teaching a family policy class. How do you incorporate the theories and frameworks from sociology, economics, social welfare, and policy that are required in such an interdisciplinary course?*

D. P.: I am teaching an undergraduate family policy class in the School of Human Ecology, HDFS department. I am trained as a social welfare academic, and I have previously worked as a social worker. Therefore, my professional and academic training has been interdisciplinary. With that said, I can only teach this subject matter by incorporating sociology, economics, social work, and public policy theories and frameworks. We are examining United States family policy (or the lack of) and its response to the needs of families in the areas of childcare, elder care, the child tax credit, and the family medical leave.■

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ON TEACHING AND DOING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY IN TURKEY: AN INTERVIEW WITH TUNA KUYUCU

Tuna Kuyucu is an associate professor of sociology at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Washington. His research areas include economic sociology, urban sociology, and the sociology of law. Dr. Kuyucu has conducted extensive research on the political economy of urban regeneration and low-income housing in various Turkish cities, with a particular focus on the case of Istanbul. His work has been published in journals such as *Urban Studies*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Urban Affairs Review*, *Nations & Nationalism*, and *Law & Society*.

Yasemin Girgin, Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Tuna Kuyucu about his research, doing sociology outside of the United States, teaching, mentorship, and the future of economic sociology.

Yasemin Girgin: *Thank you for joining us in this issue of Accounts. Could you tell us a bit about your story of becoming a sociologist? You work at the intersection of urban sociology and economic sociology. What prompted you to pursue a career in this field?*

Tuna Kuyucu: Well, it was a coming together of various events and happenings. I was a very good student when I was very young, then I was a pretty awful student when I was in my teenage years, then in college when I was in the sociology department I started to become really fascinated and interested in everything I was reading and learning. Boğaziçi University's sociology department is excellent in that regard in the undergraduate curriculum. As a person growing up in Turkey, with all the typical problems a teenage person would have in Turkey regarding gender, identity, nationalism, inequalities of various kinds, and so on and so forth, sociology became almost like Bourdieu says, a "martial art." It empowered me, opened my mind, and helped me understand many things about myself in the typical sociological imagination fashion of Mills—the connection of biography and history and making sense of personal troubles. That's how I ended up finding myself more and more involved in this department and the discipline. The place I was in (and where I am teaching right now) had a huge im-

pact on me. The professors, the general culture, atmosphere, student clubs etc. I just became fascinated with sociology.

On top of that, my father, who had a small factory in the leather business, went bankrupt when I was in my junior year. Until that time, I was probably heading towards working with my dad after graduation, which really didn't fit my personality very well, but that's kind of how I was envisioning myself, and how he envisioned me. His bankruptcy opened up more possibilities, and I ended up going into an exchange program with the University of Washington during my master's degree. UW was an incredibly stimulating environment. I ended up teaching in my second year in the MA program. I loved teaching. I am a very energetic, almost hyperactive person, and the interactions I had in the classroom while I was TA-ing gave me so much happiness, joy, and purpose, and the rest just followed. That's how I ended up in academia.

As for the topics of research I examine, that was kind of unconventional. Usually people have more of a sense of direction. I was going in and out of fields because I didn't really know what I was going to do. For a while I worked on nationalism, which was very popular in the 1990s in Turkey because all kinds of national categories or national presuppositions and assumptions were being questioned and I grew up in that environment. So in the be-

ginning, I did an MA thesis on nationalist riots in Turkey for a particular time period. But then I took some classes from the Law and Society program and started to become fascinated with the relationship between law and economy. I was always drawn to political economy and economic sociology. During that time, it so happened that the Turkish government led by Erdoğan and his party AKP started a really ambitious urban regeneration program. Seeds of that went back to 2004. They came into power in 2002, embarked on this in 2005, and passed numerous laws and administrative reforms, including urban regeneration, and specifically regeneration projects in Istanbul. Particularly in informal settlements in Istanbul. So I started working on this, which was the intersection point of law and legality, informality, property ownership, urban and economic restructuring, economic sociology, and spatial dynamics of it all. Being from Istanbul, I was inherently interested in the whole process. I ended up writing a dissertation that explored urban regeneration in Istanbul, focusing on two cases: a comparative study of two informal settlements. And that's how it all began. That dissertation ended up carrying me for about a decade of working on regeneration both in Istanbul and in six other cities in Turkey.

Y. G.: *Unlike many academics studying urban transformation, you have also published articles focusing on the failures of these attempts. What do you think makes unsuccessful cases academically meaningful?*

T. K.: So let me answer that in a little bit more of a comprehensive manner. What brought me to the examination of success and failure of certain cases was a deep frustration from what I was observing of scholars of urban regeneration not only in Turkey, but around the world. You look at urban studies journals and they are filled with, article after article, what people sometimes call "confirmation of theory." There is an accepted view that says the world economy is changing and neoliberalism comes with a package, privatization and liberalization of trade and financial flows, and the consequence of that on urban space gen-

erally happens to be urban renewal, regeneration, gentrification, and so on and so forth. People readily take this package and transport it from context to context and they look for confirming cases. When you look for confirming cases, you find confirming cases. It is a bias. So it is kind of like a circular argumentation.

After completing my PhD, I started taking questions of method and research design very seriously, because I had to teach a research design class. Before that I wasn't a methodologist. I started becoming aware of the double danger of sampling bias, especially when you work with only a few cases and do small N comparisons, historical-comparative sociology. What that meant in the Istanbul context is I looked at every study that was done on urban regeneration, and they all looked at the same few cases that confirmed the theory. But if you look at the universe of cases, you actually realize that the overwhelming majority of neighborhoods designated as urban regeneration sites never got completed. Most of them did not even start. And of the ones that started, the vast majority of them got canceled, either by court order, which is really in-

teresting in a competitive authoritarian country like Turkey—courts were deciding against the government—or due to social movements. People mobilized against the projects and the government didn't want to pay the political costs of it, so they canceled the projects. So, that became my next project. After writing about urban regeneration in Istanbul, I wrote about why it is not happening.

In another project, I did something kind of similar. I looked at regeneration projects across Turkey, and once again realized that a lot of projects that started in these mid- to large-sized towns in Turkey, where you expect them to work really smoothly and be completed because the theory makes you expect that, it did not work that way. And I constructed two projects that compared success and failure cases as controlled comparisons. Controlled as much as possible, of course, with small Ns. So I wrote a few papers that tried to theorize about the outcome. What explains divergent outcomes of similar cases or vice versa, what explains similar outcomes in divergent cases. That is the kind of thought-experiment I was engaging with. By that time, I was always within that small N comparative-historical sociology track and tried to construct those kinds of empirical or theoretical puzzles and generate explanatory frameworks around those puzzles.

Y. G.: *You teach courses like Political Economy of Housing, Social Change and Development, and Sociology of Finance. As a professor with multiple teaching awards, how do you design your courses? Are there any particular topics or readings that strike the interest of students and stimulate thought-provoking discussions?*

T. K.: First of all, I love teaching. It is a shame that the importance of teaching in academia is going down. With the publication and grant pressures, people do not put as much time and effort in teaching as they used to. But I do like teaching a lot. I tend to be a decent instructor because there is one thing that I can do: Motivating or generating interest in students for topics that they would not necessarily get interested in under normal circumstances. Why do I do this

well enough? Because I was a very bad student. Then I became a very good student. So, I kind of know what it takes or how you should approach a disinterested student.

Regarding the classes I teach, for instance Sociology of Development, among sociology students around the world and particularly in Turkey, there is almost a consensus among the student crowd, for a sort of left-leaning, socialist-influenced interpretation or explanation of underdevelopment and regional inequalities, global inequalities, etc. I start the course head-on by confronting this view using Steven Pinker; he wrote the book *Enlightenment Now*. The majority of that book is filled with all kinds of data that shows that actually free markets and capitalism work. So I present that data, and students automatically get emotionally invested in it. They want to disagree, which is very normal. One thing I know is to get people interested in anything, student or otherwise, you have to get them emotionally invested. Once you are able to do it, then the rest follows. David Hume said it 300 years ago: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions." So what he playfully was trying to do is say that we think through emotions, and then reason comes. Of course, the task of a scholar is to make reason the prime force that guides you. But emotions always creep in, so why not use that in a productive way? So, you get the students emotionally interested, and then the rest follows. You present Steven Pinker and they are like "What," and then you ask them, "So why do you think this is the case? Why do you think you thought otherwise? Why do you think this guy is writing like this? Where is the evidence? Let's look at the evidence that you have." That automatically gets students interested in data and empirical research. All kinds of interesting things follow afterwards. I use a lot of outside resources, like data I gather from the Our World in Data website, the IMF, the World Bank, and those kinds of resources. And again, students are very hesitant about using "World Bank" or "IMF" data; they are evil institutions. But when you actually speak with data, join theory and data in a meaningful way, and tell them, "Look, don't shoot the messenger. I'm just showing you the data, and you have the right and all the time in your adult life to deliberate on these kinds of things, but just listen." And they do.

I try to fight against confirmation bias and availability bias that people have. We all have it. All my life I have been struggling with these in different contexts, and now I make my students struggle with these. In Sociology of Finance, for example, what is the common sensical or general view of markets? They are evil. Especially after 2008 when world financial markets collapsed. And then when you present to the students all the incredibly important and productive things that financial markets have done and still do for humanity, for example, without banks how would anyone take a loan and live a meaningful life? You would go to loan sharks, or you would go to in-group members, your family, and neighbors. What is there to stop them from exploiting you and putting all kinds of obligations on you that actually restrict/limit your life? This used to be the case for a very long time in human history. Modern banks actually mediate between savers and people who need money either for consumption or investment purposes.

Once you start explaining things to students that they have not been expecting, it really opens their eyes. Of course there are emotional stages when you confront that kind of counter-information. First is anger and denial. Then comes—if the person is invested, or they might just say whatever and stop coming to class, but that rarely happens in my case—trying to convince me that I'm wrong. Then comes the "Hmm" stage, and then comes "depression" after realizing that what you thought may not be actually what is. Then comes liberation: The joyful part of finding some balance and some new equilibrium in your inner-state when you can "not deny your past" but "use your past in your new state" to figure out a new position for yourself. And if that is not exciting and interesting, then nothing is. That is the purpose of life in my opinion: To learn, question, deliberate, and come to a new equilibrium and do the same thing over and over again and hopefully leave some mark behind you in the world.

Y. G.: *Economic sociology is a subfield that has intersections with many different fields and is very rich in terms of theoretical and methodological diversity. In what direction do you see the future of economic sociology?*

T. K.: Very good question. And I have a very opinionated answer. We will see the proliferation of work that uses experimental methods, network analysis, and agent-based modeling in economic sociology. I think that sociologists will engage in more conversations with behavioral economists and social psychologists.

Y. G.: *Let's talk specifically about your future research. Can you tell us about your current research plans?*

T. K.: I have moved away from small N research towards using larger datasets and quantitative methods. In the future, hopefully I would like to do more experimental research. In the most recent research I have conducted with a former student of mine, Turgut Keskintürk, who is a PhD student at Duke, we decided to work on nationalism. During that time, both of us read DiMaggio and Bonikowski's paper "Varieties of American Popular Nationalism." They had a ground-up approach about how people think about the nation. They used latent class analysis (LCA), and we decided to replicate what they did for the Turkish case and did a survey. LCA groups people's responses together based on their similarities and differences. We ended up finding four distinct ways in which nationalist ideas among the Turkish population are clustered together. We also included a survey experiment: a resource distribution task: "Suppose that you have 100 liras. How would you distribute it among two different individuals? Someone from your family and someone from your country, someone from your family and someone from around your ethnic group, etc." Next steps would be to have small groups, make them play public goods games, ultimatum games, etc. It was our first step towards integrating these methods of studying social dynamics in the context of Turkey.

There are two future research projects I have in mind. The first is about youth religiosity in Turkey. We know from some public research agency data and from observational data that religiosity levels among the Turkish youth is falling very rapidly. It is happening around the world, but Turkey is among the top five in the world in the

rate of decline of religiosity. But we do not know why and how it is happening. We want to conduct a survey based on their values, beliefs and practices, and do LCA of Turkish youth according to their understandings and practices of religiosity. More importantly, we want to generate panel data in the long run, because it does not exist in Turkey. Turkey does not have the kind of research institutes or research resources that the United States has, for example the National Study of Youth & Religion, or Add Health studies that have been going on for a number of years. These have incredible research potential because they track the same individuals for five or ten years, and see how their values, beliefs and practices change. Then you can model those changes based on their peer networks, parental relationships, the larger environment, sociopolitical events and changes, and so forth. We want to do that. Turgut and I's future goal is to generate something like that in Turkey.

The second project pertains to economic sociology, and seeks to understand what the Turkish population understands about economic models. There is a lot of talk about them in Turkey: People have very strong opinions about capitalism, socialism, welfare states and markets, governmental help, structural adjustment policies, EU, Worldbank, and IMF, etc. But these opinions are all over the place. So there is not a very coherent economic ideology distributed among the population. What would be really interesting to see, first to describe and then to be able to model and explain, is how these beliefs about different economic domains, areas, practices, and policies are distributed among the population and how they come together in individuals and among groups. How people's economic ideology is related to their understanding of fairness, in-group preferential treatment, universal fairness, universalism in general, etc.

I really want to be a different kind of sociologist than I used to be. I am not saying the old way was bad. It is just that I think it is time to change, and I think it is time for sociology to engage more with other disciplines and other ways of doing social science. The world is changing, and most sociologists are deliberately keeping themselves out of this new conversation. It is as if we generate our self-worth from our marginalization. I am not saying it

is entirely a bad thing, but I think what we need to do is to have more conversations with the other social scientists that are doing very interesting work.

Y. G.: *What advice would you give to PhD students on the job market?*

T. K.: The world is changing so fast everywhere, in every sector, including academia. I would not want to be in the job market right now; for sure, that is the first thing I would like to say. Refashion yourselves. Find a position that is a niche position right now, because in a decade or so, sociologists who can bridge those gaps, or structural holes as Burt and the network people call them, between sociology and other disciplines, such as cognitive and behavioral sciences, are going to find themselves in wonderful positions. They will be the entrepreneurs who make it big, and then others will follow them.

Y. G.: *This interview is particularly meaningful for me because I decided to become an academic thanks to your mentorship. Therefore, I am sure you would have important advice for young academics regarding mentoring. What should we pay attention to when advising/mentoring undergraduate and graduate students?*

T. K.: Let me start with the graduate students. It is a very difficult task. A mentor can play a hugely important role. What I found about advising at the graduate level is I think a mentor should be extremely clear and pushy in regard to methodology of the student's research agenda. Everybody has their research interests. They come in various shapes and forms. The mentor cannot shape the research interest of the person. You worked on a topic that I had no idea about: occupational inequalities in the TV-serials industry in Turkey. You got to the topic through various conversations we had in the classroom with me in personal conversations, but it is something that I did not know much about. But what I could do to shape your thinking in the thesis is take that general interest you have and force you to turn it into a researchable format. By researchable I mean a research "question" because

a lot of research questions are not questions. You need hypotheses, propositions, and methods to be able to answer the question. For that I think the mentor should be fearless and sometimes brutal—in a nice way, of course, not in the sense of crushing the person's ego. But maybe it takes two or five or ten rounds of back-and-forth, conversations, and written feedback so that the student finally reaches that point. Because otherwise what is the role of a mentor? I cannot tell you to read this and that and let's get back and talk about that. The mentor, I think, should have the ability to take the student's interests, their larger questions, and walk them through the process of turning them into a researchable format. I think that is what is needed. Graduate school can be difficult, strange, and sometimes very confusing. Having a more sociable role and providing emotional support is also very important, but I think the most important role is about the guidance.

It is a different kind of process with undergrads because five percent or even less end up as academics. In undergrad, you have a much more diverse crowd. You cannot academically support them all the time but what you can do is to be as open as possible about what awaits them after their time as an undergraduate student, which is in a protected environment, that is, the university. So I try to motivate my students to acquire "marketable" skills. I advise them to learn software, take technical classes on top of the typical sociological education, so that when they graduate, if they do not have a very stable, fixed path in front of them, these kinds of skills will make them more marketable in the pool of potential competitors in the corporate world, the NGO world, or anywhere that they go.▪

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Dr. Gökhan Mülayim received his Ph.D. in Sociology from 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, so-cial, 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 Boğazici University in Istanbul, Turkey.

Meghann Lucy is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her inter-ests 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 overaccumulation, that is, of hoarding disorder. In this work she evaluates the extent to which socioeconomic status of individuals and neighborhoods influ-ences how cities define, detect, and either treat or punish hoarding behaviors amongst residents.
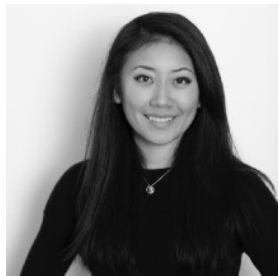
Ya-Ching Huang is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her re-search interests include economic sociology, culture, morality, health and health-care. Her dissertation project on pediatric palliative care hopes to understand how clinicians, parents, and policymakers ascribe meanings to the quality of life of children facing life-threatening or life-limiting illnesses. Through this research, she aims to reveal how these perceptions influence decisions about the involve-ment of pediatric palliative care, the coordination of care provisions, and access to care services. Additionally, her other research investigates the production and distribution of homemade cloth masks amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yasemin Girgin is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. She is interested in economic sociology, work & organizations, analytical sociology, and social psychology. She holds a B.A. from Middle East Technical University and an M.A. from Boğaziçi University, both in Sociology. In her M.A. research, she studied role diversification patterns and relational dynamics of inequality in the Turkish acting field. Currently she works on talent evaluation processes in creative industries, ideologically motivated urban transformations, and socioeconomic & political impacts of natural disasters.

Michelle Rabaut is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan whose work falls at the intersection of cultural and economic sociology. She is broadly interested in social media as a new technology of subjectivity, promoting certain forms of subjecthood while devaluing others. Her current research explores the cognitive and emotional labor of maintaining a social media presence and how this labor shifts across platforms and identities. Her past research has covered a range of topics such as urban farming, poverty governance, domestic violence, and sexual assault on college campuses.

Zhen Wang is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include organizational studies, financialization, sociology of banking, and sociology of risk. She received her B.A. in Accounting and Finance from Boston University Questrom School of Business in 2016. She then obtained her CPA and worked as a tax accountant for several years before returning to academia and earning an M.A. in Sociology from the University of Toronto. Her previous experience working for a public accounting firm and dealing with clients from the financial sector inspired her Ph.D. research, and she currently studies the behaviors of smaller regional banks in the U.S., particularly in terms of risky conduct, and how they both resemble and differ from big Wall Street banks that presently dominate economic sociology discourse.

Erika Brown is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Texas Woman's University. She is a community-focused scholar who interrogates the lived realities of Black people under the financial system in the United States. Erika earned a B.B.A in Finance from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.B.A from the University of North Texas in Marketing. Her work draws on her experiences as a Black woman, a twenty-year veteran of corporate America, and a former employee in the field of FinTech. Her research interests include personal finance, financial (mis)education, financial (il)literacy, and wealth inequality.