ACCOUNTS

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Colleagues,

It is an immense honor to open this issue of Accounts as the chair of the Economic Sociology section of the American Sociological Association. This position is a privilege and responsibility that I approach with deep respect for our collective work.

Our section represents an extraordinary community of scholars—diverse in perspectives, backgrounds, methodologies, and areas of expertise. Our members work across more than twenty countries—from China to Israel—spanning a variety of research topics, traditions, approaches, and concerns. This abundance is one of our key strengths. It fuels innovation, broadens the scope of our conversations, and enriches our interactions at workshops, seminars, and the annual conference. From examining local economic problems to global financial structures, we span disciplines and geographies, contributing to a uniquely insightful understanding of economic life.

This first newsletter is a testament to this remarkable community. It includes interviews with Ana

Alacovska (Copenhagen Business School), Aaron Pitluck (Illinois State University), Daniel Lobo (UC Berkeley), Letian Zhang (Harvard University), Jake Rosenfeld (Washington University in St. Louis), and Hatim Rahman (Northwestern University). These interviews would not be possible without the exceptional work of Accounts' dedicated editorial team formed by Erika Brown, Zhen Wang, Yasem-

in Girgin, Ya-Ching Huang, Allison Wigen, Joyce Ho, Jessica Urzua, and Ryan Fajardo. I thank them for their work.

As we move forward this year, I encourage each of you to continue fostering the connections that make our section vibrant and impactful. Let's engage actively with one another's work, share insights that bridge divides, and amplify voices that bring new and vital perspectives to our field. In other words: let's keep making our community lively and large. Invite students and colleagues to join!

Thank you for being part of this inspiring collective.

Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra■

ON CREATIVE WORK AND LABOR: AN INTERVIEW WITH ANA ALACOVSKA

Ana Alacovska is an Associate Professor of Sociology of Culture at Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. Her current research agenda is driven by a commitment to empirical and theoretical critiques of established notions of precarity, hope, and care in creative labor, focusing on local practices within Africa's creative industries (notably Ghana) and global digital gig platforms. In collaboration with cross-European research teams, Alacovska is also investigating the role of the arts and popular culture in addressing global societal challenges and organizational dilemmas. Her work has been published in journals such as *Sociology*; *The Sociological Review*; *Work, Employment and Society*; and *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, among others.

Allison Wigen, a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University, interviewed Dr. Alacovska about applying the framework of relational work to creative work and labor.

Allison Wigen: Thank you for taking the time to share about your work for this issue of Accounts. Before we zoom in on your research, I am curious about how you define your work broadly. Your research is located at the intersection of economic sociology, cultural sociology, and the sociology of work. How do you position yourself and your research at that intersection?

Ana Alacovska: Indeed, my research straddles many disciplinary boundaries. In a way, it belongs to numerous disciplines without fully belonging to any one of them. This is because much of my work originates from a sense of not-quite-being-at-home in—and thus a deep irritation with—extant, typically Western, mainstream theories. In seeking a more intellectually stimulating explanation for the social phenomena I study, I explore a wide array of alternative perspectives. In doing so, I care about, but also render myself vulnerable to, a cacophony of voices and worldviews.

It's no surprise, then, that I often find myself identifying with the Simmelian "stranger"—the figure simultaneously very near to, yet distant from, a particular discipline; both a part of a community and never fully native to it. I relish this in-betweenness and consider it profoundly enriching. Fortunately, the business school where I work appreciates such intellectual liminality. Still, it can also evoke a sense of homelessness, meaning that I frequently unsuccessfully navigate questions of positioning, identity and belonging.

A. W.: Specifically, what drew you to focusing your research on creative work and labor?

A. A.: Creative work, especially theater and creative writing, was something I grew up with—something I have never questioned as an integral part of who I am. During the formative five years of my undergraduate studies (it was a different system!), I studied comparative literature. At that time, I delved deeply into the sociology

of literature and the sociology of culture, and everything began there. I saw fellow students facing serious difficulties securing paying jobs despite their exceptional creative talents, which left a lasting impact on me. Around the time I decided to pursue a Ph.D., studies in creative industries were beginning to emerge, and approaches to creative labor were still in their infancy. It was, in many ways, serendipitous timing, that creative labor could become a viable topic of study in sociology, and even organization and management, departments. I remember one of my early doctoral papers being desk-rejected by a mainstream sociology journal on the grounds that "creative industries are not an industry." Fortunately, a lot of things since changed.

A. W.: In your 2018 *human relations* article, you bring a relational work lens to creative workers' informal labor practices. How does this framework enhance our understanding of creative work and labor? How does relational work shape the ways creative workers manage these uncertainties in their practices?

A. A.: My interest in relational work began, as I mentioned earlier, out of deep frustration with dominant approaches to creative work that equate "work" solely with paid, formal, and contractual jobs. These approaches often treat extrinsic rewards, like monetary gain and stable employment, alongside certain transactional intrinsic rewards, such as passion or self-realization, as the only benchmarks for success. However, my fieldwork and interview observations stubbornly resisted fitting into this mold. I recall feeling particularly frustrated during the empirical study that led to my 2018 article because I couldn't get a straightforward, numerical answer from the musicians I interviewed about their fees for performing at events like wedding parties. They insisted, "It depends." The price they charged varied depending on their relationship with the client—a close neighbor, a cousin, and an anonymous customer, in their view, simply couldn't be charged the same.

In my admittedly desperate and likely abductive attempts to find alternative explanations, I came across Zelizer's ideas on relational work. This approach enabled me to reconceptualize creative labor as deeply enmeshed in webs of relational interdependencies, interpersonal considerations, and ethical commitments. I could then approach work as encompassing everything people do to sustain a livelihood and recognize that much of it involves the everyday cultivation, sustenance, and repair of relationships. Through such a lens, monetary gain becomes neither an exclusive nor dominant benchmark for success, and precarity is no longer solely defined by a lack of financial security or stable wages. A relational perspective allows us to remain attuned to a diverse range of alternative and informal often affective and care-oriented practices through which people blend considerations of intimacy and economy, and in this way cherish the maintenance of harmonious relational ties while also attenuating economic precarity. At the same time, a more complex set of power asymmetries and inequalities emerges, making these dynamics worthy of study. It is here that now I think mainstream theory can learn from indigenous theory that has long grappled with issues of relationality as the basis of economic self-interest. I am now exploring how an Afro-communitarian theoretical system—widely known as Ubuntu—can help us gain deeper insight into how people navigate and negotiate precarity through the continual management of relational duties to help others and relational rights to receive help when in need. A forthcoming arti-

cle in *Business Ethics Quarterly* delves precisely into this theme.

A. W.: You have since applied the framework of relational work to platform and gig work. How do relational dynamics specifically shape work experiences and outcomes in the gig economy? In the same article, you and your co-authors outline various relational work strategies that creative workers use to maintain autonomy in algorithmically-dictated gig and platform work. Can you describe some of these strategies, and elaborate on how they help workers maintain control and autonomy?

A. A.: This is yet another example of working from intellectual irritation. Early studies of gig work have rightly emphasized the predominantly de-anonymized and depersonalized character of algorithm-mediated work on online labor platforms. However, this conceptualization did not align with my initial observations in the field.

My interest in gig work on digital labor platforms emerged quite serendipitously. During my study of creative work in post-socialist contexts, I encountered many individuals—particularly graphic designers—who, among other income sources, relied on freelance work through platforms like what was then known as Elance (now Upwork). I remember arriving for a scheduled interview with a graphic designer at an apartment-turned-office, only to find a party underway celebrating a "face-to-face encounter with a long-term client from Elance." It became evident that a kind of relational disintermediation was occurring within a labor market otherwise mediated by impersonal algorithms.

Years later, my co-authors and I probed these initial insights further, conducting a full-fledged study of platform-based gig work, where relational work patterns strongly emerged—patterns overlooked by previous scholarship focused primarily on labor embeddedness and control. In our article on relational work in the gig economy in *Work, Employment and Society*, we examined how creative freelancers online intermingle relational and economic concerns in spite of heavy tech-based or algorithmic control. For instance, to counter irregular and erratic job commissions (often managed by opaque algorithms), gig workers seek to develop longer-term, more personal relationships with clients, thereby increasing the likelihood of repeat commissions and reliable pay. Such relational tactics also guard against 'rogue clients' on the platform who often withdraw payment. However, it became evident in this study that relational work can also have detrimental consequences, leading to overwork due to the significant amount of emotional effort gig workers expend on establishing and cultivating close relational ties.

A. W.: In your 2020 *Sociology* article, you call attention to the role of care and compassion in creative work. Can you elaborate on the shift from passion to compassion, and care-less-ness to caring, in creative industries?

A. A.: Care-full work has always been central to work in the creative industries. Artists have traditionally been as much other-centered as individualistic agents, with compassion being as important as the infamous artistic passion. Many artists have engaged in socially engaged arts, where the care orientation of their work is most pronounced. A significant number of artists, at least as part of their diverse income streams, identify as artist-carers who work actively to address social and economic ills within communities and neighborhoods. It was just that the studies of creative work would omit the discussions of these aspects as being of a lesser or negligible importance. Mostly perhaps due to the sociological assumption of the art-for-art's-sake principle as being the fundamental mode of structuring the economy of cultural production, we have predominantly focused our attention to investigating the tension between creativity/commerce and the economy/art in market-based cultural productions in galleries, art markets, music companies, advertising agencies and so on. We have overlooked the important instances when artists pursue not-for-profit care work through their artistic practices such as advocating social change, campaigning against climate change, working with patents or marginalized communities. The tension between social work and artistic work is central here, as more and more creative practitioners are

compelled by cultural policies to act as low-cost social care workers. Studies of creative work can do more to elucidate these long-neglected tensions.

A. W.: Can you share more about your thinking around hope as an informal labor practice? How can economic sociologists integrate the concept of hope into their analyses of creative work, and what value does this perspective add?

A. A.: My interest in hope emerged from the recognition that there is no true "post-precarity"; that is, there is no stable employment or high wages awaiting those who endure a "precarious" phase of low or no pay on the road to stability. Precarity has become the norm, and the long-term employment or high wages experienced by certain populations in the Global North are more of a historical anomaly. Most people in the world work precariously, and it seems that hope—as an informal, everyday and ongoing practice of cultivating the good life despite pervasive economic hardship and financial adversities—plays a vital role.

When hope becomes a central lens, the economic and labor practices people engage in are no longer efforts aimed at merely surviving nor attempts to attain celebrity status or disproportionate financial rewards. Instead, these efforts intertwine with ethical considerations, values, and deeply held beliefs about what it means to live well within the constraints of precarious work. Thus, focusing on hope, rather than on concepts, for example, like desire, expectations or aspiration, allows us to evaluate work in terms of how it fosters interpersonal bonds and a personally defined good life, rather than solely for profit or the attainment of 'perfect worker' ideals.

This perspective helps us move away from imposing our own (researchers') ideas of the good life and viewing creative workers as mere "dupes" manipulated by creative or artistic ideologies that entice them into self-exploitation through a "game of pretense" that disguises long-term economic interests in present-day disinterested (lowly paid or unpaid) artistic pursuits. Hope, I think, allows for a more affirmative approach to the study of workers' future orientations by enabling the researchers to take creative workers' own accounts of what constitutes the good life more seriously.

A. W.: What research methods do you find most effective for studying creative work and labor? What challenges might researchers face when studying creative workers, and how can these challenges be mitigated?

A. A.: Creative work has been productively studied through a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, providing us with a nuanced understanding of creative processes through ethnographic studies and insights into precarity via interview-based research. We have also gained valuable perspectives through mixed methods. However, I wonder whether we, as scholars of creative work, could also become more creative and embrace more innovative and participatory approaches. Recently, in my study of visual artists on gig economy platforms, I have been experimenting with arts-based and visual methods, incorporating interviews alongside visual representations of gig work experiences. Multimodal approaches could yield rich and novel insights into the emotional, affective and spatial dimensions of creative work, which are often overlooked in the monomodal registers of text-based or verbal approaches that we typically adopt.■

ON ISLAMIC FINANCE AND CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM: AN INTERVIEW WITH AARON PITLUCK

Aaron Z. Pitluck is a Professor of Sociology at Illinois State University, Visiting Scholar at the American Bar Foundation, and was elected to the Executive Committee of the International Sociological Association. Drawing on political economy and cultural analysis, his research interests center on financial actors, organizations, markets, and institutions, particularly in the Global South. His publications have explored professional investor behavior in equity and debt markets, and explored how moral and ethical norms, beliefs, and values constitute markets. His current project investigates how investment bankers, Shariah scholars, and the state are co-producing Islamic banking and finance, particularly in Malaysia. He served as guest editor for a special issue of *Current Sociology* in press, "Brokering Novel Concepts into Sociology."

Zhen Wang, a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto, spoke to Dr. Pitluck about his research on Islamic finance and its significance in explaining financialization and the state of contemporary capitalism at large.

Zhen Wang: What are the most important things you want other economic sociologists to know about Islamic finance? How does it shape our understanding of the relationship between finance and society?

Aaron Pitluck: That's a great question, but where should I begin? Islamic banking and finance is a moralized market competing with the conventional banking system. However, in contrast to other moralized markets, like kosher food products, Islamic finance is a large and global phenomenon with about $4 trillion dollars of assets under management. In Malaysia, for example, as colleagues like Ryan Calder, Daromir Rudnyckyj, and Lena Rethel have described, it has become a part of the popular culture and national landscape. Imagine Islamic finance billboards and skyscrapers complementing a diverse Islamic aesthetic. So, for sociologists accustomed to thinking of finance in terms of secularization and rationalization, or accustomed to thinking of neoliberalism in these terms, Islamic finance is a massive social fact orthogonal to these narratives that needs to be accounted for.

Another strong theoretical lineage within economic sociology is STS and material approaches, and this is where I think Islamic finance is particularly helpful for understanding potential relationships between finance and society. On the surface, we have the secular context of finance infused with Islamic imagery and exotic Arabic terms. But what do you find when you look below the surface at the legal contracts and financial procedures that make up these products? You'll find familiar legal contracts in startlingly unfamiliar places, being put to unconventional uses. Consequently, although lawyers, financial experts and regulators can readily interpret these novel things as financial products, they are nevertheless objects with distinctive financial characteristics and distinctive legal risks. So, on one hand, a *sukuk* is designed to be functionally similar to a corporate bond or treasury certificate, and *ijarah* home financing is designed as a functional replacement for a mortgage, but on the other hand, below the surface, these products are indeed saliently distinctive from the conventional financial objects found in finance textbooks and conventional banks' practices.

In my own research, I've documented how these new forms of finance are co-produced by the Shariah scholars and (often non-Muslim) investment bankers. What Islamic finance looks like, and whether it is substantively distinctive from conventional finance, is shaped by a power struggle between these actors that is shaped by variable organizational and regulatory contexts.

Islamic finance is also a curious case for thinking about financialization. If we understand financialization as meaning the increasing influence of financial actors, markets, and instruments on social life, then Islamic banking and finance is certainly a contributor to financialization. But it is also a variant with a bit of counter-financialization thrown in, in the sense that non-financial actors—such as religious scholars—and non-financial religious values and beliefs are incorporated into these finance activities and objects.

I don't know if Erik Olin Wright would have agreed, but I see Islamic finance as fitting into his Real Utopias project. Islamic finance shows that even capitalist social structures as durable as financialization are also malleable, and that regardless of our research interests, we should pay attention to research that views financialization as an endogenous variable. Islamic finance provides us with empirical cases for how large-scale institutional economic change is feasible, as well as how it is circumvented.

Z. W.: In your view, what is the significance of studying finance and contemporary capitalism from a postcolonial perspective?

A. P.: I think for those of us conducting research in the global South, the necessity to adopt a postcolonial perspective is simply more self-evident because the experience of coloniality is so recent, and neo-coloniality is our contemporary history. Moreover, postcolonial theory sensitizes us to the international division of knowledge production, and the importance of reading and citing local and regional scholarship in the South. Postcolonial theory is much more than good ethnographic practice, but on the other hand, it is hard to do good ethnography in the South without assimilating many postcolonial ideas.

Z. W.: Can scholars studying financialization in the global North also adopt a postcolonial approach, and if so, how do you suggest they start?

A. P.: Absolutely they can. Postcolonial theory reminds us of the violence and exploitation and domination imposed on countries by the colonial powers, and sensitizes us to the path dependence

and consequences of these arrangements in the present day. For example, sociology as an academic discipline was being institutionalized in universities during the high point of European colonialism. Although the classical sociologists took a variety of positions on empire and colonialism, nonetheless they tended to share that era's colonial episteme that bifurcated the world into the West and the Rest. We've inherited this cultural frame. You can still see it embedded in many of our theories and concepts, including in what constitutes our subfield of economic sociology, in distinction to the sociology of development, rural sociology, or economic anthropology. I think Gurminder Bhambra's *Connected Sociologies* provides both a poetic metaphor and a pragmatic methodology for what we need to do. We should actively seek to make theoretical and empirical connections between North and South, as well as periodically question the cultural framing of the disciplinary distinctions shaped by our founding colonial episteme.

One example is a book that I've assigned this semester, *Spiderweb Capitalism* by Kimberly Kay Hoang. She displaces our attention away from North Atlantic elites to study the entrepreneurial and brokerage role of elites in Myanmar and Vietnam. She conducted ethnographic interviews

to trace the interpersonal connections between elites in these so-called frontier markets, offshore finance jurisdictions, wealthy entrepot economies, and in wealthy countries. It's a groundbreaking book in ethnographically detailing the motivation of these actors so as to describe how and why capital can flow into countries with weak rule of law, endemic corruption, and weak states. So that's just one example of how scholars can better understand entrepreneurship, state-business relations, and sociology of law in the North, by studying its connections to the global South.

But you had also asked this terrific question about how scholars of finance in the North could start using a postcolonial approach. I think that you should always ask yourself, at least while you are experimenting with potential research questions, whether there is a historical legacy or ongoing connection between the financial actors, markets, and financial instruments that you want to study and the global South. If there is, what have our colleagues with experiences in the global South written about the topic? And whenever possible, cite people that you've learned from. Also, a lot of the hard work of connecting sociologies is conducted in international conference spaces. Sometimes this happens in ASA, but this is the bread and butter of the International Sociological Association, and particularly the Research Committee on Economy and Society, which is kind of equivalent to ASA's Economic Sociology section. You can check them out at RC02.org.

Z. W.: What do you see as the most significant advantages of using qualitative methods to study finance and contemporary capitalism?

A. P.: I first had to wrestle with this issue in my dissertation research. Like Erik Larson and Chris Yenkey, I was researching so-called emerging stock markets. I was interested in how professional investors in Malaysia made their investment and disinvestment decisions. Nearly everything published on this topic was in finance and economics journals and used econometric analysis of secondary statistical data.

This preexisting quantitative research was deep but not very broad because empirical advances were made by gaining access to expensive proprietary data, or merging two existing data sets, or utilizing new econometric techniques. It was hard for them to keep squeezing water from those stones. In contrast, I conducted ethnographic interviews with the investors and analysts working inside the financial firms. I spoke with brokers who sought to influence these investors. I attended roadshows organized by the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, and so on. And guess what? From day one I discovered things the earlier research hadn't seen, and heard interpretations and motivations unexamined in the literature. So, for me, qualitative research has been a real gift for uncovering social patterns missing or underemphasized or misunderstood in the finance literature. The real trick then becomes how best to continue a dialogue between the insights from my own research and these quantitative analyses in other disciplines.

Another advantage is that qualitative data is able to more richly capture people's interpretation of their world and their motivations for acting. For people like me who share this epistemological aesthetic, qualitative research can most convincingly explain causation. However, as we both know, many of our colleagues would disagree. In their epistemological aesthetic, qualitative research provides some interesting hypotheses, but causation can only be demonstrated by experimental studies, or as a second-best technique, using statistical analyses that duplicates this experimental logic. Fortunately, sociology is a big tent discipline that encompasses both epistemic communities. This allows us to discuss the same concepts and findings regardless of methodology in journals like *Socio-economic Review* and *Economy and Society*. This is the real strength of studying finance or economic life as a sociologist—that we aren't siloed into separate subdisciplines by methodological distinctions. I hope that we, as a subdiscipline, continue to support that.■

FAIRNESS IN BLACK AND WHITE: AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL LOBO

Daniel Lobo is a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Berkeley, Haas School of Business with specializations in political economy and the sociology of organizations and markets. He studies race/racism, political economy, and organizational inequality using qualitative, computational, and experimental methods. His work is forthcoming in the *American Political Science Review*. You can follow his research at: www.danielmlobo.com.

Erika Brown, a Ph.D. candidate at Texas Woman's University, spoke to Daniel Lobo about organization and political economy.

Erika Brown: Mr. Lobo, thank you for taking the time to share your research with us. Most of your work in your educational career has been related to organizations as sites of opportunity. As an economic sociologist, what excites you about the study of organizations and markets?

Daniel Lobo: My work as an economic sociologist centers on understanding: who gets what, and why, within our society? Organizations and markets are crucial to answering this question because they are the mechanisms through which resources and opportunities are distributed. What excites me most about organizations and markets is how sociological these entities are—they are deeply embedded in social networks and shaped by the culture that emerges from social interaction. The cultural dimension of organizations and markets helps unpack the barriers to upward mobility and the reproduction of inequality in our political economy.

Take, for example, the hiring process in elite firms. We often assume that hiring decisions are based purely on skills, but research shows that cultural fit often plays a crucial role, adding a layer of subjectivity to supposedly meritocratic processes. This cultural evaluation is central to understanding who gains access to top-paying jobs and, consequently, the persistence of income inequality. I am fascinated by how these cultural dynamics influence economic outcomes—whether in hiring, promotions, or even market exchanges—because they reveal potential points of intervention to reduce inequality and to promote greater fairness in our society.

E. B.: You have done research in the area of STEM and the inequality present in the field. How does this work fit into your broader research agenda?

D. L.: Once I arrived at UC Berkeley for grad school, I became fascinated by the field of data science, one of the fastest growing STEM fields. For the past three years, I've worked with my advisor, David J. Harding, on an NSF-funded project to study undergraduate data science education at scale across three colleges with different student populations. We focus on understanding the individual and institutional factors that contribute to inequality in this emerging field, which attracts a diverse group of students, including those from the social sciences, compared to other STEM fields.

In one study, we use administrative, survey, and interview data to document and explain class-based disparities in who voluntarily un-enrolls (or "drops out") from the introductory data science course at UC Berkeley, Data 8. In another study, we use student focus group data to identify the mechanisms that may produce greater feelings of belonging among underrepresented minority and low-income students in an identity-based program called Data Scholars. Most recently, I led a quasi-experimental diary study where we matched students in the Data Scholars program to similar students who did not participate in the program to compare their experiences in Data 8. Our goal is to unpack what kinds of early experi-

ences in the course lead to greater belonging, and to understand how belonging mediates longer-term student outcomes in the discipline.

Like my other work, this line of research focuses on the cultural aspects of educational institutions that shape inequality and either enable or constrain social mobility. I see universities and workplaces as critical sites of opportunity. Understanding inequality in data science education is particularly important given the projected growth and earning potential of data science careers. Who gains access to these opportunities will ultimately shape broader inequality in our political economy.

E. B.: In your dissertation you are working through a concept called "culture add" vs. culture fit. How do you define "culture add," and how do organizations use ambiguous criteria and expectations to uphold systems of inequality within elite labor markets?

D. L.: I am still in the early stages of my dissertation research, but one of my goals is to document what "culture add" hiring means in theory and in practice. While the academic literature on "culture add" is almost nonexistent, it is a term frequently used by employers. From my conversations with hiring managers, I've gathered that "culture add" involves seeking candidates who bring something new to the existing company culture—whether that's new skills, values, or a different work style—unlike "culture fit," which emphasizes alignment with the current culture. However, this simple definition raises questions about what kinds of attributes are considered additive versus not, and under what conditions.

Previous research in sociology and management has shown how the subjective nature of culture fit assessments can lead to disadvantages for candidates from marginalized groups. Researchers such as Lauren Rivera and Emilio Castilla have found that evaluators are more likely to act on their biases and prioritize fit over other skills and qualities needed for the job. Moreover, research on tokenism has shown that women and racially marginalized group members are less likely to be deemed a cultural fit in various settings and thus experience worse outcomes. I'm intrigued by the

potential of "culture add" hiring to mitigate some of these biases. Part of my dissertation will involve using an experimental approach to see if we can infer a causal effect of culture add hiring on the likelihood of hiring an underrepresented candidate (once I get a better grasp of what "culture add" hiring is!).

E. B.: You have a forthcoming manuscript where you and your co-author, Dr. Ryan Brutger, discuss the varying ideals of fairness between Black and white Americans. How do you describe fairness in the context of your study?

D. L.: We present two conceptions of fairness from an original nationally representative survey experiment. First, independent of the substantive issue of trade policy, we asked respondents, "which of these comes closest to capturing what fairness means to you?" The answer choices were: (1) Treating everyone equally; (2) Rewarding those who contribute most and work hardest; and (3) Helping those most in need so they can have the same opportunities as everyone else. We find that Black respondents are five percent more likely than white respondents to choose (1) Treat-

ing everyone equally, and 3 percent more likely to select (3) Helping those most in need. These differences are, if we combine them, jointly statistically significant. Thus, we show that there is some fundamental difference between how white and Black Americans consider fairness, on average.

Second, as part of the survey experiment, we present respondents with a fictitious trade agreement between the U.S. and another unidentified country where we randomly vary the level of concessions that each country makes. We group the different concession arrangements into the categories of: (1) equal agreement; (2) favorable to the U.S.; and (3) unfavorable to the U.S. We then ask respondents to rate how fair they think the agreement is on a five-point scale ranging from -2 for very unfair to 2 for very fair. We show that when considering trade policy, white Americans demonstrate an asymmetric fairness lens, on average. This means they consider equal trade agreements to be most fair, followed closely favorable agreements, while considering unfavorable agreements to be unfair. Meanwhile, Black Americans demonstrate a principled fairness lens, on average. This means they consider equal trade agreements to be fair, while showing no difference in fairness appraisals between favorable and unfavorable agreements.

E. B.: To understand if there were differences in fairness based on race, you used tariff agreements as the basis for the respondents' views on fairness. What, if any, explanations did you offer related to tariffs because it would seem that tariffs are a topic of discussion not part of the typical American discourse?

D. L.: This is a valid concern, as recent polling from Pew Research indicates that about 40 percent of Americans demonstrate a reasonable understanding of tariffs. With this in mind, we simplified our experimental prompt, explicitly defining a tariff as "the tax charged by the American government on foreign goods entering the United States." By keeping the prompt straightforward, we aimed to make it easy for respondents to compare two numbers—the U.S. tariff reduction versus the other country's reduction—and determine the relative favorability of the agreement. This allowed us to measure perceptions of fairness without requiring detailed prior knowledge about tariffs.

E. B.: Your work offered several interesting findings on fairness based on race and political leaning. Which of the results surprised you the most and for what reasons?

D. L.: I would say there were at least three results that surprised us most. First, is the main finding of an interaction effect between the self-reported race of our white respondents and the equal (0.528, $p<0.01$) and favorable (0.599, $p<0.01$) treatment conditions of our experiment. The magnitude of these interaction effects are fairly large given the five-point scale of our fairness measure. This result is surprising because existing theories of trade found in international political economy revolve around economic vulnerability, rather than race. More recent theories that do consider race predict that Black Americans will exhibit greater trade protectionism because they tend to be in more precarious jobs that are more susceptible to outsourcing. Our finding of a statistically significant interaction effect between our treatment and the self-reported race of our respondent is important because it shows that race exhibits its own independent effect on fairness and trade policy preferences. We hope that our paper creates space for future work examining the effects of race and racism in (international) political economy.

The second surprising result is that these interaction effects remain robust even when controlling for national attachment. Recent research by Diana Mutz and colleagues suggests that national attachment can lead individuals to favor policies that prioritize national economic interests, which often translates into greater support for trade protectionist measures. This idea contrasts with other motivations, like economic self-interest or anxiety about out-groups, highlighting the psychological and social components behind trade preferences. Our results support the idea that racial identity influences fairness perceptions beyond nationalistic mo-

tivations, highlighting the distinct impact of race on attitudes toward trade.

The third surprising result is that we still observe an asymmetric fairness outlook across political party affiliations. Democrats have traditionally supported policies that promote free trade agreements in order to strengthen international relations and economic ties, while also emphasizing labor and environmental standards within those agreements. Republicans, especially in recent years, have taken a more nationalistic stance, focusing on protecting domestic industries and reducing the trade deficit. Given that over 80 percent of Black Americans identify as Democrats, many readers questioned if our results were driven by Democratic party affiliation. However, we find that white respondents who identify as a Democrat or a liberal still exhibit an asymmetric fairness outlook, although to a lesser degree than white Republicans or conservatives.

E. B.: What assumptions, if any, can we make about how racialized notions of fairness apply to perceptions in areas other than trade like education, for example?

D. L.: Given our results, I think we can safely assume that Black and white Americans, on average, will not hold the same meaning of fairness in other issue areas. We argue in the paper that our theoretical framework of asymmetric fairness among white Americans, conditioned by a privileged position in white-centered American society, and principled fairness among Black Americans, conditioned by the subjugation of systematic racism, should extend to other issue areas beyond trade. Testing if this is indeed the case is the empirical challenge of future work. My co-author and I are currently working on future studies of racialized fairness in the areas of redistribution policy, foreign direct investment, and immigration policy.

E. B.: What can we look forward to you studying in the future?

D. L.: In the near future, you can look forward to results from my dissertation research on the causes, contours, and consequences of "culture add" hiring at elite firms! I'm also working on a collaborative experimental project that seeks to understand how different diversity characteristics (e.g., race, gender, class, etc.) are weighed in the hiring process and how this is mediated by the size and composition of both the hiring team and the applicant pool.

In the longer term, I plan to shift my focus to the labor supply side, examining the experiences of upwardly mobile professionals entering elite fields. Inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Annette Lareau, Jennifer Morton, Tony Jack, and others, I want to explore how these professionals navigate cultural boundaries, balance personal identity with demanding careers, and understand the social consequences of upward mobility. My goal is to shed light on the complexities of mobility beyond economic success, focusing on the social experiences of individuals striving to fit into elite professional environments and lifestyles.■

SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH LETIAN ZHANG

Letian Zhang is an Assistant Professor at Harvard Business School, where he studies cross-national variation and social inequality. His current research seeks to understand (1) how the culture and politics of different countries influence their firms' investments in human capital, and (2) how firms' job design choices shape workplace inequality. He has a Ph.D. in Sociology from Harvard University and a B.S. in Mathematics from Stanford University.

Yasemin Girgin, Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University, talked to Dr. Zhang about his career path and current research.

Yasemin Girgin: Thank you for joining us in this issue. Could you tell us a bit about your story of becoming an economic sociologist? What prompted you to pursue a career in this field?

Letian Zhang: Thank you for having me! I've always been interested in the social world and curious about how it works. When I started my Ph.D., I had a lot of different interests—from culture to demography. At first, I planned to work with Nicolas Christakis on computational sociology and networks, but after he left Harvard for Yale in my first year, I started looking into other areas. Gradually, I was drawn to economic sociology, especially because some of my favorite sociologists, like Mark Granovetter, Ron Burt, Ezra Zuckerman, Joel Podolny, and Frank Dobbin, who later became my advisor, are in this field.

Y. G.: You studied mathematics before becoming an economic sociologist. Could you tell us whether and how having a foot in both worlds has benefited you?

L. Z.: Honestly, I'm not sure a math background is all that crucial for sociology, unless your research focus is methodology. What math did for me, though, was give me confidence in handling numbers. I learned statistics and various computational tools during grad school and as a faculty member, and having a math background definitely helped me feel more comfortable learning those skills. That said, I don't think math directly played a role in the core of my work. You don't need a math degree to come up with a clever causal identification strategy, and running computational tools doesn't require being a math expert. That being said, I have no regrets about studying math in college.

Y. G.: You effectively illustrate in your *ASR* article "The Changing Role of Managers" that the growth of the managerial class reflects a shift in their role from supervision to collaboration, driven by increased task complexity and an emphasis on worker autonomy. As organizations move away from bureaucracy, managers now focus more on coordinating and collaborating across units rather than directly overseeing employees. This shift has important implications, particularly concerning the potential exacerbation of inequality, as you have indicated. What measures could be implemented to mitigate these disparities as this new organizational structure continues to evolve?

L. Z.: As sociologists, we tend to be a bit skeptical of corporations and their motives. Most of the papers published on firms focus on their negative impact on society. But in reality, I think there's a lot more variation. In this case, I believe the changing role of managers has generally been positive for workers. It gives them more autonomy in the workplace. The downside, though, is that it puts middle managers in a tough spot. They're expected to deliver results while also giving workers more empowerment, so they end up being squeezed from both sides.

For this paper, I also interviewed many managers to get a sense of their experiences. I recognize there's a lot of variation across different firms and industries when it comes to the role of managers. What I'm presenting in the paper reflects more of a general trend, but I think it's important to be cautious about applying it to every individual situation.

Y. G.: In your recent *ASQ* article you show that a society's level of social trust significantly influences employers' hiring strategies, with higher social trust leading to a greater focus on applicants' foundational skills and potential rather than advanced skills. What implications do you see for the innovation and adaptability of the workforce in contexts with differing levels of social trust?

L. Z.: Understanding why labor markets vary across countries has been a central question in social sciences for quite some time. Economists focused on development often ask why some countries progress more than others, while comparative sociologists explore how labor institutions develop differently across regions. Our approach zooms in on the idea of long-term versus short-term thinking in different labor markets. In some markets, employer-employee relationships feel more like short-term transactions, while in others, they're viewed as long-term partnerships. We believe these different perspectives influence how employers hire, train, and utilize workers, which has important implications for long-term success and economic growth.

In this paper, we're looking at one potential reason for these differences: trust. We think a country's level of generalized trust plays a key role in shaping whether labor markets adopt a short- or long-term approach. To explore this, we ran several tests to build a stronger case for a causal link between trust and long-term orientation in hiring. Of course, understanding the factors behind varying levels of trust is a whole separate conversation with its own rich literature.

Y. G.: What is on the horizon for you? Would you tell us about your future research plans?

L. Z.: Lately, I've been thinking more about culture on a broader, societal level. Since cultural changes tend to happen slowly, I've been using cross-country comparisons and historical analyses to identify variations. The cross-country comparisons help me explore cultural differences between societies, while historical analysis allows me to study long-term changes. I feel lucky to be working at a time when so much data is becoming available—especially with the digitization of historical documents, which is creating fascinating new datasets. Even though the bar for empirical rigor has gotten higher, we now have the tools to tackle so many more interesting questions.■

BOOKSHELF: AN INTERVIEW WITH JAKE ROSENFELD ON *YOU'RE PAID WHAT YOU'RE WORTH*

Jake Rosenfeld is Professor and Chair of Sociology and Resident Fellow of the Weidenbaum Center on the Economy, Government, and Public Policy at Washington University-St. Louis. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Princeton University. His research primarily focuses on labor market inequality and workplace dynamics in the United States and other advanced economies. Dr. Rosenfeld is the author of *You're Paid What You're Worth And Other Myths of the Modern Economy* and *What Unions No Longer Do*, both published by Harvard University Press. Currently, Dr. Rosenfeld is completing studies on pay transparency and its connection to gender pay gaps, as well as an investigation into public sector unions in the post-Janus era.

Jessica Urzúa, a Ph.D. student in Sociology and Social Policy at Harvard University, interviewed Dr. Rosenfeld about his latest book, *You're Paid What You're Worth And Other Myths of the Modern Economy*.

Jessica Urzúa: Thank you for contributing to the Fall issue of Accounts. First, congratulations on the publication of your book, *You're Paid What You're Worth And Other Myths of the Modern Economy*. What inspired you to write this book? Why did you feel it was important to challenge the notion that people are paid what they're worth?

Jake Rosenfeld: Thank you—and thanks for the invitation to this forum!

A throughline connecting all my work is a focus on pay determination. I've always been fascinated by the disconnect between common lay and academic accounts of why we get paid what we do and the actual, messy work of assigning a wage or salary. So, in this book I hope to highlight the gaps between the stories we tell ourselves about pay and the actual processes shaping our pay distribution.

J. U.: How did you arrive at the four-element model (power, inertia, mimicry, and equity concerns) to explain pay-setting processes in the modern economy?

J. R.: I'd love to tell you that I arrived at the formula through a rigorous, well-organized, and disciplined process. But that wouldn't be truthful.

I started with a belief shared by many that the traditional human capital model of pay—the theory holding that the number on your paycheck reflects your marginal productivity—had limited explanatory power. I want to be clear here: productivity matters! Human capital and your subsequent performance are not irrelevant to pay. For starters, your skills and relevant expertise help you get hired for a position in the first place. But once you're in the door, the relevant skills and experience you bring to a job is just one factor among others influencing your share of the pie.

From my earlier work on labor unions, I learned that power was central to pay determination, and indeed power is fundamental to the account I lay out in the book. Power is largely absent from the traditional human capital model of pay, so I knew that part of the book would involve incorporating power dynamics to help us understand wages and salaries.

More recently, there has been a flourishing of work at the intersection of various disciplines that takes organizations and organizational-level dynamics more seriously. I am indebted to this work, and especially to the relational inequality theory that Dustin Avent-Holt, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, and their various collaborators have laid out over the years. This theory holds that organizations are the central sites of inequality generation, and therefore our attention should be on processes within organizations that shape pay outcomes.

Once you shift your attention from individual-level factors to the organizations in which workers are embedded, a lot of fascinating dynamics come to light. And this refocus proved vital to the development of the other central elements of pay determination I expand upon in the book: inertia, mimicry, and equity.

In terms of the role of inertia, for many of us, the overt fights over pay occurred prior to our arrival at our workplace. Upon hire, we're told either exactly what the position pays or offered some (usually small) room to negotiate. This is inertia at work—a property of organizations where decisions about what a position pays were determined in the past. In this way, pay attached to a particular job assumes a "taken-for-granted-ness."

And inertia at one organization often leads to mimicry by others. Mimicry describes a common process through which your employer pays the going rate for your position—it's what's going on when your boss says that the organization "pays the market rate." Invoking "the market" can conjure up images of implacable forces beyond human control. For me it's more accurate to think of this process as firms simply copying their peers.

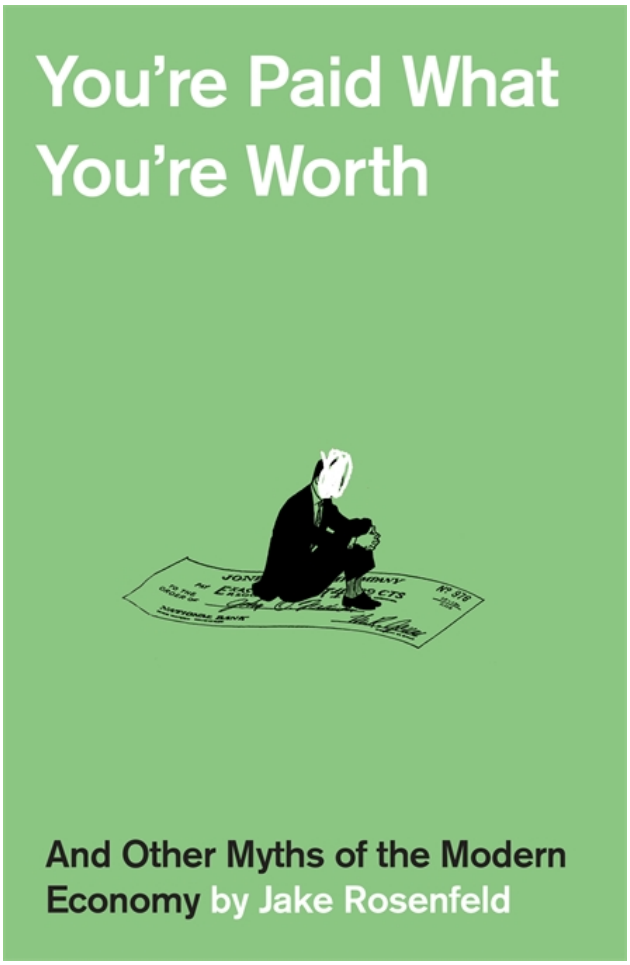
Mimicking one's peers can help to maintain a notion of equity among workers. Equity—the notion of paying fairly—can affect pay determination in a number of ways. I'll note just one because I've already gone on too long. Research going back decades—and I mean many decades—finds that workers tend to believe they are better than most of their peers at their job. We seem to think we're all above average at work. This tendency causes problems for managers who would like to differentiate pay based on some measure of individual productivity. Doing so would upset many of us who believe—correctly or not—that we are more productive than our peers. As a result, most employers don't try it.

J. U.: Your analysis involved collecting original survey data from workers, as well as senior human resources managers and other pay-setters, to understand their beliefs about pay determination. Why do you think there has been a lack of data on the beliefs of workers and pay-setters regarding how pay is determined?

J. R.: I really do believe that questions about pay determination didn't interest many survey researchers because so many didn't think there was anything to question. That is, a widespread belief that pay is based on individual performance—a core finding from my book—likely reduced researchers' motivation to include items asking about what determines pay on their surveys. One prior international effort stemming from the early 1990s did ask individuals to weigh various potential determinants of pay, and the main finding was how important people believe their performance is to the number on their paycheck. My updated surveys find the same thing. My book is why this account is wrong.

J. U.: One of the key arguments in the book is that pay is shaped by power, not just by individual performance or merit. How would you describe the dynamics of power in today's labor markets? How can addressing these power relations reduce large disparities in pay among workers, particularly among those performing similar jobs?

J. R.: As work by Nate Wilmers, Arin Dube, and David Autor has documented, for the first time in my lifetime, inequality is falling. We're just now beginning to understand the dynamics accounting for this unexpected reversal, but I do think the account laid out in the book can shed some light on it. For starters, aside from the initial period of COVID, we've been operating at record low unemployment rates for some time now. Tight labor markets shift power to workers, who can credibly threaten to leave should their employer not meet wage demands. Meanwhile, we've seen mimicry at work as well, such as when dominant industry players—think here of Walmart, once the poster child of rock-bottom pay—shifted course and began ratcheting pay upward (a bit). Competitors soon followed suit, with the result being gains in real wages for workers at the bottom of the wage distribution.



How long these dynamics will last is obviously unknown. But today's labor markets—and the underlying forces driving pay within them—have shown us how important shifting power dynamics can be toward narrowing income inequality.

J. U.: How do you hope policymakers, firms, and workers will respond to the findings and arguments in your book?

J. R.: Aside from buying it in bulk?

In general I've been pleasantly surprised by the reactions to the book. There does seem to be an appetite among many to move beyond individual-based explanations for pay, and an appreciation for the account I lay out. I've been especially surprised by the reaction of many pay-setters I've encountered both during the book writing process and post-publication. Many have remarked about how hard setting pay is—how they often feel like they are operating without much guidance—and have asked for some advice. This is not a "how-to" book but at least I can provide an account that justifies their confusion! I have come to appreciate just how hard pay-setting is.

J. U.: While researching and writing this book, were there any unexpected challenges or surprising insights that shifted your perspective or approach?

J. R.: COVID-19. Toward the end of the writing process the pandemic hit, and for a while corporate leaders, elected officials, and pundits urged us to applaud our essential workers. Suddenly the home healthcare aide tasked with keeping our elderly engaged and alive, the grocery worker keeping our kitchens stocked, and the truck driver ensuring the grocery worker has anything to offer us were receiving long-deserved recognition.

That's worthy, of course. But these workers deserve so much more, including living wages and decent benefits. The pandemic illuminated how too many workers had been underpaid and underappreciated for too long.

J. U.: Looking ahead, are there areas of pay determination or labor market dynamics that require more attention or study? What is next for your research?

J. R.: A team of us has just wrapped a related project on information sharing at work, where we focus on the salary taboo and try to unearth the factors determining whether workers will talk about pay with their colleagues. I must say it has been a ton of fun learning about pay talk and discussing our findings with people, because it's a topic that can generate a lot of strong feelings.

I've also assumed my term as chair of my department, where for the first time in my life (aside from determining my child's allowance), I actually have some say in determining pay. This, I must confess, isn't so fun, but it's been fascinating to try and apply insights I gained from writing the book to the real world. I'll have to report back about whether this process proves successful. Or you could ask my colleagues (please don't).■

BOOKSHELF: AN INTERVIEW WITH HATIM RAHMAN ON *INSIDE THE INVISIBLE CAGE*

Hatim A. Rahman is an Associate Professor of Management and Organizations and Sociology (by courtesy) at Northwestern University. His research investigates how sociological theories of work and control are changing with the introduction of new technology in organizations and labor markets. Prior to joining Northwestern, Dr. Rahman received his Ph.D. and Masters in Management Science and Engineering from Stanford University.

Ryan Fajardo, a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Northwestern University, spoke to Dr. Rahman about his book *Inside the Invisible Cage: How Algorithms Control Workers* (University of California Press).

Ryan Fajardo: Your book title references Max Weber's "iron cage of bureaucracy." Could you explain the concept of the "invisible cage of algorithmic control" and how it differs from Weber's original metaphor of the iron cage?

Hatim Rahman: My book argues that organizations, particularly digital platforms, are using algorithms to control individuals within an "invisible cage": an environment in which organizations embed the rules and guidelines for how people should behave in opaque algorithms. It is 'invisible' because organizations can use algorithms to change the rules and criteria for success at an unprecedented speed and scale without providing people with notice, explanation, or recourse. It is a 'cage' because these algorithms increasingly control our opportunities without our say.

I use the invisible cage metaphor because what I observed departs from the dominant "iron cage" concept of control in organizations. Specifically, Weber argued that the iron cage concept of control converts immaterial bureaucratic decisions into a material reality that is very difficult to escape; workers largely see their compliance with bureaucratic rules as the right thing to do, not as a direct attempt of a manager to control their behavior. Thus, for both workers and organizations, the iron cage can provide much-desired predictability and stability.

In contrast, my analysis reveals how the invisible cage metaphor encapsulates how organizations can use opaque algorithms to introduce dynamic opacity (underlying logic) to make controlling individuals easier and more predictable for themselves; conversely, these algorithms make it more unpredictable for individuals on platforms, be-

cause it is difficult for them to anticipate how their actions will be interpreted by the platform's algorithms, and subsequently impact their platform visibility and success (outcomes). Platform organizations maintain the invisible cage by leveraging weak institutional oversight and regulations governing their use of algorithms to cultivate and harness power and information asymmetries through concealed data collection, processing, and experimentation (mechanisms).

R. F.: Your research on the pseudonymized platform, TalentFinder, focuses on high-skilled freelancers such as software engineers or program designers. How does the algorithmic control on TalentFinder, which caters to high-skilled work, differ from the control mechanisms found on platforms like ride sharing or food delivery, where less formal training is required?

H. R.: In lower-skilled work, platforms can use algorithms to nudge workers to desired behaviors more easily because how workers should behave is comparatively easy to specify. In ride hailing and food delivery, for example, on-time pick-up and drop-off/delivery are easily monitored and measured. As a result, these platforms desire behavioral conformity and largely achieve this outcome by making their algorithmic rating criteria transparent. Failure to conform to the transparent rating criteria effectively gets workers kicked off these platforms.

Platforms created for higher-skilled work initially tried to use this approach as well. However, workers were able to game the rating system over time such that almost everyone on the platform had close to a perfect rating. From the platform's perspective, this was problematic because when most users have high ratings, ratings convey less information as the platform's algorithms are unable to use ratings to differentiate the best-quality users. Imagine if every product on Amazon had a five-star rating: how useful would ratings be at differentiating the products? As a result, in contexts where differentiation (rather than conformity) is important, ratings cease to reliably signal quality or serve as a mechanism of control if everyone has a similar rating. Further, high-skilled work involves unclear and shifting timelines, changing priorities, and iteration, making it more difficult to specify and quantify workers' activities.

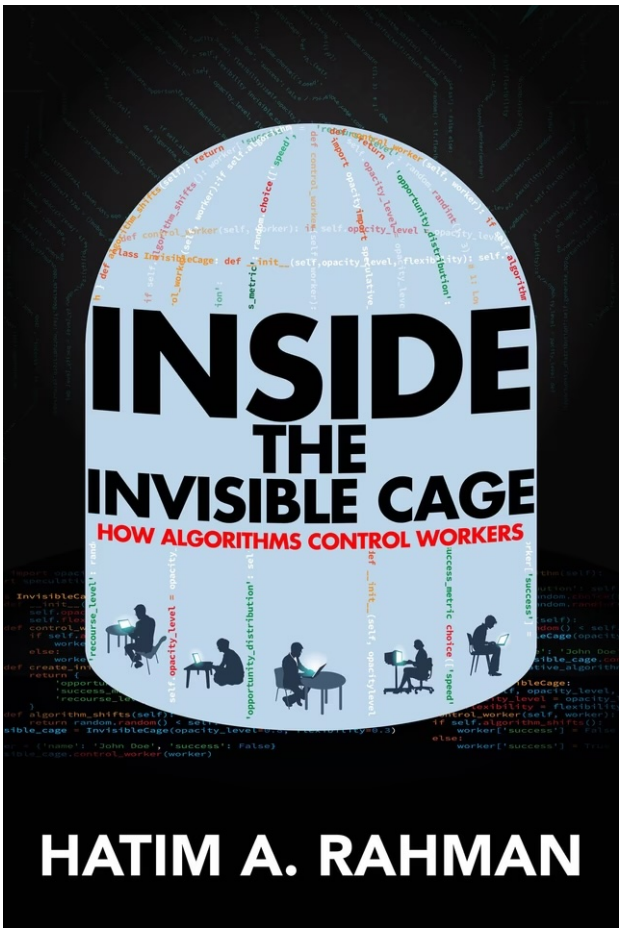
All of these factors led to TalentFinder adopting algorithmic control that was opaque to its users. That is, workers had little to no insight into the algorithm's inputs, processing, and output.

R. F.: You highlight the significant anxieties TalentFinder workers face under algorithmic control. Despite these pressures, many continue working on the platform. What drives individuals to remain on TalentFinder? Do they perceive algorithmic control as offering benefits over traditional labor structures, or is it a matter of limited alternatives in the labor market?

H. R.: This question is very important because platforms claim that unlike full-time employers, platforms are merely providing a service connecting workers with employers. As a result, platforms often state that workers are free to leave the platform at any time. Workers' lived experiences reveal a different reality. First, as many scholars highlight, network effects—the cumulative benefits derived when more people participate in a system—are a major reason people remain committed to platforms in the gig economy

and beyond. TalentFinder is the largest most successful platform for high-skilled workers. Workers expressed that no other platform comes close to providing access to so many high-quality clients.

But I found that it was not just network effects and limited alternatives that drove workers to continue using TalentFinder, but also something I call "reputational interdependence." Specifically, platforms' algorithms are becoming increasingly interconnected and share people's ratings across the digital ecosystem (and with third parties) without worker consent, decreasing a worker's ability to control their own reputation. Reputational interdependence captures how platforms' algorithms enhance both the visibility and permanence of a worker's reputation between platforms, organizations, and labor markets, beyond worker control. As a result, even when workers have credible alternatives (beyond platforms), I show how reputational interdependence can keep workers on TalentFinder because their data and how TalentFinder used it were not completely in their control.



R. F.: At the book's conclusion, you apply Marshall McLuhan's tetrad framework to forecast possible futures of algorithmic work. Could you briefly explain this framework and how you used it to make predictions about the trajectory of labor under algorithmic systems?

H. R.: McLuhan's tetrad framework is used to help anticipate and predict the hidden and unobserved impact of a technology in the future. It does so by asking researchers to simulate four (hence "tetra") potential futures based on the following questions: (1) What does a technology enhance (*enhancement*)? (2) What does a technology reverse (*reversal*)? (3) What does a technology retrieve from the past (*retrieval*)? and (4) What does a technology make obsolete (*obsolescence*)?

A key component of the tetrad framework is that these future scenarios must be simulated based on the technology being pushed to the "extreme"—that is, assuming that the technology becomes ubiquitous in society. The tetrad framework forces us to grapple with what changes to our current legal, political, organizational, and individual institutions and routines need to occur or be prevented for such scenarios to come to fruition. Importantly, each element of the tetrad framework can and usually does occur simultaneously. That is, elements of enhancement, reversal, retrieval, and obsolescence are not mutually exclusive.

I used this framework to highlight what may occur in the future and what changes would need to (not) happen for such a future to come to fruition. For example, I use the "retrieval" component of the framework to highlight that platforms' use of opaque, speculative algorithms to control workers unambiguously resembles and connects to the rise of the credit card industry and its creation of credit rating scores. Much as online labor market platforms use algorithmic ratings to bridge the trust gap between clients and workers, the credit industry created the credit rating system to bridge the trust gap between unknown consumers and organizations. Extending insights gleaned from

sociologists who have studied the credit card industry suggests that platforms' opaque algorithms are unlikely to face serious challenges in the immediate future from regulators or workers. If anything, we would expect to see an expansion of the use and sharing of platforms' opaque algorithms to other domains.

Further, the credit card industry example is instructive in highlighting how greater algorithmic transparency is not necessarily a panacea. Despite decades of laws and measures compelling credit card companies to provide consumers more transparency and control, most consumers still have difficulty understanding why their credit score changes and context changes that they feel are inaccurate.

R. F.: How can we reimagine labor practices to promote fairness and equity in the platform economy? What opportunities do you see for workers and managers to mitigate the negative impacts of algorithmic control? Are you hopeful about the potential for meaningful change?

H. R.: Multiple efforts from diverse stakeholders, ranging from workers and policy makers to the broader public, are ultimately needed to promote fairness and equity in the platform economy. For example, to provide more alternatives, workers in the ride-hailing industry have begun forming co-operatives so that they directly create and benefit from their work. Policy-makers are increasingly interested in regulating platforms as they have observed how the power and information asymmetries platforms have gained can destabilize labor, housing, and other markets. Lina Khan, the current head of the Federal Trade Commission, has been at the forefront of enforcing platform regulation. I also highlight that academics can also play a role in promoting fairness and equity. Fair.Work, for example, utilizes a "global network of researchers and experts" across the world to create "an action-research project that aims to shed light on how these technological changes affect working conditions around the world." This network helps rate platforms on their ability to provide fair pay, conditions, contracts, management, and representation.

Overall, I am cautiously optimistic about meaningful change. In the wake of many controversies involving social media companies (e.g., spreading misinformation), many stakeholders are increasingly becoming vocal about holding platform organizations accountable. Of course, there are countervailing forces (e.g., platform lobbying groups) but, as scholars, it is important that we provide research-based insights to inform the push for meaningful change.■

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Viviana Zelizer's seminal *Pricing the Priceless Child (1985)* was republished in France on October 7, 2024 with a new title, *Fixer la valeur monétaire des enfants: Du travail des champs à l'industrie hollywoodienne (1870-1930)*, and a preface by Sibylle Gollac. The original publication turns 40 next year!

NEW PUBLICATIONS

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McMillan Lequieu, Amanda. 2024. *Who We Are Is Where We Are : Making Home in the American Rust Belt*. New York, N.Y: Columbia University Press. Online.

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Hamilton, Clive and Myra Hamilton. 2024. *The Privileged Few*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. Online.

Pernell, Kim. 2024. *Visions of Financial Order: National Institutions and the Development of Banking Regulation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Online.

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Paek, Eunjeong. 2024. "Labor Unions, Work Contexts, and Workers' Access to Work–Family Policies." *Social Forces* soae103. Online.

Jancsics, David. 2024. "Organization and Organizationality of Corruption." *Sociology Compass* 18(7): e13254. Online.

Clingan, Lauren. 2024. "Defining Women's Income: Household Disruptions and Gendered Resolutions." *Social Forces* 103(2): 595-614. Online.

Bertero, Arturo, Gonzalo Franetovic and Jonathan J.B. Mijs. 2024. "Inequality Belief Systems: What They Look Like, How to Study Them, and Why They Matter." *Social Indicators Research* 174: 445-472. Online.

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BLOG POSTS & ARTICLES

Wang, Yingyao. 2024. "Studying the State through the Movements of Bureaucrats: China and its Economic Policy Paradigms." *Work in Progress*, August 21. Online.

Pérez-Ahumada, Pablo. 2024. "Class Power, Partisan Linkages, and Labor Policy Reform. *Work in Progress*, September 9. Online.

Luhr, Sigrid. 2024. "The Gendered Consequences of Informal Coaching in Silicon Valley." *Work in Progress*, September 29. Online.

Pernell, Kim. 2024. "How Culture Shapes Regulation." *Work in Progress*, October 24. Online.

Ruppel, Emily H. 2024. "Disability and the State Production of Precarity." *Work in Progress*, November 4. Online.

Green, Venus and Cedric De Leon. 2024. "Anti-Blackness and the Historical Limits of Progressive Trade Unionism." *Work in Progress*, November 11. Online.

Cueto, Alejandra. 2024. "Work is Freedom: The Entrepreneurial Self among Street Vendors." *Work in Progress*, November 18. Online.

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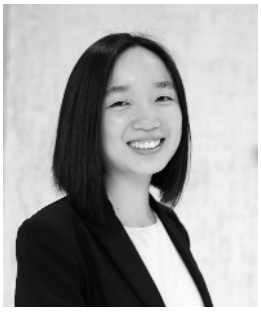
Ya-Ching Huang is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests include economic sociology, culture, morality, health and healthcare. Her dissertation project on pediatric palliative care hopes to understand how clinicians, parents, and policymakers ascribe meanings to the 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 involvement 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.

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.

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.

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.

Allison Wigen is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Her research and writing focus on culture, class and inequality, work and occupations, environment, family, and social theory. Her recent article, "Negotiating Unequal Exchange: Relational Work in Cross-Class Sibling Relationships" (*Sociological Forum*), uses economic theories of relational work to examine how economically disparate siblings conduct indirect support exchanges. Her dissertation utilizes ethnographic and historical methods to examine how commercial fishermen's work and artmaking have evolved in response to environmental change. Wigen holds an Ed.M. in Arts in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a B.A. in Literary Arts from Brown University.



Joyce Ho is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Michigan. Her research interests lie at the intersection of economic sociology, environmental sociology, political economy, and the sociologies of risk and morality. Her dissertation examines how climate disasters are reshaping the landscape of property insurance in the United States, and how they simultaneously reformulate social understandings of risk, protection, and compensation for loss. She holds a B.A. in Sociology and Economics from the University of Toronto and an M.A. in Sociology from the University of Michigan.

Ryan Fajardo is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Northwestern University, specializing in economic sociology, cultural sociology, and the sociology of science and technology. His research broadly explores how emerging economic technologies shape cultural beliefs and practices. His dissertation focuses on the legalization and regulation of digital sports betting in the United States, with particular attention to how stakeholders conceptualize the role of emotions in digital betting environments. Ryan holds a B.A. in Sociology and Economics from Williams College.

Jessica Urzua is a Ph.D. student in Sociology and Social Policy at Harvard University. She is interested in studying how power and social structure in labor markets affect economic inequality, and how social policies may exacerbate or mitigate this inequality. She received an A.B. in Social Anthropology from Harvard College and an M.A. in Economics from Columbia University.