
ACCOUNTS

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR EMILY ERIKSON

Emily Erikson is an Associate Professor of Sociology and, by courtesy, School of Management at Yale University, and Joseph C. Fox Academic Director of the Fox International Fellowship.

I have long thought that the most pressing problems faced today are social coordination problems. The past years have strongly underscored this sense for me. We have an effective vaccine for COVID-19, yet people aren't taking it. Democratic institutions are under threat. The diffusion of misinformation is inciting political violence around the globe, and coordinated responses to climate change fail to be implemented. Racism, sexism, and discrimination make the world a worse place than it should be, and underdevelopment and poverty persist in a world of technological and material abundance.



As economic sociologists, we are inordinately familiar with the many social processes that interfere with decentralized coordination and achieving optimal outcomes. I think it is fair to say that the world desperately needs our expertise in these areas. I hope, in 2022, that we as a section and a field can move further into a mode of providing solutions for the many pressing problems we face.

My question, however, in the role of chair of the section is: How can I help mobilize the section to support the efforts within the field to address these many difficult issues? First and most obviously, we need to continue to make special efforts to center the problems of inequality, racism, sexism, and discrimination within the field. In this regard, I want to offer a special thanks to the outgoing chair, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. Don focused on bringing more attention to racial justice and inequality in the section and spearheaded an initiative to create a collection of relevant works for scholars to draw upon for teaching and research. One of my central priorities will be to keep up our attention to these crucial issues, which require sustained effort for real and lasting change. We will keep adding to the database and continue to make it available for section members. We will continue to devote at least one paper session exclusively to these topics, and I will encourage all our committees—particularly the nominations committee—to keep up our focus on inclusivity and representation within the section.

I am also hoping to amplify the intellectual aspect of the section. The section is already a wonderful opportunity to meet and connect with other researchers, but I think we can do more to make it an intellectual as well as professional resource. I often worry about coordination not only in the world more generally, but also at the level of the field of scholarly inquiry—and for me this raises the issue of theory as an organizing tool. I think of research as a group process. We can only make progress on big, intractable problems through collective efforts. In research, collective effort requires organization, and theory can provide that kind of organization. I have some fear though that this aspect of theorizing has been diminished in the age of middle-range theory and that there has been a corresponding tendency toward fragmentation. Theory truly is an exciting tool of discovery, so perhaps it is fitting that the more boring and mundane mechanisms of session organization might serve the less thrilling function of providing some organization to the field. To this end, my vision for the sessions this year, articulated in the program committee, is to represent the major research streams in our field rather than exciting new topic areas. I can't promise to get these research streams exactly right, but I can at least provide the motivation and rationale here.

Let me also take this opportunity to encourage existing tendencies that stand to provide tremendous benefit for economic sociology. First, despite the fact that we are located in the American Sociological Association, we will never understand economic processes and institutions without a global and comparative lens. Please keep up the work on bringing in these other contexts. And second, the problems we are facing are pressing. Let's not let institutional boundaries get in the way of solving them. Sociology has long had a little bit of a contentious relationship with economics, but economists are doing great work on inequality, institutions, and development. We have a tremendous amount to offer and should not shrink from engaging with this work.

Finally, let me close by saying that I cannot wait to see you all in person at the 2021 convention in the beautiful city of Los Angeles. L.A. is an amazing cultural and culinary destination. A terrific location to usher in a return to in-person conference (fingers crossed!). We will be hard at work arranging a section reception that will be an intellectual and social event to remember! ■

ON SEEKING FULFILLMENT AT WORK AND INEQUALITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIN CECH



Erin A. Cech is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Associate Professor by courtesy in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Michigan. She is interested in social inequalities, occupations and professions, cultural sociology, and sociology of gender. Broadly, her research focuses on cultural mechanisms of inequality reproduction and, more specifically, how inequality is reproduced through processes that are not overtly discriminatory or coercive, but rather those that are built into seemingly innocuous cultural beliefs and practices.

Elif Birced, a Ph.D. Student in Sociology at Boston University, talked to Erin Cech about her forthcoming book, *The Trouble with Passion: How Searching for Fulfillment at Work Fosters Inequality*, which was published by the University of California Press and will be released in November 2021.

Elif Birced: How did you become interested in studying passion?

Erin A. Cech: I didn't start out intending to study passion. I was a "follow your passion" enthusiast before this project and encouraged many students to "do what you love" (especially if that meant pursuing sociology). My original research plan was to conduct interviews with college students to better understand mechanisms of occupational gender segregation. But narratives about passion-seeking, and analogs like finding "fulfilling" and "meaningful" work, kept arising in my interviews.

This pattern contrasted sharply with most of the labor and work scholarship I had encountered, which tended to presume that career decision-makers would prioritize financial security and employment stability as a matter of course. The majority of students were not making decisions about their college majors and post-graduation career paths by first weighing what would bring them the greatest financial stability. Most anchored their decision-making with the question: What am I passionate about?

My research for this book began with 100 interviews with undergraduate students at three universities: Stanford, University of Houston, and Montana State University. I oversampled students of color and students from working-class backgrounds and included students from across academic majors. The most common guiding principle of career decisions among these respondents was what I came to call the passion principle—a cultural schema that elevates self-expression and fulfillment as the central factor in good career decision-making. These students were not naive about the realities of the modern labor market; yet most believed that a college degree would provide a financial floor below which they would be unlikely to fall, whatever their major or career path after graduating. Many explicitly expressed willingness to sacrifice pay and stability to do work they love. Adherence to this passion principle was surprisingly consistent across gender, race, and class background, and across the three institutions I studied.

These patterns were interesting in their own right, but I wondered, is the passion principle simply a "college thing"? Would career aspirants still prioritize passion-seeking when they left college and entered the labor market? I followed up with 37 of these respon-

dents 2-5 years after they graduated. Two thirds of them had, indeed, prioritized passion-seeking in their career paths after graduation (and for some, with great sacrifice). Wondering whether this was just a “millennial thing,” I looked to existing national-level survey data on US workers and fielded my own proportionally representative survey of US college-educated workers. Across these survey datasets, there was a strong and clear pattern: College-educated workers highly valued meaningful work in the abstract, and often saw it as a priority in their own career decisions over and above job stability and a high salary. My analysis of secondary data found that the passion principle is also highly valued among workers without a college degree, but they tend to have less access to job security and a livable wage and thus prioritized those factors over fulfillment from work.

This use of multiple methods and data sources allowed me to understand the reach and salience of this schema across the college-educated population. And, as I explain in the book, the passion principle even has implications for my original interest in occupational gender segregation. Women and men students were similarly likely to prioritize self-expressive, fulfilling work in their career decision-making; but, due to gendered socialization processes and lives lived in gendered institutions, the selves career aspirants sought to express in their career decisions were gendered as well. As such, when career aspirants select career paths for self-expressive reasons, their choices tend to reproduce gendered occupational patterns.

E. B.: Could you please describe your research and the main implications of your forthcoming book, *The Trouble with Passion: How Searching for Fulfillment at Work Fosters Inequality*?

E. A. C: The book begins by introducing the passion principle as a theoretical concept, illustrating its salience across college-going individuals and college-educated workers, and explaining why it is such a compelling guiding principle for so many. I argue that white-collar workers in the postindustrial labor force encounter a tension between the demands to be a devoted, overworking employee on the one hand and to align with ubiquitous cultural expectations for self-expression on the other. Passion-seeking is compelling in part because it helps mitigate this tension: It allows workers

to incorporate their paid employment into what Giddens calls a “self-reflexive project,” while reducing the potential drudgery of long hours and work overload.

Beyond this, *The Trouble with Passion* asks, what are the consequences of the passion principle for labor market inequality? First, the passion principle helps perpetuate class inequality among students after college. While the passion principle is popular among college students across demographic groups, the ability to parlay passion into gainful employment is certainly not equitably distributed. Students with access to better financial safety nets and springboards (social and cultural capital) are better able to launch into stable, decently paying jobs aligned with their passion. First-generation and working-class passion-seekers, regardless of their major, are more likely to end up in precarious employment far outside of their passion. These classed patterns are mirrored in national survey data of college-educated workers as well. As such, the passion principle is an important mechanism perpetuating socioeconomic inequalities among career aspirants and college graduates.

The passion principle is not only a schema that may guide individuals’ decision-making; it also plays prescriptive and explanatory roles for its adherents. For instance, the passion principle *choicewashes* patterns of occupational gender, race, and class segregation and inequality as the benign outcomes of individual passion-seeking. It also helps scaffold other cultural beliefs (e.g., the meritocratic ideology) that undermine the perceived need for social change.

Finally, the book investigates a potential demand side to the passion principle: Might employers prefer, benefit from, and even exploit the passion of job applicants and employees? Suggesting this demand-side edge, I find in a survey experiment that college-educated workers, and even those who have hiring authority in their own jobs, prefer applicants who express passion for the work (compared to those who were committed to the organization or interested in the salary), in part because they believe those applicants will be willing to put more uncompensated work into their jobs. Passionate applicants were not offered higher salaries than applicants motivated by other factors.

More broadly, *The Trouble with Passion* raises critical questions about the prioritization of passion among

career decision-makers. What does it mean to center paid employment in one's self-reflexive project? How does it perpetuate a culture of overwork and close off other meaning-making opportunities? And in what ways might the popularity of the passion principle perpetuate exploitation—not only of workers' time, effort, and emotional labor, but also of workers' very senses of self?

E. B.: In your research, you used multiple methods, such as interviews with undergraduate students, surveys with college-educated workers, and experiments. Could you elaborate more on your motivations to use experiments and how you used experimental data in your study?

E. A. C.: The goal of the survey experiment was to understand how college-educated workers would react to job applicants who expressed passion for a job in their cover letter, compared to applicants who expressed other reasons for being interested in the job (e.g., they were committed to the organization or the salary was commensurate with their desired income range). Respondents were randomly assigned to review and assess one fictitious but realistic application to one of two different job ads: a youth program manager for a community nonprofit and an accountant for an IT firm. I found demand-side effects of passion-seeking in the context of both jobs.

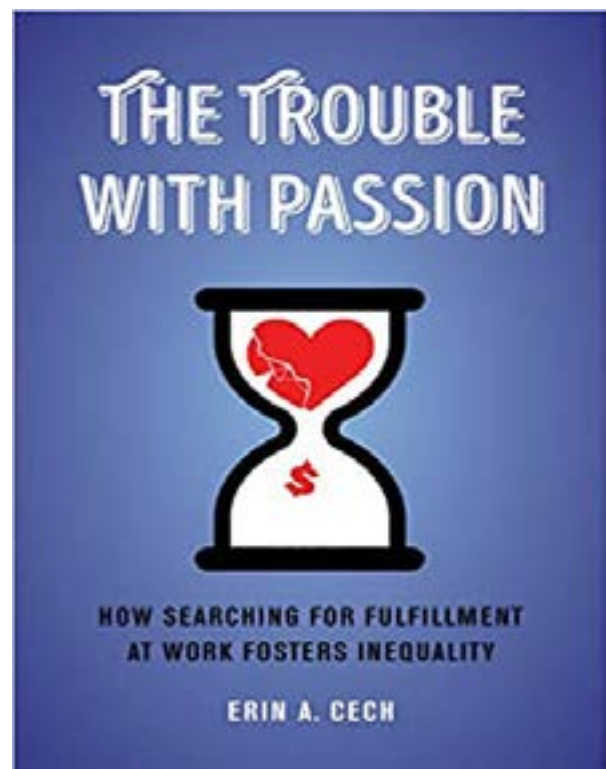
E. B.: Although you focused on college-educated white-collar workers in your work, I wonder what you think about the operation of the passion principle in the academia. What do you think about the impact of the passion principle in maintaining and reproducing various forms of inequalities in the academy?

E. A. C.: *The Trouble with Passion* raises sobering questions about standard approaches to mentoring and career advising in academia. The passion principle is a schema of good career decision-making that presumes access to safety nets and springboards that really only middle- and upper-class students enjoy. By promoting passion-seeking as the most morally valuable way to make career decisions, without addressing skyrocketing education costs, differential access to employment opportunities, and unequal social and cultural capital for garnering the constellation of skills and experienc-

es necessary to succeed on the job market, academic institutions and the instructors and advisors therein simply perpetuate the class differences that students entered college with. In interviews with career counselors and coaches for the book, I similarly found that the majority promoted passion-seeking when advising students, and some even explicitly discouraged students from prioritizing pragmatic factors like salary and job security over meaningful work. College admissions essays often also implicitly or explicitly ask students to explain their academic major choices through the lens of passion.

As I discuss in the book's epilogue, instructors and advisors need to encourage all students (and perhaps even themselves) to "diversify their meaning-making portfolios." By this I mean, we need to encourage students—especially graduate students—to find places outside of school and work to center their self-reflexive projects. The presumption that all students should and will sacrifice financial stability to pursue their passion is borne out of the privilege of academics who were rewarded for, and secured gainful employment in, their passion. Many students, especially first-generation and working-class students, may not be so lucky.

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ON CONTEMPORARY GENDERED LOGICS: AN INTERVIEW WITH ETHEL MICKEY



[Ethel L. Mickey](#) is a sociologist of work and organizations; gender, race, and class; and science and technology. She is a Postdoctoral Research Associate with the ADVANCE program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and received her Ph.D. from Northeastern University. She is currently writing a book manuscript on gendered and racialized networks in the tech sector. Follow her on Twitter [@ethelmickey](#).

Meghann Lucy, Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Ethel L. Mickey about her recent research and how we can make workplaces more diverse and equitable.

Meghann Lucy: Your article [“When Gendered Logics Collide: Going Public and Restructuring in a High-Tech Organization”](#) builds on the gendered organizations work by Joan Acker and others to reconsider inequality regimes and logics of workplaces in light of cultural shifts brought on by globalization, high-tech work, and neoliberalism. What has changed? What has stayed the same?

Ethel L. Mickey: Organizational scholars have suggested that work organizations have drastically shifted in the “new” economy, with the traditional bureaucracies outlined by Weber and studied by gender scholars like Joan Acker and Rosabeth Moss Kanter becoming less relevant as organizations adopt flexible forms compatible with neoliberalism. When I began my research in a software firm, I stepped into a modern, open office with a “no collar” dress code and beer on draft in the office kitchen. I expected the company would operate fully via flexible features like horizontal teams, contingent contracts, and career maps.

While the company utilizes cross-functional teams and project-based work, I found the organization to

be bureaucratic in other, unexpected ways. There is a clearly delineated, centralized hierarchy, for example, and a specialized division of labor distributed amongst the departments. Employees also repeatedly describe “red tape” and “scrutiny” they encounter, especially if they attempt to work beyond their narrow job descriptions. Bureaucratization occurred as the company went public, restructuring from a startup to a public firm. In [my article](#) in *Gender & Society*, I suggest that the company is host to conflicting logics, with going public resulting in a collision of the new, flexible logic with traditional bureaucracy.

For women, the conflicting logics create a paradox: They are expected to “stay in their lane” and perform limited job descriptions, but their structural locations in culturally devalued positions limit their ability to meet informal expectations of visibility. Women in segregated, female-typed roles often engage in futile networking and self-promotional strategies, hitting a glass ceiling, while men working in high-status technical departments take their visibility for granted and regularly advance.

The popular adage, “The more things change, the

more they stay the same” might best answer your question, then, and work and organizations researchers must consider the implications of the persistence of bureaucracy in the context of the new economy. Organizations undergoing change might simultaneously combine distinct and seemingly incompatible logics, giving rise to contradictory regimes that reproduce inequalities.

M. L.: A theme in both your articles “When Gendered Logics Collide” and “Eat, Pray, Love’ Bullshit’: Women’s Empowerment through Wellness at an Elite Professional Conference” is the attempts of professional women to overcome their structurally unequal positions through entrepreneurial means, such as strategic networking and “wellness”-related consumption. How did the women participating in these actions interpret and experience these tactics? Why do you think this is the case?

E. L. M.: Entrepreneurial discourse encourages individuals to overcome precarious labor market conditions by taking control of their careers and pulling up their bootstraps. This urgent sense of personal responsibility is perhaps most notoriously espoused by Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg, who encourages women to “internalize the revolution” and participate in “lean-in” circles to find career support. I study the tech sector, in which networks are crucial for skilled workers continually moving through a high-velocity labor market among competing firms, often on short-term contracts.

Women typically buy into this entrepreneurial discourse, and I find that they regularly attend meet-ups and conferences, join professional associations, and get involved with their company programs for women. However, they also find this kind of formal networking, typically done with strangers after regular work hours, to be uncomfortable and also ineffective in terms of creating connections. This creates a vicious cycle for women, as they place enormous pressure on themselves to network in ways that lead to few opportunities. White women often gain emotional support from other women, but women of color typically feel marginalized in these predominantly

white upper-class spaces.

Why do women continue to engage in strategic networking, then, if it does not really work as intended? Some women do push back against the commercialized enterprise of networking, especially programs centering a neoliberal feminist discourse encouraging empowerment through consumerism and wellness. Yet at the same time, women describe their formal approach to networking as more appropriate for professional settings, especially when compared to the informal socializing of their men colleagues, whose networking centers around masculine, homosocial activities like playing video games or going to bars. Women try to maintain a professional boundary by avoiding these informal spaces, yet doing so represents a double-edged sword for women, as informal socializing would more closely align them with high-status men.

M. L.: Could you tell us about some of the work you’ve done with UMass Amherst ADVANCE?

E. L. M.: In addition to my research on the private sector, I also study institutional mechanisms of inequality in the context of higher education and academic science. I am currently a postdoctoral researcher with the [UMass ADVANCE](#) program, funded by the National Science Foundation, which cultivates faculty equity, inclusion, and success through the power of collaboration, with particular focus on women faculty and faculty of color in science and engineering.

While the “leaky pipeline” is a now-familiar metaphor used to describe diversity gaps in academic STEM representation, we instead examine how universities as gendered and racialized organizations differentially structure faculty careers. Our interdisciplinary team, including sociologists Laurel Smith-Doerr and Joya Misra, focuses on faculty collaboration, demonstrating how collaboration is crucial to scientific discovery but not necessarily equitable or evaluated fairly, with bias and discrimination operating to disadvantage women of all races. Our research addresses how the intersection of gender and race shapes faculty retention, moving toward a fuller understanding of the institutional support needed to become a successful

academic scientist.

This past year, we also expanded our focus to supporting diverse faculty specifically in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted a case study of institutional responses to the pandemic, with a critical focus on adjustments to faculty evaluation policies. We have facilitated evidence-based workshops on pandemic impact statements and equitable faculty evaluations across the country, and have coauthored columns in *Inside Higher Ed* to support administrators in implementing pandemic equity measures for faculty.

M. L.: Based on your research thus far, what are some concrete steps you would suggest male and white-dominated fields take to make their workplaces more diverse and equitable?

E. L. M.: We often hear calls to improve diversity in white, male-dominated industries like tech by increasing the representation of Black, Latinx, and Native American workers, and these calls have grown louder, especially recently, with the reinvigorated energy behind the Movement for Black Lives. Improving diversity numbers is an important first step, but rarely do these calls include a critical interrogation of the people, structures, and cultures upholding these powerful organizations. And, despite millions of dollars invested in diversity initiatives, women of color remain underrepresented. In my new collaborative project, which I will describe further below, with Dr. Melissa Abad, we explore what systems of white accountability might look like in diversity spaces, focusing on understanding those individuals with privilege, with an eye towards dismantling intersectional systems of oppression.

A key component of my work with UMass ADVANCE, and one of the most rewarding aspects, is putting our research into practice. We draw upon our research on the systemic barriers hindering the careers of women and people of color to inform equity

initiatives and projects in academic workforce development. Our team has created a variety of [resources and tools](#) to help campus leadership promote institutional transformation by cultivating faculty equity and inclusion.

I continue to be inspired by other sociologists who engage in public scholarship to inform organizations. For example, Adia Harvey Wingfield provides [concrete steps](#) for academic departments to build diversity. And Shelley Correll's "[small wins](#)" model of organizational change, focusing on small-scale, implementable actions with big payoff, informs a lot of my thinking about creating meaningful change while being realistic about constraints. The sociological perspective is valuable to institutions across sectors, providing insights on the structural bases of inequality.

M. L.: What are you working on now? What is next for you?

E. L. M.: I am working on an exciting new project in collaboration with sociologist Melissa Abad (Stanford VMware Women's Leadership Innovation Lab) that investigates the racial logic of diversity management programs in tech, examining tensions arising as organizations respond to the Movement for Black Lives and calls for racial justice. This ethnographic project interrogates the whiteness of networking and community events, asking: How does race operate via the structure and culture of diversity programming? How do these organizational spaces reproduce or challenge the racial status quo of professional work? We are revising a manuscript that we recently presented at the 2021 ASA Annual Meeting on a thematic panel on Broadening the Conversation about Racism in Organizations, Occupations, and Work.

Additionally, I am revising my dissertation into a book manuscript, titled *Networks of Exclusion: Gender, Race and Relationships in Tech*, that will build on my previous work investigating the role of elite networks in the persistence of intersectional labor market inequalities.

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MONEY AND CARE WORK: THE PAYMENTS FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS IN ARGENTINA



Daniel Fridman is Associate Professor of Sociology and Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests lie in the interactions of economy and culture, neoliberalism and financialization, economic policy in Latin America, the construction of economic subject, the sociology of money, gift-giving, and consumer culture. His book, *Freedom From Work: Embracing Financial Self-Help in the United States and Argentina* (2016), received Honorable Mention for the Best Publication Award from the ASA Section on the Sociology of Consumers and Consumption.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Daniel Fridman about his recently published article “This Is a Handcraft: Valuation, Morality, and the Social Meanings of Payments for Psychoanalysis.”

Ya-Ching Huang: What motivated you to study the valuation and payment practices of psychoanalysis?

Daniel Fridman: I had the hunch that the case of psychoanalysts was a rich site for my interests in valuation, meanings of money, and morals and markets. This goes back to my earlier fieldwork for my book on financial self-help fans. There, I found that these enthusiasts did not see a contradiction between helping others and making money off of them, and I wrote a chapter about this. I became curious more generally about transactions that are ambiguous in their purpose, or that blend interest and disinterest. Then I studied donations to police departments (with Alex Luscombe). These donations brought money in and helped forge community ties, but they also put the police in an uncomfortable position because they could look like bribes. They had to clarify and purify donations and try to ensure that there was no reciprocity involved. Of course, sociologists know well that paid care work often expresses some of these ambiguities, but psychoanalysis seemed to have even more layers

of meaning that I thought were worth exploring. I began informally asking friends about their experiences (including my sister who is now a psychoanalyst after years of working as an engineer) and the stories I heard gave me confidence that I would be able to collect rich qualitative data and that it would hopefully make a nice contribution.

And on a more personal level, I’m from Argentina, and we love psychoanalysis. How could I not study this! Therapy has always been much more present in Buenos Aires and less stigmatized than in the United States. I remember when I moved to the United States for graduate school, some people looked at me a bit disconcerted when I said I went to the psychoanalyst. I was hearing Viviana Zelizer at an ASA panel years ago, and I suddenly remembered the notion that it was important that the patient (and not a third party) pays for the therapy. I must have heard that from someone when I was a kid. There were important meanings in that money. And there was something intriguing about studying an object that was familiar to me in some ways but totally new in others. My own

therapist was quite flexible with me about her fees. I used to see her every time I came back to Argentina to visit or for research, and each time we would have “the conversation” on the fee. I wanted to understand this better.

Y. H.: How did face-to-face payment relying on conversations become a part of psychoanalysis in Argentina? In other words, what makes psychoanalysts adopt this form of price-setting rather than fixed-rate pricing like new emerging therapy apps?

D. F.: It seems to have been around for a long time in Argentina and other places. Some interviewees brought up Freud’s writings, for example, about providing some pro bono service to those who could not afford it. An analyst needs to consider the needs of patients, including their ability to pay. Some referred to an idealized past, decades ago, in which psychoanalysis was less flexible in general, including payment practices. So I think it’s a combination of practices that were present since the beginning but also extended as therapy became more popular in Argentina, and as financial crises and inflation pushed them to extend this flexibility even more. For psychoanalysts, reaching a fee in conversation is not a second option to a better way of charging that they wish they could use. They embrace it as part of their clinical practice, they see it as a perfectly reasonable way to interact monetarily with patients. It’s part of treating each patient as unique.

I only found out about new global online therapy apps very recently (they flourished with COVID-19). My suspicion is that Argentine psychoanalysts would laugh and generally find payment by the word count of text messages or by the minute quite repulsive. Standardization is not their thing. They would likely see it as a very American way of organizing therapy.

Y. H.: You coined “inverted bazaar” to describe the distinct rules when psychologists negotiate the price with their patients. Could you elaborate more about how the transaction is not merely market exchange but also gift-giving?

D. F.: I was analyzing my data trying to understand the negotiations that took place between patients and therapists in the absence of fixed prices. I remember one interviewee distinguishing her price discrimination from charging “according to the client’s face,” which would be an abuse, not flexibility. I thought of analogies or comparable cases, like haggling in bazaars. I asked sociologist Matias Dewey, who studies illegal markets, and he pointed me to Clifford Geertz’s work on the organization of Indonesian bazaars. It was an aha moment. Some of it fit right in, except that it was inverted!

Like in the bazaar, in my case the buyer and the seller explore together the details of the price in conversation, but unlike the bazaar, they can’t just try to walk away with an amazing deal (or maybe having paid a lot more than they should have if they lost the negotiation). They are trying to build a solid therapeutic bond that cannot be framed as a competitive self-interested commercial transaction. It is a commercial transaction, and there is a market of psychoanalysts, but the price-setting mechanisms include a logic that is closer to gift-giving, in that both parties should try to give more instead of taking more, within reasonable boundaries. That’s why a patient paying too little might be a problem not just for the psychoanalyst who would not be adequately compensated, but also for the balance of the therapeutic bond and the patient’s potential feelings of debt. Yet psychoanalysts can also charge very little or nothing, as long as they perform the relational work that allows the bond to continue under those conditions. As in gift-giving, much of what happens *around* the transaction is crucial for it to succeed.

Y. H.: You argue that the payment reflects multiple meanings to both psychoanalysts and patients. I am curious about the payment as sacrifice, commitment, and loss for patients under the interpretation of psychoanalysts. Could you talk more about the nuances of why the fee is lowered or free of charge?

D. F.: The meaning of the money exchanged here gets into some really interesting ideas. Psychoanalysts

say that patients have to pay but not just in order to compensate the provider for their labor, as with any other service. The payment also has a function for the patients themselves, who have to sacrifice or “cede” something significant as part of their commitment to the treatment. Some talk about “depriving” the patient as the center of their work. Doing analysis involves *loss* in a deep sense; it’s understanding that loss is a crucial part of life. And paying is another representation of loss. This language of loss reminded me (once again) of the potlatch, where objects are gifted but also destroyed in order to prove the disinterest of the giver. Money does a job that is not just economic. Now, how do we square this with the fact that psychoanalysts don’t mind treating some patients for free? For some patients, lack of payment may reflect lack of commitment—for example, they do therapy because it’s covered by insurance, but they don’t take it seriously. But the analysts I interviewed often evoked cases of patients that were showing so much commitment that it felt cruel to cut off treatment because of money problems. The commitment itself was regarded as a sign of how much the patient valued the therapy. They were happy to continue treating a patient that “paid in other ways,” putting a loss at stake in other forms, without a money transaction.

Y. H.: What are the strengths or limitations of conducting interviews with one party (psychologists) rather than both parties (psychologists and patients) when studying valuation and relational work of price setting?

D. F.: Well, relational work is indeed *relational*. Ideally having data from all parties involved would be the best scenario. By interviewing psychoanalysts, I got a very good sense of how they framed the payment, the relationship with the patient, and so on. In fact, “frame” (*encuadre*) is the word psychoanalysts use for the ground rules of the therapeutic relationship, which includes payments. Since they are the ones establishing the frame, analysts hold more power than patients in that relationship. But it’s something they think a lot about: For example, if there’s too much imbalance in the power relation, then it may be counterproductive for the psychoanalytic transference. By setting up

those rules, they really do the majority of the relational work to define the bond and embed payments in it. But patients may have different perceptions too. For instance, psychoanalysts say that they reach a price in conversation, but not all patients might perceive it as flexible or negotiable in the way providers intend.

In practical terms, interviewing patients is more complicated than psychoanalysis, particularly in terms of having a meaningful sample with a manageable number of cases. Also, in terms of how much each interview can bring out about the concrete experiences of payment for therapy, which are relatively minor moments for them in comparison to analysts, who do it all the time. This is one of those instances in which being a fly on the wall in the exact moment of the fee conversation would be an awesome research method! I get many stories and smiles when I talk to people who have been patients. This is all anecdotal, not systematic, but many tell me about the awkwardness of paying to their therapist.

Y. H.: In what ways does your case of payments for psychoanalysis in Argentina contribute to the understanding of price-setting, morals, and markets in economic sociology?

D. F.: I’ll just bring up a couple now, besides what I mentioned before (and there’s more in the article!). Part of what attracted me to this topic is that these types of ambiguities in economic transactions are more common than we often think. At the core of the contribution is the fact that we need to pay attention to maneuver room people have in the context of commercial transactions. It’s easy to assume that if you dig deep enough, economic self-interest will be the defining feature of the transaction and will explain everything (*Zelizer’s nothing-but*). Then you discount relational work and the efforts to shape and give meaning to the transaction as simply noise. Of course, my case is quite dramatic—if there is a group inclined to overthinking, it’s psychoanalysts!—but this work can be found in many more commercial transactions. There’s also an interesting dynamic I found about things that we consider unique (like treatment for each patient), and the ability people have to com-

mensurate while continuing to claim that they are unique.

Y. H.: What is your takeaway from researching outside the United States? Do you have some suggestions for doctoral students and junior scholars taking a similar path?

D. F.: Most of my research has been outside the United States. My suggestion is to be practical about it—of course I’m bracketing the pandemic here, which raises lots more challenges, especially for students and junior scholars. For me, doing research in Argentina and Mexico has been relatively easy since I’m very familiar with both places (more so in Argentina, I “adopted” Mexico later). If you have funding and freedom to spend a lot of time in a country you don’t know, learn a new language, and so on, that’s great. But you have to be realistic about what you can meaningfully do with the time, funding, and family situation you have. I usually arrive to the field with some interviews already scheduled beforehand so that

I don’t waste any time. And if I know the place well, I can land on my feet right away. I knew it wouldn’t be hard to locate psychoanalysts in Buenos Aires; everyone I knew could recommend therapists to interview! I stayed in a neighborhood popularly known as “Villa Freud” and my goal was to conduct maybe five interviews in three or four weeks, so that after that experience I could train a research assistant to continue. I ended up doing fifteen interviews in that period, more than I expected! It was tough not to do all the data collection myself as I had always done, but I worked with Guadalupe Moreno (who then went on to do her PhD at the Max Planck in Cologne) and it was wonderful. She understood really well what I was looking for. I think having done many interviews myself was key for working well with a research assistant in a study like this—or maybe a psychoanalyst would say I’m too neurotic about it! ■

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INFRASTRUCTURAL MATTERS: AN INTERVIEW WITH EKIN KURTIÇ

Ekin Kurtiç is a Neubauer Junior Research Fellow at Brandeis University. She holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University. She was previously a postdoctoral scholar and teaching fellow in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Southern California. In her doctoral dissertation, she critically examined the politics of development and environmental conservation by focusing on the practices of forest and soil conservation to protect dams against sedimentation.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Ekin Kurtiç about her research and her experience with social science as a vocation.



Gökhan Mülayim: Let me first thank you for joining us in this issue. Could you please tell us the story of how you became a social scientist?

Ekin Kurtiç: Thanks for having me, Gökhan. My journey of becoming a social scientist started in my alma mater, Boğaziçi University's Political Science Department in Istanbul. Before the university, I studied in a public boarding high school and then studied in Patagonia, Argentina, for a year as an exchange student. These experiences of having lived and studied in different communities cultivated my curiosity to understand better the diversity of human experience shaped by power relations and sociocultural contexts. I was fortunate to be trained in social sciences by a group of very inspiring and esteemed professors at Boğaziçi. Also, I was surrounded by a community of fellow students interested in critical thinking and collective learning and very engaged in social and political matters on the ground. One can see this clearly in their ongoing, strong struggle for academic freedom and autonomy against the top-down appointment of the university rector. My undergraduate and master's studies provided a space for multidisciplinary learning. I benefitted from this space by taking sociology and anthropology courses to complement and enrich my training in political science. Once I got acquainted with the world of ethnographic research and thinking that requires paying detailed attention to everyday relations and lived

realities, I knew this was what I wanted to pursue for the rest of my academic life.

G. M.: What inspired you to study the politics of development and environmental conservation in Turkey?

E. K.: One of my primary sources of inspiration derives from my engagement in political ecological activism. Since my senior year in college, I have been actively involved in the food sovereignty and peasant rights movements through my voluntary work in the Farmer Unions of Turkey as a translator and coordinator of the unions' international relationships within the global movement *La Via Campesina*. My engagements in the national and international peasant movement provided me with profound insight into how developmental politics have drastically transformed agricultural practices and rural livelihood. Over the years, I became interested in the political ecological aspects of rural transformation. I read and thought extensively on the environmental injustice and ecological degradation caused by the industrialization of agricultural production, distribution, and consumption. During my Master's, I researched the transformation of peasant lands into a Food Specialized Organized Industrial Zone in a northwestern village of Turkey. Around the same time, in 2009 and 2010, rural environmental movements were on the rise against proliferating run-of-the-river hydro-

power plant construction by the private sector. I started my doctoral studies to explore everyday water politics in rural Turkey in the era of this novel infrastructural expansion. I was curious to understand the adoption and mobilization of conservationist claims of protecting nature by rural environmental movements against expanding developmentalist and extractivist encroachment. Yet, my anthropological and historical research on dam building led me to move beyond this question. In my work, I critically explore the intersection of—hence not necessarily the antagonistic relationship between—environmental conservation and developmentalism. So, the motivation and curiosity in my studies come from the intimate interplay between my activist engagements and academic knowledge production, each reshaping the other.

G. M.: Could you please tell us a bit about the promise of studying infrastructures in social scientific research? Why and how do infrastructures matter for us?

E. K.: The recent rise in infrastructure studies within social sciences has emerged in close dialogue with science and technology studies. It is situated within the broader scholarship that explores the coproduction of histories, socialities, and politics together with materials, objects, and ecologies. It is important to note that infrastructure studies, while paying attention to the latter, do not present a shift away from social scientific concerns regarding questions of justice, equality, and power. Instead, scholars explore new sites and forms of social, political, economic, and environmental arrangements through the lens of infrastructure. As I see it, paying attention to the making and maintenance of physical infrastructures—as well as their failures and breakage—is key to our understanding of how things and spaces connect or disconnect; social and political relationships are built, sustained, and interrupted; places and people are governed; economic processes are configured; and environments are transformed. Therefore, the study of infrastructures offers us significant analytical and conceptual tools for examining the co-production of the social and the material without privileging one over the other.

A concrete example of how adopting an infrastructural lens has shaped my work is reflected in my approach to dam building as a techno-environmental process with implications not only for the valley communities but also for mountain villagers. Large dams are hypervisible

infrastructures that challenge ideas of the invisibility of infrastructures. The submergence of entire landscapes is a drastic and visible dam-induced transformation and critical social scientific literature has primarily, and aptly, focused on the critical analysis of this process, especially for the valley communities. Nevertheless, infrastructures are multilayered material configurations. A dam reservoir does not merely erase the landscape, and it does not remain at a standstill. In time, as rivers continue flowing into the reservoir, sediment and soil get accumulated in the body of water, creating a problem for the infrastructure's lifespan. The attention to this material process has led me to expand my field site into the mountains, where the foresters conduct soil conservation work to protect dams from extreme sediment accumulation. There, I observed the decreasing population of mountain villagers, hence diminishing land use for grazing and farming, is cast as a "potential" for natural recovery and dam maintenance. Dam building and maintenance is, therefore, a process with implications for lives and livelihoods that seem to be located far away from the immediate construction site.

G. M.: You point out the role of what you call "refashioning" in the political ecology around the dams. Could you please open a bit how the work of enframings shapes and is shaped by the infrastructures?

E. K.: I point out the refashioning of both dams and the landscapes they are situated in. With the rise of scientific studies on the relationship between forests and water, uplands and mountains become framed as places of value and significance for protecting river waters and hydraulic infrastructures. There is a long history of this refashioning practice in Turkey. It goes back to the late Ottoman period when flood prevention and river flow regulation through forestry and soil conservation were central concerns. In the Republican era, dam construction became a key technology for modern nation-state building through infrastructural expansion and spatial control. An added emphasis emerged on the significance of conservationist forestry practices for protecting the hydraulic infrastructures cast as monuments of national development and economic progress. This, in turn, led to enframing of dams as more-than-technical, environmentally entangled infrastructures. Through this refashioning, foresters and soil scientists have forged claims of expertise and power in dam building and maintenance. In their own words, if dams, the epitome of development and modernization,

are to be protected and appropriately managed, there is a need for the knowledge and work of forest and soil conservation experts in the entire watersheds from which reservoir waters come. Yet, enframing of dams as environmentally entangled infrastructures does not automatically become the dominant approach in technoscientific circles. Instead, I show how foresters' conservationist labor and maintenance expertise are subordinated to the technopolitical visibility of dam construction and the productivist bias in forestry.

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

E. K.: I am currently embarking on exciting new research about past and present practices of casting nature as infrastructure. This work builds upon the critical

scholarship on infrastructural natures: Ashley Carse's influential book *Beyond the Big Ditch*, Stephanie Wakefield's recent article on the making of oysters into risk management infrastructures, and Sara Nelson and Patrick Bigger's genealogical and geographical analysis of the idea of infrastructural ecosystems. In this project, I examine the revalorization of farm and rangeland soils as a "carbon sink" and trace the discourses and practices of rendering soil infrastructural to climate change mitigation. This, ostensibly, presents a radical break from the utilitarian notion of soil-as-resource for productivity. My ethnographic and archival research in Turkey addresses what precisely the transformation from approaching soil-as-resource to soil-as-infrastructure entails. ■

TEACHING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY: AN INTERVIEW WITH KIM PERNELL

Kim Pernel is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. She is interested in economic sociology, organizations, political sociology, cultural sociology, and law and regulation. Her research focuses on the social causes and consequences of risky, ineffective, and harmful bank behavior in financial markets. Her work has been published in *Theory and Society*, *American Sociological Review*, *Social Forces*, among others. She teaches Economic Sociology, Sociology of Organizations, and Social Policy.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Kim Pernel about her experiences in teaching economic sociology during the pandemic and beyond.



Ya-Ching Huang: What sparked your interest in specializing in economic sociology? Could you talk about your research interests and ongoing projects?

Kim Pernel: I came to economic sociology through my interest in organizational malfeasance. Growing up in Houston, Texas, I observed the devastating social costs of corporate fraud and excessive risk-taking firsthand. The 2001 collapse of Enron Corporation,

the major Houston-based energy company that failed in spectacular fashion after years of widespread accounting fraud, had a chilling effect on the local economy and directly impacted the financial health of my own family. This experience sparked a longstanding interest in understanding the drivers of undesirable organizational behavior. Of all the social sciences, sociology seemed to offer the most satisfying and comprehensive answers to this puzzle. Around the time that I began my PhD

program, I became intrigued by a new wave of corporate scandals—this time, in the banking system—that was unfolding in the late 2000s. Most of my research to date has focused on identifying the social factors that promote risky, ineffective, and harmful bank behavior, a social problem with important implications for financial instability and financial crises.

I'm particularly interested in the issue of how the state (and its policies) influences the production of risky bank behavior. As one part of this line of research, I'm currently writing a book that compares the historical development of bank regulatory systems in the U.S., Canada, and Spain—three countries that experienced the 2008 global financial crisis very differently—with the goal of better understanding the factors that contribute to the emergence of more or less effective regulatory regimes. In a separate project with Jiwook Jung, we reexamine and challenge the conventional wisdom about the relationship between organizational exposure to the “government safety net” (e.g., deposit insurance, the too-big-to-fail bank bailout framework) and excessive risk-taking. Lately, I have grown more interested in understanding the impact of recent transformations in banking and finance for other domains of economic and social life. In a series of articles in progress, I examine different facets of how the financialization of banking has impacted banks' relationships with their traditional customers, including the owners of privately held businesses.

Y. H.: Could you walk us through your economic sociology syllabus? How do your research interests inform the topic selections and course design?

K. P.: I teach economic sociology at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and I approach syllabus design for these courses in different ways.

At the undergraduate level, the key challenge I face is getting students excited about studying the economy. We are lucky to have a large and diverse undergraduate sociology program at the University of Toronto, but I find that my students are often drawn to this program by an interest in other (noneconomic) aspects of the social world. To spark student interest in my course, I do a lot to emphasize connections between economic sociology and key concepts that students are learning in their other sociology courses. I also fill my lectures with real-world empirical examples (mostly gathered

from news articles), as part of an effort to illustrate the relevance of the theoretical concepts for students' lives.

In terms of assigned readings, I use a combination of academic journal articles, book chapters, and relevant news articles. Many of these selections draw from my experience serving as a TA for another successful undergraduate economic sociology course (taught by Filiz Garip), which gave me an opportunity to observe which readings really resonated with students. Although some of the readings on my syllabus are a few decades old, I find that students continue to be inspired by their broader theoretical lessons. As one example, Nicole Woolsey Biggart's *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America* was published in 1989, but my students have repeatedly remarked on this reading's relevance for understanding the success of modern multilevel marketing schemes today. However, I do update my undergraduate syllabus each year by incorporating recently published research too. David Pedulla and Devah Pager's 2019 article, “Race and Networks in the Job Search Process,” was a huge hit with students last year, and excerpts from Lauren Rivera's 2015 book *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* are perennial favorites.

At the graduate level, the focus of the course is on exploring central issues in economic sociology and introducing students to the major theoretical camps that define the subfield. My syllabus pairs classic texts with cutting-edge empirical research, with the goal of offering students a sense of both how our field has developed and where it's currently heading. Readings that students especially enjoyed in the most recent iteration of the course included John Robinson III's 2020 article, “Making Markets at the Margins: The Racial Politics of Credit Expansion”; Laura Doering and Kristen McNeill's 2020 article, “Elaborating on the Abstract: Group Meaning-Making in a Colombian Microsavings Program”; Barbara Kiviat's 2019 article, “The Moral Limits of Predictive Practices: The Case of Credit-Based Insurance Scores”; and the introductory chapter of Sarah Quinn's *American Bonds: How Credit Markets Shaped a Nation*.

Of course, my syllabi at both undergraduate and graduate levels also reflect my own research interests. Whether they continue with economic sociology or not, I want students to leave with a strong understanding of the major economic transformations of our time. We spend quite a bit of time discussing some of these transformations, including financialization, the rise of shareholder

value capitalism, the rising prevalence of financial crises and corporate scandals, globalization, and drawing comparisons between Canadian and US experiences.

If there's interest, links to the most recent versions of these syllabi can be found here: [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#).

Y. H.: What topics do you think used to be less discussed yet are now considered essential to incorporate into courses? How would they advance our understanding of economic sociology?

K. P.: Like many others, I have been inspired by recent calls for economic sociologists to engage more seriously with scholarship on race. These discussions were at the forefront of my mind as I created my graduate economic sociology syllabus and updated my undergraduate syllabus last year. I think that engaging with this conversation has become increasingly necessary to do justice to recent developments in our field.

Y. H.: What do you enjoy the most when teaching economic sociology?

K. P.: Gaining converts to the cause! It is very satisfying to introduce students to a socially informed perspective on economic life and to watch that perspective click. When students show that they can successfully analyze economic behavior through multiple theoretical lenses, or when they start to approach conventional wisdom about the economy with a more skeptical eye, I feel like I have done my job.

I also enjoy challenging the myth that only specialized experts can understand and critically evaluate the economy—especially the financial system. I see removing the sense of mystery that surrounds these topics as the first step towards lowering barriers to engagement with them.

Y. H.: How did you adapt to the online teaching due to COVID-19? Are there some tips or innovations that you find helpful for class facilitation?

K. P.: Last year, I continued teaching my courses in a synchronous (real-time) format via Zoom. To accommodate students in different time zones, I recorded these sessions and posted them to the course website. I

also integrated small writing assignments into each lecture (due within 24 hours of the scheduled class time), to give students a way to directly engage with in-class material no matter where they were located in the world.

In addition to making heavy use of the Zoom poll and Zoom chat features to encourage student engagement, one strategy that worked well for me was to keep the online version of my course ruthlessly simple. In other words, my course website only included information that students absolutely needed to know; all lectures followed the same format each week; and all assignments and participation opportunities were posted at exactly the same place at the same time each week. One benefit was that when I inevitably ran into technological difficulties, problems were always quick and easy to fix. Another benefit was that it was easier for me to maintain consistency in course delivery even with all of the uncertainty and disruption of this period. More than in previous years, I found that being consistent and reliable was important for building trust with students, who were often struggling to adjust to the online format.

Y. H.: As in-person classes resume in most universities, how do you think that the new normal, especially public safety measures (i.e., social distancing, mask wearing, vaccination, and testing) may reshape pedagogy and classroom interactions?

K. P.: That's a great question, and I'm sure that we will all have a better answer to it in a few months! Although the University of Toronto does mandate vaccines and masks for all students and faculty, some in-person activities will probably be off the table. For example, I used to encourage students to break into small groups during in-person classes and to submit written responses to discussion questions. But encouraging students to crowd around a sheet of paper and share a pen (something we did all the time, prepandemic!) just doesn't seem as reasonable in the current climate. For now, my plan is to take it a day a time, stay focused on the broader learning goals, and work within public health guidelines to find ways for students to connect and engage. The silver lining of the past year is that it forced me to reflect on why I do what I do in the classroom, and to come up with creative strategies for accomplishing the same learning objectives. I imagine that the return to in-person learning will involve more of the same. ■

SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH CARLY KNIGHT

Carly Knight is an Assistant Professor of sociology at New York University. She completed her Ph.D. at Harvard University. Knight works in the fields of economic sociology, cultural sociology, and social theory with a particular interest in language and moral discourse. Drawing on computational text analysis, she researched the history of corporate personhood and the use of metaphor in legitimating corporate capitalism, and the cultural schemas that corporations and individuals used to make sense of market transitions.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Carly Knight about her research and her experience with sociology as a vocation.



Gökhan Mülayim: Let me first thank you for joining us in this issue. Could you please tell us the story of how and why you went into the study of language and morality in economic sociology? What do you think about the promise of cultural analysis for understanding economic phenomena?

Carly Knight: Thank you for having me! I became interested in language and markets after the *Citizens United* Supreme Court case in 2010. This case sparked a debate about corporate personhood, which years later eventually became my dissertation topic. In reading about the history of corporate personhood debates, I was struck by how heavily legal scholars, politicians, and journalists relied on metaphor in order to make their points. For instance, a person's intuitions about corporate rights and obligations are fundamentally related to whether they conceptualize a corporation as like a person, as something created by the state, or as a set of contracts.

This is true when talking about markets and institutions more generally. Human beings require metaphor to make sense of abstractions. And the metaphors we use matter. Mary Douglas made this point, that institutions require “naturalizing analogies” to be legitimated.

As for cultural and economic sociology, I am really excited for the future. The amount of creative and generative work being produced in the field is thrilling. In particular, innovations in text analysis have opened up new avenues for research and are allowing us better measure and analyze cultural discourses and frames. It's a field I feel very lucky to be a part of.

G. M.: I came to know how sophisticated computational text analysis could be in historical research thanks to your presentation at the 2020 ESS meeting. Could you please tell us a bit about how you became interested in this methodology? And what are your thoughts on the strengths and the limitations of computational analysis in historical research?

C. K.: Thank you for the kind words about that presentation! I came to text analysis through my dissertation. I was originally studying theories about corporate personhood qualitatively. But over time, I began to see that there was a more general shift in the way public debates and discourse over corporate regulation unfolded. I was curious if I could systematically measure those changes and that brought me to text analysis.

There is so much potential for bringing computational methods to historical research, particularly as more and more historical materials are becoming digitized. For one, computational methods can elucidate questions about the timing of major historical shifts. This was one thing I analyzed in studying the legitimization of private corporations. Beyond that, I think computational methods will be really important in answering causal questions about how historical processes unfolded, for instance, by looking at where and when new ideas arise and are taken up by actors. These are just some examples, and I think we are still just scratching the surface.

As far as limitations go, we are of course limited by the documents people preserved. It is necessary to think carefully about the biases one's corpus contains. But I think that there is a lot that can be done, particularly when sociologists are cognizant of needing to adapt computational tools for a given historical period.

G. M.: Could you please tell us a bit about your experience with sociology as a vocation? How did you become a sociologist?

C. K.: I have always been interested in the social sciences but it took me a little while to find my way to sociology. In college, I majored in economics and political science. There, my advisor was a political scientist who was trained as a sociologist, and he gently pushed me towards considering sociology doctoral programs. Prior to that, sociology and graduate school in general had never been on my radar. After college, I worked at the Urban Institute for a few years, where many of my colleagues were trained in sociology. By that point, it seemed natural to apply.

But that's just how I came to apply. The process of "becoming" a sociologist was, of course, more complicated. The first few years of graduate school were really important, getting immersed into theories I had never been exposed to before. Starting from outside the discipline can be overwhelming, but it was also exhilarating. I remember being floored the first time I read Polanyi and just thinking: "This! Why hadn't I read this before!?" Now, I find it really hard to think any other way. That is why teaching is so great. It reminds you that these are really groundbreaking ideas that many students are getting for the first time.

G. M.: Before sociology, you were trained in eco-

nomics and political science. What was the transition to sociology from those disciplines like? And what are your thoughts on disciplinary boundaries and exchanges and/or lack of exchanges across disciplines?

C. K.: I feel very lucky to have had the experience of being immersed in other social scientific disciplines prior to sociology. Economic sociology is sometimes criticized for engaging with either a strawman version of economics or continuing to spar with economics from the 1970s. So, I think having a background in it helps sensitize me to more contemporary approaches.

As for disciplinary boundaries, I think it is universally the case that everyone would benefit from more exchange. Particularly with economics, where there's less crossdisciplinary dialogue. At the same time, I do think that in certain cases there's a fair bit of exchange happening. In text analysis, for instance, I learn a lot from reading and talking to political scientists.

G. M.: You are teaching classes on markets, morality, finance, and capitalism. How has the pandemic affected your teaching, especially in terms of syllabus design and classroom experience? What lessons have you learned in that transition? Are there any tips or innovations that you find helpful?

C. K.: Last year, my syllabus on the "Sociology of Wall Street" was designed around trying to get the students to interact with each other, since that is the component that is so difficult to replicate over Zoom. To that end, we had lots of class debates, small group work, and class assignments that required commenting on one another's posts. The thing the students seemed to appreciate the most were the debates, where every class they'd be divided into two groups to work with their peers in coming up with the best arguments and evidence for and against a particular topic. They felt like they got to know each other through that process. I also tried to make the debates over contemporary issues. So, in my class on the financialization of the university, we debated whether universities should dip into their endowments for covid emergencies. In general, I think this setup worked well, but it wasn't a perfect substitute for being in person.

This semester, I'm teaching a "Morals and Markets" class. We are back in person, with vaccine and masking mandates. I'm continuing to save some portion for the

class for debates, since that worked well last time. And plenty of breaks so people can get some fresh air.

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

C. K.: Of course! I'm finishing up some smaller projects on asset bubbles and organizational visibility. But going forward, in general, I'm interested in how people develop moralized conceptions of economic actors. We already know that markets are highly moralized, but what are the mechanisms through which those moralizations change? I have two major projects, examining conceptualizations of business on the one hand and work on the other.

The first is on how people make sense of corporate actors in our society—how they understand things like the proper scope and power of business. Here, I'm continuing to work on my corporate personhood project. In addition, I'm working on a project with Barbara Kiviat (Stanford) about how peoples' perceptions of corporations and consumers determine their judgments about pricing fairness.

Second, I'm studying how people have talked about good work—or what makes for a good employee. Along with Nathan Wilmers (MIT), I have a project examining changing managerial discourse about workers using corporate annual reports. I'm also working on a new project with a stellar graduate student, Di Zhou, examining how business self-help bestsellers have discussed work and how to get ahead. ■

BOOKSHELF: AN INTERVIEW WITH CANAY ÖZDEN-SCHILLING ON THE CURRENT ECONOMY

Canay Özden-Schilling is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the National University of Singapore. She received her Ph.D. from the History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research interests include economic anthropology, science and technology studies, and the anthropology of infrastructures. Broadly, her research focuses on the conjoined infrastructures of energy and capitalism, the dissemination of economic forms of life, and the role of scientists and engineers in market building and maintenance.

Elif Birced, a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University, talked to Canay Özden-Schilling about her new book, *The Current Economy: Electricity Markets and Techno-Economics* which was published by Stanford University Press in 2021.



Elif Birced: How did you become interested in studying electricity markets? How is electricity, as you highlight in the book, “extraordinary” as a commodity?

Canay Özden-Schilling: I came to graduate school in Anthropology and Science & Technology Studies in 2009 with a strong interest in markets and capitalism. Great titles had recently come out in economic sociology and anthropology, which so deftly lifted the curtain

on how markets are made and maintained on a daily basis, and put to rest any residual doubt that markets might just come together on their own. With my background in Middle Eastern Studies, I was also influenced by the then-recent scholarship on the twin growth of energy infrastructures and capitalism, thinking as we were in the shadow of the Iraq War.

Preliminarily, I began to explore the US energy industry, with the thought of designing a crude oil project that would take me back to the Middle East. Instead, I chanced upon the United States' own electricity markets and became instantly intrigued. Commodity exchanges for electricity were (and still are) very recent creations, the oldest one going back to the turn of the present century. They're an ongoing experiment, especially considering the smart grid vision that seeks to turn the electric grid itself into an everyday market, transcending the exclusivity of commodity exchanges. I recognized that electricity receives much less attention in energy scholarship than charismatic commodities—like oil, for instance—which gave me the opportunity I was seeking: exploring the everyday, under-the-radar processes that quietly marketize a commodity, even one as atypical as electricity.



You will be reminded of electricity's quirks every time you meet a professional in the industry. Unlike many commodities that we (as scholars or consumers) are used to thinking with, electricity is not storable except in negligible quantities, and its supply and demand have to be in physical balance at all times for the electric grid to stay intact. Its transportation is restricted to dedicated routes (i.e., transmission wires); it is hard to change the geography of trading, for instance, to swap out local megawatts with those from abroad. It is possible that many observers lump in electricity's marketization, which started in the 1990s in the United States and Western Europe, with a generic global deregulation wave. But electricity's quirks meant that no blueprint would suffice for its marketization—and in fact, much of the interest in electricity's marketization first came from within engineering circles.

During my preliminary research, I began to meet electricity traders with backgrounds in electrical engineering. This was interesting given that much of the scholarship at the time was emphasizing the cross-expertise mobility of traders—namely, that a worrying number of people traded in commodities they knew little about—thinking as we were, also, with the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis. What I began to notice in electricity circles was the emergence and reproduction of an economic imagination specifically around electricity: Different groups of experts were working with the affordances and constraints of electricity, as well as those of the toolkits at their disposal. What kind of work and expertise did it require to marketize such an idiosyncratic commodity? What did that mean for how new markets are created today, how domains of social life previously untouched by market logics are organized into markets? These were the questions motivating the dissertation and eventually the book.

E. B.: Could you please describe your research and the main implications of your book, *The Current Economy: Electricity Markets and Techno-Economics*?

C. Ö.-S.: As an anthropologist, my main method is ethnographic fieldwork consisting of interviews and participant observation. In much of anthropology today, scholars find it insufficient to limit their investigation to one site, instead seeking what's often called multi-sited ethnography. This was definitely needed in the case of the electric grid, an object with so many tentacles through which energy and money flow, from expert nodes of production and trading to everyday sites of

consumption. I followed electricity to multiple nodes—nodes that I thought were both necessary to and representative of the cultures of electricity exchange.

I spoke with a variety of experts who witnessed the creation of electricity markets. I observed the day-to-day practice of electricity trading by computer programmers and data analysts. I was trained as a market participant by one of the major market operators. I observed the work practices in labs where visions for electricity futures are put forth by engineers. I conducted trips to places where everyday users educated themselves on the electric infrastructure and became politicized. Very often, these nodes were disconnected from each other—people populating one of them were scarcely in communication with those in another. I thought it was my responsibility as a social scientist to bring these nodes together in written representation to show how they all feed into electricity exchange in their own ways—and to highlight how, at times, disconnect can create discontent.

In each one of these nodes, I witnessed a technological work culture, where people were engaging closely with electricity as allowed by the constraints and affordances of their instruments. Experts and users cultivated original economic visions and imaginations in these heavily technological encounters. They responded to electricity's physicality with a repertoire of actions that I came to predict over the course of my observations. I use the term "work culture" to understand what goes on in each one of these milieus, because it formats everyday practices in reliable ways, though these practices are not necessarily guided by values in the Weberian sense of the term. I follow instead how Ann Swidler would define a culture, as that which provides people with a repertoire of actions, informed by an available "toolkit." Of course, the toolkits I have in mind include such things as spreadsheets, phase conductors, and electrons themselves.

The argument of the book is that the marketization of electricity comes from within the thick of these work cultures, where different kinds of experts and laypeople wrestle with electricity in their own ways, as opposed to being dictated top down by ideological agendas. The experts I studied work with electricity to ensure and expand upon the reliable replication of its exchange mechanisms. One informant put this to me as the "gluing of economics and engineering." I think it shows how

experts themselves are articulate about working in the interstices of economic imaginations and technological affordances—an intersectional field I call techno-economics.

E. B.: In your book, you emphasize the importance of work cultures of experts in shaping the market of electricity. How do work cultures of experts such as engineers and data analysts affect the creation and/or operation of electricity markets?

C. Ö.-S.: The data workers in electricity trading (analysts, programmers, and database compilers, among others) represent electricity flows in the form of spreadsheet-friendly bits that can travel far and wide. This is a crucial step that opens up electricity trade to actors across distances, regardless of their physical locations. Commodity exchanges in electricity have always been electronically mediated and, in that sense, always worked on the basis of electronic representation and remote participation.

But, as I show in the book, this work culture reproducing itself day in and day out has had the impact of growing the trade volume and the labor force involved by allowing more and more people into this domain, as evidenced by the example of mushrooming third-party information sellers in the industry. Once again, in these milieus you see that the work culture is not necessarily guided by a Weberian value or motivation—that, for instance, data will make markets more efficient or link prices to the underlying conditions better. It is more the technological investment, the jobs created, and the entanglements created by existing dataification that prove sticky, even when the fundamental premise—that better data analysis means more profit—remains difficult to verify.

Different engineering cultures have assumed different, and sometimes contradictory, priorities and roles in electricity markets. From the very beginning of electrification at the end of the nineteenth century in the US, the economic agenda to balance the supply and demand of electricity has come from within engineering circles, since that was a prerequisite to build stable interconnected grids and to continue to operate them reliably. Today, there are still hard-boiled engineers ensconced in power plant operation, who may be bothered by the increasing dataification and complexity in electricity trade, because they find their primary daily responsibilities and the time

horizons of their tasks to be at odds with those of the markets—that, for instance, the expectation of flexible ramp up and down that comes with increased frequency of trade runs counter to their long-term concern about equipment wear and tear.

But there are also electrical grid engineers on the opposite end of the spectrum who are actively working towards turning the grid into a data-suffused platform of optimal supply and demand balance—by researching how to multiply the communication channels across the grid. These smart grid engineers equipped with digital optimization tools operate out of laboratories, which gives them a certain flexibility of trial and error while they plan for more optimal electric futures. So, in all these cases, you see that the everyday fabric of a work culture—the instruments, the daily tasks and responsibilities, the supervisory mechanisms—format what kind of direction the experts will eventually push these markets.

E. B.: Lastly, how does a focus on work cultures and the techno-economic nature of electricity markets contribute to our understanding of the creation and/or operation of markets in general?

C. Ö.-S.: I began this interview by establishing electricity's quirks, but that doesn't mean that this book is interested in uncovering something only applicable to electricity. Electricity's condition is not unique in the sense that every commodity has characteristics to be reckoned

with. In that vein, this book is interested in illuminating how marketization occurs in the techno-economic field where economic visions come into being during everyday technological encounters. I show that we live with the economic imaginations of not only law- and policy-makers but also those of, for instance, electrical engineers and computer programmers. These actors enact new economic organizations without always waiting for legal change or ideological consensus. This is a widespread but underdiagnosed phenomenon precisely because these actors do not always label their work as market-building or even call attention to it as economic practice. Sometimes, these practices trigger legal or ideological action after the fact of technological commitment.

I find techno-economics very helpful in understanding what is occurring in numerous pockets of capitalism. Today, many expert circles formulate social issues as technological problems and respond to them by enacting a certain market-like organization. Their products range from ridesharing apps to labor sourcing mechanisms. It is a vast research area that I see myself continuing to explore. My current project, on how port cities articulate global capitalism, also falls in this interest area even though its subject matter is quite different. There, too, I am seeing everyday technicians who interface between different trade hubs leaving their mark on the trade practices that then travel far. ■

BOOKSHELF: AN INTERVIEW WITH EMILY ERIKSON ON TRADE AND NATION

Emily Erikson is Associate Professor of Sociology and the School of Management (by courtesy) at Yale University and the Joseph C. Fox Academic Director of the Fow International Fellowship. She works on the emergence and development of global networks, organizations, and the institutions of capitalism and democracy. Her award-winning book, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company* (2014, Princeton University Press) sheds light on the early modern global trade, and it shows how the autonomy of agents in the East India Company fostered informal information sharing and organizational flexibility that were key to the Company's long-term success. In her new book, *Trade and Nation: How Companies and Politics Reshaped Economic Thought* (2021, Columbia University Press), Erikson takes us back to Britain in the seventeenth century and digs into the emergence of modern economic thought.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Emily Erikson about her new book.

Gökhan Mülayim: Let me first congratulate you on the publication of your new book, *Trade and Nation: How Companies and Politics Reshaped Economic Thought*. Could you please tell us a bit about the story of this book? What inspired you to go into this field of research?

Emily Erikson: I would be happy to! The idea of for the book began while I was still working on my previous book, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*. That book is about the English East India Company and global trade. One of the things that I kept coming across that seemed striking was how so many people who were involved in the important economic debates of the time were directly linked to the East India Company. The most famous mercantilist author of the era was Thomas Mun, a director of the company, but many better known and important to the history of economic thought were tied to the Company. John Stuart Mill, for example, was employed by the Company, and Adam Smith, who was of course a famous critic of the Company was rumored to have been passed up for a position. I personally doubt that affected Smith's work, but I still thought it was interesting. So, the book began

while I began to explore these connections and why they existed and ended up describing the relationship between the rise of the companies and the rise of this new style of economic thought.

G. M.: In this book, you offer an account of the shift in economic thought from morality to politics, and you suggest that this shift happened even before the Scottish Enlightenment. Could you please tell us about the dynamics of this transformation a bit? Who were the actors driving it, and how did they revolutionize the early modern economic thought?

E. E.: The shift from a moral frame for evaluating economic activity to a more purely economic lens happened well before the Scottish Enlightenment. The beginnings were very early in the seventeenth century. Essentially two important things were going on, but they were related. One, chartered companies, monopolies, were becoming a prominent way of organizing trade and commerce. And two, while these companies increased the economic power and political importance of trade, the political influence of merchants in En-

lish society did not change much in correspondence with their increased economic importance. Merchants in England had operated at the margins of political influence. I don't mean to say they did not have political influence, because they did. They just were not central actors. And interestingly, they stayed on the margins for most of the seventeenth century. New challenges, controversies, and competition over the companies combined with the political marginalization of merchants led them to try to amplify their influence by turning to the print medium. When they published books, they were usually trying to persuade state actors to take certain policy positions on companies and other aspects of trade. As a result, they framed their arguments in terms of the benefits that would accrue to the state. They inadvertently created a new frame through which to evaluate trade by doing so.

G. M.: Why did this transformation happen in Britain? What was peculiar to this country in the seventeenth century?

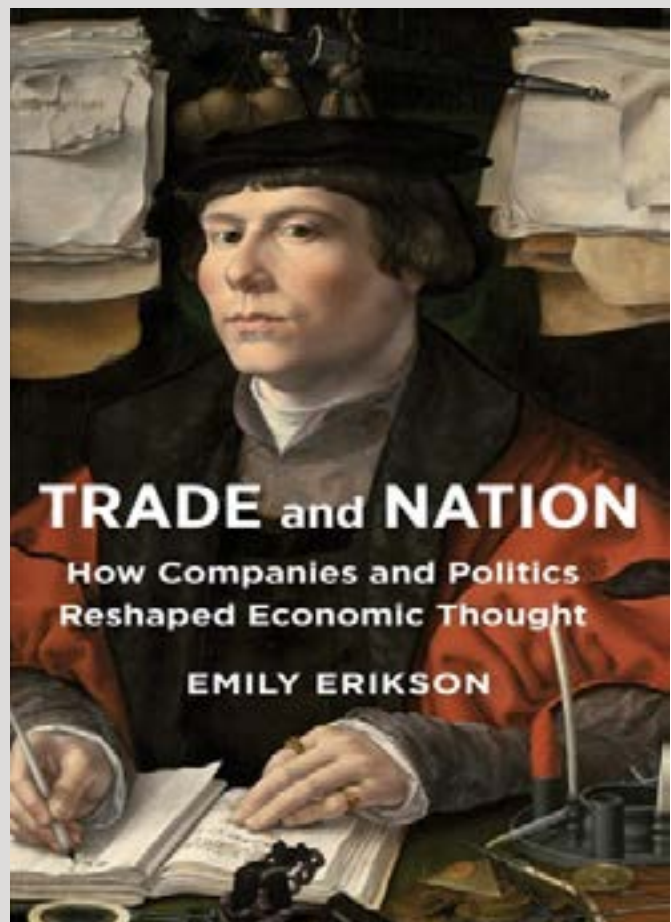
E. E.: All of this happened in Britain because it was the only nation that had in which company monopolies became a truly widespread form of organizing commerce—and in which merchants were somewhat excluded from governance, but still had a shot at influencing things. The Dutch Republic, for example, would have been a more likely place in which economic thought could flourish, since it was more commercially dynamic at the beginning of the seventeenth century. But the *States General*—the center of state power—was dominated by Amsterdam merchant elites. Since they were largely in direct control of the government, they had no need to go around writing books to persuade other political elites of their policy preferences. Thus, you don't get any new public discourse on commerce.

G. M.: Your research draws on computational text analysis. Could you please tell us a bit about the advantages of employing this tool of analysis in historical research? And what kind of challenges did you face in using it, if there were any?

E. E.: Computational text analysis a terrific tool for sociology, which I'm sure is why we are seeing more and more of it around! The main reason I found it so important was because I did not want to engage in a traditional Schumpeterian type of history of economic thought, where you read the main contributions and highlight who you thought made the most important

contribution. My goal was to map the changing contours of the entire discourse and chart its course over hundreds of years. Topic modeling really made that possible. Though of course it is not a substitute for reading as many of the texts as possible in addition to the analysis!

The main challenge is that early modern text is hard for a person to read—let alone a computer! It took me some time to find a way to get the texts in a computer-readable format. But in the end, it turned out someone else had solved the problem for me. The EE-BO-TCP partnership has converted a very large sample of early modern texts into machine-readable formats. It is an amazing resource for anyone interested in that era, when so many of our modern capitalist institutions where first developed. ■



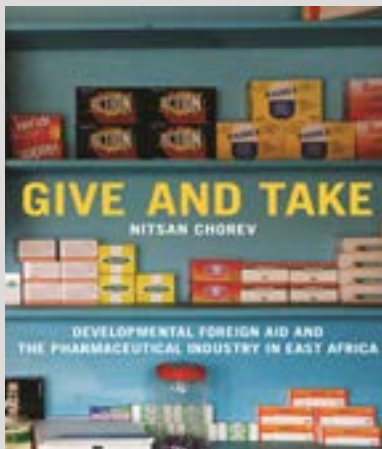
AWARD RECIPIENTS 2021

Zelizer Award for best book in Economic Sociology

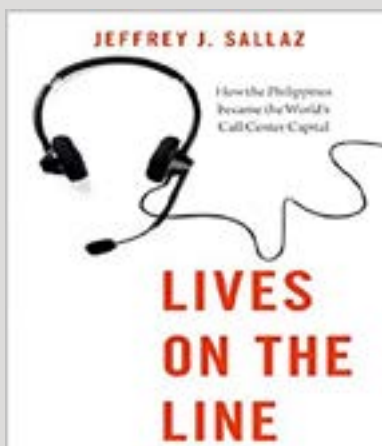
Award Committee: Nate Wilmers, Chair; Oyman Basaran, Lynn Spillman, Sarah Quinn

Winners

Chorev, Nitsan. *Give and Take*. Princeton University Press, 2019.



Sallaz, Jeffrey J. *Lives on the Line: How the Philippines Became the World's Call Center Capital*. Oxford University Press, 2019.



Honorable mention:

Kelly, Erin L., and Phyllis Moen. *Overload: How Good Jobs Went Bad and What We Can Do About It*. Princeton University Press, 2020.

Granovetter Award for best paper in Economic Sociology

Award Committee: Adam Goldstein, Chair; Andrés Tilcsik, Jing Shen, Victoria Reyes

Winner

Robinson III, John N. "Making markets on the margins: Housing finance agencies and the racial politics of credit expansion." *American Journal of Sociology* 125, no. 4 (2020): 974-1029.

Honorable Mentions:

Calder, Ryan. "Halalization: Religious Product Certification in Secular Markets." *Sociological Theory* 38, no. 4 (2020): 334-361.

Abraham, Mabel. "Gender-Role Incongruity and Audience-based Gender Bias: An Examination of Networking Among Entrepreneurs." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2020): 151-180.

Burt Award for best student paper in Economic Sociology

Award Committee: Elena Obukhova, Chair; Ken-Hou Lin, Aaron Horvath

Winner

Parker, Emily. "The Market Failure Paradox: Political Contention in the U.S. Welfare State."

Honorable Mention

Kalyani Monteiro Jayasankar. "Time and Tide: Temporal Inequalities in Residential Decisions around Climate Change."

Kauffman Foundation Award for Best Student Paper in Economic Sociology and Entrepreneurship

Award Committee: Chris Yenkey, Chair; Grace Tien, Heather Haveman

Narayan, Devika. "Between the Cloud and a Hard Place: New Organizational Forms and Market Dynamics in the Corporate Computing Industry"

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE



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



Dr. Ladin Bayurgil received her PhD in Sociology from Boston University and will be joining KU Leuven's ResPectMe Project as a postdoctoral researcher. The project, supported by the European Research Council, studies precariousness at the paid and unpaid work continuum across eight European countries. Ladin's work spans urban and economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations; particularly asks questions around urban precarious labor. In general, her research looks at intersections of urban and economic sociology by examining the ways in which intimate ties generated by community relations in the city get infused into economic exchange and employment relations.



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



Ya-Ching Huang is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests include economic sociology, cultural sociology, morality, and global health. She received her B.A. in the Interdisciplinary Program of Humanities and Social Sciences from National Tsing Hua University, and her M.A. in Sociology from National Taiwan University. Her previous research focused on Taiwanese pigeon racing, encompassing both the races and illegal gambling on them. She currently studies the production and distribution of cloth masks amid the coronavirus pandemic.



Elif Birced is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests center on economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations, and cultural sociology. In her dissertation, she analyzes how expertise is constructed in platform economies with a particular focus on Youtubers. Using qualitative methods, she seeks to explore how jurisdictional boundaries are determined in the Youtube ecosystem in Turkey. In her previous work, she analyzed economic and political precariousness of academic labor with a particular focus on social scientists at foundation universities in Turkey.