
ACCOUNTS

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BOOKSHELF

Armando Lara-Millan is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at UC Berkeley. His research interests include urban ethnography, historical sociology, law and society, economic sociology, and medical sociology. He studies how the economic worth of resources on which people rely (e.g., jail space, hospital care, advanced medical technology, and property value) are generated, recast, and allocated by powerful institutions in cultural and cognitive processes. His book, *Redistributing the Poor: Jails, Hospitals, and the Crisis of Law and Fiscal Austerity* (2021), reveals the processes of urban poverty governance in the field of American urban jails and public hospitals. His research work has been published in *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Qualitative Sociology*, *Criminology*, and *Punishment & Society*.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Armando Lara-Millan about his book, *Redistributing the Poor* (2021), published by Oxford University Press.



Ya-Ching Huang: In *Redistributing the Poor*, you discuss some myths about how we understand public institutions. What were these myths? In what ways do you find them limited in explaining why medicine has expanded in urban jails but is restricted in public hospitals?

Armando Lara-Millan: The restriction of medicine in large public hospitals and its expansion in urban jails is one of the rare topics in which there is widespread consensus about what is going on: that because American society has disinvested from public health, particularly mental health institutions during the 1960s, the sick and poor are now finding

themselves within the purview of criminal justice institutions. Actors on both sides of the political aisle, journalists, and academics generally agree that we have funneled resources into local criminal justice institutions at the expense of health and welfare institutions. I found this explanation inadequate because it did not account for three important empirical developments. First, deinstitutionalization (or the closure of mental health facilities in the 1960s) does not explain the timing and willingness of jail administrators to suddenly start spending huge sums of money on healthcare by the late 1990s. Second, welfare retrenchment (or the gutting of public institutions) does not account for the massive growth of public money spent on healthcare and its funneling into large urban safety net hospitals. Finally, the history of mass imprisonment (or the seven-fold growth of the imprisonment rate) does not account for a little-acknowledged fact: major urban jails have suffered major capacity declines and have suffered from budget retrenchment since the 1990s. So, major jails stopped growing, public money spent on major public hospitals has resisted

retrenchment efforts, and jailers started spending huge sums of money on jail healthcare way after the 1960s. What gives?

Y. H.: You propose the theories of “redistribution of the poor” and “disappearing of the crisis” to provide new insights into welfare state resiliency. Could you tell us more about these ideas?

A. L.-M.: What is really going on is that public institutions have changed because decision-makers continuously face budget retrenchment at the exact same time that they face legal pressure to expand services. They resolve such crises by “redistributing” caseloads between one another in whatever way renews their dying institutions. First, redistributing involves reclassifying caseloads or rearticulating the kinds of interventions that caseloads are thought to require, such as emphasizing the mental health needs of a jail population over their security risks. Second, this reclassification allows the movement of such wards into different institutional spaces or changing the kinds of interventions that spaces provide. By doing this, institutions can make claims on revenue from other state agencies, both those horizontally located (for instance, such as a mental health department providing services and revenue to a jail) and those vertically located (such as a jail pulling in revenue from a state health tax or renting space to state and federal agencies). Finally, it is the continuous movement between old space and repurposed institutional space that projects an illusion that services have been rendered in legally adequate ways. In total, jails have moved to expand medicine not only because they are seeing more mentally ill arrestees, but because reorganizing their jails along these lines has allowed them to tap into new revenue sources and new means of abdicating responsibility. Likewise, public hospitals moved to restrict access to medicine not simply due to cutbacks, but because doing so allowed them to generate revenue from new sources and to rationalize extreme wait times. You brought up “administrative disappearing,” which is a concept I introduce at the end of the book to understand the consequences of redistributions during crisis; every time agencies align budgets with legal demands in these ways, the social suffering associated with a previous redistribution is rearticulated into a more



REDISTRIBUTING THE POOR

Jails, Hospitals, and the Crisis
of Law and Fiscal Austerity

ARMANDO LARA-MILLÁN

affordable kind of social need. These are instances when, despite expansions of public spending, the social suffering of huge swaths of people is simply written off on paper as *successful* policy.

Y. H.: Methodologically, you wove ethnographic observation with archival data of an urban jail and a public hospital in Los Angeles. How can “historically embedded ethnography” improve our understanding of your case? What are the strengths and limitations of this approach?

A. L.-M.: In my view, in place of actual histories of field sites, sometimes ethnographers make use of broad theories or histories—theories like deinstitutionalization, welfare retrenchment, and mass imprisonment—to explain the origins of what they have found, even if those theories do not fully fit their cases. For me, this would have looked like describing the widespread use of pharmaceuticals (or what is called “zombie medicine”) by jails and hospitals (which I found in my observations) as caused by the effort to extend social control. Instead, connecting these observations to archival evidence showed me that it is also about resolving legal and fiscal crises. I write about this extensively in the appendix, but I think historically embedded ethnography is a good way to separate out historical causal explanations from functional explanations that get mixed up in what Josh Pacewicz (2020) calls “constitutive arguments” that tend to populate historical sociology and ethnography.

Y. H.: What are the major insights that your book can offer to economic sociologists? And how can economic sociologists build upon your work?

A. L.-M.: I think economic sociology has a ton to teach other subfields, and in part that is what I am doing in the book. Redistribution does not happen without performativity. When they redistribute, actors rely on new metrics, standards, measurements, and calculative devices that end up creating the object they seek to measure. In the jail I called this the “looping budget,” against all odds there is always enough available jail space as there is demand for it; the reason being is that inmates do not just arrive at the jail with existing qualities, they get endowed

with qualities (more or less violent, more or less sick) that fits them into the available budget (specialized cell spaces have dollar figures attached to them). There is a reciprocal relationship between budgets and who we think people are and this is something sociologists can track.

Y. H.: What are you currently working on, and what is next for your research-wise?

A. L.-M.: I’m fascinated by how powerful actors remake economic value using language, cognitive processes, and knowledge-making. I basically showed this in the realm of poverty governance and now I want to turn my attention to other sectors, including advanced healthcare technology, start-ups, and real estate. Boltanski and Esquire (2020) call this “enrichment,” and I think it makes up a big part of our economy. What allows for the attachment of stories to objects in such a way that facilitates the creation of huge sums of money? •

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ON RESEARCHING INEQUALITIES: AN INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN MIJS

Jonathan Mijs is an assistant professor of sociology at Boston University and a Veni fellow at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. His work focuses on how people perceive, explain and confront social inequality and it draws on a wide range of methodologies including ethnography, longitudinal data analysis, survey experiments, and computational methods. Dr. Mijs has been supported by research grants from Harvard University, the London School of Economics, the Dutch Research Council, and the European Union, and has featured in influential media outlets including *The Atlantic*, *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *El País*. His book project at University of California Press asks why growing levels of economic inequality have been met with only minimal public consternation; it describes how widening racial and economic fault lines lead to insulate people from seeing the full extent of inequality.

Gökhan Mülayim, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Jonathan Mijs about his research and his thoughts on the sociology of inequalities.



Gökhan Mülayim: Thank you for joining us in this issue. Could you please tell us the story of how you started researching social inequalities? What inspired you to enter into this field?

Jonathan Mijs: I entered the field of social inequalities research through my University of Amsterdam professor Herman van de Werfhorst, who had me read Michael Young's *The Rise of Meritocracy* in the context of a social stratification course, exploring the sociological triangle of origin—education—destination. We read the sociological classics as well as a selection of texts in moral philosophy. That led to an interest in uncovering the falsehood of meritocracy and exploring all the ways in which our societies fall short of it.

Only later came the gestalt switch that brought me

to my current research program. I am blessed with colleagues doing terrific work documenting inequities and injustice. It allows me to turn the lens to try and understand how people *themselves* experience, feel, and explain their unequal world. I'm especially interested in how people develop an understanding of inequality in the first place, how that process is situated socially, and under what circumstances people change their beliefs.

G. M.: Since the inception of sociology, inequality has been a core field of research. However, it seems the popularity of sociology of inequalities has recently been on the rise again, especially since the late 2000s. What are your thoughts on the recent surge of interest in this field and on its current state and trajectory?

J. M.: On balance, I'm happy about the resurgence of interest and the opportunities it affords as well as the media attention on the topic of inequality, etc. Although, as you noted, inequality has been center-stage in sociological scholarship since Ibn Khaldun. So, perhaps what has changed most is that our field now must deal with the onset of newcomers (among them the great usurper, economics!), all of whom are vying for attention and bringing with them a different set of tools and vocabularies. Sometimes that can lead to a tower of Babel, and there have been instances where longstanding sociological insights are "rediscovered" by oblivious outsiders or, worse, repackaged as their own.

But the resurgence of interest in the topic of inequality also creates fruitful grounds for interdisciplinary conversation, like in my subfield on inequality beliefs. I teach a class on the topic, titled "Understanding Meritocracy," in which I take students through various factors that feed into people's understanding of their unequal world, from cultural narratives and psychological processes, to the role of popular and news media and our spatial and social environment. I feel that my teaching really benefits from research in other fields, such as social psychology, education, communication, political science, and, yes, economics.

G. M.: **The concept of merit occupies a central place in your research. Could you tell us how and why it matters for our understanding of the dynamics of contemporary social inequalities?**

J. M.: To speak with C. Wright Mills, social inequality confronts us as a public issue but our belief in meritocracy turns it into personal trouble. In my work, I argue that what explains the public's belief in meritocracy in the face of economic inequality, is the socioeconomically segregated nature of so many of our social institutions—our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Looking out from our socioeconomic "bubbles," the world looks a lot less unequal and a lot more meritocratic than it really is. In the absence of interactions across the economic fault line, it's impossible to recognize our privileges or the ways in which we're structurally disadvantaged.

Without an awareness of social inequalities and an appreciation of its structural sources, people explain "success" and "failure" in terms of individual talent and merit. As I described it with some hyperbole in a recent essay, talent today is what inherited land was to feudal societies: an unchallenged source of symbolic and economic rewards. Whereas God sanctified the aristocracy's wealth, contemporary privilege is legitimated by meritocracy.

G. M.: **You use a broad repertoire of methodological instruments ranging from computational methods to ethnography. What are your thoughts on the classical methodological divide between quantities and qualities? How do you benefit from using both in your work?**

J. M.: I've always found that to be a bit of an artificial distinction, sometimes used to justify myopia or a lack of effort to engage with the work of others. Methods should never stand in the way of asking good questions and finding answers using the best tools we have at our disposal.

That said, of course we each have our skillsets and our preferences. Myself, I've really enjoyed doing qualitative field work in graduate school, and I've learned a lot from it. But it can also be exhausting; physically and emotionally. So, once I completed my organizational ethnography in, I believe, my third year of grad school, I purposively planned a project that made for a change in pace and allowed me to catch my breath. I think that's a legitimate reason to pick one tool over another, and it's what I tell my students.

More than trying out a variety of research skills, I've tremendously benefited from collaborating with others—especially when it allows for an exchange of perspectives and skillsets. In recent years I've learned a lot about computational methods by working with others who had more experience and by collectively figuring things out when neither of us knew how. Sociology is a team sport!

G. M.: **How do you see your work in the context of the continental divide? What are your thoughts on the state and the trajectory of inequality research on both sides of**

the Atlantic?

J. M.: I've joked that UK and US sociology are similarly insular; the only difference being that the latter is a slightly larger island. Studying and working in the Netherlands, the UK, and the United States, I have definitely experienced each community's idiosyncrasies, from Dutch scholars' hesitance to use the concept of "race" or the American focus, by default, on "place" to everyone's omission, in British eyes, of class. In more ways than not, however, I think scholars engage with the work of their colleagues across the great pond, which, if anything, is leading to convergence—not divergence. The real divide is between the Global North and South, which isn't helped by the monolingualism (of which I too am guilty, despite my native Dutch and tod-

der-level Portuguese) of the most visible and prestigious institutions, to the detriment of Spanish, Portuguese, and French speakers.

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

J. M.: I've developed a somewhat bold theoretical framework to make sense of why growing levels of economic inequality have not been met with more public outcry. Having done the theoretical work, I am now left with the much more daunting task of putting together the empirical pieces of the puzzle to support the hypothesized mechanisms. There's a lot still to do. Thankfully, I don't have to do it alone. •

BOOKSHELF

Charlie Eaton is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at UC Merced. His research interests include economic sociology, organizations, stratification and inequality, political sociology, and social policy. He investigates the relationship between financialization and growing inequality in higher education. His book, *Bankers in the Ivory Tower: The Troubling Rise of Financiers in US Higher Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), examines how the increasing power of financial elites plays out in a stratified higher education system. As co-founder of the Higher Education, Race, and the Economy (HERE) Lab, Dr. Eaton and the team work to explain class and racial inequalities in universities and colleges and advocates for reform and policy changes.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Charlie Eaton about his book, *Bankers in the Ivory Tower*.

**Ya-Ching Huang: Could you please tell us a bit about the backstory of this book? What inspired you to study financiers in higher education?**

Charlie Eaton: I was in grad school at UC Berkeley for the end of the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath. This made the role of financiers unavoid-

able in my personal life and the larger world.

We had massive university budget cuts, strikes, and protests against tuition hikes. Several of my fellow grad students and I did a lot of reading and discussing financiers in an economic sociology seminar co-led by Neil Fligstein, Marion Fourcade, and Heather Haveman. A group of us wrote a "Bankers

in the Ivory Tower” working paper about how financiers had tried to transform the University of California (UC). Then our paper “Financialization of U.S. Higher Education” explored how the costs and returns of financial market dependencies in different parts of US higher education compared to what we had found at UC. I thought that financiers played varied but connected roles throughout the higher education system. The project of the book is explaining how these roles are connected and how they came about.

Y. H.: Who are the financiers you refer to in this book? How did the social circuitry of finance weave into higher education, forming a web of intimate ties between financiers, university leaders, financial aid officers, and politicians to expand the federal student loan program?

C. E.: There are three kinds of financiers who play major roles in the book: private equity managers, hedge fund managers, and commercial bankers. Private equity and hedge fund managers came out of investment banking, which had long been connected to elite universities. Lauren Rivera has detailed these long-standing ties in recent work. C. Wright Mills also noted this in his 1956 *The Power Elite*. Like their investment banking predecessors, private equity and hedge fund managers use private information and social affinities from what I call “parallel social organizations” to raise capital and identify lucrative investments. These parallel organizations (or “circuits” in Viviana Zelizer and Fred Wherry’s words) included country clubs and cultural philanthropies, like opera societies, according to Mills and others. But elite universities are the most important as a site where people enter adulthood and forge lifelong friendship networks that identities that they plaster on their resumé and car bumpers.

Here’s an example of how private information and social connections are especially valuable for financiers. I write in the book: “Yale alumnus and hedge fund billionaire Tom Steyer relatedly began courting Yale to invest in his hedge fund after learning of Swensen’s appointment to lead the school’s endowment at a 1988 homecoming football game.

Two years later, Swensen provided Steyer’s Farallon Capital with \$300 million, a third of its total investment capital... Consistent with the benefits of prestigious private university networks described here, private equity and hedge fund managers in the Forbes 400 list have elite private university backgrounds at much higher rates than do billionaires from other economic sectors.... Just 26 percent of nontechnology and nonfinance members of the Forbes 400 had bachelor’s degrees from the top thirty private universities in 1989. That year, 43 percent of the private equity and hedge fund managers in the Forbes 400 had bachelor’s degrees from those schools, rising to 65 percent in 2017.” The most-elite private schools have the most board members from private equity and hedge funds because fund managers assume that the most advantage comes from serving on these boards. Consumer bankers played a major role in lobbying to expand federal student loans and to get themselves a cut of the expanded lending. They often drew on their higher education ties in lobbying. For example, bankers at Sallie Mae hired President Bill Clinton’s Yale Law School buddy Jerry Hultin to lobby the President on student loans.

Y. H.: In the book, you argue that higher education is a social good distributed by a stratified system of colleges and universities. What are the impacts of the increasing power of financiers in different strata of higher education?

C. E.: This is the elevator version: Elite universities and wealthy financiers have always been closely connected because financiers are middlemen (they really are overwhelmingly men) for elites. Financiers with Ivy League pedigrees cooked up the 1990s expansion of federal student loans that transformed higher education. Then:

- At the top, financiers with Ivy ties created new private equity and hedge funds in the 1980s with capital from endowments; this created huge endowment surpluses that subsidize debt-free college at the most elite schools.

- At the bottom, private equity financiers bought up over 900 for-profit colleges to extract tuition rents

from the expansion of federal loans in the 1990s. They particularly targeted Black and working-class students who were left with crushing debts.

- In the middle, public universities were squeezed by the diversion of tax subsidies and student aid programs to endowments at the top and private equity owned for-profit colleges at the bottom.

Y. H.: Grounded in years of research on this topic, what would be your reform proposals if you were a policymaker?

C. E.: I have called for three things:

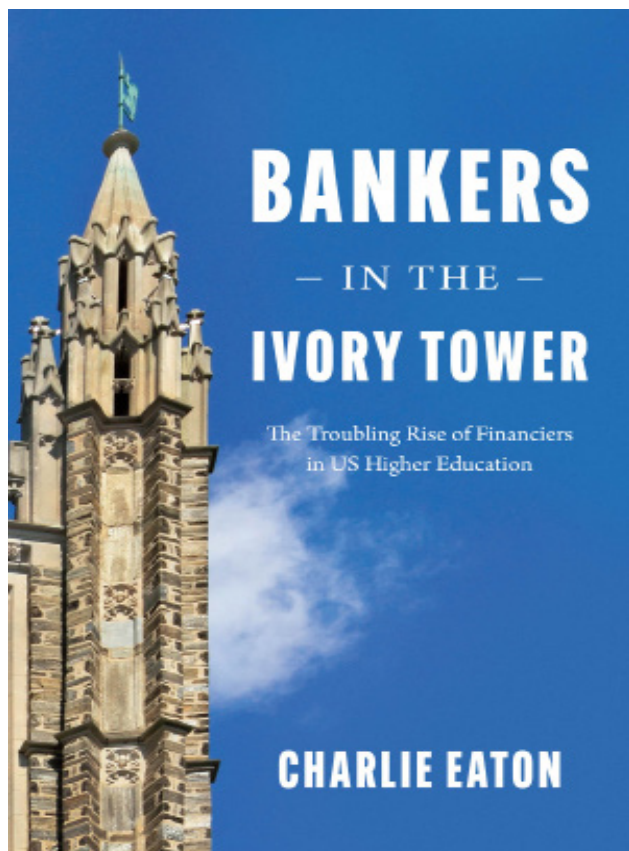
1. President Joe Biden should cancel existing student debt by executive order.
2. Congress should pass a debt-free college program so that all future students have the option to attend a public university debt free.
3. Policymakers should increase taxes on wealth and finance, including large endowments at schools that enroll few undergraduates.

Canceling student debt is the easiest step to take, and

we shouldn't wait to do so. Canceling student debt is the only way to repair decades of harm by federal student loan programs. By design, low-wealth, working-class, and Black students have borrowed disproportionately for higher education, and they have struggled to repay their loans. This has prevented them from owning homes and acquiring wealth relative to better-off students who went to school debt free. As I've written with Adam Goldstein, Laura Hamilton, Amber Villalobos, and Fred Wherry, the government broke promises to these borrowers over and over. The Department of Education failed to verify the quality of for-profit colleges eligible for federal student loans. The Department and its corporate loan servicers prevented millions of borrowers from receiving income-driven repayment loan relief. As a result, 4.4 million borrowers still have debts from the 1990s.

Debt-free college would require Congressional legislation, which is harder. But the President shouldn't wait to cancel student debt until Congress has passed a debt-free college plan. Canceling student debt will put Congress on notice that now is the time to act. One version of a smart debt-free college plan would roughly restore the late-1970s version of Pell Grants. At that time, Pell Grants covered 80 percent of all college costs for public universities on average, including tuition and room and board. Pell Grants were also available to many more students, including all middle-income students. With support from conservative Democrats, Reagan eviscerated Pell Grants in 1981, and this lay the groundwork for expanding student loans in the 1990s.

Changes to tax policy could pay for debt-free college. Just as important, tax policy can reduce the incentive for financiers to expropriate and hoard wealth from working people and government programs (like for-profit college subsidies). Congress should pass a set of tax laws including the wealth tax proposed by Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman and a restoration of taxes on capital gains and carry interest to their 1970s levels. These taxes should also apply to endowments at schools that enroll few students. For example, Princeton spends about \$100,000 per student on university operations every year just from its \$38 billion endowment. This is roughly 5 times higher than Princeton's endowment spending in the 1970s when its endowment was 1/10th its current



size, even after accounting for inflation. Princeton and other Ivies could probably still provide world-class educations if they enrolled twice as many students and only spent \$50,000 per student from the endowment. If they're not willing to make this contribution to educational access and equity, their endowment should be taxed heavily to pay for schools that do make such contributions. Otherwise, we are basically letting financiers and other rich people secede from society to spend lavishly on their children's education via philanthropic tax deductions and tax exemptions.

Y. H.: You rely on multiple methods for data collection, including secondary data from scholarly studies, original interviews, archival documents, and a newly established dataset. Could you tell us how they complement each other and help answer your puzzles?

C. E.: Here's what I say about this in the book: "Sociologists sometimes use the term triangulation for this method of gathering, analyzing, and integrating both qualitative and quantitative data. W. E. B. Du Bois provided some of the first blueprints for triangulation in his early twentieth-century studies showing the relationship between schools, racial exploitation, and struggles for racial equality in the US. My quantitative data gathering and analyses were guided by primary and secondary sources of qualitative data gathered according to what sociologists Theda Skocpol and Sarah Quinn have called the targeted primary methodology. This approach uses theories and evidence from existing journalistic and scholarly studies and supplements them with new data to fill in gaps. The targeted primary approach is especially promising for studying elites like financiers because they are relatively small in number and unusually motivated to protect their privacy from public examination."

Y. H.: How can the study of the intersection between finance and higher education offer insights to economic sociologists? Any suggestions for future research?

C. E.: I think economic sociology could investigate how college ties and college identities are collectively mobilized in a range of distributional

conflicts between social classes, racial groups, and genders. My theory is that this probably occurs in a range of domains, from workplaces to neighborhoods and to politics. I hope that economic sociologists will empirically study whether this is the case in different social and economic spheres.

Y. H.: What is next for your research-wise? Could you please tell us about your future research plans?

C. E.: I've launched a new [Higher Education, Race, and the Economy \(HERE\) Lab](#) with Laura Hamilton at UC Merced. We publish code and data for addressing racial, class, and organizational disparities in higher education. Postdocs with our Lab, Christian Smith and Amber Villalobos, and PhD candidate Heather Daniels are leading studies about how private equity has invested heavily in for-profit "online program managers" that run online degree programs for community colleges, public universities, and private nonprofit colleges. These programs have grown to enroll 2 million students annually, equivalent to predatory for-profit colleges at their peak. They have disproportionately enrolled Black and working-class students. We hope that these studies will help us learn how public scarcity and organizational opacity can fuel predatory inclusion as theorized by folks like Louise Seamster, Raphaël Charron-Chénier, and Tressie McMillan Cottom.

We are also working with PhD student Alisha Jones on studies regarding how financial aid formulas harm Black and other low-wealth students by failing to account for wealth inequalities. And members of our lab are collaborating with Adam Goldstein on a study of how administrative burdens prevent low-income and Black borrowers from accessing income-based loan-relief programs. We hope these studies will help policymakers get debt cancellation done and get the details right for creating debt-free financial aid programs moving forward.

Beyond these works in progress, I am interested in further studies of the extent to which student debt has inhibited home ownership and other forms of wealth building for communities of color, working class borrowers, and women. •

BLACK RESOURCES & CONSUMPTION: AN INTERVIEW WITH CASSI PITTMAN CLAYTOR



Cassi Pittman Claytor is the Climo junior professor of sociology at [Case Western Reserve University \(CWRU\)](#) and the author of [Black Privilege: Modern Middle-Class Blacks with Credentials and Cash to Spend](#) (Stanford University Press). Her work examines the financial lives and marketplace experiences of middle-class Black consumers. She is a nationally recognized scholar on the unfortunate, yet all too common phenomena of [“Shopping While Black.”](#) In 2020 Pittman Claytor was named as one of 100 most influential people in business in the category of retail. Pittman Claytor received her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and her Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Meghann Lucy, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Dr. Cassi Pittman Claytor about her body of work exploring the ways racism, class, and race intersect to inform Black American experiences and consumption.

Meghann Lucy: Let me first thank you for joining us in this issue and congratulations on your book *Black Privilege: Modern Middle-Class Blacks With Credentials and Cash to Spend* (Stanford University Press 2020). How did you get started in researching the Black middle class?

Cassi Pittman Claytor: The social policy aspect of my doctoral training entailed a focus on social inequality, yet it seemed that classroom discussions of race and racism centered on the Black poor. The underlying message was if only Blacks had the right culture (schooling, degrees, etc.) and were in the right financial position (occupations, income, etc.) then racial inequality would be greatly reduced. But for the Black middle class, a college degree, elite credentials, prestigious occupations, and relatively high incomes do not buffer them from racism. I wanted to unpack this in my work. I was particularly

interested in housing and wealth building through homeownership. There is no better example than the mortgage market of how Black consumers' experiences are negatively affected by race, both historically and today. My first independent research project focused on middle-class Blacks navigating the mortgage market, and particularly, why they were concentrated disproportionately in sub-prime products. I published a working paper for Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies right before the market crashed in 2008. It was around then that I determined that I wanted to explore the intersection of financial behavior and decision-making and race.

M. L.: In *Black Privilege*, you discuss the resources, specifically the Black cultural capital and cultural flexibility that middle-class Black Americans often build to navigate and excel in different social contexts. Could you discuss some of the ways these resources

play out in your research?

C. P. C.: It was not uncommon for those in my study to have experiences like worshipping at an all-Black Baptist church on Sunday to working in an all-white Wall Street firm on Monday. Both social contexts may require them to wear suits but of different kinds. Their Black cultural capital and cultural flexibility enable them to do so seamlessly. The cultural dexterity and acumen demonstrated by my respondents represent something we all should aspire to attain. It is a skill that will be increasingly necessary in an increasingly racially diverse world, which is especially true for those under 18, as the population is already majority minority.

M. L.: **The cosmetics giant Sephora commissioned your expertise as a research advisor on racial bias in retail settings. Can you tell us a bit about your experience working with industry? And how, if at all, did your findings about racial bias at Sephora differ from those you have documented about racial bias in retail in general?**

C. P. C.: Sephora is a data-driven company that is in part able to maintain its dominance in the beauty space by embracing innovation. When they approached me I believe they were genuinely perplexed about how to address and minimize incidents of retail racism in their stores. In an op-ed in *The Guardian*, I called them out and suggested they pursue a data-driven approach to the problem and that such an approach would help them to ensure customers of color have satisfactory experiences that are free from racially exclusionary treatment. The goal of the national study was in part to establish benchmarks to determine how they compared to their peers and also across the retail landscape. Interestingly, few other retailers, when approached were interesting in sponsoring the study, revealing to me that Sephora, unlike other companies, was unique in spearheading a research-based effort and was not just engaged in performative allyship. In many respects, the findings from the national study commissioned by Sephora were consistent with other work—for example, indicating that Black consumers report the highest rates of unfair treatment. I was surprised to find how frequently retail workers reported experiencing unfair treatment at

the hands of customers. It was also interesting to learn that certain sectors of the retail industry were sites where unfair treatment was more salient.

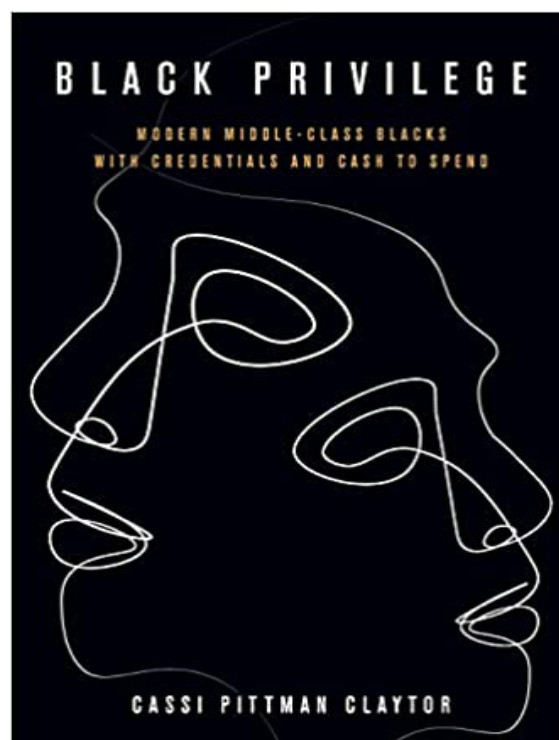
M. L.: **“Stop ‘Blaming the Man’: Perceptions of Inequality and Opportunities for Success in the Obama Era Among Middle-Class African Americans” explores “dual consciousness”—the belief that both structural and individual motivational factors contribute to racial disadvantage—among Black Americans. The research for this article was originally conducted from 2008 to 2010, a time in which you mention Wornie Reed and Bertin Louis (2009) argue that national discourses of individualistic hard work and determination rejuvenated Black American optimism. To what extent do you think you might find similar results if you were to conduct these interviews again in 2022?**

C. P. C.: Great question. The pandemic has made clear that racial disparities are stark and those disparities can have consequences that mean life or death for Blacks. I can only speculate, but I imagine that with the adverse impacts of COVID-19 combined with the racial reckoning, Blacks are less optimistic about the possibilities of individual efforts to overcome certain racial disadvantages. Systemic racism today feels palpable in a way that is quite different than when Obama was elected. Nonetheless, I do believe that there remains a deeply held belief that individual progress is attainable, even if group progress is stalled due to structural racism. In “Stop ‘Blaming the Man,’” we found that Blacks believe Blacks can and do live good lives, particularly when they “work hard” and “get an education,” though they may encounter racism and racial oppression. I suspect that this attitude is still evident.

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

C. P. C.: I am very excited to be finishing up a theoretical piece that provides a model to account for the underlying mechanisms driving marketplace racism with David Crocket. I am currently collecting data for a study that examines Black consumers’ attitudes surrounding climate change, sustainabili-

ty, and environmental justice. That is, what it means to be Black and be green. Black communities often bear the brunt of the destructive effects of climate change and are adversely impacted by environmental racism. In *Black Privilege* I touch briefly on the topic of Black consumers' ideological commitments and consumption as it pertains to "being green," but this work will delve deeper and examine the cultural scripts that Blacks draw upon when discussing their attitudes and perceptions of climate change and environmental justice, and how their ideological commitments shape their consumption.



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PRIVILEGE LOST: AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSI STREIB



Jessi Streib is an associate professor of sociology at Duke University. Her research focuses on how social class inequality is experienced, reproduced, and alleviated through various mechanisms. She is the author of two books *The Power of the Past: Understanding Cross-Class Marriages*, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2015, and *Privilege Lost: Who Leaves the Upper Middle Class and How They Fall* which was released by the same publisher in 2020.

Elif Birced, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Boston University, talked to Jessi Streib about her recent book, *Privilege Lost: Who Leaves the Upper Middle Class and How They Fall*, and her current research agenda.

Elif Birced: Could you please tell us a bit about the story of this book? What sparked your interest in studying downward mobility experiences of youth born into upper-middle class families?

Jessi Streib: The first time I really considered studying downward mobility was when I was reading Martha Bailey and Susan Dynarski's chapter in the edited volume, *Whither Opportunity?* In the chapter, they include a figure that describes inequality in college completion by parents' income. The figure is meant to highlight inequality, and it does, showing that in the cohort they studied, 9% of children born in the lowest income quartile graduated from college compared to 54% of children in the highest income quartile. I knew about the inequality, but I couldn't get over the statistic that only 54% of kids raised in the highest income quartile graduated from college. Almost all qualitative studies about class are about reproduction, and many of them write as if almost all upper-middle-class kids graduate from college. That's the literature I read most, so in my head the number was going to be closer to 90%. I really wanted to understand how so many kids raised near the top of the class structure did not get the outcomes that I had learned to expect.

E. B.: While explaining mobility paths, you highlight the importance of inherited

resources, including economic, cultural, and human capital, as well as identities for which you develop archetypes, like "the professional," "the stay-at-home mother," and "the family man." How can the relationships between these different resources and identities lead to downward mobility? Could you give us one or two examples from your findings?

J. S.: The argument is that white upper-middle-class youth inherit different sets of resources from their parents. Some white upper-middle-class youth inherit "resource strengths," or high levels of economic capital (money), cultural capital (knowledge of how to navigate institutions like schools and workplaces), and human capital (academic knowledge). Other white upper-middle-class youth inherit "resource weaknesses," or low levels of economic, cultural, and/or human capital compared to other upper-middle-class youth. Youth with resource weaknesses develop identities that are valued in their communities and that make a virtue of the resources they don't have—identities that suggest it's good that they lack certain resources because only misguided people possess them. With this mindset, youth who inherit resource weaknesses do not try to gain more of the resources they lack. Of course, schools, colleges, and workplaces reward people with high levels of economic, hu-

man, and cultural capital, so without them they are not able to stay in the upper-middle-class.

An example is a group I call the “stay at home moms,” a group of young women who want to devote their lives to marriage and motherhood. They tend to be raised by hands-off college-educated professional fathers and by hands-on mothers who did not graduate from college or spend much time in the professional workforce themselves. Their fathers then possess high levels of human capital and cultural capital but do not pass them down, and their mothers do not have high levels of these resources to pass down. Raised in these families, they inherit resource weaknesses: low levels of human and cultural capital compared to other youth in their social class. They also tend to be raised by stay-at-home mothers in conservative communities that prioritize family over work. Their resource weaknesses then push them to identify as stay-at-home mothers, an identity that suggests that marriage and motherhood are more important than school and work—places where they will not be highly rewarded given their limited human and cultural capital. Their community also pulls them into this identity, as conservative communities tend to hold stay-at-home mothers in high esteem.

Identifying as stay-at-home mothers, these young women act the part long before they become adults who fulfill the role. As teenagers and young adults, they believe that focusing on gaining academic knowledge and insight into how to navigate school and work is wrong as it takes their attention away from what is really important: relationships. As such, they use school as a site to date or get through, do not pursue college, see work as an unfortunate and temporary necessity that takes time away from family, and focus on trying to marry young. Enacting an identity that values distancing oneself from gaining more academic and institutional knowledge, they do not graduate from college or pursue professional work. They then do not stay in the upper-middle-class on their own. Their only option to do so is through marriage, but as they do not go to college they do not meet men who will become college-educated professionals. They tend to meet and marry working-class men, entering marriages that solidify their downward mobility.

E. B.: In your book, you particularly focus on the experiences of white youth. What was your motivation behind this sample selection?

J. S.: To study downward mobility, I use data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). The data has many advantages: it includes up to four waves of interviews over ten years as youth transition from teens to young adults, and it includes youth from all over the United States. Among these respondents, I wanted to focus only on those who grew up in what I think of as the upper-middle class: those who had at least one college-educated professional parent. In the NSYR, there are 129 respondents who fit that criteria, and 107 are white. The 22 non-white respondents are divided among five racial groups. There just weren’t enough people of any other race for me to make a rigorous comparison.

In addition, compared to upper-middle-class youth of other races, white upper-middle-class youth have more advantages and experience the least amount of racial discrimination. It’s thus more puzzling how some white youth fall out of the upper-middle class, and I wanted to understand how members of such a privileged group still become downwardly mobile.

E. B.: Lastly, could you tell us a little about your current or future research plans?

J. S.: I have two books manuscripts under review. *The Luckocracy: How Working Class and Middle Class College Graduates Receive Equal Pay* traces how college graduates from unequal class backgrounds and with unequal amounts of human, social, and cultural capital nevertheless receive equal earnings when entering the labor force. *Judgments: How White People Decide What’s Racist, What’s Sexist, and What’s Not* (with Betsy Leondar-Wright) draws upon interviews with white liberals and white conservatives to show how each group decides which individual and institutional issues are racist and sexist and why the two sides so often disagree.

I’m also working on a companion piece to *Privilege Lost*, examining why some working-class youth stay in their class while others become upwardly mobile. •

BOOKSHELF



Smitha Radhakrishnan is a professor of sociology and Luella LaMer Professor of Women's Studies at Wellesley College. She is a feminist qualitative sociologist interested in finance, development, and globalization in India, the United States, and South Africa. She is the author of two books. Her first book, *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a Transnational Class* was a multisited ethnographic examination of transnational Indian information technology (IT) workers.

Elif Birced, a Ph.D. Candidate in sociology at Boston University, talked to Smitha Radhakrishnan about her recent book, *Making Women Pay: Microfinance in Urban India*, which was published by Duke University Press in January 2022.

Elif Birced: Could you please tell us a bit about the story of this book? What sparked your interest in studying the microfinance industry in urban India?

Smitha Radhakrishnan: I started this project at a time when there was very little critical scholarship on microfinance. When I taught my Gender and Development course at Wellesley way back in 2009, I found that it was almost impossible for students to adopt a critical perspective towards microfinance. Its linear storyline of a capable woman who takes a loan (instead of a handout) to start her own business was just too irresistible. But I knew there was more to the story. I was keen to bring institutions into our sociological analysis of microfinance as well as the subjective experience of borrowers. And the microfinance market in India was ballooning. It continues to be, in my view, one of the most complex and understudied arenas out there, even though there are now a few monographs out that deal with the topic. Beyond India, however, I believe now, as I did then, that the vulnerable women who take out loans to sustain their families are at the forefront of neoliberal development.

E. B.: In *Making Women Pay: Microfinance in Urban India*, you demonstrate how women who used to be considered not credit-worthy, have become credit worthy. How have economically marginalized women become

key clients of the microfinance industry in India?

S. R.: This question of how a whole segment of a population becomes worthy of credit, virtually overnight, became a key empirical puzzle for this project. My empirical work uncovers that microfinance institutions (MFIs) have done what decades of cooperative banking policies for rural and urban populations have been unable to do: establish relationships of trust between financial institutions and economically marginalized women and their families. The neighborhoods I studied are urban areas where access to exploitative debt is particularly concentrated, and MFIs are just one variety of debt on offer. So, how do women borrowers decide what kind of debt to take and from whom? In the book, I identify two key actors who are each engaging in relational work with clients. First, MFI workers, who come from similar class and caste positions as their clients, work closely with clients to ensure they repay. They often conceal nonrepayment through covert negotiations that are never formally documented. These negotiations, built through an exchange of favors between MFI workers and clients, allow MFIs to maintain their legendary 99% repayment rate. In parallel, there's a second actor who works in tandem with MFI fieldworkers within communities: powerful women volunteers who organize their peers into groups in the first place, leveraging their intimate knowledge of their neighbors' financial cir-

cumstances to create an ideal risk pool that aligns with the requirements of the MFI. These powerful volunteers then connect with MFI representatives to invite them into their communities. These parallel forms of relational work create abiding ties of loyalty and interdependency even in the face of economic vulnerability. The downside, of course, is that those families who are most vulnerable can easily be cut out of these ties if they are unable to repay their debts, entrenching their financial exclusion even more deeply.

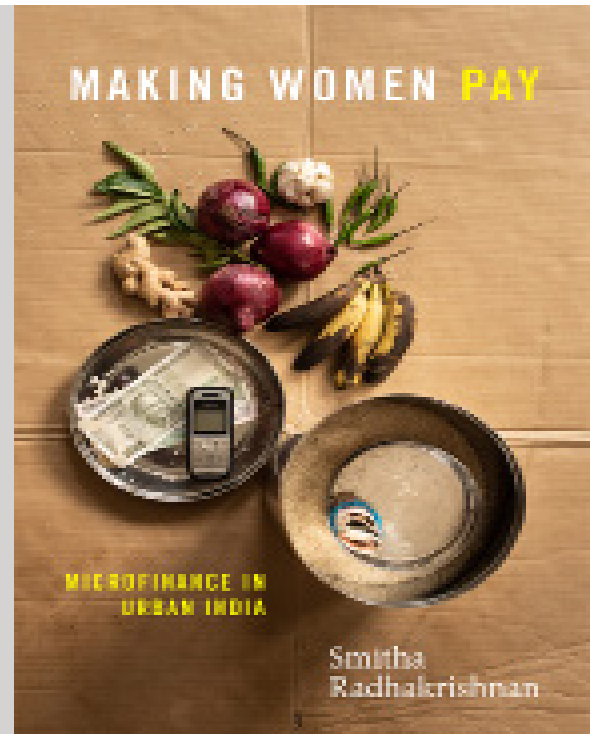
E. B.: In your book, you centralize gender in the analysis of the relationships between loan officers and working women clients. How does bringing gender back to the analysis of microfinance institutions provide a better understanding of the operation and negative implications of microfinance industry in urban India as well as in other contexts?

S. R.: I argue in the book that we must understand microfinance as a system of gendered value extraction involving both the extraction of financial value and symbolic value. Financial and symbolic value accrue to actors at the top of the “chain” (similar to a commodity chain analysis). While we are familiar with the idea of financial value extraction in many industries, the idea of symbolic value is new, referring to the conviction that the industry is “helping” or “doing good.” In other words, companies are extracting success stories, images, smiles, and gratitude from clients, all of which shore up the reputations of the industry’s leaders and the industry as a whole. There is no question that this gendered analysis needs to be at the center of our understanding of financialization, and particularly, the financialization of poverty, but it often gets left out. If we don’t bring gendered extraction into our conversation about microfinance, we overlook the fundamental reason it works so well. This story also isn’t just about microfinance, but about financialized banking and financial inclusion more broadly. The state is a central actor but is rendered invisible in this gendered story. I show that the Indian state essentially offloaded the responsibility to provide fair financial services to the majority of its popu-

lation to MFIs. This offloading is a concrete policy shift, and vulnerable women are the ones who, as my title suggests, are made to pay for it.

E. B.: Could you please describe the main implications of your book?

S. R.: I think my answer to the previous question gets to the heart of the implications for scholars and activists. But I hope there are implications for practitioners too. I argue in my conclusion that MFIs in India and around the world can immediately address gendered extraction to some extent by advancing women and men from backgrounds similar to their clients within their organizations to strategic levels. The current organization of MFIs reproduces class, caste, and gender hierarchies present in the mainstream financial sector to a depressing extent. It should be deeply troubling that the same organizations that claim to empower women prefer men from privileged backgrounds to be making decisions about the company’s strategic vision. There is a fundamental disconnect between the concerns of companies and the situated needs of women borrowers. •



TEACHING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

Daniel Hirschman is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Brown University. His research interests include economic sociology, science studies, sociology of organizations, quantification, sociology of finance, and higher education. His interests lie in the role of numbers, organizations, markets, and policy. His work examines affirmative action and the quantification of merit in college admissions, gender-based pricing of insurance and credit, the history of income measurement, and the interaction of financial innovation and regulation. His work has appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, and *Sociological Theory*. He is also a contributor of Scatterplot, a blog for public sociology.

Ya-Ching Huang, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, talked to Daniel Hirschman about his experiences in teaching economic sociology.



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

D. H.: I went to graduate school at UCSD in 2006 to study migration and development. I started reading a lot of papers written by economists and became absolutely fascinated by how they made claims. One working paper I remember reading was titled “Optimal Migration: A World Perspective” and opened with the line “We ask what level of migration would maximize world welfare.”¹ I wanted to know what kind of thing this was, and how it was that such work could be so influential in policy-making circles. I ended up transferring to the University of Michigan in 2008, just as the financial crisis was unfolding. Around that time, I took a course on economic sociology from Mark Mizruchi and started working with Greta Krippner, and between those experiences and ongoing events, got interested in the role of finance and financial regulation as well.

I ended up writing a dissertation about the history of economics and economic measurement, focusing on how the creation of national income statistics like GDP made the economy into a technopoliti-

cal *object*, not just a domain of social life, and in so doing transformed how we think about the role of government (i.e., short-run, data dependent, macroeconomic management). I also worked with Russ Funk to study the history of financial regulation in the United States to make sense out of conflicting claims about the role of the repeal of Glass-Steagall² in laying the groundwork for the 2008 financial crisis. (We determined that the repeal mattered less than you might think, in part because big banks had already found ways to innovate around the laws using lightly regulated derivatives, all with the blessing of sympathetic regulators.)

Now, I’m working on two main projects. First, I’m finishing up a book on the history of inequality knowledge. That is, how do we know what we know about economic inequality? How have the norms, practices, and infrastructures of economists and sociologists shaped public debates and public policy about inequality? I focus on the history of three iconic “stylized facts” (simple empirical regularities) that structure much of that conversation: top incomes (“the rise of the 1%”), the gender wage gap (“80 cents on the dollar”), and the racial wealth gap.

Second, I’m laying the groundwork for my next

project that I'm calling "The Costs of Climate Change." The basic questions here are: How much will climate change cost? And how will we know? Like much of my other work, it brings together work in science studies on knowledge production and disciplinary conventions with economic sociology's interest in valuation, markets, and regulation.

Y. H.: Could you walk us through your economic sociology [syllabus](#)? How do you approach syllabus design?

D. H.: I'm not sure it's great pedagogical practice, but most of my syllabi start as simply a list of topics I want to cover and readings I want to assign to cover those topics. I'm not especially creative when it comes to syllabi! For graduate seminars, though, I think this approach works well enough. For the economic sociology graduate course, I started by identifying what I saw as the major perspectives in the subfield: Polanyian embeddedness, Granovetterian embeddedness (which I see as quite distinct, following Greta Krippner's [2001] reading), Zelizerian relational work, and performativity. I also chose to mostly assign work by sociologists—one could teach a wonderful course putting economic sociology in dialog with economics, political science, political theory, anthropology, etc., but my goal was to get students up to speed on the subfield itself. So that meant, some foundational weeks, and then a range of topical weeks assigning recent work of the sort my students might want to produce themselves.

My course design was also strongly informed by the set of other offerings at Brown. There's a never ending debate about whether economic sociology and organizational sociology are separable fields or should be taught together. At Michigan, the two were combined. But at Brown, Mark Suchman taught a very thorough standalone course on organizations, which many of my students also take, so I intentionally focused on the aspects of the field most distinct from the orgs literature. Similarly, there were several excellent courses on political sociology, development, and global/transnational sociology taught by Nitsan Chorev and Patrick Heller, and so I left out many of those debates, like the role of the state in development or different approaches to world-systems analysis (which could plausibly be included in an economic sociology course, though

they are more distinct intellectual communities than econ soc and orgs, I think). So, in the end, I focused on economic sociology as distinct from orgs, and with a heavy emphasis on the United States (which also played to my strengths, as I'm basically an Americanist).

Once I'd identified those four core perspectives, and how I was going to bound the extent of the material, I then identified substantive topics I wanted to cover that illustrated the methodological and theoretical breadth of the field. That is, I wanted to show how economic sociologists would approach a topic like finance & financialization or climate change using a mix of theoretical approaches (the four I started the course with) and empirical data (archives, interviews, administrative datasets, surveys, etc.).

Y. H.: What topics or dimensions do you think used to be less discussed but are now important to incorporate into the course? How might they contribute to our understanding of economic sociology?

D. H.: For me, I thought it was important to cover some of the most exciting ways that the subfield is broadening out from what was its core in the 1980s-2000s. So, I have weeks on sex & sexism, race & racism, and climate change, all of which I see as really important topics that historically economic sociology had too little to say about, but where insights from economic sociology also have a lot to offer and where there's enough recent work to showcase to students.

These weeks also present an opportunity to reflect on some of the racialized and gendered dynamics of the subfield and, more generally, how scholars across fields historically have thought and written about economic life. As Nina Bandelj (2019) has shown, economic sociology very much developed as a subfield dominated by men in a small number of close-knit networks (fittingly enough). And as Laura Garbes and I argue (Garbes & Hirschman 2020; Hirschman & Garbes 2021), economic sociology was also shaped by the overwhelming whiteness of its founders, and by how mainstream sociology in general approached race and racism in the 1980s-1990s. Finally, climate change strikes me as one of the most pressing social and economic prob-

lems of the coming generations. Brown is fortunate enough to have an incredibly strong group of environmental sociologists and a great group of graduate students working on problems related to climate change, and so I felt it was important to showcase how economic sociology could contribute to those conversations—much as I hope to do in my next project!

Y. H.: Are there any particular topics or readings that strike a chord with students and stimulate thought-provoking discussion?

D. H.: I got a few comments that students appreciate the arc of the course: focusing on big perspectives to start, and then showing off those perspectives in different empirical contexts. I revised the readings for the weeks on sex, gender, and sexism and on race and racism, and I think those worked really well. I haven't gotten the evaluations from this iteration of the course yet, so I'm still waiting for the final verdict!

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

D. H.: I really like introducing economic sociology to students primarily grounded in other subfields. It can be very gratifying to think through the importance of markets—of how they are built, regulated, their formal and informal rules, etc.—in understanding other processes and dynamics that students are interested in (like the persistence and transformation of racism or the failure to address climate change). I also enjoy showing students a variety of ways to think about finance and to illustrate its centrality to contemporary economic life. Finally, work in the Zelizerian tradition often leads to really poignant conversations about deeply personal matters, from notions of parenthood to end-of-life care.

Y. H.: What are your suggestions for instructors planning to teach economic sociology? Are there some tips or innovations that you find helpful for class facilitation?

D. H.: My biggest suggestion for designing courses, in general, is to know why you are assigning what you are assigning, and to never assign something just because you feel like you're supposed to. This is especially true for undergraduate courses—un-

dergraduate students don't need to know all of the canon; they need to get a flavor of the approach, to see its value for understanding social and economic life, and ideally to get excited about it. For that to happen, you need to be excited about what you're teaching and so you want to make sure each piece is there for a good reason and there's something you're excited to say about it. For graduate students, they do need certain grounding (I think) to be properly "professionalized" or "disciplined," and so that's often a sufficient reason to include some material. But even then you can pick and choose to make sure you approach the core topics you feel need to cover in the ways you are most excited about, or that fit together well. Sarah Quinn (2021) recently characterized this approach better than I could as: "All bangers, all the time."

Assuming you're teaching pieces you think are "bangers," then classroom conversation tends to flow well. You know what you want the students to get out of the piece, and then you just make sure the conversation covers that at some point while also letting students drive the direction in general to make sure their questions and interests are addressed. I usually start by making sure we cover basic questions about the setup of the articles—what the data were or what the main argument was or some important but confusing empirical details—and then open things up to let the students drive the conversation, making sure at some point we touch on whatever insight or idea attracted me to the reading in the first place. •

Footnotes

1 Published as Benhabib, Jess, and Boyan Jovanovic. 2012. "Optimal Migration: A World Perspective." *International Economic Review* 53(2):321–48.
2 The Glass-Steagall Act was an iconic financial regulatory law enacted in 1933 in response to the 1929 financial crisis that (among other things) separated investment and commercial banking to reduce incentives for banks to push clients to make particular investments. In 1999, the law was effectively repealed by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act that effectively permitted large commercial and investment banks to merge.

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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 Bogaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey.



Dr. Ladin Bayurgil is a postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven's Center for Sociological Research working on a European Research Council supported project that focuses on platform work across three sectors, gig, care, and creative, and across eight European countries, with a focus on precarity at the continuum between paid and unpaid work. Ladin's work spans urban and economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations, and particularly asks questions around urban precarious labor. Before her position at the KU Leuven, Ladin has received her PhD in Sociology from Boston University.



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.