
ACCOUNTS

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR, SARAH BABB



Greetings from Boston College! I'm delighted to introduce to be presiding over a new issue of *Accounts* under the management of an energetic new editorial team, under the capable leadership of Will Attwood-Charles. This issue features an interview with John Robinson, an up-and-coming young scholar at Washington University (and a fellow alumnus of the Ph.D. program at Northwestern University). John discusses his book

manuscript--which reveals how so-called "affordable housing" has turned into a big business worth billions of dollars--and shares his thoughts about how economic sociologists can become public sociologists. The issue also features an interview with Filiz Garip, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Cornell University, about meeting the challenges of teaching economic sociology.

We are planning our next issue of *Accounts* (Spring/Summer) for June 2019.

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Managing Editor:
Will Attwood-Charles

Editorial Board: Ladin Bayurgil,
Jennifer Bouek

If you have updates, book suggestions, events announcements, or call for papers, please share!

Email: attwoodc@bc.edu

2018 ELECTION RESULTS

Chair-Elect (1-year term begins in 2018)

Emily Barman, Boston University

Council Member (3-year term begins in 2018)

Daniel Fridman, University of Texas at Austin

Elena Obukhova, McGill University

Student Council Representative (2-year term begins in 2018)

Alexandra (Lexi) Gervis, Rutgers University

NEW FACULTY



Dr. John N. Robinson is an Assistant Professor in Sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He was awarded a PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University in 2016. His research and teaching interests include economic sociology, social policy, and urban sociology. Ladin Bayurgil caught up with him to discuss his book manuscript, *Liquid City: Affordable Housing and the Color of Transformation*.

Ladin Bayurgil: Could you please describe your research and the main implications of your book manuscript *Liquid City: Affordable Housing and the Color of Transformation*?

John Robinson: I appreciate the dialogue! My research looks at the growing role of the financial sector in the provision of housing for low-income individuals and families. Historically, mainstream real estate and lending interests shunned the business of housing poor renters and neglected the disadvantaged black and brown communities where these units were disproportionately located. Today, however, many private equity firms and commercial banks view low-end renting as a lucrative new market—part of the so-called “affordable housing industry.” Much of this activity revolves around the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. This policy has become our nation’s de facto housing policy, and sustains a \$10 billion-dollar secondary market where tax credits are securitized and exchanged between developers and investors.

the first in-depth sociological look into this new industry. Using a mix of interviews, ethnographic observations, archival material and secondary/geospatial data, it examines how developers and investors conduct business and build affordable housing in the Chicago metropolitan area. It argues that the expansion of finance into low-end renting is reshaping the entire process of how marginalized individuals and families get sorted into place. One of the main implications of this book, to borrow E.E. Schattschneider’s well-known slogan, is that “new policies create a new politics.” That is, the book argues that financial sector expansion ultimately generates new racial tensions, subjectivities and disparities around subsidized housing, access to capital and neighborhood opportunity.

LB: What are the major insights your research offers for economic sociologists? And in what ways your dialogue with other fields, such as urban studies, political sociology and social policy contributes to economic sociology?

Liquid City, my book manuscript-in-progress, marks

JR: Great question. Insights from urban studies,

political sociology and social policy directly inform my project's contribution to economic sociology. Most important, my research agenda builds on a long history of interdisciplinary work on urban inequality and racial segregation to highlight the constitutive role of race in capitalist market-making, as well as how racial meanings inform the contentious politics of money and value more broadly. Economic sociologists are often interested in unpacking what markets and finance mean in context. My work suggests the promise of applying this lens to better understand the implementation of market-based solutions to poverty and disadvantage. Doing so, however, requires grappling with the distinctly racial legacies and underpinnings of economic inequality in American society.

LB: How do your findings change the way sociologists think about urban and racial inequality in the age of finance, in addition to informing larger audiences, ranging from urban communities to policy makers?

JR: The influence also flows in the other direction. My rearing as an economic sociologist very much informs my project's contribution to research on urban and racial inequality. Here I go back to the pioneering work done by economic sociologists in theorizing the politics of markets, which extends to finance. The lesson, I think, is not to take markets too seriously: that is, while the symbolism of markets operates to the ideological detriment of disadvantaged populations and communities—a point illustrated brilliantly in various works of urban and race scholarship—that symbolism also disguises and obscures lots of interesting tensions and power dynamics that sociologists need to carefully and critically unpack and examine. Likewise, in documenting the emergence of an affordable housing industry, my findings also shed light on how the making of this new market shifts both the reproduction of place-based inequalities, and contentious dynamics around the fight against racial segregation and disinvestment. In short, economic sociologists have developed a sophisticated vocabulary for de-

scribing how economic activities are socially complicated, and deeply political, even (and especially) when they seem not to be. My findings suggest that this vocabulary comes in handy for exploring the new chapter of urban and racial inequality that scholars confront amidst the rise of finance.

LB: What do you think economic sociologists can do to increase their influence in the public sphere?

JR: To preface this comment, I will say that my sense is that sociology as a whole has become a lot more publicly-engaged and influential since my first days as a graduate student. Hence, I believe economic sociologists (along with sociologists in other subfields) are already embodying the kind of things I would mention in response to this question. But in general I think we can continue increasing our influence as economic sociologists by continuing to expand the kind of topics we study (including more attention to social problems and inequalities); by disseminating our ideas in a wide range of public outlets (in addition to publishing, of course); and by thinking very explicitly about the policy implications of our research projects.

LB: As a junior faculty in the field of economic sociology, what lessons do you think that you have learned might be valuable for those who are doctoral students, on the job market or at earlier stages of their careers?

JR: First and foremost I will say this: by all means, keep believing in yourself and stay close to what you find most interesting and relevant. It may sound like cheesy motivational speak, but graduate school and the job market can be a difficult and disorienting time—I think it's really important to push yourself to keep believing in your voice, and insisting on your ability to express what you have to say. Beyond that, remember that the story of economic sociology is still being written. And you are very much a part of that story. While this subfield supplies a fascinating and incredibly useful set of heuristics, feel free to make it your own.

TEACHING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

Filiz Garip is a Professor in Sociology at Cornell University. She received her PhD in sociology from Princeton University in 2007 and is the author of *On the Move: Changing Mechanisms of Mexico-U.S. Migration*. Jennifer Bouek spoke with her about teaching economic sociology.



Jennifer Bouek: How do you approach building your economic sociology syllabus? What topics do you cover?

Filiz Garip: As a graduate student at Princeton, I took three economic sociology courses from three pro-

fessors with little overlap across the syllabi. This experience made me think of economic sociology as a very broad field. But, later on, as an early assistant professor at Harvard, I went over many economic sociology courses to design my own course, and realized that most syllabi put the emphasis on particular domains of economic activity: organizations and markets. I refrained from following this path (which, to me, seemed to replicate a similar tendency in economics to narrowly define domains of economic activity). I instead took Viviana Zelizer's advice, and her syllabus as a guideline, and decided to cover many different kinds of economic activity – from the division of labor in the household to transfer of remittances in immigrant families. I also committed early on to include many economics papers in my syllabus (and not just Gary Becker's work to be treated as a strawman). I think it is crucial to have an up-to-date and nuanced understanding of economics in order to strike a conversation with (or to provide an alternative account to) that field.

JB: Your own research lies at the intersection of economic sociology, migration, and inequality. How do you incorporate related subfields into your course? What subfields do you think are most important right now to include in an economic sociology course?

FG: Economic sociology offers a great framework to think about many questions in sociology. How do individuals make choices? How do social relations and cultural understandings shape those choices? How do organizations come to be and evolve? I cannot think of a single field in our discipline that does not ask some version of these questions. Economic sociology gives us useful ideas, tools, and examples that can be applied to many domains, and the field itself could benefit from integrating a broader range of areas into its core. Research on migration (my own area of interest), family demography, public health, for example, offers many new questions and applications that are important to include in economic sociology courses.

JB: What is your favorite book or article to teach?

FG: My favorite work to teach is Viviana Zelizer's *Social Meaning of Money*. It is priceless to see students work their way through her argument (we think that money invades and changes our social relations, but in fact, it is the other way around). A new favorite is Greta Krippner's *Capitalizing on Crisis*.

JB: What is the one thing you most hope that students remember after taking your course?

FG: That there are different ways of thinking about the same question, and no ground truth on bases of human behavior.

JB: What have you learned from teaching economic sociology?

FG: I have learned the importance (and the difficulties) of dialogue across different disciplines.

2018 AWARD WINNERS

Winner, 2018 Burt Award for Best Graduate Student Paper: Barbara Kiviat (Harvard), “The Art of Deciding with Data: Evidence from how Employers Translate Credit Reports into Hiring Decisions.” *Socio-Economic Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwx030>

Honorable Mention, 2018 Burt Award for Best Graduate Student Paper: Lindsay Bayham (UC-Berkeley), “Financial Inclusion as Network Exclusion: Social Credibility and the Interpersonal Politics of Credit in Urban Ghana.”

Winner, 2018 Granovetter Award for Best Article: Nathan Wilmers (MIT Sloan), “[2017] Does Consumer Demand Reproduce Inequality? High-Income Consumers, Vertical Differentiation, and the Wage Structure.” *American Journal of Sociology* 123 (1): 178-231. <https://doi.org/10.1086/692063>

Honorable Mention, 2018 Granovetter Award for Best Article: Tristan L. Botelho (Yale SOM) and Mabel Abraham (Columbia), [2017] “Pursuing Quality: How Search Costs and Uncertainty Magnify Gender-based Double Standards in a Multistage Evaluation Process.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 62(4): 698-730. DOI: 10.1177/0001839217694358

Winner, 2018 Zelizer Award for Best Book: Yuen Yuen Ang (Michigan), *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press)

In *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap* Yuen Yuen Ang offers a bold and innovative framework for understanding economic development, one that challenges current wisdom from modernization and institutionalist perspectives. The later, she argues, are simply too linear, top-down and errantly predicated on inductive modelling from Western contexts that make little sense for the global south. She finds her alternative in complexity theory; envisioning economic development as a recursive and dynamic process in which state and markets co-evolve through innovation that cannot be prescribed. Ang both theorizes and demonstrates how this process is bootstrapped using weak institutions at all levels of governance. Developmental paths are formed through what she terms directed improvisation, the process by which the state sets some clear makers for policy makers at lower levels, but otherwise provides incentives and support to use local knowledge and experimentation. This allows for necessary variation across the economic landscape and in different industries, the capacity for bureaucrats and entrepreneurs to select novel combinations of strategies, and the pursuit of niche economies that provide for virtuous growth cycles with ramifications for the larger economy. In a series of richly detailed case studies Ang demonstrates how success was nurtured when goals were initially narrow and institutional transformation broad but gradual, when bureaucrats at all levels were incentivized to become entrepreneurial stakeholders, and when the boogie of corruption is harnessed to build momentum. She carefully analyzes these dynamics at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. Through these case studies Ang additionally examines how the unleashing first of the coastal economies provided for cascading effects on their inland counterparts. She is also sensitive to how this co-evolutionary process produces systemic problems with respect to the environment and inequality. To add depth through comparison she also applies her model to disparate cases such as medieval Europe, the antebellum post-depression United States and Nigeria’s Nollywood film industry. *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap* truly offers game-changing ideas for the analysis and implementation of socio-economic

development and should have a major impact across many social sciences.

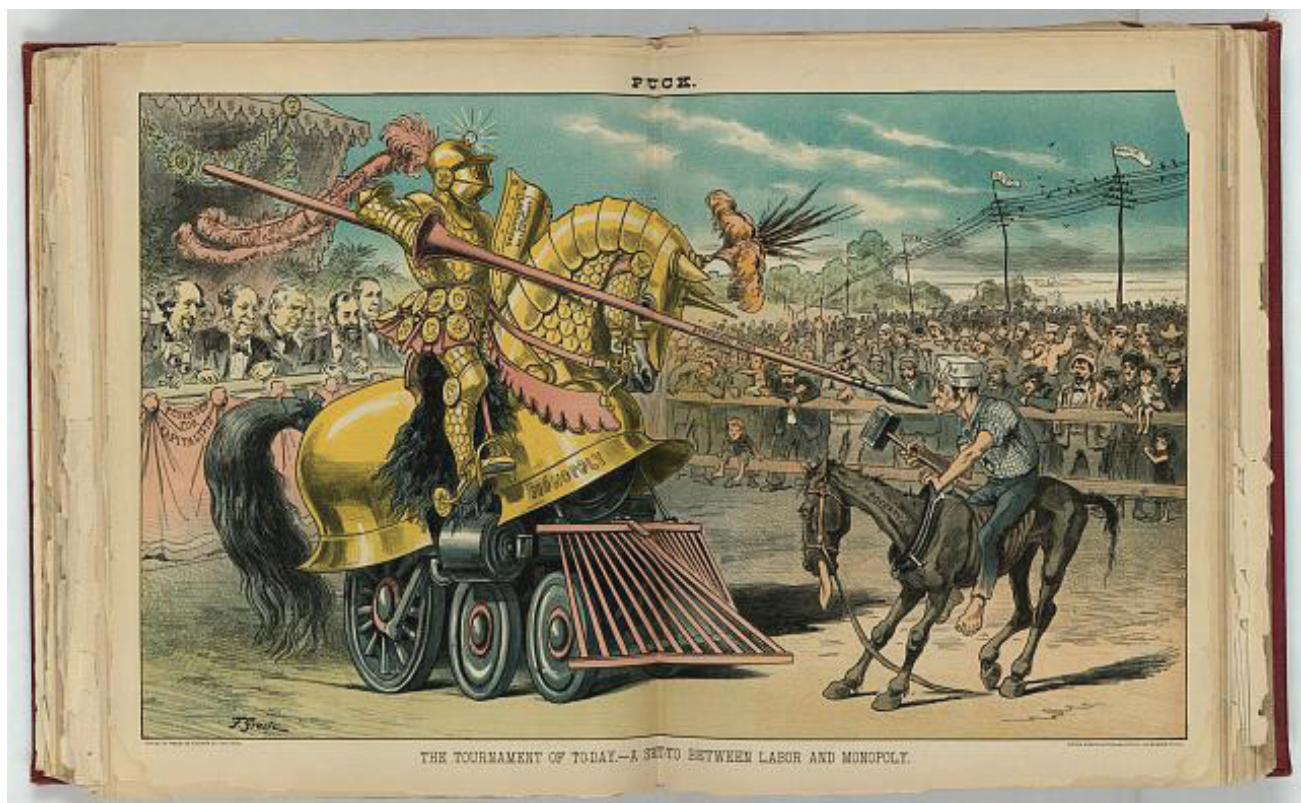
Honorable Mention, 2018 Zelizer Award for Best Book: Ariel Wilkis (National University of San Martin, Argentina), *The Moral Power of Money: Morality and Economy in the Life of the Poor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press)

A special thank you to the award committees:

The 2018 Burt Award Committee: Kate Kellogg (chair), Daniel Fridman, Katherine Hood, and András Tilcsik

The 2018 Granovetter Award Committee: Chris Yenkey (co-chair), and Cristobal Young (co-chair), Nitsan Chorev, Greta Hsu

The 2018 Zelizer Award Committee: Marc Steinberg (chair), Sarah Kaplan, Gabriel Rossman, Simone Polillo



“The tournament of today - a set-to between labor and monopoly” by F. Graetz (1883)

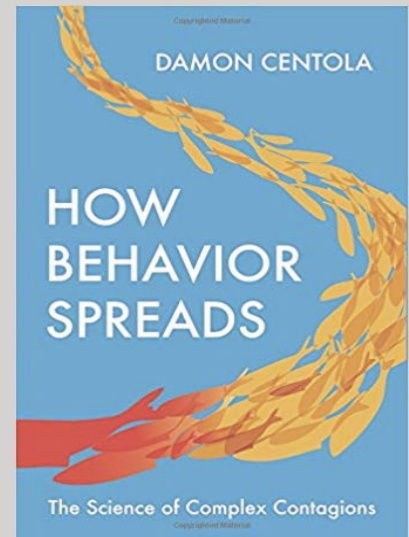
BOOKSHELF

How Behavior Spreads: The Science of Complex Contagions

By: Damon Centola

Princeton University Press, 2018

New social movements, technologies, and public-health initiatives often struggle to take off, yet many diseases disperse rapidly without issue. Can the lessons learned from the viral diffusion of diseases be used to improve the spread of beneficial behaviors and innovations? In *How Behavior Spreads*, Damon Centola presents over a decade of original research examining how changes in societal behavior—in voting, health, technology, and finance—occur and the ways social networks can be used to influence how they propagate. Centola’s startling findings show that the same conditions accelerating the viral expansion of an epidemic unexpectedly inhibit the spread of behaviors.



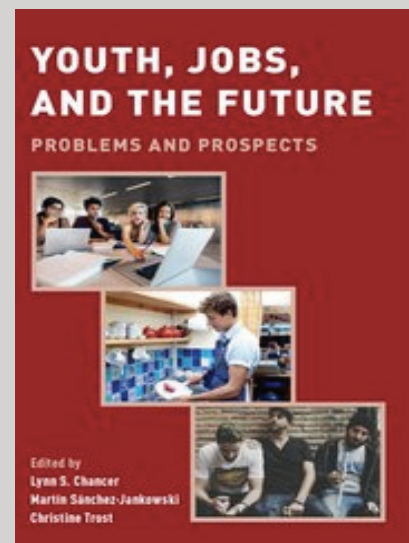
While it is commonly believed that “weak ties”—long-distance connections linking acquaintances—lead to the quicker spread of behaviors, in fact the exact opposite holds true. Centola demonstrates how the most well-known, intuitive ideas about social networks have caused past diffusion efforts to fail, and how such efforts might succeed in the future. Pioneering the use of Web-based methods to understand how changes in people’s social networks alter their behaviors, Centola illustrates the ways in which these insights can be applied to solve countless problems of organizational change, cultural evolution, and social innovation. His findings offer important lessons for public health workers, entrepreneurs, and activists looking to harness networks for social change.

Youth, Jobs, and the Future: Problems and Prospects

Edited by Lynn S. Chancer, Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, and Christine Trost

Oxford University Press, 2018

While overall unemployment has declined, the unemployment rate remains nearly twice as high for young people 16 to 19 years of age and nearly three times as high for those aged 20 to 24. Rates of unemployment and underemployment are nearly two to three times higher for Black and Latino youth. In *Youth, Jobs, and the Future*, Lynn S. Chancer, Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, and Christine Trost have gathered a cast of well-known interdisciplinary scholars to confront the persistent issues of youth unemployment and worsening socio-economic precarity in the United States. The book explores structural and cultural causes of youth unemployment, their ramifications for both native and immigrant youth, and how middle- and working-class youth across diverse races and ethnicities are affected within and outside the legal economy. A needed contribution, this book locates solutions to youth unemployment in economic and political changes as well as changes in cultural attitudes.



High Tech and High Touch: Headhunting, Technology, and Economic Transformation
By James E. Coverdill and William Finlay
ILR Press, 2017

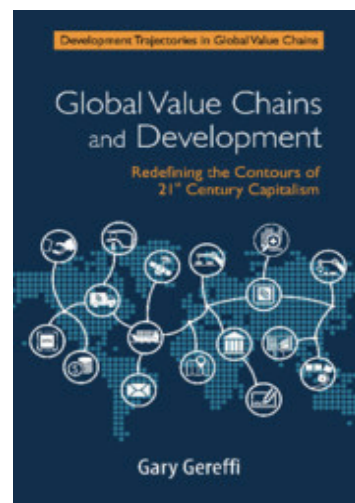
In *High Tech and High Touch*, James E. Coverdill and William Finlay invite readers into the dynamic world of headhunters, personnel professionals who acquire talent for businesses and other organizations on a contingent-fee basis. In a high-tech world where social media platforms have simplified direct contact between employers and job seekers, Coverdill and Finlay acknowledge, it is relatively easy to find large numbers of apparently qualified candidates. However, the authors demonstrate that headhunters serve a valuable purpose in bringing high-touch search into the labor market: they help parties on both sides of the transaction to define their needs and articulate what they have to offer.



As well as providing valuable information for sociologists and economists, *High Tech and High Touch* demonstrates how headhunters approach practical issues such as identifying and attracting candidates; how they solicit, secure, and evaluate search assignments from client companies; and how they strive to broker interactions between candidates and clients to maximize the likelihood that the right people land in the right jobs.

Global Value Chains and Development: Redefining the Contours of 21st Century Capitalism
By: Gary Gereffi
Cambridge University Press, 2018

Over the past half century, globalization has transformed how nations, firms, and workers compete in the international economy. The chapters in this book, authored by one of the founders of the global value chains (GVC) approach, trace the emergence of the most influential paradigm used to analyze globalization and its impact by academics and policy makers alike. The GVC framework is built around the twin pillars of ‘governance’ (how global supply chains are controlled and organized) and ‘upgrading’ (how countries and firms try to create, capture, and retain high-value niches in GVCs). This book contains the seminal writings used to launch the GVC framework, along with in-depth case studies that explain how Mexico, China, and other countries emerged as prominent exporters in the world economy. As the social dimension of globalization became more pronounced, Gereffi and colleagues elaborated the concept of ‘social upgrading’ and a new paradigm of ‘synergistic governance’ based on the coordinated efforts of private, civil society, and public-sector actors. During the 2000s, the rise of large emerging economies like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa transformed the structure and dynamics of GVCs in the direction of greater regionalization. Today new challenges are looming in resurgent economic nationalism and populism. Large international organizations such as the WTO, World Bank, and ILO, policymakers in national economies, development practitioners, and academics continue to be guided by insights from the GVC approach.

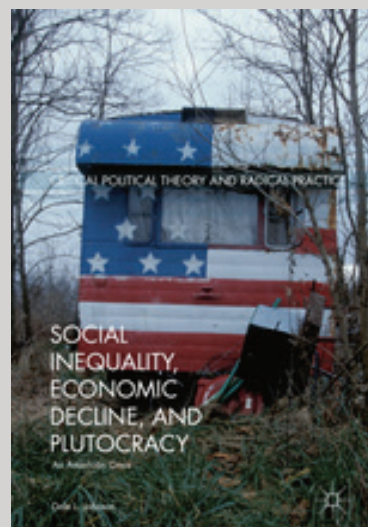


Social Inequality, Economic Decline, and Plutocracy: An American Crisis

By: Dale L. Johnson

Palgrave Macmillan, 2017

Gross social inequalities, persistent economic decline, and political rule by moneyed plutocracy create a crisis of human existence. The upper echelons of capital, led by the financiers, impose degenerative development, instill their class privileged ideology in the populace, subject agencies of state to their agenda, pursue a divide and conquer strategy for the stratified population, promote the interests of capital and neoliberal policy on a global scale, and exercise unchecked repression and war. The book explores a counter-hegemony to the rule of capital. Capital rules in part by divide and conquer, the creation of social-cultural divisions by race and ethnicity, gender, and social stratifications of privilege and deprivation. Capital imposes its ideology of Social Darwinism, generalized fear in the culture, its notions of American Exceptionalism.

*Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism*

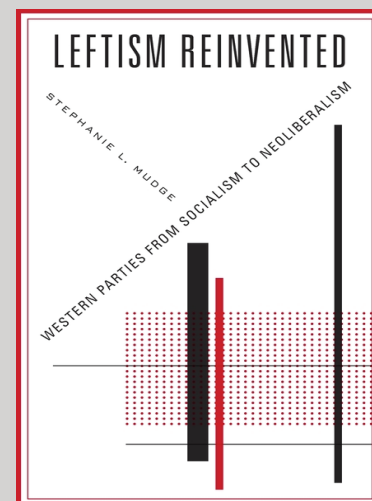
By: Stephanie L. Mudge

Harvard University Press, 2018

Left-leaning political parties play an important role as representatives of the poor and disempowered. They once did so by promising protections from the forces of capital and the market's tendencies to produce inequality. But in the 1990s they gave up on protection, asking voters to adapt to a market-driven world. Meanwhile, new, extreme parties began to promise economic protections of their own—albeit in an angry, anti-immigrant tone.

To better understand today's strange new political world, Stephanie L. Mudge's *Leftism Reinvented* analyzes the history of the Swedish and German Social Democrats, the British Labour Party, and the American Democratic Party. Breaking with an assumption that parties simply respond to forces beyond their control, Mudge argues that left parties' changing promises expressed the worldviews of different kinds of experts. To understand how left parties speak, we have to understand the people who speak for them.

Leftism Reinvented shows how Keynesian economists came to speak for left parties by the early 1960s. These economists saw their task in terms of discretionary, politically-sensitive economic management. But in the 1980s a new kind of economist, who viewed the advancement of markets as left parties' main task, came to the fore. Meanwhile, as voters' loyalties to left parties waned, professional strategists were called upon to “spin” party messages. Ultimately, left parties undermined themselves, leaving a representative vacuum in their wake. *Leftism Reinvented* raises new questions about the roles and responsibilities of left parties—and their experts—in politics today.



EDITORIAL COMMITTEE



Ladin Bayurgil is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Boston University. Her research interests center on urban and economic sociology, sociology of work and occupations, and particularly questions of urban precarious labor. Her work 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. Using ethnographic research methods, Ladin's dissertation analyzes how a new trend of earthquake risk-driven urban transformation impacts community and employment relations in Istanbul's residential neighborhoods at times of political and economic turmoil.



Jennifer Bouek is a PhD candidate in the Sociology Department at Brown University. Her research interests include poverty, inequality, economic and organizational sociology, and family. In her dissertation, she uses mixed methods to explore how the institutional and organizational settings of child care shape mothers' ability to secure care and the implications for gendered economic futures.



William Attwood-Charles is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Sociology at Boston College. His research interests include economic and organizational sociology, and the sociology of work. He is particularly interested in efforts at creating alternative institutions that are capable of meeting everyday needs. His previous research examined the practices of "makers" in the context of a multi-purpose shop space, often referred to as a "makerspace." This research focuses on dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in collectivist environments. His current research explores the role of technology in constructing digital labor platforms, as well as the experience of workers laboring on these platforms.