

# Strategic Human Capital - Spring Seminar Series 2021

## *Workplace Inequality - Sarah Kaplan Pandemic Effects Seminar May 7th 2021*

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The following document was created as part of the Strategic Human Capital Spring Seminar on Pandemic Effects. Seminar participants collaborated in randomized five person groups to create lists of compelling questions, ideas, and thoughts related to the topics discussed by Dr. Kaplan. This video provides the discussion preceding and following the breakout rooms.

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### **Mango lassi (Farzana Chowdhury, Agnes Guenther, Xi Kang, Laura Brock)**

- Gig economy and how the current form of algorithm driven job design is (or may be) exacerbating the pre-existing inequality:
  - Access to technology (World Bank access to financial tech and mobile tech in the developing world) is less for women than men;
    - Relationship between access to tech and gig economy, as well as entrepreneurship.
  - Social security shocks, high variation between different countries;
    - Health insurance bound to employment in some countries (like the U.S.);
      - Is there a push towards different forms of social security in response to the pandemic or is there an opportunity for firms to further exploit workers?
        - Employees more self-reliant or a push towards more socialized reforms?
    - Lack of workers has shifted the burden to companies trying to offer more benefits and higher pay to solicit more workers.
- Looking at outcomes and how to measure success with different dependent variables:
  - Turnover rates / job retention
  - Happiness levels
  - Stress and suicide rates
  - Future development of children who were raised by parents vs. professional care
  - Future employment of children (10 years out) and social standing, career outcomes
  - Future employment of parents (10 years out) and social standing, career outcomes

### **Yakult (Gwen Lee, Marta Elvira, Argyro Avogousaki, Tengku Mohd Khairal Abdullah, Samantha Conroy)**

- The ways in which the market values work are biased and the market is often used as the explanation - how can research speak to this issue?

- Importance of considering other dependent variables - worker health seems key, and in the pandemic there may be differences across gender; mental/emotional exhaustion and burnout are likely issues that we can study and measure
- Treatment at home may also affect these outcomes

### **Piña Colada (somos real) (Russ Coff, Olivia Anger, Yixuan Li, Thomaz Teodorovicz)**

- What is strategic in inequality?
  - What should be done (normative) vs. how are things actually done (positive) - strategy should incorporate more normative questions
- Research idea: capabilities of firms to integrate uneducated migrants - is this a strategy paper?
- To what extent do different types of diversity bring value to the firm?
  - When and which type of diversity leads to creative solutions to organizational problems?
  - What are the complementary conditions that enable diversity to create value to organizations?
- How does diversity intertwine with firm-specific and general human capital? Are inclusive policies a source of competitive advantage?
  - Micro-founded perspective on firm-specific investments in human capital -- inequity creating different worker-level incentives to invest in firm-specific human capital

### **Pina Colada (the real one)**

- Members: Sekou Bermiss, Jillian Chown, Thorsten Grohsjean, Paolien Chen
- Empathy for the essential workers. Burden of pandemic falls on the people that we tend to focus on the least (frontline workers, custodial staff in “essential workplaces”)
- We don’t spend time on thinking about work in these contexts and how society can support them
- This “shock” to the system is so new. People don’t really know what to do to deal with the disruption.
- Will organizations go back to “normal”?
  - E.g. we now understand that working from home is possible, but we also understand the value of face to face communications
- Is the pandemic too big of an exogenous shock? It changed so many things that it may be difficult to tease out specific effects. But it has “shaken up” the perspectives of enough people that companies may be more willing to experiment with working arrangements.
- Potential opportunities to study how healthcare organizations learned and adapted to managing COVID related patients.

### **Fanta**

- People (Brittany Mallory, Tunde Cserpes, Kris Irwin, John Mawdsley)
- Scribe = John

- Women (or Female?) entrepreneurship - is this a push, rather than pull....they need more flexibility, but does this mean less commitment and therefore weaker entrepreneurship outcomes (what would be these outcomes?...goals changing...aspiration points changing/dropping?) *The pandemic likely magnifies this “doing it because I have to” situation...but also does it change their perspective (like, increasing commitment?)*
- How we refer to gender is important and details from big data (databases) does not always clarify it well, but different surveys and other methods could capture this.
- As mgt scholars we are not good at talking about “gender” ....what about same sex couples in home situations. “Picking our words better”
- Careers...in and out (employment into and out of entrepreneurship)....country level differences...are these affected by the pandemic (made better or made worse?...new govt policies etc?)
- The “use” of minorities by firms for strategic means...ie promote females /people of color as a signal to the market...beyond tokenism.
- Post-pandemic...can women get back into the workforce (if it is mostly females that have been laid off)....or do females even want to go back (re-evaluation of priorities that have been initiated by the pandemic)
- Rethink work - how does this new workplace look like? Difference in research that can be published in mgmt journals (e.g. divorce, other life-family issues / balance issues). Could be more represented / more open to publishing these topics and impacts on firm performance / strategy / etc.

## **Raksi**

People (Vittoria Scalera, Julia Bodner, Rhett Brymer, DK)

- Are we normative or descriptive in our science?
- Choice of DV may already normative; like the strategy assumption of shareholder primacy
- Normative implications in the questions we ask
- DV of adaptation (of individuals, organization, policy); description of what is happening
- Opinions driving our research questions, choices of DV to enlighten a change in the phenomena, reflecting the change
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# Strategic Human Capital - Spring Seminar Series 2021

## *Working From Anywhere - Raj Choudhury Pandemic Effects Seminar May 7th 2021*

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### **Mango lassi (Farzana Chowdhury, Agnes Guenther, Xi Kang, Laura Brock)**

- Will marginalized employees see an increasing gap in development and opportunity?
- Spouse / dual career families - will this increase job retention and improve career trajectory in the long term. Reduce turnover. Reduce gender gap.?
- Onboarding / corporate culture
- Employee sourcing is limited by firm size and tax/legal obligations in multiple areas
- Codifying internal/tacit knowledge and collaboration
  - Alternative methods for recording and transferring knowledge
  - Limits on typical face-to-face internal transfer
- Can remote work minimize tax obligations?
  - Where firms are incorporated
  - Where workers are located (cost)
- Would work from anywhere change the going rate for particular jobs (typically geographically based)
- Does it pay for firms in terms of performance vs. cost with work from anywhere?
- Firm benefits - What happens to local conditions (surrounding community) in terms of taxes if employees are moving / working from home
  - No longer spending income in the local area
  - Changes in local economy, rent prices, dry cleaners, clothing retailers, hotels, etc.
- Reduce inequality between genders but increase inequality between social classes?
  - Many service-based jobs cannot work remotely
  - Essential workers cannot work from home/anywhere
- Environmental and GDP impact based on work from anywhere, reduced commutes, reduced travel, virtual meetings/conferences, etc.
  - CO2 emissions pre-pandemic, during, and post-pandemic?

### **Yakult (Gwen Lee, Marta Elvira, Argyro Avogousaki, Tengku Mohd Khairal Abdullah, Samantha Conroy)**

- What about the mental health implications of working alone from home or anywhere?

- How might working spaces co-working spaces help with mental health? And what is the implication of people working in co-working spaces where their organizational colleagues are not the same people they spend their workday with?
- Measurable versus unmeasurable performance - how might work from anywhere differ across this dimension.

### **Guinness (Russ Coff, Olivia Anger, Yixuan Li, Thomaz Teodorovic) [We just saw the window had a name]**

- Are there norms for interacting remotely that vary by company or do these become generic?
- Should we think of WFA as a policy that is "modularized"? Even within organizations, some positions may enable WFA more than others. What is the optimal bundle?
- How can organizations build a strong organizational culture when organizations implement WFA policies? Is the ability to implement WFA policies a valuable resource?
- WFA: is it pro- or against inclusion?
- Is WFA a permanent policy or a transitory policy? WFA facilitating careers changes (reduce uncertainty when thinking about career/life changes)
- How does previously accumulated social capital affect the benefits/costs of WFA to workers (and organizations)? [e.g. starting a PhD WFA vs. being a post-doc WFA]

### **Pina Colada**

Work from Anywhere research is still largely focused on specific industries (professional work).

- Question about how "work from everywhere" can help address inequality vs not
  - To the extent that US is a service-based economy, it could be helpful if service can be delivered from anywhere
  - Are there populations of people (lower paid jobs in service) that can be done from anywhere too?
  - But some individuals work will remain tied to certain locations (and that will fall along lines such as SES status)
  - Real potential the work from anywhere could exacerbate inequality
- Different DVs
  - Inequality DVs: opportunity/desire for DVs in strategy that are related to reducing inequity amongst population of people. But many view strategy scholars as only interested in firm DVs. So, we should be building bridges toward communities that have traditionally focused on those issues (e.g., ILR, sociologists, etc.)
  - Think about "wage gap" as common SMJ DVs, for example
- Need leadership from journal editors to support the work (new approaches) and reviewers open to it.
- Companies will definitely need to adjust compensation policies to reflect cost of living
  - Think about getting data on firm wage structures and data
  - Companies will likely be leading the charge in this
- For mentoring relationships

- Two effects: (1) may allow more equal access to information from the mentors; but (2) it may be more difficult to form meaningful relationships

**Fanta (Members: Brittany Mallory, Tunde Csereps, Kris Irwin & John Mawdsley)**

- What are the moderators here? Maybe the action is in “context”...this is a new situation.
- What about *new* hires coming into this environment vs *incumbent*?
- Push: WFA works so let’s implement it, what happens post-pandemic? Policy: Select into benefits is different than forcing WFA for all employees - are there still benefits to be seen? - IS THERE A SELECTION EFFECT (i’m more productive if I can choose to WFA rather than being forced to by company policy...vs. can’t keep a separate life if forced to be at home)
- Are the benefits to firms that are industry specific? Does this work better in some industries (Investment banking?) but not others?
- Will the “missing something” from working from home (WFA) impact not being able to come back (push vs. pull).
- Balance of benefits for cost of living/good schools/etc. -> does that mean you are more productive at work? More happy life = more happy at work?
- Are there time zone differences (2-3 time zone differences vs. 12 hour time zone) - could have a curvilinear effect (and have different effect on home life)
- Inclusion angle is important to understand how “lower echelons” of workforce can get on the career ladder
- Would it lead to more outsourcing (coders are cheaper in India than Silicon valley) and therefore the emptying of communities (what happens to SV if the jobs go?)
- Is the water cooler effect based on need for company culture? How does the virtualization / asynchronous impact the need to build strong culture (or change culture) work? Moderated by type of work or industry (knowledge base work, innovative / creative)? Currently still limited by technology (break out rooms limited and can’t overhear other breakouts; attention is limited).
- How well are firms set up to take advantages of WFA (inc cross-countries)... have they REALLY thought about the longer term (post-pandemic) effect.
- Are firms just acting on short term cost benefits during the pandemic (eg don’t need big office space) without thinking about the trade offs

**Raksi**

**People (Vittoria Scalera, Julia Bodner, Rhett Brymer, DK)**

- Idea of inclusion: WFA can enhance participation from countries that are less connected or locations in countries that are less connected
- Relevance for innovation: more creativity through diversity that is increased
- Asynchronous communication for collaboration, creativity
- Powerful for couples--better opportunities for spouses (often women..)
- Shifting of people along with shifting of resources--there will be a different type of inequality
- Access to opportunity: infrastructure access like internet, trains, airport

- Detrimental to rates of entrepreneurship in remote locations (where people found their own startups to be able to live there)?
- Exacerbating problems, like the lack of trust, when WFA is not granted
- Increases of salary: How likely are you to move to higher salary if you have to move versus you don't have to move?
- Incentives: WFA world more relationally focused (employer-employee) because employee can leave whenever they want: requirement to invest more in informal connections, culture
- Hybrid types of practices: Co-location moments especially in diverse firms
- Short-term arbitrage opportunity for companies that do WFA very strategically, like Google.  
~50% of employees state they would leave their employer if they required them to come back.