



Universiteit
Leiden

Upsetting binaries and hierarchies: queer labor economics

Applicants

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Eduardo Alves Vieira	Sociolinguistics
María Gabriela Palacio	Political economy

Project description

The labor market is situated in a complex social and political context shaped by normative views, e.g., heteronormative and patriarchal norms, ideologies, and discursive practices, determining what work is and how it is valued. Feminist economics has challenged the methodological individualism embedded in the discipline and revisited labor as a produced means of production. Such a shift has supported addressing the power differential between women and men in a capitalist society, the effect of a social system of production that does not recognize the production and reproduction of the workers as a social and economic activity. While such a focus has been necessary to raise awareness about the processes that create and perpetuate differences, it can benefit from the specific compound dynamics of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation. For instance, the approach to understanding LGBTQIA+ employment, labor market inequality, and income has received substantial attention within the *Queer Economics* literature and Queer Studies in general. Much of the research on the topics just mentioned has been made possible due to online methods, such as online surveys, that include questions that allow people to specify their different gender identities and sexualities. Also, previous studies on the intersectionality of gender, sexualities, and economics have shown that the work environment has the potential to increase adverse mental health outcomes and the wellbeing of vulnerable populations. This project benefits from the engagement with newer approaches to the division of labor that consider sexuality and/or sexual orientation. Furthermore, the proposal aims to problematize gendered and binary constructions that permeate the analysis of labor markets. By shifting the focus to heteronormativity in the labor market, our collaborative work explores forms of discrimination, othering, and exclusion that relate to sexual orientation and that work, together with other structural factors, to perpetuate social hierarchies and economic outcomes.

Research Trainee Profile

- Eligible candidates should have knowledge of either Portuguese or Spanish because the online questionnaire we will develop will target LGBTQIA+ individuals from Brazil and Ecuador.
- Third-year BA and (Res)MA students are welcome to apply.
- Preferably, the research trainees should EITHER be part of the LGBTQIA+ community themselves OR have an affinity with Queer and Gender Studies.
- The research trainees will be involved in every part of the project:
 - 1) help in the selection of texts/material for the literature review and get acquainted with the theoretical framework developed by the supervisors.
 - 2) design a focus group activity with LGBTQIA+ students in Leiden to get insights into their lived experiences which are relevant to elaborate the questions that will compose the online questionnaire; recruit the participants for this focus group and conduct the activity.
 - 3) summarize the findings of the focus group and use them (together with the literature review) to design an online questionnaire. The trainees should be willing to learn how to work with Qualtrics and relevant software used for data collection and analysis.
 - 4) administer the online questionnaire (Qualtrics), promote it to potential participants via social media and through a friend-of-a-friend technique, analyze the data, and write-up of the findings (two articles to be submitted for publication).
 - 5) finally, the students will present the papers in an event that the supervisors will organize to share the (findings of) the project. The supervisors will contact student organizations such as Interlatina (Latin American Studies) and BASIS (International Studies) to help in the organization of the event.

Collaboration

Such a novel agenda poses new questions to social theorists interested in crossing disciplinary borders and upsetting categories and hierarchies. Specifically, Queer Linguistics, Queer Economics (and Queer Studies, more broadly) are areas of research that provide us with contemporary epistemologies to answer some of those questions that remain unaddressed: i) how is queer exclusion hindering development in parts of the world such as Latin America?; ii) why have minority rights developed unevenly across this region and the Caribbean?; iii) why has the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable populations such as the LGBTQIA+ community experienced new forms of backlash after decades of progress in some countries?; and iv) how do context-specific social dynamics impede or foster social mobilities of marginalized groups based on their gender and sexual identities? Previous research has addressed some of these questions in different countries such as Canada and the USA. However, little research through a queer perspective has been conducted in Latin America in this regard. Furthermore, there is a risk of simply abducting concepts and stripping them from their political and social contexts only to integrate them into our economic models. Therefore, this proposal is led by the principle of learning alongside and from other disciplines, inviting a rethinking of problems, questions, and methods social theorists usually use to understand a situation. We acknowledge that multiple voices and perspectives can inform our understanding of a particular situation. This collaborative work moves forward and reflects on how sociolinguistics and economics have shaped our conceptions of the world of work. This collaboration responds to a growing need to discuss our lived experiences and make new tracks for the collective rethinking of our joint contribution to engaged scholarship. Ultimately, our goal is to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration between Latin Americanists within Queer Studies at Leiden University.

Deliverables

- Two joint papers in international journals such as the Journal of Language and Sexuality (John Benjamins), Antipode (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd), and Latin American Perspectives (Sage Journals). The Research Trainees will be included as co-authors.
- Presentation of the project findings in an event at the Latin American Studies and/or International Studies programs. The event's goal is to disseminate results and inspire other students to conduct interdisciplinary research within the framework proposed.
- Present the papers/project at international conferences (TBD). This project will serve as a springboard for future collaboration for those interested in participating in interdisciplinary research. Initially, the project will focus on two Latin American countries, Brazil and Ecuador. Later, the theoretical framework and online questionnaire can be used to replicate the study in different countries of the region.
- The applicants also envision other spaces for dissemination and scale-up of the project, including the application to the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Fund, which provides small grants to initiatives in support of our D&I priorities, with specific emphasis on creating an inclusive learning environment.
- This project will also lay the groundwork for future conference panels and collaborative research grants, fostering linkages for further interdisciplinary collaboration.

Planning

- First semester of 2022:
 - o February 2022: coordinators will collaboratively develop the theoretical framework using insights from Queer Studies such as Queer Linguistics and Queer Economics. Likewise, they will work on the traineeship selection process to make sure the candidates are selected before March 2022.
 - o March 2022: coordinators will curate the key works to first be reviewed by the research trainees and guide the team in a first approximation to the emerging fields of Queer Linguistics and Queer Economics.
 - o April 2022: research trainees will engage with the relevant literature for the project, design and conduct the focus group activity.
 - o May 2022: design and administration of the online questionnaire, data collection and analysis.
 - o June-July 2022: write-up of the papers
 - o August 2022: presentation of the project findings and papers submission, preferably embedded in the D&I strategic plan of Leiden University and aligned with the objectives of inclusive education.

Student Application

Interested students should send their resume, motivation letter (max. 100 words). Make sure to highlight the relevant courses and/or professional experiences with Gender/Queer Studies. Applications should be sent to: e.alves.vieira@hum.leidenuniv.nl and m.g.palacio.ludena@hum.leidenuniv.nl