JACINTO CUVI

Assistant professor of sociology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Institut de Sociologie
jacinto.cuvi@ulb.be

KIMSA MARADAN

Doctoral student at the Institut de Sociologie, Université de Neuchâtel
kimsa.nguyen@unine.ch

The Fitting Process

Getting a Formal Job at a Luxury Hotel in Vietnam

ABSTRACT Amid a general trend toward the informalization of employment, the globalizing sector of high-end hospitality services creates a limited number of formal employment opportunities for manual workers in specific locations with large pools of potential recruits. This paper examines the hiring criteria and recruitment process for waiting staff positions at an international luxury hotel in coastal Vietnam. Data collected through interviews and observation suggest that particularly young, taller-than-average, fair-complexioned candidates with foreign-language skills and the financial resources to compensate local brokers through traditional gift-giving rituals are more likely to get formal jobs. Aspiring formal employees perform work on their bodies and outfit to meet these requirements—a process we call "fitting." The paper makes a contribution to the sociology of labor markets and to the understanding of access to formal employment in the context of globalization.   KEYWORDS globalization, formal employment, labor market, culture

AS A DISRUPTIVE PROCESS of cultural and economic integration, globalization has reshaped labor markets worldwide, sparking intense debate about "winners" and "losers" (Alderson 2004; Friedman 2006; Sassen 2013; Silver 2003; Stiglitz 2002). Discontents are legion, from laid-off factory workers in the industrial heartlands of Europe and the United States to subcontracted sewers in Central American sweatshops (Itzigsohn 2010; Rosen 2002; Rudra 2008). But who are the winners? Conventional wisdom holds that investors with transnational business networks and mobile professionals with "hot" skills benefit from a globally integrated labor market, alongside part of the middle class in emerging economies (Hung and Kucinskas 2011; Milanovic 2016; Robinson 2012).

However, global capital flows and foreign investment also create local demand for competent but not necessarily specialized workers in such industries as air travel and high-end hospitality. Even manual employment in industries that provide personal services to high-income customers requires high standards of self-presentation and customer service from workers, who are more likely to be directly employed by a foreign brand company and to enjoy better pay and working conditions as a result (Christian and Nathan 2013; Mosley and Uno 2007; Otis 2011; Scheyvens and Russell 2012). Given

that large pools of local workers meet the basic criteria, it is worth asking who among them manages to secure these scarce opportunities.

The background to this query is the general trend toward the informalization of employment, which entails a dilution of legal and social protections for workers. As terms of employment and working conditions deteriorate, some labor scholars—along with agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO)—have revived the concept of informality to characterize current labor market developments (Mosoetsa, Stillerman, and Tilly 2016; Tabak and Crichlow 2000). Formal employment is defined as registered employment, which usually includes social security and/or related benefits such as old-age pension, paid annual leave, and paid sick leave (ILO 2018). By contrast, informal employment lacks legal recognition and its attendant rights. The ILO (2018) estimated the share of the global workforce in informal employment at 61 percent prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, many workers find themselves in a gray area where they have some but not all of the formal employment benefits. And globalization leads to a blurring of lines. Flexibilization of labor laws and the expansion of the gig economy creates forms of employment that, albeit legal, lack most of the security historically associated with formal jobs (Kalleberg 2011; Kalleberg and Vallas 2018).

In this grim landscape, pockets of formality emerge nonetheless, which provide some stability, benefits, and social status to a small group of workers. For example, the hotel employees considered in this study enjoy regular monthly wages, fixed schedules, vacations, and overtime pay in the high season. While some continue to engage in informal income-making activities in their spare time, they are closer to the formal end of the continuum than most other workers in their hometown—and they are keenly aware of the advantages their position entails. But how are they selected into these jobs?

Drawing on the old and contested dichotomy between the formal and the informal sector, economic analysis points to a number of attributes that favor transitions to formal employment, including education (Bosch and Maloney 2010; Tansel and Acar 2017; Vega Núñez 2017). At the same time, these studies acknowledge that the skills held by most formally employed workers are not so scarce in the labor force and that many workers who have the skills don't have a formal job (McCaig and Pavcnik 2015). By looking at how the recruitment process unfolds from the job seekers' perspective, this study teases out the attributes, resources, and strategies that allow educated workers to obtain a waitstaff position at a luxury hotel in a small town along the Vietnamese coastline. Age, height, weight, and other physical attributes, which applicants are self-conscious about and cultivate or frame to improve their chances, matter as much as skills.

To capture the practice of (re)shaping the self for labor market purposes, we introduce the concept of "fitting," which differs from and complements the dynamics of skill-based and cultural matching well established in the economic and sociological literature. We define fitting as the active work a job seeker does on herself to adjust her appearance and the impressions she gives to the assessment frames of recruiters. Parallel to the fitting process, job seekers must navigate an informal economy of exchanges and favors in which they spend considerable social and economic capital. Much of that capital goes toward

securing an interview, but social ties can also help candidates get hired. Metaphorically speaking, social connections relax the frames in which applicants must fit. Both formal and informal practices thus shape the allocation of formal employment opportunities in this globalizing Vietnamese town.

GLOBALIZATION AND LABOR MARKETS

The analysis of globalization has expanded from a focus on purely economic processes to cultural phenomena and from the idea of a centrifugal movement emanating from the Western core to the recognition of local and regional syncretisms and countertrends that complicate the picture. Recent scholarship in urban and cultural studies thus rejects the view of globalization as a one-way or even a two-way process. Instead, the global manifests itself through a blending of influences and circumstances in concrete settings, which terms like "assemblages" (Ong and Collier 2005) or "worlding"—borrowed by Roy and Ong (2011) from Spivak (1999) and Wilson and Connery (2007)—seek to capture. Indeed, worlding refers to changes people and places go through in the era of globalization, which cannot be reduced to a single logic or scale, and by which they become part of the global economy.

The invitation to transcend political economy and postcolonial critique, articulated by Ong (2011) in her discussion of worlding, should not be taken to mean that global capitalism, colonial legacies, and postcolonial trends or struggles play no part in shaping local outcomes, however. These and other social facts form layers, so to speak, that together shape emerging practices. At the economic level, globalization, which entails the "functional integration and coordination of internationally dispersed activities" (Gereffi 1999:41), was and remains driven, at least in part, by the quest for low-wage labor overseas to produce manufactured goods (Arrighi, Silver, and Brewer 2003; Chase-Dunn 1999; Lichtenstein 2009). From a cultural standpoint, on the other hand, hegemonic theories that see the mass media—especially Hollywood movies—as spreading Western values and stereotypes (e.g., about fitness and the perfect body) and causing public health problems among young people in faraway lands are not entirely inaccurate, even if they do not tell the whole story (Good 1999). Case studies must therefore consider the extent to which these dynamics are at play and intersect with other dynamics, especially local and regional ones.

When it comes to the restructuring of work, the economic dimension is key. And the balance sheet of globalization is less than rosy on this count. Thanks to global commodity chains that rely heavily on subcontracting arrangements, name-brand companies avoid legal responsibility over terms of employment and working conditions at production. This is often considered a causal factor in the global informalization of work (Agarwala 2013; Heintz and Pollin 2005; Kalleberg and Vallas 2018; Mosoetsa, Stillerman and Tilly 2016). In Latin America, where much of the early literature on informal labor developed, some workers turned to traditional forms of precarious or invented self-employment as a means to escape the degradation of employment at *maquiladoras* and export processing zones (Itzigsohn 2010). Likewise, sex workers in Vietnam interviewed

by Hoang (2015) assert that their occupation is preferable to work in the garment industry. At the same time, foreign capital penetration can, in some cases, have a formalizing effect. Mosley and Uno (2007) thus find that, whereas trade openness has a negative impact on labor rights, foreign direct investment has a positive effect.

While cultural integration through mass communication technology contributes to holding some name-brand firms accountable for the treatment of workers—if not in a court of law, at least in the court of public opinion (Seidman 2012)—technological development also reshapes local labor markets in emerging economies by increasing demand in the service sector (Otis 2008). A seminal distinction introduced by Blinder (2006) to map the effects of this trend is between personal services and impersonal services, "services that can be delivered electronically over long distances with little or no degradation in quality" (114). The offshoring of impersonal services often replicates the organization of global commodity chains, with subcontracting arrangements that conceal subpar working conditions at the source—in call centers, business processing plants, or the homes of precarious IT workers (Sallaz 2019). By contrast, personal services—which can be low-pay (e.g., food delivery) or high-pay (e.g., advanced medical care)—are not "offshorable."

However, the international mass transportation system facilitates the movement of consumers to developing countries, where personal services are available at comparatively low prices. In Thailand, the expat nursing home industry has boomed in recent years with clients from Europe and North America (Hill 2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not uncommon for Americans to travel to Brazil for plastic surgery (Stern and Golden 2016) or to hire the services of surrogate mothers in India (Rudrappa 2010). Beyond such country niches, international leisure travel is widespread in the age of globalization, fueled by demand for "exotic" experiences and adventure, which are often shared on social media. According to the UN World Tourism Organization (2018), the number of international tourists more than doubled between 2000 and 2017. East Asia and Pacific was the world region with the largest increase, with average annual growth of over 6 percent.

The income polarization that characterizes the service sector in advanced economies is replicated, to a large extent, among travel and hospitality service providers around the world, which run the gamut from mom-and-pop operations offering room and board to backpackers and low-cost airlines, to cruises, to luxury hotel chains. Across the industry, but especially in the upmarket segments populated by high-end international companies, consumers display ambivalence between the search for local specialty and authenticity, on the one hand, and expectations of service that meets international standards of quality and comfort, on the other. Such ambivalence manifests itself, for example, in food choices, which tourists want to be novel while meeting "European standards" (Mak, Lumbers, and Eves 2012). At the luxury hotel studied by Otis (2016) in Beijing, the service etiquette was dictated by the taste of the male business class that made up most of the clientele.

Corporate actors are thus compelled to hire or train a local workforce that can meet high expectations for personal service, and recent studies suggest that, whatever the geopolitical and macroeconomic implications of tourist service providers being

foreign-owned, "larger companies will typically offer superior wages, are more likely to abide by labor laws and, importantly, will invest considerably more in training and capacity-building than locally owned operations" (Scheyvens and Russell 2012:427; see also Meyer 2007; Otis 2011). Moreover, Snyman (2012:398) notes that "the tourism industry is employment-intensive and offers permanent employment, as opposed to other industries in [rural] areas that frequently offer only seasonal employment" (see also Mitchell and Ashley 2010). In her survey of high-end ecotourism facilities in three countries of southern Africa, Snyman finds that "respondents who were employed in high-end ecotourism operations . . . on average had a higher total household income . . . than average community respondents" (401) and that "for 77% of the staff respondents, their current job in high-end ecotourism was . . . their first permanent job" (404). The stability and regularity of such employment may vary. At a high-end resort in Fiji, workers only find out about their schedules at the beginning of the month (Scheyvens and Russell 2012). But these studies concur that employment in high-end hospitality comes closer to the formal end of the spectrum and offers considerable advantages (ILO 2018). What these studies do not say, however, is who are the workers that secure these jobs and what skills, resources, or strategies allow them to do so. Yet labor market studies and the sociology of globalization point to culture as a key dimension for understanding the process.

Fitting a Job

Culture entered the sociological analysis of hiring by way of a tweak to the classic concept of "matching." In mainstream economic theory, a match between the skills of the candidate and the technical needs of the position to be filled explains hiring. Of course, networks also matter. Granovetter (1973) famously showed that information about job openings circulating through weak ties influenced the outcomes of job searches. As Rivera (2012) makes plain, however, affinity between the applicant and the interviewer—who self-consciously embodies the culture of her organization—is also instrumental for nailing a job. In this regard, signals used by reviewers include activities mentioned on the applicant's CV (e.g., outdoor sports, or chess) as well as verbal and nonverbal cues, including dressing style, posture, eye contact, and tone of voice during the interview, all of which convey information about an applicant's taste, social background, and upbringing (Bills 1999; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Williams and Connell 2010). Recruiters know what "kind of people" work at their organization and look for "a good fit." The concept of cultural matching introduced by Rivera (2012) thus unveiled another dimension of recruitment, beyond networks and skills.

The problem with this concept is that it conveys the misleading sense of a natural, organic tangle. It downplays the lengths to which candidates go to meet the criteria of their would-be employers, or what they assume to be such criteria—a process we call "fitting." As with the online dating market, where the illusion of a spontaneous encounter ("It's a match!") conceals the amount of time users spend curating their profile, fitting is a conscious, arduous act. But what is it that aspiring employees must fit into? We argue

that job seekers try to fit into the perception and valuation frames of recruiters, which echo broader cultural schemes about gender and race, among other dimensions.

Fitting echoes two related strands of research, on which this study draws. One strand considers the influence of cultural forces through bias and discrimination. Stereotypes about race and gender inform decisions on hiring across labor market segments, from Ivy League graduates (Rivera 2011), to college graduates in general (Gaddis 2015; Kang et al. 2016), to entry-level jobs in the low-wage service sector (Bills 1999). And bodily features associated with physical attractiveness—from height and body mass to facial appearance (Jæger 2011)—have been found to determine socioeconomic and labor market success (Mears 2014), including prospective employers' interest in applications (Anýžová and Matějů 2018) and wage determination (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994; Mobius and Rosenblat 2006). The aesthetic component is especially strong in personal services, given the "co-presence of provider and purchaser" (McDowell 2011:18). An audit study by Pager, Bonikowski, and Western (2009), which finds that employers are more likely to offer entry-level service jobs to a White applicant than to a Hispanic or Black applicant with equivalent job experience and educational credentials, bears out the sorting effect of ascriptive criteria. From this perspective, however, applicants have little agency: they either fit into the recruiters' (prejudiced) frames or they don't.

The other strand of research considers the work of labor market intermediary institutions that groom their members for job applications and interviews. As Vicki Smith (2002) notes in the case of unemployed professionals in California, the state-funded placement and "networking" agency pushes them to "reinvent themselves" to find a footing in the new economy. "How do I package me?" one of them wonders anxiously (147). This is also the goal of the non-profit Dress for Success, established in 1997 to provide out-of-work working-class women with "professional attire"—and advice from volunteering upper-class female professionals—to help them nail a job during an interview (Cummins and Blum 2015).

It is not surprising that most of the—often painful—work on the self and its image transcends the acquisition of skills. As Skeggs (1997:67) points out with respect to a core area of the personal services sector, "The course text book . . . describes caring as a collection of specific attributes and attitudes. . . . The position of caring involves far more than having the 'right' skills: it involves being a particular sort of person. And the attributes of the 'right' sort of person are closely interlinked with wider cultural discourses of femininity and motherhood."

Most of these studies were conducted in culturally homogeneous settings, however, where candidates and potential employers share broad cultural frames (even with class differences at work) and where candidates have access to counsel. How does the fitting process play out in a globalizing village or small city where an international organization recruits local workers for high-end personal service jobs? What frames are applicants required to fit into, and how do successful candidates go about doing so?

Worldly Frames

Whatever their actual contours, the frames informing recruiters' assessments are likely to be hybrid, like most things, people, and spaces touched by globalization (Kelsky 2001;

Robertson 2012). In Asia, moreover, the rise of global players, be they countries like China or cities like Dubai, has spurred a fair amount of within-region inter-referencing—that is, aspirational practices and projects in which the West ceases to be the paragon (Roy and Ong 2011). For example, urban development projects in Ho Chi Minh City take Shanghai, not New York or London, as their main model (Harms 2016).

The same goes for norms regulating the body. Whereas the "idealization of the Western body" (Schwekendiek, Yeo, and Ulijaszek 2013) is still a factor in some cases, other influences blend in and sometimes overshadow it. As Holliday et al. (2017) show, Chinese customers who fly to Seoul for a surgical makeover are pursuing the "Korean Look—a look now understood as 'right for the Asian body'" (191). Local parlance even distinguishes cosmetic surgery where the ultimate goal is marriage from "employment surgery." And sex workers in Vietnam, where wealth has taken on an "Asian face" (Hoang 2015:8) given the dominance of Asian countries among foreign investors, perform versions of femininity adjusted to the social and geographic origins of their clients. Even the stereotypical "Western body" is, according to Holliday and Elfving-Hang (2012:158), "a globalized image, embodying idealized elements from many different cultures." The case study below traces colonial, regional, and postcolonial Western influences in the fitting efforts of applicants.

Fitting and Social Ties

While aesthetic labor on the body and its outfit lies at the core of the concept of fitting, the display of skills is also part of the performative process. Indeed, as shown below, job seekers may strategically gain, claim, or emphasize certain skills during their job search or when applying to a given position. And networks interact with fitting to some extent. As means of accessing information about an opening—per Granovetter's classic argument—social ties play an independent role. However, information is only one of the market benefits stemming from social ties. The status of contacts a job seeker has and the strength of the ties that bind her to them also affect her chances, suggesting influence as much as information (Bian 1997; Fernandez and Weinberg 1997; Lin and Dumin 1986; Lin and Vaughn 1981). In this regard, social ties relate to fitting because well-connected candidates face less restrictive frames to fit into, as recruiters may relax the hiring criteria in their case.

THE SETTING

Vietnam is a latecomer to the stage of global capitalism, though it has been fast to catch up. In 1986, Vietnam's communist regime launched a liberalization program known as the Doi Moi (Renewal). This program allowed private enterprise a larger role in the economy—through decentralization, expanded private management of agricultural land, and, some years later, the creation of joint-stock companies—while gradually liberalizing trade and land tenure. This new outlook encouraged the Clinton administration to lift the U.S. embargo in 1994, and Vietnam applied for membership in the World Trade Organization the following year. Membership only materialized in 2007, however, after

lengthy negotiations, as the ruling party followed a cautious path that guaranteed continuing state control over strategic assets and key sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, the Doi Moi initiated far-reaching structural change in what was, until then, essentially an agrarian society, turning it into a rapidly industrializing "socialist-oriented market economy." By 2019, the industrial sector accounted for 34 percent of GDP and 26 percent of employment, while the service sector provided 46 percent of GDP and 35 percent of employment.[1] Following three decades of rapid economic growth, the ILO (2018) estimated Vietnam's informal workforce at 75 percent in 2018, down from 95 percent in 2012, and as low as 58 percent in non-agricultural sectors. Greater economic openness also led to a boom in foreign direct investment, first from Western countries, then from Asian ones (Kim 2017).

The effects on the cultural landscape of tighter integration in the world economy are palpable in new consumer trends, such as the fancy French bakeries and nightclubs in large urban centers or demand for Hollywood movies nationwide. McDonald's opened its first restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City in 2014, with a celebration featuring traditional dragon dances in the festive atmosphere of Tet (Vietnamese New Year).[2] Nowadays, young Vietnamese, much like their counterparts in Africa or Latin America, wear Nike or Tommy Hilfiger knockoffs and listen to hip hop music in English and Vietnamese.

Domestic leisure travel also increased in recent years, alongside a massive influx of international tourists and business visitors. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the number of domestic tourists rose from 25 million to 35 million between 2009 and 2018 while the number of international visitors tripled, from 5 million to 15 million.[3] Landmark hotels in large urban centers, like the historic Majestic Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City and the Sofitel in Hanoi, date back to French colonial times. As coastal regions grew popular among tourists, however, other high-end hotel chains like Four Seasons and Reverie set up shop there.

A high-end international hotel which we shall call Hotel Nice View is the setting of our case study. Located in the midsize coastal town of Lan Thu,[4] which attracts businessmen as well as leisure travelers on their way to major touristic hotspots in the area, the 12-story glass-and-steel hotel has a distinctively modern, undulated design that stands out in a streetscape of low-rise, rough-hewn concrete buildings. The Nice View offers all the standardized amenities of a high-end international hotel anywhere in the world (a swimming pool, king size beds, etc.). It sits by the water, a few feet away from the *chợ' cá* (fish market), the center of the town's social life and—until the recent transformations, of which the hotel is both a symptom and a driver—its economic heart.

METHODS

This paper draws on a case study of waiting staff at an international luxury hotel. The main data source is interviews, including 15 one-on-one interviews with staff members and 10 focus groups featuring two to eight participants each (see Table 1 for details, including pseudonyms, profiles, and group interview composition).[5] Interviewees include the entire waiting staff on duty at the time of fieldwork, and a manager. Interviews were

TABLE 1. **List of informants and data collection**

	Name	Age	Gender	Previous employment status	Data source
Waiting staff	Alicia	19	F	Informal (clothing retail)	FG 1 + int.
	Maggie	19	F	Informal (coffee shop)	FG 1
	Roger	21	M	Unknown	FG 2 + int.
	Alex	22	M	Informal (shrimp trade)	FG 2
	Kevin	22	M	Informal (fish transportation)	FG 2
	Patricia	22	F	Informal, (small-scale agriculture)	FG 3
	Vanessa	22	F	Unknown	FG 3 + int.
	Tracy	19	F	Unkown	FG 3
	Peter	18	M	Informal (convenience store)	FG 4
	Matthew	20	M	Informal, (hardware retail)	FG 4
	Kurt	22	M	Informal (food delivery)	FG 4
	Phillip	19	M	Informal, (tailoring)	FG 5
	Tiffany	18	F	Informal (coffee shop)	FG 5
Receptionist	Laureen	25	F	Informal (jewelry store)	Int.
Security guards	Karl	35	M	Informal (event planning and food vending)	FG 6 + int.
	Victor	39	M	Informal (motorcycle repair)	FG 6 + int.
Musicians	Kelly	35	F	Informal (music and tailoring)	FGs 7 to 9
	Curtis	46	M	Informal (music and cattle raising)	FGs 7 to 9

(continued)

	Name	Age	Gender	Previous employment status	Data source
				TABLE 1. List of informants and data collection (*continued*)	
	Walter	48	M	Informal	FGs 7 to 9
				(Music and sales)	
Singer	Tori	42	F	Informal	FGs 8, 9 + int.
				(music and cooking)	
Dancers	Harry	35	M	Informal	FGs 8 to 10
				(shrimp drying and fishing)	
	Leslie	35	F	Informal	FGs 8 to 10
				(clothing retail)	
	Steven	37	M	Informal	FGs 8 to 10
				(small-scale agriculture)	
	Helen	36	F	Informal	FGs 8 to 10 + int.
				(beauty shop)	
Manager	James	42	M	Formal	Int.
				(hotel manager)	

Note: FG, focus group; int., interview. Focus group numbers provide information about co-participants but do not reflect chronological order.

conducted during the summer of 2019 by Maradan, a second-generation Vietnamese immigrant to Europe who speaks Vietnamese fluently, has relatives in the area, and had visited repeatedly prior to doing the research. Maradan also conducted complementary observation at the hotel and in the surrounding area, including the fish market. Alicia, a waitress who had worked at the hotel for five years, was a key informant who helped set up interviews with the other members of the staff. Her standing as a trusted senior waitress to whom others often resorted for help facilitated the process. Data collected in the field were complemented by subsequent archival research.

It was not possible to interview unsuccessful applicants, given the complexity of the recruitment process and practical constraints, yet several aspects of the data collection strengthen the reliability of our results and conclusions. First, interviews with successful applicants provide *processual* insights into recruitment and fitting regardless of control group availability (Ragin 2004). Second, as presented below, interviewees repeatedly cited cases of acquaintances who had tried and failed to secure waiting jobs, while reflecting on the reasons for their failure. Finally, the sample includes a secondary control group made up of informal hotel workers. While these workers did not attempt to access waiting staff positions, a comparison between this subset and the core study population of formal employees enhances our confidence in the reliability of the data from interviews.

Observation of workers took place at the hotel, especially on the terrace, with simultaneous notetaking, and at the fish market. Interviews took place away from the hotel premises, in small neighborhood restaurants, parks, beach bars, or makeshift coffee shops next to the Buddhist temples. Locations and times were regularly adjusted at the request

of informants. Toward the end of fieldwork, the researcher also contacted and interviewed a hotel manager. In total, Maradan conducted about 35 hours of interviews, 26 of which were tape-recorded. The others were recorded through simultaneous notetaking. We translated quotes from Vietnamese and analyzed transcripts through open coding, without specialized software. Unless otherwise specified, informants referred to by their first names below are waiters and waitresses.

FINDINGS

At the time of fieldwork, a fraction of the service workers employed by Hotel Nice View had what can be described as a formal employment relation. They included the receptionist and the restaurant waiting staff. Waiters and waitresses worked five or six days a week with regular shifts (7 AM to 4 PM with a one-hour lunch break, or 4 PM to 11 PM—or midnight, with a break), were paid monthly, had regular days off, were entitled to paid leave, and felt blessed about their jobs. They were distributed almost evenly between male and female, and they were all in their teens or early twenties. These workers were also perceived as having a distinctive status by other town residents, most of whom make a living in an economy marked by off-the-books transactions and unregistered employment relations.

To be sure, the waiters and waitresses did not consider their salary of USD 200 per month (and up to USD 50 extra in overtime during high season) to be exceptional by local standards, yet they greatly appreciated the security of a monthly paycheck and the regularity of their schedules and work routines. In keeping with local custom, they did not collect tips.[6] Most waitstaff had been informally occupied as contributing family workers in their parents' businesses before getting their job at the hotel, and some of them kept an informal sideline or helped relatives run their business at the end of their shift and on Sundays. Finally, within each gender group, waiters and waitresses had similar physiques, as described below.

The Fitting Process

In the high-end service industry, efforts to build an image of glamour that promises a classy customer experience extend to the selection of personnel, as a comment from the Nice View manager makes clear:

> We focus on our employees' skills and experience, but we have other requirements given our status as a luxury hotel. We have to be selective to ensure proper communication and protect our image. We definitely expect good self-presentation from our employees.[7]

The manager avoids mentioning potentially discriminatory criteria, yet the standards of "self-presentation" expected by the hotel, which concern the employee's manners as much as her looks, emerge from field observations and interviews with staff. In field notes taken at the hotel terrace, the researcher registered that waiters and waitresses looked really young—almost like teenagers—and she later asked their ages during the interviews

and focus groups. While they are all 18 or older, the waiters and waitresses at Hotel Nice View are young, even by the standards of Vietnam's relatively young workforce: their ages range from 18 to 22, with a median of 20. (According to the General Office of Statistics, less than 14 percent of the Vietnamese workforce is in the 15–24 age group.[8])

Interviews confirmed that being young was among the selection criteria. "Age is disqualifying," Matthew said. "The administration doesn't hire old people." According to Kurt, "If you are over 30, it's over. You must be young on paper." Answering a question from the researcher in a different focus group, Tiffany confirms the age ceiling for the waitstaff: "That's right, if you are 30, you are too old for this job!"

Maradan also noted that formal employees were slim and unusually tall. Again, this observation was borne out by informants, who stress the importance of looks, often in the language of beauty, and see height as a key component. Phillip puts it bluntly: "You know, if you don't meet management standards on height, don't bother applying. They make it clear that you have no chances." The rule applies to both genders:

> I am tall for a Vietnamese, and I believe all my colleagues are as well, both men and women. You know, you absolutely need to reach the threshold of 1.65 meters [5′ 5″] in our case [i.e., female staff members]. Being a waitress is like being a stewardess, [management is] very picky with your physical appearance. Height is essential. You can't be considered pretty if you are small. To be tall is to be beautiful. (Tiffany)

Male waitstaff reported that the threshold for men is 5′ 9″. These are restrictive criteria in a country where the average height is 5′ 5″ for men and 5′ for women (*Le Courrier du Viet Nam* 2017).

Of course, even ascriptive characteristics like age and height are constructed and construed through framing processes. Vanessa thus relativizes the constraint of age, saying "there's no difference between waitresses and waiters. We both have to be good-looking and young, or at least look young." Kurt echoes her point while revealing its flip side: "By all means you can't look old, you know, otherwise, even if you are young, forget it. I know a guy who is my age but looks older, and he wasn't hired."

Age and height are not the only criteria, however. As Tracy notes: "Here, everybody agrees, you know, that to be pretty and attractive, you have to be tall or at least not short, slim with long legs, and have a thin face with properly delineated, large eyes." To this list, other female interviewees add long hair and a fair complexion, while male interviewees note the importance of muscles. As Roger puts it, "being slim is not enough anymore, you need to be strong."[9]

The subjective dimension through which they are appraised makes physical attributes amenable to (more or less effective) strategies of impression management and manipulation (e.g., wearing make-up or high heels), in addition to the long-term efforts at cultivating body image in which these workers also engage to meet the tacit requirements of their job. Waitresses avoid putting on weight by eating less, and waiters refrain from drinking too much beer. The traditional local diet is not fatty, but to achieve the required bodies, some waiters work out daily. Finally, waitresses also undergo skin-clearing procedures, especially an aggressive, potentially toxic treatment known as skin peeling. This

practice comes at a cost. "My parents spent a lot of money," said Vanessa. "Here, nice fair skin is synonymous with beauty. . . . It's hard to maintain good skin because of the sun and the dust. I have to get skin treatment regularly."

These beauty canons have mixed geographical origins, but globalization contributed to their adoption. Long hair is a common feature of traditional feminine aesthetics in Asia. The exalting of whiteness, on the other hand, is a legacy of French occupation during colonial times, when the local gentry considered white skin a status symbol. This value-laden view has spread in recent years, however, through advertisement campaigns that feature light-skinned models (Frith, Cheng, and Shaw 2004). As for the aesthetic ideal of muscular masculinity, which dates back to ancient Greece, it has also spread through transnational cultural products, including Hollywood movies and television content produced in Asia that draws on similar stereotypes or hybrids (Mosesson 2018).

In a country where popular conceptions of beauty often involve the use of cosmetic accessories and bright colors—especially red, worn at weddings—formal employees were careful not to overdo it. They very consciously avoided putting on too much make-up or wearing flashy jewelry. In a statement that echoes Bourdieu's (1984) stance on the logic of social distinction, Peter said: "I tried to dress well and look clean during the interview, but I did not want to have a showy style. It's in poor taste." The international roots of these standards are captured by a comment from Matthew, which points to the importance of regional dynamics in the making and diffusion of aesthetic norms (Iwabuchi 2002):

> I dressed up for the interview. I put on a shirt but I did not wear a suit because, for a waiter's job, I wanted to look sharp, you know, and above all not look too stiff. You know what I mean? I watched many Korean movies to get some inspiration and get a really sharp look. [Laughs]

In short, formal employees are aware of the valuation schemes that inform the selection process and go to great lengths to "fit," before the interview, during, and (if hired) afterwards.

Skills Matter

Skills are a constitutive part of the profiles that job seekers build and cultivate to secure entry-level formal jobs. Management was unequivocal on the importance of foreign-language skills. "It is absolutely necessary to speak English to join our waitstaff," the manager said. "I would even say that [speaking English] is just a baseline condition. As a rule, you need to be multilingual."[10] To "facilitate the recruitment process," moreover, applicants for waitstaff positions are required to submit their applications in English. Formal employees confirmed the importance of language skills, noting that "English is the basis" (Tiffany), that "speaking English got me hired" (Alicia), that "without [speaking] foreign languages it is impossible to work [here]" (Laureen), and that "speaking multiple languages was one of the assets that helped me nail this job" (Maggie).

At the same time, interviews revealed an uneven command of English among the formal employees, some of them having only rudimentary knowledge. Waitstaff workers

themselves acknowledged these shortcomings. As a result, they resorted to impression management strategies that echo the fitting practices performed on the body. Thus, before applying, Roger asked the neighborhood physician to look over his file, as she is "really nice and speaks English really well." Peter, who "didn't speak English really well," asked the son of an internet cafe owner for help. These strategies worked because, while the application file needs to be in English, the recruiter is Vietnamese, and the interview is conducted in Vietnamese. Two informants said they were not tested on their language skills during the interview but were "simply asked if [they] spoke and understood well the languages . . . listed on [their] CV" (Tiffany). On the job, waiters and waitresses then compensate for their shortcomings through cooperation, by enlisting the help of their co-workers. "I don't think my English is perfect," Roger said. "But there's always someone to take care of foreigners."

As for the ways in which skills were acquired, they included a mix of formal education and makeshift strategies. Starting in middle school, foreign-language courses are offered in Vietnam in both the public and private school systems. As Tiffany points out, "We young people, we all chose English as our second language at school. We are aware of its potential in the job market." Alicia agrees but nuances this point: "The quality of education is poor in this area. If you want high-level training, you need to move to larger cities like Ho Chi Minh [City]." To complement her training, she resorted to private lessons, which her parents paid for. Others with fewer resources developed alternative strategies: "I had some English lessons at school, but I learned to speak fluently by watching a whole lot of movies in English and by listening to music," said Alex. His co-worker Peter said he had "a trick" to improve his conversational English: "I use an app that allows me to build vocabulary lists in English, and it's amazing the progress you make. You have to [study] every day, but it pays off." Peter and Roger also communicated in English with their friends on social media as a way to "practice writing."

Such skills can compensate, to some extent, for other qualities valued by recruiters. As Laureen, the receptionist, puts it: "I would not say I'm a beautiful girl, though I look okay [laughter]. Anyway, my strength is my education. I went to university, and my knowledge is appreciated here. It's not only about beauty, you see."[11] When it comes to what aspects of her education are valuable: "I am well versed in several languages: English, Mandarin, Thai, and [I speak] a little French. This is my strength, and it was definitely a reason they hired me. That's obvious."[12] Alicia echoes this notion: "I'm not particularly cute, but I speak English well, so waiters come to me when we have foreign clients. I was hired because I spoke English better than my co-workers."[13]

Getting Access

It wasn't easy [to get this job]. We had to talk to someone who knew an employee at the hotel that was close to the recruiter's family. Once we established that contact, we had to give gifts [to the employee] and wait for a while before meeting the family of the recruiter. Then we had to give more gifts [to the family]. You see, the path to this job was long and expensive, but that's how things work here. (Kevin)

Activating social ties in formal (e.g., a reference letter) and informal (e.g., a phone call) ways is an inherent part of job searches anywhere in the world. In the context under study, however, information about jobs running through weak ties is less useful than access to the recruiter, who only accepts candidates through referrals. Influence exerted through strong ties is more availing, especially when it involves family ties to high-status actors. Formal employees noted that having a brother who works in customs or an uncle who is a retired high-ranking military officer turned successful businessman, as was the case for Peter, helped them get their file to the top of the pile. Friends and acquaintances of their parents, especially their fathers, working in government or business were also instrumental. Patricia was assisted by officials her father befriended while playing chess in the district capital. Having friends or relatives in high places thus enlarged—metaphorically speaking—the tight frames in which employees are expected to fit. Moreover, the type of ties that were profitable reflected broader cultural aspects of society, including respect for officialdom (in a military regime) and patriarchy.

Those who lacked such precious ties had to resort to intermediaries, which came at a price. As Tracy pointed out, "There are people who can arrange meetings with important actors who might help you meet the recruiter. Of course, you have to have money." In this setting, the circulation of money through social networks is not framed as "buying" or "bribing" but as "giving a gift," considered a sign of "politeness." The customary practice of the "politeness gift" (*quà lịch sự*) alluded to in Kevin's opening quote is not exclusive to the hotel or even to the labor market. It is a generalized practice rooted in certain norms of reciprocity that govern a still-prevalent moral economy of favors and informal exchanges operating alongside or even within the marketplace (Hoang 2020). In the context of a modern job search, however, the ritual process of gift-giving can have a distinctly transactional tone. Vanessa described the politeness gift as "a cash present that you can put in an envelope and give to people who agreed to do you a favor." Kevin put it bluntly: "You know, the guy, the only thing he really cared about was the envelope and its thickness!"

Finally, some formal employees enlisted the services of placement agencies, which operate as institutional intermediaries and with whom money is also crucial. Indeed, placement agencies in Lan Thu—unlike their counterparts in many Western markets—require front-end payments to launch a job search. As Matthew noted, "Here, to go to an agency, you need to have money, otherwise they won't see you. They don't want to work for free." Peter echoed this view: "When you get there, you must show that you have enough [money] to pay them. Only then do they ask you to take a seat and look at your file. They can also help you improve your application, but that's even more expensive."

One interviewee reported paying USD 700 to an agency. Her sister had to pay USD 1,000 to get an interview for a clerical job at a bank. Five hotel employees (Patricia, Vanessa, Kurt, Maggie, and Peter) also reported cases of acquaintances who failed to secure a waiting job because they could not afford the informal broker fees. In one such case, Patricia's best friend did not get an interview for the job, even though she spoke better English than her, because her family could not afford to pay intermediaries. Maggie mentioned a girl who was "cute" but whose parents also could not pay intermediaries.

Expensive as the process is, sorting by socioeconomic status is moderated somewhat thanks to the remittances some job seekers receive from relatives abroad.

Finally, the discrepancy between official discourse and actual practice is not a matter of organizational estrangement. According to formal employees, the recruiter, who is Vietnamese, knows exactly how things work. Young workers are critical of the practice yet see the payment of fees as a fact of life, a social norm that needs to be complied with whether one likes it or not. "[Everybody] knows this is how it is. We accept it. It's normal. Perhaps it will change one day," said Matthew, "but for now, that's the way it is."

A Counterpoint: Informal Hotel Workers

While a comparison with informal workers at the hotel must be nuanced by the caveat that they did not apply for waiting jobs, marked differences between the two groups nevertheless bear out the findings from interviews with formal employees. The informal workers interviewed in this study included two security guards as well as members of a traditional *cải lương* music band and dancers. The security guards worked daily at the motorbike parking lot. They were paid by the hotel but had no formal employment relationship. The artists were allowed to perform on the terrace during the day and collect tips from the audience. They also performed occasional evening shows indoors, at the hotel's request, for which they were paid by the hotel.

The informal workers were older than the formal employees. Their average age was 39, with a median of 36, and none was under 30. The informal workers did not have foreign-language skills, either. In fact, some were illiterate. This is not to say that they did not have skills, however, nor that their skills were not valued by either the hotel or the workers themselves. The band members emphasized the purity of their art and its emotional grip on tourists, foreign and domestic. The security guards, on the other hand, were appreciated for their diverse practical skill set, in particular their abilities as mechanics, which came in handy at the parking lot. (One of them was also regularly called on to repair appliances in the hotel.) Finally, the informal workers had also obtained their jobs through networks, which entailed the delivery of gifts, though the value of the gifts was much lower and they were less likely to be given upfront, as a fee; they were registered instead in the form of a symbolic "debt" to be acquitted in due course. In short, the informal workers at the hotel did not fit the profile of the formal employees, whose characteristics and status set them apart from their fellow town residents.[14]

DISCUSSION

Formal employment is an institutional form that globalization spreads to specific locations, under particular circumstances, and undermines elsewhere. In a context of global erosion of the legal frameworks that protect workers, the high-end hospitality sector considered here, alongside a set of service industries such as air travel and medical care, forms a countertrend. It offers a level of regularity in employment and income to manual workers in developing countries. Understanding who benefits from these opportunities demands attention to the embeddedness of formal labor markets in both global culture

and local norms. Both levels interact in the case at hand to the benefit of good-looking, English-speaking, taller-than-average local youth with the social or economic resources required to obtain a job interview in an economy still organized, to a large extent, around informal exchanges of favors.

Conventional wisdom has long held that skills are a condition of access to formal employment based on the observation that formal workers consistently display more years of schooling and are overrepresented in occupations that require specialized skills (Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989). Recent scholarship on individual transitions to formality confirms that education is a key predictor, along with age (Bosch and Maloney 2010; Lara and Huerta 2020; Tansel and Acar 2017). Yet the mechanisms are not known. As McCaig and Pavnick (2015:519) note in a study on Vietnam, "even among the workers most likely to switch out of the informal sector (completed upper secondary school, young, urban, and male), actual switching is subject to a large amount of unobserved heterogeneity. . . . Thus, many of the workers that were the 'most likely switchers' did not switch to formal sector." La Porta and Shleifer (2014) speculate that a cohort effect according to which members of new generations have access to an expanding formal labor market, along with more educational opportunities, explains the correlation between transition and age.

This case study suggests otherwise. At least in the hotel industry, young workers are recruited *because* they are young—or, as Vanessa put it, "look young"—and while skills acquired through formal education allow them to meet the official job requirements, other qualities associated with physical appearance are equally important to securing the job. As the concept of fitting suggests, moreover, such qualities are produced by candidates through body image work and impression management strategies they engage in earnestly before, during, and (if hired) after the recruitment process.

CONCLUSION

Attention to the fitting process adds to our understanding of job searches. It reveals the work on the self that precedes interactions with recruiters and continues after hiring. As such, it complements other approaches, including those centered on skills, cultural matching, and social ties. The value of fitting as an analytic framework depends, however, on the labor market under study. Outside the high-end hospitality sector considered in this study—where, as the manager noted, businesses are bound by their image—skills may matter more than looks. As an analytic framework, moreover, fitting is probably more useful where candidates need to cross class- or area-based cultural boundaries to get the job. On the other hand, in elite markets like those examined by Rivera (2011, 2012), where prospective employers circumscribe their search to elite schools, matching—based on hobbies or personality traits—likely plays a bigger role. Even then, however, a closer look at what candidates think, feel, and do before submitting their applications or ahead of the interviews might unveil a picture that combines fitting (i.e., efforts to present oneself in accordance with interviewers' presumed preferences) and matching (i.e., convergence of taste, outlook, etc. between applicant and recruiter) to some degree. The case

considered here bears out this potential for cross-fertilization of theoretical approaches, as an informal economy of gifts and exchanges enacted through differentiated social ties determines, in conjunction with fitting practices and basic skill requirements, access to formal employment for young workers. ■

NOTES

1. Data from the Vietnam Economic Portal, http://www.vnep.org.vn/, accessed April 2, 2020.
2. For most Vietnamese, going to a McDonald's restaurant is a luxury, at about three times the price of a local meal.
3. https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=780, accessed June 8, 2020.
4. The names of the town, hotel, and workers are all fictional.
5. For clarity, we have counted interviews involving more than one respondent as focus groups and numbered them from 1 to 10 (Table 1). For data extracted from one-on-one interviews, the source is provided in a footnote.
6. On the practice and vocabulary of tipping in Vietnam, see Huynh (2006).
7. Interview with James, August 21, 2019.
8. https://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=774, accessed June 11, 2020.
9. Interview with Roger, August 4, 2019.
10. Interview with James, August 21, 2019.
11. Interview with Laureen, August 3, 2019.
12. Interview with Laureen, August 3, 2019.
13. Interview with Alicia, August 2, 2019.
14. Conversations with vendors at the fish market revealed the perception of the hotel service staff as a distinct and privileged social category akin to a status group.

REFERENCES

Agarwala, Rina. 2013. *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India.* Cambridge University Press.

Alderson, Arthur S. 2004. "Explaining the Upswing in Direct Investment: A Test of Mainstream and Heterodox Theories of Globalization." *Social Forces* 83(1):81–122.

Anýžová, Petra, and Petr Matějů. 2018. "Beauty Still Matters: The Role of Attractiveness in Labour Market Outcomes." *International Sociology* 33(3):269–91.

Arrighi, Giovanni, Beverly J. Silver, and Benjamin D. Brewer. 2003. "Industrial Convergence, Globalization, and the Persistence of the North-South Divide." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38(1):3.

Bian, Yanjie. 1997. "Bringing Strong Ties Back In: Indirect Ties, Network Bridges, and Job Searches in China." *American Sociological Review* 62(3):366–85.

Bills, David B. 1999. "Labor Market Information and Selection in a Local Restaurant Industry: The Tenuous Balance between Rewards, Commitments, and Costs." *Sociological Forum* 64(4): 583–607.

Blinder, Alan S. 2006. "Offshoring: The Next Industrial Revolution?" *Foreign Affairs* (March/April):113–28.

Bosch, Mariano, and William F. Maloney. 2010. "Comparative Analysis of Labor Market Dynamic using Markov Processes: An Application to Informality." *Labour Economics* 17(4):621–31.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.

Brewer, Benjamin D. 2011. "Global Commodity Chains & World Income Inequalities: The Missing Link of Inequality and the Upgrading Paradox." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 17(2): 308–27.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher. 1999. "Globalization: A World-Systems Perspective." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 5(2):188.

Christian, Michelle M., and Dev Nathan. 2013. "Tourism Overview: Changing End Markets and Hyper Competition." Capturing the Gains Working Paper 26. Available at SSRN (https://ssrn.com/abstract=2237497).

Cummins, Emily R., and Linda M. Blum. 2015. "'Suits to Self-Sufficiency': Dress for Success and Neoliberal Maternalism." *Gender & Society* 29(5):623–46. doi:10.1177/0891243215591949.

Fernandez, Roberto M., and Nancy Weinberg. 1997. "Sifting and Sorting: Personal Contacts and Hiring in a Retail Bank." *American Sociological Review* 62(6):883–902.

Friedman, Thomas L. 2006. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Updated and expanded ed. Macmillan.

Frith, Katherine Toland, Hong Cheng, and Ping Shaw. 2004. "Race and Beauty: A Comparison of Asian and Western Models in Women's Magazine Advertisements." *Sex Roles* 50(1-2):53–61.

Gaddis, S. Michael. 2015. "Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market." *Social Forces* 93(4):1451–79.

Gereffi, Gary. 1999. "International Trade and Industrial Upgrading in the Apparel Commodity Chain." *Journal of International Economics* 48(1):37–70.

Good, Erica. 1999. "Study Finds TV Alters Fiji Girls' View of Body." *New York Times*, May 20.

Granovetter, Mark. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360–80.

Hamermesh, Daniel S., and Jeff E. Biddle. 1994. "Beauty and the Labor Market." *Economic Review* 84(5):1174–86.

Harms, Erik. 2016. *Luxury and Rubble: Civility and Dispossession in the New Saigon*. University of California Press.

Heintz, James, and Robert Pollin. 2005. "Informalization, Economic Growth, and the Challenge of Creating Viable Labor Standards in Developing Countries." In *Rethinking Informalization: Poverty, Precarious Jobs and Social Protection*, edited by Neema Kudva and Lourdes Beneria. Cornell Open Access Repository.

Hill, Amelia. 2020. "Families Sending Relatives with Dementia to Thailand for Care." *The Guardian*, January 12 (https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/12/families-sending-relatives-with-dementia-to-thailand-for-care).

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2015. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. University of California Press.

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2020. "Engendering Global Capital: How Homoerotic Triangles Facilitate Foreign Investments into Risky Markets." *Gender & Society* 34(4):547–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243220931502.

Holliday, Ruth, and Joanna Elfving-Hwang. 2012. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." *Body & Society* 18(2):58–81. doi:10.1177/1357034X12440828.

Holliday, Ruth, Olive Cheung, Ji Hyun Cho, and David Bell. 2017. "Trading Faces: The 'Korean Look' and Medical Nationalism in South Korean Cosmetic Surgery Tourism." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 58(2):190–202. doi:10.1111/apv.12154.

Hung, Ho-fung, and Jaime Kucinskas. 2011. "Globalization and Global Inequality: Assessing the Impact of the Rise of China and India, 1980–2005." *American Journal of Sociology* 116(5):1478–1513.

Huynh, Sabine. 2006. "La disparition de boa: un cas de péjoration sémantique en vietnamien, ou quand le pourboire français est réservé à l'entraîneuse." *Langage et société* (1):77–101.

International Labor Organization (ILO). 2018. "Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture." Geneva.

Itzigsohn, José. 2010. *Developing Poverty: The State, Labor Market Deregulation, and the Informal Economy in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic.* Penn State University Press.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. 2002. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* Duke University Press.

Jæger, Mads Meier. 2011. "'A Thing of Beauty Is a Joy Forever'? Returns to Physical Attractiveness over the Life Course." *Social Forces* 89(3):983–1003.

Kalleberg, Arne L., and Steven P. Vallas. 2018. "Probing Precarious Work: Theory, Research, and Politics." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 31(1):1–30.

Kalleberg, Arne L. 2011. *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s.* Russell Sage Foundation.

Kang, Sonia K, Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun. 2016. "Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61(3): 469–502.

Kelsky, Karen. 2001. *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams.* Duke University Press.

Kim, Hun. 2017. "Capturing World-Class Urbanism through Modal Governance in Saigon." *Positions: Asia Critique* 25(4):669–92. doi:10.1215/10679847-4188362.

La Porta, Rafael, and Andrei Shleifer. 2014. "Informality and Development." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28(3):109–26.

Lara, Jaime, and Abigail Rojas Huerta. 2020. "¿Es realmente fácil unirse a la formalidad? Una aproximación con trayectorias laborales en el mercado laboral mexicano." Paper presented at the annual meeting, Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara.

Le Courrier du Viet Nam. 2017. "Taille: les Vietnamiens figurent parmi les plus petits du monde," September 28 (https://www.lecourrier.vn/taille-les-vietnamiens-figurent-parmi-les-plus-petits-du-monde/426252.html).

Lichtenstein, Nelson. 2009. *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business.* Metropolitan Books.

Lin, Nan, and Mary Dumin. 1986. "Access to Occupations through Social Ties." *Social Networks* 8(4):365–85.

Lin, Nan, Walter M. Ensel, and John C. Vaughn. 1981. "Social Resources and Strength of Ties: Structural Factors in Occupational Status Attainment." *American Sociological Review* 46(4): 393–405.

Mak, Athena H. N., Margaret Lumbers, and Anita Eves. 2012. "Globalisation and Food Consumption in Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 39(1):171–96.

McCaig, Brian, and Nina Pavcnik. 2015. "Informal Employment in a Growing and Globalizing Low-Income Country." *American Economic Review* 105(5):545–50.

McDowell, Linda. 2011. *Working Bodies: Interactive Service Employment and Workplace Identities.* Wiley.

Mears, Ashley. 2014. "Aesthetic Labor for the Sociologies of Work, Gender, and Beauty." *Sociology Compass* 8(12):1330–43.

Meyer, Dorothea. 2007. "Pro-Poor Tourism: From Leakages to Linkages. A Conceptual Framework for Creating Linkages between the Accommodation Sector and 'Poor' Neighbouring Communities." *Current Issues in Tourism* 10(6):558–83.

Milanovic, Branko. 2016. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization.* Harvard University Press.

Mitchell, Jonathan, and Caroline Ashley. 2010. *Tourism and Poverty Reduction: Pathways to Prosperity.* Earthscan.

Mobius, Markus M., and Tanya S. Rosenblat. 2006. "Why Beauty Matters." *American Economic Review* 96(1):222–35.

Mosesson, Marcus. 2018. "Korean Bodybuilding: Cultural Hybrid or Instance of Cultural Homogenization?" Department of Asian, Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies, Stockholm University.

Mosley, Layna, and Saika Uno. 2007. "Racing to the Bottom or Climbing to the Top? Economic Globalization and Collective Labor Rights." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(8):923–48.

Mosoetsa, Sarah, Joel Stillerman, and Chris Tilly. 2016. "Precarious Labor, South and North: An Introduction." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 89:5–19.

Neckerman, Kathryn M., and Joleen Kirschenman. 1991. "Hiring Strategies, Racial Bias, and Inner-City Workers." *Social Problems* 38(4):433–47.

Ong, Aihwa, and Stephen Collier, eds. 2005. *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems.* Blackwell.

Ong, Aihwa. 2011. "Introduction: Worlding Cities and the Art of Being Global." In *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, edited by Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong. Wiley.

Otis, Eileen M. 2008. "Beyond the Industrial Paradigm: Market-Embedded Labor and the Gender Organization of Global Service Work in China." *American Sociological Review* 73(1):15–36.

Otis, Eileen M. 2011. *Markets and Bodies: Women, Service Work, and the Making of Inequality in China*. Stanford University Press.

Otis, Eileen M. 2016. "Bridgework: Globalization, Gender, and Service Labor at a Luxury Hotel." *Gender & Society* 30(6):912–34.

Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: a Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74(5):777–99.

Portes, Alejandro, Manuel Castells, and Lauren Benton, eds. 1989. *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ragin, Charles. 2004. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, edited by Henry Brady and David Collier. Rowman & Littlefield.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2011. "Ivies, Extracurriculars, and Exclusion: Elite Employers' Use of Educational Credentials." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29(1):71–90.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):999–1022.

Robertson, Roland. 2012. "Globalisation or Glocalisation?" *Journal of International Communication* 18(2):191–208.

Robinson, William I. 2012. "Global Capitalism Theory and the Emergence of Transnational Elites." *Critical Sociology* 38(3): 349–363.

Rosen, Ellen Israel. 2002. *Making Sweatshops: The Globalization of the US Apparel Industry.* University of California Press.

Roy, Ananya, and Aihwa Ong, eds. 2011. *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. Wiley.

Rudra, Nita. 2008. *Globalization and the Race to the Bottom in Developing Countries: Who Really Gets Hurt?* Cambridge University Press.

Rudrappa, Sharmila. 2010. "Making India the 'Mother Destination': Outsourcing Labor to Indian Surrogates." *Research in the Sociology of Work* 20:253–85.

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

Sassen, Saskia. 2013. "Expelled: Humans in Capitalism's Deepening Crisis." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 19(2):198–201.

Scheyvens, Regina, and Matt Russell. 2012. "Tourism and Poverty Alleviation in Fiji: Comparing the Impacts of Small- and Large-Scale Tourism Enterprises." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 20(3): 417–36.

Schwekendiek, Daniel, Minhee Yeo, and Stanley Ulijaszek. 2013. "On Slimming Pills, Growth Hormones, and Plastic Surgery: The Socioeconomic Value of the Body in South Korea." Pp. 141–53 in *When Culture Impacts Health*, edited by Cathy Banwell, Stanley Ulijaszek, and Jane Dixon. Elsevier Academic Press.

Seidman, Gay W. 2012. "Regulation at Work: Globalization, Labor Rights, and Development." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 79(4):1023–44.

Silver, Beverly J. 2003. *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*. Cambridge University Press.

Skeggs, Beverley. 1997. *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*. Sage.

Smith, Vicki. 2002. *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy*. Cornell University Press.

Snyman, Susan Lynne. 2012. "The Role of Tourism Employment in Poverty Reduction and Community Perceptions of Conservation and Tourism in Southern Africa." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 20(3):395–416.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press.

Stern, Karen, and Jessica Golden. 2016. "Big Brazil Tourist Attraction: A Surgeon's Scalpel." CNBC, August 11 (https://www.cnbc.com/2016/08/11/big-brazil-tourist-attraction-a-surgeons-scalpel.html).

Stiglitz, Joseph. 2002. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. Norton.

Tabak, Faruk, and Michaeline A. Crichlow. 2000. *Informalization: Process and Structure*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Tansel, Aysit, and Elif Öznur Acar. 2017. "Labor Mobility across the Formal/Informal Divide in Turkey." *Journal of Economic Studies* 44(4):617–35.

UN World Tourism Organization. 2018. "World Tourism Highlights: 2018 Edition."

Vega Núñez, Adriana Patricia. 2017. "Analysis of Formal-Informal Transitions in the Ecuadorian Labour Market." *CEPAL Review* 123:79–95.

Williams, Christine L., and Catherine Connell. 2010. "'Looking Good and Sounding Right': Aesthetic Labor and Social Inequality in the Retail Industry." *Work and Occupations* 37(3):349–77.

Wilson, Rob, and Christopher Leigh Connery. 2007. *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization*. North Atlantic Books.