

ASHLEY MEARS

Boston University, Department of Sociology, 100 Cummington Mall, Office 265, Boston, MA 02215
Email: mears@bu.edu

EMPLOYMENT

2015 – Present Associate Professor of Sociology, Boston University
2009 – 2015 Assistant Professor of Sociology, Boston University
2016 – Present Faculty Appointment in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies,
Boston University
2016 (Fall) Visiting Professor, Central European University Department of Sociology and
Social Anthropology and Department of Gender Studies

EDUCATION

PhD New York University, Sociology, 2009
Dissertation: "Pricing Beauty: The Production of Value in Fashion Modeling Markets"
Committee: Judith Stacey (chair), Craig Calhoun, Harvey Molotch
MA New York University, Sociology, 2006
Comprehensive Exams: Sex and Gender; Race and Ethnicity
BA University of Georgia, Sociology, 2002
summa cum laude; minor in Dramatic Arts

PUBLICATIONS

Books

- 2020 *Very Important People: Beauty and Status in the Global Party Circuit*. Princeton University Press.
* Translated in Chinese by East China Normal University Press, forthcoming 2020
* Translated in Japanese by Misuzu Shobo, forthcoming 2020
* Features: *The Economist*, *ArtReview*, *Choice*, *Forbes*, *Financial Times*, *The Spectator*, *Slate*, *Daily Beast*, *The New York Post*, *The Telegraph*, *The Times UK Literary Supplement*, *The Times (UK)*, *Psychology Today*, *The BBC's Thinking Allowed*
- 2011 *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*. University of California Press.
* Translated in Chinese by East China Normal University Press, 2018
* Translated in Korean by Cheomnetworks, 2016
* Reviewed in scholarly press: *American Journal of Sociology*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Gender & Society*, *Sociological Forum*
* Features: *The Boston Globe*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New Republic*, *Slate*, *New York Times' Sunday Magazine*, *The Sunday Times of London*

Invited Edited Volume

2018 *Socio-Economic Review* Special Issue, “Elites, Economy, and Society.” Co-edited by Bruno Cousin, Shamus Khan, and Ashley Mears. Volume 16, Issue 2.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

2019 “Des Fêtes très Exclusives. Les Promoteurs de Soirées VIP, des Intermédiaires aux Ambitions Contraires.” (“An Exclusive Night Scene: Promoters of VIP Evenings, Intermediaries with Thwarted Ambitions.”) *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 230(5):56-75.

2018 Bruno Cousin, Shamus Khan, and **Ashley Mears**. “Theoretical and methodological pathways for research on elites.” *Socio-Economic Review* 16(2): 225-249.

2017 Asaf Darr and **Ashley Mears**. “Local Knowledge, Global Networks: Scouting for Fashion Models and Football Players.” *Poetics* 62: 1-14.
* Lead Article

2016 **Ashley Mears** and Catherine Connell. “The Paradoxical Value of Deviant Cases: Toward a Gendered Theory of Display Work.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41(2): 333-359.

2015 “Working for Free in the VIP: Relational Work and the Production of Consent.” *American Sociological Review* 80(6): 1099-1122.
* Lead article
* Honorable Mention, W. Richard Scott Article Award for Distinguished Scholarship of the ASA Section on Organizations Occupations Work, 2016

2015 “Girls as Elite Distinction: The Appropriation of Bodily Capital.” Special Issue on New Forms of Distinction, *Poetics* 53: 22–37.
* Winner, Best Publication Award of the ASA Section on Body & Embodiment, 2017

2014 “Aesthetic Labor for the Sociologies of Work, Gender, and Beauty.” *Sociology Compass* 8(12): 1330–1343.

2014 “Seeing Culture through the Eye of the Beholder: Four Methods in Pursuit of Taste.” Special Issue on Measuring Culture, *Theory and Society* 43(3-4): 291-309.

2013 “Ethnography as Precarious Work.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 54(1): 20-34.

2012 Noah McClain and **Ashley Mears**. “Free to Those Who Can Afford It: The Everyday Affordance of Privilege.” *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research in Culture, the Media, and the Arts* 40(2): 133-149.
* Reprinted in *International Perspectives of Marketing Theory*, eds. Mark Tadajewski and Robert Cluley. London: Sage (2014).

- 2012 Joanne Entwistle and **Ashley Mears**. “Gender on Display: Performance and Performativity in Fashion Modelling.” *Cultural Sociology* 6(4): 1-16.
- 2010 “Size Zero High-End Ethnic: Cultural Production and the Reproduction of Culture in Fashion Modeling.” *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research in Culture, the Media, and the Arts* 38(1): 21-46.
- 2009 Frédéric C. Godart and **Ashley Mears**. “How Do Cultural Producers Make Creative Decisions? Lessons from the Catwalk.” *Social Forces* 88(2): 671-692.
* Translated in French, “Prise de décision créative en situation d’incertitude : le cas de la sélection des mannequins par les maisons de mode.” *Sociologie et Sociétés* 43(1): 175-199.
- 2008 “Discipline of the Catwalk: Gender, Power and Uncertainty in Fashion Modeling.” *Ethnography* 9(4): 429-456.
* Lead article
- 2005 **Ashley Mears** and William Finlay. “Not Just a Paper Doll: How Models Manage Bodily Capital and Why They Perform Emotional Labor.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34(3): 317-343.
* Reprinted in *Sociological Odyssey: Contemporary Readings in Introductory Sociology*, eds. Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler. Third Edition, Wadsworth Cengage (2009).

In Progress

Ashley Mears, Michel Anteby, and Patricia Ward. “Learning to Labor like a Hard-working Immigrant.” *Under review*.

Ashley Mears and Heather Mooney. “College Partying as a Social Field: An Ethnography of Symbolic Domination.” *Under review*.

Book Chapters and Commentary

- 2019 “Fashion and Its Gendered Agendas.” *Oxford Handbook of Consumption*. Editors Frederick Wherry and Ian Woodward.
- 2018 Cati Connell and **Ashley Mears**. “Bourdieu and the Body,” *Oxford Handbook on Pierre Bourdieu*. Editors, Tom Medvetz, Jeff Sallaz.
- 2017 “Puzzling in Sociology: On Doing and Undoing Theoretical Puzzles.” *Sociological Theory* 35: 138-146.
- 2017 “The Work of Fashion Modeling in a Global Field” in *Doing Sociology through Fashion*. Yuhikaku Publishing, Japan.

- 2017 Alexander Edmonds and **Ashley Mears**. “Managing body capital in fields of labor, sex, and health” in *Fat Planet*, E. Anderson-Fye and A. Brewis Slade (eds.) Santa Fe: SAR Press.
- 2014 “Beauty, Race, and Power,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, eds. John Stone et al. Wiley-Blackwell.
- 2013 “The Cool Industries,” in *The Sociology of Work: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Vicki Smith. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- 2013 “Made in Japan: Fashion Modeling in Tokyo,” in *Fashioning Models: Modeling as Image, Text and Industry*, eds. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger. Oxford: Berg.
- 2011 “Pricing Looks: Circuits of Value in Fashion Modeling Markets,” in *The Worth of Goods: Valuation and Pricing in the Economy*, eds. Jens Beckert and Patrik Aspers. Oxford University Press.

Book Reviews

- 2021 Review of *Billionaire Wilderness: The Ultra-Wealthy and the Remaking of the American West*, by Justin Farrell. *American Journal of Sociology*. In production.
- 2018 Review of *Capital without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*, by Brooke Harrington. *Contemporary Sociology* 47(1):74-76.
- 2016 Review Essay, “Ethnography Goes Out on the Town,” of *Upscaling Downtown: From Bowery Saloons to Cocktail Bars in New York City* by Richard E. Ocejo and *Urban Nightlife: Entertaining Race, Class, and Culture in Public Space* by Reuben A. Buford May. *Sociological Forum* 31(1): 253-257.
- 2013 Review of *Dominatrix: Gender, Eroticism, and Control in the Dungeon*, by Danielle J. Lindemann, 2012. *American Journal of Sociology* 119(2): 577-79.
- 2012 Review of *Women at Work: Tupperware, Passion Parties, and Beyond*, by L. Susan Williams and Michelle Bemiller, 2011. *Gender & Society* 26(6): 952- 54.
- 2012 Review of *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People are More Successful*, by Daniel S. Hamermesh, 2011. *Contemporary Sociology* 41(6): 814-15.
- 2012 Review of *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil* by Alexander Edmonds, 2010. *E-misferica* 8.2, January. The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.
- 2010 “A Reply to Earl Smith and Bonnie Berry.” *Contemporary Sociology* 39(2): 230-32.
- 2009 Review of *The Power of Looks: Social Stratification of Physical Appearance* by Bonnie Berry. *Contemporary Sociology* 38(4): 360-61.

2007 Review of *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics* by Roberta Sassatelli. *European Journal of Sociology* 48(3): 490-92.

Public Writings

- 2020 “The Secret Economics of a VIP Party.” *The Economist / 1843 Magazine*, June 25.
- 2016 “Conversations: Ashley Mears Talks about the Ethnography of Desire” with Steve Vallas. *Work in Progress* Blog of the OOW Section of the ASA, May 30.
- 2014 “Who Runs the Girls?” Op-Ed for *The New York Times*, Sunday Review. September 21.
- 2012 “Age Limits Underscore Obsession with Youth.” Op-Ed for *The New York Times*, Room for Debate Online, September 14.
- 2011 “Will Work for Cool.” Guest Blog for *Work in Progress*, Blog of the American Sociological Association’s Organizations, Occupations and Work Section, December 13.
- 2011 “Poor Models. Seriously.” Op-Ed for *The New York Times*, September 15.
- 2010 “How Supermodels Are Like Toxic Assets.” Guest Blog for *Three Quarks Daily* appearing July 12.
*Reprinted in *The Week Magazine*, August 2, 2010.

AWARDS AND HONORS

- 2017 University of Georgia Distinguished Alumni Prize, Department of Sociology
- 2017 Best Publication Award of the American Sociological Association Body & Embodiment Section
- 2016 Honorable Mention, W. Richard Scott Award Best Publication Award of the ASA Section on Organizations Occupations Work
- 2008 Rose Laub Coser Award for Best Dissertation Proposal, Eastern Sociological Society
- 2007 Dennis Wrong Award, Best Paper by a Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, New York University

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- 2018 Boston University Human Resources Policy Institute Research Award with Michel Anteby (Lead PI, Questrom School of Business, BU) and Trish Ward (Sociology, BU), \$4,000
- 2013 Research Fellow, Amsterdam Research Center for Gender and Sexuality, University of Amsterdam (Fall Term)
- 2012 Fellowship for Higher Education, Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation, \$6,484
- 2011-12 Junior Faculty Fellowship, Boston University Humanities Foundation (Spring)

- 2010-11 Junior Faculty Research Grant, Morris Endowment, Boston University Sociology Department, \$6,500
- 2008 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Dean's Dissertation Fellowship, NYU
- 2007 National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, SES 0727268, \$2,532
- 2007 University of Cambridge, Mainzer Fellowship to the Center for Gender Studies, Lent Term
- 2003-08 New York University Henry McCracken Fellowship for Graduate Study

INVITED TALKS

Potlatch Revisited: Rethinking Status and Economic Domination

- Université de Lausanne, Centre en études genre CEG. Lausanne, Switzerland. May 2019
- University of Southern California, Department of Sociology Colloquium. Los Angeles, February 2019
- University of Texas at Austin, Department of Sociology Seminar Series. Austin, March 2019
- University of California, Sociology Department. Berkeley, March 2018

Girls in the Consolidation of Class among Elites: A Return to Ownership in the Forms of Capital

- Central European University, Department of Sociology Colloquium. Budapest, October 2015
- University of Beograd, Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory, Serbia, June 2014
- Princeton University, Center for the Study of Social Organization, March 2014
- Northwestern University, 16th Annual Chicago Ethnography Conference, Keynote Address March 2014
- L'Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris, November 2013
- Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, November 2013
- University of Amsterdam, Center for Gender and Sexuality, October 2013

Status as Collective Accomplishment: Doing Display among the New Global Elite

- Emory Department of Sociology Colloquium, March 2016
- University of Amsterdam, Dynamics of Citizenship and Culture, AISSR, October 2013
- University of Verona, Italy, Department of Sociology, June 2013
- MIT-Harvard Economic Sociology Seminar, MIT March 2013
- University of Pennsylvania, Urban Ethnography Workshop, November 2012

Pricing Looks, Pricing Beauty: The Gendered Production of Value in Fashion Modeling

- Media Design University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany, October 2013
- Furman University, South Carolina, "Book of the Year" Undergraduate Lecture, March 2013
- King's College, Wilkes-Barre, PA, Keynote Address for the Women's Studies Conference, April 2012
- University of Warwick, UK, Sociology Seminar Series, March 2012
- University of Massachusetts Amherst, Sociology Seminar Series, March 2012
- Columbia University, New Pathways for the Social Sciences Colloquium, February 2012
- Northwestern University, Department of Sociology Seminar Series, November 2011

- Harvard University, Culture and Social Analysis Workshop, “New Directions in Cultural Sociology,” September 2011
- Stanford University, Economic Sociology workshop series, April 2011
- Boston University Women’s Guild, “Lunch and Learn Lecture,” March 2011

Race and Value in Cultural Production: High-End Ethnic in Fashion Modeling

- Boston College, Department of Sociology Seminar Series, November 2012
- Brandeis University, Sociology Department Spring Colloquium Series, February 2010
- University of Mary Washington, Alpha Kappa Delta Induction Ceremony in collaboration with Women’s History Month Guest Lecture, March 2010
- Simmons College, Alpha Kappa Delta Induction Ceremony Guest Lecture, May 2010

The London Look: The City as Cultural Production

- Yale University, Modern Britain Group, February 2012

Free to Those Who Can Afford It: The Everyday Affordance of Privilege

- Cornell University, Economic Sociology Seminar Series, September 2011

Superstar Longevity and Burnout in the Globalized Creative Industries

- Stanford University, SCANCOR Seminar Series, April 2011

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE PAPERS AND SESSIONS

- “Algorithmic Capital and the Uneven Pursuit of Profit,” invited presentation, **Platformed Creation**, Stanford University virtual conference, Oct 2020.
- “College Partying as a Social Field: An Ethnography of Symbolic Domination” (with Heather Mooney). Regular Section, “Consumers, Consumption, and Inequality,” **American Sociological Association**, virtual conference, August 2020.
- “Precarious Agency: Gendered Status and Risk in the Inter-Collegiate Scene” (with Heather Mooney). Section on the Sociology of Consumers and Consumption, **American Sociological Association**. New York, August 2019.
- “The New Sociology of Elites” panel discussion at **Observatoire des élites suisses**, Université de Lausanne, May 2019.
- “Friends with Benefits: VIP Club Promoters As Social Capital Entrepreneurs.” **Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE)** Mini-Conference, “The Marketization of Everyday Life.” Lyon, France, June 2017.
- “The Reterritorialization of Financial Elites” (with David Lubin). Invited panelist at Thematic Session, “Transnational Cultures of the Elite,” **Eastern Sociological Association**, New York. February 2015.
- “Girls in the Consolidation of Class among Elites: Ownership and Cultural Capital.” Paper presented at “Class Cultures” Regular Session; **American Sociology Association Annual Meetings**. San Francisco, August 2014.
- “The Elite Potlatch: Doing Display in the Global VIP.” Paper presented at “Giving and Reciprocity” Session; **XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology**. Yokohama, Japan, July 2014.

- “How the Other Half Parties: Distinction and Display among the Jet Set.” Invited Participant, Sociologies of the One Percent: Transatlantic Perspectives. **Council for European Studies**, D.C., March 2014.
- “Elite Space in the City: The Culture of the Global Jet Set.” Invited Participant, Regional Spotlight: Empire State of Mind: New York as a Cultural Space. **American Sociological Association**, New York, August 2013.
- Organizer, Thematic Session, “Beauty and Capital: The Sociology of Appearance.” **American Sociological Association**. New York, August 2013.
- “Elite Social Spaces: Visibility and Gendered Capitals among the Global VIP.” Paper presented at Mini-Conference on “Crisis in the City.” **SASE (Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics)**. Milan, Italy, June 2013.
- “Studying Up: A Gendered Framework.” Invited participant, **Craft of Ethnography Workshop**. Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 2013.
- “A Gendered Theory of Display Work” (co-authored with Catherine Connell). Paper presented at “Gender Puzzles and Paradoxes” panel; **Social Science History Association**. Vancouver, November 2012.
- “Transnational Circuits in the Global Cultural Economy: The Case of Talent Scouts in Fashion.” Paper presented at “Emergence and innovation in markets and organizations” panel; International Economic Sociology Conference. **Higher School of Economics**. Moscow, October, 2012.
- “Teen Dreams.” Invited Panelist, From Street to Elite: **Ethnographies of 21st century Youth Conference**. University of Illinois, Purdue, April 2012.
- “The Precarious Labor of Ethnography.” Invited Panelist, Thematic Session, Ethnography in the First Person. Annual Meeting, **Eastern Sociological Society**. New York, February 2012.
- “Privilege of the Perk: the Everyday Affordance of Class Position” (co-authored with Noah McClain). Paper presented at Theory Section Session, Annual Meeting, **American Sociological Association**. Las Vegas, August 2011.
- “Superstar Longevity and Burnout in the Globalized Creative Industries” (co-authored with Frédéric C. Godart). Paper presented at Mini-Conference, “Creative Industries in the Global Economy.” **SASE**. Madrid, Spain, June 2011.
- “Fashioning Desire: Race, Class, and Sexuality in the Field of Cultural Production.” Invited Panelist, **Bringing Bourdieu to Sexual Life: A Conference on Sexuality and the Sexual Field**. University of Toronto, May 2010.
- “Gender on Display: Performance and Performativity in Fashion Modelling” (co-authored with Joanne Entwistle). Paper presented at Sex and Gender Section Session, Annual Meeting, **American Sociology Association**. Atlanta, August 2010.
- “Careers in Long Odds: Glamorous Precarious Labor.” Paper presented at Regular Section Session, Annual Meeting, **American Sociology Association**, San Francisco, August 2009.
- “Pricing Looks, Pricing Gender.” Paper presented at Mini-Conference, “Price and Value in the Economy,” at **SASE**. Paris, France, June 2009.
- “The World of Fashion Modeling: Work, Bodies, and Images.” Invited Panelist to Thematic Session, Annual Meeting, **American Sociology Association**. Boston, August 2008.

- “The Field of Fashion Modeling, or: The Gendered World Inverted.” Paper presented at the Gender Theory and Methodology Seminar at the **Center for Gender Studies, University of Cambridge**, UK, 2007.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- Critic in Author-Meets-Critic Book Launch Event for *Beauty Diplomacy* by Kemi Balogun featuring Eileen Otis, and Zine Magubane, and organized by Rhacel Parreñas and Stanford University Press, October 2020.
- Author in Author-Meets Critic Book Launch Event for *Very Important People* featuring Viviana Zelizer, David Grazian, and Rhacel Parreñas, organized by Julian Go and Princeton University Press, June 2020.
- “U.S. Academia.” Panelist at the March for Science in Reykjavík, Iceland, April 2017.
- “From Bullet Bras to Bra Burning: The Changing Lives of Women in the ’50s, ’60s and Beyond.” Panelist at *The Tannery Series* at the Peabody Essex Museum. Salem, MA, March 2014.
- “Refashioning Race, Gender, and Economy.” Panelist at MOCA, the Museum of Chinese in America, co-hosted with the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at New York University. New York, June 2013.
- “Inside the Industry: Fashion Leaders Speak Out About the Modeling Industry’s Size-Zero Standard.” Panelist, organized by The Model Alliance and the National Eating Disorder Association, Pace University. New York, February 2013.
- Invited Debater, “Proposition: This House Believes the Pursuit of Beauty Harms Women.” The College Historical Society, Trinity College, Dublin Ireland. October 2012.
- “The Economy of Beauty.” Panelist at Soho Rep Theater, Off-Broadway post-play discussion for *The Ugly One*. New York, February, 2011.
- “The Death of Taste: Unpicking the Fashion Cycle.” Panelist at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. London, UK, 2006

Quoted or referenced in the press (selections)

* *The New York Times* * *The New Republic* * *Bloomberg* * *NPR* * *The Economist* * *BBC*
New York Magazine * *Cosmo Magazine China* * *The Globe and Mail* * *Slate.com*

TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

Boston University, 2009 - present

- *Gender and Sexuality I: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, Team-Taught Lecture Course (in humanities, social sciences and biology)
- *Introduction to Sociology*, Lecture Course
- *Culture, Markets and Inequality*, Graduate Student Seminar
- *Sociology of Popular Culture*, Lecture Course
- *Sociology of Gender*, Lecture Course
- *Race and Ethnic Relations*, Lecture Course
- *Sexuality in Social Life*, Lecture Course

Central European University, Fall 2016

- *Markets and Inequalities: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Graduate Seminar

New York University, Instructor, 2007 - 2008

- *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*
- *Introduction to Sociology*

PhD Supervision (Completed)

- Connor Fitzmaurice, PhD defense June 2019
- Christina Jarymowycz, PhD defense April 2019

PhD Supervision (Ongoing)

- Dilan Eren, PhD expected 2024

PhD Committees

- Sara Snitselaar, PhD expected 2023
- Whitney Gecker, Boston University School of Social Work and Sociology, 2020
- Patricia Ward, Boston University, 2020
- Rebecca Farber, Boston University, 2019
- Taylor Cain, Boston University, 2019
- David Schieber, University of California Los Angeles, 2019
- Sylvia Holla, University of Amsterdam, Invited Opponent, 2018
- Emily Bryant, Boston University, 2018
- Alaz Kilicaslan, Boston University, 2018
- Sarah Hosman, Boston University, 2018
- Cara Bowman, Boston University, 2016
- Meagan O'Leary, Boston University, 2106
- Jill Walsh, Boston University, 2014
- Jim McQuaid, Boston University, 2013

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Elected Chair, ASA Consumers and Consumption Section, 2017
- Elected ASA Consumers and Consumption Section Council Member, 2013 – 2016
- Elected Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE) Council Member, 2014 – 2019
- Grant Proposal Referee: National Science Foundation Sociology Program, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Editorial Boards: *American Sociological Review* (2020 – current); *Qualitative Sociology* (2019 – current); *Contemporary Sociology* (2016 – 2019); *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2014 – 2019)
- Journal Referee: *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Gender & Society*, *Poetics*, *Organization Studies*, *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, *Sociological Forum*, *Sociological Theory*, *Poetics*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Work and Occupations*, *Journal of Gender Studies*

Professional Memberships

- NYU-LSE NYLON Culture Network, 2004-present
- Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, 2008 - present
- Eastern Sociological Society, 2008 - present
- American Sociological Association, 2004 - present
 - Sections: Sex and Gender; Sociology of Culture; Economic Sociology; Organizations, Occupations, and Work; Consumption