CALL FOR PAPERS—*Conference and Special Issue of the ILR Review*

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work

ILR School, Cornell University

September 12–13, 2024

Organized through a Cornell University–King's College London Global Hub project

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Summary

We invite submissions for a conference on artificial intelligence (AI) and the future of work. We are particularly interested in research that examines institutional factors shaping the strategic choices of organizations to adopt and deploy AI, and their implications for work and workers.

The conference will be held at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, **September 12–13, 2024**. Papers accepted to the conference will be considered for a special issue of the *ILR Review*.

The deadline for submission (~1,000 word abstract) is **March 15, 2024**.

Background

Digital innovations from artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and the Internet of Things to big data and algorithmic management are disrupting traditional modes of production and service provision (Bailey, 2022; Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2014; Neufeind et al. 2018). Economists argue that AI-based technologies will contribute to the automation of a widening range of tasks, jobs, and skills, contributing to job loss (Acemoglu and Restrepo 2018: 200) and increased polarization between low- and high-skill occupations, exacerbating pay inequalities (e.g., Goos et al. 2014). In addition, the widespread use of algorithms to distribute and monitor work are enabling new models of microtask work and offshoring, as jobs are digitally relocated across increasingly fragmented global value chains (ILO 2021). The recent boom in generative AI tools like ChatGPT has drawn increased attention both to the potential threats AI poses to employment and job quality among high skilled and creative workers; and to the large number of workers in content moderation and data labeling, many in the Global South, whose jobs are often low paid, insecure, and heavily monitored (Ahmad and Greb 2022; Muldoon et al. 2023). Moreover, the use

of AI in hiring, training, performance monitoring, and coaching software has raised concerns with algorithmic bias and discrimination (Ajunwa 2023).

Much scholarship on AI seeks to identify or predict its universal impacts on work and employment, assuming similar "best practice" strategic choices across organizations. However, a growing body of research asks how and why AI-based technologies are adopted in different ways, and with distinct worker impacts, across countries, industries, firms, occupations, and workplaces (Doellgast and Wagner 2022; ILO 2023; Kornelakis et al. 2022). Studies build on socio-technical systems and comparative employment relations research to examine how institutions and social processes shape strategies and outcomes. These dynamics are often studied on two levels.

First, macro- and meso-level institutions (e.g., professional associations, vocational training systems, licensing bodies and laws, unions and labor market regulation, collective bargaining systems, as well as political strategies for growth and international competitiveness) can play a role in the adjustment process (Bernhardt et al. 2023). This can be through placing constraints on or encouraging investment in certain uses of AI; or through supporting collective worker voice in these investment and use choices (Haipeter 2020; Lloyd and Payne 2019). US President Biden's recent Executive Order on AI and the European AI Act are two examples of more targeted efforts at the national and international levels to establish guidelines for responsible AI development and deployment.

Second, at the micro-level, workers often shape implementation decisions as new technologies introduce a contested terrain of control (Kellogg et al. 2020), resulting in redrawn professional and occupational roles, skills, and jurisdictions. Labor unions and other worker representatives are also organizing around and negotiating over AI use and AI ethics within a growing number of firms and industries—ranging from logistics and manufacturing to call centers, telecommunications, and IT to film, game development, and journalism (DeStefano and Doellgast 2023; Litwin 2023).

In this conference and special issue, we seek to bring together current research that explores how AI is reconfiguring work and occupations, as well as efforts to regulate and negotiate over these impacts. We also seek to bring researchers from different disciplines into conversation with each other. Thus, we encourage submissions from a broad range of fields: e.g., employment relations, comparative political economy, sociology, political science, economics, labor and employment law, science and technology studies, organization studies, and management.

Potential topic areas include:

- What models of regulation, state investment, and collective bargaining are emerging in response to new AI-based tools? What are their impacts, for example in encouraging innovative approaches to AI use while protecting workers' privacy and mitigating the negative impacts of tech-enabled surveillance? What explains variations in state and labor union responses to workplace challenges relating to AI?
- What explains variation in organizational strategies to adopt and deploy AI in the workplace—particularly across similar occupations and industries? How do international, national, or industry and workplace institutions affect these decisions: e.g., the welfare state, collective

bargaining, labor and employment law, skills or training systems, professional associations, and licensing bodies and laws? How do these strategies differ across sectors: for example, between private and competitively exposed sectors compared to public sector organizations and sectors?

- How are labor unions and workers seeking to build collective power to shape regulation and influence organizations' strategic choices concerning AI? Where are unions winning and why? How can organizations and nations leverage worker power as a source of strength and strategic advantage in the development, deployment, and ongoing use of AI?
- How does adoption of AI interact with changing markets and organizational strategies to shape the organization of work and worker outcomes? For example, what is the role of algorithmic management and cloud computing in allowing more remote, technology-mediated work; in reshaping skill use and skill development opportunities; in changing wage differentials; in altering patterns of sex segregation; and in changing value chain and location (offshoring, nearshoring) strategies associated with the deployment of AI?
- What are the distributional consequences of these changing organizational strategies (e.g., job opportunities, job downsizing, income)? Which groups of workers benefit, and which groups bear the costs—particularly along lines of race, gender, and global North vs. global South?
- What impact does AI have on bias and discrimination at work? How are governments, labor unions, investors, and organizations trying to respond to algorithmic bias (in HR practices of recruitment, selection and training, for example)? What are the outcomes for various stakeholder groups?
- How does the impact of AI in the workplace differ from the impact of other ("non-intelligent") technologies? To what extent is AI a distinctive technological intervention?
- How does the degree of professionalization in different occupations mediate the impact of AI? Are there more opportunities for resistance in occupations wielding high professional power? How do these power dynamics interact with job characteristics; for example, the substitutability of occupational tasks, roles, and skills?

This conference will bring together multi-disciplinary scholars in this growing research field to a conference held at Cornell University, with the goal of publishing selections of papers in a special issue of the *ILR Review*.

Scholars interested in participating in the conference should submit an abstract (about 1,000 words excluding references) by **March 15, 2024,** to Christine Schmidt at crs339@cornell.edu. Authors will be notified in April 2024 if their abstract has been accepted for presentation at the conference. Participants will have the opportunity to submit their papers to the *ILR Review*, with the expectation that their papers will be published in a special issue if they pass the external review process.

Prospective contributors are urged to contact the conference organizers regarding preliminary proposals or ideas for papers.

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