Austin van Loon

Assistant Professor, Work and Organization Studies
MIT Sloan School of Management

Research interests: computational social science; culture and meaning; identity; language and AI.

vanloon@mit.edu
Sloan page
github.com/AustinVL
@AustinVanLoon

Updated: January 2026

Academic Positions

MIT Sloan School of Management — Cambridge, MA
Assistant Professor, Work and Organization Studies — 2024–present
Class of 1956 Career Development Assistant Professor — 2025–present

Duke University — Durham, NC
Postdoctoral Associate, Sociology and Statistical Science — 2023–2024

Education

Stanford University
Ph.D. in Sociology, 2023
Dissertation: *Applying Artificial Intelligence to the Sociological Study of Meaning*
(Advisors: Robb Willer, Amir Goldberg)

University of Iowa
B.S. in Sociology, with honors (2016)
B.A. in Psychology (2016)
Minors in: Philosophy, Music, and Informatics

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Broska, David, Michael Howes, and **Austin van Loon**. 2025. "The Mixed Subjects Design: Treating Large Language Models as Potentially Informative Observations." *Sociological Methods & Research*. 00491241251326865.

van Loon, Austin, Amir Goldberg, and Sameer B. Srivastava. 2024. "Imagined otherness fuels blatant dehumanization of outgroups." *Communications Psychology* 2(1):39.

Guilbeault, Doug, **Austin van Loon**, Katharina Lix, Amir Goldberg, and Sameer B. Srivastava. 2024. "Exposure to the views of opposing others with latent cognitive differences results in social influence—but only when those differences remain obscured." *Management Science* 70(10):6669–6684.

van Loon, Austin and Jeremy Freese. 2023. "Word embeddings reveal how fundamental sentiments structure natural language." *American Behavioral Scientist* 67(2):175–200.

The Forecasting Collaborative. 2023. "Insights into the accuracy of social scientists' forecasts of societal change." *Nature Human Behavior* 7(4):484–501.

van Loon, Austin. 2022. "Three families of automated text analysis." *Social Science Research* 108:102798.

Salganik, Matthew J., Ian Lundberg, Alexander T. Kindel, Caitlin E. Ahearn, Khaled Al-Ghoneim, Abdullah Almaatouq, ..., **Austin van Loon**, et al. 2020. "Measuring the predictability of life outcomes with a scientific mass collaboration." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(15):8398–8403.

van Loon, Austin, Jeremy Bailenson, Jamil Zaki, Joshua Bostick, and Robb Willer. 2018. "Virtual reality perspective-taking increases cognitive empathy for specific others." *PLOS ONE* 13(8):e0202442.

Refereed Conference Proceedings

van Loon, Austin, Salvatore Giorgi, Robb Willer, and Johannes Eichstaedt. 2022. "Negative associations in word embeddings predict anti-Black bias across regions—but only via name frequency." *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM).*

van Loon, Austin, Sheridan Stewart, Brandon Waldon, Shrinidhi K. Lakshmikanth, Ishan Shah, Sharath Chandra Guntuku, Garrick Sherman, James Zou, and Johannes Eichstaedt. 2020. "Explaining the 'Trump gap' in social distancing using COVID discourse." *Proceedings of the 1st Workshop on NLP for COVID-19 (Part 2) at EMNLP.*

Books and Other Publications

van Loon, Austin. 2025. "Predictability hypotheses: A metatheoretical and methodological introduction." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Machine Learning*, Christian Borch and Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Loon, Austin and Zoe Heidenry. 2025. "Experimenting on AI can (sometimes) teach us about ourselves: Computational social science." *Nature Computational Science* 5(8):604–605.

Teaching

MIT Sloan School of Management
15.280 Communication for Leaders (MBA) — Fall 2024, Fall 2025

Duke University
People Analytics — Spring 2024

Stanford University
People Analytics — Summer 2022

Invited Talks and Presentations (Selected)

Yale Computational Social Science Seminar (2026)
Northwestern Symposium on Generative AI (2026)
MIT Conference on Digital Experimentation (2025)
MIT Collective Intelligence Seminar (2025)
Council on Technology & Social Cohesion (2025)
University of Iowa, Reese Lecture (2025)
NYU PRIISM Seminar (2025)
Summer Institutes in Computational Social Science, Paris (2025)
Yale Conference on Generative AI and Sociology, Discussant (2024)
Princeton Conference on Measuring Belief Systems in Networked Communities (2022)
American Sociological Association (multiple years)

Professional Service

Ad Hoc Reviewer
American Journal of Sociology
American Sociological Review
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
Nature Computational Science
Royal Society: Open Science
Social Forces
Social Psychology Quarterly
Sociological Methodology
Sociological Methods & Research
National Science Foundation (CAREER Grant)

American Sociological Association
Organizer, Regular Session on Quantitative Methodology (2025)
Recent Contributions Award Committee, Emotions Section (2025)
Graduate Student Advisory Committee, Social Psychology Section (2022)