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CS349

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# RESPONSIBILITY TO EMPLOYEES

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# WHAT MAKES A COMPANY AN ETHICAL EMPLOYER?

- ▶ What is fair treatment?
- ▶ What do you want from an employer?
- ▶ What is reasonable for an employer to ask from you?

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# CASE STUDY: SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT UBER AND GITHUB

- ▶ In 2014 Julie Ann Horvath left GitHub
  - ▶ After calling attention to the discrepancy in treatment between male and female employees, she was harassed by a founder's wife
  - ▶ Later solicited for sex by a coworker
  - ▶ Quit after watching her male coworkers gawk at her female coworkers exercising with hula hoops and realizing she couldn't change the culture
- ▶ In 2017 Susan Fowler left Uber after her manager solicited her for sex
  - ▶ HR and upper management refused to intervene since he was a "high performer"
  - ▶ Fowler was cited as having "undocumented performance problems"

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## OUTCOME

- ▶ Github said they could not confirm Horvath's story but they did "find evidence of mistakes and errors of judgment."
  - ▶ CEO resigned
- ▶ Over 20 employees fired at Uber after Fowler's viral blog post
  - ▶ CEO resigned over this and other internal issues
- ▶ Allegations of misconduct continue to come to light in tech and other industries as well as academia

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## WHY DO PEOPLE SEXUALLY HARASS?

- ▶ Not a compliment
- ▶ Not about attraction or passion
- ▶ All about power and entitlement

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## WHY DO PEOPLE NOT COME FORWARD?

- ▶ Victims who come forward are often not believed or outright punished
  - ▶ #MeToo movement only happening because we reached critical mass – not because this is something new
- ▶ Systems of power tend to protect the offender
  - ▶ Enacting justice versus maintaining order
  - ▶ People of the majority tend to side with the majority

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## CASE STUDY: AMAZON AND FOOD STAMPS

- ▶ 10% of Amazon employees in Ohio are on food stamps
- ▶ Other large employers who have employees use SNAP:
  - ▶ Walmart, Kroger, Home Depot, Target
- ▶ Mostly part-time factory workers
  - ▶ Full time workers receive ~15/hr plus benefits, career tuition, maternity leave etc
- ▶ Amazon profits from Q4 2017 was \$1.9B

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## IMPACT ON LOCAL AND STATE ECONOMIES

- ▶ Local and state government provides tax break incentives to Amazon
- ▶ Local community gets a major employer in the area
- ▶ Food stamp subsidies not considered in this equation
- ▶ What about other businesses?



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## CASE STUDY: AMAZON AND WORKER BRACELETS

- ▶ Amazon patented a bracelet with ultrasonic pulses and radio transmissions to track employee hands in relation to inventory bins
- ▶ Designed to streamline “time consuming” tasks
- ▶ Amazon already known for firing workers who can’t meet quota
  - ▶ To the point that workers don’t take bathroom breaks...

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## NOT JUST THE FACTORY WORKERS...

- ▶ White collar Amazon employees expected to “hit the wall” then “climb the wall”
- ▶ Emphasis on:
  - ▶ Long work hours
  - ▶ Extracting the most from its employees
  - ▶ Competition between employees as a form of “Darwinism”

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# A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO BUSINESS

- ▶ If you believe in “optimal” business practices
  - ▶ What are you optimizing?
  - ▶ How do you know when you’ve accomplished it?

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## IT'S NOT JUST AMAZON!

- ▶ In 2013 Intuit, Lucasfilm, and Pixar were ordered to pay \$20M for a "no-poach" pact
- ▶ In 2015 Apple, Google, Intel, and Adobe were ordered to pay \$415M for a "no-poach" pact
- ▶ Large companies colluded to retain talent by price-fixing wages between them

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## HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?

- ▶ How much profit does a company need to make?
  - ▶ Current “wisdom” is that a business that isn’t growing is dying
- ▶ How much money does an individual need?
  - ▶ In 2016 the average CEO made 271 times the wage of the average worker (an increase of more than 930% since 1978)
- ▶ How much “convenience” do consumers need?
  - ▶ Demand for same-day delivery is why companies like Amazon have incentive to treat their workers like robots

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# OPTIMIZING FOR HAPPINESS

- ▶ Scientists estimate 40% of our happiness is under our control
  - ▶ 60% determined by genetics and external factors
- ▶ You have a great deal of control of how happy you are!

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# WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE HAPPY?

- ▶ Strong, close relationships
- ▶ Time over money
- ▶ Enough money to not worry (income up to ~\$75,000 on average)
- ▶ Meditation and mindfulness
- ▶ Engaging in acts of kindness toward others
- ▶ Physical exercise
- ▶ Experiences and community rather than material possessions

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