

## Venmo: The Fine Line Between Economic and Social Capital

**Deyana Atanasova (PI)<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Economics, DePaul University, Chicago, IL, 60614*

*email: datanasova2000@gmail.com*

Abstract: This thesis explores the blurring lines between economic and social capital by scaffolding off of interdisciplinary scholarship to construct a quantitative and qualitative case study analysis of tweets from the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement in relation to Venmo. Economic capital is defined outside a standard economic and financial lens to accommodate individual standpoint(s), attempting to mold the term to more accurately relate to social justice. Scholarship related to consumer payment choice, economic choice and identity, digital payment platforms, Venmo, discourse communities, and more is reviewed, situating this work in the general field of digital economic and consumer studies through the lens of social justice. As a chosen “vehicle” site of study, Venmo’s social features may deem it a useful tool in supporting social, political, and economic movements by way of economic *and* social exchange, ultimately drawing a virtual connection between varying affinity spaces with shared causes and blending lines between economic and social capital. After confirming that Venmo had a prevalent presence during the 2020 BLM movement, research questions investigated in the data methodology include: (1) *what* discourse communities or affinity spaces arise in Twitter conversations regarding both BLM and Venmo, and (2) *how* does this relate to the definitions offered of economic and social capital? The data methodology section explores the three-fold method of data collection and analysis through Google Trends, simple and advanced Google searches, and a case study analysis of tweets through NVivo, a qualitative analysis software. Through the NVivo analysis of 92 tweets containing the search terms “Venmo” and “#BlackLivesMatter,” 21 cities were recognized, 44 unique hashtags were referenced, and over a dozen affinity spaces were identified which exemplified social capital as a central focus alongside the exchange of economic capital.