



**Repositioning Resistance in the
Workplace: Reframing Relationality
and Risk in Contemporary Work and
Employment**

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Repositioning Resistance in the Workplace: Reframing Relationality and Risk in Contemporary Work and Employment

**Abstract Book
Wednesday, 13 September 2023**

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WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

PAPER SESSION 1

11:00-12:30

Room W010A – Gender and intersectional inequalities within workplace resistance discourses

"The women are missing": Gender in the privately owned taxi sector in Cameroon

Donita Tata

(University of Liege)

Gender has always been linked with the transport sector. Women's access to transportation-related professions has been restricted in all nations, owing primarily to gender-based prejudices and cultural conventions that limit women's access to transportation employment as drivers or employers. This gender disparity is the result of a mix of conventional ideas about women's responsibilities in society, employers' lack of knowledge that these attitudes are discriminatory, and the reality that women are less likely to be able to buy or obtain transportation-related credentials. Women are unaware that they may pursue these tasks, and employers do not see them as viable candidates for transportation-related jobs. Furthermore, when career possibilities do arise, they often require lengthy working hours, which may be especially tough for women with care obligations. This implies that women are often caught in a bind: they are unable to access jobs owing to conventional views and a lack of finances, yet they are also excluded from specific positions. This has resulted in a scenario in which males still overwhelmingly control the transportation industry, and this will continue until efforts are made to break down the current structures. Our point of departure is that the informal sector has long been characterized as a sector for women, and the taxi sector is an informal one with easy access, but women are still absent. What explains the absence of women in this sector?

This paper examines the taxi sector in Cameroon as a male vocation. Uneven access to resources and opportunities, along with men's stronger societal approval of working in the taxi sector, has a significant influence on women's participation in the taxi sector and their economic independence. This study is based on my ethnographic research with taxi drivers and owners in Yaoundé, Cameroon, since 2020.

Gossip as resistance: Using gossip as a form of power in the early childhood workforce

Ruby Juanita Brooks

(Manchester Metropolitan University)

This paper draws on data collected through a doctoral research project titled: *Femininity, Class & Status: The societal devaluation of the female early years workforce*, in which female identifying early years practitioners were interviewed about their professional roles and who they talk to at work. Challenging historic negative conceptualisations of gossip, this paper offers a counter narrative, positioning gossip as an emancipatory force in the workplace, not one that needs managing or diminishing. This study focuses on the early childhood workforce, a 97% female dominated, and predominantly working class space, and one established to further perpetuate assumptions that women are traditional caregivers; maintaining women's continued societal marginalisation. Therefore, a critical feminist exploration of gossip in this sector is an important sociological intervention. This paper explores how women engage in professional gossip and challenges how, historically, gossip has been used to trivialise and devalue the female voice. Using data collected from in-depth interviews with practitioners, this paper argues that everyday gossip in the workplace is not just an integral part of female culture,

but a form of resistance to patriarchal power structures. The positioning of gossip as emancipatory, as opposed to reductionist narratives that gossip is solely malicious, is an important feminist intervention, and a concept that some practitioners were already challenging and rejecting in their everyday lives. The paper explores how female competition is exercised through gossip and gendered language in a working-class, female dominated space, drawing on Bourdieusian conceptualisations of habitus.

Gender and front finance: Competing logics within the Nordic work-family model

Runar Brandal Myklebust

(Institute for Social Research)

Norway and the Nordic countries constitute the global forefront of gender equality, with the most gender equal attitudes, policies and practices in the world. However, regardless of gender policies and little prejudice against mothers, there is a substantial gap in careers and wages between mothers and fathers in Norway, especially in individualized, competitive parts of the labour market, such as front finance.

In this article, we will investigate change and persistence in gendered patterns among front finance bankers in Norway. The study is based on 33 in-depth interviews with women and men in brokerage firms, investment banks and investment departments within large commercial banks.

Drawing on theories on institutional logics, the article will examine how the institutionalized “rules of the game” in front finance, interacts and conflicts with individual needs, cultural norms and gender policy. The approach is based on an understanding of society as an inter-institutional system, comprising potentially contradictory institutional logics that both enable and constrain action.

The informants’ accounts show that front finance has changed considerably the last years. Firstly, demands of “face time” and physical appearance are reduced. Secondly, the workdays are more adjusted to family life. They describe a higher acceptance of leaving work early to pick up kids, and that fewer meetings are booked after 5 pm. The third change concerns how men now more than before take parental leave.

In spite of these changes, the interviews shows that unpredictable and long workdays still make it challenging to combine work with family life. Interestingly, this challenge is not gender specific, documenting how men more than before share the burden and the time squeeze characteristic of balancing work and family. A striking finding is the many accounts of a generational shift. Where work-family-balance used to be a challenge among women, it is now described as relevant also for the new generation of men. Men over 50 are portrayed as “old school bankers”, with part-time working wives with less demanding jobs. The younger generation of men more often have partners with equally demanding careers, and the family burdens are more evenly distributed.

However, the negative consequences for women’s careers are particularly evident when it comes to parental leave. While men can postpone and adapt their relatively short parental leave to their job’s needs, so that they can retain customers and portfolio, most mothers have to take their leave according to due date. Further, mothers take longer leave and must thus hand off clients and portfolios to colleagues. They report that they lose half, sometimes 2/3, of their pay while in parental leave, especially if bonuses are a substantial part of their total salary.

The analysis shows how the highly individualized responsibility for portfolios stimulates gendered patterns, because it contributes to long work hours and punishes use of parental leave. It shows moreover that a model with high and individualized bonuses stimulates the individual organization of work, and thus contributes to persevere the pay gap and the career differences between men and women in front finance.

Room W010B – Marginalised work and workers, risk and resistance in precarious places

Minimum wages as a form of policy resistance against income insecurity

Nuria Matilla-Santander, Carin Håkansta, Bertina Kreshpaj, Nuria Matilla Santander, David H. Wegman, Christer Hogstedt, Emilia F. Vignola, Carles Muntaner, Theo Bodin, Patricia O'campo, Wayne Lewchuk (Karolinska Institute, Sweden (International project with collaborators from 6 countries))

Issue: Workers in precarious employment experience multiple challenges, including income and employment insecurity and a lack of rights and protections. This presentation examines the ways in which the quality of working life among the precariously employed can be enhanced, with a focus on minimum wages as a strategy addressing income insecurity.

Development being investigated: In this presentation, we will discuss evidence synthesised from 16 studies on the potential of minimum wage policies to mitigate workers' exposure to precarious employment. This evidence was identified through a systematic review of evaluated initiatives addressing precarious employment and its effects on workers' health and well-being. We considered minimum wage policies as one of the initiatives that can be used to respond to precarious employment, with potential effects among both formal and informal workers. We assumed that a living wage is an important part of fair terms of employment to protect workers in low-paying jobs, such as those in precarious and informal employment.

Findings: Our review provides evidence concerning the impact of minimum wage policies on financial compensation and employment security for low-wage workers in the formal and informal sectors who, based on information provided in each study, met our definition for precarious employment. The findings suggest that minimum wage policies could increase precariously employed workers' financial compensation, with little or no effect on employment security. Although the findings could be applicable to higher-income countries, none of the sixteen studies used to derive this evidence were from such economies. The identified studies point to several ways in which minimum wages could impact workers in economies characterized by a high prevalence of precarious and/or informal employment. Moreover, these studies should serve as a reminder for higher-income economies, many of which are experiencing an expansion of their informal sectors, about the need for related research and policy. As the informal sector expands, research in high-income economies should examine the link between minimum wage policies and the division of employment among the formal and informal sectors. Additionally, taking advantage of more wide-ranging public data sources, researchers studying high-income countries should scrutinise the impact of minimum wage policies on the prevalence of precarious employment in the formal sector, and on the employment conditions of workers in precarious employment in the informal sector.

Contribution: Given ongoing changes in the nature and organization of work, including an increased use of non-standard and precarious employment arrangements, this presentation should be of interest to a multidisciplinary international audience concerned with forms of resistance to the continuous expansion of low-quality work and its effects on workers.

Too precarious to resist? Working students negotiating zero-hour contract work

Agnieszka Rydzik

(University of Lincoln)

Growing financial pressures, limited state support, and flexibilization of labour markets combined with the cost-of-living crisis are accelerating the precarisation of already vulnerable worker groups. One group that, until recently, has rarely attracted attention in mainstream debates on precarisation are university students who are increasingly engaging in paid work through zero-hour contract employment.

Historically, the hospitality sector has attracted many student-workers due to the relative ease of obtaining hospitality jobs and the promise of schedule flexibility that can allow students to combine work alongside study. Yet, pressurised hospitality working environments and the scheduling power zero-hour contracts give to employers can position young and financially disadvantaged students into vulnerability as well as affecting their university performance, and consequently prospects of social mobility post-graduation. The flexible contracts they take on and the poor working conditions they experience can result in job insecurity, income instability and stress.

This paper draws on findings from 44 semi-structured interviews with student-workers working on zero-hour contracts in the UK hospitality industry. It conceptualises the distinctive and context-specific ways in which working students resist exploitation in the hospitality workplace. In particular, the paper provides new understandings into the limited – and even lack of – acts of resistance among working students. Due to their growing financial insecurity but also their insecurity being considered as having an end date (i.e. graduation and entry into the graduate jobs market), working students perceive themselves as choiceless and powerless in the immediate term, and with little option but to endure and normalise their working conditions.

Taking a whole-system approach, the paper argues that employers, universities, student unions and trade unions need to do more to prepare students to better navigate working experiences as well as building better support structures for working students. In particular, there is a need for universities to go beyond their focus on employability skills and graduate jobs. Universities need to better acknowledge the financial pressures students can be under while at university, and better prevent student-worker precarity as well as equipping students with tools to resist oppressive working conditions.

Between contentedness and discontent: Reassessing resistance at work

Fanis Lyrantzis

(Essex Business School - University of Essex)

In contemporary research of low-skilled immigrant workers, scholars have highlighted concepts like precarity, exploitation, and racism as a key locus of problematisation. Furthermore, the way they influence and relate to workers' subjectivity, affect and perspectives of otherness, is also a topic that draws researchers' attention. Additionally, how subjectivity relates with resistance and what forms of resistance are available from an organisational studies point of view is admittedly a very important factor to examine. My focus lies in the intersection of these three lines of thought and in particular how resistance at work can be theorised and articulated. Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a methodological tool which can assist in shedding light on the interrelation of workers' resistance and subjectivity in a unique and in-depth fashion. In this direction, my argumentation follows Lacan's steps in Seminar XVII, illustrating the transition from Hegel's master to the modern capitalist master. What modifications have occurred in Marx's sense of production and surplus-value's relation to the spoliation of workers' enjoyment, that enable these new forms of social bonds that Lacan represents with his mathemes of the four discourses? The answer, according to Lacan, lies in knowledge itself and its dialectic relationship with truth; the truth is blocking something that results from work, production has rendered truth impotent. The truth of knowledge is detained by the capitalist master and his unassailable command that puts everyone to work, constituting the modern market where 'everything works'. This leads the class problematic of worker's exploitation into a cultural phenomenon, where intolerance of otherness has received excessive investment in socio-political discourses, drawing its energy from the repressed class dimension. In this era of increasing segregation, Lacanian psychoanalysis helps us unveil the frustrating impotence of resistance and elaborate on the current impasses in ways that perhaps offer the potential to overcome them.

'Work Tomorrow?': The lived experiences of temporary agency workers in a UK food factory

Peter Carter

(University of Nottingham Business School)

The UK food supply chain, like other lower paid and lower skilled sectors, is heavily reliant on temporary agency workers (TAWs) and for this study I undertook an ethnographic approach to examine the lived experiences of these precarious workers in a UK fresh food factory.

Whilst temporary agency work has been subject to extensive research, few accounts take into consideration this view from below to consider the lived experiences of these workers. This is surprising and, given the significance of this form of employment, warranted further examination.

In this study I give a detailed and close-up account of the lived experiences of TAWs, focusing on the multi-faceted relationships experienced by TAWs whilst at work.

First, I highlight how temporary agency workers experience bias based on their nationality. Second, I explain how a tripartite employment relationship is problematic for temporary agency workers. Third, by examining the concept of the blended workforce, I explore the workplace experiences of temporary agency workers whilst working alongside permanent co-workers. Finally, my ethnographic approach reveals how resistance is subtly exhibited by temporary agency workers, who are subject to intense work for prolonged periods of time.

As many TAWs are migrants, this study also highlights that the future composition of many such workplaces is likely to be impacted by further changes in UK migration policy.

The ethnographic approach that I adopted for this study combined participant observations and semi structured interviews to provide valuable insights into the work experiences of TAWs and this approach was necessary as we cannot really learn a great deal about what actually happens, or about how things work, in organizations without undertaking the intensive and close-up participative research that is central to ethnography.

By examining the lived experiences of TAWs in this way, this study makes an important contribution to the literature as the relationships experienced by TAWs from within a blended workforce have not been adequately examined from their perspective. Whilst blending suggests a workplace which is smooth and homogenous, I introduce the concept of the mixed-up organisation to appropriately reflect that life on the diverse factory shop floor is far more complicated.

Room W001 – The resistant self: work, identity, work and wellbeing reconsidered

Work-life boundaries of health and social care workers: Resisting, reframing and learning over three phases of COVID-19 Pandemic

Denise Currie, Heike Schroder
(Queen's University Belfast)

In the context of demanding work environments, employees face increasing challenges to securing balance between competing work and non-work responsibilities (Walumbwa et al., 2022). Drawing from border theory (Clarke, 2000), we know that paying attention to how borders between work and non-work domains are managed is critical to creating and maintaining a satisfactory work/ life balance (Adisa et al., 2022). Individuals will navigate these borders on a continuum between the integration and segmentation of domains, depending on preferences and work/ life situation (Kreiner, et al. 2009). However, for many individuals working through the Covid-19 pandemic, the challenges to addressing work-life balance were magnified, and upended how individuals normally navigate the boundaries between work and non-work life (Adisa et al., 2022). Adjusting to this new context created 'boundary violations' (Delanoeije et al, 2019) where established boundaries between work and non-work domains were breached to accommodate the disturbances that manifested in both life and work, thus creating shifts in how individuals negotiated the integration-segmentation continuum of work-life balance (Allen et al, 2021).

Drawing from border theory (Clarke, 2000) and Job-Demands Resources theory (Demerouti et al, 2001), this paper aims to examine how UK health and social care (HSC) workers managed the border between work and non-work domains, how and why their attitudes to work and non-work boundaries changed, and how this affected their engagement with, and attitudes to work when delivering front line HSC services. Working on the front line of the pandemic, many HSC workers were forced to adapt to more difficult working conditions, while often facing trauma, burnout, and increasing concerns about

Covid 19's effects on overall health and wellbeing (Borek et al. 2022). When considering non-work responsibilities, HSC workers also faced similar challenges to other workers, having to deal with uncertainties regarding childcare, schooling, and care for vulnerable family members and friends, but which was further compounded by increased risks of transferring contagion between work and home.

This paper draws from data collected using an online cross-sectional survey of HSC workers across the UK (nurses, midwives, social workers, social care workers and Allied Health Professionals) over three phases of the pandemic (May- July 2021, Nov – Jan 2021/22, and May- July 2022) with over 3000 responses for each. It specifically focuses on the survey's qualitative responses which reveal perspectives on the impact that Covid had on services, perspectives on employers' supports, and how individuals managed work and non-work responsibilities.

We found that workers invoked temporal, spatial, cognitive and risk boundaries. Workers often managed these boundaries by reframing their emotional engagement to work that facilitated their preferred segmentation and integration between work and non-work domains. In conclusion we suggest, in the absence of appropriate job resources that sufficiently buffer the demands of work, health and social care workers withdraw their emotional labour from what they regard to be meaningful work. This form of resistance allows them to protect work and non-work boundaries alongside their wellbeing. However such individual strategies are likely to affect the quality of 'care' in care work.

The identity work of Staff Race Network members: Collective story-telling, resistance, and the relational building of organisational capability for change

Maria Hudson, Sanjaya Aryal

(Essex Business School, University of Essex)

The experience of diversity networks centred on ethnic and racial identities in addressing inequities is under-researched. There is some evidence that single category staff networks engage with diversity management practices (Colgan and McKearney, 2012), but also criticisms of their effectiveness in doing so (Dennissen et al, 2018).

The negotiation of identities involves personal choices about identity in the workplace (Jolliff, 2011), including whether or not to join staff/diversity networks and which ones. The concept of identity work has been deployed to help understand how people make sense of everyday events that challenge their self-identities, self-esteem and wellbeing. It explores how they seek, in their situated contexts, to exercise agency and influence their environment revising identity constructions (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Zanon and Janssen, 2007; Atewologun et al 2016). Identity work is thus a dynamic concept which engages with the reproduction and transformation of self-identity in the context of identity-regulating discourses. It has the potential for supporting understanding of the identity work of diversity network members and their efforts to re-work self-identities, resist ascribed identities and influence configurations of power and privilege.

This paper explores the identity work of staff race network members, and their attempts at interventions in managerial discourses and practices. It draws on a qualitative study involving case studies of eight staff race networks in public and private sector organisations in England undertaken from June 2021 to January 2022. Collected in the contexts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter Campaign, the empirical content centres on an analysis of online semi-structured interviews and focus groups with network members, chairs/co-chairs and senior managers.

The paper discusses network scope for addressing unfair and avoidable ethnic differences in employment outcomes, in which poor organisational governance were complicit. The findings include:

(a) A collective story of the value of network members carving out time and space to come together to share their stories of racial injustice and oppression. This embodies not only 'talk' of everyday events, but the development of new connections and relationships; contributing to well-being at work.

(b) The importance of network tactics in supporting learning and knowledge-building enabling acts of resistance to racial oppression. Importantly the shared experience articulated through in-network relationship building was channelled into wider organisational relationship building, 'speaking truth to power'. Networks are found to support greater understanding of the contours of oppression; deploying a counter narrative to that of non-valuable identities implicit in inequitable organisational outcomes.

Network member identity work included, the development of network allies and performance of forms of intersectional identity work through multiple network membership and cross network collaborations. In so doing there was an implicit resistance to inequality regimes (Acker 2006).

(c) Attempts to influence diversity practice/ outcomes had mixed success. Challenges constraining network member identity work included a lack of network resources, incorporation tendencies, insufficient senior management accountability for material change and the need to demonstrate 'success' to maintain ongoing network activism.

Study limitations and future research directions, including potential for action learning/research (Hersted et al, 2020), are considered.

Déjà vu: Time and space in shaping identity in Bangladeshi tea plantations

Shahadat Khandakar, Shahzad Uddin

(University of York)

Do time and space influence how managers identify their labourers and behave accordingly? This question is significant because the existing literature find managers behold exploitative and distant relationship with their labourers (Shahadat and Uddin, 2022; Ranasinghe and Wickramasinghe, 2020; Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2008) to make best utilisation of labour resources. Such behaviour dehumanises labourers and stages an authoritarian identity to managers (Shahadat and Uddin, 2022). The identity literature argues that social actors are reflexive and they may play an active role in constantly 're-authoring' their identity scripts in different contexts (Ybema et al. (2009; Anderson-Gough et al., 2022), which is often influenced by cultural construction (Raghuram, 2013). However, a very few study connects identity to the impact of time and space on managerial conduct (Taylor and Spicer, 2007) and our study aims to bridge this literature gap. We conducted non-participative observation and 43 semi-structured interviews in two spaces- traditional plantations and emerging plantations.

British colonial lords inaugurated traditional tea plantations around 200 years ago. Shortages of local labourers drove the plantation managers to recruit from distant regions of India by deception and abducted them in slavery condition. Despite tea labourers' active contributions to end British colonialism in 1947 and independence in 1971, tea labourers in traditional plantations merely managed to change their identity perceived from colonial ages. The labour line has also expanded by ethnic majority but the social inclusivity remains distant and labourers' salient citizenship rights are often trimmed. Like colonial lords, managers still identify traditional workers as 'lazy', immigrant, illiterate and 'donkey' (Shahadat & Uddin, 2022) reflecting how workers' identity is engrave into managers' consciousness. Some experienced labourers and supervisors even informally provide on-job training to tea plantation managers and field officers, but there is no history of any tea workers' career has progressed above the supervisor grade. On the other hand, these labourers identify managers as their 'God' or 'Protector'.

Emerging plantations have been operating for the past 25 years and the workforce comprises of local villagers, day labourers and a few permanent labourers. Many managers from traditional plantations have now moved to the emerging ones for better career prospects. Surprisingly, they have changed their identification of the current workforce. Managers thrive to become worker-friendly, dedicate to train labourers, external farmers. Slow and aged workers account for a significant part of the workforce. Instead of firing them, field officers placed them in tasks matched their speed. Managers find solace to become a 'trainer' or 'teacher', rather than a 'God'. However, they held the same demurring identity scripts for traditional plantation workers.

Our findings suggest that managerial workplace behaviours have transformed due to the space and time. The space dictates lack of managers' ownership rights, deflate managers' frivolous behaviour and redesign the labour recruitment, retain, and control strategy. This study finds that the time, space, and exposure to uncertainties may demarcate the identity scripts of managers and workers. These findings may contribute to articulate labour policy to achieve better employment terms and working conditions.

“Not the top of the pyramid”: Clergy resistance to managerialism in the COVID pandemic

Rebecca Whiting, Gillian Symon, Rebecca Taylor
(Birkbeck, University of London)

This paper presents work in progress from a study of Church of England clergy. With church buildings closed and lockdown in place, the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to examine a dramatic change to clergy work practices, particularly the widespread adoption of forms of digital ministry.

Clergy represent an under-studied ‘classic’ but ‘eccentric’ profession (Sirris, 2019). Most are not employees but officeholders, with primary obligations deriving from theological covenant, the Church constitution, and contractual frameworks (Berry, 2005), creating tensions in how clergy are led and managed (Blackie, 2014). The rise of managerialism in Church practices and processes, regarded by some as being at the expense of faith and tradition, is a source of ongoing debate (Elford, 2022; Milbank, 2008; Roberts, 2002). Our focus here is clergy resistance to managerialism within the Church as it was exposed and debated during the pandemic.

We conceptualize resistance as a complex, situated, and potentially contradictory practice (Van Douwen et al, 2022), mediated by the availability of space to engage in acts of resistance in the workplace (Spicer & Böhm, 2007). We address the call for research that examines how contextual elements - such as the consequence of managerialist policies in the pandemic - can facilitate or hinder resistance practices (Timor-Shlevin et al, 2023).

Our participants are drawn from a single large diocese, covering areas of socio-economic wealth and deprivation across rural and urban parishes. Most participants were stipendiary clergy or curates; gender, age and parish profiles mapped closely to clergy distribution in the Church more widely. Individual interviews were conducted with 40 participants via Zoom, each lasting about an hour, between June 2020 and October 2021. Interviews explored clergy experiences as they delivered spiritual, psychological, and social care during the various stages of the pandemic, focusing on the effects of the digitalisation of work practices.

Following template analysis (King and Brooks, 2017) for the first phase of analysis, we applied a discursive lens to examine clergy resistance to managerialism. Initial findings reveal discursive practices of resistance including disengagement (“I literally ignore everything [the diocese] send out”); challenging the effect of time-efficiency systems rather than the principle (“I had four people come [to church when opened for private prayer] over two hours, so that wasn’t a good use of time”); and cynicism at church leaders’ lack of understanding of parish clergy (“if we have a meeting with [Church House], they generally say ‘please put yourselves on mute’, and then it’s no surprise they don’t hear what we’re saying”). Clergy produced a ‘frontline worker’ identity which constructs them, rather than the Church leaders, as the people doing the real work of the Church (“the front line is where all the income is generated and ... where all the new Christians are made”) with Church management in a support role “not the top of the pyramid”.

These examples illustrate a range of discursive practices of resistance for this interesting occupational group, including how digitalisation offers potentially new spaces for resistance but also new managerialist practices to resist.

Room W002 – Open Stream One

Emotional labour and emotion management in public protection police work

Lesley Mcmillan, Maureen Taylor
(Glasgow Caledonian University)

The nature of police work means it is often stressful in the course of ‘routine work’ and police officers often work in situations which are emotionally demanding, and many policing roles require a significant amount of emotional labour. For some, the effects of this can take its toll and the connection between the emotional demands of operational policing and poor mental and physical health among police officers and police staff is documented in contemporary. The majority of research on policing and emotion has centered on ‘routine’ police work. The specialist role of public protection policing which

includes sexual violence, domestic abuse, child protection and vulnerable adults brings particular emotional demands and regular exposure to both victims and perpetrators of these crimes, necessitating a significant amount of emotional labour and emotion management on the part of officers.

Work exploring emotional labour in policing is limited, but the small body of work that does exist suggests that the complex nature of policing may give rise to contradictions that result in high degrees of emotional labour. Emotional labour refers to the way employees regulate their own personal emotions in order to display organizationally desired ones. This can be achieved by suppressing emotions that are personally felt but not 'desirable' within the context of a particular role, and expressing emotions that may not be personally felt, but are expected within that role.

This paper presents data from in-depth interviews with serving public protection police officers and considers their experience of emotional labour, emotion management and organisational cultures around emotion in public protection policing. We outline themes in police officers' narratives around resistance to, resilience for, and acceptance of, the emotional demands of the role, the organisational culture in which they work, and the institutional interventions around wellbeing.

The emotional labour of teachers and classroom assistants in Scottish schools: A nuanced sociological perspective

Derek Thomson

(Glasgow Caledonian University)

Emotional labour was originally defined by Arlie Hochschild (1983), who noted how organisations were increasingly taking control of the emotions of employees, forcing employees to put on an act to cope with these demands. However, her focus was on profit-focused employment, which Bolton (2005) noted was inappropriate for public sector workers, who lack a profit-motive and tend to be afforded greater control over their performance. In addition, Lopez (2006) highlighted that in certain jobs (care workers, in this instance) employees do actually care for their users, making acting less appropriate. Recognition of these points has led to an increase in emotional labour research focusing on public-sector and caring roles. One area, though, that has received limited focus is school-based education, with McKenzie et al. (2019) highlighting a dearth of sociologically focussed approaches to emotional labour research. While Hebson et al. (2007) and Jenkins and Conley (2007) provided an initial understanding, there have been limited attempts to consider the work of Bolton (2005) and Lopez (2006) within school-based education. Such research is particularly important due to the modernisation evidenced within education, which demands increasingly better service from public-sector workers and focuses more on the technical than the emotional aspects of roles (Bach and Kessler, 2012).

The research followed a critical realist philosophy, with Bolton (2005) indicating that emotional labour research suits a focus that moves away from the observable to the structures underneath the surface (Danermark et al., 2002). Within this, a case study approach was adopted, with the school-based education system in Scotland selected as the case study. Data was collected through 36 semi-structured interviews, which encompassed 17 teachers and 19 classroom assistants across public sector primary, secondary and special needs schools. A range of topics were discussed in relation to Bolton (2005) and Lopez (2006), in particular whether these workers do emotional labour, the level of choice around acting, the role of management, the importance of passion and the use of philanthropic emotion management.

The findings support that both teacher and classroom assistant roles are emotionally demanding and that emotional labour is important. Acting is used, but the findings support the view of Bolton (2005) that employees have more agency than Hochschild (1983) noted, with acting used more as a strategy in this case, rather than for self-preservation. Supporting Lopez (2006), there was limited evidence of school management enforcing emotional labour upon teachers or classroom assistants to make either act in ways they would be uncomfortable with. Indeed, management within the schools had a largely hands-off approach, contra to Hochschild's (1983) research. Both teachers and classroom assistants were passionate about their roles and cared for their students, with clear evidence of Bolton's (2005) philanthropic emotion management, although this did lead to employees offering too much of themselves on occasions. This research does not claim that there are no negative aspects of emotional labour, but that a more nuanced framework is required to understand emotional labour within a school-based context.

Fair Work in the social care workplace: Can it deliver for unions?

Ian Cunningham, Alina Baluch, Philip James, Eva Jendro, Stewart Johnstone, Dora Scholarios
(Department of Work, Employment and Organisation, Strathclyde Business School)

Despite employment law remaining the responsibility of the UK government, Scotland has used a range of 'soft' forms of regulation to promote decent work under the heading of Fair Work (FW). The framework is based on five dimensions - effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect (Fair Work Convention, 2016). Such 'soft', non-statutory forms of intervention, labelled as Fair Work in Scotland and Wales, have been hailed as distinctive policies that constitute a social democratic alternative to the UK government's neo-liberal agenda (Heery, Hann and Nash, 2020; Sisson, 2019).

Scottish social care was identified by the Scottish government as a sector where early attention needed to be paid to FW principles because of the vulnerability of much of its workforce (Fair Work Convention, 2019). Measures to alleviate poor working conditions through FW include the payment of the real living wage to all front-line workers in adult services, efforts to reduce the use of zero-hour contracts and the procurement practices that encourage them, and proposals for a mechanism at sector level to encourage worker voice.

Despite some evidence indicating that 'soft' forms of regulation can, at least under certain conditions, deliver 'substantial effects' (Heery, et al 2020), there are also concerns regarding the effectiveness of non-legislative forms of state intervention, such as FW (Sisson, 2019). For example, New Labour's earlier Partnership agenda, premised upon encouraging employers and unions to work collaboratively in a spirit of joint problem solving, for example, was found to have 'ran out of steam' once the Partnership at Work Fund ended (Stewart, Martinez-Lucio and Robinson, 2011). The potential for improving employment relations through soft regulation therefore remains a highly contested notion, with some concluding that, without robust legislation to move parties to a more equitable power equilibrium, actors remain locked into a status quo that militates against sustainable mutuality (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017).

Gall (2021) offers a pessimistic assessment of FW itself, identifying no discernible impact. Meanwhile, other studies have highlighted how the Scottish Living Wage faces considerable barriers in terms of ensuring widespread compliance among the various actors in the social care market (Baluch, 2021). In addition, it has been found that despite organisations aspiring to be FW employers, anti-union voice persists in the sector and can lead eventually to derecognition (Cunningham, James, and Baluch, 2022).

Existing evidence concerning the impact of FW principles, and the effectiveness more generally of 'soft' regulation on various dimensions of decent work, however, remains limited and in need of supplementation. This paper seeks to address this need through an organisational case study centred on whether union – management relations, in a context marked by a managerial desire to be an exemplar in FW, can deliver outcomes that raise the profile and capacity of the union so that it can organise more effectively in the sector. The findings reveal that even among exemplar organisations promoting FW and principles of voice, unions struggle to organise and prosper.

Room W003 – PhD Showcase

"We've won!": Exploring the Real Living Wage movement in social care in Wales

Celia Netana

(Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)

The Real Living Wage (RLW) is not just a financial concept but a way of tackling social and economic injustice (Bunyan, 2016) such as persistent low pay. The RLW movement in Social Care can be seen as an example of community led resistance seeking to tackle social and economic injustice relating to work pay and conditions.

In January 2021, the First Minister of Wales committed to paying all Social Care workers the Real Living Wage during a Social Care Summit organised by Citizens Cymru Wales, a third sector Community

Organising alliance. This was seen as a show of broad base community power, asking a key decision maker to publicly commit to paying all Social Care workers a Real Living Wage, which he did, leading to the jubilation of “We’ve won!”.

Drawing on exploratory research undertaken as a collaborative PhD research project with a 3rd sector organisation Citizens Cymru Wales, a Community Organising network. This work follows the Real Living Wage (RLW) movement in the Social Care sector in Wales. The researcher embedded with the organisation and trained as a Community Organiser undertaking participant observations of organising work relating to the RLW in Social Care as well as interviewing the broader range of actors involved in the movement outside of Community Organising and analysis of secondary data.

There is recognition in the literature that collective action is necessary to the success of a campaign seeking to tackle the issue of low pay such as the RLW (Prowse et al. 2017) and benefits of “fusion” activities between different organisations with overlapping interest have been shown to be successful (Kelly, 1998). This paper seeks to explore and unpack the concepts of alliance and collective action implied by the “We” element, what has been “won” and differing forms of success from the perspectives of different actors.

The RLW movement overall has had significant success in quantitative terms with over 12,000 employers voluntarily signing up to pay the RLW and 370,000 employees getting a pay rise. There is also evidence of 2nd order effects in terms of growth of the movement (Prowse and Fells, 2016) and boost to local economies (Werner, 2020). This work seeks to explore more qualitative notions of outcomes and success of the RLW movement in Social Care in Wales.

This exploration aims to add insights to RLW as a tool to tackle issues of social and economic injustice. It is also hoped to add clarity to how the RLW movement in Social Care works and offer insights for future campaigns seeking to improve pay and working conditions for social care workers and other low paid workers.

A case for paying the Real Living Wage

Jon Winfield

(University of Warwick)

This paper will examine what risk employers take when they become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) in paying the Real Living Wage (RLW). On one hand, the perceived risk employers take could be reputational if they are not seen to provide good quality work. On the other hand, some employers might perceive a financial risk if they decide to increase wages above the legal minimum.

Low pay is defined as being paid an hourly rate below two-thirds of the median hourly earnings. Using this measure, in the UK there were 2.5 million low paid workers in 2022 (Cominetti et al., 2023). In contrast, the RLW is higher because it is independently calculated based on cost of living, it is voluntarily paid by employers, and applies to all employees, not just those aged 23 and over (LWF website).

To gain an understanding of potential risks and/or benefits of employers voluntarily paying the RLW, an in-depth review of the literature was conducted concerning history and developments of Living Wage campaigns. First there is an historical review of debates and evolutions of campaigns in the United States of America (USA). Progress is traced from the first ‘wins’ in the US campaigns, including discussion on complex relationships between some US trade unions and Living Wage campaigners (Luce, 2005). Ultimately, it was found that collaboration across civil society was key to successful campaigns. The next section of the paper reviews how the Living Wage campaigns moved over to the United Kingdom (UK). Historical developments in the UK’s wage control system in place in the early 20th Century are discussed, with a focus on debates during the ‘post-War Consensus’ where the breakdown of consensus led to changes in wage policy of the Conservative Government (1979-1997), followed by New Labour, and the introduction of the first national minimum in 1997 (Brown, 2002). Next, progress of the modern-day Living Wage Campaign in the UK is charted, including creation of the LWF. Growth and evolution of the movement is examined, starting from its early days in London, its national presence today, and more recently, its diversification to include the RLW and its ‘Real Living Hours’ (RLH) campaign, where this diversification recognises that it is a combination of an hourly rate of pay and hours worked that combine to form an employee’s take home earnings.

The analysis set out in this paper raises several important questions. The Low Pay Commission's remit is to raise legal minimum wage levels unless there is a significant risk to employment of workers affected (Cominetti et al. 2023). If increases continue, will payment of the RLW pose a real risk to employers? Are continued increases to the RLW in line with the cost of living, sustainable during times of high inflation.

After summarising key findings gleaned from the literature review, the final section of the paper identifies the need for empirical research on the business case for good work, in particular the case for paying the RLW and offering workers RLH.

Protecting employers over employees: The logic and impacts of the UK Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Niamh Bridson Hubbard

(University of Cambridge)

The introduction of the UK's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (more colloquially known as 'furlough') in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was seen as largely successful in protecting businesses and jobs. This presentation suggests however, that while the scheme insured employers, little thought was given to the experiences of or consequences for participating employees.

In many respects, the CJRS was analogous to European comparators, with similar levels of wage replacement, maximum wage caps, and relative proportions of state versus employer contributions. The primary area of difference however was that the first iteration of the UK scheme precluded employees from working. In July of 2020 a 'flexible furlough' option was introduced where employers could reduce employee hours, with these non-working hours subsidised by government. Other departures included the lack of business incentives to provide employee training and limited protection from dismissal after the conclusion of the scheme. As such, employees could spend extended periods out of the labour force, with no opportunities to practice their skills, to only be dismissed once the government stopped subsidising their role.

Early research published using panel data from the first few months of the pandemic established that in terms of mental health impacts, furlough occupied an intermediate position between the protective effects of employment and the detrimental ones of unemployment. This presentation builds on that literature, using Understanding Society's COVID-19 survey and previous annual waves to conduct longitudinal analysis exploring participant experiences in the two iterations of the UK furlough scheme.

Fixed effects regressions highlight that while controlling for a number of demographic and household variables, transitions out of employment into non-working furlough were associated with a statistically significant increase in psychological distress. This was the case for both men and women, and the association holds even when controlling for changes in income associated with becoming furloughed. In support of the early pandemic research, transitions into non-working furlough were illustrated to carry a smaller negative coefficient than transitions into unemployment. Moving into flexible furlough on the other hand, was not associated with a significant change in psychological distress relative to remaining in employment. Examining each of the components within the psychological distress index in turn, demonstrated feelings of utility were most negatively affected by transitions to non-working furlough.

In addition to these regressions, time series analysis was conducted to explore the impacts of long-term furlough on mental health. Using a propensity-score weighting approach, changes in mean psychological distress score were examined for those remaining on furlough and those remaining in employment over a 6-month period. Whilst mental health quickly improves to near pre-pandemic levels amongst those in employment, long-term furloughed individuals see no such amelioration.

Discussions of these findings are situated in the Sociology of Work literature, examining the relationship between employment, unemployment, and wellbeing. Conclusions around the effectiveness of the scheme and suggestions for an improved future model of job-retention program are also put forward.

Algorithmic work and job quality

Yuliya Vanzhulova Tavares

(Queen Mary University of London)

Algorithmic work is platform-based employment that uses algorithmic control to mediate the commissioning, supervising, delivering and compensating workers on a contingent, piece-work basis. A prevalent theme in recent discourses about algorithmic work is its association with job quality. Scholars point to extremely precarious working conditions (e.g., Berg, 2015), eroded terms of employment (Howcroft et al., 2019), and few opportunities for development (e.g., Duggan et al., 2021) associated with platform-mediated working arrangements. In parallel, autonomy, flexibility, task variety and complexity are found beneficial to workers' job quality outcomes, although to various degrees (e.g., D'Cruz & Noronha, 2016; Wood et al., 2019). Despite the opposing views and the increased attention algorithmic work has received in popular and scholarly debates, academic and policy research on algorithmic work and job quality is in its infancy (e.g., Myhill et al., 2021). Available empirical findings are fragmented and explore the specifics of gig or cloud work in isolation from each other, fail to cover national context and are predominantly of qualitative nature.

This research contributes to the gap in three ways. First, adopting a multidisciplinary construct (economics, sociology of work and psychology) of job quality to explore gig and cloud work. This construct includes a multidimensional conceptualization of job quality (namely pay and benefits, terms of employment, job design and the nature of work, work-life balance, voice and representation). It examines the extent to which job quality differs in gig and cloud work drawn on the Good Work Index, the most comprehensive method in measuring 'good' work to date (Williams et al., 2020).

Second, despite efforts towards collecting bespoke case studies of gig and cloud workers, they have had a limited ability to investigate algorithmic work in due to modest sample sizes (e.g., Laursen et al. 2021, Myhill et al., 2021), which might undermine the validity of findings. Therefore, this research draws on larger quantitative samples of the Understanding Society of the UK national-level study, which enables extrapolating and looking at different larger labour markets.

Third, the limited literature on job quality and algorithmic work does not investigate differences between gig and cloud work. Gig work has attracted wider scholarly attention compared to cloud work (e.g., Berger et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2019). The broad differentiation of which is in a place work performed and mechanism of execution. Hence, this study aims to look at algorithmic work more broadly and discuss the ways in which gig and cloud work and job quality differ.

This research has a potential impact on academics as well as policymakers, since ensuring job quality has recently entered the international and UK government policy agendas as a driver to productive and thriving societies (BEIS, 2017; BEIS, 2018; Carnegie, 2018; CIPD, 2020). Also, there is a huge academic interest in job quality, this study extends this to an understanding of job quality into algorithmic work.

Room W004 – Platform Capitalism, hybrid work and digital resistance

The wage and its theft in platform work

Matthew Cole

(University of Sussex)

This paper explores platform wages and the theft of labour-time in the UK. As Marx declared, "capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things." This social relation is one of impersonal domination by exchange, time-work discipline and competition. Our time is treated like property when we exchange it for a wage. Yet this exchange is of a peculiar type in that labour is transformed into profit for an employer. If time is exchanged like a commodity under capitalism, then it follows that theft of labour-time is the theft of our property. This paper draws on empirical research from the Fairwork project, including over 100 interviews across 15 platforms. It is guided by two questions:

What types of unpaid labour occur via digital labour platforms? How do platform policies and practices facilitate this unpaid labour? We argue that extant analyses of unpaid labour, in terms of violation of employment law, neglect both the way misclassification functions as a means to steal wages and the systemic dimension of unpaid labour under capitalism. There is also a more speculative dynamic of extraction through certain platforms' expropriation of workers' data as it is transformed into an asset. The study develops a novel typology of unpaid labour and how platform management facilitates this. Wage theft through unpaid work time, training time, waiting time, and travel time, are integral to platform profits as well as the externalisation of costs of production and expropriation of worker data. Finally, we problematise existing policies aimed at preventing worker exploitation.

Race, gender and precariousness in the resistances of food couriers in Rio de Janeiro

Lucas Souza

(Fluminense Federal University)

This paper provides an analyse the resistance of app food couriers in Rio de Janeiro, exploring the potentialities and limits of the series of strikes that took place during 2020 and 2022 called "Breque dos Apps", with special attention to the gender and race tensions that the category faces in their daily lives. For this, the text will be divided into three parts.

The first one is related to the analysis of working conditions and the composition of the profile of the workers. The aim is, through a contextualisation of this sector in the Brazilian labour market, and taking into account the specificities of the Global South, to observe why the platformisation of deliveries has meant greater precariousness in this activity. For this, I will use data from a survey conducted during the months of August, September and October 2021 in Rio de Janeiro with 500 surveys and another 100 semi-structured interviews. In addition to this information, I will cross-reference this figures with others recent researches carried out conducted in Brazil.

The second part aims to investigate the series of Wildcat Strikes called "Breque dos Apps" that came out from 1st June 2020, trying to see their main demands and how they relate to the problems arising from the platformization of delivery. This will be done through interviews and analysis of promotion materials created by the strike organizers. Additionally, the aim is to point out the silences on race and gender issues in the demands, understanding the structural limits of these actions, which were pioneers in this sector.

Finally, I focus on highlighting the most everyday actions of resistance of the food couriers, emphasizing how they deal with issues related to race and gender. Although these actions may seem more individual, through the interviews conducted I indicate the way in which these actions are linked to the socialization - digital and physical - existing in the group and, at the same time, how these same actions give new dynamics in the organization of these workers.

I argue that, despite the theses that indicate the "atomization" of platform workers and even their "unorganizable" nature, these subjects have found ways to articulate themselves, socialize, discuss their working conditions, create solidarity bonds and organize strikes and other forms of resistance. In this path, the waiting points for new orders and social media groups - mainly WhatsApp - have been the essential means in this process.

I have as inspiration the method of workers' inquiry from Notes from Below (2018). Thus, throughout the text I will investigate the technical, social, and political composition of food couriers, with special attention to the precariousness of work and its articulations with gender and race, as well as the diversity of resistance strategies, whether individual or collective. The concepts of experience (Thompson, 1960), and consent, coercion, and resistance (Purcell et al. 2022) are also central.

Finance, pick, ride, repeat: The business models and working conditions behind quick commerce platforms

William Hunt, Steve Rolf, Rachel Verdin

(University of Sussex)

New q-commerce platforms like Getir and Gorillas – offering grocery deliveries to your door in thirty minutes or less – grew rapidly during the Covid-19 pandemic. On demand transport and delivery platforms, such as Uber and Deliveroo, have come under scrutiny for their extensive use of precarious work contracts and poor working conditions – while , e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon have come under fire for dangerous health and safety standards, work intensification and apparent union busting activities (Ness, 2023; Kassem 2023). Q-commerce platforms promised an alternative approach to working practices in e-commerce and the gig economy. In order to meet the promised 30-minute delivery times a workforce of scheduled workers, using well maintained equipment are needed to service a network of micro-fulfilment centres (or dark stores) located close to consumers. Warehouse operatives and delivery riders need to be directly employed by the firm so that they can be scheduled when needed. This represents a departure from much of the platform economy that relies on workers on 'self-employed' contracts, who often provide their own equipment. The q-commerce model, therefore, was expected to provide a greater level of security to workers and better working conditions. However, little research so far has interrogated such claims.

This paper reports findings from recent case study research in four q-commerce firms, across three countries (the UK, Spain and Germany), focusing on business trends in the sector and labour issues. The study involved desk research and in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 industry experts and stakeholders (inc. firm representatives, trades unionists and industry consultants) and 16 q-commerce workers. There are two main empirical findings. First, the direct employment model adopted in the sector does not always translate into less precarity and good work conditions for workers, with work having more in common with platform workers than traditional retail workers. In all three countries there was evidence of high staff turnover, dismissal on spurious grounds, lack of training, poor health and safety standards, bad management, intense work pressure, poor workplace relations with management and low morale. Second, there was evidence that conditions for workers had declined somewhat from an initially good starting point as a tightening financial situation meant that firms were under increasing pressure to find a pathway to profitability, seemingly at the expense of the workforce. We argue that this can largely be attributed to a lack of awareness about employment rights among workers combined with non-compliance with and lack of enforcement of existing regulations.

Theoretically, we connect poor working conditions to the business models of q-commerce platforms, especially their subordination to the temporalities of venture capital funding cycles. The implications of the findings for organising in the sector and potential policy recommendations are also discussed.

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Room W005 – Resistance and Meaningful Work

“At my age I couldn’t work for an employer” The life course, resistance, and paths into self-employment in later life

*David Lain, Mariska Van Der Horst, Jakov Jandric, Belinda Steffan, Chris Phillipson, Wendy Loretto
(Newcastle University)*

This paper takes a sociologically informed life course approach to understanding self-employment in older age. A key assumption in some previous research is that self-employed individuals can be categorised neatly by whether this form of work is ‘voluntary’ – whether they have an entrepreneurial orientation and are taking advantage of business opportunities, or whether they have no better employment options. This might suggest that older people entering self-employment either have a long-term desire to work for themselves or they cannot find anything better. An alternative, broader perspective explored in this paper is that ‘turning points’ can cause a change in the ‘direction of the life course, with respect to previously established [and anticipated] trajectory’ (Gotlib and Wheaton, 1997: 5), in this case influencing a resistance to being an employee and a move into self-employment. The ‘turning points’ concept has its theoretical roots in the work of Strauss (1959), but it has been used in a variety of ways in life course studies (for example, Elder, 1974; 2004) and other disciplines. Turning points at work can be conceptualised broadly as a ‘a period or point in time when people have undergone a major transformation in their views regarding their job or a major change in direction in their work or career’ (Wethington et al., 2003: 168).

To make sense of why people might experience turning points that lead to self-employment we draw on qualitative life-course interviews conducted with 57 self-employed individuals aged 50+, with the sample stratified on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and the age at which they entered self-employment. Our analysis builds on Elder’s (2004) principles of the life-course. These principles include ‘time and place’, the historical context in which peoples’ life trajectories occur; ‘timing’, the importance of when transitions occur in the life course; and ‘linked lives’, the influence of the network of relationships.

The findings reveal that entry into, and experiences of, self-employment varied to some degree due to timing, i.e. when the individual entered self-employment. For those entering self-employment after age 50, none appeared to have a long-term desire or plan to be self-employed, although some professionals had previously recognised it was a possibility in their line of work. Turning points, sometimes relating to ‘time and place’, were important in terms of influencing individuals to resist working as an employee. These included, among other aspects, a resistance to work-related circumstances, including work intensification, redundancy/precarity, austerity, toxic experiences at work or discrimination, work/health incompatibility, and deskilling. However, the move to becoming self-employment was socially embedded and related to linked lives - for example, forms of financial support at the household level, and opportunities for self-employment from their wider networks. The paper contributes to our understanding of how turning points and resistance can influence paths into self-employment in later life.

Parental support of gig workers: The role of family in resisting precarity in urban China

See Pok Loa

(University of Oxford)

Theoretical positioning and research questions: The past decades witness a turn in work orientation towards jobs and work styles with intrinsic rewards such as autonomy, flexibility and meaningfulness. However, these jobs often come with unstable and precarious conditions. Extant sociological studies have documented how workers rely on labor activism, collective actions, and unions in response to precarity. Less attention has been paid to the role of the family in resisting precarity as previous literature has largely understood the family as a non-work sphere. Using interview data, this paper studies this in the context of the platform economy. It asks two questions, (1) how do parents use their class-based resources to assist their grown children engaging in gig work to cope with and survive employment

precarity; (2) how do recipients of parental support understand the meanings of intergenerational resources, particularly in relation to their autonomy as an independent worker. The findings point to the diversification of forms of resistance to precarity in an age of platform economy and of growing class inequality.

Data and methods: This paper draws on interview data from 23 freelance gig workers from middle-class backgrounds in Shanghai, China. Participants were recruited through multiple job-searching platforms and online communities where freelance workers sought out labor market information. The participants came from highly skilled and professional sectors including commerce, creative work, engineering and tech, translation, education, and research. They were highly educated. Five had postgraduate education; 17 had undergraduate qualifications. One participant had high school qualifications. I define class origin with reference to parents' occupational status and educational attainment. 19 were the only child of their family. Data collection has been completed and a manuscript draft is ready.

Brief findings: I outline several forms of support parents offered and discuss the interpretations of parental support. Most interviewees, who come from middle-class and highly educated backgrounds, went against their parents' expectations to pursue a freelance career they defined as meaningful. Despite this mismatch of aspirations, they still received substantial resources and support from their parents when encountered challenges of precarity. Parents provided financial, emotional, and network resources, creating a safety net that minimized the deleterious consequences of precarity, preventing the participants from falling into poverty and hardships. With the parental support they had, the interviewees felt that they could pursue and extend a workstyle that they thought of as meaningful but insecure. However, receiving intergenerational resources also engendered potential costs for the interviewees and eroded their sense of pride as an independent worker. The findings hinted at how middle-class families were able to mobilize their resources to facilitate the resistance of precarity in platform economies and retain their advantage amidst changing labor market landscape. It also adds a complex and less straightforward picture of how the recipients of parental support experience precarity during their pursuit of meaningful work.

Overcoming resistance to equality, diversity and inclusion work from clients: EDI consultants' strategies in Denmark

Caroline Demeyere, Florence Villesèche, Emily Thorsson Schöller, Marie Northeved
(Copenhagen Business School)

This article examines the resistance to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work, as "the activities conducted by professionals responsible for designing, commissioning, purveying, implementing, and monitoring organizational diversity initiatives" (Kirton & Greene, 2019: 678). The resistance faced by EDI professionals is a central issue for EDI work as it poses a risk for the worker's identity and wellbeing and threatens the change which EDI work aims to achieve (e.g. Thomas, 2020).

Although the literature on resistance to EDI work has focused on internal practitioners responsible for diversity management within firms (Trittin-Ulbrich & Villesèche, 2022), previous research has overlooked the dynamics of resistance to EDI work in the client-to-provider relationships as organizations hire external consultants to develop, implement or improve their EDI initiatives (Kirton & Greene, 2019). Despite EDI consultants being a growing group with increasing influence on organizational-level diversity management practices across sectors and industries (Prasad & Prasad, 2014), the resistance they face in their relationships to clients has received little attention. This paper aims to understand how resistance towards EDI work manifests in the client-consultant relationship and how EDI consultants acknowledge and engage in managing such resistance.

Our qualitative method draws on 35 qualitative semi-directive interviews with EDI consultants in Denmark and participant observation of EDI professional events. Our findings highlight the various dynamic strategies that EDI consultants mobilize to handle resistance from clients. These strategies range from proactive measures, such as setting expectations and building rapport with clients, to reactive measures, such as adapting approaches to meet client needs and engaging in difficult conversations. We also found that EDI consultants view resistance as an opportunity for feedback and adaptation of their work. They engage individually and collectively in a learning process around resistance from clients. Through the identification of three stages of a cyclical process for EDI consultants' management of resistance, we underline the spatial and temporal dimensions of EDI

consultants' strategies to overcome resistance: (1) managing resistance before consultants encounter it, (2) managing resistance in the moment as a response to resistance, and (3) managing resistance after encountering it to process and learn from it. By taking a relational and process approach to resistance and focusing on the strategies of EDI consultants, we provide insights into how this resistance can be managed and overcome. Our findings underscore the importance of peer sharing and networking among EDI consultants to expand their strategies for addressing client resistance and achieving meaningful change in organizations.

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Hanging Lantern Room – Open Stream Two

The illusory nature of autonomy in hybrid working: before, during and after COVID-19

Irena Grugulis, James Brooks, Hugh Cook

(University of Leeds)

This paper presents ongoing research with CollectCo investigating working practices, control and autonomy in a call centre-based debt collection firm. The project commenced in 2018 and ran through the first lockdown in response to the pandemic, where employees in this tightly controlled call-centre environment were sent to work from home. Labour process theory has a strong tradition of research in call-centre workplaces, in particular focussing on the nature of control and autonomy at work (Taylor and Bain, 1999; 2007). The literature has considered the nature of control over remote workers (Briken, Chillas, Krzywdzinski and Marks, 2017) and more recently has mapped the phenomena of control during pandemic lockdowns (Fana, Massimo and Moro, 2021). The paper seeks to explore the changing dynamics of autonomy throughout the pandemic lockdown and return to work.

Our methodology allowed us to track the unique effects of the Covid Pandemic on this call-centre workplace and on the experiences of its employees utilising qualitative and ethnographic data across three panels of data: before, during and after the pandemic. The first panel comprised of sixteen focus groups with c100 employees and ethnographic observations of 62 calls followed by snap interviews, providing detailed insight into management practices, and observed experience of the nature of the work. The second panel comprised Zoom video diaries with 17 participants, repeated monthly through the Covid-19 lockdown (February to July, 2020), with some attrition. Five in-depth interviews were also conducted to explore home working in greater detail. This provided a unique opportunity to explore employees' experiences of shifting from a tightly controlled office work environment to working from home. The third panel of data is ongoing and seeks to explore the post lockdown emergence of hybrid working.

Initial data portrayed a tightly controlled call-centre with a significant proportion of staff encountering significant mental health problems stemming from the nature of the work: collecting long standing debt from vulnerable customers and the associated exposure to their highly emotive life stories during calls. Mental health problems were exacerbated by management KPIs which sought to maximise the amount of debt collected and by intense monitoring of all activity within the building. During the first Covid-19 lockdown, employees transited from this highly controlled workplace to the relative freedom of home working. Many welcomed this move because some systems of control were absent, such as timed

toilet breaks and blocking of mobile phones. Colleagues would work with Netflix on in the background or paint pictures while talking to customers, while those affected by poor relationships with managers thrived in the newly distant relationship. The ongoing stage explores the hybrid working system where previous tools of control in the office have been dropped as they can't be replicated at home. However despite this, autonomy remains illusory as performance monitoring persists around KPIs. This study is developing a nuanced picture of developing perceptions of autonomy set against the backdrop of ubiquitous KPI monitoring.

Quiet quitting and opposition to office work: Assessing the impact of US knowledge workers' everyday resistance during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Alice Abrams

(University of Cambridge)

This paper explores everyday resistance amongst knowledge workers in the USA, after stay-at-home mandates began to ease in Spring 2021. Through an analysis of the phenomena of quiet quitting and resistance to in-office working, I argue that workers' everyday resistance created opportunities to contest norms about productivity, encouraged managers to change Flexible Work Arrangement policies, and deepened workers' subjective feelings of 'work-life balance'. However, this everyday resistance was at times riskier and less effective for marginalized workers, and had the potential to reinforce exploitative gendered and racial power dynamics in the workplace. This paper contends that the scope and type of changes produced through workers' everyday resistance are deeply constrained by high levels of workplace surveillance, scrutiny on individual workers, and competition to be the most 'enterprising' employee. The changes that knowledge workers' everyday resistance produced tended to reaffirm existing economic norms. The deep constraints on the effectiveness of knowledge workers' everyday resistance gives us reason to question the effectiveness of everyday resistance in highly competitive, atomized, and non-anonymous environments, and to look to more organized and overt forms of political action as a source of change.

This presentation is based upon a paper that is currently being prepared for publication. The empirical data used to inform this paper's argument is primarily informed by polling, wider primary academic research about quiet quitting and attitudes to remote working, and ethnographies of everyday resistance. The paper engages with James Scott's and Lila Abu-Lughod's contributions to the study of everyday resistance, seeking to neither dismiss everyday resistance as a mere coping mechanism for oppression, nor to glorify its potential to produce political transformations.

Automation and the substitution of labour in low wage, migrant rich sectors in the UK

Ioulia Bessa, Gabriella Alberti, Chris Forde, Jo Cutter, Zyama Ciupijus

(University of Leeds)

This paper presents work in progress of a three-year study focused on the impact of recent labour market shocks in the UK and employer and worker responses to them. We focus on the impact of Brexit and the Covid pandemic on work in sectors where low pay and European migrant workers have been prevalent (care, warehousing, hospitality and food manufacture). Functional accounts suggest that, faced with a shortage of low paid labour, employers might substitute labour for new technologies or invest in training to enhance productivity of the existing workforce. Indeed, the UK government pinpointed such substitution strategies as a means through which employers might look to reduce 'reliance on the UK's immigration system' to meet their labour needs (Home Office, 2020). In the context of a tighter labour market, workers may find that their bargaining power is enhanced. As scholars of the employment relationship and migration we aim to add a sociologically informed frame of analysis to understand employer strategies and worker responses to whether and how technology (such as automation in manufacturing; AI in care) is adopted, what drives management decisions and conditions (migrant) worker responses and the implications for the regulation of work.

The first phase of the study has included an employer survey of 1,340 establishments in care, warehousing, hospitality and food manufacture, conducted between August 2022 and February 2023. Data were gathered from a senior management representative in each firm, through a 30-40 minute telephone survey, along with a workforce data sheet. The paper provides an early analysis of

employers' evolving labour strategies, changing patterns of use of migrant workers, and their strategic responses in the face of Brexit and the global pandemic. Subsequent phases of the study will focus on the dynamics of workplace relations in the context of these changes, through a programme of workplace case studies with workers, local management and recruitment agencies.

Initial analysis of the employer survey shows that one in five employers report recruitment difficulties in the 12 months prior to the survey. One in ten have sought to use technology to substitute for labour. Automation was a much less common response than turning to alternative sources of labour, training, or strategies to make work more attractive through increased flexibility, or pay. In this initial exploration of the data, we examine the profile of organisations that turn to automation and whether and how this relates to other forms of strategic response such as pay or changed employment practices.

Home Office (2020) The UK's Points-Based Immigration System: Policy Statement: The UK's points-based immigration system: policy statement - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Room W119 – Research practice and resistance: methodological perspectives

What can visual methods tell us? A study of therapy dogs' work with British university students

Carol Wolkowitz, Nickie Charles

(University of Warwick)

Many publications in visual sociology claim the epistemological superiority of visual methods as a way of capturing otherwise obscure aspects of social relations. Visual methods are said to enhance participants' voice, agency and resistance, and to be particularly helpful in capturing embodied interaction which often defies translation into words (Forster, 2022). When it comes to our interest in studying animal-human work relations, it seems obvious that, because animals cannot be interviewed, visual methods are important in transforming sociology from being simply a 'discipline of words' (Twine 2016). But perhaps the same could be said for conventional ethnography, in which careful observation and written field notes are as likely to capture the corporeal dimensions of social interaction as is the use of cameras. Moreover, it could be that some things we are interested in may not be readily visible, for instance abstract concepts like labour power or, in the case of animal-human work relations, 'feeling power' (Shukin 2013). It could be argued that the main advantages of visual methods over ethnography are either practical, for instance allowing for multiple viewers and viewings, or involve the validation or communication of findings rather than the discovery of new knowledge.

This paper addresses these questions through an exploration of the use of visual methods in a study of visits to a British university by therapy dogs in 2015-16 and 2018. The study was ethnographic, involving participation in therapy dog visits to the university, but it also included interviews and visual recording of the events through both still and moving images. Analysis of the interview and observational data identified the emotional labour, body work and feeling work required by the dogs' interaction with students and, sometimes, their resistance to such interactions (Charles and Wolkowitz, WES, 2023). Here we explore what is added to this analysis by the visual methods used. We argue that not only does the visual evidence mirror our ethnographic observations, with the same familiarity with dogs' embodied expressivity being necessary for both, but also we were able to add detail to our observations through viewing the images after the event. While this does not change our analysis it enables us to communicate our observations visually as well as through the written or spoken word. Moreover, our use of both still and moving images shows how the production of visual evidence is socially situated, rather than seeing it as transparent. It also suggests the need to adapt photographic equipment to the challenges of capturing the interactions between dogs and humans in particular settings. We conclude by suggesting that visual methods can aid our understanding of embodied interactions but that claims about their epistemological superiority need to be seen in the context of a lack of attention to, or lack of resources for, detailed ethnographic fieldwork that can also produce an embodied understanding of social interaction.

Strategies for surveying platform workers: Lessons from a Belgian case study

*Jessie Gevaert, Jens Doms, Elief Vandevenne, Karen Van Aerden
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel)*

The platform economy provides tremendous opportunities for research into far-flung flexibility and precariousness of employment relations (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2016), but many researchers struggle with finding the best way to collect data on the experiences of platform workers themselves. As a textbook example of a hard-to-survey population (i.e., they are hard to sample, hard to identify, hard to contact, hard to get to cooperate, and/or hard to interview), this paper will evaluate strategies for recruiting platform workers for the completion of an internet, cross-sectional survey. Specifically, the paper will make use of the experiences from a case study of an online questionnaire designed to investigate the work and employment conditions, health and well-being, social protection, income, and career prospects of workers in the platform economy in Belgium. After one year of data collection, this questionnaire has yielded 480 questionnaires that are valid for data analyses (i.e., after data cleaning) by using a variety of different recruitment methods. Comparing this sample to other data collection efforts within the platform economy (COLLEEM, and ETUI Internet and Platform Work Survey) shows that this non-probability sampling strategy results in similarly composed samples. This case study has shown that surveying platform workers is quite a laborious and costly process. Specifically, our experiences have illustrated that a stratified sampling approach is necessary to be able to capture a heterogeneous group of platform workers. Furthermore, retaining good contacts with platform companies themselves, has proven to be beneficial for the recruitment of their workers for a survey.

WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

PAPER SESSION 2

14:30-16:00

Room W010A – Gender and intersectional inequalities within workplace resistance discourses

Engineering gender: Navigating deprofessionalisation in Turkey

Umrhan Kemikli

(Istanbul Nisantasi University)

With growing rates of graduates and accessibility of higher education, traditional professional jobs are facing a kind of disintegration which is called deprofessionalisation. As a part of my doctoral research, this study aims to understand mechanical and building engineers' changing work experiences and labour market positions in Turkey through a gender lens. Being a highly male dominated field, female engineers' experiences throughout their education, job seeking and working life differs from those of male.

Turkey has a growing number of universities and graduates. That means, in our contemporary labour market, it becomes much harder to find a job that matches the expectations of graduates. Engineering is one of those traditional jobs that face rapid changes. In 2022 there were approximately 12,000 freshmens in these two engineering areas and in the last decade 92 new engineering faculties have been established. Enlargement of higher education in developing countries causes erosion and sharp changes in the work conditions of graduates. Deprofessionalization comes with the shattering of the traditional statuses and experiences of work however this applies differently for each gender.

Building on qualitative data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with male and female engineers, my study reveals the gendered nature of the work environment and relations of resistance. I highlight how individual experiences of the workplace differ but with a wider perspective, I also introduce the issue by including non-workers and mismatched engineers as well. From my perspective, the discussion of resistance should start from an earlier point and also include those people who chose to not resist or do not take part in the work relations.

Throughout my research, it became apparent that flexibility and individualisation of employment relations go beyond the labor market. I place the job seeking process as a part of employment relations which is highly affected by the graduate's personal resources and plays a distinct role in their career path. This also has effects on engineers' expectations and their "willingness" to resist or bow to the conditions surrounding them or rather seek careers out of their formal education. Inequality for female engineers, starting from the undergraduate years, in the workplace results in mismatch and unemployment most of the time. I suggest embedding pre- and off-work experiences of individuals for further research to understand our contemporary work environment thoroughly.

How changing gender norms have affected child labour in India 2019-2022: A socio-economic approach

Wendy Olsen, Jihye Kim

(University of Manchester)

Those children who work in India show an extreme pattern of harmful time use. 7.5% of children worked as child labourers in 2019 (India Time Use Survey 2019). The proportion of child labourers has not

reduced significantly in India. Our new findings show that prevailing gender norms are associated with high/low prevalences of child labour in India in specific social groups and types. We have published previously using multilevel models. We predicted child labour amounts by state and at household level using a sociology of norms (Kim et al., 2022). Next we studied the patterns of time use of child labourers in domestic and non-domestic work in 2019 (Kim and Olsen, 2023). We now show a continuing relationship between the 2019 gender norms and the social and economic factors affecting the risk of child labourers in India in 2022. We use granular national random-sample geographical data in association with a social and gender relations conceptual framework.

The gender and development approach provides a theoretical foundation for examining how norms affect children's work. Child labour can result from the unequal distribution of gender roles in a social hierarchy. A norm supportive of adult women's work helps reduce the risk of child labour (Kim et al., 2022). Egalitarian gender norms can empower women in a region to engage in both work and education, positively impacting on children's involvement in work. Harmful forms of child labour working extremely long hours is prevailing among female adolescents, girl agricultural labourers and boy non-agricultural labourers (Kim and Olsen, 2023, notably ages 15 –17). The time-use patterns reflect discrepancies according to gender, social groups, and job sectors.

Using a norm model again, we utilise the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022 and the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5). NFHS had more detailed gender norm variables. PLFS provided recent figures for child labourers and a set of demographic and socio-economic variables. The gender norm index used here focuses on adult women's work and autonomy in a couple. In the norm model, we use a child-labour rate in a multilevel Poisson model. These regression models are preferred where the risk is very low in some geographic areas. Independent variables include sex, rural locale, caste, religion, social class, gender norms of the area, parent's marital status, and gender interaction effects. A gender norm supporting women's work or women's autonomy reduces girl child labourer risk (we use interaction effects with gender of the child). Children's working as child labour is harmful and can be reduced during the gradual transformation of gender norms. Less restrictive gender norms help reduce the risk of child labour. Indian maps can show the updated gender norms and the latest employment data regarding child labour.

Kim, J., Olsen, W., & Wiśniowski, A. 2022. Predicting Child-Labour Risks by Norms in India. *Work, Employment and Society*.

Kim, J., & Olsen, W. 2023. Harmful forms of child labour in India from a time-use perspective. *Development in Practice*.

Room W010B – Marginalised work and workers, risk and resistance in precarious places

Technostress, privacy, and making connections: Work and health conditions for online teachers

Ellen MacEachen

(University of Waterloo)

Although work and employment researchers have increasingly turned to the growing late-COVID phenomenon of working and communicating digitally rather than face-to-face, we lack insight into the impact of this employment shift on specific professions. Our study examines the work organization and health impacts for elementary and high school teachers, who increasingly teach online and often also work from home. For teachers, a particular complexity of digital work is achieving an adequate social connection with students. As well, inconsistent student and teacher access to devices and internet forms a barrier to adequate teaching. Further considerations for teachers working online include technostress (connectivity hassle), privacy (home noise and background), difficulties with attention span, and digital surveillance (from both employers and parents). Our recently funded study

investigates the work and health of teachers in Canada and Bangladesh. This presentation will focus on the first step of our study, a scoping review of international English-language literature on the health effects on teachers of online teaching. Our systematic search across six databases includes empirical studies published in both peer-reviewed and grey literature, such as NGO reports. Our results describe distinct challenges of digital teaching related to social connection, technology, privacy and health.

Gender differences in trajectories of premature exit from the labour market: A study in Stockholm County

Julio Hernando, Julio C. Hernando-Rodriguez, Emelie Thern, Devy L. Elling, Signild Kvart, Nuria Matilla-Santander, Kathryn Badarin, Melody Almroth, Katrina Blindow, Theo Bodin

(Karolinska Institutet)

The ageing of the world's population places growing pressure on the financial sustainability of different welfare systems (OECD 2019). In response, many countries, including Sweden, have increased their retirement age. The Nordic countries have long been recognised for their progressive policies towards welfare, including generous pension schemes, as well as policies aimed at promoting gender equality. However, the implications of an increased retirement age may differ for women as they typically have more fragmented labour market participation than men (Statistics Sweden, 2021).

While the dual-earner model is increasingly prevalent in the Nordics, women still bear the main responsibility for care and housework, which frequently leads to career breaks and part-time jobs (Crawford, Thompson, and Ashforth 2019), thus resulting in a lower pension. A previous study conducted in Finland showed no gender differences in retirement, but several factors such as marital status, education, income, and public sector employment played a crucial role in determining the timing of women's retirement (Riekhoff and Järnefelt 2017).

This study aims to investigate exit pathways from the labour market in Stockholm County under a life-course perspective framework. This framework considers how labour market participation unfolds over the working life and allows for unveiled patterns of transitions that require time to appear (Amick, McLeod, and Bültmann 2016).

This cohort study uses register-based data to identify trajectories of exit from the labour market among individuals aged 58 years residing in Stockholm County in 2010 (women=10,859; men=10,670). Gender specific trajectories were identified by applying sequence analysis and cluster analysis based on the following labour market states (2010-2019): full-time/part-time employment, unemployment, receiving little income, long-term sickness absence/disability, part-time retirement pension, full-time early retirement pension, old-age retirement pension and missing.

Five typologies of trajectories of exit from the labour market were identified: standard retirement (women [W:] 51.3%; men [M]: 49.6%), early-retirement (W: 14.7%; M: 15.1%), pre-retirees with part-time employment (W: 14%; M: 13.5%), long-term disability (W: 15.2%; M: 12.1%) and other (W: 4.8%; M: 9.6%). Slight gender differences were observed in some typologies. Five trajectories of exit from the labour market were found for men and women based on 10 labour market states from 2010-2019. The most prevalent trajectory, accounting for approximately 50% of individuals, was standard retirement. This trajectory consisted in individuals who were in full-time employment and subsequently retired after reaching the age of 64. The trajectory early retirement was the only one showing slightly different characteristics in men and women. Our preliminary findings found some gender differences, where the proportion of men in the early retirement typology seems to be higher compared to women. Within the same typology, however, we found increased levels of sickness absence among women.

Our study provides insights into the diverse pathways of labour market exit and highlights the importance of considering gender differences when developing policies to address challenges arising from population ageing. Further analysis will investigate whether individuals in low-quality employment (i.e., employment insecurity, low income, and lack of social protection) are more likely to experience early exit trajectories from the labour market.

'I can pick my little one up from school': Precariously resisting neoliberal time constraints

Julie Monroe, Martí López-Andreu

(Independent)

Gendered dimensions of low-paid work have been documented extensively. However, gendered work-life differences in relation to bogus self-employment (BSE) are under researched (James, 2023). In response, our paper describes impacts of social reproduction on outcomes in precarious employment (Ba', 2020, 2023; Kampouri, 2022) through an exploration of strategies that individuals develop to manage family life. With a dataset that represents the heterogeneity of the sector (Bozzon & Murgia, 2022) we address gaps in literature through a qualitative study that explores work-life challenges of precarious workers. Drawing on data from 24 participants from diverse sectors such as foster care, speech and language therapy (SLT), construction, food delivery and public administration, we explore experiences of precarity with an intersectional lens. Focusing on household dynamics as well as socioeconomic status (Pulignano & Morgan, 2023) we gain significant insights into the tensions faced by precarious workers in different occupational statuses. For example, the SLTs work in a female-dominated middle-class profession. Theirs is a respected career where individuals do highly specialised work. Yet, all but one of the SLTs we spoke to became self-employed in order to manage childcare. Moreover, participants reported they could only transition to self-employment because they weren't the main earner. Their choice to become 'independent' was because of a lack of flexible work options in the NHS. As Nadiya [pseudonym] said, a move to self-employment often involved having 'to take a pay cut'. The public sector 'interims', the most highly paid BSE workers we met, face different challenges associated with living away from the family home and long commutes to work. Like Emmanuel [pseudonym] they too experienced uncertainty and risk. Emmanuel manages his bike courier work carefully. At interview, he had worked 80 days in a row without a break 'because only that can keep me going, otherwise I'd be into more...more mayhem so I have to work harder to be able to pay my bills and do what I think I need to do'. He chooses this work over dependent employment because of temporal freedoms 'when my wife has gone to school or to work, I can pick my little one up from school'.

Room W011 – The resistant self: work, identity, work and wellbeing reconsidered

Are internships a risky enterprise? Analysing interns' desire for employable identities

Farooq Mughal, Carolyn Downs, Mike Ryder, Uzair Shah

(University of Bath)

This study investigates how and why, drawing on discourses of neoliberalism, interns responsibilize themselves to construct and project enterprising identities in pursuit of employability. Employability, we argue, operates as a neoliberal imperative (Handley, 2018; Mackenzie and McKinlay, 2020) that renders an intern as a 'bundle of skills' with which they manage the self as a 'business' (Gershon, 2011: 537). More precisely, our study builds on neoliberal philosophy to show how, under conditions of neoliberalism, interns' identities develop with a focus on employability. Recent studies on internship work have mostly focused on pathways to employability (Kapareliotis et al., 2019), largely overlooking how individuals align their subjectivities with neoliberal discourses to become employable (Allen et al., 2013).

Our study addresses this gap by showing work practices that interns employ in displaying market-facing subjectivities (Handley, 2018; Samaluk, 2021). Drawing on Foucault, we argue that employability acts as a regulatory mechanism, operating in part through technologies of the self, understood as techniques conducted by the self to bear upon oneself (Ashley, 2022). To understand how these technologies create subjective alignment with neoliberal discourses of employability, we examine how interns constitute themselves as employable by constituting 'the objects of which they speak' through a discursive system of meaning-making and evaluation (Foucault, 1972: 49). We direct focus towards the assimilation and effect of neoliberal discourses in constructing an employable image. In so doing, we go beyond identifying the authority of discourses to demonstrate their efficacy in producing subject positions that reflect market desirability (Weidner, 2009: 391). Our specific contribution to WES literature

concerns the appropriation of neoliberal discourses of employability through processes of activation, enactment and responsabilization, which lead to configuring interns' identities in their quest for employability.

Our research presents new possibilities for theorizing internships as sites for governmental regulation in realizing labour market desires, which we argue are governed by broader discourses of employability and career (see Roper et al. 2010; Rose et al., 2006). The focus on identity work, or the ways in which interns understand themselves, helps to unpack these 'processes of becoming that focus on what we do rather than on what we are' to achieve these desires (Ball and Olmedo, 2013: 87). They shed light on interns' capacity to reflexively construct images (or identities) of oneself in trying to establish themselves as employable (Bardon et al., 2021). To this end, we use a Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) approach to examine monthly reflective logs of 154 interns over a three-year period as they engage with their internships. Their reflective logs are interpreted as discursive assemblages of the self that is seen to be constituted within broader discourses of work and employment shaping the labour market. Our findings reveal an interplay of risk-taking and self-regulatory behaviour through which interns govern their own conduct and commit to improving themselves as ideal workers. These findings can help host organizations to enhance the well-being of interns by recognizing the constant burden of having to take risks and competitively position themselves.

Keep Calm and Carry On? The implications of home-working for mothers during the COVID-19 lockdown and beyond.

Joy Probyn, Eileen Cunningham, Eve Blezard, Zoey Jones, Jess Velloza, Natalie Saunders
(University of Salford)

Unequal distribution of unpaid household labour in employed heterosexual parent partnerships is well documented historically and continues to contribute to ongoing gender inequality in the distribution of paid and unpaid work (eg. Christopher, 2021). The Covid-19 lockdown had a profound impact on working family life as many parents found themselves working from home whilst simultaneously losing vital childcare and home-schooling their children. Parents working from home were forced to squeeze additional unpaid care and domestic work into daily life, at the expense of rest, creative work and social connection (Hielman et al, 2021). Studies during this time reported mothers taking on more childcare-related and domestic work than fathers, and emotional burnout in mothers when the boundaries between paid and unpaid work and their multiple roles (i.e. mother, teacher, partner, employee) were blurred (eg. Zhou et al, 2021).

We conducted an interpretive phenomenological, longitudinal study of the lived experiences of working mothers in Northern England during the COVID-19 lockdown. Using a novel WhatsApp interview method, we collected 'real-time' data from 63 mothers at four time-points June-December 2020, and conducted retrospective in-depth interviews with 20 mothers from the sample in March 2021. Data analysis was underpinned by Van Manen's (1990) existentials of lived experience and four themes emerged from the data relating to adapting and accepting change (lived time); negotiating blurred boundaries between work and home within a confined and multi-purpose physical space (lived space); meeting the expectations of significant others (lived other) and coping with increased mental and physical workload (lived body). The essence of lived experience underpinning these themes was that a deafening silence was present in the mothers' accounts of their experiences, as they negotiated unrealistic boundaries to resist the pressures of lockdown, in order to meet their own and significant others' (employer, partner, child) expectations of their multiple roles. However, this resistance manifested in further oppression and gender inequality, as the mothers in our study succumbed to deep-rooted gender norms to preserve their multiple role identities, at the expense of their own wellbeing.

We discuss the significance of our findings in the post-pandemic workplace, where home-working is increasingly normalised and encouraged by employers. Based on our findings and the recent work of others (i.e. Chung and Booker, 2023), we argue that despite the badge of a 'family-friendly' policy enabling flexibility to support working families, home-based flexible working patterns may further impound existing gender inequalities in domestic unpaid work in employed heterosexual parent couples, impacting on the wellbeing and career progression of mothers within these partnerships. Our current research aims to explore this further by investigating mothers' negotiation strategies for balancing paid and unpaid work when working from home in the post-pandemic era.

Residential childcare practitioners: Their voice, wellbeing and neoliberalism in the children's social care sector

Beth Jay

(Manchester Metropolitan University)

Residential childcare practitioners' have relational job roles; building supportive and positive connections with looked after children and young people. The evidence base exploring residential childcare practitioners in the UK remains scarce. Yet, the residential childcare sector is facing challenges within current children's social care policy developments, such as the independent review of children's social care, inevitably impacting residential childcare practitioners through increasing strains on organisational resources. Practitioners tend to have altruistic and philanthropic motivations to work with looked after children and young people. However, residential childcare work is largely stigmatised and undervalued by society, yet in reality, the work is highly demanding, requiring significant emotional intelligence and skill (Parry et al., 2021). This presentation will provide a synopsis of practitioners' emotional wellbeing needs drawn from a research project qualitatively exploring their emotion work, informed by feminist standpoint theory (Oakley, 1998; Harding, 1995). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019) found RCPs' emotional wellbeing was rooted in social support from people who understand their job role, in opportunities to learn, in self-care practices, and in engaging with reflective practice. Themes revealed complexities with organisations' neoliberal tendencies and indicated individual practitioners' resistance to this. This presentation will provide a synopsis of RCPs' emotional wellbeing needs. These findings formed part of a doctoral research project qualitatively exploring RCPs' emotion work, informed by feminist standpoint theory and philosophy (Oakley, 1998; Harding, 1995). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2019) found practitioners' emotional wellbeing was rooted in social support from people who understand their job role, in opportunities to learn, in self-care practices, and in engaging with reflective practice. These findings add to our sociological and organisational knowledge within children's social care, adding to the wider debate around workplace wellbeing in UK residential childcare and impacting practice with new knowledge concerning practitioners' wellbeing needs and desires. This also considers the impact of the children's social care market on marginalised workers.

Digital Nomads: Lifestyle of the resistant self?

Katharina Mojescik

(University of Innsbruck, Institute for Sociology)

Digital nomads have frequently been framed in media discourse as the future of work in media discourse. In particular, the location-independent web workers living as digital nomads are often described as self-determined and flexible workers in paradisiacal settings. While digital nomads were long considered a form of employment and a lifestyle for a privileged few, the platform economy has established a wide range of income opportunities that potentially enable a broader group of people to live and work as digital nomads. Driven by the Corona pandemic and the related boost in digitalization, digital nomads have increasingly become the focus of attention again.

Digital nomads have also gained relevance as a research subject in academic discourse in recent years. In my contribution, I would like to pursue how the lifestyle of digital nomadism can be considered as a practice of resistance. Theoretically, the paper links to the "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling 2015) and sets it in relation to the theoretical framing for platform work (Purcell & Brook 2020).

The paper is based on a systematic literature review on digital nomads, addressing the following set of questions:

Which role does resistance play in the decision to become a digital nomad?

Which strategies and practices can be distinguished in this context?

How does this differ from previous concepts of resistance?

For the systematic literature analysis, key databases (such as Web Of Science, Google Scholar) were used to identify relevant publications on "digital nomads". After removing duplicates and texts in foreign

languages, the data corpus currently comprises $n = 60$ articles. The literature was analyzed and coded using content analysis. The literature review will be completed in June 2023 and will provide the basis for a continuing qualitative research project on the employment biographical embeddedness of digital nomadism.

The objective of this paper is to understand how resistant practices can be shaped also beyond workplaces. Digital nomadism is thus considered as a form of resistance to the factory paradigm and (post)Fordist labor relations as a whole, rather than focusing on specific labor relations and power relations between employees and employers on the shopfloor (as in classics such as Edwards 1986 and Burawoy 1979). However, the extent to which this is reflected in the motivations and strategies and practices of digital nomads will be explored in the paper. In doing so, references can be made to current debates on platform work and the changing values of work.

Room W002 – Open Stream One

Reimagining sustainable careers through the lens of power: a call for more inclusive conceptualizations

Christiana Ierodiakonou, Andrie Michaelides

(University of Cyprus)

The proposed paper uses power as a lens to problematize the emerging conceptualization of 'sustainable careers', critically discussing its assumptions, applicability and implications for contemporary work and employment, to identify directions for further research. Career sustainability is a new notion in the literature and still lacks theoretical and empirical substantiation. However, it is important to timely reflect on it to ensure that it develops into an inclusive framework that captures the complexities of navigating diverse careers.

Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015:7) defined sustainable careers as 'sequences of career experiences reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, thereby crossing several social spaces, characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual.' In this prevailing understanding, career sustainability is understood in both objective and subjective outcomes regarding one's health, happiness and productivity. This captures the subjectivity entailed in experiencing fulfilling careers and assumingly promotes inclusion by recognizing that everyone has a role in creating sustainable careers. Recent studies call for the inclusion of both individual and contextual elements which can influence career sustainability over time and across different life stages (De Vos et al., 2020; Tomlinson et al., 2018). The emerging framework therefore recognizes the interconnectedness of multiple actors and denotes the importance of exploring sustainability over the life course, thus encouraging a systemic and dynamic approach to exploring careers.

The above suggest that the sustainable careers model is based on sound principles and could potentially overcome the drawbacks of preexisting models. Nonetheless, we argue that the discourse developed around it comprises risks that primarily rest on the standards set for sustainability, which may be unrealistic for some employees, organizations or societies. The model suggests an idealized view of work and employment, where individuals have access to 'good jobs' with satisfactory pay, benefits and developmental opportunities. With the growth of alternative modes of working, precarious work and the gig economy, access to such 'good jobs' is questionable, especially for groups that are structurally excluded from realizing meaningful and sustainable careers (Greenhaus & Powell, 2018; Kalleberg, 2011). In fact, the literature around sustainable careers over-emphasises individual responsibility for career development and sustainability rather than addressing broader structural issues in organisations and labour markets. So, while acknowledging the effects of time, place, and contextual actors on one's career sustainability, the framework comes with a language of individualization that subsequently downplays the role various stakeholders have in creating and maintaining sustainable employment practices (see Journal of Vocational Behavior, vol.117, 2020).

Without acknowledging how power inequalities, operating at different levels and in diverse forms, create inequitable outcomes for individuals and organizations, the career sustainability literature remains blind to the experiences of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and may develop into a mainstream

conceptualization that does not reflect the reality of contemporary work and employment. It is therefore necessary to adopt a more nuanced and critical approach as research moves forward to understand and empirically substantiate career sustainability.

The challenges of securing and maintaining longer-term civilian employment for UK military service leavers: A multilevel perspective

Sally-Anne Barnes, Natalie Fisher, Karen Newell, Clare Lyonette
(University of Leicester)

Transitioning from the military to civilian work and securing employment is often defined as a successful transition. Whilst recent data show that the numbers of UK military service leavers in employment is increasing, the longevity of that employment and whether it is fulfilling and matches an individual's aspirations has been given insufficient attention in the literature. Data from a mixed methods study of UK military veterans who had left the Regular Armed Forces between 24 months and 10 years is analysed utilising the systems theory framework. Data from a survey with 534 veterans and 42 in-depth qualitative interviews with veterans provide rich information on veterans' experiences of transitioning into and through the civilian labour market, and of their experiences of accessing and navigating the veterans' support system, including that from employers. The systemic influences on veterans' opportunities to secure and maintain employment in their career journey will be explored, thereby identifying potential enablers and barriers to longer-term employment. This multi-level perspective enables the influences at individual level (micro), and contextual issues, social system and environmental-societal system (macro level) to be examined. These influences were found to all influence veterans' longer-term employment experiences in the civilian labour market. However, key to understanding veterans' experiences and how employers can provide support is based on the interaction between these influences. These findings offer a set of recommendations to develop a system of support from government, employers and service charities that delivers improved longer-term employment outcomes for military service leavers.

When the system is unwell: creative thinking for NHS crises

Aj Earley
(University of Leicester and The Philadelphia Association)

It is well-known that understaffing is rife within the NHS, after the triple threat of government cuts, Brexit and the pandemic. The problem is particularly stark where physicians are concerned, given both long training times and the highly competitive international labour market. Matters are compounded with specialist consultant physician, where professional communities can be exceptionally small, and training even longer. Challenges reach fever pitch with medical conditions that are new (like long COVID), newly identified, or historically-underserved. These are contexts where thousands or even millions of patients can materialise overnight.

Here I seek creative solutions for this dilemma, writing as a patient as well as a researcher and healthcare administration lecturer. I begin conceptually, but develop actionable plans and present a pilot study. Throughout, I draw inspiration from social theory on care (e.g. Lynch 2021; Mol 2008; Tronto 1993).

A central intervention is questioning the centrality of physicians within logics such as NICE. While there is 1) some care which must be performed by doctors, and 2) informal care which should be done by paid clinicians, there are also 3) many needs which could be met in new ways. This third category includes needs which are not currently addressed at all for many conditions, such as patient education, coaching, and support with coping.

I interrogate the notion of expertise, conceptualising it as a diffuse capacity existing between doctors, patients, caregivers, and other clinicians. It is also a capacity which could be learned by individuals with diverse backgrounds beyond healthcare such as education, psychology, counselling, social work, occupational therapy, administration, communications, and customer service.

I then focus on the value of increasing support for peer discussion groups—and even integrating them into standards of care. While support groups have long been available for conditions such as cancer

and multiple sclerosis, support often comes from tenuous charitable services. For many conditions, there is no support at all. Where there are no major charities we see patients developing their social media communities, utilising asynchronous, text-based forum tools. These have value but also downsides, as communications are generally delayed, impersonal and transactional. While this is well-suited to simple factual questions, I found that patients were often trying to meet emotional needs related to coping through such systems.

I will report initial results from a pilot study of a synchronous, Zoom-based discussion group related to Mast Cell Activation Syndrome. This is a recently-identified immunological condition which often underlies common health complaints like asthma, eczema, allergies, and digestive complaints, so may affect millions of Britons. Treatment can be transformative but requires a strict period of reducing allergenic exposure, which can be incredibly isolating. I use these findings to return to the conceptual work on healthcare shortages, the nature of care, care work and expertise.

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Training the caseworker: Does it improve employment outcomes of unemployed welfare recipients?

Markus Wolf, Stefan Tübbicke

(Institute for Employment Research (IAB))

Caseworkers play a crucial role for the labour market integration of the unemployed. They support jobseekers with job search and provide counselling, but also monitor job search effort and implement benefit sanctions. The interaction of benefit recipients with caseworkers is argued to be a cost-effective and flexible measure of active labour market policy, and several studies show that it increases the employment chances of benefit recipients. What drives this effect is however not entirely clear. Both, counselling and monitoring, can have differing effects on job search behaviour. Recent research demonstrates that caseworkers' counselling style affects benefit recipients' employment chances, and that caseworkers differ in their productivity to increase benefit recipients' employment chances. A key question is therefore how policymakers can increase caseworkers' capacities.

Our study aims to shed light on this question by analysing if and how training provided to caseworkers affects employment chances of benefit recipients. To this end, we exploit the introduction of a unified counselling framework in a representative sample of offices in the German public employment service for unemployed welfare recipients in 2013. In offices that chose to introduce the counselling framework, caseworkers would receive training with the aim to improve the quality of counselling services provided to welfare recipients. We analyse the effect of the introduction on employment using large-scale administrative data and applying an unconfoundedness-based estimation approach, comparing welfare recipients in treated with welfare recipients in non-treated offices.

Our results show that the introduction of the counselling framework significantly increased cumulated employment of unemployed welfare recipients over five years after the introduction by 3.7 percent (12 days). As the reform affected about two thirds of the 1.8 million welfare recipients registered unemployed at the time of our sampling, the aggregate effects of the introduction are substantial. Further analyses by gender, age, vocational qualification, and prior unemployment experience do not show much effect heterogeneity, suggesting that the introduction benefited a broad range of welfare recipients.

Our study contributes in three ways to ongoing research on the role of caseworkers. First, we provide evidence for the importance of counselling in the caseworker's daily work, which has received less attention in research compared to monitoring. Second, our study provides evidence how policymakers can increase the effectiveness of caseworkers by providing training. Third, we focus on unemployed in the welfare system, who are often more disadvantaged compared to those in the unemployment insurance system, and our results highlight that training caseworkers to improve counselling is an effective way to help the most disadvantaged unemployed.

Room W003 – PhD Showcase

Exploring employee consent and resistance at the time of Industry 4.0: A study in the British aerospace sector

Wilko Artale

(University of Glasgow)

The paper investigates how employees on the shopfloor responded to the introduction of Industry 4.0 (I4.0) related innovations in one unionised aerospace manufacturing firm based in the UK (which I refer to as AirCo). In light of the widespread hype generated by the rise of the so called 'fourth industrial revolution' (Schwab, 2017), the debate about the impact of I4.0 on work is divided between 'techno-optimist, socio-technical and critical' perspectives (Vereycken et al., 2021). In this respect, the question about whether workers should embrace or resist new technologies has gained renewed attention, with scholars (Edwards and Ramirez, 2016), as well as union policy documents (TUC, 2017), arguing that workers should engage early in the process of technological innovation.

While there is no strong evidence that I4.0 represents a rupture from lean manufacturing as dominant industrial production paradigm, Butollo et al. (2018) observed that the emphasis on data-based process control is likely to undermine the relevance of shopfloor experiential knowledge for continuous improvement, typical of lean systems. This is a crucial aspect within the longstanding debate about post-Fordism and supposed employee empowerment or deskilling driven by digital technologies (Vidal, 2022; Thompson, 2007); in relation to that, Adler (2007) argues that the attention dedicated to employee autonomy in modern production settings is outdated, while technology inevitably strengthens collaborative interdependence at various levels (inter-team, as well as inter-firm across the supply chain) in the long term.

The research draws on 36 semi-structured interviews with managers, engineers, aircraft fitters (union officers too), as well as external experts and union sectoral officers; supplemented with an analysis of company and industry reports. The study examines two aircraft wing structure assembly lines upgraded with robots for automated drilling and the creation of a new automated-digitally controlled wing component production line.

Research findings reveal that the digitalisation process undertaken at AirCo, in line with general trends in the British aerospace industry (ADS, 2022), is still fragmented and focused on providing shopfloor operators with digital work instructions and gathering data to improve production metrics such as 'overall equipment effectiveness'. Most areas are still based on manual operations and I4.0 innovations are adopted to optimise pre-existing lean practices. All automation engineers interviewed explained that the new production line is run by a MES platform, which guides semi-skilled operators throughout each task, making traditional aircraft fitter skills no longer needed. The introduction of drilling robots was associated with both qualitative and quantitative work intensification (Thompson, 2003) by experienced shopfloor workers, while most decisions concerning configuration had been taken by an external industrial automation firm hired by AirCo.

Against this backdrop, shopfloor workers (and their union) consent to the introduction of new technologies on the basis that it is the only way to remain competitive, even though they are excluded from strategic decisions. With regard to resistance, it is argued that autonomy should not be dismissed as criterion of employee empowerment since workers show dissatisfaction for not being heard by managers, while I4.0 does not favour forms of collaborative interdependence.

Power, agency and informality among construction workers in Accra, Ghana

Lady Asafu-Adjaye

(University of Westminster)

The incorporation of informal labour into formal production systems and its repercussions for the interest and worker agency and the role of state and non-state labour governance regimes are recurrent in contemporary labour and labour movement literature. Even though there is a near consensus on the ascendancy of incorporation of informal labour into formal and global production systems, there remains

divergent perspectives -market led and structuralist- on the nature of such incorporation and its implications for the interest, power, and agency of informal labour. While the proponents of the market-led perspective maintain that economic inclusion, manifesting in greater participation in global markets is the way forward in ameliorating poverty and economic exclusion, as such inclusions create opportunities that enhance the welfare of informal labour, the structuralists argue that the spread of global production creates informality by generating cheap and flexible forms of labour as well as unprotected occupations. To the structuralists therefore, the inclusion of informal workers into global production deepens inequalities and heightens poverty and vulnerability since such inclusions are based on adverse terms of incorporation: adverse incorporation because the terms under which workers are included are exploitative, acting to reinforce rather than ease poverty. This research assesses the incorporation of informal labour into construction sites in Accra, Ghana. It explores the labour reproduction and productivity processes at the construction sites, the power and agency of informal labour, focusing on self-organising and unionisation at construction sites to explore the responses of construction workers to labour regimes and labour controls, and state and non-state labour governance actors in the construction sector. The study utilises qualitative research techniques, involving key informants such as public officials, trade unionists, representatives of associations of contractors, civil society activists, and formal and informal construction workers. The findings indicate that dual of labour regimes- direct and subcontracting-, and labour controls- positive and negative sanctions- at the construction sites, brings about varied decent work outcomes for different categories of workers. In addition, such labour regimes and labour controls detract from the structural and associational power of workers leading to dearth of worker agency at the construction sites. This study also makes critical connections between labour governance and adverse incorporation. The multiple institutional and legislative frameworks for labour governance in Ghana have limited impacts at the construction sites in this study owing to resource constraints, political interference, and indifference attitudes among state agencies. There is also limited manifestation of private and social governance regimes resulting from the domestic-oriented nature of production in the industry and the absence of brand and reputation leverage points.

'Being well' in academia and the medical profession: Forms of resistance to the neoliberal discourses of wellbeing

Claudia Yanez Ospina

(University of Glasgow)

The business case for employee wellbeing has mobilised organisations to implement interventions to tackle the increasing numbers of work-related ill health issues, associated with work-related stress, depression and anxiety between 2010-2020 (HSE, 2020) which impacts on productivity. Among the professions, it is well-known that junior doctors struggle to maintain work/life balance and there is evidence regarding mental health issues and pressures they face due to structural issues (e.g. working conditions) in the UK medical profession (BMA, 2019; Kinman & Teoh, 2018). Similarly, academics are reported to be one of the occupational groups with the highest levels of ill mental health (Guthrie et al., 2017).

Owing to dominant discourses of wellbeing which centre on individualistic behaviours and the responsibilisation of individuals, one's wellbeing "has become another measurable commodity and tool of governance" (Leigh, 2019, p.225). Therefore, the assumption is that the individual is only responsible for their own wellbeing and employers offer wellbeing interventions which can be used as mechanisms of control. However, this may also lead to the assumption that it is the 'choice' of the employee to participate in these interventions and act responsibly towards their own wellbeing.

Kodz, Harper and Dench (2002) found that there was a 'take-up gap' of these types of interventions due to a lack of supporting infrastructure and heavy workloads. Therefore, this has provided fertile ground to conduct research on employee engagement with employer-led initiatives, and in particular if and how this entails acts of resistance. This research utilises social constructionism to understand the experiences pertaining to wellbeing at work of junior doctors and Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Previous health and sociological research on wellbeing (Olliffe & Bottorff, 2007; Guell & Ogilvie, 2013; respectively) has shown that meanings are constructed by individuals throughout the research process, allowing the researcher to gain a better understanding of individual's subjectivities. Using photo-elicitation semi-structured interviews, this research examines perceptions of employer-led wellbeing initiatives and wellbeing practices amongst junior doctors and ECR who are in precarious contracts and

experience onerous work pressures (Maisuria & Helmes, 2019; Bone, Jack & Mayson, 2018; Forsythe & Suttie, 2020).

Scholars have demonstrated that the compliance/resistance duality is far more complex in practice (Bristow, Robinson & Ratle, 2017; Anderson, 2006, 2008; Archer, 2008; Kalfa, Wilkinson & Gollan, 2018). In fact, there are creative ways in which employees, including ECRs (and perhaps junior doctors), comply with the system and use strategies in order to resist managerialism (Thomas & Davies, 2005). Where acts of resistance have been identified, it would be important to examine if some forms of resistance may affect individual's wellbeing (Anderson, 2006). By utilising Foucault notions of the neoliberal subject and governmentality, this research contributes to a novel perspective when addressing wellbeing at work, but also to examine individual's subjectivities when exposed to employer-led wellbeing interventions in a context where wellbeing is sought to allow individuals to work better and produce more. This research aims to expand on literature on covert forms of resistance at work as 'subtle activism' (Kjærgaard et al., 2023).

Sustaining wellbeing and work engagement in hybrid work for academic staff in the neoliberal university

Roopa Nagori

(Coventry University)

For the Higher Education (HE) sector, this is a time of work transformation. The new style of working remotely or in a hybrid manner and the transformed work environment in the neoliberal university are placing pressures on the wellbeing of the academic. Mental health and wellness of employees has assumed great significance in current times and it is essential for universities to understand how engagement and wellbeing in the academic can be improved. This research considers the HE sector in particular and investigates the experiences and events that influence engagement and wellbeing of academic staff.

In addition, sustainability issues related to the wellbeing of employees are central in hybrid work. The United Nations has proposed 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 3 refers to the wellbeing of the workforce mainly, 'Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.' This study aims to offer recommendations to improve employee engagement and wellbeing for academic staff in HE, so that strategies to promote one outcome, such as productivity, do not undermine another, such as improved wellbeing of employees. It is in the backdrop of the transformed work environment in HE, that the researcher aims to propose a conceptual framework for sustainable engagement and wellbeing for academics.

Research Focus: Specifically, the research addresses three questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academic staff in HE about the factors that influence work engagement and wellbeing in the post-COVID-19 era?
2. What interrelations exist in the factors of wellbeing and work engagement that impact the current body of knowledge in this discipline?
3. Which factors would have the biggest impact on the wellbeing and employee engagement of staff in remote and hybrid work?

While progress in the field of HRM has acknowledged the benefits of Employee Engagement to Performance Outcomes, the search for a link between productivity and performance has been pursued at the expense of a concern for employee wellbeing. Furthermore, changes in the nature and context of work (remote and hybrid work) support the case for a greater focus on well-being. While there have been previous studies that discuss Employee Engagement and Wellbeing, few have been applied to the context of universities and hybrid work. The research will analyse the key constructs of the existing theoretical frameworks Guest (2017), Jobs Demands-Resources (JDR framework), and Asset framework of Wellbeing.

A systematic review of the literature is carried out using the PRISMA technique-this provided the researcher with key theoretical frameworks and concepts for the research. In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews are used as the key tool to gather detailed, qualitative data for the study. Interviews with 30

full-time academic staff and 20 wellbeing experts are transcribed and analysed using the NVivo software. Thematic analysis is adopted to identify the key constructs to propose a conceptual framework to improve work engagement and wellbeing in hybrid work.

The Stage of the Research: Data Analysis and Findings

Room W004 – Open Stream Two

Numeracy, gender, and financial decision-making control within the household

Nora Wikoff

(University of Nottingham)

This study focusses on numeracy as a source of bargaining power or relative advantage that shapes who within couples control household financial decisions. Previous studies have shown gender's influence on intra-household financial decision-making to be almost equal in importance to education and experience. Men have traditionally held more bargaining power within heterosexual couples, as they were often older than their female partners, had completed further education, and had greater earnings power. Social norms surrounding gendered household roles perpetuate this traditional breadwinner model, even when men are not the sole or primary breadwinners. Women who are more highly educated and/or earn more than their male partners may nonetheless perform gender by granting their partners control over the assumed 'male' task of controlling household finances. Using longitudinal data on couples collected as part of the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS, waves 3-10), I explore how couples allocate responsibility for financial matters. Social exchange theory and financial capability models provide the conceptual framework.

The outcome variable is based on each person's response, with responsibility for decision-making going to the person within the couple who claimed a larger role: 1 = Female, 2 = Male, 3 = Joint. Numeric ability was assessed based on partners' performance on a set of five items asked at Wave 3. I defined people who answered all five questions correctly as highly numerate, in line with work by National Numeracy. Couples were coded as 0 if neither scored highly on numeracy, 1 if only the woman did, 2 if only the male did, and 3 if both answered all five numeracy items correctly. A second continuous variable captures the difference in partners' scores, and it ranged from -5 to 5. Negative scores indicated that the female had scored higher than the male, with 0 indicating that they received the same score. I conducted multinomial logistic regressions with generalized estimating equations (GEE) because the data are longitudinal. Couples' responses at each wave are likely to be correlated with their responses at previous waves, but GEE is robust to possible misspecifications of the underlying correlation structure.

The results indicate that high numeracy increased the odds that individuals contribute to financial decisions. Highly numerate couples were much more likely than other couples were to share decision-making power equally. Among less numerate couples, this role tended to go to the more numerate individual within the couple. Having said that, this general trend did not appear when women outperformed their male partners in numeracy. Within these couples, women did not appear to gain any more control over financial matters than did women who scored equally to or lower than their male partners. This suggests either that numeric proficiency has less of an association with financial decision-making for women than for men. Alternatively, it may be that there continues to be a strong starting assumption of decision-making as being primarily the male's domain. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

Resisting through 'lying flat': Young female influencers' experiences with platform troubles

Jiali Fan

(University of Cambridge)

In the face of heightened economic and career-related instability, social media platforms often present themselves as new avenues for entrepreneurial self-actualization (Arriagada et al., 2020), offering opportunities to monetize various aspects of individuals' lives, including their lifestyles (Lewis, 2010).

However, the digital economy is marked by a persistent theme of precariousness, as inadequate safeguards and unpredictable algorithmic challenges continue to expose workers to risks and uncertainties, a feature that has been widely criticized (Hund, 2023). Drawing from 13 interviews with Chinese female influencers from Xiaohongshu (known as China's answer to Instagram) and 15 interviews with Australian female influencers from Instagram, this article delves into the concept of 'lying flat' (Zhang and Li, 2022), which serves as a key emotional experience in the everyday lives of influencers and ultimately shapes the way they approach platform work. For the participants, being an influencer offers a departure from overwhelming, relentless, and often discriminatory workplaces, particularly for women who are in various life situations such as pregnancy and caregiving, while also providing a means for basic survival. This 'lying flat' mentality is further reflected in influencers' engagement with platforms. Rather than attempting to 'fix' the indeed mysterious algorithmic challenges that directly impact their platform visibility, which is often considered the ultimate goal in the structure of an 'attention economy' (Marwick, 2015), influencers choose to not care, and stay and live with the challenges as a form of resistance. While acknowledging the ongoing inequality within and arising from the platform economy, this article takes a proactive stance and argues that choosing to 'lie flat' as a rejection of neoliberal ethos of resourcefulness, personal striving, and work ethic can help influencers take control of their lives. It also highlights the active agency, creativity and spaces beyond mere consumer culture that have been overlooked in existing research on the influencer industry.

Employers' role in shaping family leave policies in the United States: A qualitative analysis of legal cases

So Yun Park

(University of Wisconsin – Madison)

In May 2021, the United States Senate Committee on Health, Labor & Pensions held a hearing on paid family leave. The debate centered on whether employers or the government should be responsible for providing this benefit. While some argued that a universal paid family leave policy is necessary, others insisted that employers should hold the role of providing family leave. This ongoing debate highlights the burden placed on employers in the U.S. for providing family leave. As such, it is essential to understand the influence of employers over family leave policies and the impact of these policies on labor market outcomes. Furthermore, it is crucial to investigate how employers construct these policies and their broader impact on forming labor market values.

To expand our understanding of employers as market actors and their influence in this area, this project aims to examine how employers draw the line around the usage of family leave policies in the U.S. This research project investigates the conflicts between employers and employees regarding family leave usage and identifies how employers shape the eligibility requirements and institutionalized processes around such policies. We draw on the theory of endogeneity of the law, which recognizes that companies have a hand in shaping the laws that apply to them (Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger, 1999; Kelly and Dobbin, 1999). By analyzing court opinions sourced from Nexis Uni and Thomson Reuters Westlaw Campus Research, we use a qualitative content analysis approach to examine how employers in California, New Jersey, and New York (states where both unpaid federal family leave policies and state-paid family leave laws co-exist) dispute legal cases relating to family leave use. The value of studying arguments made in court is that they must challenge the actions and ideas of others, often drawing on taken-for-granted understandings, having to articulate assumptions that would otherwise have remained in the background in an everyday context (Boltanski and Thevenot, 2006; Swidler, 1986). Our focus is on the period between 2004 and 2022, encompassing the passage of California's first paid family leave law. This research is a work in progress, and preliminary results provide insight into the institutional constructs employers have created and adopted to regulate family leave usage by their employees. We argue that organizations play an active role in shaping the boundaries around family leave usage in the legal context. Building on these findings, we suggest further analyzing the moral and eligibility constructs employers employ in their arguments.

This research contributes to the broader debates around power and struggle in the workplace by illuminating how employers shape employees' understanding of how family leave policies can be used and how such shaping can have broader implications for labor market values. Moreover, it fits within the conference theme by providing insight into how employers' actions can shape how employees resist or struggle for better working conditions and how such resistance can be repositioned as a tool of the powerful or pose a risk to the deregulation of employment relations.

'Professionalism' in the disciplinary control of 'misfit' workers

Brenda Beagan, Kaitlin Sibbald

(Dalhousie University)

A gay medical resident is told, 'It's best not to mention that here.' A lawyer with autism is told failure to make 'proper' eye contact is 'unprofessional.' A Black health care provider is asked to calm down, avoid expressing emotion at work. A working-class social worker is coached to dress more professionally and hide tattoos. 'Professionalism' as concept is taught, measured, policed in ways that govern the identities and performances of workers in a wide range of fields, demanding assimilation to ostensibly neutral ways of being and doing, while curbing worker resistance through appeal to the seemingly-uncontestable accusation of being 'unprofessional.'

Fournier (1999) showed how a discourse of professionalism and professional competence extends beyond classic professions to discipline workers in other occupations, demanding self-governance through appeal to 'appropriate' work identities and conduct. Flanigan Adams (2012) argues that professionalism functions as a Foucauldian episteme, cutting across institutions and "structuring work and life in taken-for-granted, everyday ways" (p. 331). Available 'professional' subjectivities demand specific forms of embodied-ness, performance, practice, comportment, decorum. In situating workers within particular subjectivities, the professionalism episteme further marginalizes particular Others.

Professionalism, then, functions as a powerful mechanism of (employer/state) control over workers. Specific worker subjectivities and performances are required, yet masked by claims of self-governance, self-regulation and autonomy. Surveillance of self and others in the name of the profession reduces the possibility of activism for change. In some occupational fields, resistance and activism – even simple forms like attending protests and rallies – are defined as 'unprofessional conduct' warranting discipline and risking loss of licensure.

As neoliberal and managerial regimes erode the power and autonomy of the classic professions, we turn to workers from traditionally under-represented groups to examine how professionalism functions as a disciplinary mechanism. This paper draws on interviews conducted across Canada with 142 workers in six fields (law, medicine, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, academia) who self-identified with one or more of six identity groups (Indigenous, racialized, ethnic minority, disabled, working-class or impoverished family origins, or LGBTQ+). Professionalism was routinely employed to keep workers 'in line,' to reinforce hetero-cis-patriarchy, white supremacy and colonialism, able-body-mindedness, and upper-middle class normative expectations and social and cultural capitals. Defining resistance – or even incomplete assimilation – as 'unprofessional' proves a proficient means of control.

Yet as 'misfits' in these professions, as square pegs in round holes, these workers "by the very act of misfitting engage in challenging and rearranging environments" (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 603). Their personal and collective experiences of daily workplace interactions provide grounds for meanings, analyses and actions that contest top-down impositions of particular subjectivities and performances under the guise of 'professionalism' (Purcell & Brook, 2022).

Misfits become points of rupture, as they cannot ever entirely embody/perform 'professionalism.' They 'queer' and 'crip' professionalism, potentially fomenting counter-hegemonic resistance to discipline, self-governance and self-surveillance. There is potential for misfits to create communities of resistance through solidarity as a form of identification bridging across groups, rooted in mutual reliance and reciprocity with shared goals of change-making (Beck & Brook, 2020).

Room W005 – Resistance and Meaningful Work

Can the academic work be deemed meaningless?

Chao Ren

(UNSW Australia)

In this study, we join a chorus of voices (e.g., Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019; Bailey, Yeoman, et al., 2019; Yeoman, 2014; Yeoman et al., 2019) that increasingly argue for the notion that meaningfulness is not purely imbued with subjective assessment, but rather is inter-subjective and institutionally conditioned assessments of working experience, encompassing “both subjective and objective features (Bailey, Lips-Wiersma, et al., 2019, p. 34). We explore the role of performance measurement systems (PMS) in the everyday practices of academic work through a fieldwork in the higher education (HE) sector. Academic work is often culturally positioned as particularly meaningful (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017), that is, academics are in a prime position to engage in work that will benefit society as a whole, but is also a site of contestation with dysfunctional consequences for themselves, work and universities as a result of the normalisation of audit culture, raising the concerns of the public. While previous research has focused on performance management practices, in particular, research and related accountability issues, in addition to a multitude of negative impacts of PMS on performance, health and wellbeing (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Hopwood, 2008; Kallio & Kallio, 2014), we need more work to deepen our understanding of how PMS affects academics think about and evaluate their work experiences. Without such knowledge, and without making what is currently invisible in HE workplace, it is difficult for regulators and university management to improve experiences of meaningfulness among academics, thereby contributing the sustainability of academic work. Further to this, insights on the investigation of meaningfulness manifest in academic work can generate important insights into the role of PMS that plays in exacerbating or alleviating meaninglessness.

We chose the Chinese HE sector as our research setting to examine how PMS influences experiences and practices of meaningful work among Chinese academics. Mimicking global trends, the Chinese HE is experiencing a gradual shift towards adopting more principles of managerialism, including efficiency-driven initiatives and the pursuit of high performance, driven primarily by the increasing pressure to be a globally competitive educational system that exacerbates work intensifications. Noting significant economic development and the adoption of Western ways of managing faculty members, the result might be nuanced by considering that the academic work and life in China has evolved to coincide with competing values.

In this study, we contribute to developing a micro-appreciation of the objective and subjective dimensions of meaningfulness (Hall, 2019) by considering the complementarities by combining the works of Bourdieu (what it means to be) and Boltanski & Thévenot (what is right to do) (Bénatouil, 1999) against the backdrop of PMS movements in the macro environment since the mid-2000s in China.

Sustainable work in the Anthropocene: From green jobs and ethical consumption to human rights

Jill Timms

(University of Surrey)

The relationship between consumption and production continues to be fertile ground for understanding the value placed on workers in global systems of supply (Ward, 2015). Many efforts towards ethical consumerism attempt to make visible the workers involved in production, wherever they may be, promoting lines of both connection and responsibility between consumer and worker (Adams & Raisborough, 2008). However, a focus on green jobs and sustainable supply chains can riskily prioritise environmental issues over, rather than as well as, labour ones. Workers can be less visible in schemes that promote sustainable production, measured in such terms as carbon footprint, resource use and waste (Erikson et al, 2019; Weiler, 2020). This presents a dangerous misunderstanding of the integrated nature of climate crisis and human survival in the Anthropocene. Evidence from a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded COVID Rapid Response Project on vulnerable

supply chains (Bek and Timms, 2021), will be drawn on to show how attempts to promote sustainable supply chains were moved on in a time of crisis (Fairtrade, 2021). However, this research also follows the project's recommendations and 2022-23 industry efforts to implement these, where including worker input and human rights as part of sustainability in the longer term become more problematic. Investigating attempts to build a sector wide Sustainability Partnership show how conflicts, power dynamics and contrasting priorities play out, potentially impacting how sustainable work could be defined by an industry.

Frontline employee experiences of training and their exercise of agency: A case of Indian Business Process Outsourcing Industry

Chandrima Roy

(University of Leicester)

This paper focuses on the consequences of post-recession recovery strategies on the training efforts in the Indian Business Process Outsourcing industry and the experiences of frontline employees (FLEs). The developments in the Indian BPO sector post 2012 namely, extremely competitive market conditions, aggressive client demands and recovery strategies adopted to revive growth for BPO business in India following the 2008 economic crisis sets the context for the study.

Indian BPO research highlights the importance of training to meet high standards of service delivery expected by lead firms in a transnational BPO business. Training was an important component of service delivery and organisational capability building in the early years of the BPO sector growth (Subramanian, 2005; Budhwar et al., 2006 a & b, Wadhwa et al., 2008; D'Cruz and Noronha, 2009). Formal, structured, robust training and development processes focused mainly on cultural programming, voice and accent training, interpersonal skills development, products and systems training (Fernandez-Stark et al., 2011; Schlosser, 2007).

This empirical research examines BPO frontline employees' (FLEs) experiences of training in highly competitive post-recession recovery market in two case study companies representative of two major types of third party service providing organisations in India. Evidence from 49 semi-structured interviews revealed that the operationalisation of the post crisis recovery strategies such as 'full process management responsibility', becoming a 'transformational partner', providing superior service delivery using 'high-end analytics' created tremendous pressure to improve productivity and make 'flawless service delivery'. Approach to training was found to be driven by two core philosophies, "reducing rebooting time" and 'deep' domain specific knowledge. While training in the post crisis years stressed the indispensability of deepened domain knowledge, the reported practice was of constrained training provision such as shorter induction programmes, quick learning curves, completing training using interactive self-service and preparing for certifications in personal time. High work intensification, extensification, self-esteem issues and anxiety about performance were reported which manifested in different ways in the two types of BPO service providing organisations. While training is often an early casualty of recessions, the organisations in these cases did not dispense with training completely, but changed the modes of delivery, a finding consistent with evidence from other studies (Felstead et al., 2011; 2012a). Such changes involved an ideological and practical redefinition of training as more of an individual responsibility than an organizational one. Managers through sophisticated ideological mechanisms integrated workplace values of learning into the FLEs working lives in such a way that FLEs' interests ran parallel to those of the companies'. FLEs' interests and agency were found to be both enabled and constrained by prevailing institutional logics (Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992). FLEs' agency was strategically embedded in a project of self -management (Grey, 1994) in preparation for an alternative path of self-expression which included pursuit of a meaningful career outside of the BPO sector, higher studies abroad and building relationships with client organisations for securing recommendations. This study highlights the changing nature of agency and resistance in an empirical context which is representative of a new form of work.

Against the Grain: The transformative qualities of small-scale farming communities in Scotland in the context of the crises of capitalism.

Steven Speed

(University of Bolton / University of Manchester)

Small-scale farming communities in Scotland engaged in a combination of food sovereignty, agroecology, or land sovereignty have not only made themselves more resilient to the crises of capitalism but have done so by reducing their dependency upon it. What is more, during the recent crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit they were not only more able to sustain themselves when long food supply chains collapsed but were also able to increase their autonomy and sustainability through an increased demand for local food networks. Also, in certain areas, these strategies have transformed social relations and, at times, revealed alternative economic practices.

The research for this thesis was conducted over a 15 month period and primarily consisted of seasonal interviews with 14 small-scale food producers in Scotland. It has examined the transformative qualities of these communities through an adaptation of Erik Olin Wright's theory of transformation (Wright 2010) by drawing on David Harvey and John Holloway's analyses of capitalism and of strategies for social transformation. Through this framework the research has examined the unintended trajectories of change that emerge from the crisis of capitalism, the gaps and contradictions these crises have revealed, the relationships these strategies have with these crises as they reveal alternative economic practices, and the sustainability of these practices in the face of capitalism's ability to reproduce itself.

The research found that the transformative qualities of small-scale farming communities in Scotland are the ways in which these communities resist and, at times, reverse the reproduction of capitalism through their demand for autonomy and self-subsistence, particularly during crises. Ultimately, these are moments of withdrawal from, and non-participation in, capitalist social relations that are made possible, in the first instance, by access to land. In their entirety they should be thought of as being transformative towards an alternative rather than as an alternative themselves, but they do offer a glimpse of how an alternative might be achieved.

Room W119 – Resistance within contemporary employment relations

“A race to be second”: New technologies and resistance in the South African mining industry

Mattia Dessi

(University of Leeds)

In recent years, debates around the future of work have spread around multiple industries and sectors. The mining industry represents no exception. With the rise in popularity of digital and artificial intelligence technologies, mining companies and commentators have developed their own views on the “mine of the future”. In line with similar debates in other industries, the ideas around the future of mining are mostly speculative and based on several assumptions. The biggest being that i) technology is neutral and devoid of any social character, therefore it benefits everyone, and ii) that technological availability is automatically translated into technology adoption.

This paper aims at questioning these assumptions. The research is designed as a case study of the mining industry in South Africa. Through using an Operaista version of Labour Process Theory, it connects evidence coming from semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis, with the more abstract level of political economy to show an alternative perspective on technology adoption in mining.

In reference to the two assumptions mentioned above, the evidence suggests that i) technology is not neutral, in fact, workers tend to resist new technologies when they are perceived as an instrument of control/profit maximisation, and, through the union, to develop their own alternative paths to technological development. Furthermore, ii) a “race to be second” approach is often adopted by mining

companies when it comes to new technologies (i.e., wait for a competitor to adopt it, and see if it works), showing that technological availability is a condition necessary but not sufficient for technology adoption.

Further evidence also suggests that, even when new technologies are adopted, a managerial culture of profit maximization seems to undermine the health and safety benefits that are attached to more advanced ways of mining. Ultimately, this paper shows that technological development in the South African mining industry is if we exclude a handful of operations, delayed even if, in theory, possible. It could be therefore argued that capitalist relations of production obstruct the development of the productive forces, keeping the average level of technological adoption in the industry low and, most importantly, coercing workers into performing surplus labour in dangerous and potentially life-threatening conditions.

Tech-mediated resistance and traditional trade union: A case study of Kolkata App Cab Ola Uber Union, West Bengal

Ashique Ali Thuppilikkat, Dipsita Dhar, Priyank Chandra
(University of Toronto)

The digital labour platforms (DLPs) are a challenging site of unionization, particularly for the traditional trade unions whose focus had been mainly on the workers in industries, large business establishments and the public sector. This has initiated discussions on union revitalization and experimentation of new forms of unionism, including informal unionism, social movement unionism, informal cooperatives, platform cooperatives, hybrid trade unions and worker associations and networks to fight against the growing precarity of labour (Bensusán 2019; Fine 2011; Webster and Forrest 2019; Dhar and Thuppilikkat 2022; Webster et al. 2021; Marrone and Finotto 2019; Chesta et al. 2019; Salvagni 2022). These new forms of worker organizing reflected and questioned the existing form and nature of membership and worker organizing (Fine 2007, 354) in traditional trade unions and instead developed mostly horizontal leadership structures (and leaderless organizational structures) rather than strictly defining the inside-outside boundaries of union membership and exercising a hierarchical chain of leadership commands.

In this context, this paper explores how and why the Kolkata App Cab Ola Uber Union, affiliated with the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), a traditional trade union, operating in the Indian state of West Bengal became a successful model of organizing workers in the ride-sharing digital labour platforms (DLPs). In particular, we investigate a) how they exercised worker power against the DLPs and the State or how the traditional trade union renewed tripartite bargaining power? b) How do these traditional trade unions leverage information and communications technologies (ICTs) for worker organizing and resistance? This line of enquiry will help us understand how the traditional trade unions are "restoring their efficacy and relevance by innovating organizational forms, crafting identities and patterns of sociality, forging alliances, and remaking working classes," after being severely affected by "neoliberalism, austerity, financialization, and the tripling of the global proletariat" (Kasim 2020, 208) and more importantly, how labour is reimagining collective consciousness despite the capital re-shaping and transforming the labour relations.

The study is based on qualitative methods, mainly eight in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion with riders of the DLPs in Kolkata. We also had conversations while travelling with Ola/Uber cab workers, trade union leaders, and protest participants against the DLPs. The fieldwork lasted for two months and was carried out in July and August 2022.

Labour transformation across space and time: A case study of two villages in South India

Yadu C R
(RV University)

This article attempts to examine the labour and employment transition in the agriculture sector in India from a micro-level perspective. It is based on fieldwork conducted in two nearby villages in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which have been previously studied in 1994. Though the nature of change in agriculture production and local ecology is similar in both the study villages, the trajectory of change

in the agrarian labour market varied between them. This article delves into the processes of change that resulted in differentiated labour market outcomes in the two villages and use its insights to throw light on the major macroeconomic debates on rural labour and employment transition in India.

While commodification of labour smoothly proceeded in Vinayagapuram, the village of Veerasambanur had a less commoditized labour scenario. Major differences were observed in the labour process, labour relations, wage trends and even the impact of macroeconomic policies on the labour market in the respective villages. Though the system of attached labour obliterated in both the villages, exchange labour was found to be significantly present in Veerasambanur. While Veerasambanur was marked by a cultivator-labourer nexus which prevented collective action by the labourers, Vinayagapuram had a neat separation between the cultivators and the wage labourers. While conditions in Vinayagapuram are facilitative of consistent wage increases, the wage trends were erratic and inconsistent in Veerasambanur. The particularistic features of social relation of agrarian employment not only caused a divergence in the long-term wage trends between the villages, but it has also affected the efficacy of government measures of local employment generation.

Even amidst differences, the gendered constitution of the agrarian labour force was a major point of similarity between the study villages. It is found that women's unpaid work has a major role in sustaining the households engaged in farming. While the agrarian crisis, in general, caused men to out-migrate, the working of the social institutions ensures that women continue to concentrate in the agriculture sector, disproportionately bearing the work burden. Thus the 'feminisation of agriculture' would also mean the 'feminisation of agrarian crisis'.

The study finds that the labour transition in these villages, on the whole, is socially and ecologically embedded.

Managerial resistance as suggestive of shifting class boundaries

Ari Stillman

(University of Edinburgh)

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, long-standing issues of financial insecurity, occupational precarity, wage slavery, and other grievances against capitalism have gained new prominence manifesting in a range of phenomena from the Great Resignation to Quiet Quitting. Discourse around such grievances have broadly been construed as Antiwork, a loose ideology referring to resistance to capitalism, and is exemplified by a 2.5M-member Reddit community by the same name. Within the r/Antiwork community, members discuss strategies and tactics for resistance and advocate for class solidarity against capitalists and their lackeys.

While it follows that the sentiment within r/Antiwork is actively hostile to management as an ideal type, what is surprising is the occurrence of managers in the community who post testimonials about the impact exposure to r/Antiwork has had on their workplace ideology and behaviors. These managers reveal how they have adjusted their interactions with subordinates and altered policy to be more pro-labor. They then share the results such actions have had on their team, which in turn is met with wide approbation by members of r/Antiwork.

Although sharing such occurrences of managerial conversion are not common, they are important to examine for three reasons. First, given changing structural factors in the labor economy, some managers who once perceived themselves as occupationally secure have found themselves (and their employees) threatened with precarity. Second, what John and Barbara Ehrenreich referred to as the 'objectively antagonistic' relationship between worker and management is called into question as the latter begins to realize they have more homophily with workers than owners. Third, managers seeming to act against their own (sub)class interests suggest a reevaluation of both categorical identities of resisters and what counts as resistance.

To illuminate these matters, I draw from literature problematizing the 'contradictory class location' of managers beginning with Marx, continuing with the class analysis of Erik Olin Wright, and contextualizing recent developments in management with Boltanski and Chiapello's New Spirit of Capitalism. Doing so allows me draw from historical trajectories as well as modern approaches in situating the emergent managerial behavior under investigation. I also engage substantially with James Scott's classic *Weapons of the Weak* and am particularly indebted to his concept of 'infrapolitics' by

which I assess the 'hidden transcripts' of managerial resistance. Methodologically, I began this study with digital ethnography of r/Antiwork for 1.5 years, scraped the subreddit for data to identify posts by and about managers, and am currently in the process of interviewing managers about their experiences with r/Antiwork that inspired workplace changes and details of the content of their resistance. By the end of the summer, I will have conducted a sufficient number of interviews to share insights with and solicit feedback from other scholars.

At stake in this research is a reevaluation of traditional class boundaries and what that might portend for class consciousness in the near future.

WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

PAPER SESSION 3

16:30-18:00

Gender and intersectional inequalities within the workplace

Is flexible working a panacea? The effects of the pandemic on divisions of paid and domestic work amongst heterosexual couples with children

Emily Christopher

(Aston University)

Temporal and spatial flexibility is considered fundamental in helping workers to strike a balance between work and private/family demands. In theory providing workers with control over when and where to work allows them to balance the demands of life outside of work while also ensuring opportunities for leisure. However flexible working might not be the panacea for work-family conflict that we might think. Research suggests that a 'flexibility paradox' (Chung, 2022) operates in which those working flexibly experience stigma, longer working hours, work intensification, the blurring of boundaries and self-exploitation (Chung et al, 2020; Felstead and Henseke, 2017; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). Women and men experience these differently in the context of persistent cultural norms around gender roles which see men in breadwinner terms and women as the natural carers of children. Until recently there has been little hope in workers' ability to resist the negative outcomes of flexible working. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic we saw significant changes to the way Britain worked particularly in sectors for which home working was possible. Given the significant amount of extra labour which lockdowns produced in terms of childcare and household work, and that flexibility was imposed by governments and employers rather than a request from workers themselves, an opportunity arose for a systemic shift in work cultures, workloads and subsequently how couples divide paid and unpaid work between them.

This paper explores whether such a shift occurred by examining heterosexual working parents couples' experiences of working flexibly during the pandemic and beyond, and its impact on how they divide childcare and housework. It presents findings from a UK West Midlands based longitudinal study in which 25 heterosexual working parent couples were interviewed together in 2014/15 and then again in 2022/23. Across both sets of interviews couples were asked about their working practices including flexible working. Utilising a creative participatory technique called the 'Household Portrait' couples were also asked to work together to create their own 'Household Portrait' showing how they divide between them over 25 housework and childcare tasks, providing reasons for these divisions. In this paper I argue that although home working brought about positive changes such as an increased sharing of specific childcare tasks, gendered divisions of housework remained remarkably consistent, illustrating the complexity of how task divisions are negotiated between couples and how flexible working may play a part. Long working hours, work intensification and the blurring of home- work boundaries were prominent in couples' stories, evidencing the continuing relevance of the 'flexibility paradox' and the persistence of workloads in line with the adult worker image (Acker, 1990). Workers' self-surveillance (Foucault, 1975) and the internalising of these working conditions as an inevitable consequence of the 'choices' they make mean negative flexible working outcomes are left unchallenged, since resistance is not deemed necessary.

Moving beyond COVID-19: Flexible Working Arrangements, for all or for just for some?

Dominic Lo, Nina Teasdale

(Glasgow Caledonian University)

The introduction of lockdown measures in March 2020 led to immediate and large-scale use of home and flexible working arrangements (FWAs) in the UK and similarly across different countries in the world, at different times in the COVID-19 crisis. This highlighted the potential for profound change for the future of work. Yet, during the pandemic, the use of home working and other forms of FWAs was not universal. Instead, they were used predominantly by those in higher-paid occupations (60%) compared to those in working-class jobs (23%), suggesting a 'two-tiered' system. While extant research shows that FWAs are deeply gendered, the classed dimensions of FWAs have received less attention. Adopting an intersectional lens, this paper contributes to this gap in the evidence base, drawing on pilot research being undertaken in a UK case study organisation that sets out to interrogate how FWAs have been experienced by workers in lower-level occupational positions both during the COVID-19 pandemic and moving out of it. The research offers a novel complement to studies that tend to focus on those working in the professions and management, and the mainly survey-based literature on COVID-19 and FWAs. Case study access has been negotiated to a large financial services institution, allowing for the exploration of multiple perspectives within a bounded-context, along with consideration of the organisational culture in which policies are enacted. Through qualitative interviews with organisational Human Resource (HR) representatives, line managers and different types and levels of workers, the following research questions are explored:

1. What is the organisation's FWAs policy and how has such policy changed or been adapted following the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the views and perceptions of the organisation's HR personnel on their role in the implementation of FWAs?
3. What are the views and perceptions of line managers and their experiences of the operational challenges - including resistance to, and the rewards – of implementing FWAs?
4. What are workers understandings, perceptions and experiences of the organisation's FWAs and what is available to them? How does occupational status and gender, and other dimensions of social positionality influence these experiences?

Drawing upon theories of translation and post-structuralist understandings of policies as having 'complex social lives' in the ways they are implemented (or translated), the paper considers the different types of FWAs that are available to different workers and the ways they 'play out' along not only along gendered, but classed lines. The paper points to advancing both theory and practice through the privileging of the experiences of 'unheard voices' and what we refer to as a complex picture of 'micro-resistances' around FWAs at differing levels within the case study organisation. In doing so, we offer a more nuanced understanding and intersectional conceptualisation of the social and organisational power relations in which flexible working arrangements are situated. To support policy and organisational practice, it is argued that organisations must reflect on the unintended outcomes of well-meaning policies such as FWAs to ensure they really are for all and not just for some.

Can homeworkers have more stable work schedules? A time-use approach to measure work schedule instability

Wei Zhuang, Zhuofei Lu

(The University of Manchester)

Despite a wealth of research on the consequences of work schedule instability for workers' well-being, few studies measure work schedule instability with objective time-use data and investigate how working from home shapes work schedule instability across gender and occupational class. Using data from the latest UK time use survey 2020-2021 and OLS regressions, this study develops a new time-use index, 'mismatched work episodes between workdays', to measure work schedule instability and investigates how it relates to working from home and the intersection of gender and class. Results show that homeworkers tend to have less work schedule instability, while this association is reversed among men in the lower occupational classes (i.e., routine and manual). Men in the lower occupational classes tend

to suffer more work schedule instability when working from home. We recommend that policymakers and organisations should develop gender-class-sensitive approaches when promoting working from home.

Mothers in the margins: 'Maternal body' and work experiences of mothers in low-income jobs in Nigeria

Blessing Chukwuka, Denise Currie, Heike Schroder
(Queen's University Belfast)

Our study explores the impact of the 'maternal body' on work-related processes and outcomes among mothers in low-income jobs in Nigeria, drawing on research intensity around gendered embodiment in the workplace. The 'maternal body' concept, referring to all aspects of women's embodiment visible during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and child-nurturing (Gatrell et al., 2017; Tyler, 2000; Haynes, 2008), is understudied in management field despite its significance. The competing identities of the 'ideal worker' and the 'ideal mother' have proven to be more challenging for low-income mothers, who have 'localized, resource-restricted, and fluctuating support networks' (Prabhakar, Stolterman, and Šabanović. 2019; p. 2). As opposed to mothers who are high income earners and occupy professional, managerial or leadership roles. Moreso, the scanty research of maternal body experiences among global southern women in low-income jobs highlights the need for this study.

Our paper documents the lived experiences of working mothers and interrogates the maternal body at work among women who have limited employment opportunities, displaced resources, protection, and power to shape employment outcomes and/or dialogue their rights as pregnant or new mothers within their organisation. Examining the structural and socio-cultural factors responsible for maternal rights utilization at work and the interplay between socio-economic status, maternity, and employment, our study reviews existing literature around factors affecting maternal body at work depicting a misalignment between policies and actual practices of how working mothers are treated in the workplace.

Theoretically, our study adopts institutional logics perspective as the lens through which this study is explored, probing for the interaction of logics and conflicting values between the mother and/or maternal body and the workplace, and how these conflicting logics can coexist to inform strategies for navigating the experience of the maternal body at work to ensure better maternal and employment outcomes. Institutional logics are often shaped by powerful actors and institutions that seek to maintain their dominance and control over resources and decision-making processes. Adopting this perspective at the micro-level analysis showed that in low-income private job settings, employers hold the dominant institutional logic that prioritizes productivity and profitability over the well-being of their employees, including mothers.

Using thematic analysis, the study analyses the narratives of 20 low-income working mothers sampled via purposive and snowballing techniques, examining the institutional factors that shape their work experiences. Our findings depict three major themes: economic necessity, normalisation and internalisation of work demands, and extent of supportive network and agency. This suggests that lived experiences of low-income working mothers are shaped and conflicted by multiple institutional logics, the market capitalist logic driven by productivity, leads to the internalisation of negative experiences and work demands. More so, the family logics improves employment chances for other women through the existence of supportive networks and agency. We conclude that mothers who are low-income earners in global southern communities are marginalised based on their socio-economic status and hence internalise and normalise negative maternal body experiences at work. However, the existence of agency and support ensures that mothers resist dominant market capitalist logic and negotiate their work demands.

Room W010B – Marginalised work and workers, risk and resistance in precarious places

Social security in the independent performing arts: System failure, artists' perceptions and need for reform

Hannah Speicher

(Leibniz University Hannover)

Working conditions in the independent performing arts mirror those in the cultural industries: project-based work, low income, contingent work, lack of social security, self-exploitation and high market pressure, but also high intrinsic motivation (art for art's sake) and meaningful work (Blair, 2001; Eikhof & Haunschild 2006, 2007; McKinlay & Smith, 2009; Menger, 1999). In the independent performing arts, self-employment and, more and more often, hybrid combinations of self-employment, employment contracts and even employer status are typical and proliferating. Funding systems in most European countries subsidize artistic projects at the level of minimum wages and do not account for work that is necessary beyond a single project such as preparation of proposals, documentation, training, administration etc. Phases of unpaid work are therefore the norm. A consequence for most independent performing artists is that social security is hazardous and old age poverty is a widespread danger. Fostered by the labour market consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, these working and social conditions have been debated at political level and in the wider public.

One result of these debates was that the German Association of Independent Performing Arts (BFDK) could negotiate with the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that a research project, "Systemcheck", is funded. The aim of this project (2021-2023) is to analyse the social security conditions of independent performing artists and to develop recommendations for a reform of the existing social security system. The project follows a participative research approach and comprises workshops, thematic dossiers, a European good practice analysis as well as a qualitative and a quantitative study.

In our paper, we focus on the qualitative study and analyse (1) how independent performing artists perceive and cope with precarious working conditions and social security threats, (2) how they reconcile meaning and economic sustainability, and (3) what the needs for a reform of the social security system are.

Our study is based on 24 problem-centred interviews with independent performing artists complemented by group interviews with representatives of funding organisations and artists with disabilities. We refer to Hirschman's (1970) typology of individuals' reactions to dissatisfying working conditions, exit, voice and loyalty, in order to interpret and structure our respondents' accounts of how they deal with contradictions and tensions in their working lives. Furthermore, we could identify three different types of coping strategies addressing precariousness and social security risks. We observed worrisome ("sorgenfrei"), unworried ("sorglos") and worried ("sorgenvoll") artists. Whereas a smaller group endows economic capital from other sources (such as heritage, family income) and is therefore worrisome, another larger group is unworried despite a lack of economic capital and high social risks. These artists show different degrees of cynicism and emphasize to be used to live in poverty. The third group is significantly worried about their social situation, seeking alternative sources of income and considering an exit from the industry.

We further explain, explore and interpret these empirical results in our full paper and discuss consequences for social security reform at policy level.

Cleaning up risk in the post-Weinstein era: The emerging role of intimacy coordinators in film and TV

Heike Doering

(Cardiff University)

In recent years, working conditions in the film and TV industry have been brought into the spotlight. Pervasive gender, class and race inequality in the industry has been demonstrated (Randle et al. 2014, Eikhof et al. 2018). Recent research has described the way in which sexual harassment had become normalised in the cultural industries (Hennekam and Bennett 2017). Attention in the media has also been directed to widespread abuses of power, sexual harassment and bullying following the success of social movements and campaigns, such as #Me Too and Time's Up, in highlighting pervasive gender inequalities in film and TV (Milner and Gregory, 2021).

The introduction of intimacy coordinators in film and TV has been widely seen as an attempt to address the "systemic and institutionalised histories" of gendered power imbalances (Cobb and Horeck 2018). In 2018, HBO, as a first mover, introduced a requirement for intimacy coordinators to be involved in film and television drama sets. Other major players in the industry (Amazon, Netflix, BBC) soon followed suit. An intimacy coordinator is "an advocate, a liaison between actors and production ... in regard to nudity and simulated sex" (Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Actors). They are involved in different roles throughout the process, e.g. advising during pre-production as well as during the shooting of scenes (Sørensen, 2021) or post-production.

The research project explores the question to what extent can intimacy coordinators' work be seen as risk management in a context of normalised wrongdoing. The paper presents an analysis of publicly available documents by national screen agencies, guilds and unions as well as standards developed by organisations providing training in the area (US, UK, FIN, RSA,NZ, AUS). Across the varying guidelines, the vulnerable performer in an industry characterised by power imbalances stands out. These accounts are contrasted with accounts of the skilled intimacy professional whose role is to advocate, educate and protect. In publicly available interviews, intimacy professionals have described the way in which their work has been "framed by discourses that are both 'dirty' and 'clean'" (Galazka and O'Mahoney, 2021). Their focus on "hygiene" in the form of structures, protocols, and practices of separating the private from the public body, aims to address actors' vulnerability due to a highly competitive labour market. The paper therefore engages with ideas of dirty work as intimacy coordinators "clean up" risky practices in the production of intimacy. At the same time, intimacy coordinators have highlighted the tensions around this construction of skills and professional identity between intimacy coordinators and directors as well as actors.

Is it the past or is it the present? Employment quality, past unemployment, psychological distress and mental well-being in the UK

Rebeka Balogh, Deborah De Moortel, Sylvie Gadeyne, Julie Vanderleyden, Chris Warhurst, Christophe Vanroelen

(Vrije Universiteit Brussel; University of Warwick)

Background Low employment quality has been associated with adverse mental health. Past unemployment may also be linked to reduced mental health and wellbeing later on and may influence subsequent employment quality. However, knowledge on the role (past) unemployment history may play in the association of (present) employment quality and mental health and well-being is scarce. This paper aims to fill this gap. **Methods** We drew on a subsample of employees aged 25 to 60 from wave 4 of the UK Household Longitudinal Study. We applied Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to derive typologies of employment quality within 6 dimensions: 1) Employment security, 2) Income, 3) Workers' rights, 4) Working time, 5) Employability, and 6) Collective organisation. We fitted logistic regressions to assess the links between employment quality, lifetime unemployment, and mental well-being and psychological distress (measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and the 12-item General Health Questionnaire, respectively). **Results** The LCA yielded an optimal solution of 6 employment quality clusters, with some similarities to previous typologies. Men and women in precarious employment forms characterised by unfavourable employment conditions including lower labour income and potential underemployment reported higher odds for low mental well-being (men odds ratio (OR):1.55, 95% confidence interval (CI):1.06-2.25; women OR:1.37, 95% CI:1.04-1.8), and

so did women in precarious forms characterised by, amongst others, lower labour income and more prevalent long and irregular hours (OR:1.44, 95% CI:1.07-1.92), compared to those in the most standard and favourable arrangement. Some further well-being inequalities were observed across the employment quality spectrum. Simultaneously, prior unemployment was also linked to reduced well-being among both genders, with no dose-response relationship. Precarious clusters were, however, not linked to increased odds of psychological distress. Conclusions Men and women in low employment quality or with prior unemployment experience had higher odds of low mental well-being in the UK. Our analysis shows the need to consider employment trajectories and how past and present (un)employment may interact.

How heteronormative standpoint shapes the sexual assault response and harassment services for LGBTQ+ students and staff at a university in England

Madelina Naick

(Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Kent)

How have universities responded to improving the safety of students and staff on campus through voluntary action? To answer this question a small-study study has drawn on in-depth interviews with staff volunteers working in harassment and sexual assault reporting services offered by a large university in England designed to support staff and students. By exploring gendered policies, marginalization and vulnerability this study informed discourse about LGBTQ+ staff and student experience at University. This article gives an insight into the reporting process for staff and students and investigates how volunteers perceive the university response to harassment and sexual assault within the LGBTQ+ community. This study is based on interviews with 8 volunteers in a large university with two campus that employ 3967 staff and supports a population of approximately 19,000 students. The research aimed to address the following: (1) what are the response processes in place for LGBTQ+ staff and students? (2) Do LGBTQ+ staff and students report harassment or sexual assault? (3) Do volunteers identify specific issues for LGBTQ+ staff and students? The framework approach was chosen to underpin analysis, as it was a small sample and this helped in the development of a robust qualitative method of data analysis applied to the interview data, which identified recurrent and important final themes. Discourse analysis was used in the second phase of analysis to gain greater depth and understand the richness of the language used by participants within each theme. Three main themes emerged from the analysis: 1) Heteronormative, this found services were designed around a traditional model of male and female reporting and it did not recognise the LGBTQ+ experience or the need for change in language. 2) Witness, although most volunteers did not have direct experience of supporting someone that identifies as LGBTQ+ within their role. There appears to be evidence of events involving harassment or incidences at work reported elsewhere. 3) Obligatory is evident when volunteers talk about LGBTQ+ communities in universities, there is an assumption that all wellbeing and social aspects relative to LGBTQ+ population will be met there. Overall the findings from this study show the complexity of providing a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals and the offer of 'safe spaces' for reporting harassment and/or sexual assault requires more meaningful consideration. Targeted harassment and sexual assaults of LGBTQ+ staff and students within university continue to be under-estimated. The knowledge that response process is biased towards a heteronormative approach does not seem to alter the systematic discourse of services. Despite the presence of services, the rigid response practice could potentially silence the voice of LGBTQ+ community, and have resulting inequalities in experience and reporting outcomes.

Room W002 – Open Stream One

Working for or working with AI? An empirical investigation into the relationship between AI technologies, job autonomy and (management) control in UK establishments

Danat Valizade, Felix Schulz, Mark Stuart

(University of Leeds)

Edwards' (1979) introduced the term 'technical control' to stress the use of machines and other technological features as one form of management control. Almost half a century later, the use of

artificial intelligence (AI) technologies as new regimes of control has become a focus of debate among employment relation scholars (Spencer, 2017; Veen et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019). Does AI technology only enslave workers by means of control? Or is the relationship perhaps more ambiguous, including dimensions of both autonomy and control, that vary depending on agential and structural forces (Bader and Kaiser, 2017; Spencer, 2017; Wood et al., 2019)? Research on the autonomy-granting and control-imposing features of AI technologies at work is predominantly based on qualitative research in the platform or gig economy (Gandini, 2019; Heiland, 2021; Shapiro, 2017). This limits any conclusions about the broader outcomes of AI technologies for autonomy and control throughout the economy and for different forms of work and employment.

To remedy this limitation, we use a novel, representative survey of UK employers' digital practices at work to investigate the relationships between employers' use of AI-powered digital technologies and management practices of job autonomy and management control. We move beyond a deterministic understanding of the effect of technology on work practices and draw on labour process theories (Edwards, 1979; Friedman, 1977; Hyman, 1987; Thompson and Laaser, 2021). Next to examining the role of management intention when investing in these new digital technologies as an agential force, we analyse the moderating role of occupational skill groups and forms of institutional worker representation as structural forces in the work outcomes of AI-powered digital technologies. We apply an integrative model that combines traditional logistic regression models with the machine learning application.

Findings suggest that the implementation of AI technologies alone is neither a strong predictor of more management control nor of more employee job autonomy. The type of work performed and the importance of it for the labour process, as modelled by employees' occupational skill group is a decisive factor in the association between AI technologies and autonomy or control. Additionally, structural factors constraining management's ability to use technologies in certain ways, in this case, forms of institutional worker representation, increase the likelihood of autonomy-granting use, while decreasing the control-imposing use of AI technologies at work.

Our findings are in line with a rare representative study in Denmark by Holm and Lorenz (2022), wherein the authors find that higher-skilled occupational groups are more likely to enjoy the autonomy-granting features of AI-powered digital technologies. We also extend their work by including the crucial role of forms of worker representation as employee voice channels. Overall, the results a) give a first, robust glimpse at UK employers' work practices linked to AI technologies and b) stress the non-deterministic outcome of new forms of technology for work practices and work outcomes.

Substituting, complementing and augmenting human labour with AI: Evidence from case study research in UK manufacturing and finance

William Hunt, Esme Terry, Steve Rolf

(University of Sussex)

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on work and employment has received considerable attention within academic and industry circles during the last decade. Much of the debate has focused on the potential use of AI to automate tasks and therefore replace human labour (i.e. substitution effects) (e.g. Frey and Osborne, 2017; Arntz, Gregory and Zierhan, 2016). Only more recently has attention turned to the potential for such automation technologies to be used in ways which complement and augment human labour (Autor, 2015; Levy, 2018), possibly creating as well as destroying jobs (Hunt, Sarkar and Warhurst, 2022). However, there is little detailed research into the pathways through which these discrete effects can be brought about within organisations.

Drawing on case study data from the UK, as part of a large OECD study looking at AI use cases in the financial services and manufacturing sectors, we explore the ways in which AI is deployed and the subsequent effects on human labour, which is variously substituted, complemented and/or augmented by automation technologies. We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with managers, workers, AI developers and union officials (n= 46) across six financial services firms and three manufacturing firms, with each case study focusing on a specific use case of AI. We find that while the affordances of AI typically lend themselves to substitute, complement and/or augment human labour (sometimes in combination), the extent to which AI is effective in doing so depends on the complex interplay of a number of factors including the motivations of management, the level of worker consultation, and technological challenges and limitations. While recognising the methodological

limitations of our sample, we find little evidence of wholesale automation of jobs, but significant evidence of the automation of tasks aimed at enhancing workers' productivity and/or their capacities. Where labour substitution was explicitly intended, the pace at which the planned automation would replace jobs was gradual, due to the variety and volume of resources (investment, time, effort, data and expertise) needed to automate the complex tasks carried out by the workers affected.

We contribute to the growing body of literature around AI and work by suggesting that simplistic notions of technological change, contained in debates around AI adoption and the implications for jobs and workers, are overly deterministic. Instead, we argue that technology use and consequences for workers is shaped by the actors involved (e.g. management, developers and workers), albeit within technical limitations, although actors' agency and influence levels are unequal. Conceptually, we centre tensions between strategic and operational management, and between workers and management, to show how AI deployment produces differential effects contingent upon organisational structure and managerial agency.

The varieties of workplace AI technologies: The new political economy of work and employment relations

Didem Ozkiziltan, Fabio Landini

(University of Parma)

The growing deployment of workplace AI tools (WAIT) has sparked a vibrant academic discussion on, for instance, the number of jobs to be lost to smart machines, algorithmic management practices paving the way for unfair and exploitative workplace conditions and the importance of political intervention as well workers' voice and collective bargaining in governing the use of algorithms at the workplace. However, these debates have largely neglected the processes behind the AI development as well as the endogenous features of AI technologies that change over time and reflect the values, ideologies, and worldviews of the society in which they emerge.

The main questions this research seeks to address is: a) What are the socio-institutional factors that affect the varieties of workplace AI digitalisation and their impact on work and employment relations across the advanced market economies? b) What are the implications of multiple WAIT trajectories across countries for the design of suitable models of AI governance? To address these questions, the research adopts a political economy lens and develops a conceptual framework offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors (micro, meso and macro) affecting both the development and the adoption of WAIT across the advanced market economies. To operationalise this approach, it places selected countries (e.g. US, Germany, Italy) that are representative of distinct models of capitalism against the background of their socioeconomic and political dynamics and identifies a set of intertwined issues to be focused on: the varieties of AI design and development, the heterogeneity of countries' capitalist development paths, the actors' ethical reflections and social values, the national and international debates on technology and the existing legal framework and regulations.

The research theoretically builds on and integrates the scholarly debates across and insights from the socio-technical systems and the varieties of capitalism literatures. Empirically, it integrates and interprets the findings from interviews of workers and employers from the companies developing as well as from those adopting WAIT, business consultants, trade union specialists and academic experts. The early findings of the study based on desk research indicates that the different capitalist development paths also construct varieties of capitalist digitalisation across the advanced market economies. These differences largely build on the way WAIT development and adoption are embedded in broader political, economic and social dynamics, shaping and navigating the political economy of employment relations in digitalised workplaces in a way to maintain and strengthen the existing balance of power between the workers and employers.

The study brings about two distinct contributions to the literature. First, it offers a theoretically grounded political economy approach to the understanding of the convergences and divergences between the workplace digitalisations in different advanced market economies. Second, it provides an empirical understanding of how the companies' WAIT development and adoption interact with and affect each other in different types of capitalist economies in a way to protect and reinforce the prevailing power relations in employment relations.

Displacement, de-skilling and de-intensification in attitudes towards technological changes in the future of work

Ariadne Vromen, Brendan Churchill, Leah Ruppanner

(Australian National University)

This paper examines how expectations about technological changes in the future of work shape preferences for policy interventions. It contrasts fears of worker displacement by automation, platform work, or deskilling via those with better technological skills, with hopefulness for a de-intensified lifestyle based on work-life balance, safer work and less stress. Developing three distinct dimensions of how citizens expect work to change in the future is useful for analysing the salience among the general public of policy interventions that prepare the workforce for technological change at work. We contrasted policies for increased individual level training, for older and younger workers, with more structural labour market policy interventions, such as taxing technology companies, basic income, or shorter working hours. This paper draws on an original survey dataset about the future of work from a national survey of Australians (n=1000) administered at the last federal election in May 2022. Using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques, our analysis demonstrates how inherent assumptions about displacement, deskilling and deintensification in the future of work shape preferences for type of government intervention, more than socio-demographics. We find that respondents who fear that workers will be displaced by automation and platform work were associated with greater support for introducing a basic income, but this was not associated with support for limiting hours to share across more workers, or for taxing technology companies more. Respondents who were more hopeful for de-intensification in the future of work, however, were more supportive of limiting hours; and those who were worried about deskilling were more supportive of taxing technology companies. All three attitudinal dispositions –displacement, de-intensification and deskilling– were associated with greater support for individual training for younger and older people. Taken together, these results suggest that new policy initiatives that could structurally reform the labour market, beyond training targeted at individuals, will only build support and salience with the general public by reframing the problems and opportunities in the future of work. A failure to recognise that there are distinct and competing dimensions in how citizens expect work to change will make it easier for largescale interventions, such as a four day working week or basic income, to be resisted by employers and policy-makers.

Room W003 – PhD Showcase

Refusal of work and work-for-refusal: Perspective of the unemployed

Alicja Palecka

(Warsaw University)

Except widely acknowledged functions of work (for example those indicated by Jahoda [1982] as “latent”), one can distinguish a function which is not widely recognized and researched, perhaps because of its marginality: a function of enabling resistance to work. Work-for-refusal means short-term employment in order to be able to later live on unemployment benefit and/or savings. Therefore it is connected and dependable on another function of work: provision of social security. In his ethnography of refusal of work David Frayne [2015] noticed that full resignation from employment is rarely possible. Therefore work-for-refusal is necessary for most idlers. I find this kind of motivation for work among my interviewees as well. However, unlike Frayne, I did not interview people who self-identified as idlers, that is those who consciously and willingly refuse to work. I was looking for formally unemployed people registered in the state job centres. While many of my interviewees were looking for employment, some resisted it, for various reasons. By interviewing them I was able to research work refusal which was not politically or ideologically motivated or even fully conscious, as some of research participants whose actions indicated work refusal, claimed that they are ready to take a job.

The aim of the paper is to analyse the reasons and motivations for work refusal. Some, like self-preservation or need of freedom, were already noticed by Frayne. These are internal motivations, to which I add structural and biographical conditions, which prompt or enable people to refuse to work, such as embeddedness in social support networks or relative stability of ‘secure unemployment’ [Fryer,

1998]. In the analysis I refer to Dorothy Smith's [2005] Institutional Ethnography approach which enables mapping formal and informal institutions from people's, in this case, the unemployed, standpoint.

Data used in this paper comes from two research projects: "Information technologies in public policy. Critical analysis of the profiling the unemployed in Poland" (directed by Karolina Sztandar-Sztanderska, financed by National Science Centre, Poland, project no. 2016/23/B/HS5/00889), and "Negotiating norms if Polish labour market institutions. Perspective of the unemployed" (directed by Alicja Pałęcka, financed by National Science Centre, Poland, project no. 2018/31/N/HS6/01964), which was aiming at the reconstruction of the meaning of work, as seen by the formally unemployed. 69 in depth interviews with the unemployed were gathered in total in various locations in Poland (two big cities and two small towns). In some cases I conducted more than one interview with research participants, as well as followed some of them in job centres or visited them at their homes to conduct observations.

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Does unemployment bring entry barriers into employment statuses?

Diane Szu-Ying Ho

(University of Tuebingen, Germany)

INTRODUCTION: According to the signaling theory perspective, unemployment brings scar effects on workers. Unemployment thus carries signals of less productivity of workers and affects the possibility for them to search for the next jobs. This study investigated whether workers' experience of unemployment creates obstacles for them to find subsequent jobs. I compared the likelihood for the unemployed to enter various employment statuses, such as employers, solo self-employed workers, standard workers, nonstandard workers and family enterprise workers. The likelihood of entering various employment statuses reflects the entry barriers for unemployed workers to find jobs. This would also reveal meanings of the segmentation of employment statuses to show that workers don't possess an equal opportunity to enter each employment status.

METHOD: I used Taiwan as a case to discuss the unemployment effects of searching for jobs in the East Asian context. The analysis data is a combined work history dataset from the 2005 and 2017 Taiwan Social Change Survey. This data contains the retrospective work information of workers across over a half-century from 1941 to 2017. I adopted a "person-month" discrete-time event history approach and used a multinomial logistic regression. This study belonged to part of my doctoral dissertation which I received a Ph.D. degree within two years. I added more analysis data and revised the research design. I did the model analysis and have been working on making the conceptual framework and the discourse of this study more coherent.

FINDING: The results suggested that the unemployed were more likely to become solo self-employed workers, standard workers, and nonstandard workers than workers. The unemployed were less likely to enter family enterprises. This revealed that the unemployed were more likely to enter solo self-employed, standard, and nonstandard jobs to put across unemployment. The family enterprise had a certain entry barrier that only those workers whose family ran a family enterprise had a chance to find family enterprise jobs. In addition, when considering the cumulative effects of unemployment, workers with more unemployment spells were more likely to become solo self-employed workers and were less likely to become standard workers. It inferred that although workers might enter standard employment to end their unemployed status, unemployment still brought obstacles for them to become standard

workers. Solo self-employment had fewer entry barriers for unemployed workers due to starting up the business themselves.

CONTRIBUTION: The contribution of this study is to examine the unemployment effects on workers to find subsequent jobs in an East Asian labor market. I investigated the likelihood of unemployed workers to enter various employment statuses to reveal the entry barriers between employment statuses. This study wished to add more discussion on the segmentation between employment statuses and the inequality of the labour market.

Non-take-up of in-work benefits: Designing policies to reduce stigma, exclusion and bracket creep

Diego Munoz Higuera, Stephan Köppe, Rafael Granell, Amadeo Fuenmayor
(University of Valencia; University College Dublin)

Workfare schemes were introduced to bring the in-active into the labour market and promote work as the main path out of poverty, but with the result that in-work poverty emerged as a new risk. Ireland already pioneered a specific in-work benefit, the Working Family Payment (WFP), in the 1980s to mitigate in-work poverty. Yet, we show that non-take-up of the means-tested scheme is a major contributor to in-work poverty.

As far as we know, this is the first paper that studies the impact of non-take-up in a wage-supplement scheme, specifically the Working Family Payment. Non-take-up refers to eligible households, but ultimately do not receive the WFP. We use EU-SILC from 2014 to 2020 to estimate non-take-up and analyse the demographic, labour market and economic drivers for the non-take-up.

We confirm that working parents do not make up the major share of families with children living in poverty, but still are a significant contributor. We find that non-take-up in the Working Family Payment declines from 76% to 63% between 2014 and 2020. The main reason for the decline of non-take-up rates is related to a decline in the number of households entitled each year, as the benefit is not indexed to inflation.

A Heckman selection model is used to assess the drivers of non-take-up. We conclude that non-take-up is influenced by socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the household, which largely confirms previous findings in the literature. However, for the first time, the relationship between work intensity of employment and non-take-up is assessed. Couple-earner households have higher non-take-up rates and households with a self-employed member are less likely to claim the benefit.

Another relevant, and novel, factor is underemployment. Households that want to work more than 30 hours, but cannot find adequate work, have a higher risk of non-take-up. We link this to zero-hours contracts, which are very common in Anglo-Saxon countries, and the stigma associated with claiming benefits.

We also identify outdated policy design effects for self-employed. Households with self-employed workers have a high likelihood to meet the income and work requirements and could claim the WFP. Yet, self-employed are excluded by design, which affects precarious gig workers disproportionately. While the exclusion of self-employed workers reduces moral hazard issues for benefit fraud of traditional self-employed businesses, who might only work the required minimum hours to claim the benefit. This old policy design excludes self-employed gig workers that emerged in the 2010s.

Therefore, policy proposals such as automatic enrolment or tax credits would reduce non-take-up and ultimately reduce the in-work poverty rate.

Fight, flight, or make it work: Exploring workers' practices navigating tensions between the promise and reality of microwork

Ryan Morgan
(Erasmus University Rotterdam)

The platformisation of labour, underway since the early 2000s, has accelerated in the wake of recent global events. While some workers' resistance efforts have garnered considerable attention - i.e. Uber

drivers - most platform labour struggles remain practically invisible to the public. A growing body of research, such as Gray and Suri's (2019) seminal investigation of "ghost work", has exposed the isolating, alienating, and exploitative conditions encountered on these platforms. Particularly overlooked is the growing population working on microwork platforms - digital labour platforms offering small tasks, requiring few skills, often with little to no barriers to entry. Though promised seemingly ideal alternatives to traditional employment – work that can be completed online, anywhere, anytime, with wages ostensibly tied to productivity and one's willingness to work – for most, this promise of microwork has belied its precarity. Nevertheless, workers continue to join these platforms in record numbers, calling for further investigation into the nature of microworking relationships and practices.

This study extends the investigation into microwork, exploring how workers navigate tensions between the promise of microwork (e.g., flexibility, autonomy, fair wages) and its precarious reality (e.g., de-flexibilisation, declining autonomy, low wages and unpaid labour). In doing so, this paper identifies three approaches – "exiting", "resisting", and "making it work" – through which microworkers contend with the precarity and irregularity of online digital labour.

In answering this question, I collected data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews (n=137) with European microworkers active on six prominent digital labour platforms. Interviews covered various topics, including worker characteristics, motivations, perspectives and experiences with microwork. This study proceeded on a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), uniquely suited to address navigating microwork as it is practically and discursively negotiated and experienced.

Based on a preliminary analysis, I demonstrate that workers come into microwork with similar intentions and hopes and are confronted with a contradictory reality. This confrontation creates tensions between what is promised and received, what is hoped for and what is realised. Navigating these tensions, workers enact different strategies: some cease microworking and "exit" platforms, while others "resist" unfair treatment and voice concerns in worker communities. Perhaps most interestingly, I uncover persistence strategies in which workers recalibrate their expectations, emotional investments, and work practices towards microwork. As exit and resistance are more familiar within platform labour studies, I focus on identifying the discursive and practical strategies at the heart of "making it work", such as how workers self-locate at various distances to microwork, how they build and maintain spatial, temporal and emotional boundaries around performing tasks, and how they seemingly 'tune' expectations and practices in reaction to microwork's precarious and irregular conditions. Casting light on these practices raises further questions about our own conceptual apparatuses. Emphasising everyday tactics and workers' agency, how may we do justice to the fraught yet everyday practices of workers managing their well-being? Furthermore, what do these strategies and practices of 'making (bad work) work' tell us – more broadly - about the future of digital labour?

Room W004 – Platform Capitalism, hybrid work and digital resistance

Young people: The 'neglected workers' in the post-pandemic hybrid work debate?

Jane Parry, Michalis Veliziotis

(University of Southampton)

Following the changes in the organisation of formerly office-based work since 2020, remote work and productivity (as well as well-being) have come to the fore, with the relationship between the two becoming more mainstreamed in organisational strategies. As workforces moved from being wholly office- to home-based, and then into hybrid formations, differences among workers have become more visible and meaningful to managers, prompting changes in their work organisational practices. This paper, based upon the analysis of secondary survey data from the Understanding Society COVID-19 dataset over the 2020-21 period, and our primary qualitative longitudinal research Work After Lockdown during the same period, focuses on the experiences, and different work needs and attitudes, of a relatively underexplored demographic group: young people.

Our paper triangulates our qualitative data on working people's daily experiences in four large organisations with the national Understanding Society dataset. This enables us to better understand how the unique challenges faced by younger workers prompted by shifts in organisational life are reflected in their productivity, how the pandemic experience has affected their working preferences, and what these developments mean for, and can be explained by, their needs from their early work experiences, their work attitudes, and their associated psychological contracts with their employers (Alcover et al., 2016).

Our empirical examination consists of two parts. In the first part, the analysis of Understanding Society data shows that, even though across all jobs young workers were more productive than older workers during the pandemic, working from home had a negative impact on this 'productivity advantage'. At the same time, young workers state a much weaker preference for exclusively home-based or hybrid work than older workers. In the second part, we attempt an interpretation of these results by using our Work After Lockdown qualitative data: young workers disproportionately suffered deficits around experiential learning and organisational onboarding during lockdowns, while their workspaces provided greater challenges for them than for other sections of the workforce (see Parry et al., 2021, 2022).

This paper contributes to a better understanding of the work needs and attitudes of young workers, who have been relatively neglected in the concurrent debates of the impact of the pandemic on workers, as well as the future of work organisation and, in particular, hybrid work. From a policy perspective, our analysis and discussion counters homogenised dictates about hybrid working practices. In particular, the importance of young people's work needs and attitudes presents an alternative lens through which to reflect on hybrid work and the resistance, or at least the scepticism, against it.

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Media hegemony and resistance under platform capitalism: The case of edu-tainers on YouTube

Aj Earley

(University of Leicester)

This project focuses on the role of YouTube within structures of hegemony and resistance. I work from the viewpoint of professional 'creators', who receive most or all of their earnings from YouTube. Following past research about labour on YouTube (e.g. Cunningham and Craig 2021; Burgess and Green 2018) I was interested in narratives about how the platform allows creators to partially resist the hegemonic strictures of other forms of work and communication. I also document their claims that YouTube itself is hegemonic, drawing on critical new media scholarship along the way (e.g. Fuchs 2021). Following Fairclough (2013), I use critical discourse analysis, as it provides guidance for understanding how power dynamics influence the types of narratives produced on any subject.

I zero in on 'edutainers'—those who create especially engaging educational content, usually outside of traditional learning institutions and established documentary film studios. I cover examples like that of Dr Ramani, an associate professor of psychology who uses YouTube to develop knowledge of narcissistic personality disorder in a faster—and potentially more democratic—way than journals and professional manuals ever could. These workers report coming to YouTube as a way of accessing freedoms and achieving reach, which could not be had from older forms of employment. While this may

seem positive, I also consider the dark side of this freedom, such as the potential for misinformation to spread in such an un-moderated forum.

The platform's hegemonic potential is seen whenever YouTube dramatically changes their policies without any consultation. Many 'creators' report finding their livelihoods in jeopardy overnight as a result of de-monetisation, or being de-prioritised within algorithms. Quite disturbingly, these policies apply to YouTube's entire archive, which can drastically affect income from back catalogues. Consequently, YouTubers may have significantly fewer protections compared film and television professionals.

After documenting YouTube's benefits and disadvantages, I draw on political economy of media production to assess the efficacy of creators' resistance (Long et al. 2021; Mosco 2009). One popular tactic is the use of voice—specifically, the creation of edutainment videos critiquing YouTube itself. Perhaps more promising are YouTubers' efforts to regain direct control over their working conditions. One common strategy is advertising integration, wherein YouTubers earn thousands of pounds per video directly from sponsors—assuming users can find their videos within the YouTube algorithms. Another is to move content to platforms such as Patreon, Discord, and creator-owned Nebula. Ultimately, YouTube is seen as a domain of possibility, but also a contested area where 'the employer' deploys radically anti-worker policies.

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**'I don't know who exactly I am while delivering, but I am not part of Deliveroo':
(Dis)identification as resistance in food delivery work**

Stella Kyratzi, Corentin Curchod, Michelle O'toole

(University of Edinburgh)

This abstract is based on an ongoing study that aims to understand the (dis)identification processes of low-skilled platform workers – explicitly the ones operating on food delivery platforms. We specifically ask: 'How do platform workers engage in identity work to develop a sense of who they are (not)?'

Theoretical background: When digital platforms reach the world of work, they affect how workers define themselves and make sense of their work at hand (Vallas and Schor, 2021).

Organisations have traditionally been regarded as key determinants of identification processes whereby individuals develop 'perceptions of belongingness to some human aggregate' (Ashforth and Mael, 1989:21) and accordingly formulate their self-concepts (Who am I?). Considerable research has examined the cognitive processes through which individuals develop self-concepts vis-à-vis their connections with organisations. While we know a great deal about processes of identification, we know far less about processes of disidentification, whereby people can formulate self-concepts based on the organisations from which they consider themselves separate (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001). The literature in management has only minimally engaged with disidentification and is yet to explore this phenomenon in contexts where organisational commitment is replaced by gig tasks, such as in platform work.

Methodology: The first author has conducted 29 in-depth interviews with platform workers on major UK food delivery platforms. She has further collected data from a 13-months netnography of the UK-based

Facebook groups and Reddit forums that workers utilise, and is conducting an auto-ethnography, whereby she works as a delivery rider to understand what 'working on platforms' means.

Preliminary findings: Preliminary findings suggest that the incongruence between individual and organisational values that exists on food delivery platforms triggers identity work (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) in the form of (dis)identification through which workers formulate cognitive distinctions between themselves and platform firms to show resistance. We have witnessed how workers: (a) avoid wearing the platform gear, (b) game the algorithms to indicate their disagreement with the rules that intend to create a sense of 'oneness' with platform firms, and (c) create folklore theories to explain how algorithms work and acquire a sense of empowerment over platform technology. These three practices constitute identity work, aiming at forming a coherent narrative of 'who I am not'. Interestingly, we further see how workers maintain their (dis)identified identities through collective action that takes place on other digital platforms – namely Facebook and Reddit - that co-shape a collective narrative against food delivery platforms.

These findings elucidate mechanisms through which platform workers indulge in (dis)identification processes to show resistance against platform firms. We further show how collective action takes place to maintain (dis)identified identities in non-traditional work settings guided by minimal human interactions and power asymmetries.

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Room W005 – Resistance and Meaningful Work

Why does work matter to us?

Ingrid Rusnes

(University of Stavanger)

In this paper I propose a new typology to understand the potential meaning of work. When discussing the meaning of work I address people's experiences of what value paid work has in their lives. Why work, except for financial reasons? This topic has been theorised several times before, but the way scholars have addressed the issue varies. In this paper I will particularly discuss the typology developed by Robert Bellah and colleagues (1985) in the 1980s, and the typology developed by Goldthorpe and colleagues (1968) in the Luton studies in the 1960s. Both works present a typology of how people experience the meaning of work. Other scholars have been more concerned with how meaningful work is, ranging from meaningful to meaningless, and what conditions meaningful work have. That is; under what conditions can work be meaningful. Both strands of contributions deal with what is defined as the absolute meaning of work. A third strand of research deals with the relative meaning of work. This concept addresses how much value or meaning we ascribe to work/employment compared to other life spheres, such as family, religion, leisure, or politics.

Based on an interview study with kindergarten teachers, university professors and industrial workers in Norway, I explore what meaning or value work have in people's lives. I have made 27 interviews (individual). The interviews were semi-structured and quite extensive (lasted 1 to 2 hours).

The three occupations were chosen based on an assumption that social class would influence the meaning of work. I thereby chose three occupations from different class positions (social space). I have also been interested in how gender influence the meaning of work. This also played a part in my choice of occupations. I wanted occupations that varied in gender balance. I have interviewed approximately as many women as men from each occupation. The analysis in this paper is based on a phenomenological approach.

The paper assesses existing typologies addressing the meaning of work and work orientations and argues there is a need for a new typology to supplement the existing ones. The typology suggested distinguishes between four main sources for meaning: existential, relational, societal and individualistic. I show similarities and varieties in the experienced meaning of work in the three occupations and claim that choice of occupation gives varying access to the different sources for the meaning of work.

Choosing life: How workers exercise embedded agency to make their work meaningful

Andy Charlwood, Hugh Cook, Nicholas Jephson

(University of Leeds)

Meaningful work is typically conceptualised as a measure of the extent to which workers perceive their jobs to be worthwhile and useful (Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Laaser & Karlsson, 2022). It is important because the experience of meaningless or useless work is strongly associated with poor wellbeing (Soffia, Wood & Burchell, 2022). Despite popular characterisations of much contemporary work as useless, meaningless “bullshit” jobs (Graeber, 2018), empirical evidence suggests that most workers do not think their jobs are useless (Soffia, Wood & Burchell, 2022). Further, even workers in low paid, low skill jobs with limited task autonomy can experience meaningful work (Bailey and Madden, 2019; Deery, Kolar & Walsh, 2019; Findlay and Thompson, 2017; Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debede, 2003). However, much of the foundational theory on meaningful work and its antecedents is unable to account for the fact that workers in these types of job might experience meaningful work (Laaser & Bolton, 2021). This has recently prompted sociologists of work and employment to develop theories of meaningful work that highlight workers’ own agentic capacities to make their work meaningful in the most inauspicious of circumstances (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Laaser & Bolton, 2021; Laaser & Karlsson, 2022).

In this context, the key contribution of this article is to appreciatively extend and develop the sociological theory of meaningful work developed by Knut Laaser and his collaborators (Laaser and Bolton, 2022; Laaser & Karlsson, 2022). In doing this we draw on Laaser and Bolton’s (2022) conceptualisation of people as interdependent meaning makers, motivated by vulnerabilities and concerns that they act agentically towards (Archer, 1982; 1995; 2007; Sayer, 2011). Informed by empirical evidence from 30 semi-structured work life history interviews with samples of warehouse workers and gardeners we theorise that workers can experience their work as meaningful if their jobs facilitates absolute autonomy and respectful recognition in their lives beyond work, even if these elements are largely missing from the job itself. Conversely, workers can experience meaningless work if a job does not result in autonomy and respectful recognition beyond the workplace even if these elements are present within the job. In these circumstances, workers can experience meaningful work by exercising embedded agency (Thornton, Ocasio & Loundsbury, 2012); reflexively acting to prioritise the things that matter most to them in the face of the constraints imposed by institutional forces and structures. Further, we posit that the experience of economic vulnerability moderates relationships between the experience of autonomy and respectful recognition in life and the subjective experience of meaningful work. Workers experience more meaningfulness in their jobs if previous experience of unemployment, insecurity and economic vulnerability have deprived them of autonomy and respectful recognition in the past. The paper goes on to discuss the wider practical and theoretical implications of the findings.

Resisting the value social care work: Constructing meaningful work in a challenging context

Sarah Louise Jenkins

(Cardiff Business School)

The paper focuses on work meanings in adult social care to address a paradox; those who work in care emphasise the rewarding and meaningful features of this work yet, there are high turnover rates and

workers reflect on the challenges of working in a sector which society does not perceive to be valuable. Hence the research problem examines how workers in this sector continue to find their work meaningful against this backdrop. To assess this paradox, the study is based on 29 in-depth qualitative interviews with social care workers in an organization which provides supported living houses and care and support to adults with learning and physical disabilities to lead independent lives in the community. This form of care work involves higher levels of skills including autonomy, discretion and responsibility compared to the general depiction of care work. Additionally, this can be described as 'dirty work' as it includes both the physical taint involved in intimate bodywork as well the social taint related to working closely with stigmatized groups. Hence, the concept of meaningful work is highly relevant because it allows an insight into how dirty workers gain esteem and worth by drawing on their agency to resist broader conceptions of 'valuable' work.

Hitherto, elements of the work meanings & dirty work literature have underplayed the influence of the broader social, political and economic context on how workers' construct meaning. However, recent conceptual developments within the sociology of work provide an important insight into how work meanings are constructed by linking agency to the broader macro political economy (Laaser & Karlsson 2022; Laaser & Bolton 2021). Laaser and Karlsson (2022) stress that sociological approaches examine the interplay between the objective dimensions of meaningful work, represented by the formal organization of work and employment conditions, and on the other hand, the mechanisms of human agency, featured in workers' formal and informal collective and individual actions. This perspective emphasises agency as workers search for meaning despite work objectively becoming more challenging. Hence, conceptualizations of struggle and 'tensions' (Mitra and Buzzanell, 2017) in the construction of work meanings are important to capture the nature of working realities but can also extend to work meanings as source of resistance.

Within this study, the broader political-economy of care plays a significant role as care work is viewed as a gendered, low-paid and low skilled job involving 'dirty' work. Workers therefore confront both social values as well as the broader economic context of marketization and austerity to negotiate the contradictory features involved in meaning-making. In this context, care workers resist the social and economic attribution of their work by focusing on the valuable contribution they make to the lives of those who draw on care and support and in their function as guardians to those who are seldom heard. Centring on deep relational work with clients thus becomes an expression of resistance to society's conception of this work. However, the focus on in-depth relational work also reveals the 'dark-side' of meaningful work (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009).

The possibilities of disalienated work in co-operative organizations?

Kiri Langmead, Simon Parker
(Edinburgh Napier University)

Since the 1960s there has been a shift in the literature from a Marxian to a psychological perspective of alienation. The former understands alienation as an objective reality intrinsic to capitalism (Ollman, 1976). The latter views it as a subjective state of mind: a feeling of estrangement derived from a general sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness, that, more often than not, can be addressed within capitalism, through changes to individual attitudes and behaviours (Blauner, 1964; Nair and Vohra, 2010; Luhman and Nazario, 2015). Within the field of critical management studies and critical economic geography focus has remained on the structural antecedents of alienation, and the potential of post-capitalist economic practices to create disalienating or less alienating work. Longitudinal studies of worker-recuperated firms (see Harnecker, 2009; Kokkinidis, 2014) reveal worker cooperatives' as potential sites of resistance that reject 'hierarchical control and alienated labour' (Sandoval, 2016: 55). Lebowitz (2003) and Jossa (2014: 9) have elaborated on these claims by highlighting worker ownership and control, and the consequent reversal of the capital-labour relationship, as the specific mechanism that enable worker cooperatives to "sweep away that form of alienation that stems from the dominion of capital over labor" (see also Kociatkiewicz et al., 2020). While these works provide valuable theoretical contributions, some studies are focus too much on the theory of disalienation or present an overly positive and hopeful analysis of disalienation in practice.

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of workers struggles for disalienating work using data collected through an 18-month ethnographic study with two worker cooperatives. It first offers a narrative comparison of alienation experienced within hierarchical, capitalist workplaces, and then explores the

less alienating labour experienced in worker cooperatives. These contrasting experiences are explored through Marx's four modes of alienation: the workers relation to their productive activity; their product; fellow workers; and species being. The paper argues that, while worker cooperatives can reverse the capital-labour relationship and create non-exploitative class processes on a firm-level, they cannot sweep away 'universal alienation' (Harvey, 2018). The 'coercive laws of competition' (ibid, p.139) and commodification that drive the intensification of work, reductions in the exchange-value of labour power, and the externalisation of social and environmental costs, continue to weigh heavy and push in the direction of alienation. However, in contrast to their capitalist counterparts, worker ownership and democratic control enables workers to struggle against these pressures. We identify three areas of struggle. First, the struggle against socially necessary labour time that drives down wages and situates labour as a commodity. Second, the struggle for workers rightful participation in processes of surplus distribution, and with it, for their ability to define themselves and their community (DeMartino, 2003; Sayer, 2011). Third, the struggle against the impersonal and competitive mechanisms (Jossa, 2014) of the market that prevent workers from seeing their interests in common. Grounding our analysis in Marx's four modes of alienation we contribute a nuanced and more complex picture of the struggles against alienation within worker co-operatives.

Hanging Lantern Room – Open Stream Two

Community and the socio-spatial context in a social entrepreneurship programme for NEET young people in deprived coastal regions

Esther Anwuzia, Carly Stewart, Preethi Rajaprakasam
(Bournemouth University)

Deprived regions in the UK and Europe face high levels of youth unemployment and inactivity, with nuanced manifestations ranging from limited available jobs, inaccessible roles and training opportunities, skills shortages, and skills mismatch to the lack of social capital, motivation, and self-confidence. Therefore, interventions and policies only aimed at job creation may not respond to the diverse labour market needs and precarity of young people. Alternative workforce development pathways are required.

There is growing evidence of young people's interest in self-employment but an insufficient understanding of entrepreneurship training programmes for young people outside mainstream education and employment and not in employment, education or training (NEET). The SPEED-You-UP (SYU) programme proposed a social entrepreneurship (SE) model to curb NEET rates in deprived coastal regions in England, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands by motivating NEET young people towards self-employment, enhancing their social network and self-confidence to re-engage in the labour market.

SE advocates a shift in how entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial value are conceived by integrating social value and impact with for-profit motives and outputs, portraying its potential to satisfy young people's desire for work with a purpose. Scholarly attempts have focused on defining the hallmarks of SE that differentiate it from commercial enterprises and how social impact can translate into economic benefits, with limited attention to the would-be social entrepreneur's nature of social embeddedness and relationship to place, particularly of vulnerable people with prolonged experiences of social exclusion. To advance knowledge on this aspect of SE among vulnerable young people, we examined how the notion of community is communicated within SYU and how the social positioning and experience in and of the local context of NEET young people influence their interest and capacity to pursue community-orientated goals within SE.

We conducted semi-structured focus group interviews with coaches from 11 partner organisations who delivered the programme across the four regions involved in SYU. Our findings revealed that emphasising the geographical sense of community, as most social entrepreneurship models do, may heighten NEET young people's perceived distance and detachment from their local communities, resulting in resistance to the programme's community-based approach to entrepreneurship thinking. Compared to the geographical community taken as a whole, NEET young people showed strong attachments to familiar local connections and spaces within their local areas, hence maintaining a

distinction between place and space in young people's response to place-based interventions for work and livelihoods. Coaches raised concerns about the impermanence of interventions like SYU aiming to foster strong ties between NEET young people and their local community. Short-termism within strategies for developing the workforce of deprived regions and the social inclusion of vulnerable people is a challenge. Ensuring the service and providers are linked to organisations and spaces with a strong local presence may help to minimise NEET young people's distrust of community-based interventions.

How effective are generous wage subsidies for the labor market reintegration of the long-term unemployed in Germany?

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Long-term unemployment in Germany remains persistently high, despite a heavy reliance on active labor market programs which was particularly expanded after the 2005 labor market reforms. This is especially the case for employable welfare recipients who already suffer from low resistance levels due to their high dependency on welfare benefits for survival. The long-term unemployment rates for this group fell only minorly between 2012 and 2022, from around 877,000 persons to around 774,000. It is well documented in the literature that long-term unemployment significantly lowers a person's well-being and standard of living, as it leads to deprivation in latent and material functions of work. The long-term unemployment of persons on welfare is hence likely to further increase their marginalization risk. In this paper, we estimate the causal effects of participating in a novel and generous wage subsidy titled „Eingliederungs für Langzeitarbeitslose-EvL“ introduced by the German government in 2019 that targets long-term unemployed welfare recipients. The wage subsidy lasts for two years and aims to reintegrate program participants into the labor market. Our analysis is based on a rich administrative dataset, where we use an entropy matching approach to estimate causal effects of program participation on employment and welfare-benefit receipt probability up to two months after the end of the treatment and for a total of 26 months after the beginning of the treatment. We are thus able to measure the extent to which the program succeeded to reintegrate program participants into the labor market in the short-run. Our results show that the program seems to be successful: two months after the end of the wage subsidy, program participants were 37 percent more likely to enter regular employment and 30 percent less likely to receive welfare-benefits compared to their matched group of non-participants. We also estimate effect heterogeneity and find that the program particularly benefits older participants without labor market experience in the last five years prior to program participation, and hence increase the resistance of this highly disadvantaged group. Our sensitivity analysis shows that the results are unlikely to be driven by non-observed confounding.

Making looking for work 'like a full-time job': Exploring the experience and implications of work-related conditionality under Universal Credit in the UK

Ceri Hughes

(LSE)

Universal Credit, the main income-replacement benefit available to working-age people in the UK, has been designed around the idea that looking for work should be 'like full-time work' (Millar and Bennett, 2017). People who are expected to seek work must demonstrate to their adviser that they are meeting a number of work-related conditions, including spending 35 hours per week looking for work and making themselves available for full-time work. While these conditions should be adjusted to take account of 'particular capabilities and circumstances' (DWP, 2010, p. 27), there is evidence of a largely standardized approach to conditionality (e.g. Wright and Dwyer, 2020). Those judged to fall short of these conditions are subject to a harsh sanction regime that can mean payments are reduced or suspended for up to 36 months with limited opportunities to challenge sanction decisions (Pattaro et al., 2022; Selman, 2022).

This paper examines the experience and implications of work-related conditionality within UK activation policy. The empirical analysis focusses on how this conditionality is implemented through a series of time-demands, arguing that they act as a key mechanism for regulating time that has as yet received little attention. The paper explores how the ability to control how you use your time relates to being low-paid, or on a low income (Rubery et al., 2015; Gerstel and Clawson, 2018; Warren, 2021) and examines

whether and how work-related conditionality acts as a mechanism for disciplining (potential) workers (Greer, 2016).

The research is based on 33 qualitative interviews with low-income workers and people seeking work whilst receiving Universal Credit in Greater Manchester. The interviews explore the types of work-related conditions that are being applied to people claiming Universal Credit, how these conditions are set and with what effect.

The paper argues that the time demands associated with Universal Credit are a key medium through which problematic expectations around work are being imposed on people on low incomes. Work-related expectations were being set in a context that was far from conducive to people being able to negotiate or even discuss what might be a reasonable set of expectations, let alone their own preferences regarding work.

Alternative Dispute Resolution and workplace conflict: A British-Nigerian Comparison

Dr Chinwe Egbunike-Umegbolu

(University of Brighton)

With the continuous decline of union representation and the introduction of legal incentives for workers to resolve individual employment disputes/conflicts without resorting to the courts, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is gaining increasing prominence in the British landscape of industrial relations. The most important sign and motor of this change have been the conciliation service offered by Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to all workers wishing to lodge a claim in Employment Tribunals. Whilst ADR has been encouraged in western Jurisdictions, precisely in the United Kingdom (UK) and in the United States (US), as a means to reduce time and litigation costs however in relation to employment tribunal claims, there have been relatively scholarly publications, particularly on the benefits of utilising Mediation or conciliation to settle workplace disputes, and hence the need for more advocacy and awareness on its benefits in the UK. However, when it comes to Nigerian workers or employees, most of whom are not encouraged or have little or no awareness of resolving workplace disputes or conflicts via ADR.

Equally, due to the lack of sensitisation in most organisations and scholarly research on ADR to settle conflicts or disputes on workplace disputes in Nigeria, particularly with Mediation and Conciliation. It has become an emergent field of study compared to the U.K. For instance, British workers are encouraged to lodge their disputes with ACAS before proceeding to an employment tribunal claim; this is similar to their Nigerian counterparts, but they settle via the National Industrial Court (NIC) ADR. However, putting theory into practice in Nigeria, some sectors, like the Trade Unions, are quite complex, particularly disputes emanating from the Maritime Industry are hardly settled via ADR, unlike their UK Counterparts; also, they are different patterns and modus operandi for resolving workplace conflicts or disputes in both Jurisdictions; this will be critically examined in this paper. Secondly, the paper seeks to examine why the minister of labour and employment has so much power accorded or bequest on him to apprehend and refer a disputed award to the National Industrial Court (NIC) ADR will be critically evaluated in this paper. The paper employs a comparative and, for the first time, Podcast analysis of workplace disputes in Nigeria, Britain and the US, focusing on the different patterns of Settling Workplace Conflicts: Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment. The paper concludes with the benefits of mediation or why mediation is relevant to various entities involved in Workplace conflicts or disputes.

Room W119 – The future of resistance at work

Union makes us strong: Experiences of traditional trade union organizing in ride sharing digital labour platforms in Kolkata, West Bengal

Ashique Ali Thuppilikkat, Dipsita Dhar, Priyank Chandra

(University of Toronto, Canada)

The digital labour platforms (DLPs) are a challenging site of unionization, particularly for the traditional trade unions whose focus had been mainly on the workers in industries, large business establishments

and the public sector. This has initiated discussions on union revitalization and experimentation of new forms of unionism, including informal unionism, social movement unionism, informal cooperatives, platform cooperatives, hybrid trade unions and worker associations and networks to fight against the growing precarity of labour (Bensusán 2019; Fine 2011; Webster and Forrest 2019; Dhar and Thuppalikkat 2022; Webster et al. 2021; Marrone and Finotto 2019; Chesta et al. 2019; Salvagni 2022). These new forms of worker organizing critically reflected and questioned the existing form and nature of membership and worker organizing (Fine 2007, 354) in traditional trade unions and instead developed mostly horizontal leadership structures (and leaderless organizational structures) rather than strictly defining the inside-outside boundaries of union membership and exercising a hierarchical chain of leadership commands. In this context, this paper explores how and why the Kolkata App Cab Ola Uber Union, affiliated with the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), a traditional trade union, operating in the Indian state of West Bengal, became a successful model of organizing workers in the ride-sharing digital labour platforms (DLPs). How did they exercise the worker power against the DLPs and the State, or how are they renewing the tripartite bargaining power of unions in DLPs? How are these unions leveraging ICTs for worker organizing and resistance? This line of enquiry will help us understand how the traditional trade unions are "restoring their efficacy and relevance by innovating organizational forms, crafting identities and patterns of sociality, forging alliances, and remaking working classes," after being severely affected by "neoliberalism, austerity, financialization, and the tripling of the global proletariat" (Kasimir 2020, 208) and more importantly, how labour is reimagining collective actions despite the capital re-shaping and transforming the labour relations.

The study is based on qualitative methods, mainly eight in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion with riders in DLPs in Kolkata. The fieldwork, which lasted for two months, was carried out in July and August 2022, and it also involved conversations and travelling with Ola/Uber cab and Rapido bike workers, trade union leaders, and protest participants against the DLPs in the ride-sharing industry.

Digital worker inquiry and the critical potential of participatory worker data science for on-demand platform workers

Karen Gregory, Cailean Gallagher
(University of Edinburgh)

The knowledge that workers have of the systems they work under is an outcome of strategic choices by platforms and by workers themselves. Based on three initiatives undertaken by food distribution workers in Scotland, this article explores the obstacles that platform workers face when conducting inquiries into their systems of control, and investigates the potential for workers to overcome these obstacles through collaborative research projects. By drawing analogies from the history of workers' inquiries into changing labour processes, the article evaluates these three initiatives in light of previous efforts by workers to monitor complex and concealed management structures. It offers a new concept of 'worker data science' to describe the techniques, skills and methods that workers require to arrive at answers to questions that emerge through their inquiries, and concludes that such purposive science has the potential to equip workers to support one another and to resist and challenge some of the commands and calculations that emerge from platforms' hidden algorithmic systems.

Perceptions of class conflict among platform workers: A comparative study of food couriers in England and Germany.

Alexandra Seehaus
(Leeds University Business School)

Digital platforms have changed the world of work, created new contradictions in the labor process and pose new challenges to workers, unions and regulators (Lehdonvirta 2022). Conditions in platform work are in many cases characterized by low pay or non-payment, a lack of work or overwork, irregular hours, pressure from customer ratings, the risk of 'deactivation' by the platform algorithm, lacking transparency or accountability in decision-making processes, and a low level of social and employment protections (Forde et al. 2017, Joyce et al 2020).

Particularly the situation of platform food couriers has raised much attention not least due to visible protest across various countries (see Leeds Platform Index). Similar to Uber drivers and other platform

workers, their work is characterized by a depersonalized, algorithmic management - a shadow employer - that is difficult to grasp and hard to criticize, by information asymmetry, low and untransparent fees, as well as one-sided flexibility (Aloisi, 2016; Rosenblat and Stark, 2016; Srnicek 2016). While the working conditions and organizing of food couriers is widely studied (Cant 2018), the beliefs, perceptions and identifications of these workers have not been the focus of empirical research, and few researchers systematically applied a class perspective when investigating precarious platform workers.

This research investigates what awareness platform food couriers have of the class relations that shape their working and living conditions, and how this awareness is mediated.

To do so it uses the concept of class consciousness, which is here generally understood as a set of individual perceptions, beliefs, and identifications regarding their socio-economic position within society which develops over the life course and is based on the interplay of work and life experiences (see Mann 1974; Wright 1985, 2000; Gurin 1995, Keefer et al 2018). It is asked whether and how these workers (1) experience inequality, (2) make sense of social inequalities and their own position in relation to that of others, (3) identify collectively, (4) perceive and legitimize social conflicts and (5) envision alternatives and belief that egalitarian change is desirable and possible.

The research is based on 34 in-depth interviews with couriers in Germany and the England which were analyzed following the coding system of the Grounded Theory (Glaser 1978, Hadley 2019).

The presentation focusses on perceptions of class-related conflicts as one dimension of class consciousness. It provides an overview of the general perception of social conflicts among food couriers, ranging from global warming via increasing inequality to a lack of political representation. It then shows which particular class-related conflicts food couriers see in relation to their work arrangements. The paper offers insights on workers' views of the company management and business model, as well as their perspectives on conflicts among different groups of food couriers. Differences between countries are discussed, which show an overlap with the difference of employment status, workers in England being solo self-employed and workers in Germany being employed.