

**BSA**



**2026 Annual Conference**

University of Manchester  
Wednesday 8 April – Friday 10 April 2026  
#britsoc26

**BRITISH  
SOCIOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

# BSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

## Abstract Book Wednesday 8 April 2026

### Table of Contents

WELCOME.....	3
SPONSORS.....	4
IMPORTANT DELEGATE INFORMATION .....	7
PAPER SESSION 1 .....	9
BREAKTIME SESSION .....	36
PAPER SESSION 2 .....	37
PLENARY: JASON ARDAY .....	70
PAPER SESSION 3 .....	71
STREAM PLENARIES.....	104
PUBLISHERS' RECEPTION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS .....	110

**Abstracts are listed by Paper Session  
then alphabetically by Stream name**

# WELCOME

Welcome to the British Sociological Association Annual Conference 2026 at the University of Manchester. The theme of the 2026 conference is '75 Years of Sociology'. Over the past seven and a half decades, the BSA has played a central role in advancing scholarship, fostering collaboration and supporting the development of our field. Our annual conference is a significant moment to come together for reflection and to consider the future directions of our work.

To mark this anniversary, it is a pleasure to announce that Jason Arday, Les Back, and our panellists, Bandana Purkayastha, Beáta Nagy and Maitrayee Chaudhuri, will address the conference in three thought-provoking plenaries this year.

In addition to these plenaries, delegates have the opportunity to attend presentations on a wide range of topics. The conference is organised in streams designed to represent the major areas of research with which sociologists are engaged. These streams are open to any topic on which colleagues are currently working, enabling delegates to meet with others who share their interests and explore a variety of subjects.

The programme also includes a variety of special events, stream plenaries, publishing events and other sessions to support sociologists across their career stages. This conference offers a rich and challenging programme and it is hoped that every delegate will find sessions of interest.

A conference of this magnitude and breadth depends on the efforts of many committed individuals. Significant thanks and gratitude are due to all those who have helped with the organisation of the conference, particularly the coordinators of the conference streams who read and thought about a record-breaking number of abstracts.

We are grateful to all the organisers, speakers, chairs, Trustees and attendees who make this conference so vibrant every year. Your engagement continues the tradition of community collaboration and intellectual exchange that has defined the BSA since its founding. We hope this conference will renew inspiration and invigorate our shared commitment to sociological ways of viewing the world for the next 75 years.

# SPONSORS

We would like to express our appreciation for the support of our sponsors and exhibitors. The Exhibition Area includes displays from many organisations that offer services and information for conference delegates. Please take some time between sessions to visit these exhibitors.

## Main Conference Sponsor

### Sage Publications



[Sage](#) is a global academic publisher of books, journals, and library resources with a growing range of technologies to enable discovery, access, and engagement.

The BSA would like to thank SAGE Publishing for sponsoring some of the free places for the conference.

## Sponsors and Exhibitors

### AQA



Since 1903, we've been designing and delivering fair and inclusive assessment – an essential ingredient for a good education. We set and mark around half of all GCSEs and A-levels, but we're more than an exam board. As an independent education charity, we reinvest all our income into research and innovation that advance assessment worldwide. We're focused on fair and inclusive assessment and the positive impact it has on teaching, learning, and society. Visit [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

### Bristol University Press



Bristol University Press is committed to publishing high-quality social science research that makes a real-world impact.

Join us at the BSA conference to explore our latest books and journals, including the new Creative Research Methods Journal. Book a meeting with our editor to discuss your publishing projects, including open access options.

Special offer for BSA attendees: Get your favourite BUP books at 50% off during April! Use code CNF26 at checkout on our website.

Discover more about our Sociology programme here: <https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/sociology>

### De Gruyter Brill



[De Gruyter Brill](#) is a global publishing leader in the humanities and beyond. Headquartered in Berlin, with its second-largest office in Leiden, De Gruyter Brill publishes over 3,500 books and 800 journals annually, with a strong focus on the humanities and social sciences while covering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. De Gruyter Brill is a family-owned, independent publisher committed to curating indispensable research that breaks boundaries, builds new bonds, and shapes a better future.

### Emerald Publishing



[Emerald Publishing](#) is a global publisher committed to publishing mission led social science research that tackles key societal challenges aligned with the UN SDGs. Their Sociology programme focuses on championing fresh thinking and promoting diverse voices. Working with thought leaders and rising stars worldwide to produce monographs, handbooks, short-

form books and series that set the research agenda, Emerald is an exciting home for scholarship that aims to reach beyond the academy.

### Liverpool University Press



[Liverpool University Press](#) is the UK's third oldest university press, with a distinguished history of publishing exceptional research since 1899. LUP has rapidly expanded in recent years to become an award-winning academic publisher that produces approximately 200 books a year, over 50 journals, and more than a dozen digital collections across the social sciences, humanities and earth sciences. In 2025 LUP was selected as the new publishing partner for the British Academy.

### Manchester University Press



Manchester University Press

Our thriving [Social Sciences list](#) consistently engages with the most pressing issues of our time. We publish books that influence policy and change the international research landscape. The list is multidisciplinary, producing award-winning academic and trade titles on everything from migration and medicine to the climate crisis and culture wars. Boasting key series on globalisation, racism and resistance, urban transformation and creative ethnography, the list represents the depth and breadth of contemporary social research.

### MAXQDA



[MAXQDA](#) is a world-leading software package for qualitative and mixed methods research. Analyze all kinds of data – from texts to images and audio/video files, websites, survey responses, and much more.

Developed by and for researchers, MAXQDA is the only leading QDA software that is 100% identical on Windows and Mac.

**MDPI**



[MDPI](#) is a leader in the transition to open science by making more research free and accessible to everyone. Over 4.5 million researchers have entrusted us with publishing their scientific discoveries.

**Palgrave Macmillan**



[Palgrave Macmillan](#) publishes award-winning, peer-reviewed research for academics, professionals, and librarians. Across the humanities, social sciences, and business, we publish around 2,000 books each year and over 40 journals. Visit [palgrave.com](#) and follow [@Palgrave](#)

**Polity Wiley**



[Polity](#) is one of the world's leading publishers in sociology and social theory. We publish many of the key scholars in the field and our list has earned a reputation for innovative, cutting-edge publications, as well as strong textbooks. Established in 1984, Polity has grown rapidly into one of the world's most distinguished independent publishing houses.

**Princeton University Press**



[Princeton's](#) sociology list publishes bold and original scholarship that betters our understanding of compelling social matters. It encompasses qualitative and quantitative research in such areas as cultural sociology, economic sociology, urban sociology, and computational sociology. Featuring

work that is empirically rich, theoretically significant, and methodologically innovative, the list represents some of the most important contributions to contemporary sociological thought.

**Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group**



Routledge is the world's largest academic publisher in the Humanities and Social Sciences, offering an extensive portfolio of book and journals that serves scholars, instructors and professional communities worldwide. We are proud to publish the Sociological Futures book series with the BSA, a flagship for new approaches to sociological issues, debates and 'the social' in the 21st century. Please visit the Routledge stand to browse the latest titles and to discuss ideas with our editors.

# IMPORTANT DELEGATE INFORMATION

## Arrival and Registration

We're expecting a high volume of delegates arriving on Day 1, so the registration area is likely to be very busy. To help everything run smoothly, please collect your badge promptly on arrival and then step away from the desk to allow others to register. Feel free to grab some refreshments, explore the venue or take a moment to familiarise yourself with the programme.

Your badge must be worn at all times for security and meal access. It also indicates whether you've booked for the 75<sup>th</sup> Social.

**Registration** will take place in The Drum, University Place:

Wednesday 8 April	08:00-17:30
Thursday 9 April	08:30-17:45
Friday 10 April	08:30-14:00

A cloakroom will be available for luggage, coats, etc throughout the conference in the Drum, University Place.

Wednesday 8 April	08:00-20:00
Thursday 9 April	08:00-19:00
Friday 10 April	08:00-18:30

## Venue Details

**Venue address:** University Place, 176 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

Directions:

- [Interactive map](#)
- [Travel by train](#)
- [Travel by bus, tram or coach](#)
- [Travel by car](#)
- [Travel by air](#)
- [Travel by bicycle](#)

**Virtual Tour of University Place:** <https://www.conference.manchester.ac.uk/virtual-tours/universityplace/>

**Sessions** will take place in various rooms at University Place.

## Chairing

We are extremely grateful to all those who have agreed to chair one or more sessions. If you find yourself in a session without a chair, we would be grateful if someone in the audience could volunteer to take this role. Chairing guidelines will be available in each room and a copy is also available [here](#).

## Meals and Refreshments

<b>Tea and coffee</b>	Throughout the conference	The Drum
<b>Lunch</b>	12:30-14:00 each day	The Marketplace Restaurant

Vegetarian and vegan options will be available as part of the standard catering provision. If you have notified us of any other specific dietary requirements, please make these known to the catering staff when collecting your meals and refreshments.

Your badge must be worn to access refreshments.

No breakfast or evening meals are included in your registration. Manchester offers a wide range of local dining options nearby.

## 75<sup>th</sup> Social

The 75<sup>th</sup> Social will be held at Whitworth Hall on Thursday 9 April at 19:00. Dress code is smart casual. This event **must be pre-booked**, we are unable to take bookings at the conference. If you are registered, your badge will display a ticket symbol. For any questions, please visit the registration desk.

## Publicity and Photography

Share your experience using #britsoc26 on social media!

Please note that professional photographers will be capturing images during the conference. These may be used by the BSA for marketing and promotional purposes, including in print and digital platforms.

By attending, you consent to being photographed. If you prefer not to be included, please speak to a member of the BSA Events team or an official photographer, or contact us after the event at [events@britsoc.org.uk](mailto:events@britsoc.org.uk)

# PAPER SESSION 1

## 09:00-10:30

### Session Table of Contents

Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space 1 - Room 3.211 .....	10
Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space 2 - Room 3.212 .....	11
Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210 (Special Event) .....	12
Emerging Themes & Special Events - Room 4.206 .....	14
Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204 .....	15
Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209 .....	17
Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211 .....	18
Lifecourse - Room 4.213 .....	20
Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209 .....	21
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217 .....	22
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218 .....	23
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219 .....	25
Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A .....	26
Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.219 .....	28
Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220 .....	30
Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204 .....	31
Theory - Room 4.205 (Special Event) .....	32
Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 3.213 .....	34

## Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space 1 - Room 3.211

### **Capital, Illness and the Seascape: An Ethnographic Exploration of Restitution and Struggle in a Small, Remote Northern Seaside Town**

*Edward Hart*

*(University of Hull)*

Many seaside towns share a fate analogous to that of former industrial towns, as expressed in the relative loss of their intrinsic purpose and the consequent implications for health. Unlike their larger counterparts, small seaside rural towns are often overlooked as sites of post-modern struggle and peripheralisation. This paper is based on an ethnographic study of the experiences of working-age adults living with multiple health conditions in a small, remote northern seaside town, pseudonymously referred to as Skelsend. Since the 1970s, Skelsend has undergone decades of economic decline, characterised by the incremental dissolution of its resort life and intrinsic purpose. Typical of many resorts, its neighbourhoods are measured as significantly socially and economically disadvantaged.

Findings suggest that residents' utilisation of space within Skelsend is related to their access to social and economic capital, whilst how residents use space largely shapes their perception of Skelsend. For residents requiring economic opportunities, the spatial redundancy of Skelsend can cultivate dispositional schemas of despondency. Individual spatial immobility, resulting from illness, dependence on bonded social capital, and precarious access to financial capital, intensifies their reliance on a town they perceive as being in decline. However, for many residents who have relocated to Skelsend whilst living with illness, especially those who are both economically secure and voluntarily inactive, the conditions of spatial redundancy are experienced as a sanctuary and integral to their restitution in the face of illness and trauma. This differential experience gives rise to tensions between competing needs within the town's social space.

### **From Ironopolis to Socceropolis: How Intergenerational Football-Fan Communities Construct the Place-identities of Post-industrial English Towns**

*Adam Dinsmore, Mark Turner*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

Football is a central component of place-identity in post-industrial England. Where the wealth and affluence of the nation's entrepreneurial cities have been integrated into the global economy, a lack of viable post-industrial futures has harmed the self-esteem of places said to have been 'left behind' by neoliberal development. Deindustrialised regions have thus seen years of disinvestment and occasional flirtations with reactionary politics. In England's 'Red Wall,' industrial decline preceded widespread closures of high street shops, public houses, local markets, and their attendant social and leisure cultures. Amidst this sustained loss of social capital, the local football club—created by local people—is often the sole surviving marker of a town's ancestral identity. Often dismissed as inward-looking or chauvinistic, this paper asks why football cultures have become unparalleled sources of local pride in England's former industrial communities—and the implications for working class politics. Drawing on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with fan communities in former cotton- (Blackburn) and steel-making towns (Middlesbrough), we examine the intergenerational practices, ideas, and modes of cultural transmission through which they construct and maintain their twenty-first century place-identities. Our findings represent a grassroots critique of the Starmer government's Pride-in-Place agenda, and any progressive politics hoping to represent post-industrial working classes in England and beyond.

## Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space 2 - Room 3.212

### **Buzzes and Break-work: How Coffee Matters in the Times and Spaces of Contemporary Academia**

*Katherine Quinn*

*(Cardiff University)*

What work does the 'break' do? While classic studies of time, employment and workplace culture – from Roy's *Banana Time* (1959) to Zerubavel's *Hidden Rhythms* (1985) - stress the break as work vacation, increasingly, breaks signal more of a shift than an arrest in work. This break-work is particularly potent in the fluctuating, fluid, and rhythmically multi-layered spaces of contemporary academia. Here, the temporal dynamics of 'projectification' increasingly coincide with architectural trends towards open-plan, hot-desk office space. It is in this context that coffee and coffee shops are put to diverse and sometimes surprising forms of break-work by university workers. Drawing on ethnographic observations at a UKHE research park – one deliberately designed with low levels of individual sensory control and high levels of open-plan work arrangements – this paper describes the work of the break. I focus on several temporal affects of break-work: buzz (where coffee is used to support temporal affects of 'leisured purpose' and futurity), boundaries (where time-shelters are created through coffee conventions), and breaks (where coffee is used to break-with professional and temporal expectations). The paper contends that the material, sensory, and spatial capacities of coffee affords important and diverse practices to work with and against the unruly spaces and rhythms of contemporary HE. Attending to coffee as a lively, sensory cultural object rather than merely a throughway to considering class is important for understanding how individuals materialise temporality.

### **Institutional Space: Order Construction of Interpersonal Interaction in Urban Café: Field Work Based on Urban Cafes in Beijing, China**

*Shaohua Le*

*(Hong Kong Polytechnic University)*

The coffee shop spaces that continue to emerge on urban streets are increasingly becoming an integral part of contemporary citizens' daily lives. In the face of the trend of a return to spatial sociology, this paper re-examines the significance of urban coffee shops from the perspectives of space and order. After reviewing the attributes of coffee shops as public spaces, class differentiation and identity recognition, this study continues to interpret the theory of coffee shops as "third spaces", further exploring the process of order construction in this inclusive space from a micro-level, and from a structural dynamic perspective, investigates the order and culture of interpersonal interaction in urban coffee shops. This study employs a qualitative research paradigm, collecting data through field observation, participant observation, and in-depth interviews. The analysis of research materials reveals that coffee shop spaces are inclusive environments that extend beyond "third spaces". Structured spatial layouts and dynamic subject actions expand the spatial functions of coffee shops. At the same time, spaces that contain multiple fields involve the interweaving of multiple spatial orders, and coffee shops present a restrictive institutional space whose spatial system is generated and reproduced through subject actions. This paper argues that spatial order, as a structural force, and the spatial agency of social actors jointly constitute a diverse and balanced perspective for explaining interpersonal interaction in contemporary urban coffee shops.

### **Cafés as Sites of Distinction: Urban Aspirations and Boundary-Making in Hyderabad, India**

*Vinathi Gurijala*

*(Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies)*

Scholars have demonstrated that cafés are venues of sociality where everyday boundaries are negotiated through the labour of service staff (Manzo, 2015; Ott, 2020). Literature on elites, meanwhile, has highlighted how boundaries are constructed through consumption practices, with recent work focusing on how elites experience privilege rather than simply protect it (Sherman, 2015). However, literature on emerging café spaces has been focused on Global North contexts and pays little attention

to boundary-making by patrons and spatial positioning. This paper examines how these dynamics unfold in a Global South context where caste and gender shape both consumption and labour.

Situating cafés within broader debates on elites, urban sociology, and labour, I argue that cafés in Hyderabad function as carefully curated and co-produced urban sites where elites enact and reproduce distinction, illuminating the interplay of aspiration, inequality, and everyday boundary-making in contemporary Indian cities. This paper argues that cafés are elite spaces, produced through everyday practices of boundary-making by consumers, workers and founders of these spaces. Emerging in tightly concentrated café clusters, these sites have become central to urban aspiration and social distinction in recent years.

Drawing on six months of ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews, I find that distinctions are produced through three key practices. First, language functions as a marker of exclusivity, with English selectively deployed to align with elite patrons. Second, invisible labour emerges as consumers prefer minimal interaction, reinforced by QR-code menus. Third, spatial positioning distinguishes cafés based on niche premium or mass premium clientele.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210**

### **Special Event**

#### **Connecting Charity, Power, and Care: Sociology's Engagement with Charity and Giving**

*Jon Dean, Katherine Chen Silke Roth, Shoma Choudhury Lahiri, Triona Fitton, Ellie Munro*

*(Sheffield Hallam University, City University of New York, University of Southampton, St Xavier's College, University of Kent, Sheffield Hallam University)*

Across societies, charity has a long, contentious history. Defined as the voluntary giving of help, typically in the form of money or volunteering to those in need, and the formal organisations which coordinate such help, the multifaceted presence of charity manifests beliefs about how resources should be distributed and who should benefit. These beliefs shape charitable forms and relations that connect various people and groups. Most people do something charitable most days: it is a vital important social process.

Until recently however, there has been an under-appreciation of the value of sociological and critical thinking in mainstream studies of charity and giving. Non-profit studies journals have generally seen a 'dampening of critical work over time', and a 'conservatism' resulting from a preference for more 'mainstream (positivistic) models of social science' (Coule et al., 2022: 478). However, inspired by an increasing focus on social inequalities, and the extent to which charity may be reinforcing rather than challenging these, there has been a growing application of sociological and critical theory to charity and non-profit sector research (e.g. Eikenberry et al., 2024; Dean and Wiley, 2021; Coule et al., 2022; Mirabella et al., 2024). This 'critical turn' seeks to examine the political, systemic and structural issues that may be shaping charitable organisations and behaviours, and 'reveal the most profoundly buried structures' (Bourdieu, 1996: 1) of the non-profit world.

Despite the outstanding work that has been done using the tools and ideas of sociology, charity and giving studies rarely filters through to general conversations in sociology. The 'sociology of charity' barely registers against 'the sociology of education' or 'the sociology of work', two commensurate areas of social life. Charity studies as an academic field has been concentrated in the public administration, business and organisation studies, and social policy fields, sectioned off in topic-specific research groups, rather than 'mainstream' sociology: the sociological character of charity and of being charitable are underrepresented in mainstream sociology journals and conferences. For example, Bourdieu's work on the gift and symbolic capital does not have anywhere near as much attention as his work on education, work, culture, or reproduction. The contribution of research into charity and how it promulgates inequality has been under-recognised by the wider discipline.

This panel will include an introduction and three papers drawn from the forthcoming volume 'Connecting Charity, Power and Care: A Critical Sociology', edited by Jon Dean and Katherine Chen, to be published by Routledge as part of the BSA Sociological Futures series. It seeks to kick-start a conversation about

the history, current presence, and future position of charity as a subject within British (and global) sociology.

### **Charity and Citizen Aid in Kolkata during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Silke Roth, Shoma Choudhury Lahiri*

*(University of Southampton)*

This presentation examines voluntary engagement in contemporary India which is shaped both by historical and religious traditions as well as contemporary neoliberalism. It focuses on charity, citizen aid, and mutual aid in Kolkata, India, during the COVID-19 pandemic. We show that while charitable giving and volunteering are underpinned by, and perpetuate, inequality, service provision through charitable acts and citizen aid can also be linked to political action and mutual aid which challenge inequality. During the COVID-19 pandemic, needs were diverse and far-reaching (including food, medicine, and the performance of last rites to dying people). In this time, citizen aid and other aid-providing initiatives filled gaps left by federal and local governments. Our research draws on literature on charities, social movements, and mutual aid to map varieties of charitable giving in Kolkata. After giving a short overview of volunteering and charitable giving in India in a historical perspective we turn to citizen aid provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our qualitative data, which was collected by Choudhury Lahiri in Kolkata during the pandemic, suggests that citizen aid centered the provision of care, and disrupted hierarchical forms of charity through horizontal forms of organising.

### **Consumption for Good, or Good for Consumption? A Critical Sociology of the UK Charity Shop**

*Triona Fitton*

*(University of Kent)*

This presentation examines the charity shop as a complex, often overlooked example of how people engage with charity on both a local and global level. It examines the historical evolution of charity shops in the UK and how they developed alongside global socioeconomic change, highlighting the various complexities inherent in their coalescence of consumer culture and charitable action. The research argues that the ethos of 'consumption for good' that surrounds charity shops obscures and stymies opportunities for global systemic change. Drawing on data from charity reports and academic literature, it considers how charity shops are 'good for consumption', because they offer a handy conduit for ethical disposal, rejuvenation, and recycling in an era of over-consumption. What emerges is a critical analysis of the ambivalent role charity shops have played in extending the contradictions and harms of capitalism and neo-colonialism.

### **Historicising Voluntary Action**

*Ellie Munro*

*(Sheffield Hallam University)*

This presentation explores how historical study of voluntary action enriches and is enriched by social theory. It explores voluntary action through the lens of strategic action field theory (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). I use archival research from a philanthropy archive in Birmingham, England, to explore voluntary action from 1965-2010, with a focus on how self-described 'grassroots' organisations present their efforts and challenges to a funder, through the lens of Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) strategic action field theory (SAF). SAF theory can help researchers understand and explain change over time because of lies in its focus on field-based actor interactions, how norms are established, challenged and reformed through discursive processes, and how actors react to external pressures and shocks. In this study, it helped to bring to the fore a history that was not about the national policy story, and not about individual organisations or leaders, but about the local-level field, where these organisations had most of their interactions, and the local field's collective identity and how it was formed through ideas, values and meaning-making activity. The theory emphasises the agency and power of voluntary and community organisations in shaping and reshaping their own field.

# Emerging Themes & Special Events - Room 4.206

## **Storytelling as Resistance: Activist Narratives, Trauma and Civic Resilience in Tunisia**

*Tesnim Chirchi*

*(Ibn Haldun University)*

Democracy requires continuous civic advocacy and discursive ownership of what democracy means in practice. In Tunisia, since 25 July 2021, pro-democracy activists have confronted imprisonment, intimidation, and legal and social pressures intended to suppress dissent — dynamics that both demobilize and traumatize participants. This paper investigates how Tunisian civil-society actors use storytelling to sustain hope and reframe collective experience into resources for democratic resilience.

I argue that storytelling functions simultaneously as (1) a coping mechanism for trauma and affective exhaustion produced by repression, and (2) a strategic form of framing and counternarrative that contests authoritarian discourse and regenerates democratic imaginaries. Drawing on 30 semi-structured interviews with Tunisian activists conducted between February and September 2024, I show how narratives shift the register from victimization to agency—documenting learning, local achievements, and concrete practices of inclusion (disability rights, women’s empowerment, public-health initiatives, local governance work).

The paper dialogues with literature on framing and social movements (framing theory, narrative studies), scholarship on repression and emotions, and debates on cultural trauma and necropolitics. It shows that activist narratives do political work: they (re)construct collective identity, produce moral frames, and transform traumatic memory into mobilizing stories (Polletta; Snow & Benford; Pearlman; Alexander; Mbembe). The Tunisian case thus illustrates how storytelling can both heal and politicize — sustaining mobilization under repression and opening imaginative pathways to democratic renewal. The paper concludes by reflecting on implications for research on post-authoritarian transitions and on the role of culture and narrative in sustaining democracy.

## **Feeling Research Culture: An Emotion Perspective on Researcher Identity**

*Lara Abel, Allison Beggs, Luisa Ciampi, Mollie Etheridge, Molly Smith, Becky Ioppolo, Steven Wooding*  
*(University of Cambridge)*

In conversations about research culture and its transformation, the complexity of the academic system appears to hinder effective change. To improve researchers’ experience of the research culture they are placed in, it is essential to understand how individual psycho-social experiences link to characteristics of the academic system. The perceived value of and control over the academic environment, as well as the experienced availability of personal, social and institutional resources, are formative in understanding this relationship.

Our research aims to map structural symbolic interactionism within the academic system, that is, understand how research culture affects individual researchers’ identities and vice versa. Identity self-verification processes may elicit emotional responses. We look to understand the landscape of researchers’ emotional responses elicited through appraisal processes as part of the self-verification process.

We present insights from our qualitative thematic and affective analysis of 27 letters written by Early Career Researchers and PIs at the University of Cambridge. These letters were submitted as part of a survey on researcher’s professional expectations and experiences. We coded achievement emotions, appraisals of control and value, coping strategies, resources, and themes relating to research culture. Emotional responses, including emotion expressions such as laughter or crying, were further analysed in interviews conducted with seven survey participants.

By linking psychological appraisal theories of emotion to sociological identity theory, our work introduces a novel framework for understanding how researchers perceive their roles within the academic system and for identifying levers for effective change.

## **The Legal Cage and the Emotional Loop: Survival and Contained Resistance in India's Border Security Force**

*Arpita Mishra*

*(Jawaharlal Nehru University)*

Sociological analyses of border enforcement typically focus on the emotional labor of managing the 'other'. This paper unsettles this focus, asking: what happens when a state's border guards feel the greatest threat to their dignity comes not from the border, but from within the state structure they defend?

Drawing on interviews with India's Border Security Force (BSF), this paper develops the concept of the 'legal cage'. We argue the Act's framework of absolute obedience, inescapable service, and suppressed dissent creates a recurring emotional loop of 'managed distress'. This cycle funnels emotional displays into 'safe havens' and is sustained by moral justifications and coping mechanisms. These mechanisms function as acts of 'contained resistance' like private venting or systemic sabotage enabling psychological survival without challenging the system's authority. Theoretically, this work stretches concepts of emotional labor to a Global South context, introducing two emergent organisational rationalities 'Docility' (compliance) and 'Camaraderie' (peer loyalty) for navigating this cage. This synthesis of legal text and lived experience offers a new psychosocial tool for analysing state security.

By foregrounding the BSF's resentment towards the Indian Army, this research contributes a vital 'Security from the South' perspective. It invites the discipline to reconsider the internal dynamics of state power, revealing how the emotional landscapes of security forces are a rational, painful response to the laws that govern them. This paper is a space to test these ideas and invite a conversation on the human cost of the modern security state.

## **Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204**

### **Great-Grandparenthood: Identity and Roles in Four-generation Families**

*Zuzana Talasova*

*(Masaryk University)*

In this presentation, I explore great-grandparenthood as a largely understudied dimension of four-generation families in the Czech context. Demographic changes have made the coexistence of four living generations more common, yet the role of great-grandparents has remained at the margins of scholarly attention. Drawing on qualitative research that combines narrative interviews and visual family timelines, I examine how this late-life family role is perceived, experienced, and negotiated across generations.

My analysis considers how great-grandparenthood contributes to the formation of family identity, how it connects to the life course perspective, and how it opens new ways of thinking about what it means to "do family" in the context of ageing and intergenerational relations. At the same time, I highlight the significance of a four-generation perspective, which offers deeper insight into the dynamics of contemporary families and their shifting expectations toward the oldest generation.

### **"If there's ever a time when friends are important, it's when we grow old": Exploring the Role of Friendships in Women's Experience of Ageing**

*Dauphine Maureau*

*(Université de Lille and Institut national d'études démographiques)*

Due to their greater longevity and age differences within couples, while most older men live with a partner, older women often live alone (Delbès et al., 2006). Encouraged throughout their lives to prioritise marital and family relationships - bonds that tend to diminish with age due to widowhood and the increasing independence and geographic distance of children and grandchildren - elderly women experience profound changes in their social circle as they age. In light of these relational shifts, the role played, in the daily lives of older women, by non-family yet intimate relationships such as friendships

becomes worth examining (Ermer, Matera, 2020). Unlike family and marital ties, friendships are characterized by fewer obligations for women and greater autonomy (Roseneil, 2004). Moreover, friendships between older women involve sharing a dominated social position and common life experiences which could provide a number of resources and enable forms of mutual aid.

Adopting a dynamic approach, this paper examines how friendships - and their place in elderly women's daily lives - evolve through certain transitions related to ageing (such as widowhood or loss of mobility). It addresses the types of resources circulating within those relationships, highlighting a continuum of care going from acts of service to emotional support and confidences, as well as forms of companionship.

This paper is based on a doctoral research conducted through semi-structured interviews with women from diverse social backgrounds aged 75 to 95 living in urban areas of the Paris region (France).

### **Caring Across a Lifetime: Parents of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in Japan**

*Rinako Someya*

*(Hosei University and Lund University)*

This study explores how ageing parents in Japan sustain long-term caregiving for their adult children with intellectual disabilities. Japan's disability movement, which peaked between the 1970s and 1990s, led to the institutionalisation of community-based living from the 2000s onward. Yet 70.4% of adults with intellectual disabilities still live with their parents. As they reconcile their own ageing with the prospect of "only ten more years," parents continue to shoulder the primary responsibility for care, relying mainly on weekday welfare services.

Drawing on intensive interviews and long-term fieldwork with parents who have provided care for over thirty years, this research examines how parents reflect on the necessity of delegating care while simultaneously persisting in their caregiving. Regardless of how much care is formally outsourced, parents narrate a constant tension: they acknowledge the need to let go, yet remain deeply engaged with the everyday, shifting responses of their children.

This paper presents preliminary findings that illuminate why parents persist in caregiving despite available welfare alternatives. Their narratives suggest that reflective awareness does not always lead to change, thereby opening up new questions about how care, family, and ageing can be understood within sociology.

### **Sibling Relations in Middle Age**

*Sara Elden*

*(Malmö University)*

Sibling relationships are the longest-lasting family ties most people experience; over 90% of Swedes aged 45–64 have at least one sibling (Sundström 2023). This paper explores siblingship in middle age as a key, yet often overlooked, relation of importance to sociological theorising on families. It captures two defining characteristics: its ebb and flow (Allan 1977; Davies 2023), and the ambivalence between closeness and conflict. In middle age, sibling ties often re-emerge through the coordination of care for aging parents and negotiations around inheritance (Sykorova 2024), representing a renewed phase of interaction. This life stage also invites reflection on earlier periods of both closeness and distance, making it particularly fruitful for examining how sibling relations challenge taken-for-granted ideas of "closeness" in family life. As Tanskanen & Danielsbacka (2021: 3) note, "the same factors that tend to increase contact, emotional closeness and help" between siblings are also "often associated with conflict and quarrels." Such ambivalence complicates assumptions in individualisation theories (Giddens 1992), which often privilege intimate disclosures over background support. As Davies (2023: 79) argues, this widens "the definitions of a close relationship to incorporate conflict and ambivalence." Drawing on 60 narratives written by middle-aged siblings in Sweden, collected via a web-based qualitative survey in collaboration with The Folklife Archive at Lund University, the paper examines how siblinghood is narrated and experienced across the life course. It makes a theoretical contribution by rethinking the meaning of closeness in family relations through the lens of sibling ambivalence.

## **Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209**

### **Entangled Ambivalence and Sandwich Care**

*Junko Yamashita*

*(University of Bristol)*

A growing population in economically developed societies are simultaneously providing childcare and older adult care, or sandwich care. The existing studies reveal that sandwich carers are more physically, mentally and financially challenged than those providing dyadic care. This paper explores an understudied area of sandwich care and ambivalence. Ambivalence encompasses the difficulties, challenges, and range of feelings, including guilt, anger, isolation, sense of duty, fulfilment and many others that sandwich carers experience. Building on the existing studies on sociological ambivalence, this paper proposes a new theoretical framework for delineating the entangled structural and relational webs where sandwich carers' experiences and negotiations are situated. Our theoretical framework captures the temporal, socially structured, and policy-contextual properties of ambivalence. I argue that ambivalence arises from historical and prospective family relationships (temporal) that intersect with the gendered expectations for parenting and family responsibility of adult social care (socially structured), which further intersects with care policy and available care services (policy contextual). How the three qualities of ambivalence influence each other in multiple ways is discussed. While I illustrate this by drawing on considerable evidence from Japan, we argue that, by integrating 'non-western' case studies, this paper develops the sociological ambivalence theory further, and proposes a useful theoretical framework attuned to understanding the experience of people providing multiple care in diverse social and cultural contexts.

### **Understanding Transracial Adoption: Emotional Labour, Identity and Racial and Cultural Negotiation**

*Sweta Rajan-Rankin, Ravinder Barn, Keira Pratt-Boyden*

*(University of Kent)*

While transracial adoption (TRA) has become widespread in western country contexts, theoretical frameworks underpinning its analysis remain limited; often confined to paradigms of racial/cultural socialisation and identity theory. These dominant approaches tend to foreground adoptive parental perspectives, while overlooking the voices of adoptees themselves.

This study challenges such epistemic silences by foregrounding the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) as a critical lens through which we can understand Black adoptees' experiences of belonging and exclusion within white families. We conceptualise emotional labour not merely as a psychological or interpersonal process, but as a deeply racialised and politicised practice. Through a close reading of selected qualitative texts and autobiographical narratives, we explore how racially minoritised adoptees engage in both deep and surface acting to navigate the dissonance between their racial/cultural heritage and the normative expectations of white familial environments.

Adoptees may perform emotional labour to maintain familial harmony and strategically present themselves in ways that align with dominant racial scripts. Racially minoritised adoptees often find themselves positioned as symbols of racial progress and multicultural idealism, while simultaneously being subjects of contestation by both adoptive families and racialised communities. They may inadvertently become facilitators of cross-racial relations, performing whiteness to gain acceptance while suppressing aspects of their own cultural identity. Some adoptees, however, reframe their liminal identities not as a deficit but as a generative space for resistance and self-authorship. This study provides new insights into identity formation within racialised family structures.

### **Implicit Care: Exploring Masculine Modes of Care within Contexts of Constraint**

*Will Mason, Osman Jama, Khaliil Ali*

*(University of Sheffield, Unity Gym Project)*

This paper extends Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities (CSMM) by arguing for enhanced recognition of the modes of care men practice within contexts of material and gendered constraint. Drawing on empirical work in the North of England, with 20 second-generation Somali men (aged 18 - 30), we show how contexts of intergenerational trauma, socioeconomic inequality and familial commitment collectively shape care expectations and priorities, in ways that engender, limit and transform care. By focusing on the often 'implicit', 'disguised' or even 'hidden' forms of care that participants recounted and expressed, we centre the importance of care practices that are reparative, but risk being missed or depreciated with the emerging field of caring masculinities. Overall, we contribute to developing work in CSMM by (1) emphasising the need to situate care practices within their geopolitical, socioeconomic and cultural contexts and (2) introducing 'implicit care' as a conceptual resource that might broaden the purview of caring masculinities and sociologies of care more generally.

## **Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211**

### **Living with Problems: Grudging Acts and 'Lack of Motive' Talk**

*Wendy Bottero*

*(University of Manchester)*

Using Mass Observation data, I examine 'grudging acts' —where people grudgingly undertake unwanted activities —as distinctive problem-situations, where people live with their problems, opting, grudgingly, to 'put up with' unreasonable situations. The Observers rehearsed 'lack of motive' talk, justifying why they begrudged activities but also why it was 'not worth' refusing, with insufficient motive to change tack. Such 'lack of motive' talk, in which people abandon envisaged actions because they think others will not accept their reasons for them, or it is unclear what is situationally acceptable, demonstrates a neglected dimension of vocabularies of motive (Mills, 1940). Grudging acts illustrate the mixed motives and mixed emotions through which people get 'dragged into' unwanted activities, connected to uncertainty over the line of acceptability. Grudging acts show the complexities both in what people will 'put up with' but also in how they fall out of social arrangements.

### **What Do Accounts of Inherited Variants of Dementia Contribute to Understandings of Family Sociology?**

*Mel Hall*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

The work of David Morgan (2011) and colleagues at the Morgan Centre has emphasised the importance of 'family practices', fundamentally reshaping studies of families and relationships. This marked a departure from structural understandings that had long dominated sociological conceptions of family. These theorisations foreground the relationality and diversity of everyday family life. Our research on dementia within family contexts (Hall and Sikes, 2018; Hall et al., 2025) has been deeply influenced by this seminal work, which has helped illuminate how the disease affects interpersonal relationships.

Yet we find ourselves grappling with how relational approaches intersect with the tangible, biological dimensions of family - particularly in cases involving inherited forms of dementia. Dementia is an umbrella term for symptoms linked to the deterioration of brain function. Its prevalence is rising, encompassing both 'classic' late-onset Alzheimer's disease and younger-onset variants. It is a degenerative, terminal condition, and for some, it carries a genetic component.

This presentation draws on findings from ten biographical interviews conducted in the US and UK, as part of a study involving adults who have experienced familial dementia attributed to a genetic variant. Some participants had undergone genetic testing and knew their status - whether they carried the gene or not - while others had opted against testing or were still deliberating. What insights does this data

offer into the enduring relevance of 'family practices'? And how might we conceptualise the space for tangible affinities - those observed and felt by family members - that arise from biological realities?

### **Care Capital**

*Duncan Fisher*

*(University of Sheffield)*

Care work, both paid and unpaid, is complex, and through it experiences and transferable resources are accumulated. The sociological concept 'capital' has been applied in different care contexts, including to elements of caring labour. Chou and Kröger (2014) deploy 'care capital' when considering challenges lone mothers face in combining paid work with unpaid care in Taiwan. They find the limited external care capital available inhibits women's labour market participation. For Skeggs' (1997) 'emotional cultural capital' is central to the classed, gendered 'respectability' cultivated by working-class women school leavers taking community care courses in north-west England. Stacey (2011) observes US homecare aides' 'emotional capital' as often developing from previous experiences as unpaid carers.

Care work is undervalued and insufficiently recognised, but 'capital' presents a possibility for capturing the existence of care-related skills, knowledge, and awareness. It offers a route to understanding specific processes shaping who cares and when, and, for example, how certain people become paid care workers. This paper explains the impetus for interest in care capital, which came from the author's empirical study of young adults' paid care work experiences in north-east England. This interest developed alongside engagement with the literature introduced above, and the paper summarises existing conceptualisations of care-related capitals. It points out how these conceptualisations enhance understanding of caregiving generated resource accumulation, discusses their limitations and risks attached to using them, and proposes a future research direction on care capital.

### **From One Hour to the Next: How Solo Mothers of Young Children in England Describe and Make Sense of Their Everyday Experiences of Work and Care**

*Victoria Pratt*

*(University College London)*

This empirical paper draws on qualitative research exploring how solo mothers of young children navigate paid work and caregiving in England. Solo motherhood — facilitated by increased access to assisted reproductive technologies — is a growing and increasingly diverse family configuration in the UK and beyond. However, everyday solo mother family life has been little researched to date. In this study, 35 solo mothers from across England were interviewed online, using a semi-structured approach; the sample reflected a wide range of income levels, including participants receiving Universal Credit. The research was informed by a critical realist perspective, which supported a reflexive thematic analysis attentive to the interplay between individual agency, culture and the underlying social structures shaping solo mothers' lives. The findings presented here show how solo mothers emphasised the meaning and passage of time as they navigated work and care responsibilities across a typical day. It is argued that this focus on temporality was shaped by the intersection of contemporary parenting culture (and its emphasis on maternal presence) with structural factors, such as childcare policy and provision. The paper contributes to sociological debates on care and social reproduction by illuminating how solo mothers sustain everyday family life amid gendered expectations and limited state support.

## **Lifecourse - Room 4.213**

### **Urban-Rural Inequalities in Later Life: Social Participation Mediates the Urban-Rural Divide in Future Support Expectations**

*Boxu Wang*

*(University of Birmingham)*

Expectations of future support serve as a key indicator of well-being in later life and are closely associated with the urban–rural divide. This paper examines the mediating role of social participation on the relationship between urban–rural residence and older adults' expectations of future support in China, a rapidly ageing society with significant urban-rural disparities.

The study draws on panel data (2011–2020) from the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS), focusing on respondents aged 60 and above. Using logistic regression and mediation models, we investigate whether older adults living in rural areas report lower levels of social participation compared to their urban counterparts. We expect that these differences may explain variations in future support expectations. Our models control for key demographic and health variables.

Findings show that older adults, in rural contexts, consistently report lower participation in social activities compared to older adults living in urban areas. Participation is positively associated with confidence in future support, and mediation analysis indicates that the effect of urban-rural residence on expectations of future support is fully explained by social participation. In other words, the mediator (social participation) is a key mechanism explaining the relationship between urban-rural residence and future support expectations.

Our results highlight that beyond redistributive measures, policies should also strengthen opportunities for rural older adults to participate in community and social life. Our paper contributes to research on ageing inequality by showing how relational mechanisms underpin identity and support gaps in later life.

### **How Shifting Social Housing and Health Policies Amplify Late-Life Inequality**

*Laura Funk, Andrea McDougall*

*(University of Manitoba)*

Politically and economically motivated emphases on 'aging in place' need greater attention to the conditions structuring older people's access to housing and supports within increasingly neo-liberalized social welfare states. Drawing on interviews with 44 housing providers, managers, resource workers and experts in one city in central Canada, we explored how shifting policies in the social housing, health and community service sectors shape tenants' access to supports within non-market seniors housing. Federal and provincial devolution and state divestment from housing responsibility, alongside home care gaps, put an increasing onus on non-profit organizations of varying capacities. Yet in the absence of structural incentives to help support tenants to age in place, providers fall back on and reinforce normative expectations of tenant 'independence,' and maintain strong organizational positions around risk aversion, especially as they face increasing expectations from the public, governments and health systems. These processes amplify social exclusion and inequalities in older tenants' abilities to age with disabilities in particular buildings over time – especially for low-income tenants and those without family supports. Structural changes that embed social responsibility and human rights considerations into the purpose and delivery of social housing for older adults could ensure the centrality of both housing rights and care rights in aging in place policies.

### **The Political Imaginaries of Ageing: A Conceptual Framework**

*Anna Shadrina*

*(University of Liverpool)*

Historically, ageing and politics have been studied separately. A small body of empirical work has examined older people's political participation, mostly in Western contexts. Inspired by the 'active

ageing' perspective, this field of research has asked how civic engagement in later life might be increased, producing typologies of collective action.

The political imaginaries of ageing is a new project that maps dominant and alternative ways of thinking about global ageing and politics. It departs from the premise that, across historical and geopolitical settings, ageing has been weaponised by political actors to advance their agendas. The project investigates how ageing and older people are represented and mobilised in political discourse.

Using Eastern Europe as an initial case study, it asks: what ideas about ageing are deployed in political narratives? What alliances do these narratives enable or block? How do ideas about ageing intersect with political temporalities and with the legal and symbolic production of borders and divides? Whose interests are served when ageing is centred as a political problem?

At this early stage, the project develops a conceptual framework for a comparative research platform that will map these imaginaries and assess their social and political implications across diverse contexts.

## Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209

### **A Diagnosing in Waiting: PMDD, Patient Activism and Normative Femininity in France**

*Hannah Gallagher-Syed*

*(University of Cambridge)*

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), a psychiatric diagnosis for severe premenstrual distress and dysfunction, has sparked considerable debate (Figert 2017). Does it pathologise women's bodies, provide an epistemic tool for self-understanding and advocacy, or occupy more ambiguous ground? And what of the places in which PMDD has not yet materialised as a legitimate diagnosis? This presentation examines the contested materialisation of PMDD in France, where it has struggled to gain traction despite its relatively successful trajectory in the US and other English-speaking contexts. I suggest that PMDD's complicated French trajectory lies in the tension between an epistemic incompatibility with French psychiatry and competing demands on femininity that are resolved through pathologisation.

Since 2020, patient activists organised through TDPM France have lobbied for state and medical recognition of PMDD. Drawing on interviews with French PMDD activists, I analyse the barriers to PMDD's French reception. I examine activists' accounts of their motivations, hopes and strategies and explore how divergent "repertoires of classification" in French medicine and society shape the reception and legitimacy of this diagnosis (Barnard 2019).

This work offers insight into a psychiatric diagnosis in its "state of becoming"—a moment during which the diagnosis is malleable, the boundaries of the normal and the pathological are unsettled and the subjects to whom they apply await or call forth a reconfiguration. By focusing on nascent French activism around PMDD, I ask why specific social contexts require specific regimes of gendered pathologisation and contribute to a wider conversation about gendered medicalisation, psychiatrisation and normative femininity.

### **A Reproductive Citizenship Approach to Roma & Traveller Health Research**

*Michaela Nudo*

*(Trinity College Dublin)*

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) women continue to experience a variety of conditions and barriers impacting their sexual and reproductive health (SRH). In Ireland, ethnocentric maternity services deflect responsibility for poor outcomes onto Traveller, Roma, and other ethnic minority women, portraying their cultural practices as the problem, rather than acknowledging systemic shortcomings in care provision (Reid and Taylor, 2007). The following project, situated within a subset of these outcomes, seeks to locate Irish Traveller (hereafter, Traveller) women's Reproductive Citizenship, emphasising their autonomy and agency in conjunction with the production of health policy and practice.

Reproductive Citizenship, first proposed in 2008 by Turner, was later defined by Smyth (2024), from a feminist standpoint on abortion research, as “the ongoing, contested process to realize every individual's freedom to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, and to have those decisions respected and facilitated,” whereby one’s rights must be realized. Drawing upon academic scholarship and community-based perspectives, this research seeks to refine an ethical, participatory, and reflexive framework that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (#3: Good Health and Well-being; #5: Gender Equality). Further contextualizing Traveller women’s rights within transitional and reproductive justice studies, this project aims to develop a comprehensive and accessible piece of literature to inform studies of population health, health policy, and health promotion, where the framework of Reproductive Citizenship may be further applied.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217**

### **Religious Self-Representation on Social Media: Young African Migrants and the Performance of Transnational Belonging**

*Sarah Kazira*

*(University of Glasgow)*

“Why do you never post us on the church’s Instagram?” The question, asked by two young Nigerian women to a church photographer during a Sunday service in London, was more than a plea for inclusion, it points to wider negotiations over visibility, representation, and how religious identities are negotiated across transnational religious and digital spaces. This article examines how young Nigerian and Zimbabwean migrants in the United Kingdom use social media to self-represent their religious identities through both curated exhibitions and real-time performances (Hogan, 2010). Drawing on digital ethnography, including online participant observation of young migrants’ social media practices on Instagram and TikTok, it shows how everyday digital activities are mobilised as strategies of religious self-representation directed at multiple, often transnational, audiences as a way for young people to assert their religious identities and negotiate belonging within transnational religious communities.

The article argues that these religious displays and performances are significant because they reveal how young migrants use social media to symbolically and performatively enact transnational religious presence by making sure they remain present and visible. Through this, young migrants show that transnational religious belonging is not only felt but also has to be performed and mediated to assert belonging and shape how others perceive their position within the transnational religious communities.

### **Uncovering Neighbourhood-Embedded Voluntary Non-Profit Action and Capitals in Conditions of Socioeconomic Challenge and Superdiversity**

*Gabriella Elgenius*

*(University of Gothenburg)*

This paper analyses the nature of voluntary non-profit (VNP) activity in conditions of socioeconomic challenge and superdiversity focusing on organisational types, activities and capitals resources utilised to enable action. We contribute to the round-earth approach (Horton-Smith 2000) while beginning to further the understanding of civil society in deprived and diverse neighbourhoods (Vertovec, 2007). An interdisciplinary framework building on scholarship concerning grassroots organisations, resource mobilisation and community cultural wealth has been utilised alongside a multi-sited cross-country ethnographic approach to identify different forms of actions including semi-structured interviews with leaders of 129 organisations in seven neighbourhoods in England and Sweden. We propose a new framing, the Neighbourhood-Embedded Voluntary Non-Profit Action and Capitals Framework, which combines the Neighbourhood-Embedded Voluntary Non-Profit Action and Neighbourhood-Embedded Capitals categorisations. The first distinguishes action by level of formalisation, nature of approach and size, identifying six different organisational types (charities, charitable trusts, grassroots, network-actors, social enterprises and subsidiary organisations). These categories have been shaped by the availability of Neighbourhood-Embedded Capitals. These strategically used resources comprise overlapping forms of social, material, multicultural and moral-cognitive capitals. Overall, we draw attention to the conditions and mechanisms under which minoritised populations leverage capitals to

achieve organisational goals and deliver multi-purpose activities. We conclude that locally embedded organisational types and capitals are overlooked in approaches researching VNP activities which rely heavily on register data.

### **Precarious Housing, Precarious Belonging: Using Arts-Based Participatory Methods to Explore the Experiences and Perspectives of Young Asylum Seekers Living in Temporary Accommodation**

*Arrate De La Cruz*

*(Edinburgh Napier University)*

In this paper, I discuss the role of participatory arts-based methods to produce respectful and representative narratives of young asylum-seeking people and their experiences of temporary accommodation in the UK. The right to adequate and safe housing is recognised as a fundamental human right under international law, a right far from realised for many, including, against mainstream media representations, asylum-seeking people in the UK. I situate my investigation within the UK environment of hostility and inequality towards racialised individuals. I address the gap in research regarding the effects of such housing precarity on the identity and belonging of young asylum-seeking people, investigating the effects of these experiences at a crucial formative age. I theoretically and practically account for how their exposure to epistemic injustices can not only affect the authentic representation of their experiences, but their identity altogether. Drawing on preliminary findings from my fieldwork with the young people, I contribute to the methodological discussion on how using participatory arts-based methods, such as visual methods, can support bypassing some of these injustices in keeping with a feminist praxis of care and allowing individuals to share their experiences in a more representational and authentic manner.

### **Racialized Differences, Economic Sector Participation and Transnational Ways of Being of Guyanese Immigrant Communities in New York City**

*Remi Anderson*

*(Florida International University)*

Is there variance by ethnicity in the economic sector participation in the homeland and the host-land and how might this have constitute differently the abilities of Guyanese of African and South Asian Indian descent to migrate and negotiate transnational ways of being? My answer to this question suggests that there is an opportunity to parse the current Caribbean and Guyanese migration discourses by exploring how race / ethnicity and economic sector participation have varied over time and how they might have produced different migration abilities, experiences, and strategic ways of being for Guyanese. I argue that the use of the transnationalism paradigm, with a focus on conjunctural and temporal specificities, produces two important outcomes. 1. It complicates the push - pull binary which drives current Caribbean migrant discourses by examining racialized differences in economic sector participation across space and time which has influenced Guyanese migration to its largest diaspora enclaves in New York city. 2. It elicits thick descriptions of ethnic differences in the lived experiences of migrants, their subjectivities and their negotiations of transnational ways of being in response to those experiences.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218**

### **Where the Aim is not to Integrate: The UK Seasonal Worker Visa and Agri-food Enclaves**

*Lydia Medland*

*(University of Bristol)*

Low-wage labour migrants are employed in horticultural production in many wealthy countries, increasingly through the use of seasonal work visas (Molinero-Gerbeau 2020). Seasonal work visas are an example of where despite positive rhetoric on integration, exclusion from ongoing participation in society is the policy goal. This article argues that seasonal work visas are a tool to maintain non-integration of workers into residential areas around the UK where they live and work. While employers

construct farmworkers' time in England as comparable to a holiday camp experience, I illustrate that segregation is performed on an everyday basis through both hard and soft measures in everyday life. Overall, these everyday exclusions produce micro-enclaves of production. The concepts of 'ghetto' and 'enclave' are discussed. Enclaves are considered most suitable to conceptualise the relation between neo-liberal production interests and the spatial position of workers in labour-intensive horticulture. The paper draws on county-level data obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, interview data from farm workers and employers, and observational insights from fieldwork in five English counties where seasonal work visas are used to employ migrants from outside the UK. The combination of the tied nature of sponsorship, permanently temporary labour market access, social segregation in rural spaces, and a lack of access to public funds, make seasonal workers part of a growing group of marginalised workers elsewhere in the economy.

### **Toward a Critical Digital Migration Studies: Digital Nomads, Colonial Desires, and Privileged Migration**

*Alexandra Eleazar*

*(University of California, Santa Barbara)*

Digital labor and remote work are quickly complicating and changing the trajectory and possibilities of migration (Hooper and Benton 2022), particularly for individuals seeking lifestyle migration opportunities. Under conditions enabled by COVID-19, access to remote work and digital labour has enabled increasing numbers of individuals to work outside the traditional workspace and be mobile across national borders (Hermann and Paris 2020). While growing scholarship has examined the rise of 'digital nomads,' this scholarship has largely been done outside of migration studies, and without taking into account colonial contexts and global mobility regimes that allow these mobilities to begin with.

Drawing from multimodal ethnographic research with North American and European remote workers and expatriates in Guatemala, I show how digital labor economies are fundamentally shifting the possibilities of migration and economic mobility for elites from the Global North, beyond the case of digital nomads alone. In doing so, I highlight how the divisions between expatriate, digital nomad, and tourist have become increasingly blurred. Furthermore, while the rise of new remote worker migration to Central America is notable since the outbreak of COVID-19, waves of North American and European migration have occurred to Guatemala for centuries. I show how contemporary migration possibilities are founded upon past and ongoing colonial desires and imaginaries. And lastly, I unpack how these privileged migration journeys are occurring concurrently with the increasing erasure of indigenous rights, criminalization, and displacement in Guatemala and beyond, and how digital migration may be creating a new frontier of inequality.

### **Ethics, Borders, and Labour: Reframing Migrant Recruitment and Legal Mobility in the UK**

*Roxana Barbulescu*

*(University of Leeds)*

This paper interrogates the ethical imperatives and institutional architectures underpinning the recruitment of migrant labour to the United Kingdom, with particular attention to the legal channels through which such mobility is sanctioned. It situates contemporary UK migration policy within a broader sociological framework that foregrounds the interplay between state sovereignty, market demand, and human rights. Drawing on recent legislative reforms and sector-specific codes of practice—especially in health and social care—the analysis explores how ethical recruitment is operationalised, and where it falters. The paper critically examines the tension between the UK's professed commitment to fair and transparent migration governance and its increasingly restrictive visa regimes, which risk exacerbating precarity among migrant populations. Ultimately, the paper argues for a reconceptualisation of organising migration that centres ethical responsibility, transnational justice, and the lived experiences of migrants within Britain's evolving sociopolitical landscape.

## **Gendered Discrimination of Migrant Labourers in India: A Human Rights Perspective on Exploitation, Social Exclusion and Access to Justice**

*Sohini Chatterjee*

*(St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata)*

Women migrant labourers represent one of the most vulnerable strata of the Indian informal economy. This paper studies the gendered discrimination and marginalisation faced by female migrant labourers in India, highlighting the tenets of human rights violations and the structural inequalities that aggravate the exploitation of women in the labour force. Employed as domestic labourers, construction workers, and agricultural labourers, they face challenges including wage disparities, unsafe working conditions, and limited access to social protections.

Using an intersectional feminist lens of analysis, this discourse delineates how gender, compounding with other social stratifications in India, exacerbates the marginalization of female migrant labourers. It delves into the role played by socialization of women, highlighting how the vulnerabilities are inherited and reproduced in contemporary migration. Delineating how old patterns of labour and patriarchy still shape women's migration today, this paper points out that sociology has often rendered migrant women invisible. It deconstructs the legal loopholes and provisions, through case studies and qualitative analysis shedding light on the culturally internalised structural inequalities that shape the lives of migrant labourers in India.

Thereby, this paper suggests for rethinking 'human rights;' it calls for stronger enforcement of labor laws, gender-sensitive policies, and greater inclusion of migrant women in policy dialogues, grounded in lived realities. By centering the experiences of women migrant workers, it aims to contribute to the broader sociological understanding of exploitation, marginalisation, and human rights in the Global South, with a particular emphasis on labor rights and gender justice in India.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219**

### **Forced Displacement and its Implications: The Moderating Role of Social Support and Self-efficacy in Fostering Subjective Well-being of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan**

*Muhammad Mohsin*

*(University of Sargodha)*

Fleeing from the home country and left behind whatever you have earned throughout your life is not an easy choice. Forced displacement is significant global issue affecting millions of refugees worldwide. Driven by armed conflict, violence, sectarianism, violation of human rights, it has become a challenge which requires urgent response and prevention. In this context, the current study was an attempt to analyze the implications of forced displacement on the subjective well-being of the Afghan Refugees in Pakistan. The current study employed survey and cross sectional research designs. The universe of the current study was Afghan Refugees settled in all provinces of Pakistan. The responses were collected through interview schedule at different refugee's camps, host communities, regulated and unregulated houses etc. The results of the current study revealed that fear of deportation had negative and significant relationship with subjective well-being. Similarly, Integration, social support, and self efficacy had also significant but positive relationship with subjective well-being of the Afghan Refugees in Pakistan. Moreover, the current study revealed that perceived discrimination had no significant relationship with subjective well-being, but the relationship was significant with moderating effect of social support and self efficacy. In the end, the current study has made both a theoretical and a practical contribution. Theoretically, it has added to the literature on fear of deportation, perceived discrimination, social support, self efficacy, integration, and subjective well being in context of Afghan refugees in Pakistan; practically, it has suggested the policies recommendations for interventions based on what it found.

## **The Role of Faith and Religion for the Health of Roma Women Living in Czechia and South Yorkshire**

*Olga Fuseini, Dr. Lois Orton*

*(University of Sheffield)*

Roma women are thought to experience some of the worst health outcomes compared to the rest of the European population. A lot has been written about the possible reasons for this. Explanations started off by blaming their genetics, moved onto portraying Roma as victims of their own cultural lifestyle and, more recently, identifying Anti-Gypsyism and gender disadvantages as the root of the problem. Despite continued academic and political attention, the inequalities experienced by Roma, and Roma women in particular, persist, and in some cases worsen. Christian faith is known to be important in Roma culture. However, connections between religious faith and health are rarely made.

The findings reported in this paper aim to centre the lived experience of Czech and Slovak Roma women living in Czechia and South Yorkshire by exploring the pre-existing beliefs and practices that have the potential to both positively and negatively shape their health. Long term engagement, involving a series of in-depth interviews and creative approaches (drawing methods from the visual arts and poetry) to story the lives of these women revealed an important link between their religious faith and their mental and physical health across four key areas: coping strategies, quality of life, death and dying, and miracles. This paper will explore how the centring of Roma women's stories in understandings of their health can help broaden the narrative in ways that recognise not just disadvantage but also foreground agency.

# **Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A**

## **Between Continuity and Change: The Role of Bureaucratic Elites in Democratic Transitions**

*Intissar Kherigi*

*(Ibn Haldun University)*

This paper investigates the changing role of bureaucratic elites during democratic transitions, drawing on Weberian theories of bureaucracy and the sociology of elites. In transitional contexts, the Weberian tension between charismatic leadership and routinized administration becomes particularly acute: politicians seek to assert new forms of legitimacy and mobilize constituencies for reforms, while bureaucrats, as entrenched holders of technical expertise and organizational memory, negotiate their place within shifting power structures. The paper draws on the case of Tunisia to analyze how political transitions generate competition and circulation among elite groups. The paper draws on fieldwork conducted in 2015-19, including 257 semi-structured interviews, analysis of official archives, and participant observation at policy-related events.

The paper draws on the sociology of elites to analyze how administrative elites form, reproduce, and adapt under conditions of uncertainty. It seeks to broaden this literature, which has largely concentrated on political, corporate and global elites while paying less attention to bureaucratic elites. It also seeks to contribute to theorizing how bureaucratic elites operate in the context of democratization in the Global South, taking account of the colonial legacies, informality, hybrid forms of authority, and international donor networks that shape elite reproduction in such contexts.

The paper argues that the sociology of elites must pay greater attention to political transitions as moments of renegotiation between charismatic-political authority and bureaucratic-professional authority. The analysis highlights how elite reproduction, co-optation, and contestation shape whether democratic consolidation occurs or whether bureaucratic inertia and elite entrenchment undermine reform.

### **From the Perspective of Identity Process Theory, the Identity Transformation in Türkiye over the Past Decades**

*Durali Karacan, Fatih Baş*

*(Eskisehir Osmangazi University)*

Türkiye has experienced significant transformations in recent decades due to political and socioeconomic developments that have impacted the economy, politics, jurisprudence, international relations, society, and social groups. In the past few decades, the transformations of individual and group identities have been among the most significant changes in Türkiye's social life. "Identity transformation" is a term that typically denotes the process by which an individual or group experiences a substantial change in their sense of self, social roles, or the meanings they attribute to their identity. This process involves changes in self-concept, which affects how individuals perceive themselves in terms of their values, beliefs, goals, and roles. Notably, the concept of "threat to identity" has been a highly contested issue in Türkiye during recent decades, with almost all groups asserting that their identities are under threat. Identity Process Theory (IPT) was conceptualised with the goal of elucidating and predicting how individuals and groups respond to psychological threats, especially those to identity. According to IPT, a threat to identity emerges when processes of assimilation/accommodation become impossible and fail to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, belonging, meaning, and psychological coherence, which these 7 principles are referred to as "motivational identity principles". In this current qualitative study, the identity transformations in Türkiye will be discussed by applying Identity Process Theory (IPT), focusing on motivational identity principles. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 15 individuals belonging to various social groups. The results will be analysed by applying Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

### **Spectemur Agendo: The Cyclical Nature of Fragmented Post-industrial Masculinities**

*Grace Batley*

*(University of Cambridge)*

In August 2024, the Holiday Inn in Rotherham, temporarily housing asylum seekers, became a site of national and international attention. Hundreds of 'protesters' gathered and as the day progressed, windows were smashed and attempts made to set the building alight. Media and political narratives framed the attendees as angry, uneducated, and violent. The tropes obscure the structural and historical contributors that shaped the trajectories of men's lives to this date. These events are connected to decades of economic and social rupture. The deindustrialisation of the 80s and its aftermath reshaped working-class identity and produced conditions in which masculine rhetorics and performances became fragmented and out of sync. The performance and masks of masculinity that are observed in my hometown convey the complexities of social identities.

This work pulls on Gordons' social haunting, where past industrial and political ruptures continue to shape the embodied experiences of masculinity. Drawing on Butler's theory of performativity, Foucault's thinking of power and basing the work in critical theory, masculinities here are understood not as fixed traits but as repeated, socially reinforced enactments,

Situated in my positionality as a woman from Barnsley and daughter of a miner, this project traces what I coin the cycle of fragmented masculinities: identities formed through early socialisation, reinforced through recognition, and sustained by fear of exclusion. Using portraiture as a scavenger methodology, it centres lived experience and cultural memory to explore how masculinities in post-industrial South Yorkshire persist, and manifest, capturing patterns and fracture without romanticising the past.

### **Growing Pains: Identity Work of the Emerging Nordic Tech Elite**

*Henri Koskinen, Anu Kantola*

*(University of Helsinki)*

Because of recent shifts towards technology-driven and digitalized capitalism, new technology-based elites are emerging all over the world, including the Nordic countries. In this study, we examine the identity work of the Nordic tech elite, situating them as a case of new elite formation in the digital age. Drawing from scholarship on social mobility and elite legitimation, we analyze how rapid upward mobility

destabilizes classed self-understandings of the tech elite. Drawing on 28 interviews with Finnish and Swedish tech founders, CEOs, and investors, we show how wealth accumulated in the new digital economy creates dislocations between inherited class dispositions and newly acquired upper-class status. To reconcile these tensions, the tech elite employs classed repertoires of ordinariness, modesty, and social responsibility, situating themselves as egalitarian citizens rather than privileged elites. Yet these strategies remain contradictory, as material affluence strains their identification with ordinariness. We conceptualize this ambivalent positioning as the paradoxical symbolic position of the “middle-class millionaire.” Our findings highlight how national cultural imaginaries – in this case Nordic egalitarianism – shape elite identity work and elite legitimation. By theorizing elite formation as lived negotiation of classed identities, we demonstrate how emerging elites are compelled to balance global capitalist trajectories with local moral repertoires. Our study thus advances elite research by linking structural transformations of capitalism to the subjective, cultural, and moral dimensions of emerging elite groups.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.219**

### **‘An Inspiration to others’?: Strictly Come Dancing, Inspiration Porn and the Politics of Disability: Ellie Goldstein Matters**

*Alison Wilde*

*(Northumbria University)*

This paper focuses on Ellie Goldstein, a disabled contestant on the UK’s ‘Strictly Come Dancing’ show, in 2025. It sets her casting as a celebrity within the broader context of the evolution of disabled celebrities on the show since they were first cast in 2017, proceeding from the - comparatively non-controversial - participation of well-known Paralympians, who seemed to carry the mantle of disability inspiration tropes since the UK’s 2012 Paralympic Games. The integration, and popularity, of more increasingly “risky” characters with recognisable impairments - such as blind and Deaf celebrities - is considered here in the climate of increasing ‘anti-woke’ complaints by sections of the audience and mainstream press. Drawing on my recent analyses of comedy, talent, and recent Strictly celebrities with sensory impairments, this paper follows the 2025 show’s coverage, and associated press and social media discussions. It centres on Ellie Goldstein, a young woman, model and actress, with Down Syndrome. - paying close attention to her own words and desire to become an ‘inspiration to others’, In so doing, it uses Critical Discourse Analysis to chart changing understandings of learning disability in relation to the show’s central values of talent, aesthetics, selfhood, and meritocracy. This draws on frameworks drawn from Critical/Disability Studies and Reality Television, to place representations in wider social context, considering the wider impacts on disabled people and people with learning disabilities in particular.

### **Divided by Pride: Partisan Narratives of Nationalism in Korean Presidential Commemorative Speeches**

*Jaemin Lee*

*(Chinese University of Hong Kong)*

Nationalism is often seen as a unifying force, yet it can also divide citizens by promoting competing visions of the nation. While computational studies have measured nationalist rhetoric in political speech, they typically focus on inclusion or pride intensity, overlooking how national pride is qualitatively constructed—limiting insights into nationalism’s role in political polarization.

This study builds on the concept of nationalist polarization, where partisan competition centers on divergent nationalist visions. It analyzes all official South Korean presidential speeches delivered during major commemorative events from 1949 to 2024—ritualized occasions where leaders define national identity, celebrate history, and envision the future. Drawing on theories of nationalism and linguistic research on tense and aspect, we distinguish between retrospective pride (celebrating past struggles) and prospective pride (projecting future progress).

Using theory-driven seed verbs expanded via word-embedding similarity, we extracted past-tense subject–verb–object (S–V–O) triplets. Ambiguous pronouns and demonstratives were clarified using large language models to ensure accurate referent identification. Objects were categorized into five

themes: Sovereignty & Security, Cultural Heritage & Tradition, Democracy & Rights, Economic Development & Global Standing, and Challenges & Adversities.

We assess whether verb orientation and object emphasis vary systematically by partisan affiliation. Our findings show how partisan variation in temporal framing and thematic focus can be detected through fine-grained linguistic analysis of ceremonial political rhetoric, offering new insights into how nationalism operates as a mechanism of political polarization.

### **'The most fun we've had in ages!': Politics and Play on the American Religious Right**

*Hannah Peterson*

*(University of Cambridge)*

The "big tent" MAGA coalition is riddled with contradictions, including a series of quiet but surprising faith alliances: Evangelicals collaborating with Mormons on political and cultural projects, and Orthodox Jews submitting amici briefs on behalf of Muslims and Catholics. This paper asks: how do minority faith groups themselves make sense of their engagement in MAGA politics?

In the United States, political engagement on the religious right is typically understood in terms of instrumental motivations (e.g. the desire to secure material or symbolic advantages for one's faith group) or expressive motivations (e.g. the performance of religious identity to the state and other citizens). Yet during six months of ethnographic fieldwork with two minority faith groups - Orthodox Jews and Latter Day Saints - in the lead-up to and aftermath of the 2024 U.S. presidential election, I found that these frameworks did not fully capture how my interlocutors understood their own engagement with politics. Just as significant as instrumental and expressive motivations was a ludic motivation: a desire to engage with U.S. politics because it served as a religiously sanctioned space to play and have fun.

This paper develops a ludic approach to politics, drawing on theories of play to conceptualize political engagement on the religious right as a sandbox for experimenting with ideas about the future, attitudes toward leadership, and conceptions of the self. I argue that the playful dimensions of MAGA politics are not incidental but central to sustaining its "big tent" coalition.

### **Women's Social Worlds in Autism Care: Support, Identity and Traces of Helicopter Parenting in Urban Uttar Pradesh**

*Pratiksha Rai*

*(Banaras Hindu University)*

Autism Spectrum Disorder remains an under-explored field in India's Sociological landscape, particularly in Uttar-Pradesh, where socio-cultural values impose rigid gendered expectations on women. This research examines how cultural norms and socio-economic values influence the social participation and support networks of women caregivers of autistic children in urban centres of Uttar Pradesh.

Driven by the significant research gap concerning region-specific experiences, the study intends to understand how social expectations shape caregiving responsibilities, social isolation, and access to support. This paper is framed around major sociological theories, namely, Symbolic Interactionism and Feminist perspective employing a mixed-methods approach. The study integrates semi-structured interviews, case studies, and surveys with purposive and snowball sampling techniques to explore parents' lived experiences that trace Helicopter Parenting at its core. Thematic analysis provides qualitative insights, while quantitative surveys highlight key trends in social participation and access to formal and informal support systems.

Preliminary findings suggest that societal stigma, limited institutional support, and traditional role expectations significantly constrain women's ability to maintain social networks, often resulting in emotional distress and social withdrawal. The study brings into focus the importance of culturally contextualised policy measures aimed at empowering women caregivers and promoting inclusive support structures. By contributing a regionally grounded understanding of the intersection between autism, gender, and social support in Uttar Pradesh, this research aims to inform policy reforms and expand academic discourse on caregiving in marginalised contexts.

# Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220

## **Aspiration-Achievement Paradox: Exploring Tertiary Education Goals of Urban Slum Youth in Colombo**

*Sudeshika Waththuwa Durayalage*

*(Bangor University)*

This qualitative study examines the educational aspirations of disadvantaged urban youth in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and how these ambitions are shaped by socio-cultural and economic contexts. The study draws on 20 semi-structured interviews with young people and parents in Colombo's low-income urban communities, analyses them thematically through Bourdieu's framework and an intersectional lens. This study uncovers the interplay of individual goals, family expectations, structural barriers, and institutional influences. Participants voiced diverse and often contradictory aspirations, ranging from professional careers to vocational paths, reflecting both hope for upward mobility and awareness of systemic constraints. Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field, alongside an intersectional lens, the analysis demonstrates how class, gender, ethnicity, and religion intersect to produce distinctive educational challenges. While many aspire to tertiary education, financial hardship, limited academic preparation, and cultural norms generate an aspiration-achievement paradox, where high ambitions are undermined by structural inequalities. Gender differences were evident: young women's goals were frequently restricted by safety concerns and social norms, while young men showed greater acceptance of vocational routes. Family habitus, expressed through parental expectations and sibling trajectories, strongly shaped aspirations. Despite these barriers, participants displayed resilience and agency in navigating pathways to education and work. The study contributes to sociological debates on aspiration and inequality by showing how global theories of educational mobility are reconfigured in postcolonial urban contexts. It highlights the need for intersectional policy interventions that address the layered constraints facing marginalised youth in Sri Lanka.

## **Meritocracy in East Asia's Examination Regimes: Technical Capital and Legitimation Strategies of Professional Elites in Taiwan**

*Chi-Chung Wang*

*(National Sun Yat-sen University)*

How elites mobilise meritocratic discourses to justify their privileged positions has become a central theme in recent studies of social inequality. This paper extends this line of enquiry by examining the dominant meanings of 'merit' within East Asia's standardised examination regimes and their implications for inequality. Drawing on interview data with current students and recent graduates from top departments in Taiwan's elite universities, we show that academic elites flexibly mobilise either 'talent' or 'effort', depending on context. When distinguishing themselves within elite groups, the ability to achieve exam success with ease is celebrated as the most valued principle. However, when their privileged status is contested, narratives of effortful preparation become the common form of justification. This discursive flexibility is rooted in the very nature of exam-related abilities, which bear the characteristics of 'technical capital': seemingly objective, transparent, and acquirable in a relatively linear fashion through formalised procedures. These qualities strengthen the legitimacy of meritocratic discourses, enabling academic elites not only to publicly justify their advantages but also to secure broader social acceptance. While such forms of meritocratic reasoning are particularly associated with the professional middle and upper classes—such as doctors and engineers—rather than capitalist elites in business, we argue that the content and legitimising force of meritocracy vary not only across regions but also across the structural positions occupied by different elite groups.

## **Defining Eliteness: Prestige Hierarchies in Turkish Secondary Education**

*Vildan Ozerturk Sofu*

*(Independent Researcher)*

Defining elite schools remains a contested issue. Existing studies in the literature on elite education tend to focus on particular institutions without sufficiently clarifying the criteria that render them "elite."

Are all fee-paying private schools elite? Or are all long established schools elite? Just as there is no universal definition of the elite, there is likewise no universally applicable definition of elite schools. Rather, the criteria of distinction vary across societies and historical periods. Unlike most studies in the field, in the Turkish context, prestige is attributed not only to private schools—most of which are foreign (formerly missionary) institutions—but also to state schools, some considered even more prestigious than private ones. This study examines prestigious high schools within the Turkish elite educational field and proposes both a methodology and a “prestige hierarchy” of Turkish high schools based on the number and nature of their mechanisms of distinction. The study draws on existing typologies of elite education, (such as Gaztambide-Fernández’s five ideal-type categories of American elite schools and Courtois’s four-category classification of Irish elite schools) to develop a context-specific framework for understanding prestige hierarchies in the Turkish educational context. Drawing on a detailed analysis of 48 prestigious secondary schools, the study eventually advances a four-category prestige hierarchy that delineates the contours of the elite education field in Türkiye.

## **Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204**

### **Working-class Women on Access to HE Courses Two Decades Apart: A Comparative Analysis of Risk, Opportunity and the (Re)Construction of Identities across a 20-year Period**

*Richard Waller, Sarah Mclaughlin*

*(University of the West of England, Bristol)*

Widening participation (WP) in higher education (HE) remains a significant component of UK education and wider social policy landscapes. It aims to create a university system addressing the underrepresentation of particular social groups. Mature working-class students are one such group, yet they have recently largely disappeared from policy discourse. The journey for those entering university via an Access to HE course provides valuable context to the WP agenda. This paper presents a comparative analysis of two narrative studies conducted 20 years apart. It evidences the ongoing value of progressing into HE for mature working-class women taking an Access course, and the continuing reflexivity and risk, confusion and contradictions experienced by mature students during their course.

The findings of the 2022 research echo those of the 2001 project and further challenges the assumption that a changing learner identity necessitates a corresponding shifting class identity. However, 20 years on, the second cohort faced increased financial risks, further compounding the students’ class positions, especially those who were parents. This is significant to the WP agenda because it highlights particular barriers for this group of students and suggests that getting into, and engaging with HE, remains challenging and presents significant specific risks to them.

The research makes visible the realities of ongoing class, gender and aged-based inequalities, highlighting how they are experienced and how they continue to shape educational and employment trajectories. We present practitioner-led enquiry as a valid epistemology offering important insights into mature women students’ journeys into and within university.

### **Exploring Working-class Women’s Transition to University across Generations**

*Kaidong Yu*

*(University of Sheffield)*

This study explores the interrelationship between class and gender in the narratives of working-class women’s experiences of education and social mobility. While the expansion of higher education (HE) since the 1960s has provided more opportunities for female students, class and gender inequalities continue to shape working-class women’s transitions to university across different time periods. Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, extensive scholarship has examined how classed and gendered structures constrain women’s choices of and experiences of university study. However, as many critiques of Bourdieu suggest, women’s agency remains difficult to see in their navigation of challenges and constraints in accessing HE. This study adopts an intergenerational approach by situating different generations of working-class women who successfully attended university within the changing historical contexts of HE policies. Through life-history interviews with three sample cohorts of 16 women participants, this research identifies key differences in how participants realised and

understood opportunities and constrains for HE attendance— with older cohorts viewing HE as a means to resist traditional gender expectations of marriage and childbirth, while younger cohorts emphasising independence and social mobility. A gendered perspective on working-class women's transitions to university not only highlights the important role of changing educational policies in shifting working-class women's university aspirations but also reveals working-class women's agency in challenging shifting gendered norms across generations. This research, therefore, contributes to a more dynamic understanding of habitus by considering how shifting gendered expectations and women's agency interact.

### **Navigating HE Choices with Care Experience: An Exploration of Decision-making and Applications to Undergraduate Study amongst Young People with Care Experience in England**

*Fionna MacLauchlan*

*(King's College London)*

The educational outcomes of children and young people in state care or with care experience have been an international concern for several decades. In more recent years, there has been a growing evidence base on the relationship between experience of children's social care during childhood and access and transition to higher education (HE). Within this literature, less is known about how young people with care backgrounds experience HE decision-making and the application process, and how this distinct phase in access and transition interacts with the challenges of leaving care and lived experience of children's social care in England. This study, therefore, aimed to examine how and to what extent care experience can interact with HE choices and the application process. The study used a mixed methods research design that included an online questionnaire (n=91) and semi-structured interviews (n=16) with care experienced young people aged 18-25 studying in the UK. The study draws on a theoretical framework that brought Bourdieu's (1990) theory of practice into dialogue with Markus and Nurius's (1986) theory of possible selves. Findings revealed that young people with care experience faced specific challenges with HE choices and the application process that were directly related to their care backgrounds. The study concludes that these challenges risk impeding on young people's access and success in HE and that these inequities will persist unless the quality, depth, personalisation and reach of institutional support services for HE exploration, choices and the application process are significantly improved.

## **Theory - Room 4.205**

### **Special Event**

#### **Critical Encounters: Rethinking Classifications, Histories, and Intellectual Practices**

*Zeina Al Azmeh, Sebastian Raza, Seetha Tan, Patrick Baert*

*(University of Cambridge)*

This panel explores the ways in which critique can be reimagined at a time when intellectual positionalities, disciplinary divides, and political classifications, risk hardening into orthodoxy. With individual contributions that examine domains like sociology's relation to history including its own, the role of intellectuals under shifting conjunctures, and the legacies of postcolonial difference, the session examines how categories and narratives that once enabled critique can themselves become rigid, reductive, or exclusionary. Contributors, already in conversation as part of a research group at Cambridge Sociology, ask: what happens when critique collapses into group loyalty, or when history and postcolonial theory are reduced to binary framings that obscure internal complexity? How might we move beyond canonisation, nostalgia, or tribalisation without abandoning the ethical and political force of critique? By foregrounding plural, context-sensitive, and ethically demanding practices, whether of intellectual positioning, historical reasoning, or identity negotiation, the session opens space for rethinking critique as situated encounter rather than settled paradigm. The aim is to recover the vitality of critique as discernment under constraint, and to consider how sociology can sustain openness and responsiveness while resisting the drift into relativism or orthodoxy.

## **From Orthodoxy to Attunement: Situational Intellectualism as Critical Practice**

*Zeina Al Azmeh*

*(University of Cambridge)*

This chapter introduces the concept of the situational intellectual as both a descriptive framework and a normative orientation. Traditional typologies of intellectuals (e.g., universal, specific, organic, autonomous) assume relatively stable modes of engagement and risk reifying critique into a fixed posture. In contrast, situational intellectualism treats critique as a practice of discernment: contingent, relational, and responsive to shifting conjunctures of power, affect, and history. Drawing on Baert's positioning theory, Bourdieu's study of autonomy and engagement, and Deleuze's philosophy of becoming, I conceptualise the intellectual as an assemblage in flux whose interventions are continually reconfigured by loyalty, fear, trauma, and fatigue as much as by reason or conviction.

This perspective responds to a key pathology of the present: the tribalisation of critique, whereby political and intellectual allegiances harden into forms of belonging that resemble pre-modern identities. In such contexts, critique risks collapsing into group loyalty, where affirmation of one's "side" substitutes for reasoned engagement. Situational intellectualism resists this drift by foregrounding judgment under constraint: recognising that all knowledge is situated within normative frames, and that the task is not to transcend normativity in the name of objectivity, but to navigate it with ethical responsiveness and responsibility, including to oneself and the contextual and temporal specificities they navigate.

By shifting attention from critique as orthodoxy to critique as situated practice, the paper highlights the discernment required to decide when to speak, how to intervene, and under what pressures. It offers an alternative to both absolutist moralism and opportunistic flexibility, reclaiming critique as a plural, context-sensitive, and ethically demanding practice that makes visible the everyday encounters through which critique is both enacted and contested.

## **Sociology and the History of Sociology**

*Sebastian Raza*

*(University of Cambridge)*

This paper offers a reflection on the relation between sociology and the history of sociology. It does so in two moments. The first moment deals with what I call "actually existing attitudes" towards the discipline's past in sociology. My concern here is to look at how sociologists effectively relate to the discipline's past, and try to characterize and offer an initial evaluation of the different approaches. I start by identifying three different actually existing attitudes to the past: reckoning, ignoring, and canonization. I then offer a tentative explanation of why the discipline affords these different attitudes to the past in the first place. My argument is that each attitude coincides with a different interpretation of the discipline's purpose. If sociology is seen as a moral and political project, the tendency is to reckon with the discipline's past; if the discipline's scientific ambitions take priority, the history of sociology is largely ignored; and if the discipline is seen as part a larger humanistic endeavour, the tendency is to take a canonizing attitude. I proceed to specify and characterize each attitude to the past in terms of its temporal horizon, how they conceive the relationship between the discipline and its environments, and – crucially – what role they give to historical argumentation in sociological reasoning. I conclude that arbitrating between different "actually existing attitudes" towards the discipline's past is tantamount to favouring one vision of the discipline, which is not a beneficial move to make if we want to maintain the value pluralism that allows sociologists to have different understandings of the discipline in the first place.

I then proceed to the second moment in this paper. I argue that a way out of this dilemma is to move from "actually existing attitudes" to what I call "the logical problem of historicity" in sociological reasoning. I draw a distinction between narratives and historical arguments to point to two different issues at stake in the historicity of sociology. First, I deal with the issue of narrativity in the formation of social-scientific disciplines, which centres on the role of narratives in the formation and consolidation of disciplines, but also, crucially, the limits and tensions in the act of narration itself. Second, I assess the logic of different forms of historical argumentation in terms of their sociological relevance. I identify the scope and limits of specific forms of historical argumentation that make the history of sociology relevant to the practice of sociology. My main argument is that sociology itself is shaped by how the history of discipline is narrated, and that historical arguments hold relevance and are useful to sociology, but that

neither narrativity nor historical argumentation are simple matters. The detour into “the logical problem of historicity” in sociological reasoning does not allow us to arbitrate among “actually existing attitudes”, but at least provide us with some coordinates to place, clarify and assess concrete historical arguments in the discipline.

### **Rethinking Postcolonial Difference beyond Binary Oppositions**

*Seetha Tan*

*(University of Cambridge)*

In seeking to address the legacies of imperialism, postcolonial critique has been preoccupied with certain forms of ‘difference’. Despite seeking to repudiate the very binary oppositions empire constructed, canonical framings of ‘West vs. Rest’ (Hall, 1992), ‘Orient vs. Occident’ (Said, 1978), ‘metropole vs. periphery’ and more recently, ‘Global North vs. Global South’ risk naturalising certain analytical framings. These binary oppositions not only represent the colonised ‘Other’ as a stable and coherent category, but frame this ‘Otherness’ exclusively in relation to the colonial power. In doing so, they overlook how difference operates within cultural categories themselves. Recent reconfigurations of postcolonial identity, evidenced by the political shift of certain marginalised communities from Labour to the Conservative right, indicate that these frameworks may no longer be sufficient.

This chapter has several interconnected aims. First, given its reliance on the very classificatory systems it seeks to dismantle, this chapter interrogates whether existing models of postcolonial critique can avoid the reification of cultural categories. Second, in reflecting on how postcolonial critique has canonically theorised mechanisms of ‘othering,’ I draw on empirical reflections that examine how postcolonial migrants living in London negotiate difference within a category of identity. While important work has foregrounded the tensions between categories such as “Black” and “British”, or “Indian” and “British,” limited work has been dedicated to problematising difference within these categories themselves. In attending to the emerging ideological, social, and cultural conditions shaping postcolonial identity today, I interrogate the utility of existing postcolonial frameworks within the present conjuncture. This chapter, therefore, offers a new framework for understanding postcolonial difference that attends to the complexity of identity formation in Britain.

### **What is ‘Critical’ about Critical Social Science?**

*Patrick Baert*

*(University of Cambridge)*

Social scientists frequently use the term ‘critical’ to refer to the type of intellectual endeavour in which they are involved. We often hear about academics writing about their work as ‘critical sociology’, ‘critical social research’, ‘critical social analysis’, ‘critical theory’, ‘critical social work’, ‘critical realism’, ‘critical race theory’, and so on. The term has become so ubiquitous that arguably it has lost some of its erstwhile semantic power. In this contribution, we try to answer a variety of questions in relation to this curious phenomenon. What or whom do critical researchers criticise, and in what sense does this critical endeavour contrast with other form of social research?

## **Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 3.213**

### **Exploring the Experiences of Black African Nurses (BANs) in the UK Healthcare System: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Approach**

*Oluchi Mellor*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This study explores the lived experiences of Black African nurses (BANs) within the UK healthcare system, using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Despite their significant contributions, BANs often encounter systemic inequalities, workplace discrimination, and challenges to

professional identity that remain under-researched. Through in-depth interviews, this study captures how these nurses navigate the intersections of race, migration, and professional expectations, highlighting both the personal and structural dimensions of their experiences.

The research foregrounds themes of resilience, cultural negotiation, and professional marginalization, revealing how BANs construct meaning in contexts that may simultaneously valorize and constrain their labour. By situating these experiences within broader sociological debates on inequality, migration, and organizational culture, the study contributes to understanding the persistent gaps between policy intentions and lived realities in healthcare.

This presentation invites sociological reflection on systemic inequities in professional settings and demonstrates the value of qualitative, interpretative methodologies in capturing the nuanced, embodied experiences of marginalized groups. The findings also suggest directions for policy, practice, and future research aimed at fostering inclusivity and equity in healthcare workplaces.

### **Learned Friends? Schooling, Social Class and Professional Life at the Bar of England and Wales**

*Hannah Wilson*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

A middle-class family background and a private education have been shown to exert enduring influence over the course of professional careers in the UK. In this paper, I present mixed-methods research on the self-employed Bar of England and Wales which unpicks how social class origins, primarily understood through a Bourdieusian lens, shape careers within a profession often perceived to be “elite”. Using an administrative dataset covering the entire profession I investigated the relationship between earnings and secondary schooling among barristers. This revealed a raw earnings gap which saw state educated practitioners earn 75% that of their privately educated colleagues. A substantial part of this gap was explained by barristers with different educational backgrounds sorting into different types of legal practice. Privately educated barristers are over-represented in desk-based specialisms, such as Commercial and Chancery. Areas requiring barristers to undertake regular courtroom advocacy, which include Crime and Family, are more open to those who have passed through the state school system. Interviews with 62 barristers revealed the existence of a cultural schema at the Bar which polarises specialisms either by perceived complexity or by purported engagement with human messiness. The different practical ways that working lives are configured according to specialism means that social class background, and in particular embodied cultural capital, does not have a universal salience across the profession. The paper concludes by proposing the importance of lawyers’ social class backgrounds in the current conjuncture, where challenges to the rule of law and to lawyers’ independence abound.

### **Understanding the Labour Market Experiences of Professional British Pakistani Women from the North of England**

*Aqsa Dar*

*(University of Exeter)*

This paper explores the working lives of 20 British Pakistani professional women, aged between 35 and 58, who were brought up and educated in the north of England. 50% of the women were the breadwinners in their families and 25% constitute a longitudinal cohort who were interviewed about their career aspirations 14 years ago. Through in-depth biographical interviews I explore the nuances of how women navigated the labour market and the barriers and opportunities they experienced across different stages of their life course. This paper will focus on how my interviewees experienced obtaining advanced qualifications and training. They worked hard to prepare themselves for the world of work through acquiring high-level skills and held desirable attributes. Workplaces contributed to further professional and self-development; however, such commitments from the workplace were not uniformly present in my interviewees’ working lives and I will discuss this variation. The whole-life approach to research illuminates how earlier hopes became subjected to challenging workplace environments and any single triumphalist account of Asian women’s social mobility does not capture the whole story of their working lives. This paper contributes to the sociological practice of employment and women’s social mobility.

# **BREAKTIME SESSION**

## **10:35-10:55**

### **Mezzanine, University Place**

#### **Japanese Tea Ritual**

*Ikuko Tomomatsu*

*(University of Osaka)*

Experience the Zen of Japanese Tea Ritual Take a moment of tranquility amidst the conference buzz. We invite you to a demonstration of the Japanese tea ritual, presented by Sōiku (Dr Ikuko Tomomatsu). Rooted in the Zen philosophy of "Ichigo Ichie" (treasuring every unique encounter), this session offers a mindful escape through the art of Matcha.

Interactive Experience: We will hold two sessions (approx. 20 minutes each), with a possibility of a third session upon request. For each session, three participants are invited to sit and enjoy Matcha and Japanese sweets. As spaces are very limited, **pre-booking is required**. Please email [kirsten.boucher@britsoc.org.uk](mailto:kirsten.boucher@britsoc.org.uk) if you would like to attend this experience. Email requests must be **received no later than Tuesday 31 March 2026**.

The Tea Ritual will take place on Day 1 and Day 2 during the refreshment break in the mezzanine area from 10:35am - 10:55am.

# PAPER SESSION 2

## 11:00-12:30

### Session Table of Contents

BSA Special Activity - Lecture Theatre B.....	38
Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Room 3.211.....	38
Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210.....	39
Environment & Society - Room 4.214.....	40
Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204.....	42
Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209.....	43
Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211.....	44
Lifecourse - Room 4.213.....	46
Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209.....	47
Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206.....	49
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217.....	50
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218.....	51
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219.....	52
Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205.....	54
Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A.....	55
Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.218 (Special Event).....	57
Social Divisions / Social Identities 3 - Room 1.219.....	59
Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220.....	61
Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204.....	63
Theory - Room 4.205.....	65
Work, Employment & Economic Life 1 - Room 3.212.....	66
Work, Employment & Economic Life 2 - Room 3.213.....	68

## **BSA Special Activity - Lecture Theatre B**

### **Navigating Mid-Career in Sociology: Collective Strategies & Shared Realities**

*Kathryn McEwan, Saorfhlaith Burton*

*(University of Newcastle, Robert Gordon University)*

This session offers a space for sociologists navigating the mid-career stage to think collectively about what this career stage looks like in practice, and what kinds of support can help.

Mid-career is often framed as a period of stability or momentum, yet many sociologists experience it differently. Pressures around leadership, research, teaching, institutional service, and care responsibilities frequently intensify at the same time, while expectations become less explicit and routes forward opaque. This session responds to those realities by focusing on shared experience, practicalities, and collective sense-making rather than individualised narratives of success.

The session will combine short provocations from established sociologists and BSA trustees, alongside facilitated discussion with the Mid-Career Forum convenors. Drawing on themes emerging from recent Forum activity, conversation will explore issues such as time pressure, uneven recognition, leadership without authority, sustaining research identity, and the emotional and relational labour of academic life.

Rather than formal papers, the emphasis is on reflection, dialogue and practical insight. Participants will be invited to contribute their own perspectives and to help shape how the BSA Mid-Career Forum can support sociologists at this stage in meaningful, realistic ways.

This event will be relevant to mid-career sociologists across sub-disciplines, as well as those approaching this career phase or supporting colleagues within it.

## **Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Room 3.211**

### **Urban Informality and Water Precarity: Negotiating Rights and Belonging in Jaipur's Settlements**

*Tripti Singh, Vangelis Pitidis*

*(University of Warwick)*

Rapid urbanisation in India has intensified the precarities of informal settlements, where insecure tenure, overcrowding, inadequate housing, and limited access to services intersect. Water provisioning makes these vulnerabilities particularly visible, as municipal piped supply is often contingent on land tenure. Residents also live with the constant threat of eviction, which shapes their strategies for accessing services and asserting rights. This research examines everyday water practices in two informal settlements in Jaipur, one with household piped connections and another dependent on communal water points. Using participatory methods, including social mapping, water resource mapping, stakeholder network mapping, and interviews, the study co-produces knowledge with residents to trace how they negotiate belonging, manage risks, and exercise agency amid infrastructural precarity.

Findings indicate that water insecurity varies across settlements, depending on their degree of state recognition. Surveyed settlements are often considered "less informal" and receive more services, while others remain excluded, producing fragmented governance. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, the national sanitation programme, toilets are provided based on household ownership, even in areas without municipal piped water, which remains linked to tenure. Uneven recognition compels residents to adopt socially embedded coping strategies, including pooling resources for private tankers, mobilising community organisations, and collectively petitioning authorities. The findings challenge binary notions of formal and informal settlement. By centring marginalised voices, the study shows how recognition politics deepen vulnerability and calls for decoupling essential services from tenure. Addressing these inequities is crucial to advancing the right to the city and shaping more inclusive urban futures.

## **Village Rhythms**

*Aksel Tjora*

*(Norwegian University of Science and Technology)*

This paper is based on a 10-months' ethnography in Sydney's Inner West area during 2022-23, and explores how aspects of time and place/space are connected to the experience of community and connection. Based on (1) a stranger's perspective, using an auto-ethnographic experience of disconnection from local time/space rhythms and (2) 43 depth interviews of local residents of various ages and situations, I explore how individual and collective social rhythms emerge on basis of (1) events, (2) places/spaces, (3) situations and (4) communication, the latter being both analogue and digital. Core theoretical starting points include social infrastructures as platforms for social interaction (Klinenberg 2018), social affordances of places/spaces and communication layers (cf. Hutchby 2001, Tjora 2011), the idea of social rhythms that constitute types of events (Tjora 2016) and how vast arrays of communal forms (Tjora & Scambler 2020) provide connection – and disconnection – in various ways. The study rests on a phenomenological sociology, to study the knowledge that is applied by individuals to interpret and understand (inter-subjectively) everyday social interreaction (cf. Schütz 1970). In conclusion, I suggest "village rhythms" as a type of communal form that connects the individual to a location and its members, but not independent of a "social location" related to cultural capital and demographic structures, like class, age, and gender. What we may term "social arrhythmicity» - not comprehending or being able to conform to this rhythm - may lead to isolation and loneliness, which seem to be increasing challenges in our societies.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210**

### **Language Politics, Resistance, and Reception: Kneecap at Flow Festival 2025 in Helsinki, Finland**

*Erica Aberg, Alma Rinta-Pollari*

*(University of Turku)*

This presentation examines the performance of the Northern Irish rap group Kneecap and its reception at the Flow Festival in Helsinki, August 2025. Known for their Irish-language lyrics and unapologetically activist performances, Kneecap's appearance drew attention for its explicit solidarity with Palestine and criticism of Finland's arms exports to Israel, with stage visuals stating: "Free Palestine" and "The Finnish government enables genocide."

Kneecap's show is analysed through the lens of cultural sociology and performance, focusing on how language, symbolism, and audience participation created a moment of collective resistance. Drawing on media coverage, festival reports, and participant observation, we examine how Kneecap's message resonated in the Finnish context. Much of the public debate surrounding Flow Festival was focused on its ownership of private equity firm KKR—whose Israeli ties Kneecap and other artists openly criticised on stage. This critique echoed a local campaign, Flowstrike, calling to boycott the festival of its corporate connections. The campaign gained visibility throughout the weekend: artists' public statements in support of Palestine, QR codes linking to aid organisations in stage projections, and artists pledging to donate their fees to humanitarian causes.

This case study contributes to research on the sociopolitical role of music and the affective dynamics of festival spaces. Kneecap's performance became a moment of shared frustration and defiance—towards both the Finnish government and the festival itself—while also offering the audience an opportunity to publicly express solidarity with Palestine in a highly visible cultural space.

### **We Gotta Get Out of this Place: A Case Study in the Infrapolitics of Resistance in and through Popular Music**

*Marek Korczynski*

*(University of Nottingham)*

The central theoretical frame for the paper is an engagement with Scott's arguments in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) regarding the potential for cultural expressions to become part of an infrapolitics of resistance among those in subordinate positions within a social setting. Empirically, the paper focuses on the case of the song, *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place*, by The Animals, and considers how Scott's arguments help us understand the reception of The Animals' version of the song. The paper analyses the reception and use of the song by those in subordinate positions in two social contexts. It analyses Werner and Bradley's (2016) findings and arguments regarding the meaning and role of the song for young conscripted USA soldiers in the Vietnam war, and Korczynski's (2014) findings in his ethnography of work and music in low skill factory work. Despite important differences in the two settings, in both cases, the song had considerable resistive resonance. Scott's concepts help us see key commonalities across these settings. Turning to analyse the specifics of the potential for popular music to be used as an infrapolitics of resistance, the paper considers how The Animals' remaking of the original Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil demo dramatically enhanced the potential for the song to be used as an infrapolitics of resistance. Here, the paper analyses the importance of the ways in which the Animals' made changes in the lyric, the melody, the harmonic arrangement, the instrumentation, and the vocal style.

## **Environment & Society - Room 4.214**

### **Waste as Relation: Studying Toxic Infrastructures and Health Inequalities**

*Gala Rexer*

*(University of Warwick)*

In this paper, I approach waste as a heuristic to think with in the context of anti-incineration protests in North London and knowledge production about the health effects of air pollution more broadly. This ethnographic paper is centered around the Edmonton waste incinerator, which currently burns about 500,000 tonnes of waste a year and releases lead, mercury, and ultra-fine particulate matter into Edmonton, one of London's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Drawing on my ethnographic work with activists at the incinerator site, as well as interviews with local council members, policy makers, scholars, and employees in local waste management, this piece examines the various and sometimes contradictory forms of knowledge, expertise, and methodologies required to capture the health effects of waste incineration and air pollution. Bridging the fields of environmental sociology, queer theory, and discard studies, this paper offers three interconnected ways of thinking with and about waste: 1) waste as spatial relation, 2) waste as biomedical relation, and 3) waste as a "boundary object" that allows for various meanings, actors, and scientific practices to co-exist and co-produce each other. In so doing, I argue that taking waste and its toxicity seriously as materials and material realities allows for a more expansive understanding of racial, urban, and embodied inequality.

### **Dignity in Circular Dirty Work in the Indian Circular Economy**

*Lynn Wilson, Tulika Singh*

*(University of Glasgow)*

Waste pickers in India are integral to the country's waste management system, and the transition to the circular economy. The concept of a circular economy where there is value in waste being transformed into regenerative and valorised product, can lead to independent income streams for the lowest caste, female members of Indian society, supported by nonprofit organisations. Some organisations teach workers the dignity of making a resource out of consumer waste streams, such as food, plastic and textiles and this in turn ensures they find pride and satisfaction, as well as generating an income from their work. To date little is known about consumer perceptions in India about the concept of the circular economy in relation to what is traditionally seen as a way of subsidizing municipal services that often fail to meet the growing volume of waste. Despite their significant role in environmental sustainability, waste pickers face social and economic marginalization. This research seeks to explore the role of circular waste management non-profit organisations, within India's waste management system, examining both the opportunities and challenges related to the business model, and what it means for

the women and consumers engaged in the process. This paper explores the changing landscape of waste management in India, from a contextual perspective, examining whether there can ever be equality and dignity in managing other people's waste and what the Indian waste management systems, can teach us, about the role of dignity in the face of the climate crisis.

### **Can 'Sustainable Development' Survive Integrated World Capitalism? Four Challenges and a Resolution**

*Nick Fox*

*(University of Huddersfield)*

This paper critically examines the challenges to the United Nations' (2015) sustainable development goals posed by a global capitalist economic mode that perpetuates resource extraction capitalism, consumption and the accumulation of capital and deepens social inequalities, while paying lip-service to ecological and social well-being.

Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship and theories of the more-than-human dynamics of capitalism, the paper critiques the co-option of sustainable development into neoliberal discourses. It explores how extractive practices – both material and financial – intensify ecological degradation, while the expansion of market logic subordinates environmental sustainability to profit and capital accumulation via 'green capitalism'. It also considers how capitalism is implicated in sustaining and broadening social divisions. Simultaneously, the capitalist state serves as a facilitator of these dynamics, co-opting sustainability efforts within market-oriented frameworks.

The paper highlights a need for a shift in economic policy that undermines the dynamics of supply and demand that feed the logic of global capital accumulation. It concludes by advocating a range of measures that can tame supply and demand to address each of the UN's seventeen sustainable development goals.

### **Climate Apartheid in the Home: Racialised Bodies, Housing Inequality and the Intimate Politics of Heat in Britain**

*Adeela Zaka*

*(Tu Dortmund University)*

This paper introduces the concept of domestic climate apartheid to interrogate how Pakistani women in Britain inhabit the embodied inequalities of climate change. While sociologists increasingly analyse the global politics of climate (Ghosh, 2016; Kenis & Lievens, 2017), little has been written on how environmental crisis is lived within the intimate spaces of the home. Drawing on ethnographic observations and preliminary interviews, the study investigates how overcrowded flats, poor insulation, and energy poverty magnify experiences of heat, humidity, and respiratory strain during extreme weather events.

For women responsible for sustaining households, these thermal vulnerabilities accumulate over time: sleepless nights, children's health issues, elders' fragility, and chronic exhaustion from caring in overheated conditions. Such findings echo environmental justice frameworks (Bullard, 2005) but extend them by foregrounding embodied temporalities: how exhaustion accrues across days and seasons, and how housing precarity is inherited across generations.

The paper argues that climate crisis cannot be reduced to emissions targets or carbon budgets; it must also be understood through sweating bodies, disrupted rhythms of care, and everyday negotiations of survival in hostile domestic environments. By theorising domestic climate apartheid, the study unsettles universal framings of climate vulnerability and contributes a distinctive conceptual vocabulary for linking environmental sociology with race, gender, and migration.

## **Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204**

### **Beyond the Passive and Unknowing Child: Using 'Child as Method' to Critique the Colonial Trope of 'Saving the Innocent Child'**

*Brenda Herbert*

*(University College London)*

In this paper I critique the trope of 'saving the innocent child'. This paper asks what work does it do when we hold children in this passive state? Using Burman's (2018) Child as method approach, I analyse how different tropes of childhood are mobilised to uphold a patriarchal and colonial social order. I theorise how these tropes enable children who are marginalised, through race, poverty and abuse, to be dehumanised and creates an epistemic injustice that renders children unknowing in the production of knowledge about their own lives, and further marginalise them. I demonstrate how through using multimodal ethnography we can decolonise and democratise knowledge creation with children that goes beyond 'saving the innocent child'.

The paper is based on an 18-month multimodal ethnography in an inner London borough with ten children, aged between five and ten years old. who had experienced domestic abuse and social work interventions. I use the analytical framework offered by cultural theories of everyday life, as well as the works of decolonial and feminist scholars, to analyse my data and to generate thick descriptions.

The paper concludes that it is important to address this epistemic injustice by researching the everyday with children who have experienced domestic abuse. In doing so we can challenge the patriarchal and colonial social order that pathologize and dehumanise children. I theorise how in not decolonising research with children, we (un)intentionally uphold a colonial social order and promotes a figure of the child that further endangers the embodied child.

### **Finding Family across Borders: Challenges and Insights from International Kinship Placements**

*Sara Bellamio*

*(Lancaster University)*

This project explores the challenges associated with placing looked-after children with family across borders. In England, when children require out-of-home care, local authorities are required to prioritise family placements. However, identifying and assessing relatives becomes significantly more complex when families and potential caregivers live abroad. According to Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB, 2024), a London-based organisation providing case management services in cross-border child protection cases, the number of children placed in kinship care abroad rose by 71% between 2020 and 2022, reaching 192 children. Despite this increase, cross-border placements still represent only 1% of all children in care, suggesting that many more could be eligible, as 37% of recent births in England and Wales have at least one foreign-born parent (ONS, 2024).

Research remains limited on how practitioners navigate complex international legal and statutory frameworks to ensure best-interest decisions for children whose family resources extend beyond UK borders. This PhD project addresses this gap through a mixed-methods design. Stage one involves analysis of aggregated case data provided by CFAB, while stage two consists of semi-structured interviews with family justice professionals, including CAFCASS children's guardians, CFAB caseworkers, and lawyers representing children and parents in cross-border cases.

By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study integrates empirical evidence with practitioner perspectives, emphasises children's rights, and seeks to inform policy and practice. Ultimately, it aims to improve decision-making and protections for children with transnational family connections.

### **Disney from the Periphery: Indonesian Lower Income Families Experiencing Disney**

*Filipus Wicaksono*

*(University of Surrey)*

For lower-income families in Indonesia, Disney occupies a paradoxical position in contemporary childhood: it is marketed as universal family entertainment, yet Disney+ Hotstar subscription and cinema ticket costs remain economically inaccessible to many lower-income households. While theoretical research on Disney is extensive, little is known about how families from the Global South who exists on the economic periphery access and experience Disney. This paper draws on observational “text-in-action” and semi-structured with 20 families (n=60) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as part of my PhD thesis on how parents from the Global South navigate Disney. This paper situates Disney within the frames of inequality and family practices, wherein the global media is consumed within the confined spaces of single-room dwelling and small screens, away from traditional co-viewing. I argue that lower-income families creatively mobilise informal, even “illegal”, practices to overcome structural economic exclusion from accessing global children’s media. Faced with concerns over free online children’s media, parents reframe piracy as a moral act being a “good parent”, enabling their children to access what they widely perceived as good cultural capital. The children, meanwhile, creatively reconstruct Disney narratives from fragmented clips on social media, demonstrating their agency in navigating limited access. Their practices highlight how inequality, morality, and global children’s media are lived and negotiated in everyday family life.

### **Ghostly Siblinghood: Children’s Sibling Relations under China’s Changing Population Policies**

*Jianyu Li*

*(University of Manchester)*

The one-child policy (1979-2015) dominated the lives of Chinese families for nearly four decades and profoundly reshaped kinship relations, including through the official erasure of siblinghood. Multi-child families, whether permitted or concealed, nonetheless continue to exist, even if children’s own accounts of sibling relations during this period remained marginalised. With the partial relaxation of the policy in later years, when families were once again allowed multiple children, children’s own understandings and practices of siblinghood have emerged as an essential but underexplored area of inquiry.

Based on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with Chinese children aged 13 to 17 who grew up under shifting population policies, this paper will explore how children’s narratives reveal the existence of siblings who appeared as ghostly figures, unexpected, invisible, imagined, or only encountered during brief reunions. These accounts also address an ongoing tension between idealised sibling ties and lived experiences, generating uncanny and unsettled feelings towards brothers and sisters.

The paper will argue that shifting population policies reshaped not only the possibility of having siblings, but also the very meaning of siblinghood. Informed by Susie Scott’s work on the sociology of nothing, it will demonstrate how sibling relations are defined as much by absence, silence and invisibility as by presence. By exploring how state regulation is woven into the most intimate of family ties, this paper concludes that absence and ghostliness are not gaps in siblinghood in contemporary China, but rather are constitutive features of it.

## **Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209**

### **In Pursuit of Status Equality: The Social Power of Money and the Organisation of Wealth within Couples**

*Liz Mann*

*(University College Cork and London School of Economics and Political Science)*

Sociology has a long history of engaging in the study of money and income in couples, and places heavy emphasis on the symbolic nature and social meaning of money. However, this important literature has been neglected in studies of wealth and its distribution, where wealth is widely regarded as a

household characteristic. Similarly, the money in couples literature has paid limited attention to the organisation of assets and debts. In this paper, I consider the symbolic nature of money and what it means for the organisation of assets and debts within couples. I draw on interviews with 35 individuals who currently live with their partner or spouse, aged 25-50 and resident in the UK. I introduce the concepts of 'status equality', 'performative equality' and 'conditional sharing' which each in their own way serve to limit sharing of assets and debts, allowing inequalities of wealth to accumulate between partners. I further observe participants widely reported valuing independence, but with gendered narratives, often reinforcing individualised approaches to assets and debts. In contrast, some participants use sharing of money and income to signal their 'togetherness', but this seems to be facilitated by similar economic resources. Taken together these findings emphasise the ways in which the symbolic nature of money can affect the accumulation of assets and debts within couples, and points towards the need for greater interrogation of assumptions of equal sharing of household wealth.

### **Couple-Defiant Intimacies: Experiencing Space, State and Citizenship outside the Couple Norm**

*Leehee Rothschild*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

In this presentation I introduce the umbrella-term couple-defiant intimacies, which could serve as an analytical category, by which alternative intimacies that destabilise the couple norm could be conceptualised and theorised together. Academic scholarship on intimacies and sexualities has recognised the centrality of the couple norm, compulsory romance and mononormativity to the design of contemporary intimacies and families. It further acknowledged the ensuing importance of investigating together multiple types of intimacies, which are in tension with them and the lack of terminologies by which these intimacies can be grouped and researched together. The term couple-defiant intimacies is an attempt to address this gap.

The presentation is based on my PhD, a qualitative research, featuring virtual interviews with 24 Israeli adults (carried prior to the genocide in Gaza), relationship maps and legal textual analysis, wherein couple-defiant intimacies was used to encompass polyamorous constellations, solo-polyamorists, polyfidelitous triads, co-parenting units and friendships as life-partnerships. It illustrates that these intimacies share similar experiences of citizenship, spatiality and biopolitics, which makes it valuable to examine them together. I will show, for example, that they are all subjected to different forms of marginalisation resulting from epistemic and material erasure by the state, whose policies are structured around the ('properly'-racialised) couple. Likewise, they are marginalised by the architecture and design of living spaces, which are directed towards the nuclear family. The consideration of these intimacies through the category of couple-defiant intimacies can depart from neoliberal identity politics and steer their discussion towards social structures instead of particular experiences.

## **Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211**

### **Relational Radicalisation: The Consequences of QAnon**

*Rian Mulcahy, Jessica Simpson*

*(University of Greenwich)*

Conventional accounts of radicalisation have too often framed it as an individual and linear trajectory culminating in extremist behaviours. Within this framework, families are simply positioned as buffers, risk factors and even informants. We believe this lens is limiting as it not only ties the concept to broader security agendas but overlooks how radicalisation is experienced within everyday relationships. We argue that radicalisation should be understood instead as a relational process with relational consequences - a claim developed more fully in our forthcoming book, *The Hidden Pandemic: Relational Consequences of QAnon* (Emerald, 2026).

Drawing on over 2,000 testimonies from r/QAnonCasualties, this paper centres the lived experiences of Social Network Clusters - the families, partners, and friends of QAnon believers. For them, conspiratorial belief was experienced as radicalisation, not because it necessarily produced violence, but because it reordered family life. Testimonies describe estrangement between spouses, children severing ties with parents, gendered burdens of care, grief for the "living ghost," and, in some cases,

the intensification of coercion and abuse. And yet, against this backdrop, we found SNCs forging coping infrastructures, with online forums functioning as affective publics and survival communities.

We argue therefore that treating radicalisation simply as a march toward violence and extremism is to miss its most immediate and relational effects: the grief, burdens, and ruptures borne by loved ones. And while QAnon is our case study, the framework of relational radicalisation can extend further; to anti-vaccine movements, incel forums, and other sites where belief reorganises intimacy.

### **Feminist Constructions of Fatherhood Played out on Mumsnet?**

*Andrew Baron, Charlotte Barrow*

*(University of Lancashire)*

Any conceptual and empirical assessment of the quintessence of contemporary fatherhood needs to be understood in relation to its symbiotic relationship both to masculinity and motherhood. For several decades research studies have explored the social formations and transitions of these identities, revealing complex dynamics of continuity and transformation (Handley, 2023).

Our study applies a 'feminist critical discourse analysis' approach to investigate the social media forum Mumsnet to identify women's perceptions of how fatherhood is performed in the domestic sphere.

Studies of male narratives on fatherhood have highlighted the nuanced process of how hegemonic masculinity resiliently still influences paternal identities, yet simultaneously new 'softened' forms of masculinity within fatherhood practices are emerging too, weakening traditional gendered divisions of labour within the private sphere (Williams, 2008).

Research exploring female accounts of the motherhood - fatherhood interplay within the family, highlight how separate, imbalanced divisions of childcare, domestic and emotional labour are displayed, with women disproportionately burdened with this work (Ehrstein, 2022).

We reveal how Mumsnet voices debate the reality of symmetrical family relations versus the continued entrenchment of domestic 'triple shift' labour inequality for women. These voices explore, engage and contest hegemonic notions of fatherhood affirming a feminist praxis for the household domain.

Therefore, we need to assert the importance of the argument, that fathering is a political issue (Silverstein, 1996).

### **Non-Serious Relationships: Gender, Class, and Technology in Modern India**

*Parul Bhandari*

*(University of Cambridge)*

Since long studies on marriage in India, typically try to locate 'love' in the process and discourse of marriage, especially to make an argument of a 'modern' self. Equally, the past few years has witnessed a growing interest in the study of intimacies amongst college-going adults or young professionals, to understand their conception of marriage and trace transformations and dissent (class caste, religion). This paper too concerns itself with these debates on love and marriage but primarily focuses on the kind of relationship that has not been given much attention in the context of South Asia, namely, non-serious relationships. Demographers note a push at age at marriage especially amongst urban Indians. In this paper, I bring attention to what demographers call the 'elongated phase of singlehood', where urban Indians are not looking to marry but simply experience a range of intimacies especially relationships that do not translate into marriage and when they are not in love. In this 'new' reckoning, I explain the role that technology plays especially in the form of dating apps. I draw attention to the growing leisure and pleasure industry to understand the self-fashioning of urban Indians as modern and their desire to experience non-serious relationships. These, I argue, are important everyday intimacies which informs their gender and class identities.

## Lifecourse - Room 4.213

### **Becoming a VIP: Characteristics and Impact of Significant People in the Lives of Scottish Youth**

*Dalia Avello-Vega*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

Research on the impact that significant others have throughout childhood often focuses on adult-child relationships and their protective roles in the context of adversity. Less is known about the temporal and transformative roles that significant adults can play throughout childhood in the context of youth flourishing, a state of feeling well, functioning effectively and leading a meaningful and fulfilling life. This study, known to participants as “My V.I.P. Scotland”, aims to explore how relationships with their nominated VIPs emerged, evolved and influenced their lives over time. Using data from the Growing Up in Scotland birth cohort study (GUS), this project examines the impact that parental and non-parental adults have on adolescent flourishing. A subsample of GUS birth cohort members (N=22), now emerging adults, was interviewed to explore and retrospectively map what they considered to be the most influential relationships and events in their lives. The participants reflect on their perceived differences in the impact of caregivers in traditional two-parent households, discuss the significant roles that non-parental and non-familial adults can play in the lives of children growing up in both normative and non-normative family structures, and broaden the concept of positively influential figures to include media content creators, literary characters, and online communities, offering a unique child-centred view of the key factors that make a relationship significant.

### **Another ‘Becoming’ Bodily Experience: Redefining Menopause from Liminality Angle and Its Implication to Workplace Wellbeing**

*Eun Sun Godwin, Priscilla Eke*

*(University of Wolverhampton)*

As the number of women pursuing their careers who are going through menopause is increasing, it is critical to understand this phenomenon appropriately to foster an inclusive workplace and society for thriving individuals. However, there is still a dearth of studies on menopause, and those that exist tend to focus on the ‘medical’ perspective (e.g., symptoms). In this paper, we focus on women’s experiences during menopause and offer a conceptual framework to redefine menopause not as a discontinuous (as the term implies) bodily experience, but as a ‘becoming’ or ‘transiting’ bodily experience, applying a liminality angle.

This paper is based on a case study with a higher education institution (HEI) in the UK. The data were collected through focus groups, interviews, and panel discussions with 32 staff members across three campuses. The study explored individuals’ perceptions and experiences, as well as the collective narrative on the impact of menopause on their workability and career.

Our initial findings reveal that many women see their bodily experiences of menopause as a ‘process of changes’ rather than a ‘pausing’ experience, which reshapes their identity as a woman and as a worker. Our participants’ menopause experiences greatly resemble the liminal process of the ‘transition’ of girls from puberty to adulthood. We hence conceptualise menopause as another ‘becoming’ process based on liminality concept, redefining menopause as a positive and celebrative stage of life. This will offer valuable insights not only to the sociological theorisation of menopause but also to the relevant workplace and government policy.

### **Topographies and Temporalities of Loss and Hope: Examining More-than-Human Generations In and Through Deindustrialised Landscapes**

*Melanie Lovatt, Rozemarijn De Kwaasteniet, Hannah Spruce, Susan Watkins*

*(University of Stirling)*

This paper explores generational dynamics and their related emotions in deindustrialised landscapes across Europe. We present data from ethnographic research conducted at four case study sites (Austria, Germany, Romania, Scotland) as part of the project “Waste/Land/Futures – Intergenerational

relations in places of abandonment and renewal across Europe” (funded by VolkswagenStiftung, 2024-2028). Through their histories of change, abandonment and renewal, deindustrialised landscapes are often marked by distinct emotional topographies (Hastrup et al, 2010), which might foreground feelings of loss, longing, and nostalgia (Meier, 2016) but also feelings of hope and utopian thinking (Burningham and Venn, 2025). What has remained underexplored so far is how these emotions might both build on and reproduce (inter)generational dynamics. Younger generations often leave deindustrialised areas in hopes of better job opportunities elsewhere, leaving behind older adults whose lives become closely tied to the area's story of loss and decline. We ask how conceptualising generations as not only human but as co-constituted through humans and the more-than-human temporalities, materialities, and ecological dynamics of deindustrialised environments can 1) advance understandings of what generations mean, and 2) complicate binary narratives of progress and decline or conflict and solidarity in the context of place and (inter)generational relations.

### **Co-constructed Spaces between Adolescents and Non-parental Figures: Debates around Agency and Vulnerability**

*Johanna Quina*

*(University of Leeds)*

In this presentation, I will discuss one of the themes I developed based on a qualitative, exploratory, and participatory study conducted with young people aged 13 to 17 in Quito, Ecuador. I explored their perceptions of contemporary adolescence and mental health. Using relational materialism and approaches from childhood studies, I analyze the social networks in which adolescents are embedded. One of the most important relationships is with non-parental adults. Few studies in the literature address these relationships or their impact on the lives of children and adolescents. In this study, I learned from the participants' experiences about the significance of non-parental adults in their lives, including coaches, teachers, psychologists, and older relatives, among others. However, the relevance of these relationships lies more in the co-construction of shared spaces with these adults than in the adults themselves. This includes the research space created with the participants, which also had a positive impact on their experience. This presentation aims to review the relationships between adults and young people. In a world where there are more shared spaces, it is worth considering youth from an intergenerational perspective that rethinks the power relations that limit or enable mutual and shared agency. It also aims to reflect, as academics, on the spaces we open to work with young populations and the role of the adult researcher when considering young people as participants and/or vulnerable populations. These are valuable discussions to nourish the field of Childhood Studies and other disciplines.

## **Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209**

### **The Importance of Friends for Young People Navigating the Work of Contracepting**

*Marie Larsson*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This paper addresses the often-overlooked role of friends in young people's sexual and reproductive health, particularly in what I term the work of contracepting. Previous researchers have critiqued the marginalisation of friendship in this domain (Budgeon, 2006; Roseneil, 2004; Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004). As Byron notes, research on sexual health typically fails to engage with young people's friendship cultures (2017, 488), viewing peer relationships primarily through the lens of peer pressure and as something to be mistrusted.

This paper contributes to the growing call to acknowledge and explore the complex roles friends play in sexual and reproductive health. I draw on the stories generated from 27 in-depth interviews with 13 women, men, and non-binary people aged 18 to 29, with different sexual identities living in Sweden, and who had some experience with pregnancy and/or STI prevention.

I will illustrate how friends can act as co-explorers, co-educators, playmates, practical helpers and guides in navigating the work of contracepting. Additionally, I will explore the relational factors enabling

these roles, while acknowledging the dual nature of friends' influence, which can be both caring and controlling. This analysis aims to shed light on the nuanced roles of friendship in this context and its implications for young people's sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. Finally, without romanticising the power of friendship, I suggest there is cause for optimism about the role friends and friendly communities play for young people in doing the work of contracepting, which deserves more attention in research, policy and healthcare.

### **Geographies of Response-ability: How Social Relations Shape the Messy Terrain of (Digital) Contraception**

*Cecily Klim*

*(University of New South Wales)*

From tracking apps and wearables, to “smart” condoms, hormonal profiling, and implantable microchips, this paper examines the emerging landscape of digital contraceptive technologies. Femtech companies leading this development pride their technologies for being user-led and for meeting several user-defined contraceptive priorities, such as non-hormonal, non-invasive, and user-controlled. However, these claims have been met with considerable scepticism and criticism, particularly from health professionals who question their effectiveness for pregnancy prevention while highlighting new concerns around safety, security, and privacy.

Presenting findings from two interrelated studies conducted as part of my doctoral research—an online document analysis of diverse sources related to digital contraceptives, and creative qualitative workshops with potential users—I argue that, despite competing claims, the affordances of these devices are not necessarily as important as the social relations that shape their emergence and stabilisation. Situating digital contraceptives within these relations repositions claims about benefits and risks less as questions of technical efficacy, and more so as reflections of broader struggles over power, agency, and responsibility.

To understand these dynamics, I empirically map the entanglement of actors implicated in the digital contraceptive landscape, including Femtech companies, healthcare professionals, users, social media influencers, pharmaceutical firms, regulators, and governments. I unsettle common assumptions about ‘who’ is responsible by showing how power and agency are not fixed attributes but are relationally enacted and continually reconfigured. In highlighting these shifting geographies of responsibility—or response-ability—I point to the importance of, and potential for, more collective and inclusive approaches to both digital and nondigital contraceptive care.

### **Troubling 'Non-compliance' to Weight-loss Advice: A Critical Policy Study of BMI Restrictions on NHS-IVF**

*Rebecca Muir*

*(Queen Mary University of London)*

The majority of Integrated Care Boards in England exclude women with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of >30 from NHS-funded IVF treatment. The medical and ethical rationales behind restrictions have been questioned and qualitative work has found restrictions create emotional, social, and moral burdens for excluded women.

This qualitative study employs Bacchi's What's the Problem Represented to Be? critical policy analysis framework to examine how BMI restrictions are constructed in policy and experienced by women navigating NHS-IVF treatment. Analysis of national and local commissioning documents, alongside interviews with 22 stakeholders (local policymakers, clinicians and policy stakeholders) and 12 women affected by restrictions, reveals disconnections between policy assumptions and lived experiences.

Policy documents construct women as “empty vessels” requiring education about diet and exercise, while positioning obesity through a mechanistic metabolic model where weight loss follows predictable energy-balance equations. Women with BMI >30 are represented as non-compliant and too high risk to undertake IVF.

Counter-discourses challenged deficit models of health knowledge. Women described complex emotional relationships with food, including stress eating and disordered eating patterns unaddressed by standard advice. Additionally, policies exhibit time-blindness – while recommending that women should gradually lose weight, policies ignore conflicting temporal pressure from NHS age restrictions on IVF and age-related fertility decline. Some women in the study faced difficult dilemmas between gradual, healthy weight loss and imposed treatment deadlines.

These findings demonstrate that BMI restrictions rest on flawed conceptual logics that fail to account for complexities of weight-loss, temporal constraints, and women's existing health knowledge.

## **Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206**

### **From Timelines to Poets: Maximising Data Diversity and Innovating Data Interaction**

*Sarah Neal*

*(University of Sheffield)*

As Urry and Law (2003) observe, traditional social science methods are ill equipped to respond to the multiple social realities of 21st century worlds and remind us that 'what is known depends on perspective' (2003: 6). Given this, the paper argues for qualitative methods assemblages (Baker and McGuirk 2016), empirical design that is committed to providing a variety vantage points through which to access and bring together the heterogenous, multi-dimensionalities of contemporary social life. It also seeks to build on participatory approaches to data generation and interaction through creative engagements with qualitative datasets that emerge from complex social worlds.

Synthesising the experience of two research projects, Just Turn Up: Informal Sport and Social Participation in the Superdiverse City (ESRC) and Living Brexit in Rural Britain (Leverhulme Trust), the paper situates these arguments in two distinct moments in the qualitative process in each project. The first moment considers the innovations in data interaction on the JTU project and discusses the ways in which the project worked with 'poets in residence' as a strategy to open up data about everyday urban leisure practices to novel forms of interaction and creative re/interpretation. The second moment focuses on the Living Brexit project's efforts to design in pluralist strategies for dynamically engaging interlocutors and listening well. It will focus specifically on the experience of generating data diversity in combining group-based interviews with individual biographic-place timelines as inventive routes for discussing the politically sensitive themes of Brexit, migration and social change in rural places.

### **Measuring Economic Insecurity Using Digital Trace Data: A Computational Approach to Measure Labor Market Conditions**

*Ubeyd Oktem*

*(Koç University)*

Over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in both academic and public literature on the growing insecurities stemming from shifts in labor market relations across various regions. This surge in attention reflects the decline in labor market standards, often conceptualized as precarious employment and economic insecurity, which carries profound negative implications for individuals and societies. While existing research has largely examined these dynamics through survey-based approaches, this study advances the field by shifting the focus toward subjective perceptions of insecurity as expressed on social media. In doing so, it contributes to the measurement of labor market conditions by showing how digital traces can capture lived experiences of economic insecurities as a complement to conventional survey data.

To this end, this research examines subjective perceptions of economic insecurity in Turkey by analyzing discourse on X (formerly Twitter) from 2016 to 2024. It introduces a computational framework employing natural language processing to classify individual posts, which are then aggregated to the user level. Subsequently, the framework applies poststratification techniques (MRP) over known demographic and spatial characteristics to generate population-representative indices.

The study provides empirical insights into Turkey's case, where a series of economic, political, and social shocks over the past decade have heightened the salience of insecurity. It also contributes methodologically by demonstrating the potential of digital trace data for assessing labor market conditions, particularly as survey research faces rising costs, temporal limitations, and a growing crisis in measuring public opinion and subjective perceptions.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217**

### **Institutional Efforts to Address the Past: The Church, Slavery and Discourses of Protection**

*Bethany Elce*

*(University of Lincoln)*

In recent years, from both overseas and at home, calls for the Church of England (CofE) to address its history of involvement with transatlantic chattel slavery have grown louder and more persistent. In 2023 the CofE published research on the history of its major funding body, the Church Commissioners charity. Their research findings revealed that the charity's predecessor fund had invested in and received income from the South Sea Company which transported and traded enslaved African people. Additionally, increasing numbers of churches and cathedrals have been taking stock of their monuments and memorials with links to chattel slavery with some seeking, and others achieving, removal of these items from church buildings. This paper is drawn from a project which uses ethnographic methods to examine what it looks like for a national institution to reckon with colonial pasts, and questions whether such an engagement can help create a more racially just present and future. The CofE serves as an important case study because of its historic and contemporary proximity to the British state and because of its ambitious claims for what its project of reckoning can achieve. Here, I present some analysis of interviews with church leaders who have taken action in regards to slavery linked artifacts in their churches. As I examine some of the reasons given for initiating this work in local parish churches, I argue that starting points do indeed shape, and may also limit, the anti-racist potential of such efforts to reckon with the legacies of slavery.

### **Indigenous Queer Narratives and Social Movements in Taiwan: Storytelling, Affect, and the Politics of Self**

*Ting-Sian Liu*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

Taiwan has achieved legal reforms in both Indigenous rights and queer rights through social movements since the democratisation in the 1980s. In 2016, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen formally apologised to Taiwan's Indigenous peoples on 1st August and promised to lead the Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee. In 2019, Taiwan became the first country in Asian to legalize same-sex marriage. While Indigenous queer people have been actively participating in these movements, their lived experiences are often absent from mainstream narratives. Over the past two decades, Indigenous queer people in Taiwan have developed ways to articulate their experiences that challenge racism, sexism, and sexual discrimination and build communities across Taiwan.

In this paper, I examine how Indigenous queer organizers in Taiwan engage in advocacy work through strategies that foreground affect, storytelling, and self-making. Through analyzing their narratives, I explore how they challenge Han settler colonialism while deepening decolonial practice that rooted in communal care. I argue that affective storytelling, rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, serves as an advocacy tool that enables Han-Taiwanese settlers to rethink ethnic privilege, Indigeneity, and the possibility of solidarity-building.

This research draws qualitative data, including 19 in-depth interviews with queer Indigenous organizers, 9 in-depth interviews with Han-Taiwanese queers, participant observation at Indigenous events and queer events from December 2024 to September 2025, and secondary data from online interviews and podcasts. Through exploring Indigenous queers' experience in social movements, this research seeks to complicate the discussion of Taiwanese queer activism through the lens of race, ethnicity, and decoloniality.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218**

### **Understanding State Violence and Resistance in Police Pursuit Killings**

*Siobhan O'Neill*

*(University of Manchester)*

Racially minoritised and working-class communities continue to be overpoliced and underprotected in the UK. At the sharpest end of policing, in the last ten years alone, there have been more than 2,309 'deaths during or following police contact'. Reflecting wider patterns of policing, police killings are racially disproportionate. Police pursuit killings are a specific form of state violence that is under-researched and under-considered. This paper begins to address this gap by shining a spotlight on police pursuit killings. It attempts to make sense of this form of state violence by focussing in on the stories of three boys who died in the same year (2021) following police pursuits by Greater Manchester Police. Through an exploration of their stories and this specific type of state violence, I outline how their lives were 'blackened', rendered disposable, devalued and treated as ungrievable by the police and the state. I explore this process at different stages: in the moments of violence; through re-presentation and in the slow violence in the aftermath, specifically in the coronial inquest process. I argue, therefore, that police pursuit killings should be understood in the wider context of domestic colonialism which maximalises the precarity of racially minoritised and working-class communities. Through these stories, I also argue that resistance and solidarity is built beyond identity politics at the intersection of race and class. This paper, therefore, extends sociological knowledge of state violence and police killings and highlights how coloniality persists in contemporary policing practices.

### **"Do not feel bad for me. I'm a fucking badass you know": Displaced Students' Narratives of Self-identity**

*Alessia Dalceggio*

*(London Metropolitan University)*

This paper draws on a study conducted with 21 university students who have lived experience of forced migration. In discussing their journey through university, many participants found that, while they primarily understood displacement as an experience, others saw it as an embodied identity. This clash of understandings caused tension for participants; even in spaces like universities, the identifier 'refugee' almost always carried negative assumptions, perceptions and prejudices, including heightened vulnerability and helplessness. Through participants' narratives of the self, this paper explores how participants reflected on their intersectional identities and experience of forced migration to push back, reclaim or redefine the boundaries of 'being a refugee'.

### **Decolonial Futures: From Subalternity to Epistemologies of Resistance**

*Sneha Sabale*

*(Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics)*

In the past 75 years of sociology and sociological theory, sociology has critically examined inequality while the discipline's canons of theorising have continued to create silences around marginal forms of knowing. Subaltern Studies inhibited researchers and academics from thinking about the silencing of voices from below in analysis, but often only brought description rather than interrogation, as colonial sociologies had done before. Similarly, the decolonial turn that originated from Latin American and African places have attempted to interrogate the coloniality of race and empire, even while often prescribing or universalising the conceptual frameworks of coloniality through race and empire, while marginalising caste and other forms of hierarchies beyond the Western experience.

In this paper I suggest that sociology must go from discussing exclusion to putting epistemologies of resistance at the centre of inquiry--the kind of knowledges that can emerge from the struggles of people who have been marginalised.

By bringing subalternity and decoloniality together here I am attempting to re-imagine the futures of the discipline of sociology. The argument made here proposes a methodological shift from investigating the

"margins" as an object of study, to theorising with "margins" as theorists and producers of knowledge. This paper does this while contributing to global conversations around epistemic justice, challenging and disrupting inherited blind-spots of the discipline, and signalling pathways for building pluralist and decolonial sociologies that are in-tune with multiple histories of anti-colonial and anti-caste resistance.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219**

### **Between Colonial Violence and Anti-colonial Subversion: Assembling Durham University's Colonial History**

*Sol Gamsu*

*(Durham University)*

This paper explores the history of Durham University as a site for both preparing and perpetrating colonial violence but also a place in which anti-colonial resistance has been fostered. To frame these contradictions we draw on la paperson's (2017) argument that the university is an assemblage of different and contradictory machinery. We explore this through an analysis of a selection of student newspaper articles from 1948-1994 to examine how race and colonialism and the specific links between the University and the British Empire were viewed and discussed by students. We find certain repeating themes – senior university administrators and academics embedded within the declining colonial project of British Empire, a minority of anti-colonial academics, conservative students debating empire and questions of race in ways that reinforced racism and colonial violence, the voices of international students pushing back against this, student campaigns for solidarity with Algeria, South Africa and Palestine, the persistent white gaze of middle-class students abroad and an extensive discussion of race in music and film. These contradictory forces raise questions of how or whether the university can ever be 'decolonized' but allow us to trace an anti-colonial politics even in a provincial, white middle-class and historically conservative university.

### **Flowing between In(visibility): Intersectional Identities of East and Southeast Asian Academics in UK High Education**

*Grace Gao, Mengyi Xu, Ning Xu*

*(Northumbria University)*

East and Southeast Asian (ESA) academics in UK higher education are simultaneously understudied. While identity scholarship has emphasised the relational and intersectional nature of identity, ESA academics' positions are shaped by racialised, cultural, and migratory histories that are often overlooked. This study explores how ESA academics perceive and navigate their intersectional identities and how these shape their workplace experiences. Drawing on the visibility–invisibility–hypervisibility framework (Lewis & Simpson, 2012), we examine how identity operates fluidly and simultaneously as both a site of constraint and a resource for agency. Through 40 semi-structured interviews conducted across a Russell Group research-intensive university and a post-92 teaching-intensive university, encompassing different disciplines, contract types, and career stages, we reveal how participants actively shift between visibility states through purposeful identity performances, amplifying presence to counter invisibility, strategically withdrawing to mitigate hypervisibility, or preemptively projecting particular identities to shape how they are seen. We thus further reconceptualize these visibility forms not merely as constraints imposed upon minoritized subjects, but as strategic resources for identity work and workplace navigation. This reframing reveals the sophisticated, often invisible, labor that minoritized academics perform to navigate structural inequalities, while showing how agency operates even within constrained circumstances. By linking visibility fluidity to identity fluidity, we demonstrate how intersectional identities function simultaneously as sites of marginalization and as resources for resistance, offering a more nuanced understanding of how power, identity, and agency intersect in organizational contexts. We conclude by calling for HE institutions to design EDI policies responsive to this group's specific challenges.

**Migrant Health and Integration in the UK: Prolonged Waiting Times, Hostile Environment and Anti-Migrant Rhetoric**

*Erdem Dikici*

*(University of the West of England, Bristol)*

Studies on migrant integration often focus on legal status, labour market activities, or social integration, with a scarce emphasis on the role of health and wellbeing. There remains a limited attention to how structural and political stressors influence not just the mental health and wellbeing but also the processes of integration. Drawing on qualitative interviews with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in the UK, this paper examines how two key stressors—prolonged waiting times in the asylum system and rising anti-immigrant rhetoric—pose significant challenges to both mental health and integration into the society. The findings show that “asylum backlog” has emerged as a key source of distress with prolonged waiting times exacerbating anxiety and depression while at the same time extending legal uncertainty, delaying access to employment and stable housing—key aspects of integration. This system-led limbo status both undermines individual health and affect families, further deepening individual isolation and social exclusion. Compounding this, the findings also show how increasingly hostile political and social environment, particularly mounting anti-immigrant political rhetoric and violent protests, both re-traumatizes already vulnerable populations and impede their integration process. Participants report feeling targeted and devalued, which nurtures fear, isolation and mistrust, thereby, hinder the process of developing a sense of belonging. Based on these insights, the paper concludes that more nuanced research is needed on the broader effects of anti-immigrant, far right politics on the health, wellbeing, and integration of migrant populations, which requires a sociological approach that attends to the temporal and political determinants shaping migrant lives.

**Displaced Brokers: How Displaced People Shape Humanitarianism in an Era of Fragmented Protection**

*Aminath Nisha Zadhya-Cepoglu*

*(University of Leeds)*

This paper foregrounds a specific cadre of people displaced due to conflict: those employed or volunteering in formal and informal roles in humanitarian organisations. In doing so, it offers new insights into how displaced individuals, often in ambiguous legal situations, who are excluded from political activism and civic participation, mobilise for broader rights and protection of displaced people. Preliminary data drawn from in-depth interviewing and audio diaries of displaced Syrians and Afghans in Turkey, examined through the lens of brokerage, demonstrates how they expand and constrain the borders of the humanitarian field and considers how emerging from different contexts of conflict shapes the collaboration or contestations of different displaced groups with each other and with humanitarian organisations in turn. Situating displaced people in this socio-political environment invites an understanding that they are not simply service recipients or intermediaries between humanitarian organisations and displaced communities, but rather disruptive and (re)constructive forces in a field that is in flux. This paper makes two key contributions: (1) it provides new data on an under-research segment of displaced people and trace the pathways of their inclusion and exclusion within and through the humanitarian field and (2) it foregrounds the attempts of displaced people to claim ownership of the humanitarian field, making a theoretical contribution about the transformative negotiations of different groups emerging from different conflict contexts and treats displaced people as experts of humanitarian challenges and change-makers that are at the forefront of confronting the current crisis of humanitarianism.

# Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205

## **Oppression through Capture: Automating Biopolitics from Punch Cards to AI**

*Janos Szakolczai*

*(University of Glasgow)*

This paper explores the continuities between contemporary debates on artificial intelligence (AI) and earlier technologies of surveillance and classification, examining how seemingly neutral systems of data processing can become instruments of exclusion and domination. Since the mass adoption of generative AI in 2022, platforms such as ChatGPT have been celebrated as breakthroughs in innovation. Yet their reliance on vast datasets and the extraction of user inputs reproduces older logics of consent, capture, and corporate power. To place these dynamics in an extreme context, I draw on two historical case studies: Automated punch-card tabulating machines to facilitate Nazi bureaucratic discrimination, and the role of data-driven large computational systems in South Africa's pre-apartheid "Book of Life," which catalogued racial identity categories with unprecedented precision. In both cases, data collection framed as administrative or benign underpinned infrastructures of racialised surveillance and social control, which are today becoming central in the automation of warfare and policing.

Theoretically, I argue for a shift from understanding data as "given" (datum) to "taken" (capta) (Szakolczai, 2023), aligning with Foucauldian and critical data studies approaches that foreground power in processes of biopolitical measurement and classification. By situating today's AI systems within this genealogy, I highlight how, blinded by innovation, lax regulation and concentration of technological ownership risk, they enable new forms of systemic discrimination. The talk invites reflection on the sociological implications of contemporary AI: not only as a tool of efficiency or innovation, but also as a potential infrastructure for segregation, sorting, and exclusion.

## **Digital Conspiracy Cultures and Intra-movement Competition in the British Extreme Right since the August 2024 Riots**

*Richard Henry John Donnelly*

*(Kingston University London)*

This paper sits at the intersection of political sociology, digital sociology and social movement studies. I analyse how "controlled opposition" conspiracy claims circulate within the digital ecosystem of the British extreme right and how these claims have shaped intra-movement competition in the aftermath of the August 2024 riots. Conceptually, I extend the notion of conspiracist semiosis—the appropriation and re-articulation of tropes from a long conspiracist tradition—to show how extreme-right actors deploy antisemitic frames to police movement boundaries, challenge rivals and mobilise resources. Methodologically, I combine digital ethnography with the Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, situating conspiracist texts within shifting strategic action fields.

Empirically, I trace a corpus that includes Nick Griffin's online pamphlet "What Lies Behind the English Defence League?" (2012), transcripts of recent livestreaming by the neo-Nazi Patriotic Alternative organisation on Rumble, and the antisemitic "Tommy Robinson" meme ecology. I show how controlled opposition narratives are deployed by rivals to challenge Tommy Robinson's prominence within the British extreme right via allegations of Israeli control. Conspiracist narratives help challengers reframe field hierarchies, exploit strategic dilemmas, and siphon activists, attention and donations.

This paper's contribution is threefold. First, it theorises conspiracist semiosis as a form of social skill in competitive social movement fields. Second, it demonstrates how conspiracy theories organise coalitions and antagonisms inside the extreme right. Third, it provides a discourse-analytic approach to understanding meme cultures, conspiracist texts and organisational rivalry. More broadly, the paper advances a sociological account of conspiracism as social movement infrastructure, not just individual belief.

## **Two Tiers of Injustice: Intersecting Mythologies of Nation, Monarchy, and Economic Precarity in Unite the Kingdom Propaganda**

*Ashton Kingdon, Craig Webber*

*(University of Southampton)*

On September 13, 2025, an estimated 110-150,000 people attended the Unite the Kingdom rally in central London, organised by far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson), marking one of Britain's largest far-right demonstrations in decades. Thousands of TikTok and Instagram videos — many AI-generated — circulated in the surrounding weeks to disseminate misinformation and mobilise support. Through analysis of this audio-visual content, we examine how Unite the Kingdom deployed intersecting nationalist narratives: mythologising England as the Anglosphere's 'Mother Country', appropriating WWII 'Darkest Hour' imagery to frame immigration as an existential threat and exploiting housing market anxieties to redirect economic grievances toward exclusionary politics. We analyse how the propagandists instrumentalise historical symbolism — from wartime sentiment and Crown hierarchies to medieval Crusader iconography — to legitimise elite power while deflecting attention from structural inequality toward marginalised communities. Situating this within theoretical frameworks of precarity, relative deprivation, and social psychology, we explore how narratives of national humiliation embed in-group/out-group differentiation into self-fulfilling prophecies of cultural decline.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A**

### **When Critique Becomes Classification: Subjectivity, Power, and International Students in Elite Universities**

*Kun Liang*

*(University of Cambridge)*

What if the very vocabularies sociology developed to critique inequality, like "class," "identity," "privilege", have themselves become mechanisms of governance inside universities? This paper explores that question through a historical analysis of higher education and ethnographic fieldwork in UK and US elite universities, with a particular focus on international students.

Critical terms do not remain within scholarly debate. They are adopted and repurposed in admissions, support, and diversity schemes that differentiate students (e.g. "first-generation," "low-income," "sexual minorities"), while other categories are blurred into undifferentiated blocks (e.g. "international students") or left relatively untouched. Practices that appear to extend critique may, counter-intuitively, also reproduce new forms of labelling and regulation, folding critical vocabularies into neoliberal and meritocratic logics and into the culture-war pressures of the present.

International students bring transnational horizons of self-understanding that collide with these institutional classifications. Navigating this terrain, they selectively emphasise or silence aspects of identity, generating subjectivities through the friction between prior frameworks and new institutional logics.

Rather than fixing conclusions, the paper opens three questions for debate: when do institutional uses of critical categories widen critique, and when do they narrow it? How are labels taken up, sidestepped, or reworked in everyday interaction? And what forms of subjectivity emerge as critical vocabularies circulate between scholarship, governance, and student life? By doing so, the paper reconsiders sociology's own critical languages, asking how they travel, transform, and return to shape the very subjects they seek to describe.

## **Cast(ed) Psychosis: Prejudice, Humiliation, and the Quest for Dignity of Dalit Students in Indian Higher Education**

*Dhaneswar Bhoi*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This paper examines caste as both a structural hierarchy and an affective system through the lenses of the sociology of emotion and psychoanalytic theory. While caste has been extensively studied in political, economic, and identity-based frameworks, its emotional and psychic dimensions. The study foregrounds how caste is lived, felt, and internalised, shaping subjectivities, interpersonal relations, and collective imaginaries.

Methodologically, the study is based on 10 case studies of Dalit students, 5 focus group discussions (FGDs) with students across social groups, and 2 FGDs with faculty and staff, providing a multi-layered ethnographic analysis. Findings reveal that caste discrimination is internalized, affecting self-worth, emotional well-being, and academic confidence, often manifesting as stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Institutional silences and normalized biases compound these experiences, while students' responses—from withdrawal to assertion—reflect ongoing psychic struggles.

The analysis highlights how humiliation, shame, resentment, and aspiration circulate within caste-embedded spaces, producing lasting psychosocial effects. Its findings linked to Freud's concepts of repression and projection elucidate how unconscious anxieties and desires are displaced into caste interactions, reinforcing social boundaries while generating psychic tension (Freud, 1923). It also theorises the findings linking Goffman's theory of stigma further demonstrates how caste-based discrimination is inscribed upon emotional life, regulating social participation and fostering internalised inferiority (Goffman, 1963).

By integrating sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives, the study situates caste within lived affect and psychic life into a theory called 'cast(ed) psychosis', arguing that meaningful interventions must address both the emotional and structural dimensions of caste to support the dignity of Dalit students.

## **Institutional Transformation, Everyday Practices, and the Limits of Recognition**

*Mara Aleida Silva Hope*

*(University of Warwick)*

This paper explores how transformation and change can be differently understood and enacted within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work in higher education, based on an institutional ethnography of a UK university. I argue that while transformation could be framed as a visible, institutional goal that articulates itself by metrics, awards, and recognition schemes, change is experienced more diffusely in everyday practices, negotiations, and actions that sustain EDI work.

I propose that transformation should not be reduced to the attainment of fixed outcomes but instead understood as a process that is made possible by the cumulative and often overlooked changes that exceed institutional forms of measurement. Drawing on the experiences of participants who describe how initiatives that enable change frequently spill over the categories required by formal applications, raising questions about where these practices permeate to, how they circulate, and whether they must become institutionalised in order to "count".

By reflecting on what people working on EDI understand transformation to mean, and why frustration often emerges in the process of translating everyday practices into institutional outcomes, this paper highlights the tensions between lived feminist labour and the bureaucratic logics of recognition. Rethinking the possibilities and limits of feminist transformation in higher education.

## **Middle-Class Anxiety in China: Understanding Educational Practices through the Lens of Habitus and Illusio**

*Yu Feng*

*(University of Manchester)*

This study examines how education has become a significant site of social anxiety for China's middle class. The Chinese middle class has expanded rapidly and been recognised as important in China's societal development. Yet in recent years, this growth has been accompanied by rising insecurity and anxiety, with education emerging as the most salient concern.

Existing research has considered the behaviours, expectations, and anxieties of middle-class parents within educational settings. While valuable, such studies remain confined to the parent-child perspective and do not provide a systematic, conceptual analysis of general social anxiety experienced by the middle class. In particular, the link between educational anxiety and insecurity over social status remains underexplored.

Building on Hunt's (1999) concept of social anxiety and Bourdieu's notions of habitus and illusio, this paper develops an analytical framework tailored to the Chinese context. Drawing on 39 in-depth interviews with members of the occupational middle class in Shunde, Guangdong Province, it suggests that educational anxiety is not merely a personal or parental concern but constitutes a form of social anxiety closely intertwined with class and intersecting social structures. The analysis shows that first-generation middle class, shaped by experiences of upward mobility, have developed a class habitus that positions education as the central pathway to social achievement. This habitus shapes their parental educational practices including an intensive investment in and commitment to education that exemplifies Bourdieu's concept of illusio. Combined with the uncertainty of educational returns, this amplifies the educational anxiety experienced by the middle class.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.218 Special Event**

### **The Gendering of Sociology and the Sociology of Gender**

*Sue Scott, Stevi Jackson, Jeff Hearn, Mary Holmes, Radhika Govinda, Finn MacKay*

*(Newcastle University / University of Helsinki, University of York, University of Huddersfield / Hanken School of Economics / Örebro University, University of Edinburgh, University of the West of England)*

This panel, chaired by Sue Scott, will interrogate the sometimes-contested history of the concept of gender, within and beyond sociology, a concept that was absent from sociology 75 years ago, but which has had an interesting history in the ensuing period. We will explore the emergence and development of gender as a sociological concept, assessing the uses of its academic precursors such as Sex Roles and Sexual Divisions. We will then focus on the part played by feminism in the creation of space within the BSA, and UK sociology more widely, for research on women and for feminist critique. This will lead into discussion of the way in which the sociology of women evolved into the sociology of gender, with an emphasis on gender as a social division, as well as the development of the sociology of masculinities. While gender originated as an analytical concept, which challenged essentialist and biologicistic assumptions about women and men, it became, in everyday parlance, a mere synonym for sex thus depriving it of its critical import. More recently it has been re-identified as critical in a negative sense; with the emergence of 'anti-gender' movements associated with the resurgence of the political right across the world, gender has been branded as a dangerous concept. There has also been an association of gender with gender identity and contestation of the sex-gender distinction, particularly in the context of, often ferocious, political debates on trans rights. The panel will analyse these shifts and evaluate their consequences for the sociology of gender and for gender divisions in social life. Overall, the aim of the Panel will be to make the case for the importance of a distinctively sociological approach to gender and also the particular value of sociology for making sense of social and cultural changes, political trends and of continued inequalities and injustices. It is important that an event such as this includes presenters from different generations and with differing relationships to both the sociology of

gender and to gendered identities. The Panel will therefore include those whose engagement with thinking about gender is spread across the last fifty years.

### **Gendered Beginnings**

*Stevi Jackson*

*(University of York)*

In this presentation I will interweave the story of the struggle to gender sociology with the early history of gender as a concept. The former begins from a time, the late 1960s and early 1970s, when sociology as a discipline was overwhelmingly male dominated and concerned primarily with the social lives of men. But this was under challenge. Inspired by the Women's Liberation Movement, a new generation of feminist sociologists began to put women back into sociology, to recover the small volume of relevant research that already existed and to undertake our own. Feminists also organised into the BSA, using the political skills acquired through activism, with considerable success: the 1974 and 1982 conferences, the formation of the Women's Caucus and the Equality of the Sexes study group (1974-5) and sub-committee of the BSA executive (1976), and increasing the representation of women on the BSA executive. In the beginning we did not have a concept of gender and when it first entered our vocabulary, via the work of Ann Oakley (1972) and Gayle Rubin (1975), it was not universally accepted. While the concept of gender was soon established, the relationship between sex and gender, and the distinction itself, was contested – as were the gendered politics of class and race. In considering both feminist activism within the BSA and debates around gender within the discipline, I will reflect on the legacy of the feminist sociologists of the 1970s and early 1980s.

### **Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities: Implications for the Gendering of Sociology, and the Sociology of Gender**

*Jeff Hearn*

*(University of Huddersfield/ Hanken School of Economics / Örebro University)*

In my presentation I address how the development of more critical studies on men and masculinities relates to the contested concept of gender. The last 50 years have seen a growth of more explicit, more critical, sometimes more sociological, studies on men and masculinities, however defined. Fifty years ago, 'masculinity' largely meant social psychological identity or sex role; meanwhile, 'men' was rarely a sociological issue, even if sociological classics can be re-read as much or all about men. Feminist scholarship – and gay/sexualities scholarship – beyond and within sociology, including the BSA, changed this, at first somewhat indirectly, implicitly, then more explicitly, albeit differently from different feminisms. These matters are relevant for both the doing of sociology and sociological analysis, and within the institution of sociology itself. Critical studies on men and masculinities have also concerned a changing concept of gender away from sex/gender roles, from conflation of sex/gender/sexuality, and sometimes from sexual/gender divisions and difference(s). They meant naming the unmarked, the centre(s), the One, of men and masculinities, as social/sociological categories, then available for Othering and 'deconstruction'. Women's Studies, then Gender Studies, problematised staying only within sociology, and raised questions on naming and positioning of these studies. Locationality, intersectionality, and reflexive criticality have become more central in the sociology of gender, conceptualising gender, and gendering sociology, with influences from international projects, queer, transgender, decoloniality, world geopolitics, and human-nonhuman-planet relations.

### **Mainstreaming and Multiplying Gender in Sociology**

*Mary Holmes*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

I will pick up the story of gender in sociology from the 1990s when scholars were responding to shifts and fragmentations in feminist movement, the rise of poststructuralism, a growth in masculinity studies and the mainstreaming of gender as an accepted and even essential topic within sociological thinking and teaching. I will argue that there was a shift from a focus on the material aspects of gender to understanding it in more symbolic terms. The appearance of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* in 1990 ushered in a supposedly new paradigm for understanding gender, but arguably one that relied heavily

on established sociological ways of understanding gender. Also, British sociology saw some other ways of thinking about gender that were still interested in the material conditions in which gender was produced, such as Bev Skeggs *Formations of Class and Gender* (1997). There were also increasing efforts to think about how gender was intertwined with other forms of social inequality not only around class but around race and ethnicity. This was combined with the beginnings of a more global sociology of gender.

### **Sociology of Gender: Tracing Plural Histories, Interrogating Coloniality**

*Radhika Govinda*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

I see myself reflecting on the panel theme from a unique vantage point, occupying the positions of a feminist confronting patriarchies in the discipline of sociology, of a feminist and sociologist from the global south interrogating the agendas of western feminism and sociology, and of a gender-sensitive sociologist researching intersectional inequalities of caste and gender in India, and more recently of race, coloniality and gender in UKHE (Rege 2003). I argue that both sociology and gender studies acknowledge they are situated forms of knowledge production so the history of engendering sociology/ sociology of gender cannot be traced in a singular voice. I trace feminist sociologists' contributions to the discipline of sociology in India as a case in point. Early Indian feminist sociologists were instrumental in interrogating the discipline's epistemic location within the colonial discourse, shaping its reorientation in India. Their engagement with women's issues came from lived experience rather than as a consequence of and exposure to second wave western feminism, per se. I also reflect on how while Indian feminist sociologists have found the concept of 'gender' useful, Latin American feminist sociologists have questioned the very concept as a colonial imposition. Whilst their arguments are grounded in different (postcolonial and decolonial) approaches, both call for an interrogation of coloniality in sociological knowledge production on gender – I offer an insight into how I have tried to heed this call in my teaching practice.

### **Whose Gender Are We Afraid Of?**

*Finn MacKay*

*(University of the West of England, Bristol)*

As a radical feminist researching gender it has been frustrating to see the term TERF become a shorthand for trans exclusionary and transphobic politics, while the actual political theory from radical feminism on gender abolition and queer kinship remains largely unknown. Gender has become a pathologised property or marker attached to trans men, trans women and gender diverse people only, enabling the unscrutinised continuation of the dominant gendered status-quo. Ongoing attacks on limited legal rights and representation for LGBTQ+ people have only elevated levels of scrutiny on gender expression for the minority whose gender expression is viewed as less than immediately readable as either male and masculine or female and feminine. In this panel I will discuss the challenges of researching gender in such an environment and reassert the need for mainstreaming a sociological understanding of gender as a powerful social structure, which, like all social structures, contains possibilities for resistance, recreation, personal expression and replacement.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 3 - Room 1.219**

### **Behind the Masks: Exploring the Enablers and Barriers of Good Work for Autistic Women**

*Stevie Barnes*

*(University College London)*

This research explores experiences of good work for autistic women, drawing on the notion of good work as a key driver influencing sustainable employment. In the UK, good work is recognised as contributing to positive health and economic outcomes. However, there is a gap in understanding the heterogeneity of factors contributing to good, quality work and how this may influence labour market participation for specific subgroups.

The intersecting identities of being female and autistic mean autistic women face both gender and ability-based disparities in the workplace. Existing research considers experiences of autism disclosure and support at work. This research aims to contribute to knowledge of intersectional autistic experiences at work, considering the barriers contributing to the significantly low employment rate for autistic adults in the UK and the experience of having multiple marginalised identities in the workplace.

In partnership with the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), a participatory-informed approach examined the contextual factors influencing experiences of good work for autistic women. These experiences were explored through twelve semi-structured interviews with autistic women. Inclusive methods were guided by an advisory group comprising of IES representatives and individuals contributing lived-experience knowledge or employment expertise. Reflexive thematic analysis identified interconnecting contextual factors influencing barriers and enablers of good work for autistic women. The findings identify the limitations of universal definitions of good work, contributing to an understanding of good work beyond existing frameworks. Most notably, this research identifies the impact of pathological or neurodiversity knowledge paradigms on influencing experiences of good work.

### **Who Decides What Counts? Autistic Women, Trauma and the Politics of Recognition**

*Katrine Callander*

*(University of Kent)*

Autistic women's accounts of trauma compel sociology to confront both how harm is produced and how it is recognised. Drawing on participatory life story doctoral research with 62 women and over one million words of narrative data, this paper traces how trauma emerges not as an isolated event but as cumulative, relational and systemic. Societal dismissal, gendered norms and medicalised framings fracture identity and belonging, leaving survivors to navigate cycles of silencing and re-traumatisation. Yet the meaning of trauma is never neutral. It is mediated by systems of recognition that determine what "counts" as harm, whose distress is legible and whose voices are disregarded. Autistic women's narratives reveal how forms of suffering are routinely reframed as individual deficit or misdiagnosis, erasing the social roots of injury.

As the language of 'neurodiversity' circulates ever more widely, there is a danger that structural violence shaping autistic women's lives is obscured and trauma is reduced to an individualised or inevitable condition rather than recognised as a product of power. This research challenges the assumption that trauma is inevitable and questions the authority of institutions to decide whose suffering counts and whose voices are dismissed. As we celebrate the BSA's 75th anniversary, the presentation will ask what it means for sociology to inherit traditions that have excluded certain voices and how the discipline might instead foreground recognition, relationality and agency. By centring autistic women's narratives, the research challenges trauma's inevitability and opens space for neurodivergent-affirming, trauma-informed futures that reconfigure belonging, legitimacy and social justice.

### **"They obviously existed but no-one was including them in anything": Autistic Women's Involvement in Feminist Organising**

*Sara McHaffie*

*(Northumbria University)*

Autistic women's perspectives are rarely considered within feminist research (Fox 2025). However, an increase in feminist work by autistic women disrupts stereotypical ideas about our identities and strives for epistemic justice (e.g. Limburg 2021). My doctoral research project addresses the question How do autistic women as a subaltern counterpublic express and engage with feminist ideas to counter epistemic injustice? I draw on Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics (1990) to understand autistic women's activism, alongside work from critical autism studies on the need for epistemic justice (Botha 2021) for autistic people.

My research involved two phases: interviewing six autistic feminists, then dialogue with a group of twelve autistic women in Tayside for eighteen months. Analysis of interviews informed discussion with the second group, grounding the study in the context of autistic women's advocacy and feminist thought. With the second group, we engaged in dialogical groupwork where we discussed our lives and the

relevance of feminist ideas, and used creative writing and embroidery to articulate ideas in more abstract ways.

One theme which was identified was “They obviously existed but no-one was including them in anything”: Autistic women’s involvement in feminist organising. Participants described passionate engagement with feminism, organising alongside other autistic women. However, this is rarely acknowledged as it is “not that kind-of shouting or loudness”. Additionally, participants described exclusion from the feminist movement. I present my analysis of ways this theme characterises autistic feminist resistance, and participants’ involvement in, or (self)exclusion from wider feminist organising.

## **Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220**

### **Creating Performance Sociology (PS): ‘Feeling’ the Social and Political Issue in the Context of Crime, Education and Neurodivergence**

*Chrissie Rogers*

*(University of Kent)*

Creating Performance Sociology (PS) bridges my current data and new research. Creativity, storytelling, performance, and drama within qualitative sociology, anthropology, and criminology are not new. Neither is script writing and performance that is heavily influenced or driven by social and political responses to human narratives a new paradigm. Perhaps significant is, more recently creative ways of telling stories based on real lives or events has escalated, via for example, docudramas, Ethnotheatre, Verbatim theatre, applied theatre. Human stories ground the re-presentation and are delivered as authentically as possible. This paper is about connecting the sociological imagination, alongside early education and political philosophy, human stories, and dramatic creativity. In a landscape of advancing artificial intelligence where human connection diminishes, I aim to reflect upon facilitating storytelling, to make and create ways of doing PS, theoretically and practically. By doing so, I hope to make meaning of education, disability, criminal (in)justice, and care. Notably, the power of images or performance from page to stage or screen, animates the temporality of life. The writer and the consumer of the script (and performance) interact, feel, imagine, and make sense of social issues. Critically, however, unlike perhaps several scripts or creative writing pieces we see in academic work that are driven by the issue, for PS, similar to Ethnotheatre, the art comes before the message. If the art (script) is created with meaning and authenticity, readers and audiences will feel and connect to the issue rather than being ‘told’ and therefore be moved to act(ion).

### **Linguistic Habitus in the Making: How Chinese Primary School Students Internalise Institutional Language Hierarchies**

*Lijia Yu*

*(King's College London)*

China’s standard language policies and internal migration have reshaped linguistic environments in dialect-speaking regions. While existing research focuses on mega-cities with elite migrants and favourable dialect policies (Liang, 2015), this study examines Ningbo, a tier-two industrial city where migrants are predominantly working-class and policies align with national Mandarin-promotion ideologies. Based on six months of ethnographic fieldwork at a public primary school in Ningbo, this study combines participant observation across formal and informal school contexts with semi-structured interviews with students across different grade levels. It traces how students internalise and reproduce institutional language hierarchies through everyday participation drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Three key findings emerge. First, students internalise Mandarin as the default medium for institutional participation, maintaining systematic adherence even in minimally supervised contexts, demonstrating internalisation operating through pragmatic recognition rather than explicit enforcement. Second, students strategically appropriate dialect’s authority-enhancement function observed in teacher disciplinary practices, deploying targeted Ningbonese expressions for institutional resistance, peer dominance and collaborative coordination before reverting to Mandarin. Third, dialect serves solidarity formation among native speakers while marginalising migrant students. Developmental differences reveal younger students maintain complete Mandarin exclusivity, while older students

demonstrate selective dialect appropriation. The findings demonstrate that linguistic habitus is shaped through prolonged institutional immersion where language hierarchies are embedded in daily practices, contributing to understanding of how educational institutions reproduce linguistic inequalities in multilingual China.

### **Let the Magic Happen: The Affectivity of Mentoring Relationships in Academia**

*Maria Keil, Flora Petrik*

*(Justus Liebig University Giessen)*

What is the magic behind successful academic mentoring and the seemingly natural development of strong bonds in academia? In this paper, we contribute to a critical reflection on academic practices and evaluation.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social magic from relational praxeology, we ask: at which moments and stages of academic careers do 'sticky affinities' create a match between habitus and field? To address this question, we triangulate data from two qualitative research projects that combine the perspectives of students and professors in the social sciences in Germany and Austria.

Our analysis shows how a fit with the academic field is created not only through affinity with scientific practices and study content, but also through the support of gatekeepers for first-generation students. Yet, gatekeepers hold specific images of what students and doctoral candidates must signal in order to be recognized as potential mentees or recruits. Consequently, the traits of promising young academics are shaped not only by class-based understandings of education and field-specific cultural capital, but also by the perception of these traits as natural gifts. We further highlight mentoring as a reciprocal process: professors may advance students' careers through recognition, while students also contribute to the symbolic capital of their mentors.

With this analysis, we expose how class is woven into meritocratic ideals and illuminate the workings of social magic in academic settings.

### **Curricular Reforms, Rhythms in Teaching Practice and the Construction of the Low Attaining Student**

*Max Aantjes*

*(University of Cambridge)*

After an initial spatial turn in the sociology of education, the past decade has sparked debate on the interaction between space and time in social practice; this has included a reconsideration of proposals for conceptual shifts (e.g., from 'space-time' to 'timespace') and a renewed interest in the affordances and limitations of how influential theorists, such as Bourdieu and Foucault, conceptualised time. In this presentation, I will explore two theoretical trajectories which have emerged from these discussions, as well as their potential for researching social inequality. First, in which ways do the conditions of one field (in a Bourdieusian sense) affect the temporal structuring of another field? Second, how do such effects influence the relative positions, and available subject positions (in a Foucauldian sense), of actors in different fields? I explore these questions with respect to an ongoing research study into the implementation of a teaching reform initiative (Teaching Mathematics for Mastery) in British secondary schools that stratify students into different attainment groups. Drawing from extracts of policy documents, teacher interviews and focus groups, I will show that the temporal structuring of the curriculum by policy makers is translated into rhythms in teaching practice that vary across high and low attaining classes, in particular in terms of the ordering of the 'why' and the 'how', and a divergence in how different students are seen to desire 'efficiency' and 'connections'. I conclude with a tentative discussion of how this may affect students' 'subjective field of possibles', both within and outside of mathematics.

## Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204

### **Scholarship as Struggle: Towards a Transnational Understanding of Race and Decolonial Scholars in Higher Education in Belgium and the UK**

*Elif Lootens, Lili Schwoerer, Peter Stevens, Bart Van De Putte*

*(Ghent University)*

Over the past decade, decolonization has attracted growing attention across academic fields. The 'postcolonial turn' occurred almost a quarter-century ago and sought to bring into focus the ways in which colonial histories continued to influence culture, labor, and knowledge production. The political-epistemological movement against 'coloniality', that is, the persistence of the structures of power and privilege that emerged with colonialism in knowledge regimes, remains a subject of much controversy (Mbembe, 2021). In parallel, far-right parties around the Global North are portraying universities as breeding grounds for radical thought. Universities and scholars who criticize white privilege, colonialism, or racial illiteracy are being threatened by right-wing politicians, with anti-colonial and critical race theory as their main targets (Fúnez-Flores, 2024). Across today's universities, scholars engaged in anticolonial, decolonial, and anti-settler work navigate intensifying forms of institutional suppression that disproportionately threaten non-white racialised staff and fields deemed economically "unproductive" (Holmwood, 2011). Recent suspensions of academics for pro-Palestinian advocacy exemplify the precarious conditions facing de/postcolonial activist scholars, while other outspoken academics particularly in less marketized HE systems such as Belgium's, avoid formal sanction. A common pattern emerges: marketised higher education narrows the space for activist scholarship, selectively disciplining voices and re-inscribing epistemic hierarchies under neoliberalism. Drawing on qualitative interviews with racialised non-white PhD researchers in Flanders (Belgium) and England working on race and de/postcoloniality, this study develops a transnational analysis of how HE governance regimes shape who can do this work, which knowledge is valued, and on what terms.

### **Contesting 'Value': Neoliberal Discourses, Rip-Off Degrees, and the Politics of Worth in UK Higher Education**

*Ryan Wilkinson*

*(University of Leeds)*

The notion of value in UK higher education has become a site of political contestation, increasingly framed through discourses of value for money and the vilification of so-called "rip-off degrees." These framings, championed in Conservative Party reforms and reinforced through the Office for Students' regulatory agenda, exemplify the neoliberal and market-oriented restructuring of the sector. Universities are discursively redefined as providers of economic returns, while students are positioned as investors required to secure employability outcomes. This paper employs critical discourse analysis of news media coverage, government policy literature, and political speeches to examine how the language of value is strategically mobilised to reshape higher education's purposes and priorities.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theorisation of capital, the study interrogates how political and policy discourses operate to construct value as symbolic capital, privileging economic forms and eroding the legitimacy of cultural and social capital. The findings suggest that the rhetoric of employability and financial accountability functions as a tool of symbolic violence, narrowing the definition of worth while legitimising intervention in higher education governance. The label "rip-off degrees" emerges as a powerful delegitimising device, targeting disciplines framed as economically unproductive, and reinforcing stratified hierarchies between universities and subjects. At the same time, counter-discourses—whether from within academia, student groups, or sections of the media—seek to reassert education's civic, intellectual, and cultural purposes. However, these remain persistently marginalised within neoliberal policy frames, highlighting how struggles over value reveal deeper contests over authority, legitimacy, and inequality in UK higher education.

## **Teaching Sociology in Turbulent Times: Resisting Contemporary Reactionary Discourses Surrounding Higher Education**

*Charlotte Morris*

*(University of Portsmouth)*

The value and purpose of sociology along with other humanities and social science subjects and the university itself is under increasing scrutiny. This paper shares findings from the British Academy funded Teaching in Turbulent Times project which explored contemporary populist discourses surrounding UK universities, humanities and social science subjects, alongside academic and student perceptions and responses to these. Recent years have seen anti-intellectualism, entailing a decrying of 'experts' and 'woke' academics alongside bolstering of hate speech, including in universities (Read, 2018). This is further situated in a broader context of reactionary politics, rising fascism and anti-migrant discourses in the UK and beyond. It is therefore imperative that we consider the role of education and our discipline in resisting such forces (Giroux, 2024).

Social sciences and humanities disciplines such as sociology which involve critical discussions and often include political and social justice orientated content and approaches are frequently positioned as controversial (Stanley, 2018). Through critical discourse analysis of popular news outlets alongside qualitative research with staff and students in humanities and social sciences this project revealed deeply entrenched imperialist, nationalist and racist discourses in the ways in which 'ideal' universities and academics are constructed as white, there to preserve heteropatriarchal-capitalist-coloniality and the legacy of empire. Simultaneously some academics are feeling threatened by increased surveillance and pushback against teaching content by students, set against a backdrop of crisis for the sector. This paper sheds light on contemporary constructions of universities, academics and students and considers the implications for our discipline and practice.

## **After the University? The Rise of the Edu-factory in an Age of Turmoil**

*Daniel Nehring*

*(Swansea University)*

Around the world, universities find themselves in crisis. From the USA to China and Hong Kong, academic freedom has come under severe political threat, while budget cuts, mass layoffs, and extensive structural adjustment programmes batter higher education systems from Argentina to the UK. Against this backdrop, this paper pursues three lines of inquiry. First, I ask to what extent and in which ways contemporary higher education institutions can still be characterised as 'universities', given their increasingly comprehensive departure from classic, for example Humboldtian, institutional models. I highlight the hegemony of discourses, modes of governance, and practices of higher education, grounded in academic capitalism, that undermine established notions of the university, while drawing attention to persistent spaces for contestation and re-articulation of what higher education might mean. Second, to move beyond preliminary notions of the 'post-university' salient in recent academic conversations, I advance the concept of the 'edu-factory', as an analytical tool to gain purchase on the arguably epochal changes and turmoil that are turning universities into 'something else' and critically interrogate the consequences of these epochal changes for academic citizenship and patterns of inequality and stratification in academic labour. Finally, I consider the implications rise of the edu-factory for the sociology of education. I call for recursive modes of inquiry that account for the rapidly changing institutional circumstances that circumscribe what sociologists of education can research. The empirical analysis underpinning my argument follows a historical comparative approach and draws on case studies from across different parts of the world.

## **Theory - Room 4.205**

### **The Evolving Use of Theory in Sociology**

*Alan Warde*

*(University of Manchester)*

This presentation traces the ways in which the use of theory has been transformed over the 75 years of existence of the BSA. Different types of theory have seen their fortunes wax and wane. The way that sociology is practiced in the 21st century – the routines, procedures, norms and aspirations of its professional exponents – has reduced the prominence of theory and of theory construction as an objective. The consequence is, paradoxically, that the exceptional expansion and increased sophistication of empirical sociology is outstripping the discipline's capability for absorbing and formulating its findings, which once upon a time have been seen as the mission of theory. I will argue that the failure to counter abstracted empiricism is in important part due to the conventions of the contemporary scientific journal. Relevant intellectual trends will be illustrated by an examination and analysis of the format and content of British sociological journals, their abstracts and keyword lists, and other assorted sociological compendia. Concluding discussion will focus on how best to deploy theory alongside empirical studies in order to establish sociological interpretations and explanations of social arrangements.

### **Towards Sociology of Moral Obligation**

*Anna Smolentseva*

*(University of Cambridge)*

The concept of moral obligation is central for understanding and conceptualisation of, and research on, morality. However, moral obligation has been largely overlooked in sociological discussion. The study starts from Durkheim's notion of morality as a system of interrelated concepts: the unity of good and duty (or moral ideal and moral obligation), social attachment to the group, and individual autonomy (Author 2024). Sacred moral ideals existing in the symbolic domain of collective representations shape obligations which belong to the profane domain of daily practices. Obligation/duty is action directed towards the ideal. Connecting impersonal ideal and individual action, the concept of moral obligation captures the binding character of the social relationship, linking the individual with others. It is a particular type of social bond, a building block of collectivities and moralities.

The concept of obligation opens new conceptual and empirical pathways. First, it gives more precision to the sociological apparatus. The elements of the obligation developed in political philosophy and law, as well as the Durkheimian hierarchy of obligations, which are presented in this paper, enable the empirical analysis of a particular morality - for example, in this paper, the transformations of moral obligations in Russia as it moved from socialism to capitalism. Second, the concept of obligation facilitates the study of other moral phenomena: indifference as 'exclusion' from 'the universe of obligation' (Bauman 2000); amorality as absence of obligation to others; liberal notions of individual rights based on individualism with no obligations to others (Wolfe 1989); responsibility as obligation.

### **The Eclipse of Character in Sociology**

*Sebastian Raza, Galen Watts*

*(University of Cambridge, University of Waterloo)*

Sociological accounts of inequality or stratification are undergirded by notions of fairness. Sociological accounts of alienation, reflexive agency, or life satisfaction are underpinned by notions of human flourishing. These two normative modalities are commonplace in contemporary sociology. We argue, however, that there is a third normative modality—concerned with character. It involves the study of virtues or vices produced by specific institutional arrangements and social practices, which prove either corrosive or conducive to the achievement of particular social goods. Our argument is that this modality has virtually disappeared from sociological discourse.

We begin by showing that questions of character were a key animating concern in the works of classical sociologists and then show how character became an explicit normative modality animating twentieth-century sociology. By the start of the twenty-first century, however, sociological interest in character underwent sudden and near-total eclipse. Our argument is that behind its disappearance in sociology lies a transformation in the way institutions are conceptualized in the discipline. No longer seen as environments of moral socialization where different virtues are or are not cultivated, institutions came to be understood almost exclusively as arenas of conflict over resources, as sites of subjectivation and discursive disciplining, or as systems of stratification. Finally, we contend that a revival of sociological concern with character is necessary and could be accomplished by means of a renewal of the study of social types and a revision of the concept of socialization.

## **Work, Employment & Economic Life 1 - Room 3.212**

### **Flexibility at a Cost: Gendered Career Consequences of Using Flexible Work Arrangements in the UK**

*Sizhan Cui*

*(University of Oxford)*

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are widely promoted as tools to support employees' work-life balance, yet their use may inadvertently signal reduced commitment or availability to supervisors, resulting in negative career outcomes. Existing studies often compare FWA users to non-users without accounting for whether employees had the opportunity to use them, thereby conflating access with use. Using the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) waves 2-14 and fixed-effect models, this study isolates the career consequences of using FWAs when access exists, with particular attention to gendered dynamics and family context. Results indicate that among employees with access to FWAs, those who use them face a significantly higher risk of demotion compared to non-users, with this penalty more pronounced for women than men. For women, the effect is conditional on family stage: FWA use is not associated with demotion risk when they have preschool-aged children, but is linked to negative career outcomes when they have no children or older children. By contrast, men's use of FWAs is not significantly related to demotion risk, regardless of family circumstances. These findings reveal that the costs of FWAs emerge not from access itself but from use, reflecting the persistence of a flexibility stigma shaped by gendered expectations of work and caregiving. We argue that expanding access alone is insufficient; organizations must address the normative assumptions underpinning flexibility stigma to ensure FWAs promote both work-life balance and equitable career progression.

### **Heteronormative Discrimination and Violence against Trans Women in the Labour Market in Lima (Peru)**

*Maria Del Pilar Grados Bueno*

*(University of Sussex)*

In many countries, LGBTIQ+ populations face significant difficulties in the labour market as they can experience discrimination and gender-based violence in their workplaces (McFadden, 2015). Among this group, trans women confront the most significant challenges in accessing and participating in the labour market due to discrimination based on their gender expression (Beauregard et al., 2018; Coll-Planas and Missé, 2018; McFadden, 2015). This pattern of discrimination is present in the Peruvian labour market, where this population is constrained to precarious economic activities. In Lima, Peru's capital, 64% of trans women work as sex workers and 28% as hairdressers, while a minority perform jobs in other sectors (Salazar et al., 2010).

Despite this situation, the literature on gendered labour markets provides minimal insight into how gender norms affect individuals outside the gender binary. This paper aims to contribute to this gap by analysing how heteronormative discrimination and violence influence trans women's labour trajectories in Lima (Peru). This research finds that heteronormativity produces and reinforces stereotypes about trans women, linked to narratives of sexualization, pathology, deviance, and beauty care. These

stereotypes manifest in experiences of discrimination, microaggressions, and violence encountered by the participants.

This paper draws from primary qualitative data collected through fieldwork conducted in Lima from September 2023 to April 2024. During this period, I carried out 40 in-depth interviews and two photovoice workshops with trans women about their experiences working in stereotypical jobs (e.g., sex work and hairdressing) as well as in professional, sales, and service occupations.

### **How “Mom Jobs” Impact Gender Equality in Precarious Labour Market: The Case of Temporary Teachers within Public Education Sector of China**

*Ying Huang*

*(University of Warwick)*

In response to increasing public demands for workplace gender equality amid women’s care burdens, China announced the promotion of “mom jobs” in 2022. These low-paid roles are designed to enable women to juggle paid employment and unpaid childcare. Glucksmann’s (2002) concept of the Total Social Organisation of Labour (TSOL) highlights the alignment of time and space in integrating paid and unpaid work through organisational practices. In China’s public education sector, decades of restructuring have produced large numbers of temporary teachers—predominantly women—who face injustice in pay, workload, and social protection. Many remain in such job because of the alignment between their workplace and their children’s school, yet little research has examined this phenomenon from the perspective of gendered precarious labour.

Drawing on 27 semi-structured in-depth interviews with female temporary teachers in Wuhan, China, the findings indicate that such “mom jobs” do not advance gender equity. Instead, they deepen exploitation across both paid and unpaid labour. First, time and space alignment intensifies time poverty, as teachers are expected to follow their children’s educational schedules. Second, this time poverty undermines long-term career prospects, restricting access to stable employment with adequate income and social protection, and thereby limiting economic independence. Finally, this alignment fosters isolation from colleagues and bonds with employers, curtailing opportunities for collective action and resistance.

These findings extend the TSOL framework by demonstrating how “mom jobs” exacerbate rather than alleviate gender inequality, revealing their negative implications for working mothers in an increasingly precarious labour market.

### **Men and Menstruation in the Wilderness: Unveiling the Unspoken in Nontraditional Workplaces**

*Ashmika Motee*

*(Heriot-Watt University)*

This study explores how the interplay between organisational structures and menstruation management, including treatment pathways, influences employment experiences of those working in remote and challenging environments. Through the lens of Gendered Organisation Theory (Acker, 1990), this research examines how gendered norms shape professional identities, job satisfaction, and career progression among employees navigating menstruation in such settings.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 34 women and 18 men across sectors where gender equity policies often overlook menstruation-specific needs such as research vessels, deep-sea mining, mountain/hills, deserts, rain forest, high-conflict zones, and polar expeditions. Data were analysed using a thematic approach providing an in-depth understanding of menstruation management in these environments as well as the experiences of men leading or working alongside menstruating colleagues.

Findings reveal that managing basic toileting facilities is arduous, let alone managing menstruation. Gendered norms exacerbate these challenges, posing distinct professional difficulties. Furthermore, men’s perspectives highlight gaps in current workplace inclusivity practices and a lack of awareness about the challenges faced by their menstruating coworkers.

This research addresses understudied issues of menstruation, contributing to the discourse on gender equality and inclusion in nontraditional workplaces while providing valuable insights for policy recommendations to better support menstruating employees.

Key recommendations include:

1. Normalising conversations on menstruation
2. Incorporating menstruation management in pre-training and risk assessment–
3. Providing resources and infrastructure.

These recommendations promote equal opportunities and supportive environment while advancing inclusive practices for employees with varying needs working in remote and demanding work settings.

## **Work, Employment & Economic Life 2 - Room 3.213**

### **Post-digital Reaction: Carbon Capitalist Imaginaries of ‘Real’ Work and Masculinity in a Manufacturing SME**

*Christopher Land, Jana Stefan*

*(Anglia Ruskin University)*

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted during a three-year project examining Industry 5.0 in European manufacturing, this paper analyses how gender and political identities conflict with attempts to realise a ‘twin transition’ of digitalisation and sustainability in manufacturing. Our research case is situated in the industrial heartland of former West Germany. The company produces high-quality industrial gas applications, occupying a specialist market niche with few competitors. Despite this, an aging workforce and political ambitions to decarbonise European manufacturing threaten its long-term viability. Whilst a ‘twin transition’ would offer some solutions, it was actively resisted at all levels of the organization.

We examine this resistance through the interplay of deindustrialisation and masculinity. Workers’ identities in the company were invested in industrial values of hard, physical labour inherited from coal and steel. The paper argues that resistance to digitalisation and sustainability was connected to a kind of ‘post-industrial melancholia’, in which identities had been actively invested in this sense of loss, valorising previous generations as ‘real men’, and interpreting digitalisation and electrification as a kind of emasculation. The paper contributes to the literature on masculinity and deindustrialisation (Strangleman, 2024), exploring the relationship between nostalgia, reactionary politics, and contested ideologies of the future of work (Dries et al., 2025).

#### References

- Dries N, Luyckx J, Stephan U, et al. (2025) The Future of Work: A Research Agenda. *Journal of Management*.
- Strangleman T (2024) The World We Have Lost: Reflections on Varieties of Masculinity at Work. *International Labor and Working-Class History* 105: 9–25.

### **Algorithmic Reproduction of Gendered Hiring Biases: A Résumé Audit of LLMs in the Chinese Context**

*Linfeng Shen, Qiang Tan*

*(Chinese University of Hong Kong)*

Against the backdrop of increasing corporate adoption of AI for résumé screening, this study investigates whether large language models (LLMs) replicate and amplify gendered biases in hiring, specifically the documented human tendency to penalize high-achieving women. Through a large-scale computational audit study utilizing over 300,000 Chinese job postings from Liepin, we test whether LLMs exhibit the bias identified by Quadlin (2018), where women benefit from competence but are

penalized for exceptional academic achievement. For each job ad, we employed a factorial survey design, presenting LLMs with eight different candidate profiles varying systematically by gender, institutional prestige (985 vs. 211 universities in China), and GPA (3.9 vs. 3.3). Two primary tasks were used: candidate selection and full ranking. The main experiment was conducted using DeepSeek-V3, with robustness checks performed using Qwen3-32B. Our results confirm that LLMs reproduce the human bias: high-GPA women were consistently ranked lower and selected less often than their male counterparts with identical credentials. This penalty was most pronounced in male-stereotyped occupational domains. Two supplementary experiments revealed that time pressure significantly amplified this bias, likely by forcing heuristic processing, and that gendered organizational culture descriptions in job ads primed the models to shift their evaluation criteria, either exacerbating or mitigating the bias. These findings demonstrate that algorithmic bias in hiring is not static but highly context-dependent, shaped by cognitive constraints and situational cues. This research underscores the urgent need for regulatory frameworks that address the situational nature of algorithmic discrimination rather than treating it as a fixed property.

### **A Class System of Horticultural Work? Working for '5 a Day' in the English Countryside**

*Lydia Medland*

*(University of Bristol)*

Two profiles of horticultural worker are prominent: farmers and (usually migrant) workers. Drawing on fieldwork from five English counties and forty interviews, the paper unsettles these profiles by illustrating further groupings of people who work in edible horticulture. These profiles are: seasonal migrant workers; migrant workers with long-term rights in the UK; citizen workers and self-employed people; employees, and land-owning farmers. By proposing five types of horticultural worker, identified within a class system, the paper visibilises more people and power relations within the sector than is habitual.

Despite occupying different social positions, horticultural workers experience common pressures associated with the global political economy of food. Fresh produce production (or farming) is challenging in advanced capitalist economies because profits are small and competition from lower-income economies is high. Working to produce fruits and vegetables, the risks and pressures are highest for workers closest to the crops. Amongst non-citizen workers: seasonal migrant workers are threatened with deportation if unproductive while other migrant workers face onerous and changeable border controls. For citizens, precarious horticultural workers struggle with insecure living conditions (sometimes on-site). Employees of farm businesses often enjoy secure employment but are constrained to working beneath owners who often inherit land. Finally, land-owning farmers experience pressure as profits are challenged by factors including low-cost imports and the retraction of farm subsidies. Taken together, each role within the English horticultural class system is under pressure within a socio-economic system that undervalues food-related work. The paper invites discussion on social class and food work.

**PLENARY**  
**14:00-15:00**  
**Lecture Theatre B**

**WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE: THE PLAYBOOK**

**Jason Arday**, *University of Cambridge*

**Chaired by Angharad Beckett, University of Leeds, BSA Publications Trustee**



**Jason Arday** is Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education, and a Fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge. He was formerly a Guest Editor on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme.

Professor Arday has previously held the position of Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Glasgow, School of Education; Associate Professor in Sociology at Durham University in the Department of Sociology; and Deputy Executive Dean for People and Culture in the Faculty of Social Science and Health.

Jason is a Patron of the Adult Literacy Trust (ALT) and Get Further. He was formerly a Trustee of the Runnymede Trust, the UK's leading Race Equality Thinktank for 11 years. Presently, he is a Trustee of the British Sociological Association (BSA) and Autism Action.

Jason sits on the NHS Race and Health Observatory Academic Reference Group and the ITV Cultural Advisory Council.

Join us after the break to continue the discussion:

Paper Session 3, 15:30-17:00

Room 3.213 - Special Event

'You're being watched!': Sociologists at Risk of Harm

Pauline Leonard and Aston Kingdon

# PAPER SESSION 3

## 15:30-17:00

### Session Table of Contents

Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Room 3.211 .....	72
Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210 .....	73
Emerging Themes & Special Events - Room 3.213 (Special Event) .....	75
Environment & Society - Room 4.214 .....	76
Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204 .....	77
Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209 .....	78
Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211 .....	80
Lifecourse - Room 4.213 .....	82
Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209 .....	83
Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206 .....	85
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217 .....	87
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218 .....	89
Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219 .....	90
Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205 .....	92
Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A .....	93
Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.218 .....	94
Social Divisions / Social Identities 3 - Room 1.219 .....	96
Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220 .....	98
Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204 .....	99
Theory - Room 4.205 .....	100
Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 3.212 .....	102

# Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Room 3.211

## **Whose City? Power and Democracy in Planning Britain's Next Generation of 'New Towns': A Case Study of Plymouth City Centre**

*Mike Sheaff*

*(University of Plymouth)*

In September 2025, announcing plans for twelve 'New Towns', the government promised "the next generation of new towns must match [the previous] post-war vision" One proposed location, Plymouth city centre, was identified in 2023 as one of twenty sites for Michael Gove's policy of "gentle densification". This led to proposals for 5,000 new homes within the city centre, subsequently expanded to 10,000. In February 2025, minutes of a Strategic Board (disclosed in response to an Environmental Information Regulations request), reported discussion on a "capacity study" indicating "30 high residential towers in the city centre".

Contextualising this within developments since the work of Pahl, Harvey and others on the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, this paper starts with Pahl's question, 'Whose City?' to consider issues of governance, power and control.

For example, noting that "careful thought will have to be given to achieving the vision of having a coherent new town identify in the city centre", the New Towns Commission's Final Report acknowledges that some of Plymouth's first housing sites will achieve lower levels of 'affordable housing' than the government's "gold standard" of 40% due to an objective to "deliver good quality housing."

An early study of Britain's first new town, Stevenage, concluded, "the most fundamental problem posed by the Stevenage experience [is] . . . the extent to which efficient executive action is compatible with the democratic process" (Orlans, 1952). Here I consider how this tension may be further mediated and intensified through the role of commercial interests.

## **Housing with Pride? Coproducing Initiatives to Challenge Inequality Experienced by LGBTQ+ People in the Housing Sector in the UK**

*Andrew King*

*(University of Surrey)*

This paper draws on a series of projects undertaken by the presenter and colleagues that address the concerns and experiences of LGBTQ+ people in relation to housing, both in terms of social housing and housing in later life. After presenting evidence from our research on these housing inequalities, the presentation outlines a series of co-production projects where LGBTQ+ community members, support organisations and housing sector policy makers and housing providers, have worked together with academic researchers to create change – both in terms of an equality framework that is now a national scheme and knowledge exchange opportunities in terms of housing staff training and community engagement. The paper reflects critically on this work; it considers what challenges and compromises have been required, but also the ways that collaborative, coproduced initiatives can bring about greater equality and action within institutions and specific places.

## **Fragmented Communities of the Vertical City: Rethinking Sense of Place and Social Capital**

*Zehra Ruya Yuksel*

*(MEF University)*

This paper conceptualises vertical urbanisation as a socio-spatial formation and restructuring of urban habitus by situating the ascent of high-rises amid struggles over sense of place, dimensions of belonging, and the reconfiguration of social capital. The current speed of verticality disrupts conventional understanding and sense of neighbourhood, proximity, and community, while simultaneously generating new, stratified spaces of interaction, exclusion, and identity-making. As a distinctive urban form, high-rise living calls for a fresh sociological scrutiny on how our collective

attachment to places are (re)formed, contested, and transformed within vertically structured environments.

Earlier vertical housing projects sought to provide affordable shelter and foster social life. In contrast, much of today's urban skyline increasingly functions as speculative investment assets for elites, spatially separating the wealthy above from the rest below. This shift signifies not only an economic restructuring of urban land but also a profound reconfiguration of social fabric. Drawing on historical trajectories from Le Corbusier's "Plan Voisin" to Rem Koolhaas's visions of the "city in the sky", this paper examines the transformation of vertical urbanism from post-war social housing to neoliberal mega projects marketed as investment assets.

Integrating perspectives from urban and cultural sociology, and debates in place branding studies, the paper conceptualises how vertical urbanisation reconfigures residents' sense of belonging, mediates opportunities for social interaction, and conditions community engagement. It stresses the paradox of verticality as both a symbol of urban aspirations and a catalyst for social fragmentation and asks- curiously- for whom such vertical futures are imagined.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food - Room 3.210**

### **The Re-habitualisation of Boycotts: From Disruption to Everyday Life**

*Wang-Shu Liu*

*(University of Manchester)*

Boycotts, as a form of political consumption, are commonly framed as momentary acts of political resistance - either as moral expressions within the field of consumption, or tactic disruptions in social movements. Although widely researched, existing work tends to focus on the impact or mobilisation of boycotts, often overlooking the process of how it may emerge, evolve, or dissolve into everyday life. To conceptualise this dynamic, I draw on practice theory, which offers a processual lens grounded in the idea that social life is constituted through evolving, routinised practices, making it well-suited to exploring post-disruption trajectories.

This project adopts a comparative case study approach, focusing on three boycott campaigns in the UK context: Nestlé, Amazon, and the pro-Palestine boycott. The research explores how boycott practices be embedded into everyday life. These cases highlight different dimensions of power and consumer struggle: from challenging a specific state regime to multinational companies, and from taste disruption to lifestyle changes tied to digital infrastructures. Moreover, both Nestlé and Amazon also appear on the pro-Palestine boycott list, raising further space to explore how consumers navigate their own positionalities within today's turbulent and morally complex world.

The paper will draw on these cases to explore how boycott practices intersect with everyday consumption routines. Rather than linear habituation, it emphasises a spiral progression in the ongoing redefinition of 'ethics'. In this way, it offers a new orientation for understanding the afterlife of boycott practices, fostering dialogue between the field of social movement, consumption and everyday life.

### **Romance, Resistance, and Regulation: The Pink Tax in Chinese Business Otome Games**

*Boyang Liang*

*(University of Leeds)*

The pink tax refers to women paying higher prices for substitutable goods or services, constituting a form of structural discrimination. While existing studies have focused on physical consumption, digital games remain an overlooked domain. With the rise of in-app purchases, Japanese console otome games have shifted into China's mobile market, raising key questions for this study: Does the pink tax exist in the virtual consumption sphere of otome games, and how is it constructed, reproduced, and legitimized through game mechanics, emotional narratives, and player practices?

This paper takes Love and Deepspace as its core case study, with the male-oriented mobile game Wuthering Waves as a point of comparison. By examining differences in pricing systems, gacha

mechanisms, and item validity between the two games, and drawing on behavioral economics discussions of sunk cost and scarcity effects, the study reveals the structural inequalities underlying gendered consumption logics. Furthermore, using digital ethnography, it analyses highly interactive discussions on social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu, focusing on how female players engage in resistance and reinterpretation through practices. The study also considers the extension of virtual consumption logic into real markets, through official merchandise strategies as well as third-party live-streamed gambling-like gacha and blind box sales.

This paper demonstrates how gendered consumption and emotional costs operate in digital entertainment, while also highlighting the vulnerability of female players in the absence of effective regulation. In doing so, it addresses broader issues of governance in China's digital economy and the struggle for women's discursive space.

### **'Being an influencer isn't just taking a quick photo': The Fantasmic Logics Underpinning Older Female Influencers' Digital Labour**

*Vicki Harman*

*(University of Reading)*

This paper investigates the experiences and motivations of older female influencers aged 50+, 60+ or 70+. Social media influencing is a type of labour without clear and standardized structures of payment and benefits (Trittin-Ulbrich and Glozer, 2024). Younger influencers have been characterised as engaged in aspirational labour (Duffy 2017) seeking to build careers from their free or underpaid work on social media, which raises questions about why older influencers might also devote time and effort to work with uncertain and potentially poor remuneration in light of the time invested. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 19 older female influencers active on Instagram, we employ framework analysis to map older influencers' experiences and the fantasmic logics (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Tirapani and Willmott, 2023) underpinning their digital labour. The findings provide insight into the significant hope and aspirations that older influencers have linked to their digital creator activities. These include imaginings of re-writing dominant scripts focused on ageing, invisibility and decline, new encounters with like-minded women, community, pride and accomplishment, appetite for new and unexpected adventures, and aspirations for success in future. The contributions of the paper are to extend existing studies of digital labour, fantasmic logics, hope, and to put forward new understandings of contemporary ageing through the work of being an older influencer.

### **The Fear of Being Called Out: Towards a Sociology of Hypocrisy**

*Mark Doidge, James Jackson, Oscar Berglund, Jenny Amann, Samuel Toscano*

*(Loughborough University)*

The concept of hypocrisy should be central to the study of sociology; social life is inherently complex. The roots of hypocrisy are about the difference between words and deeds. Our everyday lives are complex webs of millions of interactions and relationships which are at the heart of the sociological imagination and it should not be controversial to say that how we act may differ from how we talk about things. There are a myriad number of political, legal, social, economic and cultural impacts on human beings that affect how they act and interact in the world. Yet the literature on hypocrisy has overwhelmingly focused on the (alleged) hypocrite acts of individuals or their motivations for the deceit. This is particularly the case in the area of climate change. This paper will focus on the space between the words and the deeds and how we account for this absence. Based on interviews with people involved in sustainability in football, it shows how the fear of being called a hypocrite prevents climate action. Yet there are structural aspects – or structural hypocrisy – that impacts on individuals' ability to act in line with their words. This leads to a reflexive hypocrisy where individuals acknowledge and 'own' this hypocrisy in order to be authentic in their presentation of self and engage in climate action.

# Emerging Themes & Special Events - Room 3.213 Special Event

## **'You're being watched!': Sociologists at Risk of Harm**

*Pauline Leonard, Ashton Kingdon*

*(University of Southampton)*

In recent years, sociologists and criminologists have been increasingly experiencing hostile, abusive and aggressive reactions to their research. Posts on social media about new research findings and publications can attract streams of hatred-filled attacks. This is particularly experienced by women, often intersecting with ethnicity, religion and sexuality. It can be in response to any topic of research, but reactions turn especially virulent on any issues relating to far-right activism and inequalities in race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Posters are often explicitly racist and sexist, threatening physical harm and even rape and murder. Trollers may act as individuals or as members of a network, sometimes encouraging others to join the hostility through doxxing: publishing private contact details and personal information to expose researchers to further harassment and fear.

Online abuse can also potentially spill over into actual physical, face to face contact. Some researchers have experienced unwanted visits to their offices, and hecklers turning up at speaking events to create a climate of hostility and fear. Such experiences are truly frightening, and few of us have the knowledge and skills to cope with these as individuals.

And nor should we. This is clearly an important issue for both institutions and professional associations, who have a duty of care to ensure the health and wellbeing of their communities. Current institutional frameworks primarily focus on protecting research subjects rather than researchers themselves. When institutions lack awareness of online research risks, they effectively shift responsibility for researcher safety from employer to individual - creating serious workplace health and safety concerns. The lack of institutional awareness regarding ethical considerations in online research translates directly to insufficient support for researchers. Many institutions lack appropriate guidelines for conducting safe research online, including protocols for protecting personal data, maintaining mental and emotional well-being when studying violent materials, and explicit steps researchers should take when subjected to networked harassment campaigns. Where such guidance exists, it is often produced by external entities rather than being clearly integrated into institutional policies and compliance requirements.

In response to such threats, researchers may feel forced to be silent about their research on public platforms, not only diminishing the potential of their research findings to positively impact social challenges, but also negatively affecting their research careers. Social media is increasingly important for developing networks and reaching stakeholders and funders (Head et al 2023) and non-participation may entrench inequalities between researchers. This creates a particular equity concern, as networked harassment disproportionately targets women and minority researchers, meaning that generalised advice to withdraw from online engagement may negatively impact the advancement and retention of marginalised researchers at higher rates.

The aim of this session is to provide an open forum to discuss this issue. If you have experienced trolling and abuse because of your research, please do come along to share your experiences and thoughts on how the BSA can develop effective support structures. A sector-wide, connected network could provide an important resource for us all, enabling us to share experiences and support each other.

## Environment & Society - Room 4.214

### **Resilience Based Model in Anthropocene Context: Spirituality, Social Support and Gender Norms as Predictors of Coping Strategies amid Climate Change among Hiltorrent Flood Survivors in Pakistan**

*Mussarat Hussain, Tauqeer Ahmed*  
(University of Sargodha Pakistan)

Climate change has intensified the frequency and severity of extreme weather events across the globe but specifically in South Punjab, Pakistan due to destructive hill-torrent floods. These events cause widespread displacement, livelihood loss, and psychological distress among the vulnerable victims that underscore the resilience strategies. Through resilience framework, this study examined the predictive roles of spirituality, perceived social support, and gender norms in shaping coping strategies among flood survivors. A cross-sectional survey was conducted by using standardized interview schedule instrument from 315 participants in Rajanpur and Dera Ghazi Khan two of the most flood-prone districts in the region. Data was analyzed through structural equation modeling. Findings revealed that social support and gender norms exerted strong, statistically significant effects on coping, while spirituality contributed a modest yet significant resilient variable. The results highlight that kinship networks, communal ties, and culturally embedded gendered roles substantially provide support. By contributing to an under-researched field of disaster research in Pakistan, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of post-disaster psychosocial adjustment, and provides evidence to guide inclusive, gender-sensitive and culturally-sensitive disaster management policies in climate-vulnerable areas.

### **Living in Extreme Weather: Water Insecurity, Embodied Labour, and Everyday Coping**

*Tripti Singh, Vangelis Pitidis*  
(University of Warwick)

Climate extremes such as flooding and heatwaves recur seasonally and shape daily life in informal settlements, and are expected to become increasingly frequent and severe. Research on water insecurity often emphasises technical aspects such as unreliable pipelines, intermittent supply and poor quality, while less attention is given to social and gendered dimensions or disaster contexts. This study examines how climate change affects residents of two informal settlements in Jaipur, with a focus on water as both a material necessity and a marker of social inequality. While one settlement is low-lying, relies on communal water points, and lacks drainage infrastructure, with houses in the lowest areas flooded during the monsoon, the other depends on pipelines but faces ecological risks, bordered by rocky hills and dunes that limit access and heighten vulnerability. Residents cope through labour-intensive strategies, including collecting, storing, rationing, and sharing water, often at considerable bodily and social cost. Women and children bear disproportionate responsibility, affecting health, education, and livelihoods. Seasonal crises are normalised, with residents adapting coping mechanisms despite risks.

Drawing on phenomenology and embodiment theory, the study demonstrates how infrastructural failures are inscribed on residents' bodies. The concept of 'bodies as infrastructure' underscores how physical labour and social networks compensate for inadequate services, while slow infrastructure violence embeds inequality in daily routines. Long waits, flooded alleys, and enduring fatigue reveal the temporal, spatial, and embodied impacts of water insecurity. By centring lived experience, the study provides evidence to inform climate-sensitive urban policy that addresses everyday inequalities.

### **"It's lucky that we live in Iceland": Nordic Exceptionalism and Narratives of Climate In/Vulnerability in Contemporary Iceland**

*Utsa Mukherjee, Auður Magnús Auðardóttir*  
(Brunel University of London)

While climate vulnerability, that is the distribution of climate risks, is widely discussed, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to how fantasies of climate invulnerability underpin climate inaction

and justify the maintenance of status quo, thus reproducing existing patterns of exploitation and violence (Weatherill, 2025). This paper contributes to the emergent body of critical scholarship on the politics of climate in/vulnerability through a focus on contemporary Iceland. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 27 participants who are actively engaged in promoting environmental sustainability in their daily lives, we show how Iceland's geographical location in the North Atlantic is invoked by participants to advance ideas of relative climate in/vulnerability of the island. Analysed through prisms of critical feminist and decolonial politics, these narratives assume two main forms. One portrays Iceland as geographically 'lucky', thereby less vulnerable to climate risks which are displaced onto far-off places 'at risk'. The other sees Iceland as not doing enough to combat climate change, thereby exposing itself to future risks from 'elsewhere'. We argue that these narratives of climate invulnerability are produced at the intersection of colonial imaginaries of geographical risks and widespread acceptance of Icelandic exceptionalism that obviates critical examination of current status quo. Perceptions of climate invulnerability, understood to be outcomes of geographical location and 'luck', deflect attention away from the material processes of colonialism, racial capitalism and geographical inequalities that lead to uneven distribution of resources and risks.

### **Droughts in the Past Millennium Reduce Violent Crime Incidence: The Power of Parching and Prayer**

*Zhihui Fu, Qing Tian, Zhuo Chen, Jiazhi Chen, Beibei Liu, Yan Wang, Yunsong Chen*  
(*Nanjing University*)

Natural disasters are not just environmental phenomena but also exert profound effects on collective behavior by shaping social norms. Yet existing research has largely emphasized short-term impacts, overlooking the long-term influence of historical disasters on contemporary behavior through cultural pathways. Using historical disaster data (1000-1900) from China, this study finds that frequent historical droughts significantly reduce present-day violent crime, while successful rain-praying rituals in response to droughts moderated this effect. We link these findings to the historical Chinese cultural belief "Interactions between Heaven and Mankind (Tian Ren Gan Ying)": without effective disaster mitigation, ancient societies often interpreted droughts as divine warnings, leading to self-imposed behavioral constraints; successful rituals signaled forgiveness, weakening constraints. Over time, such cultural and institutional responses became embedded in collective memory, continuing to shape behavior in modern times. In contrast, floods rarely triggered such moral responses. These findings highlight how historical environmental adversity, interpreted through culturally embedded frameworks, leaves persistent imprints on modern patterns of violence, offering new insights into the interplay among environmental stress, cultural evolution, and reduction of violent crime.

## **Families & Relationships 1 - Room 4.204**

### **Pregnancy in Precarious Time: Transitions to Parenthood under Non-standard Work Schedules**

*Anne Lambert*

(*Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques*)

Non-standard work schedules (i.e. outside of the typical 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday) are increasingly prevalent in UE countries. A growing body of research highlights their negative impacts on workers and families (Presser, 2003), including reduced parental well-being (Zinalawala & MaCunn, 2024; Han, 2025), increased levels of work-family conflict (Lambert et al., 2023; Taiji & Mills, 2020; Tammelin et al., 2017), and adverse mental health outcomes, particularly for women (Torquati, 2019). However, little is known about how NSWS affect the transition to parenthood, especially in the pre-birth period, due to lack of appropriate data.

This paper addresses this gap by focusing on how NSWS shape the experience of becoming a parent. Drawing on 80 in-depth interviews with women employed under non-standard schedules in France, it explores how they make sense of non-standard work schedules and experience the process of childbirth, and early parenthood under conditions of temporal precarity. Grounded in theories of social time, gender, and work-family conflict, the article identifies the symbolic, relational, and material forms of labour women engage in to make childbirth both desirable, and feasible.

Findings reveal the hidden costs of non-standard schedules, including elevated rates of pregnancy complications and miscarriages, and offer a critical perspective on the consequences of labour temporal deregulation.

### **Black like Me: Making Black Babies with Assisted Reproductive Technologies**

*Patricia Hamilton*

*(University of York)*

Anthropology and sociology scholars have argued that assisted reproductive technologies reinforce the myth that race has a biological essence (Moll, 2019; Russell, 2018). This is especially true when fertility treatment requires the contribution of a third-party including surrogates, egg and sperm donors and donated embryos. Research has revealed that the sector treats racial matching as ideal, seeking to replicate unassisted reproduction. However, much of the existing racial matching scholarship focuses on the reproduction of white babies (Nordqvist, 2012; Pande, 2021) and to a lesser extent, 'mixed' babies (Keaney, 2023; Newman, 2019). Drawing from pilot research examining black people's experiences of fertility treatment in the UK, in this paper, I outline the complexities of racial matching when the goal is a black baby. I interviewed 11 black women who had received (or were currently receiving) fertility care and 7 fertility professionals who had experience treating black patients/clients. This paper explores the political, cultural and geographic dimensions of blackness raised by research participants. I argue that a fluid understanding of what it means to be black (Massaquoi, 2004; Reynolds, 2005) reflects the political climate of contemporary Britain and examine how the fertility sector manages this fluidity.

### **Negotiating Masculinity and Intimacy: Emotional Strategies in Chinese Men's Fertility Practices**

*Jiangyi Hong*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

In China, fertility practices remain heavily gendered, with academic and policy discourses disproportionately framing fertility as a "woman's issue." Men's emotional agency—particularly their negotiations of intimacy, masculinity, and familial duty in fertility decision-making—is critically underexplored. This project addresses this gap by examining how married, childless men in urban China navigate the tensions between hegemonic masculine ideals and intimate spousal relationships. The research employs hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1996, 2000, 2002a) and intimacy (Jamieson, 1999, 2011; Yan, 2003, 2016a) as theoretical frameworks to construct the research. Hegemonic masculinity, as a theoretical tool, not only aids in understanding men's roles and identities but also facilitates an investigation into how masculinity is constructed and interpreted within their fertility practices. Furthermore, it explores how men position themselves in these practices. Additionally, the research aims to examine young men and their masculinity in relation to fertility, which typically occurs within familial contexts.

Moreover, during the fieldwork, emotions emerged as a significant factor, serving both as a lens to analyse participants' experiences and as a resource utilised by the participants themselves. It became evident that men strategically deploy emotional strategies—a performative tool blending egalitarian rhetoric with patriarchal logics—to reconcile structural marginalisation with symbolic authority. This revealed a dynamic "emotional fluidity" in their fertility discussions, spousal negotiations, and navigation of masculine ideals. Thus, emotions help me understand fertility practices, into a broader exploration of how emotions are embedded in power, intimacy, and cultural continuity within contemporary Chinese marriages.

## **Families & Relationships 2 - Room 4.209**

### **From Kafā'a to Cosmopolitanism: Rethinking Marriage in Omani Society**

*Abdul Rahman Al Wahaibi*

*(Sultan Qaboos University)*

In April 2023, Oman introduced Royal Decree No. 23/2023, a milestone legal reform permitting Omani citizens to marry foreigners without prior state approval. This reform has triggered a surge in cross-national marriages, raising urgent questions about family, kinship, and cultural continuity in a rapidly changing society. This study explores the lived experiences of Omani men married to foreign women, situating their narratives within the tensions between tradition and modernity, kinship and individual choice, religion and state authority.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with Omani husbands and couples, the research reveals the multi-layered challenges and motivations underpinning such unions. Participants highlighted financial relief from high dowry obligations, exposure to foreign cultures through travel, study, and work, and personal convictions rooted in Islamic legitimacy as key drivers of cross-national marriage. Yet these unions also provoked family opposition, social stigma, and bureaucratic obstacles, often described as making marriage feel like “a crime.” At the same time, couples developed resilience strategies, such as gradual family persuasion, framing decisions within Islamic ethics, and adopting bilingualism to bridge cultural divides.

The findings suggest that cross-national marriages are reshaping gendered financial responsibilities, challenging tribal concepts of *kafa'a* system in Oman (equivalence of social status between the husband and wife), and testing the boundaries of national identity in Oman. By linking individual experiences to broader socio-legal transformations, the study contributes to wider debates on marriage, kinship, and belonging in the Global South, highlighting how globalization intersects with conservative family structures.

### **Gossip & Banter: The Gendered Positioning of Language between Male and Female Spaces**

*Ruby Juanita Brooks*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

Historically, gossip has been used to trivialise and devalue women’s voices (Brooks, 2023). This article addresses a gap in the literature regarding the contrast between gossip, and its male counterpart banter, with the aim of challenging how women’s marginalisation is further perpetuated by ongoing perceptions of women’s language as negative and unworthy. The dictionary definitions of the terms gossip and banter are contradictory. Definitions of gossip present it as unkind, untrue and disapproving (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). Banter, however, is defined as a playful exchange; unserious and witty. The contrast between a playful exchange (exchange implying active participation from both parties) and an untrue and unkind conversation highlights the divide between male and female associated language, and emphasises the capacity to perpetuate marginalisation. Using qualitative methods and critical feminist methodologies, this paper draws on data collected with women early years practitioners who were interviewed about who they talk to at work. As a working class, women dominated space, the early years workforce presents an insightful context to explore women’s conversations and relationships. Challenging historic negative conceptualisations of gossip, this paper offers a counter narrative, positioning gossip as an emancipatory force in the workplace. This paper explores how women engage in professional gossip to forge relationships and how this is perceived societally, drawing on contrasting parallels from the masculinised concept of professional banter. The paper argues that everyday gossip in the workplace is not just an integral part of women’s culture, but a form of resistance to patriarchal power structures.

### **Forgiveness and Death**

*Owen Abbott*

*(Cardiff University)*

Despite forgiveness in relationships being a prominent area of psychological and communications studies, sociological research into the role, significance, and practice of forgiveness in personal lives is virtually non-existent. This talk draws on a two-part qualitative study of forgiving and not forgiving in personal relationships, the first sociological study of its kind. In both the qualitative interview responses (n=42) and responses to the specially commissioned Mass Observation Project directive (n=117), death was a prominent theme around which participants recounted experiences and considerations of

forgiving and not forgiving. It is argued here that forgiving and not forgiving, contrary to dominant psychological conceptions, should be seen as a social vernacular through which damaging experiences in relationships are made sense of. Participants used vernaculars of forgiveness to interpret relationships and experiences within them after death forecloses the possibility of relational issues being resolved in person. I argue that the finality and pain of death acts as an interpretive juncture in relationships, leading to contemplations of forgiving and not forgiving being deployed as a means of making sense of unresolved issues or generally challenging relationships. For some participants working towards forgiveness was used to facilitate grieving, whereas for others deciding not to forgive foreclosed the need to do so. I conclude by arguing that the entwinement of death with discussions of forgiveness is indicative of wider points firstly about the role of death in relationship interpretation, and secondly about the use of forgiveness as a language of relational evaluation.

### **Patriarchy's Hidden Costs: Towards a Theory of Masculinity Burdens**

*Xiaorong Gu, Xiaobing Wang*

*(University of Suffolk)*

This paper argues that patriarchy functions less as a gender war and more as a role-based regulatory regime—one that penalizes behavioral deviation regardless of gender categories and reinforces itself through symbolic costs and identity sanctions. Drawing on empirical observations from families raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in China, we compare and contrast the narratives and behaviors of fathers and mothers, and examine how caregiving fathers incur what we conceptualize as Extra Patriarchal Cost (EPC)—a layered burden involving cultural devaluation, symbolic punishment, and identity dissonance. To mitigate this cost, many men adopt coping strategies such as behavioral and discursive masking, compensatory performance of masculinity, or selective disclosure, which in turn generate hidden coping costs that silently erode well-being and deepen internal conflict. Crucially, these strategies feed into a self-reinforcing feedback loop: by making deviation appear socially tolerable without challenging structural expectations, they reproduce the patriarchal logic they initially resist. This dynamic not only limits genuine gender flexibility but obscures the depth of structural harm by channeling it into private psychological sacrifice rather than public contestation.

## **Families & Relationships 3 - Room 4.211**

### **Cockapoo Crisis! Social Tensions in Multispecies Wellbeing**

*Eva Giraud*

*(University of Sheffield)*

In recent years there has been a dramatic surge in claims that particular human-animal relationships offer win-win wellbeing benefits, which strengthen the physical and mental health of not only humans but the other species within these relations. This paper draws upon the case study of hypoallergenic dogs from a five-year project, 'Multispecies Mutualisms', that interrogates both the potentials and the risks of multispecies relationships that are popularly presented as mutually beneficial. Drawing on ethnographic observation of nature reserves and documentary analysis of materials from pet-focused NGOs, the paper focuses on two interrelated social challenges that complicate wellbeing narratives about human-dog relations by bringing their broader sociological contexts into relief. Firstly, it focuses on an emerging set of tensions surrounding labour practices associated with the contemporary pet industry, pertaining to dog-walking gig-work and the growth of informal markets to supply popular breeds. Secondly, the paper reflects on how competing understandings of wellbeing (between different groups of people, dogs, and other species) generate social tensions about access to green space. By centring these tensions, and elucidating how competing understandings of wellbeing become (un)resolved in practice, the paper also offers a wider intervention into approaches to conceiving of human-dog bonds that have gathered force in social theory. In particular, the paper illustrates the need to rethink prominent ways of conceptualising human-dog entanglements, which are grounded in posthumanism and new materialism, by interrogating the socio-economic forces that are implicated in these relations.

### **Sex and Intimacy: A Three-Generational Portrait from China**

*Jieyu Liu*

*(SOAS University of London)*

In recent decades, a new generation of modernity theorists have posited the democratization and detraditionalization of intimate relationships in late modern times. China meanwhile has undergone rapid and dramatic changes as a result of its unique trajectory of political, social and economic development. Drawing upon 260 life history interviews with three generations of men and women in urban and rural China, this talk contests the extent to which intimate relationships become democratized as modernization proceeds. In particular, this talk will focus upon sexual practices – premarital sex, conjugal sex and extramarital affairs. The Chinese narrative reveals paradoxical changes and continuities across three generations of men and women. Despite a widening repertoire of sexual practices and increasing emphasis on ‘pleasure’ among members of the youngest generation, gender transcends both the urban-rural and generational divide. In pre-marital and conjugal sex, male privilege in sexual agency and discourse permeates activities behind closed doors, where consent can be manufactured and women are more likely to be pressured into having sex. Only extramarital affairs offer a momentary glimpse of the ‘pure relationship’ and ‘plastic sexuality’ described by new modernity writers.

### **Faith, Friendship and Fraternity: Changing Notions of Religious Homophily among Muslim Women in a Secular State**

*Khadeeja Mangat, Dr. Anwar Sadath.Kt*

*(Independent Researcher)*

Friends are often regarded as ‘comforters, confidants and soulmates’ in people’s everyday lives. Even though they are crucial to the social fabric, friendship, as a social fact, is non-institutionalized on one hand and rooted in structural power relations in society on the other. The literature on the socio-historical significance of friendship demonstrates that, homophily – the idea that people’s networks and relationships are based on similarity – is an important factor shaping people’s intimate relationships.

The paper here is an earnest attempt to understand faith, friendship and fraternity as theological as well as sociological concepts and to analyze their relationship with institutional and cultural parameters such as religion and gender. The study thus explores how these dynamics unfold in relation to a multicultural, secular state. This paper critically examines the evolving notions of friendship among Muslim women in the Malabar region of Kerala, India. It explores how religious homophily shapes these friendships over time and investigates the role of religion and theology in defining the criteria for such homophily. The study specifically focuses on how these dynamics unfold within the context of the immediate neighborhood.

The changing patterns of friendship and fraternity among Muslim women in their neighborhoods is determined by studying two generations of Muslim women. Given that religion is quintessential in the everydayness of Muslim women in Malabar region, the paper seeks to answer questions of how religiosity inform Muslim women’s friendship choices and everyday interaction of Muslim women in their neighborhood within a multicultural-secular social set up.

### **Care and Love Practices in Romanian Father-away Transnational Families: An Ethnographic Approach**

*Ioana Dobre*

*(University of Durham)*

Approximately 26% of Romania’s population lives transnationally. This project aimed to understand Romanian transnational fathers’ and young people’s gendered practices of care and love in the maintenance of transnational family ties. Through multi-sited ethnographic and auto-ethnographic methodologies, I conducted interviews and observations with transnational fathers and young adults living in Romania, Italy, and the UK alongside my own self-reflexive journaling as a young person from a Romanian father-away transnational family. This project found that mobility and socio-economic factors were not the only influences in the separation and maintenance of transnational family ties as

previously considered. Additionally, divorce and custody inequalities played an important role in the formation and continuation of Romanian father-away transnational family life. Mirroring continuities and discontinuities of transnational family life after divorce and migration, Romanian father-away families constructed meanings of familyhood through practices of interrelated doing and caring for family through visits, digitally mediated communication, gift exchanges, and being family through blood and unconditionality. Romanian transnational fatherhood was also constructed around the persistence of feeling love despite and across distance. Romanian transnational fathers' love paralleled practices of emotional bordering between intimacy, stoicism, disciplining, emotional, and financial provision according to changing gender norms and financial vulnerabilities. Through an intergenerational approach, young people often perceived an emotional gap to their fathers but would persist in doing love and expressing understanding for their fathers' difficult situations. These findings contribute to sociological debates on understandings of family in times of mobility and advance meanings of Romanian fatherhood during transnational family life.

## **Lifecourse - Room 4.213**

### **Bridging Generations: An Evaluation of Intergenerational Practice in Residential Care Homes in England**

*Sandra Lyndon, Denise Turner, Hilary Woodhead*

*(National Activity Providers Association, University of Hertfordshire, University of Chichester)*

Intergenerational practice aims to create positive relationships between generations by bringing together people of different ages to participate in shared experiences. One way of supporting intergenerational relationships is through establishing links between residential care homes and educational settings such as, colleges, schools and nursery schools. Although research has demonstrated the many positive benefits of intergenerational practice for all those involved, research particularly in the UK is limited. This presentation reports on a collaborative research project between NAPA (National Activity Providers Association), the University of Hertfordshire, and University of Chichester. The project aims to explore intergenerational practice within residential care homes in England, with a focus on the type of intergenerational practice taking place, the benefits, and challenges. Drawing on a pragmatic paradigm, a questionnaire was developed which included a mix of both quantitative and qualitative questions, enabling us to explore both the extent and type of intergenerational practice within the residential care homes, as well as gaining a deeper insight into the perceived benefits and challenges. The questionnaire was distributed by NAPA (National Activity Providers Association) to all care homes in their membership, and 65 questionnaires were returned. Data was gathered between May 2025 and July 2025. The questionnaire was available on Microsoft Forms and completed online via a secure link or QR code. During the presentation we will report on the initial findings from the project including implications and recommendations for further research and practice.

### **Transitioning Death: Ritual Materiality and Religious Change in Jharkhand, India**

*Sukanya Deogam*

*(Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar)*

This paper explores how funerary practices among the Indigenous Ho community of Jharkhand, India, are reshaped through the intersecting forces of religious conversion, modernity, and material ritual practice. While scholarship on death has often prioritised theological or cultural explanations, this study highlights the semiotic and material agency of non-human elements, from the corpse itself to ritual objects and megalithic stones in shaping the contours of mourning and memory.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork across two groups- the Ho, and the Ho who have embraced Christianity- the paper examines how death rituals mediate questions of kinship, belonging, and identity. In Ho Christian funerals, prayers at the grave and the circulation of hymns negotiate a new temporality of salvation, while in Indigenous rites, laments, stones, and offerings sustain relationships with ancestral spirits. Rather than simply displacing one another, these practices overlap, hybridise, and at times create conflict, producing new forms of semiotic ideology around death and afterlife.

I argue that funerary rituals in Jharkhand are not only responses to religious change but also critical sites where histories are periodised, continuities reworked, and social futures imagined. By foregrounding the agency of ritual materiality and the shifting semiotics of mourning, this paper contributes to broader debates on temporality, identity, and belonging in sociology. These funerary encounters compel us to take seriously the agency of stones, spirits, and ritual objects, and to attend to Indigenous semiotic frameworks that challenge conventional sociological understandings of religion and modernity.

### **The Absence of the Topic of Death Discussions in Schools**

*Billie Daniels*

*(Independent Researcher)*

Death is an intriguing subject because it is everywhere but nowhere. Death is something everyone will experience for themselves, but no one can ever really know. We cannot comment or reflect on our own death after the fact, and we can only experience and survive it indirectly as we live through the death of others.

Death is indeed a fascinating topic, but it is one which is rarely discussed in an open and frank way especially between adults and children. Although death is an emotional topic, this should not be a reason for restricted conversations. As a topic, death is one which should be discussed more freely and more often by everyone.

Education plays a crucial role in developing attitudes and although death is discussed through subjects such as religious education and literature in schools, this is not the same as having actual conversations about death itself, and by doing so such conversation would become more commonplace in wider society. Given that the core purpose of the National Curriculum itself is to prepare children for the future and death is an inescapable part of our future, it is a topic worthy of discussion, especially in light of the Covid 19 pandemic. To understand the reasons for the absence of death as a topic in a school curriculum I combine a genealogical approach to trace the concept of habitus with a psychosocial theoretical framework.

## **Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 3.209**

### **Black Freebirth Choices in England as a Tool to Decolonise Maternity Care**

*Elsie Gayle*

*(Mimosa Midwives)*

This paper considers the experiential journey of black mothers through the UK maternity care pathway in England who choose to be unattended throughout their childbearing continuum, despite free access to NHS midwives as the specialists for birth. The paper discusses the maternal decision making process. A lawful choice, 'freebirth' statistics are unknown, largely unresearched and leaves the parturient woman open to variable support and treatment from professionals during the childbearing year.

Background: UK midwifery is based in 'woman centred maternity care'. Regulatory and national policies require clinicians to 'meet the needs and values' of service users.

Midwives are the responsible and accountable specialist who provide preconceptual, antenatal, birth and postnatal care up to 28 days following the birth. This includes preventative measures, detection of deviations from the norm, making direct referral for medical care and are equipped to carry out emergency measures. Midwives practise in the home, community settings and hospitals.

Research into the first 1001 days of life shows how the treatment of mothers impacts the neurological development of the developing brain, from the womb to the tomb and intergenerationally.

The longstanding, unique annual 'Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths' reveals a consistent, intransigent disparity in mortality and morbidity outcomes for the black mother-baby dyad.

Every investigation into a myriad of individual UK maternity services, continues to describe fragmented models with hierarchical power inequalities, with cultures of bullying and coercion. Women repeatedly complain of not being listened to, being racially stereotyped and experiencing high degrees of physical and psychological trauma.

### **Cultural Barriers in Frailty and Dementia Care: GP Perspectives on Assessing Older South Asian and Muslim Adults**

*Sheinaz Stanfield, Nazrul Hussain, Katie Brittain, Benjamin Ajibade, Lesley Geddes, Alison Steven, Zeb Sattar*

*(Northumbria University)*

This study explores the perceptions of GPs and primary care staff on their experiences of engaging with older South Asian and Muslim (SAM) adults with a focus on frailty and dementia assessments. The UK's population has become more ethnically diverse than a decade, with increases across all identifying ethnic groups. Despite this shift, there is a remains little academic knowledge on the cultural appropriateness of assessment tools used by GPs and primary care staff.

A co-designed qualitative study recruited twenty-seven participants. Public Involvement and Community Engagement (PICE) members contributed throughout the research process from study design to data analysis. Three key themes were identified using reflexive thematic analysis

- a. Appropriateness of resources in diverse cultures.
- b. Implications of interpreting and case finding; and
- c. The need for community-based care for older SAM populations.

Results showed there were language barriers, but cultural barriers were perceived more significant. Participants reported difficulties using standard frailty and dementia assessments, particularly, because patients would present with chronic conditions and were culturally unfamiliar with concepts of dementia and frailty. Subtle changes in patients' health were often missed due to linguistic and cultural misunderstandings. GP visits to care homes were seen as inappropriate for older SAM adults because of limited recognition of religious practices and dietary requirements, and a reluctance by participants to refer their patients to such settings.

This study highlights the need for culturally adapted dementia and frailty assessment tools, better awareness of the intersection between ethnicity, faith, and ageing and community care-based care models

### **'The Sacred Status', 'Silenced Voices' and 'Lowered Gazes': Women's Bodies, Power Politics and the Dynamics of 'Altruistic' Surrogacy in India Today**

*Pratyasha Sahoo*

*(Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi)*

The Surrogacy Regulation Act of 2021 bans commercial surrogacy and mandates 'altruistic surrogacy' in India. 'Altruism is the 'new normal' within the current discourse. The ground reality, however, disputes this normative ideal with broader anxieties surrounding motherhood, women's reproductive rights, their bodily autonomy/agency. As this Act appears to be ambiguous, perilous, less supervised and fraught with the danger of undesirable difficulties, the present paper attempts to look at it from the perspective of both infertile couples and surrogate mothers in India. Altruistic surrogacy acts as a double-edged sword. While an infertile woman loses her 'sacred status' within the conventional Indian society; the paper contends that surrogacy cannot be a reliable choice for such women to complete their families. Synonymously, the Act specifies that surrogate mothers should minimize the financial component, consider it a providential dispensation and then generously engage themselves in this act of 'altruism' while birthing and gifting babies. The paper also foregrounds a revealing contradiction between the state's responsibility to uphold principles of mothering and morality on the one hand, while on the other, it stands morally indifferent to the financial disabilities of poor women from Third World nations like India. In the process, their 'sense of agency', or 'choice' is dismissed and undermined. The qualms faced by clinics, surrogate mothers and intending couples to adhere to multiple legal compliances is

symptomatic of a complex political negotiation and a deeper sociological tension. Voices in the form of narratives of 10 surrogate mothers and infertile couples have been captured.

### **The Projection of Male Gaze in Medicine: A Feminist Science Analysis of PCOS and Biomedical Treatment Models**

*Ayeshna Dutta*

*(Kishinchand Chellaram College)*

It has been very well established by the Women's Health Movement of the 1960's that women and all bodies that identify as female have been marginalized and excluded from health care practices. This paper looks at the construction and projection of the male gaze in medicine using feminist methodology of standpoint and situatedness. The paper aims at understanding the ways in which biomedicine excludes women's lived experiences in the treatment of PCOS. PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome) is a complex hormonal condition found in women/bodies having ovaries belonging to the reproductive age. Using a Feminist Science Studies framework, it establishes a critique of the bio medical models of treating PCOS that completely overshadows and silences women's idea of their own bodies. It attempts to highlight how women's bodies become site of construction of the male gaze that is projected through medicine, science and technology. While medicine is assumed to be the only way of treating bodily conditions, the paper explores the interconnectedness between the male gaze and the medical gaze. It responds to critical questions that the discipline of Sociology and Feminist Science Studies raises to highlight how and why women have been left out of dominant knowledge production systems.

## **Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206**

### **Positionality as Assemblage: Toward Non-confessional Reflexivity in Postcolonial Research**

*Kaustubh Jagtap*

*(University of Sheffield)*

This paper critically examines the confessional mode that dominates positionality statements in contemporary social research, arguing that for postcolonial subjects navigating multiple systems of meaning, transparent self-disclosure may be neither possible nor desirable. The confessional format—with its demand for coherent self-accounting—risks becoming another site where postcolonial researchers must speak in the master's language, using the master's categories, reproducing the very structures of knowledge/power they seek to challenge.

Drawing on poststructural critiques of authorship and confession, feminist epistemologies of embodied and relational knowing, and postcolonial theories of hybridity, ambivalence, and strategic essentialism, this paper proposes an alternative: treating positionality not as a fixed property to be declared, but as a topological surface that folds and refolds through actual encounters.

Through ethnographic vignettes—plateaus—from PhD fieldwork in Mumbai, traversing elite bureaucracies, informal settlements, and intimate domestic worlds, the paper demonstrates how positionality is continuously composed rather than occupied, and can only be fully understood in the act of composition itself. The plateaus reveal position not as a stable coordinate but as a provisional assemblage, continuously negotiated through tactical, contradictory labour where motion and translation are constitutive of positionality itself.

By offering an assemblage rather than a confession, this approach acknowledges that for subjects partially opaque to themselves, accountability takes different forms. Recognising what is contingent and incoherent in oneself may allow one to affirm others who do not mirror one's own constitution, raising questions about whose voices have been legible within existing methodological conventions and what might make space for differently situated knowers.

**(Re)Memory, Race and the Potential of Synesthetic Ethnographies of Pain and Sexual Violence**

*Ulla McKnight, Sarah Milton*

*(University of Sussex)*

This paper proposes a methodological intervention for sociology, developed through an AHRC project. It draws on life-history narratives of racialised and migrant women reflecting on reproductive pain and sexual violence, alongside a (non)maternal archive. This archive gathers sensory content linked to past or future selves or meaningful others (such as (imagined) children or grandchildren), with contributions including photographs, recipes, clothes, and recordings. Artists were commissioned to create depictions in response, extending the archive through interpretation.

To expand ethnographic practice, I turn to interdisciplinary resources, most centrally Toni Morrison's concept of (re)memory in *Beloved* (1987) and Khenshti's notion of Hurstonian synaesthesia, inspired by Zora Neale Hurston's claim that "we see with the skin." These orientations open ethnography to what is often unsayable: the sensory, affective, and embodied residues of trauma.

Here, novels are not simply literary texts or sources of comfort. They act as embodied, talismanic forces that evoke, contain, transmit, and transform pain. Morrison's *Beloved* and Hurston's ethnographic writings operate across temporal, bodily, and affective registers. They resonate with Avery Gordon's (1997) insistence that haunting is a method: an attunement to what persists across time and space, connecting racialised experiences of pain that remain unspoken yet deeply felt.

By weaving archive, art, and literature into ethnographic practice, I argue for a Hurstonian-synaesthetic methodology that listens for what is obscured, unsayable, or denied. This approach highlights the spectral and extra-worldly dimensions of racialised pain while offering new tools for apprehending suffering and its afterlives across bodies, histories, and temporalities.

**Introducing Africanist Sista-hood Methodology: A Novel Approach for Understanding what Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Mean to Africanist Diasporic Women in UK Higher Education**

*Rachel Odufuwa*

*(Lancaster University)*

[Dear Sista],  
Because of [Sistas] who came before us, we are free  
To challenge the Eurocentric mentality,  
We're free to express our frustration, we're free to complain  
As empowered women, our [(re) Sista-nce] will never wane.  
(Gabriel, 2017, p. ix)

I open with this love letter poem to introduce Africanist Sista-hood methodology—a valuable methodology for understanding what EDI means to Africanist Diasporic Women in UK Higher Education. Africanist Sista-hood methodology builds on Africanist Sista-hood in Britain, a theoretical framework developed by Chijioke Obasi (2019), which centers the experiences of Africanist Diasporic Women in Britain and their 'collectivity, connectivity, commonality and difference' (ibid., p. 229). Building on Africanist Sista-hood in Britain, I introduce Africanist Sista-hood methodology—a culturally situated methodological framework which centers how Africanist Diasporic Women are creating their own pathways and developing methods built around self-naming and our epistemic qualities.

Within my PhD research, I have been using Sista Circles and Sista-to-Sista Conversations which attempt to re-name focus groups and interviews on our own terms, whilst also centering our epistemologies—dialogue between the Black woman researcher and the Black woman participant (s). Africanist Sista-hood methodology builds on the ongoing work by Black female qualitative researchers to merge tools of qualitative inquiry with cultural knowledge to produce work of scholarly relevance, and of relevance to the Black female community. Through dialogic conversations, my PhD research reveals how Africanist Diasporic Women are creating our Africanist Sista-hood social imaginaries of EDI, which are in (re) Sista-nce to UK Higher Education understandings of EDI.

### **Beyond an Ethics of Care: Reflections on Engaging the Black Radical Imagination**

*Annabel Wilson, Claire Neaves, Vivian Látiñwò-Ọlájídé*

*(University of Oxford)*

What is care, beyond the ethical concern of protection from harm? Care, as a practice of love and relationality, is rarely considered a central principle of research. Whilst there is no definitive definition of what care in research should look like, there is a need for meaningful reflection on what reparative justice through research could be. This paper supports researchers in recentring care as a practice of repair by considering opportunities for healing within research design. In this paper, we outline 10 principles of care integral to our social research practices. To illustrate this, we discuss 'Engaging the Black Radical Imagination', a project that worked with Black Bristolians, centring on conviviality, imagination, and Joy, as they reimagined an alternative future for education in their city using poetry and film. This paper then considers how to balance researchers' need to know with making space for discussions of trauma/ vulnerability through prioritising conviviality.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.217**

### **The Poetics of Political Becoming in Colonial Qatar**

*Maryam AlHajri*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This paper investigates how artistic and cultural production in colonial Qatar registered repression while sustaining political imagination under tightening authoritarian rule. Focusing on the 1950s–60s, a period of insurgency and colonial repression, I draw on a counter-archive of poems, magazines, and novels that mediated colonial violence and authoritarian consolidation while preserving suppressed histories and reconfiguring what could be seen, said, and remembered. I ask: How did cultural forms in 1960s Qatar make violence, loss, and alienation perceptible in a context where dissent was silenced? In what ways did poems, magazines, and novels enact dissensus and create spaces of political imagination? How do their afterlives preserve traces of erased histories and open spaces for an otherwise? I position cultural texts as key sites where dissent left its trace and where collective imaginaries of liberation persisted, even as the state closed avenues of mobilisation. I show how cultural production in colonial and postcolonial Qatar reconfigured the field of perception—what Rancière calls the distribution of the sensible—by creating spaces of dissensus outside state control. Texts such as *Al-Watan* magazine, produced by the short-lived cultural club *Al-Tali'ah*, poems of the oil era, and Noora Al-Saad's novel *Al-'Aridah* exemplify these insurgent practices. Drawing on Fanon's conceptualisation of subjectivity, I trace how these sites of aesthetic politics constituted forms of becoming in and through colonialism itself—emerging from its violence while working against it. In this sense, dissensus and counter-archives in mid-twentieth-century Qatar made equality perceptible, preserved suppressed histories, and illuminated the unfinished demands of earlier mobilisations.

### **Problem Spaces and Policy Shifts: A Sociological Lens on Afghan Resettlement in England**

*Caroline Oliver, Louise Ryan*

*(University College London)*

Research on migrant urban reception explores inclusive or sanctuary cities, the role of 'arrival infrastructures', and the tensions and alignments between local and national responses in multi-level governance. This paper draws on a Nuffield Foundation-funded mixed methods study of the UK government resettlement schemes for Afghans, while also reflecting on the methodological implications of working in this space.

The resettlement schemes responded to the chaotic evacuation following the Taliban takeover in 2021, navigating extended placements of Afghans in bridging hotels and military sites during the Covid pandemic, a major data breach, and frequent policy changes. A range of actors across international, national, and local levels, managed responsibilities from evacuation and housing to healthcare and social cohesion.

Whilst the central focus of our research is with Afghans, a key strand involved research with stakeholders. We draw on data from collaboration with five English councils, three strategic migration partnerships, over 40 stakeholder interviews (including government and commissioned civil society organisations), and three roundtables with 45 participants from 30 local council resettlement teams. Substantively, we explore the varying perspectives on the schemes, and how far stakeholders viewed them as offering genuine 'safe and legal passage' as promised by the government.

Methodologically, we engage with Celia Lury's (2020) notion of 'problem spaces', where sociological problems are not pre-given, but transformed and shaped through engagement. This framing highlights the evolving nature of social inquiry in the complex and fast-paced field of migration governance and the need for reflexive, situated approaches to understanding complex policy landscapes.

### **Switching, Blending or Distancing? Transformations of National Identity among Chinese in Britain**

*Dongwei Wang*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

Given that national identity is shaped by historical, political, and local contexts, it is worthwhile to examine the shifting and contested nature of interpreting 'Chineseness' across different generations of Chinese migrants. Existing studies have laid a foundation for comparing distinctions in how diasporas narrate cultural and ethnic identity through engagements in language, artistic performances, and festive celebrations. However, there is a lack of discussion about how Chinese migrants and their descendants articulate national identity and their nuanced understandings of 'Chineseness'. In this intervention, I examine how national identity is understood and performed by first-generation, 1.5-generation, and British Born Chinese in the context of globalisation and glocalisation. Drawing on in-depth interviews in four UK cities with long-standing historical and contemporary connections to Chinese communities, I establish how identity has been switched, blended, and distanced across different generations. Using the concept of notional 'others' from David McCrone and Frank Bechhofer and Michael Billig's banal nationalism as analytical lenses, the findings show that social and symbolic boundaries of identity are reinforced by the presence of notional 'others', and the respondents frequently negotiate these relational dynamics with a high level of reflexivity. This study indicates that an 'in-between' national identity and a 'betwixt-and-between' transnationalism are banally reproduced across generations in everyday activities, which are crucial locations for identity (trans)formation.

### **Dwelling in Istanbul: Spaces of Exclusion and Spatial Practices of Solidarity**

*Dogus Simsek*

*(Kingston University London)*

This article explores the dynamics of solidarity among migrant groups in Istanbul through three interrelated questions: to what extent do migrants and refugees mobilise solidarity to contest exclusion, racism, and neoliberal governance; how such solidarities reconfigure notions of belonging; and whether they also reproduce hierarchies of urban belonging among different migrant and refugee groups. Exclusion is shaped not only by precarious housing, exploitative labour markets, and limited welfare, but also by surveillance, policing, and racialised discourses that mark migrants and refugees as "undesirable." Yet alongside these constraints, fragile solidarities emerge through practices of cohabitation, care, and collective survival in neighbourhoods marked by displacement. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2024 in Kumkapı, Dolapdere, and Zeytinburnu, the article shows how solidarities are forged yet fractured within conditions of inequality, surveillance, and legal precarity. By focusing on spaces of exclusion and spatial practices of solidarity, it highlights the dialectic between constraint and possibility. I argue that dwelling in the city is co-produced and contested, shaped by structural marginalisation and the hierarchies of urban belonging, encompassing a range of factors, including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and migratory status. Solidarities, however, are partial and uneven, underscoring that shared marginalisation does not automatically translate into collective bonds across migrant groups.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 2.218**

### **Negotiating Masculinity in Migrant Families: Afghan Men in the UK**

*Sayed Mahdi Mosawi*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This paper aims to understand the dynamics of migrant masculinities within the family in a transnational context. It specifically focuses on Afghan male immigrants living in the UK and explores how migration reshapes their practices and ideals of manhood in the family. Drawing on ethnographic research, participant observation and in-depth semi structured interviews the study highlighting the relational and intersectional dynamics of changes and continuities with the masculinity adapted before immigration. The findings reveal that migration introduces different patterns of change: some men adapt and expand their understanding of what it means to be a man in the family, while others struggle to reconcile traditional expectations with new socio-cultural realities. These negotiations affect household labour divisions, decision-making, and intimate relationships, producing diverse patterns of gender practice. The paper especially highlights contributes to the sociological research on men and masculinities and migration studies and demonstrates that masculinities are fluid, socially constructed, and continuously renegotiated rather than fixed. The research contributes to sociological discussions on migration, gender, and family by underscores the importance of understanding migrant masculinities not in isolation but as dynamically intertwined with broader social, cultural, and economic structures.

### **European Ethnics Became White Americans Only When Non-Europeans Arrived: A Three-Group Assimilation Hypothesis**

*Aryan Karimi, Rima Wilkes*

*(University of British Columbia)*

Segmented and neo-assimilation theories posit that socioeconomic status (SES) mobility led ethnic Europeans to assimilate. Yet, recent longitudinal data do not show widespread SES mobility among ethnic Europeans in the 20th century. Hence there must be a different cause of their assimilation. We propose that it was boundary expansion by the white Anglo-Saxons. To build this boundary model, we rely on the broader sociological theories of boundary-work. These theories posit that each group self-identifies vis-à-vis an Other group and, consequently, that self and Other cannot completely assimilate to become one and dissolve the us-them binary. Accordingly, our three-group hypothesis proffers that the post-1965 arrival of non-Europeans created a three-group scenario with Anglo-Saxons, ethnics, and non-Europeans. Then, regardless of SES, the boundary of Anglo-Saxon whiteness could expand to include the European ethnics. Without the third group, ethnic Europeans, at least some of them, would remain non-assimilated. We also discuss the implications for non-European immigrants.

### **What is the Race of “Refugee” in the 21st Century? Afghans’ Self-identification as Refugees and Ukrainians’ Self-identification as Immigrants in Canada**

*Aryan Karimi*

*(University of British Columbia)*

There is a difference between refugee as a top-down legal category and refugee as a bottom-up self-identification label. Refugee studies literature underlines that legal categories, in the public discourse, carry positive and pejorative meanings and that, consequently, these categories shape policies and how recipient societies perceive refugee populations. Instead, in this study, based on 80 semi-structured interviews with Ukrainians and Afghans in Canada, we explore how these categories inform individuals’ self-identification to be a refugee. We analyze the postcolonial context and discourse, globally and in Canada, wherein the refugee category emerged and became a racialized-classed label over time in the 21st century. Against this background, our data show that, although Ukrainians and Afghans are similarly displaced from war-torn homelands, they have disparate relations with being a refugee. Ukrainians emphasize their European racial and cultural origin and contrast it with the non-white racial and class status associated with refugee category. Our Ukrainian participants self-identified as immigrants. Afghan participants did not question the racial-class meanings of being a refugee and

presented themselves as the emblematic refugees whose only path to safety is the current refugee policy in Canada. Our study contributes to the refugee studies literature on the consequences of refugee labels.

### **For the Abolition of Integration Courses? An Abolitionist Critique of the German Integration Regime**

*Marija Cubalevska, Melissa Silva*

*(University of Bremen, University of Würzburg)*

This paper offers a theoretical contribution that brings abolitionist perspectives into dialogue with adult education to interrogate state-led “integration courses” in Germany and the wider DACH region. While these courses are framed as tools of social inclusion, critical research has long shown how they reproduce paternalism, racialized hierarchies, and the binary between “us” and “the others.” More broadly, the discourse of integration has been criticized as a form of methodological nationalism, entangled with colonial imaginaries and exclusionary assumptions about belonging. Abolitionist theory, rooted in struggles against slavery and extended through critiques of prisons, police, psychiatry, schools, and the nuclear family, provides a radical lens for examining how institutions perpetuate structural violence. Read against adult education, abolitionism exposes the ambivalent position of educational practices as both stabilizers of social order and potential sites of transformation. This contribution does not present empirical findings but rather develops a conceptual framework by systematically reinterpreting migration-pedagogical critiques of integration courses through an abolitionist lens. In doing so, it develops two theoretical insights: first, it highlights how abolitionist thought unsettles dominant narratives of integration, illuminating the structural violence underpinning migration regimes; second, it explores how adult education with and for refugees might be reconfigured through “non-reformist reforms” to dismantle, rather than reproduce, inequalities. By reframing integration courses through abolitionism, the paper speaks to broader sociological concerns on shifting formations of inequality, contested notions of belonging, and the search for new conceptual tools to critique and reimagine contemporary social orders.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 3 - Room 2.219**

### **Thailand’s Migration Paradox: The Political Economy of State Control and Migrant Labour Flows**

*Chittranut Kiatadisorn*

*(Nanyang Technological University)*

Thailand plays a unique role as both an importer and exporter of migrant labour. While Thailand’s economic development has long been heavily dependent on rural-to-urban domestic labour migration, the number of outmigration workers has increased substantially since the 1990s. At the same time, Thailand has become increasingly reliant on migrant workers from neighboring countries. This raises two related questions: Why is Thailand both a migrant labor importer and exporter? Who is involved in shaping Thailand’s migration dynamics?

To answer these questions, this research explores the political economy of labor migration governance in Thailand, focusing on how state institutions, brokers, and migration networks shape migration flows and how migrant workers navigate these structures using the “migration infrastructure concept” (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014) and “autonomy of migration concept” (Scheel 2019).

With the ethnographic fieldwork and policy analysis, this study will examine three dimensions of Thailand’s migration governance:

1. The factors shaping Thailand’s multiple migration systems (internal rural-to-urban migration, labor outmigration to foreign countries, and import of foreign migrant labor)
2. The role of migration brokers and the state
3. The resistance and negotiation of migrants and activists in respond to authoritarian migration controls.

This research will contribute to broader discussions on authoritarianism and labor governance by studying Thailand's labor governance and migration control mechanisms. This research will also broaden the geography of migration sociology, offering insights from Southeast Asia that can dialogue with global framework.

### **Social Construction of Scapegoating: Scapegoating of Forced Migrants and Refugees from the Global South to Global North**

*Ali Vedadhir*

*(University of Tehran and University of Bristol)*

Across the Global South and the Global North, state responses to crises e.g., wars and armed conflicts, resource insecurities, refugee flows, economic sanctions, pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, and climate change reveal more than governance. They indeed demonstrate a politics or game of blame. Too often, public policies are reactive, fragmented, and mismanaged, intensifying inequalities and worsening the living and working conditions of already disadvantaged communities. A particularly troubling and persistent feature is the scapegoating of forced migrants and refugees. As socio-culturally marginalised and politically voiceless, these groups are commonly transformed into symbolic culprits for systemic failures they neither caused nor controlled.

This pattern is visible across contexts. In the US, Mexicans and Muslims have been somehow vilified; in the UK, Brexit-era debates cast migration as destabilising. Across Europe, the reception of Syrian and Afghan refugees has sparked similar contestations. In Türkiye, nearly four million refugees are politicised in national debates, while Russia redirects discontent toward migrants from former Soviet republics. In Pakistan and Iran, Afghan refugees remain enduring scapegoats—most recently through the forced return of nearly two million Afghans. These narratives shape public opinion and penetrate the everyday lives, emotions, and futures of migrants.

Taking a social constructionist perspective, this paper comparatively addresses how states and other claims-makers employ ideologies, rhetorical strategies, and symbolic framings to redirect crises onto migrants. Scapegoating functions not only as a tool to manage public sentiment but also as a mechanism to obscure structural and institutional weaknesses, with lasting consequences for migrants' dignity, security, and belonging.

### **Student Migrants and Volunteer Organisations: Navigating Inclusion and Discrimination in Germany, Japan, and the UK**

*Polina Ivanova*

*(University of Bremen)*

This study examines how student migrants engage with volunteer organisations in their host countries and how these interactions shape experiences of loneliness, inclusion and belonging. It explores how students navigate structural inequalities, discrimination, and everyday racism, and how they seek and sometimes find refuge in civil society spaces.

Using a mixed-methods design, the study combines online surveys and semi-structured interviews with international students, university staff and members of volunteer organisations in Germany, Japan, and the UK. It focuses on bottom-up practices initiated by students and local organisations, while critically analysing the structural and institutional barriers that constrain student migrants' social and educational trajectories.

The findings reveal tensions between transnational aspirations and local realities. Despite national policies promoting high-skilled migration and "global talent" in all the three countries, international students encounter bureaucratic hurdles, restrictive visa regimes, and everyday discrimination to a varying degree, depending on their country of origin, appearance and financial status. Volunteer organisations attempt to provide spaces of inclusion and mitigate social inequalities, yet they remain limited in addressing broader structural contradictions shaping student migrants' experiences.

This paper contributes to debates on migration, racialisation, and migrant wellbeing by showing how student migrants' engagement in civil society both reflects and contests systemic inequalities. The

comparative perspective across Germany, Japan, and the UK highlights how local contexts shape migrant experiences, offering insights into the interplay between individual agency, collective practices, and institutional constraints in transnational higher education.

## Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205

### **Artificial Intelligence and the Reconfiguration of Worker Agency**

*Mariachiara Barzotto*

*(University of Bath)*

The growing deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) in workplaces poses fundamental questions for sociological understandings of control, resistance, and worker agency. Far from being neutral tools, algorithmic systems reorganise the labour process by redistributing discretion, redefining managerial authority, and introducing new forms of surveillance and regulation. This article explores how AI unsettles taken-for-granted assumptions about initiative, responsibility, and participation at work, situating these shifts within the broader dynamics of digital capitalism. Drawing on labour process theory and critical sociology of work, it examines the tensions AI generates between autonomy and control, visibility and opacity, empowerment and subordination. By foregrounding these contradictions, the paper calls for a rethinking of worker agency under algorithmic management and highlights the implications for inequality, collective organisation, and the future of work.

### **AI as a Friend, Therapist, Lover? New Digital Intimacies and Technoeconomies of Care**

*Ash Watson, James Frederick Green, Maria Volkova*

*(University of New South Wales)*

This paper critically examines the emotional and relational dynamics of AI companionship, sharing findings from an international qualitative project involving interviews with people who have developed relationships with chatbots such as Replika and ChatGPT. Participants describe their AI companions in deeply relational terms: friend, therapist, colleague, coach, even spouse. Drawing on Hochschild's work on the public and/or private emotional system, we explore how users navigate the normative terrain of emotional expression in relationships with AI through a focus on social/emotional norms and emergent digital intimacies. We explore how AI companionship constitutes a novel site for emotion work/management, social exchange and feeling rules, where users engage in affective interactions that are both personally meaningful and socially ambiguous. We see that the 'pinch' between what one feels and what one ought to feel (Hochschild, 1983) can be especially pronounced in these relationships, prompting users to seek interpretive communities to make sense of their attachments. We consider these communities as affective infrastructures, helping users reconcile their emotional experiences with dominant discourses of authenticity, sentience and the "real." Too, we reflect on the commodification of intimacy: how subscription models, aesthetic customisations and tiered access further complicate these exchanges and embed an emotional system within AI economies. Our paper aims to contribute to critical contemporary debates on AI and the reconfiguration of intimacy, boundaries of personhood and the affective politics of human-machine interaction.

### **Large Language Models and the Future of Qualitative Research**

*Susan Halford, Les Carr*

*(University of Bristol)*

The growth of Large Language Models (LLMs) has prompted widespread claims that these 'tools' will transform the future of qualitative research. These are explored in a substantial body of literature, reporting practical experiments which examine the opportunities and challenges of LLMs for qualitative research and offer guidelines for their effective and ethical use. Overall, the message is qualitative researchers should equip themselves for a fast approaching future, or risk irrelevance.

In this talk we take a different framing. First, rather than seeing the research described above as a timely response to a future that awaits us, it can be seen as an increasingly coherent set of future-making claims. Second, Rather than seeing LLMs as discrete ‘tools’ that offer a better (or worse) way of doing qualitative research, they can be seen as the focal point for a network of actors, practices and relations that may transform ways of knowing and the wider knowledge economy.

Pulling these two elements together, the current debate about LLMs in qualitative research can be seen as future making practices, mobilized through a nascent re-assembling of the dominant methodological apparatus. To explore this we report on our own experiments. This suggests, to us at least, a rather different way of thinking about LLMs and the future of qualitative research.

### **Sociology as a Vocation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**

*Richard Randell*

*(Institute for Advanced Study)*

“If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them.” Attributed to George Orwell but possibly apocryphal, this aphorism assumes a distinction between thinking and writing. It is a distinction that holds only if we take writing in the literal sense of pen-paper or keyboard-computer, and take thinking as something done inside one’s head. Alphabetic language, the first of which was ancient Greek, is a technology by which any spoken language can be represented in phonetic writing. Spoken language and thinking itself, conversely, are reflexively also a form of alphabetic writing. If thinking is writing and writing is thinking, a world saturated with AI generated text would be a world wherein our thinking is done for us by AI. To assume that the technology that is AI is a neutral tool—which thought is a thought that is being thought for us by others—is to be delivered over to technology, as Martin Heidegger observed, in the worst possible way. Of course, “others” have been doing our thinking for us before the advent of AI. The challenge is to identify what kind of thinking AI writing might be. One of the primary workday activities of sociologists, as it is in most academic disciplines, is the interpretation and writing (they are the same thing) of texts. This paper addresses the question of what a sociology that has outsourced its writing work to AI might look like.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 1 - Lecture Theatre A**

### **Twenty-first Century Butlers and the New Spirit of Service**

*Bryan Boyle*

*(Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies)*

In the 1970s, Lewis Coser argued that the “servant” occupation has become obsolete, citing the decline of the old domestic service regime. He also theorised that such occupations could not function without “premodern” religious and ascriptive ideologies. More than fifty years later, there is reason to suggest that Coser spoke too soon; the number of people working in domestic service has risen, including the type of private service roles in elite households that Coser had in mind. In this paper, I review Coser’s claims by drawing from a recent ethnography that involved training and working as a butler and conducting interviews with butlers in private service (N=24). In the absence of the religious ideologies that indeed permeated the old service workforce, I identify a “new spirit of service” among twenty-first century roles. This spirit is defined by: (1) necessity, as butlers typically first entered the wider hospitality industry in the absence of desirable alternatives; (2) professionalism, as butlers engage in a kind of “service *illutio*” characterised by a desire to deliver “high levels of service”; and (3) misrecognition, whereby working for elites themselves bears its own allure and appeal, including the chance for butlers to vicariously consume a lifestyle that they cannot otherwise access. Although, here, servanthood and social class are expressed through the more modern mediums of professionalism and lifestyle, the new spirit secures consent to old working conditions. These include highly diffuse obligations, a particularistic style of service, and near-total loyalty to one’s elite employer.

## **Disabled-Queer Student Experiences in Scottish Higher Education**

*Jack McKinlay*

*(University of Strathclyde)*

More than two decades ago, Harley et al. (2002) identified disabled-queer students as one of the most marginalised and under-researched groups in academia. Despite some progress, this remains true, with much scholarship centred on the US and focused primarily on classroom experiences (Miller, 2015; Kimball et al., 2016; Peña, Stapleton, & Schaffer, 2016). This narrow lens risks overlooking other sites of the student experience, including social spaces, accommodation, student services, and transitions in and out of university.

This presentation addresses this gap by exploring disabled-queer student experiences in Scottish higher education, a national context often framed as progressive, 'different', and separate from Westminster politics (Taylor, 2023). Drawing on qualitative interviews with 21 disabled-queer students, it explores how universities are experienced as both sites of opportunity and exclusion, shaped by heteronormative and able-bodied ideals of the 'good student'. Participants describe navigating community, isolation, systemic barriers, and tensions between institutional policies and lived realities.

By foregrounding disabled-queer narratives, this research contributes to sociological understandings of intersectional inequalities and the identity of Scottish higher education. It critically interrogates how inclusivity is imagined versus enacted, and the extent to which national narratives of progressiveness resonate with students' lived experiences. The findings offer insight into how universities might better support intersectional identities, extending discussions of student experience beyond the classroom and beyond US-centric contexts.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 2 - Room 1.218**

### **Indigenous Girls and the Postfeminist Green Gaze: Fashioning Climate Activism in Vogue**

*Chloe Dawson*

*(Keele University)*

This paper examines how postfeminist discourse has recently been entangled with sustainability narratives in fashion magazine, *Vogue*, revealing the ways environmental activism is shaped by the same logics of empowerment, positivity, and individual choice that define postfeminism. While existing scholarship has critiqued postfeminism's detrimental effects on gender equality, I explore its extension into environmental politics, where it reframes activism as consumer-friendly and brand-oriented. Focusing on *Vogue*'s construction of a 'climate warrior' network, I trace how the Indigenous identities of young activists like Xiye Bastida and Quannah Chasinghorse are appropriated by white celebrities—Stella McCartney, Livia Firth, and Billie Eilish—to market sustainable fashion and reinforce ethical consumer identities. Although postfeminism often gestures toward intersectionality, its emphasis on non-confrontation and optimism reinforces hegemonic (white, heteronormative) norms while marginalising radical or alternative voices. Within this framework, Indigenous activists are invited to lend authenticity to the sustainability efforts of (often nepotistic) celebrity figures, who remain central in shaping the narrative. I argue that postfeminism now functions as a broader depoliticising force beyond gender, neutralising the political potential of environmental activism. By commodifying both the climate crisis and the figures associated with it, *Vogue*—and by extension, the fashion industry—translates collective ecological urgency into personal lifestyle choices. Ultimately, postfeminist rhetoric enables the fashion industry to reconcile ethical consumption with capitalist imperatives, promoting sustainability not through systemic critique, but through the aspirational imagery of empowered individuals making "better" choices and excluding the knowledge of Indigenous groups.

### **Serving and Resisting Beauty Duty: Negotiating Beauty and Gender in Intimate and Family Relationships in China**

*Shuang Qiu*

*(Keele University)*

Beauty has become a central site where gender, identity, and power are negotiated within intimate and family life. Feminist scholarship has often framed beauty either as a tool of patriarchal control or as a

means of individual empowerment, but such binary perspectives overlook how beauty is practiced and negotiated in the context of everyday relationships. In post-socialist China, the expansion of market-driven consumerism and the circulation of global beauty ideals have reinforced standards such as being 'pale, young, and slim'. At the same time, enduring Confucian expectations around moral femininity continue to position women as virtuous wives and good mothers.

This article draws on in-depth interviews with 13 urban married women in Beijing to examine how beauty is negotiated within intimate and familial relationships. Rather than understanding beauty as simply oppressive or liberating, the study conceptualises it as a dynamic, embodied practice shaped by social expectations, life course transitions, shifting power relations, and familial obligations. Participants variously engaged in, complied with, or resisted what has been termed "serving beauty duty" (服美役). The study contributes to feminist sociology by foregrounding beauty as a lived negotiation, entangled with identity, recognition, and power in contemporary Chinese family life.

### **Reframing Solidarity and Global Feminism in Poland**

*Peggy Watson*

*(University of Cambridge)*

Anna Walentynowicz was a welder and overhead crane driver who worked in the Gdańsk shipyard and came to the world's attention due to her high profile in the Solidarity protests. Despite efforts to airbrush her from history, Walentynowicz remained a symbol of dissent with respect to the path Solidarity had taken, the Round Table negotiations that paved the way to system change, and the social realities of post-socialism that ensued. Thirty-five years later the world is witnessing profound geopolitical, economic and financial transformations and there has been a backlash against liberal feminism worldwide. This paper unsilences Anna Walentynowicz by drawing on earlier interviews and archival material that has become available over time. This is the starting point for retelling the story of Solidarity, and how that story functioned as a foundational narrative for dominant liberal feminism in Poland. The reframing will contribute to current debates over ways forward for post-socialist feminism.

### **Recounting the Census: Feminist Participatory Methods for Reimagining Gender Statistics in the United Kingdom**

*Sophia Hamilton, Sophia Hamilton, Minna Cowper-Coles, Liz Hind, Caitlin Schmid*

*(King's College London)*

Persistent gender data gaps limit the UK's ability to identify and address structural inequalities between women and men. While the UK censuses provide comprehensive disaggregated data, it also omits critical dimensions of gendered life, including income, unpaid childcare, and the diversity of feminised industries. This paper used feminist participatory action research to examine the strengths and limitations of the census for feminist and intersectional analysis. It involved 170 participants across 12 workshops in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland from local government, women's and grassroots organisations, and academia, as well as unaffiliated individuals and private sector employees, all with varying statistical skills. Through co-produced inquiry, participants identified not only critical gender data gaps but also limitations in the political and epistemological assumptions embedded in census design. In light of a growing crisis of trust in official statistics, we argue that feminist participatory methods offer a way to reorient official statistics toward greater inclusivity, accountability, and relevance. Such approaches can help rebuild confidence not only in data itself but also in the policy derived from them. The paper concludes by outlining eight user-informed recommendations for improving gender data and advancing gender equality in UK policymaking.

## **Social Divisions / Social Identities 3 - Room 1.219**

### **Deconversion: Subjectivity, Ideology, Structure, and the Power of Classification**

*Efstathios Kessareas*

*(University of Erfurt)*

This paper explores religious disaffiliation or deconversion as a complex, multilayered, and socially embedded process. Moving beyond individualized psychological accounts, it adopts an interdisciplinary and critical sociological perspective that situates personal transformations within broader ideological and structural shifts of late modernity.

Through a critical review of the relevant literature and recent empirical data, the paper first clarifies the contested terminology used to describe the dropping or changing of religious attachments, highlighting the need for more precise conceptual tools. It then maps the diverse trajectories through which individuals disengage from religious traditions – trajectories shaped by an interplay of cognitive, emotional, social, and practical factors. These pathways are deeply intertwined with wider societal transformations such as the rise of individualism, secularization, pluralism, globalization, digitalization, and migration.

Drawing on empirical material from the field of Orthodox Christianity, the paper proposes an ideal-typical framework to classify institutional responses of religious authorities to the phenomenon of disaffiliation. These responses range from defensive-conservative to dialogical-progressive, reflecting broader tensions within religious fields over the role and relevance of religion in contemporary society.

Finally, the paper critically examines the role of the social sciences in constructing classificatory schemes that shape societal understandings of non-religion and religious change. It calls for further investigation into the mutual influence between individualized religiosity and parallel epistemological shifts within the social sciences themselves, particularly the growing focus on individual reflexivity, identity, and agency.

### **Roots of New Religiosity: From a Search in Secret India, through Sheilism to Saint Culture**

*Suzanne Newcombe*

*(Open University and Inform)*

Recent years have seen yoga milieus increasingly implicated in 'conspirituality' – signifying an overlap between health and wellness culture and promoting conspiracy theories. Soon after this term was applied by Ward and Voas (2011), Aspren and Dyrendal (2015) argued that there was nothing new about the confluence of esoteric religiosity and conspiracy theories. This paper will explore the history of a subcultural episteme that emphasises personal experience and synthetic knowledge creation as significant building blocks to 'true' knowledge. It will use figure of Paul Brunton as a case study, in order to explore historical and cultural dynamics 'at the intersection of religion, politics, and knowledge'. A mercurial figure, Brunton's influence on modern yoga has been profound. Although predominately promoting a 'progressive millennialist' vision of positive evolution towards the 'Kingdom of God' both internally and externally, Brunton's milieu also encompassed a darker side. It was also included aspects of spiritual warfare and narrowly averted World War III during the 1960s. This paper will aim to demonstrate that Brunton's influential writings can be seen as a precursor and possible influence to both 'Sheilism' – the New Age individualistic 'private faith' of Sheila Larson as described by Robert Bellah in 1985 – as well as the more sinister logic found in contemporary online conspiracy theory and 'Saint Culture' where individuals create an bespoke belief system that can justify violence as an acceptable action for perceived grievances.

## **Decoding Sacralisation: Why Interdisciplinary, Qualitative Methods Are Essential for Understanding Christian Nationalist Discourse Institutionalisation**

*Kristi Boone*

*(University of Leeds)*

This paper addresses a critical methodological challenge in sociology of religion: detecting how religious nationalist discourse becomes systematically embedded in governance structures requires interdisciplinary and qualitative approaches that can decode subtle obfuscation tactics. Whilst existing research has productively examined Christian nationalism through various lenses, the specific mechanisms through which theological assumptions transform into institutional policy frameworks remain inadequately theorised.

Combining Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2015, 2021) with critical religion scholarship (McCutcheon 2001; Lincoln 2003; Asad 2003), this research develops a Three-Dimensional Sacralisation Framework for tracking coded language evolution across institutional contexts. Qualitative discourse analysis reveals patterns that quantitative methods cannot detect: how defensive sacred language ('defend religious liberty') evolves into offensive mandates ('religious liberty under attack'), ultimately becoming bureaucratic directives ('religious liberty requires' specific policy interventions).

Analysis of organisational and institutional documents such as Republican Party platforms (2012-2024), federal and state legislation, and policy documents such as Project 2025 demonstrates systematic linguistic shifts exemplifying Wodak's 'shameless normalisation'—whereby extremist content enters mainstream governance through strategic reframing. An interdisciplinary framework makes visible how sacred boundaries become administrative categories, religious authority claims transform into bureaucratic legitimation, and theological warfare embeds itself in policy implementation.

Perry (2024) documents only 46% public awareness of Christian nationalism despite its significant policy influence, underscoring sociology's urgent need for methods capable of decoding how ideology operates through seemingly benign communication. This research demonstrates why interdisciplinary qualitative approaches are essential for analysing contemporary political transformations where religious nationalism reshapes institutional structures through coded discourse that standard methodological approaches cannot detect.

## **Nonversion in Context: Muslim Deconversion beyond Secularism**

*Metin Koca*

*(University of York)*

This article examines the emergence of nonreligious subjectivities in Türkiye, focusing on the contours and complexities of young individuals' disaffiliation from Islam within a context shaped by state-led Islamisation and contested secularist legacies. Building on recent scholarship that conceptualises nonreligion as an emergent, affective, and biographically negotiated orientation, the article moves beyond the secularism/Islamism binary to contextualise nonversion—the turn from inherited religion—within a Muslim-majority setting. While frameworks developed in (post)Christian and religiously pluralistic environments have yielded valuable insights, the article argues that Muslim-majority contexts introduce additional political, cultural, and affective dimensions that warrant closer attention. Accordingly, within Türkiye's hegemonic Islamist imaginaries, nonreligion is manageable if not desirable—but nonversion is disruptive. Identifying several research objectives in this context—notably (1) distinguishing gradual disaffiliation from abrupt biographical rupture; (2) exploring how nonversion interacts with enduring cultural residues; and (3) examining how nonreligious subjectivities form in constrained analog and digital spaces, the article concludes by proposing a multidimensional methodological framework—combining digital ethnography, interviews, and conversational journals—to study nonreligion as a lived and structurally constrained phenomenon shaped by the political and theological specificities of Islamist governance and Türkiye's contested secularism.

## Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220

### **Reading Socialization in Childhood and Socio-economic Differences: Evaluating Dispositionalist and Rational Actor Frameworks Using Contrasting Hypotheses**

*Andreas Roaldsnes*

*(University of Bergen)*

Children's reading abilities and interest shapes educational outcomes and social destinies, and the likelihood of being a reader is subject to cultural transmission across generations. Social scientists agree that variation is tied to differences of socialization processes in childhood, but there is less agreement on why socio-economic differences affect reading socialization, and at what stage in childhood this influence is the strongest. Moreover, the key differing theoretical frameworks in cultural transmission studies, Family investment and stress theory and dispositionalist theories rarely appear in the same studies, which is an impediment to cumulative social science. This study applies theoretical and empirical models derived from Rational action theory and the dispositionalist framework to explain differences in children's reading using Norwegian survey data of reading practices in families (N=11573, children aged 3-17 years old). By creating and testing framework-distinct hypotheses, the study evaluates the explanatory utility of the two frameworks. Even as the study finds both useful, the dispositional framework provides better models. The largest influence stems from specific sub-species of cultural capital. There is no evidence that economic capital influences reading practices, which goes against all expectations of Family Stress and Investment theory. The first hypotheses are analyzed by way of standard causal methods. Second, using Multiple Correspondance Analysis, the study challenges a central assumption in Rational Action Theory, the openness of reading as a cultural practice and finds weak reading practices to be strongly related to different types of relative wont, while strong reading practices are linked to symbolic abundance.

### **White Working Class 'Victim' Narratives: A Sign of Hegemonic Crisis in Education**

*Ian McGimpsey, Karl Kitching*

*(University of Birmingham)*

The recently announced White Working-Class Educational Outcomes inquiry, commissioned by Star Academies, follows two similarly focused parliamentary Education Committee inquiries in 2021 and 2014. As discussed by Gillborn (2024), public concern with the white working class since the late 2000s has increasingly focused on white victimhood.

Our empirical focus in this paper is on policy and media coverage of the announcement of the White Working-Class Educational Outcomes inquiry. We find that this commentary presents prioritising the 'left behind' White working-class as indexical of the success and even legitimacy of education policy and practice, and ties responding to this group to other contested policy areas including equalities, immigration, and employment. We argue that this embedding of frames, narratives and interconnected signifiers in the representation of White working class pupils is highly politicised, and connected to the radical Right's mobilisation of support among 'white school leavers' (Ford, 2020, p. 304) with few qualifications living in more ethnically homogenous former industrial towns and rural areas.

We argue that the widespread use of the figure of the White working-class pupil to articulate the purpose and value of education follows a period in which the market performed a similar role for ostensibly centrist politics as part of a neoliberal 'global hegemonic hypernarrative' (Clarke, 2014). We conclude that this rupturing of the relative ideological closure of neoliberalism may indicate a 'hegemonic crisis' (Hall, 2013) in education connected to the broader crisis of political hegemony associated with the rise of the radical Right across the West.

## **Parental Activism in Education**

*Nathan Fretwell*

*(University of Leeds)*

Parental activism has emerged as a prominent albeit polarising and contentious feature of the ‘culture wars’ being waged around education in countries like the UK and USA. Set against a wave of conservative reaction that has seen parent groups challenge the inclusion of transgender rights, LGBT+ issues, and antiracism within school curricula (Pappano, 2024), this paper seeks to reclaim the progressive democratic potential of parental activism as a form of collective parental involvement in education. Drawing on qualitative data collected from parent-led campaigns engaged in struggles over a range of progressive educational issues, the paper argues that parental activism belies the individualism inherent in traditional conceptions of parental involvement and constitutes an important means for exercising voice in educational contexts that many parents experience as disempowering. I capture the energy, effort and commitment displayed by parents fighting for educational justice, detail how their actions were guided by care not only for the interests of their own children, but for wider educational communities, and outline how they framed educational activism as a vehicle for demonstrating to their children, and others, the importance of civic engagement. I conclude by arguing that we need to widen the horizons of parental involvement to accommodate parents’ pursuit of collective interests. In so doing, we might better recognise and value the democratic potential of parental activism in education.

## **Sociology of Education 2 - Room 3.204**

### **Time, Crisis, and Inclusion: SEND, Social Justice, and the Neoliberal Greek Classroom**

*Eleni Vagia*

*(University of Bristol)*

This paper investigates how primary school teachers in Greece perceive and experience the inclusion and social participation of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the context of austerity and neoliberal reform. The central research question guiding the study is: How do teachers understand and negotiate the inclusion of students with SEND within conditions of resource scarcity, intensified surveillance, and heightened standardisation? By situating teachers’ perspectives in the aftermath of Greece’s financial crisis, the paper highlights how historical legacies of austerity continue to shape present possibilities for inclusion.

The study draws on six semi-structured interviews with teachers in two mainstream schools. Thematic analysis reveals both strong commitment to inclusive ideals and deep concerns about limited capacity to meet diverse needs. Teachers emphasised four interrelated dimensions of social participation—peer acceptance, friendship formation, self-perception, and interaction—as vital to fostering belonging and emotional well-being. These accounts underscore the temporal nature of inclusion: not a one-off placement, but an unfolding process of building relationships, challenging hierarchies, and sustaining democratic practices over time.

The findings reveal tensions between neoliberal logics of commodification and schools’ democratic potential. Grounded in critical pedagogy, the paper argues for reimagining inclusion as a counter-hegemonic practice that resists individualisation and market-driven priorities. Teachers emerge as agents of change whose struggles illuminate wider sociological questions about how education systems inherit crises, reproduce inequalities, and open possibilities for solidarity and emancipation.

### **Why is No One Talking about Disability? An Exploration of the Disabling Barriers Experienced by Dyslexic Pupils in Selective Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) in England**

*Esther Outram*

*(Durham University)*

There is a stark underrepresentation of special educational needs pupils in grammar schools, yet the broader academic conversation and critique of whether educational selection at age 11 is fair and

meritocratic has predominately remained firmly within the parameters of social class, largely ignoring disability. This ESRC funded research includes dyslexic lived experiences in the conversation of social justice and the existence of grammar schools to present findings from biographic interviews with dyslexic pupils (n=41)(aged 14-17) and interviews with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (n=6) from schools across selective educational authorities (LEAs)(n=7) in England. Theoretically drawing on Doreen Massey's relational time-space and Carol Thomas' socio-relational model of disability, this paper explores the disabling psycho-emotional barriers experienced by dyslexic pupils in selective LEAs. This paper finds temporal tensions of academic selection aged 11 and low rates of dyslexia identification during primary school, shapes the educational spaces dyslexic pupils occupy and their perceived belonging in high attainment spaces. Affective atmospheres of urgency embedded within high attainment spaces and the dominance of standardised high-stakes testing reproduces neurotypical constructions of 'intelligence' and 'time' in grammar schools. The guise of neurotypical meritocracy legitimises which academic pathways pupils perceive as inclusive and offering an equal opportunity for 'success'. Thus, such selective schooling systems damage pupils' academic self-concepts whilst reinforcing medicalised deficit understandings of which spaces dyslexic pupils can occupy. Finally, as a dyslexic insider, this paper hopes to contribute dyslexic voices to a broader discussion of authentic inclusion of dyslexic individuals within all educational spaces, including 'high' attainment.

### **'Of course, academia is not a cult. Cults offer a sense of belonging': Towards the Inclusion of Disabled Academics: A Class-based Analysis**

*Alison Wilde, Rebecca Fish*

*(Northumbria University)*

In response to the conference's question 'What are sociologists paying attention to now?' we assert the need to give far more consideration to disability and impairments in the production of sociological knowledge, and to attend to the much-neglected matter of how disabled sociologists can be recognised and embraced by the sociological community. We narrow these questions to a focus on the recruitment of disabled academics for academic jobs in the social sciences.

This paper is based on deeper and selective analysis of recruitment data gained our recent study of disabled academics and class in Higher Education Institutions. Following the wider aims of the project, which foregrounded the distinct gaps on precarity, class, and disability in the literature on disability and Higher Education, our paper argues that there is an urgent need for academia to understand and change the processes and norms which keep disabled academics on the margins of academia, or out of it, not least in understanding the impacts marginalisation has on disabled academics' lives, but also on the perpetuation of limited epistemologies in research and teaching.

We focus our analysis on the experiences of those working in EDI, HR, and recruitment staff, with disabled candidates, triangulating both streams of data with documentary analysis of job descriptions and other relevant policies. Thus, we present a multi-dimensional view of how the academic workforce culture reproduces or challenges its ethnocentric biases, normative practices, and hierarchies of cultural capital, and how it could change to optimise the inclusion of disabled academics.

## **Theory - Room 4.205**

### **Can't Even Imagine: The Foundations of Imaginative Justice**

*Birgan Gokmenoglu, Joe Davidson*

*(Birmingham City University)*

This paper explores the notion of imaginative justice by unpacking the factors that enable or constrain the imagination. We take the imagination as a form of bricolation that takes familiar elements of the world as we know it and rearranges them in new and creative ways. To theorise the foundations of imaginative justice we focus on the social and political constrictions, which are malleable and variable, that restrict this bricolating activity. Using a range of theories and case studies, we seek to understand the power relations that influence dominant and marginalised imaginaries, both at the individual and collective level. The two cases we examine as illustrations of dominant and marginalised imaginaries are Silicon imaginaries, where the Silicon Valley's visions of the future that track dominant relations of

power are affirmed, and protest imaginaries which break with established relations of power and are thus marginalised. In a world in which alternatives are deemed unimaginable, studying the uneven distribution of imagination across social groups gives us insights into who shapes our collective futures and how these futures can be reclaimed.

### **The Advanced Taste: Bourdieu, Temporality and Global Inequalities**

*Yuhan Jiang*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This presentation examines global inequality through the lens of cultural taste, focusing on how hierarchies of cultural consumption in the Global South are often explained in temporal terms: cultural forms are categorised as either advanced or lagging behind. Such temporal hierarchies are particularly evident in the labelling of “Western” culture, which is frequently associated with science and modernity during its localisation, in contrast to local forms positioned as outdated.

I illustrate this through a study of jazz in China, based on ten months of fieldwork in Shanghai and 56 interviews. Jazz was first introduced in the 1920s by colonial intermediaries, gained popularity in the 1930s–40s, was later banned during the Cold War, and re-emerged in the 1980s. Today, jazz remains a niche genre, embraced primarily by professional musicians who frame it as a marker of scientific modernity for advancing music education and production. In this context, jazz is less emphasised as an African American cultural form than as superior musical knowledge. Musicians frequently expressed a desire to “catch up” with the United States, positioning jazz as a sign of progress in the musical field.

I argue that this case reveals how cultural capital in global hierarchies is often embedded in discourses of temporality, where the Global South is constructed as perpetually lagging. Drawing on Bourdieu’s field theory and postcolonial critiques, this presentation unpacks the role of temporality in cultural globalisation, contributing to current debates on decolonisation and the persistence of global cultural inequalities.

### **Assembling Bodies and Technologies in Relational Dialogues with Children and Young People around AI Futures**

*Debbie Watson, Lisa May Thomas*

*(University of Bristol)*

Artificial intelligence (AI) systems are increasingly woven into the everyday lives of children and young people (CYP), yet the datafication processes and agendas underpinning these technologies remain largely opaque. While studies highlight that AI and digital literacy education can shape CYP’s perceptions of AI, their expectations are also shaped by diverse social, economic, and cultural contexts. As data are always and variously connected to our bodies, as ‘human-data assemblages’ (Lupton, 2018), we think that it is urgent and critical to understand what CYP think and feel about their data and its use in AI systems, and how they imagine the futures of these technologies in their lives. In this paper, we report on a collaborative study with CYP investigating these ideas, using the technologies themselves as methods for imagining and enacting different sociodigital entanglements and futures. In doing so, we position/considered the CYP as posthuman subjects intra-acting (Barad, 2007) with technologies in embodied and embedded ways (Braidotti, 2013). By foregrounding the everyday practices, material realities, and embodied experiences of CYP, and by grounding our practice in situated, relational, material ways, we hoped to bring ‘depth and detailedness’ (Feitsma and Whitehead, 2025) to their ‘futures in the making’ (Halford and Southerton, 2023).

# Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 3.212

## **Walking in the Office with My Head Held High: Tales of Gains from Lifelong Learning**

*Mary Shek, Fran Myers, Sarah Bloomfield, Kulvinder Buray, Alice Winters*

*(Open University)*

Whilst current UK government skills offerings were initially focused on options for young people, lifelong learning policies are now emerging through a framework of individuals learning 'at a time that is right for them' (Gov.uk, 2025). However, whilst there is a rich literature on traditional student development, less is known about the benefits that 'upskilling' brings to learners already situated in the workplace. This paper shines a light on how individuals gain from embarking on and completing formal study programmes via lifelong learning.

We focus in on five discrete learners, hearing their voices from a set of 33 interviews with employed individuals studying for their degree in mid/late working life. Vignettes enable participants to tell their own stories, in our case highlighting initial feelings of failure carried over from school to emotions around impostor syndrome at work.

Through these rich 'journey' narratives we learn how their working lives and self-perceptions change through completing their degree apprenticeships as mature learners. We note how individuals learn to walk taller, and gain recognition and status around new skills and accompanying theoretical knowledge.

Findings not only highlight individual benefit but also gains for their employers and society more widely. At a time of policy flux and economic uncertainty, empirical research in this area will provide vital insights into future directions for workforce planning and development.

Reference: Gov.uk (2025) Lifelong learning entitlement: what it is and how it will work - GOV.UK (accessed 11/08/25)

## **Searching for a Meaningful Life? How Young People Navigate Precarity and Insecurity in England**

*Kaidong Yu, Edward Yates, Jason Heyes*

*(University of Sheffield)*

This paper examines how young people experience and navigate insecurity and precarity through an exploration of their working conditions and wider life experiences. Young workers are vulnerable to the widespread 'normalised' precarious work as they are more likely to lack the developed skills, capital, and capacities which older workers possess. While work is often lauded as a solution to the problems facing young people as it can provide meaning, belonging, purpose, and dignity, little is known about how young people engage with work and employment in order to find a sense of meaning, and in doing so develop dignity and self-worth in the context of precarious employment.

The study draws on interview data with 70 young non-graduates in England from the ESRC-funded project 'Transitions of Young Workers in the UK Labour Market: Consequences for Careers, Earnings, Health and Wellbeing'. Our findings illustrate the complex ways in which young people navigate precarity. Three alternative narratives against precarity were identified: downplaying the importance of pay, prioritising enjoyment and work-life balance, and maintaining modest, value-driven hopes for the future. Our findings illustrate that young people assert agency in precarious conditions through rejection of status markets and the sense of meaning which can come from traditionally high-status work. We argue that such narratives to counter structural precarity are significant for understanding how young workers' experiences of insecurity are differentiated and stratified. The paper therefore offers new insights into how precarity and insecurity are experienced, felt, and, crucially, resisted.

## **Digitalization Reshaping Job Autonomy? New Evidence from a German Employment Survey 2024**

*Gina Glock*

*(Technical University of Berlin)*

**Background:** In light of increasing digitalization, this article examines the relation between the use of digital technologies in the workplace and employees' subjective perception of job autonomy.

**Relevance:** Job autonomy is considered a key work resource that allows employees to meet work demands and shows positive links to productivity, satisfaction, or creativity.

**Methods:** Based on the BIBB/BAuA employment surveys of 2012, 2018, and 2024, the use and introduction of digital technologies are considered indicators of workplace digitalization. Job autonomy is measured using a composite index and four sub-dimensions (Task, Criteria, Scheduling, Working Time). Multiple linear regression analyses are used to estimate the effects of digital tools on the Autonomy Index.

**Results:** The regression analyses show that digital technologies are linked to job autonomy in various ways: video conferencing enhances all areas of autonomy, while frequent computer use increases task-related freedom but limits flexibility in terms of work goals and time. Smartphones promote task- and method-associated autonomy but are associated with a loss of control over goals and working hours. Greater autonomy is positively linked to the perceived relief brought about by the introduction of new technologies. These results thus fit into existing research on the ambivalent relationship between digitalization and working conditions.

**Practical relevance:** This article offers a nuanced view of the connection between job autonomy and the use of selected digital tools, providing valuable insights for companies and policymakers to develop strategies for creating humane working conditions in an increasingly digitized and intensified world of work.

## **Constructing the "Ideal" Graduate: Employer Narratives in a Post-Covid World**

*Sviatlana Kroitar, Elizabeth Robinson*

*(University of Leicester)*

The Covid-19 pandemic has drastically restructured the UK labour market, intensifying graduate competition and potentially widening existing skills gaps. This paper presents preliminary findings from a mixed-methods study investigating how employer expectations for essential graduate skills have evolved in this new post-pandemic world, specifically focusing on the challenges employers face in navigating these shifts.

We adopt an integrated theoretical framework, using labour process theory to view the pandemic as a catalyst for employers to strategically reshape skill demands to ensure productivity and control in fragmented work environments. Simultaneously, institutional theory helps us understand how these strategies are embedded in, and shaped by, evolving social norms, industry-specific standards, and cultural expectations about what constitutes a "good" employee in a post-Covid context.

The project uses a strategic, synergistic sequential mixed-methods design. We began with a broad national quantitative survey of 400 employers across England to establish a statistical foundation of demands, followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with 15-20 employers in London. This combination of national breadth and regional depth is designed to reveal not just what skills are valued, but critically, why.

Currently in the data collection stage, this paper shares the initial findings from the quantitative survey data. These results identify key trends in skill priorities and perceptions of graduate preparedness across various sectors, providing a robust framework to understand the most significant shifts in employer expectations since the pandemic.

# STREAM PLENARIES

## 17:15-18:15

### Session Table of Contents

Environment & Society - Room 4.206 .....	105
Families & Relationships - Room 4.204 .....	105
Race, Ethnicity & Migration - Lecture Theatre A .....	105
Rights, Violence & Crime - Room 4.205.....	106
Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 2.218.....	107
Social Divisions / Social Identities - Room 1.218 .....	107
Sociology of Education - Room 3.205 (Special Event) .....	108
Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 1.219 .....	109

## Environment & Society - Room 4.206

**Borrowed Time: Developing Multi-Temporal Imaginations**

*Ben Highmore*

*(University of Sussex)*

Industrial modernity was fashioned out of a time before humans were born, a time when the planet's provision of coal, oil, and gas was being formed (see Malm 2016, Szeman 2019). Today the fossil fuels that were combusted to forge the industrial expansions of Britain, Europe, America and their colonies are still acting on our planet. We are living in the unfinished business of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, business that was built on the borrowed time of the energy storage that went into producing fossil fuels. If we simply stopped burning fossil fuels today the seas and the atmosphere would continue to heat up. This means that we are living in non-synchronous temporalities: a recent history that was reliant on millions of years of organic transformation; and a future history of the past unfolding in predictable and unpredictable ways. This is the long *longue durée* of geological time, and the future perfect (or future anterior) – the 'what will have been' – of global warming. These complex conjugations of time are not scholarly pedantry but crucial to trying to understand our present conjuncture as a time of competing catastrophes. As we witness the rise of the far right with its attendant white suprematism, deep misogyny, and dedication to misinformation, we also await levels of climate migration that will make our current refugee crisis seem minor. There is of course no easy solution here, but any response to this situation will require multi-temporal imaginations.

**Chair: Pancho Lewis**

## Families & Relationships - Room 4.204

**Queer Lineage: On Generational Sexualities LGBTQ Identity and Visibility**

*Róisín Ryan-Flood*

*(University of Essex)*

This paper proposes a new concept, 'queer lineage', which refers to intergenerational queer interpersonal connections that look to the past in ways that are significant in the present. It draws on Ken Plummer's theory of generational sexualities, to incorporate an intersectional approach to the generational narratives of sexualities that co-exist in the same present moment. Exploring contemporary representations of elder LGBTQ lives in visual culture and their popularity with younger audiences, it is argued that cross-generational connections can be foundational to queer community and often exist alongside intergenerational dialogue and positive relationality. The paper also presents some reflections on changes in theorising queer kinship over time.

**Chair: Shuang Qiu**

## Race, Ethnicity & Migration - Lecture Theatre A

**The Enforced Silence: Gaza and Scholasticide of Palestinian Academics: Parallels, Provocations, and Pathways for Action**

*Syra Shakir, Anna Liddle, Penny Rabiger, Fadoua Govaerts*

*(Leeds Trinity University, Sheffield Hallam University, Leeds Beckett University, University of Bath)*

In times of crisis, silence is never neutral; it is complicit. This article interrogates the concept of scholasticide, first coined by Nabulsi and further developed by Hajir and Qato (2025) as both a humanitarian and epistemic crisis. Scholasticide captures the systematic destruction of Palestinian universities, scholars, and intellectual life, exposing education as a key target of settler colonial violence.

Yet, we argue that scholasticide also illuminates broader global patterns of academic suppression, including censorship, retaliation, and the dismantling of equity and critical pedagogical initiatives. Drawing on examples from Palestine, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the plenary situates the silencing of educators and students within wider nationalist and neoliberal co-optations of the academy.

The analysis engages three interrelated questions: how scholasticide reveals mechanisms of suppression in global academia; what ethical and political responsibilities scholars, universities, and academic organisations bear in resisting complicity; and what strategies can break enforced silence and foster spaces of resistance. Mobilising critical pedagogy (Freire, 2020; hooks, 2014; Giroux, 2022), we contend that education is not a neutral endeavour but a practice of freedom requiring moral clarity.

Historical precedents, from anti-apartheid academic boycotts to anti-war student movements, illustrate pathways for collective resistance, while contemporary examples highlight the urgent need to protect endangered scholars and centre marginalised voices. We conclude with a call to action: for educators, students, and institutions to move beyond performative solidarity, confront systemic injustice, and reclaim academic freedom as a space of resistance. Breaking the silence is a pedagogical imperative and ethical duty.

**Chair: Doğu Şimşek and Oluchi Mellor**

## **Rights, Violence & Crime - Room 4.205**

### **Feminist Worldmaking in Turbulent Times: Holding out Hope and Forging Connections**

*Miranda Horvath, Yemisi Sloane, Kim Heyes, Shoba Arun*

*(University of Suffolk, Anglia Ruskin University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Essex)*

What does it mean to be a feminist researcher working towards a world without violence against women and girls (VAWG) in 2026? This session explores contemporary conflicts, crises and complexities VAWG researchers find ourselves reckoning with, and strategies for holding onto hope, safeguarding wellbeing and building community.

The UK government has pledged to halve VAWG within the next decade, yet gender-based violence remains a fiercely contested terrain. VAWG is becoming increasingly instrumentalised by reactionary political movements in the UK and internationally, even as institutional responses and investment continue to fall far short of societal need.

Session convenors invite speakers to consider their work in context, encouraging reflexive engagement with the evolving status of VAWG research(ers), nationally and globally, in this divided and hostile climate.

Speakers would situate their research journeys in space and time, reflecting on what has changed, whose voices remain dominant, or side-lined, and how they are working to promote community and wellbeing among VAWG researchers globally. Speakers would explore how feminist worldmaking practices can be employed to contest oppression, forge connections and build fairer futures across diverse contexts.

Speakers are invited to reflect on relevant topics including:

- researcher wellbeing and trauma-informed research
- community-led world-building and expressions of solidarity among difference
- resisting conceptual and epistemic entanglements of VAWG with coloniality and racial hierarchies
- lived experience
- intersectionality
- co-production, creative and participatory methodologies
- navigating tensions and conflicts within VAWG research spaces
- engaging in research that matters/disrupts/provokes in neoliberal environments

- imaginaries of and pathways to VAWG-free future

**Chair: Katherine Allen, Mirna Guha, Kim Heyes**

## Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 2.218

**The Special Relationship between Sociology and Science, Technology and Innovation Studies**

*Robin Williams*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

Science and Technology Studies (STS) has emerged in close engagement with theories and methodologies from Sociology (and related work from Anthropology and History). However, the epistemic orientations of these fields diverge in important ways.

STS has been able to secure attention and voice through its ability to colonise new territories thrown up by technoscientific change - in the process securing funding and policy/stakeholder relevance. It has tackled these by developing generic conceptual frameworks that can readily be applied to almost any context (translation; interestment; boundary object) while cautioning against “theory in the form of grand narrative” (Law 2008).

At the same time, STS is characterised by significant internal heterogeneity, shaped by its multiple engagements with other disciplines and various external audiences and by the diverse orientations of scholarship, from theoretical contributions to practice-focused interventions. These dynamics generate potential tensions.

Recognising and working with these complementary orientations can foster a productive synergy between sociology and STS. Indeed in the UK context, sociology departments have housed many STS groups. The possibilities for a mutually beneficial relationship are particularly evident where Sociology and STS been returned together under Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercises where sociology departments have benefitted in turn from STS research income and impact.

Convergent pressures are countered by the productive engagements between STS and sociologically and sociomaterially oriented scholarship in cognate fields including Innovation Studies (hence the growing STIS designation), Organization Studies, Information Systems, Design.

**Chair: Yuhan Wang**

## Social Divisions / Social Identities - Room 1.218

**A Wealth of Insight: What 75 Years of Studying Elites Can Tell Us about Social Change, Inequality and Sociology**

*Mike Savage, François Schoenberger, Liz Mann*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science, University of Oxford, University College Cork)*

C. Wright Mills's book *The Power Elite*, published 70 years ago in 1956, arguably launched the sociological study of elites as we know it. The book is widely considered both the first large-scale, sociological study of power structures and one of the first that did not take a purely Marxist approach, instead integrating various theoretical perspectives. However, sociological work on elites seemed to be largely on hold through the overlapping civil rights battles of the 1960s and 1970s, which shifted the focus of the academy to marginalised groups, and the 1980s, when the promise of neoliberalism pushed social class concerns into the background. Although a watershed moment in the field was the arrival of Bourdieu's theories of elite reproduction, it was not until after the global financial crisis of 2008 that inequalities were back in focus and the sociological study of elites rapidly gained traction. Since then, the field has deepened and broadened its engagement with various methods, theories, objects of study,

approaches to access and ethical issues. The stream plenary will unpack this history - what it reveals about the nature of social change and inequality, and, importantly, what it tells us about the field itself.

Chair: Emma Taylor, Sarah Kunz

## Sociology of Education - Room 3.205 Special Event

### Rewilding Higher Education

*Gaurish Chawla*

*(University of Sussex)*

The land we roam  
The episteme we rove  
Interconnected.

***N.B.: Walking tour on Tues 7 April, 15:45-17:00 (details below) followed by facilitated workshop.***

This facilitated workshop will aim to explore the ecological concept of rewilding as a metaphorical inspiration for higher education. Restricting our understanding of 'learning' to cognitive experiences limited to highly industrialised 'classrooms' is problematised: This experience is dissociated from nature, sterile and disconnected and inspires knowledge that struggles to not conform to a similar description.

Rewilding is a response, both environmentally and epistemologically, to the observation that "overly managed systems, whether ecological or educational, can become depleted, homogenous and fragile (Gillies & Compton, 2025)." A call for a Rewilding of Higher Education recognises the role a "command and control (ibid.)" academic culture, rooted in a "technocratic model of education (Woods et al., 2010)" underpinned by Tyler's work (1949, cited in Woods et al., 2010) can and does play in creating intellectual homogeneity, reducing plurality and thereby adversely affecting the intellectual diversity within higher education.

In this facilitated workshop, we draw on rewilding to re-energise our conceptualisation of pedagogy: what if higher education was less about creation of "assessments" that reinforce command and control ideologies akin to harshly, harmfully 'maintained' gardens; and more about embodied experiences? Must knowledge exchange and creation default to a setting reminiscent of industrial workhouses or could we adopt more liberated methods such as 'the walking seminar' (The Walking Seminar, n.d.)? We explore how our understanding of 'pristine gardens' and 'weeds' is intertwined with our understanding of higher education and its exclusionary baggage. The goal of this workshop is to steer us away from Uni-versity to Pluri-versity (Boidin et al, 2012), from a uni-species grass lawn, that may look pristine to our eyes but hides away environmental violence; to a re-wilded garden where we all thrive and harmonise.

The workshop will take the shape of a facilitated discussion on the following three topics followed by a summarising plenary. The discussions will be guided by relevant content on a PowerPoint presentation.

1. Rewilding teaching: Exploring curriculum design and delivery as well as learning experience for ideologically forced homogeneity and devising and studying rewilding- inspired alternatives.
2. Rewilding knowledge creation: How could we dispense with the term Re-search and focus on creation of wild, emancipatory, knowledge?
3. Rewilding higher education relationality: To explore together how higher education could rewild itself into a space less about 'command, control and examine' relationships, and more about a relationality of trust. A relationship that encourages celebrating our diversity and our unique epistemologies and translating these epistemologies into knowledge.

References (truncated for word count)

- Boidin, et al. (2012). Introduction: From University to Pluriversity: A Decolonial Approach to the Present Crisis of Western Universities.

- Gillies, and Compton, (2025). <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/political-science/events/2025/mar/prof-cathy-elliotts-inaugural-lecture-rewilding-university>
- The Walking Seminar. <https://www.ahk.nl/onderzoek/artist-in-residence-air/publicaties/the-walking-seminar/>.
- Tyler, R. W. (1949). Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction.
- Woods, A., et al (2010). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780080448947000580>

### **N.B. Walking Tour**

Interested delegates are invited to join Gaurish for an optional Rewilding themed walk that we hope will inspire our thoughts ahead of the session. The walk will take place as follows:

Date: Tuesday 7 April 2026

Time: 15:45-17:00 BST

Location: Castlefield viaduct

Facilitated by: Gaurish Chawla

Meeting point: just in front of the viaduct entrance.

Sign up: email Gaurish directly on [gaurishc@icloud.com](mailto:gaurishc@icloud.com)

Further details: National Trust owned, free to enter, Castlefield viaduct has been transformed from an industrial revolution era viaduct to a haven for plant and wildlife so will really suit our topic. Please see the website for details and accessibility. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cheshire-greater-manchester/castlefield-viaduct>

## **Work, Employment & Economic Life - Room 1.219**

### **Born to Rule, Forced to Rationalise: Elite Resilience and Precarious Exclusion**

*Aaron Reeves, Krzysztof Jankowski*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science, Independent Scholar)*

Understanding Britain's elite matters because they are the gatekeepers and beneficiaries of power and privilege—controlling the rules of work, employment, and economic life. This group often appears to be a conservative "chumocracy," born to privilege and anointed at Eton and Oxford. But to what extent is this caricature true, and how have recent economic shocks altered the pathways into the elite?

Drawing on a novel, definitive dataset covering the careers of over 125,000 members of the British elite from the late 1890s to today, Aaron Reeves argues that the contemporary elite aren't exactly like the elite of the past. Shifts in the political economy are clearly reflected in their composition. And yet, despite these changes, there are critical continuities. The plenary focuses on the powerful mechanisms that enable the elite to sustain itself, revealing structural resilience particularly around social origins. This remaking of the British elite gives us crucial clues about how they will change—or resist change—in response to the profound contemporary crises.

In contrast, Krzysztof Jankowski argues that tertiary-educated young adults in London's low-pay, insecure job market are excluded from the professional careers they expected. Interview data reveals a precarious rationalisation to remain detached and hesitant toward the labour market. Crucially, their social capital acts as a cushion, allowing them to avoid the worst conditions, yet still denying them true financial security. The plenary offers a dual perspective for discussing elite and non-elite reproduction and the increasing instability of social positions in the twenty-first century.

**Chair: Irena Grugulis**



# **PUBLISHERS' RECEPTION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

Wednesday 8 April 2026  
18:15-19:45  
The Drum

Please join us to tour the publisher exhibition stands and view our conference posters. Publishers and poster authors will be available for questions and discussion. Refreshments will be provided.

Abstracts for all posters can be found in the separate document titled '[Poster Presentations Abstracts](#)'.