

**BSA**



**2026 Annual Conference**

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

**BRITISH  
SOCIOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

# BSA Annual Conference 2026

## Abstract Book Friday 10 April 2026

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# 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 exhibitions 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.

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

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### De Gruyter Brill



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### 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.

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[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.

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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.

## 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)

# ROUNDTABLES

**09:00-10:30**

**Market Place Restaurant, University Place**

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# Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Table 1

## **How do NGOs Reshape the Temporal and Political Dynamics of Small Public Urban Green Spaces**

*Xian Wu*

*(University of Manchester)*

This paper proposes a sociological investigation into how NGOs are reshaping the temporal and political dynamics of small public urban green spaces (SPUGSs). As these community-level actors assume greater roles in planning, design, and maintenance, they redefine notions of civic responsibility and inheritance of public land.

The research will ask: How do NGOs contribute to the planning, design, and maintenance of SPUGSs? To what extent do NGOs contribute to more equitable SPUGS outcomes? And how does NGO involvement in SPUGSs, compared to traditional planning approaches, reshape stakeholder interactions in UGS planning practices?

This research will utilize a two-phase qualitative investigation. Phase I involves interviews with NGO representatives from global case studies with experience in SPUGSs, which will inform Phase II, a case study of Shanghai. Data will be gathered through: (1) semi-structured interviews with NGO leaders, city planners, and community members; (2) ethnographic observation of planning and design meetings; and (3) document analysis of project proposals and municipal policies.

The study is framed by the State-Agency Theory, which emphasizes the dynamic relationship between institutional structures and actors' capacity to act within and against these structures, avoiding singular focus on structure or agency. It is particularly relevant for examining centralized governance contexts like China but remains underutilized in UGS research, leaving room for novel theoretical contributions. By investigating the often-invisible work of NGOs, this proposed research will offer new insights into the changing contours of citizenship and environmental governance, which directly addresses the BSA conference's interest in how we 'rework ideas'.

## **Chinese Identity, Chineseness and International Education**

*Yajing Sun*

*(University of Cambridge)*

My project is based on understanding the unique identities in relation to lived experiences of international Chinese students who have been studying and living in Western democracies for a prolonged period (4+years) – specifically focusing on those studying in the UK, USA, Australia, or New Zealand. More specially, this study adopts an interpretive ethnographic research perspective, allowing participants to reflect on their life stories and histories. It also examines the extent to which Chinese overseas students' identities, and notion of 'Chineseness' are impacted by international education in Western democratic countries.

An overarching aim is to investigate and understand, using visual ethnography research method to capture participants' understanding of identity within transnational space. This is combined with employing in-depth structured interviews to explore the unique identity challenges and internal conflicts faced by this unique community against the increasingly hostile political and social environment climate in China.

It is hoped that this unique research will provide a new perspective on the Chinese international student community, particularly giving voice to those who experience an identity dislocation, identified as "ideological refugee" following experiences of Western democratic education. More important, I hope to find a new group of people through these unique experiences who can give us a fresh sense of belonging.

## **Devolution: Reclaiming the Politics of Place and Identity**

*Tallulah Sutton*

*(University of Cambridge)*

The notion that British democracy is experiencing a crisis of unprecedented proportions is a persistent concern in academic discourse. Voter turnout has faltered, traditional party loyalties are fraying, and populism is finding fertile ground in 'left-behind' places. Political engagement and participation are increasingly shaped by local communities' perceptions of their diminishing status and value within a predominantly national institutional context which is chronically over-centralised. With this geography of discontent, the question arises whether devolution, if anchored in the emotional and cultural significance of place, can revive democracy? This presentation examines the Labour Government's latest English devolution policy, considering whether it can restore popular legitimacy and rebuild trust by convening and mobilising citizens where they are at. Drawing on a case study of Greater Manchester – the first statutory Combined Authority with the most advanced settlement – and elite interviews with actors whose positionality and institutional authority influence politics, policy and practice; the presentation assesses whether devolution, as currently conceived in economic and democratic terms, is feasible and scalable. Operating at the intersection of academia and policy, the aim is to develop a political framework for place and identity. One which rebalances the social and spatial dynamics of Kratos and readmits the Demos by enabling inclusive economic growth and amplifying seldom-heard voices from historically left-behind communities. Ultimately, these communities require more than decentralisation under the guise of devolution; they demand a restoration of dignity and agency and a democracy of proximity that genuinely represents and responds to their needs and aspirations.

## **Emerging Themes & Special Events - Table 4**

### **Beyond Food Banks: Reframing Food Insecurity through Community Voices**

*Marie Swettenham*

*(University of Nottingham and Canterbury Christ Church University)*

The rise in food insecurity in the UK is often framed as a Public Health emergency, with large, high-profile food banks situated at the centre of national responses. While these organisations meet urgent need, their dominant narratives frequently marginalise grassroots, community food projects. This study used qualitative focus groups and interviews with stakeholders involved in UK food support. Analysis, via hermeneutic phenomenology, revealed that mainstream, food bank-centered strategies misaligned with locally driven, dignity-focused models focused on destigmatisation and building social capital.

This draws on findings from a wider study to develop tangible guidance for community leaders setting up and running food projects. The results advocate that to effectively tackle food insecurity, our understanding of "need" and who defines it should be reframed. We argue that effective solutions to food insecurity require a fundamental reframing of "need" and greater inclusion of voices from diverse community contexts.

In this roundtable, It invites public health professionals, policymakers, and researchers to open their sociological imagination to define the next steps of the guide beyond this study. I invite attendees to critically examine dominant narratives, and share their experiences of community engagement.

The session will highlight the risks of isolating community projects. It will explore pathways towards more sustainable policy, and collectively reflect on the intersection of social determinants, dignity, and food justice.

Key Points for Discussion:

- Challenging food bank-centric narratives.
- Implementing evidence informed sustainable responses to food poverty
- Shifting the debate from short-term statistics to policies emphasising equity and collective ownership.

## Families & Relationships - Table 2

### **Beyond the Couple: Important Non-romantic Intimacies in the Lives of Single Parents**

*Natalie Bennett*

*(University of the West of England)*

Despite the growing diversity of family forms, important intimacies continue to be narrowly defined through the couple, particularly in relation to childrearing. This focus sidelines other significant forms of connection, even as divorce, co-parenting, single parenthood by choice, polyamory, and asexuality become increasingly visible.

This paper draws on my research findings with single parents who have important non-romantic intimacies to examine how these relationships shape wellbeing and everyday life for them. Guided by feminist new materialist theory and a connective ontology, I explore how relationships are shaped not only through people but also through environments, senses, imaginaries, and other intangible dimensions. To capture these dynamics, I employ a mixed methodology combining visual methods, participant interviews, and field notes. These approaches foreground the entanglement of knowledge and research practice, making the methodological process itself part of the inquiry.

The findings show how single parents cultivate vital forms of intimacy beyond the couple, reshaping notions of care, belonging, and support. I argue that recognizing these practices offers a more expansive understanding of intimacy and has practical implications for how single parents can be better supported in contemporary society.

### **Rejection Re-activates Unresolved Grief: Findings from an Archive-led Autoethnography**

*Abodid Sahoo, Yashaswinee Sahoo*

*(Royal College of Art, London, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar)*

Originating in a case where romantic refusal reopened the pain of a sibling's death, the project treats unrequited love and unresolved bereavement as entangled rather than discrete experiences. Under the title "Do ghosts feel jealous if you miss the living ones more than them?" This project is rooted in autoethnography and phototherapy.

I write on archival family photographs as if in conversation with my younger brother, whose funeral I could not attend; this practice helps me make sense of an unfinished goodbye and produces deeply personal images with handwritten texts on them for analysis. I also hold extensive conversations about love and loss with hundreds of strangers and close friends. Their words and insights form the base of the ethnographic data for this project and are included only with returned permission, options for anonymisation, and removal if consent is withheld. I analyse the image texts and interview transcripts for recurring patterns, including recalling, interrupted mourning, and feelings of abandonment where ritual was absent.

The findings are clear: a romantic rejection can re-activate grief that was not worked through, and missing a funeral makes that work harder. The approach is practical and repeatable; writing on images becomes evidence of imagined interactions, and intimate conversation becomes sociological data held with care, together moving private grief into shared social knowledge. This allows careful study of coexisting losses without flattening their differences, and it shows how images, plain language, and held dialogue can help people carry both kinds of grief with care.

### **Rolling the Dice on Methodological Innovations: Tabletop Games as Method in Families Research**

*Hanna Andersen*

*(Cardiff University)*

Research on queer families and kinship has increasingly emphasised the need for methodological innovation beyond traditional approaches and the dominant semi-structured interview (Fish and Russell

2018; Gabb and Allen 2020). These include advocacy for participatory experiments which can contend with the messiness of non-linear stories (Reed and Stella 2024). This paper explores tabletop games as one such experiment. Tabletop games have long been a part of human culture, but their potential as research tools has received limited attention in sociological inquiry. Existing focus has been on games which are specifically designed for educational or research purposes (Neag 2019; Gröppel-Wegener 2022; Monteiro-Krebs et al. 2024). This paper builds on existing methodological knowledge and explores the use of commercial tabletop games within focus groups and interviews as a method for researching families. Through a study of the effects of social policies on queer families in the UK, I critically engage with the methodological potential of games like *The Game of Life* and *Happy Families*. These games, often already familiar and culturally embedded, serve as a medium through which participants can discuss their real-life experiences, revealing insights into social dynamics and policy impacts. Through an analysis of how games can interact with traditional research tools, this paper discusses the ways in which gameplay may enrich data generated in family studies. The paper will conclude by discussing methodological considerations for integrating games into research design and will invite others to explore the potential of game-based approaches in researching family life.

### **The Paradox of Autonomy: Disembedding, Re-embedding, and the Ethical Reconfiguration of the Chinese Family**

*Weijun Gao*

*(Sun Yat-sen University)*

Unlike the radical individualization theorized in Western modernity, familist ethics continue to shape relationships within Chinese families. While many previous studies have emphasized the resistance of the younger generation against traditional structures, this study explores how educated youth from rural-origin urban migrant families reconfigure kinship ties upon returning to their hometowns, thereby illuminating the dynamic reconfiguration of the family in contemporary China.

Data were drawn from semi-structured interviews with sixteen young adults from such families, which are emblematic of China's social transformation: while they can be categorized as urban middle-class households, they remain deeply influenced by traditional norms, making them an ideal site for observing cultural tensions within China's individualized modernity.

Findings reveal that when returnees' quest for autonomy prompts them to distance themselves from assertive relatives, their country-born-and-raised parents also exhibit subtle adjustments to support them. This is made possible by the youths' higher educational attainment, while enhanced economic independence reduces the risks of disembedding from traditional kinship. Therefore, the process of disembedding, rooted in intergenerational cooperation, allows the parent-child relationship in nuclear families to paradoxically intensify and re-embed. Within this cooperation, the nuclear family is sublimated into a minimal emotional unit, and family values shift from clan obligation to affective authenticity.

By exploring how these families inherit, rework, and navigate change in familist ethics, this study contributes to a sociological understanding of how past norms shape the contemporary family in non-Western contexts, revealing a creative ethical agency that dialectically unites instrumental and emotional dimensions of Chinese family life.

## **Lifecourse - Table 3**

### **Losing Friends in Old Age: The Social Organisation and Subjective Experience of Grieving for Friends in Later Life**

*Dauphine Maureau*

*(Université de Lille and Institut National d'Études Démographiques)*

Witnessing the death of friends is a common experience in old age, especially for women, due to their longevity. However, unlike widowhood, the loss of friends remains a blind spot in sociology. This paper seeks to enlighten the social issues surrounding the loss of friends during later life. It is based on

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

Firstly, this paper questions the social place of older women during the death of their friends. The role of friends in end-of-life care, death, funerals, and bereavement is barely institutionalised or recognised, either socially or legally. This lack of recognition can have implications for bereaved individuals, who may find themselves without the support of their social circle. In this context, we may wonder how older women navigate their friends' death, and how this grief is subjectively experienced and collectively perceived.

Furthermore, this paper analyses the impact of losing friends on older women's lives. Ageing involves changes concerning people's relationships, resources, and abilities (particularly for older women, who are more likely to live alone and experience disabilities). Within this framework, friends can play an important part in helping women maintain their place in society, deal with the ageing process and take on new social roles. For that reason, losing friends can cause upheavals in older women's lives and in their relationship with the social world that this paper seeks to explore.

### **Shared Mobility Services in a Super-ageing Society**

*Ritsuko Ozaki, Midori Aoyagi*

*(University of Winchester)*

This paper analyses new initiatives in shared mobility for senior citizens of Kashiwa, a satellite settlement outside Tokyo. Infirmity and vulnerability promote a shift away from individual dependence on personal car ownership, but also make the 'first and last mile' a critical barrier and create demands for mass transit services.

Kashiwa experimented with the new shared mobility services of a fixed-route minibus and a flexible community taxi. Personal car use is also discouraged through the promotion of health and safety co-benefits such as the reduction of injury associated with older drivers. Demand response seeks to avoid smart phone dependence, which has low diffusion in this demographic group. Innovations have been made instead to use artificial intelligence for ride sequencing and management in response to conventional telephone booking customer interface.

Interviews were conducted with a range of users of these services in order to explore their utility and prospects. There remain significant challenges in designing a demand-led system to effectively match user needs, with under-utilised capacity in fixed routes, and excess demand in flexible services. The different services tend to specialise in different journey types - fixed route for mass transit connectivity, and flexible for point-to-point destinations. Policies that simply focus on concessionary fares for public transport reflect the limits of an economic approach. This case study demonstrates issues around mobility of older people and the need to address their multi-dimensional social practices, highlighting challenges which many developed countries are now facing.

### **Voluntary Dravedigging in the West of Ireland**

*Daniel Conway*

*(Open University)*

In rural Ireland it is still a common but fading practice for neighbours to dig the grave/conduct the burial, when a neighbour dies.

In 2018-19 and then again in 2022 (post Covid) I conducted a doctoral study of voluntary grave digging in the West of Ireland. My study involved individual interviews with 26 men about what they did, but with a focus on their practical, social and personal motivations for their involvement in this practice. I also consider wider structural explanations connected to modern Ireland, including the effect of moving from being an agrarian to a post-industrial economy by leap-frogging industrialisation. The main findings from my study were connected to: participants relationship with death and the dead, the extraordinary importance of neighbours; belong/re-belonging; kindness; the perceived quality time and the invisibility of culture to its practitioners. My study is the first academic account of this important death practice. Although this is a male only practice it exist within the wider context of the pre-funeral Irish wake. This

is built around the planning, provisioning and running of the 'wake house', nearly always run by women. This also seems to be an under explored area of research.

**Othering Childhood with Indebtedness: The Reproduction of Generational Orders in Intergenerational Gifting**

*Ruiqi Deng*

*(University College London)*

The otherness of childhood is essentially derived from the difference between children and adults, which is termed generational difference by Alanen (2011). A body of literature (e.g., Oldman, 1994; Mayall, 2002; Punch, 2005) suggested that generational differences are usually structured socially in a way that subordinates children. Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in a rural Chinese community, this paper contributes to examining the structured process of othering children in the context of children's intergenerational gift-giving practices with adults. The finding suggests that the performing and interpreting of intergenerational gifting in the rural Chinese context is overdetermined by an adult-dominated construction based on neoliberal individualism and Confucian filial piety and serves to render children as insolvent debtors in both economic and moral senses. Children's 'giving' is undervalued, making generational equality based on reciprocity impossible and leading to a problematic essentialisation of childness based on dependency and indebtedness. This ends up with both confirming and reproducing the otherness and subordination of childhood. Through unpacking how othering turns into structured child-adult hierarchies, this paper contributes to advancing new insights for conceptualising the socially produced dependency of childhood by linking it with indebtedness. It is also indicative of navigating the distinctiveness of children, as a fundamental issue of Childhood Studies, more reflectively.

# PAPER SESSION 8

## 09:00-10:30

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

### **Blueprints of and on Contested Spaces: Developing Methodological Tools for Exploring Constructions of Sense of Safety in Religious Spaces**

*Jenni Spännäri, Anne Birgitta Pessi*

*(University of Helsinki)*

The sense of safety is an essential foundation for human flourishing and well-being in individuals, communities, and in societies. However, social, political, and health-related global transformations, and polarization have eroded deeply not only safety but our sense of safety. Religious spaces have a huge potential for creating embodied sense of safety – but also tensions and insecurity. Thus they form an intriguing context to explore the foundations of sense of safety. Religious embodied social spaces have symbolic weight, and combine layers of emotional regimes, thus making the contestations related to them observable in physical realities.

This paper focuses on the ways in which sense of safety is constructed and contested in relation to, and in religious spaces. Our aim is to develop a methodological approach to explore constructions of sense of safety in religious spaces. We will first discuss sense of safety and space, specifically in relation to religion, and the need for a methodological approach for investigating it empirically. After that, we will introduce methodological and conceptual approaches from three especially prominent fields, which provide viewpoints of space and sense of safety, that can further our attempt of developing the methodological approach. These are environmental psychology, urban studies, and research on recognition and politics of belonging from political philosophy. After this, we will introduce a preliminary model of investigating sense of safety in religious spaces, and four different empirical cases to briefly demonstrate how the model can be applied.

### **Temple Grounds as Liminal Spaces: The Reimagination of Public Life through Spiritual Places in Beijing**

*Yanan Guo*

*(Communication University of China)*

From the 19th to the early 20th century, three major types of leisure activities occupy the public spaces of Beijing residents—pilgrimages, sightseeing, and festival gatherings. Bound to specific temporal cycles, these activities often took place in or near temples and occurred throughout the year. However, since the early Republic of China, due to the introduction of the Western temporal systems, a regulated, technocratic modern urban vision, and the anti-superstition currents, temple grounds gradually lost their aesthetic appeal and were supplanted by "new parks" emblematic of the "New Beijing" (Ju, 2016).

Recent years, however, Beijing has seen a resurgence of public engagement with spiritual places as leisure sites. Drawing on ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews and case studies such as the Yonghe Temple and Longfusi in Beijing, this paper argues that China's "temple craze" reveals not merely a religious revival, but a reimagination of public life under rapid urbanization and drastic social changes. Through making spaces for prayers and commodified spiritual practices, temples have become liminal spaces where urbanites negotiate transformations and pressures of the Chinese modernity—such as economic uncertainty and social atomization. Temples, therefore, have transcended their traditional religious roles, evolving into contested arenas where individual spiritual quests, state-led cultural governance, and market forces converge—offering temporary respite from, yet ultimately reinforcing, the very modernizing dynamics they appear to resist. Reflecting broader societal shifts, spiritual places have become public spaces of "temporal compression" in China, where pre-modern, modern, and postmodern values coexist.

## **Conceptualising Urban Sanctuary from Below: Migrants' Experiences of Belonging in London**

*Franca Roeschert*

*(University of Greenwich)*

City of Sanctuary seeks to build local communities where migrants can belong, participate, and feel at home. Its framework envisions sanctuary enacted largely through local authorities collaborating with civil society actors to gain accreditation. Although scholarship on sanctuary is growing, limited attention has been paid to how migrants understand and experience sanctuary, despite their perspectives imbuing sanctuary with meaning.

This research conceptualises sanctuary from the bottom-up through migrants' experiences of the city. It draws on emotional maps and interviews with 14 migrants with precarious immigration status in London.

The paper identifies three potential sites of sanctuary: third sector organisations, which provide temporary relief; the home, associated with acceptance, belonging, and safety but constrained by structural barriers preventing migrants from establishing a stable home; and religious institutions, which serve as spaces of belonging for some but are limited by exclusionary social dynamics.

As the findings show, sanctuary materialises through social connections and access to support networks yet remains transient, shaped by structural oppressions that permeate urban space. Drawing on Massey's conception of space as relational, sanctuary is conceptualised here as constituted through relationships that place facilitates. This perspective challenges static understandings of sanctuary, such as the one promoted by City of Sanctuary's local authority accreditation scheme, which risks conflating administrative boundaries with migrants' more fluid lived experiences of the city. Ultimately, sanctuary is meaningful not as a fixed location or policy, but as a dynamic, relational process embedded in migrants' lived urban experiences.

# **Culture, Media, Sport & Food 1 - Room 2.219**

## **Special Event**

### **Art Entrepreneurship: Marketisation, Values and Social Organisation**

*Egle Rindzeviciute, Anna-Sofie Köping, Ulrike Rohn, Heie Marie Treier, Miikka Pyykkönen, Katri Talaskivi*

*(Kingston University London, Södertörn University, Tallinn University, University of Jyväskylä)*

### **Infrastructuring Freedom? Transnational Place-making in the Art Field**

*Egle Rindzeviciute*

*(Kingston University London)*

Since the introduction of the creative industries as a policy idea (Garnham 1987), sociologists studied the ways in which artistic work has been transformed by this cultural policy change as it prompted instrumentalisation and marketisation of the art practice (Patel 2020; Banks 2017; O'Brien 2013) as well as the transnational travel of the creative industries policies (Rindzeviciute, Svensson, Tomson 2016; de Beukelaer 2014). The idea that the arts sector can boost national economic growth was particularly embraced by the post-socialist countries looking for new rationales for public support of the arts beyond the traditional aim of preserving national culture (Kim & Comunian 2022; Rindzeviciute 2021). Although policy reports detail considerable growth of the creative sectors in North, East and Central Europe, much less is known about the ways in which art practitioners experienced the change and how they make sense of their professional practice and artistic agency in this context. How do creative practitioners respond to the policy pressure to scale up their work in order to earn profits? How do they articulate the public value of their artistic practice? How do they position themselves in the increasingly blurred landscape of private markets and state funding? Focusing on the case of Lithuania, this paper draws on a study of cultural policy discourses (1990s-2020s), fifteen semi-structured interviews with artists and cultural policy actors and ethnographic observations (2025), conducted in the selected art

residencies and creative hubs to map the discursive and practice orientations that art practitioners deploy to survive in what is an unstable and precarious field. Curiously, the initial findings point to the limitations of the national case study framework as the Lithuanian art field appears to be strongly transnational, whereas the artists' reflections suggest the salience of physical infrastructure, its temporalities and place-ness as key resource enabling artistic freedom.

### **Artists as Entrepreneurs or a Common Good?**

*Anna-Sofie Köping*

*(Södertörn University)*

Swedish national cultural policy has long been characterized by democratising culture throughout society, as well as by its commitment to safeguarding art and culture that cannot survive under market conditions. However, the last 15-20 years, Swedish cultural policy has undergone significant changes in both structure and content (Harding 2022). Today, cultural policy is implemented at the national, regional, and municipal levels, and the traditional aim of minimizing market influence has been increasingly challenged by neoliberal ideas that frame artists as entrepreneurs and business actors operating in a free market. Professional non-profit artists face a specifically precarious situation, facing institutional complexity by being considered as autonomous and professional art entrepreneurs and simultaneously representing art as a common good. The aim of this research paper is to describe and analyse how artists, unions and public authorities in Sweden, respond to the idea of entrepreneurship and artistic autonomy by constructing and translating entrepreneurship into a form that is meaningful for their local context through their 'practices' (Czarniawska & Sevón 1996). The theoretical framework is relational (Dachler & Hosking 1995) drawing on reflexive studies of artists' creative and entrepreneurial practices in relation to funders and policy makers (Bourdieu 1990; Reckwitz 2002; Nicolini 2012). Through ethnographically inspired methods the paper examines the new infrastructures, contexts and challenges (Star 1999) within which artists currently operate. Site visits and interviews with artists, public officials, politicians, and trade unions reveal conflicting ideas of both how artistic autonomy is understood and what it means to be an art entrepreneur.

### **Between Fundability and Freedom: Artists as Entrepreneurs in Estonia**

*Ulrike Rohn, Heie Marie Treier*

*(Tallinn University)*

This paper contributes to the panel on art entrepreneurship, marketisation, values, and social organisation by examining the Estonian case. In line with debates on the neoliberal political economy, Estonian artists face increasing expectations to act as "artpreneurs," self-managing careers under conditions of internationalisation, digitalisation, and commercial pressure, while simultaneously striving to uphold artistic freedom and autonomy. Following the much discussed tensions between artistic values and external demands of entrepreneurship and policy, our paper focuses on presenting the results of interviews with artists, art managers, and policy actors in Estonia. Our analysis of these interviews shows how project-based and export-oriented funding models, EU-driven thematic priorities, weak social security, and administrative burdens generate short-termism, precarity, and risk aversion, thereby limiting time and space for creative work. At the same time, our findings reveal pragmatic survival strategies: hybrid livelihoods combining teaching, commissions, and residencies; lean operational models; and international networking. Collective solutions, such as shared infrastructures, lobbying, and state commissions help mitigate structural pressures and sustain artistic practice. Building on definitions of entrepreneurship, we find that artistic practice exhibits core entrepreneurial traits, even where artists resist commercial logics. Like entrepreneurs, artists create value under resource scarcity, pursue opportunities, innovate, and self-manage. Our research shows that it is precisely such behaviours that sustain artistic practice and generate cultural, social, and symbolic value alongside economic value. The threat to autonomy arises, however, when access to resources indirectly influence not only artistic content, but, more often, its form.

### **Artists in a Changing Welfare State**

*Miikka Pyykkönen, Katri Talaskivi*

*(University of Jyväskylä)*

As in other Nordic countries, in Finland arts and culture were in the late 20th century well protected by the state: artistic creation and participation in the cultural field have been seen as some of the democratic rights the welfare state would offer its citizens. On the other hand, in a small domestic market state support has been considered crucial for a relatively independent arts field. During the past 25 years private foundations have taken more responsibility in supporting more marginalized ways of artistic expression by giving out an increasing amount of grant money. Nevertheless, since the 1990s the demand for artists to make a living by selling their work in the free market has increased. (Murtoniemi 2024). The political recognition and dissemination of the idea of artists as entrepreneurs has been linked to the emergence of creative and cultural industries, the increase in the number of artists, a general transformation of working life, and the spread of awareness of copyright issues. It is expected that entrepreneurship will become more common among Finnish artists, whereas, in turn, arts will form a fertile ground for entrepreneurship due to their tradition of individual creativity and self-employment (Pyykkönen and Stavrum 2017; Sokka, Pyykkönen & Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). However, at the same time low incomes and social security challenges have been constantly articulated in the context of cultural policy debate. Drawing on a specially conducted qualitative study of Finnish art organisations and policy debates, in this paper we discuss the strategies deployed by Finnish artists to navigate their artistic work in the cultural policy of a changing welfare state and evaluate the types of artist support provided by the existing cultural infrastructures.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food 2 - Room 3.210**

### **'A thrift to the future': Conceptualising Thrift in Consumption Practices**

*Gaby Harris*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

This paper responds to the call to identify blind spots in sociology, reworking the concept of thrift using practice theory to develop a new dimension which can account for classed and gendered inequalities in everyday practices. Despite its prevalence in everyday life, consumption is all too often ignored as a tool for understanding how individuals navigate challenges defined by political, economic and cultural shifts in society. Thrift is a consumption practice which reflects the ritualistic and sacrificial nature of consumption, underpinned by social relationships (Miller 1998). The practice of thrift is particularly salient for individuals as they navigate polycrises including the rising costs of commodities alongside income stagnation (cost of living crisis), and concerns for the environment (climate crisis). Yet as a concept 'thrift' is often used sporadically in conceptual and empirical work, without consistent grounding in literatures that came before, leaving it flimsy and lacking holistic understanding. This paper traces the genealogy and evolution of the concept in existing literatures and systematically reworks them through engagement with practice theory in order to revive and ensure ongoing relevance in contemporary debates. I will demonstrate how reflecting on practices of consumption and processes of meaning making with things, we can understand more about the different ways thrift is utilised as a practice, and how individuals respond to polycrises in everyday ways. In doing so, the paper evidences how the practice of thrift can respond to the changing political landscape, facilitating sociological debates on consumer culture, practices of care, and economic inequality.

### **Attraction to Abandonment: Exploring the Consumption and Disposal of Furniture**

*Katryn Furnston*

*(Nottingham Trent University)*

Furniture is both intimate and expendable; it is a part of daily life but can also be viewed as temporary or replaceable. This paradox is heightened by the rise of fast furniture, which has led to shorter product lifespans and normalised discard practices. This paper aims to understand the dimensions of furniture consumption by examining the value consumers attribute to their furniture over time. Using a mixed-

methods approach, emotional attachment, aesthetic preference, affordability, and consumer mobility are investigated to understand decisions regarding the keeping, repairing, or replacing of furniture items. Stories accompanying acquisition and disposal are mapped, illustrating how cultural norms and lifestyle aspirations intersect with material practices. Findings suggest that emotional durability and symbolic meaning are critical, yet often overlooked, factors in extending product lifetimes. By situating these practices within the broader debate of sustainability and consumption, this paper argues that furniture lifespans should be viewed as socially and culturally significant for how we theorise consumer culture and everyday sustainability.

### **Schrödinger's Tomato: Ontologies of Food and Waste**

*Jonas House*

*(University of Southampton)*

The significant amount of food waste generated in Western food systems is a major sustainability issue. Increasing scholarly attention is being directed to understand the causes of food waste across the supply chain, as well as potential solutions. Important sociological contributions have shown how food waste is shaped by the coordination of mundane practices, as well as the broader configuration of food system activities. Among such debates, another key issue is edibility: that is, the categorisation of something as 'food'. For example, if surplus or out-of-date food is to be 'revalorised', it needs to be classified as food rather than waste. While edibility is a recurrent theme across interdisciplinary literatures on food waste, sociological understanding of how things move in and out of the category of food remains relatively limited. This paper aims to advance these debates. The paper is based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork at a Stockholm-based social enterprise, which provides commercial catering based on food 'rescued' from becoming waste. The paper explores how food products, such as tomatoes, seem to exist both as 'food' and 'not food': their categorisation as food, then waste, then food again, results from their temporary stabilisation as such across shifting material and discursive configurations. Alongside practical insights into the revalorisation of food waste, the paper sheds light on how the category of 'food' is established, contested and changes. In doing so, it seeks to make a theoretical contribution to debates around sustainable dietary change and the sociology of consumption more broadly.

## **Emerging Themes and Special Events - Room 4.209 Special Event**

### **Who Speaks of Suicide? Troubling Knowledge Production within the Sociology of Suicide from Durkheim to Discovering Liveability**

*Alex Oaten, Lynne Gilmour, Georgie Akehurst*

*(University of Lincoln, University of Edinburgh)*

In this interactive workshop, we will begin by mapping the sociology of suicide over time, before considering how sociological research has prioritised certain forms of suicide knowledge. Through a blend of visual and interactive presentations and a short world café, we will encourage participants to critically consider the production of suicide knowledge within our discipline. We will reflect upon and embrace the complexity and messiness of the topic and consider the place of lived and living experiences of suicide by critically reflecting on our own current research.

The study of suicide has been significant for the foundation of sociology as a discipline and yet there remains limited critical consideration of how the development of suicide sociology has shaped current practices of knowledge and power. Durkheim's publication of *Le Suicide* in 1897 was a conscious attempt to demonstrate the importance of Sociology for the "governmental administration of life" (Tierney, 2010). Whilst later sociological interventions by thinkers such as Atkinson and Douglas critiqued the Durkheimian approach, current sociological work on suicide is relatively limited, despite its founding significance for the discipline. This is surprising given the wider relevance of the sociology of

suicide to many other areas of sociological enquiry, such as inequalities of class, gender, race, and health.

Drawing upon a Foucauldian discourse analysis, we problematise the sociological production of suicide knowledge, which has historically existed within a biopolitical regime (Oaten et al, 2022). We will invite participants to unpack knowledge creation within suicide research by posing questions such as: Whose voices and ideas have been heard and reproduced? Who held epistemological power? And who has benefited from the production of sociological knowledge about suicide?

Following on from this explicit recognition of the historic power imbalances inherent within the sociology of suicide, we will turn our attention towards recent efforts to actively involve and co-produce research with people with lived and living experience of suicidality. Whilst the inclusion of people with lived and living experiences of suicide can lead to a more ethical and democratised knowledge, there are still critical questions that must be considered, such as: Whose voices are accessed and heard? Who remains absent? How much power do 'academics' hold to create hierarchies of knowledge? And what about the positionality of academics who have their own lived and living experiences of suicidality? As critical researchers in the field have highlighted (Voronka 2016; Fitzpatrick 2016), despite a turn towards the inclusion of lived and living experience, issues of power remain unresolved, and hierarchies of lived experience can emerge, awarding some experiences higher recognition or status. Our short world café (roving discussion space) will allow participants to explore these contentious issues, reflecting on their own work and experiences. We will conclude our session by sharing our own experiences of navigating the 'messiness' of suicide scholarship and introducing our new programme of research, Discovering Liveability, which focuses on exploring the environmental and societal conditions that make lives more liveable.

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

### **Exploring Lived Experiences of Young Fathers with Histories of Childhood Domestic Abuse**

*Dawn Brenchley*

*(University of Surrey)*

Current literature (Neale and Tarrant, 2024; Kimball and Ilea, 2025) has identified that some young fathers have childhood experiences that include reports of abuse. Such experiences have not been examined in depth, however, leaving significant scope to provide further depth of enquiry about the connection between childhood experiences of abuse and the journeys of young fathers.

This presentation focuses on new research that aims to extend current knowledge by understanding experiences in depth and by including participants from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. The research explores how past experiences inform identity, beliefs, aspirations, and perceived needs of young fathers, aged 18-25, with a self-reported history of childhood domestic abuse. The study examines the challenges they face, their responses to these challenges, and their perceptions of available support, including what they wish services knew and asked about. In doing so, it seeks to generate new knowledge to inform policy and practice, and to consider how these narratives intersect with broader concepts such as agency, stigma, race, masculinity, and inequality.

This presentation focuses on the ways in which the project will improve understanding about the lived experiences of young fathers who self-identify histories of childhood abuse and reflects on the sensitively, constructed, pragmatic research design. An overview of the existing research about young fathers is also included, illustrating how the proposed study aims to extend knowledge and reflecting on how young fathers can be stigmatised in popular discourse, and sometimes, professional practice.

**(En)Casted Love, Gendered Bodies: Young Women's Struggles and Resistance for/in Inter-caste Marriages in North India**

*Khushbu Sharma*

*(Jawaharlal Nehru University)*

In a society like India, where all aspects of an individual's life are informed by the caste-mediated gendered social regime, marriage is no exception. Marrying across birth-based social groups or castes is considered a social taboo. Such marriages invite severe opposition- ranging from excommunication to violent killings, attempted at upholding the caste order. Despite this, women in India are increasingly taking these 'social risks' to marry men outside their castes. Based on life-history interviews with ten women (from different socio-economic backgrounds) in the north Indian state of Haryana, which is ill-famed for high rates of HBV, I bring into focus the struggles that they undergo with their families and community elders to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed 'right to love.' I use critical caste studies and intersectional feminist lenses to illuminate these women's mundane acts of resistance, carefully situated in a liminal zone between overt rebellion and tactical silence as strategies of bargaining. My findings reveal that navigating one's life within a marriage that is socially contested and tabooed puts an additional burden on these women of 'making it work' as an exemplary form of marriage. An in-depth look into the experiences of these women also debunks the scholarly myth that assumes alternative conjugal forms like 'love marriages' to be more 'egalitarian' and 'liberating' for women as compared to 'arranged' ones. For women, self-chosen inter-caste marriage also operates as a site of power where hierarchies of caste, gender, and class interact, intersect, and enact themselves to produce specific forms of vulnerabilities.

**Defeminization and Emasculation? Unheard Voices of Couples from Lahore, Pakistan**

*Tayyaba Sohail*

*(University of Home Economics)*

Violence within intimate relationships has conventionally been framed through a gendered lens, where men are depicted as the primary aggressors and women are deemed the primary victims. When violence is examined through the family violence perspective, it is understood that spousal violence is a complex and reciprocal phenomenon, within which both genders use different tools and strategies to exert dominance, show aggression, or react to situational challenges. Therefore, the current study aims to emphasize the importance of looking beyond the usual gendered dichotomies in violence analysis. This research seeks to delve more into the complexity of gendered violence in spousal relationship, its fundamental causes, and its general social ramifications by considering different theoretical viewpoints and empirical evidence. The study laid its foundation on the interpretive paradigm with qualitative approach. A total of 19 reconciled couples were recruited through purposive sampling from 8 Union Councils of Lahore. Therefore, the Union Councils were used as gatekeepers. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis was conducted for data analysis. The findings of the study showed that both male and female spouses used violence as a controlling tool. Joint family system found to be playing active role in inflicting violence among spouses. However, the reconciliation role of families in marital conflict was affirmed by the reconciled couples.

## **Medicine, Health & Illness 1 - Room 1.219**

**Exploring the Potential of 'Task-sharing' to Improve the Mental Health Support Available to Women Who Are Single Parents on Low Incomes in Scotland**

*Natalie Dewison*

*(University of Glasgow)*

Women who are single parents on low incomes are a marginalised population that experience disproportionately high rates of poor mental health and multiple barriers to mental healthcare. Focusing on the concept of 'task-sharing', this research considered how people with 'lived experience' (Community Health Workers - CHW) have been recruited into health and social care systems to make mental health support more accessible, feasible and meaningful for minoritised groups. Underpinned

by a social model of health, CHW programmes pioneered in the Global South, have created opportunities for people with lived experience to apply their experiential knowledge and skills in new ways, namely the design and delivery of talk therapies.

Drawing on examples from the global literature often overlooked by academics in higher income settings, this participatory research created a space for women who are single parents on low incomes to assess the feasibility of Interpersonal Counselling (IPC), and the potential role of peer support in its delivery. This paper reports on the findings from four workshops involving six women and interviews with 21 wider stakeholders, addressing a gap in participatory research on the topic which both centres lived experience and involves health professionals.

Findings demonstrated that workshop participants could engage critically with the concepts and tools used within IPC and identify new types of peer roles. However, such innovations create tensions in health settings which are underpinned by hierarchical staffing structures and continue to privilege biomedical knowledge; I argue that this could limit the transformative potential of 'task-sharing'.

### **Irreconcilable Differences? Epistemic Injustice and the Integration of Mental Health Care for LGBTQ+ Young People**

*Elizabeth McDermott, Rachael Eastham*

*(University of Birmingham)*

Integrated youth mental health care involves a coordinated system attending to multiple health and social needs, often operating from a single site. This approach is presented as a possible solution to the global deterioration in young people's mental health and the failure of current mental health services. It is especially relevant for LGBTQ+ young people who have disproportionately high rates of poor mental health compared to cisgender, heterosexual peers.

The aim of this study was to examine barriers and facilitators to integrated mental health care for LGBTQ+ young people through a qualitative secondary data analysis using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, a method that centralises power, knowledge and history. Interviews with LGBTQ+ young people and staff (n=30) from four mental health services were examined for discourses used to construct 'youth', 'LGBTQ+ identity' and 'mental health' alongside the concept of epistemic injustice within a liberatory epistemological framework.

Dominant discourses of LGBTQ+ youth mental health concentrate on risks, trauma, and harm, and reinforce a passive, pathologized and patronized subject position for LGBTQ+ youth. In contrast, we found 3 counter-discourses in LGBTQ+ specific mental health services: 'Knowing and Telling; Resisting Pathology; and Capability that allowed for wider possibilities for LGBTQ+ youth subjectivities. We argue that without justice and coherence in thinking about LGBTQ+ youth mental health, there will remain fundamental irreconcilable differences that limit integration of mental health care for LGBTQ+ young people and this will forfeit effective and inclusive systems of care.

## **Medicine, Health & Illness 2 - Room 3.209**

### **Pharmaceuticalising Tradition: The Transformation of Sowa Rigpa in Contemporary India**

*Ajitesh Mathur, Pranay Swain*

*(National Institute of Science Education and Research)*

Traditional medicine systems have to conform to biomedical standards for legitimacy; however, the legitimacy gained by conforming to these standards comes with a set of challenges, including medical hegemony, pharmaceuticalisation, and epistemic restructuring of knowledge. Sowa Rigpa is a traditional medical system which is recognised under the National Healthcare Policy of India and recently included in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. This Act dictates what medicine standards are to be followed, who qualifies as a practitioner, and who can produce medicines. In doing so, it drives the pharmaceuticalisation of the system. This dictates how health and illness increasingly come to be defined, understood and treated through pharmaceutical interventions, which remains in conflict with the cosmology and preventive healthcare models of this medical system. The pharmaceuticalisation of

Sowa Rigpa transforms a holistic, community-based system focused on preventive healthcare and lifestyle changes into dependency on commercial drug products. This study utilises Multisited ethnography (from 2022 to 2024), interview schedules and interviews from physicians and policymakers to understand the changing healthcare landscape in Ladakh, India.

This study contributes to debates on how traditional medical systems like Sowa Rigpa, once a village-based holistic medical system, rooted in religion and community service, are reduced to biomedical categories of efficacy and drug interactions. Pharmaceutical categorisations benefit pharmaceutical companies and government revenues, while ignoring the indigenous identity of Sowa Rigpa. This aligns with the government's aspiration of participating in the fast-growing global traditional medicine market.

### **The Intersections between Lay and Expert Knowledges in Relation to the Emerging Debates on Antimicrobial Resistance**

*Tony Shenton*

*(University of Nottingham)*

The World Health Organization estimates that 700,000 deaths related to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occur every year and that this could rise to 10 million every year by 2050. My paper is an in-depth study of antimicrobial resistance and the important role of 'lay' knowledge in relation to how lay publics make sense of the emerging scientific discourse on AMR in rivers, lakes and seas. My thesis was based upon my analysis of AMR policy documents and 40 semi-structured interviews with AMR scientists, open-water swimmers and surfers.

My paper uncovers that policymakers and scientists imagine that lay publics will change their behaviour and practices that can contribute to AMR when they are presented with scientific knowledge. However, my findings also reveal that both surfers and open-water swimmers' relationship with science is extremely nuanced. Indeed, they draw upon their pre-existing knowledge, values and beliefs about health, healthcare, environmental pollution and globalisation to make sense of AMR in ways that can often come into conflict with scientific knowledge.

This paper makes an original contribution to the sociology of science because it examines the intersections between how 'lay' and 'expert' publics construct and engage with the emerging debates about AMR. Thus, rather than arguing that scientific knowledge is more accurate than lay knowledge, I conclude that it is necessary for public participation mechanisms to move 'upstream' so that 'lay' and 'expert' publics can engage in genuine dialogues with each other about AMR in order to better understand each others' perspectives.

### **Sleepscapes: Rhythms, Routines, and the Dynamics of Everyday and Everynight Life**

*Dana Zarhin*

*(University of Haifa)*

Sociologists are increasingly interested in exploring the role of time in relation to illness, disability, and care. However, the question of how individuals experience and navigate the temporal dimensions of sleep in their everyday and everynight lives requires further empirical research. The present study addresses this question using in-depth semi-structured interviews with 66 employed midlife Israelis from diverse sociodemographic backgrounds. The findings indicate that sleep experiences are shaped by a complex interplay of biological, social, and seasonal rhythms. Sleep patterns recur nightly, weekly, seasonally, and following major life events and transitions, combining to create what I call sleepscapes—the evolving rhythmic patterns and disruptions that characterise the lived dynamics of sleep throughout a person's lifecourse. The study underscores the concept of polyrhythmia—multiple rhythms—in everyday and everynight life and shows how various rhythms can either harmonise or clash, often co-producing each other. The study explores individuals' efforts to negotiate these rhythms, illustrating how all these processes profoundly impact human experiences, social relationships, and health.

The article has been accepted for publication in *Health Sociology Review*.

# Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206

## Drawing Out Transformations and Dynamics in the Sociology of Work

*Fon Ninkhate, Sudthasiri Siriviriyakul*

*(Thammasat University)*

This paper explores the use of participant-produced drawings as part of semi-structured interviews in our study of emotional labour of academics in Thailand. Firstly, we argue that the drawing method reflects the increasing embracement of commercialism, meritocracy, and work precarity in Thai academia. Secondly, it shows the unsettling emotional labour of lecturers, for example, 'smiling through it' and frustration within the 'big head'. Thirdly, the power dynamics along with seniority culture and (seemingly unfair) political game-playing were uncovered such as the picture of the 'sword'. Next, the drawings stimulated further discussions of shifting experiences, perspectives, emotions, roles, and identities. The technique enabled us to explore macro-level transformations of institutions, as well as the everyday lives and career trajectories through symbolic and metaphorical visual expressions. Overall, we demonstrated how the drawing method, despite its motionless being of the pictures, can capture transformations and dynamics in the sociology of work.

The drawing technique has proliferated within management and organisation studies. However, its application to research within the sociology of profession is still limited. Within the areas where mainstream research relies heavily on quantitative and positivist methodology such as Thailand, the use of this unorthodox technique is novel yet challenging. This paper thus contributes to the ongoing methodological debate in the acceptance and validity of visual sociology to the wider audience. We suggest future research to seek direct feedback of this method from participants. In addition, the comparison between online and on-site drawing activities can be further investigated.

## Sensory Ethnographies of Displacement: Trauma-informed Approaches to Material Culture

*Vicky Panossian*

*(University of Warwick)*

This paper looks into the use of trauma-informed research design principles through sensory methodologies to facilitate engagement with complex and emotionally charged narratives of displacement and diaspora identity formation. The study draws on a workshop series with first, second, and third-generation Arabic-speaking immigrants from regions affected by war and conflict. The workshops were conducted in London between 2024 and 2025, using pottery as a trauma-informed method to examine how inherited material culture shapes emotional experiences and identity among members of Arabic speaking migrant communities in London. This paper critically examines the integration of trauma-informed principles into qualitative research design, particularly when addressing sensitive topics within diverse participant groups. Furthermore, it highlights the limitations and ethical considerations of adopting a trauma-centered approach in migration and diaspora studies, discussing potential pitfalls and experimenting with strategies for more nuanced and contextually responsive creative methodologies.

## Combination of Biographical Interviews and Neighbourhood Documents

*Yoshinori Kasai*

*(Keio University)*

To analyse how communities develop and how their members connect with the trajectories of those communities, it is essential to adopt triangulation, or a combination of multiple methodologies, as pioneered by the Chicago School. This paper presents two case studies in Japanese suburban areas where the author applies such combinational methods to first-hand materials gathered through fieldwork.

The first case concerns a traditional hamlet that still maintains numerous folk and ritual events. Here, the author analysed account books of traditional events spanning more than 200 years, in combination with biographical interviews and geographical information system (GIS) mapping. The second case is

a more recent suburban community, known as a 'New Town,' with only a half-century of history and few traditional events or organisations. In this case, the author collected almost all neighbourhood monthly newsletters and related documents from the community's inception, along with biographical interviews, and applied text-mining techniques.

Across both cases, the paper demonstrates: (1) biographical interviews provide an effective means of accessing residents' interpretations, including latent meanings, though they may sometimes contain inaccuracies; and (2) technologies such as GIS and text-mining can be applied not only to quantitative data but also to enrich qualitative analysis. By combining interviews with community-level documentary sources, this study highlights methodological innovations in qualitative sociology and contributes to broader debates on how multiple sources of evidence can be integrated in community research, offering a model for future cross-contextual and interdisciplinary applications.

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

### **Police Violence in Favelas: A Policy of Extermination of Black Marginalised Population in Brazil**

*Leticia Hardoim*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

This paper examines police violence in Brazilian favelas as a state strategy of extermination against poor black populations, framed through the lens of racial capitalism. Building on Robinson's conception of capitalism's reliance on racial hierarchies and Fraser's distinction between exploitation and expropriation, I argue that mass incarceration and police lethality operate as mechanisms to manage the surplus populations produced by neoliberalism. Historical continuities from slavery to the criminalisation of black cultural practices reveal how black lives are persistently rendered disposable. Drawing on concepts of necropolitics (Mbembe) and the prison-industrial complex (Davis), the analysis shows how racialised bodies are either commodified through imprisonment or eliminated through lethal policing. Empirical evidence demonstrates the racial and spatial selectivity of this violence, concentrated in urban peripheries. The paper concludes by foregrounding the role of black activism and cultural production in resisting this regime, contending that police intervention in favelas functions less as public security than as a racial-capitalist strategy of social control.

### **Mapping Migration and Identity: Hong Kong Nurses' Transition into UK Healthcare and Diasporic Life**

*Yuet Man Lai*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

Since 2021, over 160,000 British National (Overseas) [BN(O)] visa holders have arrived in the UK, marking a shift in Hong Kong (HK) migration patterns. This ongoing study examines how the 2019 social unrest and BN(O) scheme accelerated HK-educated nurses' migration, investigating how complex dynamics shape their migration motivations, post-arrival transitions, professionalism and colonial subjectivity within healthcare settings.

Using Interviews and timeline mapping, this study centres HK nurses now working or seeking UK nursing registration, allows participants to narrate key moments in their migration journey. The researcher's shared cultural background fosters insider access and deepens rapport, enabling more candid narrative while complicating positionality and interpretation with shared affective and political ties.

Striking extracts from early interviews suggest divergence from dominant nurse migration narratives centred on economic mobility. Participants describe emotionally charged decisions rooted in anticipatory concerns for family safety and political futures. They report migration expectations are shaped by informal digital platforms (e.g. YouTube), highlighting how community-sourced information and mediated peer support influence migration narratives and imagined futures.

The study also explores nurses' adaptation to UK healthcare settings and registration system alongside cultural practices and professional socialisation. Participants emphasise cultural continuity through food

and community ties, anchoring diasporic identity in daily life. Despite shared colonial histories and frameworks, participants feel like outsiders, exposing a complex relationship between legal inclusion, social and professional recognition. Interviews reveal the need to understand HK nurses' migration and their evolving identities within healthcare setting and daily living, shaped by racialised belonging, cultural continuity and postcolonial legacies.

### **Colourism and Indian Girlhoods: An Arts-based Enquiry**

*Sweta Rajan-Rankin*

*(University of Kent)*

This paper explores the anatomy of colourism and how it is manifested and experienced within Indian girlhoods. Colourism, defined as the privileging of light skin and straight hair texture (with proximity to whiteness) (Tate, 2007), has a knotted history with gendered expectations that are driven by 'patriarchal patterns of desire' (Phoenix, 2014). My aim is to trouble the flat ontological descriptions of colourism as two sides of the colour-line, and explore more nuanced representations of 'race' and colour in the Indian context.

Colourism is not just visited upon the body as a metalevel normative project; it lives and breathes within the skin. It wounds and burns. Drawing on art as a radical and diffractive practice (Bachelard, 1991; Barad, 2014) I interspace auto-theoretical narrative, with poetics and portraiture, to coax material imagination to emerge. This enables sensory disruption and new ways of practicing and accessing racial memory- to taste the sting of verbal put-downs about the darkness of one's skin and smell the burning of relaxed hair.

The arts-based imagery presented in this paper, include portraits from my family archives; visual representations of face-lightening creams and matrimonial ads in Indian newspapers, as well as oral history representations of colourism in Hindu mythology. These images are analysed using Critical Race Theory (CRT) approaches, and expose ways that colourism is entangled with racial capitalism and patriarchy. Arts-based inquiry enables us to challenge the racist connotations of colourism experienced by children of colour in everyday life, and by doing so, creates spaces for resistance.

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

### **Narrating Time in Migration: Future, Rupture and Ontological Security**

*Anton Gumenskiy*

*(University of Warwick)*

This paper, a work in progress, draws on my doctoral research into how complex temporal experience is articulated in the narratives of legal Russian migrants in the UK. I employ walk-along interviews and narrative analysis to explore how individuals make sense of time in relation to migration. This approach highlights the motives, self-perceptions, and coping practices of people in transition, while demonstrating the analytical value of narrative methods in migration studies.

Preliminary findings from the 20-informant sample indicate orientation toward the future as a decisive migration factor: for those citing professional or political motives, their imagined future was the key driver for departure. The paper also argues that their identity choice – rejecting the "migrant" label, instead positioning themselves as "just working/living here" – functions as a narrative strategy to assert control over their future status and to distance themselves from the perceived precarity and vulnerability attached to the migrant category. Crucially, "living in the moment" appeared not as a coping device against uncertainty, but as a privilege afforded to those already secure about their spatial and economic future.

Alongside these strategies, several informants framed migration as a temporal rupture: their life in Russia had ended, and a second, separate life in the UK had begun. Such accounts of discontinuity rely on narrative work to restore coherence and ontological security (Laing, 1960). Finally, the war in Ukraine emerged as a Baudrillardian "Mother of All Events," symbolically destabilising long-term residents and, for some, producing the feeling of being migrants for the first time.

**"I'm still scared": Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Experiences of Antisocial Behaviour  
Victimisation**

*Kirsty Cameron*

*(Leeds Beckett University)*

Whilst antisocial behaviour has been in UK policy and practice since the 1990s, and has subsequently been subject to academic scrutiny and debate, little has been said about migrant and refugee experiences of antisocial behaviour victimisation. Whilst existing criminological and sociological research would indicate the likelihood of increased risk of antisocial and criminal behaviour for people from ethnic minority backgrounds, how migrants to the UK differentially experience antisocial behaviour, and what responses are provided following victimisation, remains unclear. Working with charitable organisation Migration Yorkshire, this research explored how migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other recently settled populations experience antisocial behaviour and the responses they receive from services. Qualitative research methods were used to engage with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as stakeholders working with these groups. Using a theoretical framework of intersectional vulnerability, analysis of data suggests migrants often experience persistent antisocial behaviour, particularly racist and migration status targeted behaviours in the wider community and/or antisocial behaviour from service providers and professionals. Female participants experienced behaviour targeted by gender, ethnicity and migration status and were more likely to experience sexualised harassment and threats of sexual assault. The impact of antisocial behaviour on migrants can be significant and longstanding, building on previous trauma and existing inequalities. This research can offer a first step towards improving responses to migrants who have experienced antisocial behaviour, and an exploration into how we might be able to reduce instances of antisocial behaviour for these groups.

**Crisis Social Capital as Temporary Infrastructure of Collective Memory: Ukrainian Migrants and  
the Divergence of Identity Narratives**

*Kateryna Bannikova*

*(Kharkiv University of Humanities 'People's Ukrainian Academy')*

This study examines how crisis social capital, a distinct form of social capital that arises in sudden crises and functions as a short-term adaptive mechanism, operated as a temporary infrastructure for collective memory among Ukrainians affected by displacement since the 2022 invasion.

Drawing on 32 semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian nationals across four groups (those who remained in Ukraine; those who left in 2022; those who left later; and those who had lived abroad before the war), the study investigates how these networks influenced the way people constructed, shared, and preserved memories of the war's early phase. These networks not only enabled practical problem-solving but also shaped a common narrative space in which experiences were framed, interpreted, and emotionally anchored.

Three years later, these forms of social capital have shifted. The study traces how the weakening or dissolution of initial support structures coincides with increasingly diverse interpretations of the same events, changes in perceived belonging, and varying levels of emotional connection to Ukraine. For some, collective memory has remained central to identity; for others, it has become peripheral or contested.

The paper proposes that crisis social capital temporarily held together a shared memory framework during a time of uncertainty. Its decline has exposed internal differences in how the war is remembered and how national identity is maintained, adapted, or disengaged from altogether.

**Protests against Police Racism and Montreal's Pro-police Agenda**

*Anne-Marie Livingstone*

*(McMaster University)*

Black community organizations and their allies in Montreal have regularly raised the alarm about police racism since the 1970s, only to have their concerns fall on deaf ears. Not only has police racism shown

no signs of diminishing, but the city's police department has been amassing more financial and discretionary power to control the lives of Black and other racialized citizens and shield itself from public accountability. The paper seeks to understand why. Why are political leaders in Montreal more inclined to ignore legal rulings banning arbitrary stops and grassroots campaigns for reform compared to other Canadian cities, such as Halifax and Toronto? To answer the question, the paper conducts a 50-year-long historical analysis of the politics of police racism in Montreal, revealing how repeated cycles of crisis, contention, and regression follow each police killing of a Black or other racialized person. By examining the policy process over time, the paper concludes that public demands for police reform are outweighed by the city's pro-police agenda, which has the backing of the provincial state and a compliant municipality. The paper highlights the perpetual feedback loop between local politics, police racism, and the expansion of the carceral state.

## **Rights, Violence & Crime 1 - Room 4.211**

### **'Her' Story in Her Eyes**

*Martia Bevan*

*(University of Brighton)*

This research explores the lived experiences of visually impaired women who are survivors of domestic abuse from a male partner. While storied accounts have often conveyed the trauma of abuse, here I consider the additional, often overlooked, dimension of visual impairment. The study focuses not on victimhood, but on journeys of surviving beyond an abusive relationship. Through unstructured interviews and creative writing, I invite participants to express authentic accounts in their own words, emphasising the importance of voice, agency, and self-representation.

Relating to a "need to tell", (Giddens 1991), the study explores how survivors continually process and re-frame their sense of self through accounts of their unique experience. The absence of vivid, personal storytelling has often left gaps in awareness, restricting pathways to recovery and growth. By considering their experiences, visually impaired women may open up restorative possibilities for finding new understandings of their experience, themselves, and their future, (Wozniak & Allen, 2011). The experience belongs to the survivor, and should be told in her words, and on her terms. Through this process, it may be possible for her to acknowledge the shadows of darkness, while also choosing, when ready, to move towards her own version of light. It is 'Her story'.

### **Examining the Relationship between Economic Abuse, Unpaid Care Work, and Public Policy in North East England**

*Emlyn Foxen*

*(Northumbria University)*

Economic abuse is a form of coercive control that exploits victim-survivors' material and economic resources and creates economic dependency. More than 95% of domestic abuse cases involve economic abuse, and a lack of control over economic resources is a key reason victim-survivors are unable to leave abusive partners. It is also distinctly gendered, with much higher rates of economic abuse occurring among women versus men. Though generally under-researched, the impact of unpaid care work responsibilities on economic abuse and vice versa has been especially overlooked. The link between public policies and care work is also crucial to understanding experiences of economic abuse among carers and represents another major gap in the literature.

This presentation will delve into the relationship between economic abuse, unpaid care work, and public policies in North East England, where women experience the highest national rates of reported domestic abuse and provide more unpaid care work than anywhere in England and Wales. I will argue that women with unpaid caring responsibilities experience unique vulnerabilities to, and consequences of, economic abuse. I will also expand on the notion of institutional economic abuse, arguing that public policies that create disproportionate and gendered care burdens are essential for understanding and preventing economic abuse. I will conclude by outlining the main questions I seek to answer in my doctoral research project on this topic and the methods I will employ.

**'Undoing' the Current 'Gendered' Approach to Domestic Abuse Support: A Participatory Action Research Project with Young LGBTQ+ People**

*Cait Jobson*

*(Durham University)*

Within current debates on the role of 'gender' within women-only 'safe' spaces and a white able-bodied cisgendered public story of domestic abuse (DA) (Donovan and Hester, 2008), many LGBTQ+ young people are unable to access the DA support they need. Research should move from polarised approaches towards theoretical approaches to acknowledge the complexity of the social world. Taking a participatory action research approach, 12 young LGBTQ+ co-researchers and I interviewed DA, sexual violence and LGBTQ+ youth practitioners, and surveyed other LGBTQ+ young people to explore help-seeking. Through iterative co-analysis processes, we questioned who is, or should be, included in DA services, highlighting a changing, conflicting and complex understanding of the role of gender and intersectionality, such as with 'ungendered', 'gender neutral' or 'gender inclusive' approaches. In viewing gender as embedded in everyday interactions and gender performance as an inevitable process in which we (academics, policymakers, practitioners and those experiencing abuse) are constantly 'doing', it would be impossible for domestic abuse support, within the current gendered societal context, to be 'ungendered'. Instead, I argue we should work towards 'undoing' the current 'gendered' approach to support by moving beyond a single-issue emphasis on patriarchy to reflect how sexism, heterosexism, racism, classism, ableism, ageism and cisgenderism intersect and affect both the understanding of service providers and practitioners who work with those who have experienced DA and those experiencing abuse. I argue that, to ensure intersectionally inclusive DA support, we must expand feminist understanding to become more trans-inclusive towards queer intersectional feminist practice.

**Exploring Legal Agency of Australian Pakistani Women Victims of Domestic Violence at Intersections of Migration, Economic Stability, and Social Networking**

*Sana Ashraf*

*(University of Melbourne)*

Post-migration transformation of cultural and legal contexts provides immigrant women with new spaces to reconfigure domestic violence negotiation mechanisms. This study asserts that agency of immigrant women is not fixed but is continuously negotiated across cultural and geographic landscapes. It is argued that women's interaction with the legal system, such as calling the police, going to court, and using legal threats, is not always intended to end abusive relationships, but rather to change the power dynamics inside their marriages. Using post-colonial feminist frameworks, this study draws from the idea of agency to show how immigrant women engage with Australia's legal system as a strategic weapon to resist domestic abuse. It shows how legal agency provides leverage points that drive women to keep renegotiating the terms of their marriage. This study questions the idea of associating legal success with permanent separation and prolonged exposure to abuse as a result of legal failure. It does so by examining how women strategically use the host country's legal provisions to their advantage as well as the barriers that impede their ability to do so. Key findings show that women use Australia's family violence framework and social networking skills to improve their intimate relationships by carefully timing legal actions and using legal threats as tools for negotiation. By situating women's experiences in transnational contexts, this study highlights how transnational migration opens new opportunities for women to negotiate their lives, while also showing complicated interplay of cultural, legal, economic, and migration aspects affecting their strategic choices.

## **Rights, Violence & Crime 2 - Room 4.213**

### **Veiled Feminism under Consumerist Frames: The Sanitary Pads Movement in China**

*Yaquan Liang*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This article examines the November 2024 “Sanitary Pad Movement” in China—a digital feminist mobilization centered on menstrual health, consumer justice, and anti-discrimination. Unlike the extensively studied #MeToo movement, this campaign did not confront state power directly but intervened through everyday life and market logics, exemplifying a decentralized and embedded mode of contention. The study investigates how women activists used health and consumer rights discourses to advance gender politics, thereby expanding both the agenda and repertoire of feminist struggle in China.

Empirically, the study is based on 31 in-depth online interviews with participants from Mainland China. Findings reveal that activists shifted accountability to corporations instead of the state, framing claims in “depoliticized” terms of consumer rights to evade censorship. In doing so, they exposed the long-standing systemic injustices in the female product industry, epitomized by sanitary pads, including inequalities in quality, pricing, design, marketing, and ideology. Activists not only pressured companies into reform through boycotts, strategic discourse, and even natalist rhetoric, but also legitimized the entry of gender issues into the public sphere, mobilized broader participation, and challenged deeper structural injustices.

While digital activism is often seen as fragmented or short-lived, this article argues that short-term feminist mobilizations can build affective residues and collective memory, leaving a lasting political legacy and opening possibilities for resistance under repression. It also shows how feminist actors creatively rework market logics and emotional experience into viable repertoires of contention, revealing new forms of resilience in China’s high-pressure political environment.

### **Feminist Edgework at UK based Music Festivals: Responding to Gender-based Violence**

*Gemma Summers-Green*

*(University of Portsmouth)*

This paper explores the embodied, relational and strategic work of a gender-based violence (GBV) response team operating within the UK music festival industry. It examines this new model of care-led, trauma-informed practice implemented within traditional male dominated security infrastructure through worker interviews, ethnographic vignettes, reflective analysis and feminist theory.

Music festivals are often framed as temporary utopias and imagined as sites of collective joy, rebellion and freedom (Bakhtin, 1984; Szmigin et al., 2016). Yet beneath the surface of sensory pleasure lies sites of complexity, shaped by broader social and cultural dynamics (Anderson, 2019). Behind the marketed carnival is a structurally gendered and hierarchical organised industry, where the politics of visibility, safety and labour remain deeply contested. For those who work them, in roles focused on care, support or safety, the labour of maintaining these atmospheres is anything but carefree (Carr and Raalte, 2025).

Against this backdrop the GBV response team operated as both a service and a disruption. Its role was to respond to disclosures and incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, alongside security, offering collaboration and a space for developing a shared skill-set, but also to challenge how such violence was understood, named and addressed. The team occupied a contested space, resisting the pull towards either complete assimilation into security structures or total separation. Like edge-workers (Gunby et al., 2024; Lyng, 1990), the team operated on the margins, navigating risk, resistance and organisational contradiction.

Themes of embodiment, dignity, discourse and polarities are drawn into conversation with theory and practice.

# Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205

## Theorising the Content-flow Cycle: Digital Platforms, Affordances and Audiences

*Matt Bassett*

*(University of Bristol)*

The understanding that digital platforms are not neutral hosts of online content, but necessarily moderate, filter and thus co-constitute that content, is well established. This paper builds upon that understanding to develop a more detailed account of how digital platforms work: how they shape online content through sociotechnical affordances, and how they connect disparate audiences to produce online communities. Empirically, I do this by drawing on a cross-platform affordance study of gender self-identification practices on Tumblr, X, Reddit, Twitch and Gender Wiki to theorise the content-flow cycle of digital platforms. This cycle describes the circular flow of content as it travels towards platforms, from the users who produce and share it, and travels back towards users, from the platforms who shape and supply it. Different affordances are more heavily involved in shaping that content depending on the direction considered. The paper illustrates this idea using eight affordances identified in the cross-platform affordance study described above. Affordances of agglutination, reactivity, discursivity and marketisation more directly influence content flowing from users to platforms. Visibility, persistence, editability and regulation more directly shape content flowing in the opposite direction. Conceptualising the relationship between platforms and users in this way further explains how platforms make online communities possible. The content-flow cycle provides a more integrated explanation for how affordances shape practice on digital platforms. The newly coined affordances of agglutination, discursivity, marketisation and regulation also provide scholars with new ways of conceptualising the possibilities for action produced at the nexus of people and technologies.

### **Is AI Changing the Game of Biology?**

*Huayu Xin*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This study examines how artificial intelligence (AI) is changing epistemic and social norms in the life sciences. Science itself can be described as a “game”—one sustained by competition, collaboration, and the joy of discovery. Within this framing, the introduction of AI raises the question of whether it is merely helping scientists play better, or subtly changing the game itself.

To explore this, the study employs the metaphor of “cheating”—not as literal misconduct, but as an analytic device for capturing actions that appear too fast, opaque, or insufficiently earned. In such situations, machines may generate credible outputs without engaging in the communal practices that typically anchor trust and legitimacy.

The analysis is structured around four lenses: the social construction of rules, the boundaries of expertise, the politics of tools, and the role of metaphors. Empirical evidence derives from 54 semi-structured interviews, conducted between 2023 and 2025, with scientists in Europe who work at the interface of AI and biology, complemented by qualitative coding and thematic analysis. Interview accounts reveal ambivalence: some scientists interpret AI as a legitimate rule-changer, while others raise concerns about unequal access, “cheat codes” of computational power, and the weakening of explanatory standards.

The study concludes that AI in biology does not simply accelerate research but provokes ongoing negotiations over legitimacy, authority, and fairness. The dual metaphors of “game” and “cheating” thus illuminate how scientific communities grapple with disruptive tools that both conform to and transform the rules under which science is played.

### **Algorithmic Futures of Citizenship: Pakistani Muslim Women and the Digital Politics of Belonging in Britain**

*Adeela Zaka*

*(Tu Dortmund University)*

This paper develops the concept of algorithmic futures of citizenship to examine how Pakistani Muslim women in Britain experience racialised exclusion through digital governance. Existing work on migration and bureaucracy has analysed waiting and uncertainty (Griffiths, 2017; Sharma, 2014), while scholarship on Islamophobia has focused on securitisation and everyday surveillance (Meer, 2014; Sayyid, 2018). Yet little attention has been paid to how algorithmic infrastructures of biometric borders, automated visa checks, and counter-terror databases now reconfigure belonging through temporal control.

Drawing on interviews and digital ethnography, the paper explores how opaque scoring systems, automated refusals, and algorithmic flagging produce futures that feel deferred, precarious, and ungraspable. Women describe themselves as “living on borrowed time,” their educational, professional, and familial trajectories continuously delayed by computational suspicion. Importantly, these experiences highlight a paradox: digital governance renders migrants simultaneously hyper-visible (as flagged risks) and immobilised (through endless waiting).

The paper suggests that algorithms do not merely administer citizenship; they actively generate unequal futures. By theorising algorithmic futures of citizenship, it unsettles assumptions of technological neutrality and contributes a novel vocabulary for linking migration studies with digital sociology. In doing so, it highlights how hidden computational architectures are quietly re-shaping the sociological meaning of time, belonging, and precarity in Britain today.

### **The Beautiful and the Sublime: Scientists' Views on Connection with Nature**

*Poonam Pandey*

*(University of Vigo)*

A connection with nature (or a lack thereof) is central to the advancement of science and society. The understanding of connection with nature and the organization of science and society often go together: be it imperialism and Cartesian ontology of nature as ‘brute, passive, and inert matter’ needing divine (and humanly) intervention (Daston 1998: 39), or patriarchy and Robert Boyle’s characterization of nature as ‘womanly’ needing subordination (Merchant 2010). The de-colonial and feminist studies of science and ethical debates on climate change and emerging technologies have critiqued and re-articulated the relationship between nature, science, and society. However, there is still very little literature on what scientists in contemporary times think about their connection with nature. By employing the existing interdisciplinary literature on the beautiful and the sublime, this paper analyses qualitative data (100 interviews with scientists) from four countries (India, Italy, USA, and UK) and across two scientific disciplines (Biology and Physics). We analyzed the adjectives and metaphors (grand, vast, surreal, spiritual, peace, calm, mother, care, protect etc) used by scientists to describe their connection with nature. Our findings suggest that scientists see nature and their connection with it differently ‘at’ and ‘outside’ work. Both, the beautiful and the sublime are invoked to describe the connection with nature ‘at’ and ‘outside’ work. However, there are different aspects of the beautiful and the sublime that become prominent at different sites. These findings have implications for the ways in which different scientific disciplines engage with and shape society and vice versa.

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

### **When was Woke? Rethinking the Chronology of the Culture Wars and 'Anti-identity' Politics**

*Nick Hubble*

*(Brunel University of London)*

At the launch of the latest report of the annual British Social Attitudes survey in June 2025, John Curtice explained that ‘Brexit speeded up a process which is that our politics are no longer simply about left

versus right [...] We now have a second dimension, which has always been there to a degree but which now matters far, far more. And that is basically culture wars, it's social liberals versus conservatives, it's libertarians versus authoritarians.' The adoption of 'anti-identity' politics across the political spectrum has led to commentators (Goodwin, Nieman, Doyle) blaming this division on 'woke', a phenomenon which mysteriously arose in the early 2010s and which has now apparently ended. On one level, this imaginary timeline is simply a pretext for a generational war of the old (and their postwar capitalist social norms) against the young, which replays earlier identity-based culture wars of the 1910s, 1930s, 1960s and 1980s. In rethinking this chronology as a longer process of a cultural schismogenesis, this paper revises the culture wars as a dynamic struggle between the capitalist social values of the nation state and the self-reflexive desire for new cultural patterns of living beyond the old hierarchies and binaries. I hypothesize that this cycle will only end though either some form of apocalypse destroying nation states, or the development of a new, more sophisticated cultural pattern enabling the development of post-national social structures. Consequently, I argue for the need to theorize culture as more than a self-contained feature of social structure.

### **Loneliness, Status Threat, Aggrieved Entitlement, and Support for Political Violence**

*Akos Bocskor, Ales Kudrnac*

*(Czech Academy of Sciences)*

Political radicalization poses a growing threat to democratic societies. As more people find violence an acceptable means of pursuing political goals or eliminating opponents, acts of violence in the political arena are likely to increase, as suggested by recent political murders and assassination attempts. Support for political violence is often linked to frustration with one's personal situation and the perceived situation of one's group (frustration-aggression hypothesis).

This article examines whether support for political violence is driven by three sources of frustration: status threat, aggrieved entitlement, and loneliness. Perceived status threat, i.e., the sense that one's social position is being undermined, has been associated with negative attitudes toward outgroups, as well as with support for political violence. Aggrieved entitlement refers to the frustration experienced by members of the dominant group who feel advantages such as power or status are no longer guaranteed to them. Such perceptions may make violence appear acceptable to remedy these injustices. Loneliness, reflecting social isolation and lack of meaningful connection, may similarly heighten receptivity to violent solutions. We further test whether these relationships differ for men and women.

Using data from the Czech Attitude Barometer (N=1,659), a panel survey representative of the Czech adult population, we show that loneliness, status threat, and aggrieved entitlement are positively related to support for political violence. Moreover, support for political violence is more strongly associated with loneliness and status threat among men, but with aggrieved entitlement among women. These findings underline the importance of the gendered dimensions of social frustration.

### **Liberal Belonging and Christian Nationalism: Sacred Space in the Shadow of Project 2025**

*Bridget Wisner*

*(Independent Reseacher)*

Project 2025, a policy blueprint closely tied to the U.S. Christian Right, represents the consolidation of a decades-long movement fusing evangelical culture with nationalist politics. While much attention has focused on conservative evangelicals' influence, this paper examines the inverse problem: how liberal and progressive Christians find themselves displaced from both religious and civic belonging in contemporary America. Drawing on Robert Bellah's concept of civil religion, I argue that Christian nationalism has redefined the symbolic boundaries of sacred space in the U.S., claiming national identity as religious identity. Empirical scholarship on Christian nationalism (Whitehead & Perry; Gorski & Perry) shows how this framework increasingly governs institutional churches, megachurch cultures, and political discourse.

For Christians who do not identify with conservative evangelicalism, this produces a condition of exile: either joining small, aging congregations disconnected from civic life, or withdrawing altogether into individualized, online forms of spirituality. The loss of community and sacred space has profound implications not only for church life but also for political participation and identity.

By situating liberal Christians' search for belonging within the wider transformation of civil religion, this paper highlights how nationalism reshapes sacred space and leaves some religious citizens without a spiritual or political home. The analysis contributes to debates in the sociology of religion by showing how the politics of nationalism and exclusion fragment Christianity from within, raising urgent questions about pluralism, belonging, and the future of American civil religion.

### **Conditional Belonging: Visualising Stigma, Identity and Emotional Labour among Young Mothers in Ghana**

*Ayomide Oluseye, Philippa Waterhouse, Might Abreh*

*(Open University, University of Cape Coast)*

This paper draws on a Photovoice study with sixteen unmarried young mothers in Cape Coast, Ghana, to explore how stigma, identity, and belonging are negotiated, redefined and visualised. In many West African discourses, early pregnancy and motherhood is often framed as a moral failing that forecloses futures, producing an enduringly stigmatised identity. While these dominant narratives deeply affect young mothers, our findings show that lived experience is far more complex and dynamic, shifting between rejection, conditional acceptance, and the possibility of reintegration.

Through their narratives and participant-generated images, our findings reveal how young mothers engage in emotional labour and construct imagined futures to redefine their identities and negotiate belonging. Strategies such as reframing motherhood, striving for education, pursuing marriage, aspiring for economic independence, and demonstrating resilience function as acts of negotiations. However, these strategies are foregrounded in reclaiming a "spoiled" identity and re-entering socially sanctioned pathways to belonging. This paradox, where renegotiation simultaneously mitigates stigma while reproducing the very patriarchal structures that sustain it, contributes to our understanding of the complex lives of stigmatised populations.

By making visible these tensions, this paper contributes to sociological debates on stigma, identity, emotional labour and the need for belonging. It demonstrates that stigmatised identities are not fixed endpoints but sites of struggle, where identity and belonging is conditional and continually renegotiated. The paper concludes by inviting us to rethink how we theorise the relationship between individual agency and socio-cultural constraints.

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

### **Strategising versus Positioning: Middle-class Educational Strategies and Cross-border Mobility**

*Nicole Yanxi Guan*

*(Education University of Hong Kong)*

This study examines how middle-class families from mainland China strategically navigate cross-border educational fields when relocating to Hong Kong for their children's education. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field, the research asks: How do different forms of capital transform across educational contexts, and can geographical mobility alone secure educational advantage and middle-class reproduction? The study conducted 17 in-depth narrative interviews with middle-class Chinese parents regarding their experiences with school choice in both mainland China and Hong Kong. The findings suggest that the advantages associated with school choice are field-specific. Parents who held privileged positions within the educational system in mainland China were unable to automatically transfer these advantages to Hong Kong's educational system. The analysis identifies two distinct parental approaches. "Strategising" parents actively and continuously accumulate locally valued capital (including language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and social networks) to ensure their children's academic success in the new field. In contrast, "positioning" parents assume that merely placing their children in Hong Kong's educational field will guarantee success without ongoing capital acquisition. This distinction challenges assumptions about the rationality of middle-class educational strategies, demonstrating that while geographical mobility functions as a class-based educational strategy, it alone is insufficient for successful middle-class reproduction without corresponding efforts to adapt to new field conditions.

## **Chameleon Habitus and the Negotiation of Belonging: Imposter Phenomenon among Foundation-year Students in a Post-92 University**

*Paul Keogh*

*(University of Cambridge)*

This paper investigates imposter phenomenon as a socially produced effect, analysing how class and racialised structures of privilege shape the experience of students entering higher education through foundation year pathways. Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field and drawing on intersectional analysis, it explores how students navigate historically middle-class academic spaces within a metrics-driven sector.

A qualitative study was conducted in a post-92 English university. First-generation foundation students with intersectional backgrounds participated in semi-structured interviews, which were analysed through reflective thematic analysis to ensure methodological transparency and depth. Four interconnected themes emerged: Childhood experiences and the shaping of habitus;

Masking and the development of chameleon habitus (performing middle-class academic expectations);

Approval seeking (using grades and staff validation to counter symbolic exclusion); Institutional influences (low-stakes assessment, peer networks and cultural capital, but may also inherently foster feelings of non-belonging).

Findings reveal the emotional labour of being a "space invader" in a field that students perceive as not for them. The chameleon habitus enabled some to accrue cultural and social capital, but often intensified self-surveillance and impostorism persisted. Whilst the foundation year supported a sense of belonging and confidence, wider structural hierarchies and market pressures continued to perpetuate exclusion as outlined in Bourdieu's social reproduction theory.

This paper invites discussion about how foundation year programmes might disrupt symbolic violence, value diverse forms of capital, and create more equitable conditions of higher education.

## **Linguistic Affinity: First-generation University Students' Evolving Understanding of Academic Norms**

*Liang-Wen Lin-Januszewski*

*(University of Wuppertal)*

This study investigates first-generation university students' evolving understanding of academic norms, conceptualizing the university as a linguistic market where an authorized language exerts symbolic violence. Employing Bourdieu's toolkits of linguistic habitus and symbolic violence, this study introduces 'linguistic affinity' to explore how students navigate the academic system's implicit and diffuse linguistic expectations. It examines the slow acculturation process through which some students climb the 'linguistic hill' to gain membership in the academic community, highlighting how linguistic affinity intersects with their socio-economic backgrounds to shape this journey.

Data is drawn from an ongoing longitudinal project at a regional German university, involving 77 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 41 first- and second-year students across three cohorts, conducted from March 2023 to September 2025. The sample includes 12 male students, 17 with migrant backgrounds, and 27 first-generation students.

The study argues that linguistic affinity comprises three interconnected dimensions—content, form, and ease. Findings indicate that, for these students, the initial disconnect between family and academic language can cause feelings of exclusion and mystification regarding academic norms. While disciplinary language and unfamiliar vocabulary present challenges, more subtle forms of symbolic violence emerge as difficulties with academic writing styles, understanding diffuse course expectations, and achieving perceived 'linguistic ease' and 'acceptability' within the academic field, as emphasized by Bourdieu. This research aims to demystify academic norms by detailing these subtle mechanisms, illustrating how unequal relations of symbolic power operate through linguistic aspects embedded in university pedagogical practices.

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

### **Inside the Old Boys Club: An Exploration of Staff Attitudes within a Leading British Public School**

*Justice Aina*

*(Cambridge University)*

This article examines staff engagement with inclusion policies in a world-leading British public school, focusing on how resistance takes form and influences institutional culture. As an exclusive institution over 500 years old, shaping old boys and reproducing elites, this school offers a critical site to examine the possibilities of inclusion, and the dynamics of change and resistance. The analysis focuses on staff responses to initiatives designed to diversify staffing, curriculum and school culture - reforms that disrupt the consecration process of the traditional old boy.

It examines the efficacy of policies introduced by senior leadership and considers how progress is negotiated when resistance arises from within. Resistance is not understood as obstructive and instead serves a role in the preservation of culture. Framing the research against 2020's Everyone's Invited and Black Lives Matter movements, which exposed entrenched sexism and racism in the public school sector, particularly in boys' schools, locates the concept of resistance within wider struggles over power, legitimacy and institutional reproduction.

The study employs a multi-method qualitative design, combining semi-structured interviews with 20 members of staff alongside autoethnographic reflections from my position as an inclusion research fellow. Interviews capture perspectives from senior leaders and junior staff, while autoethnography provides insight into how new policies are enacted from a partial insider-outsider position. An intersectional lens highlights how gendered traditions and professional hierarchies shape organisational responses. The paper situates resistance as an embedded organisational process; central to institutional identity and essential to the negotiation of shared community values.

### **Unpacking Elite School Experience: Enduring Features and Transformations at Turkish Elite Schools**

*Vildan Ozerturk Sofu*

*(Independent Researcher)*

Distinguished by their historical legacies, exceptional academic credentials, and rich material and symbolic resources, elite schools in the Turkish educational field have consistently maintained privileged status since their establishment. Yet the experience of this privilege has evolved over time alongside notable continuities. This study examines transformations in elite school experiences across graduation cohorts, comparing pre-2000 with post-2000 alumni. Based on in-depth narratives from 36 participants of diverse age groups and socio-cultural backgrounds, drawn from three elite high schools—one private and two state schools—the analysis traces how perceptions and lived experiences of elite schooling have shifted. The study is grounded in a robust theoretical framework, engaging with Bourdieu's cultural reproduction, Bernstein's instrumental and expressive school orders, Goffman's interaction rituals, Durkheim's collective effervescence, and Elias's noblesse oblige to interpret the dynamics of privilege, socialization, and institutional culture. Findings show continuities between earlier and later cohorts in the role of schools in shaping character ("elite qualities") and in the advantages of studying alongside high-potential peers ("elite peers"). Transformations, however, appear across multiple dimensions: (a) in the experience of privilege, (b) in mechanisms of distinction, (c) in the formation of elite pathways, (d) in sense of belonging, (e) in orientations toward school traditions, and (f) in perceptions of societal responsibility (noblesse oblige). The study demonstrates that while Turkish elite schools retain enduring features, they are also dynamic, adapting to socio-political, economic, cultural, and generational change. These insights contribute to understanding how educational privilege is both reproduced and reshaped in a non-Western context.

## **Problematising Policy Differentiation in English Education: A Comparative Analysis of State and Private Schooling**

*Phil Nicholson*

*(University of Glasgow)*

In England, independent (private) schools enjoy freedom from and autonomy over many of the policies that govern maintained (state) schools. Some of the important yet largely unexplored freedoms afforded to independent schools relate to curriculum, assessment and inspection. Drawing on a comparative case study of maintained and independent schooling, this paper seeks to 'problematised' the different policy arrangements in these areas, viewing them as a 'major area of sociological interest' (Bernstein, 1971, 156). The paper aims to make three key contributions related to the development, shape and effects of policy differentiation. First, it considers the historiography and origins of policy differentiation, drawing attention to processes of construction, convergence and contestation. Second, it outlines and compares policy differentiation in its contemporary form. Third, and drawing on case study evidence (interviews, observations and documentation), it considers the effects of policy differentiation 'on the ground' (Ozga, 2000, 47). In concluding, the paper considers whether the different policy arrangements for maintained and independent schools perpetuate and/or mitigate the stark and deep-seated educational inequalities that exist between children and young people who attend these settings (Sutton Trust, 2025). In other words, to what extent does policy differentiation – the obligation (or not) to follow the national curriculum, administer national assessments and be inspected by Ofsted – enable independent schools to maintain their status as 'schools of power' (Reay, 2017, 44) and 'engines of privilege' (Green and Kynaston, 2019)?

## **Theory - Room 4.205**

### **Fractured Solidarities, Epistemic Justice, and the Politics of Knowledge in Mental Health Research**

*Victoria Nunn*

*(Northumbria University)*

This paper interrogates how voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations shape mental health research in England, not only as service providers but as knowledge producers. Despite decades of policy rhetoric on inclusion, their involvement often halts at "presence without power." Using sociological theories of knowledge, legitimacy, and epistemic justice (Harding, 1991; Beresford, 2021), I examine how authority, identity, and credibility are negotiated in cross-sector partnerships.

A comparative case study design explores two mental health research projects: one VCSE-led, one collaborative with NHS/academic partners. Methods include semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, analysed thematically and reflexively (Hopkins et al., 2024). A typology of five partnership models— independent VCSE-led, VCSE-led collaborations, academic-led delivery, balanced co-production, and brokered partnerships—structures comparison.

Methodologically, the paper reflects on insider/outsider positionality. As a neurodivergent trauma survivor, VCSE practitioner, and academic researcher, I navigate shifting credibility across institutions. Reflexivity is approached not as a checklist but as an ongoing negotiation of power, identity, and epistemic risk (Banks et al., 2021; Gillard et al., 2022).

Findings highlight a persistent "glass ceiling": community and lived experience knowledge is rhetorically valued but structurally excluded from governance, authorship, and dissemination. At a moment of turbulence across NHS and higher education, this research situates precarity as a sociological lens, showing how instability constrains equitable knowledge production.

The paper contributes to theoretical debates on epistemic justice, legitimacy, and the politics of knowledge, offering frameworks for more inclusive and sustainable cross-sector research.

### **'Really Useful' Public Sociology Knowledge**

*Eurig Scandrett, Maria Giatsi Clausen*

*(Queen Margaret University)*

Public sociology should aim to produce 'Really Useful Knowledge'. 'Really Useful Knowledge' was a slogan adopted by the radical movements for independent working class education in the early nineteenth century. It was a satirical repost to the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge', founded in 1826, (200 years ago) by Edinburgh lawyer and Whig politician Henry Brougham. For the Chartists, Owenites and (later) Marxists, really useful knowledge should be accessible directly by the working class, not selected and filtered by ruling class reformers with an interest in the reproduction of capitalism. The phrase continues to be used by radical adult educators and, it is argued here, provides a valuable methodological heuristic for public sociology. For sociological knowledge to be really useful, it must be accessed directly by social movements challenging structures of exploitation and oppression, unmediated by interests that reproduce such structures. The implications of this insight for public sociology practice is explored, drawing on the methodologies of radical adult education. For example, in Jane Addams' Hull House, public sociology resulted in the emergence of occupational therapy and the conception of occupation as 'everyday activities that people do to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life'. Such meaningful activities however become hegemonic and subsequently alienating. Drawing on dialogues with social movement activists following an 'extended case' method, we will explore how social movements have deployed really useful public sociology knowledge in challenging hegemonic, 'common sense' notions of what particular social groups find as meaningful occupation.

### **Selective Attention, Eurocentrism and Sociological Histories: The Case of China and Why It Matters for Sociology**

*Stevi Jackson, Jieyu Liu*

*(University of York, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)*

There appears to be limited interest in China from sociologists outside Asia. While there has been a welcome increase in work on China in international sociology journals in recent years, it remains relatively insulated from sociology as it is practised in the metropole. It is rarely engaged with except by Asian studies specialists, despite China's global significance, even when it bears on central sociological issues. The converse, of course, is rarely the case; the widely acknowledged hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship means that Chinese sociologists and sociologists of China are constrained to draw on concepts and theories generated from analyses of European/North American societies rather than from Chinese social realities and scholarly legacies. In this latter case, however, there are further issues. The historic dominance of other disciplines, at the expense of sociology, in multi-disciplinary China Studies and the patchy and selective adoption of western sociological perspectives within Chinese sociology often leaves Eurocentric theory unchallenged while simultaneously reinforcing Chinese exceptionalism. In this paper we aim to consider both sides of these imbalanced knowledge flows, taking account of the historical context of scholarship on China and the history of sociology within and outside China. We argue, on the one hand, that there is much to be learnt from China on issues of concern for sociologists and that, on the other hand, there is much that a sociology that engages critically with Eurocentric knowledge could offer Chinese sociologists and sociologists of China – as well as China Studies more broadly.

### **Sociological Publics beyond Professional Knowledge Productivism: Intellectual Life in Marianne Weber and W.E.B. Du Bois**

*Yufan Sun*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

Debates on public sociology, initiated by Michael Burawoy, have centered on how sociology relates to publics. Ali Meghji has recently reformulated this agenda by emphasizing sociological publics. I argue, however, that Meghji still treats professional sociology as the benchmark, assessing publics by their contribution to professional knowledge production—a stance I term professional knowledge productivism.

This paper contends that sociological publics cannot be reduced to professional knowledge producers. Drawing on Steve Fuller's sociology of intellectual life, I highlight three axes—production/dissemination, research/education, and professionalization/popularization—where the latter dimensions, often devalued in professional sociology, are vital to sociological publics.

Two cases illustrate this argument. Marianne Weber and her feminist contemporaries cultivated salon and publishing networks of popular dissemination that generated theoretical contributions outside professional sociology. W.E.B. Du Bois and the Jefferson School of Social Science exemplify how Black radical and workers' education traditions transformed popular pedagogy into a site of sociological innovation when Marxism was marginalized in the academy.

By shifting attention from the professional knowledge productivism to the broader ecology of intellectual life, this paper advances a more capacious understanding of how sociological publics shape knowledge as part of their wider public life.

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

### **The Impact of Reaccreditation on Academics Working in Initial Teacher Education in England**

*Aimee Quickfall*

*(Leeds Trinity University)*

In 2022, a mandatory accreditation process was enacted across the pre-service teacher education sector in England, the successful navigation of which would be a requirement for institutions to continue offering initial teacher education (ITE) beyond 2024. We surveyed 143 academics working in university-based ITE during this period, using an online survey to capture a range of their experiences of the academic year. In this presentation, we focus on the experiences of the reaccreditation process. The results show significant concerns about accreditation within this group, at individual, team, institution and wider levels, including workload, perceptions of ideologically motivated change and existential concerns for the sector. Taking a novel ecological systems discourse analysis approach to the study data, we conclude that the accreditation process has had a serious and negative impact on ITE academics. Whilst our focus is on one country, which is an outlier in terms of the policy, regulation and accountability of teacher education, there are national governments that have expressed an interest in carrying out their own provider accreditation processes for teacher education, policing, nursing and other professional qualifications, and this may be of interest to those working in those countries, and to anyone who has an interest the human impact of policy enactment, and in the future of pre-service teacher education and teacher educators.

### **Becoming the Higher-skilled Vocational Worker: Sector Prospects for 'Middle' Progressions to Higher-skilled Work in Early Adulthood**

*Karen Tatham*

*(University of Leeds)*

The career achieved in early adulthood remains one of the most powerful indicators of future life chances, with an English regional priority the creation of good jobs to address long-standing economic inequalities. Surprisingly, there is limited sociological attention on 'middle' occupations, or of the processes which shape, support, or constrain early adult vocational progression to higher-skilled work. Drawing from a mixed-method, three-sector comparative study of the construction, textiles manufacturing and digital sectors in Northern Region in England, a new secondary quantitative analysis of local skills and occupational groups shows 'the middle' is a more complex and important skills grouping than contemporary low and high-skilled polarisation narratives suggest, providing new definitions of mid-skill equilibria. Career sequencing challenges the normative policy representation of vocational higher-level qualifications as 'one-size', instead arguing vocational progression processes are intrinsically situated by sector. Qualitative analysis through a key informant approach illuminates diverse and distinct skills processes by sector, revealing young adults' vocational choices are bounded

by 'fast', slow' or no' higher-skilled vocational progression, where, I argue, 'becoming the higher-skilled vocational worker' is contingent on little recognised industry logics, norms, and understanding the sector 'rules of the game'. My study foregrounds the sector and the processes of early adult vocational progression through the 'middle' as a key site of intragenerational inequality. Challenging longstanding sociological tropes of the vocational, 'manual worker', and their prospects for higher-skilled work.

### **Gift Labor and Symbolic Power: Reproducing Exploitation in a Chinese Tutoring Institution**

*Teng Peng*

*(Peking University)*

An important tradition in service work research has approached the field from a "control" perspective, emphasizing how capital disciplines workers and customers at the bodily, emotional, and ideological levels, while paying less attention to the reproduction of exploitative power relations in the symbolic dimension. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic power" and Burawoy's labor process theory, this study examines the labor practices of teachers in a Chinese commercial tutoring institution to show how regimes of labor exploitation are reproduced through teachers' pursuit of symbolic power towards in relation to clients. The findings indicate that under the institution's performance evaluation system based on client retention, teachers frequently provide extensive unpaid tutoring—what I call "gift labor"—to parents and students in order to secure both economic returns and a dominant position in their relationships with parents. The uncertainty of "gift labor" compels teachers to engage in continuous self-exploitation to sustain exchange relations, while simultaneously endowing their economic actions with an altruistic moral value that legitimizes institutional systems of labor exploitation. The analysis also shows that teachers' success in building trustful and reciprocal relationships with parents through gift labor, such as unpaid tutoring, is a key factor shaping their emotional experiences of work. In summary, this study argues that analyses of exploitation and power in the labor process must incorporate the symbolic dimension of social relationships, moving beyond a purely control-based perspective.

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

### **Multiple Invisibility: An Intersectional Perspective on the Invisible Work of Palestinian-Arab Women in Israel**

*Maha Sabbah-Karkabi, Amit Kaplan*

*(Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)*

While there is extensive research on invisible work and its relation to labor market performance, understanding this phenomenon from the perspective of women in multiple hierarchical positions in the Middle East remains limited. This study, which uses an intersectionality lens to examine invisible work mechanisms, explores how Palestinian-Arab women in Israel from various social locations perceive, experience, and manage invisible work within their homes and how this shapes their participation in paid employment. Our qualitative analysis of three group interviews with Palestinian-Arab women from diverse classes and geographic spaces in Israel reveals overlooked types of invisible work shaped by gender, class, and space, intensified by large families and extended kin roles in a patrilocal context. The women were found to adopt self-sacrifice ideologies while seeking to balance paid and unpaid work; however, their perceptions of self-sacrifice varied according to class and space, particularly where these intersect with structural constraints. The study also explores the role of outsourcing and how social and structural inequalities shape access to this coping strategy. We conclude that invisible work is not a monolithic concept but is deeply incorporated in the cultural context, shaped by socioeconomic status and geographic space. Accordingly, we introduce the concept of situated invisible work, which captures how multiple, intersecting layers of inequality shape women's experiences of invisible and paid work differently across social positions.

## **Achievement or Comfort? The Impacts and Mechanisms of Family Economic Status on Gender Pay Gap**

*Hanzhi Hu*

*(Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)*

Previous studies found that advantaged families can help women achieve gender equality in education in China. But does it have the same effect on income? This study focuses on the changes in gender income disparity along with family background and the underlying mechanisms. Utilizing the data from the "Panel Study of Chinese University Students" (PSCUS) from 2018 to 2023, the study found that as family economic conditions improve, the gender disparity in income of vocational college graduates expands, but the gender income disparity among university graduates narrows. This paper further examines the underlying mechanism from the perspective of work values and discovers that as family economic conditions improve, women with vocational college degrees place greater emphasis on whether the job aligns with their interests and the working atmosphere when choosing a job, thereby resulting in an income gap with men; while women with university degrees pay more attention to economic returns and career development, thereby narrowing the income gap with men. When men generally pursue career development, women's work values are influenced by multiple factors, such as their family background, parents' values, and educational attainment, thereby contributing to the gender disparity in income.

## **Housework Performed by Women in Leadership Positions in Japan: A Mixed-methods Approach**

*Makiko Fuwa, Kuniko Ishiguro*

*(Tokyo Metropolitan University)*

This study examined housework performed by women in leadership positions in Japan using a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative analysis is based on data from the 2017 Japanese Panel Study of Employment Dynamics. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with female managers and entrepreneurs. Previous housework research has suggested that the impact of economic resources on the division of household labour can be complex and gendered. On the one hand, the hypotheses focusing on economic resources suggest that economic resources, such as being a manager, can be translated into marital power and, thus, female managers should perform less housework than those in non-managerial roles. On the other hand, the gender deviance neutralisation hypothesis suggests that women in leadership positions may undertake more housework to compensate for their deviation from conventional gender roles, especially in societies where traditional gender ideologies persist. The results of the quantitative analysis suggest that female managers spend more time on housework than women in non-managerial positions. However, the qualitative data revealed varied work-life balance situations among the analysed women. While some women have taken responsibility for housework and child rearing by deterring or giving up their career progress, others have made extra efforts to attain both work and life success. Other cases suggest women's subjective reflection on equal housework responsibilities with their spouses, but in fact, some women spend more time on housework. This study identified an intricate status and process of the division of housework among couples of women in leadership.

# PAPER SESSION 9

## 11:00-12:30

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# BSA Publications Special Activity - Lecture Theatre B

## **Navigating the Publishing Process: Insights from Journal Editors**

*Nadya Jaworsky, Chris Thorpe and Rin Ushiyama (CUS), Sam Hillyard, Rachela Colosi and Will Atkinson (SRO), Jill Timms (SOC), Laurie Cohen (WES)*

*(Masaryk University, University of Exeter and Queens University Belfast, University of Lincoln, University of Lincoln and University of Sheffield, University of Surrey, University of Nottingham)*

To publish in academic journals, it's hugely helpful to have a clear understanding of what makes a strong submission, how the editorial processes work and what BSA journal editors are looking for. This session, led by editors from all 4 BSA journals – Cultural Sociology, Sociology, Sociological Research Online and Work, Employment and Society – will provide invaluable insights into factors that influence the journey of a paper within a journal and what you might experience when submitting to a BSA journal. We'll also consider the unique features and differences across the journals to help you choose the right journal for your work.

With ample time for audience questions, this session provides an opportunity for delegates to gain behind-the-scenes insights into the publishing process.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food 1 - Room 2.219**

### **What's on? Understanding Class in TV Production, Representation and Reception**

*David O'Brien, Beth Johnson, Anna Viola Sborgi, Laura Minor*

*(University of Manchester)*

From politicians expressing concern over working-class exclusion in creative sectors, to BAFTA winners addressing class inequality in their acceptance speeches, class is increasingly visible in national debates about television. At the same time, academic research has been considering the role of class in the production and consumption of television. Here, academic work has demonstrated that class is crucial in shaping what gets commissioned for television, who gets roles on and off screen, and the sorts of representations of social class that are broadcast and made available to download or stream. Class is not only present in the 'cultural match' between commissioners and those pitching for shows and series, but it also shapes which stories are considered 'authentic, and how imagined audiences and markets for television products are constructed.

These public and academic discussions are the starting point for this paper. It summarises findings from the AHRC funded What's on? Rethinking class in the television industry project. Working with industry partners, the project explored the powerful, yet often overlooked, role that social class plays in shaping the UK television industry. The paper gives an overview of extensive fieldwork with TV workers, audience focus groups, and content analysis of on screen representations in two TV dramas. In doing so, the analysis shows the importance of class in TV, demonstrating the importance of who produces on what is made, and how audiences react.

### **Social Media as a Site of Black Feminism: Black Women's Digital Activism and Resistance**

*Jamila Thompson*

*(Birkbeck, University of London)*

This paper explores how Black women and femmes in the UK use social media as a space of creative resistance and Black feminist expression across the diaspora. Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X, users craft digital content that is both artistic and political — blending aesthetics and activism. Hashtags such as #BlackGirlMagic are collective practice, allowing Black women to build counternarratives to existing narratives which have historically stereotyped, degraded and marginalised

them. Whilst social media does provide a platform to respond to misogynoir, racial trauma and political issues, the digital landscape is simultaneously filled with moments (and movements) of joy, self care, beauty and community which are positioned as radical forms of resistance (#restisresistance).

Drawing on interviews with UK-based Black women aged 25–49 involved in digital content creation and activism this study explores how participants navigate social media to assert identity, challenge erasure, and build networks of care. Their practices highlight the tensions between visibility and vulnerability, resistance and commodification, and personal expression and collective struggle.

Using Black British feminist theory and digital cultural analysis, this paper argues that social media functions as a vital site of Black feminist knowledge production. It challenges traditional sociological frameworks that often overlook creativity, aesthetics, and digital life as legitimate sources of insight or knowledge production. In the context of Sociology's 75th anniversary, the paper calls for greater recognition of how Black women's online cultural work expands the boundaries of the discipline and offers new modes of knowing, being, and resisting.

## Culture, Media, Sport & Food 2 - Room 3.210

### **The Role of Family in Establishing Media Usage Patterns: Latvian Case**

*Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte*

*(Riga Stradins University)*

Families play a crucial role in shaping the media habits of young people. From providing and restricting access to technological devices and communication platforms to establishing routines and rules for media use, families create the context in which media practices are formed and negotiated. Although family communication in relation to media has become a more visible topic of inquiry only in the past decade, critical approaches highlight the importance of power dynamics. Media use in families is often embedded within intergenerational relations that involve stereotypical perceptions of user identities, leading to practices of bias, prejudice, and authority. This paper addresses questions concerning the patterns and functions of media use in family contexts, with particular attention to the presence of interaction, discussion, and intergenerational exchange regarding media usage and media content. We investigate how families in Latvia negotiate rules, construct shared meanings, and exercise influence over young people's engagement with news and socially oriented media content.

Methodologically, our study combines two sources of data. First, we draw on the analysis of one hundred family media usage diaries, collected in the framework of "family media day" by first-year students in a communication program. These diaries document everyday routines of media engagement within family contexts. Second, we analyze focus group interviews with parents, which provide qualitative insights into parental perspectives, attitudes, and practices in relation to media use.

### **Distinctive Parenting: How Families Draw Symbolic Boundaries through Children's Rules on Digital Usage**

*Abel Aussant, Andreas Roaldsnes*

*(Sciences Po)*

Symbolic boundary is a core concept in cultural sociology, explaining the basis of social closure and reproduction. Building on seminal work by Michèle Lamont (Lamont and Molnár 2002) and subsequent Scandinavian reconceptualisations (Jarness 2017; Jarness and Flemmen 2019), much research has explored boundaries revolving around cultural consumption.

This article proposes an original mechanism of symbolic boundaries drawing: parenting practices concerning children's digital media use. Relying on a large representative survey (N=19,180) of parents in the Vestland region, Norway, we investigate whether and for whom these practices establish symbolic boundaries between families. We first examine if parents express moral judgment toward families with differing rules on children's digital media use. Second, we determine how contrasting media-related parenting styles lead parents to prevent their child from visiting households with different media rules.

Using dimensionality reduction techniques (PCA, classification) and regression models, we show that social class and capital composition (economic vs. cultural) correlate with moral judgment on digital media parenting. Furthermore, the act of boundary-drawing is moderated by the exhibited parenting style and class belonging. Specifically, parents with strict rules on screen time and content consumption are more likely to establish boundaries with other families based on digital media use, as are families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. These results contribute to understanding the mechanisms of social reproduction in contemporary western societies.

### **Rethinking the Mannheimian Problem of Generations in the Digital Age**

*Siu Han Chan*

*(Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University)*

This paper will discuss how Karl Mannheim's sociological theory of generational formation requires fundamental reconceptualisation for understanding collective consciousness development in contemporary digital societies. While Mannheim's framework emphasised shared historical experiences as the foundation of generational identity, the paper will consider how digital platforms create new contexts for generational formation that both extend and challenge traditional theoretical assumptions about temporal scale, geographic scope, and consciousness formation mechanisms.

Through sociological analysis of platform-specific generation formation across major social media environments, this research will consider if algorithmic mediation, platform affordances, and accelerated technological change produce generational effects that transcend conventional age-based cohort boundaries. How early Facebook adopters, YouTube creator generations, and TikTok natives, for example, exhibit distinct cultural practices, communication styles, and social orientations that reflect their formative platform experiences rather than shared historical events will be discussed. How far platform experiences create new forms of social stratification based on technological competence rather than chronological age and if the digital generation has been flattened will be assessed.

The paper will explore how to revamp Mannheim's theoretical framework that preserves his core insights about the social construction of generational consciousness while incorporating analysis of mediated collective consciousness upon algorithmic mediation, global digital culture formation, and multi-platform identity construction in the digital age.

## **Emerging Themes & Special Events - Room 4.209**

### **Actors with Purpose: Shaping Evidence-informed Policy in the Civil Service**

*Jonathan Cook, Irene Skovgaard-Smith, Helen Fitzhugh, Kevin Daniels*

*(University of East Anglia)*

A lack of evidence-based learning has been identified as a persistent challenge in UK government policymaking. The complex policymaking system and competing influences such as ideology and public opinion present challenges to using evidence. Whilst the need for dialogue between research and policy has been recognised, there has been more limited consideration of the actions of key actors at the centre of policymaking. By understanding what shapes their attitudes and behaviours, we can add to the actor-centred perspective on evidence-informed policymaking.

The overarching aim of this ongoing research is to improve the understanding of how and why the civil service uses social science evidence in policymaking. Initial interviews (n=19) with civil service policy professionals and analysts, and outside experts were analysed thematically and abductively. This found that 'evidence' can include an array of types, but that assembling a case using specific ones may carry more credibility with decision makers. The way policy processes are constructed and perceived, and the interactions and influence of different actors within departments were found to shape the nature of evidence use. Departmental cultures can affect the importance and role given to evidence, and these

cultures may be influenced by leaders and by responses to the external policy context such as political volatility and contention.

The initial findings provide avenues to explore how actors may engage in purposeful work at professional and organisational boundaries to promote the use of evidence for different levels of policy decision and to affect broader cultures of evidence use.

### **Surviving the 'Impact Agenda'**

*Julian Molina, John Connolly*

*(University of Bristol)*

Debates about the future of the social sciences tend to orbit around the political stakes of articulating policy impacts and wider social benefits. Well-rehearsed positions about the 'impact agenda' vigorously itemise the effects of its normative expectations on academic knowledge production and the culture of intellectual life. This paper reads these debates through the prism of the social research community embedded within the UK government to ask: What impacts can social research and sociology expect to have on government policy? What should sociologists do when this impact is diffuse and intangible? Based on a mixed-methods study (including 43 interviews with UK Government Social Researchers working in central government departments and devolved administration), the paper reflects on a shared piece of uncomfortable knowledge: the social research profession tends to be perceived as 'Cassandra-ish'. Despite their institutional proximity to power and policymaking processes, social researchers need to draw upon a set of interactional resources to navigate their work being ignored, their professional expertise diminished, the research methods gendered, and their roles misunderstood. The paper will conclude with speculations about the critical potential for a renewed sociology of everyday social scientific work.

### **The New Age of Sociology: Digitellectualism and 21st Century "Knowledge"**

*Avery Benton*

*(Independent Scholar)*

Contemporary society stands at the threshold of what can be termed "late stage knowledge," a phase paralleling late stage capitalism, wherein knowledge production, dissemination, and consumption are deeply commodified. In this condition, the role of the sociologist, once heralded as a steward of critical inquiry, is increasingly subject to stifling of freedom of thought, public skepticism, and commodification of knowledge through AI. As knowledge becomes over-democratized and readily accessible, the distinction between fact and fiction erodes, giving rise to a new epistemological crisis defined by misinformation, disinformation, and algorithmic truths over social reality.

This paper interrogates the commodification of expertise and the shrinking space for meaningful discourse in Western democracies, where free speech is paradoxically both defended and constrained. These tensions are not new, but rather emblematic of cyclical historical patterns, as dominant knowledge systems falter as societies transition into new paradigms. We are now entering an era of digitellectualism. Digitellectualism is a post-intellectual condition in which artificial intelligence, digital echo chambers, and attention economies increasingly mediate what counts as knowledge. In this climate, critical thinking becomes a luxury, and truth a contested terrain.

Drawing from historical sociology, political theory, and digital epistemology, this paper explores how late stage knowledge marks a decisive shift in the production and authority of truth. It argues that understanding this shift is essential for reimagining the role of the public intellectual and safeguarding democratic discourse in a time of epistemic fragmentation.

Society is changing, but can sociology change with it?

## **On Being an Activist Archive: What Obligations Arise from the Materials in an Activist Archive and How to Respond to Them**

*Steven Speed*

*(University of Greater Manchester)*

The Working Class Movement Library in Salford, UK, is an activist archive which records over 200 years of radical organising and campaigning. With a similar purpose to those laid out in Sven Lindqvist's *Dig Where You Stand*, it aims to work as a self-help resource for working class communities to research their own history and raise class consciousness. This article focuses on archive research at the library over a twelve month period looking at the way local communities and activists have engaged in international campaigns. The paper will look at the library's historical role in campaigning and how this has related to its collecting.

Through exploring the tradition of international solidarity campaigns in the region and the interconnectedness of these campaigns. It also reflects on how the archive has been collected in a manner that both aimed to challenge the hegemonic arrangements of political relations and resist the pressures of bourgeois culture to commodify its material. With this in mind, the paper will question what obligations arise from these materials, that often relate to contentious and sometimes violent actions, and is it possible to meet their demands.

## **Families & Relationships - Room 4.204 Special Event**

### **Exploring Personal Relationships in Challenging Times: The Role of Family Sociology**

*Sundari Anitha, Katherine Davies, Patricia Hamilton, Lynn Jamieson, Lena Näre, Sue Scott*

*(University of Sheffield, University of Newcastle, University of York, University of Edinburgh, University of Helsinki)*

The world faces multiple crises; from increasingly grave threats to the environment, to wars and conflicts, the rise of far right and populist politics around the globe (Henig and Knight, 2023). As these issues unfold on the global stage, it has never been more important to attend to relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours and to consider how lives are lived through, and despite, such times. As argued in a recent *Families, Relationships and Societies* editorial (Churchill, Davies, Kilkey, Anitha, Carter and Walsh, 2005), sociologists of families and relationships have a central role to play in understanding macro global challenges as lived and experienced through our most personal relationships. In this session we explore and celebrate the commitment to exploring the radical interplay between relational processes and broader societal circumstances that has been demonstrated by sociologists of families and relationships. We discuss the theoretical, methodological, interdisciplinary and career challenges faced by researchers who explore 'big' issues such as politics, migration, racism, violence against women and girls and environmental crisis through the lens of our everyday relationship practices.

Led by Professor Sue Scott, this session comprises a panel discussion with sociologists who have been working at the nexus between the macro and micro, the socio-political and the personal, with regard to relationships. Each speaker will share insights from their research and audience members will be invited to join us in contemplating the future role of family/ relationships research in shaping our understandings of challenging times.

Chair/discussant: Professor Sue Scott (University of Newcastle)

Panel members:

Professor Sundari Anitha (The University of Sheffield) will discuss her work on violence against women and girls in the global south, pointing to the importance of a decolonised, intersectional feminist approach to shaping global understandings.

Dr Katherine Davies (The University of Sheffield) will discuss her work about how political times (such as Brexit) are relationally and biographically experienced.

Dr Patricia Hamilton (The University of York) will draw upon her work about how race impacts on parenting culture, practices and policies.

Professor Lynn Jamieson (The University of Edinburgh) will discuss the potential of friendship in generating social change, particularly in relation to the environmental crisis.

Professor Lena Näre (The University of Helsinki) will explore care and relationality amid the global migration and refugee crisis.

## Medicine, Health & Illness - Room 1.219

### **Inequitably Harmed: Understanding Equity and Diversity in Patient Safety**

*Josephine Ocloo, Gustavo Sanchez, Shone Surendran, Jade Gibson, Leah Noel, Shoba Dawson  
(King's College London)*

Patient safety is a central pillar of healthcare quality. Repeated failures across healthcare highlight the need to better understand how safety can be improved for all patients. Institutional efforts, such as the recently published NHS England Patient Safety Healthcare Inequalities Reduction Framework (2025), attest to the urgency of broadening understanding of healthcare harm in connection to issues of equity. Patient safety research can often obscure the social and cultural dimensions and epistemic injustices of healthcare harm, with its linear focus on clinical incidents. This fails to address the links between patient safety and wider discussions on social inequities and justice, impacting different population groups.

To address this gap, we are conducting a scoping review of empirical and grey literature published in major medical databases over the past 25 years. Our review, conducted by a research team of experts by occupation and experience, examines what evidence exists on patient safety harm and its impact on different population groups. We focus in particular on patients from marginalised backgrounds and explore what actions, co-produced with harmed patients and family members, can help address patient safety inequities.

Our findings will shed light on the relationship between patient safety and healthcare inequities, distinguishing between differences in health experiences and inequities that are unfair and avoidable impacting different groups. These inequities often stem from systemic biases linked to race, ethnicity, disability, age, class, gender, and sexual orientation. This paper will provide an overview of the evidence with the aim of expanding conventional understandings of healthcare harm.

### **Altruistic Rhetorics or Financial Incentives? (De)Commodification and Health Risks in Domestic and Cross-border Egg Donation**

*Jung Chen*

*(Academia Sinica)*

This study interrogates the paradoxical logics of (de)commodification governing egg donation (ED) in Taiwan and transnational circuits. Despite the legal prohibition of commercial ED in Taiwan, donors receive substantial fixed compensation (£2,230), creating a 'grey market.' Globally, the lucrative fertility industry increasingly recruits economically precarious young women, valued for their 'biocapital', high-quality oocytes, yet often provides them with limited information regarding the health risks of hormonal stimulation and oocyte retrieval. Drawing on multi-sited data, including interviews with donors, posts from a Taiwanese online forum, and the websites of domestic fertility clinics and transnational brokers, this article employs thematic analysis to examine recruitment strategies and donor narratives. The findings reveal divergent yet co-existing strategies of (de)commodification. In the domestic context, Taiwanese clinics and donors deploy altruistic rhetorics via framing donation as 'spreading love' to decommodify the bodily exchange and construct it as a morally righteous act of care, distinct from reproductive labour. In contrast, transnational ED operates on an explicitly capitalist logic, marketing

the process as a profitable 'working holiday' for 'highly-educated Asian young women' that reinforces racialised hierarchies of biocapital at a global scale. This study argues that, in both domestic and cross-border contexts, financial motivation and altruistic discourse are not contradictory but are co-constitutive, creating socially sanctioned narratives that mitigate stigma and grant the exchange moral and affective legitimacy. This article concludes by recommending the implementation of mandatory comprehensive risk disclosure in Taiwan and the development of transnational regulatory frameworks to protect donors from health and legal precarity.

### **The Hidden Epidemic: Under-diagnosis and Normalization of Menstrual Pain in Türkiye**

*Tugba Ozcan*

*(Middle East Technical University)*

Menstrual pain is one of the most common gynecological complaints worldwide, yet it remains systematically under-diagnosed and undertreated (Iacovides et al., 2015; Proctor & Farquhar, 2006; Coco, 1999). Despite prevalence rates reaching up to 90% (Coco, 1999), dysmenorrhea continues to be normalized both in biomedical discourse and everyday life (Markovic et al., 2008; Ito & Pascual, 2024). Recent scholarship confirms that menstrual pain is overlooked compared to other pain conditions, underscoring its invisibility within women's health research (Gagnon et al., 2022; Wilson, 2021).

Drawing on qualitative PhD fieldwork (2024) conducted in Türkiye, including 30 in-depth interviews and participant observation, this study demonstrates how biomedical encounters trivialize women's testimonies. Doctors frequently reduce pain to reproductive status (e.g., PCOS, childbirth as a "solution") and rely on symptomatic treatments such as analgesics, rather than exploring underlying causes (Ballard et al., 2006). These interactions illustrate testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007), whereby women's accounts are discredited due to gendered bias, echoing critiques of medical authority (Illich, 1976).

Importantly, normalization is not confined to medical practice: women themselves, socialized to endure pain, initially downplay their suffering before acknowledging its severity. This double silencing delays diagnosis of conditions such as endometriosis, sometimes for years (Whelan, 2007).

By integrating feminist theory with chronic illness sociology (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Bendelow & Williams, 1995; Martin, 1987), the paper argues that quantitative prevalence data alone cannot capture the complexity of menstrual pain. Qualitative methods are indispensable for uncovering hidden suffering and exposing the structural and cultural forces that perpetuate its invisibility.

## **Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206**

### **"Captive Data": Methodological Challenges and Opportunities in Studying Prisons through Social Network Approaches**

*Francesca Pallotti, Andrea Borghini*

*(University of Exeter)*

Prisons, as prototypical "total institutions," pose distinctive challenges for sociological research. Access restrictions, ethical dilemmas, and the bounded nature of social life behind walls make data collection and analysis particularly complex in these settings. While traditional ethnographic and survey-based approaches have yielded rich insights into prison life and culture, this paper argues that emerging methodological perspectives - especially social network analysis (SNA) - offer new opportunities to re-examine questions of social order, power, and identity within carceral settings.

Drawing on ongoing work that integrates ethnography and network analysis in high-security prison settings, the paper explores how network-based approaches can illuminate processes of social capital formation, group dynamics, and identification among inmates. In particular, it shows how SNA can complement qualitative methods by mapping relational structures that shape attitudes and behaviors, while also tracing pathways of social integration relevant to rehabilitation and post-release reintegration. At the same time, the paper reflects critically on the methodological and ethical dilemmas raised by

collecting and interpreting network data in such constrained contexts, including issues of reliability and representation.

By foregrounding the challenges and potential of “captive data,” the paper contributes to ongoing methodological debates in sociology. It highlights how combining network perspectives with established qualitative traditions can advance our understanding of the interaction between formal organizational processes and informal social relations that shape inmates’ experiences and behaviors.

## **Two Innovative Approaches to Accessing Voices of the 'Hard to Reach'**

*Richard Waller*

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

This presentation showcases two innovative approaches to accessing voices of ‘hard-to-reach’ research participants, which could also be employed more generally. Each was developed by researchers from Sheffield Hallam University, and I have both employed and supervised doctoral students using them successfully.

The first is Emma Heron’s ‘Listening Rooms’, whereby participants record a semi-structured conversation, guided by prompt cards, without a researcher present. Emma adapted the method from the BBC Radio 4 ‘Listening Project’ programme which ran 2012-2022. In my work I’ve recruited self-identified white working-class male undergraduate students, who then recruited a friend from a similar background who didn’t go to university. The conversations centre on decision-making regarding HE participation, and the anticipated impact that attending university – or not doing so – will have on participants’ jobs/careers and longer-term wider lives.

The second is ‘Round Table Analysis’, developed by Helen Parkin. Qualitative data (which could be from the Listening Rooms approach, or other more traditional methods) is analysed by a number of people identified as ‘stakeholders’. In my project these could for example be university admissions tutors, careers staff, widening participation officers or student union representatives amongst others. Each is assigned a few transcripts to read in advance of a discussion of all stakeholders, facilitated by the researcher, and asked to identify key themes within the data. All stakeholders then use these themes to analyse their transcripts.

Both approaches lead to the production of data and insights into it that a researcher adopting more conventional methods might miss.

## **Activating the University as a Just Anchor: Insights from Community Researcher Training in Birmingham and Gaza**

*Liam O’Farrell, Sara Hassan, Pakinam Hassan*

*(University of Latvia)*

Community-engaged research (CER) has emerged as a transformative approach within universities for generating meaningful impact, fostering reciprocal partnerships with communities and increasing the relevance of academic work. This chapter explores CER’s potential through two case studies that demonstrate the value of collaborating with trained community researchers. The first is an urban planning project in Birmingham, where community researchers collected data that informed a local 15-minute neighbourhood pilot plan. The second is a university collaboration with the Palestine Trauma Centre in Gaza, where residents informed research design, service provision and were equipped with skills to advocate for their needs.

By training local people to take active roles as peer researchers on projects that affect them, CER leverages local expertise, enriches data collection and builds community capacity for longer-term impact. Building on earlier work conceptualising the university as a just anchor, we contend that community-engaged research is crucial to activate the latent social, political, economic and epistemic capabilities of universities. Through embracing this community-engaged, training-oriented research model, CER enables universities to contribute impactful, socially responsible research. This chapter advocates for CER with a strong training component as a valuable framework for creating long-term partnerships that amplify research outputs, community capacity and social impact, urging higher

education institutions to invest in CER and establish meaningful, durable relationships with local communities as a core part of their research impact strategies.

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

### **Breaking the Silence: Reflections on the Lived Experience of Race and Privilege in Academia**

*Tahaney Alghrani, Katy Proctor*

*(Hugh Baird College)*

This paper captures the lived experiences of two academics who share similarities in age, gender, career stage, principles and moralities. They differ visibly, however, in the colour of their skin. Using a duoethnographic methodology, they explore their different journeys in to and during their academic careers which have been shaped respectively by race and privilege. Reflecting on significant world events that happened over the course of the year since they met, such as the 2024 Southport riots, the Islamophobic backlash after the appointment of Hamid Patel as interim Chair of the Ofsted Board, the exoneration of the officer who shot Chris Kaba, and the ongoing Palestinian genocide they argue there is a prescient and urgent need to challenge narratives that benefit privilege and maintain the status quo.

Presenting excerpts from their duo ethnographic conversations on the concept of "breaking silences"—facilitated open and honest conversations about the respective challenges, or lack thereof, they have faced in their personal and professional lives. Through dialogical analysis, Alghrani's documented experiences of racialised discrimination are juxtaposed with Proctor's reflexive examination of unearned advantages. In the face of a very public and contemporary global crisis in equalities and inclusion, this paper aims to confront and provoke stimulating conversations around race and privilege and the need for honest reflection on the experiences many people of privilege take for granted. The research contributes to critical discourse on race, privilege and social identity in academia while modelling collaborative approaches to dismantling systems that perpetuate educational inequity.

### **Irregular Mobilities, Forced Returns, and Post-deportation Reintegration**

*Geraldina Polanco*

*(McMaster University)*

Many Western immigrant-receiving nations have implemented deportation regimes to remove select non-citizen residents. The U.S. has been at the forefront of instituting mass deportation programs with the majority exiled to Latin America. With the 2025 overhaul of the U.S. immigration system, those deemed deportable has expanded, with the media daily reporting on previously unimaginable practices. This includes the forced removal of residents with protected legal status, unlawful apprehensions and detention of individuals for political organizing, the deportation of individuals to countries with no citizenship ties, and a generalized expansion of mass removal. This marks new trends in human mobility in what has been an established milieu of fortified borders and forced returns.

While most of these policies and their enactment are occurring in the U.S., they have cascading effects on the countries receiving returning flows. Drawing on 2.5 years of empirical research examining the experiences of individuals deported from the United States to El Salvador (including 125+ interviews, ethnographic field research, focus groups, and surveys), this presentation homes in on the distinct ways in which gender and age intersect to shape the reintegration experiences of returnees with a focus on lived experiences and governance structures. Recognizing the variety of migrants and returnee experiences, it addresses how socially located subjects experience the process of reintegration and the unevenness of reintegration opportunities, processes and structures. It concludes by offering policy recommendations for improving the reintegration environment for women and the elderly, situating these within strategies currently being taken up in the region.

## **Flags, Roundabouts, and the Role of 'Right Victimhood' in Reinforcing Racism**

*Natalie-Anne Hall*

*(Cardiff University)*

In summer 2025, amidst weekly protests outside hotels housing asylum seekers, St George's and Union flags began appearing on motorways, high streets, and painted on roundabouts across the country. In news-media vox-pops, a common argument given by proponents was that 'we put them up because we're not allowed to put them up anymore', followed by 'there are too many people here that shouldn't be'. This reflects two symbiotic logics of grievance that I argue govern everyday discourses around immigration and nationhood: anti-leftism and racialisation. While there is a strong tradition among sociologists of developing illuminating theoretical explanations for the latter's connection to anti-migrant sentiment, there has been less attention to the role of accusations of 'political correctness', 'cancel culture' and the alleged marginalisation of conservative values in bolstering these exclusionary mobilisations. In this paper, I draw on two UK-based ethnographic studies to advance the concept of 'Right victimhood', arguing that it is equally significant to contemporary racism as the better-known White victimhood. The first study was of pro-Leave Facebook users during the Brexit negotiation period (2017-2019) and the second the anti-immigration milieu across Facebook, X, TikTok and YouTube since the Southport riots (2024-ongoing). Both studies employ innovative online-offline fieldwork in recognition of social media's role in affective political entanglements. To the people engaging with this mediated exclusionary politics, their alleged victimisation (and that of British society more broadly) by an amoral and amorphous Left is strongly resonant, highly motivating, and a key explanatory logic for anti-immigration, anti-multicultural and Islamophobic worldviews.

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

### **Societies on the Move: Migration, Race and Everyday Mobilities in Northern Ireland**

*Emma Soye*

*(Queen's University Belfast)*

Migration. Race. Northern Ireland. These words perhaps bring to mind recent media footage of loyalist protestors engaging in racist violence, or politicians who paint the newcomer as a burden to an already-struggling post-conflict society. Academic and policy narratives fall into the trap of 'groupism' (Brubaker, 2002), describing tensions between neatly bounded 'communities' – once 'unionist' versus 'nationalist', now 'sectarian' versus 'newcomer'. Stereotypes abound.

This paper challenges simplistic framings by foregrounding the lived experiences of ordinary individuals on the move. Drawing on ethnographic research on the buses and streets of Belfast, Craigavon, and Derry/Londonderry, it offers new ways of seeing Northern Ireland and its journey into a diversifying future. The research shows how people's everyday mobilities are shaped by precarity, which intersects with sectarianism, racism, and digital intensification. At the same time, it reveals how individuals enact small, often overlooked, forms of support and solidarity that offer hope and the possibility of transformation.

By unsettling assumptions about identity, community, and diversity, this paper speaks to the broader sociological task of rethinking how we conceptualise belonging in societies on the move. In doing so, it contributes to wider reflections on the trajectories and futures of sociology itself – asking how our methods and narratives can better respond to complexity, and how sociological knowledge might more effectively provoke change.

### **The Weight of History: Theorizing Racial Wealth Divides across Colonial Legacies**

*Annalena Oppel, Mike Savage*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

This paper advances a transnational framework for understanding racial wealth divides by bringing the United Kingdom and South Africa into critical dialogue. We argue that wealth, as material asset, legal property, and historical accumulation, cannot be understood without centring race and racialization in

its constitution. Drawing on Cheryl Harris's concept of 'whiteness as property' and Katharina Pistor's analysis of how law 'codes' capital, we demonstrate that racial divisions are not incidental to wealth inequality but foundational to its logic. Our explorative approach challenges methodological nationalism in inequality studies by tracing how slavery and colonialism established enduring transnational hierarchies that shape contemporary wealth distributions. In South Africa, apartheid's legal architecture institutionalized racial property relations that persist despite post-1994 reforms: black households hold just one percent of white household net worth. In Britain, analysis of probate records reveals an intensifying racial wealth gap between 1958-2020, precisely during a period of dramatic aggregate wealth growth: a pattern that contradicts liberal assumptions about inequality naturally flattening over time. We thus theorize wealth as fundamentally temporal, operating through what we call 'the weight of history': intergenerational transmission via kinship structures, legal instruments like trusts and property law, and the compounding returns that enable historical advantages to accelerate rather than diminish. This temporal dimension connects directly to 'thinking sociologically with time,' revealing how we periodize change, inherit inequalities, and how histories shape present stratifications.

**"Palestine was...a litmus test...when I... make friends": Ethics of Friendship and Belonging within UK Universities at a Time of Genocide in Gaza**

*Madeline-Sophie Abbas*

*(Lancaster University)*

The unfolding genocide in Gaza has invited scrutiny on the permissibility of violence and the disciplinary mechanisms that have been used to silence critique of such violence within UK universities. Sociologists have raised ethical questions about the role and responsibilities of universities towards affected students. Less focus has been placed on the ethical and moral dilemmas posed to the formation, preservation and loss of friendship experienced by students resulting from their support for Palestine. Drawing from narrative interviews with Arab, Palestinian and/or Muslim students in UK universities, this paper examines the cognitive dissonance described by students resulting from the challenge of living two lives: one where the predominate 'business as usual' response negates personal impact and silences personal suffering and the other where the devastating impact of loss transforms the very nature of how friendship can be meaningfully formed. The paper argues that the question of Palestine is a litmus test for organising friendship based on a shared value system. Whilst this is often connected to shared positionality in terms of key identity factors such as ethnicity and religion, significant transracial friendships can be forged through a shared moral compass centred on Palestine support, but which requires reflexivity on positionality and power to speak on Palestine to avoid marginalising Palestinians. The paper provides an important intervention to sociological analyses concerning friendship, solidarity and the ethical and emotional drivers that make meaningful connections possible, as well as the structural constraints to belonging that engender feelings of loss, harm and betrayal.

## **Rights, Violence & Crime - Room 4.211**

**Criminalised and Disabled: A Sociological Criminology beyond the Crime**

*Chrissie Rogers*

*(University of Kent)*

This paper is based on my recent publication and provides a compelling sociological exploration of learning disability, mothering, and mental health within the criminal justice system. Through life story research, I reveal the stigmatisation, miscommunication, and injustices faced by neurodivergent men who have broken the law and mothers who have criminalised and disabled sons. I document stories of abuse, fear, exclusion, misunderstandings, harm, loneliness, alongside stories of hope and care. Criminalised and disabled men, along with their families, operate in a climate characterised by calls for harsher sentencing, especially for violence and sexual crimes. The men who shared their life story were not born to break the law; they were neurodivergent and learning-disabled boys who endured physical, emotional, and systemic abuse. Mothers with never imagined their lives would follow a path marked by criminalisation and the incarceration of their sons. They never anticipated the emotional and physical abuse they would endure or the lifelong challenges of caregiving and declining mental health. Harm and punishment profoundly impact lives, as does our response. Although many might consider

themselves unaffected by harm and injustice, these issues permeate every aspect of social and community life. I argue that understanding the socio-political context is essential. For example, experiencing stigmatisation as a child and then breaking the law as an adult is a personal trouble; encountering violence from a son, then caring for him while incarcerated is a personal trouble. Yet, crime, education, and violence are public issues rooted in society the moral and legal norms.

### **When Formal Justice Fails: Women's Use of Ifşa in Turkey's #MeToo Movement**

*Oyku Inal*

*(University of Edinburgh)*

This paper examines the recent wave of the #MeToo movement in Turkey, through the practice of ifşa: the public exposure of perpetrators of sexual harassment and violence, on online platforms. Ifşa, as a feminist practice, can be understood in parallel with Sara Ahmed's (2021) concept of "complaint," which identifies and challenges the abuse of power. Although these practices share similarities, namely, outing the person who causes harm and sharing a personal experience to make it part of public debate, ifşa is distinctive in that there is often no formal authority to which these complaints are addressed.

Recent discussions and criminal cases in Turkey highlight a lack of legal sanctions for sexual or domestic attacks against women, and a punitive system that no longer serves as a legitimate avenue for justice. In this context, ifşa functions as a form of complaint in which survivors address no formal authority but each other. Its aim is not to trigger legal action but to initiate collective sanctions, such as social isolation of perpetrators, public pressure on institutions they work with/in; creating a network of care and solidarity and the warning of other young women - aligning with Federici's (2018) understanding of information sharing in women's circles, which has historically been attacked under the name of "gossip". Drawing on previous theories and news sources, the study discusses ifşa as a distinct form of feminist resistance in contexts where legal avenues are closed to women.

## **Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205**

### **From Inclusion to Inspection: Digital Panopticism and Tactical Resistance to Algorithmic Governance in India**

*Rebonto Dasgupta*

*(University of Essex)*

India's rapid transition to digital finance, championed by the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Aadhaar, is globally hailed for its promise of financial inclusion. This paper critically examines the uniformity and interlinking of this infrastructure, arguing that it operates as a sophisticated mechanism of digital financial surveillance. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concepts of Panopticism and biopower, extended to contemporary algorithmic governance, the research frames these financial systems as tools of discipline that monitor, classify, and stratify citizen behaviour.

Through a multi-sited qualitative methodology, the paper aligns theory with fieldwork to demonstrate how the system's dual nature creates new societal frictions. Specifically, empirical findings from Karnataka reveal the irony of inclusion: small-scale traders who adopted UPI were retroactively targeted with GST notices based on algorithmic analysis of their transaction data, despite often selling tax-exempt goods. This punitive application of surveillance is not internalized as discipline but generates active resistance. This counter-conduct manifests as a tactical reversion to cash and the boycott of QR codes, asserting individual autonomy against the disciplinary gaze of the state. The analysis offers a crucial sociological perspective on how digital technologies, intended for development, simultaneously reproduce inequality and incite new forms of resistance in the Global South.

## **The Massive Roll-out of Urban Surveillance? Studying the Diversity of Digital Tools for Urban Security in Britain and France**

*Myrtille Picaud*

*(French National Centre for Scientific Research)*

Research in sociology about digital technologies and artificial intelligence for urban security has mainly focused on two elements. Firstly, how these technologies (may) infringe upon civil liberties and human rights. The development of surveillance capitalism is seen as reinforcing a society of control and preemption, causing pervasive surveillance. Secondly, others have studied how these technologies influence the work of police forces and its legal framing, with debates around their effectiveness regarding crime prevention. However, on the ground, many different types of urban surveillance tools are being developed and used (face recognition, “smart” CCTV, hotspot policing, etc.) by diverse groups: public police, private security, business improvement districts, businesses, etc. Little research has been devoted to this diversity: who promotes what digital technologies, to do what and where? This paper suggests that there is a growing differentiation of urban surveillance, rather than its unavoidable and standardised roll-out. Drawing on research in Britain and France (40 interviews with developers and users; observation of use cases), I first present different types of digital technologies for urban surveillance and the firms behind their technical development. These appear quite different between both national contexts. Secondly, I explain these differences, not only due to the legal context, but also to the different urban security environments in Britain and France and the types of security workers using the technologies. I conclude on the importance local political and economic contexts play in the social form technologies take, warning against a one-size-fits-all approach to digital surveillance.

## **Building Science Differently: Reshaping Professional Norms and Scientific Identities in a Chinese Startup Institution**

*Sining Wang*

*(University of Hong Kong)*

While much of the existing research on scientific institutions focuses on established universities and research centers, this study examines how a top-tier startup scientific institution is reshaping professional norms and identities in China. Drawing on fieldwork and in-depth interviews, this study reveals how the startup’s unique organizational structure and flexible evaluation system influence scientists’ experiences. In China, traditional institutions often operate under hierarchical team structures, where senior, middle, and junior scientists collaborate on some large-scale programs. Within this framework, younger scientists are frequently constrained by resource dependence on senior leaders and burdened by administrative tasks, limiting their academic autonomy. In contrast, the startup institution employs an independent Principal Investigators (PI) system, dominated by junior PIs born in the 1980s, with a smaller cohort of senior PIs born in the 1960s. This flat structure grants PIs full autonomy in managing their laboratories, fostering scientific freedom and research focus, but limiting mentorship opportunities. Moreover, unlike traditional universities, which emphasizes quantifiable evaluation metrics like publications and national titles (e.g., ‘Distinguish/Excellent Young Scholar’), this institution adopts diversified evaluation criteria, including international peer reviews and translational achievements. Scientists see themselves as partners in building the institution and share a collective interest in translating discoveries into marketable products, reflecting a more entrepreneurial scientific identity. These findings reveal how startup contexts shape scientific norms and identities, offering fresh insights into the sociology of science and the changing landscape of institutions.

## **“Mobile Immobility” by the Algorithm? Visibility and Marginality of Rural Chinese Women on Tiktok**

*Jingru Zheng*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

The digital revolution has reshaped socio-economic and cultural dynamics in rural China, particularly for women negotiating traditional gender norms and evolving technological landscapes. Platforms such as Tiktok provide unprecedented opportunities for rural women to gain visibility and redefine their

identities through digital participation. Yet these opportunities are entangled with structural inequalities, algorithmic biases, and audience expectations that perpetuate stereotypes of rurality.

This paper explores how rural Chinese women's engagement with Tiktok influences their "spatial reflexivity" (Cook & Cuervo, 2020)—reflections on mobility aspirations and constraints within gendered, socio-economic, and digital contexts. Building on Wallis's (2013) concept of "immobile mobility," it examines tensions between empowerment and exploitation in algorithmically mediated spaces. While Tiktok amplifies rural women's content, it often privileges performances aligned with urban consumer expectations, reinforcing rural stereotypes and commodifying cultural identities. Through digital ethnography and fieldwork in Zhejiang Province, this study investigates the practices of rural women vloggers and casual users. Methods include content analysis, audience interaction tracking, and interviews, with a focus on how online presence shapes offline opportunities for social and physical mobility. The research situates itself beyond the empowerment versus exploitation paradigm, interrogating how digital participation mediates visibility, marginality, and aspirations for (im)mobility.

By integrating theories of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006) with empirical insights from rural China, this paper contributes to debates in digital sociology and gendered media studies. It highlights the paradoxical ways algorithms structure agency, providing visibility while simultaneously constraining how rural women can be seen and valued.

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

### **Reading Stuart Hall in the Present Conjuncture: Identity and difference in nationalist times**

*Nick Beech, Angela McRobbie, Frances Rogan, Yuchen Yang, Ben Carrington  
(University of Birmingham, Goldsmith's, University of London)*

Stuart Hall's papers were deposited at the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham in 2017, and opened to the public the following year. In 2023 the university launched the Stuart Hall Archive Project, fully cataloguing the extensive collection, and initiating a series of projects to encourage scholarly and public engagement with Hall's life, work, and legacy.

This special event introduces Hall's archive and asks how we should 'read' Stuart Hall's work, as exemplified by his BSA President's speech of 1995 on globalisation, identity and difference. That speech, like so many others of Hall's, was thought to be lost but is available in handwritten form in the archive. In it, Hall interrogated the new social, political and cultural formations resulting from neo-liberal globalisation, and the forms of nationalism and new ethnicities into which diasporas were inserted. Crucially, Hall also argued for reconsidering the epistemologies of sociology in understanding these processes and the 'conjuncture'.

This panel discussion will draw inspiration from Hall's approach to reading Antonio Gramsci. We will 'delicately disinter' Hall's ideas from their 'concrete and specific historical embeddedness' to 'transplant' them into the 'new soil' of the present conjuncture ('Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', 1986). Using Hall with Hall in this fashion recognises that if his ideas—generated in response to the conjuncture of the mid-1990s—are to aid us today, we will have to carefully disinter and possibly reconstruct them for our own, crisis-ridden period. The retreat from globalisation has been initiated by nativist and nationalist political projects, within a world still very much 'on the move', when so many are migrating, diasporic, unsettled and working to find roots and routes to identity.

The panel discussion will begin with a presentation on the contents of Stuart Hall's archive, particularly the materials directly relevant to Hall's period as BSA President and Chair of Sociology at the Open University. This will be followed by critical reflections on the relationship of cultural studies and sociology, by both former colleagues of Hall and those working to extend and critically develop the project of cultural studies in the present, including examining new social formations, digital media, and forms of contemporary globalisation.

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

### **Schools as Brahminical Organisational Spaces: Everyday Practices and the Concealment of Ascribed Inequality**

*Vishal Vasanthakumar*

*(University of Cambridge)*

This paper explores how elite private schools in Chennai, South India, function as Brahminical organisational spaces, spatial settings in which caste hierarchies are not only reproduced but also rendered invisible to their beneficiaries. Drawing from nine months of ethnography and sixty-six interviews in three elite private schools, I document the institutional norms, policies, procedures, visual signifiers, mechanisms of exclusion and unequal incorporation, and “casteless” discourses that render these organisations normatively Brahminical.

Synthesising South Asian scholarship with Critical Race Theory, I position the Indian caste context as a crucial comparative lens for understanding how educational organisations globally manufacture social divisions—paralleling mechanisms of race, whiteness, and class in Western schooling. The mechanisms observed: holidays marking only Brahmin festivals, explicit encouragement of caste markers, vegetarian-only policies, Brahminized language, and spatially segregated campuses highlight how privilege and exclusion are institutionally constructed, policed, and defended. The production of such a space normalises exclusion, ensures that caste is seen as irrelevant, and sustains the conditions for “institutional ignorance”: an active knowledge object invested in not knowing, not seeing in order to maintain hegemony. Foregrounding meso-level processes enacted within schools, I demonstrate that schools are not passive links between individual action and structural forces, but are dynamic sites where inequality is made ordinary and invisible. By focusing on space and ignorance as core mechanisms, the paper advances sociological debates on the reproduction of privilege through organisations and the emergence of new logics, forms, and imaginaries of ascriptive hierarchies.

### **‘Quiet’ and ‘Loud’ Elites: The Visibility of Economic Power in the UK**

*Mina Mahmoudzadeh, Victoria Gronwald, Johnathan Inkley, Marta Pagnini, Mike Savage*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

The remarkable rise of elite populist politicians in the past decade poses pressing analytical, political and sociological questions. Central among these is: what does the resurgence of public prominence by economic elites tell us about the contemporary nature of power and legitimacy today? This paper addresses this question through a comprehensive study of the most powerful members of UK’s economic elite. We link a unique biographical database of these 541 individuals with analysis of media sources and public registers to systematically draw out the ways by which elites are consecrated, exposed, legitimised and made visible.

We argue against existing scholarship which sees contemporary elites largely as ‘quiet’ and seeking to avoid public scrutiny. We reveal two distinct groups. Firstly, a large, “quite” elite- mainly corporate executives and intermediaries- who operate largely out of sight, avoiding sustained public attention. Second, a much smaller “loud” elite, especially those with extreme wealth or political office, who court publicity, often presenting themselves as maverick outsiders, with this latter strategy often allowing elites to position themselves against the very bastions of economic privilege of which they benefit. This ‘power pincer’ reveals how visibility itself becomes a resource, enabling both quiet and loud elites to secure legitimacy and consolidate influence in different ways.

By shifting focus from elite composition and practices to elite visibility, this research highlights the infrastructures through which power is made public- or concealed- and raises important questions about legitimacy, power and the pursuit of strategic interests within contemporary capitalist nations today.

### **Who Gets Seen as Smart? Gender, Class Origins, and Peer Attributions of Intelligence at a French Elite University**

*Benjamin Brundu-Gonzalez*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

Connections and reputations formed at elite universities can open doors well beyond campus.

This paper draws on original network data (n = 258) to investigate how reputations for intelligence emerge among students at Royal College, a university that has long served as a training ground for French elites. Specifically, each student was asked to nominate those peers they considered clever, generating a network that makes visible how intellectual esteem circulates.

The analysis shows that gender is the most powerful determinant of intellectual recognition. Male students are far more likely than women to be celebrated as intelligent by their peers, even after accounting for academic confidence and grade achievement, and for relational processes such as friendship bias and propinquity. This advantage is reinforced across gender lines, with both men and women more likely to nominate male peers, revealing the depth of internalised gendered status beliefs. By contrast, differences by social origin are more ambiguous. While first-generation students are less often celebrated, these disparities are smaller and appear to operate through differences in academic capital rather than through residual bias.

Together, these findings highlight the unequal consecrating power of elite universities. Even among a hyperselected population, processes of intellectual recognition privilege men, continuing-generation students, and those best able to display academic competence, consolidating reputational advantages that may shape access to opportunities well beyond the university.

### **Studying Up Close: Methodological and Ethical Challenges in Elite Ethnography**

*Francois Schoenberger, Emma Taylor*

*(University of Oxford)*

Ethnography is a powerful tool for studying elites, revealing informal practices through which privilege operates. However, gaining access to such challenging fields relies on researchers' social capital more consequentially than in other research contexts. This dynamic intensifies role ambiguity, introducing practical and ethical challenges. Existing ethical models, from rule-bound approaches prioritising participant control to "un/ethical" frameworks justifying unauthorised exposure, provide limited guidance when friendship becomes data, confidentiality is negotiated retrospectively, or legal risk intersects with scientific interests.

We examine these dilemmas through two ethnographic studies: one in an elite British school, another in a Swiss investment bank. As "inside outsiders," we cultivated relationships with participants that simultaneously enabled entry and constrained disclosure, underscoring the limitations of prescriptive ethical rules.

Drawing on these empirical cases and ethical debates, we propose a reflexive framework guided by four dimensions: relevance to the research question, potential harm to participants, legal exposure, and personal ethical judgement. These principles help navigate complex decisions about data collection, representation, and omissions, positioning ethics as central to research design and practice. Importantly, rather than prescribing specific behaviours, the framework considers ethical judgement as an iterative process that requires continual recalibration as fieldwork relationships shift and data transition from collection to dissemination. By foregrounding these dimensions, we aim to provide methodological clarity and practical guidance for ethnographers, positioning ethics not as a procedural hurdle but as a constitutive element of research design and practice in elite settings.

# Sociology of Education 1 - Room 2.220

## Degrees of Value: Cultivating Privilege at an Elite University

*Fiona Gogescu*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

This study examines how students at the London School of Economics (LSE) perceive the value of their university degree. While existing research in Sociology of Education has focused on strategies used by pupils and their families to secure access to prestigious schools and universities (Demerath, 2009; Kosunen and Seppänen, 2015; van Zanten, 2019), less is known about strategies used during time at university to gain positional advantage. This is a highly relevant research topic, as recent university graduates are facing unfavourable social mobility prospects (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018), while attending elite education favours, but no longer guarantees elite outcomes (Wakeling and Savage, 2015). The research employs mixed methods, combining a survey of second- and third- year undergraduates with follow-up in-depth interviews. The survey captures students' perceived educational gains, priorities during university, as well as beliefs about factors influencing success at university and in the labour market. Students with different profiles — defined by the goals prioritised and their understanding of success — were selected for in-depth interviews to explore how they negotiated between competing priorities during their time at university. Findings show how under perceived conditions of social congestion (Brown, 2013), students approach elite higher education as a site for cultivating multiple forms of graduate capital (Tomlinson, 2017) so as to gain positional advantages over other graduates.

## Cultural Capital and the Arenas of Sociability: Revisiting Culture, Class, Distinction from Japan

*Shinichi Aizawa, Kentaro Hori*

*(Sophia University)*

This paper revisits the analytical value of cultural capital by engaging Culture, Class, Distinction (CCD) from a Japanese perspective. CCD posed three crucial questions: whether cultural capital can still be discerned in contemporary societies, how cultural fields are structured, and how cultural hierarchies reproduce social advantages. While central in Britain, these questions are reconsidered through a non-Western case, Japan.

Building on earlier work in which I applied CCD's approach to Japanese datasets, this paper advances the inquiry with a different dataset (SSP2010) incorporating a wider range of lifestyle variables. This shift enables a more comprehensive analysis and provides new insights into the arenas in which cultural practices may become capital.

The correspondence analysis confirms the familiar association between educational attainment and participation in valorised cultural forms, echoing both Bourdieu and CCD. Yet it also identifies a distinct dimension structured around community and religious sociability—activities such as neighbourhood associations, volunteering, and worship. This additional axis suggests that in Japan, cultural capital is not only reproduced through alignment with education but also acquires meaning when cultural participation overlaps with arenas of sociability.

Theoretically, this finding highlights the need to reconsider cultural capital as a context-dependent process. Its convertibility into symbolic or social capital depends on the arenas—educational, communal, or political—where practices are recognised and valorised. In particular, while education remains a central axis of cultural reproduction, the Japanese evidence shows that it cannot fully account for the ways in which cultural practices become resources for social positioning.

## **Towards a Bourdieusian-Heideggerian Framework: Techno-cultural Pedagogy for Social Justice in the English Classroom**

*Carly Waterhouse*

*(Leeds Beckett University)*

By moving beyond the deus/diabolus binary of edtech, I utilise Heidegger's (1977) framing and the turning to resist 'tech as tool' instrumentalism, foregrounding the importance of relational and embodied learning experiences. Placing these concepts in conversation with Bourdieu's (1986) habitus, field and capital, and the extension of techno-capital (Choi et al., 2021), I explore how technology access and valued practices structure inequality in the English classroom. Drawing on empirical insights from a four-week intervention that integrated immersive virtual reality technology into the English classroom of an ex-mining community secondary school in England, I share how students' techno-capital and agency grew, while teachers' uncertainty and infrastructural constraints persisted. It is the integration of these tensions within the Bourdieusian-Heideggerian framework that inform six principles for techno-cultural pedagogy: (1) challenge normative pedagogies; (2) value student voice and experience; (3) develop collaborative practice; (4) resist technological instrumentalism; (5) promote cultural and contextual relevance; (6) progress speculative, future-oriented pedagogies.

This presentation invites participants to interrogate the risks and possibilities associated with integrating imminent technologies into incongruous contexts and subjects. It also encourages participants to question, and reimagine, what counts as literacy, participation and engagement in the English classroom. The importance of the Bourdieusian-Heideggerian framework lies in its ability to reimagine the space of the English classroom as a site of possibility, where social justice can be enacted in everyday practice.

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

### **The Capital of Transition: A Quantitative Analysis of Chinese Students' Adaptation in the UK**

*Yi Tang*

*(University of Birmingham)*

The rapid growth of international student mobility has had a strong impact on the global education system. As Chinese students transition from their home country to the UK, they must navigate academic, social, and emotional adjustments within a new academic and social field. These transitions are shaped by enduring forms of stratification, as students' pre-migration resources, such as previous educational experiences, language proficiency, and cultural familiarity, may not be fully recognised or valued in a new context. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, I frame international education as a process of capital accumulation and conversion, where students' pre-existing positions and resources shape their ability to navigate a new academic and social field.

Using data from the Bright Futures survey (n=853), this study quantitatively examines how different forms of capital affect Chinese postgraduate taught students' adaptation in UK universities. Specifically, it explores the relationship between students' accumulated educational, linguistic, and cultural resources and the challenges they face in academic and social adaptation. The findings, to be presented, will illuminate how prior accumulation of capital affects students' engagement to the British higher education system and their cross-cultural interactions.

This paper contributes to the theoretical discussions of international student transnational mobility with the attempts of employing Bourdieu's theory of capital to this context. It also offers insights into the broader dynamics of social inequality in the field of global higher education.

## **Caste Bias in UK Universities: New Terrains, Old Hierarchies**

*Ritu Kochar*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

Despite UK universities' commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), caste-based prejudice remains unrecognised within institutional frameworks. This study examines how caste hierarchies are transplanted and reproduced within UK universities by investigating the experiences of Indian international students, who comprise a majority of the global international student population. The research employs Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and habitus to examine how social hierarchies are maintained through symbolic violence. Additionally, Pratt's contact zone theory of contact zones illuminates how hierarchies are renegotiated in international educational spaces. Data derives from 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews (2-4 hours duration) conducted in the UK, part of a larger comparative study comprising 80 interviews. Participants were purposively sampled from both Dalit and privileged caste backgrounds. I employ a cross-sectional comparative analysis with reflexive positioning as a female Dalit researching my community. Analysis reveals four distinct patterns of caste bias: (1) enforcement of purity-pollution boundaries in communal spaces through dietary segregation and refusal to undertake cleaning responsibilities; (2) academic stigmatisation through caste-based slurs and intellectual disparagement of scholarship recipients; (3) explicit caste assertions establishing hierarchical superiority; (4) institutional invisibility preventing effective redress due to caste's absence from protected characteristics under Equality Act 2010. Students adopt maladaptive coping strategies, including self-isolation and silence, fundamentally compromising their educational aspirations. The study introduces the concept of 'hierarchical transplantation' to theorise how inequalities travel across borders through educational mobility. Findings demonstrate an urgent need for UK institutions to incorporate caste within EDI frameworks, as current institutional neutrality perpetuates transnational discrimination.

## **Neither Here nor There: The In-betweenness of LGBTQ+ Chinese Graduate Students**

*Jiayu Shi*

*(University of Strathclyde)*

In recent years, Scotland has seen a rise in Chinese postgraduate students, reflecting broader trends of higher education internationalisation. Yet this movement takes place amid post-pandemic hostility and a tightening UK anti-immigration climate. Within this context Chinese queer students face a double bind: invisibility and erasure at home, and precarity abroad as temporary migrants (Cui, 2022, 2024; Huang, 2020; Tight, 2022). This study examines how Chinese LGBTQ+ graduate students in Scottish universities experience inclusion and belonging, asking how gender and sexual identities are reshaped in the UK's queer-inclusive cultural landscape and academic climate. Using a queer-feminist framework informed by Skeggs' (1997, 2004) work on gendered class inequalities and Crenshaw's (2017) formulation of race-gender intersectionality, the study draws on 20 semi-structured interviews with Chinese LGBTQ+ graduate students across Scottish universities, representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Drawing on these interviews, the analysis highlights how the uncertainty of temporary status produced strong feelings of in-betweenness, as students described holding cultural capital from both China and Scotland yet not fully recognised in either (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Racialised assumptions were also evident in queer spaces that centred whiteness, where the comparatively straight-passing embodiment of many Chinese participants, without visible markers of queerness more common among white peers, constrained their recognition and belonging. These findings point to structural constraints shaping students' everyday lives. These findings highlight the study's contribution. By foregrounding lived experience, it enriches intersectionality and queer theory by introducing a Chinese perspective underrepresented in Anglophone scholarship. Practically, it underscores the need for sustained inclusion and equity in higher education through equitable policies, stronger wellbeing provision, and enhanced community support structures.

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## Theory 1 - Room 4.205

### **Ageing in a Posthuman World: A New Materialist Exploration of Learning and Ageing in the Anthropocene**

*Claudia Blandon, Jocey Quinn*

*(University of Plymouth)*

The 2021 UK Census reported that 18.6% of the total population were aged 65 years of older. The ONS projects that by 2072 this could rise to 22.1 million people (or 27% of the population) (Barton et al., 2024). Moreover, older people (people aged 85 and over) is the fastest growing segment of the older population (State of Ageing Report, 2025).

Therefore, considering current sociological scholarship on ageing (Barrett et al., 2025; Cluley et al., 2021), this paper argues that it is crucial for life post sixty-five to be critically re-interpreted and reconfigured by foregrounding learning in debates on ageing.

Using posthuman theory (Barad, 2007), Stewart's (2007) learning affect and Quinn's (2024) invisible education concepts, this paper argues that people over 65 are learning subjects who are producing new forms of knowledge. This recognition is crucial for re-writing scripts of old age and frailty (Cluley et al., 2021). Using empirical data from interviews and workshops, this paper explores what people over sixty-five are learning, relearning, and unlearning in everyday life and the implications for their notions of ageing and flourishing. This paper theorises alternative ways of ageing that consider the role other non-human/more-than-human actors play in processes of learning and ageing.

This research is significant because by focusing on the more-than-human and engagement with matter, the paper demonstrates the entanglement of learning and ageing and contributes to conversations on posthuman notions of wellbeing and frailty (Boyd et al., 2023; Andrews et al., 2022; Andrews & Rishworth, 2023; Cluley et al., 2021).

### **Co-creating Worlds: Thing-power and Agency in Human-plant Assemblages**

*Clare Lesley Hughes*

*(York St John University)*

This paper examines how contemporary British wortcunners (from Old English: 'wort' meaning plant or root, and 'cunner' meaning knowledge or knowing) who hold animist philosophies, enact new materialist principles through their everyday interactions. Drawing on Jane Bennett's concept of thing-power and assemblages and Karen Barad's agential realism, this research demonstrates how plants and human practitioners co-constitute relational realities in which vitality and agency are not the exclusive domain of humans, but cut across ecological networks, shaping knowledge and embodied experience.

Based on a semi-structured interview methodology informed by a feminist "friendly stranger" approach and rooted in reciprocity and dialogic exchange, this study illustrates how wortcunning practices

generate vital entanglements where plant matter asserts an agential influence within human-led processes. Practices such as herbal tea ceremonies, intuitive plant selection for healing, a 'spiteful' nettle plant that always stings one's leg despite caution and acts of rescuing self-seeded saplings exemplify assemblages in which human and plant co-create outcomes. These encounters reveal the thing-power of plants, guiding decisions and shaping relational knowledge while challenging anthropocentric hierarchies and conventional epistemologies.

By situating these practices within an evolving sociological discipline, this paper proposes that future sociological inquiry could benefit from embracing the animacy, vitality, and assemblage-thinking evident in overlooked communities such as wortcunners. These practitioners offer a compelling template for reimagining sociological boundaries, highlighting the promise of more-than-human relational ontologies in contemporary social analysis.

### **Biosocial Theory in a Biosocial Age: The Politics of Biology Revisited**

*Des Fitzgerald*

*(University College Cork)*

A decade ago, multiple scholars participated in a claim that, as the world moved into a 'biological age' - i.e. as new biosciences such as genomics and neuroscience radically re-constituted concepts like selfhood, identity and collectivity – so social theory need to undertake a 'biosocial' turn to comprehend this transformation (Rose, 2013; Meloni, 2016). At the heart of this claim was the proposition that social theory could no longer be merely social, and was now confronted with the critical task of breaking down the barriers between cultural and biological knowledge. This was not uncontroversial: critics argued that the 'biosocial' represented rather a biological colonization of the social, a development that presaged a new reductionism and a new governmentality (Choudhury et al., 2015; Gillies, Edwards and Horsley, 2016).

In this paper, I argue that the broadly anti-biology or anti-interdisciplinary critique, often deemed less potent at the time, or which seemed untimely regarding the demands of the day, deserves revisiting in the light of subsequent developments. I situate this claim within three recent topoi within the cultural politics of biology: (1) the re-emergence of a hardened science of biological sex, backed by legislative fiat, within the anti-gender movement; (2) the re-emergence of 'race science,' as well as research on the link between 'intelligence' and racialization; (3) the emergence of an expressly anti-migrant form of biological nationalism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through these examples, I argue for now cultivating a more strategically negative, aversive relationship to the biological sciences from within social theory.

## **Theory 2 - Room 4.214**

### **Nonlinear or Postcolonial Capital(ist) Accumulation? A Case Study from India**

*Abdul Qaiyum*

*(Azim Premji University)*

The debates on the development of a capitalist economy in India have been dependent on the onset of industrialization, resultant capital and labour relations to explicate the accumulation process. The overwhelming presence of a neoliberal market in India has formed the back and forth debates on semi-feudalism. However, the problem with such a formulation is the lack of space or debates on how capitalist forms of accumulation can develop even in the absence of capitalism in the traditional sense (or the linear model of capitalist development). This becomes clear in certain forms of production systems such as aquaculture where there is a huge turnover of profits even though the mode of production is nowhere close to a typical capitalist production system. Rather there are various strategies of accumulation which are sustained by a scaffold of kin based and village level local networks. Further the investment of non-local capital in the business connects it to the larger networks operated by global capital. This paper would discuss the debates on capitalist development in the context of India and how global capital, with its drive for accumulation has made it possible for companies to invest capital in local economies with restricted (or managerial) role played by the state. This paper would explore the different strategies such as "straddling" and the changing "idioms of accumulation" (Carlos Oya, 2007)

facilitate such processes. This would help in engaging with formulations of postcolonial capitalism, and the dialectic of 'need economy' and 'accumulation economy' in India (Sanyal, 2007).

### **The Many-headed Underdevelopment: Theorizing Second-order Dependency**

*Viswesh Rammohan*

*(Central European University)*

Colonial Urbanism is the dominant theoretical lens through which the history of cities in formerly colonized countries is often understood. While offering a very useful typology, it falls short of demonstrating the various connectedness between the local and the global in the context of colonialism. Borrowing from the literature on dependency theory and specific aspects of world-systems theory, and moving away from a typology-based approach, I argue that that the study of a city in a colonial context can be understood in terms of three interrelated factors and these are: i) The role of Empire and the processes of capitalist accumulation, ii) The role of the city within the colonized landscape and iii) The nature of capital flows between the local and the global. Using the city of Madras (now known as Chennai) as a case study and by making use of archival material on labour, infrastructure and capital, I argue that the colonized landscape cannot be considered as a singular entity but instead is a fragmented one, elements of which operate distinctively. By placing Madras within this context and elaborating on world-systems theory, the paper moves away from the typology of "colonial urbanism" and offers a novel way of looking at cities in the colonies socially and historically. In doing so, the paper seeks to conceptualize the concept of a 'second order dependency' to theorize on the growth of capitalism and the understanding of specific cities within the historical conjuncture of colonialism.

### **Between Real and Formal Subsumption: Rethinking Conflict, Development and Society-State-Nature Relations in the Capitalocene**

*Calum Dallas*

*(University of Bath)*

This paper is a challenge to conventional developmental theory and policy that draws an uncritical parallel between state-building, environmental sustainability and economic development. Drawing from Ecological Marxism, Open Marxism, and Critical Bolivian State theory, this paper demonstrates that this conflation depends on an ahistorical and reified theorisation of the modern state that invisibilises its formal dependence on the externalisation of nature and the universalisation of the capitalist value form. The paper instead proposes a theoretical framework that builds on Marx's notion of formal and real subsumption of labour under capital, understanding the state as the culmination and standardisation of the latter. However, as recent scholarship has emphasised, real subsumption has historically relied on the expansion and deepening of formal subsumption elsewhere, typically through a core-periphery dynamic. While much of these tensions were outsourced during the industrialisation of Western states, through colonial and neo-colonial practices, they become increasingly apparent when a state-centric lens is applied to development in the Global South, in which the pressures of global capitalist accumulation combine to both limit the horizon of the state form and undermine it through the global demand for cheap nature. The paper will demonstrate these contradictions and challenges, using post-conflict Colombia as a case study, as well as suggest an alternative that understands the state and environmental sustainability as expressions of class struggle.

### **A World-Conjuncture? Thinking Conjuncture within the World-System**

*Vladimir Rizov*

*(University of Sussex)*

This theoretical paper explores the intersection between conjunctural analysis (CA) and world-systems analysis (WSA), arguing for their complementarity and capacity for analysing contemporary capitalism in its imperialist form. On one hand, I follow approaches to conjunctural analysis that draw on the works of Gramsci, Althusser, and Hall, while acknowledging recent claims that 'conjunctural thinking has been relentlessly historical in orientation' (Leitner and Sheppard 2020:493) at the expense of spatial concerns. I follow Hart (2024) who has recently articulated CA in terms of modalities, key of which is spatiality in general and the global in particular (2023). On the WSA side, I consider how Brussi (2022)

reads Ruy Mauro Marini's theory of sub-imperialism as a conjunctural approach within dependency theory. Tracing WSA's intellectual lineage through Marxist political economy and theorists such as Emmanuel (1972), Amin (1972; 1974), and Marini (2022), I seek to highlight WSA's relevance for the conjunctural analysis of imperialism, colonialism, and racial capitalism. Emphasizing the shared concern of both frameworks with structural and contingent dynamics, the paper contends that a combined CA–WSA approach can enrich the critical analysis of global capitalism today.

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

### **Indispensable Outsiders: Health Care Assistants in Mediated and Outsourced Healthcare System**

*Ruiqi Deng*

*(University College London)*

The restructuring of medical care provision in China, including increased outsourcing and mediated service models, has positioned Health Care Assistants (HCAs) as indispensable, if not primary, providers of hospital care. Drawing on the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in an urban hospital in southwest China, including in-depth interviews with HCAs and other medical staff, I will unpack how mediating and outsourcing mechanisms pose structural constraints on this increasingly demanding yet exploited medical care workforce. Previous literature highlights HCAs' structural vulnerability that manifested in precarious working conditions, including low pay and limited training. Building on these insights, I argue that mediating and outsourcing agencies exacerbate the vulnerability by monopolising HCA supply, blurring and delegating care responsibilities, and neglecting responsibilities for professional training and workload management. HCAs are therefore left vulnerable to low pay, insecure employment, excessive workloads without training and support. Lacking formal authority or clinical decision-making, they nonetheless bear patients' frustration and delegated emotional labour without recognition, are held accountable for outcomes beyond their control, and face possible fines from mediating agencies for bypassing them to deal directly with patients (care receivers). Attending to the intersection of shifting practical, ethical, and organisational logics in HCAs' labour, this study provides a critical lens to understand new forms of exploitation in the changing healthcare environments.

### **Skills on the Go: Exploring the Voices and Choices of Young Precarious Workers in Self-selected Work-related Training in China**

*Dichen Wei, Geng Wang*

*(University of Glasgow)*

Over the past two decades the growth in precarious 'gig' workers - those in insecure employment - has made them an integral part of the workforce in most countries. Whilst the rise in gig work has been viewed as a panacea for youth unemployment by offering much-needed opportunities to young people, it has also been associated with a degradation of the skills training process. In China, young people tend to be caught in a 'precariousness trap', remaining in jobs which do not offer them opportunities for professional development that could contribute to a positive transition. But there is a research, and consequent policy, deficit on how young precarious workers access and experience training. This study aims to fill that research gap and to develop policy recommendations for improving training accessibility and provision for these workers, which in turn would improve their lives, and the economic contribution they can make.

This study employs a skills ecosystem perspective to capture the issues of relationality, in terms of VET networks and connections between individuals and institutions. Data is collected by interviews with young precarious workers engaged in the selected programmes, training providers and policymakers. The fieldwork is conducted in Tianjin, once a leading city in manufacturing, commerce and trade. It now faces challenges in upskilling its workforce, and in regenerating and improving employment opportunities. The project provides insights on the ways in which precarious employment marginalises

young people in terms of accessing and experiencing training and impacts the institutional arrangements for training.

### **Manufacturing Uncertainty: Degree Apprenticeships and the New Legal Precariat**

*Caroline Barrett*

*(University of York)*

The re-emergence of the apprenticeship model for solicitor training—a historical echo of the original exclusionary, fee-based system rooted in medieval professional guilds—demands a re-periodisation of professional access. This market-driven Degree Apprenticeship (DA) is presented as a social mobility rupture. Engaging with the BSA's call to "think sociologically with time," this presentation explores how the DA intersects with the persistent legacies of professional inequality and commercial imperatives driving market-led change.

Drawing on a qualitative, longitudinal study of solicitor apprentices in England, this paper addresses the need to periodise access pathways to account for the structural emergence of the professional precariat. While DAs mitigate student debt, findings reveal a profound intensification of temporal load, where simultaneous full-time work and rigorous academic study create relentless occupational strain. This precarity is compounded by the geographic unevenness of opportunities and apprenticeships concentrated in regional or high-volume firms, echoing the stratification seen in the onshoring of "dirty legal work".

The paper argues that individual struggles are a micro-level expression of macro-level segmentation. Far from disrupting hierarchy, the DA route risks creating a new, lower-status professional tier. This paper calls for a reflexive re-periodisation of our sociological understanding of access and social mobility, highlighting how historically rigid structures reproduce inequality through intensified temporal and cultural demands on the individual, thereby reinforcing a two-tiered professional landscape.

### **The Working Practices of Refugee Entrepreneurs: Bricolage as a Strategy for Survival, Social Contribution and Self-actualization**

*Carolynn Low*

*(University of Southampton)*

The concept of bricolage in entrepreneurship research has been used to understand the creative strategies employed by entrepreneurs to combine and repurpose available resources in addressing new problems or opportunities in resource-constrained contexts (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Largely, this has been researched and understood as an economic strategy, although it has also been applied to social entrepreneurship as a means of creating social value (DiDomenico et al., 2010). This paper applies the concept of bricolage to an analysis of the practices of entrepreneurs from a refugee background who are involved in both commercial and community-oriented small-scale enterprises in the UK. It proposes broadening the idea from an approach to understanding enterprise start-up and outcomes, to a way of understanding the diverse working practices undertaken by entrepreneurs that may supplement and run concurrently with their businesses. Drawing on in-depth qualitative research with entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, this paper explores the nature of work for refugee entrepreneurs by examining how they engage in a portfolio of work activities (both remunerated and unremunerated) spanning commercial business/self-employment, social/community enterprises, paid employment, voluntary work, and education. Therefore, it is argued that entrepreneurial bricolage, understood in this way as diverse working practices, can enable economic survival and social value creation, as well as self-development and self-actualisation for the bricoleur. The entrepreneurs adopt these bricolage practices to counter their marginality in economic, social, political and cultural terms.

# LUNCHTIME SESSION

**12:30-13:30**

**Room 2.218**

## **Sociology in a Time of Genocide**

*Sociologists in Solidarity with Palestinians*

From US President Trump's 'Board of Peace' and dystopic AI-driven view for the redevelopment of Gaza to Israel's continuing bombing, starvation, and spaciocide (Hanafi, 2013), it is clear the 'ceasefire' in Gaza is in name only. What is our individual and collective responsibility as sociologists in the face of genocide? What is the role of sociology as a discipline, professional association, and intellectual spirit, particularly in the context of broader calls to 'decolonise' our work?

In this workshop led by the UK-based group Sociologists in Solidarity with Palestinians, we will explore these questions with an emphasis on praxis – putting our critical, scholarly understandings into concrete action. We will focus on two key areas: (1) academic boycott and divestment as developed by the BDS movement and expanded in the PACBI principles and (2) academic engagement against scholasticide inspired by the call of the Emergency Committee of Universities in Gaza. We will explore the synergies and tensions between symbolic acts and material solidarity, reflect on the relationship between grassroots activities and professional/institutional change, and discuss challenges in the face of silencing and repression of solidarity with Palestine in our universities and beyond.

Please note that lunch will be saved for delegates attending this session.

# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

14:00-15:00

Lecture Theatre B

## SOCIOLOGY'S PAST AND FUTURE: 75 YEARS OF THE BSA

Les Back, *University of Glasgow, BSA President*

Chaired by Vanessa May, *University of Manchester, BSA Publications Trustee*

By looking back at the keynotes of past BSA Presidents, Les Back takes stock of sociologists' changing priorities over the past 75 years. Through doing so, he will argue for the value of association and sociology as a shared craft in the context of the attacks on Higher Education in our current moment. He explores the paradox that, while sociologists are losing their jobs across the UK because of cuts to Higher Education, studying sociology is more popular than ever in schools. He will talk about his experience visiting schools and conducting outreach in his role as BSA President. He will offer a portrait of what today's students look for and hope for in studying sociology theoretically and imaginatively. The sociological invitation to live in doubt in the service of understanding is particularly precious given the global circulation of disinformation and lies. Sociology's great gift in this context is its capacity to weigh and judge information and evidence that circulate in a digital environment at unprecedented scale and speed. During such dark times, he will argue that there are still more opportunities than ever to practice sociology innovatively, and he will conclude by making a case for sociology's value and values as a listener's art and a sociable science in the service of freedom and justice.



**Les Back** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Glasgow. He is also a journalist, broadcaster and musician. His published work is mainly in the areas of the sociology of race and racism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, urban culture, music and sport. His book *Migrant City* (Routledge, 2018) (co-authored with Shamsar Sinha, Charlynnne Bryan, Vlad Baraka & Mardoche Yembi) develops an experimental mode of co-creation in which research participants are also credited as authors. In 2022, he published *The Unfinished Politics of Race* (University of Cambridge Press, 2022) with colleagues Michael Keith, John Solomos & Kalbir Shukra.

This Presidential Address is sponsored by Sage Publishing.



# BREAKTIME SESSION

**15:00-19:00**

**Meeting Point:**

**Entrance to University Place on Oxford Road**

## **Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions Study Group Launch Event: Activist Archive Tour and Workshop**

*Birgan Gokmenoglu, Steven Speed, Camilo Tamayo Gomez*

*(Birmingham City University, University of Greater Manchester, University of Huddersfield)*

Come and discover the international solidarity collections at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford during the BSA 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference.

The event will start at 15:30 but we will meet at 15:00, after the Presidential Address, at the entrance to the University Place building on Oxford Road, from where we will get a bus to the library. Following the tour and workshop, there will be a short introduction to the ASMR group and a social event to celebrate our launch.

The event will be a part of the launch of the BSA Activism, Social Movements and Revolutions (ASMR) study group and will be of interest to scholars of social movements, grassroots politics, social justice and socio-political change.

The Working Class Movement Library is an activist archive which records over 200 years of organising and campaigning. A significant aspect of this collection comes from activists who have engaged with international struggle, examples of which include Irish Independence, South African Apartheid, Pan-Africanism, American Civil Rights and Spanish Civil War.

This tour and workshop will explore the tradition of international solidarity in the region and the interconnectedness of these campaigns. It will look at the library's historical role in campaigns and as a place of learning and organising. It also considers how its founders collected in a manner that both aimed to challenge the hegemonic arrangements of political relations and resist the pressures of bourgeois culture to commodify its material and will question if this is still possible in 2026.

Alongside the tour there will be a short workshop looking at materials from the library's archive to the Spanish Civil War and International Brigades who fought Fascism in Spain. Their collection includes letters, photographs, diaries and a beautiful collection of rare Spanish Civil War political posters.

This event has limited availability so booking required: Please visit the [Study Group website](#) for more information and to book.

# PAPER SESSION 10

## 15:15-16:45

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# Cities, Mobilities, Place & Space - Room 3.211

## Empire, Caste and Urban Development

*Jusmeet Singh Sihra*

*(University of Cambridge)*

How is urban development shaped during the British Raj? Addressing this question highlights micropolitics that shape the making of urban infrastructure, a veritable gap in the literature. More broadly, it informs us how social boundaries affect the making of cities historically. As part of my query into historical and urban sociology, I use primary archival resources composed of reports, exchange of official letters, petitions, and memos from 1896 to 1911 to uncover the history of the construction of Madar Kund, a water reservoir, in Ajmer, India. While British administrators envisioned the reservoir as a vegetable market, mercantile castes – Baniyas and Jains – used their financial clout to repurpose it as a Dharamshala, a charitable lodging for pilgrims. The Baniyas and Jains prevailed. Their success, however, complicates colonial binaries of the oppressed 'native' resisting and the imperial coloniser oppressing. Following Achille Mbembe, the micropolitics of urban development show how these encounters "often produced paradoxical situations" (2000). The "caste-state nexus" (Vishwanath 2014) produced unexpected outcomes: the 'native' member of the Municipal Committee did not support the making of the Dharamshala, whereas it was a high-ranking British official who ensured that the Dharamshala be constructed, against the will of the British officials in Ajmer. This research advances postcolonial urban theory by foregrounding caste-inflected micropolitics in colonial infrastructural development.

## Strategic Memory and Urban Legitimacy: Intergenerational Marwari Identity in the Longue Durée of Bihar

*Ritika Choudhary*

*(Jawaharlal Nehru University)*

This paper addresses the Cities, Mobilities, Place and Space theme by examining the multi-generational paradox of the Marwari diaspora in urban India. The Marwari identity is analysed as a highly mobile, diasporic construct (Hardgrove, 2007) whose social solidarity faces intense internal pressure across generations (Harrison, 1960). The study focuses on the historically crucial but critically understudied community in Bihar, which has maintained its distinct identity since the 19th century (Lakshmi & Jha, 2014) amidst intense urban churn.

The research is guided by two specific questions

1. How is a durable sense of belongingness and place-making constructed and maintained by 2nd and 3rd generation Marwari migrants in Patna, Bihar?
2. What memory banks (e.g., historical philanthropy, entrepreneurial legacy) are strategically mobilized to establish a resilient positionality and urban legitimacy in the host space?

The central claim, drawing on Kapila's concept of the "strategic relic" (2023), is that as economic mobility shifts from trade to new-age sectors, the community's historical memory is actively resignified as political and social capital. This deliberate deployment of the past mediates the tension between strong ethnic cohesion and the necessity of urban assimilation. This process ensures the "coherence of [Marwari-ness] alive and non-nostalgic" (Kapila, 2023).

The methodology employs deep, situated ethnography and semi-structured interviews across generational cohorts in Patna, capital city of Bihar, enhanced by insider access of the researcher. This work contributes to urban and diaspora anthropology by detailing how the strategic mobilization of memory structures the *longue durée* of migrant place-making in the Global South.

## **Learning from History? Municipal Radicalism in Edinburgh and Lothian in the 1980s**

*Gareth Mulvey*

*(University of Glasgow)*

Scotland has a history of municipalism that has not been told. There has been considerable academic work on the radical Councils in England in the 1980s, but historical analyses have been blind to the specificities of Scotland. Excellent book length contributions by Gyford (1985) and Boddy and Fudge (1984) makes only fleeting reference to developments in Scotland. And in searches of work on radical municipalism in Scotland almost nothing turns out to have been written, even though a number of Local Authorities in Scotland in the 1980s were elected and attempted to govern with a range of more or less radical policies and practices. The focus here is on Edinburgh District Council and Lothian Regional Council. These were two Local Authorities that had real political battles between right and left before, during and after the 1980s. They were, Edinburgh more than Lothian, seen as conservative areas, and yet they elected radical councils in 1984 and 1986. The question then is why a radical socialist leadership was able to gain power there, and not in, for example, Labour heartlands of Glasgow and Strathclyde. This paper provides some tentative answers to that but also seeks to discuss how these Councils won power, and look at what they did with it, and any legacies still evident today.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food 1 - Room 2.219**

### **Exploring Muslim Women's Experiences as Sports Spectators in Malaysia: An Intersectional Perspective**

*Fatin Nabilah Azren*

*(Leeds Beckett University)*

Muslim women face unique barriers as spectators at sports events, including cultural, religious, financial, and accessibility challenges. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, their experiences remain underexplored, particularly in the Malaysian context, where cultural diversity and Islamic identity strongly shape leisure practices. This study addresses this gap by combining Intersectionality Theory and the Halal Tourism framework to examine how overlapping identities such as gender, religion, age, marital status, financial status, and parenthood interact to influence women's participation, access, and sense of belonging.

The research draws on 38 semi-structured online interviews with Muslim women from diverse life stages and socio-economic backgrounds. Data collection is complete, and thematic analysis is underway using NVivo software. Preliminary findings reveal four interrelated themes: (1) Expressions of Religious Identity, including modesty, prayer obligations, and halal considerations; (2) Gendered Spaces in Spectatorship, focusing on comfort, safety, surveillance, and sport type preferences; (3) Access and Participation Barriers, shaped by affordability, cultural expectations, and logistical challenges; and (4) Experiences and Social Support in Spectatorship, highlighting the role of family, peers, and community networks.

The study's originality lies in advancing halal tourism by integrating intersectionality, moving beyond a mono-dimensional approach. This dual framing connects practical needs with cultural and religious expectations, offering fresh insights into inclusivity in sports and leisure. The findings contribute conceptually by extending sociological debates on gender, religion, and leisure, while also offering practical guidance for designing more accessible, inclusive, and culturally sensitive sporting events.

### **"...it's like they've just left us.": Exploring the Experiences of Women of Colour Football Referees in England**

*Allison Thompson*

*(University of Leicester)*

This project is the first to examine the experiences of women of colour who are football referees in England. Attention is paid specifically to the ways in which their racialised and gendered identities shape their lived experiences within the game. Despite increased participation of women in football over the

past few decades, there remains a dearth of empirical research that widens knowledge on the specific challenges facing referees who are women of colour. This talk reports on my PhD study which is the first to directly attempt to respond to this lacuna.

Drawing on qualitative interview data with over 25 women match officials of colour operating at the grassroots and professional levels of men and women's football in England, preliminary findings show: (1) The limited effects of targeted interventions for improving pathways for development, as women of colour experience hyper-invisibility due to gender equity in refereeing largely focusing on the exclusions faced by White women. Likewise, racial diversity policies for referee development were seen to focus almost exclusively on men of colour. (2) Lack of representation at governance levels in football translate into perceptions of a generally low priority given to their experiences of exclusion in terms of access and development, and (3) They receive higher levels of gender and race based scrutiny and criticism from players, coaches and club officials.

The talk concludes by sharing some of the emergent preliminary recommendations for improving access and career development for current and future generations of referees who are women of colour.

### **Gender Inequalities in Sport: Exploring the Experiences of Women Coaches**

*Urszula Wolski*

*(Buckinghamshire New University)*

Despite a continued growth for women in many sports, including those traditionally seen as rooted in the male domain (Lake, 2012), sports remain gendered and stereotypical, and even more so when looking at coaching in sport. In this gendered division in sport, coaching opportunities remain limited in women's sports and are mostly absent in men's sports (Walker and Bopp, 2011). Coaches are still vastly under-represented, and the coaching profession remains a white male-dominated occupation in which women are marginalised, bullied, harassed, and excluded (Norman and Rankin-Wright, 2018). According to Norman (2022), a third of coaches are female and the gender disparity becomes greater as the coaching pathway narrows. It can be argued, therefore, that roles continue to be reinforced in accordance with Connell's (1987, 1995) concepts of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity'.

However, as shown in previous research and current research (Wolski, 2019 – 2025), this is a slow but changing landscape. Previous research which looked at the experiences of women tennis coaches in the UK, found that some coaches continue to experience sexism, and discrimination, within their professions. Key themes identified were stereotyping, the lack of role models and feeling excluded from the 'Boys' Club'. Further research built on this and was broadened to explore the experiences of women coaches in other sports in different countries. Current research focuses on four sports: basketball, cricket, netball, and rugby.

Research comprised a mixed methods approach consisting of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Key findings will be presented at the conference.

### **'One thing African [women's] teams always show is their pace and power!': Misogynoir, Whiteness and Mediated (Re)Constructions of Black and White Women Footballers in Soccer Matchday Commentary**

*Paul Campbell, Allison Thompson*

*(University of Leicester)*

This paper is the first to examine how praise comments and narratives within women's soccer matchday commentary differ for Black and White female footballers and the ways these mediated framings reproduce the misogynoir logics that shape Black and White women's experiences within the sport.

We draw on approximately 4800-minutes of matchday commentary gleaned from all 52 televised matches at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup Finals (on the British Broadcasting Corporation), to conduct a systematic exploration of the variations in verbiage used by commentary teams to praise and describe the on-field actions, performances, behaviours, talent, and physical appearances of women soccer players from different racialised backgrounds.

Our findings show: (1) clear differences in the ways in which visibly Black and White women soccer players were praised and discussed, which align with ‘natural athlete’ discourses. (2): That natural athlete framings became more pronounced when Black and White women played alongside each other. (3) The natural athlete frame when applied to women extended to include talk about perceived inherent emotional dispositions, that were demarcated by race. (4) The othering of Black women footballers also occurred via a consistent over-celebration of aspects of Black sports-womanhood and fandom as ‘exotic’.

## **Culture, Media, Sport & Food 2 - Room 3.210**

### **Toward a Theory of Platform-based Cultural Production**

*Eric Lin*

*(University of Bristol)*

This paper advances a Bourdieusian field theoretical account of online platform-mediated cultural markets. This entails conceptualising platform content, such as videos on TikTok or YouTube, as symbolic goods—cultural objects carrying differentiated symbolic value as taste markers. Their genesis involves two dimensions: internally, through agents’ struggles over capital and the principle of ‘misrecognition’ within the field of cultural production; externally, through the cultural production field’s positioning relative to other fields in the field of power. Whilst platformisation’s transformation of cultural practices necessitates theoretical renewal, existing attempts to digitalise Bourdieu’s framework remain limited: they either artificially segregate online/offline realms, neglecting how established social contexts shape digital practices; or they overlook how a platform’s technological materiality configures cultural production trajectories. Addressing these shortcomings, the present paper proposes a three-dimensional analytical framework. First, examine technology companies as agents in economic fields, analysing their strategic positioning at the intersection of local/global market axes and autonomy/heteronomy poles. Second, explore how regulatory pressures and market demands arising from positioning in the economic field shape platform companies’ architectural design decisions. These architectures matter because their technological materiality define what creative practices are possible or constrained; such technological parameters interact with creators’ existing habitus to collectively shape cultural production strategies. Finally, investigate platform users’ exertion of ‘field effects’ through creative practices—the capacity to obtain recognition as sharing common stakes. This mechanism defines which content creators qualify as legitimate cultural production field members within the context of presumption, whilst establishing new criteria for approximating agents’ relative field positions.

### **From Lifestyle to Feminism: Identity and Fragile Collectivity on Digital Platforms**

*Li Zhou*

*(University of Chicago)*

Social media platforms appear to expand feminist collectivity, but the commercial, algorithmic, and political logics through which creators must remain viable continually question and destabilize these possibilities. While existing literature highlights the articulation of feminist identity for visibility and commercialization, or emphasizes how platforms constrain feminist expression, less attention has been paid to how such identities shift across genres and are negotiated, contested, and sustained under platform conditions. This paper brings together theories of collective action and Davis’s mechanism-and-condition framework of affordances to examine how feminist collectivity is constructed and destabilized under platform architectures, contingent on creators’ articulation and cultural legitimacy.

I illustrate this dynamic through a case study of one Chinese lifestyle creator who shifted towards feminist content production. Drawing on interview and content analysis, I show how she sustained a fluid persona rooted in her move from lifestyle to feminist genres, shaped partly by algorithmic preference and relative freedom from commercialization pressure, while avoiding explicit self-identification as a feminist. This flexibility deflected backlash and invited audiences to co-construct her identity. In doing so, it generated moments of collective resonance, but these collectivities remained precarious: they repeatedly recentered onto the creator herself, positioning her as a spokesperson for feminist publics under constant scrutiny for “real” feminism.

Feminist collectivity emerging through individual creators thus appears fragile and recursive, raising broader questions about how platform infrastructures reshape the conditions under which collective politics can be enacted.

### **The People versus the Media? The Media-Audience Relationship as a Critical Site of Cultural Struggle**

*Nadia Haq*

*(Cardiff University)*

Research highlights how negative, discriminatory media narratives about marginalised, minority groups are increasingly amplified through the digitalisation of news media. But what happens when discontented audiences as active publics resist and contest the growing pervasiveness of disinformation and narratives promoting hatred and division in the news media? I investigate this question by situating the media-audience relationship as a critical, under-researched site of cultural struggle. Focusing on key media activist groups in the UK, I employ a case study analysis that incorporates qualitative interviews and surveys with activist supporters to explore how these groups engage the public to challenge media narratives regarding vulnerable and marginalised communities. As well as considering the strategies employed by these activist groups, I assess their successes in mobilising audiences to challenge systemic biases entrenched within mainstream media systems. By bridging the missing cultural component in existing media research to better comprehend how digital audiences can act in culturally meaningful ways, the findings moves beyond an examination of how audience agency can reform and shape media structures to the study of social movements and the influence of digital activism to reform wider socio-political power structures and systems. By positioning audiences as a diverse group of active publics with more spaces to intervene in an increasingly digital media landscape, the research offers an urgent intervention into contemporary scholarship on how everyday people can challenge the powerful media institutions that shape their own mediated socio-political and cultural realities, and the wider implications for journalism overall.

### **Museumising Sovereignty: What National Museums Teach Sociology about National Identity?**

*Andi Haxhiu*

*(University of Business and Technology)*

Despite nationalism's enduring status as a core sociological concern, the discipline has consistently overlooked the role of museums in shaping national identity. Nationalism studies' have privileged the analysis of political elites, wars, and media, while relegating heritage institutions and material culture to the margins. This paper argues that museums constitute a disciplinary blind spot that offers new insights into how nations narrate sovereignty.

Focusing on case studies within the United Kingdom, I examine how national museums materialise identity through exhibitions, objects, and symbolic architecture. These institutions provide distinctive vantage points for analysing who is included and excluded from the nation's story, how cultural heritage is mobilised to legitimise political orders, and how memory is negotiated across moments of rupture and continuity. In doing so, I show that museums function as powerful narrative machines of sovereignty.

This intervention situates museums within the sociology of nationalism as both empirical sites and theoretical provocations. By engaging with their narratives, silences, and curatorial choices, we are compelled to reconsider sociology's epistemological boundaries: what does it mean to study nationalism if we omit one of its most enduring cultural institutions?

The paper concludes by calling for a broader methodological toolkit for nationalism studies, one that integrates narrative analysis, ethnography, and visual methods to account for the museum as both stage and actor in narrating sovereignty. Museums, I argue, teach sociology to see nationalism not only in discourse or politics but in bricks, glass, artefacts, text labels, and display cases.

# Emerging Themes & Special Events 1 - Room 4.209

## **Individualization in Post-Socialist China: Astrology as a Cultural Toolkit for Negotiating Selfhood**

*Yanan Guo, Dan Huang*

*(Communication University of China, South China Normal University)*

Over the past two decades, China's "psy fever" has been dominated by psycho-therapeutic practices, framed through terms of psychological concepts and diagnostic categorizations (Iskra, 2021; An, 2023). Recently, however, this "psy fever" has witnessed a new shift, as astrology, spiritual workshops, and other non-pathological healing practices gain striking popularity, particularly among younger generations. This paper takes astrological practices as a case to analyze this shift, focusing not on astrology as belief, but on how it is mobilized as a cultural repertoire for negotiating selfhood under conditions of uncertainty and relational pressure.

This study employs discourse analysis, applying Swidler's (1986) "cultural toolkit" to studying discourse as symbolic resources for interpreting experience and legitimating action. Datasets of the study include posts, comments, video scripts, discussions and participant observation from social media accounts of local astrological organizations, astrologists, and popular astrological digital platforms in China.

Findings highlight that astrological practices function as a "cultural toolkit" in two ways: "acceptance of the self" and "interpretation of others". First, astrological practices foster self-acceptance by reframing personalities that might otherwise be stigmatized as "flawed" or "pathological", and reinforce a sense of belonging through exchange of shared experiences framed by astrological narratives. Second, astrological narratives produce non-moralizing explanations for interpersonal frictions, enabling individuals to claim authenticity and relational liberation while remaining embedded in social ties. Extending Yan (2009)'s theory of "relational individualization", the paper conceptualizes this process as "authenticity-based individualization", contributing to understanding of how cultural repertoires shape and reshape selfhood in China.

## **Universities as Sociological Experiments and the Democratic Method for Overcoming Educational Polarisation**

*Titus Alexander*

*(Democracy Matters)*

This paper explores 7 propositions:

1. All institutions, including universities and governments, can be seen as real-time experiments in how to achieve outcomes in society.
2. The purpose of an institution is what it does (Stafford Beer 2002), so understanding what universities are for means analyzing actual behavior and results.
3. Universities educate leaders and professionals who run our most influential institutions and opinion-formers and politicians on opposing sides; they produce ideas and methods that guide society, and promote their role as gateways to better jobs and status, inadvertently polarising society and politics along educational lines (Bovens and Wille 2021; Grossmann and Hopkins 2024; Lind 2020).
4. Democracy can be seen as a rudimentary method of collective social science, in which institutions are peer reviewed by citizens through elections, public opinion and protest, judging the outcomes of social experiments by governments and other institutions.
5. Societies have developed mechanisms for scrutiny, detachment and deliberation to improve collective experiments, such as trial by jury, due diligence, elected assemblies, free speech, judicial review etc.
6. The rise of misinformation, distrust of institutions, extreme inequality, democratic backsliding and other factors undermine democratic experiments by Western governments, which are being overtaken by China's one-party "Whole Process People's Democracy".

7. Universities have the potential to help people renew democracy and improve societies' collective experiments in how to create a good life for all.

Versions of this paper were published as a book chapter and presented at APSA and IPSA.

### **A Sociological Exploration of Daydreams**

*Ayelita Mukherjee*

*(Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, India)*

Individuals simultaneously inhabit external and internal worlds-the interaction between which creates their socially located biographies. A sociological imagination of daydreams aims to reimagine the same as inherently social and conscious phenomena that mirrors lived realities multifacetedly-allowing retrospection, resistance, or even transcendence. The immediate task of this paper is to find a space for enquiry on daydreams in sociological theory; to explore daydreams as a space to vicariously experience desirable realities; to interrogate these daydreamed realities as being informed by the daydreamer's social location. Despite the lack of direct literature on daydreaming, insights from symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and leisure studies-especially Edmund Husserl's (1913) call to prioritize lived experience and Thorstein Veblen's (1899) theory of leisure class and vicarious consumption, offer valuable theoretical framework to socially situate daydreams. Margaret Archer's (2003) seminal work on internal conversations inspires the methodology by outstandingly tackling the problem of the double hermeneutic. Resultantly, the study employs qualitative interviews with youth, who are more vulnerably shaped by societal expectations because of the transitory yet crucial nature of the youthful phase, aged 19–29 in Kolkata, India. Such an endeavor allows capturing the diverse meanings which youth attach to their daydreams, which might echo macro social structures of class, gender, media, capitalism, and sexuality etc. The sociological relevance of this paper lies in recognizing daydreams as legitimate objects of sociological inquiry, contextualizing daydreams in the intersection of a dynamic interplay between structure and agency; and in expanding the very creative boundaries of the discipline itself.

## **Emerging Themes & Special Events 2 - Room 4.213 Special Event**

### **Climate Affects and Liveable Futures in an Age of Planetary Crisis**

*Angela Marques Filipe, Liene Ozolina, Magda Schmukala, Miranda Iossifidis, Des Fitzgerald, Anastasiya Halauniova*

*(University of Edinburgh, Liene Ozolina, Magda Schmukala, Latvian Academy of Culture, Newcastle University, University College Cork, Sciences Po)*

In recent years, we have witnessed a shift of attention towards “planetary thinking” and the framework of “planetary polycrisis” in social and political theory (Clark 2020, Hui 2024, Albert 2024). Extensive research on the anthropogenic triple crisis of climate change, toxic pollution, and biodiversity loss has alerted us to the existential threats they pose to ecological and societal systems alike. Feminist scholars have begun documenting how these threats and climate emotions play out in everyday life, often along preexisting lines of social inequality and vulnerability (Sasser 2024).

Despite this, scant sociological attention has been paid to the double-arrow of that question: if inhabiting a climate-changed, collapsing world affects virtually every aspect of our collective and personal lives, how might these affects shape, in turn, how we make sense of liveable futures? What are climate emotions, feelings, and discontents made - and capable - of? How might these climate affects, at once, foreclose and expand our horizons of possibility (Haraway 2016, Burawoy 2021)? And how do these questions conjure up critical conversations and interventions – in both contemporary everyday life and future social theory?

The Special Event addresses these questions head-on, shedding light on how climate affects and futures are featured in and mobilised across social fields. We will explore a range of pressing questions: from new framings and expressions of ecoanxiety, climate emotion, and moral exhaustion among scientific and activist communities (Angela M. Filipe, Durham, introductory talk) to ideas of socio-demographic catastrophism and populationism in reproductive justice cooptation and in the media (Miranda Iossifidis, Newcastle); to post-socialist aesthetics of climate hope, desire, and imagination (Liene Ozolina, Latvian Academy, with Magda Schmukala, Essex) and temporal materialities of life maintenance and care in the thawing permafrost (Anastasiya Halauniova, SciencesPo/Durham); to embodied practices of eco-healing and repair in mental health (Des Fitzgerald, Cork).

This Special Event has a hybrid “plenary-meets-workshop” format, combining short interventions from speakers (10 minutes) followed a brief Q&A (10-15 minutes). There will be ample time for open discussion with the audience (25-30 minutes) to concretely workshop plans for a flagship SI on the event's cross-cutting themes. In times of ecological and existential meta-crises, it seems crucial that we hold space for conversations on emerging and pressing issues in sociology, which challenge the binaries of scientific reason and affective experience, theory and activism, nature and culture, body and society, collapse and repair, care and co-optation, personal and planetary spheres.

### **Hope Now: Aesthetics of Hope in Times of Political and Ecological Transitions**

*Liene Ozolina, Magda Schmukala*

*(Latvian Academy of Culture)*

Climate change triggers a deep fear of losing an essential part of present life, namely a future towards which life can develop. Living under the conditions of climate catastrophe means living a life which pulls towards 'no-time' (Baraitser 2020). In Eastern Europe this existential fear and the traumatic collapse of known identities and temporalities is not new. It was acutely present in societal life and collective moods during the 1980s when a knowledge of the failure of Soviet-type communism was becoming apparent without there being any future alternative to easily replace the failing system. This paper presents a psychosocial approach to studying the practices and images of hope and imagination in communist and post-communist Europe, with an empirical focus on artists and art collectives and their aesthetic and conceptual tools for capturing and enacting alternative futures. It asks how these practices of hoping, desiring, and imagining futures in times of no-time are remembered or forgotten in art practices and public life today as well as what these practices can tell us about the challenges of collective hope and creative imagination in times of climate catastrophe. On a broader level and by drawing on psychoanalytic and post-structuralist theories of fantasy, the paper will examine the intersection of memory and imagination. It will ask, firstly, what happens to memory and imagination if no linear temporality is available to allocate fears and desires to a specific time or space and secondly, how practices of mourning and working through past losses can provide starting points for reviving a collective will for better even if indeterminate futures.

### **Climate Emotions and Populationist Futures**

*Miranda Iossifidis*

*(Newcastle University)*

This paper focuses on how diverse speculative media mobilise contemporary eco-anxiety and climate grief in relation to reproduction. It analyses the fabrication of apocalyptic climate and demographic futures that engage with climate emotions and co-opt reproductive justice language. This advances feminist scholarship by Jade Sasser (2018; 2024) and Suzanne Schultz (2019, 2021, 2024) by focusing on the role of speculative and worldmaking practices. The corpus analysed includes speculative fiction, population projections, videos, podcasts, visualisations, scenarios, and forecasts. Keywords: population control; populationism; speculative; SF capital; climate futures; climate emotions.

### **What Does and Environment Heal?**

*Des Fitzgerald*

*(University College Cork)*

As much as the planetary polycrisis is experienced as material loss, so is that lost material understood to have a psychic and affective dimension: across a range of emergent fields and practises, researchers and therapists understand the physical environment to be a site of psychological crisis, as the environment is degraded, but also a site of remediation, in that re-immersion in the natural environment improves mental health. How does that remediation work? Drawing on qualitative interviews, this paper offers a critique of the autobiographical and nostalgic affects that are mobilised in environmental therapy and asks whether liveable futures may not require an alternative temporality of repair.

### **Grounds for Care: Thawing Permafrost and the Maintenance of Life in the Arctic**

*Anastasiya Halauniova*

*(Sciences Po)*

What happens when the ground on which life unfolds is no longer stable? To answer this question, I turn to permafrost—a geological phenomenon in which the earth remains frozen for years, covering roughly one quarter of the Northern Hemisphere's landmass and 65 percent of Russia's territory. Today, in the context of climate change, permafrost is being radically redefined as particularly unreliable and temporary due to it thawing. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in Barentsburg—a Russian mining town on Svalbard—this presentation examines how local residents, state officials, and permafrost researchers engage with the material and temporal uncertainties of thawing earth. As permafrost thaws, buildings crack, pipes rupture, and landscapes deform, and yet, daily life continues through practices of long-term care and repair against all odds. While "care" carries ethical commitments that unsettle dominant understandings of nature as a mere resource, it can also flourish within what Michelle Murphy (2015) calls "non-innocent histories of care"—in which nature is cared for so as to be mobilised for extractivist and colonial projects. In this talk, I contrast two forms of care. The first is done by state-affiliated engineers and geologists who seek to control permafrost in order to stabilise extractive infrastructures built upon it. The second is practiced by builders, maintenance workers, and residents who strive to prolong the life of settlements amidst thaw, economic decline, and political uncertainty. By tracing these divergent modes of caring for permafrost and living with its rhythms between state subsidies and international sanctions, I situate permafrost within broader histories of Soviet and post-Soviet extractivism, Arctic colonial legacies, and environmental degradation. Rather than framing permafrost thaw as an apocalyptic rupture, this presentation highlights the ways in which residents negotiate durability of life and how caring for thawing soils can carry different ethical and political valences.

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

### **Checks and Balances: The Division of Reproductive and Domestic Responsibilities in Chinese Lesbian Families**

*Xinzhe Hu*

*(University of York)*

Since 2016, children born out of traditional heterosexual marriage in China can apply for permanent residence registration. Further, since 2024, more and more provincial governments in China have included assisted reproductive technology (ART) services in health insurance to promote fertility. However, couples still need a marriage certificate (which is only available to heterosexual couples in China) and proof of infertility to use this service. Therefore, only heterosexual couples who have been diagnosed as infertile have legal access to ART services. And yet, these policy changes do offer Chinese non-heterosexual people a greater degree of flexibility to pursue parenthood and family through ARTs.

Drawing on data from in-depth interviews with 31 Chinese lesbians who are, or plan to become, mothers, this article explores how they negotiate, divide and view their responsibilities during different stages of forming families. I analyse their division of labour from three perspectives: 1) Patterns that echo heteronormativity. 2) Patterns based on making meaning of bodily relatedness. 3) Other political and discursive constraints shaping their feasible reproductive options. Across these three dimensions, I theorise Chinese lesbian mothers' divisions of reproductive and domestic responsibilities as demonstrating their effort to impose 'checks and balances' to manage what they and other family members give and receive in return. Their divisions of responsibilities manifest efforts to align with ideas of the 'normal' family and to protect their interests in the face of uncertain futures. Their reflections on divisions of labour, therefore, both reinforce and challenge Chinese dominant discourse surrounding reproduction and family.

### **“He is my horse in the off-season, my brother in the peak season”: Queer(y)ing Human-Horse Relationships in Rural Tourism in Southwest China**

*Heidi Rui Yang*

*(Leeds Beckett University)*

In the Global North, horses are primarily used for leisure, and scholarship in this area has developed along three strands: (1) economic and symbolic roles in human history; (2) intersections of equine practices with gender, race, 'class', and other social categories; (3) posthumanist approaches to horse agency and welfare. In China, rapid socioeconomic changes complicate human–horse entanglements, embedded in traditional, modern, and postmodern logics, yet such contexts remain little studied.

This PhD project addresses two research questions: What does a liveable life mean for villagers working in horse-riding tourism in rural China? How do rural–urban inequalities shape evaluations of the self, significant others, and non-human others? It draws on five months of participant observation in a national park (where each rural household raises a horse and participates in a horse-riding cooperative) on the China–Myanmar border, and on 39 semi-structured interviews with clan members.

This presentation shares two findings. First, most participants, men aged 30–60, formerly peasants or low-skilled migrant workers, have turned to local tourism in recent decades for emotional and moral needs alongside material benefits. Second, while horses are recognised as both income-generating tools and sentient beings, there is no clear categorisation for human-horse relationships (i.e., livestock, family member, working partner).

By applying sociological theories of cultural evaluation and boundary-making, this research examines the moral and emotional dimensions of social inequality. Through the lens of human–horse relations, it shows how socioeconomically marginalised groups assert self-worth and dignity by drawing on the available cultural repertoires, while forming interspecies solidarity.

## **Medicine, Health & Illness 1 - Room 1.219**

### **Vital Flows of Drinking: Storying Young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller People's Alcohol Practices**

*Samantha Wilkinson*

*(Manchester Metropolitan University)*

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities experience significant health inequities, including higher morbidity, mortality and infant mortality (Condon et al., 2019). People in these communities have been considered vulnerable to problematic alcohol use, due to social exclusion and discrimination (Van Hout, 2010). Warner-Southwell (2019) conclude that alcohol is the biggest healthcare issue for Gypsies and Travellers. Hurcome et al. (2012) asserted over a decade ago that little is known about the alcohol consumption practices of people in Traveller communities; this remains largely underexplored, particularly for young people in these communities.

Problematic alcohol study approaches have been critiqued by Jayne and Valentine (2024) for giving causality to alcohol as a catalyst of problematic drinking. A dualism is reached where, on the one hand, this community is presented as vulnerable to problematic alcohol use, and, on the other hand, there is

a discourse that for many young people, alcohol is a fundamental component of identity exploration. There is a need to explore this community's relationship with alcohol, from the voices of people in this community. I propose doing so through engaging with Stern's (2010) concept of 'vital flows' to afford agency to more-than-human actants when exploring young people's drinking experiences, without reinforcing moralising, disciplining, and normalising discourses. I draw on a vignette co-produced with nine young people across heterogenous GRT communities, and demonstrate how alcohol is not a deterministic cause of harm, but a medium through which vitality circulates - modulated by respect, family norms, gendered expectations, and shifting infrastructures of sociability.

### **Britain's Longest Pharmaceutical Controversy: Sociology of Causality and Time**

*John Abraham*

*(Brighton University and Sussex University)*

It is 75 years since Duogynon/Primodos was first marketed in Germany and from 1958 marketed as the first oral pregnancy-test pill in Britain. Since the 1970s, hundreds/thousands of users of the drug and their children have claimed that it caused severe birth malformations, but the manufacturer has always denied this. The alleged injurious effects of the pharmaceutical only began to be linked to it years after women took it so the scope for technical uncertainty is huge. Using methods of participant and non-participant observation in government, parliamentary, media, legal and stakeholder-group settings, together with analysis of documents spanning approximately 70 years, I have been researching this ongoing controversy for nine years so far. This paper focuses on conceptualizations of causality within the 2024 Patient Safety Commissioner Report and the 2023 court case brought by users against the manufacturers. It explains how the controversy about whether Primodos has caused countless malformations needs to be understood in historical and sociological context. It is argued that the formation of expertise is central because it empowers pronouncements on causality. Several sociological dimensions of the causality-expertise nexus are explored: the experience-based self-taught consciousness-raising of the users; the secrecy and destruction of documentary data by regulators; the interpretation of commercialized scientists in industry; inconsistencies in government regulatory perspectives over time; conflicts-of-interest of expert science advisors to government; mass media investigations and coverage; and the political economy of legal process. These factors explain why the controversy continues, increasingly adversarially, well into the 2020s.

### **“Drinking to be a man, ward makes me a prisoner”: An Ethnographic Study on the Causes and Treatment of Alcohol Addiction among Chinese Male**

*Xinyi Qu, Mei Yang*

*(University of Hong Kong)*

This study examines the cultural and social causes of alcohol addiction among male psychiatric inpatients in China, alongside the triple agencies of addiction treatment for clinicians, patients, and families. Through ethnographic fieldwork at a psychiatric hospital in Guangdong, China, including participant observation in wards, group therapy sessions, family visits and clinical conferences, this study reveals how recurrent drinking contributes to the construction of masculinity. Many informants expressed that alcohol consumption is indispensable for gaining respect and establishing a masculine identity. Social drinking is viewed as a symbol of brotherhood and group integration in Chinese culture. Men lacking economic and symbolic capitals gain fleeting yet potent masculine identity and dignity through collective drinking. However, this alcohol-derived masculinity proves transient, failing to directly alter vulnerabilities in social and family life. The paradoxical experience intensifies the relapse of alcohol use.

A second paradox emerges in the treatment realm. The clinic, ostensibly a space of healing, becomes an arena where the instrumental rationalities of patients, families, and clinicians converge. Treatment is repurposed for control, punishment, and domestic harmony, becoming a cyclical event in the patient's life rather than a path to recovery. By framing both addiction and its treatment through the lens of paradox, this research elucidates how cultural identity and social relationships are not merely background factors, but the very medium through which addiction is lived and managed. It concludes that effective intervention must first grapple with these deep-seated social contradictions.

## Medicine, Health & Illness 2 - Room 3.209

### **“The Pen Is Lifted”: Religious Governance of Dementia Care in Muslim Communities**

*Suhad Daher-Nashif*

*(Keele University)*

This paper explores the framing and governance of dementia in Arab-Muslim contexts, highlighting the interplay between religious discourse, caregiving practices, and cultural understandings of aging. Using a governmentality approach, I analyse how religious authority, through Quranic verses, hadith collections, and fatwas, shapes the moral, legal, and social boundaries of care for people living with dementia. The data set comprises an indexed lexicon of dementia-related references in the Quran, the Sunni hadith collections, and forty-four fatwas issued by national and transnational institutions, including IslamWeb, and Dar al-Iftaa' portals of each Arab country.

Findings show that dementia is consistently positioned within the framework of natural aging, rather than pathology, and is distinguished from insanity. Religious discourse lifts ritual obligations from those affected while simultaneously reinforcing the ethical imperative of filial duty and care. Fatwas also address financial accountability, guardianship, and permissible transactions, thereby regulating everyday life and securing both familial and institutional control. These rulings do not merely interpret scripture; they operate as soft governance, extending religious authority into domains of health, property, and memory.

The analysis demonstrates how dementia becomes a site where religious texts, moral responsibility, and biopolitics converge. It underscores the dual role of religion as both constraint and resource in caregiving, mediating between state law, family expectations, and individual vulnerability. By foregrounding these dynamics, the paper contributes to the sociology of religion, sociology of health, and aging studies, and invites further comparative inquiry into how religious epistemologies shape global responses to dementia.

### **Embodied Experience of Mental Health in a Transcultural Context: A Study of UK Chinese International Students**

*Yuting Wen*

*(University of East Anglia)*

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in embodiment in sociology. The body is a site where lived experience of social structures and power dynamics is embedded. Thus, mental health can be understood as an embodied practice of social inequalities and power dynamics, manifested in forms of mental distress or illness. This lens is especially valuable to explore the international student population as their embodied experience of mental health through their daily practice across different social and academic environments. A cross-sectional comparison study indicated that Chinese overseas students have greater stress levels than their domestic counterparts. This finding is particularly alarming when considered alongside the significant increase in anxiety and depression rates among Chinese university students from 2010 to 2020. These findings suggest that the heightened risk of mental health issues is particularly evident among Chinese international students. However, little is known about their embodied experience of mental health.

To address the gap, the study adopts semi-structured interviews to capture the embodied experience of mental health among UK Chinese international students. Thematic analysis situates the identified patterns of embodied experience within the ecological framework. This paper reports initial findings from this ongoing project. This study contributes to the sociological understanding of embodiment and mental health in a transcultural context.

**Connected Bodies: Stories of Social Support and Vicarious Harm among Czech and Slovak Roma Women Living in South Yorkshire**

*Lois Orton*

*(University of Sheffield)*

“If they are unwell I am unwell”

Sociologists understand health as both an individual and a relational concept. Health is experienced both within one's body and also beyond it. However, much of the focus on the relational aspects of health has been on social support and the sharing of resources for better health. A separate body of work has explored the negative ways in which bodies may be connected, potentially providing a different angle on the relational aspects of health and wellbeing, through epigenetics and the vicarious and/or intergenerational transmission of trauma. Until now, the two - negative and positive - aspects of relational health have not been brought together. In this paper, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of both the negative and positive aspects of relational health and coin a new term 'vicarious harm' to explain how bodies can share in the health harms of others even when not considered as a direct result of trauma. I do this by creatively exploring the health and life stories of Czech and Slovak Roma women living in South Yorkshire. I believe these women's stories provide a useful lens. They have experienced generations of oppression, forging strong kinship connections that foreground the relational aspects of health and wellbeing. Moving away from the perceived source of oppression (from the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the UK) they also leave behind their kin networks. The social fragmentation that results further highlights the connectedness of their bodies in both beneficial and detrimental ways.

**Health Patchwork: Medical Return among Chinese Immigrants in Germany**

*Zai Xu*

*(Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)*

This research investigates why and how high-skilled Chinese immigrants in Germany return to China for medical care. Drawing on an ethnography of the author's own experiences and those of twelve other transnational health-seekers, this paper rethinks conventional understandings of transnational healthcare as the flexible accumulation of resources within medical sociology.

First, the paper argues that this medical return arises from a political-economic paradox: Germany's universal healthcare system, founded on principles of solidarity and welfare, often limits access to treatments that these high-skilled immigrants deem sufficient and ideal; conversely, China's highly marketized healthcare landscape allows them to access premier medical resources affordably, especially with their strong social networks. Beyond this structural perspective, the research demonstrates how divergent medical practices in Germany and China generate distinct conceptions of medical urgency and necessity. This not only reveals the influence of political economy on biomedical standards but also shows how medical culture and encounters reshape the health-seekers' sense of belonging and their plans for career, family, and citizenship.

Ultimately, this paper contests simplistic views of health seekers as either passive subjects adrift in global resource gaps or as perfectly flexible and rational actors. Instead, it posits them as active agents who must constantly translate, mend, and coordinate disparate medical resources, languages, and cultures—a process that demands intensive self-education and places significant responsibility on them for medical decision-making. This ethnography retheorizes transnational health-seeking not as a process of accumulating resources but as a coordinated patchwork that demands continuous navigation and construction across borders.

## Methodological Innovations - Room 4.206

### **Flourishing and the Vitality of Schools: Towards an Alternative Theorisation of Education**

*Alison MacDonald, Caroline Oliver*

*(University College London)*

Too often we hear commitments to support young people to 'flourish' or 'thrive' in education, yet traditional systems of schooling in England are often at odds with this ethos. Driven by performance agendas, mainstream educational systems tend to centre policies for attainment through highly regulated mechanisms of behaviour management and control. Scholars have long deployed Foucauldian theories of biopolitics and 'docile bodies' to critique such systems as apparatuses of governance and discipline. But what if we took seriously the concept and practice of 'flourishing' as a theoretical vehicle for the development of an educational system otherwise? Bringing ethnographic insights from co-produced visual research with young people and adult educators in a democratic school into dialogue with new materialist theory, we consider how the concept of 'flourishing' - and related ideas of nurture, relationality and dynamism - can shift our perspective on schools as 'vital' (Bennet 2010; Braidotti, 2011). Exploring this provocation in light of comparative research on similar themes, our analysis shows how this perspective can re-centre the relational in school life, and prioritise the embodied, situated, entangled and interdependent nature of education that is too often stifled in traditional approaches.

### **Mapping the More-than-Human City: Digital Pedagogies for Civic Knowledge and Environmental Justice**

*Ria Dunkley*

*(University of Glasgow)*

How can digital platforms reshape civic engagement in ways that amplify local voices, climate and environmental justice, and the more-than-human city? This paper shares insights from communiMap, a community science app and co-designed digital mapping tool developed through the NERC-funded GALLANT programme at the University of Glasgow. Rather than extracting data, communiMap is built to gather stories, ecological observations, and emotional responses to environments from people living, working, and playing in the city.

Drawing on relational and creative geographies, the project positions digital mapping not only as a research method but as a civic act. It situates communiMap as a soft archive of plural environmental knowledges, foregrounding community voices and sensory, affective, and narrative dimensions often excluded from institutional framings of sustainability and urban planning. In this sense, communiMap challenges extractive traditions of data collection, redistributing power in knowledge-making and recognising community expertise as central to urban ecological futures.

Through ongoing workshops, workshops, and community collaborations, communiMap creates an infrastructure for witnessing and sharing environmental change in a time of accelerating climate crisis, often framed as the Anthropocene, co-producing data and meaning while reconfiguring what counts as valid knowledge. Such tools extend sociological debates about participation and justice: they open civic space for marginalised voices and demonstrate how universities can act as boundary actors, moving between civic and institutional worlds to build climate-ready cities. The work contributes to broader conversations about digital publics, environmental pedagogy, and the sociological role of universities in shaping more just and sustainable urban futures.

### **Doing and Imagining Queer Sociological Research Methods Teaching as Forms of Resistance**

*Harvey Humphrey, Kirstie Ken English*

*(University of Glasgow)*

We find ourselves in times of trouble and crisis and we turn to methodological innovation to ask and answer complex sociological questions of our times. We live and work in times of global uncertainty, precarity and growing inequalities. As two ECR queer and trans scholars working as methods educators

we respond with resistance and hope in the form of queer classrooms and embedding 'queer' into teaching sociological research methods. We explore the value that 'queering' offers in terms of pedagogical practices and research methodologies. We take different queer approaches in our work with one of us focusing on quantitative data production and the other on qualitative creative practice.

We ask how and why queer methods matter in today's sociology drawing on experiences teaching students research methods. We offer innovative examples of queer research and approaches as ways to challenge the moral panics and anti-queer backlash many staff, students and participants face. There is not one way to do queer methods in sociology. Challenges in defining 'queer' can be barriers in teaching and adopting queer sociological approaches. For us, this uncertainty in pinning down 'queer' allows our sociological imaginations to flourish challenging assumptions and developing strategies for resistance. We have possibilities, provocations and examples of 'doing and imagining' queer methods. We offer examples from our own practice of how methods can be queered highlighting possibilities and limitations of queer itself. Refusing singular definitions, the ambiguity and multiplicity of queer and how it manifests through research methods is foregrounded in our accounts.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 1 - Room 2.218**

### **Not Fully Seen, Not Fully White: Rethinking Passing in the Context of Eastern European Migration**

*Elisabeth Scheibelhofer, Melanie Kurek, Alina Cristea*  
(University of Vienna)

Our qualitative research on the living and working experiences of individuals from Eastern Europe in Austria engages with recent debates on their racialization (Blachnicka-Ciacek & Budginaite-Mackine 2022; Kalmar 2023; Lewicki 2023). Within much of the international literature, Eastern European migrants who are often read as "white" are discussed in terms of their ability to "pass." While passing is frequently mentioned as a relevant phenomenon, a systematic analysis of its meanings and implications remains absent. Drawing on our interpretive analysis with Constructivist Grounded Theory, we delineate the multiple interpretations and consequences of "passing": How do interview participants articulate it, and what roles does it play in their everyday lives? What are our interpretations as researchers of passing and their consequences? We argue that passing is closely tied to questions of visibility—specifically, to the condition of not being visible in the majority society – and thus not a target of ethno-racial discrimination. Invisibility may relate to phenotype, clothing, language, but also to the expression of values. Accordingly, we suggest that "passing" is a far more complex and layered concept than commonly acknowledged, also intersecting with discourses of integration and assimilation. Furthermore, we challenge the assumption that groups who may in some respect be able to "choose" whether or not to pass necessarily occupy a privileged position among those subject to discrimination. Rather than framing passing in terms of comparative disadvantage, we suggest to discuss it as crucial to understanding the lived experiences of so-called Eastern Europeans. (see also research group [inmi.univie.ac.at](http://inmi.univie.ac.at))

### **Dark-Skin Penalty and Light-Skin Privilege: Girls' and Young Women's Experiences of Colourism in UK Secondary Schools**

*Aisha Phoenix, Jamila Thompson, Nadia Craddock, Annabel Wilson*  
(King's College London)

This paper explores how colourist beauty ideals affect Black and Mixed (Black and White) young women in UK secondary schools. Colourism, prejudice in which people are penalised the darker their skin is and the further their features are from those associated with whiteness, is commonplace in secondary schools. Focusing on the experiences of Imani, a 14-year-old Black British African girl with dark skin and Chloe, a 16-year-old Mixed (Black Caribbean and White) young woman with light skin, the paper argues that skin shade and phenotypical features affect how attractive young women are perceived to be. Highlighting the importance of taking an intersectional approach, it draws on Imani and Chloe's narratives and other interviews and focus groups with Black and Mixed young people to argue that girls and young women with dark skin were considered the least attractive, whereas those with light skin

were seen as particularly desirable. Positioning in beauty hierarchies affected both self-perceptions and treatment by peers. Being subjected to dark-skin penalty led some young women to be critical of their looks, it hurt their self-esteem and affected their sense of belonging. While benefiting from light-skin privilege meant that young women were desired and confident in their looks, it sometimes led to resentment from young women with dark skin. The paper concludes that colourist beauty ideals are divisive, damaging relations between young women with dark and light skin and harming their sense of belonging. It is thus important to address colourism in schools, and among young people more broadly.

**'But in my culture, you can't begrudge a human being food. That's the worst sin': An Explorative Account of Minoritised Women's Experiences of Food in English Prisons**

*Maria Adams, Vicki Harman*

*(University of Surrey)*

Drawing on fieldwork with 108 women in prison, this paper advances understanding of the cultural and racial food narratives that shape experiences within prison. This presentation will explore how minority women experience food both prior to and during incarceration, and how these food practices reflect broader social and racial dynamics within carceral spaces. Using a qualitative approach, we will illuminate the voices of minority women and to understand the role of food by addressing these key themes including (1) the racialised histories of women in prison; (2) racial and cultural exclusionary practices within carceral food systems; and (3) food as a site of both racialised and gendered injustices and justices.

**'Don't take our Cook': Protecting Whiteness in and through the Heritage**

*Shabana Marshall*

*(Durham University)*

The toppling of Edward Colston's statue in 2020 prompted both national and international debate regarding the value and meaning attached to symbols of the heritage bearing links to Britain's colonial and slave trading past. In England, a number of heritage organisations responded by engaging in a re-evaluation and reframing of their collections in alignment with a decolonising agenda, a move welcomed by those advocating for greater critical engagement with colonial histories, but also inviting criticism from right leaning politicians, press and organisations seeking to stoke the 'culture wars'. Such negative publicity led some figures engaged in critical heritage work experiencing threats to their personal safety, raising questions as to whether the heritage sector could feel empowered or equipped to continue this work in the face of such hostile reactions. In this paper, I explore the extent to which museums involved in mediating local links to colonial histories have felt either able or willing to critically engage with these histories, particularly when links to colonial figures are viewed with a sense of pride. Employing a Critical whiteness Methodology, I focus on the region known as Cook Country in the north of England, this being the birthplace and childhood home of Captain James Cook, to explore how the interplay of race, class and whiteness impact a museums ability to critically evaluate their local connections to colonial history and heritage.

## **Race, Ethnicity & Migration 2 - Room 4.211**

### **Special Event**

**Working Within the Racial Regime: Trauma, Whiteness and Lived Experience in Sociology**

*Syra Shakir, Oluchi Mellor*

*(Leeds Trinity University, University of Edinburgh)*

This special event hosted by convenors of the Race and Ethnicity Study Group will convene an interactive discussion on what it means to work within sociological disciplines shaped by the racial regime, institutional whiteness, and racialised trauma. Sociology often positions itself as a discipline committed to justice and critique; yet many scholars experience the academy as a "white fortress"

sustained through everyday practices of exclusion, epistemic policing, and professional norms that privilege whiteness while marginalising racialised knowledge.

Drawing on lived experience as a guiding principle, this session will create space for collective reflection on navigating research, teaching, leadership and activism within institutions structured by racial power. We will examine how whiteness operates not only as demographic dominance but as an organising logic shaping credibility, authority, belonging, and disciplinary boundaries. Participants will explore the emotional and embodied dimensions of working under racialised scrutiny, including the cumulative impact of trauma, silencing, and hyper-visibility.

Through facilitated dialogue, shared narratives, and critical sociological analysis, the event will ask: How do we survive and resist within the racial regime? What does it mean to practise sociology while confronting institutional whiteness? And how might lived experience, rather than being marginalised as anecdotal, become a methodological and political resource for transforming the discipline?

This session invites open, courageous conversation aimed at building solidarity, deepening critical understanding, and imagining mechanisms for collective change within sociology and beyond.

## Science, Technology & Digital Studies - Room 3.205

### **Uncovering the Algorithm Black Box: A Study of Multi-stakeholder Influence in Algorithm Development within China's Internet Industry Based on Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) Framework**

*Jingru Zheng*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

Algorithms are often described as “black boxes,” shaping human experience while obscuring the social processes behind their creation. This paper explores algorithm development in China's internet industry through the lens of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework, highlighting the multi-stakeholder dynamics that shape design and implementation. Rather than viewing algorithms as purely technical artefacts, the study foregrounds how diverse social groups—including engineers, product managers, shareholders, consumers, investors, and regulators—negotiate their interests within the development process.

The research addresses three central questions: how do different groups participate in algorithm design; how do their power dynamics amplify or mitigate bias; and what SCOT-informed guidelines can promote more inclusive and ethical algorithmic governance? Methodologically, the study employs an exploratory case study of a major Chinese technology firm. Qualitative methods include in-depth interviews with stakeholders, document analysis of technical and corporate reports, and observations of design discussions. Quantitative methods involve stakeholder surveys and secondary data analysis of algorithm performance and user satisfaction, supplemented by network modelling of group interactions. By integrating qualitative and quantitative findings, the study aims to reveal how interpretive flexibility and technological conflicts shape algorithmic outcomes. The analysis contributes to Science and Technology Studies by extending SCOT to the algorithmic context, while also offering practical insights for inclusive innovation practices. This work underscores the need to open the “black box” of algorithms, situating them within broader organisational and societal negotiations.

### **Digital Research Infrastructure: Revisiting Sociological Tools for Cultural Change**

*Francisco Duran Del Fierro, Carolynne Lord*

*(University College London, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)*

The UK's Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) community is preoccupied with notions of ‘culture’ and the need to enact cultural change for more inclusive and sustainable DRI futures. However, existing debates often lack a sociological grounding. “Culture” is frequently treated as a behavioural or managerial problem, addressable through training and guidance alone. Even initiatives explicitly

focused on “research culture” tend to treat culture as an “auditable object” (Bandola-Gill, 2024). In this paper, we argue that sociology offers conceptual and methodological resources for critically understanding and shaping DRI, and the discourse around it. Yet fundamental questions arise in this context: What sociological concepts and tools can be used, and what needs to be rethought to better understand and support DRI-related change? Drawing on two empirical cases where sociological approaches were mobilised to support shifts in epistemic practices, we examine how diverse traditions – including cultural sociology, science and technology studies (STS), theories of practice, the sociology of science, and actor-network theory – offer unique and useful tools to reconceptualise and understand DRI, offering new ground for transformative interventions. We conclude by outlining a conceptualisation and research agenda for sociologists interested in shaping this dialogue. The constitutive role of technology means that this represents an essential space in which we must intervene in, recognising the transformative potential of DRI-focused funding, policy and research for future scientific practice.

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

### **Conflict and Commonalities in the Digital Transgender Culture War: A Reflexive Discussion on Nuance and Sensitivity in Research**

*Kit Towner*

*(University of York)*

The transgender culture war taking place online is well-known. It is guaranteed profitmaking for the media, and a political football (or grenade) for the UK government. As a trans man, I have followed this debate closely since JK Rowling’s comments on Twitter in 2019. I am intrigued by how the digital has shaped this discourse, and how it has now become a toxic and inflammatory topic. What are the debates taking place? What drives them? How safe do people feel online, and what are the consequences offline?

These are important questions, and ones I seek to answer in my PhD thesis. However, what is most interesting is the lack of real engagement or measured and nuanced discussion. It is this silence which intrigues me the most. Is it born of fear, ignorance, or apathy? Or is it fatigue at often only the most extreme voices being elevated? If we remain silent, we risk those extreme voices being the only ones heard and the much needed nuance being lost. This presentation will outline my proposed methodology of a digital ethnography exploring the arguments of both trans activists and gender critical activists in their virtual communities. In doing so, I hope to highlight how confronting toxic topics such as this one with nuance and sensitivity can potentially build bridges instead of burn them.

### **Understanding Gender Identity: Authoritative and Negotiative Gender Identification**

*Matt Bassett*

*(University of Bristol)*

The concept of gender identity is central to contemporary gender politics. Despite this centrality, there is a gulf between how the term is used in public discourse and transgender studies, and how it is used by theoretical frameworks popular in sociological research. Theorisations like Butler’s gender performativity, West and Zimmerman’s ‘doing gender’, or Goffman’s ‘gender display’ use the term ‘gender identity’ to refer to implicit, provisional and negotiated identities produced through and for interactions between people. This conflicts with the widespread use of ‘gender identity’ in terms of self-identification: gender identities that people claim explicitly, definitively and authoritatively for themselves. This paper argues that gender self-identification is not well accounted for by popular sociological theorisations of gender and proposes a new framework for understanding this theoretical mismatch: a distinction between authoritative and negotiative gender identification. Drawing on Bettcher’s theorisation of gender self-identification as ‘first-person authority over gender’, I theorise the medico-legal regime of sex assignment as a regime of ‘third-person authority over gender’. I then explain negotiative identification practices as responses to the pressures imposed by that regime. The authoritative/negotiative distinction clarifies academic discourse by explaining how theorists have

meant different things by 'gender identity' and encourages the integration of trans perspectives and practices into sociological theory and research. This framework makes possible future research which specifically interrogates how authoritative and negotiative forms of gender identification relate to one another, compete with one another, and rely on one another in specific social situations.

### **Beyond the Binary: Emotional Agency and the Re-theorising of Poverty in Women's Life Stories**

*Suzanne Butler*

*(Newcastle University)*

This paper re-theorises poverty through the narrated life experiences of women living in the UK, drawing on narrative life history interviews to explore how poverty is felt, understood, and negotiated over time. Moving beyond dominant binary framings that reduce poverty to either structural oppression or individual failure, the study foregrounds poverty as a temporal, emotional, and meaning-making process. Using an integrated theoretical framework of Critical Realism, Feminist Standpoint Theory, and the Life Course and Narrative paradigm, it develops an inductively grounded typology of life trajectories: turbulent, stalled, and climbing.

A key contribution of the article is its elaboration of emotion as a form of agency. Emotions such as shame, anger, and hope are shown to be structured and structuring—shaping how women interpret their lives and act (or refrain from acting) within constraint. The study also treats narrative not merely as a method, but as an epistemic practice through which participants construct knowledge, evaluate structural injustice, and reframe their identities. In doing so, it positions women as co-theorists, generating insights into poverty that challenge and expand dominant sociological and policy frameworks.

By situating women's stories at the centre of analysis, the article offers a more nuanced, relational, and epistemically inclusive account of poverty. It contributes to ongoing debates about lived experience, agency, and inequality, and calls for poverty research that takes seriously the emotional, narrative, and temporal dimensions of social life. Poverty, it argues, is not just endured—it is narrated, felt, and reflexively theorised by those who live it.

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

### **Blurring, Shifting and Moving Political Discourses on Migration: An Irish Story**

*H Bowman*

*(Trinity College Dublin)*

In this paper, I consider the context of Ireland and the ways in which migration discourses have shifted since the establishment of the Irish state in 1919 and later the Irish Free State in 1922. Ireland is frequently framed as a country of 'new' immigration. And while, in absolute terms, there is something in this, this paper argues that the intertwined histories of state building, emigration and immigration in Ireland complicate the picture. Turning to political discourse, it shows that even in the case of a country often cited as a country of 'new' immigration, categorisations of 'migrants' and 'non-migrants' do not spring from nowhere. With a particular focus on valuation and how states (through political actors) attribute value to people, it is possible to unpack the state logics underpinning categorisation. Drawing on digitised records of parliamentary debates since 1919, I use critical discourse analysis to tease out the particular political work done by the broader concepts of 'work', 'welfare' and 'belonging' in these shifting state migration discourses and categorisations. Early conclusions point to the implication of processes of post-Independence Irish state building in the shape such categories have assumed in contemporary Irish political discourse. By highlighting flexibility in the category of 'migrant' over time and asking what interests such categorisation serves, I also seek to contribute to research that is challenging the idea that any such categorisations could be taken as fixed, given or value-free.

### **Weberian Social Status Reimagined: A Sociological and Empirical Critique of Existing Status Measures and a Viable Alternative**

*Scott Oatley*

*(University of Manchester)*

This paper reconsiders social status in contemporary Britain by initially duplicating and further improving upon prior analysis from Chan and Goldthorpe (2004, 2007). This paper analyses the occupational structure of marriage, cultural consumption, friendship closeness, and monopolistic acquisition to construct a measure of social status. This measure is directly compared with the Chan-Goldthorpe scale and the Cambridge scale to make theoretical and empirical arguments in favour of using this newly constructed measure as an appropriate Weberian determinant of social status. This paper examines the relationship between social status and the epiphenomenal role it has with education, income and social class to provide an evidence base for its construct validity. This paper also identifies multiple models based on economic life chances, cultural consumption, social attitudes, and behaviours to directly compare multiple status-based measures and assess the relevant discriminant and criterion validity associated with each measure. Evidence suggests that this newly created status measure is more sensitive compared to alternatives and more adequately captures the status/class relationship evidenced in British society and outlined in Weberian social theory. This new social status measure captures a more accurate Weberian distinction of social status and builds upon important empirical literature set out in the work of Chan and Goldthorpe (2004, 2007).

### **Universal Free School Meals in Secondary Schools: A Focused Ethnography of Daily Student Experiences**

*Natalia Concha, Mathilda O'Donoghue, Nicola Firman, Cervantée Wild, Pratima Singh, Carol Dezateux, Maria Bryant, Rab Brownell, Phoebe Kalungi, Suzanne Spence, Jayne Woodside, Veronica Toffolutti, Meredith K.D. Hawking*

*(Queen Mary University of London)*

Amid rising child poverty, food insecurity and the cost-of-living crisis, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was the first in England to extend universal free school meals (UFSMs) to all children and young people aged 4-16 in 2023. While research on school food is growing, the impact of UFSMs on youth interactions and experiences of belonging remains underexplored. We present qualitative findings from the NIHR-School for Primary Care Research funded Food Improvement Goals in Schools II mixed-methods study, building on our school food research. Applying a focused ethnography, we explored how UFSMs are perceived and experienced in four secondary schools with staff, parents and students. Data were analysed thematically with NVivo12. The study has been enriched by input from Tower Hamlets Youth Council and local parents, from co-designing methods to validating findings, and shared in local events. Financial relief is the main theme found but here we focus on how the universal model has shaped students' daily meal experiences. Whilst students described practicalities around queuing, time restrictions and opportunities to sit sharing food, these practices carried social significance. Eating together without visible differentiation based on eligibility impacted dynamics. Drawing on social identity and social categorisation theory, we argue that UFSMs function as a site where belonging is enabled by the universal offer reshaping the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In a national climate where belonging is contested, school food offers a lens into the potential, and limits, of child-based welfare policies in shaping youth's identities and lived experiences of inclusion.

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

### **The PSF 2023 and the Dance of Inclusion**

*Anja Finger*

*(Independent Scholar)*

This paper takes Advance HE's Professional Standards Framework or PSF 2023 as a starting point for reflecting on the meanings of inclusion in and for higher education practices of learning and teaching. The Framework defines standards for professional recognition of educators in UK HE through different

fellowship categories for which individuals apply either direct or through institutional pathways. As a successor to the UKPSF 2011, the recently introduced PSF prides itself on placing a prominent emphasis on inclusion.

The paper examines this supposed shift in detail through a sociological reading which ponders the implied imagined professional self and learners of the framework and moves on to explore both promise and limitations of inclusive pedagogy.

This exploration is informed by discussion of the multiple variations inspired by diversity consultant Vernā Myers's statement, popular in EDI (Equ/ality, Diversity and Inclusion) circles, that 'diversity is being invited to the party, but inclusion is being asked to dance'. In educational contexts, such variations include metaphorical ways of defining learning/teaching for belonging, equity, or liberation. The paper will also consider critiques of inclusion which question what the nature of the 'dance' is — whether that be the curriculum at the macro level, or a learning activity at the micro level: If the inclusion of some always comes with the exclusion of others, how are the criteria for these processes established and justified, what about those who for whatever reasons resist being included, and what comes after inclusion?

### **Listening in a Social World: How Interactions with Listening and Being Listened to Impact Students and Their Transitions to Living and Studying in the UK**

*Niamh Mullen*

*(University of Leeds)*

This presentation focuses on three student case studies from a larger piece of doctoral research which was longitudinal in nature. The research investigated how listening-related experiences of PGT students whose first language was not English (L2 students) impacted on them, and on their transitions to living and studying in the UK. For this study, participants maintained regular listening diaries and took part in five narrative discussions over an academic year. Data were analysed and interpreted through the lens of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field.

While much research around second language listening focuses on cognitive aspects of listening, findings from this research support a more nuanced understanding of listening as a social, psychological and emotional practice which can impact students' sense of self. This study suggests that L2 students are unique individuals whose previously established dispositions and capitals can interact in different ways via listening-related experiences in their new environment, leading to feelings of (eventual) comfort and / or disruption. These experiences can influence the extent to which students feel legitimate in this new context. Importantly, I will argue for a broader understanding of listening that includes listening and being listened to in order to truly comprehend the social act of listening. Implications for HE practice will be discussed, and I will argue that a move beyond purely cognitive orientations in how listening is understood and engaged with is key to support L2 students' successful transition to living and studying in the UK.

### **Does Higher Education Expansion Bring About Educational Equality? Evidence from China's Stratified Senior High School System**

*Yuqi Zhang, Yue Yin*

*(University College London)*

The higher education expansion in China since the late 20th century has increased educational opportunities but has also raised new concerns about equity. As access to higher education grew rapidly while access to senior secondary education expanded at a slower pace, a stratified high school system is at risk of producing greater inequality. Using data from the Chinese Household Income Project 2018 and Inverse Probability Weighted Regression Adjustment, this study examines the impact of China's stratified senior high school system and key senior high schools on higher education enrolment in the context of expansion. The findings indicate that, compared to the pre-expansion era, disparities in access to both higher education and elite higher education have widened across different stratifications of senior high schools. In particular, graduates from key senior high schools have gained a greater advantage in securing elite higher education enrolment compared to their peers before the expansion. This study also observed a widened urban-rural gap by senior high school stratification post-expansion.

This growing inequality in higher education suggests that expansion has reinforced academic tracking starting at an earlier stage, further enhancing social stratification. This study argues that targeted, partial interventions are insufficient to reduce inequality. Without systemic reforms to enhance track mobility and expand opportunities for disadvantaged students, inequality does not vanish; it merely shifts – unfortunately, it has moved to high school entry, constraining possibilities for the young. This study provides implications for the future advancement of senior secondary and higher education in China.

## Theory 1 - Room 4.205

### Looking Again at Spencer and Dilthey

*John Offer*

*(University of Ulster)*

This presentation re-examines what Wilhelm Dilthey wrote on Herbert Spencer's approach to sociology and the understanding of social life. Contrary to the impression of hostility given by Uta Gerhardt and others, Dilthey's own words point to a measured level of agreement.. Dilthey was not judging Spencer through the misleading lens of 'social Darwinism'. Dilthey found more common ground with Spencer than he did with Comte or Mill, who attracted more direct criticism from him. He was familiar with Spencer's work on psychology as well as sociology; the first providing a necessary basis for the second. Dilthey stood for hermeneutics, understanding individuals and psychic life 'from within' not from 'outside'. 'Inner perception' came from lived experience. Spencer aimed to develop a science of sociology, but he also emphasized the need for a Dilthey-like method in his book *The Study of Sociology*. Both writers also united by dislike of the idea of a collective consciousness. On some of the occasions on which Dilthey appeared to disagree with Spencer, the matter was based on a misperception, such as of the role of holism in Spencer's interpretation of 'society'. The theme of the presentation overall demonstrates, through its focus on the example of Dilthey and Spencer, how elements in the possession of one 'tradition' of thought can migrate almost unnoticed to become embedded in another. With Spencer, this review should also assist in rekindling interest in unduly neglected but important parts of his sociology, including especially the social self-consciousness of individuals.

### From Carnal Sociology to Embodied Theory

*Jana Melkumova-Reynolds*

*(London School of Economics and Political Science)*

This paper will consider how embodied, tacit and non-verbal forms of knowledge can be useful to sociology not only as objects of study but also as methodological and pedagogical devices. It will begin with a review of literature on tacit and embodied knowledge, followed by an outline of Nick Crossley's proposal for 'carnal sociology' as distinct from sociology of the body. It will then formulate an approach that bridges these two paradigms, before proposing a toolkit for developing sociological thinking and practice by engaging with theory in embodied ways, both in the field and in the classroom. To achieve this, I will draw on practical examples from the three Embodied Theory Lab workshops I convened in 2024 (at the London School of Economics and Political Science, at Durham University and at The Sociological Review's Annual Conference) and the Crip(ping) Methods Lab I organised in 2025 at the LSE. In these events, informed by disability studies and disability arts practices, movement artists and social theorists came together to think through theoretical concepts and social, political and cultural idea(l)s in ways that made space for embodied as well as discursive knowledges, producing novel, experimental and playful ways of engaging with 'the sociological'.

## **Embodiment, Women's Bodies, and the Challenge to Biomedical Reductionism: Insights from Menstrual Pain**

*Tugba Ozcan*

*(Middle Eastern Technical University)*

This paper addresses the theoretical debate on embodiment through the lens of women's reproductive health. While biomedical discourse traditionally frames the female body as a mechanical system subject to regulation and control (Foucault, 1973; Keller, 2000), feminist theories of embodiment offer an alternative, highlighting the body as sentient, lived, and culturally mediated (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Grosz, 1994; Sullivan, 2015). Menstrual pain provides a critical site for this debate: although widely prevalent, it is normalized, under-diagnosed, and rendered invisible.

Drawing on qualitative fieldwork in Türkiye, I show how women's narratives of menstrual pain reveal a disjuncture between biomedical explanations, emphasizing pathology, prostaglandins etc, and lived embodied experience, which encompasses suffering, disruption of daily life, and social marginalization. Women's accounts illuminate not only a failure of diagnosis but also what feminist theorists term testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007), where embodied knowledge is discounted or dismissed.

This theoretical engagement argues that reproductive health cannot be reduced either to biological determinism or to pure discursive construction. Instead, menstrual pain exemplifies embodiment as a dynamic process where biology and culture are co-constitutive. Following feminist phenomenologists and new materialist thinkers (Martin, 1987; Barad, 2007; Sullivan, 2015), I argue that embodiment provides a conceptual bridge: it resists the dualism of body/mind and nature/culture, while grounding women's reproductive health in both materiality and lived social experience. Ultimately, theorizing embodiment through women's accounts of menstrual pain challenges the reductionism of the biomedical model and calls for integrative, biopsychosocial perspectives centering women's bodies not as objects, but as active, knowing subjects.

## **Theory 2 - Room 4.214**

### **The "Ontological Bonding" of Sociodigital Objects**

*Taishi Liu*

*(University of Bristol)*

The proliferation of digital objects is a defining feature of the 21st century. Scholars have revealed that digital objects possess distinctive materiality and are intimately entangled with the social from their genesis, making them inherently sociodigital objects with irreducible ontological significance. However, the theorization of sociodigital objects remains underdeveloped. To address this gap, I introduce the concept of "ontological bonding" to understand the distinctive ontological condition of sociodigital objects.

The starting point for ontological bonding is the transductive property of sociodigital objects, which reveals the high-frequency ontological transformations in sociodigital processes—namely, modal conversions of constituted ensembles (e.g., analog-digital, code-video, digital-social). While transduction is irreversible, sociodigital objects, mediated by data, achieve bidirectional transduction and establish interoperability across heterogeneous domains, which I call ontological bonding. Sociodigital objects achieve at least three forms of bonding: information/materiality, social/digital, and virtual/actual. These bondings drive the formalization and operationalization of the world.

The case of algorithmic governance demonstrates the analytical power of ontological bonding. Specifically, algorithms, as sociodigital objects, function simultaneously as model parameters/physical storage, social rules/digital code, and predictive systems/infrastructure. Ontological Bonding emphasizes the integration of this triple bonding effect within algorithms as sociodigital objects, which helps explain why algorithms possess such diverse dimensions yet establish a cross-scalar and coherent governance system. Accordingly, research should focus on how transduction and bonding occur across different domains in algorithmic operations. This also means that the political-economic essence of the digital age is abstract domination.

## **Dancing the Thought: Metaphoric Thinking as a Way to Navigate New Materialism**

*Yelyzaveta Nesterova*

*(Newcastle University)*

Post-qualitative inquiry offers space to reapproach the social. However, aligning with the new understandings of the problem and research process creates a major tension. The freedom of post-qualitative goes hand in hand with the absence of any practical directives (Lorimer 2015). Post-qualitative inquiry resorts to metaphoric thinking for questioning established concepts (Moore 2004), narrating fieldwork (Vannini 2015) and working with 'data' (MacLure 2021); it is also not uncommon to use metaphoric language to present findings. Less attention is paid to capacity of metaphoric thinking in assisting understanding of the frequently abstract theoretical inferences that shape the post-qualitative.

Relying on metaphoric thinking I employ specific approach to dance - Cunningham's technique - as a conceptual tool to navigate new materialism tenets in relation to my research – exploring alternative readings of everyday assemblages encompassing interactions of people with archaeological heritage. The nuances of Cunningham's technique (Cunningham 1991), meant to overcome the limitations of existing contemporary dance tradition, amply illustrate the abstract concepts and processes typical for the new materialism inquiry – balance, chance, assemblage and beyond.

Thinking with MacLure's (2024) 'intensive reading', an approach involving closer attention to the ongoing formation of the thought (not bereft of metaphoric thinking), rather than focusing on already formulated ideas and arguments; and Brown's (1976) conceptualization of the social theory as assemblage of metaphors, I aim to explore metaphoric thinking (Lakoff and Johnson 1981) in social inquiry as a way to distance from the disciplinary positionality and well-trodden paths of thinking to generate new perspectives.

## **Body, Home, State: Goffman and the Total Institution after the Infrastructural Turn**

*Gunhild Toendel*

*(Norwegian University of Science and Technology)*

This paper revisits Erving Goffman's concept of the total institution in light of contemporary transformations in welfare state organization, particularly within elderly care. Previous research on how total institutions evolve during periods of societal and organizational change has demonstrated their adaptability to permeability and fluidity in relation to the surrounding society (Clot-Garrell, 2022), suggesting that the total institution may also operate in infrastructural ways. In recent decades, the private home has increasingly become an extended site for elderly care service delivery, supplementing traditional institutions such as nursing homes. International policy discourses emphasize the autonomy and dignity that home-based care may offer older adults. However, the changing role of the home can also be understood as part of a re-institutionalization of care and ageing with new means. Drawing on several years of qualitative fieldwork within Norwegian public healthcare services, as well as observations of policy developments related to ageing, healthcare, and technology, this paper explores how the meaning of the private home has evolved as part of the reorganization of elderly care. This reorganization appears to have been facilitated by the installation of total institution-like principles within the home—an infrastructurally organized program of power that renders the totalizing character of elderly care less visible than before. What does the permeability of the private home reveal about the total institution as a modern phenomenon?

## **Re-imagining Praxis of Lived Realities: A Theoretical Exploration in Hermeneutics and Reflexivity**

*Reshmi Chakraborty*

*(Independent Researcher)*

The context of lived experience is a simulation of facts (not reality) in the virtual world, more believable and experiential than actual experience. The question of 'truth' depends on a selective algorithm therefore. Everything is out there, from feelings, sentiments, emotions, advice, health guidance, food habits, fashion, art, anger, hunger, war, occupation, and lack of freedom! Another category that creates

the most intrigue and surpasses all the above is the disclaimer of 'sensitive content'. What we 'record' to experience for later and participate, changes the anthropology of the content. This is the 'now and later' phenomenon. And not categorizable with the traditional sociological methods of inquiry.

The hermeneutics of lived experiences and the ontology of one's existence have never seen such a complex interface as witnessed in the post-COVID era. The three major shifts the world has witnessed are: i) experiencing loss and grief as almost an everyday phenomenon and yet catch up with la vie quotidienne; ii) rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence; iii) global shift in the political temperament, majorly towards right-wing politics.

There cannot be another way 'experiences' could be determined or explained but through 'interaction-intervention-interpretation' model. The three 'I' effect may eventually transcend individualistic experiences to a collective one, something to be re-evaluated. The hypothesis of this research is to revisit traditional modes of reflexivity, relevance, and timelines and to examine the possibility of repositioning one's lived experiences in the simulated matrix between the real and virtual in the current world.

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

### **Cosplaying the Algorithm: Moralized Labor and Human-as-Interface Work in Otome Cosplay Commissions**

*Ziyu Deng, Qing Xiao*

*(Oxford Internet Institute)*

This paper investigates the labor dynamics embedded in otome cosplay commissions, in which young women hire female cosplayers to role-play idealized romantic partners based on male characters from dating simulation games. Drawing on 32 in-depth interviews with both buyers and sellers, we explore how emotional labor is moralized, informalized, and increasingly shaped by expectations borrowed from human-computer interaction. Buyers frequently understand the commissioned cosplay first as a paid service, and thus expect consistent, affectionate, scripted interactions. Cosplayers, or sellers, often reject the notion of "merely providing a paid service," and instead describe their labor as an act of altruistic dream-making and affective care within the sisterhood. This framing asymmetry, reinforced by sellers' dependence on reputation-driven platforms, further compels sellers to enact emotionally compliant personas and avoid open boundary-setting.

As both parties converge on a human-machine interaction logic of seamless, programmable affection, commissioned cosplay begins to resemble an affective user interface: love is performed as indexed behavioral outputs. Cosplayers are thus dehumanized as human proxies of buyers' projected, algorithmic fantasies. By tracing how love is executed as programmable outputs, moral expectations, and affective performance, this paper contributes to feminist digital labor studies and the sociology of intimacy. It offers a conceptual lens for understanding how platformized affective labor not only mirrors algorithmic systems but also absorbs the cultural burden of sustaining human connection in their absence.

### **An Exploration of Nurses' Experience of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Revalidation Approach of Professional Regulation**

*Joanne Harrison*

*(University of Nottingham)*

This study explored how nurses experience their professional regulator's revalidation approach, with revalidations own aim being that of the assurance of post-registration maintenance of quality standards. A neo-Weberian approach from the sociology of the professions was utilised as a theoretical framework. Summary of research background and rationale: NMC revalidation was explored with specific reference to other United Kingdom healthcare regulators revalidation approaches. Limited studies on the NMC revalidation approach have been undertaken. Therefore, there was merit in exploring nurses' views and experiences of revalidation as a regulatory process in relation to effects on professional work. Research

design and methodology: An interpretivist philosophical standpoint, utilising social constructionism methodology provided the framework for this study. Data collection used semi structured Microsoft Teams interviews. Findings: Revalidation does not achieve its aims of assuring patient safety and the quality of nursing care through the periodic revalidation of maintained levels of clinical skills, knowledge and behaviour. Although its utility was questioned, participants engaged with as part of a professional project activity (Larson, 1977) as participants valued the gateway role of revalidation to maintain their registration to practice. Recommendations: A series of recommendation were identified through the findings which would augment revalidation processually and may contribute to the regulator and professions response to the contemporary challenges faced.

### **Algorithmic Control and Informal Labour Market in India's Gig Economy: The Case of Food and Parcel Delivery Work**

*Mohammed Anfas, Manikantha Nataraj*

*(Centre for Development Studies)*

This article explores how algorithmic management intersects with informal labour market conditions to reshape the labour process in India's gig economy, focusing specifically on food and parcel delivery platforms in Kerala. While the digital transformation of work has garnered significant scholarly attention, much of the existing literature on algorithmic control and gig work has concentrated on contexts in the Global North, characterised by a relatively formalised labour regime, historically shaped by collective bargaining, regulatory protections, and institutionalised worker representation. However, the realities of the Global South, particularly in countries like India with deeply entrenched informal labour markets, present a distinctive and under-explored context. Drawing on 31 semi-structured interviews with food and parcel delivery workers and platform managers in Kerala, this article examines how algorithmically embedded gig platforms control workers through opaque performance metrics, shifting incentive structures, and real-time monitoring, among others. The findings reveal that algorithmic management in India thrives on the vulnerabilities of an informal workforce. Workers, accustomed to precarious conditions, often respond to tight control mechanisms of gig platforms with adaptation rather than resistance. By situating the Indian gig economy within the broader context of informal labour, this article challenges the universality of existing labour process theories that emerge from formalised economies. It demonstrates how the intersection of digital governance and informal employment structures produces a despotic form of algorithmic control.

### **The Experience of Employees Working Long Hours in Hong Kong: Agency and Structure Perspective**

*Winnie Wing Yee Lam, Kristin Hildenbrand, Dannii Yeung*

*(University of Leeds)*

Scholarships have provided a limited narrative describing the process of acceptance for people working long hours, setting aside the role of employees in staying in their less-than-ideal situation, with limited capability to describe why employees stay in such a situation, how they convince themselves to stay, and how they manage when staying in such a situation. This study provides a narrative of how people's cognitions influence their behaviour, choices, and changes in environment, while serving as an active agent to justify and make small changes to an unsatisfying situation. We also illustrated the tension between agency and structure, providing examples of where they respectively influence the work-life experience of our participants.

Data were collected between April and May 2019 in Hong Kong via semi-structured interviews with 32 white-collar workers who worked at least 47 hours per week.

Our analyses revealed that employees who work long hours are active actors by engaging in behaviour and cognitive efforts to make their long working hours more manageable or acceptable. Participants reduce cognitive dissonance by comparing their situation with that of others and by considering the relationship between themselves and the social structure. The East Asian holistic thinking style also showed an influence on how participants understood their situation.

The findings highlighted that both agency and structure were shaping the work-life experience of employees and their respective roles in various actions and non-actions. We illustrate how agency and

structure together influence people's behaviour and cognitive processes to shape individuals' work-life experience.

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

### **A Land of Plenty? An Analysis of How AI Policies in China, the EU, and the United States Address Labour Related Issues of Surveillance, Bias, and Inequality**

*Phoebe (Wenjiao) Wu*

*(University of Leicester)*

AI relies on massive amounts of data, it is highly scalable and transferrable, and it pushes the ideology further into bias towards automation (Acemoglu and Johnson, 2023). These features of AI bring ethical problems such as algorithmic bias, surveillance, and exploitative labour process for workers who made AI work, and whose work is reshaped by it. Yet institutions are rushing to jump on the AI bandwagon in fear of missing out. Therefore, researchers must understand AI harm to workers and how it is governed.

Critical data studies have documented the algorithmic bias and surveillance ethical problems (O'Neil, 2016; Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019; Zuboff, 2019; Dencik et al., 2022), and the sociology of work scholars have very well researched how such ethical issues are spread to work lives, and are disproportionately affecting marginalised workers (Vallas and Schor, 2020; Steinhoff, 2021; Korczynski, 2024; Casilli, 2025). AI policy researchers have found that in the absence of a single central authority on AI governance, countries have developed distinct approaches to AI governance. Therefore, this research asks: How are issues such as surveillance, bias and inequalities treated in the AI policies produced by China, the EU, U.S. governments/companies/civil society actors in terms of labour and how do they compare.

This presentation will showcase how I developed the theoretical framework, which draws from the critical data studies and the sociology of work scholarship. In addition, I will share some preliminary findings from the analysis of the AI policies issued by the aforementioned actors.

### **Volunteer Labour Exchange: The Implementation and Perception of Volunteer Resource Management**

*Alan Roe, Hugh Cook, Zinovijus Ciupijus, Kai Zhao*

*(University of Leeds)*

This paper critically explores the implementation and the perception of Volunteer Resource Management (VRM) practices, conceptualising the volunteer-management relationship as a structured and formalised power dynamic that closely resembles traditional employment relationships. Through an in-depth single case study at Treelands, a large UK higher education institution (HEI) collaborating with the third sector, this study examines how salaried staff implement VRM practices and how volunteers experience and perceive these practices. It advances the theoretical understanding of VRM by integrating perspectives from Human Resource Management (HRM), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Labour Process Theory (LPT) to interrogate the assumptions of reciprocity, managerial control, and power dynamics embedded in volunteer work.

The findings reveal a fundamental tension between the formal, structured VRM and the informal, flexible nature of volunteer work. VRM practices are implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness and alignment with volunteer expectations and organisational objectives. The findings demonstrate that these practices, while designed to enhance organisational efficiency, often function as managerialist tools that reinforce unpaid labour as subordinate to operational priorities and institutional interests. VLE challenges the notion of volunteering as an altruistic, agency-driven exchange, instead highlighting the managerial control and systemic inequalities embedded in such non-employment relationships. The findings have significant implications for organisations seeking to design VRM practices that balance organisational objectives with volunteers' evolving motivations and expectations, as well as for

volunteers who seek volunteer work as a springboard to enhance their employability while making a meaningful difference.

### **Digital Communities, Affective Politics, and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Narratives**

*Yushan Xie*

*(University of Oxford)*

Statistics show that 948,000 people aged 16 to 24 were NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in April to June 2025 in the UK, which was 12.5% of all people in this age group. Studies have indicated that time spent in NEET can have negative impacts on one's physical and mental health, and increase the likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low-quality work later on in life. Against these socio-economic challenges young people are facing, this paper is being developed to better understand how NEET narratives and the affective politics are constructed in digital communities, particularly considering the issues of access to and outcomes of education and training, the design of jobs and work culture, and the broader questions of social mobility, inclusion, and justice.

The key research aim is to better understand what kinds of narratives around NEET have emerged and how they are politically constructed, with a focus on a digital community on Reddit. The paper will analyse large-scale user-generated content scraped from the Reddit community r/NEET. A mixed-methods approach will be used to analyse the data. Natural Language Processing tools will be used to conduct topic modelling and sentiment analysis to provide an overview of the themes being discussed and how they were narrated. Building on these quantitative findings, a critical discourse analysis will be used to qualitatively analyse a selection of posts with the most comments, likes, and relevance score based on the quantitative results, to provide a more detailed, in-depth analysis of these narratives.

### **Re-imagining Humanness in Work: A Case Study of Meaningful Work within Heritage Crafts**

*Eun Sun Godwin, Joshua Blamire*

*(University of Wolverhampton)*

This paper explores the notion of meaningful work within the heritage crafts industry. The nature and the value of work is changing fast particularly with the disruptive and transformative development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The concerns over AI disruption are not only about it substituting human's work but also it (re)shaping the fundamental 'humanness' in work, such as ethics, purpose, meaning and social connection. This paper proposes that meaningfulness of work as crucial part of 'humanness' and explores how this humanness might be challenged and/or enshrined in such a fast-changing notion of work and its value in the society.

We propose heritage crafts as a fruitful case to explore this topic. The nature of the heritage crafts, with emphasis on hand making the thing itself with traditional skills, challenges modernity's concept of work and value of the work. The ethics and understanding of work of craftsmanship focusing on 'doing' and the product itself as well as the heritage crafts' purpose of durability and valuing long-lasting skills embedded in the work and the product challenge the temporality of modernity in production of work – i.e., fact, instant and disposable – intensified by disruptive technology development.

This paper is based on our data from interviews and ethnographic observation with 16 heritage craftspeople. We build our discussion on the Hannah Arendt's Human Condition, particularly her conceptual distinction between 'labour' and 'work', in investigating how meaning and meaningfulness of work is shaped and how these notions can contribute to strengthening the humanness in work.