



# U-RED19: Undergraduate Research Excellence Day

**School of Sociology and Social Policy**

Conference Programme and Abstracts

31<sup>st</sup> May 2019

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# U-RED19

## What is it?

This is a day when we celebrate the research culture in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. More specifically, we showcase the research that our final year undergraduate students have produced for their dissertations.

## Who is it for?

There is a little bit for everyone. Final year undergraduate students have the chance to practice public speaking and to share their research findings as well as reflect on their dissertation journeys. Second year undergraduate students have the chance to find out what the dissertation is about, get ideas for their future projects, chat to students who have just been through it and to prospective supervisors. Similarly, first years can get a head start on their ideas and prepare for research methods modules. PGT, PGR, staff, family and friends get to celebrate with final year students and find out more about the amazing research they have done over the past year.

## What to expect

It is a day full of thematically organised presentations that hopefully will give food for thought to everyone. In the spirit of celebration, we will be awarding prizes for best abstract and best presenters and the day will end with an exclusive dissertation module session for second years with Prof. Bill Dixon.

We are very much looking forward to seeing you all on the day!

Conference team:

Dr Aimie Purser

Prof Bill Dixon

Dr Elena Genova

Official conference hashtag: **#U\_RED19**

# WELCOME

## Prof Louise Crewe

*Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience*  
*Professor of Human Geography, University of Nottingham*

Prof Crewe's areas of research include:

- Fashion
- Retailing
- Consumption
- Commodification, value and disposal



# KEYNOTE

## Dr Samantha Weston

*Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Keele University*

**Talk:** 'Research, what is it good for? Informing practitioners working with vulnerable people'



Dr Weston is the UG Criminology Programme leader at Keele University. Before Keele she worked as a Research Associate for 8 years at the National Drug Evidence Centre, University of Manchester. Here she was involved in a number of Home Office and Department of Health funded research projects. Samantha is interested in the overarching themes of social inequality, and the exclusion, discrimination and injustice of marginalized communities. Her research can be consolidated under the overarching theme of 'Risk Prevention', particularly how risk prevention measures have been applied to the areas of substance misuse, but more recently this has expanded to include child sexual exploitation and 'vulnerabilities'.

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Time	Activity	Location
09:30-10:00	<b>Arrival and refreshments</b> Coffee, tea and pastries available	Atrium, LASS
Time	Activity	Location
10:00-10:15	<b>Welcome</b> <i>Prof. Louise Crewe</i> Faculty APVC for Education and Student Experience	B62, LASS
Time	Activity	Location
10:15-11:15	<b>Session 1: Deviance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century</b> <b>Chair:</b> Dr Andy Henley Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Déjà Jones</b> The Prohibition of Pleasure: An Exploration of Barriers Hindering Policy Reform in the Criminalisation of Recreational Drug Users</li> <li><b>Millie Watkins</b> Born into slavery? A study into the role of agency in the lives of perpetrators and victims of bonded labour in India</li> <li><b>Victoria Ficarra</b> The deviance of the vegan: A contemporary analysis of Othering theory in relation to the growth of veganism in the West</li> </ol>	B18, LASS
	<b>Session 2: Mediated Identities and Intimacies</b> <b>Chair:</b> Dr Lisa Warwick Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Harriet Badley</b> #Brelfies: How Can Breastfeeding Selfies Subvert Discipline of the Maternal Body</li> <li><b>Sian Galsworthy</b> A Cinderella Story?</li> <li><b>Priya Sahota</b> '400,000 Men Couldn't Get Home, so Home Came for Them': Word War 2 and Collective Memory and Film</li> </ol>	B55, LASS

Parallel sessions

Time	Activity	Location
11:15-11:30	<b>Refreshments:</b> coffee, tea and biscuits available	Atrium, LASS
Time	Activity	Location
11:30- 12:00	<b>Keynote</b> <b>'Research, what is it good for? Informing practitioners working with vulnerable people'</b> <i>Dr Sam Weston</i> Senior Lecturer, Keele University	B62, LASS
Time	Activity	Location
12:00-12:45	<b>Lunch:</b> a selection of pizzas	Atrium, LASS
Time	Activity	Location
12:45-13:45	<b>Session 3: Overcoming Barriers in Education: 'Race', Class and Disability</b> <b>Chair:</b> Dr Elena Genova Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Jack James</b> If you're a young black man, you're more likely to be in a cell than studying at a top University: exploring the experiences of Black male students at the University of Nottingham</li> <li><b>Anna Du-Mont</b> Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social Isolation: A Positive Coping Mechanism</li> <li><b>Hannah Aldridge</b> "A little bit in-between": an exploration into the changing class identity of university students</li> </ol>	B18, LASS
	<b>Parallel sessions</b> <b>Session 4: Exploring Everyday Practices, Experiences and Behavioural Choices</b> <b>Chair:</b> Dr Lewis Cameron Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Tiago Machado Costa</b> When is the personal problematic? An exploration of race-based sexual discrimination in gay men's casual sex practices</li> </ol>	

2. **Julia Gunman**

Social Practice theory and climate change

3. **Ashling Akosa**

Exploring the Black student experience of Russell group higher education institutions: A case study

	Activity	Location
13:45-14:10	<b>Refreshments:</b> coffee, tea and mini muffins available	Atrium, LASS
	Activity	Location
14:10-14:35	<b>Awards</b> <i>Best Abstract and Best Presentation</i>	B62, LASS
	Activity	Location
14:35-14:50	<b>Closing</b> <i>Prof. Bill Dixon</i> Director of Undergraduate Programmes	B62, LASS
	Activity	Location
14:50-15:30	<b>Dissertations 2019/20</b> <i>Prof. Bill Dixon</i> For current UG Year 2 students only	B62, LASS



# CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

## Session 1: Deviance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### **The Prohibition of Pleasure: An Exploration of Barriers Hindering Policy Reform in the Criminalisation of Recreational Drug Users**

*Déjà Jones*

(BA Sociology and Criminology)

The war on drugs has been addressed in academic discourse as a 'war on drug users'. This dissertation seeks to explore the ways in which this war is fought upon recreational drug users, as the use of psychoactive substances has become increasingly pursued across various social groups in recent times. In spite of the proliferation of drug use entering otherwise non-criminal groups, the war continues to be fought as vivacious as ever, adapting to such developments in the demographics of drug users. The punishment of drug users persists in disregard of evidence that not only is prohibition a failure, but that it heightens drug-related problems in several aspects. The ultimate focus of this dissertation is to offer an explanation as to why the criminal justice system of England and Wales remains the dominant response for drug users in the pursuit of pleasure amongst a plethora of evidence demonstrating a public health approach is crucial in reducing drug-related deaths, addiction and crime.

### **Born into slavery? A study into the role of agency in the lives of perpetrators and victims of bonded labour in India**

*Millie Watkins*

(BA Sociology and Social Policy)

This dissertation presents a sociologically significant contribution to literature by investigating the relationship between modern slavery and agency. Modern slavery is prevalent in society today, yet the under-researched assumption that perpetrators have agency over their position and victims do not weakens academic understanding of the issue. I argue that this assumption is too simplistic and does not make full sense of the multi-dimensional role of agency within modern slavery. I utilise the case study of bonded labour in India to present an in-depth analysis of the role of agency. I analyse transcripts of paired interviews with both perpetrators and victims and implement exploratory multi-dimensional methods of analysis within the theoretical framework of agency and power in order to best understand this unique and rich data source, giving precedence to the voices of those directly involved. I contend that in order to end modern slavery by 2030 per United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8, we must pay more attention to the role of agency in the lives of both perpetrators and victims.

**The deviance of the vegan: A contemporary analysis of Othering theory in relation to the growth of veganism in the West**

*Victoria Ficarra*  
(BA Sociology)

Veganism has grown substantially in the West in recent years. Subsequently, as the movement has gained popularity and credibility, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with vegans. By analysing academic literature on Othering theory, this review will propose that whilst existing literature hints at Othering being motivated by a perceived threat, it does not explicitly make this link. Then, by specifically analysing existing literature on the Othering of the vegan individual, vegaphobia, this literature review will assert that most of the literature on vegaphobia does make this link but looks to the social threat the vegan poses. Instead, this review will contribute to a small body of work which attributes vegaphobia to a perceived threat of moral superiority. Thus, this review's main argument is that vegans are viewed and treated negatively because of the moral threat they pose on the non-vegan's own moral identity. By offering a moral alternative, the mere existence of the vegan subject challenges the morality of the non-vegan and contradicts their sense of self.

**Session 2: Mediated Identities and Intimacies**

**#Brelfies: How Can Breastfeeding Selfies Subvert Discipline of the Maternal Body**

*Harriet Badley*  
(BA Sociology)

This dissertation examines the role of Brelfies in subverting the discipline exercised over the maternal body according to a Foucauldian-feminist approach. As infant-feeding has garnered an increasing amount of interest, breastfeeding has become central to the discourses surrounding motherhood. This dissertation surmises, through the application of Foucauldian-feminist thought that the expectation of women to breastfeed, and the sexualisation and resultant exclusion of their bodies works to enforce a discipline over maternal bodies. Brelfies, offer women a site for subversion and challenge their exclusion from the narrative, the sexualisation of their bodies, and reinstates the right of their bodies to exist in the public sphere. As a literature-based research project, this dissertation provides a valuable contribution to the discursive field of infant-feeding and recognises the subversive possibilities available to women due to technology.

**A Cinderella Story?**  
*Sian Galsworthy*  
(BA Sociology)

The modernisation and individualisation of society has seen a shift in the way in which intimate lives and relationships, are conducted and the rise of digital technology has further facilitated this. Emerging

adults, in particular, have been subject to this increasingly digital way of maintaining and initiating relationships and have also become the primary audience for the digital dating application Tinder. In light of this, through semi-structured interviews with six heterosexual male and female emerging adults, this research sets out to understand how emerging adults today are experiencing dating and intimacy. The research shall also take a specific look at the ways in which emerging adults use Tinder to facilitate this, and the impact this is having. Consequently, the main argument put forward in this research is that there has been a shift in why and how emerging adults are able to facilitate their dating and intimate lives, which can be evidently correlated with the increasing individualisation and modernisation of society. Moreover, this article argues that Tinder specifically is facilitating a shift in the dating lives of emerging adults. Firstly, by reversing the traditional gender roles which once underpinned dating, yet secondly, encouraging the commodification of relationships and intimate lives.

**'400,000 Men Couldn't Get Home, so Home Came for Them': Word War 2 and Collective Memory and Film**

*Priya Sahota*  
(BA Sociology)

In Brexit-era Britain, reflecting on our national past seems is one of the overriding cultural practices of today. World War 2 holds ample significance in British culture. Our appetite for World War 2 in popular culture seems to be ever-growing, with different war films being released year upon year. By analysing three contemporary war films; Dads Army (2016), Darkest Hour (2017) and Dunkirk (2017); this investigation aims to explore the narratives that mainstream, contemporary British cinema offers us about World War 2. The findings of this dissertation indicate that contemporary British war films depict an idealised and glorified version of war-time Britain. Furthermore, this study shows that the 'myths' represented in the three texts are still held as truth today, and that they inform present day ideas about British national identity.

**Session 3: Overcoming Barriers in Education: 'Race', Class and Disability**

**If you're a young black man, you're more likely to be in a cell than studying at a top University:  
exploring the experiences of Black male students at the University of Nottingham**

*Jack James*  
(BA Criminology and Sociology)

It is undeniable that black African Caribbean male students are severely underrepresented in Elite educational institutions in the United Kingdom. Many academics argue whether this lack of black male

students is a result of ethnic bias in admission processes, a result of class or poor educational attainment. My study explores black males who attend the University of Nottingham to understand why they go against the statistics. Bourdieu's forms of capital look at whether the participants are part of the dominant groupings. From this, it allows an understanding of why these students go against the statistics and attend a Russell Group University. Furthermore, this dissertation examines the experiences of black male students at the University of Nottingham. Through this, it gains an understanding of the problems faced by black male students and whether these experiences will affect their future professional life. It is hoped these findings can help in facilitating in gaining a better understanding of why there are barriers to attending elite Universities for black male students. Also, these findings can show the experiences of black male students and give an insight into improvements which can be made by the University to help in providing students with a positive experience. Lastly, I hope these findings will be beneficial in bridging the gap of black racial background and male gender in UK academic experiences.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social Isolation: A Positive Coping Mechanism**

*Anna Du-Mont*

(BA Sociology)

This dissertation examines the use of social isolation as a positive coping mechanism by young people on the autistic spectrum. Through semi-structured interviews with 4 Special Educational Needs (SEN) professionals, this research works towards an understanding of the difficulties that autistic individuals may face in neurotypical environments, such as conforming to social norms and communicative difficulties, as well as the navigation of the experience of adolescence. An analysis into previous literature identified that autism is often studied from a positivist theoretical model, particularly where definitions of autism are viewed as a neurodevelopmental disorder. However, through viewing autism through the social model of disability this research is theoretically grounded in an ontological social constructivist framework of knowledge that aims to view those with autism as individuals with personalised needs, rather than a generalised medical condition to be cured. Following this empirical research, it is argued that social isolation can be used as a positive coping mechanism by young people with autism. However, the difficulties that lead to the need of using such coping mechanisms must also be understood if we are to contribute to a wider understanding of autism and hence support autistic individuals in successfully navigating neurotypical environments.

### **"A little bit in-between": an exploration into the changing class identity of university students**

*Hannah Aldridge*

(BA Sociology)

This dissertation explores the changing class identities of university students, focusing specifically on students who took part on widening participation schemes before they came to university. Qualitative

research was conducted in the form of guided interviews to understand the lived experience of being a student at a Russell Group university. A thematic analysis of the interviews indicated that being a first-generation student, using the student finance system and having an accent, or speaking in a certain way, all contributed to a changing class identity. The findings indicate that class is experienced on a subjective level, but there are shared experiences of working-class or widening participation students that contribute to changing class identity. Class identity is either realised to have changed through a particular event or moment, or is understood gradually, and tends to be accompanied by feelings of pride or shame. The findings also indicate that widening participation schemes do impact upon class identity, through possession of different capitals and the embeddedness of aspirational narratives in stories of social class.

## Session 4: Exploring Everyday Practices, Experiences and Behavioural Choices

**When is the personal problematic? An exploration of race-based sexual discrimination in gay men's casual sex practices**

*Tiago Machado Costa*

(BA Sociology)

This piece of research focuses on the phenomenon of racial preferences among gay men through the lens of post-racial discourse, through which racial discrimination in all realms of social life becomes obscured. Racial preferences constitute a discourse in which individuals actively articulate an exclusion or inclusion of some based on potential partners' racial identity, generally through phrases like "Asians are not my type" or "not into black guys". Current literature on this topic overwhelmingly focuses on the experiences of those affected by these forms of exclusion and the psychological, emotional, political, and sexual health impacts on gay men of colour. This study seeks to respond to that gap from a critical race perspective by exploring the language and style in the way individuals discuss hypothetical scenario of "preferences" being used in sexual interactions. Through vignette-focused semi-structured interviews with gay university students, it uncovers the ways in which individuals construct the boundaries that separate racial prejudice from sexual preferences. Three major themes are identified: the objectification of embodiments of race and its reliance on the sexual stereotyping of certain racial groups; a policing of publicly articulated racial preferences within a post-racial society that disavows the existence and impact of race; and certain rhetorical strategies used by participants to continue to deploy racial preferences while avoiding being associated with racial prejudice and racism. Ultimately, I argue that the racial preference discourse can be used to individualise and privatise racism, creating unique contexts of Othering for gay men of colour.

## **Social Practice theory and climate change**

*Julia Gunman*

(BA Sociology)

Scientific research has concluded that anthropogenic climate change is a threat to both human and non-human lives. With it comes major political, economic, socio cultural and ethical implications. Which must be understood if policy is to be implemented into wider society successfully to mitigate climate change and its potential threats. Currently in the UK psychology-based paradigms dominate the governments approach to behaviour change providing ways in which people can make better choices for themselves. However, these are not working whilst concern is rising, people's engagement in reducing their high carbon behaviours is tangible. This dissertation turns to the social sciences, which have been at best, marginalised from climate change policy. Using a qualitative approach to explore three practices; meat eating, transport and coffee drinking. Each will be conceptualised into Shove's definition of a practice which includes, meanings, materials and competences. Using this to explore why people worry about climate change but still engage in high carbon behaviours. This understanding will then be applied to suggest potential mitigation strategies. By using social practice theory this dissertation represents an original approach to understanding the publics engagement with climate change.

## **Exploring the Black student experience of Russell group higher education institutions: A case study**

*Ashling Akosa*

(BA Sociology)

Despite some efforts to widen participation and become more equal from university's historically racially biased past, black students continue to be the most underrepresented group of students in Russell group higher education institutions. The research on how this affects the experience of black students within these institutions is very limited. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how underrepresented black students experience Russell group higher education institutions with a qualitative study exclusively focused on the University of Nottingham. In order to do so, section 2 examines existing academic literature in relation to race, ethnicity and the higher education system, as well as literature on how black students are affected in higher education institutions. Section 4 focuses on the results of two focus groups, one with black students and another with white students, to offer a comparison of their experiences of higher education in terms of their social, educational and welfare experiences. This is in order to truly explore the black student experience and how it separates from others. This qualitative research adds a contribution to a gap in the literature related to black students and their experiences of university by showing how it differs from the white majority experience at a Russell group university for UK domiciled undergraduates.