

Thresholds

A Pop-Up Event
Treehouse, Berrick Saul Building
University of York
Friday 22nd September 2017

This event platforms scholars working across the humanities and social sciences around the theme of 'thresholds'. It explores perspectives on the liminal edges of everyday, organisational and social life. What and who reside beyond or within different types of thresholds? Who has to cross thresholds? What prevents people or things crossing? How does power operate through different thresholds? How do thresholds articulate with limits, extremes, dangers and tipping points? These are just some of the questions explored in this one day symposium. Thresholds brings together diverse disciplines including sociology, politics, history, anthropology, women's studies, critical management, human geography and social policy.

Programme

10.30 Coffee and arrival

10.40 Welcome (Joanna Latimer)

10.50 Session 1 (Chair: Nik Brown)

12.00 Lunch (45 mins)

12.45 Session 2 (Chair: David Beer)

14.05 Break

14.20 Session 3 (Chair: Rolland Munro)

15.40 Drinks & informal discussion

<https://thresholdyork.wordpress.com>

SESSION ONE

- 10.50** **Deport, Deprive, Extradite**
Nisha Kapoor
- 11.00** **Caught in-between thresholds: on being open & vulnerable, & becoming-rendered**
Joanna Latimer
- 11.10** **Crossing the Threshold in Iran**
Reihaneh Afshari Saleh
Richard Ogden
- 11.20** **Encounters, crossings and ordinary thresholds**
Helen F. Wilson
- 11.30** **Women Clergy on the Edge of a Chthonic Breakdown: A Story of Permanent Liminality**
Sharon Winfield
- 11.40** **The Governance of Disabled Students through reasonable adjustments: An investigation of Foucault's modalities of power**
Laura Wigley
- 11.50** **At the thresholds of 'actionable risk': Oncotype DX testing and chemotherapy decision- making in breast cancer**
Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Anne Kerr, Emily Ross and Julia Swallow

SESSION TWO

- 12.45** **Biotic thresholds – bodies, buildings and biomes**
Nik Brown
- 12.55** **Liminal Spaces: a new way of understanding the regulation of health research**
Isabel Fletcher
- 13.05** **Situating the Syringe**
Nicole Vitellone
- 13.15** **Standing at the Threshold with Dementia**
Catherine Pemble
- 13.25** **Loving Pets Long Distance: Fur-ever friends or part-time playthings?**
Bethany Robertson

- 13.35 The bounded community: an open question**
Helen Traill
- 13.45 (In)Accessibility: On Doors, Gatekeeping and the Delegation of Management**
Jocelyn Finniear & Paul White
- 13.55 Delivering on Time: Work, Fulfilment and Buying Online**
David Hill

SESSION THREE

- 14.20 Graduate Level Apprentices: A new threshold between employment and study?**
Ella Taylor-Smith, Sally Smith and Alison Varey
- 14.30 Thresholds of Visibility and the Politics of Looking'**
G Bratchford
- 14.40 Membership and 'framing-work' in the visual arts: becoming, mattering and negotiating**
Emma Coffield
- 14.50 Arts-based practice and epistemological thresholds**
Ruth Kelly
- 15.00 The Porous Threshold between Art and Anthropology**
Max Kimber
- 15.10 Art and the post-communist condition as threshold experience**
Magda Schmukalla
- 15.20 In war, not everyone is a soldier: Ritual thresholds' & tabletop gaming**
Matt Coward
- 15.30 Pushing back data thresholds**
Dave Beer

ABSTRACTS

Pushing back data thresholds

Dave Beer

This talk will reflect on the power of data analytics and how that power is spreading throughout social world. It will look at how data thresholds are pushed back in order to increase the reach and intensity of data-led thinking, judgment and ordering. Using a study of the data analytics industry, it will begin to reflect on how a new kind of data imaginary is developed that is charged with forcing data thresholds outwards and rendering the social world amenable to data analysis.

Biotic thresholds – bodies, buildings and biomes

Nik Brown

This paper reflects on architectural designs as forms of biotic life and liveliness. In so doing, it seeks to move away from thinking about buildings as ‘environments’ (the ‘built environment’) and instead endeavours to understand the co-evolutionary relationships taking shape between the architectures of the body and the building. I’m particularly interested in drawing together insights from anthropology (Douglas notably) and biopolitical writing on immunity (Sloterdijk, Esposito, Derrida). Empirically, I locate this discussion in the context of healthcare architectural designs that seek to control, minimise and mitigate communicable infections. I’m interested in the ever-changing and dynamic relationships between these designs and the kinds of bodies that inhabit them and reshape them. In so doing, the paper reflects on biotic forms of life co-evolving at the thresholds between the ‘body of the building’ and the ‘building of the body’.

Thresholds of Visibility and the Politics of Looking’

Gary Bratchford

Knowing that visibility is not homogenous but instead is connected to thresholds, my paper will discuss how the effects of visibility are contingent upon the type of regime in which it is situated. Focusing specifically on Israel/Palestine as both a contested space and field of vision, I will explore how varying regimes of visibility differ from context to context and are managed through a range of registers which are formed around a number of political, military and social mechanisms. By doing so, I will address how visual activism can challenge the ‘normal appearance’ (Goffman 1971) of such settings.

Membership and ‘framing-work’ in the visual arts: becoming, mattering and negotiating

Dr Emma Coffield

Abstract: This paper explores the multiple, overlapping and at times fraught boundaries established and negotiated by artists as part of their everyday practice. Drawing upon data collected at three UK-based artist-run initiatives (85A, The Mutual, Empty Shop), I argue for ‘membership’ as actively and distinctly framed (Entmann 1993) and a boundary between legitimate field players and ‘others’. However, while membership can compel acceptance of group norms (Guibernau 2013) it can also defy competitive field logics and render artists and their work meaningful. The paper thus considers who and what might belong in the arts, how, and the price to be paid in exchange.

In war, not everyone is a soldier: Ritual thresholds' & tabletop gaming

Matt Coward

In 2017, the multi-player cooperative narrative-driven tabletop game *This War of Mine* was published; based on the single-player survival video game of the same name published in 2014. In this campaign-style game, players take control of the fate of a group of survivors in the war-torn city of Pogoren, controlling their actions and trying to stave off the misery, illness and hunger caused by the siege. Through *This War of Mine*, I will argue that in playing tabletop games, players commune in the thresholds of liminal space, fostering communal cohesion and allowing greater understanding of the devastating effects of war.

At the thresholds of 'actionable risk': Oncotype DX testing and chemotherapy decision-making in breast cancer

Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Anne Kerr, Emily Ross and Julia Swallow

Oncotype DX technology uses genomic profiling to predict breast cancer recurrence, guiding adjuvant chemotherapy treatment decisions by categorising patients as at low, intermediate or high risk. This paper considers how the 'intermediate risk' category is negotiated in treatment decision-making, as patients are placed at the thresholds of 'actionable risk'. We show how patients interpret, share and refine this ambiguous categorisation in the context of dominant cultural narratives encouraging individuals to 'fight' cancer (recurrence). This paper contributes to understandings of the emergent complexities and moments of liminality produced by the introduction of genomic technologies into patient care.

(In)Accessibility: On Doors, Gatekeeping and the Delegation of Management

Jocelyn Finniear & Paul White

This paper examines principles of accessibility through a trope of openings and closings (Latour, 1987; 1988). We present some implications of insights from social understandings of things that open and close in order to analyse the work of gatekeepers. Through openings and closings we show how responsibilities delegated to line managers align with a logic of proximity, flexibility and devolution, examining the impact they have upon the lives of women who need flexible working arrangements following maternity leave. Here we present the technology (Foucault, 1991) of localization as a means of presenting an obligatory passage (Munro, 1998) for legitimating (in)accessibility.

Liminal Spaces: a new way of understanding the regulation of health research

Isabel Fletcher

This presentation briefly introduces the theoretical framework developed by the Liminal Spaces Project (Wellcome Trust, PI Graeme Laurie) which analyses the regulation of health research. Building on spatial understandings of regulation, we argue that liminal spaces - spaces in-between rules and regulations, guidance and governance practices - are important, understudied elements of many regulatory regimes. Our processual approach examines regulatory spaces and practices as they are experienced by all actors, shedding new light on the boundary-crossing inherent to health research. It raises the possibility of a radical reimagining of regulatory approaches based on partnerships between researchers, regulators and the public.

Delivering on Time: Work, Fulfilment and Buying Online

David Hill

In 2012 Amazon ran a TV advert with the slogan: “Connecting your mouse to your front door was our moon landing”. This was a relatively early articulation of a key organisational development in Platform Capitalism: the integrated Stack. Amazon’s aim is to seamlessly integrate buying online with lean logistics in warehousing and delivery. This short paper explores the moral condition of the invisible labour that fulfils commodity consumption, arguing that Platform Capitalism creates a moral pollution that further obscures the human costs of the products we carry across the domestic threshold.

Deport, Deprive, Extradite

Nisha Kapoor

Between 2003 and 2015 there were nine individuals extradited from the UK to the US for terrorism-related offences. The significance of these high profile extreme cases – extreme not simply because they are few in number but because they involve some of the most extreme excesses of state power – is that they demonstrate the full extent of disciplinary power and in doing so are in some senses positioned at what Saskia Sassen refers to as the ‘systemic edge’, the point at where a condition is made so extreme that it is not easily captured by standard interrogations of, in the cases of interest to me here, citizenship, policing or human rights. In this intervention, I consider what their extreme nature, in its starkness, makes more visible about the broader workings of the security state.

Arts-based practice and epistemological thresholds

Ruth Kelly

In July 2017, Emilie Flower and Ruth Kelly (Centre for Applied Human Rights) worked with artists and activists in Bangladesh and Uganda to explore how arts-based research practices can disrupt dominant epistemologies and facilitate reflection about our performance of development. Our preliminary analysis looks at how practicing the arts can help us experience (stand at the threshold of) different ways of knowing. We discuss the influence of the spaces we used and flow of activities in unsettling how participants do workshops, but also the challenges in moving away from cultural scripts of development and alternatives.

The Porous Threshold between Art and Anthropology

Max Kimber

I am an artist currently studying for an MA in Social Anthropology and Visual Ethnography at the University of Kent. However, because my BA Hons was in Fine Art and concentrated on animal studies, I tend to view this MA through a fine art human/animal studies lens. This has led me to examine the porous thresholds and liminal spaces that exist between art and anthropology in order to locate the nexus where they might meet. Hybrid areas like this are an essential way to further the scope of anthropology itself, which still suffers from perceptions of colonialism and latterly, Eurocentrism. I suggest that by attempting to occupy the liminal areas between art and ethnography it will enable anthropology to utilise a position that is more accessible to the public than a traditional monograph could ever be. To support this suggestion, I will refer to my recent project *Dying to Meet You*, where I interviewed the taxidermist at the Natural History Museum. This interview was an enquiry into the relationship that might exist between a taxidermist and the animals which are

stuffed. The interview resulted in an ethnofiction written in the voice of a creature that is about to become taxidermy; giving vocalisation to an animal that has lost its own voice, which in this case is a fox. The narrative is supported by a sculpture and forms a hermeneutic circle with the ethnofiction; each assisting in the explanation of the other. It can be certain that the threshold between art and anthropology has been reached as both ethnofiction and sculpture work individually as anthropology and art, but when viewed together they combine as the locus between them.

Caught in-between thresholds: on being open & vulnerable, & becoming-rendered

Joanna Latimer

I report on an incident in which a companion species in a rural site in Crete creates a threshold through which I was not meant to pass, a threshold which comes into collision with the passage created by walking and thinking and “being alongside” otherness. Drawing on Haraway’s notion of “becoming-with” in her work on companion species, and my own of being alongside, I reflect on the mortal consequences of a collision of thresholds, and the politics of being open and vulnerable, and of becoming rendered, including the reassembling that occurs.

Crossing the Threshold in Iran

Reihaneh Afshari Saleh & Richard Ogden

What are the rituals and social conventions that must be adhered to when a guest steps into a host’s home? This presentation is about ‘focused interactions’ (Goffman 1963: 83) between friends in Iran, based on a collection of recordings originally made for TV. The rituals typically involve greeting, embracing, kissing, paying compliments, among others. Using the methods of Conversation Analysis, we explore some of the linguistic features of threshold interactions, and their role in delineating the boundaries of threshold exchanges. We will show how appreciating the extraordinariness of ordinary interactions leads to a better understanding of daily encounters.

Standing at the Threshold with Dementia

Catherine Pemble

Across the UK and Europe, the call for ‘dementia friendly’ neighbourhoods and communities is gathering momentum, with researchers highlighting a range of concerns from public transportation to the design of street signs. However, despite this growing interest there has as yet been little consideration for the threshold spaces which separate ‘home’, community and neighbourhood spaces for people living with dementia. This paper discusses the preliminary findings of an ethnographic research study into how people with dementia experience, manipulate and negotiate physical, social and relational threshold spaces, highlighting the mercurial nature of thresholds and their importance for dementia theory.

Loving Pets Long Distance: Fur-ever friends or part-time playthings?

Bethany Robertson

Pets, the animals that Western culture invites across the threshold of the family home, occupy liminal spaces. I challenge the assumption that pet owners live within the household that their pets are located, as shown by students living away from home who manage their relationship across geographical space. Pets are a source of unconditional love, but

ambivalence arises when the consistency of support is challenged by love being conditional on sharing personal space. Despite the attribution of kinship, the absence of care-giving and tactile interaction during a long distance relationship draws attention to the boundary space between human/animal.

Art and the post-communist condition as threshold experience

Magda Schmukalla

I explore the way in which art allows us to 'speak' and theorize from within thresholds. By drawing on contemporary critical and psychoanalytic theory, I argue that artworks trigger an artistic experience which allows us to know the social status quo and its various ghostly realities through a liminal and transitional state that is akin to that of threshold experiences. I will discuss these points in relation to the post-communist condition as a transitory site and look more closely at one site-specific artwork that internalizes, translates and intervenes in post-communist public places in Warsaw (Oxygenator 2007 by Joanna Rajkowska).

The bounded community: an open question

Helen Traill

Community is often spoken of as a bounded process, after Cohen (1985). This has been discussed as the 'primitive, carnivorous side' of community itself (Belton, 2013). But are boundary processes an inevitable part of communal organisation? Reflecting on communal growing projects in Glasgow, this paper explores the way that boundaries might be multiple and porous, given an ideological context that promotes openness. This raises the contradictory possibility of the open community, alongside practical questions of cultural continuity. This paper suggests that strong thresholds are not an automatic outcome of communal organising, but do exist in relation to collective ideology.

Graduate Level Apprentices: A new threshold between employment and study?

Ella Taylor-Smith, Sally Smith and Alison Varey

Edinburgh Napier University's Graduate Level Apprenticeships are undergraduate degrees in which the students are in full-time employment, studying on campus one day per week. The first apprentices start in September. We are embarking on a holistic research project, in tandem with the degrees, to explore the threshold between employment and study. How will the apprentices traverse this threshold and manage dual identities of student and employee? The employers and the university share responsibilities for the apprentices' well-being, success, and, to some extent, the content of their university education. How will these partnerships between these different institutions and perspectives play out?

Situating the Syringe

Nicole Vitellone

What is at stake when the syringe becomes a tool for thinking? This paper describes the empirical challenges, methodological strategies and epistemological consequences of encountering injecting drug users directly affected by Harm Reduction policies as significant stakeholders in the expression of drug problems. By reclaiming the everyday experiences of injecting drugs my intention is not to incorporate the drug user into theoretical and policy debates as another or alternative source of knowledge but show how situating the problem

of the syringe transforms knowledge production and evidenced based evaluations of Needle Exchange.

The Governance of Disabled Students through reasonable adjustments: An investigation of Foucault's modalities of power

Laura Wigley

This qualitative research presents a Foucauldian analysis of disabled students' experiences of accessing reasonable adjustments. Analysis revealed that reasonable adjustments were frequently viewed as an exception to normal practice that required justification. Participants were required to repeatedly demonstrate that they qualified as disabled, as the threshold between able-bodied and disabled identities was policed through the modalities of power identified by Foucault. Access to reasonable adjustments often depended on discretionary decisions (sovereign power) based on the identity and categorisation of disability (biopower) and judgements about the effectiveness of the students' coping and studying strategies (disciplinary power).

Encounters, crossings and ordinary thresholds

Helen F. Wilson

The paper considers how encounters articulate with thresholds and what this does to how we think about ordinary forms of liminality. Drawing on work that positions 'the encounter' as a distinct genre of contact and a site of rupture it considers how the experience of encounter might be read as the involuntary recognition of a threshold that is simultaneously confirmed and undone. In asking how encounters 'haunt the solidity of things' (Stewart, 2007), it centres on the momentary ways in which the crossing of multiple thresholds is sensed, whether as a barely detected fluctuation or a radical shock.

Women Clergy on the Edge of a Chthonic Breakdown: A Story of Permanent Liminality

Sharon Winfield

My research into women clergy and their gendered belonging in the Church of England has revealed a world of thresholds, structural and symbolic. Using Victor Turner's defining discussion on liminality (and with a nod to Haraway's Chthulucene), this paper will examine how women clergy live in a state of permanent liminality, formed through the symbolic erasure of female priesthood across a boundary known as 'the two integrities' in the Church. I intend to share briefly how this threshold existence is experienced by women clergy and how they negotiate this boundary in multiple ways as they seek a sense of embodied and symbolic belonging.