



# BEYOND THE SCREEN

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT



# BEYOND THE SCREEN: Exploring the Digital Society

## Welcome

Hello and welcome to 'Beyond the Screen: Exploring the Digital Society'. The conference will be an interdisciplinary and fascinating discussion about the social implications of digital technologies in society, research, and of course, a day for networking.

From understanding 'algorithmic thinking' presented by Prof. David Beer, and the 'Truth about the killer robot' by Dr Jennifer Chubb, our conference will cover a range of topics within digital cultures as well as looking at health online.

Make sure you don't miss out on our excellent poster presentations at lunchtime, and vote for your favourite! You can cast your vote using this Google form linked here.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf\\_sHXgRvHq2whvPU66cPaDlmcffUHENw5BbH6R\\_G3Jg504MQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf_sHXgRvHq2whvPU66cPaDlmcffUHENw5BbH6R_G3Jg504MQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

And please, don't forget to tell us about your thoughts on the conference. You can leave your feedback here.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfpQL1h9LD17VgAePrm9bhZ3eligJVYYAdh\\_bzZ8yhrYwoVg/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfpQL1h9LD17VgAePrm9bhZ3eligJVYYAdh_bzZ8yhrYwoVg/viewform?usp=sharing)

We hope you will enjoy the programme, and spend the day with us here, at the Department of Sociology of York.

Best wishes,  
PGR conference committee 2023

# BEYOND THE SCREEN

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

## PROGRAMME

09:00-09:30	<b>Welcome &amp; Registration</b>
09:30-09:40	<b>Opening remarks</b>
09:40-10:40	<b>Keynote: Professor David Beer</b> Department of Sociology, University of York Algorithmic Thinking
10:40-10:55	<b>Break</b>
10:55-11:35	<b>Data &amp; Algorithmic Technologies</b>
11:35-12:05	<b>Digital Cultures (Part 1)</b>
12:05-13:05	<b>Keynote: Dr Jennifer Chubb</b> Department of Sociology, University of York The truth about killer robots: AI narratives and sense-making AI futures
13:05-14:05	<b>Break</b>
14:05-14:20	<b>AI &amp; VR technologies</b>
15:25-15:35	<b>Break</b>
15:35-16:40	<b>Health online</b>
16:40-16:50	<b>Break</b>
16:50-17:30	<b>Digital Cultures (Part 2)</b>
17:30-18:30	<b>Closing remarks &amp; Reception</b>



## KEYNOTE

Professor David Beer



### PROFESSOR DAVID BEER

David Beer is Professor of Sociology at the University of York. His books include *Metric Power*, *The Data Gaze* and *The Tensions of Algorithmic Thinking*.

• **Website:**  
<https://davidbeer.net>

To take us beyond the screen this talk will focus on the social implications of algorithms. Looking back across 15 years of research into the sociology of algorithms, this talk will draw out some key questions facing sociology and concepts developed in the study of algorithmic systems. It will reflect back on the shifting significance of algorithms and how they might be understood by sociologists and social scientists today. In particular, it will reflect back upon the concepts of 'power through the algorithm' and the 'social power of algorithms'. It will then bring this up-to-date with more recent work on the tensions created by algorithms and by exploring the ongoing and routine implementation of algorithms within everyday life through the concept of automation hesitancy. The talk will then conclude by outlining a key problem facing all sociologists: the problem of researching a recursive society.

## BEYOND THE SCREEN

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

## KEYNOTE

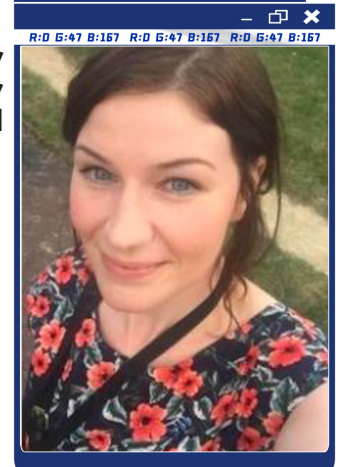
### Dr. Jennifer Alison Chubb

Jenn is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of York. Her research agenda is broadly concerned with the impact of science and technology on knowledge and understanding.

• **Website:**  
<https://www.york.ac.uk/sociology/our-staff/academic/jenn-chubb/>

• **Twitter:**  
@Alsonicstories

Dr Jennifer Chubb



Stories are an important indicator of our vision of the future. In the case of artificial intelligence (AI), dominant stories are polarized between notions of threat and myopic solutionism. The central storytellers—big tech, popular media, and authors of science fiction—represent particular demographics and motivations. Many stories, and storytellers, are missing. This paper details the accounts of missing AI narratives by leading scholars from a range of disciplines interested in AI Futures. Participants focused on the gaps between dominant narratives and the untold stories of the capabilities, issues, and everyday realities of the technology. One participant proposed a “story crisis” in which these narratives compete to shape the public discourse on AI. Our findings indicate that dominant narratives distract and mislead public understandings and conceptions of AI. This suggests a need to pay closer attention to missing AI narratives. It is not simply about telling new stories, it is about listening to existing stories and asking what is wanted from AI. We call for realistic, nuanced, and inclusive stories, working with and for diverse voices, which consider (1) story-teller; (2) genre, and (3) communicative purpose. Such stories can then inspire the next generation of thinkers, technologists, and storytellers.



## Data & Algorithmic Technologies

**Tom Wright** The University of Sheffield Department of Sociological Studies

Twitter: @wrightttomsheff

**Resisting the Algorithm? Collectivised everyday engagements with algorithmic governance in the cultural sphere.**

- Abstract -

A wide range of disciplines have collectively problematised how algorithmic technologies are continually and inequitably used to make life-altering decisions in almost every facet of contemporary life, including in education, welfare, justice, and finance. Many of these important interventions have foregrounded the unprecedented power of algorithmic technologies in society, rendering explicit the often-deleterious effects of algorithmic power upon humans. Though this work has been essential, it has nonetheless contributed to a broader narrative, elsewhere termed 'big critique' (Burgess et al., 2022), that has effectively reified the top-down disposition of algorithmic technologies whilst neglecting the ground-up practices of collective agency and resistance that have emerged in response to them. Departing from this prevalent preoccupation with top-down governance through algorithms, this paper explores a burgeoning body of work concerned with algorithmic resistance. The paper first underscores the prevalent focus on labour and work in this emergent body of literature, exploring the methodologies deployed in relevant empirical studies, before foregrounding the need to refocus the critical lens of algorithmic resistance towards the deployment of algorithmic technologies in the cultural sphere as a means of cultural production.

**Alexander Wright** York St John University Department of Fine Art

**The Hyper Spectacle is Here**

- Abstract -

As part of my doctoral research regarding the Third Digital Age I intend to theorise the notion that through social media(s) and subsequent digital services that Debord's theory of the Spectacle has now mutated into the Hyper Spectacle. The Spectacle in the Third Digital Age age has been spearheaded by Social Currency and Digital Labour, two ideas of commodity domination which have gripped internet users since the advent of social media.

Social Currency is the accumulation of Likes, Shares, Comments, Followers and any

## BEYOND THE SCREEN EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

other re-labelled form of social capital whilst Digital Labour is the creation of massive amounts of content across these platforms which is generally utilised to gain more capital. These content creators widely receive no form of reparation for their works whilst advertisement revenue earns the websites in question unthinkable amounts of money.

Debord's notion that every form of capital has been reduced to an image is ever more prevalent in our current reality of social media which in turn is creating a generation of people obsessed over the commodities they own, and the amount of currency they can collect through somebody simply pressing a button.

**Nabila Cruz** University of Sheffield Department: Sociological Studies

Website: <https://www.nabilacruz.com/>

**Trust and inequalities in a data-driven society**

- Abstract -

Trust is central to social relationships – interpersonal or organisational, with humans and non-humans, individual or system-related. It is a calculation based on information about degree of risk and trustworthiness of trustees. When trusting, trustors are vulnerable but often believe such vulnerability would not be exploited by trustees. Therefore, to be able to understand trust as a concept we must consider that assessments of trustworthiness are driven by personal and collective histories, including social inequalities and exploitation of vulnerabilities linked to people's identity. Trusting costs more to marginalised peoples, because of historical collective experiences and due to the current and continued social exclusion they face every day. This is reflected in frequent distrust of systems and processes aim to decrease marginalisation.

In this context, we balance trust and distrust in everyday life as it increasingly relies on data-driven systems, such as digital, internet-based programs, interfaces, and algorithms. These perform services or provide products, while also collecting data about users, which produce benefits (e.g., personalised healthcare metrics) and harms (e.g., preventing certain groups from accessing services).

Navigating these assessments bring to the fore how social inequalities play a role in how we trust digital technologies as lived experiences in the offline world directly influence how people act and feel online. My PhD research will investigate the interrelationship between trust, social inequity, and data-driven media in everyday life. This project forms a part of Designing for All a BBC research programme which aims to address digital inequality and inclusion while ensuring public value.



## Digital Cultures (Part 1)

**Pablo Molina** University of York Department of Sociology

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pablo-molina-556625205/>

### The role of technology in the social construction of dynamics in queer male virtual spaces

#### Abstract:

This presentation provides an overview of my ongoing doctoral research which examines the intersection between technology and human sexuality (technosexuality) in male sexual minorities. It explores users' perceptions, motivations and overall dynamics across digital spaces. The term "dynamics" encompasses the socio-sexual interactions between users, including how they present their digital identities on each platform. Previous research suggests that the technological design of digital apps significantly influences how these dynamics are constructed, including the design of interfaces and the technology integrated that facilitate connectivity among users. This thesis investigates how different technologies contribute to the construction of digital dynamics in queer male spaces, ranging from location-tracking in dating apps like Grindr or Tinder, to algorithmic technologies on Instagram. The central focus is to evaluate predominant theories that examine the relationship between technology and society. Moreover, I argue that the social background of male sexual minorities in society should not be ignored when analysing their digital dynamics. This argument is framed within the theoretical framework of Queer theory, which examines gender and sexuality as social constructs based on the heteronormative system in society. A mixed-method study is proposed to support this theoretical approach, consisting of two stages. The first stage involves a statistical survey to gather data that will inform the characteristics of the second stage, which will consist of conducting semi-structured interviews.

**Abril Rodríguez Vázquez** University of York Department of Sociology

### Scientific knowledge dissemination: Institutional practices in Mexico

Twitter: @Abril\_R\_V

#### - Abstract -

The production of scientific knowledge and its societal impact is influenced by institutional positioning. Consequently, it is significant for academic organisations to incorporate social responsibility into their work practices, providing services based on

## BEYOND THE SCREEN

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

local demands and fostering interaction with the regional population, industry, and decision-makers. Additionally, understanding how funding is allocated and managed in generating scientific knowledge is essential for assessing the available resources for research activities and their subsequent impact on society. Furthermore, as generators of scientific knowledge, it is crucial to identify the specific audience that can benefit from the research output. This involves fostering collaborations within the region and emphasising the potential of partnerships between different institutions to enhance the effectiveness and impact of scientific research. This paper focuses on the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) as the regulating entity for public research centres (CPIs) in Mexico, ensuring the credibility and reliability of knowledge production and promoting ethical and transparent research practices. In addition to their regulatory responsibilities, CPIs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between research findings and the broader public by disseminating scientific knowledge and identifying practical approaches to engage diverse audiences. Recognising the importance of effective communication, these CPIs have embraced the development of tailored tools, channels, and formats for effectively conveying scientific knowledge. They are actively involved in creating and evaluating strategies that have proven to be effective. These commitments to improvement pave the way for more impactful and inclusive dissemination of scientific knowledge in Mexico.

## AI & VR technologies

**Kason Ka Ching Cheung** University of Oxford Department of Education

Twitter: @kason\_cheung

### Epistemic Insights into Relationships between Artificial Intelligence and Science: A Systematic Review of Science Education Literature

#### - Abstract -

There is a growing application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in scientific inquiry in K-12 science classrooms. In educational literature, AI comprises a set of skills, attitudes, and ethics. Epistemic considerations such as how AI and science interact are more important for promoting students' interest in learning both disciplines. To develop students' epistemic curiosity, there is a need for a unifying framework capturing epistemic insights into relationships between science and AI. To synthesize what has been learned from previous studies, this article reports a systematic review of 15 studies that incorporated AI technologies in science learning. We used the



family resemblance approach as an analytical framework to analyze what kinds of epistemic insights into relationships between science and AI are documented in the literature. Five categories, aims and values, methods, practices, knowledge, and social-institutional aspects were used as analytical categories. Our findings indicate that epistemic insights into relationships between scientific knowledge and AI knowledge were only mentioned in two studies. Compared to non-science-education sources, social-institutional aspects of epistemic insights were downplayed in science education journals. The findings also prompted the construction of a unifying framework of such epistemic insights that guide curriculum development and teaching intervention which centers on the (a) application of AI in science; (b) similarities and (c) differences in the ways of knowing between science and AI.

**Dennis (Yifei) Sun** The University of Texas at Austin Radio Television Film  
**The tripod authorship of AI-generated images – chance-orientated artworks and the purpose of copyright in the U.S**

- Abstract -

This article delves into the complex copyright and authorship issues surrounding AI-generated images, an AI-enabled production method which gained increasing populace among U.S. artists since Feb.2022. Since the current generative technologies tend to put artists in chance-oriented collaborations with AI, the copyrightability of AI-generated material becomes a crucial issue, given the U.S. copyright office's renowned hostility toward indeterminate works and machine authorship. Granted, the conflict between AI artists and their more traditional peers would appear more intuitively concerning under this framework, since copyrighting AI-generated material would benefit the former, whose outputs are often trained on the latter's works without permission (see the Anderson class action lawsuit against Midjourney and Stable Diffusion). However, the USCO's current decision not to register AI-generated images (e.g. Zarya of the Dawn, Kristina Kashtanova, 2022), as well as its precedents to copyright certain indeterminate works (e.g. 4'33", John Cage, 1950) help to shift my attention to some more fundamental questions: Theoretically, is AI-generated material copyrightable? If so, what does its current uncopyrightability tell us about the purpose of the U.S. copyright law? To address these questions, this article reviews the USCO's understanding of AI technologies under a critical lens, and raises a new model to conceptualize the creative process of AI-generated images - tripod authorship.

## BEYOND THE SCREEN

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

**Michael Regier** University of Sheffield Department: Philosophy Department  
**Apathy's a Tragedy: Kierkegaard & Burnham on Constructed Apathy in the Metaverse**

- Abstract -

Bo Burnham's comedy special *Inside* presents a criticism of the migration of human interaction into the metaverse. Key to this criticism is the promise that the internet can provide "a little bit of everything all of the time," a promise that is revealed to possess a sinister aspect. Soren Kierkegaard, despite a radically different departure point, presents a critique of alienation that, in many ways, parallels Burnham's worries about increasingly living our lives online. In this presentation we will be reconstructing Kierkegaard's critique and focusing on the role of constructed apathy manifesting from idealizing the world. Our contention is that the metaverse, itself an idealized world, motivates apathy and alienation by promoting the adoption of one-dimensional avatars distinct from ourselves, and distracts from our engagement in genuine social, political, and interpersonal activities. The metaverse may offer a little bit of everything, but the cost is a passionate interest in existence.

**Thomas Flynn** University: University of Huddersfield

Department: Department of Management

Linkedin: [www.linkedin.com/in/thomas-flynn-0a746a166](https://www.linkedin.com/in/thomas-flynn-0a746a166)

**Virtual Reality Shopping Revolution: Changing The Way We Shop**

- Abstract -

Virtual reality is a technological emerging medium advancing at a rapid pace, giving the opportunity for society to engage in new consumer experiences and the marketing potential for business to connect with consumers beyond static computer screens. This research seeks to present and notify the social implications of this are transformative, our research shows the potential on how this technology can transform our experiences in the way we engage with brands through teleporting into 3D environments with high-quality headsets, this is bringing about a new level of presence that is unable to be replicated by a static 2D screen creating new opportunities for consumers and brands. To understand this further, it's important to provide insight into theory behind consumer behaviour therefore our findings include theoretical perspectives and implications within virtual reality shopping, this will help us gain insight on how consumers behave within a virtual reality shopping landscape. In addition, our results from methodological findings show that technological limitations are impacting the way users feel and behave in



virtual reality experiences, for example motion sickness and face pain potentially ruining the experience. The revolution in virtual reality shopping is fast approaching, therefore as academics understanding the future research agendas will create significant contributions including identifying methodological and research gaps such as exploring wider sampling, considering qualitative methodology as an alternative from the dominant quantitative research in virtual reality shopping and implicating individual context of consumers such as personality trait and income levels. Overall, through bringing together our findings this helps academics moving forwards into the future in this relatively unknown field of research by mapping where the literature is and where it needs to go to ensure that significant contribution to knowledge can be made.

## Health online

**Anna Bailie** University of York Department: Politics

Instagram: @mentalhealthpolitics

**Self-Care or Self-Discipline?@mentalhealth on Instagram**

- Abstract -

This presentation takes a Foucauldian perspective to explore examples of mental health activism on social media and how young people's experiences of mental health link to a wider politics of digital subjectivity, explorations of the self and the politics of bodies in the digital world. Evidence and findings come from my PhD research project which critically examines the contemporary UK politics of mental health (MH) among young people through a digital ethnographic qualitative study. More specifically, it examines the way in which social media allows young people to explore, express and share their selfhood and identity around ideas of 'mental health'. Practices, exercises, and discourses of responsibility reveal how young people are re-defining MH on social media, in the MH community and in civil society (CS). This research re-defines MH on social media as a practice or discourse of responsibility to care for the self and is shaped by data, trends, and cultural shifts. I will explore manifestations of responsibility by young people as subjections of power in the Foucauldian understanding. Overall, the presentation will argue that MH discourses have transformed young people's sense of self and particularly focuses on the practice of self-care as something both subjectifying and empowering. This presentation will include sensitive subjects and data but aims to shed light on young people's digital experiences of mental health in a positive and accessible way.

## BEYOND THE SCREEN EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

**Deanna Holroyd** The Ohio State University Comparative Studies

**The Implications of ADHD TikTok**

- Abstract -

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in social media content that details the symptoms and experiences of living with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and which, according to users' comments, has led to many users self-diagnosing with the disorder. This paper thus adopts a digital ethnographic approach to ask how TikTok has become a voice of medical authority and expertise in the self-diagnosis of ADHD. To answer this, I carry out visual content and discourse analyses of ADHD TikTok videos, to delineate how authority about health and the body is created on TikTok. Using Bruce Lincoln's theory of authority (1994), I argue that although the internet is typically understood as a mostly inclusive and authoritarian-free commons of knowledge, social media is not devoid of authority. In contrast, I find that TikTok content creators cultivate a voice of authority while sharing health and wellness knowledge on ADHD by creating videos that conform to visual and discursive standards. These standards and expectations of video content are coproduced by content creators, viewers and the platform's algorithm to produce an individually tailored home page that overwhelms users with repetitive content, and produces affects of authority. I ultimately argue that our increasing reliance on modern digital technologies as sources of information on health and wellness means that we are shifting our perspectives on traditional Western medical authority; rather than previously only being created by medical professionals, medical authority is now also being curated by laypeople through their collaborative sharing of everyday lived experiences on social media platforms.

**George Vincent F. Gamayo** Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Department of Broadcast Communication

Facebook: George Vincent

**#PLHIVDiaries as Socially Shared Inquiry: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Filipino PLHIV Tweets in #PLHIVDiaries**

Co-authors: Santos, Yhna Therese P., Tanchuan, Vonn Vincent V., Villacastin, Juven Nino A.

- Abstract -

Persons living with HIV (PLHIV) navigate through physical, psychological, and social perplexities in their daily lives. With HIV mostly being stigmatized in Philippine society, Filipino PLHIV have used Twitter as an avenue to make sense and help make others make sense of what it means to live with HIV in the country. Using



critical discourse analysis grounded in concepts from Alfonso's (1992) *Socially Shared Inquiry*, this paper attempts to theorize how this discursive process of sense-making and sense-giving unfolds in a Twitter hashtag called #PLHIVDiaries. Tweets describing the daily experiences of Filipino PLHIV (n = 1089) were described, interpreted, and analyzed using critical discourse analysis. We describe how different struggles related to living with HIV are framed and reframed through a discursive socially shared inquiry process. Implications on the socio-economic, political, and cultural context of HIV in the Philippines are further discussed.

**Charlotte Heather** University of York English and Related Literature

Instagram: @Charheatherr

### **Building the remote body: a case study of digital disability community and access**

- Abstract -

The disability community has a long history of finding online spaces to be together due to difficulties in accessing public spaces, which has only increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These communities have taken different shapes and approaches, from information sharing Facebook pages to disability meme Instagram accounts to mutual aid Whatsapp groups. In this paper I will critically analyse a space formed in 2020, 'the remote body', a project that brings together arts practitioners and facilitators, mostly from creative writing backgrounds, to digitally host events and workshops that prioritise chronically ill, crimp and disabled people. By examining how it has been built, how the community has grown and the space's shortcomings, particularly regarding access resources, I argue that 'the remote body' project is an important case study which helps us to think through the significance of digital spaces as a place for community building among disabled people in the UK and beyond in the contemporary moment. This analysis will use ephemera from the 'remote body' archive, alongside looking to other online disability communities including analysis from Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Disability Justice ethos.

## **Digital Cultures (Part 2)**

**NUSARATH JAHAN P** University of Hyderabad

Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP)

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### **Digital Devices, Gender Dynamics and Negotiations: A Study on Left-behind Wives from the Malabar Region of Kerala**

- Abstract -

The 1970s saw a spike in the rate of migration as a result of multiple push-pull factors from the Indian subcontinent, especially from Malabar, the northern part of the southern state of Kerala, leading to the formation of the category of the Left-behind wives in the geographical location. With the distance came an emotional rupture, which the early generation tried to bridge through the exchange of letters, mostly delivered by the migrant relatives or friends who visited the hometown and vice versa. Post-globalization, the emergence and advancement of digital technology and communication devices bought in a shift in the dynamics of interpersonal relations between migrants and the Left-behind wives, further rejuvenating the emotional intimacies which were formerly disrupted. In transnational contexts, digital resources are equally hazardous and constructive in nature, particularly in the case of the Left-behind wives in northern Kerala. The everyday life of the Left-behind wives has been monitored, compromised, and subjected to scrutiny and confrontations with the help of virtual technology. This paper looks at how the Left-behind wives of northern Kerala negotiate the problem of 'mediated patriarchy,' which is produced through modern technological devices. Grounding on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in northern Kerala, this study will try to understand how the husbands mediate patriarchy through digital devices and thereby critically assess the scope and possibility of 'infra politics' practiced by the Left-behind wives through the virtual technology.

**Sujood Momani** University of Limerick Department of Sociology

### **Identity Negotiations and the Online Space: "I would rather be Eroticized than be seen as a Threat".**

- Abstract -

Muslim women living in the West and beyond derive from a range of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite reductive characterisations, particularly visible in anti-Muslim discourse, the rise of social media has given Muslim women a platform from which to be heard and seen in ways that were previously unattainable (Ryan, 2011). In this regard, Muslim women have discovered novel ways to break boundaries and challenge homogenized stereotypes by expressing themselves using the online space, particularly through the hijab and modest fashion (Lewis, 2013; 2015; 2017). Coinciding with an increasing online presence, global brands have recognised modest fashion as a niche market, marking the beginning of the hijabi





influencer-brand collaboration relationship, further amplifying the online exposure of Muslim women.

Drawing on original qualitative data from fieldwork conducted internationally with Muslim women as social media producers and consumers, alongside a semiotic visual analysis (Barthes, 1964; 1972; 1977), this paper examines how these hijabi influencers negotiate 'new', socially, and religiously constructed notions of Islamic modesty, while simultaneously trying to align with norms of what is currently deemed aesthetically attractive. It discusses the impacts capitalist collaborations are having on Muslim women's interpretations of religiously defined 'Islamic' notions of 'modesty' and performative Muslimness, asking whether these interpretations are challenging Western stereotypes or complicating Islamic notions of religiosity.

This paper concludes with a discussion of the utilisation of hijab, by both influencers and brands, and whether this is to be regarded as regressive or progressive for Muslim women living in the West.

**Catherine Stinton** University of York Department of Sociology

Twitter: @cath\_stinton

## **Passively observing the repugnant other: the challenges of a digital ethnography of the extreme right**

- Abstract -

Ethnographers have long struggled with the challenges of studying the 'repugnant other' (Harding, 1991), where we must engage with and learn from those whose politics confound or even disgust us. The extreme right are one such group. Digital methods may make study easier, facilitating access to reclusive research populations and increasing physical, if not necessarily emotional, safety. In this paper, I discuss the planning and implementation of my six-month digital ethnography of the British extreme-right organisation Patriotic Alternative, and the ongoing challenges presented by this passive observation of exclusively the group's online content. Research design was ineffably influenced by COVID restrictions, practicalities of access, and ethical considerations, all of which changed over time. While digital methods allowed me some distance from a group discussing their racism, homophobia, and other bigotries on a daily basis, it also blurred lines between life and work, denied me control over lines of inquiry, and often rendered me a wholly passive and helpless observer of their hate. Despite this, I maintain digital methods are essential in studying a movement that has always organised online and shares a global community.

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EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

## **BEYOND THE SCREEN: Exploring the Digital Society**

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank our keynotes, panellists, and poster presents for their excellent work and contributions today.

We would also like to thank our director of graduate studies, Dr Clare Jackson and the PGRs that helped chair the panels.

A special thanks to our wonderful administrative and support team, and the PGR committee from last year for helping with the organisation of the conference. And, of course the Department of Sociology for funding the event.

Last but not least, thank you all for coming today and for your contributions throughout the day.

All the best,  
The PGR conference committee 2023

Pablo Molina, Xinzhe Hu, Luping Wang, Xiaoyu Zhang



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