



SOUTH WEST DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

DATA ANALYSIS WEBINAR SERIES

January - May 2026

Tales, reflections, and advice
from social science research

- as told by the researchers

SWDTP Data Analysis Webinar Series

A collection of webinars featuring presentations by over 30 social science researchers about conducting data analysis in actual research projects. Throughout the series, we will explore all kinds of data, methods, approaches, and stages of data analysis. In addition to the achievements and breakthrough findings, we will also highlight the nitty-gritty details - the challenges, frustrations, surprises and change of plans that researchers could expect. Through these reflections, we hope to help PGRs and other researchers be better prepared for the ups and downs of their data analysis journey.

Register here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/swdtp/1956811>



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What is Research Data? Practical Guidance on Organising and Sharing your Files and Findings (Tue 20/01/26, 1-2pm)

Speaker: Dr Jade Godsall, Assistant Research Support Librarian in Research Data Management and Digital Scholarship at the University of Bristol

Every research project generates data. It's the material that you gather, create, or interpret to answer your research questions; whether that is numbers, images, recordings, or documents. Good research data management and sharing are essential for making your work accessible, your methods transparent, and your findings easy to use and build upon. Funders, publishers, and universities require researchers to share and cite their research data – but what does this look like in practice? This webinar offers practical tips and guidance to organise, store and share your documents and results effectively throughout your project. This session covers:

- What is research data and why it matters
- The expectations of funders, publishers, and universities for research data storage and sharing
- How to organise and describe your files so you can easily find and understand your research data throughout your project
- How to ethically share research data when working with human participants
- How to find a suitable research data repository for your work
- What support is available beyond your supervisory team



Analysing large-scale assessment data (Thu 22/01/26, 1-2pm)

Issues with using police data to investigate offending: A research perspective

Dr Ioana Crivatu, Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham

Dr Ruth Spence, Senior Research Fellow at Middlesex University

Police data is an important source of information for researchers about investigations, suspects, and victims. However, crime records can be problematic to work with. Here we outline three key issues along with our approach in combining and quantitatively analysing police data from several police forces in England and Wales which used different crime recording systems. We discuss data quality, which reflects missing and misclassified values; inconsistency, which refers to the vague and at times different definitions provided; and granularity, which reflects the lack of detailed information included in the datasets. We recommend developing a robust strategy for working with missing data, triangulating across different sources, creating higher-order categories where necessary, and creating a detailed data governance plan before analysis begins.

Link to published paper:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0032258X251313944>

Preparation of a Large-scale Assessment in Education and its use in a Quantitative Intersectional analysis in R

Dr Natalia López-Hornickel, Postdoctoral Research Associate at Roehampton University; SWDTP alumni

In this presentation, first, I aim to show the considerations and challenges of preparing large-scale assessment data, using the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) from 2016. This includes the sources of the data and the merging process, which is usually an overlooked but crucial step before proceeding with the analysis.

Second, I will refer to the analysis steps to obtain descriptives and models. Particularly, I will use the case of the Multilevel Analysis of Individual Heterogeneity and Discriminatory Accuracy (MAIHDA) to develop an intersectional analysis of students' endorsement of the gender equality scale (Fifth paper of my thesis). This technique is a parsimonious alternative to multiplicative terms in regressions.



All the explanations will be conceptual and also accompanied by a description of some R syntax.



Philosophy as method for data analysis in research (Tue 10/02/26, 11am-12pm)

Prof. Janet Orchard, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion in Teacher Education at the University of Bristol

*Dr Naomi Hodgson, Reader in Educational Philosophy & Theory at Edge Hill University
Anna Park, Edge Hill University*

Educational researchers are often encouraged to reflect on their 'philosophical positioning', i.e. the ontological, epistemological and axiological (ethical) assumptions that underpin their research design. Meanwhile, in recent years in anglophone educational research departments, using philosophy as a 'method' in its own right, as opposed to a tool supporting empirical research, has tended to go out of fashion. A group identifying as philosophers of education, including current doctoral researchers and their supervisors, seek to demonstrate the benefits and attractions of continuing to work philosophically, sometimes treating the existing literature as priori data to be analysed, at other times working in partnership with empirical research. They showcase a range of distinctive philosophical perspectives, including examples from hermeneutical/analytical (Janet Orchard + 1) and critical/post-structuralist (Naomi Hodgson + 1) traditions. This event is aimed at doctoral researchers at any stage who would like to hear more from enthusiasts of the theoretical on how to think more abstractly about data analysis in research.



Messy and mixed: working with quant and qual data (Thu 26/02/26, 1-2pm)

Making Sense of Messy Legal Data: Analysing Climate Litigation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Cristian Heredia Ligorria, PhD researcher in Socio-legal Studies at UWE Bristol

My doctoral research investigates rights-based climate litigation (RBCL) in Latin America and the Caribbean applying a socio-legal methodology and from a decolonial perspective. Chapter 3 of my thesis is grounded in the construction and analysis of a working dataset of 51 RBCL cases (as of November 2024). This process combined qualitative and quantitative methods to identify high-level trends, map actors (who litigates, against whom, and in what contexts), and develop a typology of cases.

The analysis presented several methodological challenges: the diversity of legal systems across the region, inconsistencies in reporting, language barriers, and the evolving nature of climate litigation. Data were cleaned and verified manually, drawing on databases such as the Sabin Center and supplemented by direct regional expertise. Supervisory feedback, peer-reviewed collaborations, and external expert input were essential in refining the methodology and ensuring rigour.

This experience highlights both successes and the practical challenges of working with heterogeneous legal data, and offers lessons for socio-legal researchers conducting comparative data analysis in underexplored regions.

Using a structured case review tool to understand police investigation of rape cases

Aneela Khan, Postdoctoral Research Assistant at Bournemouth University

Operation Soteria Bluestone aimed to improve understanding of how police investigate rape cases in the UK. As part of this work, we developed a structured case review tool to collect detailed information on individual investigations. In its initial format, the tool required a junior officer to document case details and evaluate investigative strengths and weaknesses, followed by a senior officer who repeated the review and provided oversight on the junior officer's assessment. Due to several challenges, the tool was adapted for the second year to allow researchers to directly access the cases and then populate the template. The dataset comprised qualitative and structured quantitative



information, including case characteristics, investigative actions, and assessments of investigative quality. Data analysis combined descriptive statistics to summarise trends and thematic coding to identify recurring strengths, weaknesses, and procedural patterns across cases. This methodology provided a systematic approach to evaluating investigative practices in rape cases and supports evidence-based recommendations for improving police investigations.



Validating constructs through quantitative sampling (Tue 03/03/26, 1-2pm)

Using multi-dimensional experience sampling via smartphones to map thought-emotion interactions in daily life

Anqi Lei, PhD researcher at the University of Plymouth

Patterns of on-going thought have crucial implications for emotional health. In the present study, we used multi-dimensional experience sampling (MDES) via smartphones to examine how daily-life thought patterns relate to concurrent affective states (valence, arousal, stress) as well as how alexithymia traits (reflecting atypical emotional awareness) modulate these thought patterns across a range of affective and social situations. Principal Component Analysis of the MDES data identified four latent thought dimensions: future-self orientation, intrusive distraction, sensory engagement, and task-focus. Linear Mixed Models revealed different associations between thought dimensions and affective states, which may reflect distinct adaptive and maladaptive cognitive processes, particularly in relation to alexithymia. High overall alexithymia predicted fewer future-self-oriented thoughts as well as more different sensory engagement across affective and social contexts. Regarding specific facets of alexithymia, difficulty identifying feelings selectively reduced future-self orientation during intense sadness, and externally oriented thinking rendered thought patterns less sensitive to affective contexts. By mapping affective experiences onto thought dimensions in daily life, these findings uncover cognitive pathways that support emotional well-being, providing a scalable framework for understanding variability in human affective experience.

Measuring sensitive constructs in conservative contexts

Sara Yadollahi, PhD researcher at the University of Bath

As a psychometrician, I was responsible for data gathering and analysis in the project: “Development and Validation of an Iranian Scale for Problematic Online Pornography Use,” which used a descriptive-correlational design and online non-random snowball sampling. A total of 1,921 adults (813 women, 1,108 men) completed the scales: the Iranian Scale for Problematic Online Pornography Use (developed by the research team following multiple steps, including a thorough literature review) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS).

Data were analysed using AMOS and SPSS. Confirmatory factor analysis supported a seven-factor model—Salience, Mood Modification, Tolerance and Escalation,



Withdrawal, Relapse, Conflict and Problems, and Guilt (RMSEA=0.07, CFI=0.91, df=228). Construct validity was confirmed through intercorrelations among subscales and the total score; discriminant validity by the Fornell-Larcker criterion; convergent validity by Average Variance Extracted (AVE); and criterion validity by correlations with pornography use frequency ($r=0.56$), duration per session ($r=0.35$), and frequency of masturbation with ($r=0.56$) and without pornography ($r=0.25$). Reliability was strong (CR=0.98, $\alpha=0.93$).

In this webinar, I will focus on the data analysis process, including designing the scale with the research team, conducting the pilot study, being creative in measuring sensitive constructs in conservative contexts, working with a large dataset, and ensuring participant anonymity during data collection and analysis.



Negotiating positionality in data analysis (Thu 12/03/26, 1-2pm)

Reflexive Thematic Analysis on researcher’s position as an “in-betweener”

Claire Hadfield, Senior Lecturer and PhD researcher in Education at Plymouth Marjon University

Reflecting on my journey using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) in a qualitative longitudinal study of early career secondary teachers’ professional identities, I draw on my position as an “in-betweener”—moving from school teaching into initial teacher education. This role placed me close enough to share aspects of participants’ experiences while also able to view them from a different perspective. Working with interviews, viva reflections, and journals, I returned to the data repeatedly in an iterative process of theme development. RTA supported deep engagement through analytic journaling and participant discussion. I will discuss how insider knowledge both enriched and complicated the analysis, how slowing the process helped avoid premature conclusions, and how reflexivity was essential in managing bias. The session will share practical strategies and honest reflections on the challenges and insights that came from applying RTA in a long-term, identity-focused study.

How to prioritise participant voice in data analysis when a third voice is present - the use of advocates in research

Kim Collett, Lecturer in Education at The Open University

For my PhD I conducted interpretivist research, using research driven photo elicitation interviews and thematic analysis, comparing experiences of inclusion in the classroom. For some of the participants adjustments were needed to ensure the research was accessible. This included having advocates present during data collection. One of the under explored, issues with advocacy in research is how to deal with advocate voices in the data. The words of advocates will appear in verbatim transcripts and removing them can change meaning/context. However, keeping them means they become part of the analysis and introduce a third voice.

I kept the voices of advocates and analysed these along with the words of the participants. However, careful consideration was needed to determine if the data was really reflecting the experiences/thoughts of the participant when the advocate was



speaking. Sometimes it was clear as the participant would verbally or non-verbally agree/disagree, or the content would reflect other parts of the conversation. However, sometimes there was no confirmation. Reflexivity was key to assessing this and the findings chapter had to carefully cover the use of advocates when a finding was based on or informed by the advocate.



Making sense of lived experiences through narratives (Thu 19/03/26, 1-2pm)

Understanding home deathcare through narrative.

Sam Hooker, SWDTP-funded PhD researcher in Social Policy at the University of Bath

My PhD project used a narrative methodology to capture people's experiences caring for the dead at home. Two interviews were conducted with participants. The first consisted of asking them to tell me their experience, while the second was used to ask questions to fill in gaps in the narratives. Then, in the participant's own words, a chronological narrative of the event (core story) was formed, which reads like a short story of their experience. This process was an emotionally taxing experience for me as a researcher, due to the depth of immersion in the data. The core stories are included in the thesis, allowing the data to remain situated, capturing the complexity of a very personal and challenging experience for participants. While additional analysis is included, the core stories allow the reader to draw conclusions from the data itself. They also provide a valuable resource for people who wish to take care of their own dead to learn from.

Putting a light in the window: using creative writing to focus analysis in relationally engaged research

Luci Gorell Barnes, PhD researcher in Education at UWE Bristol

My PhD investigates how relationally engaged arts-based research methods can support minoritised children to express, reflect on, and amplify their lived experiences and perceptions. I understand meaning-making as happening through the process of engagement, and gathered data to consider the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith and Eatough, 2021) of not only *what* the children expressed, but *how* they did this through their conversations, interactions, and demeanours.

This study focuses on the children's unique experiences and I wanted to examine what I had learned from each child, foregrounding how they had 'got under my skin'. Having familiarised myself with the data I then drew on less conscious or orthodox ways of knowing (Hammond and Fuller, 2024) to write what I think of as 'fictional portraits' of my encounters with individual children. These were informed by the issues that child explored, the metaphors and images they used, and how they had interacted with me and each other. Using this process helped me get close to each child's 'internal



narrative' Mannay (2010, p.10) and I came to understand each 'portrait' as being like a light in the window guiding me through the dark woods of data, focusing my analysis and supporting me to write interpretive accounts that kept the relational nature of the study at their heart. McNiff (2019) suggests that fact and fiction can work together to deepen our understandings, and by engaging with my data in this highly subjective and 'interruptive' way (Clark, 2024, p. 3) I brought a level of relational accuracy to my analysis that I might not have otherwise found.

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Visual mapping for data analysis (Tue 31/03/26, 1-2pm)

Visual mapping of process data

Prof. Peter Turnbull, Professor of Management at the University of Bristol

In several studies we have used visual mapping to depict changes over time and the (inter)action of the key players that we focus on in our research. We draw on the work of Anne Langley and others on “process research methods”, using our visual maps for “temporal bracketing” and the application of “alternative templates” to explain (inter)action in each period and establish not simply “what’s going on here” but “what is this case of”?

I could give a couple of examples from our research on: (i) the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the ILO’s (failed) attempt to develop a Convention (international labour standard) for decent work in global supply chains, published in *Human Relations*, and (ii) a recent paper on (successful) trade union resistance to the introduction of new technology in air traffic control, published in *New Technology, Work and Employment*.

The ILO study was based on a rich ethnographic dataset. My co-author worked at the ILO for 2.5 years during the deliberations on the proposed Convention and my own work with the ILO dates back to 1999. We encountered some rather very difficult challenges using these data as much of the “real work” at the ILO takes place “behind closed doors” and is therefore not part of the public record.

The study of trade union resistance to new technology (digital towers) was more straightforward as we have a close working relationship with Prospect (the union that represents air traffic controllers and technical staff) and Members of the Scottish Parliament who also opposed the plans were more than willing to discuss their concerns.

Art-based Mapping: an analysis of where teenagers spend their breaktime in school

Zifi Tung, PhD researcher at the University of Bath

For decades, research on play has primarily focused on young children, emphasizing its benefits for social, physical, and cognitive development (Lindon, 2007; Casey, 2010, Jawabri et al, 2023).) This study shifts the focus to adolescents, examining the nature of



their playful experiences within a school setting. Data collection methods include map-making, observations, and focus group discussions.

This presentation focuses on the analysis of art-based maps created by students from year 7,8,9,10 and 12. Art-based mapping techniques have been widely applied in urban planning and the study of adolescent spatial experiences (Lynch,1960; Thomson and Philo,2004; Travlou et al, 2008; Webber et al, 2014). In this study, map-making was utilized to identify where students spend their break and lunch times, their favourite and least favourite locations, and restricted areas within the school.

By using content analysis, findings indicate across all year groups, most participants spend their free time with friends. During lunch, students are primarily engaged in eating, queuing for food, and socializing with peers. Significantly, only boys were shown to be playing football on the astro turf, there were no girls reported to spend time there. These results underscore the significance of friendship and questions whether the breaktime experiences are gendered.



Posthuman data analysis? (Tue 21/04/26, 10:30am-12:00pm)

Eliane Bastos, Lecturer and PhD researcher in Education at the University of Bath

Hannah Hogarth, Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Northampton

Charlotte Hankin, PhD researcher at the University of Bath

Karen Barr, Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University

Carol Taylor, Professor of Higher Education and Gender at the University of Bath

“Entanglement makes all the categories of humanist qualitative research problematic.”
(Lather and St. Pierre, 2013)

How does our analysis shift when we stop asking ‘What does this data show?’ and instead ask ‘Who and what is this data entangled with, and how can we stay accountable to those relations?’

This webinar invites pondering of the joys and challenges that emerge with data analysis when social researchers embrace their entangled inseparability from the world being researched. We explore what becomes possible when we analyse data as an experiment in relations rather than attempting to represent a universal reality. By considering the posthuman ontological turn and its implications for social sciences research, we, a group of posthumanist, feminist materialist, post-qualitative educational researchers, share some of the processes and techniques that we employed as we grappled with the process of meaning making in our research projects. Through matter, waters, bodies, silences, we consider what our more-than-human data might say, if it could speak, and how such voices might re-shape the ways we engage with the worlds around us, when we listen more expansively.

By showcasing examples of ‘how did we do it’, this webinar is suitable for researchers at any career stage, including ECRs, who are either working with posthuman data analysis, or are curious about practices that challenge conventional ways of doing social sciences research. In addition, the webinar will provide an interactive opportunity for participants to engage in posthuman data analysis through practical examples. Anonymised data examples will be provided, or participants are welcome to bring their own.



Handling data in decolonial research (Thu 30/04/26, 1-2pm)

The Messy Realities of Anticolonial Research: Reimagining Language Practices in Secondary Education in Nigeria

Mercy Martins, PhD researcher in Education at the University of Bath

My research explores how language practices in Nigerian secondary schools can be reimagined using anticolonial concepts of agency and resistance. The research design was indigenous, weaving qualitative, creative, and participatory methods that were flexible and aligned with the daily experiences of my collaborators. Structured in two phases, the first focused on the voices of marginalised students, while the second included teachers, parents, school management, and leadership.

After securing ethics approval, I conducted a small online pilot with local collaborators which informed my choice of a school with linguistic, ethnic, and religious parity. I prioritised depth in one all-male secondary school rather than breadth across two schools due to time constraints. Almost five months of fieldwork produced extensive data. To preserve Nigerian Pidgin and avoid rough translations, I transcribed and cleaned the data manually. Journalling and a participatory analysis session, where students directly engaged with the research questions, guided the analysis.

While I set aside some methods (such as Theatre of the Oppressed and parent interviews) for future work, I sought to include multiple perspectives, centre participant voices, and clearly distinguish between their ideas and mine. Ethical tensions included deciding what to share, avoiding reductive categorisation, and ensuring authenticity.

Storytelling, Embodiment, and the Ethics of Analysing Bedouin Ethnography

Wesam Wekhyan, PhD researcher in Social Policy at the University of Bath

My PhD research explores Bedouin identity, knowledge, and community praxis in central Jordan through a decolonial, feminist ethnographic approach. The dataset is multi-modal: focus groups, one-to-one interviews, oral histories, WhatsApp notes, photos, videos, fieldnotes, memos, and observations of ceremonies and everyday life (weddings, funerals, dinners, walkabouts). Much of this material was produced in a Bedouin dialect and a culture where history is preserved orally rather than textually, requiring translation across dialect, Arabic, and English, as well as from embodied,



performative expression into written form. Virtual data (voice notes, chats, images) extended this storytelling into digital space.

Writing was not separate from analysis, but a continuation of storytelling: through memos, vignettes, and embodied descriptions I traced how narratives lived, moved, and transformed across settings and generation. Analysing such material meant making decisions about segmentation and representation without erasing relational meaning. Ethical and personal challenges were constant: anonymity in small communities, safeguarding oral/visual data sovereignty, and navigating my insider–outsider position and the embodied emotional labour of researching from within.



Analysing media discourses (Tue 05/05/26, 1-2pm)

Higher Education in Nigerian public discourse

Yusuf Olaniyan, SWDTP-funded PhD researcher in Education at the University of Bath

This presentation will discuss the methodological approach and data analysis techniques used in my study of how higher education (HE) is constructed within Nigerian public discourse. The research combines media analysis with a discourse-historical approach (DHA) to explicate how HE is framed in Nigerian national news medias. It focuses specifically on the post-COVID period, and the introduction of the National Universities Commission's (NUC) Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) policies. The study used 331 media articles from three major Nigerian news media (Punch, Daily Trust, and Daily Post), published between 2021 and 2022, which focused on the intersections of vocational education, entrepreneurship, skills training, and apprenticeship-like pathways in the context of HE reforms. Through a two-phase analytical process, the first phase involved a quantitative scan to map the frequency and thematic emphasis of HE discussions in the media, highlighting the economic framing of HE around employability and market-driven outcomes. The second phase employed DHA to visibilised the ideological functions of these discourses. It also investigates how HE policies were legitimized, how social actors were positioned, and how historical continuities were reproduced in the media. Through this methodology, the presentation will illustrate how media discourses serve both framing and gatekeeping functions to determining which perspectives on HE are amplified or marginalised. It will highlight the challenges of conducting discourse analysis on publicly available media data, as well as the methodological and theoretical benefits of combining quantitative content analysis with a qualitative DHA framework. This session will be useful for doctoral researchers like me and early-career researchers interested in media analysis, discourse studies, and the intersection of policy, education, and public opinion in national contexts.

How do social media influencers legitimise veganism on YouTube?

Adrianna Jerzierska, PhD researcher in Business Studies at the University of Bristol

In this presentation, I will outline the methodological framework used in my PhD project, which aims to understand how social media influencers have legitimised



veganism over time, by analysing approximately 8,000 YouTube videos posted between 2014 and 2024.

During this workshop, I will discuss the computational theory construction and the qualitative techniques used to study the discursive legitimation strategies by which influencers mainstream veganism. The first phase of the analysis involves generating the Dynamic BERT topic model (DTM). BERT is a large language model (LLM) that performs language tasks, such as distilling clusters of documents with similar semantic topics. By incorporating temporal analysis of topics, researchers can effectively track lexical changes across topics, leading to a deeper understanding of discursive legitimacy over time. The second stage involves the qualitative interpretation of the machine output by adopting a qualitative content analysis of the videos to contextualise the discursive strategies used by online actors.

Given that BERT performs best with short texts compared to long and noisy YouTube video transcripts, this was a significant challenge to overcome. In this webinar, I will discuss the decisions made to work within these limitations, as well as provide a brief overview of the analytical framework, from querying and downloading videos using the YouTube API to discussing AI tools for converting large audio files into transcripts.



Analysing qualitative data with diverse co-researcher and advisory input: Participatory qualitative methods in co-produced research with young people and parents (Thu 07/05/2026, 11am-12pm)

Prof. Maria Loades, Professor in Psychology at the University of Bath

Dr Nina Higson-Sweeney, Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Oxford

Natalia Kika, PhD researcher in Psychology at the University of Bath

Participatory research is a collaborative approach to inquiry that actively involves stakeholders, like community members, service users, or practitioners, in the design, implementation, and interpretation of research. These approaches can be applied to qualitative research across a wide range of fields, ensuring that study findings are relevant, inclusive, and impactful. The spotLight on Adolescent and young adult Mood Problems (LAMP) group at the University of Bath will present their experiences of using a participatory research approach in qualitative studies, with a focus on data collection/collation and analysis.

The first two presentations will focus on aspects of the Can We Connect with young people study, which was a qualitative interview study (n = 24 13-18 year olds) exploring where young people look online for early mental health support and what they think of what they find. Prof Maria Loades will set the context for the study and its aims, and describe how we involved young people as advisors and co-researchers. Dr Nina Higson-Sweeney will then specifically describe how we conducted the qualitative reflexive thematic analysis as a team, which included young co-researchers. The third presentation by Natalia Kika will describe the challenges we encountered with involving parents in a qualitative systematic review, and how those learnings helped us involve the LAMP parent advisory group (PAG) in the analysis of qualitative interviews with parents. The webinar will also highlight approaches that are feasible for PGRs and early-career researchers, including resource-efficient co-production strategies and practical tips for sustaining meaningful engagement and partnerships across projects.



Critical Discourse Analysis: Methods and Approaches (Thu 14/05/2026, 11am-12pm)

Dr James Hawkey, Associate Professor in Linguistics and Catalan Studies at the University of Bristol

Dr Anna Havinga, Senior Lecturer in Sociolinguistics at the University of Bristol

The study of language is a key component of social science research. Studies range from critical analyses of media discourse to historical approaches that uncover how language changes over time, from micro-level analyses of pronunciation to macro-level examinations of the consequences of governmental policy. Language can tell us a great deal about society, and society can tell us a great deal about language. Research in linguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and the sociology of language is methodologically and epistemologically rich. This session will introduce you to an approach that is both widespread and extremely useful beyond linguistics: critical discourse analysis (CDA). We will cover central aspects of CDA and explain how this method can be used on a variety of data.



Using co-produced data in the doctorate (Tue 19/05/26, 1-2pm)

Beginning from the Inside Out: The Value of Pilot Studies in Decolonial Research

Kate Matzopoulos, PhD researcher in Education at the University of Bath

This presentation explores the value of conducting a pilot study prior to larger-scale research, particularly when working with Indigenous and decolonial methodologies that are still in experimental phases and not widely documented in education research. My context, with the Ju/'hoansi San community in Namibia, is not widely written about outside of anthropology, which meant that I had to draw from other Indigenous scholarship to piece together meaningful approaches.

My pilot study, carried out during my master's research, was foundational in forming authentic relationships with the community. Relationality became the hinge on which the work rests: research emerges in and through relationships, shifting with daily life rather than fitting into neat methodological boundaries. The pilot also revealed how to engage respectfully across difference and avoid reproducing colonial knowledge systems that obscure reality.

Ultimately, the study affirmed the importance of beginning research from the “inside out,” allowing Indigenous people to act as co-researchers working from their own onto-epistemologies, rather than being framed by external categories or outsider lenses. This informs my ongoing fieldwork in my PhD studies.

Conducting a pilot to trial photo diary instructions and assess the data generated

Louise Toller, SWDTP alumni in Sociology at the University of Exeter

My PhD research investigated the experiences of chronically ill young adults using a combination of verbal and visual methods, specifically participant-generated photographs and photo elicitation interviews. In this presentation, I describe how I used a pilot study to develop my visual method, essential due to both my lack of prior experience and the lack of detailed information in published studies. I conducted a pilot with two main objectives: to trial the draft photo diary instructions I would give to participants, and to assess the sort of data the photographs generated. I reflect on what I learned from the pilot, and the modifications I then made to the photo-based phases



of the main study, highlighting lessons that I would not have gained without carrying out a pilot.