Research Methods Rendezvous

Rendezvous One Sessions

(10 September 2025)

Title	Speaker(s):	Session description
I wonder how AI will change authoritarian governance and development	Chao-yo Cheng, Birkbeck, University of London	Researchers and advocates have noted the growing use of artificial intelligence technologies in daily authoritarian governance. I am collaborating with former colleagues in China and the United States on a new survey project. We aim to investigate how technologies such as facial recognition, tracking apps, and generative AI powered by large language models (LLMs) have reshaped the functioning of the Party-state apparatus. Preliminary qualitative evidence from focus groups suggests many local officials are concerned that the increasing presence and use of artificial intelligence could undermine their discretion and influence. Meanwhile, we are working on a new project to explore how different LLMs in the United States and China, through exercises such as prompt engineering, fine-tuning and simulations, can aid in studying public opinions in dictatorships and other politically challenging environments.

I wonder how we could operationalize everyday organizational practices	Iikka Meriläinen, University of Oulu	This session explores how abstract concepts of everyday organisational practices, drawing on Schatzki and Reckwitz, can be translated into measurable and comparable entities. It considers the challenge of moving from descriptions of routines, embodied know-how, and material arrangements to a level of systematicity that allows for benchmarking practices across different organisations. The talk outlines potential approaches such as ethnographic observation, process mapping and other mixed-methods setups, that could systematically capture the frequency, sequence and material context of practices to be operationalised. The session aims to open a discussion on which methods might best illuminate such routine actions in a way that is sufficiently objective for comparative examination. Ideally, participants' practical experiences and ideas will enrich the session and contribute to methodological development during the interregnum.
I wonder how we can better understand behaviour in a fast-changing and complex world?	Emily Oliver and Benjamin Rigby, Newcastle University's Centre for Behaviour	This session discusses the need to evolve our methods of conceptualising, capturing, and examining behavioural data in real-life environments, if we are to meaningfully understand, predict and change how people behave.

		The emergence of a wide range of exciting new behavioural datasets presents great promise, alongside both valid and at times exaggerated ethical and public concerns.
		I wonder how we can better use available data while building and maintaining public trust? We additionally need to discuss how to maximise opportunities as a community to design and deliver research that can move us past traditional blocks and failures (e.g., how to drive sustainable behaviour change; how to change population behaviour at scale) to prioritise research pursuit based on global and local needs, rather than data availability (or lack of).
		Lastly, we aim to discuss whether our methods are 'up to scratch' in exploring behaviour when the environments, places and spaces in which behaviour happens are often rapidly and radically changing.
I wonder if words are entirely the problem?	Charlotte Marshall, Nottingham Trent University	Was Foucault on to something when he said words are entirely the problem? Did Lyotard prepare us for the language game?
		The more time I spend in creative research spaces the more I hear about the heaviness of words and the problems of using existing language structures.
		In this lightening talk, using other means of communication, we will think with what could happen if we relied less on words and more

		on making tools to dismantle the master's house.
I wonder how ageing and disability activists can learn from one another?	Catherine Marie Pemble, University of Stirling	British Disability Studies has long been shaped by disabled activists and scholars, from UPIAS's foundational principles to contemporary voices like Carol Thomas and Tom Shakespeare. It has a long history of grappling with critical issues, from the body's role in disability to institutionalisation, independence, and inclusion. Contemporary dementia studies increasingly mirrors these discussions yet rarely engages with either Disability Studies' rich literature or its potential insights into the experiences of people living with dementia. This represents a missed opportunity for collaboration. This talk queries how we might identify the theoretical, systematic, and interpersonal barriers and facilitators to integration between ageing and disability theory and activism. It also asks how emancipatory and co-productive methodologies could contribute to meaningful research—not only to better understand these barriers but to create outputs that enable stakeholders to overcome them more effectively.
I wonder if it is possible, ethically or pragmatically, to do prospective	Kirstie Coxon, University of Central Lancashire	I wonder if we can do longitudinal research with dyads, or even with groups of more than two? How would that work?

qualitative longitudinal research involving specific participants plus a number of people who are important to them?		
I wonder if we can bring people that are politically polarised together to talk to each other and find common solutions to problems?	Rosario Aguilar, Newcastle Universtiy	Potential interventions to bring people together in non-competitive setting to talk to each other and work with each other to come up with solutions to local problems that are affecting them and other communities. For example, deterioration in social services, increasing grocery prices, increasing prices for leisure, etc. The idea is also to have them talking about what they expect from their government and what principles should the government and politicians follow when governing. In other words, have people think and discuss on their expectations towards the government, parties and politicians and ways to keep them accountable. Thus, it would be a two-tiered intervention to bring them together, identify the problems they face even if they don't agree in politics, work together and deliverer on their expectations and how to keep politicians and government accountable.

I wonder why states collaborate on intelligence collection and analysis?	Cynthia M. Nolan, American Public University System	I wonder why states collaborate on intelligence collection and analysis actually starts with failure. Intelligence failures are often very public events and the rest of the world wonders what the solutions to these failures could be.
		Surely someone knew (so the thinking goes) that something was going wrong. Surely someone had access to the intelligence that would have prevented this failure (or so most people think).
		This research project will work with the collective assumptions that most observers make on intelligence failures and asks whether collaboration avoids failure. In the aftermath of 9/11, a failure of communication within the American intelligence community was widely blamed for "not connecting the dots."
		Assuming that the same lessons learned from intrastate collaboration can be applied to interstate collaboration, this research would potentially ask: Can a network of intelligence cooperation solve intelligence failures and when is that cooperation most likely?

I wonder how we could use behaviour science methods to make campaigning and policy more effective?	Morgan Brown , Royal British Legion	Behaviour science encompasses a range of theories, methods, and tools that can be used to understand and change behaviour. Behavioural science has been used by public policymakers. However, this typically happens retroactively, for example as a way of trying to make an established regulation more effectively followed. What if these considerations were made at the earlier stages of policy asks and campaigning? Behaviour science could be used to identify behaviours or actors that influence a policy's aims, allowing these to be considered and accounted for at the earlier stages of policy positions. But how exactly can this be accomplished? What issues might arise in trying to integrate these areas, and how could they be resolved? These questions can be explored using the case study of one of the largest UK Armed Forces charities.
I wonder how Natural Language Processing methods compare to traditional text analysis in social science research	Shunqi Zhang, University of Southampton	This lightning talk explores the strengths and limitations of Natural Language Processing (NLP) in social science research, drawn from our projects in education. We will begin with an introduction to NLP and key methods, followed by examples of how these techniques can complement traditional analytical approaches: Analysing public perceptions of mathematics through topic

		modelling and sentiment analysis of social media discussions.
		Applying NLP to interview data from existing projects to compare insights with those obtained through conventional qualitative analysis. Our goal is to demystify NLP tools, highlight their potential applications, and critically examine their challenges.
I wonder how to effectively study online disinformation	Vassilis Routsis, UCL	Disinformation is not new on social media platforms, but recent developments have amplified its impact on society. With developments like the explosive growth of platforms like TikTok and Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, the ways people consume and share information online are constantly changing.
		The emergence of accessible generative AI technology has made creating and distributing false or misleading content easier than ever. Today, disinformation spreads rapidly across networks, often using sensational headlines, deep fakes, and manipulated visuals to capture attention and shape opinions.
		It takes many forms - from political propaganda and health myths to fabricated news stories and conspiracy theories. Disinformation is designed to exploit human emotions, biases, and trust in familiar sources.

		This digital landscape makes it challenging to discern truth from fiction, affecting public discourse, influencing elections, and even altering social norms.
I wonder how we ensure off-line human behaviour measurement belongs to social scientists, not only digital platforms?	Anne Motan, Kingston University London	There has been a considerable rise in the collection and analysis of egocentric or first-person video to support the development of applications for wearable computing. In addition, the platforms (Meta, Google) expect to commercialise wearable computing in the coming year.
		Wearable computing will of necessity measure physical human behaviour, the domain of social science. Unless we develop a research methodology that can passively and independently collect human behaviour data, the platforms will determine our access to this data. The technology is available, but the cost of scaling the measurement system as the industry did with audience-peoplemeters and till-purchase data is beyond the capacity of the research industry.
		I wonder if there is the will or how we could create the capacity for the research industry to invest in an independent passive scale measurement methodology for human behaviour.
I wonder in what ways we can reimagine belonging	Pamela Jabbar	Reimagining invites us to revisit the master's tools and their complicity in maintaining the master's house (Lorde 1983). Rather than

| in sport for South Asian and Muslim heritage communities in the UK if we take a decolonising approach to sports research methodologies? | | dismantle and discard Western ideas and techniques, this talk is an invitation to imagine new tools, new houses, and new ways of knowing (Mignolo and Walsh 2018); to repurpose existing tools, develop new methods that hold the spirit of decolonising values and position new ways of knowing within non-hierarchical systems of knowledge production (Spivak, 1988, Smith, 2022).

The turn to non-extractive, non-exploitative, storytelling and story-catching, and not data-snatching research methods is an act of resistance. Calling us to resist dominant ways of knowing and knowledge production, and embrace "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2009).

Decolonising methodologies promise collective knowledge co-creation, shifting power relations that decentre the researcher and privilege the knowledge-holder. However, translating and operationalising decolonial principles into concrete research methods remains difficult due to a lack of practical protocols.

In this research methods rendezvous (RMR) I seek collaborations to co-design context-specific, participatory practices that foreground multi-voiced, collectively situated knowledge creation.

I take the specific example of sport to work through an idea of "subaltern hauntology" (as |

		collectively unheard hauntings of lost futures). Specifically, I ask: a) How do the spectres of Empire, colonial histories, and the colonial matrix of power persist and (re)surface as "ghosts" of lost futures in subaltern sporting experiences? b) How might decolonising approaches offer new reinterpretations of "exclusion" as resistance and agentic mechanisms of belonging for South Asian and Muslim heritage communities in the UK?
I wonder how qualitative research methodologies can be adapted to truly co-produce knowledge with marginalised communities, ensuring that they are not just participants but equal partners in shaping research outcomes?	Sylvana Walcott, Sedulous Collective CIC	In this lightning talk, I explore the question: "I wonder how qualitative research methodologies can be adapted to truly co-produce knowledge with marginalised communities, ensuring that they are not just participants but equal partners in shaping research outcomes?"

Traditional qualitative research often extracts knowledge from communities rather than centring them as co-creators. At Sedulous Collective, we challenge this by embracing non-extractive, participatory and decolonised research approaches that prioritise equity, reciprocity and shared power.

I will discuss how methodologies such as ethnography, grounded theory and participatory action research can be adapted to foster meaningful collaboration.

Using real-world examples, I'll reflect on the challenges and ethical tensions in co-production and invite discussion on how |

		researchers can shift from knowledge extraction to co-creation. How can we reshape research relationships so that communities are not just researched but are recognised as producers of knowledge, policy and change?
I wonder how to TRULY flip the Research Model – allowing the community to lead, decolonise, and do the research.	Holly-Gale Millette, University of Southampton	This session explores if we as 'visibly white', traditionally imperialistic, assumed-to-be-privileged researchers can ever truly flip the research model in circumstances where decolonisation and reparation is on the table. Specifically, how might we do ethnography and oral history when surrounded by theoretical, systemic and interpersonal barriers. This talk also addresses the disparities and inequalities in research administration that further act as barriers to longitudinal and public engaged research. This presents us with a 'double bind' as these are key priorities for most our institutions and for UKRI now. Central to this talk is the failure of my own research projects to engage communities, emancipate participants through action, or co-produce methods and objectives. Nevertheless, this data stands as an impactful argument for a systemic shift within the academy and in how, it insists, research is conducted, funded and measured.

I wonder how we might break the link between wealth and health?	Emilie McSwiggan, University of Edinburgh	We pay for poverty with years of our life. In patterns seen within and between countries, people with less money and fewer resources tend to have poorer health & shorter lives than their wealthier counterparts, with differences that can span years or decades. This seems a fundamental injustice which demands action.

Through this wondering, I want to explore: Are health inequalities inevitable, for as long as wealth inequalities exist? If so, what does that mean for those of us working in public health and related fields, in terms of what issues we put our energy and resources into resolving? Or if this link is not inevitable, what could we be doing better now, so that money matters much less for people's life chances? And what are the ethical issues at stake, in either way of approaching this challenge? |
| **I wonder when (or if) 'fieldwork' really begins or ends** | Lucrezia Gigante and Manas Murthy Kallakuri, University of Glasgow | We will revisit some of our fieldwork experiences to interrogate - through introspection – when our respective engagements with the 'field' really began. We argue that often in field-based qualitative research, there is a tendency to treat the 'field' as a finite and distant space (and time), that is separate from the researcher.

This seemingly also extends to the people, objects, and phenomena we study. However, often, in practice, we find ourselves leaning |

		on our predilections and past experiences to reframe and look at the 'field' in our own way. Our emotions often even dictate what we choose to study in the first place, bringing the 'field' into the fold of our affective world. Consequently, maybe fieldwork does not really only begin when we 'enter the field' (the geography we set out to study), nor does it end when we leave it.
I wonder what would help people to embrace and take part in the 'everyday prevention' of sexual harm?	Rhys Turner-Moore, Leeds Beckett University	There are lots of examples of everyday experiences and activism online. For example, everyday sexism, everyday victim-blaming, everyday feminism. These fulfill an important purpose in providing a place for people to share their experiences, feel heard, and learn from others. However, the concept of the 'everyday' hasn't been applied to preventing sexual harm, such as sexual violence and abuse. People tend to see sexual harm as something that is inevitable and unpreventable. However, I believe that there are small everyday steps that we can all take to collectively create a world free from sexual violence and abuse. For example, engaging in dialogue with those around us (e.g. neighbours, family, friends, taxi drivers, people on social media) or challenging poor media representations or use of language (e.g. via social media, online posts, file a complaint with the news source).

		I wonder what it would take to help people embrace the idea of the 'everyday prevention' of sexual harm, feel inspired to take part in it, and to collectively build a public movement towards preventing sexual harm?
I wonder how we can use digital trace data to validate the accuracy of self-reported measures of online activity in conventional survey data	Conor Gaughan, University of Manchester	Survey data is commonly considered to be the gold standard in social and political research. However, it is well-established that reliance on self-reported measures are fraught with measurement bias, where there is a mismatch between what a respondent reports about their attitudes and behaviours, and what they actually think and do.

I wonder how we can use a respondent's digital trace data such as their social media activity or web browsing history to assess and validate the accuracy of their self-reported measures of online behaviour in conventional survey data.

Specifically, I would like to discuss the ways in which we could do this methodologically, the theoretical and ethical considerations that we would need to make, and the sorts of research questions that this could help answer for us as social scientists. |
| **I Wonder: Whose Story Gets Told in International Law?** | Emma Nyhan, University of Manchester | In this lightning talk, I explore how methodological choices shape the narratives we construct in international law - and how more inclusive approaches might help amplify marginalised voices. |

		Using Australia's engagement with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) during the 1996 nuclear weapons advisory proceedings as a case study, I draw on archival research to examine its support for a preliminary objections' procedure - an approach shared only with France. This move, often seen as a legal technicality, also functioned as a narrative strategy, which influenced the outcome of the case and how it has been remembered in legal scholarship.
		Through a combination of archival research, critical legal studies, and discourse analysis, I trace how procedural arguments and dominant narratives elevated certain state voices - particularly those of Australia, France, the UK, and Japan - while sidelining or silencing others, such as the Marshall Islands.
		This talk invites reflection: What kinds of stories do dominant legal methodologies allow us to tell, and which ones do they leave out? And how might we develop more inclusive, critical approaches to international law - approaches that engage not only with its narratives, but also with its silences and absences?
I wonder how deeply personal research methods can be ethical.	Linjin Man, University of Birmingham	Introspective and deeply personal research methodologies, such as heuristic enquiry, elicit unexpected and unconscious insights, through researcher immersion and self-

		dialogue alongside participants' experiences. However, some practical and ethical dilemmas thereby emerged.
		Drawing from my heuristic research on the transition experiences of students with vision impairment to mainstream universities in China, this talk will share real moments where heuristic inquiry illuminated tacit and intuitive knowledge, leading to self-recognition, transformation, and shared emancipation.
		Meanwhile, emerged issues of research ethics are also posed for open discussion as follows: Where is the threshold between self-disclosure and self-protection? How do we balance immersion in research with personal life? How can we document, analyze, and present spontaneous insights and lived experiences in a manageable way?
		By sharing both inspiring discoveries and unresolved tensions, this talk invites the audience to reflect on their own experiences and explore how to navigate the complexities of deep researcher immersion.
I wonder what creative use of research methods we can apply to understand how young people understand, experience, and	Henry Mainsah, Oslo Metropolitan University	What do young people observe, sense, make, and document about themselves with digital technologies?
		What role do digital technologies play in mediating how people understand and feel about their bodies, health and well-being?

engage with health information mediated through digital technologies.		What role can creative methods play in generating new understandings and awareness about the changing health information ecosystem that they are part of?
I wonder how to assess the impact of a major research training investment	James Hall, University of Southampton	Assessing the impact of major research training investments is complex and risks being underestimated. Traditional bibliometric indicators of research impact fail to capture wider influences on policy, practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

This lightning talk will explore how impacts from major research training investments can cascade across individual, organisational, and national/societal levels, using the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) as a case study.

We'll examine how NCRM's training and capacity-building influenced decision-making in government, NGOs, and industry, sometimes in unexpected ways. But:

Can we truly measure the long-term effects of investing in research capacity?

And what happens when methodological innovation leads to creative, non-traditional outputs like Participatory Action Research, arts-based methods, or machine learning applications?

This session invites discussion on rethinking impact evaluation methodologies to reflect the full breadth of a major research training |

		investment's role in shaping research culture and societal change. Attendees will leave with practical insights into alternative approaches to impact assessment.
I wonder if a combination of "MAIHDA" and intersectionality theory can be used to help policy makers uncover heterogeneous policy effects.	Andrew Bell, University of Sheffield	Multilevel Analysis of Individual Heterogeneity and Discriminatory Accuracy (MAIHDA) is an innovative approach to analysing inequalities in society. In the MAIHDA approach, individuals are divided into intersectional strata, based on the combination of sociodemographic identity characteristics (for instance: gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status). The method has a number of good statistical properties that allow for reliable calculation of inequalities, in diverse outcomes. We are interested in using a MAIHDA framework to consider inequalities in the effects of policies. That is not only "Are these groups different?", but "Is the effect of this policy different in different groups?" To do so requires more advanced versions of MAIHDA, utilising random slopes models, but also presents challenges relating to data formats, statistical power, challenges with non-continuous outcomes, different policy implementation, and theoretical understanding in the face of statistical complexity. We hope to work through these challenges here, and through our ESRC-funded grant.