



1st Accommodating Diversity in the Workplace Conference

19th-20th June , Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading and Online

Presentations will take place in Edith Morley 128 and arrival/breaks in Edith Morley 127

Conference Schedule

Monday 19th June: 12-4:30pm

12:00-13:00: Arrival and Lunch

13:00-13:05: Welcome and Introduction

Session 1 (Edith Morley 128)

13:05-13:50: Designing inclusive remote and hybrid working to support disabled workers, Paula Holland, Lancaster University (Nuffield Foundation Project Highlight)

13:50-14:15: We're all in the same boat: The career efficacy development of people with disabilities and the role of others, Greg Swaysland, Birkbeck, University of London

14:15-14:40: Speaking in a Different Voice: The Gendered Nature of Promotion Applications, Frances Hamilton, University of Reading

14:40-15:00: Tea and Coffee

Session 2

15:00-15:25: Exploring the experiences of British fathers returning to paid work after extended parental leave, Jessica Hobbs, Birkbeck, University of London

15:25-15:50: Access to and experiences of parental and associated leaves for university staff in the UK, Merve Uzunalioglu and Katherine Twamley, University College London

15:50-16:15: Female academic's experiences and perceptions of maternity leave in the neoliberal university: unmasking governmentality, Karen Jones, University of Reading

16:15-16:30: General Discussion and Close



Tuesday 19th June: 9-4pm

9:00-9:30: Arrival and tea/coffee

Keynote Talk

9:30-10:30: Fertility journeys and other emerging areas for equality, diversity and inclusion, Krystal Wilkinson, Manchester Metropolitan University

10:30-10:45: Break

Session 3

10:45-11:30: Inequalities in Access to Elite Occupations, Claire Tyler, University College London (Nuffield Foundation Project Highlight)

11:30-12:15: Maternal Well-Being, Infant Feeding and Return to Work Decisions, Sarah Jewell, University of Reading (Nuffield Foundation Project Highlight)

12:15-13:00: Lunch

Session 4

13:00-13:25: Labour law's (mis)management of menopausal workers, Grace James, University of Reading

13:25-13:50: Exploring Role of Leadership and Context in Determining Employee Experiences of Inclusion, Sana Ahmed, University of Reading

13:50-14:15: How expectations and perceptions of Black women's leadership shape the leadership and progression experience of Black female managers, Obiageli Heidelberger-nkenke, University of Reading

14:15-14:25: Break

14:25-14:50: Contracting with heterogenous biases, Xueying Zhao, University of Warwick

14:50-15:15: When Matthew met Larry: Prestige and discrimination in academia, Steven Bosworth, University of Reading

15:15-1600: Cake and Round table: How to facilitate return to paid work?

16:00: Conference close

You can find more details and how to register for the conference [here](#).



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Abstracts

Session 1

Designing inclusive remote and hybrid working to support disabled workers.

Paula Holland, Lancaster University

Co-authors: Calum Carson, Mel Wilkes, Alison Collins, Jacqueline Winstanley, Rebecca Florisson, Steve Bradley

One-fifth of working-age people in the UK is disabled and this proportion is increasing. Despite this, the diversity and inclusion agendas of many organisations often place greater emphasis on protected characteristics other than disability. The disability employment gap stands at 29.8 percentage points and is largely driven by organisational inflexibility and non-inclusive policies and practice within the workplace, including inequitable access to effective reasonable adjustments. Building on earlier work, our larger-scale mixed-methods study funded by the Nuffield Foundation explores how remote and hybrid working can be designed to be inclusive of disabled workers' needs and preferences, so that it actively promotes their job retention, recruitment and progression. We explore, through a national survey and in-depth interviews, disabled workers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of remote and hybrid working in relation to their employment, health/wellbeing, productivity and work-life balance, and the factors they perceive as enabling inclusive remote/hybrid working. Through organisational case studies, we will identify whether and how employers are implementing inclusive remote/hybrid working. However, remote and hybrid working will not help narrow the disability employment gap unless designed to be inclusive of disabled workers' needs and preferences and appropriately managed within organisations.

We're all in the same boat: The career efficacy development of people with disabilities and the role of others

Greg Swaysland, Birkbeck, University of London

In the UK, only 54% of people with disabilities (PWD) are in employment, compared to 82% of those living without a disability (DWP 2020). This study investigates how those with various disabilities experience work and their career, with a particular focus on how they develop self-efficacy and the influence of others. By addressing the gap in the disability and careers literature and focusing on how employed PWD develop the self-efficacy to achieve positive workplace and career outcomes, this research seeks to inform how PWD experience work. 17 participants, considered as disabled under UK legislation, participated using semi-structured interviews conducted online. Underpinned by the ability to adapt and manage their environment, most participants benefitted during the pandemic and achieved positive outcomes through their understanding of personal strengths and limitations however, this was acknowledged as a process that took time. Others were involved but their impact on current efficacy beliefs were minimal. This study reveals that commonality exists in how PWD succeed in an employment context and the role of previous career experiences in shaping how they view employment. Practitioners should explore the previous career experiences of PWD to facilitate a better understanding of the factors that enable their workplace success.



Speaking in a Different Voice: The Gendered Nature of Promotion Applications

Frances Hamilton, University of Reading

Co-authors: Elisabeth Griffiths

The gender pay gap in UK Higher Education Institutions remains high and in 2022 stood at 18.3% sector wide. This chapter explores a gender-based case study at one post 1992 University Faculty of Business and Law, which was undertaken during the course of a successful 2020 Bronze Athena Swan application. Amongst a number of activities undertaken, staff were questioned during a focus group about the perceived impact of gender on promotions. We analyse why, although some progress has been made in terms of promotion, women remain under-represented at Professor level, with its inevitable impact on the gender pay gap. Some staff consulted in the gender focus group viewed current promotion criteria as 'inherently masculine'. The Feminist Judgments Project (as led by Hunter, McGlynn and Rackley, 2010) rewrote legal judgments, applying the law as it existed at the time, but adopting feminist theoretical approaches leading to different conclusions or different reasoning. Inspired by that approach, this paper applies a feminist approach to current promotion policies, procedures and management practices, considering their accessibility for women applicants. Many approaches to reform, including the trickle-up theory, have proven unsuccessful. We therefore recommend rewriting promotion criteria and exemplars of excellent successful applications, in order to further articulate feminist views of excellence in academia.

Session 2

Exploring the experiences of British fathers returning to paid work after extended parental leave

Jessica Hobbs, Birkbeck, University of London

Supporting mothers returning to paid work after maternity leave has become a standard consideration for many employers. In 2015 the UK Government introduced a new policy for Shared Parental Leave (SPL). The aim of this exploratory qualitative study was to gain initial insights into how British fathers experienced returning to work after taking an extended period of parental leave, with a view to understanding what support may be beneficial. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen fathers from a variety of industries who had taken more than one month of parental leave since the introduction of SPL. Findings indicated that these fathers experienced many similar challenges to mothers returning to work from maternity leave as they attempted to balance paid work with responsibilities at home. Despite these challenges, these fathers were overwhelmingly positive about having taken extended parental leave. The take-up of SPL to date has been low and research in this field has therefore tended to focus on enablers and barriers with the intention of increasing take-up. In expectation of more fathers taking longer parental leave, this presentation contributes a valuable insight into fathers' experiences of returning to paid work that may inform how employers could support them through this transition.



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Access to and experiences of parental and associated leaves for university staff in the UK

Merve Uzunalioglu and Katherine Twamley, University College London

Co-authors: Alison Koslowski, Margaret O'Brien

At universities in the UK, women and minority ethnic staff are underrepresented in senior positions and predominantly hired on fixed-term and part-time contracts (Advance HE, 2022). These differences are exacerbated for parents (Eren, 2020; Gheyoh Ndzi, 2023), suggesting a motherhood penalty is intersectionally experienced in UK academia. Parental and associated leaves are one mechanism through which the gendered pay gap and career progression inequalities may be addressed (Almqvist & Duvander, 2014). Shared Parental Leave (SPL) was introduced in 2015 to support co-parents' time off from work to care for an infant, potentially increasing men's involvement in care work and improving women's engagement with paid work. However, SPL has had very low take-up - around 2.8% of eligible fathers. Focusing on staff who have taken maternity, paternity or adoption leave in the last five years, we conduct an analysis of HR data (n=2,199) and a supplementary staff survey (n=339) to understand who takes leave and for how long. Follow-up qualitative interviews with a subsample of employees are also conducted to understand reasons behind such associations. We bring the findings together to consider how changes to organisational culture might improve access to and experiences of parental leave in the context of UK academia.

Female academic's experiences and perceptions of maternity leave in the neoliberal university: unmasking governmentality

Karen Jones, University of Reading

There is a paucity of large-scale research into maternity leave in academia and under-theorizing of the influence of neoliberalism on maternity rights in this sector. Responding to such gaps, this study utilized secondary analysis of a sub-set of data from a global online mixed method survey with 553 female academics (82% UK, 18% international), to explore their experiences and perceptions of the implications of maternity leave. The findings reveal that 69% of female academics continued to undertake core academic work duties during maternity leave, such as writing grant applications and journal articles, supervising doctoral students, teaching and responding to email. Analysis of qualitative (open text) data was undertaken to explore the reasons why women effectively relinquished their maternity rights by continuing to labour during maternity leave. This analysis shows how neoliberal ideology has gained a hegemonic position in academia that leaves little space for maternity leave, hence many women effectively relinquish their maternity rights to sustain academic productivity. The findings will be of interest to professionals advocating for gender equality and women's maternity rights in academia (and beyond), academic mothers, managers, policy makers and those championing change in the sector.



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Keynote Talk

Fertility journeys and other emerging areas for equality, diversity and inclusion

Krystal Wilkinson, Manchester Metropolitan University

Maternity and parenting have long been acknowledged as equality and diversity issues in the workplace, and have attracted legislative protections and a range of organisational provisions. Much less attention has been paid – in academic research and more broadly – to the stages before conception (partnership formation, fertility decisions and struggles) and to experiences such as pregnancy loss, mental health complications in pregnancy and post-birth, or coming to terms with childlessness. We thus know less about how to support affected employees appropriately in the workplace and prevent discrimination. In this keynote presentation, I will offer insights from my empirical research projects, focusing on our two-year project on complex fertility journeys and employment, funded by The Leverhulme Trust. This project explored pathways of experience, considering how fertility journey experiences impact individuals' work and careers, and vice-versa. The project included interviews with 80 men and women with lived experience, including diversity in gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, fertility journey and employment. The lived experience interviews were supplemented with interviews with line managers and fertility counsellors. I will briefly discuss my related projects on single/solo-living staff; perinatal mental health and employment; and women's health in the workplace to explore synergies and key learning points.

Session 3

Inequalities in Access to Elite Occupations

Claire Tyler, University College London

Co-authors: Lindsey Macmillan, Catherine Dilnot

This session describes the initial stages of a new data-led research collaboration between UCL and large UK employers which ultimately aims to create more socially diverse and inclusive workplaces. It is a three-year project funded by the Nuffield Foundation, intended to advance our understanding of inequalities in access to elite occupations. We aim to assess how access to elite occupations varies by socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity (and the intersections of these), at each stage of the recruitment process, and across entry routes. The project uses anonymised individual-level applicant data for early career roles, across a range of sectors. The project goes beyond measuring high-level access rates to elite occupations by demographic group to provide deeper insights into why certain groups are less likely to obtain job offers for entry-level roles. We anticipate societal benefit both for applicants from non-traditional backgrounds and the firms and wider economy as the talent pool is widened and barriers to recruitment are removed. The session will describe our approach to collaborating with large employers and obtaining anonymised recruitment data for large cohorts of applicants and explains the new analysis and insights we are able to provide using this approach.



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Maternal Well-Being, Infant Feeding and Return to Work Decisions

Sarah Jewell, University of Reading

Co-authors: Fari Aftab, Sam Rawlings, Marina Della Giusta, Grace James, Sylvia Jaworska

In the UK breastfeeding rates are low compared to other countries. One potential barrier for mothers wishing to continue to breastfeed is return to paid work, and vice versa. The potential conflict between infant feeding and return to work decisions, and the resulting impact on maternal well-being of any conflict, has been under-researched. There is also a lack of understanding of how to accommodate and support breastfeeding employees. Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, our study explores the well-being, opportunities and lived experiences of new mothers who want to continue to breastfeed on return to paid work. The research fills a gap in UK knowledge by helping us better understand underpinning societal attitudes, legal frameworks and other obstacles that may shape decisions in this context and to explore the impact of these on the well-being of working mothers. It will help identify weaknesses and areas of good workplace practice to inform policies and practice to support breastfeeding with the aim of improving maternal well-being. The project draws on information from surveys and interviews with mothers and employers, supplemented with data from the UK Household Longitudinal survey (UKHLS). We will present preliminary findings from our project.

Session 4

Labour law's (mis)management of menopausal workers

Grace James, University of Reading

At the core of this paper is a critique of labour law's engagement with menopausal workers in the UK. The legal critique is framed by an overarching discussion of how menopausal bodies can disrupt inherent valorisations of the liberal subject/ideal worker within dominant organisational norms. The legal treatment of menopausal bodies at work, I suggest, underscores and perpetuates the historically entrenched, patriarchal, ageist and potentially sinister, nature of that valorisation. There is a limit to the impact labour laws can have in a context that ignores or shames natural bodily changes. Effective labour laws could however, I argue, better support those who feel able / willing to negotiate the boundaries between private (menopausal) bodily experiences and stubborn organisational norms – encouraging and improving long term individual and organisational resilience.

Exploring role of leadership and context in determining employee experiences of inclusion

Sana Ahmed, University of Reading

Leaders and managers play a critical role in cultivating an inclusive organisational setting and determining middle and lower level managers' perception and practice of diversity and inclusion (Nishii and Mayer, 2009). Senior management's ownership, role and acceptance of diversity management is still underrepresented in the research despite several studies indicating its



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importance. These studies highlight the indifferent attitude of leaders and lack of commitment as the top most barrier in implementation of diversity initiatives and creation of inclusive environment. While much has been written on diversity management approaches of multinational corporations (MNCs), relatively little research-oriented efforts have been done to address individual concerns, especially in developing countries. It is argued that diversity management practices are influenced by national and organisational cultural factors, hence, it is highly unlikely for these practices to be identical in both the home (developed) and the host (developing) countries. Taking a holistic approach, the research addresses the knowledge gaps on diversity management specially in a South-Asian context. This research will utilise a mixed methods approach and findings will inform diversity and inclusion practices within MNCs, helping address some of the major concerns in the successful implementation of diversity practices.

How expectations and perceptions of Black women's leadership shape the leadership and progression experience of Black female managers

Obiageli Heidelberger-nkenke, University of Reading

While we have seen an increase of women in middle-management positions over the years, statistics evidence that members of marginalized groups are still struggling to make their way up through the leadership labyrinth. Black women are particularly scarce if not totally absent within the senior ranks of leadership. Prior research has identified various challenges in the way of women's progression into senior leadership. Nevertheless, we are lacking in-depth knowledge about Black female leaders' unique experience within leadership and career progression. In this study, we examine how the leadership expectations and perceptions key others, who are involved in their progression, hold of Black women's leadership, shape this experience. The qualitative interviews with Black female leaders on the path to senior positions and senior leaders alike provide several insights, including the role of Black female networks and kinship in developing confidence and a deep connectedness with sponsors to push for access to career opportunities and meaningful representation at the top of organizations.

Contracting with heterogenous biases

Xueying Zhao, University of Warwick

Incentivizing workers to exert effort is a key concern for organizations. As workplaces become more diverse, firms face greater challenges in motivating workers from different backgrounds. The conventional contract model with moral hazard assumes that the principal and agent share the same beliefs, and that the subjective belief equals the objective belief. But in real-life situations, firms and workers might have non-common priors due to various reasons. This paper explores the optimal contract in a scenario where the principal and agent have non-common priors, specifically regarding the probability of high output under effort. The study finds that a biased principal or agent may be better-off compared to the conventional model with common priors. The biased agent is better-off as long as the objective belief is above the agent's belief. When the first-best contract is obtainable, a biased principal is better-off if the objective belief is below a threshold between the principal's and agent's belief. In conclusion, the study contributes to the literature on contract theory by considering the impact of non-common priors on optimal contracts. The analysis



highlights the importance of objective probability in addressing the welfare implications of unconscious biases in contracts.

When Matthew met Larry: Prestige and discrimination in academia

Steven Bosworth, University of Reading

Co-authors: Marina Della Giusta, Erin Hengel, Almudena Sevilla

Evidence suggests that both in US and UK academic economics, more prestigious departments pay more and also have more male faculty. We present a model of employer-employee matching which combines the Matthew Effect (the prestige of departments providing cumulative benefits to individual faculty) and the Larry [Summers] Effect (the tendency to misinterpret correlations and infer ability from identity) and focuses on the mutually reinforcing dynamics of prestige and biased beliefs due to imperfect information on individual ability (in this instance caused by long publication lags). When departmental prestige is important and complementary to merit in the production of research, higher wages and discrimination towards the favoured group (men) are found at better-endowed institutions, and having a greater proportion of male relative to female colleagues will be associated with an additional wage premium for both men and women. We test this prediction of the model in an administrative panel of UK academics. Looking at career trajectories of institution movers we find that the same person is paid more the more the department they move to is male-dominated, and that this holds for both men and women, with a similar effect size (premium) of around 3%.