



Society for the Study  
of Social Problems  
*In Pursuit of Social Justice*

# VIRTUAL POSTER MINI-CONFERENCE

*A Virtual Gathering of Emerging Scholarship*

**March 27, 2026**

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#### **Contemporary Struggles for Social Justice**

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Aneesa A. Baboolal

Kat Fuller

Sarah Anne Hale

### **Session 2: Gender, Health, Environment, and Everyday Life:**

#### **Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Social Change**

Azebi Oyeintarimoboere Precious

Sara Tehrani

Sabina Mensah & Hulda Sakyi

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# Abstracts

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## **Racism and Microaggressions among International Students in a Small Ontario City: Implications for Multiculturalism and Global Education**

*Anthony Acquah Mensah & Eugena Kwon, Trent University*

International students interact with social spaces in host cities where experiences of racism and microaggressions shape their social and academic trajectories. Although the proportion of international students in Canada has increased over the past two decades, there is limited empirical research on the experiences of racism among international students in smaller cities in Canada. This qualitative study addresses this gap by drawing on critical race theory to examine racism and microaggressions experienced by international students in Peterborough, Ontario. Using a qualitative approach, a sample of 55 international students were recruited through convenience sampling. Eight focus group discussions were conducted using semi-structured interview guides to elicit students' experiences. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Three key themes emerged: (i) everyday interactions within the city, (ii) institutional practices and dynamics in postsecondary settings, and (iii) coping mechanisms among international students. The first theme explores everyday interactions within the local community, including experiences in public transportation, housing, shopping, and the workplace. The second theme examines institutional practices in postsecondary settings that shape students' experiences, including boundary-making through inclusion initiatives, epistemic positioning within the classroom, and institutional orientations. The third theme illustrates how students cope through processes of normalization, meaning-making, and persistence. Overall, the themes revealed that racism and microaggressions are co-embedded in everyday environments, alongside international students' resilience. The findings have important implications for postsecondary institutions, municipal authorities, and stakeholders in developing policies and programs that promote safety, inclusion, and academic success among international students in small cities in Canada.

## **Intersectional Islamophobia: Violence against Muslim Women**

*Aneesha A. Baboolal, University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth*

Drawing from in-depth interviews with Muslim women (n=27) during the first Trump presidency, gendered Islamophobia at the intersections of racial/ethnic and immigrant identity has impacted women

as experienced verbal/physical hate violence. Muslim women encounter gendered racism at the axes of multiple marginalizations which informs contemporary notions of Islamophobia. Findings indicate that Muslim women navigated and resisted gendered anti-Muslim racism (Islamophobia) in everyday interactions, and subsequently, anti-Black racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. Veiled Muslim women navigate intersectional discrimination in society at the axes of racialized Muslim identity, as well as perceived categorization as an immigrant, thus enduring xenophobia as well. Black Muslim women's experiences of biased harassment are further complicated by anti-Black racism and societal perceptions of Muslims as 'perpetual foreigners'. Thus, Muslim women in the United States are increasingly navigating and resisting Islamophobia as a result of their multifaceted identities.

## **Won't Somebody Please Think of (Trans) Children?!: Content Analysis in News**

### **Coverages on Chloe Cole**

*Kat Fuller, The University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

There has been a significant rise in bills against trans rights in the United States, with nearly 700 introduced in 2024, up from 600 in 2023 and 174 in 2021. Chloe Cole, who advocates for bans on gender affirmative care and asserts that she regrets her transition while under 18, has appeared in several media outlets as a "detransitioner" and sued medical staff for allowing her to transition. Cole's media appearance raises questions about public understanding of (de)transitioning. The questions are: how do news articles frame Chloe Cole's experiences? How does Cole's stance affect the mediatized discourse? There is limited research on news media and detransitioning, which this study aims to explore. Through MAXQDA, I coded the articles collected from Factiva under the name "Chloe Cole" and identified 211 articles. I removed any duplicate articles, articles with another person's name, and mere headlines, resulting in 125 articles in total. I coded the articles through grounded theory and inductive coding. The articles are also categorized as either left-leaning, right-leaning, center, or University by Biasly, Media Bias/Fact Check, and Ad Fontes Chart. The recurring themes discovered in news media are: (1) Partial Perspectives, (2) Protecting (Cis)Women and Children, (3) Leftist-Trans Agenda, (4) Conservative-Trans Connections. Cole becomes an ideological entrepreneur, creating moral panic on gender-affirmative care from anti-gender movements. False empathy for trans youth is fueled by transphobia and misinformation in the media. The media frames Cole's experiences through a trauma narrative that enforces cisnormativity. The framing misinterprets (de)trans experiences, traditional beliefs about women and youth, and claims of a supposed "gender ideology" or leftist propaganda. Cole, often associated with anti-DEI groups like Do No Harm, has appeared in right-wing media or rallies. Right-wing movements, including US politicians such as Mike

Johnson and groups like the Heritage Foundation, weaponize these trauma narratives to depict detrans regret as widespread, despite reasons and experiences that significantly contrast with Cole's.

## **Resisting Neoliberal Narratives: Student Activists and Palestinian Solidarity**

*Sarah Anne Hale, SUNY University at Buffalo*

This study examines how student activists at a large public Research I university understand their organizing in the wake of October 7, 2023, and how they interpret institutional responses to dissent. Grounded in a transformational resistance framework (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) and critical analyses of neoliberalism in higher education (Giroux, 2010), this study centers student narratives surrounding Encampment Day—a protest demanding transparency and divestment from institutions complicit in the genocide of Palestinians. Using a qualitative case study design informed by critical ethnographic principles, this research situates student activism within the bounded system of the renowned "Neo University". Semi-structured interviews with marginalized student activists provide insight into both their resistance and the institutional conditions they navigate. Findings show that student activists are not merely responding to institutional harm. Rather, participants were deeply aware of how neoliberal logics such as image management, financial prioritization, and the commodification of diversity structure their lived experiences as student activists. While the university outwardly promotes values like diversity, safety, and dialogue, students described a stark gap between that messaging and the material realities of exploitation and selective repression. Their stories offer a powerful counter-narrative to dominant representations of higher education as inclusive or progressive.

## **Feminist Environmental Justice in Practice: Women as Agents of Change in the Niger Delta's Oil Conflict**

*Azebi Oyeintarimoboere Precious & Yvonne Braun, University of Oregon*

This study examines the gendered aspects of environmental degradation and justice in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region, focusing on the lived experiences, activism, and agency of women amid continuous environmental harm caused by oil exploration and exploitation. While oil exploration keeps generating economic revenue for Nigeria, it has also caused serious environmental damage, loss of livelihoods, and health problems, with women disproportionately impacted because of their roles as resource managers, farmers, and caretakers. Despite their vital role, women are largely excluded from decision making and environmental governance, a marginalization reinforced by patriarchal systems. Through a feminist political ecology and intersectional lens, this study explores how Niger Delta women navigate structural

barriers, mobilize collective action, and contribute to the emergence of a feminist environmental justice movement. The study uses a qualitative method, including ten semi-structured interviews with environmental justice activists, community leaders, lawyers, and NGO representatives. The findings show that although oil exploration and exploitation have devastated many communities, ruining farmlands, polluting rivers, and increasing health risks, women continue to respond with resilience.

## **Medical Authority, Personal Narratives, and Reproductive Decision-Making: Representations of Prenatal Genetic Testing on Instagram**

*Sara Tehrani, Sofia Lahsaini, Crystal Chanthasone, Donia Fouissi, & Shannon K. Carter, University of Central Florida*

Prenatal genetic screening and diagnostic testing for chromosomal abnormalities is now recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to be discussed and offered to all birthing people, regardless of maternal age or risk factors. As prenatal genetic testing has become increasingly medicalized and technologically sophisticated, bioethical concerns have emerged regarding the reasons underlying widespread promotion of these technologies and the possible eugenic consequences of their use. Research suggests that while prenatal genetic testing may support birthing people's decision-making, it also operates as a mechanism through which certain lives are marked as more or less valuable, potentially serving as a tool for contemporary eugenics. Data consisted of 152 Instagram reels related to prenatal genetic testing posted between 2015 and 2025. Analysis used both deductive and inductive techniques, examining themes present in existing literature while identifying new themes that emerged from the data. A comparative analysis assessed similarities and differences in content produced by medical professionals compared to birthing people. Medical professionals emphasized the distinction between screening and diagnostic prenatal genetic testing, recommending that "high-risk" screening results be followed by confirmatory diagnostic tests. Medical professionals portray non-invasive prenatal testing as a simple and highly accurate blood test while acknowledging false positives and negatives. Some medical professionals partnered with genetic testing companies for sponsored advertisements. Conversely, birthing people represented prenatal genetic testing as an emotionally charged experience, often eliciting anxiety, stress, fear, trauma, confusion, and guilt. Financial burdens and questions regarding validity and accuracy emerged as dominant challenges. Most content creators in both groups were White-presenting, indicating limited representation of people of color. This analysis demonstrates how Instagram serves as a platform that normalizes medicalization and technological interventions in pregnancy.

## **Women, Food Sovereignty and Postharvest Management in Northern Ghana**

*Sabina Mensah & Hulda Sakyi, with Yvonne A. Braun, University of Oregon*

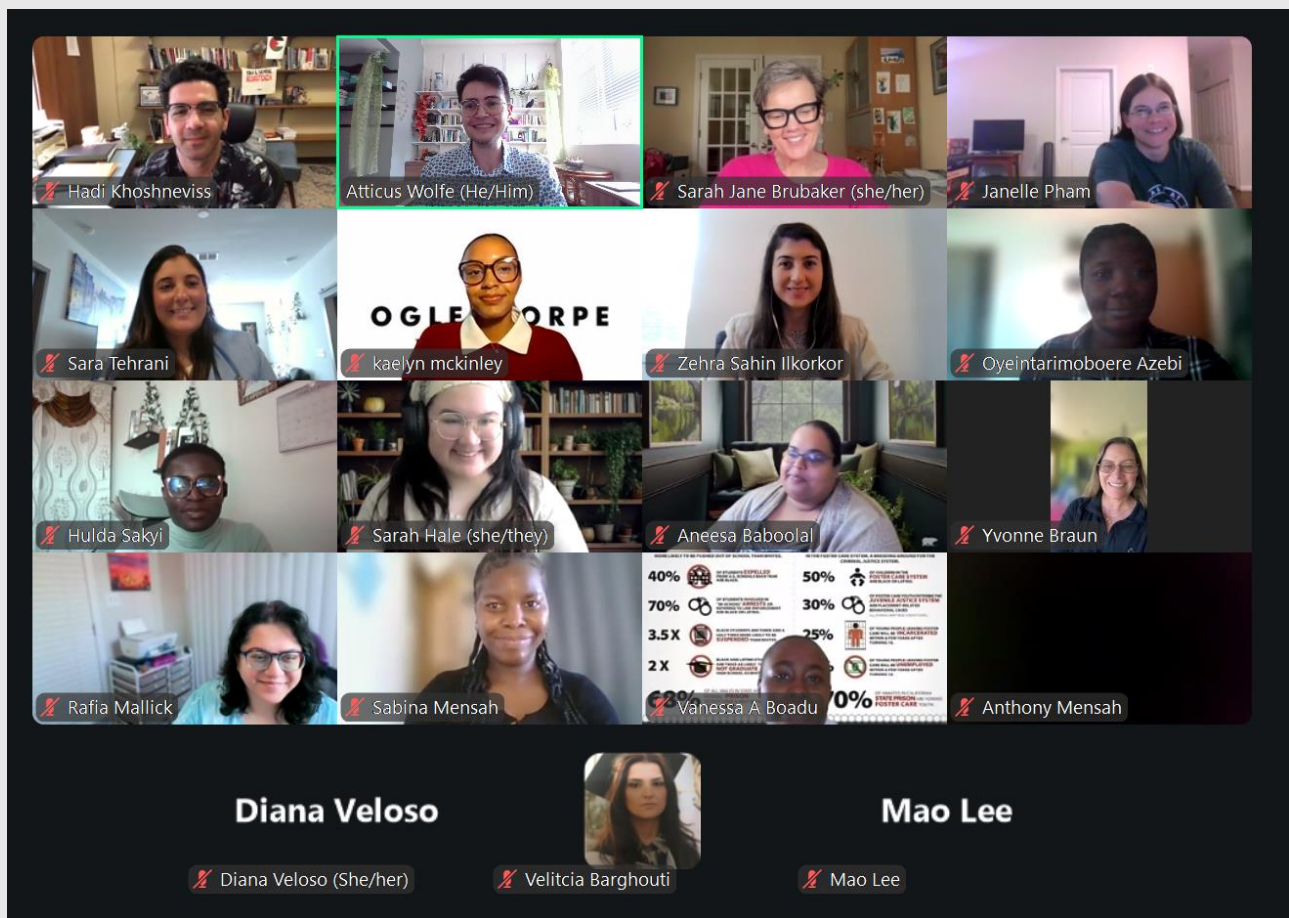
Reducing postharvest loss has been proposed as a crucial option for achieving food security. Postharvest loss refers to the loss of food quality and quantity along the food supply chain from harvest to consumption. In developing countries like Ghana, about two-thirds of food losses occur at the postharvest level even before reaching consumers, hence the need to address the problem at the farmer level. Women play central roles in postharvest systems across Africa, contributing significantly to handling, processing, storage, and marketing. Yet institutional and social norms frequently restrict their decision-making power. While women's contributions to household food security are widely acknowledged in Northern Ghana, far less attention has been given to how their Indigenous postharvest knowledge contributes to food sovereignty. This proposed study centers Northern Ghana to examine how women's Indigenous postharvest practices and knowledge may contribute to postharvest loss reduction and strengthen food sovereignty. Using a mixed-methods approach, qualitative data will be collected from approximately 80–100 participants using participatory rural appraisal, focus group discussions, life history interviews, and participant observation. Quantitative data will be gathered through 250 household surveys alongside postharvest loss assessments with a subsample of 60–80 households. This study contributes to making the role women play in postharvest management more visible and will inform the design of inclusive, gender-responsive interventions.

## **Dating, Sex, and Relationships: Determining Interest in Long-term Relationships among College Students**

*Kaelyn S. McKinley, Oglethorpe University*

The role of marriage in society has long sparked interest and debate, and although studies illustrate a consistent decline in marriage rates, they also indicate that young people are still desiring marriage for their future. This raises questions on the nature of interest in exclusive relationships for younger generations. Previous literature has focused on relationship dissolution and behaviors among college aged individuals but the processes of romantic partner selection and perceived attitudes about dating are less known. This study utilizes mixed-methods design to examine how college students approach romantic partner selection and long-term relationship intentions in the context of shifting cultural norms. Quantitative analysis draws on national survey data from the Online College Social Life Survey, using variables that examine predictors of desire for exclusive relationships. Results find gender differences emerge within the importance that male and female college students place on desirable romantic values

and perceived advantages of exclusive relationships. Qualitative interviews draw on Oglethorpe University students to provide deeper insight into how they understand romantic partner selection. Major themes like perceived attitudes about the dating scene, desirable/non-desirable qualities in romantic partners, and the fear of commitment without reciprocation illustrate that college students are living unique lives that shape their relationship expectations. These findings suggest that college students are not simply rejecting commitment or marriage; rather, their processes of partner selection are changing and reflecting new attitudes.



# Acknowledgements

SSSP Executive Officer Elroi J. Windsor would like to thank the following people for their efforts in organizing the 2026 SSSP Virtual Poster Mini Conference:

- President Sarah Jane Brubaker and Program Chair Hadi Khoshnevis for their leadership in developing the virtual conference to increase accessibility and participation for more SSSP members
- Program Committee member Atticus M. Wolfe for his leadership in organizing and presiding over the conference
- Program Committee member Zehra Sahin Ilkorkor for her assistance in organizing the conference
- The Administrative Office staff members for their ongoing technological support to ensure the event's success: Kelsey Whitaker, Michele Smith Koontz, and Helen Wilds
- All conference presenters and attendees for engaging in exciting and critical scholarship, in pursuit of social justice!

