

• CALL FOR ABSTRACTS •

The **Centre for Qualitative Research (CQR)** at University of Bath is pleased to announce the Call for Abstracts for the Seventh Annual *Qualitative Research Symposium (QRS)* entitled:

## RESEARCHER VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is of vital consideration in qualitative research. As an interdisciplinary concept, vulnerability has been theorised within, for example, legal scholarship, feminisms, critical social and cultural theory, political science, or bioethics in relation to social, cultural, physical, psychological, financial, ethical, political, or legal dynamics. More than a susceptibility, risk, or exposure to harms, wrongs, violence, threats, or violence, vulnerability is “an ontological condition of humanity”<sup>1</sup> that invokes a shared constitutive condition, a way of being open to and being affected by and affecting others<sup>2</sup>. In this way, vulnerability is applicable to both researchers and participants; it is arguably always *in play* in qualitative research, yet *researcher vulnerability* is rarely acknowledged or discussed (at least formally).

Through this Symposium, we open up for discussion how vulnerability is constructed and what vulnerability looks and feels like for researchers, our research projects, and the methods we use. We recognize the care so care-fully taken for our research participants, particularly those who are marginalized, Othered, or experiencing precarity, and ask whether and how qualitative researchers might also learn from recognizing and tending to our own vulnerabilities. In this way, we take up what Jacqueline Rose<sup>3</sup> described as the “unsustainable fantasy of invulnerability”, and ask: in what ways can and should we incorporate vulnerability into qualitative research? We thus consider seriously researcher vulnerability as a productive space that tells us something about ourselves, our participants and our relationship to them, the ways research is organized with certain contexts and forces, and the nature of our work. We want to hold space for unpacking and examining formations and conceptualizations of vulnerability, the effects of vulnerability, and methods of and for vulnerability.

These areas form the core themes of the Qualitative Research Symposium 2022, and we invite you to share how vulnerability is or can be incorporated into your qualitative research.

- 1) Formations and conceptualisations of researcher vulnerability:** focusing on the diversity of forms of vulnerability amongst qualitative researchers (e.g., legal, physical, social, psychological, cultural, political, financial, etc.) considerations may include:
  - How is vulnerability constructed within the development of, enacting of, or reflecting on qualitative research?
  - How do different constructs of vulnerability include or exclude the ways we think about ourselves in research?

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<sup>1</sup> Rogers, W., Mackenzie, C., & Dodds, S. 2012. Why Bioethics Needs a Concept of Vulnerability. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 5(2):11–38.

<sup>2</sup> Cunniff Gilson, E., 2016. Vulnerability and victimization: Rethinking key concepts in feminist discourses on sexual violence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 42(1), pp.71-98.

<sup>3</sup> Rose, J. 2021. *On violence and violence against women*. Faber & Faber: United Kingdom.

- How can reflexivity on vulnerability help to shape ways how research is organised?
  - In what ways could researcher vulnerability be (re)conceptualised and developed to advance the field of qualitative research?
- 2) Effects of vulnerability:** focusing on how vulnerability amongst researchers or in the researcher-participant relationship can impact upon the research process and the decisions we make, considerations may include:
- How does researcher vulnerability reveal or illustrate itself in our writings?
  - How is researcher vulnerability related to quality, trustworthiness, or rigor of research?
  - In which stages of the research process might researcher vulnerability matter, and in what ways?
  - How do we prepare ourselves for, negotiate, and respond to our own vulnerability?
  - What outlets exist for exploring our own vulnerability?
  - How do we design more ethical projects based on recognition of researcher and participant vulnerability?
- 3) Methods of and for vulnerability:** focusing on methods and methodologies that can, should, or already attend to or incorporate researcher vulnerability into the research process, considerations may include:
- How do we build researcher vulnerability into our project design?
  - What methods are available to us that directly explore this ethically, productively and politically (e.g., feminist sensibilities, postcolonial approaches, indigenous methodologies)?
  - How do we make vulnerability a productive component of qualitative research?
  - How does a focus on vulnerability of researcher ask us to reconsider our methods?

We encourage contributors to reflect on and consider their past, current, or future work in relation to the overarching theme of researcher vulnerability. Contributions across all academic disciplines are welcome, as are theoretically inspired, methodologically oriented, and empirically grounded inquiries that link to these overlapping themes.

## KEYNOTE LECTURE



### Dr Milli Lake

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/international-relations/people/lake>

Dr Lake is Associate Professor of International Security at the London School of Economics' Department of International Relations. Her research expertise lies in political violence, institutional reform, and the rule of law, predominantly in violence and conflict-affected states. She co-directs the [Women's Rights After War](#) project, a project that falls under LSE's Gender Justice and Security HUB, and is jointly funded by the National Science Foundation and the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund. Using a variety of participatory research methods, the project evaluates the lived realities of post-war gender reforms efforts as they are experienced by women from different class, ethnic, racial, religious, or other backgrounds. Dr. Lake also co-convenes the [Advancing Research on Conflict](#) consortium, which runs a summer field methods program for doctoral students preparing to embark on field research in volatile or conflict-affected research sites.

## PRACTICALITIES

The Symposium is a two-day event held this year on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022 at the University of Bath. Website: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/events/qualitative-research-symposium-2022/>

Presentations will be on **Wednesday 2 February 2022**. Cost of attendance is £30. Coffees, teas, and lunch will be provided. Presenters will pay a subsidized cost of £15. A small budget is available to support postgraduates and researchers with limited means for travel and conference participation: further information will be available when registration opens in late November.

On **Tuesday 1 February 2022**, a series of **qualitative workshops** will be offered through separate advertisement, to be made in November 2021.

## KEY DATES

### **Submission Deadline: Friday 5 November 2021**

The following should be prepared for submission:

- Paper title
- Author(s) and affiliated university or employer, and contact information
- Symposium theme(s) to which paper relates
- Abstract of no more than 350 words

Submit abstracts here: <https://bathreg.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/qrs-2022-abstract-submission>

Please contact us via [QRSBath@bath.ac.uk](mailto:QRSBath@bath.ac.uk) with any queries about the event, abstract submission process, or suggestions for papers not directly addressed by the Symposium Themes.

### **Author Notification: Friday 19 November 2021**

Authors will be notified by email whether or not their papers have been accepted for inclusion in the Symposium. Those accepted will be asked to prepare presentations of 15 to 20-minute duration.

Remote presentations and participation will be considered as necessary.

## ORGANISERS

QRS 2022 Organizing Committee ([QRSBath@bath.ac.uk](mailto:QRSBath@bath.ac.uk)): Bryan Clift, Sheree Bekker, Ioannis Costas Batlle, and Katharina Chudzikowski.