



BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology

UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE

Current Discussions in
Sociology

14 MAY
2026
14:00

Şerif Mardin Seminar Room

UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE: CURRENT DISCUSSIONS IN SOCIOLOGY

PROGRAM

14:00 Opening Remarks

14:10 Keynote Speaker: Tuna Kuyucu

Mapping Student Subjectivities: A Multi-Regional Study on Secularity and Social Values in Turkey

14:40 - 15:00: Q&A

15:00 - 15:15: BREAK

15:15 PANEL 1: Populism, The Digital & Trust

15:15 - 15:30: Özgür Deniz Akdemir

15:30 - 15:45: Adanil Güzel

15:45 - 16:00: Cansu Mine Yıldırım

16:00 - 16:15: Q&A

16:15 - 16:30: BREAK

16:30 PANEL 2: Narratives and the Political

16:30 - 16:45: Sahba Darabi

16:45 - 17:00: Gökçe Aksu

17:00 - 17:20: Ahmet Haktan Canpolat, Elif Sustam, Fırat Güney

17:20 - 17:45: Q&A

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

TUNA KUYUCU

MAPPING STUDENT SUBJECTIVITIES: A MULTI-REGIONAL STUDY ON SECLARITY AND SOCIAL VALUES IN TURKEY

This paper introduces an extensive, ongoing research project designed to map the shifting landscape of secularity and social values among university students in Turkey. Based on a large-scale survey spanning more than 30 universities—representative of all geographical regions, public and private sectors, and diverse academic disciplines—the study provides a comprehensive look at the "Generation Z" cohort during a period of significant social transformation.

The research utilizes a multidimensional secularity scale developed by the authors to capture the nuances of belief, practice, and world-view. Beyond religious identification, the project investigates how secularity correlates with a wide spectrum of attitudinal variables, including gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, nationalism, immigration, and views on state violence. By integrating key demographics such as subjective class position, income, and family structure, the study aims to identify the socio-economic drivers behind emerging value orientations.

Methodologically, the project intends to move beyond traditional linear analyses by employing person-centered clustering techniques to identify distinct ideological profiles within the student body. While the research is currently in the data collection phase (n=19330), this presentation will outline the theoretical framework of the scale development and discuss preliminary descriptive trends. The findings aim to challenge binary interpretations of Turkish society, highlighting the complexities, contradictions, and hybrid identities that characterize the next generation of Turkey's professional and intellectual class.

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"PHD TAYFA": DELEGITIMIZATION AND ANTI- INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE ON TURKISH TWITTER

ÖZGÜR DENİZ AKDEMİR

This paper proposes a theoretical analysis of phd tayfa ("PhD crew"), a quasi-pejorative term widely circulating on Turkish Twitter, used for dismissing and marginalizing academics, specifically political theoreticians, in public debate. Rather than treating the term as a trivial instance of internet slang, this study argues that it constitutes a structured delegitimization strategy, one that undermines the authority of expert voices by reframing their credentials as markers of class privilege and ideological bias rather than genuine knowledge.

The analysis draws on two complementary frameworks. First, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), following Fairclough (1992), Wodak & Meyer (2009), and van Dijk (1993, 1995), provides tools for examining how the term operates at the textual, discursive, and social levels. Particular attention is paid to the term's role in online argumentation: how it disposes of substantive engagement, constructs group boundaries, and create a form of ad hominem silencing. Second, Bourdieu's (1986) theory of symbolic and cultural capital illuminates the social stakes of this discourse. "phd tayfa" is understood as a challenge to the academic credentials as legitimate authority. Used as a populist disruption of the rules of the intellectual field.

For ethical data handling, Association of Internet Researchers' (AoIR) guidelines of social media research, which recommend anonymizing usernames and avoiding posts that could identify individuals is to be used. Twitter data is public, so consent is not always legally required. But ethical best practice suggests that private accounts and personally sensitive content should be treated with additional care.

The paper situates its argument within Turkey's broader socio-political context of institutional distrust and populist polarization, contributing to growing scholarly interest in the linguistics of expertise contestation. A methodology for corpus-based empirical follow-up, drawing on Twitter data and Ekşi Sözlük, is also proposed.

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DIGITAL PURGE OF THE SELF: DISPOSABLE ACCOUNTS AND ANONYMOUS CONFESSION CULTURE ON REDDIT

ADANIL GÜZEL

Even in online pseudonymity, why do people need disposable identities to speak their truth? This study explores Reddit's culture of disposable accounts who post on confession subreddits. These accounts are mostly single use identities created to post sensitive, taboo or deeply personal information without exposing the account owner's primary digital persona or real identity. This study aims to understand why individuals seek absolute anonymity even within a platform that is already predominantly anonymous drawing upon Goffman's Dramaturgy and Foucault's notions of Confession and Power. This study focuses on the transition from the "Performing Self" to the "Hidden Self".

While mainstream social media platforms encourage to create an idealized identity, Reddit's Throwaway culture create a form of "Digital Purge". Analysing the data from subreddits such as r/Confession and r/OffMyChest with qualitative methods, motivations behind these accounts will be categorized into three categories: the avoidance of social stigma, the avoidance of the "Digital Panopticon" and the need for being heard without being judged.

Qualitative netnography combined with thematic analysis will be used to examine approximately 200 selected posts over a three-month period. To uncover the hidden meanings intentions behind the confessions, a manual reading technique will be applied. Technique will be focusing on the construction of guilt, shame, and relief. The data will be systematically coded to identify recurring emotional trajectories, allowing for an interpretation. Initial observation suggests that these accounts function as confessionals with the absence of social consequences. That anonymity allows for a "radical honesty" that is often impossible to have in face to face or non-anonymous digital interactions. The study is aiming to understand how disposable anonymity reshapes self-presentation strategies in online confession spaces.

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ATTITUDES TOWARDS STRONGMAN LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES: THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

CANSU MİNE YILDIRIM

In recent years, authoritarian populist parties have gained much traction, especially in Western Democracies. On the other hand, authoritarian-populist parties not only undermine democracies but also oppose critical forms of knowledge and reverse rights that protect marginalized groups.

In both scholarly and popular debates, the populist leader is frequently characterized as a charismatic strongman. Economic insecurity is one popular predictor that receives significant attention for explaining support for strongman leadership. However, since exogenous shocks akin to the 2008 crisis have more or less subsided, one is justified in questioning why support for authoritarian leaders remains so prevalent, especially in light of Donald Trump's re-election in 2024. This suggests the need to introduce another perspective. Therefore, this study integrates institutional trust as an additional predictor. It is suggested that when the polity has strong trust in established institutions of the government, they are less likely to be vulnerable to the anti-establishment rhetoric of strongman leaders. Thus, this study aims to examine the following question: How do economic insecurity and trust in institutions impact attitudes towards strongman leadership in the United States? Using the 2017 World Values Survey, this study finds a statistically significant and positive relationship between deprivation of basic needs and support for strongman leadership. In contrast, no statistically significant relationship was found between income level and attitudes towards strongman leadership. Moreover, the study reveals a statistically significant and positive association between institutional trust and attitudes towards strongman leadership.

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GOOD REFUGEE, BAD REFUGEE: LABELS AS TOOLS OF CONTROL

SAHBA DARABI

Refugee discourse in the Global North tends to follow an apparent binary: the good refugee as a passive victim who wins compassion and the bad refugee as a dangerous outsider who inspires fear, much like the "good cop, bad cop" technique in law enforcement that uses counterfeit sympathy along with aggression to maintain control. Nevertheless, both representations result in the same exclusionary consequences, from unemployment and denial of social services to overall integration barriers.

This analysis is mainly inspired by Howard Becker's labeling theory (1963). Considering his framework, the "bad" label frames refugees as security concerns, whereas the "good" label makes them objects of charity. Ultimately, both eradicate their subjectivity and agency. Additionally, this work is established on existing literature, such as Stereotype Content Theory, the bureaucratic labeling of refugees, and key concepts such as "deservingness" in the field of forced migration.

Moreover, the historical roots of these classifications can be traced back to colonialism and, essentially, the notion of white supremacy. The 1951 Refugee Convention, particularly, prioritized the suffering of displaced Jews in Europe following World War II, legitimizing their suffering. Colonized populations, on the other hand, were categorized as "infiltrators" or "economic migrants", not recognized for their suffering. Today, the European Union's refugee policy reflects this continuity as European applicants are accepted at higher rates than those from Africa and the Middle East, which account for the majority of asylum claims worldwide. Another point to note is the language used in the media in Canada and Uganda – two countries on opposite parts of the globe where it is observed the same problematic pattern of labels being used as tools of control.

This paper contends that the current practices of refugee discourse and policy are structurally shaped by historical racial hierarchies and that the same social control processes that marginalize communities are manufactured by binary-focused approaches. What is necessary for long-lasting transformation in this area is acknowledging refugees as equal agents who are able to make contributions to society.

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THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL READING STYLES ON CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN EVALUATION OF THE "MASAL GEZGİNİ" METHOD

GÖKÇE AKSU

This study explores the formation of social justice perceptions in preschool children, specifically focusing on the role of parental mediation during storytelling. While traditional reading styles often prioritize literacy, this research investigates how interactive reading can foster early awareness of social equity.

The core of this project involves a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design with a sample of families and their 5-year-old children. The intervention group utilizes the "Masal Gezgini" (Tale Traveler) method—a specialized storytelling technique developed by the researcher to engage children in critical thinking about fairness and rights. To measure the outcomes, a visual scenario analysis specifically designed for the 5-year-old developmental stage will be piloted. This qualitative-driven quantitative assessment allows children to evaluate social justice dilemmas through illustrative storytelling.

By comparing the pre-test and post-test results of the intervention group against a control group, the study aims to quantify the efficacy of the "Masal Gezgini" method. The research contributes to the sociology of family and education by providing a measurable framework for how early domestic interventions can shape a child's sociological imagination and sense of justice.

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A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF LOGISTICAL TRANSFORMATION IN BÜYÜKADA: LABOR, MORAL ECONOMY, AND INFORMALITY

AHMET HAKTAN CANPOLAT, ELİF SUSTAM, FIRAT GÜNEY

This study examines the process of banning horse-drawn carriage transportation in Büyükada, Istanbul, in 2020 and replacing it with electric vehicles, from three different academic perspectives. Drawing on the same fieldwork but employing different theoretical frameworks, this integrated research opens up a discussion on the class, ecological, economic, and sociological implications of a logistical transformation.

Canpolat, in the first part of the research, rejects the anthropocentric approach and reads the process through a multi-faceted ethnography. While emphasizing that horses were not merely tools but active subjects in the economic production process, the study examines the processes of horses' exclusion from the system and socio-cultural tensions such as class conflicts and the distinction between New and Old Islanders, within the context of Marx's theory of alienation.

In the second part, led by Sustam, the study bases its analysis on Karl Polanyi's concept of embeddedness and his theory of moral economy. The horse-drawn carriage system offered an informal second chance, beyond official records, based on trust and kinship ties; how this embedded labor was rationalized and extracted from embeddedness in the new digital and centralized logistics regime; and the symbolic denial mechanisms in this process.

In the third part, focused on by Güney, the intertwining of informal and formal economies is addressed using the theoretical frameworks of Hart and Mollona. The study focuses on how the horse-drawn carriage industry, which became uncontrolled after the commercial boom of the post-1980s, became a bargaining chip in the nationalization process, and the spatial incompatibility and local unrest created by the new centralized logistics system with the island's authentic character.

The common denominator of the research is that the transformation in Büyükada is not merely a modernization or animal rights gain; it is an attempt by the state to restructure a local informal space through logistical rationality and centralized control. The authors agree that the crises of the traditional system result in a radical disruption. However, analytical differences provide depth to the study: Canpolat views the issue as an "interspecies labor crisis," while Sustam focuses on "the breakdown of the social fabric and moral contracts," and Güney on "the pressure of economic rationality on spatial identity." This tripartite approach, using the Büyükada example, offers a comprehensive panorama of urban transformation and informal labor regimes in Turkey.