



Call for abstracts for the international conference

New Directions in Singles Studies: Towards Pluriversity

Co-hosted by the [Leeds University Centre for African Studies](#) and the [Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies](#), University of Leeds (UK)

in collaboration with the [International Singles Studies Association](#) (ISSA)

with funding from [The British Academy](#)

Venue: University of Leeds, UK

Date: 3-6 June 2026

Keynote speakers

Stella Nyanzi, Philipp Schwartz Bridge Fellow at Ruhr University, Bochum (Germany)

Sarah Lamb, Professor of Anthropology, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Barbara Mandel Professor of Humanistic Social Sciences, Brandeis University (USA)

About the theme

Singles studies is no longer a nascent field in many parts of the Global North. Testimony to that are the many scholarly articles, monographs and edited volumes that have been published to date (e.g., DePaulo and Morris 2005, 2006; DePaulo 2007, 2014, 2017; Greitemeyer, 2009; Kislev 2019, 2023, 2024; Chowkhani et al. 2023; Apostolou et al., 2020; Fama and Lagerwey 2022). Yet, as Christiane et al (2024, 4) note in their recent book on *Being Single in the City: Cultural Geographies of Gendered Urban Space in Asia*, “there is still a scarcity of research about single women and men in the ‘Global South’”.

While it is possible to argue that singles studies is steadily emerging in some parts of the majority world such as Asia (Christiane et.al., 2024; Lamb, 2018, 2022; Himawan and Bambling 2018, Himawan et al., 2021; Himawan 2020; 2020), the same cannot be said about other parts, such as Africa (Pauli et al. 2022; Biri 2013; 2021). In her ongoing project on female singlehood among the Shona of Zimbabwe, Tendai Mangena is developing African singles studies as an urgent and important sub-field of inquiry that advances understanding of major questions in African and gender studies at large, such as about gender and modernity, socio-cultural change, and decolonization.

The insights emerging from these contexts begin to interrogate monolithic and Eurocentric definitions of singlehood, and to critically diversify the expressions and experiences of singlehood as it intersects with other categories such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, and de/coloniality.

This international conference on ‘New directions in singles studies: towards pluriversity’ aims to provide a platform for scholars from across the arts, humanities and social sciences, to meet and converse on critical issues at the heart of the growing field of single studies. The conference seeks to “raise awareness of issues regarding singlehood and how it is viewed in various disciplines, communities, and other sociocultural contexts, particularly as the population of single people continues to rise” (Chowhan and Wynne 2024, 4).

We invite scholars who pursue studies of singleness from diverse disciplinary perspectives, such as psychology, sociology, literature, religious studies, and cultural studies, and in different regions of the world. Since “the rewards, challenges, and meanings of single life may be so different in different places” (DePaulo, forthcoming), we invite papers and panels that draw on decolonial methodologies, which call for attentiveness to diversity and contextualisation. We envision a pluriverse of perspectives and approaches, to do justice to the diversity and complexity of singlehood across our world, and to open up new critical futures of single studies.

In order to address the current marginal status of Africa, and of African scholarship, in global singles studies, this conference will fund a number of African early career and established scholars based on the continent, in order to help realise the vision of singles studies as a decolonized discipline – one that emerges through meaningful dialogue between the Global South and Global North (Chowkhani and Wynne 2024, 6).

Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following

- Representations of singleness in literature, film and other cultural productions
- Singleness and/in social media
- Singleness and politics
- Singleness and queer identities / queer perspectives on singleness
- Singleness, gender and feminism
- Decolonial and context-specific approaches to singleness
- Religion, spirituality and singleness
- Economic dimensions to singleness
- Single parenthood and kinship formation
- Health, wellbeing and the stigma of singleness

Abstract format and submission

Abstracts for individual presentations should include title, author/s affiliation. It should be between 200 – 250 words.

Abstracts for panel discussions or roundtables should include a title, names and affiliations of panels and a 250 – 300-word abstract.

Abstracts should be submitted online by 30th November 2025 via this [submission form](#).

Selected References

- Chowkhani, K., & Wynne, C. (2023). *Singular selves: An Introduction to Singles Studies*. Routledge.
- Christiane, B., de Kloet, J., Abu-Er-Rub, L., & Butcher, M. (2024). *Being Single in the City: Cultural Geographies of Gendered Urban Space in Asia*. Heidelberg University Publishing.
- DePaulo, B. "Changing thinking, changing language, changing lives: The power and promise of singles studies." *Singular Selves*. Routledge India, 2023. 11-20.
- DePaulo, B. "The urgent need for a singles studies discipline." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42.4 (2017): 1015-1019.
- Greitemeyer, T. "Stereotypes of singles: Are singles what we think?." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 39.3 (2009): 368-383.
- Pauli, J., Solway, J., Lamb, S., Nelson, L. C., Walters, K., Medeiros, M. A., & Jones, C. (2022). *Opting out: Women Messing with Marriage around the World*. Rutgers University Press.
- Reiter, B, (ed.) (2018). *Constructing the pluriverse: The geopolitics of knowledge*. Duke University Press.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., (2020). "Global economy of knowledge in transformative global studies: decoloniality, ecologies of knowledges, and pluriversity." In *The Routledge handbook of transformative global studies* (pp. 69-83). Routledge.