Speaking of Research

South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership Podcast

Series 1 – Episode 4 – Kezia Pugh

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SPEAKERS
Kezia Pugh, Catherine McDonald

Catherine McDonald 00:03
Hello and Welcome to Speaking of Research, a podcast from the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership. I'm Catherine McDonald, and in this first series of our podcast, we're talking about impact and how researchers can achieve it. We're recording at the amazing Cumberland Lodge, and we're speaking to doctoral researchers about their research, who might benefit from it, and how they hope it will make a difference. In this episode, I'm joined by Kezia Pugh from the University of Brighton. Can you tell us a bit about your research Kezia?

Kezia Pugh 00:36
I can indeed. Thank you for having me. My research focuses on the intersection between care labour, so social care, domestic work, any sort of form of informal care that's like paid care, that labour that's done. The intersection between that care, labour and migration. So, there's, yeah, a lot of migrant care workers. They make up a large demographic of the social care sector. So, I'm looking intothose workers experiences of labour exploitation. And by labour exploitation, I sort of mean various dimensions of practices that could be considered exploitative or abusive. And those aren't always necessarily illegal practices. Like a lot of the time, I'd sort of consider it as a continuum of interrelated practices so that can start with things like low pay, insecure work, zero hours contracts, those sorts of practices that are quite common in social care, all the way towards more severely exploitative practices like forced labour, debt bondage, other things like that. And so, I'm looking into those, the dimensions of those exploitative practices, alongside the various responses and resistance to those practices that are kind of led by community organisations, community groups, campaign groups, both sort of formal and informal campaigns, as well as trade unions. And so, kind of looking into the role of that, like third community sector, and, yeah, I guess, like the implications for policy, practice and society, the role that they play have.

Catherine McDonald 02:12
And how far into your PhD Are you?

Kezia Pugh 02:14
I am in my second year,

Catherine McDonald 02:16
Okay.

Kezia Pugh 02:16
So about a year and a half in.

Catherine McDonald 02:18
Okay, so what's that, about halfway?

Kezia Pugh 02:21
I'm slightly under halfway, because I've got an extra three months of funding at the end. So yeah, just approaching halfway.

Catherine McDonald 02:28
And tell us a bit about the methodology you're using.

Kezia Pugh 02:32
So this actually changed relatively recently. I initially went into my research thinking that I was going to do a participatory action research methodology, which essentially, kind of includes the participants of your research from the very start of the research process. And that's initially what I thought I was going to be doing. But in my first year, as I kind of read a lot more about different methodologies and the best ways to sort of engage different perspectives and testimonies in your research, I decided that, well, there was one, there was a particular research institute, I think at the University of Oxford, that talks about engaging survivors of modern slavery and research practice, and making sure that you kind of make the best use of evidence that already exists. So not kind of going out to seek, seeking those stories to be retold to you as a researcher, but actually finding where those stories have already been told and how you can use that as evidence. And so that's sort of what my pivot was, and I now I'm kind of doing a triangulation of a few different evidence bases, so one being, kind of existing evidence in the third sector, so collected by charities or campaign organisations, various forms of like evidence and testimonies of workers who have experienced labour exploitation. Alongside qualitative interviews that I'm conducting with kind of practitioners and community organisers within that campaign space. And then I'm also doing a more sort of review of the literature that those organisations produce. And I'm kind of triangulating all of those things together and trying to analyse those findings thematically and see if there are any basically emerging themes, but also kind of recommendations or findings that can feed into kind of more collaboration between those sorts of groups.

Catherine McDonald 04:21
So quite a mixed methods approach.

Kezia Pugh 04:22
Yeah mixed methods, but more qualitative focus than quantitative. I'm more of a qualitative researcher, yeah.

Catherine McDonald 04:29
So looking ahead then, what new insights do you hope your PhD will provide? And then how do you hope that those insights, and the new findings, will benefit people?

Kezia Pugh 04:42
So this one I find slightly more difficult to answer at this stage, just because I don't yet have my findings. So I have sort of an initial idea of what I think might come out of my research, but I don't know exactly what that will be. Was it about impact that you mentioned?

Catherine McDonald 04:58
Yeah how do you hope that those insights that you discover will go on to benefit people?

Kezia Pugh 05:04
Yeah, so I think, I guess there's a few ways, like, firstly, I mean, my background before starting my PhD was in the charity sector and working in campaigns. So I'm really interested in, sort of finding ways to support those organisations in collaborating on an issue, and so I'm hoping that that's one area of like benefiting those organisations is after conducting these interviews and doing this sort of triangulation of from different data sets, is to be able to put together some more accessible, condensed like resources and guidance for those organisations about the areas that make most sense to collaborate on, because I think so often, you know, academic and research can be very specific and very jargon orientated. And I'm trying to kind of counter that by making it a bit more like accessible to the audience I'm talking about. And in the third sector, they love a kind of very easily digestible toolkit or guidance like that, that's kind of, yeah, used more frequently. So, I'm hoping to do that, I guess, other areas that I I'm not entirely sure yet, I would love to develop a more kind of comprehensive impact plan for reaching workers who have experienced labour exploitation themselves. And I yeah, I've kind of just not got that far in in my research yet, and I think a lot of that depends on the interviews that I'm conducting at the moment, sort of what different strategies that the community organisers or practitioners are bringing up, and ways that I can sort of get involved in their activities, essentially.

Catherine McDonald 06:39
yeah. So, I mean, you know the type of impact that you're talking about, it's really clear to me. How do you envisage making that impact happen? What do you think you're going to need to do to try and ensure that impact happens?

Kezia Pugh 06:54
I think firstly, in terms of what I need to do, I think maintaining a really good relationship and communication with the people that I've been speaking to will be key. So, to kind of not just appear in their lives as a academic and then disappear for two years and then say, here's my final product. So, I'm hoping to kind of like build those relationships. I did have quite a few of those relationships before,

just because of what my job was previously, but yeah, sort of keep that line of communication open. I've been speaking to a lot of, I think it's about network building as well. I've been speaking to a lot, spoken to a documentary filmmaker who's working on a documentary about migrant care work, which I found really interesting. So, wondering if there's ways to sort of connect her with other interviewees that I've spoken to. Yeah, I guess other ways, I mean, there is also the more traditional route of trying to get published in academic journals and things like that, which I'm definitely keen on doing. And I've already started, I presented a conference last week, some sort of initial thoughts from my research, and I'm doing that a few more different conferences this year, so kind of hoping to build those academic networks as well. I'm really keen, the SCDTP offers like overseas institutional visit. So, I'm keen to kind of see if I can take advantage of that and visit like an academic institution abroad, and build networks there as well, and see if there's any sort of like areas of community organising that are quite comparable to the UK and what we can learn from, and how we can sort of exchange that knowledge and understanding.

Catherine McDonald 08:30
Sure, there's so many ideas there. I wish you all the best. Kezia, thank you so much for speaking to us today, and thanks to you for listening to this episode of Speaking of Research from the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership. To find out more, please visit southcoastdtp.ac.uk. Don't forget to subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to access earlier and forthcoming episodes. This was a Research Podcast production.