**PhD Position in Sociology:**

***‘Working Class Encounters With Elite Education: The Case of Ireland’***

**Post specification**

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| Post Title: | PhD Researcher in Sociology |
| Post Status: | **48 months**, Full-time |
| Starting Date: | September 2021 (ideal start, but with degree of flexibility) |
| Department/Faculty: | Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy |
| Reports to: | **Dr. David Ralph; Prof. Richard Layte** |
| Location: | Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland) |
| Salary: | PhD Researcher. Full fees (EU/non-EU); stipend of Euro 20,000 per annum; research allowance of Euro 2,500 per annum |
| Closing Date: | **Friday 30th April 2021** |

**Post Summary**

*Doctoral Researcher in Sociology*

The **Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin** is seeking to appoint a highly motivated and outstanding doctoral researcher for a period of 4 full years (48 months). The doctoral candidate will conduct an innovative PhD project that will investigate the **working class encounter with elite education**. A remarkable and unprecedented expansion of the higher education sector occurred in the Republic of Ireland in the latter decades of the 20th century, with participation rates now among the highest in Europe (OECD 2013). However, despite this undeniable *quantitative* increase in student intake figures, equally an undeniable *qualitative* difference continues to exist regarding the *type* of educational institution attended by those from different social class backgrounds. In broad outline, those from less affluent social-economic groups are less likely to attend third level education and where they do, they are less likely to attend the elite universities, despite attempts by government and the university sector to improve equity of access and promote diversity.

This project, titled **Working Class Encounters With Elite Education: The Case of Ireland**, examines how social class origins impact on the educational experiences of students inside Ireland’s elite higher educational settings. As arguably the most elite of Ireland’s elite educational landscape, the project focuses specifically on Trinity College Dublin. In doing so this projectwill explore the working class encounter with elite education by comparing the lived experiences of students from different backgrounds over time as they move through their undergraduate degree. To this end, the project will use a longitudinal design employing ethnographic methods.

The project provides an outstanding opportunity to the PhD student to carry out cutting-edge theoretical and empirical sociological work. ***Empirically***, it aims to provide a comprehensive ethnographic account of the working class encounter with the elite higher education university sector previously unstudied in the Irish context. ***Theoretically*** it aims to take seriously the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in its conceptualisation of ‘the working class’. Much previous literature on social mobility implicitly assumes that the upwardly mobile figure is a white male, perhaps captured, as Friedman (2016) suggests, in the heroic narrative of the ‘working-class boy made good’. No such heroic equivalent exists for working class women nor for working class men or women from minority ethnic backgrounds. This project addresses these empirical and theoretical deficits.

The Department of Sociology of Trinity College Dublin will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support by integrating the PhD candidate into the community of social science doctoral students at TCD.

**Major research activities** **conducted by the PhD candidate** will involve: (1) conduct literature review on working class encounters with elite education; (2) become proficient in in-depth interviewing techniques, focus groups, and longitudinal diary studies; (3) develop expertise in qualitative data analysis; (4) writing-up of findings into professional reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and full-length narrative dissertation; (5) presenting work for different audiences nationally and internationally at conferences and workshops.

Informal enquiries are welcome and can be made directly to Dr David Ralph (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin; ralphda@tcd.ie). General enquires are also welcome and can be directed to Prof. Richard Layte (Professor, Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin; layter@tcd.ie).

*Standard duties of the post*

* Systematic and analytical review of relevant literature for the project.
* Conducting empirical research using varied qualitative data collection methods.
* Writing academic pieces (articles/dissertation chapters) in English.
* Writing and submitting research papers for publication and contributing to joint projects or related submissions with the PhD supervisor.
* Organising and attending meetings, workshops and conferences.
* Disseminating academic work to specialised and general audiences.
* 4 hours of teaching a week during the statutory term (facilitating undergraduate tutorials).

**Person Specification**

*Qualifications*

* Completed or will have completed by September 2021 an MA, MSc or MPhil in Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Human Geography, Political Science, Psychology, or any cognate discipline (thesis should be defended or submitted).

*Essential research skills*

* Excellent analytical skills.
* Advanced knowledge of ethnographic approaches in the social sciences, in particular in carrying out and analysing semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups, or willingness and competence to develop such skills in a short amount of time.
* Solid knowledge of quantitative methods in the social sciences.
* Basic (preferably solid) knowledge of the literatures on social mobility, sociology of class, sociology of education.

*Other essential skills*

* Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.
* Willingness to contribute proactively to the development of the project.
* Strong motivation to publish in academic journals.
* Good organisational skills.
* Ability to work effectively in a team.
* Excellent interpersonal and relational skills.

**The Department of Sociology**

Sociology is a member of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, one of 24 Schools within Trinity College. The Department’s principal research clusters are: Migration, Identities and Diversity; Comparative Inequalities, Education and Families; Power, Conflict and Resistance; Digitalisation and Social Networks. The Department shows a great variety of international sociologists with a high profile, becoming increasingly international, and combining the use of advanced quantitative methods applied to real-world data with the use of sophisticated and diverse qualitative methodologies. Our research links to several College priority research themes: 'International Integration' centred within Trinity Research in Social Science (TRISS), 'Identities in Transformation' within the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH), and 'Inclusive Society'. The Department has a long-standing collaboration with one of Ireland’s premier research institutes, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). Members of the Department have successfully obtained NORFACE or H2020 funding.

The Department has an active postgraduate programme. It is home to an MSc Comparative Social Change, delivered jointly with University College Dublin, as well as an MPhil Race, Ethnicity, Conflict. It has a structured PhD programme combining advanced methodological training with transferable skills workshops. There are around 15 PhD students and our doctoral graduates have positions in academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Further information on the Department of Sociology is available at: [www.tcd.ie/sociology](http://www.tcd.ie/sociology)

**School of Social Sciences and Philosophy**

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy was formed in 2005 and comprises the Departments of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology, together with the Policy Institute. With over 45 full-time academic staff, the School has an international reputation in research and is committed to the dissemination of its knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the wider community, with the Policy Institute providing an important channel for policy analysis and evaluation. The School is home to the unique undergraduate degree in PPES (Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology). It also contributes to undergraduate degrees in Business, Economic and Social Studies (this includes Political Science and Sociology), Philosophy, History and Political Science, Philosophy and Political Science, Law and Political Science, Geography and Political Science, Sociology and Social Policy, European Studies and to the TSM programmes in Economics, Philosophy and Sociology. Over 100 graduate students are conducting research across the four disciplines.

Further information on the School is available at: [www.tcd.ie/ssp](http://www.tcd.ie/ssp)

**Trinity College Dublin**

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin’s city centre, Trinity’s 17,000-strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity’s campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.

As Ireland’s leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize-winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university’s connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

**Equal Opportunities Policy**

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.

**Application Procedure**

Candidates should submit:

* a motivation letter clearly indicating how the applicant’s profile and skills fit the requirements of the job position. In the letter please also indicate your interest in the topic of working class encounters with elite education and where this comes from (max. 2 pages);
* a full curriculum vitae;
* the names and contact details of 2 or 3 referees (with email addresses included);
* at least one example of a written piece (in English) that shows the analytical and writing skills of the candidate in a social science discipline (this can be an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation, or a piece of published writing);
* via email to **Dr David Ralph** (ralphda@tcd.ie) and cc. **Prof. Richard Layte** ([layter@tcd.ie](mailto:layter@tcd.ie)) by Friday the **30th April 2021** (23:00 GMT) indicating “**PhD Application – Working Class Elite Education**” in the subject line.