



British Sociological Association

BSA EARLY CAREER FORUM NEWSLETTER

Nov 2009

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the quarterly BSA ECF newsletter. In this edition you will find feedback from the October BSA Council meeting, details of upcoming early career events, the progress of the ECF Facebook group and the regular features: "In the News; On the Move" and "Papers/Resources of Interest".

Don't forget to check out:

- The **ECF webpage** for updates on EC events and resources: www.britsoc.co.uk/ECForum/
- The **ECF Facebook** group (search for 'BSA Early Career Forum') to network with fellow ECF members, find details of upcoming EC events, discuss current issues/concerns and contact your ECF convenors
- **BSA Jobs in Sociology – Vacancies Board** on www.britsoc.co.uk/about/Jobs
- Have your CV posted on the **BSA CV Noticeboard** by sending an email to donna.willis@britsoc.org.uk
- ECF member contributions to **Network** for a commentary on the latest issues facing EC Sociologists.

You can always **contact us** on ECForum@britsoc.org.uk with any ECF news/discussion pieces, comments, suggestions or updates!

Lara Killick & Ruth Lewis
ECF Convenors

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ECF on Facebook



Our ECF group on **Facebook** now has 63 members. To find us search for "BSA Early Career Forum" and click on the "join group" link. Use the group as a discussion forum, to make contact with other ECF members, to find out about upcoming events or to raise any issues/questions with the ECF convenors.

ECF in Network

Read anything inspiring recently? Or want a free copy of a recent book? *Network* are looking for book reviewers for the next issue. Please contact alison.danforth@britsoc.org.uk for more details.



"Avenues of Support: What is out there for EC sociologists?"

We were delighted to have 51 attendees at our inaugural event at the British Library on 28th July 2009. The evening consisted of four presentations covering various avenues of support for early career sociologists.

Jude England (Head of Social Science Collections and Research at the British Library) kicked off the proceedings with an overview of the unique and varied resources available at the British Library for EC sociologists. She drew particular attention to the vast array of data sources, including parliamentary papers, sound recordings and digitised newspapers. [View Jude's presentation here.](#)

Dr Ian Fairweather (C-SAP) followed with a detailed exploration of the resources and funding opportunities provided by C-SAP (The Subject Network for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics). These resources are designed specifically to support those seeking to develop their teaching skills and professional development within sociology. Full details of these resources can be found on the [C-SAP website](#), which Ian encouraged us to visit.

Shifting attention slightly, **Professor John Scott** (University of Plymouth) then offered his 'top tips' for approaching the postdoctoral application process. He discussed what makes for a good/poor postdoctoral grant application and outlined some common mistakes.

Dr Nicola Gale (University of Birmingham) concluded the event with a reflective talk about her experiences of being an EC sociologist and some of the pitfalls she has encountered in negotiating the post-PhD terrain. [View Nicola's presentation here.](#)

The Q&A session included fruitful discussion about some of the issues facing early career sociologists, and attendees shared their own experiences, queries, solutions and strategies with the group. The evening concluded with many of the attendees continuing their discussions over dinner in a local pub.

Evaluation Responses

The evaluation form completed by attendees has provided some really useful feedback for planning future events and taking the group forward. Via this feedback we have been able to identify the key strengths (variety of talks, informal atmosphere, Q/A session, networking opportunities) and weaknesses (quality of refreshments, pitching of the event) of the event and we will address these when organising and hosting future sessions. We have summarised the key issues arising from the feedback below and have attempted to 'answer' some of the questions posed by those who attended the event. We hope this is helpful!

Q. What do we mean by 'early career'?

We understand early career is a broad term which encompasses different stages and sectors of employment. While we hope to be inclusive in following a self-identification model, we appreciate that some events may be more usefully targeted at specific groups e.g. transitions from PhD to post-doctoral; lecturers within first few years of employment; contract researchers; researchers who do not have and are not studying for a PhD; early career sociologists working in non-academic settings, etc. While all ECF members are welcome to attend any of our events, we aim to be more explicit in 'pitching' future events at each of these sectors.

Q. How did you arrive at this event?

Since we started the group earlier this year, we have constantly asked for our members' ideas for events. Many of the suggestions we received related to a perceived lack of information about sources of support for early career sociologists. In response to these requests, we put this panel together to provide information on sources of support relating to teaching (C-SAP), research (British Library) and advice on applying for funding (John Scott and Nicola Gale). We are currently thinking about future events (including the BSA 2010 conference in Glasgow), and are keen to hear your suggestions so please get in touch, either [via email](#), or via our Facebook group (search for us under BSA Early Career Forum).



Q. Can we improve the refreshments offered at the events?

Given that this was our first event we hoped to keep costs down so that we would not have to charge a fee for attendance. In light of the feedback provided, we will consider introducing a nominal fee to cover the cost of providing more substantial refreshments. We will try to ensure that this fee will not be prohibitive and restrict your ability to attend the events.

Suggestions for Future Events

We received several suggestions for future events including: guidance on writing academic CVs, submitting job applications and a more detailed examination of funding bodies and the grant application process. We are working hard to organise events/workshops around these topics and will be in touch soon! Any further suggestions please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

We hope all those who attended found it useful and worthwhile and we look forward to seeing you at future events!



British Sociological Association

Feedback from October BSA Council Meeting

On 9th October, the BSA Council convened at the new BSA Meeting Room, Imperial Wharf, London. This was the second meeting at which the ECF was formally represented, and Ruth presented a report summarising our activity since the previous Council meeting, including:

- **Increased membership** (323 and rising!), with 63 members of our Facebook group
- An overview of the **British Library event** (see pg 2)
- Our proposal for a **Professional Development Award**, which would provide financial support for our members. This is currently being revised in conjunction with the Membership Directors, and will be re-presented to the Executive Management Team for ratification in November.
- **Reciprocal agreement with the Social Research Association:** We met with the SRA over the summer to discuss the potential for reciprocal benefits to BSA and SRA members at the early career level. This agreement is to be confirmed and the discount available to BSA members for SRA training events will be communicated ASAP.

There are plans for the full minutes of Council meetings to be available for all BSA members on the Webpage (www.britisoc.co.uk). We are waiting to hear when this feature will 'go live' and will let you know as soon as we do! However, two items on the agenda were of particular relevance to ECF members:

1. **REF consultation response:** Council discussed their response to the REF consultation, which will be drafted by the Executive Management Team. This will include arguments for a preferred panel configuration (a merger with social policy and social work is considered a better outcome than a merger with anthropology), the double-weighting of more substantive outputs, the reduction of the number of outputs submitted per person from four to three, and strongly recommending that the weighting allocated to 'impact' be reduced from 25% to 15%. The draft response has been circulated, with a summary of the key issues, to the full membership for comment, and a copy of the final response will be sent to the SPA, HAPS and the Academy. Add your comments here: http://www.britisoc.co.uk/about/membere-news#_ref



2. **Sociology International Benchmarking Panel feedback:** The ESRC's Ian Farnden reported to Council that the overall message from the Panel is that British Sociology is generally in good shape. However, the Panel was shocked by the conditions under which early career researchers labour in this county. A strong complaint that arose via the small sample of early careers researchers that were consulted by the Panel is the high cost of the BSA conference fees for early career researchers. Drawing on feedback from the EC membership, Ruth explained that this is a particular issue for early career researchers who are not financially supported by their institution/employer to attend conferences, and who may have to choose between either not attending or paying conference fees out of their own pockets. EMT is to review conference fees, to consider how early career researchers are supported, and to bring conference cost comparisons and recommendations to the next Council meeting.

In order to inform this process, Council requested feedback from EC sociologists on their employment situation in the recent e-newsletter. Please take the time to respond by following this link:

http://www.britsoc.co.uk/about/membere-news#_benchmark

If you have any issues you would like raised at the next Council meeting, which Ruth will attend in February, please do not hesitate to contact us on ECForum@britsoc.org.uk.

ECF members: 'In the news' & 'On the move'



Dr Nicola Gale has written an article based on her talk at our inaugural event, which will appear in the next edition of *Network*. Look for her piece entitled “**A slightly scenic route to an academic career**”.

If you are ‘in the news’ and would like to advertise your media exposure let us know: ECForum@britsoc.org.uk



Dr Tessa Sanderson started an MRC/ESRC interdisciplinary post-doc at the Rheumatology Department, University of West of England, Bristol, on 30th September. The research will focus on ethnic minority treatment priorities and scale development in rheumatoid arthritis. She can be contacted on

Tessa2.Sanderson@uwe.ac.uk.

We wish all the ECF members ‘on the move’ the best of luck with their new positions.

If you would like to advertise your change in employment details let us know: ECForum@britsoc.org.uk



Papers/resources of interest

Visit <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/ECForum/Resources.htm> to see the new page on our website for EC resources, which we hope will grow over time. If you come across any papers/resources that you think may be of interest to ECF members, please forward them on to us at: ECForum@britsoc.org.uk

We are currently working on compiling a database of funding bodies and resources connected to Teaching and Learning. We particularly welcome any contributions/suggestions you might have on these topics. Please forward all articles to: ECForum@britsoc.org.uk

Members may be interested in a new *Times Higher Education* blog, available in the 'online columnists' section:

"The Insecure Scholar: Our new weekly online blog on the daily struggles, petty indignities and insecurities of an academic life on casual contracts"

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk>

Call for contributions

Got an Early Career event you want to advertise?

Let us know about it! Email us at: ECForum@britsoc.org.uk and we will post it on the ECF webpage and Facebook page

Would you like to write a discussion piece for Network?

Contact us to find out how. We look forward to hearing from you at ECForum@britsoc.org.uk

Want to publicise your media exposure/new job details?

If you have any media exposure/new job details you would like to publicise in the next edition of the newsletter simply email us the details at ECForum@britsoc.org.uk

Have an idea to improve the ECF?

We are always looking to drive the ECF forward and meet the needs/demands of our members. Contact us at ECForum@britsoc.org.uk with your ideas.

Want to know the details of upcoming sociology conferences and events?

Check out the BSA events page on: www.britsoc.co.uk/events/