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START AUDIO

Eileen Green: Welcome to Manchester. I'm Eileen Green, I'm chair of the BSA and it's my great pleasure to welcome you to Manchester, to the BSA Annual Conference. The theme, as you'll see, is 'recovering the social, personal troubles and public issues' and I'm delighted to say that we have 850 participants here. It looks to me like most of you might be in the hall and that's the second biggest conference that we've had since the BSA's 60th anniversary conference at LSE in London. So we're absolutely delighted about that, that seems like a real achievement.

Now you'll already have dipped your toes into the paper sessions and meetings today, I'm sure, and you'll see that we've got an exciting line-up of plenary speakers, one of them on my right, paper sessions under the familiar themes that you come to know and expect, open streams, under frontiers, which offers a forum for new, innovative work. Then there are lots and lots of other conference events including the publishers' receptions and exhibitions, BSA journal sessions, poster presentations, you need to go and have a look at those, mentoring sessions, and then I just want to mention two key events today which we'd like you to join us at.

One is the 'remembering John Urry' panel which is this afternoon and the other one is the BSA annual members' meeting which is early evening. That's just outside in the foyer here, we're offering you a free glass of wine and we're doing it in our new innovative style so I hope you'll join us for that. I'm going to hand over to John Horne in a minute to introduce our first plenary but I wanted to remind you that after the lecture today, the president is going to present the BSA Distinguished Services to Sociology Award. So please don't rush off immediately, stay for that. Okay, and I'll hand over now to John Horne.

John Horne: Thank you Eileen. I'll second the welcome to everybody here, yes this is the second largest BSA conference ever after that one in London. I'm really pleased to be able to introduce Professor Ben Carrington, currently at the University of Texas in Austin. Ben has been working for several decades now on sociology of race and culture, especially in relation to popular culture and sport.

He's just in the last few hours arrived in Manchester and is going to give us a talk that focuses on rethinking the social through C. Wright Mills and Stuart Hall. I'm going to keep this introduction brief because we have a presentation, approximately 50 minutes long and then time for questions and comments and discussion and then as Eileen has just said, we'll have a presentation by president Lynn Jamieson. So I just want to welcome Ben and welcome you all again and look forward to the talk and the rest of the conference.

(Applause)

Ben Carrington: Good afternoon everyone, how are we doing? I'd like to thank the conference organisers for inviting me to speak this afternoon. The title of my talk is 'publicising the personal, privatising the public, rethinking the social through Mills and Hall'. I'd like to dedicate this talk to four public intellectuals who have passed away over the past year and who I think in their various ways embody the sociological imagination. That's John Urry, who I know will be talked about in the days to come, Zygmunt Bauman, Doreen Massey and also Cedric Robinson. Although only two of them were formal sociologists, I think all four of them are important to my intellectual formation and I know to many of you.

My first BSA was in 1996 in York, when Stuart Hall gave the keynote and I will speak a bit about that moment in a moment. One of the highlights for me as a young PhD student, actually, was listening to in 1997, when the BSA was in Reading, I think it was, two things stand out for me. One was sharing a taxi with Patricia Hill Collins on the way from the train station to the event just by chance and imagining all these taxi driver jokes, I've got Patricia Hill Collins in the back of the car, starstruck as a PhD student as I was, but also the brilliant keynote that Zygmunt Bauman gave that year. For those of you who were there you may remember this moment.

During the Q&A Zygmunt was asked a question about the relationship between money and debt and Zygmunt misheard the question and gave this 10 minute explanation about the relationship between money and death (Laughter) which was this fantastic Bauman-esque move through history and Renaissance literature and rethinking the nature of death in relation to money. To the credit of the questioner they did say, "Actually I was talking about money and debt, not death," at which point Bauman did another 10 minute explanation (Laughter) and I thought, "One day I want to be as good as that," and I won't ever be as good as Bauman but that kind of stuck with me, so it's a personal honour to be asked to give this keynote today.

I should also say that this plenary, this talk, is in conversation with the one that Anoop Nayak and Claire Alexander gave last year and if you weren't there for that talk, they talked about their sociological research on race but also the ways in which sociology as a discipline internalises and reproduces certain racist discourses. I'd urge you to go back to Anoop and Claire's talk from last year and in some ways I think this is an extension of some of the ideas and arguments that they were making.

One other thing to say; this talk is based on materials at the C. Wright Mills Archives at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin and also the Centre of Contemporary [Cultural Studies 0:07:36] Archives at the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham as well as I'm drawing upon some of the personal annotations of C. Wright Mills' books by Stuart Hall. Some of you may know last year Catherine Hall sold Stuart Hall's personal library of around 4000 books to Housmans bookstore and I purchased a number of copies of Hall's personal copies of C. Wright Mills' texts and so that kind of informs the talk today. And in addition I've been helped by Maggie Tate so I'd like to thank her.

The talk is divided into four parts. The first part is called 'the book', the second part is called 'Stuart comes to Reading', the third is called 'beware the professionalising sociologist' or 'the revenge of Parsons' and then I conclude with 'imaginative sociology'.

I'd like to start my talk in a slightly unusual way with a correspondence between a journal editor and an author. Although the academic review process should usually be kept confidential, that is to say private, it is appropriate to break those professional conventions for a moment, especially as we have been charged by the conference organisers this year to think more critically about the relationship between the personal and the public as a way to recover the social.

The letter is carefully written and friendly in tone but it is undeniably a 'revise and resubmit'. The editor of the journal writes that it is, "With great reluctance that the article is being returned but it is only fair that the author be allowed a chance to work on it further. The analysis," it is suggested, "Is somewhat American-centric in its understanding of working class politics and its focus on the Cold War and the Soviet Union. The author might think more carefully and consider the differences between class configurations in the UK versus the US. And perhaps," suggests the editor, "The author could further reflect on how the new times are changing the old class configurations. This does not mean abandoning a Marxist analysis of class but rather reformulating it to take into account emergent class differentiations between, and within, the traditional class blocks." The editor ends the letter by reiterating that, "The rest of the editorial board are delighted to have received the submission and I hope it can be revised in time for the publication in the next issue."

The typed letter is dated June 3rd 1960. It is addressed to a Wright Mills and signed by a Stuart Hall. This correspondence between Mills and Hall is one of the few times that the two scholars would directly engage each other. Indeed, with the exception of the sociologists Les Back and Maggie Tate, and historian Daniel Geary and the communications scholar Kim Sawchuk, it is rare to find accounts that place the work and ideas of C. Wright Mills and Stuart Hall directly in conversation with one another.

In some ways, of course, this is not that surprising as their intellectual lives and biographies are, at first glance, quite distinct. Mills was born in Waco, Texas in 1916 and studied sociology as an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin where I currently work. Mills would, of course, go on to have a storied academic career and by 1960 was arguably, with the possible exception of Talcott Parsons, the most famous American sociologist of the age.

Mills is sometimes described as the rebellious upstart from small-town Texas who ended up as the combative and maverick public intellectual teaching sociology at Columbia University until his tragically early death in 1962, aged just 45. Notes the writer John Summers, "In the aftermath of the global riot of 1968 the CIA identified Mills as one of the most influential New Left intellectuals in the world, even though he had been dead for six years." Mills' reputation was established in the 1950s as a result of a series of key texts such as 'White Collar: the American Middle Classes' published in 1951, 'The Power Elite' that came out in 1956 and 'The Sociological Imagination' that appeared in 1959.

We should remember, too, that Stuart Hall is the founding editor of the New Left Review and, who sent that R&R to Mills in 1960, was himself only 28 years old at the time. Hall was born in Jamaica in 1932. He left the Caribbean to study English literature at Merton College, Oxford University, and then rather to returning to Jamaica, he stayed on at Oxford where he started, but did not finish, his PhD on the writer Henry James. Hall immersed himself in the politics of the late 1950s, became a key intellectual in the British New Left and later a founding figure in the formation of culture studies as a distinct academic field. From 1979 until his retirement in 1997, Hall taught sociology at the Open University. By the time of his death in 2014, Hall was Britain's leading black public intellectual and one of the most cited cultural theorists in the world.

It is interesting to note, in the archives, Stuart Hall is often referred to as 'the brilliant young West Indian', this is how he was framed, I'm guessing in contrast to Richard Hoggart. Yet despite their obvious differences, both Mills and Hall shared a deep seated scepticism towards narrowly empiricist forms of social science research and both sought to challenge the [functionist 0:13:27] accounts of society that dominated mid-20th century American sociology. Mills and Hall were also deeply interested in exploring how intellectuals could inform wider publics beyond the academy of the hidden dynamics and dimensions of power within society. A reformulated sociology for both men could, and perhaps should, be a project that examines social inequalities with a view to changing those conditions for the common good.

I want to suggest, however, that despite the oft repeated invocation and recitation of 'The Sociological Imagination' as text, the type of sociology Mills practiced is increasingly under threat within mainstream US sociology and in some ways marginalised due to the dominance of neo-Parsonian theoretical frameworks within which sociology on the one hand and the growth of positive statistical methodologies on the other have become dominant. Likewise I want to argue for the necessity of a Hallian approach to sociology that we might best call a [conjunctial 0:14:30] sociology.

Now whilst some have recently claimed that Hall's ideas and theories are redundant, both sociologically and politically, I want instead to argue for the continuing relevancy in this moment of a highly racialised and increasingly nationalised neo-liberalism of Hall's sociological work. Put somewhat reductively, Mills' sociological imagination lives on most readily today not in mainstream sociological approaches despite their periodic claims to Mills, but in precisely those areas of critical sociological analysis that are indebted most to cultural studies. Hall, in other words, can be read as carrying forward the Millsian sociological project through the CCCS and deepening it in the years after when he moved to the OU and even into his later retirement through his engagement with black visual culture among many others domains.

Recent calls for a new or revised sociological imagination, however, must also reckon with the silences and omissions of Mills' earlier work, especially around questions of race. Finally I will suggest that any truly reflexive sociological project must interrogate sociology's own complicities with some of the very same structures of power and ideologies of domination it so often claims to speak against.

'The book'. In 'The Sociological Imagination', Mills makes an argument for what he calls 'the promise' of sociology that is premised on the understanding that, "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both." One of his most famous lines, which has become almost a defining aphorism for sociology as a field, is when he notes, "Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between the personal troubles of milieu and the public issues of a social structure." Crucially the sociological imagination is not reserved for academics or even sociologists but it is, rather, as he nicely phrases it, "A quality of mind that can and should be developed by the wider public in order to make sense of the uneasy and indifferent times in which we live."

The sociological imagination, in a final analysis, is as much an argument within sociology as it is for sociology. Mills, quite brilliantly and provocatively, rails against the spread of the physical and biological sciences and what he calls 'the technique of the laboratory' as a primary basis and approach for understanding social relations. As the older common denominator of the physical sciences shorn of any ethical reflexivity regarding its technological advances, such as the H-bomb, produces new problems and is questioned by a sceptical public, the need for a sociological imagination becomes more apparent to help us understand and potentially address the social ills of the day.

Interestingly, as an aside, Mills believed that the sociological imagination was more alive within English journalism, fiction writing than history than it was within the discipline of sociology in England. We can maybe talk about that in the Q&A.

Mills famously takes on the Methodologists including some of his own Columbia University colleagues for what he labels their abstracted empiricism and the atheoretical approach to social problems. Mills charges that the abstracted empiricists reduce the complex intimacy of social life to measurable and quantifiable units of analysis in order to relate them to other artificially constructed types. Further, due to the high costs involved in conducting large scale survey research, the commercial state bureaucracy agencies have come to dictate research problems and goals, further distancing such work from Mills' scholarship which has the effect of turning sociology away from the great social problems and human issues of the day.

Mills dismisses what he calls, "The emptiness of these fact-cluttered studies." Perhaps, however, the most memorable and, for some, infamous, sections of 'The Sociological Imagination' are reserved for Mills' attack on grand theory and especially the work of Talcott Parsons. Mills does so because he wants to, "Help grand theorists get down from their useless heights." Mills' key charge, among many points, is that much of the discourse of grand theory and especially as it had come to be practised by Parsons is convoluted, dressing up ideas in unnecessary arcane language, ideas that are either already well known or, if new, not that sociologically significant anyway.

Part of the problem of the high level of abstraction is that the observation of any type of meaningful engagement with how people actually live and behave is largely lost in the rush to theory. To illustrate this point, Mills translates passage after passage of Parsons' most tortured sentences and overly long paragraphs into short and readily understandable sociological prose. More substantively than the language is Parsons' failure to deal sufficiently with questions of power and social change through time. Grand theory of the Parsonian kind dissolves into a self-referential semantic exercise. There is almost a [fetishised 0:20:10] embrace of the concept and the model of society that eliminates conflict and privileges integration and valued consensus.

"Thus," charges Mills, "The problem is not only grand theory's obscurantism but it is perhaps its unintended conservative politics and status quo ideologies that serve to legitimate stable forms of domination". Mills ends the section by answering his open end question as to whether or not Parsons' key text, 'The Social System', is actually saying anything sociologically meaningful. Mills concludes, "My answer to this question, it is about 50% verbiage, 40% is well known textbook sociology, the other 10%, as Parsons might say, I'm willing to leave open for your own empirical investigations."

'Stuart comes to Reading'. In 1996, Stuart Hall delivered the presidential address at the BSA Annual Conference in Reading. Remarkably, and somewhat sadly, there is no official account of what Hall said that day. His keynote was never published and the BSA at the time did not record plenary talks. Thus the brief remarks below are based on my notes taken on that day.

Hall admitted that he was honoured, if a little surprised, that he'd been given the honour of being BSA president as he had never formally studied sociology at all. Hall then outlined the starting point for work done at the CCCS during his time at the centre. "We went to Parsons and whatever he had rejected, we read." As I have noted previously, though used as an amusing anecdote to situate the type of engaged, reflexive and critical intellectual work done by the centre, at least as Hall recounts the story, the work of culture studies was not concerned so much as directly engaging with Parsons and functionist theory, but decidedly to raise other, more urgent political questions around power, ideology, representation and cultural resistance that could not easily be framed within the conventional sociological practices of measuring socialisation, identifying patterned behaviours and conceptualising norms and the maintenance of value consensus.

Thus, whilst Alvin Gouldner famously signalled the coming crisis of western sociology of the styles of the 1970s and tried to answer that call via a critical engagement with Parsonian sociology, culture studies instead produced a sociological project around those very aspects of everyday life, popular pursuits and [latterly 0:22:48] language and meaning that sociology had failed to adequately analyse.

More precisely, as Hall notes in the recently published book 'Culture Studies 1983: A Theoretical History', what Hall and others sought to retrieve from a Parsonian theoretical dustbin were those parts of Durkheim's analysis found in texts such as 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' and 'Primitive Classification' that would later prove useful for French structuralism, but that Parsons and his followers dismissed as Dirkheim's 'idealist' texts. As Hall puts it, Parsons read selectively from Dirkheim in order to establish a statistically base form of quantitative sociology as science. Hall, and by extension culture studies, took a broader view that developed the sociological notion of norms and extended these concerns a la Mills in order to think about those who did not keep to such norms. How to trace all governed behaviour is therefore maintained and by whom and the underlying issue of social order itself.

We can readily see here how Dirkheim's interest in crime, the symbolic order and the ritual acts of punishment provided part of the theoretical apparatus for later texts such as 'Policing the Crisis', arguably the most important sociological text produced by the CCCS.

Of course the interventions of culture studies were met at the time with hostility from social scientists. Hall recounts the blistering attack, especially from sociology, which was directed at the centre when it was first opened in 1964. This was an attempt, Hall suggested, to put culture studies back in its place. Notes Hall, "The opening of the centre was greeted by a letter from two," it was actually three, I think Hall forgot how many sociologists issued this blistering attack, "Social scientists who issued a sort of warning. If culture studies overstepped its proper limits and took on the study of contemporary society and not just its texts, without proper scientific, that is quasi-scientific, controls, it would provoke reprisals for illegitimately crossing the territorial boundary."

We might suggest, then, that attacks on culture studies from sociology were almost a tradition in and of themselves. More recently, for example, Bryan Turner has criticised contemporary culture studies as being little more than what he calls 'decorative theory' as opposed, presumably, to the more substantive and meaty offerings grounded in social reality found within sociology and social, as opposed to cultural, theory. Turner rails against those who [will privilege 0:25:36] certain forms of cultural analysis that are not first and foremost situated within what he calls 'the social'. For Turner, and I cite him here merely as an example, not to pick on Bryan Turner who I'm sure can look after himself, culture studies, due to its eclectic and multidisciplinary approach, lacks the intellectual depth and sophistication to, "Develop a range of concepts with the breadth, scope and more seriousness of Weber's notion of rationalisation, Marx's concept of alienation, Dirkheim's analysis of the sacred, Simmel's understanding of mental life in the city or Parsons' analysis of the democratic revolution in the education of the system".

Now leaving aside for the moment how we would come to an agreement over what constitutes the 'more seriousness' of a concept and even if that should be a criteria at all, I want to suggest that this alleged division between sociology and culture studies overstates the extent of divergence and overlooks the fact that many of the founding classical theories of sociology were concerned with aspects of culture and meaning which, to a degree, was neglected in the more structural functionist approaches of modern sociology. The sociological imagination is diminished when sociologists attempt to exclude culture studies from its concerns.

As I have argued previously, this culture studies versus sociology framing denies the inherently symbiotic relationship between the two and crucially fails to acknowledge the pivotal ways in which culture studies has decisively reshaped the theoretical, methodological and conceptual concerns of sociology since the 1970s in ways which have given sociology new impetus, energy and relevance to the public issues of the day, even as it is denied by some, perhaps by a few in this room today, no doubt.

As Paul Gilroy [forcefully 0:27:46] put it many years ago, "In the field of sociology, as in many other places, there is a strong current of resentment which suggests that all of these arguments around culture and its complexities were things that were already known and already practiced by sociologists. I think that's bullshit but it's very interesting that this position represents itself as common sense. What is more of an immediate issue for me," Gilroy goes on to say, "Is the kind of culturalisation and [inaugural 0:28:14] sensitivity to the workings of culture that has been evident in the implosion and collapse of sociology as a discipline. This disciplinary predicament has produced a political battle around culture and its workings." Paul of course is now in \_\_\_ of literature at King's as opposed to holding the Anthony Giddens chair at the LSE.

The influence of culture studies upon sociology can be seen in other ways too. The leisure studies theorist and culture historian \_\_\_[0:28:39] notes that a survey of British sociologists in the early 1970s asking them to name the key sociological texts of the age shows Dirkheim's 'Suicide' closely followed by Weber's 'Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'. Just a decade later, whilst Dirkheim had slipped to second, it was Paul Wallace's study of how working class males were schooled into working class jobs which was seen to be one of the key [explanatory] texts. Thomson further points out that Anthony Giddens himself, when asked to specify an empirical study that best exemplified his notion of the theory of [structuration] also pointed to Wallace's landmark culture studies text. Indeed Giddens' 'In Defence of Sociology' that came out in 1996, the same year as Hall's BSA keynote, has a chapter dedicated to Raymond Williams. Alvin Gouldner's 'The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology' too opens with an account of popular culture and uses The Doors' 'Come On Baby Light My Fire' to illustrate the central thesis of his book. Whilst the city of Detroit was being burned and looted, the song was apparently being used by a car manufacturer to advertise their product. It was this, "Context of contradictions and conflicts that is the historical matrix that is what I have called the coming crisis of western sociology," noted Gouldner. The first section of Gouldner's opening chapter, we might remember, is called 'sociology as popular culture'.

Even a conventional sociological critic like Bryan Turner concedes that, in the end, all that may be needed is a reconciliation rather than a divorce when he notes that the solution to the alleged division is, "To make sociology more cultural and culture studies more sociological." Who in good faith could argue with that?

'Beware the professional sociologist' or 'the revenge of Parsons'. At the start of his presidential address to the American Sociological Association conference in Los Angeles on August 28th 1963, Everett C. Hughes asked the assembled delegates the following rhetorical question; "What is there new to say about racial relations?" Hughes' address that year was entitled 'racial relations and the sociological imagination', a clear acknowledgement of Mills' legacy, who had died only the year before. Hughes' paper that day was a painful acknowledgement of the failure of mainstream sociology, despite its newly developed scientific skills, experimental methods and predictive theories, to foresee, let alone make sense of, the tumultuous social changes that were taking place not just within US society but globally during the period of the early 1960s; change that ranged from the civil rights marches and protests to the collapse of the European empires in the face of anti-colonial movements, to the emergence of new nation states and the breakup of others.

As Hughes himself put it, "Why did social scientists and sociologists in particular not foresee the explosion of action of Negro Americans toward immediate full integration into American society?" Hughes delved into the work of Robert E. Park in order to make sense of the nature of racial relations but without the theory of racism and understanding of white power and privilege and historicised account of the continuance of colonial modes of governance and the reproduction of slave relations post-emancipation, all themes, of course, that would later be addressed by the late Cedric Robinson in 'Black Marxism', Hughes struggled to make sense of the historical moment except to realise that whatever was going on, sociology was ill-prepared for the task. The notion that the very model of racial relations was itself part of the problem did not figure in Hughes' otherwise reflexive account.

The irony of history, of course, was that sociology's marginality was geographically inscribed on that very day being in the wrong place at the wrong time looking for answers using the wrong tools when the action, so to speak, was taking place elsewhere. At the exact moment as the finest minds of US sociology gathered in LA to listen to Hughes lament sociology's failure to spot the changes taking place within US society, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was delivering one of the greatest speeches in US history on the steps of the Lincoln memorial to hundreds of thousands in Washington, DC.

No doubt with Mills in mind, the question of method and its effect on developing the sociological imagination lay at the heart of Hughes' critique of where sociology was going wrong when he noted, "Some have asked why we did not foresee the great mass movement of Negroes. It may be that our conception of social science is so empirical, so limited to little bundle of facts applied to little hypotheses that we are incapable of entertaining a broad range of possibilities, of following out the madly unlikely combinations of social circumstances." Hughes concluded his talk with the following: "Our problem is not that we are too deeply involved in human goings on, but that our involvement is so episodic and so bound to the will of particular projects with limited goals. In short, that we are too professional." This is him saying this in '63. "While professionalising activity may raise the competence of some who pursue it by standardising methods and giving licence only to those who meet the standard, it may also limit creative activity by denying licence to some who let their imagination and their observations run far afield and by putting candidates for the licence, the PhD, so long in a straitjacket that they never move freely again. Our problem as sociologists in the par in the next few years will be to resist the drive for professionalising and to maintain broad tolerance for all who would study societies, no matter what their method."

More than half a century after Hughes' warning about the narrow professionalising tendencies of American sociology, the extent to which that broad tolerance exists today is a matter of some dispute but certainly the rush to professionalise US sociology, as Michael Burawoy and others have noted, is surely not. For some, like Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and directly echoing C. Wright Mills, sociology in the US has sacrificed its sociological imagination at the altar of methodological correctness with the result that, "American-made sociology tends to be boring, uninspiring, apolitical, badly written and hardly relevant."

Similarly, in prose that may have made even Mills wince a little, Richard Sennett has argued that, "American sociology has become a refuge for the academically challenged. The British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously declared a generation ago, "There is no society, only individuals and their families." In an eerie way, much positivistic sociological research subscribes to this antisocial nostrum. The '[goal 0:35:54] science' as Michel Foucault called American sociology legitimates dissociation from the entanglements, contradictions and difficulties of actual social experience. In the last 20 years more interesting, hard sociological research has been done in medical, planning and law schools and better research on culture and society in the humanities departments than in sociology departments. Sociology, in its dumbed down condition, is emblematic of a society that doesn't want to know too much about itself." Ouch. I should add that Richard Sennett wrote those words in the New York Review of Books when he was actually in the Department of Sociology at NYU. You can imagine that next Friday afternoon's faculty meeting.

Now while there is little doubt that Bonilla-Silva and Sennett overstate their arguments, it remains the case that what passes for sociology in the US looks very different to how the discipline is practised elsewhere. Even a cursory glance through a page of, say, the American Journal of Sociology, the American Sociological Review and Social Forces compared to, say, the British Journal Sociology, Sociological Review and Sociology reveals a gulf in methodological and theoretical approach as well as writing styles that underlies the huge divergence of US sociology from its British counterpart, I would argue, since the 1960s.

One dramatic example of this is the fact that mainstream American sociology long ago, and with only a few notable exceptions, effectively stopped using the concept 'class'. I've been at the UT Austin now for 13, 14 years and I remember some of the earliest conversations I had with some of my colleagues and grad students when everyone kept referring to SES. I'm doing SES research, SES regression [analyses 0:37:40] and I was like, "What is SES?" and he said, "Well, socioeconomic status," and I said, "Oh you mean class?" and he said, "Well no, it's SES." So this language of class is largely being displaced by the notion of socioeconomic status or SES. As the phrasing implies, this is, to all intents and purposes, a proxy for class and signals the attempt to map the complex relations between economic forms of stratification linked to income and occupational status with the various sociological dimensions of class related to education, lifestyle and so on. The benefit of producing SES indices is the ability to measure how the different variables included impact upon each other and the life chances of those studied. In short, class can be precisely quantified, allowing for important statistical forms of analysis, prediction and causal relationships to be shown.

A problem occurs, however, when SES status is seen purely as a continuum. The point at which lines are drawn to differentiate groups becomes arbitrary, especially so with interval variables. What gets included and excluded from the index itself is often a subjective judgement and the relative power of difference often \_\_\_[0:38:55] groups, vis-à-vis each other, is [allided]. The underlying conditions of capitalism, the political struggles that result and that in a sense produce class and questions of a class consciousness tend to get written out of the conceptual schema of analyses reliant upon SES frameworks. In other words, capitalism as a system and power, both as institutional and relational and political struggle and its effects, are difficult to measure in this way and so often disappear from the analysis and with it the concept of class and class consciousness.

These issues, of course, were around in the time of Mills. Indeed he specifically addresses this issue in 'The Sociological Imagination' when he complains of the 'spongy indices' of the term socioeconomic status. If things were bad in 1959, the situation is much worse today. As Reeve Vanneman has recently noted, an account of the frequencies of working class in the titles and abstracts of articles in the two most cited US sociology journals shows a dramatic decline in recent years. From the rapid growth during the 1960s to a steady interest for the next two decades and then an abrupt decline starting in the 1990s. What could be more devastating for a discipline's contemporary relevance in this particular historical conjuncture to have largely ignored any meaningful class analysis?

I want to suggest that part of the reason for the abandonment of any serious class analysis, at least as found in the pages of the major US journals, can be linked to a flight from the types of sociological analysis associated with culture studies and the kinds of work produced by Mills and a related retreat into the comfort of neo-Parsonian theoretical frameworks. In the same year, 2014, that Stuart Hall passed away, the renowned historical comparative sociologist Orlando Patterson published a key review article entitled 'Making Sense of Culture' in the Annual Review of Sociology. Remarkably this state of the art overview failed to cite a single contribution from Hall's extensive writings and instead fastly refused to even acknowledge the contribution of culture studies scholars to the study of culture. In other words, in the same that eulogies to Hall's singular contribution to the critical sociological study of culture were widespread, both within academia and further afield, the once a decade summation of the key sociological works and ideas on culture written by one of Harvard's sociology department's most renowned thinkers simply refused to acknowledge even the existence of Hall and culture studies as a field relevant to the study of culture and instead posited a neo-Parsonian framework consisting of values, norms and behavioural psychology of the future of cultural analysis.

As a further aside, two years ago I submitted a panel idea together with three other leading US based sociologists of culture whose work is indebted to Hall to what would have been this year's American Sociological Association's annual conference. The panel was entitled 'Honouring Stuart Hall: Sociologists Engage Hall's Legacy'. Hall had just passed away and it seemed fitting to acknowledge his legacy and his contribution. What was more, the theme for the conference was 'Culture, Inequalities and Social Inclusion across the Globe', a perfect fit for a panel on Hall, or at least one would have imagined. The panel was, to our surprise, rejected. When we inquired as to why, we were told that due to a large number of submissions ours had not made the cut. We asked if there had been other panels on Hall that had been selected instead; we wanted ours, of course, but if another Hall panel was deemed to have been better than ours then that would have been fine. But there wasn't.

When we contacted Michèle Lamont, the then ASA president-elect and chair of the programme committee, for a full explanation, we were told, "Try to submit a proposal to a regional meeting." In other words Stuart Hall, in the event of his death, was not deemed worthy enough of a sociological figure for a panel, a single panel, mind, in a conference that has up to 5000 sociologists from across the globe, and instead such a panel might work at a small, regional conference. To date the ASA has never had a panel that recognised Stuart Hall.

I just want to segue very briefly, have I got time? I can maybe say a bit more about this in the Q&A. If you take one lesson away from this, it's not to get into a Twitter war with Gurminder Bhambra (Laughter) and/or Ben Carrington, although sometimes they amount to much the same thing. I don't know if Steve Hall is here, I've never heard of Steven Hall but apparently for those of you that do criminology he's a big criminologist and a well known figure over in Teesside, and also perhaps a poor man's Michel Foucault (Laughter). In response to an article in Discovering Society which looked at some of the complexities around race and class in this moment, Steve Hall interjected, "This was another example of the cultural left identity politics failing to engage sufficiently with class". When Gurminder Bhambra pointed out there was lots of class in the papers and in the special issue, issued around class in India and other parts of the world, he shot back to say, "I was talking about class, you're talking about race," and so it was hard for him to conceptualise the fact that you could be black and working class, you could be brown and working class, so in a sense there were class analyses in the special issue but not the sort that Steve Hall would recognise, by which he meant a kind of embrace of a certain type of white working class identity.

And in the exchange with him I got involved, please don't get involved in Twitter, it's not worth it, (Laughter), the main function of Twitter I think is basically for you to lose your job at some point in the near future (Laughter). But I saw Gurminder in this exchange so I intervened and I said something to the effect of, "In this moment, why would we need seriously about the intersections of race and class?" and I made the argument, Stuart Hall had been making these arguments for a long time, at which point he shot back with his tweet, "Stuart Hall is as obsolete as any other 70s thinker and his 80s post-structural turn finished him as a useful commentator." (Laughter)

I just use this as an example to emphasise the extent to which in this moment I think there is an attempt to negate the contributions of Stuart Hall, but not just Stuart Hall himself, an entire approach to thinking critically about the complex intersections of race and class which gets dismissed either as intersectional theory on the one hand or identity politics on the other, and it allows for a certain retreat into safe formulations of class which in a sense haven't changed much for the past 30 years and I want to use Steve Hall as an example. His response when someone said, "Well who should we be reading?" was, you can maybe guess this, Žižek. Apparently Žižek is the only one who gets it now because, he argued, that Žižek understands the unconsciousness and Stuart Hall didn't.

That will be interesting for those who either work the centre or who read Stuart Hall 1983 text where for a long time he has been engaged with Lacanian psychoanalysis, he tried to think through questions of the unconscious, he was one of the earliest people to engage with Frantz Fanon and his understandings of the unconscious and racism, so it's interesting that that kind of work gets exorcised and forgotten but what we need is a Steve Hallian Žižekian approach instead. And I'm going to conclude now.

Just one other example; every year I take students to England from Texas for four weeks and we go to Leeds and we do a study abroad course, so I have to pitch my course in front of the students to get them to sign up. So two years ago one of my colleagues teaches a class at UT called 'The Social Scientific Imagination', so in week four or five I went in front of the class and said, "This is my \_\_\_[0:47:00] in England, it's a study abroad course, please come', and as I was doing my introduction I said, "Of course you've all read C. Wright Mills' 'The Sociological Imagination', I'm sure we're going to grapple with these issues," and I got this strange look from my colleague and C. Wright Mills' 'The Sociological Imagination' was not on the reading list at the University of Texas, Austin where Mills himself got his undergraduate degree in sociology on a course called 'The Social Scientific Imagination' (Laughter).

I use this, it's an n of 1, as the empiricists would point out, but I think it's symbolic actually of the way in which there's a sublimation of Mills and a denial of what he was doing to recapture him and to recalibrate him as a social scientist in a way in which clearly he would have been very hostile to. I was just amazed that you could teach that class without at least doing 10 minutes on Mills. As an aside, as I prepared for this talk my research assistant did a quick Google and we discovered that my colleague this year actually does include 'The Sociological Imagination' but it was copied and pasted in a different font (Laughter) and it was quite clearly just added.

In conclusion, imaginative sociology, the conference theme this year addresses what the organisers refer to as the rise of the culture of [hyperindividualism 0:48:21] that has called into question ideas around social cohesion and social solidarity. The denigration of the social in shaping life chances as well as the attacks on the very idea of public goods has, it is suggested, increased individual greed, selfishness, discrimination and division over collective need, solidarity and empathy. Trying to understand the relationship between the personal and the public and how inequitable social arrangements constrain the life chances of the marginalised was, of course, a central focus for both Mills and Hall.

A number of unresolved questions lie before us, however, and I would like to conclude briefly by just going through some of them. With Bauman's astute observations always in mind regarding the spread of celebrity culture and liquid relationships, both on and offline, we might want to more fully consider the blurred lines between the personal and the public that we so easily work with and abstract from. Whilst we sociologists have an almost axiomatic interest in defending the public from the privatising forces of neo-liberalism and the associated technocratic bureaucracies of the capitalist state, and for good reason, we need to recognise that in the age of social media, Twitter, Snapchat and more, the active self-publicising of the private radically changes the stakes for any straightforward intervention to keep the two spheres separate in order to protect the public. I do not claim this to be a novel observation but more a collective reminder of how normative assumptions can quietly slip through even the most reflexive of analytical backdoors.

In defending the public sphere we should also ask which publics do we have in mind when the public, a singular, is invoked? And defend the public for whom? Critical account of history suggests a more problematic story of exclusion from the public sphere, based in part on class but much more readily on the basis of race and gender too. When we imagine the public, what counter-publics are forgotten and marginalised as a result and which idealised citizens get to stand in for the common good?

As instructive as the personal troubles and public issues metaphor has been and continues to be, we might also want to think through the ways in which the binary of the personal and public and gendered in ways that Mills himself and many others afterwards have not fully accounted for. The historical research of scholars like Catherine Hall, Ann Oakley and Ann McClintock into the already politicised spaces of the domestic and the long-standing black feminist interrogations of both home and domestic labour has been bound to questions of politics and power in the writings of Selma James, Andrea Davis and Patricia Hill Collins amongst others need to be read alongside and against the Millsian personal troubles, public issues metaphor.

In this context it is important to state that for all of the undoubted strengths of Mills' reflexive sociological project and his commitment to [centring 0:51:09] questions of power and politics within our analyses, the absence of any serious engagement in his writings with questions of race and anti-black racism, or what was referred to at the time as an ego question, is astounding. Given the time and place in which he was born and grew up, the prevalence of Jim Crow strictures on freedoms and the everyday lives of African Americans, the fact that when he attended the University of Texas at Austin as an undergraduate it was a racially segregated, all-white university and would remain so until the late 1950s, Mills' stubborn refusal to think through the politics of race requires much more attention than his biographers have given it to date.

And rather than being content with the ritualistic chanting of 'The Sociological Imagination' as text whenever the field feels under threat, we perhaps need more sociologists with actual imagination. This is a call to retrieve and fight for more creative aspects of our field that can't easily be captured in an impact assessment case study to support central and open-ended sociological projects that may require more than a semester to complete. To embrace and recognise the invaluable interdisciplinarity as a sociological good and an institutional commitment to experimental forms of live sociology in contradiction to the deadening hand of old white boy sociology which too often serves as a convenient disciplinary mask for the mundane, the repetitive and the reactionary.

Back in 2011, on the 60th anniversary of the BSA, Paul Gilroy gave the plenary talk which, as some of you may remember, was entitled 'Redefining the Sociological Project: The Cosmopolitan Challenge'. Gilroy ended his talk thus: "A cosmopolitan and, yes, a post-colonial sociology is a critical part of sustaining the sociological craft and imagination and of stimulating the intellectual growth that has suffered because too many of us have felt that our survival depended upon being seen to make a virtue out of closing down our curiosity and the curiosity of our students." In other words, truly wrestling with the post-colonial predicament and thinking through how we might start a new sociological imagination through decolonising our field, as Gurminder Bhambra has tirelessly urged us to do, and I use 'us' widely here, and that includes some of her departmental colleagues as well, is the necessary first and not an optional secondary step. Part of this new sociological imagination, or what I would now like to term 'imaginative sociology', would prioritise imagination as a core component of the intellectual craft of our discipline and would help us, following Mills, to better identify the signal features of our period.

For Hall, echoing DuBois a century earlier, this was a problematic of how we might live with difference. Indeed par for the task at hand may well be to avoid the temptation to identify a singular feature of the contemporary moment. A truly conjunctual analysis has to hold at one and the same time an array of competing and sometimes conflictual determined elements. The hubris of science has always been driven by the ideal and idea of identifying tidy metanarratives, finding a single and clear explanation that can account for the social dilemma at hand. Thus the scientist can supposedly identify for the rest of society the nature of the problem, its cause and ultimately its remedy in order to then clean up, fix and solve the problem for good.

If we've learnt anything from Bauman over the years, it is to be sceptical of such enlightenment myths bearing false promises of social progress through science, technology and instrumental rationality.

In his interview with Doreen Massey, Hall reminds us of the following: "This is not a moment to fall back upon economic determinism, though it may be tempting to do so since the current crisis seems to start in the economy with the collapse of the global financial system and the banks. But any serious analysis of the crisis must take into account its other conditions of existence. For example the ideological, the way market fundamentalism has become the economic common sense for us all, not just within the west, but globally. Politically, the way New Labour has been disconnected from its political roots and involved as a second part of capital, transforming the political terrain. Socially, the way class and other social relations have been so reconfigured under consumer capitalism that they fragment, undermining the potential social constituencies or agencies for change."

Now I see this in this framework, a direct extension of Mills. Again, to return us to 'The Sociological Imagination', recall when Mills says the following: "What we experience in various and specific milieu, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieu. To be able to do this is to posses the sociological imagination." Hall's call, then, to how we can live with difference, to sit with it, embrace it, is different from the idea that such differences need to be assimilated and altered in order to produce value consensus through sameness.

If I may be permitted to close here and to borrow from Alain Badiou, and only slightly out of context in his book "In Praise of Love', Badiou says the following: "What kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one? What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the viewpoint of difference and not identity? That is what I believe love to be." Mills' essay was eventually accepted by Stuart Hall after his revise and resubmit and published later in 1960 in the New Left Review as lettered to the New Left.

So let me finally end here by quoting from the opening paragraph. Mills says the following: "When I settled down to write to you, I feel somehow freer than usual. The reason, I suppose, is that most of the time I am writing for people whose ambiguities and values I imagine to be rather different from mine, but with you I feel enough in common with you to allow us to get on with it in a more positive way. Reading your book 'Out of Apathy' prompts me to write to you about civil problems I think we now face. On none of these I can hope to be definitive, I only want to raise a few questions." I hope among friends at the BSA, with whom I have much in common, I have raised a few questions for us to consider over the next few days.

(Applause)

John Horne: Thank you very much indeed, Ben, for that. We do have approximately 10, 12 minutes for comments, observations. There are two people clad in delightful green BSA t-shirts and they will come down with the roving mic so that people can hear. I can see a hand there at the back and please just indicate and I'll...

Male 1: Well thank you very much, Ben, for that really enjoyable lecture. I think what's true of American sociology but possibly not true of British sociology, we very much have our own private troubles and public issues. Some of those may have to do with how we do or don't use class, we tend to use class in terms of a Bordieusian cluster way rather than in the old classic [Leftist 0:58:49] way. I was very much struck by how you talked about the early and the middle Hall, but didn't really say a great deal about the latter Hall, who often himself would talk about how he felt very alienated from cultural studies and how it had developed in the context of him doing a great deal more work on visual culture. So I'd be interested to know if you had anything more to add on that. Thank you.

Ben Carrington: Are we going to take a few? John.

John Horne: If there's nobody else at the moment...

Ben Carrington: Yes, so I think you're right. I think if my focus was on culture studies I would have picked up more on Hall's disillusionment. I think he said in one of the interviews, I don't know if it was the one with Les Back or the journalist \_\_\_[0:59:37], something like, "If I see one more analysis of 'The Sopranos' I'm going to pull my hair out," or something. But in the interviews I've read with Hall and his comments on this, I think he gets stuck between not wanting to be the paternalistic overseer of all things that are called culture studies, and you go to Stuart Hall and you say, "Is this true culture studies?" and he says, "No," and he gets cast away.

Part of me understood what Hall was saying but parts of me want to push back against that. Do we need any more studies of soap- Hall comes close to, but doesn't because he's too smart, a position that he fought against himself for much of the 60s and 70s when, and I didn't show it here but if you go through the archives at Birmingham, the avalanche of attacks on the centre was really interesting to see. It was pop studies, they would make all these ridiculous jokes about studying things like romance novels and teenage girls' magazines and soap operas etc. and I think the key argument that culture studies puts forward is that even these seemly benign, trivial spaces there's important ideological work taking place that may not be immediately obvious.

And I think therefore that although there is that slippage towards a textual analysis in which the underlying conjunctures, especially around political economy get lost, which I think was Hall's main point. It's not so much that there's another analysis of 'The Sopranos', it's how it's done and ironically a retreat back to a certain type of quasi-\_\_\_[1:01:24] reading of texts that get divorced from the social context which some types of culture studies end up coming close to, I think that's what he was pushing back against and the constant pushing to say where is power here? What's at stake in the analysis? But at other times he would step back and say, "Look I'm not going to start dictating what culture studies should and shouldn't be," but then he would say, "Actually this is what I think it should be doing."

Male 2: [What do you think that professional sociology worries about losing, in terms of these exclusions and divisions and let's be\_\_\_? 1:02:05-1:02:18]

Ben Carrington: Its professional standing, especially in the US. I went to the US very naive, this was my community, I was sitting here 21 years ago, this is what I understood sociology to be, where a figure like Stuart Hall could be the BSA president who didn't- not only did he never formally study sociology, he doesn't even have a PhD. Or someone like Paul Gilroy who can move from American studies into sociology, if you chart Gilroy as an example, going to the Southbank in sociology, becoming I think Professor of Culture Studies and Sociology at Goldsmith's, going to Yale, becoming the Professor of African American Studies and Sociology, taking up the Anthony Giddens chair in Social Theory at the London School of Economics in the sociology department and now moving to King's as a professor of English literature I think, that's roughly it. That [chopping 1:03:12] transition doesn't really happen in the US, because the gatekeepers are so strong, because we need to protect our professional identity and it's often linked to sources of funding and status, both within the university and within the US academy, it's just on a different scale. This was the big conference that I used to come to because there were like 500, 600 people, maybe up now to 700. The ASA has over 5000 people, and so it's on such a bigger scale that it gives a great degree of autonomy to say, "This is sociology and this isn't," whereas I think the lines are much more porous in the UK of people moving between- Claire Alexander coming from anthropology into sociology, the same with Les Back, and many people in this audience I think. So to me that's never been a defining feature of sociology.

And in some ways I read that as an impact of culture studies, yes the interdisciplinary approach to thinking critically about a sociological problem and drawing upon whatever discipline mattered. In my time in the US I've been quickly disabused of that way of thinking about sociology and in the US it's much more- ironically coming from the UK, as I like to tell my American colleagues, Americans are hugely status conscious. We have that here, I'm well aware of that, but for the most part you come to the BSA and someone's at Leeds University or Manchester University or Brighton uni and there are distinctions there; Oxford and Cambridge have their own thing going on and the LSE thinks it's something else (Laughter). But for the most part we kind of get that, yes?

In the US there's such attachment to where you got your PhD as a defining quality of the work that do that was really staggering to me. The very first meeting that I went to when I was on the search committee, we had all these applications from around the US and around the world, brilliant PhD students, and all I noted was when they got their PhD and what they were working on. All of my other colleagues wrote down where they got their PhDs, that was the defining factor to say- and this will happen in conversations when you go to the ASA, you'll be asked, "Where are you studying?" as opposed to, "What are you studying?" Similarly for professors when you have to get tenure, the question we asked, not what your work is about but who the publisher is. Is with Harvard University Press, is it with California University? That becomes a marker by which someone knows your work.

So I think all that is partly professionalising that takes place and it's also because I think of the resources that are available within US universities by saying we are a serious profession, we do proper social science research, therefore we can apply to things like the NIH, the National Institute of Health, or at least until the last week, not quite sure what Trump has done with the funding, there's a huge source of funding for sociology. So you have this skewing as well of sociological research in which everything is 'and health', and you think, "This has nothing to do with health," and you say, "Okay, this is the way in which we can an NH grant."

So it's both there's a size of it, the money that's at stake and the way in which that gets embedded, and they can become relatively autonomous spaces that self-reproduce. You have to cite in certain journals, you have to get your PhD at certain places, you publish with certain presses and this becomes the definition of us as sociologists as distinct from anthropologists, as it's distinct from historians and certainly as distinct from culture studies. I would suggest the ones that are most hostile to the type of work that I've been arguing for here don't actually come from the abstract empiricists. Until I went to the US I wasn't even aware that demography was part of sociology, I thought that was different, that's demography, that kind of statistical form of positivistic social science is so embedded within US sociology. But those folks don't feel threatened by the culture studies approach to sociology, they don't even know what it is, they just get on and do their stuff with their big grants.

It's actually the qualitative sociologists that most fear being mistaken for someone who does culture studies. So the level of hostility actually, I would suggest, comes from the, I won't name names but those who do a certain type of Bordieuian sociology for sure, qualitative type of work are the most hostile towards the Hallian approach I've been arguing for.

John Horne: There was a hand up there and that will be the last comment or question, thank you.

Male 3: Do you think that the methodological [myopia 1:07:36] you mentioned is symptomatic of a shrinking public sphere where people emphasise validity as a kind of retreat into a professional identity is against the absence of a public sphere of deliberation. And in a sense you're dealing with two thinkers here in which the public sphere was apparently perhaps more open to the \_\_\_ now, and I'm thinking about the differences between the US and the UK in this respect as well.

Ben Carrington: Yes. Sorry, was there a question there? I missed the first part, I was trying to look for you.

Male 3: The effect on that relationship between deliberation and analysis and that kind of shrinking of the public sphere and the potential that there is for being able to engage in that. [Is it something you'd like to 1:08:16] \_\_\_ [validity] \_\_\_ people moving around it, it's about the notion of engagement and how much sociology engages with [puppets] and when it does so, of course, it has to recognise other forms of knowledge and that in and of itself starts to devalue its own knowledge in a sense \_\_\_.

Ben Carrington: Yes, I see. In very broad terms I think the public sphere in the US has shrunk, it's quite limited. It took me a while to- and again, when I moved there 13 or 14 years ago, what I recognised as the public sphere operates very differently in the US, it's much more commercialised, it's much more fragmented. So the fact that you would have a conversation in The Guardian between Anthony Giddens and Gordon Brown, for example. Think about the intellectual space of Marxism today as one particular example in which you would have journalists, you'd have someone like Stuart Hall, people like Martin [Jacques 1:09:11] and Susanne Moore, you'd have people like David Blunkett writing and discussing.

There was an intellectual space in which there was a porous interchange between intellectuals, academics, journalists, politicians, activists that wasn't just located within small spaces but could find voice in the public realm to some degree and was relatively open. I don't see that in the same way in the US. So what it means to be a public intellectual in the US has itself become linked to celebrity culture, that being famous or having lots of Twitter followers or having a show on TV becomes a defining characteristic of being a public intellectual as opposed to, if you go back to Stuart Hall as a model of using the media or the mass media or television or the [Open University 1:09:59] as a way to engage with ideas. In other words using the mass media and television to engage in a broader conversation as opposed to wanting to be on television as an actual goal in itself.

And you can become fabulously rich in the US as well by performing a certain celebrity public intellectual persona which often has very little to actual politics and social movements and the work itself just may not be that good. It has to be good enough for 140 characters (Laughter) and it has to be good enough for a 40-50 second soundbite on MSNBC, which are actually difficult things to do, I don't want to devalue that as a technique of intervention, but unless there's some serious intellectual work behind that then we just end up performing, a public intellectual becomes a role that gets played out.

I'll just end on this; one of the things I do love about Stuart Hall when he retired, and many of you will know this quote, in 1997 from the Open University and he was asked, "So what are you going to do now that you've retired from OU?" he says, "Now that I've stopped being an academic I can get back to being an intellectual," and I think for too many of us we conflate being an academic with being an intellectual as being one and the same. There are many ways in which you can do intellectual work which aren’t constrained by the university and there are many people in academia who aren't intellectuals (Laughter).

John Horne: Okay. Well thank you very much for the comments and the questions.

(Applause)

Now as Eileen pointed out I now have the pleasure of handing over the BSA president, Professor Lynn Jamieson, to announce the winner of this year's Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award. Thank you.

Lynn Jamieson: Right, so, the Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award has existed for about half a dozen years or so, since the 60th anniversary and I'll just remind you that it goes to a person who has given distinguished service, both in their academic writing, in their contribution to the discipline of an academic sort but also often through their contribution to the BSA. And the person that I'm about to give this award to is Sara Arber who has done all of that and probably more.

Sara has a long and distinguished career at the University of Surrey where she has been, I think, all of her academic career. She's very well known for her writing on gender and ageing but also much more recently has pioneered a line of sociology of sleep, a topic that's not been an obvious one to many people and has been quite a revelation in the way that she has brought that into sociology but she's also done a great deal of work around medical sociology over her career, she has recently authored a book on grandparenting, so she's been contributing to the field of family sociology as well.

She's a former president of the BSA, she's also been a president of the ISA. She has had other awards, this is not her first, she's been honoured by the Society for Gerontology, so I want you to all join with me in congratulating Sara as she comes and takes this award here.

(Applause)

I'm going to ask Sara just to say a few quick words.

Sara Arber: Well thank you Lynn, and thank you the BSA. I'm delighted and deeply honoured to receive this prestigious award from the BSA and I was very surprised to be honest. I joined the BSA in 1974, 43 years ago, a long time, and that's when I became a lecturer in sociology at the University of Surrey and, as Lynn says, I've actually spent my whole career at the University of Surrey. And you might think that's boring but actually by going to international meetings, by going to the BSA, by being engaged in all sorts of other activities, that's been a critical part of my career.

So I do feel that the BSA has been absolutely fundamental to my career, in particular the study groups. So for example I was a medical sociologist, I began, I did a Master's in medical sociology, so I started a medical sociology group. So the BSA MedSoc conference and group were fundamental for me and I went to all their conferences from the mid 70s and still am involved. So really the comradeship and collegiality and support and intellectual stimulation from the BSA, from the medical sociology community has been invaluable throughout my career.

I'd just like to say another couple of words, and one is that my research began on inequality, so I did my Master's dissertation on class inequalities in health. And boringly I still am doing work on inequalities and I've done through my career a lot on inequalities in health, gender inequalities in pensions and caregiving and goodness knows what, inequality in ageing and so on. And given where we are in British society today and the incredible increase in inequalities, sociology and the BSA I feel have never been more important than today in playing a fundamental and critical role in terms of researching all aspects of contemporary inequalities. It's really very nice to come to a conference like this where there is a lot of work and engagement with issues of inequality.

So finally my feeling is long may the BSA and sociologists continue to do the work, particularly issues to do with inequality, so thank you very much.

(Applause)

I will honour it and care for it, so thank you.

John Horne: Right, you have a break.

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