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Interview: Sheila Allen

Sheila Allen was Professor of Sociology at the University of Bradford until her retirement in 1998. During her career she has worked in the fields of industrial sociology, youth, race and gender. Network went to interview her.

NETWORK: Which degree did you do originally?

SHEILA: I did Sociology at LSE. We were the first generation to do undergraduate Sociology for the whole of the three years. There was a BA and a BSc, and they were no different, it was whether you'd done Latin at matric. If you hadn't you couldn't register for a BA in those days. It was a very different world!

NETWORK: What was it like doing Sociology at the LSE then?

SHEILA: There were 60 of us in that first year intake. Before that undergraduates had to do a BSc Econ, but could specialise in Sociology in the final year. Well we were pioneers in some ways. I think we were pioneers as far as the staff were concerned. I think they weren't too sure what we were supposed to be doing a lot of the time [laughs]. I could tell you a few stories about that! But people like John Westergaard, David Lockwood, Basil Bernstein and Norman Dennis and many others were still students at that time. The first term was exceedingly alienating for me in the sense that I didn't think I understood anything that anyone was saying. And I didn't know what to do. I used to go into the library and read all these books and I couldn't understand them. I could understand the words, but I couldn't understand what it was about.

NETWORK: What sorts of books were these?

SHEILA: In the first year the tutor Bob Mackenzie asked the class "What do you think scientific method is?". We had no idea what he was taking about. So we all went off and read books on scientific method but we understood very little. Through discussions in tutorials, classes and in the refectory it started to fall into place. Though it's very unfashionable, I believe you should have space to be able to find your way and to think things through and read, make mistakes. That's why I think the modular system is very anti-intellectual. I shouldn't say that should I?

NETWORK: Can you remember what the expectation was of your cohort of sociology students, what they were going to do with a degree in sociology?

SHEILA: I don't think many of us knew. We had come from all sorts of backgrounds, for all sorts of reasons. I think the normal route, for women, would have been to become social workers. I did social administration but I was never terribly convinced about social work being the sort of thing I wanted to do.

I knew I had to earn my own living, and I thought if I took social administration it would have some relevance for something but I wasn't sure what. I just thought it was an amazing privilege to have three years to read! Reading for a degree. Sitting in the library you know? I came from a working class background. I was the first one in my family to go to university. I had been to a Grammar school of course, stereotypical scholarship girl, and I had this great yen to find out, understand.

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Interview: Sheila Allen (continued)

NETWORK: Did you get that yen from school?

SHEILA: Oh no I didn't get anything from school about sociology, the school disapproved of my choice. I took History, French, Latin and English literature at the Higher School Certificate. It was difficult at that time to get straight into university because a lot of the places were for people coming out of the forces. For a time I'd wanted to do languages, but I couldn't see a way of being able to go abroad. I didn't know where the money was coming from. I didn't understand the system. I was also very keen on history, although I knew that was a very difficult subject to get into because of the demand for places. There were two things which positively influenced my choice. One was the first Reith Lectures, the other was the 1948 Children's Act. And these started me thinking along pre-sociological lines. I wasn't sure I understood the Reith Lectures but I found them absolutely fascinating. Goodness knows what I would think now if I reread them.

NETWORK: So you were a researcher after graduating?

SHEILA: Yes well it was very temporary to begin with. It was on patterns of prescribing in the NHS. Heavily statistical, although I must say that the statistics were extremely crude. I used to go to Regent Street where part of the Ministry of Health was located. And the chap who did the statistics knew nothing about them but was ever so good at drawing straight lines with a ruler, true, absolutely true! I've still got some notes from that time. And then later on after I'd spent two years at LSE I did some research on the staffing of social services, the employment of qualified and non-qualified staff, the sort of thing that people still talk about today. I went very briefly to the Home Office and worked on the outcomes of probation, and different forms of sentencing.

NETWORK: That was all based around the LSE?

SHEILA: Yes apart from the work at the Home Office. It was wonderful to go to the Home Office because you had clerks who put clean blotting paper and sharpened pencils on your desk! I was a Scientific Officer which sounded very good. I remember being asked to write a briefing paper about what a community was. An MP had asked a question.

NETWORK: Can you remember what you said?

SHEILA: No not really, I spent time looking things up, but perhaps it was too sociological. I think a quick sound bite answer was wanted. These have never come easily to me and I still feel very uncomfortable when I hear them being trotted out.

NETWORK: So tell me about Birmingham.

SHEILA: There were some very interesting people there. Gi Baldamus and I used to take seminars together. I found him absolutely fascinating. He really was a thinker. David Eversley was also there together with Charles Madge, A. H. Halsey and Norman Dennis. And there were some really interesting economists. We had a very lively faculty society which met on Friday evenings. All of us felt we had to take extra mural evening classes. It was part of our duty to go out and do a full load for almost nothing. It was a tradition in Birmingham and to some extent Leicester.

NETWORK: Where was this idea coming from, the people themselves?

SHEILA: Well I think it was an idea that had been very strong for a long time among some university staff to go out in to the highways and byways. So I taught, for example, in Coventry to Town Planners, in Rolls Royce in Derby, and at the National Coal Board HQ. Driving all over the place on foggy evenings, by this time I had the car, after a full day teaching and thought nothing about it.

NETWORK: Was Leicester very different from Birmingham?

SHEILA: Leicester sociology was also part of a faculty degree programme. Ilya Neustadt was determined to change to a special honours degree in sociology and nothing but. I was always against that, Richard [Brown] and I were on the same side.

NETWORK: Why were you against that development then?

SHEILA: Well I didn't see how you could do sociology if you didn't do some economics, some history, certainly methods and statistics. At the LSE, for example, we would do these and logic and scientific method, I used to voluntarily go to Karl Popper's lectures! And I just assumed that's what you did in order to locate sociology. You have to remember that people like Ginsberg taught me, taught us sociology, social philosophy and social psychology. It was just normal for people to have this breadth and Ilya's attempt to narrow down was one of the things I thought very unwise.

NETWORK: In retrospect do you think it was a mistake to narrow down?

SHEILA: I suppose it was inevitable, like some of the developments in the BSA at that time to make it more 'professional'. It was almost bound to happen I suppose. I still think you should read widely, to me that is one of the main benefits of University life. And not to have some basic grasp of logic and methodology is a grave handicap. Obviously you can't be a polymath but would we have so many people busily reinventing the wheel if we had historical knowledge, including the history of sociology. This is one of my hobby horses, and I am afraid the race relations field is full of it.

Occupational Mobility

Andrea Abbas has been appointed to a Lectureship in Sociology within the School of Social Sciences at the University of Teesside.

Professor **Pamela Abbott** has been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University, with effect from 1st January 2000.

Andy Bennett, previously at the University of Kent, Canterbury, has moved to the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey.

Huw Beynon, previously professor of sociology and co-director of the Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition at the University of Manchester, has been appointed head of the new Cardiff School of Social Sciences.

Sharon Bolton and **Finn Bowring** began work as Simon Marks Post-doctoral Research Fellows in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manchester in the early summer of 1999.

Alan Buckingham has been appointed to a permanent lectureship at the University of Sussex.

Simon Cross has been appointed to a Lectureship in the Sociology of Mass Communication within the Centre for Mass Communications Research at the University of Leicester.

Fiona Devine has been promoted to Reader in the Department of Sociology at Manchester University.

Elizabeth Ettorre has been awarded a Chair at the University of Plymouth. Her title is Professor of Sociology.

Rob Flynn has been promoted from Reader to Professor of Sociology, with effect from 1 April 1999, at the University of Salford.

Andy Furlong, Reader in Sociology at Glasgow University, has been appointed Head of Department.

John Hall, from McGill University (Canada), has been awarded a half-time research Professorship in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at Queen's University Belfast.

Anthony Heath, Fellow of Nuffield College, has been appointed to the new Chair of Sociology at Oxford University.

John Holmwood moves from Edinburgh to take up a professorship at the University of Sussex in January 2000.

Gill Jones, formerly Director of the Centre for Family Research at Cambridge University, is now Professor of Sociology at Keele University. She is part of the new School of Social Relations which is the product of a merger of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, and the Department of Applied Social Studies.

George Kolankiewicz, previously in the department of sociology at Essex University, has been appointed to a chair at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London University.

Luke Martell and **Kevin McCormick** have been promoted to senior lectureships at the University of Sussex.

Simon Miller has moved from Manchester University to become Professor of Sociology at Queen's University Belfast.

Colin Murray has been promoted to Reader in the Department of Sociology at Manchester University.

Howard Newby, Vice-Chancellor of Southampton University, has been elected to chair the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, of which he was previously Vice-Chair.

Samuel Porter, previously reader in sociology at Queen's University Belfast, has been appointed Professor of Nursing Studies there.

Peter Preston has been appointed Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Brighton.

Kate Purcell, formerly Principal Research Fellow at Warwick University's Institute for Employment Research, has been appointed Professor of Employment Studies at the Bristol Business School.

Diane Railton has been appointed to a Lectureship in the Sociology of Media within the School of Social Sciences at the University of Teesside.

Dr **Ali Rattansi**, previously Reader in Sociology, has been promoted to a personal chair in the Department of Sociology, City University, London.

Hilary Rose, Professor Emerita of Social Policy at Bradford University, has been appointed to joint tenure (with Steven Rose) of the Gresham Chair of Physic at the Open University.

Alan Scott, formally Senior Lecturer in the School of Economic and Social Studies, University of East Anglia, has been appointed Professor of Sociology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria.

Sue Scott, previously Professor of Sociology in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at Stirling University, has been appointed to a Chair in Sociology at the University of Durham.

Tracy Shildrick has been appointed to a Lectureship in Sociology within the School of Social Sciences at the University of Teesside.

Mark Simpson has been appointed to a Lectureship in Criminology within the School of Social Sciences at the University of Teesside.

Beverley Skeggs, previously Reader in Sociology and Women's Studies at Lancaster University, has been appointed Professor of Sociology at Manchester University.

Neil Small, previously Senior Research Fellow at the Trent Palliative Care Centre and University of Sheffield, has become Professor of Community and Primary Care at the University of Bradford.

Alan Warde, previously Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, has been appointed to a Chair in Sociology at the University of Manchester. His post is seconded half time to work as Co-Director of the ESRC Research Centre on Competitiveness, Innovation and Competition.

In the government reshuffle of late July, **Malcolm Wicks** was appointed Minister for Life-Long Learning at the DfEE. A graduate in sociology from LSE, Mr Wicks held research and teaching posts at York, Brunel and the Centre for Environmental Studies, and was then director of the Family Policy Studies Centre, before his first election to Parliament in 1992 (as MP for Croydon North). His work in the House of Commons until his ministerial appointment included chairing the Education and Employment Committee's sub-committee for education.

Marysia Zalewski, who specialises in women and politics, who was formerly at the Department of International Relations, University of Abertyswth, has been appointed lecturer in Women's Studies in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at Queen's University, Belfast.

HONOURS

Richard Breen, Professor of Sociology at Queen's University Belfast, has been elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy.

Janet Finch, Vice-Chancellor of Keele University, has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship of Royal Holloway and Bedford College, London University.

Nigel Gilbert, Professor of Sociology at Surrey University, has been made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

In the Honours List of June 1999, **Ruth Lister**, Professor of Social Policy at Loughborough University, was appointed CBE for services with regard to social issues. **Michael Anderson**, Professor of Economic and Social History at Edinburgh University (formerly in the University's department of sociology), was appointed OBE for services to education.

NETWORK: How did you get interested in issues of race?

SHEILA: Well a lot of my interests have stemmed not just from sociology. Sociology has been a way of organising my ideas and analysing issues. After the 1964 General Election, during which a virulent racist campaign was waged in Smethwick, a few of us in Leicester set up a Campaign for Racial Equality. Some of us were in the University, some were outside, I worked in it for a couple of years. So when I came to Bradford in 1966 I helped set up a similar group. But I also began to think I can't be an industrial sociologist or a sociologist of youth and not take account of race. And I conducted a small research project, well it wasn't so small, we thought it was small at the time...we had about 400 interviews! But the focus was on employment rather than race. Because my approach was to ask why were people from Kashmir, from Pakistan and India and the Caribbean in local industries? They weren't here for the good of their health, or because the sun always shines in Bradford. The research was about labour migration, and labour recruitment and industrial structures and conditions. But I was fairly heavily criticised within sociology for saying that. I had a paper rejected by *Sociology* in about 1968/9, and that was about indigenous and non-indigenous labour and it wasn't regarded as sociology.

NETWORK: Why?

SHEILA: Well because even in those early days you had to put the explanatory emphasis on skin colour. Now that to me as a sociologist was not actually a very useful way of approaching it. So I rejected that and still do to some extent. I have modified my position slightly perhaps, but not a great deal. There was a widespread view about black workers having higher accident rates or different attitudes to work. You get similar statements about women. I thought it's not because you're black, or a woman, there ain't no way sociologically this could be the answer. And so we asked questions about working conditions, hours of work, how much training had they had and so on.

NETWORK: I guess there wasn't much of a literature around race then?

SHEILA: No, not on black people in Britain, well is there yet? Where is it? Now we have some specialist journals. In a review symposium of the book Liz Stanley and David Morgan wrote about Sociology, I said though 'women' have made a breakthrough in Sociology the same could not be said about 'race'. Since that time, and I am not saying it is cause and effect, there has been more in Sociology on race and ethnicity. But I still think there is too little integrated into the mainstream sociology journals and sociology generally. Basically in the end it's about social relations and structures and I think that is the only way you can usefully approach it. That's why 'identity' or notions of identity, taken out of structural contexts, makes no sense.

NETWORK: Can I ask you about your involvement with the BSA?

SHEILA: I think I joined the BSA around the time I went to Birmingham, '59/60/61. It was cheaper in those days to go to conferences. I worked in Skepper House when I was a researcher at LSE in the late 1950s and that is where the BSA was located. So I knew Anne Dix and her predecessor, Gwen Ayres, and something about the BSA before I joined. Also Tom Bottomore was always in and out and we used to have coffee and a chat. Then in the 1960s I started going fairly regularly to the annual conference. But in those days you didn't give papers unless you were fairly elite and were selected. It was very hierarchical, and you had to be sponsored, but people like me could go and listen and occasionally comment. And then a lot of things happened in the 60s which opened up ways of thinking about sociology. I suppose we regarded ourselves as having the truth. Whereas those that had gone before us didn't. One or two people I knew well went on to the executive and I was encouraged by them to put up for it. I think the first time I went on the executive was 1970? I was asked to give a paper at the 1969 conference that analysed race and racialism but I didn't actually give the paper I'd written because I was in hospital having my elder daughter. So her birthday throughout her childhood usually fell in the BSA conference week [laughs]. Most inconvenient! On the executive I began to learn what the BSA was all about. It is difficult now to recall just how small the BSA was when I was first lecturing. We nearly all knew each other or knew of each other. I mean before the expansion in the '60s and the setting up of the Polytechnics sociology courses.

In '73 I was asked to do the '74 BSA conference and as some would say the rest is history! It was to be on the family. So they turned to me because I was a woman I suppose. And I said "why are you asking me to do it I don't know anything about the sociology of the family". Anyhow I agreed if they let me do it in my own way. So we began by calling it the 'political economy of domestic life'. And then I asked someone to organise it with me who said there wasn't enough material on it but she knew someone who might be a co-organiser. So Diana Leonard and I organised the 'Sexual Divisions in Society' conference. And we changed many things including who we asked to write papers and chair sessions. We asked several men to give papers reviewing their own research in terms of the sexual divisions. Only two replied in a positive way! We also set up the women's caucus at that conference.

NETWORK: Do you think things have improved since then?

SHEILA: Well it wasn't only that of course, it was part of a change in the society with the women's movement rather than just something to do with the BSA. But it meant that things started to move in the BSA, they would have probably moved anyhow, but it could be seen as a kind of catalyst. Particularly as more women came forward to go on the BSA executive, the Sexual Divisions study group and the Sex Equality sub-committee were set up. If you mean has it altered anything in any dramatic way, then no I don't think it has. The language has changed but I don't think the power structure has.

NETWORK: What was your experience of being a fairly senior female academic? When did you get your chair?

SHEILA: 1972, I was the 46th woman professor in the country! In every subject! I don't know how many men there were but there were rather more than 46! In some disciplines there were more women earlier on, so it's not a linear progression.

NETWORK: How have you found it subsequently being a female chair?

SHEILA: Well I think you have to separate out different spheres - in your own institution, the BSA, the ISA, various international women's networks. And really the experience can be very different in these, but if you have contacts outside the immediate institution it gives you a much wider perspective in all sorts of ways, which is important. What I always felt was that I wasn't only a feminist, I was always a sociologist and I must say a socialist. And all these were important to me.

NETWORK: Do you think it is easier for women in the discipline now?

SHEILA: I think in some ways it's easier, and in some ways it's

as difficult as it ever was. The pressures on young people are enormous, and they have no elbow room, the sorts of space that we had, and not the security we had once we had tenure. And then on the other hand there are things that are easier, or should be if equal opportunities legislation and policies are implemented. For instance, it should be easier to have children and a career in sociology for women as well as men. But I understand talking to women this is not always the case. They are assumed not to be pulling their weight if they go off on maternity leave. Patriarchal cultures and structures remain dominant.

NETWORK: What would you like the BSA to do?

SHEILA: Well I think it has to go on being very clear about the importance of sociology as a discipline in relation to other disciplines, and in terms of social policy. Britain is very poor in terms of its social policy not being research based. And I think the BSA could do something encouraging and facilitating its members to speak out about this long standing problem. All the current discussion about refugees and asylum seekers and so-called economic migrants ignores decades of social research! Sociologists have an enormous contribution to make to these debates though they have been rarely heard.

NETWORK: Do you think sociologists have themselves to blame?

SHEILA: I don't think it needs a navel gazing exercise or that sociology is full of technical jargon. I think that often sociology is saying things that those in power don't want to hear.

NETWORK: What's your grand project for retirement?

SHEILA: Oh well I don't have one really! [laughs]. Well I have so many projects that I have said I will do when I retire, and they are all sort of piled up, often on scraps of paper, half written. A sociologist wrote to me last year and said he thought Zygmunt Bauman was a model. So when I was talking to Zygmunt recently I said "I've been told you are the model". And he said it was wonderful to write as and when you wanted to. So that's what I want to do but how sociologically acceptable it will be I don't know.

Interview by Tim Strangleman

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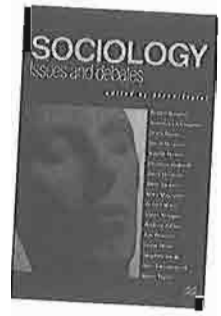

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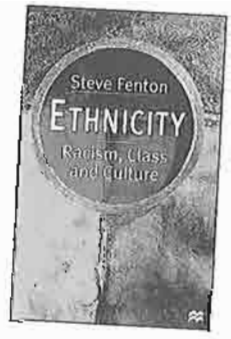

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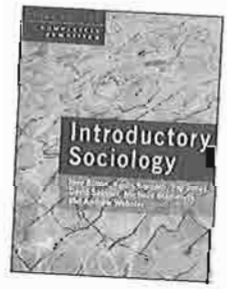

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NEWS FROM THE ESRC

Awards made in the first round of support from the Joint Infrastructure Fund (established in partnership between the Wellcome Trust, the Office for Science and Technology, and the HEFCE) include the following in the social sciences: via the ESRC, for an Inderdisciplinary Institute of Advanced Studies at LSE to bring together research at the School on social policy, economics and finance, and for a Centre for Applied Cognitive Science at Warwick University to pursue work on consumer behaviour and business decisions; via the HEFCE, for a European Research Institute at Birmingham University to facilitate expert analysis of the potential futures for Europe beyond as well as within the EU. The total sum available for awards from the JIF over the period April 1999-March 2002 was increased earlier this year to £700million. The final date for bids in respect of equipment, new buildings and refurbishment is April 2000, in respect of equipment only October 2000. For further information see the ESRC website on http://www.esrc.ac.uk

New initiatives approved by the Research Priorities Board include research programmes into Devolution and Constitutional Change (the implications of such change in the UK for governance and constitutional matters: nationalism, identity and social change; economic and social policy, including competition and co-operation) and into Innovative Health Technologies (extending to their implications for public health and their interaction with wider changes in society). Funding in a new mode has also been approved for 'Priority Networks', comprising groups of research teams with their own arrangements for co-ordination and direction. The first such network, on Evolutionary Complex Systems and Socio Economic Sustainability (co-ordinator Professor P Allen at Cranfield University), will focus on processes of adaptation, learning and exploitation of new knowledge during the transformation of particular economic, urban and social systems.

Following review by the Research Resources Board, a new strategy framework for research resources is available on the ESRC website or direct from Steve Morgan at ESRC.

On retirement from the post of ESRC Chief Executive in June 1999, Professor Ronald Amann moved to become Director General of the Centre for Management and Policy Studies within the Cabinet Office. His successor at the ESRC had yet to be announced when we went to press.
JHW

Research Assessment Exercise 2001

For the next RAE (deadline for eligible output 31/12/00, census date 31/3/01, submissions by 30/4/01, publication of results expected in December 2001), membership of the Sociology Panel will comprise:

John Urry (Chair), Lancaster
Nigel Gilbert, Surrey
Huw Beynon, Cardiff
Stevi Jackson, York
Steve Woolgar, Brunel
Mike Featherstone, Nottingham Trent
Pamela Abbott, Glasgow Caledonian
Gordon Marshall, Oxford
Liz Stanley, Manchester
Steve Bruce, Aberdeen
John Scott, Essex
Sallie Westwood, Leicester

Appointments to other panels include: Education, Rosemary Deem (Lancaster); Social Policy, Hilary Graham (Lancaster) and Claire Ungerson.

Further information about the RAE can be found on the HEFCE website: http://www.niss.ac.uk/education/hefce/rae2001

More about accreditation for higher education teaching

In the May issue of Network (No 73) we reported on the initial proposals for certification of teachers in higher education circulated by the Institute for Learning and Teaching. In June 1999 the ILT issued a revised set of arrangements. These followed responses from institutions, subject associations and similar bodies, as well as individuals, many of which had apparently found the early recommendations insufficiently sensitive to the needs to avoid burdensome procedures, to reflect diversity of learning environments, to recognise subject-based research/scholarship in teaching and learning, to cast the net wide for certification, and to couple provision of both individual and institutional routes towards it with recognition also of the role of other professional bodies in promoting 'continuing professional development'. The June proposals (http://www.ilt.ac.uk/accredit.html) now promised 'flexible interpretation' of the five broad areas of professional activity to be taken into account (these areas themselves somewhat re-ordered and re-worded); and set out the following routes to ILT membership.

Initially, for at least two years, 'experienced' staff may apply on the basis of a statement of professional experience supported by two referees; and an alternative route will be designed for admission via 'established institutional programmes of staff development' which have external validation or moderation, whether accredited by the ILT or 'other appropriate bodies'.

Thereafter, following full establishment of the ILT, there are to be three main routes: by successful completion of an ILT-accredited institution-based programme of staff development; by individual or group (eg course-team) submission of evidence, direct to the ILT, to satisfy the criteria for membership concerning experience and qualifications; or by submission of a portfolio of evidence to an ILT-accredited institution.

The June paper summarised above made no mention of the requirement ventilated in the first set of proposals for re-registration of members every three years on evidence of continued 'good standing', nor of the distinction envisaged then between full and associate membership.

HW

HE Ethnicity + Employment Research published

John Carter, Steve Fenton and Tariq Modood have completed research on minority ethnic groups in academic employment in H.E. The synopsis Ethnicity and Employment in Higher Education was published in June, accompanied by 2-page spread coverage in THES. This is the first comprehensive study of ethnicity and employment in UK Universities and Colleges, based in part on the 1996-97 HESA data-set.

The full report will appear, published by PSI, in September/October 1999.The research was funded by CRE, AUT, CVCP, SHEFCE, HEFCE, NATFHE

Research Funding by 'international standing': an update

Readers may remember an earlier note in *Network* (No 72, January 1999) about the HEFCE's Consultation Paper 98/54. This had floated the notion of introducing a 'policy factor' to modify the Council's allocation of research funding between subjects, by reference to the relative 'international standing' of English research in the various subject areas.

On behalf of its over thirty affiliated social science associations (including the BSA) ALSISS responded in late 1998 that the HEFCE's suggestion would constitute a "very serious threat to research in this entire sector", to the effect of unjustified discrimination against social scientific work. The notion of international standing is, in ALSISS's view, "simply not relevant" to those significant areas of social research which concern "structures, systems and approaches" unique to the country in focus; and the mode of bibliographic analysis envisaged to assess such standing "has profound flaws" in application to social research, through its exclusive attention to journal publications which make up only about half the research output in the social sciences.

Sociology and Social Policy at Oxford University

Observers of the British sociological scene have for a number of years been struck by what might be called 'the Oxford anomaly': to put it briefly, a co-existence within that university of notable strength in sociological research with tenuous and fragmented provision for teaching in the subject, especially at undergraduate level. There now seem fair prospects of change on that score and, in a separate while parallel development, of strengthened provision for social policy.

This follows two reviews of organisation and resources in these fields over the past three or four years. In consequence the Department of Applied Social Studies and Social Research is to be consolidated as the university's centre for work in social policy, as well as of professional training and research for social work, with a Barnett Professor of Social Policy (attached to the new St Cross College) to be appointed in October 1999 or soon thereafter. At the same time a new Professorship of Sociology (attached to Nuffield College) is to be filled, the holder of which will direct a newly formed Department of Sociology intended to bring together, as full or associate members, a majority of the sociologists across the university, whether at Nuffield or other colleges. Watch *Network's* Occupational Mobility space for news of the new chair appointments when made.

Michael Noble
John Westergaard

Obituary: John Hood Williams 1959 - 1999

John Hood-Williams, whose life was tragically cut short on the 7th of August in a motorbike accident, was a sociologist whose academic career seemed to be starting to flourish. His work was developing rapidly and he was starting to be better known in the sociological community, although he had had an early success with Families, a book co-authored with Diana Leonard. In his recent submission for a PhD by publication, he traced the intellectual history that had brought him from an early concern with childhood, understood in relation to family and gender, to a focus onto the concept of gender itself. The latter was the fruit of a long pedagogic and intellectual partnership, based predominantly around a course we team taught, called initially 'Explorations in the Study of Gender' and latterly 'The Problem of Sexual Difference', in which we threw into question the traditional framework of the sex/gender problematic. We had only recently started to publish together and, at the time of John's death, were roughly half-way through work on a co-authored book provisionally called Making the Difference: Sex, Gender and Discursivity, to be published by Sage in the year 2000.

John's early roots, however, were in the sociology of education, with him arriving at the Institute of Education in 1978 as an MA student at an exciting time, under the aegis of Basil Bernstein, Michael Young and perhaps most importantly for his subsequent development, Diana Leonard. During those early years he also formed a productive writing partnership with a fellow postgraduate student, John Fitz, and started work on the sociology of childhood, with them publishing a series of articles together in the early 1980s. Much of his early work argued for the importance of including generational relations within a definition of patriarchy and sought to focus attention on children as social beings in their own right, something he did not feel that the sociology of the time had addressed to any great extent. His paper 'Patriarchy for Children' (in Chisholm, L. et al. (1990) Childhood, Youth and Social Change) sought to elaborate a conception of family patriarchy, a specific complex of generational and gender relations. That paper, however, also adumbrated the move away from a totalizing or general social theory that was to come and that was to find its full expression in the papers that he started to publish as an outgrowth of our work together. That shared work represented something which is probably a fairly rare thing: the construction of a joint voice. All of our discussions were aimed at elaborating what we thought as a unit, and, although we took a decision simply to alternate the order in which our names appeared in print, we did not intend that others should see the joins.

Wendy Cealey Harrison

Speaking for sociology: the perils of punditry?

by Alan Aldridge

The theme of this year's annual BSA conference at Glasgow, For Sociology, implicitly invited us to look back on our heritage and forward to the new millennium. 'For Sociology' may mean many things: a dedication to our predecessors; the justification of an embattled discipline against its detractors; a celebration of sociology's achievements and potential.

The mood of the Glasgow conference was positive and forward-looking. In this spirit, the paper I gave discussed the role of prediction in sociology. A totem of Comtean positivism, prediction is in danger of becoming a taboo subject, which I think is unhealthy. The word is no longer to be found in many of the dictionaries of sociology and the introductory textbooks. This is not to say that prediction is not discussed anywhere. Anthony Giddens has had a lot to say about it, and Gary Runciman pursues the theme in his stimulating essay The Social Animal. It is also reassuring to see Jim Fulcher and John Scott advising students in their recent textbook not to throw around 'positivist' as a term of vulgar abuse.

For all their differences, Giddens and Runciman share the view that sociology cannot be a predictive discipline. To believe otherwise is, for them, to fall victim to the false conception of sociology as a science on a par with the natural sciences. They bring forward a formidable battery of arguments against a scientistic view of sociology: the underdetermination of theory by facts; the permeability of the boundary between the knowledge claims of sociological experts and the practical knowledge of 'lay' actors; the inherent instability of sociological 'laws', given the reflexivity of social life and the consequent problems of self-fulfilling and self-negating prophecy; the inescapable unpredictability of future knowledge, as emphasized by Popper in his critique of historicism; and the hard lesson from chaos theory, that minute and undetectable variations in the initial conditions of complex systems rapidly produce vast differences in outcomes. Nor should the odd lucky guess be mistaken for a rationally grounded scientific prediction.

Underlying Giddens' and Runciman's critiques is the conviction that sociology is a humane discipline calling for Verstehen, empathy and imagination. There is no great gulf between sociologists and the rest of humanity, in contrast to the Comtean vision of sociologists as Platonic philosopher-monarchs. Like virtually all colleagues, I agree with Giddens and Runciman on this. The hieratic pretensions of the technocrats are, happily, unjustified.

My argument is that prediction is one element in sociology, not its most important constituent but not to be discarded either. Far from being incompatible with a humane discipline, prediction is an expression of it. Predictions do not have to be grand revelations ceremoniously unveiled to a general public in awe of the sacred mysteries to which we alone have access. Giddens has ridiculed that notion, and quite right. We can certainly forget that. But since predicting is part of everyone's life-world, by making predictions we do not deny but express our common humanity.

Some of our worries about prediction are misplaced, for example, the problem that predictions can be self-fulfilling or self-negating. So they can, but only if people listen and act on them. As things stand, few of us enjoy a vast audience ready to respond to our every word by actions that will bring about or frustrate our predictions. Let us worry about that when we face it. In any case, we should be more concerned, as Robert Merton was in his classic article on self-fulfilling prophecy, with analysing the way in which pseudo-scientific ideologies generate self-serving 'evidence' - of racial inferiority, or the character failings of society's outcasts. The self-fulfilling predictions of sociologists are surely less important socially than the self-fulfilling prophecies of bigots.

Similarly, we should not allow ourselves to be deterred by the fear that all we can do is make lucky guesses. To take that view is to underestimate the richness and achievements of sociology, as if there were nothing solid on which predictions could be based. So, calling on colleagues to engage in prediction, and to make explicit the predictions which lie implicit in our work, was an attempt to speak for sociology.

At the BSA conference, I made the prediction that, within twenty years, virtually all the defined benefit occupational pension schemes in the UK (those based on final salary and years of service) will have been replaced by money-purchase schemes, where investors build a sum which will finance their own income in retirement. This prediction is based partly on an extrapolation from current trends - the shift is well under way in the private sector - but also on key themes in sociological work on post-Fordism, flexible specialization, the new managerialism, enterprise culture and risk society. It is a testable and I hope non-trivial prediction. As for its usefulness, I would simply say: be on your guard for the next round of bad advice and unprincipled mis-selling. Significantly, financial service providers, industry regulators and the government are urging the need for 'financial literacy'. This should be read less as an opportunity than a threat: the financially illiterate will be the losers, and they will be blamed for their illiteracy. Do not expect the neo-liberal state to show much compassion.

A colleague in the audience asked me whether I saw a danger in making predictions of that kind. A fair question. I have argued that, in the present climate, we should not be too concerned about self-fulfilling and self-negating prediction. If, however, sociology succeeds in asserting itself in the public sphere, then the problem of irresponsibility in prediction will become a reality. For me, the question underlines the inescapably moral and political nature of teaching and research in sociology. It is a matter not just of research ethics, but of sociology's impact on society for good or ill. In my own case, I teach and write on the sociology of religion. Without foolishly overestimating the impact one can have - the students are alert, I am not that important to them, and fortunately I do not have sophisticated techniques of 'brainwashing' any more than the Moonies do - I still would not want to say anything that led a student in the direction of a violent millenarian movement. I imagine we all face such dilemmas, and I do not think it helpful to deny them.

The point about prediction is that it is not the same thing as prophecy. A testable prediction, rationally grounded in theory and riskily made public, is quite different from the self-important prophecies delivered to a captive audience by the cosseted academics whom Weber condemned in his defence of ethical neutrality.

The Times Higher carried a feature on the Glasgow conference, written by Alison Utley. I was reported as saying that sociology has become inward-looking, that we have lost our audience, that we take too few risks, and that we have abandoned the grand vision. I cannot make the usual disclaimers, that I was misquoted or my views taken out of context. Nor do I wish to join in the antipathy towards journalism that is so characteristic of sociology - witness Pierre Bourdieu's high-minded strictures on the shortcomings of journalism and the mass media. We cannot expect journalists to act as our propagandists, and they have a point about our failure to communicate to the wider public.

Bourdieu is, of course, a maître à penser. It seems unlikely that any British sociologist, not even Anthony Giddens, could ever be treated with the deference which the French accord to their intellectuals. The Anglo-Saxon way is probably healthier. But the success of American sociology points up our own relative failure. For example, we have no text which can compare with the impact in the USA of Habits of the

Heart by Robert Bellah et al. If American sociologists can address a public of fellow citizens without trivialization, why can't we?

I had a surprise when I read the 'What the Papers Say' section of my university's Newsletter, which had evidently picked up the Times Higher's coverage of the BSA conference. Amid the usual evangelical celebration of our achievements (an instance of Weberian 'salvation anxiety'?) we had this summary of my contribution: 'Alan Aldridge, a sociologist at the University, says no one is listening to sociologists anymore'. Bad news at last! Ironically, I was actually trying to speak for sociology, not against it. Such, in Giddens' phrase, are the perils of punditry. No doubt I should have predicted what would happen.!

Report From The Women's Caucus

Over 50 women participated in the two meetings of the women's caucus at the 1999 Annual BSA Conference. Meetings were passionate in tone with a great sense of energy amongst women. The atmosphere was positively promoted by the provision of tea, coffee and biscuits at the first meeting - a gesture greatly appreciated by those present.

There were three main areas of debate:

- Gender and sociology
- Scheduling of caucus meetings and conference organisation
- The war in Kosovo

Gender and Sociology

Debate on these issues started with a consideration of the involvement of women in panel sessions at the conference. A "hierarchical dimension" to participation was suggested. Some felt intimidated by "big names" in sociology and a sense of male networks, which were said to continue to dominate many areas of sociology. In parts of the science stream (and some other sessions) there were no women as panel members. Given the increasing number of women in sociology this was considered a worrying trend. The content of some presentations was also felt by some to be dated, as issues of gender and sexuality were not considered when they are clearly relevant to a critical and inclusive sociology. Audiences in streams appeared to be "gendered", with some streams predominately male or female. One woman commented that sociology as a "friendly place to be, to debate differences" was questionable, and others agreed. However, most women were sanguine. The issues of gender, representation and participation in sociology emerge at every conference and there remains much to be achieved to develop an "inclusive sociology" and association. The caucus provides a space in which women can consider these issues and the positive developments of the last 25 years were recognised. But, as ever, the struggle continues.

The cost of the conference was thought by some to have lowered participation by postgrads, contract researchers, and those not in employment. It was suggested that a lower day rate and a progressive increase in the conference fee could help to enhance participation. Related to this, a number of women received conflicting information on the hardship fund. It was suggested that an advert/article in the winter issue of *Network* could be used to clarify these issues.

Scheduling

This year the caucus was scheduled against the AGM of the BSA. A lively debate considered this and related issues. For a number of years the first meeting of the caucus has taken place on the first evening of conference, after dinner, around 8pm. This was not possible this year as a plenary session took place on the first evening of the conference. Whilst accepting that time tabling is difficult a number of women were concerned that they had to choose between the AGM and Caucus.

Debate considered ideas for next year's conference. It may be possible to return to an early evening meeting on day one. Might the first meeting be scheduled against the publisher's reception (teatime day one) or a lunchtime get together at the start of the conference? It was agreed to discuss these ideas with next year's conference organising committee.

A related issue was the scheduling of papers and other sessions on gender and sexuality. There was a sense that these were timetabled against each other. Again it was agreed to discuss this with next year's organising committee.

War in Kosovo

After a discussion on the bombing and impact on women and children it was agreed to send a message of support to a peace group in Belgrade, Women in Black Network. The message would be sent on behalf of the women present at the first caucus meeting. Discussion on the war did bring home the wider context to the conference and brought us back to the potential for a discipline that is dynamic, relevant, and inclusive.

Positive End Points

A celebration of women in sociology was suggested. This led to a discussion on what were the things about the conference women enjoyed. Apart from the obvious - that the Caucus meeting was the best session so far! - there were a number of aspects to celebrate. Women noted the potential for networking, sharing and the quality of many papers.

Linda McKie

Report from the Equality of the Sexes Committee Workshop on Contract Research

Held at the 1999 BSA Annual Conference, University of Glasgow

The contract culture has become increasingly evident in UK institutions of higher education. There are some 36,000 contract researchers working in higher education, mostly employed on external funding from research councils, charities, the European Union, government departments. Most institutions consider each contract as a self-contained entity that must cover all costs. And yet there is the irony of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE); it is invariably the least secure in the profession, the contract researchers, who are generating much of the data and papers on which RAE submissions are based!

Women are 33% more likely than men to be employed on fixed term contracts and 50% less likely to be professors (Halvorsen, 1999). With more than half of all students in higher education women, what future awaits those hoping to develop an academic career? Often graduates and postgraduates start their academic careers in contract research.

So what can the British Sociological Association (BSA) do to support sociologists in contract research? This was the focal question for the workshop. With national initiatives such as the Concordat for Contract Researchers and more recently the Research Careers Initiative does the BSA need to do anything more? Three presentations considered the issues from the perspective of:

- the contract researcher, Carol Emslie, University of Glasgow
- the manager of contract researchers, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, University of Edinburgh, managing a range of projects
- a former contract researcher and now director of a research centre, Janet Holland, South Bank University

...continued over

At its best research work is a shared experience, with openness and ethical management practices. Yet so many find themselves excluded from a range of activities and core information, and most importantly from knowledge about the workings of academia. An essential first point of action is the development of appropriate and sympathetic management practices by BSA members who act as line managers and grant holders for projects.

Central to management practice is support for research careers and an appreciation that (a) there needs to be a career structure for those who wish to remain solely in research; (b) today's researchers may become tomorrow's senior lecturers and professors. There is a paradox with sociology as a discipline researching and theorising hierarchies, inequalities and the implications of difference, but working in a context of increasing casualisation with little regard for the futures of contract staff.

Dedicated research centres, with appropriate infrastructural and support from senior management, can provide a focused environment for career development and employment retention. Contracts of less than three years create a greater range of insecurities and pressures upon time; especially to publish from studies. Central is the need to value research, not just for the RAE, but as an intrinsically necessary and valid component to the development of the discipline, social and public policies and wider debates on society.

Access to staff development and skills training helps to promote the job opportunities of contract researchers and the BSA could support such activities through the development of existing workshops run by the Postgraduate Education and Training Committee and EOS.

In summary BSA members who are managing contract research need to appreciate:

- the insecurities, especially financial and career;
- the inefficiency resulting from pressures on contract researchers to seek further contracts or job opportunities;
- the pressures on time; to write up and publish while seeking further employment;
- the need to negotiate a publishing strategy which includes contract researchers post contract as active authors in scheduled programmes of writing, if they so wish;
- the need to offer opportunities for conference attendance, skill development and career networking, and
- the need to offer peer and mentoring support in progressing a career in academia

Contract researchers must also appreciate the growing pressures on managers who are trying to secure longer-term employment in the context of increasing competition for grants.

In conjunction with other BSA committees and members the EOS Committee are considering the issues raised at the workshop. We hope to develop a number of activities to both raise awareness and promote the situation of contract researchers and their managers.

Linda McKie, Chair, Equality of Sexes Committee,

Halvorsen, E (1999) Gender Analysis of the Higher Education Statistics Agency Data 1996/7, Association of University Teachers, London.

'For Sociology', a Personal View of The BSA Annual Conference

This was the best BSA conference that I have ever been to. However, this view was certainly affected by the venue - my favourite British city. For places to drink and eat, and that's about as cultural as I get, Glasgow is second to none. My favourable experience is probably also due to the fact that I did not stay in conference accommodation, but managed to inconvenience a friend for the week.

This BSA conference differed from many of its predecessors in a number of respects. Firstly, the conference did not have a substantive theme. The call for papers asked for contributions 'with any theoretical and empirical focus, in any area of sociology' which addressed issues of continuity and change; modernity and its others; the future of the discipline(s) etc. I did worry that this might lead to complete chaos and fragmentation. However, the organisers should be congratulated for achieving a balance between rich diversity of substantive focus, concurrent and coherent streams of papers and an overall thoroughgoing theme. All of the sessions and discussions I attended related, in their own way, to the central challenge thrown at us by the organising committee: how does our own work relate 'to the discipline of sociology, its traditions, its future, its relationship to other disciplines and its relevance to contemporary social issues'. In relation to previous debate that has appeared on the pages of Network, this year's conference is an argument for unthemed conferences every year. Personally, I became tired of attending sessions, not only at BSA conferences, where authors attempted to squeeze their own personal projects into the conference theme, with the result that the latter was hardly discussed in any detail at all. Why don't we just come clean and have no substantive theme?

The second major way in which the 1999 conference differed from earlier ones was the diverse forms of paper presentation, discussions and session organisation. Traditional three-paper sessions and plenaries were still available. However, they were joined by 'special sessions', 'flagged sessions' (both of these consisted of particularly influential authors discussing the concerns of a particular stream) and 'feature sessions' (relating sociological issues to current developments in Glasgow; matching sociological discussion with a related visit or tour in Glasgow). Some papers were also presented 'electronically', available on a special web-site to fully accredited delegates for the duration of the conference and for one month after. In my view, we were treated to four excellent, and interrelated, plenary sessions from Anthony Giddens, Greg McLennan, Liz Stanley and Richard Sennett. It was fascinating to hear their ideas on 'why sociology matters' and what it is all about. The Giddens plenary was supposed to be a video presentation. However, rather ironically, as he was talking about the massive impact of globalisation, de-traditionalisation and the 'new media', the video did not work and it became a radio broadcast. At least this made some people smile!

In terms of content and innovation, I thought the conference was excellent. Where it may have fallen down, and this is from other experiences rather than my own, is in communicating this content - even to the conference participants. Thus, for example, the 'feature sessions' which I attended were superb (one was the best conference session I have ever attended), however they were very poorly attended. Many delegates claimed not to know when or how these could be accessed. Similarly, the 'electronic presentations' were an imaginative development. However, some people were unclear how to access the papers and/or locate the authors for discussion. The non-availability of a substantial number of presented papers was also a criticism from a lot of people.

Overall though, I came away from this conference feeling positive - sociology has a lot to offer the world in the next century.

Steve Taylor

A Sociologist's involvement in the Lawrence Inquiry

by Simon Holdaway

As I read the official papers about the police investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder, my years of sociological research about the police found a new vitality. Features of the occupational culture of policing which I had analysed for two decades, conclusions from my studies of the occupational experience of black and Asian officers, and ideas developed in various work about police race relations harmonised, explaining aspects of the police action documented in the files. The newspapers had been reporting a catalogue of startling errors in the police investigation, some calling it racist, some incompetence. From my perspective, the police action seemed incredible at first sight but routine, consistent with what much research over two decades has told us about policing.

Emotions are inevitably mixed on these rare occasions. I could not help but recall the frustration I felt when senior police officers criticised my work. They usually argued that I was either displaying prejudice against the police, or that so much change had taken place since I finished my fieldwork that my ideas were no longer relevant. Then there was the long battle with the Home Office for permission to publish my research about black and Asian resigners from the police. I wanted to shout, 'I told you'. And there was the terrible tragedy of Stephen Lawrence's death; his parents' years of struggle to get their voice heard; and the wider context of race relations in our society which they reflected in some measure. The insight of sociological thinking that, in Mills's terms, links personal problems to public issues focused on Stephen Lawrence's murder. I now had an opportunity to convey my ideas to the inquiry and influence its findings.

The lesson I have learned about policy reform is to be resillient and dogged when pursuing one's ideas with government, the police, and whomever one tries to influence. I am now glad that, despite setbacks, I did not give up trying to influence the Home Office and other policy makers. I am glad that I have not tried to move my position as a sociologist, away from the boundary between the police and the more detached academic world. The risk is to be viewed as a police sociologist by academic colleagues, as an idealistic academic by police officers. The point is to try and stay on the boundary, as uncomfortable as this might be.

The Lawrence Inquiry offered an opportunity to bypass many gatekeepers who had previously hampered my work. There was an opportunity to make a direct submission to the Inquiry and (at the risk of sounding arrogant) to raise the profile of sociological analysis, not least its relevance to an important public debate.

The Commission for Racial Equality had asked me to write their evidence for Part 1 of the Lawrence Inquiry, which was about the police investigation. The dominant idea in the minds of the counsel representing various parties was one of individual police officers who were racists, of policies that were deliberately discriminatory, and so on. This was understandably getting them nowhere, and the Commission needed to fathom how they could move beyond that individualistic analysis of officers as racists which was dominating the Inquiry. My view was that counsel had to tease-out the ways in which officers of all ranks neglected to take 'race' into account during their routine work and, when they did account for it, how it was mediated in discriminatory ways through the occupational culture. The focus needed to be on the taken-for-granted world of police officers, the occupational culture that framed their ideas about race and mediated them when related to action.

I combed the police papers, trying to tease out officers' assumptions about how the murderous assault should be defined, about why the Lawrence family responded to officers in particular ways. In brief, I tried to describe and analyse police common sense, which in my view is precisely the domain of inquiry that should be at the forefront of sociological analysis. A striking, consistent feature of the police investigation was the way in which race relations were neglected. When race was taken into account it mediated negative ideas. However, it was the neglect of race, not least when so much advice from the Home Office and police sources had directed officers clearly to take it into account, which was crucial to the ways in which Stephen's murder was investigated. It was possible to demonstrate that the police could and should have acted differently when investigating the murder. By doing nothing they sustained discriminatory practices which they took for granted as acceptable.

Alongside the preparation of the evidence, I made contact with or was contacted by newspaper and other journalists. When the Inquiry report was published, I wanted to ensure that I had an opportunity to comment, which required me to be very pro-active. I was booked for the Today programme, Newsnight, the BBC mid-day news, Radio 5 phone in's, and so on. When the report was leaked and eventually published I must have spoken to more than 20 journalists and was lined up for a number of live interviews. Specialising in the police has meant quite a lot of contact with the media throughout my career. However, the experience of my involvement in the Lawrence Inquiry has led me to develop and use some basic rules for working with them.

When taking part in a radio interview I write down a few words which convey what I want to say and make sure that I make all of my key points. When on television, I memorise the points and stick to my script. Before I speak to a journalist I ask about the character of the programme or article they are preparing. I will not speak to journalists unless they guarantee to ascribe quotes personally, including the name of my university and that I am a professor of sociology. It does academe no good to virtually write articles and programmes via telephone conversations and not be recognised for it.

If a radio or television journalist interviews me, I ask who is going to take part in their programme and suggest that I do so. Again, my view is that it is necessary for academics to seek a much higher media profile than they presently enjoy. During the Lawrence Inquiry, I was told on several occasions that I was not being invited to appear in a programme because people who, as one researcher put it, 'are on the front line' were required. We have to change that perception of the academic and present our ideas in a way that communicates to television and other audiences. This of course means compromise, the simplification of ideas and a very proactive stance with the media. My final rule is this. When working for a television or other commercial company, request a fee. I made this rule after an extended conversation with a BBC researcher who invited me to appear on a prime-time programme. She conducted a lengthy interview about the Lawrence case and invited me to travel to London for a live, televised interview. My telephone went as a taxi arrived at my house to take me to the station. The interview was cancelled in the nick of time; someone from London would be able to do it. I watched the programme to find that the

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A Sociologist's Involvement in the Lawrence Inquiry (Continued)

introduction was in my words, almost verbatim, and the rest of the script drew on my ideas. That experience led to a complaint to Sir John Birt, which is still being investigated, and a promise to myself that I will never again provide free consultancy.

We await the government's response to the Inquiry's findings. At the moment the Home Office is controlling its response very tightly. Academics are not being used to reflect on various policy options. Monitoring groups to oversee the implementation of whatever reforms are recommended have been appointed, but they do not include any social scientists. They are essentially groups of people from the police professional associations and representatives from various minority ethnic groups. I would have hoped for a much more open approach to policy reform, and further opportunities for sociologists to contribute. We cannot yet be content.

Simon Holdaway is Professor of Sociology at the University of Sheffield. He has recently been appointed specialist adviser on police race relations to the Commission on the Future of Multiracial Britain, funded by The Rowntree Trust and administered by The Runnymede Trust.

bsa

BSA Support Fund

The BSA Support Fund exists to provide financial assistance for BSA members, living in the UK who are unwaged or in low paid part-time work. Postgraduate members who are unwaged or who have no research grants are, therefore, eligible.

If you know of anyone who could benefit let them know of the Fund's existence.

The maximum award to any individual in any one calendar year is £120.00.

The majority of funds have been provided for:

- Travel and subsistence in connection with BSA conferences and/or BSA study groups
- Research and/or fieldwork
- Typing and binding of thesis

The Support Fund does not give grants towards the cost of course fees or for the purchase of books or equipment. Priority will be given to proposals involving participation in BSA activities.

Successful applicants are required to submit a brief financial and academic report on the activity enabled by their award.

Application forms and further details are available from the BSA Office.

Email: enquiries@britsoc.org.uk

Postgraduate Forum Update

Thank you to all those people - postgraduates and staff - who have expressed support for the Postgraduate Forum. Many thanks particularly to all of you who responded to the feature in the previous issue of Network. Your help was invaluable in preparing a formal response to the ESRC Postgraduate Training Guidelines.

If you missed the last Network, or have just forgotten what it was all about, the Postgraduate Forum held a meeting at the BSA Annual Conference in Glasgow, in April. We discussed the many and varied situations and experiences of postgraduate students doing Sociology, including the status of part-time and international students, supervision, computer facilities, health and safety concerns, the level of student stipends, life after the Ph.D., what we as postgraduates could do for ourselves about such things, independently of our departments. Importantly, the ESRC had posted a discussion document on proposed revisions to postgraduate training guidelines on its website. So we had a lot to talk about, and still do!

I asked postgraduates for any suggestions or comments they had on the ESRC proposals, and the issues raised in the Glasgow meeting. The depth of feeling, frustration and injustice expressed by current postgraduates to the Postgraduate Forum was surprising. The responses to the Network feature indicate that those of you who feel embittered at the performance of your supervisors, department heads, departmental staff, postgraduate directors are certainly not alone. This is not reassuring, but deeply disturbing; postgraduates across the UK need and deserve more respect within their own institutions.

Now that we're on the subject, the issue of the status of Ph.D. students was frequently mentioned. According to an ESRC report, "The status of postgraduate research students is that of junior members of staff in the university" (Woodley 1996:7). Reading this now seems risible.

Whilst at first glance the exercise may have been biased towards the ESRC, the fact of the matter is that departments are aiming for formal recognition by the ESRC. If departments already have ESRC-funded students, they should adhere to certain conditions laid down by the ESRC, regarding the provision and quality of training, supervision, facilities ... (you've seen this list before). And those departments who aspire to formal recognition have to implement prerequisites set by the ESRC. So we all benefit. Or that's the theory, anyway. So, as I said last time, there was never any attempt to prioritise ESRC-funded postgraduates over postgraduates who receive funding from other sources - apologies to anyone who inferred otherwise - but the ESRC guidelines affect all postgraduates. Therefore, whether we receive funding from the ESRC or not, it's in our interests to have our say on ESRC proposals.

Further, the Postgraduate Forum tried not to limit its readership to membership of the BSA - the article was originally circulated as an e-mail attachment (it also appeared on the BSA website) - but under the umbrella of the BSA we do have the opportunity to exchange views and have them sent directly to the ESRC. We shouldn't waste this opportunity, and thanks again to all those who took up the chance. People responded with very thought-provoking and challenging ideas, making it worthwhile to submit a response independently from the BSA. Andrew Blaikie, as Chair of the Research and Postgraduate Committee, is to be thanked and congratulated for his determination to give postgraduates a voice.

Last time, I mentioned how there was a lack of career advice for postgraduates who did not want to teach or research. I'm glad to report that this was addressed by the Graduate School at the University of Manchester, in a student conference "Into the Millennium: The Other Side...!" on May 13th. Congratulations to the University of Manchester, and hopefully other institutions will follow their lead on this matter.

In response to all your queries concerning writing abstracts and articles for publication: the BSA is currently preparing a resource-pack, which will include plenty of helpful material. Previous issues of Network are worth consulting, for advice on writing conference abstracts (No. 71, October 1998); and a call for members' opinions on core journals appeared in the subsequent issue (No. 72, January 1999). Look out for further information on core journals in sociology, which may be useful to postgraduates (and staff) in targeting future papers for publication. Professor Roy Boyne (University of Durham) is preparing a "journals directory" for BSA members-more information on this will be given when the directory is available.

Also, the BSA Equality of the Sexes Committee (EOS) has produced a booklet which includes information on journal articles, book proposals, editing and publishing. Contact the BSA Office for details.

Professor Alan Warde gave a talk on "The Natural History of an Article" at the 1998 BSA Postgraduate Summer School, University of Stirling. (The editors of Sociology were present, and didn't take too much umbrage at Alan's comments!) The Postgraduate Forum approached Professor Warde to ask if his talk could be circulated in some way, which he kindly agreed to do, and we are working on this for the resource-pack mentioned above.

There are, occasionally, conferences for postgraduates. All I can suggest for the moment is to keep your eyes peeled. Perhaps publicity is the problem here: maybe there are more postgraduate conferences going on that we just don't know about? So if you're planning or attending a postgraduate conference, or you hear about one, let the Postgraduate Forum know (it's better to be told by several people than not be told at all, so don't hesitate to mention it).

After preliminary investigations, we discovered that setting up an e-mail discussion list would do some serious damage to the network in the BSA Office. If anyone has any ideas how a discussion group could be set up, without endangering the folks at the office, please let us know!

Reference

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Andrew Carlin
a.p.carlin@stir.ac.uk

Benefits of Doctoral Research Training — by Wendy Olsen

Across Britain more and more universities are offering PhD research methodology training schemes. These make UK PhD programmes more similar to US doctorates which have a substantial taught coursework component. Some students complain about being forced to study methods modules. Below I report on some of my experiences with social science PhD students. The schemes have several advantages which I describe below. Some are visible mainly in the long run, institutionally, and rather beyond the immediate desires of the new PhD student. That could suggest that these schemes are problematic for the PhD student so I will conclude by looking at their disadvantages too. Along the way I'll refer to several publications that may interest sociologists who either supervise or train PhD students.

Many of the schemes for doctoral students use modules that originate at Masters level in specific departments. These have been made available to a range of PhD students from related disciplines or departments. The paperwork and payment transfers for these modularised schemes are now often undertaken by new Graduate Schools, such as the University of Manchester Graduate School of Social Sciences, which lets students choose from among a very wide range of modules from among member Departments. A major result is that PhD students are implicitly encouraged to use cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or inter-disciplinary methods. Apparently the higher education funding councils have stipulated some official definitions distinguishing inter-disciplinarity from multi-disciplinarity but the main point is not these fine distinctions. A student exposed to two disciplines' methodologies is likely to come up with a relatively novel method even for a one-discipline PhD. An economist can use interviews and qualitative analysis, for instance. Yeung uses and recommends grounded theory for geographers!

Inter-disciplinarity has always raised problems for the students doing social topics like development studies. The fact that different disciplines like political science, sociology and economics have different conventional criteria for validity sometimes leaves the student floundering in Year Three or squeezed between two disagreeing PhD examiners during the Viva. I did a multi-approach PhD and I found that in the literature review I could not take anything for granted so had to summarise more material than I expected.

One academic study that ranged across the sciences and social sciences drew the conclusion based on interviews with UK PhD students, that those whose BA or MA (or BSc or MSc) was in a single discipline had a more firm base for inter-disciplinary PhD work (Parry, Atkinson, and Delamont, 1997). Basically one could not recommend mixed disciplines for the whole BA-to-PhD career except for the academically strongest students. Secondly, they found that in the natural sciences students gained clarity and resolve by working in teams that combined doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. In the social sciences this "team" model is not widely used and multi-disciplinary students sometimes felt isolated and unsure of the assessment criteria for the PhD. Stress and defensiveness seem to thrive on these conditions whereas "well-disciplined" single-discipline PhDs are more confidently felt to be coherent.

Is it incoherent to analyse, say, war as a web of linked social, political, economic and ethnic phenomena? It does not seem so to me. But within the PhD process it can appear so because some academics are so dismissive of what other academics do.

So the training schemes help these students by sitting them down with disciplinary specialists and letting them get a thorough grounding in Year One. Of course summer schools like that as the University of Essex have for many years provided training (see http://www.essex.ac.uk/methods/). What's new is the long-term 3-4 year cohort creation where the students actually discuss with each other in Year One and create a basis for giving supportive but critical help to each other in Year Three.

I would suggest that this "cohort effect" will become more obvious to students in Year Three or after submission. That is why at Bradford University we plan to do a retrospective study of PhD recipients to see how they assess the training scheme they had several years before. We have already had the letters expressing thanks for the scheme from students who now have their PhDs.

Another benefit, besides the cohort effect and affirming the use of novel methods in each discipline, is to raise the standard and clarify the criteria for excellence in PhD research. It may be twenty years since the supervisor(s) did their PhDs. What is feasible in a doctoral study has changed because of rapid growth in the computer support for survey-data and qualitative-data analysis. The up-to-date training and the marking of essays on methodology spread the idea among students and staff that expectations are high. Having done essays (which most PhD students hate doing) the student can then compare their marks with others, discuss their weaknesses, and celebrate their strengths. Feedback starts in Year One rather than Year Four.

The responsibility for training is now shared and does not lie merely with the supervisor. I list below the most frequent problems found in our (Bradford University Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities) essays:

1. Poor grammar or punctuation
2. Referencing not consistent or not complete
3. Simplistic qualitative-vs-quantitative dichotomy
4. Lack of a theme running through essay
5. Lack of clarity in defining terms
6. (least common) Excessive cutting-and-pasting from old work into new, resulting in a disconnected "bitty" style.

None of these are discipline-specific problems and it seems obvious that it is more efficient for central trainers to insist on (and teach) high standards in areas 1 to 6 while supervisors concentrate on substantive suggestions for reading, data, argument and analysis. We hope that a burden is being removed from lecturers by creating an atmosphere of excellence for everyone to share. Of course supervisors' styles differ (Acker, Hill and Black, 1994), but it is desirable for them not to duplicate each others' work.

When a student's essay fails it certainly shocks everyone. It does happen but usually only because the PhD student is concentrating on some other work. After discussion with the supervisor a revised and improved piece of work is usually submitted.

The ESRC and HEFCE hope that the generic training will make students better able to complete a PhD or MPhil in the allotted time. It certainly makes them aware that they should do so. Beyond that it is up to each student.

One useful type of exercise in Year One is to get students to estimate how long it takes to transcribe one interview. Then get someone (or each one) to actually type out 5 minutes of talk from a tape. Apart from the inevitable discussion of slang, accents, cost of microphones that will result, students generally get a shock when they realize that it takes 20-30 minutes. They need a minimum of 4 hours per hour on tape - and that's for a skilled touch typist. Similarly, for questionnaires, people think unrealistically that they can get 6 to 10 survey interviews

done per day. We get third year students and academic staff to come and tell how we usually only achieve two survey interviews per day because of all the networking and triangulation work we are also doing.

So feasibility and accurate estimates can improve the Year 1 methodology planning for social science PhDs. Self-financing students can also plan their costs accordingly. For institutions, then, the PhD training schemes create an atmosphere where people know what is meant by research excellence and students are helped to set out feasible plans by the end of Year 1. Both full-time and part-time students gain from the "cohort effect" since they get to know more students early on and they can meet up with them during the relatively isolating writing-up stage.

The main drawback of all this is the pressure it puts on students. They have to read, read, read; plan their PhD; attend lectures; satisfy their supervisors; write essays and keep to termly attendance under the new schemes. Many complain bitterly, saying of Bradford's scheme that it will cause delays in them beginning their fieldwork. The ESRC itself has had a committee produce a guide aimed at helping both supervisors and students to avoid unnecessary delays (Christopherson, et al., 1992). Supervisors think sometimes the danger lies in beginning fieldwork too early! But often students don't agree.

A major issue, it seems to me, is (ugly word) "optionality", by which I mean flexibility in the training from the student's viewpoint. Can a student get exemption for MA level work they've already done? Do they get to choose from a range of options? Do the options cover both generic and subject-specific issues? I'm sure I speak for many doctoral students in arguing that flexibility is preferred by the students compared to a fully compulsory course.

But not by ESRC! The funding agencies do insist that every student be exposed to all the generic issues and technologies, as described in the core research training guidelines. (See footnote 1) The great benefit of all this, however, is that the student's c.v. can then include skills like "secondary data analysis; focus group mediation; questionnaire construction; in-depth interviewing; grant proposal construction and budgeting", even if all these techniques were not actually part of the PhD. The doctoral training begins to look like valuable transferable skills.

So UK Doctoral schemes have been both widened and improved, at least from a long-term viewpoint.

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ESRC Guidelines on the Provision of Research Training for Postgraduate Research Students in the Social Sciences, ESRC: Swindon. *(www.esrc.ac.uk/ptd/guidlns/ptgsa.htm top).*

Lyon, E.S., (1995) 'Dilemmas of power in postgraduate practice: A comment on research training', *Sociology, vol.29, no.3, pp. 531-540.*

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Dr Wendy Olsen is Course Team Leader; lecturing at the Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Bradford.

1. See www.esrc.ac.uk/ptd/guidlns. These were produced in 1991, updated in 1996, and are up for review with the new edition due out in the year 2000.

2000 Post Graduate Summer School Call for Director

bsa

The BSA's Research and Post Graduate Committee invites nominations and applications for the Director of the 2000 Summer School.

The annual School offers an intensive, residential, week of study and networking to 35 postgraduate student members of the BSA. The role of the Director is to act as host for the School, determine the programme of events, appoint tutors, decide on applicants' acceptance to the School, and to report regularly on the progress towards the School.

The Director becomes a member of the Research and Post Graduate Committee on appointment. The reports of recent Directors are available to the successful applicant, and these reports provide invaluable support, "how to do" sections, and comments on the experience of running this rewarding event.

Deadline Friday 12 November 1999.

If you would like further details, please contact:

Judith Mudd at the BSA Office, Units 3F/g, Mountjoy Research Centre, Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3UR. Telephone: 0191 383 0639; Fax: 0191 383 0782; Email: enquiries@britsoc.org.uk

Sociology of Religion Study Group

1999 Annual Study Day

The Study Day will be on Saturday 20th November at the University of Warwick, on the theme, 'Religions and the State'. The day is being held in conjunction with the Politics and Religion Academic Network (PARAN). Revd Canon Dr Martyn Percy will be giving a keynote paper for the Study Group.

Postgraduate Conference 2000

The dates for this will be 28th-29th January 2000, at the University of Bristol.

2000 Annual Conference

The dates for this will be Wednesday 29th March - Saturday 1st April 2000, at the University of Exeter.

Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Convenor

Leisure & Recreation Studies Study Group Workshop

The Department of Sports Studies at the University of Stirling hosted a Leisure & Recreation Studies group workshop on Friday 3rd September 1999 which considered 'Sport and the Break-Up of Britain? Continuities and Change'. Over twenty people attended the workshop which included presentations on: 'Sport and the Scottish Parliament: preliminary considerations'; 'Nation, ethnicity and exclusion in Scottish football: the experience of Asian Scots'; Sport and the Unionisms of Ireland'; and 'The stirrings of St George: Englishness - a matter of style or a rediscovered identity?' Anyone who wishes to be included on the mailing list for this study group should contact: Irene A. Reid, Department of Sports Studies, University of Stirling; e-mail i.a.reid@stir.ac.uk

Protest & Social Movements Study Group

One-Day Conference

Manchester, Saturday 13th November 1999

Programme:

10.30 - 11.00 :	coffee and registration
11.00 - 12.30 :	Mario Diani (University of Strathclyde) - "New and Old in Contemporary Social Movements"
12.30 - 1.30 :	sandwich lunch provided for people booking in advance
1.30 - 3.00 :	Chris Rootes (University of Kent) - "The Future of Social Movements and Social Movements Research"
3.00 - 4.15 :	Discussion on the future of the study group

Room E221 John Dalton Extension, Manchester Metropolitan University, Oxford Road, Manchester (3 mins walk from Oxford Road Station, 1 min from BBC; nearby street parking possible)
Cost: BSA members stlg10, BSA student members stlg5.00; non-members (staff) stlg15.00, (students) stlg10.00. Cheques to BSA.

This event is organized by the BSA study group on Protest and Social Movements in conjunction with the Departments of Sociology at Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan Universities.

To book, give at least a week's notice to enable ordering of sandwiches (state if veggie etc), payment in advance preferred, to

EITHER

Colin Barker (study group convenor), Dept of Sociology,
Manchester Metropolitan University,
Manton Building,
Rosamond St West,
Manchester
M15 6LL

email: c.barker@mmu.ac.uk tel 0161 247 3439

OR

Nick Crossley, Dept of Sociology,
University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9PL

email Nick.Crossley@man.ac.uk tel 0161 275 2517

Who Prospers ? - The BSA at the Annual UK Festival of Science

The BSA now sponsors the Sociology and Social Policy section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and for the first time presented an afternoon of speakers at this year's UK Festival of Science at Sheffield in September.

This year's festival theme was "Prospering Through Science", so the natural question for sociologists was "who prospers?" This session appeared under the strands of 'quality of life' and 'sharing scientific understanding'.

For the session, the BSA Research and External Liaison Committee selected 4 speakers considered to be of sufficient merit to represent the Association and whose abilities as sociologists and members was deemed worthy of recognition. The BSA selected speakers were:

Clare Twigger-Ross, Environment Agency
Kate Burningham, University of Surrey
Colin Hay, University of Birmingham
Ian Loader, Keele University.

'Sharing science? Methods for participation in environmental regulation' by Clare Twigger-Ross was a talk drawn from her research at the Environment Agency's National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal. Clare examined the current debate on new methods for incorporating values into environmental decision making and considered the implications for environmental regulation. The three specific methods she explained were citizen's juries, consensus conferences, and stakeholder dialogue. Clare argued that only by bringing together 'experts' and stakeholders could better understanding of environmental impacts be appreciated.

'"We don't have statistics we just hear from the noise of the road": a case study of lay challenges to expert assessments of social and environmental impact' by Kate Burningham was based on her ESRC funded research into local opposition to a new road. Kate juxta-positioned the experiences and views of local residents to the 'desk-based' analysis of the Department of Transport's 'experts'. She argued for the inclusion of moral and experiential considerations alongside more technical data. Kate successfully demonstrated the type of unsatisfactory outcomes that can occur when lay people are not properly consulted about significant planning projects.

'Globalisation and welfare retrenchment: who prospers ?' by Colin Hay looked at the 'buzz-word' of the 1990s which he argued conjured an ever growing diversity of associations, connotations and attendant mythologies. His presentation sought to expose, challenge and mystify many of the exaggerated and over-generalised claims made about globalisation in the context of welfare retrenchment in contemporary Europe. Colin provided a rigorous tour-de-force of the global context of the welfare state by providing a blow-by-blow comparison of both the negative and positive externalities of welfare expenditure. Colin argued that rather than being a burden on competitiveness, the welfare state had a significant role in enhancing it.

'Is CCTV a price worth paying? Debating liberty and security in middle England' by Ian Loader and drawn from his ESRC funded research on the experiences and views of local people in an English town. Ian documented the competing sensibilities towards closed-circuit television and considered what they tell us about the impact and significance of a "very English" solution to the crime problem. He was able to demonstrate how people no longer saw CCTV as a 'big brother' threat and were more likely to view it as being as necessary as a burglar alarm, without the subsequent view that this signified the failing of the police. There could be a range of views that people might hold on this form of surveillance but Ian demonstrated that overall the most visually monitored society in the world had come to accept this addition to public spaces.

The talks were well received and promoted much discussion from the audience that was primarily made up from the science community, the media and general public. The BSA is now committed to presenting speakers at the UK Festival of Science and sees this as an opportunity to honour members who are considered exceptional sociologists. The Research & Post-Graduate Committee is currently considering next year's speakers. Congratulations to Clare, Kate, Colin and Ian for this year.

Liam Murphy
Recorder, BAAS, Sociology and Social Policy Section

Websites for sociologists

Which websites do you find most useful as a sociologist?

The Network Editorial Team would like to feature a Top 20 of Websites for Sociologists in a future edition. Here are some suggestions:

Sarah Zupko's excellent cultural studies site with lots of sociology stuff & links
http://www.popcultures.com

Don Slater's brilliant site, recently updated, with loads of stuff on consumption, sociology of the internet etc. Bibliography especially useful!
http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/slater

The Henley Centre - interesting consumer research and 'pop' sociology
http://www.henleycentre.com/index2.html

Lovely concise Intro to sociology website from Cardiff University - ask yourself why 'meaning & everyday life' is represented by the Teletubbies...
http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/undergrad/introsoc/index.html

Tony Fitzgerald's great site full of resources for introductory sociology - aimed at beginners but good stuff. Test yourself with his online quizzes! Embarrass yourself by getting questions wrong that you should know!
http://www.tonyfitzgerald.freeserve.co.uk

Email your ideas to network@britsoc.org.uk

INTELLECTUAL MIGRATION AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The Movement of Ideas from German-speaking Europe to the Anglo-Saxon World. International conference to be held in Brighton from 25-28 September 2000. organised by the Institut Wiener Kreis (Vienna) and the Centre for German-Jewish Studies (University of Sussex)

Call for Papers:

The enforced migration of writers and intellectuals from Nazi-occupied Europe has been the subject of intensive historical research. The aim of this conference will be to extend the focus to take account of a wider 20th century context, analysing both the dynamics of the original ideas and values and the transformations which resulted from their assimilation to a different cultural environment. Now that the life stories of so many migrants have been documented through both personal testimony and empirical research, this conference will break new ground by investigating the complex evolution of thought patterns and intellectual paradigms, associated in notable instances with specific groups or institutions.

The primary focus will be on migration to Britain, but proposals for comparative papers dealing with the movement of ideas to the United States and other English-speaking countries will also be welcome. There may also be scope for comparisons with migration to other language areas, for example Switzerland or Turkey. Comparative perspectives may help to distinguish the more complex implications of intellectual migration from the immediate impact of the political crisis.

Papers may focus both on evolutionary patters of development and on the creative displacements which resulted from cultural re-contextualization, including processes of depoliticization imposed by the conservatism of British institutions, which tended, perhaps to a greater extent than in the States to encourage conformity. The need to rethink intellectual positions in another language constitutes a further dimension of this process of readjustment.

The sequence of papers will be organized in thematic clusters which will include fields such as Art History, Psychology and Psychoanalysis,, the Influence of the Vienna Circle, and the Function of Institutions (for example, the Frankfurt School, the Warburg Institute and the Society for Protection of Science and Learning). The exodus of the Vienna Circle may serve as a model for the intricate relations between individual biographies, institutional histories and the evolution of theoretical concepts which accompanied the process of social adaptation and cultural transformation. A section devoted to questions of Theory and Methodology will also take account of voluntary migration, and there will be scope for concluding reflections on the longer-term implications of intellectual migration for cress-cultural creativity.

The language of the conference will be English, and papers will be restricted to a maximum of 30 minutes to allow ample time for discussion. Further information is available from the address given below, and proposals for papers, accompanied by one-page synopsis, should be sent to by 31 January 2000 to Andrea Hammel, Research Administrator, Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer/Brighton, BN1 9QN, e-mail: a.hammel@sussex.ac.uk

THE 1999/2000 CREST CONFERENCE

Title: "Social Change and Minority Ethnic Groups in Britain"
Date: Wed 24 November 1999
Venue: British Academy, London
Cost: £50 (£20 for full-time students)

Speakers include:

Baroness Prashar (Chair)
Shamit Saggar, Queen Mary and Westfield College
Andrew Geddes, University of Liverpool
Tariq Modood, University of Bristol
Anthony Heath, Nuffield College Oxford
James Nazroo, University College London

Contact for further details:

Katarina Thomson, 0171 250 1866, k.thomson@natcen.ac.uk

The Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST) is an ESRC funded research centre linking Nuffield College Oxford with the National Centre for Social Research (formerly SCPR)

ShOP

Sheffield Online Papers in Sociological Research (ShOP) will be an online forum for the publication and distribution of peer-reviewed research and work-in-progress in social science and related disciplines. Whilst we welcome papers from other disciplines we remain an explicitly sociological forum. Following suggestions from within the postgraduate fraternity an editorial team was formed who will manage the submission and referring process and the website itself.

ShOP is open to both postgraduate students (full and part-time) and staff from within the department, other departments within the University and elsewhere. Contributions are welcomed as peer-reviewed papers, book reviews and as short discussion pieces. The web site will also provide the capacity for feedback on papers via email, which will provide an essential forum for those completing work-in-progress.

Papers will be anonymously reviewed by three referees; two post-graduate students and one member of staff. We hope that all staff will be able to contribute to this aspect so as to facilitate a bridge between staff and postgraduates. ShOP is now open for submissions and will go online in October 1999.

For further information, contact the editorial team c/o:

John Walliss SOP97JW@SHEFFIELD.AC.UK
Or
Emma Wisby SOQEW@SHEFFIELD.AC.UK)

Making Time/ Marking Time

British Sociological Association

Annual Conference 2000
17th - 20th April 2000

At The University of York

The Plenary Speakers will be:

Professor Barbara Adam (Universities of Cardiff and Munich): "Taking Time Seriously: The Challenge for Sociology"

Professor Sara Arber (University of Surrey): Presidential Address

Professor Jonathan Gershuny (University of Essex): "Time and Social Change"

Professor John Urry (University of Lancaster): "Time, Complexity and Globalisation"

Papers, posters and other forms of presentation will be structured around themes which include:

*Theories of Time *Time as a Methodological Problem *Age and the Life Course *Continuity and Change *Time and Space *Public Time and Private Time *Social Trends *Biography, History and Memory *Anticipation and Futurology *Symbolic Time *Work-time and Play-time*

In addition, the social programme at the Conference will include a Ghost Walk in York, a Quiz, and a Disco.

bsa

Booking details from:

2000 BSA Conference, British Sociological Association,
Unit 3F/G, Mountjoy Research Centre,
Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3UR, UK.
Telephone: 0191 383 0839
Facsimile: 0191 383 0782
Conference2k@britsoc.org.uk

Booking forms will be distributed to members with the January issue of Network.

SOCIOLINGUISTICS SYMPOSIUM 2000
THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND SOCIAL THEORY

27-29 April 2000

The Sociolinguistics Symposium 2000 is the thirteenth meeting of the Sociolinguistics Symposium which meets once every two years. This conference will focus primarily on the Interface between Linguistics and Social Theory, and it is hoped the meeting will contribute to further cooperation between the two disciplines. The conference will include papers from a range of different subject areas such as: language variation and change, language and gender, language and the media, discourse analysis, languages in contact, creole linguistics, intercultural communication, language and migration, social stratification of language, language development and other related topics.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Professor Jack Chambers (Toronto)
Leaders and laggers in the diffusion of changes
Professor David Corson (Toronto)
Critical Realism: An Emancipatory Social Philosophy for Sociolinguistics
Professor Pieter Muysken (Leiden)
Radical Modularity and the Possibility of SocioLinguistics
Professor Shana Poplack (Ottawa)
The Social Context of Linguistic Variation (working title)
Professor Ruth Wodak (Vienna)
Does Sociolinguistics need Social Theory? New Perspectives in Critical Discourse Analysis

PROVISIONAL TITLES OF COLLOQUIA

Investigating Linguistic Variation and Change from a Dialect Sociolinguistics and Integrationism
Network Analyses in a Multilingual Environment
Language, Nationalism and Minority Rights
Intercultural Communication in Organisations. Shaping the Interface between Theory and Practice
Language, Culture and Ethnicity in the 21st Century
Language Contact at the Romance-Germanic Language Border

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More information about the conference programme, the venue and the general organisation of the event can be found either on our website:

http://www.uwe.ac.uk/facults/les/research/sociling2000.html
or at our addresses/numbers below:

Jessa Karki/Jeanine Treffers-Daller
Centre for European Studies (CES)
Faculty of Languages and European Studies
University of the West of England, Bristol
Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QY, UK

E-mail: ss2000@uwe.ac.uk
Tel: ++ 44 117 976 3842, ext 2724, Fax: ++44 117 976 2626

GENDERING ETHICS/ THE ETHICS OF GENDER

AN INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE 23 - 25 JUNE 2000

CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY GENDER STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Recent years have seen a growing interest in issues of ethics within feminist scholarship. As faith in the grand narratives and political projects of modernity has faltered, there has been a turn towards situated, contingent ethical frameworks. Both the philosophical basis and the political contours of these emerging frameworks are the subject of intense debate among feminists. Developments in science and technology raise new ethical dilemmas, and the demands of subaltern groups disturb old moral certainties. Across a wide range of disciplines questions of ethics are taking centre stage. This conference will be the first major international, interdisciplinary feminist conference in the United Kingdom to address these issues.

Keynote Speakers include:

Patty Abozaglo (Peru); Seyla Benhabib (USA);Cynthia Cockburn (UK); Jayati Gosh (to be confirmed); Lynette Hunter (UK); Grace Jantzen (UK); Sabina Lovibond (UK); Lois McNay (UK); Selma Sevenhuijsen (Netherlands); Vandana Shiva (to be confirmed); Joan Tronto (USA); Nira Yuval-Davis (UK).

We welcome short papers for parallel sessions on a range of themes including: Gender and moral subjectivity; the ethics of science and technology; bodily integrity; the new ethics of the public sphere; traditions and gender ethics; social policies and normative frameworks; intimate ethics; gender, reason and rationality; representation and ethics; violence, war and ethics; human rights. universalism and particularism; agency, autonomy and ethics; the ethics of sex; gender, nature and animals; feminist ethical histories - abolitionism, peace, prostitution, sexual violence; the ethics of the market; postmodernism, ethics and politics; the ethics of place and space; ethics and the politics of difference; alternative moral communities - historical, fictional, utopian.

Send 200 word abstracts by 1 February 2000 to:

Sasha Roseneil and Linda Hogan
Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT UK
Email: gender-studies@leeds.ac.uk

For more information, visit our website:
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/gender-studies

CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS CONFERENCE

11 - 12 DECEMBER 1999, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

OBSCENE POWERS:

CORRUPTION, COERCION AND VIOLENCE

Keynote Speakers Include:

Zygmunt Bauman (Leeds/Warsaw)
William E. Connoly (Johns Hopkins)
George Ritzer (Maryland)

The final years of the millennium have seen the extension of corporate control, the escalation of military conflict and the proliferation of political scandal. These developments have led many to conclude that contemporary configurations of power pose a grave threat to social justice, human rights and democratic decision making. This international conference will explore the modalities of corruption, coercion and violence, and will bring together scholars from a range of disciplines, that include the following: Sociology, Politics, Cultural Studies, Ethnic and Racial Studies, International Relations and Gender Studies.

For details of registration please contact:

Ronald Cowdery, Conference Director,
John Hansard Gallery,
University of Southampton, SO17 1BJ.
Tel: 01703 592158. Fax: 01703 594192
Email: rvc@soton.ac.uk

A-Z of titles reviewed in this issue of *Network*

Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political

Crime and Social Exclusion

Critical education in the new information age

The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity

Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure

The Incomes of Ethnic Minorities

Patterns of Social Inequality

Political Theory and Ecological Values

Social Science in Question

Sociology and Nature: Social Action in Contex

World systems theory

Writing and Publishing

Writing for Scholarly Publication

RAYMOND ARON: THE RECOVERY OF THE POLITICAL,

Anderson, B. C. Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 215 + ix

Brian Anderson summarises Raymond Aron's intellectual position as 'disenchanted conservative liberalism'. The main thesis of his book is to illuminate the way in which Aron's voluminous writings - they numbered over forty volumes - returned to the theme of a critique based on a political understanding of history, social order and the state. The charge made by the author is that too often thinkers on the left, in particular Marxists, have uncoupled the political from the social. This has resulted in the production of abstract theory which, at best, fails to fully engage with the social world and at its worst results in utopian totalitarianism.

Anderson begins with an essay on the work of his subject, placing Aron in his intellectual and political milieu. Anderson's Aron cuts an isolated figure among his contemporaries of the radical French intelligentsia. A recurring theme in the book is the integrity derived from standing against what is supposed to be the mainstream of social theory. There follow three substantive chapters that explore individual aspects of Aron's work. The first of these is an account of Aron's thought on history and historical method, in particular his engagement with evolutionary determinism and historical relativism. Anderson charts Aron's writings and thought on a variety of thinkers including Marx, Hegel, Weber and Dilthey. The next chapter is a critique of ideology, which Anderson assumes unproblematically is a feature monopolised by the left. The book concludes by focusing on Aron's relevance for contemporary political theory.

I came away from this wanting to read more of Aron's work, which is a tribute to any book about a thinker. What let Anderson's argument down is the grinding of his own axe rather than the application of Aron's own philosophical method and approach. Aron is defined as the liberal academic who asked uncomfortable questions of his more ideological and radical contemporaries, but this collection of essays has little to say about how he would engage with a resurgent neo-liberalism, itself perhaps more abstracted from daily life than earlier Marxist thinkers.

Tim Strangleman

WRITING AND PUBLISHING

BSA Equality of the sexes committee
BSA (1999) £5.00 pb

The BSA Equality of the Sexes Committee and others contributing to the conference held in 1997 and this subsequent booklet on Writing and Publishing are to be congratulated. Firstly, it is clear from the reports of the discussions which took place at that conference, and from the feedback included in the booklet, that the meeting provided a supportive forum within which to discuss the problems and possibilities associated with writing and publishing. Secondly, extending the discussion into the wider professional domain through the booklet will help sociologists beginning to write for publication. The booklet demystifies the processes involved in getting published, enabling potential authors to feel confident in their own abilities to write and publish appropriately. It does this through apposite use of experience and personal reflection, and an open sharing of information. There are two reflective pieces on publishing papers; an overview of publishing in academic journals; a well-directed account of publishing and research careers; and a succinct introduction to writing a book proposal. There are also reports on the four workshops held at the conference: editorial boards; writing and publishing for sociologists in a non-sociology department; the personal and the collaborative; and writing for journals. The booklet crucially highlights important professional issues, such as the impact of short term contracts, funding, collaborative working, lack of time and career structure, difficult negotiations over authorship, and the RAE.

These form the context within which we all work, but provide particularly acute constraints on postgraduate students, junior staff, and those on short term contracts. The booklet aims to be an introduction to anyone who wants to get their work published. It is a good one and should be widely read, but not just by those who are new to writing and publishing. It should be essential reading for all supervisors, principal investigators, editors, members of editorial boards and referees, because reflection on the issues raised may help prevent bad practice and the reproduction of further inequities.

Sarah Cunningham-Burley

CRIME AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Catherine Jones Finer and Mike Nellis (eds), Blackwell
ISBN 0-631-209123, £12.00 pb

This book marks the beginning of a series entitled 'Broadening Perspectives on Social Policy'. The aim of the series is to bring together approaches and perspectives from various disciplines in order to enrich current social policy debates. In *Crime and Social Exclusion* these overarching themes are explored by authors whose interests lie in several different fields - social policy, sociology, criminology, housing policy, the criminal justice system and the youth service.

It is organised into three sections: the first addressing socio-spatial aspects of crime and social exclusion; the second concerned with the actual service needs of 'socially excluded' groups; and the third with policy developments. A broad range of papers contained within these sections offer different perspectives on, and solutions to, the problems of crime and social exclusion whilst focussing on their specific area of interest. A number of the papers warn of the dangers of following the American model of penal policy - something Rutherford describes as the 'eliminative ideal' - and suggest a more 'understanding' and inclusive approach be adopted in work with communities exhibiting high levels of crime.

Crime and Social Exclusion brings together a collection of well written and thought provoking papers each delivering a clear message that new, more holistic and area-based/locally-shaped responses are needed to address the problems of crime and social exclusion. The text offers the reader an insight into the complex nature of these issues and

how they inter-link and, in doing so, contributes to a growing body of literature that describes social exclusion as a highly complex and multi-faceted concept. I am sure it will prove valuable reading to both academics and practitioners alike and will be of particular interest to 'youth' researchers and those concerned with the consequences of social exclusion.

Jane Marsh

CRITICAL EDUCATION IN THE NEW INFORMATION AGE

Castells et al
Rowman & Littlefield
ISBN 0-8476-9010-5 / £13.95pb

This book brings together a diverse range of papers, all of which are worthy in their own right, although they sometimes struggle to draw out a fully consistent approach throughout the text. Overall, this book offers insight into change in terms of the global economic, political, social and cultural, and balances this against the role of the education system. It suggests ways in which education must adapt and confront the wider changes which are deemed to have occurred.
Although the book is listed as Castells et al, the introduction is actually written by Peter McLaren who provides a very good, clear account of the new world order of communications, the information society, globalisation and the rise of cultural politics. This is followed up by Castells' contribution, again looking at the structural transformations which are taking place in society. In doing so he reviews theories of post industrialism, considers the role of new information technologies, the changing role of women, family, sexuality and personality, and rounds off by drawing an understanding of what all of this means for the role and regeneration of knowledge in society.
Chapter Two, by Ramon Flecha, addresses educational issues much more directly by looking at issues of inequality in the education system, and comparing traditional, postmodern and communicative approaches to such. The crisis of modernity has delegitimised the teaching of absolute truths but what is to replace them? This is followed by a short paper by Paulo Freire looking at educational practice and responsibilities for the democratization of such. Henry Giroux provides a paper looking at the condition of youth in postmodernism. This offers an interesting contribution using postmodern cinema as its main point of reference to draw an understanding of the rootlessness and emptiness in the lives of youth. This chapter draws out a clear understanding of the difficulties of radical educators working in todays prevailing climate.
Donaldo Macedo offers a rather different approach in Chapter Five. By taking a series of explanations of key events in U.S. history from Hirsch's "Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What All Americans Need to Know", he is able to offer alternative explanations. For example the everyday understanding of the Vietnam War is balanced against stories of shocking human rights abuses by the American forces. This all allows the author to argue that education must be based on a notion of humanity capable of promoting a realization of social, political and economic wrongs. The book draws to a conclusion with a very good, critical, contribution from Paul Willis looking at everyday culture in the postmodern world.

Gary Pattison

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SELF: FIELDWORK AND THE REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY

Amanda Coffey, Sage Publications Ltd., £14.99 pb
ISBN 0-7619-5267-5

As Coffey notes in her introduction, this is not strictly speaking a 'how to do ethnography' book, rather its aim is to discuss a way of thinking about the relationship between ethnography, (re)presentation and the self. This is based on a dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, the 'ethnographic self' and, on the other, the field; between how we, as researchers affect the field and how the field affects the researcher. Following the introduction, the book's eight chapters focus on two broad issues. Firstly, the researcher's presence in the field. In these chapters Coffey examines the different types of interpersonal relationships, including emotional and sexual, that can occur between researcher and researched and argues that fieldwork may not be simply about the 'presentation of self' but may involve becoming a new self through negotiation and interaction with the field. Following on from this is the issue of the (re)presentation of fieldwork, in particular the issue of 'romanticising' or emotionalising the fieldwork. The majority of the discussion in these chapters focuses around two issues, the relationship between autobiography and ethnography and between the different methods of presenting fieldwork (e.g. ethno-theatre, ethno-poetry) and personal identity.

Throughout the book Coffey makes a strong case for the emotional and personal aspects of the ethnographic process and an autobiographical ethnography wherein the self - always implicit within the fieldwork process and text - becomes one of its focal points. While one may not wholeheartedly agree with this claim, the major strength of this text is that, unlike many 'prescriptive' qualitative methods texts, it raises such issues and provides a source of reflection on - a way of thinking about - the interpersonal aspects of fieldwork.

John Walliss

GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY: DIALECTICS OF FLOW AND CLOSURE

eds. Birgit Meyer & Peter Geschiere
Blackwell Publishers, ISBN: 0-631-212-388
£13.99 pb

One of the fundamental paradoxes of globalization is that its tendencies towards homogenisation, through for example communication, transport or McDonaldization, are often offset by continued - if not intensified - tendencies towards cultural heterogeneity. This book brings together contributors from the USA and mainland Europe to discuss this tension between 'global flow' on the one hand and 'cultural closure' and the other and its relationship to personal and national identity. Following an introduction by the editors the volume is divided into three sections. In the first, contributions focus on the bi-directional 'pull' on individual identity of the national and the transnational through detailed case studies of the Soviet Union, early twentieth century China, nineteenth century Senegal and finally contemporary Europe.

The second section continues this emphasis on empirical cases with contributors discussing the flows and closures associated with forms of consumer goods. Two of the contributors in particular discuss the ambivalent reaction to western consumer goods in post-colonial Africa and the manner in which the simultaneous fascination and deep suspicion engendered by them are placed within wider narratives of 'Born Again' Christianity and witchcraft. Finally, in the concluding section the emphasis shifts to the theoretical with three contributors discussing Anderson's Imagined Communities, the transformations occurring within African society, and ethnic violence in the global age respectively.

This mixture of the empirical and the theoretical as well as the emphasis on globalization as an ambivalent situation of flow and closure are the main strengths of this volume and as such it serves as a useful introduction to the topic, not least to those are put off by the overly theoretical approaches usually associated with the subject matter.

John Walliss

POLITICAL THEORY AND ECOLOGICAL VALUES,

Tim Haywood,
Cambridge, Polity Press,
1998, viii + 196

And

SOCIOLOGY AND NATURE: SOCIAL ACTION IN CONTEXT,

Raymond Murphy, Oxford,
Westview, xiii + 319

Both of these books identify and seek to remedy a central problem with much historical and contemporary social theory: namely, the tendency to see humanity and human culture as created in opposition to nature. Moreover, both authors reject the idea that the progressive development of humanity necessarily involves the further subjugation of a passive external nature. The differences between the two accounts reflect their respective disciplinary origins and perspectives.

The book by Haywood is a tightly argued piece of political philosophy developed within a liberal framework. He rejects the idea of any inherent conflict between ecological values and human interests.

He contrasts 'perspectival anthropocentricism', which he sees as unavoidable, with the concepts of 'speciesism' and 'human chauvinism'. In accepting the former and denying the latter he points to the importance of self interest in liberal theory conceived within a framework which rejects the opposition of altruism and self interest as a false dichotomy. He argues that perspectival anthropocentrism initiated during the enlightenment is what produces the capacity for objective thought which has served to develop an evolving technology of domination and yet has also provided the possibility of moving humans away from the centre of creation. In seeking a solution to environmental problems he rejects the extremes of an analysis based on free market environmentalism or environmental economics in favour of a form of deliberative democracy. This involves the deliberation by citizens on the nature of collective goods beyond the market. Moreover, whilst recognising that there is a tension between consumer preferences and citizens' values the author is of the opinion that generalised self interest can be the basis of environmental values, in which the problem of future generations is seen through the frame of distributional justice.

In relation to non-human species Haywood's position parallels the discussion of the same issue in Murphy's book. Both critically engage with Habermas on the issue of discursively constituted ethics. Haywood argues that it is rational 'rite ' that is protected in Habermas's approach, whereas bodily integrity is not included. If the latter were to be included there is no reason why active respect cannot be extended to nonhuman beings.

Once rational agency is not the sole criterion then the difference between humans and non-humans is minimised. If this is accepted then, following Rawls, we can develop a substantive rather than procedural account of justice, which 'all other things being equal' should predispose us towards showing justice and respect to both human and non-human animals.

Haywood has produced an important book, although one that sociologists (certainly this one) may have to work at quite hard in order to deal with the formal style of political philosophy in which it is grounded. If the standpoint of the author remains that of a liberal this is nevertheless a critical account. In the concluding chapter he calls for the establishment of ecological rights within constitutional frames established as general goods.

He also argues that claims to an implicit commitment towards sustainability of liberal democracy should be held up to immanent critique and that the very notion of sustainable economic growth is questionable. If Murphy's discussion is concerned with some themes similar to that of Haywood's the style of the two books is very different. Murphy is clearly a sociologist without apology. His project is to produce a critique of 'sociology as if nature didn't matter' and he succeeds brilliantly. At the roots of the problem he detects disciplinary specialisation, which has denatured humans and 'rendered sociology synthetic in the pejorative sense of the word' (p11). Secondly, the revulsion and repulsion from social darwinism and sociobiology has played a role and a more contemporary shift from a sociology of system to a sociology of agency has further limited consideration of the link between the dynamic processes of the ecosystem, of nature and social action. External to the discipline the epoch of primary modernisation in which sociology, together with other sciences, has arisen is a short one in which the plasticity of nature seemed possible.

Particular targets for Murphy are the traditions of social constructivism and textual analyses. He points out that:
It is true that knowledge is socially constructed in the interests and according to the power of the constructor. But pushed too far, social constructivism becomes pure relativism, in which the constructors busy on the scaffolding are seen. What they construct, in particular its relationship with the world of nature is lost sight of. (p25)
He follows Benton (1993) in criticising Tester's assertion that animals are 'a blank paper', which can be inscribed with any message, and symbolic meaning, that the social wishes. Arguing that:

The daftness of such assertions does not reside in their being untrue. The ... assertion by Tester is factually accurate. Society could, if it so wished, inscribe whales with the message that they can fly, or tigers with the message that their population is increasing exponentially, or smallpox with the message that it is good for humans. What is at issue is the wisdom of doing so, and the appropriateness of the message that is constructed socially. (p 40)

Social constructivism, it is argued, can not deal with the notion of an active aspect to nature, which exercises an effect even if we choose to ignore it. As such this approach can prove very useful to those forces that want to deny any crisis or even well established causal tendencies such as those between smoking and ill health. In this timely critique, Murphy does much to rescue sociology not only from the 'daftness' of social constructivism but also from, 'the misuse of language (that) has thrown all too much of sociology into a communicational abyss' (p41)

There is far more to Murphy's book than just critique. He expands some of the themes of his earlier book, 'Rationality and Nature' concerning the elastic rather than plastic relationship between human activity and nature. Further, he sympathetically criticises and further develops Beck's approach to reflexive modernisation, takes issue with Habermas' portrayal of the development of the quasi-moral rights of some animals, shows why post-modernist fragmentation is a problem rather than a solution to ecological ills, and goes on to argue for a reconstitution of 'post-humanism' as pro-nature humanism. The importance of this book is considerable. It is a useful and accessible treatment of a wide range of perspectives on nature and society. More importantly, in its substantive arguments it has rendered a service to sociology as a discipline cautioning against several varieties of 'daftness' which continue to enjoy intellectual fashion.

Ian Roberts

THE INCOMES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

Richard Berthoud
ISER Report 98-1
ISBN: 1 85871 2009

This report would make interesting reading even to a non-specialist despite the numerous charts and graphs that are found virtually in every page. For me as someone who has spent years working as a researcher and occasionally as a community worker focusing on issues of concern to the Asian communities, most of the findings did not appear as surprising but nonetheless affirmed my own convictions and validated the findings of many other small scale studies.
The report compares the incomes of Indians, Bangladeshis/Pakistanis, Africans, Caribbeans and Chinese with those of the White population. The data analysed has been extracted from two different sources: the Family Resources Survey (FRS conducted in 1994/5 and 1995/6) and the Fourth Survey (held in 1994). Over the complete range of earnings the two surveys are very compatible with a few exceptions, such as the relative position of each ethnic group. The Fourth Survey found that Caribbean men were very close to Whites, in terms of total net household income, and above Indians who were positioned third in the hierarchy; whilst the FRS put Indians higher than Caribbeans. Similarly, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are seen to be at an advantageous position in relation to Caribbeans in the FRS sample but their apparent wealthier status disappears once family size is accounted for. In brief, the Chinese, Whites and Indians come out at the top with Caribbeans and Africans in the middle and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis at the bottom with over half of them (roughly, three-quarters if one assumes that extra people in the household require as much income as a single person living alone) at poverty levels.
The Chinese appear to be doing extremely well (in fact they were ranking above Whites in many of the income tables) but also had many poor community members (28% compared with 16% for Whites) with less representation at the middle of the scale. Nonetheless, it is difficult to give weight to these statistics, as the sample was too small. Twice migrant Indians from Africa seemed to be earning as well as the Chinese whilst the Indian group (consisting of those directly from India) was close to the Caribbeans in terms of income. The well-off Indian families were earning more than any group, which probably is not new knowledge, as this has already been documented by various other means; (such as the highest number of millionaires in Britain have the Patel surname) nonetheless, when the total income of Indians was considered in connection with household size they fell behind White people.
The text thus provides many examples of insights into the high level of diversity within the so-called homogeneous ethnic groups and differentials of economic experiences between men and women (such as the Caribbean women following a different trajectory to their menfolk). It could have done well if it had extended the section on poverty among the poorest communities in Britain i.e. the Pakistanis and the Bangladeshis and had looked at it from a qualitative perspective too. Moreover, the two communities need to be researched and analysed separately even if they share many commonalties, as my suspicions are that Pakistanis have higher income levels than Bangladeshis and slightly different cultural characteristics.

Neera Lakhmana

PATTERNS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY: ESSAYS FOR RICHARD BROWN

Beynon, H. and Glavanis, P. Longman, pp. 1-224. ISBN 0 582 29263 8.

Following my interview with Professor Richard Brown, published in the last edition of *Network* (No. 73), I was invited to the Department of Sociology at the University of Manchester on the 7th July 1999 for the launch of this edited volume of essays written in his honour. After an editorial introduction, there are separate contributions from Ian Roberts (twice), Sheila Allen, Huw Beynon, Pandeli Glavanis, Bob Burgess, John Eldridge, Theo Nichols, Tony Elger, Frank Ennis and Margaret Curran. All the contributors (apart from one who had a very good excuse !) attended the launch where Richard was presented with the book and an interesting and lively seminar ensued around the theme of 'social inequality'. Given the eminence of the above line-up, it was suggested by Huw Beynon that many of the postgraduates in the seminar audience had 'come to see their bibliographies dance!'

Patterns of Social Inequality reflects upon the (changing) nature of social inequality within contemporary UK society. It is both an undergraduate text and a contribution to existing sociological debates. The book covers many of the themes encountered by undergraduates - 'race', gender, class, work, unemployment, education, community, culture and identity - in an enticing, refreshing and highly readable, if not exhaustive, manner, when compared to other textbooks. However, the real beauty of *Patterns of Social Inequality* as a textbook is that it encourages students to continually think about the inter-connectedness, dynamism and complexity of the many different aspects of social inequality and stratification - 'race', gender, class, age and residence to name but a few - as well as their fundamental importance for analysing all facets of contemporary social life in Britain. This invitation to the value of a seamless sociological imagination, which is written in a clear and accessible manner, more than compensates for the more comprehensive, but rather mechanical and less interesting coverage of sociological 'topics' available in other texts. As a contribution to existing debates, the book powerfully refutes many academic and political claims of the 1980s and 90s that social inequality is diminishing in incidence or significance. In fact, the text manages to explode some academic and political myths, especially propagated by 'the cultural turn' within western sociology and the political discourses attached to it, by uncovering a reality of intensifying and constantly evolving social inequality throughout contemporary Britain. The whole book certainly justifies an early plea from the editors 'to restate the importance of social inequality to (enable) an adequate sociology' (p. 1).

Some people might have stopped reading this review by the first or second paragraph, having comfortably and stereotypically dismissed the book under consideration as 'old fashioned' or 'out of date'. To do so may be comfortable, however, it also distances us from most of the world we are supposed to be trying to engage with and convey, and propels us further and further into a 'world of our own'. If there are still some of us who wish to understand and communicate the daily concerns, interests and needs of the majority within British society, and how these connect to wider social processes and forces, then this book will become a valuable tool. One wouldn't expect anything less from the authors involved, or the man to whom the book is dedicated.

Steve Taylor

SOCIAL SCIENCE IN QUESTION

Mark J. Smith. Sage Publications. ISBN 0-7619-6041-4

Smith provides 'a guide to the approaches to knowledge construction from positivism to postmodernism and tackles many of the key concepts with which social science is familiar.' Ultimately, he succeeds in that primary goal.

The book is structured in a coherent way. Chapter one addresses the topic of social science as a situated practice with chapter two exploring the story of science. Chapter three examines the emergence of the social sciences with chapter four reviewing imagination and complexity in the social sciences. Chapter five examines paradigms, conventions and relativism with chapter six exploring language, discourse and culture. Smith closes the book by examining situated knowledges. Therein, his journey's end acknowledges complexity as a diverse resource and topic. His idea of complexification is a step away from scientific reasoning where different yet classical problems are easier to analyse. The strength of this book lies in the demystification of epistemological and ontological issues to a wide audience. Moreover, it is a stylistic breath of fresh air with comments and diagrams in the margins, chapter activities and readings and a general keywords glossary.

In conclusion this book contributes in a stimulating way to the large literature on social philosophy and research methodology. It will be a useful guide and decoder, both historically and currently, to a wide social science audience across various learning levels.

Dave Calvey

WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY AND PRACTICE

Kardulias, P. Nick (ed.) Rowman & Littlefield. 0-8476-0104-7. £18.95pb.

Although World-Systems Theory emerged as an attempt to understand the rise of modern capitalism in the West, its conceptualization of core-periphery dynamics was soon adopted by a wide varieties of disciplines. This particular volume is one such excursion into the realm of 'pre-historic' and 'pre-capitalist' societies and regions. There are 11 papers that attempt to apply the theory on ethnographic or archaeological data. Some of the cases cover Mesoamerica (c. 900-1520 A.D.), the Roman Empire in Temperate Europe (c. 500-300 B.C.), and the Aegean Bronze Age (c. 1400-1200 B.C.).

It has to be stated that this volume is no celebration of the universal applicability of World-Systems Theory; at best, some authors are willing to accept only that small parts or certain aspects of the theory can be useful for anthropology and archaeology. Despite the fact that World-Systems Theory is heavily biased towards structural analysis, many of the anthropologists and archaeologists in this book have shown that with careful reformulation, the theory can be more agent oriented, especially with the focus on the role of elites within society.

Some papers in this volume will serve as very useful teaching materials, particularly in the areas of focusing on the contemporary debates and currents about World-System Theory. The more general papers by Thomas Hall and Andre Gunder Frank are also potentially useful as they provide stern critiques of the theory and how it is evolving into what seems like a paradigm.

Alexius Pereira

WRITING FOR SCHOLARLY PUBLICATION

Anne Sigismund Huff, Sage Publications, ISBN 0-7619-1805-1

Anne Sigismund Huff opens this book with a statement a number of us can empathise with: 'I had a very hard time getting something published after receiving my Ph.D.' This candour continues throughout the book as she charts her experiences and makes a strong case for writing and publishing to be a specific course undertaken during Ph.D. work. Anne confides that her biggest problem was, as she put it, 'talking to herself ... without any clear image of a broader audience.' Ah yes, that time old problem of writing what excites you regardless of interest levels amongst peers. Many new and young academics are supposed to make a seamless shift into publishing. Yet a good few of us look back to our postgraduate days and realise how little information was exchanged or sought on this mysterious world of writing for publication.

This book provides invaluable information and advice on the mysteries of publishing. In the first part of the book Anne argues that writing can be conceptualised as a conversation and that scholarly work is best rooted in the lively exchange of ideas, hence the notion of the conversation. The importance and place of writing in the academic career is also considered.

Part II encourages readers to work on an individual and group basis through a series of exercises to consider such choices as what to write, whom to write for, etc. In Part III a chapter is devoted to each of the sections of an academic paper and the process of submission, review and publication. Thus it starts with a chapter on the title and abstract, moves on to consider the main body of a paper, and ends with a chapter on submission, revision and publication.

The ideas and advice in the book are easily accessible. At every stage Anne shares with readers the ups and downs of something that is now critical to every academic career. The book is a must for every Ph.D. student, supervisor and anyone interested in getting into print.

Linda McKie

bsa

BSA Philip Abrams Prize

The British Sociological Association invites nominations for the Philip Abrams Memorial Prize 1999.

This will be awarded to the first sole-authored book published between 1st December 1998 and 30th November 1999.

The prize is intended for sociologists at the beginning of their careers.

Please send us your nominations by no later than Friday 19th November 1999. The prize consists of £100 plus permission to carry appropriate publicity on the book. The winner will be announced at the BSA Annual Conference at the University of York in April 2000.

Further details & nomination forms available from:

Judith Mudd, Acting Executive Officer, BSA, Unit 3F/G, Mountjoy Research Centre, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3UR. Telephone: 0191 383 0839; Fax: 0191 383; Email: enquiries@britsoc.org.uk.

And new for 1999 . . .

Blackwell Publishers and the Board of The Sociological Review are delighted to be able to offer the winner of the BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Prize a free subscription to The Sociological Review for 2000. From 2000 the Sociological Review will consist of four regular issues and two monograph issues.

The Sociological Review provides comprehensive coverage of all areas of sociology, social anthropology and cognate subjects such as cultural and women's studies, social policy and industrial relations. The journal has a flexible approach to both its content and style. No social topic is considered irrelevant, innovative subject matter and style are welcomed, and articles are always topical and current. Each issue of The Sociological Review also includes a comprehensive book review section, including extended reviews and review articles covering the latest developments in all areas of society.

Further information on The Sociological Review is available on the Blackwell Publishers website:

http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk,
or by e-mailing
jnlinfo@blackwellpublishers.co.uk

New President for the BSA: Sara Arber looks ahead

David Morgan completed his two-year term as President of the BSA in March at the Glasgow Annual Conference. David performed an outstanding role as President, representing the BSA on numerous occasions, including at the important meetings to establish the new Academy of the Social Sciences.

I am honoured and delighted to take on the role of President of the BSA for the next two years. It is particularly pleasing to be following in the footsteps of earlier women Presidents, including Barbara Wootton (1959-1964), Sheila Allen (1975-1977), Meg Stacey (1981-1983), Jennifer Platt (1987-1989), and Michèle Barrett (1993-1995), as only the sixth woman President of the BSA.

My whole academic career has been spent at the University of Surrey (25 years this Autumn). In my professional life I have been active internationally and nationally, for example, on the ESRC Social Affairs Committee in the mid-1980s, BSA Executive and as Treasurer in the late 1980s, and Chair of the Sociology Editorial Board in the mid-1990s. As the current Head of the Sociology Department at the University of Surrey, it is a privilege and a source of solace to be President of the BSA.

The BSA is currently at the forefront of leading British sociology through a number of far-reaching changes facing higher education, in particular the QAA Sociology Subject Benchmarking exercise due to be completed by the end of 1999, the developments in the accreditation of Teaching and Learning, and the establishment of the new Academy of the Social Sciences. In addition, the BSA is active in responding to numerous consultations, among them consultations on the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, on ESRC postgraduate research training and on the ESRC thematic priorities.

As well as representing the BSA nationally, one of my goals as President is to ensure that British sociology has maximum impact on the world stage, particularly through involvement in the activities of the European Sociological Association and the International Sociological Association. The April 2000 conference theme of 'Making Time: Marking Time' connects well with my research interests on ageing, gender and generations, so I am particularly looking forward to delivering my Presidential Address at this conference in York.

I hope to serve the BSA well during my period of Presidency. My intention is to write a reflective piece on my Presidency for Network at the time of handing over to my successor.

Sara Arber
BSA President (1999-2001)

BSA Journals: back issues offer

At the office in Durham, the BSA holds the back stock of the BSA journals up to 1996. Most of the stock comes out as full runs for each of Sociology and Work, Employment and Society. The stock increases every year, with Cambridge University Press holding a full five year run of each journal as well (they currently have 1993 - 1998).

The amount of space taken up by this back stock is, of course, not usable for anything else. The staff have suggested we donate much of the back stock to the Eastern European Journals Project (which operates out of the New York School for Social Research). The Treasurer asked that we also include universities in Africa and Asia as potential recipients of the journals. We want to do this to free up space at Durham for other storage needs and other uses.

Obviously, we want to let BSA members have the opportunity to fill the gaps in their own collections first, so here are the details of a special one-off chance to buy BSA journals at very low prices. This special offer will close at the end of this year, so if you want to take advantage of it, you have to have your order details and payment at the BSA Office by no later than 10 December 1999. We will use any surplus made from sales to finance the sending of the rest of the back stock to university libraries in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

The offer, which includes postage and packing, is this:

Normal price	Limited Offer Price to BSA Members only
Single copies of either journal £12.50	£5.00
Single volume, either journal £50.00	£20.00
Full run* to 1996, Sociology £1,400.00	£500.00
Full run* to 1996, WES £500.00	£175.00

* there may be some missing part numbers; if so, we will contact you before despatching your order.

You should enclose your payment with your order (cheques payable to "BSA"). If you want to pay by credit card, please contact the office for further information. We will only accept orders from fully paid up members of the BSA.

So, this is your last chance to buy copies of the journals at this fabulous offer price! After the end of the offer, you can still buy copies of the journals, but they will be at the normal prices.

The office will, of course, keep reference copies of the journals as part of the BSA archive.

Important News about contacting the Office electronically.

As many of you know, the BSA's domain name was introduced in December last year. That was the move that allowed us to have an e-mail address for each member of staff, and also for special areas of work (like the annual conferences). The final part of the "change over" kicked in during the summer, and we have now ended our association with our old Internet providers. So please don't send any more e-mails to the old address (britsoc@dial.pipex.com). They won't get seen by anyone at the BSA!

The next thing to ask you about is the version of Netscape you use. There are some ideas we have for making the BSA's web site a bit more exciting to look at, but we don't want to do all the work only to find that no-one can see them. So we need to know whether you have access to Netscape version 4 (or even 5!). Please e-mail us and let us know! Thank you.

(members@britsoc.org.uk)

Letters to the editor

Do you have experience or knowledge of doing secondary analysis of qualitative data? If so, you may be able to help with my ESRC research project. This involves a review of studies which have used the methodology and I would appreciate help in obtaining references to published and unpublished examples of these. I am particularly interested in use of the methodology in health and social care research but references to work in other areas would also be welcome.

Please note that by 'secondary analysis' I mean studies which have re-used existing data to explore new or emergent research questions. This is in contrast to, say, systematic reviews and meta-analyses which aim instead to compile, assess and synthesise evidence relating to a common concern or area of practice.

If you can help, or require any further information on the project, please contact Janet Heaton, Research Fellow at the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD.

Tel: 01904 433608.
Fax: 01904 433618.
Email: jh35@york.ac.uk

An article by me that appeared in the January 1998 edition of Network ["Down among the bandits: Fieldwork in South Albania"] is being used in the teaching of English at an Albanian university. So if you all ever wonder if it is all worthwhile ...

Beryl Nicholson

University Of Derby Centre For Social Research

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Mickleover, DERBY DE3 5GX
email: l.richards@derby.ac.uk
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Career Move

Nicola Boyne, the Association's Executive Officer for the last seven and half years, has decided over the summer that the time has come to make a career move. The Executive Committee is sure that members would want to join in thanking Nicola for her work on behalf of the Association, particularly in the early 1990s when the Durham Office was first being established. Judith Mudd will be Acting Executive Officer until a new appointment is made.

Editing Sociological Research Online

by Liz Stanley

I've often been asked 'what's it like, being editor of an electronic journal like *Sociological Research Online*?'. Equally often, as I've replied in what has now become a somewhat formulaic way, I've wondered just what is meant by the question: do they want to know what I do as an editor? or what difference editing an electronic journal makes? or both of these things? or is there perhaps a suggestion that the whole thing is so odd or out of the way that the question is actually more of a comment? Whenever I've asked about this, however, the responses haven't been very illuminating, being of the 'oh I just wondered' kind. The formulaic response I've developed to explain what 'editing *Sociological Research Online* is like' goes along the lines of 'it's very like editing a print journal except that things happen quicker and there's never a backlog of articles waiting to be published'. Being asked the same question by Network, however, gives me the chance to explain why this is both an accurate and in some respects a misleading thing to say.

Editing *Sociological Research Online* is, quite simply, the most exciting thing I've done in my professional life. In its basic procedures, it's very similar to editing a print journal - I co-edited *Sociology* with David Morgan a few years ago, have been editor of *Auto/Biography* and the British & Irish editor of *Women's Studies International Forum*, so I feel confident in saying this. However, it's also astoundingly different, and the key difference doesn't lie in the speed at which it operates (something I'll return to) but more in two other things. These are the opportunities for learning and for helping to shape part of the sociological discourse in what I think is a highly distinctive, not to say unique, way.

On the learning front, during the time I've been involved in journal and also the wider project funded by eLib of which it is a part (and in which the BSA is one of the four partners) I've learned an enormous amount about new technology and how to use it, to harness it for intellectual and academic purposes. 'Behind the scenes' of each issue of the journal lies, on the one hand an entirely electronically-organised editorial process involving an Editorial Board and a group of International Correspondents which peer reviews articles and advises the editor and, on the other hand, a set of electronic tools and procedures around which the actual production of each issue takes place. In both of these, the expertise and initiative of Stuart Peters, as initially the journal's Editorial Assistant and now the key 'hands-on' figure in EPRESS, has been absolutely crucial in making a success of what was set up to be a highly innovative and risk-taking project. Being able to learn about something very new, innovative and at the leading edge has for me been the most interesting thing about 'what's it like?': this was what led me to become involved in the first place and it's still something I feel strongly.

Being a new journal, one starting from scratch, has meant that in a very real sense what *Sociological Research Online* has become has been to an alarming, and exciting, degree up to me, to the things I tried and succeeded or failed in doing, in particular in attracting good quality articles of a kind that referees would agree were of publishable quality. I took an early decision that, if the journal was to succeed, then it had to succeed intellectually, to be seen as a place where good quality sociology was published. The electronics are all very well, but they are a means and not an end in itself, and that has been something I've been very clear about right from the start.

What this has meant in terms of 'what's it like?' is that I've been able to adopt a very pro active style of editorship, spending a fair amount of time in publicising the journal, persuading and cajoling people to become involved, to think about sending articles to it, to referee articles in their area of specialism, to write about projects they're involved in, and so on. This has been hard work, taken quite a lot of time, and involved activities 'above and beyond the usual call of editorial duty'. However, I think it's been worth it in terms of what the journal is now like, and the innovations in article style and presentation, and also in areas of sociological work covered, that it has achieved in a very short period of time. It's also been very exciting, not a word usually associated with editing an academic journal: 'white-knuckle editing' is probably a good way to describe it!

This is also where speed comes in. Electronic communications really are very quick and this suits the way that I work anyway. I can flit about the world through email, file attachments, the web, and organise something quite major in a fairly short period of time. And this is how the 'Rapid Response Sociology' that *Sociological Research Online* has pioneered came into existence. At the end of one week, Stuart Peters and I were talking about the Macpherson Inquiry Report and Stuart suggested asking some sociologisists working on 'race' matters to comment. Within three weeks I had commissioned, received, got refereed, revised and also published ten short contributions in the March issue of the journal. These are short contributions which are 'opinionated' in the best sense of this word, in which people write about their angle on 'a public issue' in the C. Wright Mills sense, and in which they do so as 'public intellectuals', to use a phrase that has become recently fashionable. Now part-way through each three month publication cycle I think about a current 'public issue', ask colleagues for some suggested names of people 'working in the field', and from there built up a snowball list of people to invite to contribute. I also line up referees who will read and comment on all these 'rapid response' contributions so they can be turned around in a very short time-period (and, by the way, this allows revision but also rejection where contributions don't in the end 'fit' or aren't of a sufficient quality). The second rapid response in the June issue is on genocide, terror and war and its backcloth was Kosovo; the September one is organised around the genetic modification of foods.

Earlier I made the claim that *Sociological Research Online* was helping to shape part of the sociological discourse in a highly distinctive, not to say unique, way. I want to finish by explaining what I mean by this, to justify the claim. I do this starting with the journal's development of 'Rapid Response Sociology', but relating this to the more general ways that this journal operates.

Firstly, the very rapid publication provided by electronic media enables sociology to be part of an emergent discourse of knowledge-claims about particular public issues. The 'rapid response' in each issue enables a sociological response to be at the forefront, rather than more typically following in the wake, of social investigation and commentary on contemporary public issues. However, the 'rapid response mode' of the journal in fact encourages sociologists to use possibilities for rapid publication that are 'always already' there for contributors to *Sociological Research Online*.

Secondly, readers can not only read the 'rapid responses' but can also use the facilities provided by an online journal to contribute to the debate: email contributions can be made using the Pinboard, a range of relevant web sites are hyper-linked for readers to access, and readers can also use the Pinboard to publicise additional relevant web sites which are of interest.. And again, although the existence of the 'rapid

response mode' encourages this, these facilities are there as a standard part of what the journal provides to its readers and contributors.
Thirdly, 'rapid response sociology' provides teachers of sociology with a set of good quality peer reviewed short contributions all focused on sociological explorations of a particular public issue which can be accessed by every student in an institution which subscribes to *Sociological Research Online*. No more multilithing of endless reading packs, no more queues at short loan, no more missing readings or books, no more 'it wasn't there' claims about reading material. Again, these features are already present in the journal, but publishing 'a set' of articles on a particular issue will I hope encourage the use of articles it publishes for teaching purposes. What? your institution doesn't have a subscription? Better get on and prepare all those readings to have 300 copies of each printed then!

And fourthly, 'rapid response sociology' provides a very large number of informed readers on a world-wide basis for sociological work. Each issue of the journal attracts nearly 60,000 'downloads' of material, and the 'rapid response' contributions are already attracting higher than usual numbers of readers for this work. The journal's readership is truly world-wide, and while this is already a feature of its readership, the development of the 'rapid responses' means that public issues and sociological responses that are important to, say, people in the countries of Eastern Europe, India, Africa, South America.... can also be contributed to by sociologists from those places and read world-wide.

My last word on 'what's it like?' is that I just wish I had a decent computer on my desk. However, editing *Sociological Research Online* with a slow computer with hardly any RAM that crashes all the time and an ancient printer that thinks very slowly between printing each word at least keeps my feet firmly on the ground, even if it does mean that the air can become thick with expletives at times!

What's it like. . . ?

This is the first in what we hope will be a regular series.

We welcome suggestions or proposals from members on different aspects of working in the sociological world.

Please e-mail your ideas or finished articles (max 900 words) to:

network@britsoc.org.uk

bsa

British Sociological Association Annual Conference 2002 Call for Organising Team

The Executive Committee invites bids from members to organise the 2002 Annual conference. Following extensive discussions it has been decided that the 2002 conference need not have a specialist theme. The Organising Team will consist of four or five members. The academic programme should be as broadly based as possible to attract participation from as wide a cross-section of the sociological community as possible but bids should also include suggestions for special events and conference entertainment. Previous conferences have been organised with four plenary speakers and special sessions, such as round-tables and off-site activities, to encourage stimulating debate on topical issues.

Early expressions of interest should be received by Friday 26th November.

Developed proposals to be submitted by Friday 25th February 2000 for consideration by the Executive Committee in March. Selected bids will be discussed at the 2000 AGM in April at the University of York.

Conference Proposal Forms and further details are available from the BSA Office.

Contact:
Nicky Gibson, Conference Administrator, BSA Office, Unit 3F/G, Mountjoy Research Centre, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3UR.
Telephone: 0191 383 0839. Fax: 0191 383 0782.
Email: nicky.gibson@britsoc.org.uk.

Irresponsible communication?

Steve Taylor's piece on Communicating Sociology (*Network* 73) undoubtedly touches on what is a key issue at the present time. Having said that, I find my perspective sharply at odds with his. When I read his comment that sociologists have 'taken the need to use responsible argument too far' I couldn't suppress astonishment. It seems to me that there is an increasing failure in many quarters to be sufficiently responsible - in the sense of respecting methodological cautions. Often, methodological considerations are used primarily to challenge lines of argument with which the writer disagrees, and are largely forgotten when it comes to presentation of his or her own views. Indeed, Taylor's position seems to legitimate this.

He suggests that 'the whole point' (of the activity of sociology) 'is to represent aspects of the social world as we see them or the social actors involved see them, using sociological perspectives and methodologies'. In my view, that puts the cart before the horse: the point of sociological perspectives and methodology is to enable us to find out what is going on; it is not just a matter of using sociology to justify the way we see things. Perhaps that is not what Taylor meant, but it looks like the direction in which his argument points.

The core issue of disagreement, it seems, is what the task of the discipline is. Taylor, following Polly Toynbee, suggests that it is not just to represent but to evaluate and improve the world. If these three purposes represent the composite goal of the discipline, the question that arises is: what marks it out from, and what is its relationship to, the other social sciences, and to all those other social activities that are concerned with evaluating and improving the world? Clarifying this requires, among other things, that we specify the proper relationship between representation, evaluation, and improvement within sociology. It also requires that we make explicit the values on the basis of which evaluation and improvement are to be based; and, given that there is likely to be disagreement about those values, how value disagreements are to be resolved.

Or is what Taylor is recommending simply that each sociologist puts forward evaluative and prescriptive conclusions on the basis of his or her own values? But, if that is his position, how could the sociological cacophony that would result 'make a difference', in terms of feeding into action? Natural scientists, who are in a much stronger position to influence policy, face the problem that conflicting factual conclusions in their work are exploited by those pursuing different political interests, thereby reducing the impact of that work. If sociologists not only produce conflicting factual conclusions but also conflicting evaluative and prescriptive ones, how will this lead to 'making a difference' and improving the world? Equally important, what gives sociologists the right to legislate (I use the word advisedly, given Taylor's reference to Bauman's work) what the practical and political implications of their factual conclusions are?

Towards the end of his piece Taylor seems to adopt a much more modest position: that sociologists should put more effort into communicating their research findings to lay audiences. I agree with this; but we need to be clear about what we can legitimately claim to 'find' and on what grounds; and what role we see our communications as playing. If the idea is that sociologists are in some privileged position to say what's wrong with the world and what ought to be done about it I beg to differ. I cannot see any justification for this; and such a claim to authority seems to me to lead precisely to the kind of attack made by Polly Toynbee.

Taylor says that we take too long in communicating our ideas or findings. My view is that, frequently, we do not take long enough and the result is shoddy work. His argument that the results of research are out of date by the time they are published seems to assume that the task of the discipline is to produce up-to-the-minute information about social trends, or even knowledge of the future. By contrast, I think the task is to address longer term trends and perennial issues. Taylor also argues that 'we are increasingly afraid to look sociologically at "big" issues such as "the future of work" [...]'. This is not a tendency I have noticed. Quite the reverse. One of the sources of poor quality in sociological research is that it is over ambitious. Many people seem to assume that anything can be studied, that any question can be answered. By contrast, a key feature of natural science is the selection of research problems in terms of feasibility as well as relevance.

Taylor fears that we will be 'increasingly disregarded by the outside world'. My fear is rather different. It is that we will be required to make precisely the kind of direct contribution of immediately usable information whose production he seems to regard as our essential task. And being held to this, I suggest, we will either fail miserably and be closed down, or we will have to transform the discipline into some sort of policy science. In short, there are worse fates than being ignored!

Martyn Hammersley
School of Education
Open University

network bsa

This edition of *Network* was edited by John Westergaard, Rebecca Leach, Steve Taylor & Tim Strangleman, with support from Judith Mudd (copy deadline was Aug 15)

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Network, Unit 3F/G, Mountjoy Research Centre, Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3UR.
Tel: 0191 383 0839.
Fax: 0191 383 0782.
Email: network@britsoc.org.uk.

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