



BSA Ageing,  
Body and  
Society  
Study Group

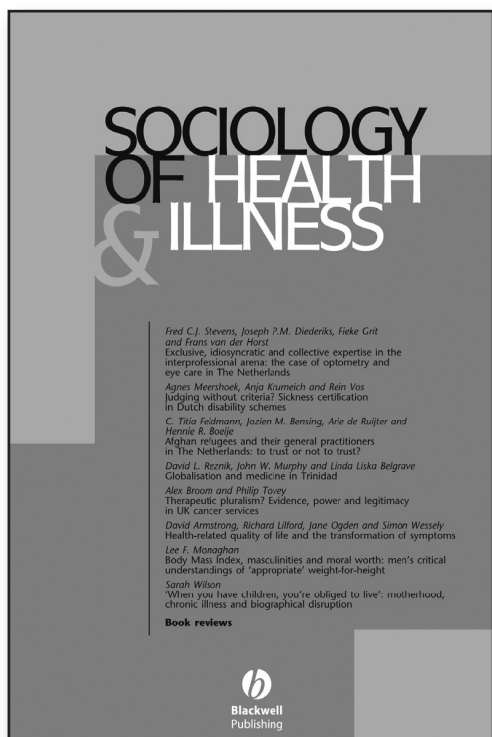
Futures of Ageing: Science,  
Technology and the Body  
Conference

P R O G R A M M E



19th July 2010  
British Library Conference  
Centre, London

SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS



# SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS

**A Journal of Medical Sociology**

Published on behalf of the Foundation of the Sociology of Health & Illness

*Edited by Clive Seale, Jonathan Gabe, Steven Wainwright & Clare Williams*

*Sociology of Health and Illness* is an international journal which publishes sociological articles on all aspects of health, illness and medicine. We welcome empirical and theoretical contributions in this field. In addition to the six regular issues published each year, subscribers receive a free special issue. These themed issues aim to identify and contribute to new areas of debate and research in the discipline and each issue is devoted to an important topic of current interest.

## The Sociology of Health & Illness Monograph Series

*The Sociology of Health & Illness* Monograph series provides a sociological perspective on the theory of medical knowledge, the practice of medical work, and the experience of receiving or giving medical and health care. Published annually, they aim to identify and contribute to new areas of debate and research in the discipline and each book is devoted to an important topic of current interest.

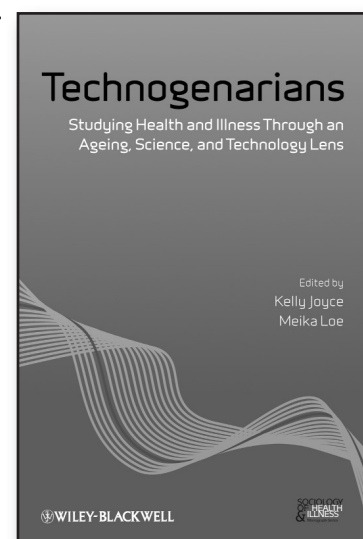
### **Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness Through an Ageing, Science, and Technology Lens**

*Edited by Kelly Joyce & Meika Loe*

*Technogenarians* investigates the older person's experience of health, illness, science, and technology. It presents a greater theoretical and empirical understanding of the biomedical aspects of ageing bodies, minds, and emotions, and the rise of gerontechnology industries and professions.

Publishing September 2010

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# WELCOME

## BSA Ageing, Body and Society Study Group Conference Futures of Ageing: Science, Technology and the Body

Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> BSA *Ageing Body and Society* Study Group Annual Conference. We believe that this is an exciting opportunity to explore ageing and bodies in relation to developments in science and technology. In particular, we are delighted to present such a strong and diverse programme with notable and established academics alongside emergent researchers. We especially welcome our keynote speaker Professor Simon Williams and our inter/national plenary panel. We invite you to the wine reception and launch of the *Sociology of Health and Illness* monograph *Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness through an Aging, Science, and Technology Lens* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, Inc) edited by Kelly Joyce and Meika Loe and thank Wiley Blackwell for their support and sponsorship. We welcome all our participants and speakers to the conference, from both near and far.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to present our research and ideas in such an engaging venue as the British Library. The BSA has made important links with the **British Library** in recent years and Jude England, Head of Social Sciences, is committed to promoting and highlighting the significance of social science research. We hope you will take this opportunity to learn more about social science research resources, as well as gain important links with the British Library.

We would also like to thank Jenny Cairns, Events Coordinator, for her support, commitment and efficient organisation of this conference. The BSA office is committed to supporting study groups and we would not be able to be as active and efficient without their support.

There will be **refreshments** available in the foyer at break times throughout the conference. We welcome any comments you may have on the format or organisation of this or future conferences. Please let us know your views either by speaking to one of the conference organisers, or via the feedback survey which will be circulated after the conference.

We would like to thank everyone who is presenting their work, chairing a session or contributing in some way to the conference organisation and success. We hope that you enjoy all aspects of the conference, from the academic to the social to the food and wine!

*Wendy Martin and Julia Twigg*

BSA Ageing, Body and Society Study Group Convenors

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As always many people have helped with organising the conference. Thanks to the BSA office for their support and of course Jenny Cairns our Events Coordinator.



The conference committee would like to thank Jude England, Head of Social Sciences, and her colleagues at the British Library for their support of this event and also the *Sociology of Health and Illness* for supporting the wine reception.

SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS



# BSA Ageing, Body and Society Study Group

## Introduction

There has been a wealth of work recently on the subject of the body across the humanities and social sciences. Most has, however, focussed on younger, implicitly 'sexier' bodies. Social gerontology has, moreover, tended to avoid the subject of the body, in its struggle to assert the social and cultural determinants of ageing, as against the reductionist bio-medical accounts that dominate professional and popular discourses of age. Emphasising the body can seem to demean older people, reducing them to 'failing' bodies. For these reasons gerontology has kept away from the topic. This means, however, that the body in old age has remained largely untheorised and unexplored.

Although work on the body in old age has begun to emerge, it remains scattered. Researchers and scholars are isolated in their disciplinary groupings. There is no obvious forum for exchange. The aim of this study group is to redress this, and establish a forum that will bring together work across a range of approaches and subject areas. We also invite researchers, practitioners and academics to revisit and explore the embodied dimensions of their work.

The aim of the group is therefore to be a focus for an exchange of ideas and debate. As part of this there will be a number of one-day seminars and workshops which will explore different aspects of ageing and the body. It is hoped that these will provide a basis for publications. The interests of the group are broad and include theory, empirical research and practice in relation to, for example:

- Anti-ageing/Age Resistance
- Lived bodies in everyday life
- Clothing and embodiment
- Discourses of ageing and ageism
- Well-being and the ageing body
- The masquerade of age
- Policing old bodies: intergenerational conflict and the role of governance
- Queer bodies
- Racialised bodies
- Fluid bodies, leaky bodies
- Gendered bodies
- Bodies in the Third and Fourth Ages
- Researching ageing bodies: methods and methodology
- Exercise and 'active' ageing
- Spatial geographies of bodies
- Bodies and institutions
- Death, dying and disposal
- Bodywork
- Emotions
- Science and technologies

## Joining the Group

The group organises seminars, workshops, conferences and other events and has an e-mail discussion list as well as a web page. To join the email discussion list and receive information on the groups activities please visit. [www.britisoc.co.uk/specialisms/AgeingBodyandSociety](http://www.britisoc.co.uk/specialisms/AgeingBodyandSociety). New members, including students, are very welcome to join the Group. To put your name on the Ageing, Body and Society Study Group mailing list and for further information please contact Dr Wendy Martin at [wendy.martin@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:wendy.martin@brunel.ac.uk)

## Contact the Convenors

**Dr Wendy Martin** School of Health Sciences and Social Care, Brunel University. Tel: 01895 268747; Email: [wendy.martin@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:wendy.martin@brunel.ac.uk)

**Professor Julia Twigg** School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent. Tel: 01227 827 539; Email: [j.m.twigg@kent.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.twigg@kent.ac.uk)

# INFORMATION DIGEST

## Registration

The conference registration desk will be open in the foyer of the conference centre from 09:45am until 17:00 on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010. Please note that delegates should wear their conference badge at all times, otherwise you may be refused access to conference sessions and service of refreshments and meals.

## Messages

During the conference please direct all telephone messages to the British Sociological Association office on +44 (0)191 383 0839. Please make reference to the BSA Ageing, Body and Society Study Group Conference, as the office staff will need to know how to direct your call.

## Keynote

**Professor Simon Williams**, University of Warwick, will give the Keynote Address on '**How Old is Your Brain?: Neuroculture, Active Ageing and Cognitive Decline**' on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 10:30 in the Auditorium.

## Evening Reception

There will be a reception held on Monday Evening from 17:00-18:30. This will be held in the Conference Foyer and is free for all delegates to attend.

## Refreshments and Lunch

Tea and coffee will be served in the foyer at the times specified below

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 09:45 - 10:15.

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 11:20 - 11:40.

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 15:10 – 15:30.

Water will be available throughout the conference.

Lunch is provided on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July and will be available to delegates in the foyer.

## Meeting rooms

All conference sessions will take place in the British Library conference centre rooms including the Auditorium and Meeting rooms 1, 2 and 4.

## PowerPoint

All meeting rooms will be equipped with a screen, powerpoint and laptop. Presenters should bring with them a copy of their presentation file on a CD or USB memory stick.

Presenters should access session rooms 15 minutes before their stream starts or during lunchtimes.

## Email Facilities

Free wireless internet is available in the British Library. **Remember to bring your laptop if you wish to use this facility, as the British Library and the BSA will not provide them.**



# BSA AGEING, BODY AND SOCIETY STUDY GROUP 2010 CONFERENCE

FUTURES OF AGEING: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE BODY

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010

British Library Conference Centre, London



## OUTLINE PROGRAMME

09:45 – 10:15	Coffee and Registration	Conference Centre Foyer
10:15 – 10:30	Conference Welcome: Dr Wendy Martin and Professor Julia Twigg: Co-convenors of the Ageing, Body and Society Study Group Jude England, Head of Social Sciences, British Library: <i>Social Science Research and the British Library</i>	Auditorium
10:30 – 11:20	Keynote address: Professor Simon Williams (University of Warwick) <i>“Boosting the Brain?” Neuroculture, Active Ageing and Cognitive Decline’</i>  Chair: Dr Wendy Martin	Auditorium
11:20 – 11:40	Break	Foyer
11:40 – 13:00	Plenary session: Prof Joanna Latimer (Cardiff University) <i>Intimations of (Im)mortality: how aging scientists debate the relation between the normal, the natural and the pathological.</i> Prof Paul Higgs (University College London); Prof Ian Rees Jones (Bangor University) <i>‘Anti-Anti-Ageing’, progressive critique or conservative metaphysics?</i> Prof Stephen Katz (Trent University, Canada) <i>Embodied Memory: Ageing, Neuroculture and the Genealogy of Mind</i> Prof Chris Gilleard; Prof Paul Higgs (University College London) <i>Refusing to face the future? Developments and tensions in the discourses of anti-aging surgery.</i>  Chair: Prof Julia Twigg	Auditorium
13:00 – 13:50	Lunch	Conference Centre Foyer
13:50 – 15:10	3 concurrent paper sessions	Meeting Room 1,2 and 4
15:10 – 15:30	Break	Conference Centre Foyer
15:30 – 17:00	Plenary panel: <i>Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness through an Aging, Science, and Technology Lens</i>  Professor Barb Marshall (Trent University, Canada); Louis Neven (University of Twente); Dr Katie Brittain (Newcastle University, UK)  Chairs: Dr Kelly Joyce (College of William and Mary, USA) and Dr Meika Loe (Colgate University, USA)	Auditorium
17:00 – 18:30	Wine Reception	Foyer

# PROGRAMME GRID

MONDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2010

PLENARY SESSION 1: 11:40 – 13:00

	AUDITORIUM
	<i>Chair: Prof Julia Twigg, University of Kent</i>
11:40 – 12:00	<b>Latimer, J.</b> Intimations of (Im)mortality: how aging scientists debate the relation between the normal, the natural and the pathological.
12:00 – 12:20	<b>Higgs, P.</b> 'Anti-Anti-Ageing', progressive critique or conservative metaphysics?
12:20 – 12:40	<b>Katz, S.</b> Embodied Memory: Ageing, Neuroculture and the Genealogy of Mind
12:40 – 13:00	<b>Gilleard, C.</b> Refusing to face the future? Developments and tensions in the discourses of anti-aging surgery.

PAPER SESSION 1: 13:50 – 15:10

	MEETING ROOM 1	MEETING ROOM 2	MEETING ROOM 4
	<i>Chair: Dr Veronika Williams, Brunel University</i>	<i>Chair: Prof Julia Twigg, University of Kent</i>	<i>Chair: Dr Wendy Martin, Brunel University</i>
13:50 – 14:10	<b>Hubble, N.</b> Mapping Emergent Third Age Subjectivity	<b>Olofsson, J.</b> Ageing bodies, technological shifts - retired fire fighters and the embodied implications of instrumental development.	<b>Frohlich, D.</b> A custom computer for older people
14:10 - 14:30	<b>Rea, I.R.</b> Beyond 90 Together; Telling our Stories	<b>Hughes, J.</b> Are older men taking sexuality as prescribed? The implications of the competing influences on ageing male heterosexuality	<b>Winefield, H.</b> Ageing and the body - a nontechnological view
14:30 – 14:50	<b>Westwood, M.</b> Mediated Dying: A case study from acute stroke care	<b>Amor, T.</b> Living Longer, ageing sooner: the contemporary trap?	<b>Bissland, V.</b> Older adults' preferred learning and communication styles and how these fit with recent neuroscience insights into adult learning.
14:50 – 15:10			<b>Efstathiou, S.</b> 'Could Ageing Brains Be Wiser? Wisdom, Heuristics and Aging'



# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at 10:30 in the Auditorium

## Professor Simon Williams

### *“Boosting the Brain?” Neuroculture, Active Ageing and Cognitive Decline’*

Set within the context of rapid developments in the neurosciences over the past few decades and the emergence of a variety of neurocultural forms, this keynote will explore where and why neuroculture is recasting and re-imagining the older brain and along with it the older mind. The promises, problems and prospects of a neurocultural future, it will be argued, draw dense and dynamic lines between so-called Third Age healthy, active, ‘successful’ ageing and Fourth Age dependency, loss and decline. Hence the emergence of a cognitive field in which cognitive health becomes an ‘accomplishment’ of the Third Age -- something to be worked at if not ‘optimised’ or ‘enhanced’ like other social body-projects -- as well as a marker of potential decline. Related notions of cognitive ‘capital’ also come into view here which raise many pertinent sociological questions. As the cognitive boundary between Third and Fourth ages has emerged as a crucial part of the territory of decline therefore, delaying its apparent onset becomes a lifelong project that neatly fits the neurocultural promises of a hopeful neuroprotected future. These issues will be illustrated in relation to mild cognitive impairment (MCI) as a feared cross-boundary at-risk category of pre-dementia memory loss and cognitive decline, and a convergence point for neurocultural, pharmaceutical and gerontological communities. Reflexive questions concerning the role of the social sciences as well as the neurosciences in the construction or co-construction of these neurocultural forms and futures are also considered in closing. Neuroculture, it is concluded, constitutes a rich and fascinating combination of both new dilemmas and old debates regarding the human matrix of minds, brains, bodies and selves, and a potent if not poignant nexus or point of convergence where cognitive function meets active ageing.

**Simon J. Williams** is a Professor of Sociology, in the Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, UK. He has published widely within the sociology of health, the sociology of the body, the sociology of emotion, including recent work on the politics of sleep, and is currently working on social shaping and social significance of recent developments in the neurosciences, with particular reference to the problems, promises and prospects of neuro-enhancement, and the salience and significance of contemporary neurocultures. A new single authored book *The Politics of Sleep; Governing (Un)Consciousness in the Late Modern Age* (Palgrave) has just been completed and another co-authored book (with Paul Martin) *NeuroFutures in the Making* is currently underway. Simon is also an active member of both the interdisciplinary Neuroscience and Society group ([www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/nsw](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/nsw)) and the new Science, Politics and Society (SPS) group ([www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/)) at Warwick.



# Plenary Session

Monday 19<sup>h</sup> July 2010 at 11:40 - 13:00

Chair: Professor Julia Twigg

Auditorium

*Latimer, Joanna Elizabeth. Puig, M.*

*Cardiff University*

## **Intimations of (Im)mortality: how aging scientists debate the relation between the normal, the natural and the pathological.**

In being & Time the prospect of death is for Heidegger the touchstone of human creativity. The proposed paper explores how possibilities for immortality are debated in aging science discourse. The paper draws on a collaborative project with life scientists at Cardiff on the biology of normal human ageing and its contributory role in the development of those diseases associated with later life funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing programme. While the general ethical, social and cultural dimensions of ageing science and medicine have been being discussed and explored (e.g. Binstock et al 2006; Davis 2004; Vincent et al 2008) what has emerged in the current study is that there are also debates within the scientific and medical community over the possibilities, and proper objectives, of ageing science and medicine (e.g. de Grey 2003; Select Committee on Science and Technology Sixth Report 2006;) with radical claims for 'no limits' to longevity (e.g. De Grey et al 2002a and 2002b) and the promotion of rejuvenatory anti-ageing therapies (e.g. Rose 2007). The paper examines these debates and discourses around the normal, the natural and the pathological for how and at what moments scientists justify, or don't, intervening in ageing, including dying itself. The aim is to reflect upon the significance of these debates for understanding the contemporary attitude to becoming old, and to time itself.

*Higgs, Paul. Rees Jones, I.*

## **'Anti-Anti-Ageing', progressive critique or conservative metaphysics?**

Anti-ageing medicine has become a lightning rod for many debates around ageing in recent years. The fiercest critics of anti-ageing medicine are to be found among the gerontological community who wish to distance themselves from the anti-ageing movement. For this group, anti-ageing medicine is a kind of 'Frankenstein science'; a deviant form of health-care that is promoted by quacks, charlatans and corporate medicine whose interests lie with profits and market expansion rather than research and treatment aimed at understanding and improving health in later life. These criticisms have parallels in other fields such as psychiatry and sexual health where scholars and practitioners have highlighted the dangers of disease construction.

However, Anti-ageing medicine has also been criticised for denying people the 'right' to age 'naturally', instilling desires that cannot be fulfilled, placing the emphasis on youth rather than health as well as promising limitless life-extension. Vincent among others articulates a number of counter arguments for an 'anti-anti-ageing' movement which include, inter alia; the undesirability of bodily perfection, the loss of old age identities, the social importance of death and the debt owed to future generations. While those who take an explicitly 'anti-anti-ageing' approach may view themselves as the true progressives in the debate on the future of human ageing, in this paper we question the extent to which this is justified. Despite the stated radicalism of anti-anti-ageing, in its present guise it cannot avoid a retreat into an implicit conservative metaphysics

*Katz, Stephen.*

## **Embodied Memory: Ageing, Neuroculture and the Genealogy of Mind**

While the aging process has been subject to a horizon of scientific (and science fictional) speculation about the possibilities of age-reversal, physical enhancement and exceptional longevity, only recently has this horizon included the aging brain. For this reason the brain has become a new space in which the boundaries between nature and culture around the ageing body can be redrawn. This paper examines memory and some of the historical antecedents, discourses and images by which memory became embodied within the ageing brain. Examples include images of the classical 'ars memoria', medieval and early modern models of mind in the body, modern clinical research on the localization of function, and current neuroscientific, neurocultural and pharmaceutical discourses that represent cognitive health as a route to the optimization of aging. Critical discussion will also focus on: a) The powerful role of scanning technology that 'lights up' the brain in active ways that materialize the human mind, b) The metaphorical force of pseudo-scientific and marketing vocabularies around 'neuro-protection', 'memory fitness' and 'neurobics', whose slippage between ageing conditions of 'maintenance', 'improvement' and 'enhancement' is significant, and c) The new hypercognitive and digitalized conceptions of mental ability which neglect the social and environmental determinants of cognitive health and ageing memories. Conclusions question what becomes of the normally aging mind, in the shadow of dementia, where increasingly broadened stages and refined symptoms of memory decline, such as Mild Cognitive Impairment, are intensified and shaped by social forces that prioritize profit over care and stratify new bio-identities based.

**Refusing to face the future? Developments and tensions in the discourses of anti-aging surgery.**

The practice of cosmetic rejuvenation is a culturally significant arena of anti-ageing medicine. Surgical procedures like face and forehead lifts, blepharoplasty and upper arm lifts and non-surgical interventions such as chemical skin peels, dermabrasion and fillers have become culturally popular ways of resisting the visible signs of old age, evidenced by the success of the Channel 4 programme “Ten Years Younger” (Maverick Television, 2007). As surgical and non-surgical procedures have become more widely available, the technical procedures underpinning them have grown more complex. This complexity is not confined to the techniques alone but involves more sophisticated understanding of age changes in hair, muscle and skin.

Moving from a view that age operates as a gravitational force causing skin to ‘sag’ to an appreciation of the underlying structures that support youthful looks has led cosmetic surgery to change its tactics if not its strategy. Separation of ‘photo-ageing’ and ‘intrinsic ageing’ is another line of development, as are developments in the biological measurement of skin lines and wrinkles. There is an increasing integration of plastic surgery into mainstream academic bio-medicine, and a similar integration of ‘cosmetic science’ with more traditional areas in dermatology. We draw upon two sources of information – firstly the increasing number and sophistication of academic bio-medical journals concerned with anti-aging facial surgery and related procedures, and secondly reports on the relative prevalence of surgical and non-surgical anti-ageing procedures. Our conclusion is that anti-ageing continues to thrive under the auspices of an increasingly respectable ‘aspirational medicine’.

# Futures of Ageing: Science Technology & the Body

## Session 1

19/07/2010 at 13:50 - 14:50

Chair: Dr Veronika Williams

Meeting Room 1

*Hubble, Nick. Tew, P.*

### **Mapping Emergent Third Age Subjectivity**

The authors of this paper are investigators on the NDA-funded Fiction and the Cultural Mediation of Ageing Project (FCMAP) at Brunel University.

FCMAP has commissioned the Winter 1992 Mass Observation Directive on 'Books and You' which asks respondents about representations of their own age groups (50% of the MO panel is over 60) and their experience of book groups. It has also organised (in conjunction with the Third Age Trust) year-long groups of older readers around fictional texts (with the subject of ageing) as catalysts for social reflection and discussion.

These approaches (i.e. the typical MO and U3A life-writing and study group structures) provide a model for detecting emerging trends in the understanding of ageing. For example, MO responses to directives on ageing in 1992 and 2006 already show the speed of the shift in the way that ageing is experienced with respondents in their 60s (and many in their 70s) simply not considering themselves old. FCMAP results will be used to predict the continued development of these future trends.

However, more significantly, this paper will argue that the participant forms of collective literacy practice used by FCMAP, which are already central to organised Third Age practice, are transformative practices embodying social agency. This emergent Third Age subjectivity will be theoretically mapped and the possible consequences of its expansion will be explored in terms of the generation of public value and the potential transformations of society which would arise from the demise of restrictive age categorisation.

*Rea, Irene Maeve. Murphy, A. Rea, S.*

*Queens University Belfast*

### **Beyond 90 Together: Telling our Stories**

Most of us know mothers or grandmothers, who have reached 85 and over. We also know family clusters where more than one family member has reached their 90th year. Scientists consider that genes influence long life, clinicians wonder why some live long without major illness and sociologists wonder if behaviours and cultures have an important influence.

This study presents the self-reported life stories/narratives of 90 year old sibling pairs/trios enlisted as part of EU-funded Genetics of Healthy Ageing (GeHA), in 4 European countries. Sibling pairs were asked to 'tell their life story' and answered some structured questions about their survivor hood, family inheritance and if being siblings over 90 years helped their coping. Photographs were also taken. Themes were identified using 'grounded theory' methodology. Sibling pairs considered that genes and life style influenced their longevity. Relationships with their living siblings showed few 'intimate' supportive dyads with most sibling pairs demonstrating an independent but 'congenial' relationship, though sibling 'rivalry' was also present at 90.

This study gives a 'voice' in text and image to the self-told life stories from some the 90 year old siblings. They demonstrate positivity/optimism, a feisty independence, adaptability and a self-deprecating sense of humour as their personality characteristics. Are these characteristics primarily genetic or are they cultural or are the two inextricably intertwined? The old debate of 'nature' or 'nurture' emerges with respect to the personality profiles and the 'successful ageing' phenotype.

*Westwood, Martin.*

### **Mediated Dying: A case study from acute stroke care**

Stroke is the most common single cause of disability in the western world, the third most common cause of UK deaths, and the second most common worldwide. The UK's stroke rate is approximately twelve per hour, one in ten of whom will have died before a month has elapsed (in the 'largest' of these strokes, those with the biggest effect, this rises to four out of every ten), and in a small, but significant, number of individuals with a new stroke, death will occur in the first hours or days after the event and their admission into hospital.

This paper will describe the death of just one of these individuals, and how, in the face of his lost ability to communicate, his family made use of nurses' tools and nurses' knowledge to make sense of, and respond to, his changeable and deteriorating condition.

# Futures of Ageing: Science Technology & the Body

## Session 2

19/07/2010 at 13:50 - 14:50

Chair: Professor Julia Twigg

Meeting Room 2

*Olofsson, Jennie.*

*Luleå University of Technology*

### **Ageing bodies, technological shifts - retired fire fighters and the embodied implications of instrumental development.**

This presentation is based on an ethnographic account of an association of retired fire fighters in the Northern parts of Sweden. The intention is to outline how technological changes contribute to modifying the very profession of a fire fighter as well as the embodied and gendered implications of this undertaking. In as much as enactments of bodies and masculinities are historically contingent they are subjected to the utility of professional tools. Due to situated practices, collaborations between fire fighters and their instruments therefore materialize in rather unpredictable and often contradictory ways.

Investigating the interlacement between the ageing bodies of the retired fire fighters, their joint practices of storytelling and their preferences for certain tools rather than others this presentation proposes a revived understanding of how the profession as a fire fighter is open to continuous modifications. The contentious relations between different generations of fire fighters reveals gendered expressions and embodied executions as historically situated and enacted, and also highly contingent upon utility of tools. In turn, scrutiny of the technological shifts discloses a generational shift, which in turn encourages certain bodies whilst dismissing others. As the embodied undertakings of fire fighters rely on the temporality of instrumental utility technological shifts contribute to fortifying differences between the age groups of the fire fighters.

*Hughes, Jonathan.*

*The Open University*

### **Are older men taking sexuality as prescribed? The implications of the competing influences on ageing male heterosexuality**

Increasing ageing bodies are required to negotiate many interactions with science and technology. This presentation explores one such interaction. It focuses on the importance of the biotechnology represented by drugs like Viagra for ageing male heterosexual bodies.

Male heterosexuality is often represented as a dominant, even repressive, sexuality. Viagra's advent has subjected the male body to an unprecedented social and medical gaze. This has contributed to a view of male heterosexuality as being based on the uncertain platform of the erect penis. A focus on the accounts of ten older men (55 to 69) showed that, far from taking the prescriptions for sexuality generally linked with Viagra, they were more involved in developing self-prescriptions which reflected important aspects of their relationship and health histories.

While a group of ten men cannot represent ageing men as a whole, it was striking that despite the weight of prescription (both medical and non-medical) older men reinterpreted what counts as heterosexual activity. The experiences of those who have tried Viagra should make us cautious about the claims made by both those who prescribe it and its detractors. Its prescribers suggest that it reinstates a youthful sexuality. Its detractors suggest that it fixes and limits male heterosexuality. The experiences of those who used it suggest that it does not necessarily provide such a dependable fix. Even when it does prove 'successful', it is only one factor in shaping how ageing male bodies can be deployed.

*Amor, Teresa.*

### **Living Longer, ageing sooner: the contemporary trap?**

In this presentation, it is proposed to reflect on the singularity of the ageing process in contemporary Western societies and, in particular, on the individuals' perceptions of their own ageing process.

Based on the fieldwork conducted over the past three years (people aged from 35 to 85), the reflection is broadly anchored in a phenomenological perspective. It will be argued that the ageing process experience is marked in the first instance by the perception of 'Loss' (rather than 'Change') and that, notwithstanding the continuous rise in average life expectancy, the individuals experience, and incorporate in their references, concerns about ageing increasingly early on in their lives.

Although there is evidence of gender differences (which tend to be cut across by generational cleavages), the research findings point out that, in a context in which "image" (associated first and foremost with attributes of youth) is a mainstay of social imaginary, the phenotypic signs of ageing tend to be one of the first major concerns. In contrast to other times in history, when ageing was feared

mainly because of the progressive frailty and dependence upon others, nowadays, even if these fears are also present, they are occurring in a much later phase of their lives: body image stand out as the primary focus of concern, occurring in fairly early phases of the life course. At this level, the development of a whole anti-ageing 'industry' (which is significantly reliant upon the medical discourse, and biomedical technologies) seems to play also an important role.

# Futures of Ageing: Science Technology & the Body

## Session 3

19/07/2010 at 13:50 - 15:10

Chair: Dr Wendy Martin

Meeting Room 4

*Frohlich, David.*

*University of Surrey*

### **A custom computer for older people**

The complexity of internet computing is increasing as services diversify and connectivity extends to new platforms such as TVs and mobile phones. At the same time, many government and commercial transactions are moving on-line at the expense of traditional off-line transactions with service staff. These trends disadvantage some groups of older people who have never engaged with digital technology, or find it increasingly difficult to do so with age or disability. In this paper we discuss one response to this issue in the form of a custom computer or 'CC' which is simplified and adapted for an older people's market. What this should do and what form it should take was the subject of two creative 'Sandpits' with older peoples' groups on the SUS-IT project, funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing programme in the UK.

Using a combination of live drama and new technology demonstration we presented a simple touch-screen device with a stripped down suite of applications and some adaptive interface features, to 16 PC and 16 non-PC users of retirement age. Participant reactions were elicited in discussions between each act of the drama, and half the participants went on to re-design the custom computer concept for themselves. Findings suggest that the idea of a custom computer was attractive to non-PC users only, although PC users wanted many of its interactive features for their own computers. These included manual and automatic ways of customising the interface, and more step-by-step help at points of trouble in the interaction

*Winefield, Helen. McCann-Mortimer, P., Ward, L.*

*University of Adelaide*

### **Ageing and the body - a nontechnological view**

Writers from a social gerontology perspective have called for a fuller account of the body in deep old age, which encompasses subjective feelings and experiences and

recognises embodiment as the central topic, rather than frailty and decline. The current psychological literature also fails to consider what older people actually say about their goals and therefore overemphasises health and functional capacity as "successful ageing"

A qualitative study of older women used interviews and focus groups to gather first hand accounts of mid-life and older women talking about their views on successful ageing and their concerns for the future as they grow older.

Findings illustrate the need for as much attention to be given to the positives of ageing as is currently given to the negatives and deficits.

The spectre of poor treatment from medical staff and care givers in one's fourth age shows a need for vastly improved training of people who work in all capacities with ageing people. Improved home and other types of accommodation and care options are needed that will provide a much better fit with the needs and wishes of older people.

The lack of a positive model of the fourth age renders an already challenging time of life more fearful and difficult than it needs to be. The challenge for researchers is to return some hope and balance to our vision of the fourth age and the end of life.

*Bissland, Val.*

### **Older adults' preferred learning and communication styles and how these fit with recent neuroscience insights into adult learning.**

Recent research on older learners has focused on the meaning of learning and the identification of various learner types, but a review of the learning-in-later (LLL) life literature by the Association for Education and Ageing (2008) has drawn attention to the limited understanding of learning and teaching methodologies.

This interpretative study drew on older adults' experience of lifelong learning and beliefs about learning to explore preferred ways of learning and communicating. By means of an introductory questionnaire and focus group interviews the views of a group of older learners within a LLL programme were compared to recent neuroscience insights into adult learning, such as, enhancing learning through connecting people in social and emotional ways, enhancing meaning and memory through the use of emotion, and the co-creation of knowledge by teacher and learners.

The study found that older learners' preferred ways of learning and communicating involved dialogue and discussion at the very heart of learning. They learned best through forms of experience both inside and outside the classroom, in contrast to sitting listening. Some also learned through helping other older adults learn a skill, such as computing. While there is no one right way to teach adults, this study provides evidence that insights from neuroscience concerning 'teaching with the brain in mind' are well-suited to the kind of learning experiences which many older adults are seeking as they attempt to add quality, purpose and meaning to their later years.

*Efstathiou, Sophia.*

### **'Could Ageing Brains Be Wiser? Wisdom, Heuristics and Aging'**

"Brain-training gadgets were just in the news –and not in a positive light (Owen et al 2010). Older people are told that practicing their mental skills can ward off the effects of ageing. But instead of fearing the old as senile, could we reasonably expect the older to be wiser?

In specific: a. What is wisdom? and b. How does wisdom relate to ageing?

This presentation outlines one possible answer using 1. a specific theory of knowledge and 2. empirical scientific research.

1. On the philosophical arm of this analysis is John Hyman's theory of knowledge. Following the work of Kenny, Ryle and Wittgenstein, Hyman proposes that knowledge is an ability: it is "the ability to act, to refrain from acting, to believe, desire, or doubt for reasons that are facts" (Hyman 1999, p. 451).

2. To give flesh to these philosophical ideas I examine the work of Gerd Gigerenzer on heuristics and decision-making (cf. Gigerenzer and Todd (1999), Gigerenzer (2001), Raab and Gigerenzer (2005)). Gigerenzer and his research group propose that a. intelligent behaviour consists in the ecologically advantageous usage of heuristics in decision-making situations, and b. that heuristics are the building blocks of our evolved and adaptive cognitive toolbox.

If wisdom comes with 'training' what Hyman calls an ability, 'knowledge', then it is experience as well as talent that enables its attainment. If personal age is a good indicator of an individual's experience it may also already indicate an individual's wisdom. Counter-arguments to these views are explored.





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# PLENARY ADDRESS

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at 15:30 in the Auditorium

## *Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness through an Aging, Science, and Technology Lens*

This plenary examines how old people, healthcare professionals, and technology designers create, use, and modify science and technology to negotiate and define health and illness. Far from passive consumers, elders are technogenarians, creatively utilising and adapting technological artifacts such as walkers and medications to fit their needs. Technogenarians are situated in multiple and overlapping socio-historical contexts surrounding ageing bodies and ageing enterprises, including the biomedicalisation of ageing that includes the rise of anti-ageing or longevity medicine; and the rise of gerontechnology industries and professions - fields that largely accept the ageing body as a given. Combining science and technology studies and sociology of health and illness frameworks this plenary captures technogenarians in context and in action, as well as the stakeholders and institutions involved in the ageing, ageism, health, and technology matrix.

### **Kelly Joyce and Meika Loe: Introductions**



Kelly Joyce is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the College of William and Mary and a Visiting Scientist/Program Director at the National Science Foundation. She is the author of the book *Magnetic Appeal: MRI and the Myth of Transparency* (Cornell University Press, 2008) and is co-editor of the forthcoming monograph *Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness through an Aging, Science, and Technology Lens* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, Inc).



Meika Loe is Associate Professor of Sociology at Colgate University in New York, USA. She is the author of the book *The Rise of Viagra: How the Little Blue Pill Changed Sex in America* (NYU Press 2004) and is co-editor of the forthcoming monograph *Technogenarians: Studying Health and Illness through an Aging, Science, and Technology Lens* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, Inc). She is currently working on a book about nonagenarians aging in place.

### **Barb Marshall: Science, Medicine, and Virility Surveillance**



Barb Marshall is Professor and Chair of Sociology at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, where she teaches in the areas of sexuality, gender, the body, and social theory. Her books include *Engendering Modernity* (Polity, 1994); *Configuring Gender* (Broadview, 2000) and *Engendering the Social* (ed. with Anne Witz, Open University Press, 2004). More recently, she has written extensively (often with collaborator and colleague Stephen Katz) on technological reconfigurations of sexual lifecourses as sexual function has been identified as a key indicator of successful aging, and as aging bodies have been targeted as sexually rehabilitable. Her current research continues to explore the ways gender and sexuality are embedded in biomedical accounts of aging bodies across a range of different contexts, including sexual medicine, hormone therapies, and non-medical (or pseudo-medical) anti-aging treatments.

### **Louis Neven: Robots and Elder Test Users**



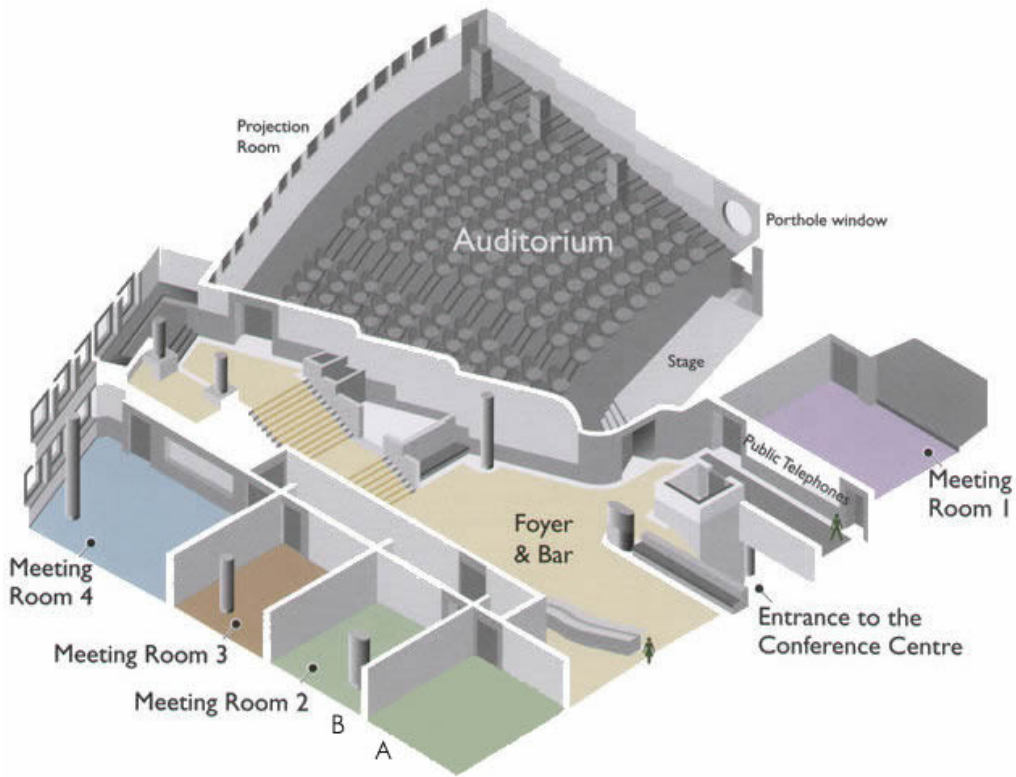
Louis Neven is a PhD student in Science and Technology Studies at the STePS group of the University of Twente. He received a M.A. from the University of Maastricht, faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Louis' thesis - supervised by prof. Nelly Oudshoorn and to be submitted by the fall of 2010 - focuses on the ways in which engineers, designers and other professionals involved in the design of technologies devise representations of elder users. He studies how these images of the prospective elder user influence the design of Ambient Intelligence robots and surveillance systems and how the identity of elder users and their social relations are taken into account in these design processes. Louis' research interests include: technology and ageing, use and non-use of mundane (health) technologies by elders, technology and identity creation, design of IT and health technologies, constructive technology assessment.

### **Katie Brittain: Technologies of Place for those Living with Dementia**



Katie Brittain is a Lecturer in Social Gerontology within the Institute of Health and Society at Newcastle University. She is an experienced health services researcher with an academic background in sociology. Her research employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods to examine the social impact that illness can have on the lives of older people. Katie has researched and published widely around the impact of ill health on older people and carers, particularly with reference to continence management. More recently her work has focused around the well-being of older people and their lived experiences, particularly around how technology might support older people to 'age in place'.

# PLAN OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY CONFERENCE CENTRE



# MAP OF THE AREA SURROUNDING THE BRITISH LIBRARY



# CALL FOR PAPERS



## The British Sociological Association Annual Conference 2011

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
London School of Economics

The British Sociological Association invites submissions to its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference. The 2011 Annual Conference follows the successful new format introduced in 2009. Participants can present on topics they wish within broad streams (and open streams) that reflect the core research areas of the membership:

- *Culture and Consumption*
- *Education*
- *Families, Relationships, Lifecourse*
- *Law, Crime and Rights*
- *Media*
- *Medicine, Health and Illness*
- *Methodological Innovations*
- *Religion*
- *Science and Technology Studies*
- *Social Divisions / Social Identities*
- *Space, Mobility and Place*
- *Teaching, Learning and Professional Issues*
- *Theory*
- *Work, Economy and Society*
- *Open Stream(s)\**

\* The conference will accommodate three or four open streams of up to 30 papers each. The organisers will seek to arrange abstracts submitted and accepted to the open stream by area of activity. Suggestions for grouped sessions within the open streams are welcomed. For example, groups submitting on a similar topic may mark their abstracts Open Stream/Climate Change or Open Stream/Historical Sociology etc.

All BSA study groups are strongly encouraged to contribute posters/papers and other activities addressed to these streams. There will also be opportunities for study groups to meet independently.

The Keynote Plenaries and Sub-Plenaries will address the Conference theme:

### 60 Years of Sociology

#### **Abstract submission form available from:**

**BSA Website:** [www.britisoc.co.uk/events/Conference](http://www.britisoc.co.uk/events/Conference)

#### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010:** Final deadline for abstract submission.

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011:** Last date for presenters to register.

**E-mail:** [BSAConference@britsoc.org.uk](mailto:BSAConference@britsoc.org.uk)



# BSA Ageing Body & Society: Futures of Ageing: Science, Technology and the Body **DELEGATE LIST**

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## Why Join?

Membership to the BSA is a must-have for those who wish to be involved and stay current with sociology in Britain. As a member of the BSA community, you'll have many opportunities to meet and collaborate with others who share your interest in establishing invaluable networking and career opportunities.

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## Who can join the BSA?

Membership is open to anyone who is engaged in, has influenced, or is interested in contributing to the promotion of sociology. So, whether you're an academic or a practising sociologist, teaching or working toward a degree, just starting your career or retired, we welcome you to the BSA community.

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