BSA Network
Recording the working lives of sociologists for over 40 years **Issue 145, Autumn 2023**

Running up that hill

Also in this issue:

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

News

Features

Opinion

Autumn 2023

Main feature:

We follow sociologists' careers from beginning to end, in the form of accounts by four researchers

See page 20

graphic: AI-generated imagery

Network:
©2023 BSA Publications Ltd
ISSN: 2634-9213

Production/Enquiries:

tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk
Tel: 07964 023392

Network is published three times a year:
Spring
Summer
Autumn

Available online to members:
www.britsoc.co.uk

Longer versions of some *Network* articles can be seen at:
https://www.britsoc.co.uk/members-area/network *(login needed)*

Authors' book advance to be given to charity

University of Oxford: Two sociologists will give their £20,000 book advance to charities committed to supporting neurodivergent working class families.

Professor Jason Arday and Dr Chantelle Lewis are giving up the advance for their book, *We See Things They'll Never See: Love, Hope and Neurodiversity,* to be published by Princeton University Press.

The donations have a personal meaning: Dr Lewis, of the University of Oxford, has ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Professor Arday, who recently became the youngest Black person ever appointed to a professorship at the University of Cambridge, was diagnosed with autism and global development delay in his early years.

The researchers said in a statement that they hoped the book would "shine a light on how challenging neurotypical society is for the most marginalised.

"We are delighted that Princeton University Press will be publishing our sociological reflections on neurodiversity, informed by scholarship which centres love and hope.

"It is a privilege for us to make a contribution to the global movement and long tradition of disability activists seeking to find innovative ways to make the world a more equitable place. Nothing about us, without us."

The work is expected to be published in 2025.

Top: Professor Jason Arday
Above: Dr Chantelle Lewis

Future of LGBTQ+ HouseProud scheme assured

University of Surrey: Professor Andrew King and Dr Frances Sanders have extended the work of the 'HouseProud pledge scheme'.

The sociologists set up the scheme with the HouseProud network in 2019, as an initiative that social housing providers can sign up to in order to demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality and support. It is the first national LGBTQ+ social housing equality framework.

Now a new project has secured the future of the scheme by forming a new partnership between HouseProud, a network group for LGBT people working in social housing, and Stonewall Housing, the UK's largest charity supporting LGBTQ+ people on housing issues.

The project has given evidence to all-party parliamentary groups and the Social Housing Commission to help ensure LGBTQ+ residents are placed at the centre of social housing governance.

A report, 'Housing with Pride: working together to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity in social housing', has just been published from the project: https://tinyurl.com/5yb47cc5

In other Surrey news, Professor Ranjana Das hosted 'The datafied family', a day-long international virtual workshop in June.

The event, sponsored by the Institute of Advanced Studies, featured four themes: data in the home; data and its relationships to different stages in the life course; parenting in platform societies; and the datafication of schools and classrooms.

The four keynote speakers were Professor Sonia Livingstone, LSE; Dr Giovanna Mascheroni, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan; Professor Veronica Barassi, University of St Gallen, Switzerland; and Professor Usha Raman, University of Hyderabad, India.

More than 25 papers were presented, with speakers joining from across time-zones. The full programme is at: https://tinyurl.com/22axyssm and the event recording can be seen at: https://tinyurl.com/43uxt3ut

Also, the project 'Emergent everyday ethics in infrastructures for smart care', led by Professor Christine Hine in collaboration with Professor Payam Barnaghi of Imperial College London, has completed.

The project ran activities to highlight developments in remote monitoring, and produced a set of animated explainer videos to help people make decisions about smart care. More details: https://tinyurl.com/2s39wbnd

Round-up of sociology news

University of Cambridge: Sandi Toksvig, the author, broadcaster, entertainer and founder of the Women's Equality Party, has been awarded the first Fellowship under a new scheme run by the Sociology Department.

She has been given the inaugural Qantabrigian Fellowship for 2023-24, which enables distinguished Cambridge LGBTQ+ alumni to spend time at the university to conduct a research project or develop a new idea.

As part of her Fellowship, Ms Toksvig will develop a new 'Mappa Mundi' project, with the aim of creating a digital resource documenting women's achievements and struggles across the globe.

She will convene a series of events, workshops and meetings to develop her initiative in partnership with Cambridge academic staff, students and support services.

The goal of the Fellowship is to build stronger links to LGBTQ+ Cambridge alumni worldwide, and to widen participation in the research and teaching activities of the university.

More details: https://tinyurl.com/3jc497t6

University of Leeds: Professor Angharad Beckett has been made a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She was one of 47 leading social scientists given Fellowships in October.

They join more than 1,500 social scientists from academia and the public, private and third sectors selected for their excellence and impact.

Professor Beckett's research interests include citizenship and disability, and she is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice,* and one of the founding editors of the international *Journal of Disability Studies in Education.*

• The **Campaign for Social Science** has launched a new project – 'Election 24: ideas for change based on social science evidence'.

This brings social scientists together to share insights on key policy issues including the economy, climate change, health and social care, immigration and education which could be adopted by the next UK government.

It is running a series of events online and in-person on themes such as health inequalities, migration and climate change: https://tinyurl.com/yzhncje6

Cost to parents of putting child through state schooling is £18,000

Loughborough University: The cost to parents of having children at state schools has been worked out for the first time.

Researchers in the Centre for Research in Social Policy added up what parents who took part in focus groups between 2012 and 2022 said they spent to meet children's minimum educational needs.

Although education is free at the point of access, the cost of uniforms, learning materials, school trips, packed lunches and transport sets most parents back at least £39.01 a week for each secondary school child and £18.69 per child at primary school.

The research found the annual price tag for children at secondary school was £1,756, and £865 for a primary school child. The total for children to go through all 14 years of school was £18,345.

Uniform, including PE kit and school bags, costed the most for parents of primary school children and came second only to transport costs for secondary school children. Food was the second biggest cost for parents of primary school children and was also a major weekly cost for those with secondary school children.

Parents of secondary school children need £279.76 a year for learning resources, including a phone, calculator, pencil case, textbooks, revision guides, set texts and subject-specific resources such as ingredients and aprons for food and nutrition lessons. Essential trips and school activities set parents back about £160 per child per year.

While some families on the lowest incomes might get help with school costs, the support available varies substantially across the nations. Eligible low-income parents of primary school children in England pay nearly double for their children's education, £30.85 a week, than equivalent families in Scotland, £16.46.

The Co-director of the centre, Professor Matt Padley, who undertook the analysis with fellow Director, Professor Abigail Davis, said: "Having the resources at home necessary to do homework, having what's needed to join a school sports team and go on educational school trips, having school uniform that fits – all of this comes at a cost, and not being able to do these things can have really damaging short and long term consequences for children.

"In the current climate, with significant and persistent pressures on household finances, it is vital that we develop and implement policies and systems across the UK that support all young people to meet their basic educational needs, but beyond this enable them to thrive in education."

Professor Matt Padley

The Child Poverty Action Group, which commissioned the research, has called on all governments in the UK to ensure all children have as a minimum affordable school uniforms, a free hot, balanced meal, the opportunity to attend school residentials and trips that enhance learning, and free transport to and from school daily.

New challenge to tackle discrimination

Loughborough University: A new initiative brings together researchers in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities involved in work on inequality and discrimination.

The researchers will work on the 'Dimensions of inequality research challenge', one of four such 'challenges' which provide a platform for collaboration across academic disciplines.

The challenge was launched at events in November 2022 and in February this year, which gave colleagues from across the school opportunities to meet and discuss their research interests and expertise.

Further events are planned, including one entitled 'Empowering methods in an unequal world', which looks at the methodological challenges and concerns of researching marginalised, vulnerable and under-represented individuals, groups and communities.

This event is jointly organised with one of the other research challenges, 'Hidden voices, contested pasts'.

The other challenges are 'Successful transitions under environmental change', and 'Challenges to democracy and the public sphere'.

Dr Thomas Thurnell-Read

The lead for 'Dimensions of inequality' is Dr Thomas Thurnell-Read, who said: "Staff are excited about showcasing the excellent work on inequalities taking place within the school and the possibilities for new collaborations that bridge disciplinary silos."

He said that research on inequalities taking place in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities included core clusters of work on poverty, youth and families, and on race and migration. A theme of many of these activities was the use of intersectional approaches as well as a focus on citizenship and equality and justice.

The School also hosts the Centre for Research in Social Policy *(see article above)*, which is internationally recognised for its pioneering work on minimum income standards, and which has established the level which the public agree no one should fall below if they are to meet their material needs and participate in society.

This is now the most widely used benchmark of its kind and has informed the setting up of the UK living wage and been applied in nine countries beyond the UK, including Mexico, South Africa and Japan.

Other recent activities by the centre include work by Dr Katherine Hill and Dr Chloe Blackwell on digital inequalities and Dr Juliet Stone's research on dying in poverty and financial hardship at the end of life.

Students ‘reluctant to report violence at UK universities’

City, University of London: Almost half of students are reluctant to report violence and victimisation they suffer at UK universities, a study has found.

Researchers received 263 responses by students to a survey asking for details of the sexual or physical violence they had experienced. These included unwanted touching, leering, suggestive comments, indecent exposure and sexual assault.

When asked if they had reported these, 47 % said they had and 46% said they had not.

When asked about barriers to reporting violence, students cited emotional factors such as feeling embarrassed, ashamed or traumatised; practical reasons such as not knowing who to talk to; and social reasons such as fear of being treated differently by peers, trust issues, or fear of perpetrators finding out.

Researchers from City, in collaboration with the University of Surrey, De Montfort University, Universities UK and NatCen conducted the first pilot study into students’ experiences of all forms of violence and victimisation at UK universities. The project,

Dr Holly Powell-Jones

entitled Violence at University, was led by Dr Carrie-Anne Myers, and ran from November 2020 to December 2021, investigating whether an effective tool could be developed for tracking when, where and how incidents take place.

Dr Myers said the results of the pilot questionnaire showed the usefulness of using survey data in tackling violence at university and making students aware of the support that is available to them.

“A key gap in our understanding of violence in universities relates to the collection of data,” she said.

“Most data collected on crime only incorporates household responses, which generally excludes the student population that might live in halls of residence. There is not a lot of information about how students are affected by violence.

“By working alongside students to produce a pilot survey, we show that violence is measurable within a university context.”

With small changes to the initial survey design, universities could use it as a practical tool to prevent incidents and protect students, she said.

“Our initial results show that many are reluctant to report violence and harassment, whether through fear of doing so or not being aware of appropriate channels.”

The researchers were: Dr Myers; Dr Holly Powell-Jones, City, University of London; Professor Helen Cowie, University of Surrey; Dr Emma Short, De Montfort University; Fiona Waye, Universities UK; and Nathan Hudson, NatCen.

Elections, veganism and health: news round-up

University of Oxford: Research has confirmed the long-held view that economic crises such as recessions and currency devaluations usually lead to the governing party losing the next election.

Professor Steve Fisher analysed UK general elections since 1922 and found that in the 14 elections that followed economic crises, the governing party lost nine times. By contrast, in the 13 elections that were not preceded by such crises, the incumbent party was re-elected 10 times.

Professor Fisher found that in three elections where the government survived an economic crisis, this can be accounted for because the prime minister was replaced during its term of office. For example, in 1992, Margaret Thatcher was replaced by John Major and the Conservatives went on to win the election despite the recent downturn.

The paper was referenced in an article in the *Independent*, which discussed whether Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the current government will stay in power following the next election, given the economic crisis currently facing the UK.

University of Kent: Dr Corey Wrenn has contributed a chapter to the *Handbook on Inequality and the Environment*. The book

Professor Steve Fisher

explores the ways that inequality is linked with climate change, natural resource extraction and food insecurity.

Dr Wrenn’s chapter reviews the concept of animal rights in the context of environmental inequality. It is summarised here: https://tinyurl.com/4fa2xn5r

Dr Wrenn is featured on the ‘Thinking like a vegan’ podcast on the topic of factionalism in the vegan movement: https://tinyurl.com/45yzdpyv

The second volume of the *Student Journal of Vegan Sociology*, of which Dr Wrenn is Faculty Editor, is available: https://tinyurl.com/ytvjfa6a

Professor Alison Pilnick has left the University of Nottingham to take up a post in the Faculty of Health and Education at **Manchester Metropolitan University.**

Her research interests lie mainly in the field of the sociology of health and illness, with a particular interest in interactions between health and social care professionals and their patients. From 2000-2006 she was a co-editor of the journal *Sociology of Health and Illness* and since 2006 has been Advisory Editor (Medical Sociology) for the journal *Social Science & Medicine*. In 2015 she was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, and in 2023 her book *Reconsidering Patient Centred Care: Between Autonomy and Abandonment* was awarded the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness prize. *See page 16 for her Medsoc plenary address*

University of Edinburgh: Professor Janette Webb is one of 91 new academics recently elected as Fellows by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland’s national academy, providing expert advice to policymakers.

Professor Webb is co-Director of the UK Energy Research Centre, leading multi-disciplinary research on the potential of integrated local and regional energy systems to improve efficiency.

Lack of time to review data leads to miscarriages of justice

University of Exeter: Miscarriages of justice could occur because defence lawyers do not have the time to review data from phones and computers, a study shows.

Researchers surveyed 70 criminal law solicitors and barristers and carried out interviews with 23 criminal law solicitors and barristers in early 2022.

The lawyers reported that their use of digital evidence was restricted by limited or late access, large volumes of material, and tight turnaround times for securing legal aid funding and choosing and instructing independent experts.

Even one gigabyte of data produced unmanageable amounts of evidence to review, so that lawyers sometimes had to rely on the summaries provided by the prosecution.

The inability to undertake independent checks could result in omitting important details, which could lead to miscarriages of justice.

The research, by Professor Dana Wilson-Kovacs and Professor Rebecca Helm, of the University of Exeter, Dr Beth Growns, of the University of Canterbury New Zealand, and Lauren Redfern, of King’s College London, is published open access in *The International Journal of Evidence & Proof.*

Professor Dana Wilson-Kovacs

The researchers call for more clarity and transparency around the collection and analysis of digital evidence and the streamlining of the format and presentation of information.

Professor Helm said: “There is a widespread need to raise the levels of understanding of digital evidence by all, including how it is gathered and when and how it may be challenged. Improving lawyers’ own digital literacy is key to ensuring they can adequately represent the interests of their clients.

“Respondents noted that inaccessible format and presentation of digital evidence presented by the prosecution could be difficult to navigate and laborious to decipher. Some described receiving ‘data dumps’ which would slow down the progress of already overstretched defence teams. Respondents discussed the lack of timely access to data as another factor that could restrict both the legal aid funding stream and the capabilities of the defence.”

Professor Wilson-Kovacs said: “Some criminal defence lawyers may attempt to analyse data themselves because of the volume received from the prosecution, the short time they have to prepare a response and secure legal aid funding, the limited amount of that funding and the independent expertise it pays for. This increases the risk of essential information being missed.

“Those involved in the study said even when defence expert witnesses were secured, access to other relevant data held by the police depended largely on the goodwill of the prosecution and would typically occur too late to be able to undertake any meaningful analysis. The digital evidence made available to defence teams often lacked detail and context or was so heavily redacted that it was impossible to follow.”

Ex-prisoners ‘need support’

Universities of Sheffield: Mothers who are in prison are not given adequate support to help them avoid domestic violence upon their release, a new report says.

Researchers conducted a review of policy and practice for mothers in prison or who are on release, and who have past or current experience of domestic violence and abuse.

The report, written with University of Salford researchers, found that there were examples of good practice in the prison system in supporting prisoners’ mental health, which included recognising the importance of family work by helping prisoners to repair and maintain family relationships.

However, the analysis highlights that the availability of these interventions was variable and often lacked a focus on preventing abuse.

Dr Michaela Rogers, one of the researchers, said: “Our review has found that the heightened awareness about the links between women’s imprisonment and mothering, and domestic abuse, has not translated into better practice, with the speed, consistency and parity that is needed to reach and make a difference for all imprisoned mothers in England and Wales.”

The researchers have proposed 20 recommendations, including running training sessions upon entry to prison that enable women to recognise experiences of victimisation.

Home Office data show that around 60 % of women in prison have experienced domestic violence.

Dr Michaela Rogers

E-book celebrates life of Berry Mayall

UCL: An e-book celebrating the life and work of Professor Berry Mayall has been published online.

Professor Mayall, who died in 2021, aged 85, worked at the Institute of Education as a childhood studies researcher.

She argued that modern Western societies often marginalise children and young people, leaving them oppressed or excluded from society.

The book, edited by Professor Priscilla Alderson, draws on a celebration of Professor Mayall’s life, held in-person and online at UCL in April this year, and chaired by Dr Kirrily Pells and Dr Ginny Morrow.

Among those who attended were members of Professor Mayall’s family and 30 students on the MA course, ‘Childhood studies and children’s rights’, co-founded by her in 2003. A dozen addresses were given celebrating aspects of her work.

The book, entitled, *Celebration of the life and work of Professor Berry Mayall 1936-2021,* can be viewed at: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10172775

One in 15 Britons, across all age groups, change their sexuality

Lancaster University: One in 15 Britons changed their sexual identity over a six-year period, a study finds.

Researchers looked at the self-declared sexual identities of almost 23,000 people reported to the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study between 2011–2013 and 2017–2019.

They found that 6.6% of the UK population had changed their reported sexual identity over that period.

The study's main findings show that sexual identity mobility was three times more likely among minority ethnic people (15.5%) than among white people (5.0%), and was more likely among less educated people. It was 10% less likely among men (5.7%) than women (6.3%).

Sexual identity mobility was higher among young people aged 16-24 (7.9%) and older adults aged 65 and over (7.4%), compared with those aged 25-64 (5%-6.2%).

The categories most likely to change, omitting those who preferred not to say or said 'other', was bisexual, 57% of whom changed their sexuality, mostly to heterosexual; and gay or lesbian, 13% of whom changed their sexuality, mostly to heterosexual. Of heterosexuals, only 2% changed their sexuality.

"The idea that sexual identity is fluid is not new, but up until now we knew relatively little about just how fluid it is in the population and how the fluidity varies across different demographic groups," said the lead author, Professor Yang Hu.

"An increasing range of social policies, public health and welfare programmes are rolled out to support equality for and the wellbeing of sexual minority individuals. Our findings show that the sexual minority population is not static, and identities and partnership practices may change over the course of people's lives.

Professor Yang Hu

"As the composition of the sexual minority population may shift, policy makers must be attuned to the changing characteristics and needs of the population."

Dr Nicole Denier, of the University of Alberta in Canada, co-author of the report, was particularly intrigued by the finding that sexual identity does not stabilise over the life course.

"That assumption has given rise to much research focusing on adolescence as a critical stage of sexual identity development," she said. "But our findings suggest that changes in sexual identity represent an equally worthy research topic among the elderly and indeed across the full life span."

The research is published in *Demography*, the journal of the Population Association of America.

Symposium looks at migrant families and the environment

Families and Relationships study group: The group hosted an online symposium on the theme of families, relationships and the environment in May.

The symposium began with a keynote address by Dr Catherine Walker, of Newcastle University, who shared insights from her research exploring the way that different generations in migrant families in Melbourne and Manchester tackle environmental issues.

Her methodology involved people aged 14 to 18 acting as both participants and researchers. The young people took part in interviews with a researcher, with some then interviewing an older member of their own family.

Dr Walker's talk was followed by a series of five-minute 'lightning' talks by scholars at all career stages who shared a summary of their current work. These talks illustrated the range of empirical and theoretical work in this growing field.

Topics covered in the first of these panels were: nappy-free infant rearing practices in Pakistan and the UK, given by Dr Kaveri Qureshi; perceived abilities to adapt home heating systems, by Dr Fiona Shirani; generation talk in the context of environmental crisis, by Professor Sarah Irwin; precarious living conditions in areas vulnerable to climate change, by Ghurni Bhattacharya; and public responses to net zero, by Professor Lucie Middlemiss.

Professor Lucie Middlemiss

In the third and final session, expectant parents' environmentally conscious consumerism was discussed by Alice Menzel; children's conceptualisation of nature, by Dr Lisa Howard; outdoor participatory methods by Nobila Bano; 'play street' initiatives, by Professor Alison Stenning; and how the sociology of death and dying can help us to understand climate change as an existential crisis, by Dr Jane Ribbens-McCarthy.

Discussion during the symposium, and feedback given afterwards, suggested to the group that further activities were needed to link the sociology of family and relationships more closely with the global environmental crises.

In other group news, Dr Katherine Twamley, Dr Humera Iqbal and Dr Charlotte Faircloth published *Family Life in the Time of Covid* with UCL Press. This compiles case studies from 10 countries that explore how local responses to the pandemic shaped, and were shaped by, practices of family life.

The book came from the Fact-Covid study based at the Social Research Institute led by the authors, and involved researchers from a range of institutions. It can be downloaded for free: www.uclpress.co.uk/products/184220

Just rewards: prizes given to sociologists

Essex University: Professor Lydia Morris has been awarded the prestigious Peter Townsend Prize.

She was given the £1,000 award by the British Academy for her research, including a recent book, *The Moral Economy of Welfare and Migration: Reconfiguring Rights in Austerity Britain*.

This explores Britain's years of austerity from 2010 to 2015, when the coalition government brought in measures to try to cut welfare spending and immigration.

The British Academy's judging panel said the monograph, "makes a major contribution to understanding recent policy developments".

The Peter Townsend Prize is awarded every two years to prominent researchers in the social sciences and was set up in memory of Professor Townsend, a sociologist and co-founder of the Child Poverty Action Group.

Professor Morris, who has taught at Essex for more than 30 years, said: "I am honoured to be the joint recipient of the 2023 Peter Townsend Prize, and grateful for this recognition of my critical commentary on measures that have caused, and continue to cause, misery and distress for so many."

Lancaster University: Professor Imogen Tyler has been elected to the Council of the Academy of Social Sciences, the national academy of academics, practitioners and learned societies in social science.

The members of the Council, which functions as the Academy's Board of Trustees, have overall responsibility for the charity.

Professor Tyler, who will serve a three-year term of office, joins columnist Will Hutton and sociologists Professor Eileen Green and Professor John Scott and others on the 21-member Council.

Her research focuses on inequalities of poverty, class, race, gender, disability and citizenship. She works with community groups, activists, artists and museums.

LSE: Dr Faiza Shaheen has been appointed course tutor during the 2023-2024 academic year, working with Professor Sam Friedman and Professor Mike Savage on the MSc Inequalities and Social Science and on collaborative projects with the International Inequalities Institute and the Atlantic Fellows Programme in Social and Economic Equity.

Dr Shaheen was Director of the Centre for Labour and Social Studies think tank between 2016 and 2020, and from 2021 to 2023 worked at the Center on International Co-operation at New York University. Her book, *Know Your Place*, was published recently.

Dr Shaheen was the parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party in Chingford and Woodford Green in the 2019 election and will contest the seat at the next election.

Dr Aminu Musa Audu has been given a 'Voice Achievers Award' by the Voice publication for research work on his country of origin, Nigeria. He carried out the work for his PhD at the **University of Liverpool**.

The award was given at a ceremony in Almere in the Netherlands, whose theme was 'Harnessing our diversity for the advancement of Africa'. Dr Audu has written about policing problems and solutions in Nigeria.

He has also been thanked by the Merseyside Police for his membership of the Merseyside Independent Advisory Group and by the BSA for his six years as a trustee of the association.

Podcast airs workers' stories

Applied Sociology Group: The group's website is hosting a podcast series featuring interviews with employees from a range of occupations who studied sociology at university.

The series comprise around 40 interviews that were uploaded weekly over the past few months with men and women working in the media, civil service, local government, caring professions, marketing, PR, education and the police. Many reflect on the value that sociological understanding has contributed to their work.

The podcasts, created by secondary school sociology teacher Sunny Gunessee, are a resource for sociology students nearing graduation, who can find out more about the range of careers open to them.

Outstanding podcasts include one by Luca Parrott, who discusses the impact sociological knowledge had on her career as a solicitor, offering practical tips for navigating the world of law.

Oscar Tremain explores how studying sociology, and in particular the sociology of media, has shaped his work in the music and technology industry.

"Sunny has put in a huge amount of effort to gather together this remarkable selection of people applying sociology in their everyday work," said Nick Fox, convenor of the Applied Sociology Group.

"Listening to these employees' stories makes you realise just how valuable sociology can be in the world of work outside academia and research."

The podcasts are collected together for the first time on the group's website: http://appsoc.org.uk and can be accessed for free, under the Podcasts tab.

Sunny Gunessee

PG Forum runs range of events

The **Postgraduate Forum** has been active in 2023, running 13 regional events, more than any previous year.

The events, run online and face to face, took place at universities across the UK and covered a wide range of topics, including the media, migration, sex work, disability, feminism and big data. They were funded by grants of £1,000 from the BSA.

The series marks a renewal of the work of the forum and aims to express the diversity and dynamism of the postgraduate experience: https://tinyurl.com/3wrcx2hx

This year also saw the launch of a series of the forum's journal publications events, held at the BSA annual conference and the Work, Employment and Society conference. These are part of the BSA's commitment to supporting the publication processes for PhD students.

Details of the events, and the PG Forum, organised by convenors James Green, of UCL, Karen Tatham, University of Leeds, and Emrah Yildirim, University of Bath, can be seen on the forum's website at: https://tinyurl.com/52fmu48n

Worsley's boomerang (and shells and baskets) will now come back

A reminder that the pioneers of British sociology came from a variety of backgrounds has arrived in the form of an agreement to return objects to an indigenous Australian community.

The objects were bought or traded for in the 1950s by Peter Worsley, an anthropology PhD student researching the lives of indigenous Australians for his PhD at the Australian National University.

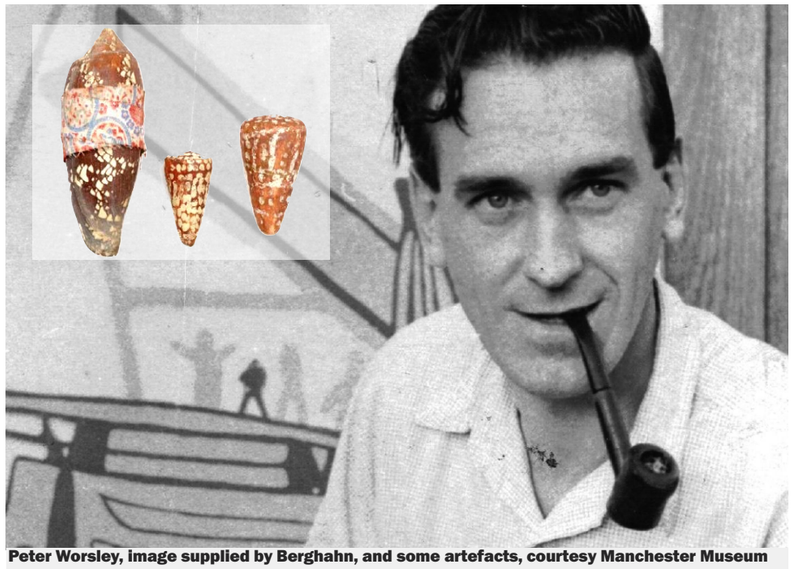
He went on to lecture in sociology at the University of Hull and become the first professor of sociology at the University of Manchester, in 1964. He later served as President of the BSA.

The 174 items, which are being returned by Manchester Museum, are everyday objects including dolls made from shells, baskets, fishing spears, boomerangs, armbands and a map made from turtle shells. The objects have not been on display or used for teaching for many years.

They were sent back to the Anindilyakwa community, who live on an archipelago in the Gulf of Carpentaria, off the northern coast of Australia, and who number 1,600 people. Three representatives of the community travelled to Manchester for the handover.

The expectation is that the objects will be used to strengthen Anindilyakwa culture by teaching new generations the cultural history of their people.

There is no suggestion that the pieces were acquired in anything other than a legitimate manner, and Professor Worsley's relatives believe he would have approved of the transfer. His daughter, Deborah, who was at the ceremony, told *The Guardian*: "He would be so thrilled. I feel so, so proud today."



Peter Worsley, image supplied by Berghahn, and some artefacts, courtesy Manchester Museum

Esme Ward, the Director of Manchester Museum, said: "We believe this is the future of museums – this is how we should be. My understanding is that he [Professor Worsley] was building relationships with the Anindilyakwa people and I like to think he would view this as an extension of the work he started."

Many organisations, including Unesco, hope the project will be a model for other museums to follow.

Do you have news to share?

Network is looking for news, features, opinions and book reviews. If you're interested in having your say please contact Tony Trueman, at tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk or on 07964 023392.

BSA welcomes A-level increase

The BSA has welcomed the large increase in the number of students taking A-level sociology this summer.

Ofqual data show there was a rise of 4.9% from the summer 2022 figure, bringing the number to 45,730.

This makes sociology the fifth most popular A-level, after mathematics (90,845), psychology (78,015), biology (68,870) and chemistry (57,620).

The figure for sociology is the latest in a steady rise over the past few years, with 36,295 taking it in summer 2019, 36,965 in 2020, 39,825 in 2021 and 43,590 in 2022.

Of those taking A-level sociology in summer 2023, 18.6% achieved either A or A* grades, and another 29.6% achieved a B grade. Only 2.2% failed to get an E grade or higher.

The total number of A-levels taken in summer 2023 was 806,410, an increase of 2.3% on the previous summer.

Judith Mudd, BSA Chief Executive, said: "We congratulate all those students who passed their sociology A-level this summer, who are more numerous than ever, a strong sign of the health of the discipline. We would also like to give a warm welcome to those who are going on to study the subject at university."

The number of sociology AS-levels taken this summer, 4,785, fell by 6.3% on the previous summer, though it remains the sixth most popular, after 'other subjects', mathematics, psychology, biology and chemistry.

The number of AS-levels taken overall fell by 2% from summer 2022 to summer 2023.

New staff join BSA's team

The BSA has welcomed three new staff members who have joined the association in the past few months.

Kirsten Boucher joined as Events Officer, to increase capacity in this area now that events are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Selina Hisir has begun as Publications Co-ordinator, supporting the Publications Manager, Alison Danforth.

Katherine Minnis takes on a new role of Governance Manager, which replaces the previous role of Company Secretary following the retirement of Kerry Collins, who gave 16 years' of excellent service to the BSA.

Articles on work, gender diversity, and audiences win Sage prizes

The winners of three Sage prizes for innovation/excellence in BSA journals have been announced.

The joint winners of the *Work, Employment and Society* prize were Dr Knut Laaser, of the University of Stirling, and Professor Jan Karlsson, of Karlstad University, Sweden, for 'Towards a sociology of meaningful work'.

This article introduces a novel sociological framework that features the objective and subjective dimensions of autonomy, dignity and recognition.
https://tinyurl.com/2s33mv6k

Dr Khandakar Shahadat, University of York, and Professor Shahzad Uddin, University of Essex, also won the WES prize for 'Labour controls, unfreedom and perpetuation of slavery on a tea plantation', which looks at social and economic exclusion through discriminatory labour laws and labour-manager relations on Bangladesh tea plantations: https://tinyurl.com/4x7nsjby

Dr Khandakar Shahadat

'Hearing, policing, and using gender diversity: the role of institutional gatekeepers in researching youth and gender', was this year's winner for *Sociological Research Online*.

Dr Karen Cuthbert, University of Glasgow, Dr Joseph Hall, University of Hertfordshire, Professor Sally Hines, University of Sheffield, and Dr Kim Allen and Dr Sharon Elley, University of Leeds, reflect on their experiences in organising focus groups with young people in educational and youth group settings.

The article traces the ways in which meanings around gender and gender diversity are framed:
https://tinyurl.com/yrmrhzw2

The winner of the *Cultural Sociology* prize was Anne Taylor, PhD candidate at Yale University, for her article, 'Audience agency in social performance',

This offers a rigorous theorisation of the audience in cultural pragmatics and argues that they are the sole arbiters of performative outcomes.

This process is visualized with a new analytic tool, with illustrations from US Senator Bernie Sanders' political rise over the last decade: https://tinyurl.com/mwyp53w5

The prizes are £250 worth of Sage books or a free annual individual subscription to a journal of the winner's choice.

Meet the PhD: Catherine Stinton

'Everything about the PhD has surprised me – I've learnt to embrace the uncertainty and be adaptable'

My research explores the position of women in the propaganda and rhetoric of the British far right, specifically Patriotic Alternative, the largest fascist group in the UK, who pursue their ethnic nationalist agenda through various forms of legal activism.

PA has several women in leadership and high-profile positions, and it seeks to present itself as family-friendly and community-minded to maximise mainstream appeal.

I began my PhD in 2020 and Covid restrictions forced my research to change from the initial proposal of conducting face-to-face interviews to a digital ethnography, focused entirely on the publicly available online content of PA.

Through viewing their online content and discourses, I explore the roles women play within ethnic nationalism, an ideology known for its deep misogyny. I also examine PA's depictions and discussions of racism, ethnic nationalism, transphobia and other ideologies. PA's website includes extensive material about the organisation's activities, and their blog, with articles written by members, is updated daily. They also have a large presence on alternative social media and streaming platforms, with videos posted almost daily. For six months, I viewed all of this material on a daily basis, extensively recording my observations through field notes as a passive lurker and consumer of their content.

It is essential that society continues to oppose the organised far right and their ideals, which are increasingly mainstreamed by our legacy media and government. I grew up against the backdrop of the War on Terror, with British Islamophobia on the rise. This has always shaped my opposition to fascism and my belief that the British far right must be taken more seriously.

Everything about the PhD has surprised me. I underestimated how much my research would change from the initial proposal to my current analysis drafts. This has been exciting, not frustrating, and has reflected my personal growth, the expansion of my understanding, and changing opportunities. I've changed a lot as a person, not just a researcher, and this has been about finding the freedom and confidence to pursue my passion. I've learnt to embrace uncertainty and be adaptable.

The friendships I've made have been necessary in supporting me through the difficult subject material and the emotional challenges of doing a PhD. The hardest part of it – of any PhD, I suspect – is the loneliness. For all of the bonds you make, only you can guide yourself through the moments of self-doubt and the sense of isolation as you pursue a long and difficult research project, often completely on your own. I've found this particularly hard when reading far-right content, where sometimes I immersed myself for days in hate speech and bigotry. It's essential to make sure you have a support network to get through a PhD, ideally one which includes people outside of academia as well as inside,

I would like to stay in academia but it's a difficult industry for stability, and I would like very much to be able to settle down in one place. I would feel like I've let myself down if I don't continue to work against the far right in whatever comes next for me.

- **'Women in the British Far Right: A Critical Exploration of the Discourse of Patriotic Alternative', 2020-2024, University of York**

All around the world...

Links to online articles about these topics can be found at www.britsoc.co.uk/members-area/network

Network takes a look at sociology beyond our shores

Oil companies owe $23 trillion

Two sociologists have calculated the amount of money that the main oil companies should pay as compensation for their part in the climate emergency.

Professor Marco Grasso, of the University of Milan-Bicocca in Italy, and Richard Heede, of the Climate Accountability Institute, surveyed hundreds of climate economists to obtain information on the financial costs associated with global heating.

Currently, governments or insurers often end up paying for the restoration of areas damaged by floods or heatwaves. In some cases, however, the victims are left saddled with the obligation to rebuild their homes as best they can at their own expense or move to other places.

In their study, published in the journal *One Earth,* the researchers found that it is possible to quantify the total amount that will be owed by the industry as a whole at approximately $23 trillion for the period 2025-2050.

They worked out that Saudi Aramco, the Saudi Arabian oil company, should pay $43 billion each year, the Russian Gazprom corporation should pay $20 billion and Exxon $18 billion. Shell should pay $16 billion, and BP $14.5 billion.

The researchers point out that this money could be paid into a global account to fund property restoration after environmental catastrophes and to finance new ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The sociologists acknowledge the difficulties of managing this payment system, but they also point out that as climate change-related environmental disasters become more frequent and more extreme, new sources of revenue will be required to pay for their consequences.

"Fossil fuel companies have a moral responsibility to affected parties for climate harm and have a duty to rectify such harm," they write.

"Moral theory and common sense ... demand that historical wrongdoing must be rectified. A direct way to do so is through payment of reparations to wronged parties."

The study can be read at: https://tinyurl.com/yuz8r3mk

Degree is child's play for Gavin

Gavin Munson would be uniquely placed to contribute to youth studies if he used an auto-ethnological approach.

That's because he has been awarded a bachelor's degree in sociology at Arizona State University at the age of 14.

Gavin began his higher education journey aged 10 through an accelerated programme which allowed him to earn dual credit toward his degree at the same time as continuing his regular school studies, which he completed aged 12, top of his class.

One of his dual enrolment credits was a life-changing sociology class taught by a passionate and engaging teacher, which sparked his interest in the discipline as his college major.

Gavin told 12News: "I was so young I didn't realise how much of a leap it was [to start university]. My parents would drop me off and I'd go to class and I'd just sit in the classroom and learn – it felt normal for me."

Same-sex book is banned

A sociology textbook has been banned by Pakistan's Education Ministry because of its content on same-sex marriage.

Sociology, by Jonathan Blundell, a BSA trustee, was banned because it goes against Pakistan's social and cultural values, according to one official.

The book is Cambridge University Press' IGCSE sociology coursebook, and lists only two pages on same-sex marriage in its index.

The History and Culture of Pakistan, by Nigel Kelly, has also been banned, on the grounds that it allegedly describes Pakistan's political history wrongly and includes a misprinted map of the country.

The country's Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority has issued a notification stating that the printing, publishing, distribution and teaching of the books would be prohibited, and legal action would be taken against violators. Educational institutions must ensure that these books are not available.

The ban is reported by the Propakistani website, details at: https://tinyurl.com/4fmshxkc

Girls put off 'unsocial' STEM

Young women are put off taking STEM subjects at university because they think these demand little of the social and emotional skills of everyday life, research says.

Dr Benita Combet, of the University of Zurich, carried out a study with 1,500 Swiss high school students in which she teased out the factors that made science less appealing to the girls than boys.

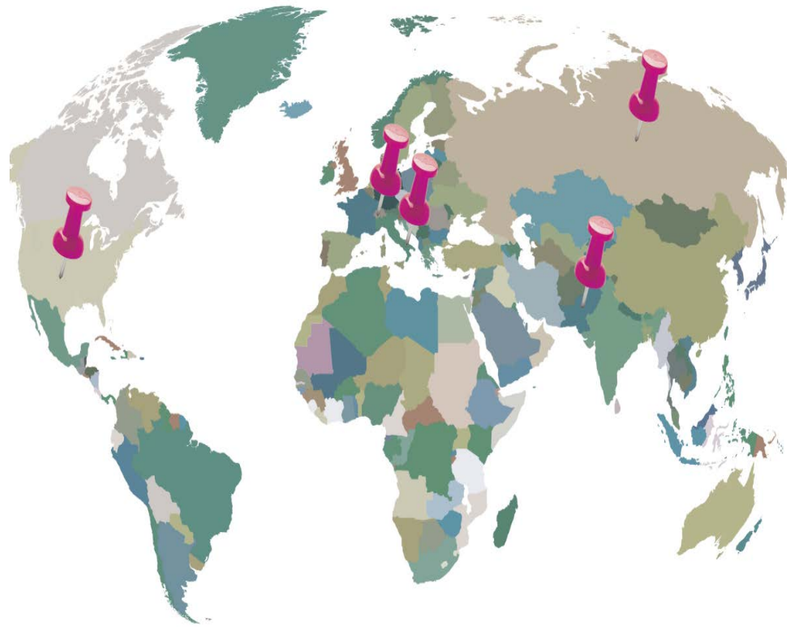
She found that the boys were influenced by their preference for mathematics and the salary and prestige that went with science.

The girls were averse to subjects that they thought required analytical rather than creative thinking and that needed little social and emotional skill.

Dr Combet believes school children should be given more detailed information about future subject choices to overcome the bias against science.

"Many of their current perceptions are not accurate – interpersonal and creative skills are also important in engineering, for example working in a team to develop new products."

The study is published in the journal *European Sociological Review.*



Prof admits she is non-Native

A sociology professor at the University of California-Berkeley has apologised for wrongly identifying as Native American.

Elizabeth Hoover confirmed she is not actually a member of the Mohawk and Mi'kmaq tribes, as she had been told during her childhood.

Professor Hoover said she never knowingly falsified her identity, but she had now discovered that she didn't have the native heritage she had claimed.

"By claiming an identity as a woman of Mohawk and Mi'kmaq descent without confirming it with communities of origin, and by not confirming kinship ties back to politically and culturally affiliated indigenous peoples, I betrayed and hurt my students, collaborators, and friends. I have negatively impacted people emotionally and culturally. For this hurt I have caused, I am deeply sorry."

She has pledged to give away her native moccasins, jewellery, and clothing "to people who will wear them better".

More than 300 students and professors called on her to resign from her position at the school, accusing her of being a 'pretendian'. She remains in post, however.

Russia war critic is arrested

The sociologist and Kremlin critic Boris Kagarlitsky has been detained in Russia, in the latest crackdown on critics of the invasion of Ukraine.

He was detained for allegedly 'calling for terrorism', a charge that could result in a seven-year prison sentence. He has denied the allegation.

His lawyer, Sergei Yerokhov, said that, "in his work, Professor Kagarlitsky never supported or justified terrorism. The purpose of all his statements is to show the real problems faced by the Russian state."

Professor Kagarlitsky, aged 64, works at the Moscow Higher School of Economics, a university known for its liberal values, where he is well known for his writings on Russian society and his left-wing political history.

The Russian authorities declared him a foreign agent in 2022. He was also a political prisoner in the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin has taken its crackdown on critical voices to an unprecedented level. Most well-known opponents are in exile or behind bars, and thousands of ordinary Russians have been detained for criticising the offensive.

Amitai Etzioni dies, aged 94

Amitai Etzioni, the American-Israeli sociologist who championed the philosophy known as communitarianism and served as a senior policy adviser to the Carter administration has died, aged 94.

Professor Etzioni was born Werner Falk in 1929, in Cologne in Germany. His family, who were Jewish, fled the Nazis after they took control, eventually settling in Israel, where Werner changed his name – Amitai meaning 'truth' in Hebrew.

As a teenager, he fought for Israeli independence as a member of the Palmach, an underground army unit, and began filing newspaper dispatches that served as the basis of his first book, *A Diary of a Commando Soldier* (1952).

He then studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under Austrian-born philosopher Martin Buber, receiving a bachelor's degree in sociology in 1954 and a master's in 1956, before moving to the United States for his doctorate.

Professor Etzioni joined the faculty of Columbia University, rising to become Chairman of the Sociology Department, and was later President of the American Sociological Association.

He rose to scholarly prominence with his book *The Active Society* (1968), a 700-page study of social change in which he examined the way that history is shaped by individual action, power and consensus.

Professor Etzioni went on to write hundreds of papers and more than 30 books, both for specialists and general readers, on topics such as foreign affairs, organisational theory, nuclear proliferation, the space race, sexual ethics and morality.

He also sought to connect his research and findings to policy making, writing essays for the *Washington Post* and *New York Times,* and giving frequent TV and radio interviews.

Professor Etzioni worked at the Brookings Institution as a guest scholar before joining the administration of President Jimmy Carter in 1979 as an adviser.

He became best known as the chief spokesman for communitarianism, a centrist philosophy that earned him an audience in the 1990s with leaders including Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

The philosophy combined a liberal emphasis on social justice with a conservative belief in personal responsibility, aiming to maintain and repair society and its institutions.

In 2001, he was named among the top 100 American intellectuals, as measured by academic citations.

Medsoc 2023 brings sociologists together for ‘amazing, brilliant, but not terrifying conference’

This year’s Medsoc conference saw addresses on stem cell research and patient-centred care, and featured a host of special events. Network takes a look...

This year’s MedSoc conference, at the University of Sussex in September, attracted 274 delegates from 23 countries, including India, Japan, China and Nigeria.

The conference, the 55th held, was notable for being the second to stage hybrid events, with 12 presentations given virtually.

The events included a ‘sandpit’, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, where people could discuss funding, ECR networking and setting up regional or special interest groups.

The conference proved popular, with people posting favourable comments such as “brilliant”, “amazing” and “not as terrifying as anticipated” on Twitter/X. *see right*

The programme also included special events on long Covid, vaccinations, collaborative group working and health service delivery. Of the 30 free places available, 24 were taken up.

Professor Alison Pilnick, of Manchester Metropolitan University, gave the opening plenary, on ‘What’s wrong with patient-centred care?’ *see page 16*

Dr Ros Williams, of the University of Sheffield, gave the closing plenary, entitled ‘Saved by the cell: race, recruitment, and the blood stem cell registry.’ *see right*

The plenaries will be available on the Medsoc website and full details of the programme and speakers are on the online event archive, https://tinyurl.com/p8jyabp9

Jo Hope and Gareth Thomas stepped down as main Medsoc convenors, with Dr Hope staying on as an ordinary member of the committee.

Simon Carter and Hilllary Collins become the new co-convenors. Catherine Coveney has stepped down from the committee, and Priya Davda and Jaime Garcia Iglesias join as ordinary members, with Raquel Boso Perez as the new PGR member.

The Foundation of the Sociology of Health and Illness book prize was won by Professor Pilnick for her book, *Reconsidering Patient Centred Care: Between Autonomy and Abandonment*. More details: https://es.britsoc.co.uk/fshi-book-prize-2023-winner-announcement

The prize, of £1,000, is awarded each September to the author or editor of the book making the most significant contribution to medical sociology or the sociology of health and illness which was published over the preceding three years.

The Phil Strong prize was given to Sabrina Keating, of the University of Oxford, who researches experiences of gynaecological conditions and how people with long-term health conditions make decisions on knee surgery.

The prize was established in memory of Phil Strong (1945-1995), who influenced the development of medical sociology in the UK. It is worth £1,200 and is given to support postgraduate research.

Next year’s MedSoc conference will take place at a venue to be confirmed later, from 11 to 13 September.

- As well as the main MedSoc group, there are eight BSA regional medical sociology groups and three special interest groups: Deconstructing Donations, Early Careers, and Mental Health.

Stem cell registries ‘organised in terms of race’

The task of setting up registries for stem cell donors has become “framed and organised” in terms of race, Dr Ros Williams told her plenary audience.

Registries had been set up since the 1970s so that people with blood diseases such as cancer could find donors.

The odds of finding a donor whose cells would be compatible were very low, so large databases were needed, she said.

Registries now had around 40 million donors worldwide, and the chance of a white person finding a compatible donor were now over 70%, but were much lower for non-white people, at 20%.

Dr Williams said that from the early days of stem cell registries, genetic differences had been noted, with different alleles – gene variants – found predominantly in different population groups.

There were fewer donors from ethnic minority groups, so the odds of finding a compatible donor for them were lower. People from some ethnic minorities did not have settled lives because they were migrants or distrusted health services because of previous bad experiences.

In response, ethnic status among donors was recorded and appeals were made to specific minorities to donate, she said.

“The work of trying to ensure a breadth of genetic diversity is framed and organised in terms of race,” Dr Williams said.

“It’s communities that have to be approached, made responsible for, and compelled to act to redress the inequity.

“I do think that invoking race again and again is a choice. Things could have been different. Infrastructures could have been established that prioritised global incorporation, ensuring that everybody could access this treatment, which would then mean that the infrastructure of stem cell registries themselves would have been far more inclusive and diverse and probably wouldn’t then have had to use the language of race at all.

“An alternative would be, of course, to direct resources to people so that they could ensure they’ve got a sufficient primary healthcare.

“The data is replete with examples of talking about how particular racialised communities are reluctant and tend to be quite lazy or don’t like to get involved in things or are not team players or care more about their own families or their local communities.

“A lot of the thinking around that is about how they’re far less reliable, in part not because of any cultural difference, but because they move around a lot. These are migrants, and so their address is always changing.

“People are saying no to their DNA being put on a database because of very real experiences they’ve had where they’ve interfaced with other kinds of institutions, including the NHS, and have felt very much ‘othered’. And so they do not trust these systems very often because of the way that their systems treat racially minoritised people.”

Another reason for the lower number of suitable non-white donors was that of the 56 countries with registries, only two, Nigeria and South Africa, were in Africa. The cost of a stem cell transplant – £38,000, rising to £100,000 with follow-up treatments – was prohibitive for some countries.

Watch Dr Williams’ plenary

Alison Pilnick told her plenary audience that patient-centred care can leave people without the expert guidance they need

‘By discarding professionals’ expertise, we leave patients unable to make meanings’

Professor Pilnick speaking at a previous event

There is no firm evidence that switching to a patient-centred care system helps people’s health, Professor Alison Pilnick told her Medsoc plenary audience.

If doctors and nurses downplayed their authority during consultations, this could leave patients without the expert guidance they needed to make informed decisions, she said.

Professor Pilnick, of Manchester Metropolitan University, called for a return to an emphasis on professional expertise and authority, “rehabilitated civilly and productively for the benefit of patients”.

Professor Pilnick said that it was generally accepted that patient-centred care, brought into the NHS over the past few decades, involved “a move from the reductionist biological approach of illness-centred medicine towards the pathology of the whole person.

“One of the things that I assumed when I was first interested in this area was that, given the pervasiveness of patient-centred care in healthcare, the evidence base for it must be pretty strong, because I naively assumed that that’s how healthcare policy gets made. But the evidence is actually pretty mixed.”

Three major studies in 2001, 2012 and 2015 concluded that while patients may have been more satisfied with their treatment, there was no, or only mixed, evidence for patient-centred systems improving their health.

“So at best it seems that these interventions sometimes improve satisfaction, but the evidence that they improve health behaviours or health outcomes is kind of mixed or non-existent dependent on which review you look at,” she said. “So we’ve arrived at this position where patient-centred care has become a mark of quality of care in the absence of any real evidence for how it improves that quality of care.”

She said her own research showed that doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals were giving information to patients but not drawing conclusions from this that would help patients make up their minds about treatment options.

“What you need is a conclusion or a point that gives some kind of summary of the sense that’s intended. Because if you don’t have that, the listener has to work out for themselves how it should be interpreted in the absence of the additional knowledge that the teller has.

“But what I saw time and again in my data across a range of different settings was healthcare professionals backing away from that meaning-making for fear that it will undermine patient autonomy and patient choice. By downplaying or discarding professionals’ epistemic authority, we can leave patients unable to make the meaning they require from their situation.”

Her research carried out video and audio recordings of patient consultations with doctors, nurses, physios, pharmacists, speech and language therapists, genetic counsellors, midwives and other healthcare professionals.

“The problem is pretty much always conceptualised as one of inadequate training. If only we trained healthcare staff more or somehow better in patient-centred care, then we’d see different results.

> ‘Patient-centred care has become a mark of quality in the absence of any real evidence for how it improves that quality’

Watch Professor Pilnick’s plenary

“But I think it’s much more complex than that, and I think it’s been misconceptualised because of a lack of understanding about how interaction in general and healthcare interaction in particular works in actual practice.”

She said that patient-centred care presupposed that the patient was “somebody who wants to assume control of their healthcare and also has the intellectual and the interactional resources to be able to do that. But if you don’t have that then the promised empowerment of patient-centred care isn’t easily achieved. We seem to have reached this position where we assume that the only alternative to patient-centred care as currently espoused is a return to medical paternalism.”

But this was a false dichotomy as healthcare was not a zero-sum game in which control could only belong to either patients or professionals.

“If we assume the only alternative to patient-centred care is unbridled medical paternalism, we’re both misunderstanding how healthcare interaction works in practice as well as conflating authority with expertise.

“What do I think we should do instead? Despite many years of trying to find it, we haven’t found any evidence that patient-centred care works in terms of improving health behaviours or health outcomes, and so I wonder whether we’re trying to reform the wrong thing, and I wonder whether reform is better directed at trying to consider how professional expertise can be rehabilitated civilly and productively for the benefit of patients.

“I certainly don’t mean to suggest that communication is unimportant. What I actually think is that it’s probably even more fundamentally important than proponents of patient-centred care recognise.

“I certainly don’t think that everything about patient-centred care is bad. There are common definitions of patient-centred care that include things like active listening or enlisting expectations, that are absolutely important practices.

“But we need to study interaction or communication in its own right, rather than doing it through checklists that assume we can determine in advance which features are good or bad, and see whether those are present or absent.

“Sometimes when I talk about this work, people say to me, ‘so you don’t think patient experiences are important then?’ And that couldn’t be further from the truth. I think they’re of paramount importance, but I think there are better ways of incorporating them into healthcare than through the obsessive scoring or re-evaluating of individual consultations.

“So how do we use it on a more fundamental level in co-design and co-production to make sure that it’s properly elicited, properly incorporated, properly utilised?”

> ‘Sociology’s been co-opted to bring about patient-centred care rather than considering whose interests that serves’

She said that sociologists had a role in this. However, in order to do this, medical sociology had to step back from seeing patient-centred care as a universal good.

“Sociology’s been co-opted, I think, in an attempt to bring about the delivery of patient-centred care, rather than considering whose interests that philosophy serves in the first place.

“While I don’t mean to suggest that it’s been implemented with anything other than the best of intentions, if we think about it only from the inside I think we run the risk of losing some of the original purposes of sociological inquiry.

“I think there are questions for all of us about the ways in which we use our sociological skills. What I think about now is how sociology might be used as a tool to identify and explicate interactional practices in order to bring about change.”

• The three studies of patient-centred care Professor Pilnick drew on were:
–‘Interventions for providers to promote a patient-centred approach in clinical consultations’, by Simon Lewin et al (2001) www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD003267/abstract
– An update on this in 2012 by Dwamena et. al. www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD003267.pub2/abstract
–‘Where is the evidence? A systematic review of shared decision making and patient outcomes’, by Shay and Lafat (2015) https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25351843

• Professor Pilnick began her career as a hospital pharmacist before obtaining her sociology PhD from the University of Nottingham, where she worked for more than 25 years. In October, she took up a post as Professor of Language, Health and Society at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research has focused on healthcare interaction in clinics, hospital wards and GP surgeries in the UK and abroad, using conversation analysis. She has edited the journal *Sociology of Health and Illness* and in 2015 she was elected a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She attended her first Medsoc conference 30 years ago.

WES conference looks at workplace resistance

This year's WES conference saw addresses on sweatshops and age discrimination in the workplace. Network takes a look...

Dr Ashok Kumar spoke about the research he carried out for his book, *Monopsony Capitalism: Power and Production in the Twilight of the Sweatshop Age* (2020).

He said this began with his visit to the town of Ramanagara, 30 miles south west of Bangalore, where there was a textile mill owned by the Indian company, Arvind Mills, making products for Phillips-Van Heusen (PVH), a large global shirt and neckwear conglomerate.

Dr Kumar, of Birkbeck, University of London, (pictured below) was brought in as a translator in a meeting between Arvind and PVH following a dispute in which some workers had been injured.

He expected to find that Arvind's management would be required by PVH to treat their workers better, so that PVH's reputation would not be damaged in the West as a company indirectly using mistreated sweatshop workers to make its products.

But as he recalls in his book, "Rather than prosecute an adversarial case on behalf of the worker (as a response to consumer pressures to avert reputational damage), the PVH representative seemed to be on the side of the Arvind executive, defending his points and conceding her own, wherever they conflicted. It quickly became clear that there was another layer in the power dynamics at play. The Arvind executive did not feel obliged to give an inch to PVH, throwing his weight around like a bull in the proverbial china shop."

As Dr Kumar told his plenary audience, "The existing orthodoxy tells us that there's an asymmetrical relationship between buyers and suppliers [in the third world garment trade]. The buyers have the power, suppliers have no power.

"This is basically why you've always had sweatshops in these sectors. But as I was sitting there doing these translations, it was clear that the dynamics were the inverse. It was that, actually, Arvind had an enormous amount of power. And the Phillips-Van Heusen representative wasn't pushing her weight at all.

"So as we left, and I got a ride from the investigator on the way back, I said 'that was nuts, that's not what I expected'. He said, 'I've been noticing this over and over again'. So then I started doing kind of research on this."

Dr Kumar told his plenary audience that he investigated the concept of monopsony, a market where there were few buyers and many sellers, who were "fighting like crazy to get the business of these buyers. And that gives lots of power to the buyers. The more sellers you have and the fewer buyers you have, the higher the degree of monopsony."

The freedom of buyers in the West to switch their custom from one sweatshop to another, or one country to another, meant that sweatshop owners had to keep their costs to a minimum to win business, exploiting their workers in the process. If workers organised to get higher wages, so putting up the cost of producing their goods, buyers could simply switch to cheaper areas. Because it was cheap to set up a textile factory, there were many alternatives from which to choose.

However, said Dr Kumar, gradually buyers demanded ever cheaper products, and many sweatshops went out of business.

"Over time you have increased pressure by the global brands and retailers, and that downward pressure means that to buy a shirt or shoe or tie, they're asking [suppliers to drop their price]. So over time, fewer and fewer suppliers are able to compete, which leads to consolidation."

This involved some suppliers buying up rivals to form larger companies which were able to take on larger contracts and supply the West with cheaper products by taking advantage of economies of scale. It then became harder for outsiders to start rival firms to these companies as they were so large.

Consolidation thus gave sweatshop owners more power when dealing with the large Western companies which wanted their goods, since there were fewer firms running sweatshops and so fewer alternatives for buyers. So sweatshop owners now had the power to resist efforts by Western companies concerned about their reputation for indirectly using sweatshop labour to make their products.

The conflict at Ramanagara was an example of this, where the sweatshop owners could crackdown on workers' protests without fearing they would lose the custom of Western companies.

"This worker struggle was for union-isation. What the company did … was a violent response. They would sexually harass the women and they would attack their husbands and brothers. And they were able to do all of this and withstand the strike precisely because of their resources."

He noted as background to his research the dangerous working conditions that garment workers suffered in sweatshops, including the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 in Bangladesh, in which more than a thousand people died.

However, occasionally the change to larger sweatshops also meant that if workers could organise themselves successfully, they could win concessions, he said.

• *Monopsony Capitalism: Power and Production in the Twilight of the Sweatshop Age.* (Cambridge University Press) was the winner of the American Sociological Association's 2021 Paul Sweezy Outstanding Book Prize and the 2022 Immanuel Wallerstein Memorial Book Award.

'Despite cultural change programmes, age bias remains'

Professor Kathleen Riach, told her plenary audience that inequality of life expectancy could "be witnessed here where we are in Glasgow today", where the average life expectancy in Calton, a poorer area, was around 68 for men, whereas in richer Bearsden, six miles away, it was 83 years.

This showed the "way that work has marked their bodies and provided conditions for financial precarity or financial security, to the extent that it almost seems unfair that they'll receive their same state pension at the same chronological age, which will be around 67 come 2027, if they actually make it that far.

"Despite legislation surrounding age discrimination, despite culture change programmes, age inclusive programmes, and despite the increasing incidence of multi-generational workplaces, these elements of age bias remain persistent, mainly because the aspects that reproduce ageism and age inequality are not simply incidental to the labour process but they are actually an enduring feature of the work landscape in contemporary society.

Professor Riach, of the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, said that ageing had become a target for institutional and management control.

"For example, in launching a world campaign to tackle ageism in 2021, the World Health Organization and the United Nations jointly called for urgent action to combat ageism, and for better measurement and support to report and expose ageism for what it was – an insidious scourge on society."

But this was too simplistic, she said, because defining ageing was not an objective process but was linked to social and political influences. "Whilst this is a noble ambition, what we actually see here is that this is assuming an ability to fix ageing using measurement or reporting, and this helps to suggest that ageism can be identified,

isolated, extrapolated and subsequently fixed quite simply."

However, "normative perceptions of age … are intimately woven into how we think about and experience work and later life, and growing up and getting older in late capitalism. So to get to grips with this idea of working through ageing requires us to depart from [the idea that] age is a neutral or objective phenomenon.

"A really great example of this was in the early '90s, where we had labour market policies across the global north which were focused on activating retirement – getting people into retirement [and off unemployment benefits] to make the employment figures look good."

Once demand for workers began to increase, official policy switched to taking older people back into employment.

"With the changing demographic patterns … there was a U-turn in that policy, and practices that were once seen as positive were all of a sudden seen as ageist and the 'extended working lives movement' began."

Medical classification of ageing had also been "particularly powerful in helping to produce this illusion of ageing as a fixed entity that we can grasp onto and subsequently manage."

Professor Riach also spoke about how the menopause was now seen as a business opportunity. "While menopause can happen at any age, the average age for a white person is around 51 years in the global north. And that's around the time the ageism really starts to kick in in many sectors.

"This growing interest has been accompanied by a growing for-profit menopausal market around training, consultancy, mentoring and thought leadership, as well as supplements, nutritional and lifestyle coaching, and specialist clothing such as heat control clothing, all predominantly focused on supporting women with significant financial means and cultural capital.

"A market needs a problem because a problem is always needed for the market to solve. These modes of commodification, in doing so, reproduce a certain ageing aesthetic, one that is found in similar narratives surrounding the ideal worker, such as being slim fit."

The WES conference

The event, entitled 'Repositioning resistance in the workplace: reframing relationality and risk in contemporary work and employment', took place from 13 to 15 September at Glasgow Caledonian University.

It attracted 324 delegates from 31 countries and featured 375 presentations.

The organising committee was: Shoba Arun, Kendra Briken, Giorgos Gouzoulis, Katrina Pritchard and Paul Sissons.

‘Sociology has often been a subject where I found my own experiences validated and explained’

Network begins an eight-page feature on sociological careers from beginning to end, with an account by Carli Rowell of how her academic work threw light on her early life on a sink estate

In her presentation to a recent BSA event, Dr Carli Rowell, of the University of Sussex, described her path into academia.

“My journey of becoming a working class academic began over a decade and a half ago when I decided to study sociology as an A-level,” she said.

“Prior to sixth-form, I’d never heard of sociology. I hadn’t encountered sociology but, looking back, I’d always been a sociologist. I’d always been impassioned and enraged by issues of social injustice, whether those are issues of social injustice playing out in the playground or on TV.

“It was my younger sister, who had encountered sociology, who really encouraged me to choose the discipline as an A-level for my prerequisite to university. Her recommendation was based on two things. The first was that she thought that I would really enjoy it because it was a subject that was real and it focused on the real world, and secondly, because of the quality of the teaching.”

Her teacher “had a reputation for bringing alive sociology within the classroom, teaching it in a way that was understandable, and for leading successive cohorts of students to success with a focus on making the real world understandable.

However, she did not choose the subject at university at first. “I regarded a degree as providing me with a platform to secure myself a comparatively well-paid job. So this is actually why, despite my love of sociology, I didn’t choose to study it at undergraduate level initially.

“I chose instead to study a BSc in economics under the kind of falsehood that a degree in economics would bring me financial security in a way that perhaps studying sociology wouldn’t.

“However, just one week into my degree at university, I was bored by economics and I could feel my intellectual strings drawing me and pulling me towards sociology.

“So whilst I transferred to sociology as an undergraduate degree, I never imagined that I’d still be pursuing the discipline, and I never imagined that I would be in academia.

“So that leads me to ask myself what happened along the way. Again, it goes back to this idea that sociology has often been a subject where I found my own experiences validated, enlightened and explained through the texts that I’ve encountered, both as an undergraduate student, as a postgraduate student and now as an early career academic.”

She felt the pull of sociology when “upon reading the MacPherson report of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry as part of the A-level sociology syllabus, it dawned on me that I’d often walked down the streets and waited at the same bus stop where that attack had occurred.”

Her reading helped her to understand why many working class boys did not go on with education.

“I discovered Paul Willis’ *Learning to Labour* when my male peers, despite their potential, had rejected education as a route of social mobility and instead were moving into manual trades, operating either within the low level drug market or dropping out of the paid economy altogether. I discovered Marx’s perspectives on the role of education when my comprehensive school peers were persuaded to study for GNVQs in childcare and home economics, and sent to college for two days a week to learn a trade, when our grammar school counterparts at the school adjacent were encouraged to study for exams in economics, engineering and classics and were taken to university exhibitions when we at the comprehensive down the road were not.

‘I was bored by economics and I could feel my intellectual strings pulling me towards sociology’

“Upon reading Bourdieu’s *Distinction*, I finally understood why, when I was at primary school as a child on free school meals, living in a council flat in a local sink estate, my friend’s parents were reluctant to allow them to attend after-school tea or weekend sleepovers at my house.

“I conducted my PhD at Warwick, which was entitled ‘Pleasure, pains and possibilities: an ethnography of working class students at an elite university’. My PhD was concerned with exploring working class students’ experiences of studying at an elite university, but was less concerned with their on-campus experiences that pertain to their academic life and more about the social consequences of moving away, metaphorically and physically, via attending university and moving away from their working class origins, roots, family and friends.

“I went to Sussex in the final year of my PhD to work as a teaching fellow. I then moved up to the other side of the UK to work at Glasgow University on a postdoc, looking at the effects of rapid urbanisation in the global south and what that means for access to quality education.

“I then came back down south to Sussex to start my career as a lecturer within the Sociology Department. And part of my academic journey and a part of my identity as a working class academic is the desire to stay close to my friends and family whilst also balancing the demands of the academy, which arguably looks more favourably upon those who are able to be and want to be geographically mobile in the academic labour market.

“My research interest can be summarised as being along the lines of the educational experiences and inequalities of the working class and its various intersections in the UK and how we might think about class beyond the context of the UK.

“Since then, I’ve conducted research funded by the Society for Research into Higher Education into the class pipeline of academia, looking at working class doctoral students’ experiences of navigating through their PhD and sometimes into and out of the academy, casting light on the class challenges that emerge for students from working class backgrounds who perhaps want to pursue a PhD and then go into academia, and considering the implications of these challenges for the politics of knowledge production and the diversity of knowledge production in UK universities.

“More recently, I turned my attention towards what happens in universities in terms of what we teach and how we teach the pedagogy. I’ve been really interested in thinking about how we can reflect upon how class has been studied academically and, importantly, how it’s been taught within universities. Recently this interest has manifested itself through an undergraduate module that I designed and delivered in collaboration with first-generation working class students who helped me construct the material and select topics that they felt should be taught.

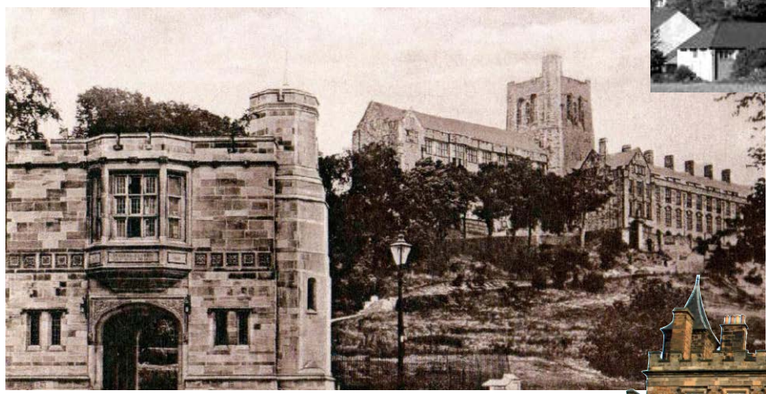
“I also wanted to criticise and turn on its head the ways of knowing what knowledge is legitimate, whose knowledge is valued, and trying to extend beyond academia through my teaching.

“I’m currently putting together an edited book that seeks to explore some of these issues. The contributors to this book, both established and emerging academics from working class backgrounds, will examine the power of, and possibilities afforded by, working class backgrounds for the production of knowledge and conversation and paradigms, whilst remaining attentive to the complexity of what it means to be a working class academic, a working class researcher doing research on working class issues in working class communities.” ▶

Note: Dr Rowell’s presentation was part of the BSA’s event, Sociological perspectives on class discrimination’, which is set out on page 28

‘I gained so much from the backwaters I taught in’

As part of our careers feature, Dr Ron Iphofen writes about the ups and downs of his early working life in residential colleges, and why disagreeing with a V-C is never a good idea...



Photos:

Above, Coleg Harlech residential adult education college
(image: Peter Humphreys – https://tinyurl.com/23m9djt9)

Left, Bangor University
(Image courtesy of the Archives and Special Collections, Bangor University UCNW/PHO/5/2)

Below, Newbattle Abbey residential adult education college
Bottom, Dr Iphofen at a recent graduation ceremony
Previous page, Dr Iphofen on holiday in 1976

Reading *Network* at my age brings the pain of nostalgia, missed opportunities and the potential for regret, prompted by reflections at the demise of many contemporaries and, sadly, those much younger. The passing of well known and respected scholars whose work was central for my teaching, and others who were more tangential, has brought to mind the turning points in my academic career, the roads less and ‘not’ travelled, articles written and rejected, posts applied for and not awarded, books that remain an idea. I suspect my own route matches many sociologists not honoured with lifetime achievements and not deserving of obituaries in the professional media – even less in the national press. Did we ‘others’ make it in some way or do we retreat into obscurity with the hope that we remain cherished in the memory of students who crossed our paths and helped sociology to matter in their lives? My undistinguished trajectory, in mirroring so many others, may be instructive. My near misses might serve as a warning about how not to miss an opportunity.

I recently had a dream about Roland Robertson, my first sociology professor at York. After a Google moment, I discovered he passed away in 2022. He was only 10 years older than me but astounded me with his erudition. From him I learned the term ‘adumbrationist’ – useful on many subsequent occasions. My first graduate teaching opportunity came when he took a sabbatical to the States and asked me to take over his tutorials. The positive evaluations I received led to increased teaching opportunities (as a married mature student I needed the money) but also to disfavour amongst some staff in the department, who appeared to resent the arrangement. I should have heeded my first supervisor, Ian Whitaker, who advised, “If you are offered a graduate scholarship, do not stay here… familiarity will breed contempt. It is in the nature of academia.” How right he was. At one departmental social event I was introduced as “... doing more teaching than anyone else in West Yorkshire”. It was the first evidence of a disgruntlement – perhaps not with me but with those who had faith in me. Who knows? So much was unspoken – at least in my presence. Maybe I should have taken an offered PhD with Tony Coxon in Edinburgh, but we were domestically settled and had part-time work – finances always a determinant of choices.

My PhD supervisor, Laurie Taylor, had also passed on a teaching opportunity – evening classes for a Leeds University extension course for adults. All supervision from Laurie was conducted when giving me a lift home from the station, since my return from evening teaching in Bradford coincided with him collecting his girlfriend from the London train. “How’s it going?” Laurie would ask “It’s okay but I am wondering about how to …”, “Great…let me know if you need anything.” The journey from station to home was too short for adequate supervision. Before long Laurie was too busy with broadcasting to bother and he passed me on to a newly arrived professor who had no interest in my work and desired my research council funding to build his own research group. I read the writing on the wall (and his vacuous comments on my work) and got the message from others in the graduate school who overheard things and so I sought employment elsewhere. Again I needed the money.

I don’t remember applying for my first full-time teaching post. A letter arrived for an interview at an adult residential college near Edinburgh, Newbattle Abbey – in desperation I went. As a previous interviewee left the room he asked, “what other discipline are you offering?” What!!! I thought that they just needed a sociologist, I said. “Yes, but there is also teaching part of either the economics or politics course,” he replied. Shiiii…t! Toss of the coin… I told the panel that I had enjoyed more of the politics as an undergrad in Part One social science. Magic – I completed the jigsaw that fitted what the two previous appointees offered, and got the job.

A full-time post. Regular money. Perhaps complete the PhD at a distance? Get real!

More than seven hours contact time a day – tutorials, lectures, seminars, marking… preparation was evenings and weekends. Two years before I could take a holiday. One supervisor still tried to help with completion but I was exhausted so we gave up and opted for a B.Phil for work already completed. Still, I learned more about politics (university politics included) and, honestly, about sociology, while having to teach it to mature students. I learned to gut books and articles faster than ever before and present ideas and argument in interesting and engaging ways.

I continued to write, with letters to *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* (those were the days of scholarship in THES) or the *Radio Times* and *Reader’s Digest* – the latter earning me more per word than ever before or since. Academic papers had little or no success – no time to rewrite after peer review – move on, next lecture, next tutorial. So perhaps time to look for another post, further south…Edinburgh was freezing and we couldn’t afford carpets at home.

My next adult residential college, in North Wales, Coleg Harlech, was a luxury. Less formal contact teaching time, seminars held on the beach, full time librarian(s). Perhaps I could write more? A colleague, Lewis Lloyd, could be found in a cafe in town with notebook and coffee while writing maritime history. The Vice-chancellor in my last post once asked why I hadn’t written like him. Lewis had five students per year, I had 25. We did give more informal time to students, but that was part of the ethos of Harlech. It had an authentic learning culture, whether giving or receiving. I wanted to do more ‘research’ so I sought to move on again. Academics who came from urban universities wondered why on earth I would need to leave the idyll. But again I saw the writing on the wall – regrettably the institution did not survive.

My move into the Faculty of Health at Bangor (North Wales) was occasioned by having completed a Master’s degree, having written one highly regarded journal article and being accustomed to working with mature students. The School of Nursing needed to encourage staff into research, introduce degree courses and upgrade the value and esteem of nurse education. More time to write, research and publish? Fat chance. I was to deliver three-hour teaching sessions on a few days each week to undergraduate nurses in sociology – were they interested? An even fatter chance. This was done alongside working with staff at their own research and degrees, and raising the credibility of a nursing school within the university by developing degree courses at Master’s and PhD level. Together with colleagues we did find a way of encouraging nursing students to see the value of sociology to their clinical practice and it led to my first book and a paper at the World Congress of Sociology. I was really proud of that and have even seen the book referenced in a medical textbook, while the paper has been read 15,000 times, which might represent a ‘need’. Neither led to esteem within the sociological community and one colleague scoffed at my ‘downgrade’ to teaching nurses. But, for me, one major value of an academic discipline is how it contributes to understanding our world and our place in it – professional ‘place’ included.

I have done more research and writing since retirement – I have found the time, the energy and the interest. Prior to retiring I sought to advance to a more senior post. I went back through my archives and realised I applied for about 30 such advancements. Some of these were professorships and I was shortlisted and interviewed for 11 – this was over a five-year period. One day I will write about these experiences in detail, they were instructive. To give you a flavour of what I learned: never challenge or directly disagree with the Vice-chancellor, the head of the department you hope to join or criticise any aspect of their current organisation – even if it is clear they are tempted to agree. Never fully share aspirations. I did and my interviewers deemed they lacked credibility: to gain European funding (I have done), write three books in four years (I did), and make a career of research ethics (I did). And never suggest that a professor should be in the same physical location as the rest of their departmental colleagues (never got the opportunity to prove that one).

When I look back on those encounters, and when I hear of what became of those who got the posts I didn’t, I am forever grateful for my failure to gain ‘promotion’. I am recognised as an expert in research ethics and professional integrity and I think my experiences in the UK higher education system are responsible for my eagerness to promote ethical research practice. I value the space I have had since formal retirement and have sympathy for younger colleagues still fighting to balance the growing demands of modern professional posts. I have gained so much from the range of backwaters I have found myself in and privileged by the people I have worked with – colleagues and students alike who remain lifelong friends. I doubt I will merit a page in Wikipedia or an obituary in *Network* when the time comes, like many others who have promoted the discipline of sociology in our own quiet ways – but I hope that, like me, it will not matter to them. ▶

– Dr Ron Iphofen FAcSS, BA, BPhil, MSc, Cert tHE, D Hyp, PhD

• In addition to being a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, Dr Iphofen is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, the Higher Education Academy, the British Society for Clinical Hypnosis and the British Association for Medical Hypnosis. He was PI on the recently completed PRO-RES Project funded by the EU: https://prores-project.eu

In the last five years his publications include:
- *Ethics, Integrity and Policymaking: The Value of the Case Study*, Research Ethics Forum Series: Volume Nine, (ed. with Dónal O’Mathúna, 2022, Springer)
- *Ethical Evidence and Policymaking: Interdisciplinary and International Research*, (ed. with Dónal O’Mathúna, 2022, Policy Press)
- *Ethical Issues in Covert, Security and Surveillance Research* (ed. with Dónal O’Mathúna, 2022, Emerald)
- *Handbook of Research Ethics and Scientific Integrity* (ed., 2020, Springer)
- *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics* (ed. with Martin Tolich, 2018, Sage)

How can women researchers combine bringing up a family with a successful career? As part of our feature, Nancy Lombard, of Glasgow Caledonian University, tells Network of juggling the demands of work with raising five children

‘When my youngest child was a few weeks old I gave evidence at the Scottish Parliament with him in a sling’

In 1995 I left Burnley for Scotland; the first (and the only person) in my family to go to university. After graduating in sociology from the University of Glasgow I took on three jobs to fund my Master’s at the University of Essex and went on to work as a research assistant at Keele University.

After deciding resolutely that academia was not for me, I left Keele and went to work in a women’s refuge in London. So began my experience of the daily procession of women arriving with bin bags of possessions and tiny children, with nowhere to move to and their lives put on hold. I attended meetings with officials where the same tropes were spouted – why don’t women leave, they’re intentionally homeless, blah blah blah. Awful. I wanted to change things but felt disempowered by the enormity of the challenge.

In spring 2003 I was pregnant – unplanned – and I wasn’t sure what to do. I couldn’t afford to look after myself in London, never mind me and a baby. I saw a PhD advertised at Glasgow Caledonian University. Looking around my dark basement bedsit, I didn’t take much persuasion to realise this could offer me and the new baby a way out, a new life.

I was invited to an interview the week before my due date. They offered me a phone interview but, stubborn as I am, I wanted to meet the team in person and check out the campus. My mum insisted on coming with me in case I gave birth with the stress of it. Professor Linda McKie offered me the PhD, with the insistence that I could choose when I wanted to start. The sheer relief of a new future that was mine to determine is hard to describe. I gave birth to my baby, Dylan, the next day. I whispered to him that I had a great life planned for us. I hoped this was true.

Dylan and I moved to Glasgow in March 2004 and I started my PhD. My studentship was £8,000 a year but, as I was a student, I could not access any other benefits. I was shocked, but also grateful to find out we were entitled to food vouchers amounting to £20 a week. I took on extra teaching to pay the rent.

My supervisors provided me with lots of opportunities in terms of collaborative writing and networking. Often I couldn’t make the networking, but our head of department put measures in place and in 2004 I attended the BSA summer school. I was lucky to be able to get my mum to come and look after Dylan so I could go to Southampton for four days – how precious that time was to meet other PhD students and develop my academic career. The first conference I attended was BSA Medsoc in York in 2005 – there was onsite childcare and my head of department organised a babysitter in the evening so I could attend the conference dinner.

In 2006, I was two years into my PhD, with a new partner, and we decided to have a baby. I was on a university funded studentship and the head of department agreed to extend the funding for six months so I could have paid maternity leave. I came back to my PhD part time, mainly because we couldn’t afford full time nursery for two, but ready to tackle my findings and begin writing up. Doing my PhD was the only time I ever worked weekends. I swore when I handed my thesis in that I never would again and I have stuck to that.

In 2009 I was successful in securing a full time lecturer post at Edinburgh Napier University. They were expanding into criminology and, because of the topic of my PhD, I managed to position myself as the sociology and criminology lecturer they wanted. It was a baptism of fire. The teaching load was heavy and it was a four-hour round commute. I had to leave the house at 6am to get to my 9am lectures. I enjoyed the job and had a great boss but I struggled with combining a new job, writing brand new modules, trying to finish my PhD and staff that believed in presentee-ism.

During this time, my eldest was undergoing hospital testing as he was very poorly and that was adding to my stress. My line manager was great and knew that I was doing a good job. My students loved me but staff who had been there since the days it was a college grumbled when I only came through on my teaching days and worked at home the others. Oh how times have changed eh?

It was during this time I was expecting my third child. The commute on the train, tiredness, plus morning sickness was awful. I was desperate to finish my PhD and it was also a condition of the job. In October 2010, I had my viva and passed, then a week later I gave birth to my daughter. The maternity leave gave me the clarity I needed – yes, I needed a job but I also wanted to see my family, have breakfast with them and put the children to bed. So as my leave drew to a close I started to apply for other jobs. One university said I didn’t have the REF requirements – I did – they just refused to take maternity leave into the equation. I was eventually offered an interview back at GCU for a social policy lecturership; I got the job and I was delighted.

By this time I had three children aged nine, six and two. My partner had just started a four-year degree and had some flexibility, so we could share nursery and school pick ups and drop offs. It was during this time that my research findings really took off and I found myself being asked to deliver keynotes and plenaries. This is not something I would have been able to do without a partner who rearranged his life to support my career.

Again I had a great head of department who let me use budgets for talks to book cheaper travel that enabled my family to come along. So instead of one hotel room we booked youth hostels for the five of us at the same price, or took our tent along. I managed to tag conferences onto family holidays and took the children to Austria, Sweden and the United States. Flexibility meant that I didn’t have to choose work or my family but could combine both whilst also making sure I had quality time with them at the end of conferences too.

After two years, I applied for promotion to senior lecturer but was put forward for Reader instead. I was delighted that GCU recognised the work I had done and I felt supported in my career and in the flexibility they offered in terms of both my family and

‘I became a professor in 2022 and I cried when I found out – I was so proud of what I had achieved, as a woman from a working class background and the first in my family to go to university’

the additional needs of my eldest child.

Between 2014 and 2018, I wrote a monograph, *Young People’s Understandings of Men’s Violence Against Women*, edited a large collection on gender and violence and was appointed to various government committees and panels. With stability, support and my own tenacity I saw my career progress. I also had two more children. I found support from colleagues around the UK in my research area and will always be grateful for the opportunities they afforded me. When my youngest was a few weeks old I gave evidence at the Scottish Parliament with him in a sling, and also travelled to a conference to take part in a roundtable where I breastfed him whilst I spoke. These were opportunities I didn’t want to miss and I felt comfortable with performing them. They were my choices and women should have the opportunity to decide this for themselves not because of expectations from others.

The hardest part in my career was when my dad died in Christmas 2018. We only get two weeks leave and I returned to work in a haze of grief and felt numb for at least a year. I couldn’t think and didn’t have the energy to be creative or productive. I think the way our managers respond to grief needs to become much more individualised and responsive.

Then Covid happened. Any feeling that we had eventually got a handle on our working lives and five children rapidly dissipated for my partner and me when we realised we were stuck in our tiny three-bedroom house with children aged two, four, nine, 13 and 16, two of whom had complex needs. My academic work suffered as the minimal amount of time I had to myself was spent preparing teaching materials and supporting students. I had just obtained a large government grant, but I didn’t celebrate the achievement, I just groaned – why now? We did not have any workspaces in our home. After a week of stress trying to manage everything and achieving nothing, we created a rota where my partner worked 9-11 and 1-3 and I worked 11-1 and 3-5. The rest of the time we looked after the children and helped the older kids manage online schooling. We worked by balancing our laptop on our knees on our double bed with the bedroom door closed. Some days I would just sit there for a while to try and reconnect with my own thoughts. Every day was a whirlwind.

During the second lockdown, my partner was required to go into work, but I still had to have the children at home so I did very little of my own work and ended up having two months on sick leave as I was diagnosed as exhausted.

In 2021, I was awarded a large European grant and was eventually persuaded by several of my colleagues at GCU and beyond to go for promotion. I became a professor in 2022 and I cried when I found out. I was so proud of what I had achieved to get to that point.

As a woman from a working class background and the first in my family to attend university, I have never taken my role as an academic for granted. I am thankful to those who have supported and encouraged me and I endeavour to repay this to others. As a woman, I have experienced many obstacles but I have also had supportive colleagues who have helped me counter those. There is still much more that needs to be done for those in academia across ethnic background, gender, class and multiple other intersecting divides that can help us work towards more lasting structural changes. ▶

My career: the good, the bad and the ugly

To end our feature, Dr Michael Ward writes about his career at Swansea University and why he felt he needed to leave academia this year

"When an individual presents a finished project to an audience, it is that what is judged, what is hidden is the journey leading up to it" (Goffman,1959:52)

I have studied or taught sociology in one shape or form for over 20 years, and this is the first autumn for 17 years since I began teaching when I will not be working at an academic institution. I would like you to indulge me as I say goodbye to a part of the self, a shredding of my (in Goffman terms) academic 'front' and 'back' performance.

Some people have said I am brave for making this leap, to leave a stable income and head off into the unknown, but I am not sure about that. Maybe 'brave' is acknowledging when something is no longer working for you, realising that how you sell your labour has become such a core part of one's identity that it is making you ill, and any joy or happiness something once gave you is no longer there. I'm also not leaving because I have fallen out with anyone or because I am 'going to Canada' to escape. I'm going to Canada because my partner lives there.

If this is to be my final 'paper', it seems fitting to take a look at the good, the bad and the ugly before I exit stage left! I never expected to be at Swansea for seven years (and believe me I've tried numerous times to get out via other institutions, but I never quite managed it!).

The Good

Sociology. When I started at Swansea in October 2016 there was no social science degree, no sociology degree and the education degree was in its first weeks of classes. Over the time I've been here, working with a team of overworked colleagues, we put these degrees together. Bringing these disciplines back to Swansea is one of the things I'm most proud of during my time here. Not because it helps with university league tables, student recruitment, NSS scores or growth for the neo-liberal university (more on all that in a minute), but because these subjects have the power to radically change lives for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a first-generation student who discovered sociology's "promise" (C. Wright Mills), my world view was altered and my sociological imagination was born, and this enabled me to get my undergraduate degree in sociology from UWE, Bristol, and a PGCE, an Msc and PhD from Cardiff. Working with colleagues over the many, many, hurdles we faced (and continue to face) to get these up and running really has been a highlight. Seeing how first-generation working class students like Ellie Griffiths, who worked with me on the Corona Diaries project and who is now an 'Empowerment officer' with Carmarthen Council, and Megan Evans, now coming into the second year of their PhD, have developed (and all the others who I won't mention for sake of time) fills me with a huge sense of pride.

The 'benefits' of academia. I have been an invited speaker or visiting professor/scholar to universities in Canada, USA, Iceland and Germany, and been to dozens of conferences around the UK, Sweden, Denmark and Australia, to name a few. I've met my heroes and sheroes (Raewyn Connell once cut up my hot cross bun as I chaperoned her around Cardiff) and got to talk and listen to interesting things in the day and then do more talking and drinking into the night with more folk than I care to remember. I never saw conferences as an opportunity to network, but places to just meet interesting people and make new friends. For me, these were the best way to find out what was happening in the subject. When I co-chaired the BSA Education study group and annual conference stream, it was an integral part of developing my academic self, not to use it to gain promotion but to play an important role in my discipline.

These benefits have also given me the 'power' to arrange things, such as an event in my home town to celebrate the 80th anniversary of when Paul Robeson performed in 1938 with the returning Welsh soldiers from the Spanish Civil War. I also delivered non-academic talks to the Department for Education in London and at the Hay Festival. I should also say that I once gave a paper in New York at a men and masculinities conference and the Hollywood superstar Jane Fonda walked into my session and sat through my paper, which was surreal!

Writing and Publishing. When time and energy allowed, I was able to publish lots and lots of different things (which hardly anyone reads!), including six books (okay, some of them have been edited collections) and I have been privileged to edit *Boyhood Studies*, an international journal, for the last five years, which I step down from at the end of December. Some of these publications have been with scholars who shaped my own intellectual thinking (remember when being at a university was about that?) such as Sara Delamont. I won a book prize from the British Education Studies Association and a cheque for £500. This is all good practice for writing the CoronaDiaries book, which I will be doing after I leave.

Research. Although I never managed to bring in multi-million pound research grants, some of the research projects I have been involved in (I think) have made a real difference to people's lives. One project was an evaluation of a Swansea-based multi-agency early family intervention project. My colleague Susanne Darra wanted me to get involved, but I was reluctant, as I was not sure this service could overcome all the structural factors impacting on the service users' lives. On hearing this Susanne said, "that's all very well, Mike, but while we are waiting for the revolution, we need to do something!", which really did get me out of my own academic head. We evaluated the service over the course of a year and the agency was hugely grateful for our research – our final report helped them gain extra funding and to expand and help more people. Their work is now used as an example of good practice across the sector.

The Bad

It's not been all superstar moments. I think I have witnessed (and my own institution is guilty of this) the devaluing of academic capital. We all know, or should be aware of, how difficult it is to maintain one's autonomy in the face of HE managerialism and the erosion of 'expertism'. We all have to deal with terms such as 'student experience', 'employability', 'entrepreneurship', 'internationalism', TEF and REF, etc. It appears we are now back to using the term 'personal tutors' again, after being 'academic mentors' for the past few years. The neo-liberal agenda is hard to deal with, but often as academics and social scientists we are complicit in its making. REF panels, for example, are often chaired by leading experts, as 'clever' people, so why do we not make these work for us? My own approach was to ignore this and just write what I wanted to do, in the belief that the scholarship itself would be rewarded. However, the system does not always agree, and I had to have my own award-winning book re-marked for our last REF submission as it was not deemed world leading by an anonymous reviewer. This was the book that had seen me invited to many different countries around the world, shortlisted for numerous awards, and deemed, in my tiny sub-field of sociology, one of the most significant contributions to the literature since Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*. It took me a long time to realise that academia is not a meritocracy.

One example of this: in 2020 the British Academy launched the Special Grant Covid awards. There were over 842 eligible applicants for 56 awards, with a success rate of 6.6%. Two of these awards went to independent scholars. Of the 54 awards that went to universities,18 Russell Group universities were represented, with 28 awards out of the 54 going to these 18 institutions. You could therefore argue that 28 out of the total of 56 awards went to 'elite institutions' – 50%! After a quick Google check, this group of universities amount to only 15% of UK universities.

Other highlights: there was only one award made to a university in Wales (Cardiff – Russell Group), two in Northern Ireland (Queens – Russell Group), and two in Scotland (University of West of Scotland and Edinburgh – Russell Group). There were more awards granted to Oxford (two) than the whole of Wales (one), and King's College received the same number of awards (four) as Northern Ireland and Scotland combined (two each = four).

Also, something I did not expect but probably should have: most of the awards (15) were clustered around institutions based in or near London, more than those granted to all the universities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland combined. These went to Queen Mary, (2), Goldsmiths (1), King's College (4), SOAS (1), LSE (2), Royal Holloway (2), Birkbeck (1), UCL (1), and Roehampton (1). I still feel the CoronaDiaires were robbed!

The Ugly

I cannot end this final 'paper' without talking about what happened to me last autumn and how the toxicity of the never-ending academic treadmill (I really stress this goes way beyond our own institution) finally broke me. I feel it is important to reveal how my depression, anxiety and stress led to a breakdown. It had been building for years. Yes, nobody held a gun to my head to answer those endless emails on my phone, work late into the evening and most weekends, to write that extra book, to submit that next grant application, go to that other conference – but this was all such a key part of my identity that for a long, long time this did not seem abnormal! The slow creep of the depression was (looking back now) there for a while, but eventually it overtook me and many things built up. I was horrible to be around. My own mother (who I moved back in with after a house I was buying fell through) was also worried about me, and it turned out that my stepfather and she had been having many hushed conversations about my behaviour. I didn't want to get out of my car on some mornings and had a panic attack in my office one day. At my lowest, I was coming into the back entrance of the building to avoid people and thinking of ways to have a car accident to get time off work! I was also drinking too much and engaging in other unhealthy coping mechanisms.

I had also been in and out of therapy for three years at this point and nothing was helping. When a proposed student complained about the way as PGR tutor I had handled a PhD application, (it had been floating around for six months), it was the final straw and I went to see my GP and was signed off work.

The seven months I had off really helped me gain some clarity and I was able to begin to regain some perspective and realise that some things needed to change. One of these was reconnecting with my partner in Canada and putting my health and wellbeing first, which made me see that there could be a life beyond academia and, as Weber put it, the iron cage.

I'm sad in some ways to be leaving but also very excited about what the future holds. I'm not sure if the neo-liberal university allows the sociological imagination to flourish anymore, so I am looking forward to using it elsewhere ■

• *An abridged version of this 'eulogy' was delivered in The Brunswick, Swansea, in September.*

‘A denigration of working class culture continues’

A BSA members-only event, ‘Sociological perspectives on class discrimination’, explored the various ways that working class people in the academy, and in society generally, experience unfairness in their careers. Network takes a look...

Professor Emerita Geraldine Van Bueren QC, of the University of Oxford, told the event that, “I very nervously wrote a series of articles in the *Independent* and the *Times Higher* in the 1990s asking why there weren’t more working class professors like me. Each time I received a growing number of emails, all marked confidential, sharing their working class stories with me. The confidentiality was because they feared their universities and academic colleagues would find out that they were working class. I understood, of course, but what a criticism of the academy if people feared speaking about a fundamental aspect of their identity.

“So I asked a number of senior academics at established universities if they would join me in setting up an alliance of working class academics and students, but each declined. One said they did not wish to be told again that they had a chip on their shoulder, and I respected that.

“But after the *Times Higher* published some interviews with younger working class academics, I thought they very bravely shared their experiences of being working class and academics. I approached each of them, I said, ‘would you like to form an alliance?’ And they all said yes.

“We were running mentoring sessions for new academics and for post-grads, including on how to raise funding.

“Funding holds some challenges for those of us with working class heritages – my father, like many, worked long hours in a factory, and the sums working class people earn for long hours of arduous work are dwarfed by the sums offered by some grant makers, and it makes many of us feel uncomfortable. Since our mentoring, some have gone on to successfully raise grants, and we’ve also become international [with conferences in Australia and the US].

“We’ve created a University Code on Equal Opportunity for Working Class Students and Academics. We didn’t want to wait until class discrimination became illegal and we wanted to give universities a constructive guide to moving towards ending class prejudice in the academy.

“It’s based on international law, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Four on Education, which ensures equal opportunity, improved equitable access, and enhanced mobility and accountability by the United Nations and its members, including the United Kingdom, by the year 2030. So the United Kingdom has rather a lot to do at the moment.

“We wanted to reverse the myth that having working class members means a cost to the university. So the starting point of the University Code is that students and academics from an originally diverse range of working class heritages add economic, social and cultural value to communities, the state and the global community.

“The University Code calls on universities to include in a respectful manner the rich range of working class histories and experiences in designing curricula and in developing and monitoring institutional policies and practices.”

As an example of something that needed to change, she cited her discipline, law, where “we include the slave owner Locke and his philosophies but exclude working class scholars, including Thomas Paine, whose *Rights of Man* was a bestseller at the time.

“Throughout most of my academic career, I never met another working class law-academic, but thankfully this is now slowly changing – class, however, remains generally invisible in law and in many other academic disciplines.

“The University Code is based on intersectionality, but the equal treatment of working class heritage staff in relation to recruitment and retention, salaries and promotion policies, is often overlooked. Many academics have said how uncomfortable they’ve felt at Russell Group universities and, in fact, they’ve moved on to other universities.

“Retention is significant for working class students, and the University Code calls on universities to assist working class heritage students in overcoming hurdles to full participation in university life, to their achievements, and in seeking employment.

“Very recently, the University Code has been adopted by the American Working-Class Studies Association, and we’ll be discussing with them how we can work together to take this forward. And I hope British working class associations do the same. It will shortly be presented to an Irish university.

“We’ve done all of this because although universities have a binding legal duty on them not to discriminate on a number of bases in relation to discrimination, this [does not include] class discrimination. So, understandably from the university’s perspective, by concentrating on other areas, class discrimination lags behind the protected characteristics.

“Now, if someone were to propose that laws against race discrimination, sex and gender discrimination and disability discrimination should be abolished, and instead we as a society would rely upon charity and the occasional regulation, there would be justifiable outrage. But this is the situation with class discrimination. We rely in this country on the creation of social mobility schemes, which many conclude, without evidence, solves class discrimination.

“A growing number of countries, interestingly, now do prohibit class discrimination, including most of Latin America.

“Excluding working class people from the protection of equality laws is in itself discriminating against working class communities, even if it’s not currently legally actionable. So that when a student told me she had been shortlisted for an interview, and at the interview she was told there was too much of a social gap between her and her fellow solicitors, the solicitors were acting lawfully but they couldn’t have said that in relation to race, sex or sexuality.

“Why is it that after a day’s work, many working class people feel exhausted, having spent the day speaking differently than they do at home, trying to participate in a culture which makes no effort to welcome us? An example of this is the comment in the Millennium Cohort Study, which found that a higher percentage of middle class students shoplifted in comparison to working class students. The researcher said she found the results puzzling and ‘you would think it would be the other way around’. Why would you think it would be the other way round? Does being born working class mean you have a greater propensity to steal?

“Class discrimination affects even life expectancy, the right to life, the most fundamental of all our rights. There’s a significant and unacceptable difference found by the World Health Organization in adjacent boroughs in Glasgow, and the London Borough of Camden. A 10-year difference in life expectancy in neighbouring areas was reported by its local member of parliament, Keir Starmer [MP for Holborn and St Pancras].

“Even when we have the same educational attainments, roles and experiences as others, those of us who are from poorer back-grounds even years later face a salary discrimination of about 7%. Women and ethnic minorities face a double discrimination.

“Our first approach must be to adopt a language that respects everyone’s dignity and heritage. I’m proud to say I come from a working class heritage, but the terms ‘poverty class’ and ‘low’ or ‘lower socioeconomic status’ are intrinsically disempowering and lacking in dignity, as is the term ‘underclass’.

“Finally, for those who argue, as many do when change is suggested, that this is a good idea but now is not the time, we should remember the words of the civil rights activists: if the times aren’t right, change the times.”

Note: Dr Carli Rowell’s presentation at this event can be seen on page 20 as part of our feature on career obstacles

Cleaners, queers and academics: other presentations

Dr Iona Burnell Reilly, of the University of East London, (pictured right) talked about a book she had edited, *The Lives of Working Class Academics* (2022), a collection of autoethnographies written by academics who self-identify as working class.

“My objective for the book was to give voice to working class academics, a space to share their stories and to situate their lived realities in order that they can be acknowledged and understood.

“Some very interesting themes and phenomena have emerged from the ethnographies. These are powerful and deeply personal accounts of the academics’ lives. The authors recount their lived experiences of becoming academics, the effects of being born into their social class and the social circumstances and life chances associated with that class.

“Some of the authors share their experiences of being first in their family to go to university. Others discuss the effect of a lack of academic role models within the community and their social network. And some refer to working class values that are sometimes not conducive to educational achievement.

“Many academics recognise the imposter phenomenon and feelings of not belonging, particularly if they’ve also experienced negative past educational experiences, which for some means overcoming feelings of failure.

“Working class academics often have to display an incredibly strong tendency for self-determination, intrinsic motivation, resilience, and other character strengths in order to arrive at where they are. And these are all evident in the book.

“Higher education is still shrouded in elitism and snobbery in many institutions, albeit more so in one type than another. I have experienced some uncomfortable exchanges with academics at elite institutions that I would attribute to snobbery.

“Despite these challenges, more and more of the working class are finding their way into academic roles in HE, and this is partly due to a widened participation drive. HE widened its participation to allow under-represented groups to take part. Twenty plus years on and many of those students are now academics. Not only did we take advantage of that opportunity educationally, we also benefited vocationally. And, to quote Paul Wakeling, there's no going back.”

Professor Valerie Walkerdine, of Cardiff University, discussed an article a professor wrote about his cleaners.

“This was an academic article where a professor talked about two elderly people who cleaned his house. And he talked about their dependency needs and their not acting in their own interests in their voting intentions, which were not the same as his.

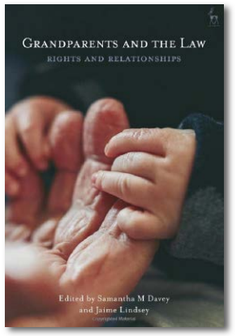
“I remember feeling complete rage: for a start, he didn’t even think about the fact of his own privilege in having cleaners. Elderly cleaners – why were they still having to earn money as cleaners?

“He felt able to write about them, to criticise them and pathologise them, and never once questioned the position from which he wrote. It took me quite a long time to get through my rage. This questioning of taken-for-granted positions seems to me absolutely central to what working class academics can do.”

Dr Haridhan Goswami, of Manchester Metropolitan University, shared research from his PhD on forms of discrimination experienced by a religious minority in Bangladesh and how it varied by class background.

His statistical analysis of survey data on non-Muslim people in 40 households showed that social class, or socio-economic status, explained almost 70% of the variation in their experience of being discriminated against.

Professor Yvette Taylor, of the University of Strathclyde, who chaired the event, spoke about her book, *Working-Class Queers: Time, Place and Politics,* published in May. The book draws on interviews with over 250 people between 2001 and to 2021 to critically engage with the experience of working class queers to show how they have been under-represented.



Grandparents and the Law:
Rights and Relationships

ed. by Samantha M. Davey and Jaime Lindsey

Hart
2023
239 pages
£76.50 hbk
ISBN: 9781509953417

Bookends

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

This book deals with legislation in England and Wales, and beyond, on the rights of grandparents, yet it is of immense interest to sociologists focusing on family life. Many of the chapters deal with whether, and if so how, rights for grandparents could be incorporated into law in England and Wales. There are three chapters illustrating the different legal positions and cultural and social circumstances in Iran, France and Nepal.

This book makes a welcome contribution to what we know about the frameworks that sustain important family relationships, and which also enable change to them through the modification of 'heteronormative' assumptions. This releases the space for a relational perspective to take hold and possibly give more voice to grandparents.

Up to 40% of grandparents over the age of 50 provide regular care for their grandchildren. The evidence suggests that their importance in the lives of the grandchildren extends to making them significant figures still as they enter adulthood. When a marriage, or a couple, faces a breakdown in their relationship the courts and legal frameworks have minimised, and in many cases ignored, the practical involvement that grandparents can have on an everyday basis. As the editors comment, grandparents have no specific legal rights in the laws of England and Wales, with a blanket preference instead being shown towards parents (p.13).

Placing the focus on grandparents and their legal status may shed new light on the navigation of informal caring practices within families. We know that with new parents having children later in life and grandparents now likely to live for longer than in previous years, changing patterns may emerge. Looking after children as grandparents while the parents are working may merge into those same children a few years later helping their now less agile grandparents.

Grandparents and the Law also gives us valuable insights from a different angle, namely into unpaid work. It helps to penetrate some of the felt obligations, duties and sometimes simple love which find expression in the world of work done without a price tag attached.

If the primary consideration is to have the best interest of the child in mind (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; European Court of Human Rights), it is argued that a review is required into the grandparent-grandchild relationship in the law in England and Wales. By contrast, in France, as the chapter by Laure Sauvé underlines, the Civil Code now states that a "child has a right to maintain personal relations with his ancestors. Only the interest of the child can impede the exercise of such a right" (p.197). Whilst there is an important legal/cultural difference on display here in France, it remains the case that issues of parenthood are based largely on biological relationships, so that "non-biological family constellations (such as step-families) are often regulated differently than the blood family" (p.194), as applies of course to many other jurisdictions including England and Wales.

It is very good to have the French and other perspectives. In Iran, tradition and Shia jurisprudence give paternal grandparents a strong status; in Nepal grandparents have cultural influence, but in a relatively weak legal framework. More light from other comparative material would have been welcome.

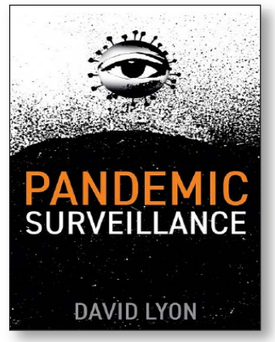
The index excludes mention of authors (bibliographical detail are in footnotes). Their exclusion is frustrating if your interest is in the use of authors in the whole book (for the record, Mill is used chapter three, Luhmann in chapter seven!).

■ **Professor John Offer**
Ulster University

Pandemic Surveillance

David Lyon

Polity
2022
176 pages
£45 hbk £15.55 pbk
ISBN: 9781509550302



The link between disease and surveillance is nothing new. Throughout the annals of time, epidemics and infections have swept through communities and brought down empires, but also introduced new technological avenues each time to advance epidemiology and public health. From John Snow's pioneering work in tracing cholera through the streets of Soho, to the global sequencing and mapping technologies of HIV/Aids and Sars, the evolution of surveillance has been instrumental in understanding and limiting the fatal impact of disease on society. However, what sets the Covid-19 pandemic apart is the emergence of controversial surveillance technologies. The personal data collected from people – who they are, their whereabouts across time and space – are not solely limited to managing and preventing disease. Pandemic surveillance, as David Lyon argues, unveils an arsenal of technologies designed to control people.

In this book, Lyon takes us on a thought-provoking journey as to how the Covid-19 pandemic has given birth to a new era of surveillance culture. Drawing on his extensive research in surveillance studies, Lyon meticulously dissects the diverse forms of surveillance that emerged during the pandemic and the often contentious and uneven impact they had on the liberties, rights and everyday lives of people.

The book doesn't shy away from addressing the critical challenges posed by the expansion of surveillance. One challenge is the extension of state power through the questionable use of technologies, such as the use of drones by local police in Italy to monitor curfew compliance, as well as the implementation of vaccine passports to strictly regulate borders. Lyon aptly coins the term 'surveillance capitalism' to describe how the private sector, through Big Data, became intertwined with the Covid-19 surveillance landscape by tapping into data generated by everyday users on platforms such as Facebook, WeChat, and Google. Surveillance capitalism has also unleashed a normalising of 'technological solutionism' that continues to sustain everyday activities remotely.

The book also adeptly links the rise of controversial surveillance methods to questions of power and who is allowed civil liberties in a state of emergency. Lyon reveals the disproportionate and uneven impact of pandemic surveillance, pointing to the increased policing and monitoring of marginalised communities. For instance, he cites the unsettling use of contact tracing mechanisms in Minnesota, US, to identify Black Lives Matter protesters in June 2020, and the encroachment on liberties for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank through Israel's controversial contact tracing app with Shin Bet.

However, the book only scratches the surface of the intricate relationship between surveillance and racism. While the racialised nature of surveillance is not a novel concern, the Covid-19 pandemic brought this issue into sharper focus. Yet, despite the rich array of examples in the book, Lyon's exploration falls short of fully addressing the profound implications of surveillance on racialised communities that unevenly bear the brunt of these technologies in the name of public safety.

Nevertheless, *Pandemic Surveillance* is a compelling and timely exploration of how the Covid-19 pandemic reshaped the surveillance landscape. It provides a valuable contribution to the ongoing sociological debates about the delicate balance between public safety and personal freedoms, especially in moments of uncertainty and crisis. The thoroughly crafted blend of empirical examples and theoretical discussions, presented in an engaging and accessible style, makes this book a fascinating read for anyone interested in the future of surveillance in a post Covid-19 era.

■ **Aida Hassan,** PhD Researcher, Queen Mary University of London

Structure and Social Action:
On Constituting and Connecting Social Worlds

John Scott

2022
120 pages
RRP £42.78 hbk
ISBN 9781802628005

This book captures the main protagonists of European and American sociological theory of the 20th century and brings their work together in simultaneous conversation around structure and social action. By elaborating on the historical context and emergence of social structure in sociological thought, the book provides unique insight into what shapes our common assumptions as social theorists today.

The author's work illuminates the fact that prior debates in the social sciences around structure and agency may have been slightly misplaced and, through a rigorous historic analysis, shows that the assumptions we all hold today do indeed derive from a cumulative and iterative process of theory-building around 'social action', particularly by Parsons and Goffman. The argument is amplified by the paucity of the 'structure vs agency' debate in today's sociological discourse.

In the analysis of social action, the author highlights the complementary effect Parsons and Goffman had on our current understanding of structure and social action. Specifically, Parsons' treatment of consensus in social structures was possibly misconstrued by his students, and the author points to Goffman's later and partially unfinished work and demonstrates how it adds to our understanding of Parsonian social structure. It thereby elegantly aligns with previous accounts of Goffman as a systematic social theorist, e.g. Giddens' *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, and offers new ways to re-engage with his work pertaining to the 'interaction order'.

At the heart of the theoretical contribution of the book lies the notion of 'figurational' and 'formational' structures. In the first instance, this formalisation helps navigate the multilevel analysis which scholars face when researching individuals and their institutions. Within the interaction order, framing becomes an innate process that guides individuals through the different contexts of what Scott refers to as social worlds and sub-worlds. Moreover, the book offers network researchers new concepts to work with, such as 'figurational structures' emerging from the interaction order and depicted in social network analysis.

The book further discusses the notion of 'formational structure', embodied in given institutional frameworks that individuals act in. Developing theory from such formational structures, the author argues, is of importance as formational structures may inform figurational structures and researchers may infer theoretical insights through, for instance, structural equivalence. Block modelling is used as an illustration of the way the formational structures can inform the nature of the social network. The preceding concepts are brought together on a macro-level in a case study on class conflict in France. Through this, the multi-level analysis is completed.

Rather than revive the debate around structure and agency, the book coherently places social structure in a historic context and develops its explanatory potential. While it seems that Scott argues what modern sociology has learnt to assume, namely, that social structures are produced, reproduced and transformed through social action, the author thereby highlights that this precisely forms the need for sociology as a discipline to focus on both aspects, empirically and theoretically. The introduction of figurational and formational structures can aid in this process.

The book is not only of importance to social and organisation theorists, but the constructs Scott develops will be useful for researchers studying social and informal networks at work and offers a theoretical approach to multi-level analysis in inter-organisational networks. Figuratively, the book may undoubtedly provide a rich and sturdy 'baseline' for those researchers with empirical and theoretical interests in social and organisational networks more broadly.

■ **Dr Christoph Wu,** Norwich Business School, University of East Anglia

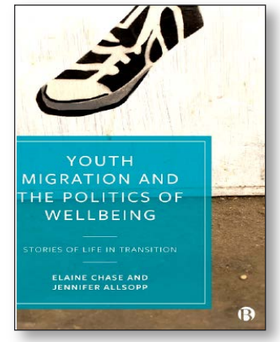
Mixed-race in the US and UK:
Comparing the Past, Present, and Future

Jennifer Patrice Sims and Chinelo L. Njaka

Emerald
2020
160 pages
£58.73 hbk, £29.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781787695542

Bookends

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology



Youth Migration and the Politics of Wellbeing

Elaine Chase and Jennifer Allsopp

Policy Press
2020
280 pages
£58.10 hbk £26.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781529209020

In addition to being an award-winning work (winner of the 2020 Mid-South Sociological Association's Stanford M. Lyman distinguished award), the first distinctive aspect of this book that captures the reader's attention is its enthralling writing style. The authors thoroughly engage the reader and subtly invite them to keep reading, which is not an easy task in academic literature. Secondly, the cross-cultural approach in the discipline of critical mixed-race studies is to be commended and the reader (regardless of whether they are familiar with the discipline) will encounter solid and well-articulated reflections.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that the work makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by addressing racial mixing and mixed-race construction experiences and identity in social contexts as varied as Brazil and Latin America in general, Canada, Puerto Rico and South Africa, some of which share similar enduring negative legacies of European colonisation.

However, although the book is structured into eight chapters, it is important to highlight that in conceptual terms it comprises two major powerful lines of reflection: the conceptual construction of mixed-race in the UK and the US, and the lived experiences of mixed-raceness in both countries.

Following this line of reasoning, in the first four chapters the authors address topics such as the differential perceptions of Black mixed-race people in the UK and the US, explaining the supporting racial formation theoretical framework they employ and the methodological approach adopted. They also explore the issue of censuses in both countries and the counting of mixed-race people. This topic is of high relevance for different reasons. First, without data it is extremely difficult to tackle racial inequalities and foster the discussion and implementation of social policies. Secondly, the authors argue that through censuses, individuals can be categorised and be recognised. This approach contrasts considerably with, for example, French colour-blind politics, where racial or ethnic categories are not included in censuses. As a consequence, racial or ethnic minorities in France tend to be invisibilised and face greater challenges in overcoming inequalities and making their voice heard.

Nonetheless, racial categorisation (be it assigned to individuals or self-declared) faces a number of challenges, most notably how to accurately capture these nuances on census forms. Additionally, even civil society organisations construct their own notions of mixed-race, which do not necessarily coalesce with those of state entities. Thus, these relevant intertwined aspects are also explored in the first half of the book.

In the second half, the authors explore the lived experiences of mixed-race people, including, for instance, the perception of belonging and strangeness as seen from the perspective of whitened hegemonic social groups, who often enquire where mixed-race people 'come from'. Within this, one of the main locations in which these questions are raised is that of the working environment.

Ultimately, the practical implications of this work are that it illuminates the ways in which the state officially constructs and recognises mixedness through the census. In addition, it also highlights how censuses in both the US and the UK articulate constructions of mixed-race that subsequently shape the ways in which several national institutions and the population in general understand, accept or contest mixed-race. The particular enumeration processes taking place in each nation create and define racial categories. This information will be useful for policy-makers and researchers who seek to understand how mixed-race individuals are recognised and categorised by the state. Furthermore, the key findings of this work can be used to inform discussions around the ways in which mixed-race individuals navigate their identities and experiences in diverse social contexts.

■ **Dr Luiz Valério Trindade**
Independent researcher

Popular media continues to perpetuate negative images of migrants, often supported by policies and political narratives that promote the "vilification and taunting of unaccompanied young people" (p. 214). Lost within these dominant descriptions are the everyday lived realities of young people who migrate unaccompanied and who are left relatively unaided to work through the complexity and precarity of their migrant status and into adulthood. Even less is said about their wellbeing and how the differential enactment of migration policies come to define statuses and identities and, ultimately, the pathways and opportunities available to them.

Chase and Allsopp make visible the ways in which young migrants seek ways to secure their wellbeing and safety as they search for a better life. Drawing on a longitudinal and participatory research study with unaccompanied young migrants aged 16-25 years from Afghanistan, Albania and Eritrea, the book exposes the inherently political aspects of young migrants' wellbeing, unpacking how migration policies produce prolonged uncertainty in these young lives, who are all the while searching for meaning and security as they transition across borders and into adulthood.

The book's comparative approach offers an insightful analysis into how the UK and Italy differentially tackle the so-called migration 'problem'. Chase and Allsop reveal how, despite a commitment to common European Union standards for supporting the rights of unaccompanied minors, the contrasting welfare and immigration regimes in these countries produce different opportunities and vulnerabilities for young migrants.

Underpinned by socio-relational perspectives, each chapter takes us through core aspects of young migrants' lives and experiences, including their wellbeing, safety and freedom, identities and belonging, and the importance of maintaining friendships, relationships and connections with family. Drawing on first-hand accounts from young people, the chapters illuminate the harsh realities of growing up under migration control and the ways these young people construct viable futures as adults.

In spite of the highly complex, often raw, accounts of their attempts at navigating migration and welfare processes, the book offers a sense of positivity as these young people narrate their aspirations and agency in and across complex social and political conditions. Without underplaying these young people's experiences of the atrocities of war, persecution and discrimination, each chapter is narrated with warmth, evidencing the impact and importance of social and familial ties and how these contribute to migrants' sense of wellbeing.

Drawing connections with the relational and collective elements of wellbeing, at a time when life seems highly fragmented, reveals how these young people define and enact their own wellbeing. Indeed, each chapter leaves the reader wondering what happens next in the lives of these young people, particularly when they 'age out' of childhood and become adults. Inevitably, we do not hear the end of these stories – this is not the intention of the book but, rather, reflects the navigation of these complex journeys and transitions.

The book's careful and considered engagement with key sociological ideas helps to make sense of the socio-political, structural and relational aspects of these young lives, advancing the understanding of young migrants' wellbeing and transitions into adulthood. The book brings to life the everyday lived realities of unaccompanied young migrants and is especially useful to anyone with an interest in migration, young lives, social justice and the politics of wellbeing. Crucially, the book pushes back against the popular tendency to pathologise young migrants and foregrounds the need to rethink policies and practices to enhance the wellbeing of young lives in transition.

■ **Dr Grace Spencer**
Anglia Ruskin University

Multiracism: Rethinking Racism in a Global Context

Alastair Bonnett

Polity Press
2022
224 pages
£50 hbk, £17.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781509537310

Multiracism: Rethinking Racism in a Global Context urges the reader to look beyond the common narrative of a western-centred approach toward racism, which is predominantly conceptualised through a Black and white binary. Bonnett argues that modernity creates the conditions for racism to exist and continue; however, we must expand our perceptions outside of Western modernity. Through this expansion we can begin to acknowledge that a multitude of modernities exist, resulting in multiple forms of racism. Alongside this, the debated concept of racism is explored, and key debates are discussed and dissected, drawing on global examples of racism.

The book provides the reader with a deeper understanding of global racism, pushing readers to question what is considered racism. Bonnett's contribution differs in approach by decentring the West, focusing on non-Western distinctive racisms and plural modernities, while simultaneously acknowledging the impact of Western colonialism on non-Western forms of racism. This book contributes to ongoing debates in race and ethnic studies, decolonial and postcolonial theory, and all areas relating to racism and ethnicity, resulting in its application being multidisciplinary.

Throughout the chapters, Bonnett communicates his arguments in an easily digestible and interesting format, through the presentation of case studies predominantly based in Africa and Asia. He examines the contrasting and sometimes interwoven origins and ways that racism presents itself in a regional and country-specific context based on religion, nationalism, politics and history. In certain cases these are not categorised as racism or are conceptualised through a single lens, which he terms the 'Western race paradigm'.

This is evidenced by the multitude of Western-centred approaches toward racism present in ethnic and racial studies. From this perspective, a Western-centred approach to racism is not only Eurocentric but inaccurate, as this places the West as all-encompassing in discussions of race and power, which is no longer the case in the 21st century. Alongside this, it ignores the existence of plural modernities and, as a result, multiple forms of racism that emerge from their complex roots relating to nationalism, politics, history and religion.

Bonnett proposes strong counter-arguments against the notion of diverse racism mimicking Western and white-identified racism and modernities. This is represented throughout the chapters; for example, in chapter four the relationship between communist modernity based on racism in the form of ethnopolitics presented in the USSR is explored, and in chapter three, where religious racism is explored in China's treatment of Muslim populations in the Xinjiang province. In this context, the manifestation of racism represented through islamophobia in China emerges from a long history related to nationalism and politics, resulting in ethno-racism as an attempt to maintain a unified China.

To conclude, *Multiracism: Rethinking Racism in a Global Context* reveals the injustice and limitation of approaching racism through only a Western lens, emphasising the importance of understanding diverse racism in their country-specific contexts. It offers a refreshing take on discussions of racism, without diminishing the importance of continued research on Black and white binaries of racism. This is a must-read for anyone interested in the topic areas of race and ethnicity, as it provides a deepened understanding of the origins of racism and how this manifests on a global scale through the detailed historical overview that Bonnett so eloquently provides.

■ **Shannon Martin**
PhD student, Open University

Robert Dingwall

Professor Dingwall has worked mainly at the universities of Aberdeen, Oxford, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent, first in medical sociology and then helping to develop the sociology of law as a field of UK research. At the University of Nottingham he founded the Institute for Science and Society, an interdisciplinary research group. He left to set up the Dingwall Enterprises consultancy, offering services in writing, research and policy analysis. He was an advisor to the government on the management of Covid-19 during the pandemic

Your first choice is *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, by Adam Smith – why did you choose that?

Albion Small, who founded the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, published a book-length study of the work of Adam Smith in 1907. "If logic and a deliberate methodology ruled the world, or even the supposedly intellectual part of it," he wrote, "Adam Smith would have been as immediately, if not as intensely, influential upon concrete moral philosophy, or sociology, as he was upon economics."

Moral Sentiments was the book that first made Smith's reputation as a scholar, nearly 20 years before *Wealth of Nations*. I first encountered it in the 1980s at the suggestion of a journal reviewer. When my generation studied sociology, we learned that its core question was: how is social order possible? Amid the political and religious turbulence of the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes had imagined a state of nature where humans were driven only by immediate self-interest. The result was a total destruction of society.

How could this be prevented? Before Smith, there were only two answers: either we were restrained by a sovereign, who we hoped would behave less selfishly than everyone else, or by a fictive social contract enforced through law. Smith showed that it would be possible to establish a spontaneous order based upon mutual self-restraint. He went on from this to develop a vision for a market society that maximised people's opportunities for innovation, self-realisation and creativity. The state would create the basic conditions for citizenship through investment in education and culture to develop moral sensibilities. The state would also step in where markets failed because of natural monopolies in infrastructure, asymmetries in information or uninsurable risks.

This vision of order as inherently unstable, constantly shaping human actions and constantly renewed by them, has inspired many subsequent sociologists, even if they have not always acknowledged the source.

What made you choose your next book – *The Road to Serfdom*, by Friedrich Hayek?

This is not Hayek's best work but we are asked to choose books. This polemic is less subtle than his journal articles on the informational problems that face anyone trying to plan a society on any scale. Those papers are recognisable cousins to the work of people like Simmel or Schutz that we have no problem in admitting to our canon. They justify his Nobel Prize far more than his association with libertarian politicians.

Why should sociologists read Hayek? Well, if our core problem is the possibility of order, we are easily led to ask about what kind of order that should be. It is then only a short step to setting ourselves up as the successors to Plato's philosopher kings, ready to prescribe what makes for a good life and a good society rather than seeking to clarify and inform debate among citizens.

I used to teach this book on a Master's in Public Health (MPH) course – if you can't commit the time to reading, there is a five-minute cartoon summary on YouTube that I showed in class. It traces the way in which good intentions and benevolence lead to tyranny and a firing squad. There was always a shocked silence among the students at the end. MPH courses do not encourage students to question either ends or means in public health. But it was flattering during the Covid pandemic to have an ex-student come over to me in a supermarket queue and say she now understood why I had covered this topic. As someone working in public health to plan and control everyday lives, what was she really being asked to do? What was justified? What was proportionate? Did she really have better information than the people she was being asked to control?

Why did you select for your third work, *The Silent Dialogue*, by Virginia Olesen and Elvi Whittaker?

This was the first research monograph I ever bought for myself, and my introduction to the Chicago tradition. As an under-graduate, my degree had been solidly classical – Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Parsons. Contemporary sociology was represented by the Frankfurt School and Habermas. Recent colleagues were somewhat amused to discover that I could still cover this material when the scheduled lecturer was off sick. There were a couple of lectures on Goffman but that was about as far as the course went. *The Silent Dialogue* was a revelation. It is a very sensitive qualitative study of nurse education as it was being developed in US universities in the 1960s, against the background of the radical changes in women's lives that were happening at the same time. The students were trying to work out what nursing careers will look like in a graduate occupation and how these will fit with other expectations about relationships, marriage and family. The authors never lose their empathy for young women whose choices were very different from their own.

It taught me a lot about how to think about gender relations and to listen with respect to informants. The work is theoretically innovative in other ways, too. It was based in the broadly interactionist medical sociology programme created by Anselm Strauss and colleagues at UCSF but reaches out to both ethnomethodology and phenomenology. The book should have had a much wider impact but fell victim to a kind of professional snobbery. Medical sociologists are prone to reproduce the hierarchies of the medical world, so that research on nurses is less prestigious than research on doctors. The book should have ranked alongside *Boys in White* or *The Student Physician* and introduced new thinking about theory and context to the field of professional socialisation.

I got to know Ginny Olesen later. Like so many of the Chicago-influenced sociologists, she was extraordinarily generous to early-career people. The sensitivity apparent in her fieldwork was absolutely who she was as a person. A true role-model. As I was writing this piece, I heard the sad news of her death. Within a few weeks we have lost so many of the great figures of that school of sociology – Norm Denzin, Howie Becker, Lyn Lofland. It is, I suppose, the price of getting old, that one's heroes leave the room, even if Mick Jagger seems to be immortal…

Your fourth choice is *Profession of Medicine*, by Eliot Freidson – why this book?

This was a difficult choice. I had thought about looking for something from the sociology of law, since this will shortly become extinct in the UK. The cohort trained by the ESRC in the 1980s are retiring, and even dying off, and there are no obvious successors. Socio-legal studies is well-established in UK law schools – but this tends to use sociology to address specific legal problems rather than asking how law contributes to the production of orderliness in society. The field will be left to criminologists, who only cover a small part of what law does and have very little, if anything, to say about its creative role in contemporary societies.

Curiously, it was the same gap that led to ESRC investment in the first place – but it has long been recognised that the ESRC has little interest in the health of disciplines compared with keeping onside with governments. I decided, then, to settle for *Profession of Medicine*, the second book that I bought as a PhD student, and the core of my education in medical sociology. It was another pathway into learning about the Chicago approach but, more importantly, it established medicine's role in society as a core topic for our discipline. Medical sociologists were not put on this earth to make life easier for medics or health services nicer for patients. Our key task was to ask questions about power, control and social order, many of which originated with Parsons. Freidson's work is consistently respectful of Parsons's insight into medicine's role in 'soft' social control. Like Goffman, he explores the sick role as a mode of discipline, much more precisely than Foucault, who was writing at a similar time. Medicine is not a simple tool of capitalism but neither is it a purely altruistic enterprise dedicated only to human welfare. The pandemic made those issues even more critical but medical sociology generally failed to address them. The seductions of biomedical funding, and the coercion of impact metrics, had drawn its fangs at the time when they were most needed.

Your last book is *Sociology and Medicine: Selected Essays*, by Philip M. Strong – what led you to this?

This is a real self-indulgence. Younger BSA members are probably going 'Philip M who?' Phil was the most influential person who was involved in my PhD supervision – these things were less well-ordered 50 years ago! He became a mentor and friend for many years until his untimely death in 1995 just short of his 50th birthday. This collection of his papers conveys something of the intellectual brilliance that earned him the respect of a whole generation in medical sociology and beyond. They display the breadth of his reading and scholarly curiosity – and his acute nose for nonsense.

Although he wrote books, and a big chunk of the first generation of the OU course on health and disease, his real gifts were as an essayist and are well-displayed here. The piece on epidemic psychology, in the sense of social psychology defined by Blumer, is uncannily prescient in making sense of societal reactions to the Covid pandemic. The paper on moral science and public policy, published posthumously, is a standing reproof to those who think they can bring about a better world by acts of state power.

Phil's early death deprived us of the book, based on his work on Aids and on the history of epidemics, that is prefigured in these chapters. Like all of us, Phil had his demons but we lost someone who should have been an intellectual leader for the times we have lived through.

And for your luxury?

On a desert island, with only our own company, we must, as Voltaire said, cultivate our own garden. He intended this to apply to the development of our own intellectual capacities, but I have always taken it rather literally. My luxury, then, would be a set of garden tools, with a view to increasing the productive capacity and aesthetics of the island. I am sure there will be plenty of seaweed to act as fertiliser and perhaps I can experiment with breeding palm trees.

Professor Dingwall's choices:

1. ***The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, by Adam Smith (1759) Andrew Millar, Alexander Kincaid and J. Bell**
2. ***The Road to Serfdom*, by Friedrich Hayek (1944) Routledge/University of Chicago**
3. ***The Silent Dialogue*, by Virginia Olesen and Elvi Whittaker (1968) Jossey-Bass**
4. ***Profession of Medicine*, by Eliot Freidson (1970) New York University**
5. ***Sociology and Medicine: Selected Essays*, by Philip M. Strong, ed. Anne Murcott (2006) Ashgate**

Howard Becker, 1928-2023

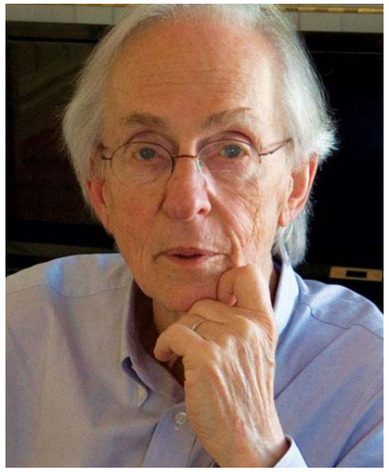
The BSA was sad to learn of the death of the American sociologist Professor Howard Becker, aged 95, who is perhaps best known for his research and writings on the sociology of deviance, and his book *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963).

In *Outsiders*, he presents two groups, marijuana smokers and dance musicians, and examines their cultures and careers to explore the theory in which deviance is simply a social construction used to persuade the public to fear and criminalise certain groups. "The central fact about deviance: It is created by society," he wrote, arguing that deviance is inherent not in certain behaviours but in the way those behaviours are viewed by others.

Outsiders became a set text in the French social science curriculum, and he became a well-known theorist in French sociology, spending several months a year there.

Howard Becker was born in Chicago in 1928. His father, a descendant of Jewish immigrants, ran an advertising firm and his mother was a homemaker.

He received his undergraduate degree in sociology at the University of Chicago in 1946 and went on to take his MA and PhD there, writing his doctoral dissertation on school teachers.



Professor Becker was also an accomplished jazz pianist. He began playing at an early age and later worked as a pianist in bars and strip joints and with a campus band.

He chose to observe the musicians he was playing with, noting their frequent use of marijuana and using this as the basis for his Master's thesis and a journal article, which the University of Chicago Press republished as a book in 2015.

After teaching at Chicago, he later moved to Northwestern University as professor in 1965, producing influential works on the sociology of art, including the book *Art Worlds* (1982), as well as works on sociological methods, such as *Writing for Social Scientists* (1986). He stayed at Northwestern until 1991, when he moved to the University of Washington, retiring in 1999.

Art Worlds was one of the first American volumes on the sociology of art, and was based in part on his experience with photography, arguing that art is a collaborative effort.

Dr Becker also wrote about sociology itself, in books such as *Tricks of the Trade (1998), Telling About Society* (2007), *What About Mozart? What About Murder?: Reasoning From Cases* (2015) and *Evidence* (2017) in which he tackled communicating clearly and learning to make a general argument from specific cases.

Dr Becker's first marriage, to Nan Harris, ended with her death in 1986. He later remarried, to Dianne Hagaman, who survived him. He is also survived by a daughter from his first marriage, a granddaughter, and a great-granddaughter.

Jo Woodiwiss and Ellen Malos

The BSA has expressed its regret at the recent death of Dr Jo Woodiwiss.

Dr Woodiwiss was a Reader in sociology and youth studies at the University of Huddersfield, with a background in women's and gender studies.

Her research interests lay in LGBT+ young people, childhood sexuality, and experiences of childhood sexual abuse, with a particular interest in the use of narratives and stories in everyday life.

She was the author of *Contesting Stories of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (2009), which explored the role women play in constructing their own sexual abuse narratives.

She also co-edited *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges* (2017), which combined narrative and research to provide examples of feminist narrative studies.

Dr Woodiwiss was deeply committed to sociology as a discipline and to the BSA in particular, being a member since 2000, a convenor of the Families and Relationships study group from 2014 to 2018, and serving on the *Sociology* Associate Board and then on the Editorial Board between 2010 and 2023.

Top: Dr Jo Woodiwiss
Above: Professor Gill Hague, left, with Ellen Malos

Professor Gill Hague writes: Ellen Malos and her late partner were heroes of activism in the left as well as various social movements. They took refugees into their house, such people fleeing the Chilean coup in 1973 and miners' wives during the miners' strike, and ran the first radical bookstore in Bristol, Full Marx.

The first women's centre and domestic violence shelter in Bristol were both in their house. She was the co-founder (with me) of our Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol back in 1989/1990 and she also founded Bristol Women's Aid in the mid-1970s. She was a pioneer of work on violence against women, not only in the UK but in countries across the world.

Ellen died peacefully in the house she had always lived in that so many know so well, with her son and daughter at her side, after a struggle with health for quite a while.

Ellen and I worked together closely for 40 years – it is almost impossible to believe she has left us – and we will not see her like again.

In great sorrow for the loss of a true feminist pioneer, sister and deep friend. It is the end of an era.

Margaret Archer, 1943-2023

Tributes have been paid by sociologists across the world to Margaret Archer, the prominent theorist who died in May at the age of 80.

They spoke of their sense of loss at the passing of a researcher and activist whose public commitment took her to the presidency of the International Sociological Association and of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences at the Vatican.

Professor Archer started her career as a sociologist of education, gaining a PhD from the LSE in 1967 and working with Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski in Paris. She lectured at the University of Reading from 1966 to 1973 and then moved to the University of Warwick, where she spent most of her career. She was promoted to professor in 1979 and served the university in various roles, including as head of department.

She is best known for her work on critical realism, developing her morphogenetic perspective – a complex social theory that interrelates structure, culture and agency – in a series of books: *Culture and Agency* (1988), *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (1995), *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (2000), *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (2003), *Making our Way through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility* (2007), *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity* (2012) and (with Pierpaolo Donati) *The Relational Subject* (2015).

Professor Archer was the President of the ISA from 1986 to 1990, the first woman elected to the post. She also edited *Current Sociology,* the journal of the ISA from 1972 to 1980.

From 2014 until 2019, she was President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences at the Vatican, acting as an advisor to the Pope, and putting artificial intelligence, human trafficking and slavery on the agenda.

The BSA awarded her a Lifetime Achievement Award this year in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to the development of sociology in Britain. She was a founding member and Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

In an appreciation of her life, Professor Frederic Vandenberghe, of the Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro, and Professor Sari Hanafi, President of the ISA, said: "Maggie was a strong and forceful but also caring woman with a passionate concern for social justice.

"She was the main representative of critical realism within sociology. She has set the agenda for social theory over three decades. Her work on reflexivity, internal conversations and the morphogenetic society will continue to inspire future work.

"We'll miss her deeply. She was very active in the ISA, right up until the last few months. She was always a shrewd source of advice for many ISA members and for me as President.

"We will cherish her memory and continue to feel especially privileged to have known and read her for so long."

The University of Warwick wrote in a tribute: "We are deeply saddened by the death of Professor Margaret Archer, who spent much of her academic career at Warwick."

Alice Mah, Head of Sociology at Warwick wrote: "Margaret will be remembered and deeply missed by many. She was an internationally recognised sociologist, whose important work on critical realism, social ontology and social theory influenced many scholars and students at Warwick, in the UK and around the world.

"We mourn Margaret's loss and cherish her important role in our history as a department and as a university."

The Centre for Critical Realism, where Professor Archer was a trustee, said: "We were shocked and saddened to learn of the death yesterday of Margaret Archer. Maggie was the leading sociological advocate of critical realism and the most important figure in establishing the influence of critical realism after its founder, Roy Bhaskar.

"Maggie's work, particularly her outstanding trilogies of books on realist social theory and reflexivity, and the morphogenetic approach she developed in them, will continue to inspire and guide critical realist research. We will miss her deeply as a friend and colleague as well as a scholar."

When asked by the *Times Higher*, "how does it feel to be the papacy's highest-ranked woman?" her reply was blunt: "Let's face it, there isn't much competition; it makes women's rugby look mainstream! Apart from being pregnant and giving birth, I've never done anything 'as a woman'. One's gender, unlike one's sex, is a social construct and that leaves privileged women free to buck it."

In an interview with *Network* in 2014, Professor Archer described her meetings with the Pope: "We just wander around the courtyard talking, though it's like being in the middle of a football pitch at the end of a game – in any conversation you start with him you cannot guarantee even to finish one sentence because there are an awful lot of people who are just wanting to shake his hand.

"I think he does have a sociological imagination – he was struck by seeing, for example, a factory in Buenos Aires that had failed and had been illegally occupied by workers who took it over so that they can continue to work and have a livelihood. His reaction was to invite the leaders, the mainstays of the collective, over to Rome to tell him more about it."

When she was asked what she did for fun, she replied, "nothing at all – I find it in the interstices of routine, even mundane events, when some exchange suddenly turns on the lights. I could also say scrambling in Chamonix with Freya, my granddaughter, and Maximus, our Bernois dog, and that would be true too."

Podcasts can throw light on who we think we are

Professor Michaela Benson writes that podcasts can go beyond conventional ways of teaching in explaining the social world

Podcasts are one of the emerging ways in which sociologists (and other social scientists) have sought to engage wider audiences with sociological thinking. And yet, how often are we bringing these to our primary audiences, students? And what are the opportunities for and barriers to doing so?

I have been podcasting since 2017, and over this time I have realised the contributions that podcasts can make for engaging students in the collective project of the sociological imagination. They can add to the learning experience in ways that shift beyond the lecturing and reading that we so often rely on as the primary sources for developing students' knowledge and understanding. Not only do podcasts offer new content to students but, by presenting knowledge in an alternative format such as a podcast, we encourage and accommodate different modes of learning within the student community. Podcasts also hold the potential for making audible the process of knowledge production in ways that are often obscured in the written text.

These understandings of podcasts as an educational resource that can supplement other ways of learning underpins the approach in my podcast, 'Who do we think we are?' (https://whodowethinkweare.org), now in its third season. The podcast focuses on debunking taken-for-granted understandings of migration and citizenship. It demonstrates the value of social science thinking for challenging the politicisation of these issues in the UK and elsewhere.

In the final episode of season two (https://whodowethinkweare.libsyn.com/s2-e10-in-dialogue), I invited regular listeners to reflect on what the podcast offered them. It was the responses of my own and other people's students that really excited me. From Olivia, an undergraduate student at Newcastle University, I heard how she had been using the podcast as a snapshot into the issues discussed, then going away to dig deeper into the issues that had sparked her intellectual curiosity. From Niamh, one of my students at Lancaster, I found that this had really helped her to grasp some of the concepts and theories we work with when we teach about migration, as well as offering hope in the context of bleak headlines about migration.

The latest season of the podcast is presented by me and Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham) as part of our research project Rebordering Britain and Britons after Brexit (https://migzen.net), and focuses on understanding how migration and citizenship are variously entangled with the political project of 'Global Britain'. Importantly, this embeds the learning I gained over the past two seasons and centres more explicitly on students and their learning experience. This is reflected in the format of the episodes, the content we present, and the additional resources we prepare and provide for each episode.

Episodes follow a narrative format, including an introduction to a key concept, an expert who can offer insights into the real-world applicability of the concept, and conversation between Nando and me where we draw from our research to offer further thoughts on the significance of that concept for making sense of the post-Brexit migration regime. We offer different social science perspectives onto this current political project, from the imagined community through to migration diplomacy.

Alongside the main series, Ala Sirriyeh (Lancaster University) and I produce the series Beyond the Headlines. This is an interview-based format designed to demonstrate how social science understanding can help make sense of current affairs relating to migration. We bring a guest in to talk through the headlines, drawing on their expertise. In this way, we showcase the dialogue that is at the heart of academic knowledge production but also how we take scholarship out of the university and into the world. We have new episodes lined up on migration and care activism, the ongoing fallout of the Windrush deportation scandal, and decolonising museums.

However, making the podcast work for students is about so much more than the audio content. I have been working to make these as accessible as possible by providing additional resources that can both help listeners to navigate the content and offer them guidance for how to use the podcast as a springboard into their own research on the topics. To these ends, each episode includes a short list of active listening questions which encourage the development of critical thinking on the basis of the content and a list of recommended resources where they can find out more about the issues discussed. To help with accessibility relating to audio content, each episode is also accompanied by a transcript.

We can't all produce a podcast – and I would argue that we shouldn't all produce a podcast – but we can draw on those that are already out there and build on these in our classroom activities.

Want to include podcasts in your teaching but don't know where to start? There are so many podcasts out there that it can be quite overwhelming. But there are some great resources. Here's a few that I have found useful:

- **The Social Breakdown** (www.thesocialbreakdown.com)– this offers informed discussions of sociological concepts that would work well to help students build their confidence with these.
- **Uncommon Sense** (https://thesociologicalreview.org/podcasts/uncommon-sense) – this podcast from The Sociological Review deconstructs taken-for-granted understandings of the social world, demonstrating how everyone could benefit from sociological knowledge.
- **Surviving Society** (https://survivingsociety.co.uk) – the back catalogue here is a rich resource that gives students the opportunity to hear sociologists in their own words on a variety of topics from across the sociology curriculum.

Events listing

8 December 2023 – 5 April 2024

As of 14/11/23. For a complete and up to date list see: www.britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-liste

14 December	**Online**	**Intimacy as Method in Trans Sex Research: Seminar from the New Materialisms Study Group**
14 December	**Online**	**Death and Sexuality: Social Aspects of Death, Dying and Bereavement Study Group Annual Symposium**
11 January 2024	**Online**	**Early Doctoral Reflections on Autistic Auto/Biography: Auto/Biography Study Group Seminar**
24 January	**Leeds University Business School**	**Digital Transformations of Work and Employment in the Professions: Early Career Forum Regional Event**
7 February	**Online**	**Exploring the Life and Legacy of Christa McAuliffe, Teacher in Space: Auto/Biography Study Group Seminar**
15 March	**Online**	**Religious and Non-Religious Perspectives: Families and Relationships Study Group Symposium**
25 March	**Goldsmiths, University of London**	**Sociology and the New Materialisms: A New Materialisms Study Group Conference**
3-5 April	**Online**	**Crisis, Continuity and Change: BSA Virtual Annual Conference 2024**

Would you like to contribute to Network?

We are looking for letters, opinions and news articles

For more information please contact Tony Trueman at: tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk or on 07964 023392, or BSA Chief Executive Judith Mudd at: judith.mudd@britsoc.org.uk

The Spring 2024 edition of *Network* will be published in April. Copy deadlines are around two months before publication (please check with Tony or Judith).

We try to print all material received, but pressure of space may lead to articles being edited and publication being delayed.

Books for review can be seen at: http://bit.ly/2gM3tDt

NETWORK

Autumn 2023

“As a woman from a working class background, I have experienced many obstacles, but I have also had supportive colleagues who have helped me counter those”

“Sociology has been co-opted in an attempt to bring about the delivery of patient-centred care rather than considering whose interests that philosophy serves in the first place”

“I didn’t want to get out of my car on some mornings and had a panic attack in my office one day – at my lowest, I was coming into the back entrance of the building to avoid people, and thinking of ways to have a car accident to get time off work”

Magazine of the British Sociological Association
Registered Charity (no. 1080235)
Company Limited by Guarantee (no. 3890729)

Network is published three times a year:
Spring
Summer
Autumn

ISSN: 2634-9213

Available online to members:
www.britsoc.co.uk

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION