



Network

Recording the working lives of sociologists for 50 years

Issue 149
Spring 2025



Also in this issue:

- Claire Alexander on why she doesn't fit in academia
- Event celebrates the career of Ann Oakley
- Alison Pilnick on the books that have influenced her
- Robert Dingwall writes about urban legends

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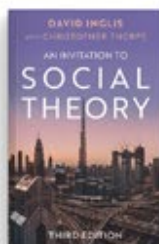
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Issue 149, Spring 2025

Main feature:

We celebrate 50 years of Network with a look back over the decades

See page 40

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WELCOME

Welcome to the 50th anniversary issue of *Network*, the BSA's magazine that launched in January 1975 as a 12-page black and white newsletter, and grew from there. To mark its anniversary, and its move to online-only publication, the magazine has been redesigned by Twentyseven, an agency based near Newcastle: <https://www.twentysevendesign.co.uk>

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the new design. Please send your feedback to judith.mudd@britsoc.org.uk.

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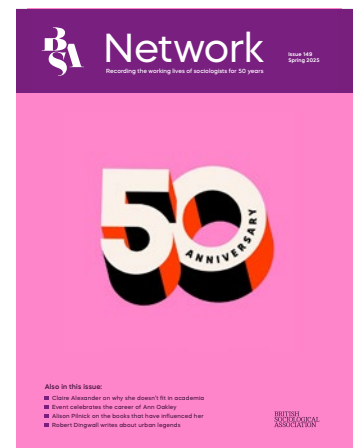
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News round-up



- 6 Organised crime groups 'can cut low-level crime rate'
- 8 Most TikTok cancer cures 'are fake'
- 10 Online age checks 'ineffective', says research
- 12 New books charts soccer from 1863
- 16 You live no more than 40 miles from a sociology course, says project
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ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS 'CAN CUT LOW-LEVEL CRIME RATE'

Organised crime groups can reduce the rate of low-level crime in their area, a study has found, challenging current criminological theories.

The research, by Dr Fanqi Zeng and Professor Federico Varese, says that organised crime groups often exercise a degree of authority over communities by imposing restrictions on people's behaviour, enforcing agreements, solving disputes and dealing out a rough kind of justice.

They examined two similar working class neighbourhoods in Nottingham – Bestwood and Bulwell – using data gained from interviews with local officials and an analysis of phone calls made by the public to the police from 2012 to 2019.

Their paper, published in *Nature Cities*, noted that Bestwood has been the home of an entrenched crime group for many decades, while in Bulwell, no organised crime group was present.

The study found that certain types of crime were significantly lower in Bestwood than in Bulwell, including anti-social behaviour, burglary, civil disputes, criminal damage and violence against the person, suggesting the presence of the crime group reduced crime.

This was because the Bestwood Cartel, active since the 1980s, was seen as the real authority in the community, with any local issues or disputes solved by its boss. People often went to the gang rather than to the police because it was seen as a trustworthy mediator, adept at resolving conflicts and rectifying injustices.

In return for obedience, the group was capable of acts of generosity towards the neighbourhood, such as funding community events or donating to local schools.

A police officer who worked in Bestwood in the 1990s and 2000s recalled that, in his time on the estate, "you didn't commit burglaries or car thefts or the like on the Bestwood Estate because [the gang leader] would police that himself and he was more effective in dealing with it than the police."

The gang itself was responsible for more serious crime, however, including multiple murders, police corruption and large-scale drugs trafficking.

In the past, studies of organised crime in cities have traditionally concentrated on the global South or ethnic enclaves within the global North. However, the paper shows organised crime in communities where the main actors are white and British-born, and where the state is not weak or emerging from many years of civil war.

Professor Varese, now of Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po, said: "This research highlights that British-born gangs can exercise control over communities in England. Thus, the phenomenon of criminal governance is not only a feature of traditional mafia territories, like western Sicily, or part of Latin America, but of the UK too."

'The relationship between social order and crime in Nottingham, England': <https://tinyurl.com/2mu5x8ts>



FEDERICO VARESE

Photo Credit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/internaz/albums/72157636177253873/>

ALCOHOL TREATMENT ORDERS 'INEFFECTIVE' SAYS RESEARCH

Orders imposed by court that require offenders to undergo treatment for alcohol misuse are ineffective at reducing re-offending, research shows.

However, a requirement to abstain from drinking was effective, the study, by Dr Carly Lightowlers, showed.

The study, published by Administrative Data Research UK, was the first of its kind in evaluating court-imposed alcohol orders in England and Wales.

It found that orders requiring offenders to stop drinking reduced re-offending by 24%-33% within the study period, 2014-2020. However, the study found

no evidence that alcohol treatment requirements had the same impact.

This research used probation and magistrates' court datasets provided by the Ministry of Justice's Data First programme.

REPORT REVEALS CRISIS IN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Dr Lindsay Richards has co-authored a report published by the Social Mobility Commission, which reveals a crisis in adolescent mental health, particularly among girls and working class people.

The study showed that 40% of lower working class girls aged 11 to 15 said they felt nervous and lost confidence in new situations, compared with 31% of girls in higher socio-economic classes.

Similarly, 29% of boys in the lower working class group reported the same nervousness and lack of confidence, compared with 15% of boys whose parents were higher professionals.

Rob Wilson, Deputy Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said: "We are witnessing a deeply troubling crisis in young people's mental health that could impact the life chances of future generations for years to come.

"Young people from all social groups face challenges, but our report shows that it is often those from the poorest families who face the greatest difficulties."

However, children from more advantaged families were found to be more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as drinking alcohol, using drugs and vaping. For example, 32% of young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds self-reported drinking alcohol in the last month, compared to 19% from lower socio-economic groups.

The study also showed that while parents from all socio-economic groups take their children to cultural activities such as the cinema, theatre or museums, those from higher socio-economic classes participate at higher rates.

Time-use data indicate that mothers with higher socio-economic status spend an average of 79 minutes per weekday on activities with their children.

This compared with 50 minutes for lower working class mothers on average. While in some cases, they engaged in more activities with their children than higher socio-economic parents, a significant portion did not engage in these activities at all, which brought the average down.

Dr Lindsay Richards said: "The situation is complex and mixed, but there is a general picture that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds have lives that are a bit more stimulating.

"They often have access to a broader range of cultural activities, live in neighbourhoods with better amenities and higher levels of trust, and have better study facilities at home.

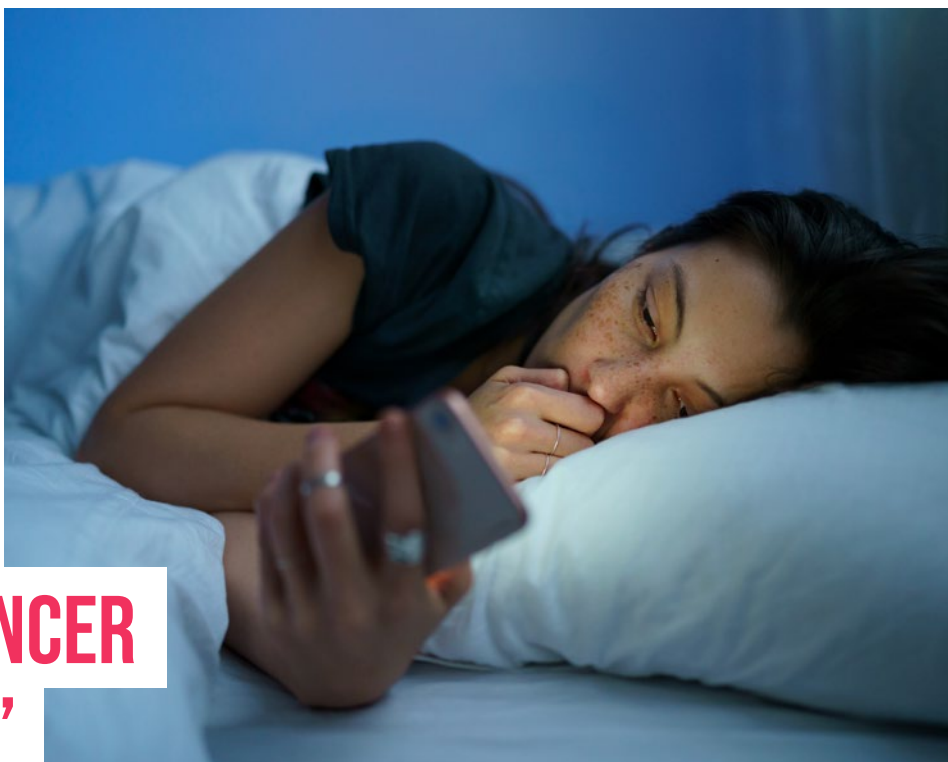
"We need to recognise that these factors may play a role in their future life chances, and that children who lack these advantages may face challenges in reaching their full potential."



LINDSAY RICHARDS

CITY ST GEORGE'S

MOST TIKTOK CANCER CURES 'ARE FAKE'



Around four-fifths of cancer cures touted by content creators on TikTok are fake, according to new research by Dr Stephanie Baker.

To carry out the study Dr Baker created a TikTok account which searched for the term 'cancer cure', and she then allowed the platform to make recommendations for videos to watch.

She found that only 19% of the videos the platform recommended using its algorithm contained legitimate medical advice.

The recommended videos fell into five main types: personal anecdotes of cancer survivors; contrarian doctors discussing miracle cures; conspiracy theories about corrupt medical institutions; spiritual videos about the importance of faith to overcome illness; and posts selling harmful products.

She found a total of 163 videos that were spreading fake cancer cure claims, some videos featuring doctors giving credence to the idea that miracle cures are concealed by the government.

Dr Baker said: "The sheer amount of misinformation on TikTok related to cancer cures is alarming – 81% of fake cures for cancer is staggering and should sound the alarm for online regulators.

"The fact that TikTok's algorithm incentivises content creators to take advantage of vulnerable people is simply unjust.

"Governments urgently need to place greater pressure on social media giants to better moderate their content."

She said that Gen Z was particularly vulnerable to this cancer misinformation, as TikTok is used as a search engine by younger demographics and was a key means of accessing health information.

The research, which will be published as part of a forthcoming book, is entitled 'Link in bio: fake cancer cures, radicalization pathways and online harms on TikTok':

<https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/pqs5e>



STEPHANIE BAKER



PUZZLE BOOK EDUCATES CHILDREN ABOUT RARE SYNDROME



KATIE COVENY

Dr Katie Coveney has helped produce a puzzle book to educate children about the rare genetic condition, Noonan Syndrome.

The syndrome stops development in various parts of the body, leading to short height, heart problems and other physical problems. It affects around 1 in 2,500 children.

Dr Coveney, who has carried out research with people with the syndrome, worked with illustrator Lele Saa to create an engaging activity book for children and families affected by it.

The book includes an I-spy game and a maze, and illustrations that invite children to learn about the realities of Noonan syndrome in a playful way.

Lele also designed a board game for families and the public to play together, highlighting the ups and downs of living with a rare disease.

The book and game were displayed at Rarefest24 in Cambridge, an evening of music, performance, comedy, talks and art, organised to challenge perceptions of genetic illness.

The book was produced as a part of the Cambridge Rare Disease Network's ART-Translations project, which pairs 20 scientists with 20 artists to produce artworks that convey the struggles and resilience of people with rare diseases.

DISABLED AT RISK OF MISSING OUT ON VOLUNTEERING, SAYS REPORT

Disabled people are at risk of missing out on volunteering opportunities because they cannot access the internet, a new report says.

The report says that two million disabled adults do not own a smartphone or computer, and 1.4 million say they don't use the internet.

The report, entitled 'Bridging the digital divide', calls on organisations that use volunteers to ensure that digital technology does not create a barrier to inclusion for disabled adults.

The report, produced with the University of Greenwich and HEAR, a network of London charities and voluntary organisations, showed that organisations may be over-reliant on technology and assume people understand how to use systems and devices.

One of the researchers, Professor Daiga Kamerāde, said, "Our report found that disabled people continue to experience both indirect and direct discrimination. For some, the lack of appropriate devices, limited training,

and organisational cultures that make people reluctant to seek support, all imply a level of discrimination that makes it difficult for disabled adults to engage in volunteering roles.

"The project team have developed guidelines for the digital inclusion of disabled adults in volunteering which we hope will support existing good practice in the voluntary sector to reduce digital barriers. These guidelines are useful not only for improving the digital inclusion of disabled people in voluntary work but also in paid work."

DISABILITY ADVOCACY BRINGS REWARD

Emily Mann has been included on the Young Women's Movement's '30 Under 30' list for her involvement in feminist and disability advocacy.

The movement is Scotland's national organisation for young women's and girls' leadership and rights. It celebrates each year Scotland's most inspiring young women, girls and non-binary people.

Emily, a PhD student in the Sociology subject area in the School of Social and Political Science, volunteers with SWAN Scotland, a charity helping autistic women and non-binary people in Scotland.

She also leads the Scottish component of a participatory research project, 'Changing realities', which shares the everyday experiences of families living on low income in order to advocate for urgent social security reform.

ONLINE AGE CHECKS 'INEFFECTIVE', SAYS RESEARCH

Age checks are often ineffective at protecting children from online harm, risking their privacy and harming their civil rights, research shows.

Experts found that many current age assurance methods do not meet obligations found in legislation such as the Digital Services Act and the UK Online Safety Act 2023.

The research team was: Professor Sonia Livingstone and Dr Mariya Stoilova, of the LSE, Professor Abhilash Nair, of the University of Exeter, Professor Simone van der Hof, of Leiden University, and Dr Cansu Caglar, of Queen Mary University of London. They examined the legal

requirements for age checks in Europe for online content, including gambling and the sale of alcohol and tobacco; assessed compliance by companies; and analysed the consequences for family life.

They found that age check measures were often poorly implemented, exposing children to inappropriate content, harmful products and services, and depriving them of the high level of data protection mandated by the GDPR.

They found a lack of clear guidelines from regulators as to how appropriate measures could be implemented in practice.

Professor Nair said: "We found there is a myriad of legislation across the EU that require age checks, but without appropriate age assurance mechanisms in place many of those laws have not been meaningfully enforced.

"There is now a renewed interest in age assurance, and it is important that we get it right this time so that age assurance tools can serve as a useful tool to achieve compliance with the laws but at the same time are respecting rights for all, and particularly for children."

Professor van der Hof said: "Although age assurance is the responsibility of digital service providers, they seem to shift the responsibility from digital service providers to children and parents by expecting them to provide the correct age or date of birth at registration.

"When children do use digital services below the minimum age set by providers, they find themselves using services that do not consider their safety specifically and may therefore not be age appropriate."

The research, funded by European Commission, is published in the *International Journal of Child Rights*: <https://tinyurl.com/2r47shvn>



SONIA LIVINGSTONE

CONFERENCE HELD ON BEING QUEER IN SCOTLAND

Professor Yvette Taylor hosted a one-day conference in December on being queer in Scotland.

Speakers included academics, Dr Maria Sledmere, University of Strathclyde, Kirstie Ken English and Dr Harvey Humphrey, of the University of Glasgow, Dr Kevin Guyan, University of Edinburgh, the activist Jj Fadaka, and Ely Percy, the author of *Duck Feet*, a book about teenage life written in Scots.

The event was held in advance of the edited collection *Queer in a Wee Place*, which will be published open access by Bloomsbury this year.



YVETTE TAYLOR

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

BOOKS TACKLE ISLAMOPHOBIA, FEMINISM AND INTERSEX ISSUES

Professor Surya Monro is lead author of a new monograph about intersex issues. *Intersex, Variations of Sex Characteristics, DSD Critical Approaches* looks at the complex debates surrounding people with variations of sex characteristics – those who are born with chromosomal, gonadal or anatomical diversities that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. <https://tinyurl.com/aznunpf2>

Professor Jennifer Cooke and Professor Line Nyhagen co-edited the book *Intersectional Feminist Research Methodologies: Applications in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, a

multi-disciplinary volume which examines how feminist methods address issues such as gender, race, sexuality, and class. It is available open access at:

<https://tinyurl.com/5n7j4b9w>

Dr Özge Onay's forthcoming book, *In the Shadow of Islamophobia: Identity and Belonging for British Turks* examines how British Turks negotiate identity, ethnicity, race and religion. <https://tinyurl.com/ymfcdn94>

Dr Simone Varriale has published two articles recently. 'How many intersections? Theoretical synergy as a rationale for intersectional biographical analysis' in the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*, is available open access: <https://tinyurl.com/57ktebzb> 'Against culture? Class analysis, strategic essentialism and methodological nationalism after Beverley Skeggs' *Formations of Class & Gender* is forthcoming in *The Sociological Review*. Its post-print is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr3u4c6z>

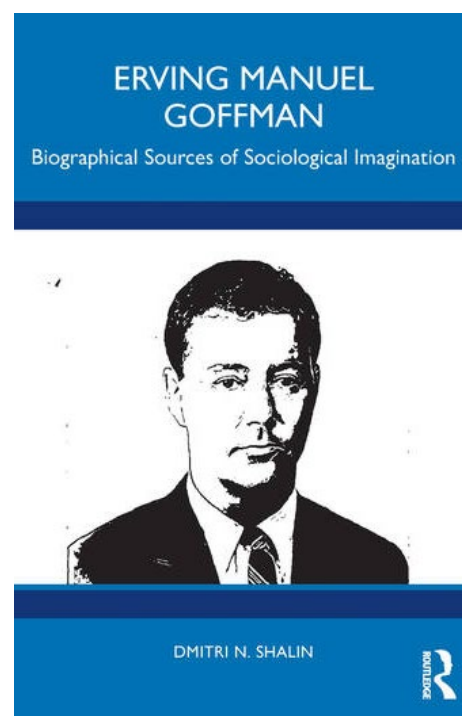
Also, Dr Adrian Leguina has organised the international workshop 'Intersectional Analysis and Quantitative Methods' at Loughborough University, taking place from 10-11 April. <https://gqia.lboro.ac.uk/workshop/>

BOOK LOOKS AT GOFFMAN'S CAREER

A new book has been published, *Erving Manuel Goffman: Biographical Sources of Sociological Imagination*.

It shows how Goffman, an intellectual of Russian-Jewish decent, uses the idea of the Potemkin village – a mock portable settlement built to impress the Empress Catherine the Great during a journey to Crimea – to illuminate the facades people and organisations erect to protect their 'backstages'.

Professor Dmitri Shalin, Director of the Center for Democratic Culture at the University of Nevada, makes the case that Goffman's career reflected dramatic events in his family and personal history. He draws on documents and interviews collected in the Erving Goffman Archives.



UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

NEW BOOK CHARTS SOCCER FROM 1863

Sport sociologist Dr John Williams has written a book on the history of British football.

Football in Wind and Rain: The Making of the British Game charts changes in the people, events and culture of the game, from its origins in 1863 to the modern-day global dominance of the Premier League.

The book examines the sporting lives and experiences of men and women from the game's beginning, and brings out the voices of commentators, fans, managers and players, while covering topics such as fandom, memorable goals, players, managers and owners.

LSE

QUANT EXPERT JOINS LSE

Dr Haley McAvay has joined the Sociology Department as an associate professor in quantitative approaches to social inequalities.

Dr McAvay researches migration, residential segregation and ethnicity. She will work with Professor Aaron Reeves to develop quantitative teaching and research in the department, and with Professor Sam Friedman and Professor Reeves on the MSc in Inequalities and Social Science programme.

Dr Tim White has been awarded an Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Research Fellowship and will be based in the Department of Sociology at the John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University of Berlin, where he will continue his research on the financialisation of housing.

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

DEMIREVA BECOMES MIGRATION STUDIES DIRECTOR



Professor Neli Demireva has taken over as Director of the Centre for Migration Studies.

The centre was launched in 2018 to address issues including human rights, immigration policies, forced migration and human trafficking. Its members comprise academics and postgraduate students from departments including Sociology and Criminology, the

Essex Business School, Government, Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies, and Psychology.

Professor Demireva's work focuses on vulnerable local communities, migration, social cohesion, ethnic penalties and multiculturalism.

She will work alongside Dr Sarah Kunz as Deputy Director.

MANCHESTER
METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

THREE JOIN POLICY EVALUATION UNIT

Three professors – Hannah Hesselgreaves, Rob Wilson and Toby Lowe – have joined the Sociology Department.

The three join the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, where Professor Hesselgreaves will be its new Director, Professor Wilson becomes the Director of the Masters in Public Administration degree, and Professor Lowe becomes Professor of Public Management.

All three join from Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. Professor Hesselgreaves has a background in organisational development, applied to healthcare education; Professor Wilson studies the relationship between information systems and public and social innovation; and Professor Lowe has spent 15 years working across the public and voluntary sectors in the UK.



BUILD A BETTER FUTURE BY UNDERSTANDING PAST, SAYS NEW MP

Professor Pam Cox, who was elected Labour MP for Colchester in July, has highlighted the value of academic research in her maiden speech in the House of Commons.

She said: "I am not a career politician. I have spent most of my life researching, teaching and leading in higher education, much of it at the outstanding University of Essex.

"I worked in social history and social sciences. It is my firm belief that only by understanding what has worked and what has mattered in the past can we hope to build a better future.

"I have written about the history of work, criminal justice, social care and education. I have used that knowledge to help to lead present-day policy

change in youth services, family courts, women's employment and victims' rights.

"There is a red thread running through my work, which has traced how modes of governing have changed over time and how we have come to govern in the name of freedom with the aim of enabling people to truly flourish.

"If our country is to flourish, everyone must have the opportunity to thrive. We need decent public services that give everyone the best start in life and support us through to life's end. That is a collective endeavour."

In line with the tradition of maiden speeches in the House of Commons, Professor Cox also celebrated her Colchester constituency. "Colchester

has been a wonderful home to me and my family. I stood for election first as a city councillor and then as an MP because I wanted to give back to that community that has given us so much."



PAM COX

Photo Credit: Roger Harris

[https://www.](https://www.rogerharrisphotography.co.uk)

[rogerharrisphotography.co.uk](https://www.rogerharrisphotography.co.uk)

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

LI GIVEN OBE FOR WORK ON MOBILITY AND INTEGRATION

Professor Yaojun Li has been made an OBE in the King's 2025 New Year Honours list.

Professor Li was given the award for services to the advancement of knowledge in social mobility and to ethnic integration.

His work focuses on social mobility and social stratification, social capital, education, labour market positions, ethnic integration, and comparative studies, in particular between Britain and China.

His books include *Social Mobility* (2023), written with Professor Anthony

Heath, which highlights how social mobility is shaped by gender and ethnicity, and the role of social class.

He also co-edited *Social Inequality In China* (2022), a comprehensive analysis of the patterns and trends of socio-economic development and social division in contemporary Chinese society.

Professor Li said: "I am completely humbled and startled. It is beyond my dream of all dreams. I wish to thank all colleagues who have given me so much help, advice and support all these years."



YAOJUN LI

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FOUR-DAY WEEK RESEARCHERS WIN AWARD



The Digit Working Time Reduction Team has won an award for impact on business and enterprise.

The team won the Outstanding Business and Enterprise Impact prize at the 2024 ESRC Celebrating Impact awards ceremony in November.

The team investigated the UK's largest trial of a four-day working week,

finding benefits for both employees and employers. Their insights have led employers to continue with the four-day week.

The prizes are an annual opportunity to reward ESRC-supported researchers who have made an outstanding impact. Winners are given £10,000 to spend on knowledge exchange work, public engagement, or other impact-related activities.

CRIME RESEARCH WINS AWARD

Dr Aminu Musa Audu will be given an Intellectual Pathfinder Award in April by the School of General and Administrative Studies at the Federal Polytechnic Idah, Nigeria, in recognition of what it says is his “cutting-edge research in community policing, leading to reduction in crime and crime management in Nigeria”.

Dr Audu's doctorate, taken at the University of Liverpool, looked at ways of developing community policing in his home country.



YOU LIVE NO MORE THAN 40 MILES FROM A SOCIOLOGY COURSE, SAYS PROJECT

Almost all people in Britain live within 60 kilometres of a university offering a sociology degree, a new project has found.

The British Academy has created an interactive map that tracks the UK's subject 'cold spots' – areas where students have limited access to social sciences, humanities and arts subjects.

Blue areas on the map are places with courses within a commutable distance -- defined as 60kms -- with darker blue indicating that several universities are offering courses in that area. White

areas mean there are no courses within the limit.

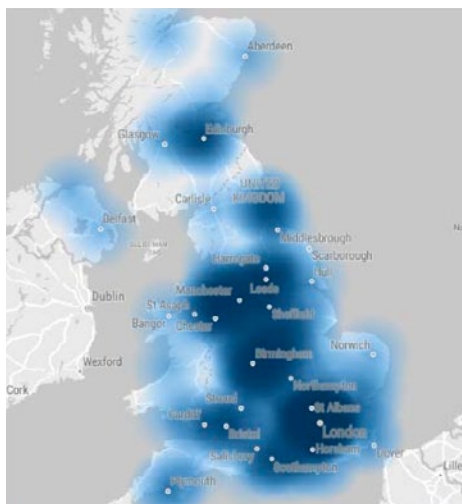
For sociology in 2022/23, the map shows almost all the country is covered. Only small parts of Cornwall and Dorset, northern England, Wales and Northern Ireland are outside the zone, although larger parts of Scotland sit outside.

Excluding degrees that are joint honours for sociology and another subject lessens the coverage area only slightly.

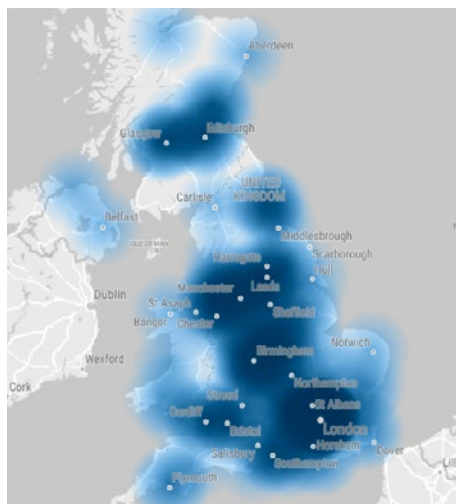
The sociology coverage area is similar to that for politics and social policy, and larger than for anthropology; only psychology has an appreciable larger area.

The map also allows comparisons over time, showing that the area for sociology has slightly extended its coverage since 2011/12.

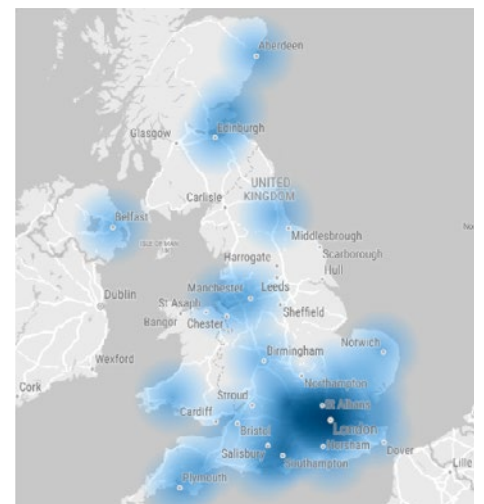
The maps draw on Hesa data to show provision for first-year, first-degree UK-domiciled students aged 21 and under. <https://tinyurl.com/ybfxkknj>



SOCIOLOGY



PSYCHOLOGY



ANTHROPOLOGY

BSA ENCOURAGES REF PANEL APPLICATIONS

Applications to sit on the REF2029 sub-panels are invited by 28 April this year.

Applicants do not have to be nominated by sector bodies, and applications can be made using a form on REF's website: <https://tinyurl.com/v8e2j3ab> More information is available on the REF029 site: <https://tinyurl.com/4ejysa3n>

The website encourages applicants from all backgrounds to apply: "We are keen to hear from individuals with varied experiences who can bring unique perspectives to the panels, this includes diverse lived experiences. Experiences beyond academia are also highly valued."

The BSA has also encouraged applications: "Being a member of a sub-panel provides a unique insight into the REF process, is a position of power and enormous responsibility, and is a highly-regarded contribution to your academic discipline and community," it said in an email.

"The success of the sub-panels as well as the outcomes for HEIs and individual disciplines depends on good people stepping forward.

"In the best interests of the discipline, the BSA strongly urges sociologists from diverse backgrounds and people who use sociology in their work outside academia, for example in the private, public or third sectors, to apply."



JOURNAL OF
Femininities

BRILL

Journal of Femininities

NEW

Editors-in-Chief: **Karen Blair**, Trent University, Canada and
Rhea Ashley Hoskin, University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University, Canada

The *Journal of Femininities* is the first academic journal devoted to the study of Femininities and uniquely offers an outlet for scholarship on femininity. The *Journal of Femininities* cultivates and unifies the field of Femininities by publishing content that advances theories and methods in the study of femininity. It seeks to challenge and re-examine the taken-for-granted norms and associations of femininity and to treat Femininities as an academic discipline similar to others that focus on particular social dimensions. Articles that appear in the *Journal of Femininities* contribute to deeper and more complex understandings of femininity.

The *Journal of Femininities* publishes cutting-edge research focused on femininity. It is a peer-reviewed international journal that publishes high-quality research from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, gender studies, business, public health, education, political science, media studies, legal studies, family science, etc.) and is particularly supportive of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and trans-disciplinary work from feminist perspectives.

Articles for publication in *Journal of Femininities* can be submitted online through www.editorialmanager.com/fem.

Individuals are eligible for free access to the *Journal of Femininities* until 31 December 2025. See brill.com/fem for more information.

ISSN: 2950-1229
brill.com/fem



BRILL

STS STUDY GROUP

SEMINAR SERIES LOOKS AT SEXISM, INNOVATION AND ETHICS

The group continued its seminar series with five events held over recent months.

In October Dr Coleen Carrigan, of the University of Virginia, discussed her new book *Cracking the Bro Code*, an ethnographic study of sexism and racism in contemporary computing cultures.

In November, Professor Joy Zhang, of the University of Kent, gave a talk on 'Decolonising STS in the context of Asia's rise', which outlined the challenges that decolonisation presents not just to the West but also to countries in the global South.

In December the group held its second professionalisation event with *The*

Sociological Review editors Dr Karen Throsby and Dr Silke Roth, who led a session on 'Publishing journal articles', targeted mainly at PhD students and early career researchers.

In January Dr Stephen Hughes, of UCL, gave a talk entitled 'Disruptive feelings: saying, "no" to innovators', which explored how engineers manage uncomfortable feelings when being asked to consider stopping an innovation for the purposes of ethical responsibility. Dr Astrid Schrade, of the University of Exeter, gave a talk in February titled 'Caring with haunted marine microbes'.

This year, the group received a record number of abstract submissions for

the STS/Digital Sociology stream at the 2025 BSA conference. There will be 12 panels on STS-related topics at the conference.

Those who want more information can sign up to the STS newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3svhv9>



COLEEN CARRIGAN

NEW MATERIALISMS STUDY GROUP

EVENT TACKLES SOUTH AFRICA, COAL MINERS AND ART RESEARCH

The group ran a seminar series over the autumn, on the theme of 'Materiality, society and the more-than-human'.

The first seminar featured a talk by Dr Raksha Janak, of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, who spoke on sexual violence in rural South Africa. Dr Janak's research involves inviting teenage girls to create posters that allow them to express themselves and set out their ideas for preventing sexual violence.

Helen Garbett, of the Centre for Island Creativity, University of Highlands and Islands, spoke at the second event on her art-based research on limpet sea-snails.

In the third event Professor Anna Hickey-Moody, of Maynooth University, Republic of Ireland, spoke about the digital animation workshops she has run with young people in coal mining areas as a way of studying young people's systems of values.



FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GROUP

EVENT LOOKS AT MUSLIM FAMILY LIFE

The group hosted a webinar at the University of Sheffield in which Dr Jo Britton spoke on 'Muslim family life as a site of struggle'.

Dr Britton told the webinar in October, attended by 30 people, that events had highlighted the tenacity of anti-Muslim racism and the precarious position of Muslims in UK society.

She explored Muslim family life as an overlooked site of struggle against multiple enduring forms of discrimination and inequality, drawing on an argument that poverty must be theorised from a family perspective.

Dr Britton, of the University of Sheffield, has recently published a book on the topic, *Understanding Muslim Family Life: Changing Relationships, Personal Life and Inequality*.

In November, the study group hosted an early career meet-up, as part of its series of online events. This featured a wide-ranging discussion about the issues facing early career researchers of families and relationships, including the impact of precarity, the current economic outlook for UK universities, and the pros and cons of being based in departments other than sociology or social science.



CARE SYSTEMS ARE ‘ABSOLUTELY NOT BENIGN’, STUDY GROUP LAUNCH HEARS

The convenors of a new BSA study group, Dr Ania Plomien, Dr Sara Farris and Dr Maud Perrier, write about their launch event (please see the following page for more details of the group).

While care systems are “absolutely not benign”, care and social reproduction are important “for our very survival”, are “key to organising”, reflect “acts of citizenship” and offer a “faint trace of another world”, the launch event of the BSA Care and Social Reproduction study group heard.

Professor Gargi Bhattacharya, of the UCL Institute of Advanced Studies, the first of four speakers at the event, underscored the intellectual significance and the political potential of social reproduction.

She stated that social reproduction “underlies and enables all other forms of economic or human life”. As a concept, it invites questions against other questions and offers a “potential to illuminate the mechanics of carnage and also the faint trace of another world”.

In her intervention, Professor Umut Erel, of the Open University, described her research with migrant mothers reflecting on how creative methods of active participation and co-production can enable “linking the care and cultural work of migrant mothers to acts of citizenship” and see such efforts as “an intervention into political debates”.

Specifically, she explained what citizenship “should mean” when “those who are legally or socially constituted as full or partial outsiders (...) can constitute citizenship through making rights-claims”.

The third speaker, Dr Alessandra Mezzadri, of SOAS, delineated a genealogy of care and social reproduction paradigms. She reminded that the origins of the concept of care are “related to moral philosophy and particularly to a critique of how issues of caring for others or how we connect to each other was actually missing in the work of big philosophers – all men in fact, so no surprise there”.

Drawing out theorising for policy and practice, she noted how research on the neoliberal phase of capitalism that precipitates the crises of care and of social reproduction is “perhaps weaker for Global South, where capitalism has always diverged in terms of life organization (no welfare state)”. She concluded that “reproductive work and sphere [must be seen] as key to organising”.

Finally, Professor Rachel Rosen, of UCL Social Research Institute, discussed her research with unaccompanied young people who come to the UK. “The care system places these unaccompanied young people in an unregulated for-profit, commodified form of housing support, disproportionately in comparison to local children”, she said.

“Young people who’ve travelled across seven, eight, nine national borders together, arrive in the UK, and the care system decides they’re not kin and separates them, sends one to the north, one to the south. If we miss these kinds of relations of care, I think we do a violence to children.”

That is why, as she put it, the UK’s care system is “absolutely not benign”.

“THE STUDY GROUP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ABOVE ALL TO BRING TOGETHER SCHOLARS WHO WORK AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF DEBATES ON CARE AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, IN ORDER TO DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THESE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE ISSUES THAT THEY ADDRESS”

On January 31st the new BSA Care and Social Reproduction Study Group was launched at the LSE.



ANIA PLOMIEN

The event was chaired by Dr Ania Plomien, of the LSE Gender Studies. She co-convenes the study group, with Dr Sara Farris, of Goldsmiths, and Dr Maud Perrier, of the University of Bristol.

Dr Plomien welcomed the participants and invited the four speakers working on care and social reproduction from within and outside sociology to “reflect on how their research contributes to the understanding of contemporary social crises, including the crisis of care and the crisis of social reproduction”.



SARA FARRIS

In the introduction Dr Farris said that “it was more or less a year ago that Ania, Maud and myself came together to organise this study group on care and social reproduction, in the context of the BSA.

“We did it because we noted that a significant number of sociologists, and more generally scholars in the social sciences, had been increasingly working on care and drawing on social reproduction feminism, but there was not a home for them. We didn’t know exactly who was working on what, and we wanted to establish a network and a space for these scholars.



MAUD PERRIER

“So, the study group has been established above all to bring together scholars who work at the intersections of debates on care and social

reproduction, in order to deepen our understanding of these theoretical frameworks and the issues that they address.

“We plan to organise other activities in the near future to highlight the wealth of research, sociological and social science research more generally, on these topics.”

Dr Perrier said that “care and social production have tended to be relegated to the realm of social policy and gender studies, but we think they’re central to social theory and sociological theorising, particularly after the recent pandemic has shown the importance of discussions about care and social reproduction for our very survival.

“We think that these concepts, care and social reproduction, are uniquely posed to interpret and challenge some of the most pressing contemporary crises that we experience, including austerity cuts to care sectors, the devaluation of care workers, the financialisation of vital goods and services. We think this rich body of work needs to be at the centre of sociological debates about and for the future.”

The organisers thanked the LSE Gender Studies Department for hosting the launch of the study group and thanked all the participants for insightful engagement at the event and are looking forward to future discussions and activities with members.

RELIGION GROUP CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH EVENT ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

SocRel is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Professor Jim Beckford established the study group and convened its first meeting in 1975. He was then a lecturer in sociology at the University of Durham, and the group's 2025 conference will be held at the university, from 14-16 July.

The theme also reflects the occasion, focusing on 'Challenges and change: the past, present and future of the sociology of religion'.

The group has invited a number of sociologists from his generation to the conference to celebrate the achievements of Professor Beckford – a much-valued participant at annual conferences who died in 2022 – and reflect on the present while looking to the future.

The conference will feature keynote addresses by Professor Grace Davie, Professor Gordon Lynch and Professor Linda Woodhead. Details of the conference are at:
<https://tinyurl.com/mr2cm892>

The study group has welcomed new members onto its executive committee – Dr Jennie Riley and Alex Arthur-Hastie, responsible for events, and Ellie Atayee-Bennett and Morgana Loze-Doyle for communications.

They have worked on events including the anniversary conference and the Chair's Response Day, on religion, disability and neurodiversity, held at King's College London on 29 March.

They are also launching a new SocRel PGR/ECR Slack Channel and relaunching its social media presence – Instagram: @bsasocrel X/Twitter: @BSASocrel and Bluesky: @bsasocrel.bsky.social

For more information see the group's website www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group or contact co-convenors, Dr Dawn Llewellyn d.llewellyn@chester.ac.uk and Dr Sonya Sharma sonya.sharma@ucl.ac.uk



JIM BECKFORD

HEALTH STREAM GETS MOST ABSTRACTS

Dr Katie Coveney, of Loughborough University, is co-convening the medicine, health and illness stream at the 2025 BSA annual conference with Dr Sarah Hoare, of the University of Cambridge.

They had the highest ever number of abstracts submitted to the stream, reflecting the growing popularity of the sociology of health and illness as a discipline in the UK and internationally.

DECONSTRUCTING DONATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

DONATION GROUP TO HOLD CONFERENCE

The group is holding its 2025 conference on 5 June at Bangor University on the theme of 'Transforming the boundaries of donation'.

This event will explore the transformative possibilities and ethical complexities of in organ donation,

including the potential of animal-to-human transplants. The keynote address will be by Dr Rommel Ravanani, a consultant nephrologist and transplant physician, and Treasurer of the British Transplantation Society.

More details:
<https://tinyurl.com/559x4avy>



SOCIOLOGY ‘IDEAL’ FOR NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Sociology is an ideal subject to include on the National Curriculum for schools, the BSA has said.

The BSA responded to a government consultation on the curriculum, where it noted that currently the discipline is not included.

“Sociology serves as a unique bridge between humanities, arts and STEM disciplines, equipping students with critical and transferable skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration,” the response says.

“In addition to preparing students for higher education and careers, sociology fosters independent thinking and equips them with intellectual and emotional tools. It develops research capabilities and promotes critical analysis of topics like social continuity and change, inequality, crime, media and health. Sociology’s comprehensive scope makes it an ideal subject to weave through the national curriculum.

“For sociology to make a greater impact, it must be widely available at both GCSE and A-level, supported by well-trained educators. Its broader inclusion could significantly enhance students’ understanding of the social world, providing them with knowledge and skills essential for navigating complex societal challenges.

“The current National Curriculum includes insufficient sociology, a gap that must be addressed to help students understand how their education can positively impact wider society. Sociology offers a unique opportunity to fulfil the Government’s ambitions for fostering active citizenship.

“Sociology can help learners experiencing socio-economic disadvantage by fostering an understanding of the wider social context that shapes people’s choices and decisions, which supports their wellbeing and decision making.

“Diversity is a central focus of sociology. Through sociological data and analysis, students gain a comprehensive understanding of what diversity entails and why it is crucial. Sociology’s ability to cultivate awareness, appreciation and understanding of social diversity makes it a vital component of the national curriculum.

“Sociology encourages empathy and social awareness. Students are prompted to reflect on the lives and experiences of others, fostering a sense of responsibility and social justice. This awareness can inspire students to be more engaged citizens who contribute to positive change in their communities. Overall, sociology provides secondary school students with a well-rounded education, preparing them to navigate and understand the complexities of the modern world.”

The review will publish recommendations this year.



JUDITH MUDD

HELP AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL TALKS

A working group to help researchers promote sociology in schools is to be set up by the BSA.

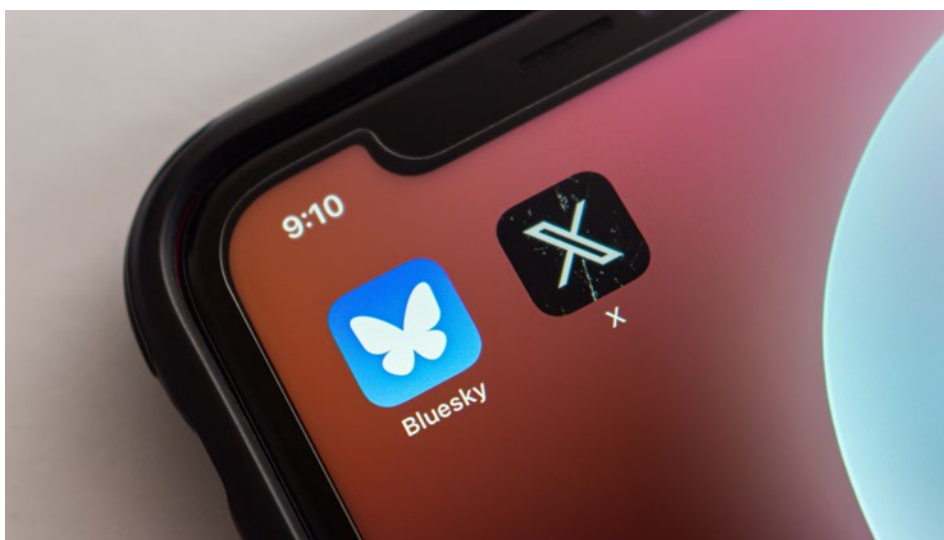
The group will create support materials for sociologists to help them prepare talks to give in schools about sociology and society.

The initiative follows a response by the BSA to a government consultation on the national curriculum.

The BSA sent its response to its members, and also asked if they

would be interested in supporting a dedicated campaign to promote sociology in schools by joining the working group or giving a talk at their local school. More than 70 sociologists responded positively.

Every year the BSA connects a small number of schools asking for speakers with sociologists. The aim of the working group will be to increase the number of sociologists going into schools.



BSA TO STOP USING TWITTER/X

The BSA will shortly stop tweeting on its main account on X (Twitter) and post solely on Bluesky.

In a statement, the BSA said the step back from X was “part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity.

“This decision is prompted by concerns over the platform’s evolving content moderation policies, which have allowed both disinformation and

misinformation to spread unchecked, alongside an increasing tolerance for harmful rhetoric.

“Such developments are at odds with the BSA’s commitment to maintaining rigorous standards in scholarly communication and ensuring that intellectual discourse remains grounded in truth, responsibility, and ethical engagement.” The Bluesky account is at @britsoci.bsky.social

LES BACK ELECTED BSA VICE-PRESIDENT



Professor Les Back has been elected by BSA members as the association's Vice-President.

Professor Back, Head of Sociology in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow, will spend this year working alongside BSA President Professor Rachel Brooks, before stepping into her role in 2026.

He said: "I have always wanted to support the BSA and feel grateful to sociology for providing me with an intellectual home in the wintery 1980s. I am really humbled by this."

The Vice-President's role includes playing a central part in the annual conference and, representing the association on matters affecting the discipline of sociology.

In a statement, the BSA said: "During this period of significant change in

UK higher education, Les's expertise, dedication, and passion will be crucial in supporting the BSA's mission to promote and defend our discipline."

Before joining Glasgow, Professor Back was the Director of the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths, and has worked as a social researcher at the Thomas Coram Research Unit and Birkbeck College, London.

He works mainly in the areas of race and racism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, urban culture, music and sport. He co-wrote *Migrant City* (2018), with Shamser Sinha, Charlynnne Bryan, Vlad Baraka and Mardoche Yembi.

In recent years he has focused on writing about teaching and scholarly craft through the publication of his book, *Academic Diary: Why Higher Education Still Matters* (2016).



RESEARCH ON TABLOID REFUGEE IMAGES WINS AWARD

Research on the way tabloid newspapers use images of refugees has won a Sage journal prize for innovation and excellence.

Dr Hannah Ryan, of the University of Birmingham, and Dr Katie Tonkiss, Aston University, asked two focus groups of tabloid readers to analyse the images in the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and *The Mirror*.

The focus groups said the images made them think that men refugees were likely to be loners and criminals, and women refugees were vulnerable mothers.

“While the focus group study was small, it is indicative of the power of the tabloid media, and of its visual imagery alone, to transmit tropes of misrecognition which can severely curtail the extent to which refugees and people seeking asylum are able to secure safety,” the article says.

The article, in *Sociological Research Online*, is entitled, ‘Loners, criminals,

mothers: the gendered misrecognition of refugees in the British tabloid news media’.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13607804221100555>

Also, Dr Linzhi Zhang, of the University of Cambridge, wins the Sage prize for *Cultural Sociology* journal for her paper,

‘Scenography and the production of artworks in contemporary art’.

This article challenges the assumption in classical sociology of art that artworks are created in the artist’s studio as independent and self-sufficient objects. Instead, she shows that artworks are shaped by considerations of how they will be staged for the public.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17499755221076922>

The prize is £250 worth of Sage books or a free annual individual subscription to a journal of the winner’s choice.

MEET THE READER: DR VIVIANE GALATA, HELLENIC OPEN UNIVERSITY

I had to summarise my feelings about *Network*, I would say it is my trusted companion. It keeps me informed – directly, widely, and on the spot – about the diverse and dynamic work happening within our sociological community.

I recently read the latest issue of the magazine and, I must admit, I absolutely loved it. As a sociologist, it felt like coming home. The issue opens with a nod to C. Wright Mills and his enduring insight into the connection between private troubles and public issues – an anchor for all sociologists. From there, the magazine dives into a wealth of news and studies from university departments. The range of topics covered is both impressive and relevant: climate action, plastic recycling, children in care, deaths caused by police – each article offering unique insights into pressing social issues.

In addition, *Network* highlights events organised by BSA study groups, addressing themes like precarity and conflict, care homes and precarious work, and meaningful work in the digital economy. The inclusion of sociological events and research findings, such as those tackling healthcare and racial inequalities, makes it an invaluable resource.



VIVIANE GALATA



BSA TO LAUNCH CAREER WORKSHOPS FOR MEMBERS

The BSA is planning a series of career development workshops and other initiatives as part of its drive to enhance its members' experience, the annual meeting heard.

The BSA Chair, Professor Chris Yuill, told an online audience that the BSA wanted to "make sure there are lots of events, and lots of training opportunities, enrichment opportunities, that will help our members in their scholarly endeavors and their career endeavors.

"We're planning on career development workshops online, at ECR level, postgraduate level and also maybe mid-career stream as well. We've also put on various online events, for example, on the sociology of Palestine.

"So the membership experience is just trying to make things as best as possible for our members in all sorts of different ways. If there's something that we're missing or people think we can do better, please tell us."

Professor Yuill said that another area of work on behalf of members was mentoring, "where more experienced members of the BSA can mentor and support people coming up".

"This year, we've matched 70 mentees with mentors, which is the highest amount we've ever had. I think it's very valuable to use the experiences that some of us have gained over the years and share that around and help build a community atmosphere.

Another membership benefit was a reduced rate for BSA events, including the annual conference, where the BSA offered 100 free places for those with lower income, 20 sponsored by Sage publishers.

Professor Yuill said that the annual conference admission was priced to break even or make a small loss on

the £195,000 it cost to run, 60% of that cost incurred when hiring a university venue. It has decided against a hybrid event as the cost of that was prohibitive.

The BSA had also reduced its membership fee for postgraduates to £40 as a way of building membership level, currently just over 2,000 people.

Another part of the strategy was better improving communications within the BSA and with the outside world, he said.

"We're also trying to improve the communication between all constituencies – study groups, the advisory board, all different parts of the BSA – to make sure we have a better and really fruitful conversation between parts."

As part of communicating with the wider world, the BSA had responded to the UK Government's National Curriculum and Assessment Review. "We have tried to get ourselves more involved in interacting with the world of politics, so we organised a pilot event for northeast of England MPs." It was also looking to work more closely with the European and American sociological associations.

The BSA was developing its work with schools. "What we want to do there is try and reach out to people working in schools, find out how the BSA could support them, find out how we can make the experience that students have of studying sociology a secondary or high school level as best as possible. Because what we need is a throughput of young people coming into our universities. So we've reached out to various parts of the school world, for example, the qualifications agencies."

The association was responding to planned job cuts in sociology in UK universities. "Whenever a sociology

department is under threat, then we can write in support to the principal or the vice chancellor. We try and push that out on our social media and other media channels. I think the more we can pull together at this time the better it is for everybody.

The BSA was looking to celebrate its history next year. "It is the BSA 75th anniversary, which I think is, is amazing. It's one of the oldest sociological associations in the world, and we will have our 75th conference at Edinburgh University. What we'd like to know from our membership is what they would like to mark this milestone. What kind of events, what kind of plenaries, what kind of activities through the year would be useful, would be helpful or appropriate."

The event was the first annual meeting held online. It attracted more than 80 viewers from countries including Italy, Ghana, Pakistan and India, as well as the UK.



CHRIS YUILL

'I HAVE FOUND IT INCREDIBLY HELPFUL FOR MY PHD JOURNEY'

The BSA Mentoring Programme gives members each year the chance to pass on skills and techniques to others who may benefit from learning about their experiences.

This year, the association matched 70 mentees with mentors, the highest number yet, and feedback has been positive:

"I had the great pleasure of meeting my mentor to discuss matters related to my career progression and common interests around creative writing, creative methods, and writing accessibly for audiences beyond the academy."

"I have found it incredibly helpful for my PhD journey and career prospects, as my mentor has provided me with a lot of constructive advice."

"It was enormously helpful. Being able to ask questions outside of the context of my own institution was really useful and my mentor gave me a good and realistic view on what to prioritise going forward, to take the next step."

"My mentor gave a range of helpful and timely advice regarding academic progression. I am very pleased to have joined this mentoring month."

"My mentor and I met today and they were very generous with their time and advice."

Applications for the 2026 programme will open in October 2025 and the deadline for applications is the end of November.

To find out more about the programme, please email: enquiries@britsoc.org.uk

THE TRUE COST OF HOSTING THE BSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Judith Mudd, BSA Chief Executive, writes about the annual conference costs.

Each year, we are asked: *Why does it cost so much to run our annual conference?* It's a fair question, and one that many learned societies, including the BSA, regularly address.

For transparency, let's break it down. The total expenditure in the budget for the 2025 BSA Annual Conference is £195,476. But where do these costs come from?

THE BREAKDOWN OF CONFERENCE COSTS

1. University Venue Costs - £114,393

Over three days, we hire 22 rooms, including large lecture theatres, to accommodate up to 840 individual presentations across 16 parallel oral streams plus poster sessions, a dining area, and an exhibition space, and provide daily morning and afternoon refreshments plus lunches for between 700 and 1,000 delegates.

2. Administration Costs - £38,321

Organising a conference of this scale takes approximately 18 months of planning

The BSA has a significant number of academic colleagues who contribute to the conference (i.e. Stream Coordinators and Trustees). The administrative work costed above is separate to that academic work.

Again, for transparency, as we are sometimes also asked why we need paid administrative support for the conference, here's a list of the kinds of administrative tasks that are involved in running a large academic conference like ours:

- Venues: seeking venues, negotiating venue contracts, managing contractual relationships and venue logistics, agreeing catering and responding to special dietary requests and orders
- Accommodation: finding and booking conference accommodation
- Abstracts: supporting the stream coordinators by processing 1,400+ abstracts, replying to abstract submission queries, sending acceptance / rejection / reserve correspondence
- Conference IT systems: setting up the conference on our back-office system and on our website
- Publicity: contracting designers and agreeing visual identity for conference, writing and circulating promotional texts via different channels
- Presenters: confirming presenter programme slots, replying to presenter emails, chasing bookings and payments to meet programme and venue deadlines

- Special events: processing and supporting special event requests
 - Side meetings (e.g. Board of Trustees, Advisory Forum): booking rooms and organising refreshments
 - Programme: putting together programme (800+ presentations and special events), responding to programme change requests, processing programme changes, inviting reserve list presenters following withdrawals, creating narrative content for programme
 - Signage: preparing and printing signage and other materials, organising courier services to transport materials to venue
 - Registration: processing bookings, creating visa specific invitation letters, writing and sending booking confirmations, replying to attendee queries
 - Conference dinner: seeking venues, negotiating venue contracts, deciding menus
 - Funded places: promoting and processing funded place requests
 - Plenary speakers: liaising with plenary speakers including gathering abstract and biographical information for the programme, booking hotel accommodation
 - Accessibility: responding to individual accessibility requirements, seeking and booking specialist support
 - Sponsors and exhibitors: creating annual conference sponsor / exhibitor packages, seeking and working with exhibitors on-site including organising the exhibition area and tables
 - On-site support: administration staff are on-site for 4 days including setting up the day before and providing reception, registration and trouble-shooting support throughout the conference. (7am – 10pm)
 - Evaluation: setting up and circulating feedback survey and evaluation
 - Historical records: updating historical records
 - Reports: producing statistical and other reports
 - Expenses: processing expense claims and queries
- Rather than outsourcing, we have an in-house events team of professionals dedicated to managing the administration of the conference. Additionally, each year we recruit and compensate local student helpers to assist with logistics and support delegates on-site.
- 3. Organiser, Plenary Speaker & Prize Winner Travel/Accommodation - £20,090**
- This covers travel and/or accommodation for stream coordinators, plenary speakers, Trustees, staff and prize winners all of whom play a crucial role in ensuring a high-quality event.
- Our stream coordinators in particular generously contribute their time to peer review hundreds of conference abstracts (this year over 1,400), determine which submissions make it into the programme, organise paper groupings, and chair sessions. Their efforts form the backbone of the conference's academic structure.
- 4. Conference Dinner - £12,334**
- This expense is largely offset by attendees who pay for their own dinner, along with contributions from sponsors and exhibitors. Importantly, conference registration fees do not cover this cost.
- 5. Publicity - £6,000**
- To ensure a visible and smooth-running event, we invest in posters, banners, signage, advertising, and the expertise of a media consultant who seeks and manages press coverage for the conference and our presenters.
- 6. Miscellaneous - £4,338**
- This includes irrecoverable VAT, bank processing fees, and essentials like lanyards and delegate badges.

BREAKING EVEN, SURPLUS, OR DEFICIT?

The conference is designed to break even but the financial outcome depends on attendance numbers and the distribution of attendees across different registration categories. Sometimes we break even; sometimes we generate a small surplus which goes back into supporting the charity's wider activities; sometimes we make a deficit.

How Are Registration Fees Calculated?

We calculate the conference registration rates by looking at the

estimated costs for that year's conference. We seek to cover those costs to break even.

For 2025, once we subtract income from the conference dinner and sponsorships/exhibitors, the remaining cost to be covered is £154,458. If every attendee paid an equal share and we had 700 paying delegates, the standard registration fee would be £221 per person.

However, BSA follows a cross-subsidy model, ensuring that those with

greater financial means help support those with fewer resources and, of course, members get preferential rates. For 2025, we have committed to offering 100 free places to those on low incomes or experiencing financial hardship. This results in a sliding scale of registration fees ranging from £0 to £405.

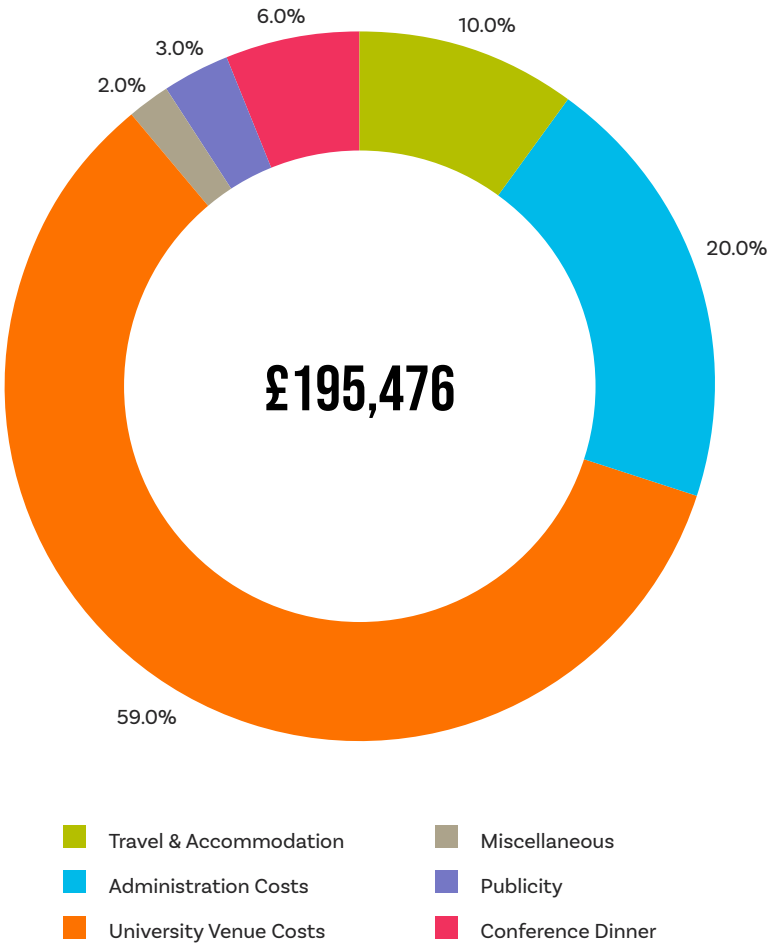
VISUALISING THE COSTS

To better illustrate the distribution of expenses, here is a breakdown in the form of a pie chart:

Final Thoughts

Organising an event of this magnitude is a significant undertaking, balancing accessibility (e.g. location, transport links, venue etc.), quality, and financial sustainability. We are committed to keeping the BSA Annual Conference as inclusive and impactful as possible while ensuring its long-term viability.

We hope this breakdown provides clarity on the costs (as well as the processes) behind making our conference happen. Thank you for your continued support in making it a success!



'MY ACADEMIC INTERESTS CAME OUT OF MY OWN BIOGRAPHY AS A TRANS-RACIALLY ADOPTED PERSON'

In this feature, Claire Alexander, this year's winner of the Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award, writes about her career and her thoughts on sociology today.

Professor Alexander, Head of School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester, has published work on race, ethnicity and inequality in Britain for more than 30 years, including her influential book, *The Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Identity, Masculinity* (2000), an ethnographic analysis of the demonisation of Asian young men as members of 'the Asian Gang'*. She also explores issues of history and curriculum on *Our Migration Story*, an award-winning website that received *The Guardian's* Research Impact Award in 2019.

Like many sociologists, my background is not actually in sociology, and I found myself here through a rather circuitous route. My first degree was in English language and literature, but I soon realised – after an essay on Black British English – that my interests were less in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and more in people and in questions of identity. From my English degree I did a Masters in social anthropology and then a PhD on Black British youth identities (later published as *The Art of Being Black*).

My work was interdisciplinary (or disciplinarily random?) – my PhD supervisors were an historian and a geographer, though most of the work I read for my thesis was from sociology. My methods (ethnography) were anthropological, although I was blithely unaware of the fact that ethnography was viewed by many race scholars in the UK as problematic – for good reason. After graduating I struggled to get a position in anthropology – work 'at home' and on 'race' was not considered proper anthropology – so I did a postdoc with Stuart Hall, who had been my external examiner.

I think my academic interests came out of my own biography as a trans-racially adopted person who grew up in a white family in the Cotswolds, where, literally, my face didn't fit. I think this gave me a curiosity about race and identity which has underpinned my work – to see if and where I could find a space to feel like I belonged – but it also led me to ask unconventional questions in less popular ways. This meant, too, that I didn't take things for granted, and was curious about things that other people didn't notice – for example, in the Asian Gang

project, I was fascinated by hierarchies within families, because I had always wondered what it would be like to have been part of an Asian family, and I was interested in small details – like the rules around cigarette smoking, and what this told us about social structures. I think my background in English literature also meant I was interested in storytelling – plot, character, motivation, voice, humour – and also in making my research more accessible to a wider readership (like many sociologists, I harbour secret ambitions of being a novelist).

I found it really hard to get a job once I'd finished, either in anthropology or sociology – I think interdisciplinary work was less popular than it is now, and as a young woman of colour working on race, the spaces available to me were very few. In most of the places I went on to work I was the only academic of colour and often the only person researching and teaching race. Very often, colleagues assumed that this was all I could do.

I got my first lecturing job in the academy in the mid-1990s – this was a time when sociology was starting to address its race problem, in terms of research and staffing. I was one of a handful of colleagues of colour who came through at that period, when issues of race and ethnicity were also moving from the margins into the centre of sociological research. Of course there was never more than one person of colour in most departments, and usually only one person working on race (usually these were the same individual). There were so few of us that we really did all know each other! I will always be grateful of the support

I got from other scholars of colour and scholars of race when I was starting out.

I was the first woman of colour in the sociology department in Southampton, one of two in South Bank, and the first woman of colour in the Department of Sociology at the LSE. I was the first woman of colour professor appointed in Sociology at Manchester and, I think, across the School of Social Sciences. This says nothing about me, but everything about the structures and culture of the academy during those years – and also how things have changed. Now when I look at the academy, there are many more scholars of colour, at all levels and in all spaces, though there are also clear inequities still present, as our BSA report ('Race and ethnicity in British sociology', with Remi Joseph-Salisbury, Stephen Ashe and Karis Campion, 2020) shows.

Now, of course, race and ethnicity is also a key element of sociological research and teaching – though again as our report showed, there is more to be done to integrate these considerations more fully across the discipline and into core units. Sociology has undergone many changes across these years – I came in during 'the cultural turn' in British sociology, at the time when 'new ethnicities' was transforming the way in which work on race and identity was done and thought, but which at its worst became too focused on the individual at the expense of the social.

More recently, there has been a re-engagement with structure and inequality, with a 'materialist re-turn', which points to the inseparability of structure and culture, and the political. There has been a proliferation of areas of research, of methodological approaches, and of the people who research, teach and study sociology. Ethnography, I'm glad to say, has been reclaimed by scholars of colour as a key way of exploring race and ethnicity.

Of course in the current political climate in the UK and globally, sociology, and other social sciences are under threat – particularly those which are at the qualitative end, when knowledge is viewed through the lens of hard science, facts and impact – but this is also a time when a sociological imagination has never been more important. With the sector facing difficult times, there are internal and external threats – around the erosion of EDI agendas, around the diversity of students who come to university, and the social, political and cultural divisions as culture wars are waged online and on campuses.

Particularly, post-Black Lives Matter, issues of race and racism have been placed centrally in the academy and in sociology – however, we are already seeing the backlash against this focus in terms of research funding, appointments, university strategies etc. The door is closing, and it is crucial that the progress made is sustained, and that new generations of scholars can find their place in the discipline, as I did. In my role as Head of School of Social Sciences, I see it as a crucial part of my job to ensure that the tentative gains of the past 30 years are defended, expanded and embedded.

*Professor Alexander's book, *The Asian Gang Revisited*, (2024), follows the same men across 25 years.



CLAIRE ALEXANDER



OBAMA'S SPEECHES IMPACTED MENTAL HEALTH

Some of the factors behind the poor mental health of some BAME Americans have been revealed by two research projects.

A recent study published in *Ethnicity & Health* journal revealed a link between 'internalised racism' and suicidal thoughts among Asian Americans.

The study, led by Dr Fanhao Nie, of the University of Massachusetts Lowell, involved a representative national survey of 970 Asian American adults in the US.

Suicidal ideation was assessed using a scale that asked how frequently they had thought about suicide in the past month. Internalised racism was measured by asking participants to rate their agreement with statements such as 'I sometimes wish I weren't Asian' or 'Asians are less physically attractive than whites'.

The analysis revealed that internalised racism was strongly associated with suicidal ideation, even after accounting for other factors.

"This effect was not only robust after controlling for a host of socio-demographic variables, but it also had a larger magnitude than other important predictors of suicide, such as anxiety and perceived external racism," Dr Nie told PsyPost.

"Therefore, particularly for those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, our internalised racial repression poses a greater threat than observable, external racism. This is probably the area that deserves more public attention and resources in the fight against racism."

The study is entitled 'Devil among us or inside us? Exploring the relationships of internalized racism and suicidal ideation among US Asian adults'. <https://tinyurl.com/3vk6j95c>

In another study, researchers found that following Barack Obama's re-election as US president in 2012, the mental health of college-educated Black men improved significantly, while those who didn't attend college reported worse mental health.

The study examined survey data on Black adults' mental health for 30 days prior to and 30 days following the 2012 election. While college-educated Black men experienced nearly three fewer poor mental health days a month following Obama's re-election, Black men with no college education experienced more than one extra poor mental health day.

Lead researcher, Professor Tony Brown, of Rice University in Texas, said that Obama's speeches may have been the reason for this. "The rhetoric he used suggested that if you were college educated, then you were deserving of respect, and we believe this type of communication during Obama's presidency is just one example that could explain why less educated Black men felt the way they do and why we saw their mental health worsen."

Black women did not experience any mental health benefits from Obama's re-election, the research, published in *Du Bois Review* journal, found.

1.5M US CHILDREN LOSE FAMILY TO DRUGS

Around 1.4 million US children – 2% of all children nationwide – have lost a family member to a drug overdose, according to a study by sociologists.

Researchers combined data on causes of death related to drugs with census population data from 2000 to 2019 to find the proportion of under-18s losing parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins.

The researchers, based at Pennsylvania State University, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, and Princeton University, suggest that the number of affected children would be higher if the deaths of friends, neighbours or step-parents had been included.

Children were 2 to 2.5 times more likely to lose a male relative than a female relative to overdose, they also found.

The research, published in the American Journal of Public Health, uncovered a growing trend: about 2% of children born in 2009 had lost a family member to an overdose by age 10, compared with just over 1% for those born in 2001.

One of the researchers, Professor Emily Smith-Greenaway, said: “We predict this percentage will climb even higher – possibly reaching 5% – by the time children born in 2009 turn 18. It’s alarming how much-younger children are losing loved ones.”



SOCIOLOGIST BECOMES SRI LANKAN PRIME MINISTER

The sociologist Harini Nireka Amarasuriya has become Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, following the general election last year.

Dr Amarasuriya has undertaken research into human rights and ethics in Sri Lanka, and is an advocate of free education for all in the country.

She took a first degree in sociology from the University of Delhi, and, after working as a community health worker, she gained a masters in applied and developmental anthropology from Macquarie University and a

PhD in social anthropology from the University of Edinburgh and Queen Margaret University. She joined the Open University of Sri Lanka as a senior lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences in 2011, where she became the head of department.

In 2020, she was elected to the country’s parliament as a member for the National People’s Power, which won a landslide victory in 2024. Her appointment as prime minister last year makes her the third woman to hold the office in Sri Lanka.

CATHOLIC CHURCH DEFECTIONS REACH RECORD

The number of people formally leaving the Catholic Church in Switzerland almost doubled in 2023.

The Swiss Institute for Pastoral Sociology in St. Gallen said that 2.6% of members – 67,497 people – left the Church in 2023, exceeding the previous annual record of 34,561, set in 2022.

The institute estimated that, at the end of 2023, there were around 2.8 million Swiss Catholics out of a population of 8.7 million.

The cantons with the highest departure rates were near the country's border with Germany. In contrast, the cantons of Geneva, Valais, Neuchâtel, and Vaud in western Switzerland recorded almost no departures.

The institute said the near-doubling of the church exit figure was due to the abuse crisis that engulfed the Swiss Church in September 2023, when the Vatican ordered an investigation into allegations against six senior members.

An independent pilot study on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Switzerland since the mid-20th century identified 1,002 “situations of sexual abuse”, involving 510 suspected perpetrators and 921 victims.

The Protestant Church in Switzerland also saw a record number of departures in 2023, when 39,517 people formally left, up from 30,393 in 2022, leaving it with 1.86 million members.

MUSK CAUSES ACADEMIC TWITTER EXODUS

Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter in 2022 led to a significant number of academics leaving the platform or reducing their use, according to a new study.

Researchers at the European University Institute in Italy and Vanderbilt University studied a sample of more than 15,700 academic accounts from the fields of economics, political science, sociology and psychology.

The researchers attributed the departures or reduction in use to the changes brought about by Musk since he acquired Twitter for \$44 billion in October 2022, altering its name to X.

These include mass layoffs of the company's staff, the reinstatement of tens of thousands of accounts that

had been suspended for violating Twitter's terms of service – including Donald Trump's – changes to Twitter's blue tick verification process and the rise of misinformation on the platform.

“Each of these changes influenced the broader social-network characteristics in ways that are not yet fully understood quantitatively, but which entailed a shift in the user experience that we colloquially refer to as ‘vibes,’” the study notes.

“We argue that a combination of the threat and then the reality of Musk's ownership of the Twitter corporation influenced academics either to quit Twitter altogether or at least reduce their engagement with the platform.”

Although quantitative, the study does not state in clear terms how many

academic users quit the platform or to what extent users reduced their activity.

The research is timely: following the US presidential election last year, in which Musk used X as a way of pumping out pro-Trump material, many more academics left.

The study, titled ‘The vibes are off: did Elon Musk push academics off Twitter?’, is published in *Political Science & Politics* journal. It was authored by Dr James Bisbee, of Vanderbilt University, and Dr Kevin Munger, of the European Institute University in Italy.

The BSA has decided it will leave X/ Twitter shortly.

DANISH VIKINGS WERE SOFTIES (COMPARATIVELY)

A recent research project has reported an unexpected sociological conclusion: compared with Norwegian Vikings, their Danish cousins were softies, relatively speaking at least.

Rates of violence in Viking Age Norway and Denmark were long believed to be comparable, but work by a team of researchers has challenged that assumption.

Their findings show that interpersonal violence – violence not meted out

as punishment by authorities – was much more common in Norway. This is evident in the much greater rates of trauma on skeletons and the extent of weaponry found in Norway.

Researchers from Norway, Germany and the US found that 37% of the skeletons in Norway showed signs of lethal trauma, highlighting the frequent and often fatal use of weapons.

Danish society was more centralised, with clearer social hierarchies and stronger central authority. Violence was

more organised and controlled, often linked to official executions rather than acts of personal violence.

For example, skeletal remains in Denmark showed fewer signs of weapon-related injuries but included evidence of executions such as decapitations. Skeletal evidence suggests about 6% of Viking Danes died violently, almost all from executions.

The study is published in the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*.

PATRIARCHAL GAZE USES WILDLIFE CAMERAS LENS

Cameras and drones brought in to monitor wildlife in one of India's best-known forest reserves are being misused to spy on women, researchers say.

Forest rangers in the Corbett Tiger Reserve in the northern state of Uttarakhand fly drones over local women to intimidate them and prevent them from collecting natural resources to which they have a legal right, a paper published in the journal *Environment and Planning F*, says.

Researchers conducted a 14-month study, interviewing 270 locals in the villages around the reserve, where women go to collect firewood and fodder for cattle.

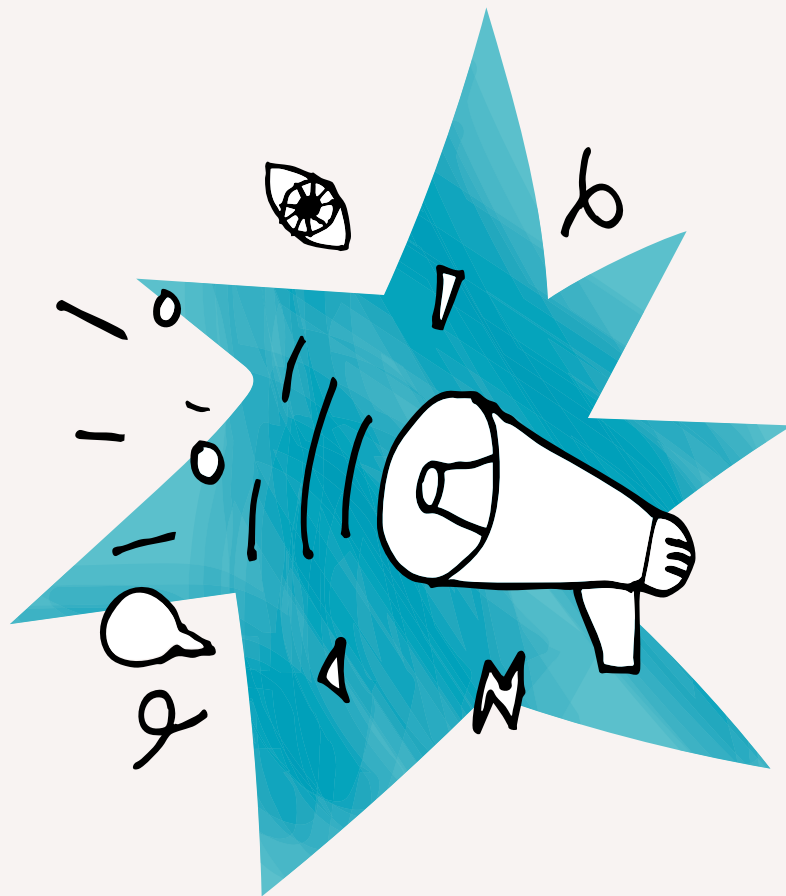
The study, titled “The gendered forest: digital surveillance technologies for

conservation and gender-environment relationships’, also found that women now venture deeper into the woods to avoid surveillance and put themselves at greater risk of wildlife attacks.

Dr Trishant Simlai, a researcher at the University of Cambridge’s Department of Sociology and lead author of the report, told *The Independent* that the “patriarchal gaze of the society has extended into the forest because of these cameras.”

Officials from Corbett Tiger Reserve, part of the wider national park, called the allegations “absurd”, but have set up an investigation to look into the study’s claims. <https://tinyurl.com/bde9zsuj>

Features



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IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO TODAY

Welcome to the 50th anniversary issue of *Network*, an old publication which now boasts a new look. It was in early 1975 that the first edition of the BSA's magazine made its modest appearance, and so, firmly in the interest of reflexivity, we take a look at half a century of our own history...

The first issue was more a newsletter than a polished periodical – 12 pages of black and white text, enlivened by one front cover photograph (of Peter Worsley) and a red masthead, bearing the word '*Network*', a title thought up by its first editor, Max Atkinson. It comprised a feature on the BSA's past and present, some short news items, an article on workshops at Keele, and a crossword with truly gnomic questions (9 Across: 'Trouble in Pareto domicile' (2,2) – answer: 'To do').

Max (who died last year) stated its purpose – one kept to by all his successors – "That something may not be academic enough for journals or too specialised for periodicals does not necessarily mean that it must be unimportant. If there are enough people in sociology and allied

trades interested in telling their tales and grinding their axes, *Network* will probably have a future."

It did have a future: two million words on 4,500 pages over the next 50 years, for those who like some quant with their qual, pages exploring all aspects of the lives of sociologists: their books, their research, their events, their arrivals, their departures, plans, campaigns, prizes, strikes, triumphs, disasters, joys and despair. 'Recording the working lives of sociologists for 50 years' was the sub-heading below the masthead, and it was no idle boast.

This issue celebrates those 50 years, by reproducing a feature we ran for our 40th anniversary and adding a series of excerpts from articles we have run over the past decade to bring us up to today. We also bring a new design look to the magazine, one suited to its publication online only and not print.

As we look to an uncertain and unsettled future, we can at least take a little hope from the way that sociology, as recorded in these pages, has survived and prospered, by telling its tales and grinding its axe.

CHRONICLING THE WORKING LIVES OF SOCIOLOGISTS FOR 40 YEARS...



Below we reproduce an article celebrating the first 40 years of Network which was published in the Spring 2015 issue. After that is a page of selected front covers from across the years before we take a look at the last 10 years.

Network is 40 years old this year. It marks its coming of middle age with a (not-overly-serious) look at its history since its launch in 1975, starting with a chat with its first Editor.

The first Editor of Network was Max Atkinson, who worked at Essex, Lancaster, Manchester and Oxford universities, and as a Home Office researcher.

He was writing his PhD at Manchester in 1975 when he heard that the BSA Office (then staffed by just two people) was looking for a volunteer Editor. Max took on the role, deciding on the title 'Network' for what was the BSA's first members' newsletter.

He wrote to university departments three times a year asking for news (a tradition Network has recently restarted) and had the results typed up and printed.

Max says that although his two years as Editor involved quite a lot of work, he enjoyed it – “especially the expenses-paid trips to London” (to the BSA's office). “It gave me a chance to visit friends and colleagues who might be persuaded into writing something,” he says.

“I loved doing it, and it was quite popular, although I remember I got into trouble quite early on.” This came from his idea to give Network a lighter side, adding a crossword and some quotations from unintentionally amusing student exams (see below).

Another selection of extracts from exam scripts salvaged from examiners' dustbins . .

Durkheim was the archetypal member of that abominable species, the armchair sociologist.

Max Weber was a sociologist with very badly defined ideas, on the whole. He tended to be vague and was very much for generalisations.

Karl Marx died in 1883 of Jewish birth.

Durkheim was influenced by another sociologist of his time, Tabul Raza.

He received a complaint from an anthropologist about raiding scripts for laughs. Max decided to confront this head-on, reporting himself to the BSA's Professional Ethics Committee, which pronounced him not guilty.

Max, who was later appointed professor, is the author of books on suicide and verbal interaction in law courts (with Paul Drew), and was Co-editor (with John Heritage) of one of the first collections of empirical studies in conversation analysis, *Structures of Social Action*. He felt that sociology then wasn't taking conversational analysis as seriously as it did marxist thought and quantitative techniques, so he left to set up a speech-writing and communications agency.

He became much in demand after a World in Action programme followed his coaching of a SDP supporter before she gave an ovation-winning speech at its annual conference. His book *Our Masters' Voices: The Language And Body Language Of Politics* was read by the new Liberal MP for Yeovil – and when Paddy Ashdown became party leader he relied on Max for help with his speeches. Max later wrote several books on speech-making, which are still popular on Amazon, see: <http://tinyurl.com/mparx5d>

Max is now semi-retired. “It's quite an impressive looking document” he says of recent issues of Network.



NETWORK

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

RETIRING PRESIDENT LOOKS TO ANOTHER GREAT LEAP FORWARD

In the 1960s, as part of the expansion of the universities, sociology went through a boom period. Sociology had at last "arrived" in the universities.

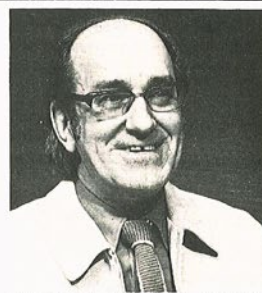
The growth of sociology outside the universities was even more striking, but since the BSA tended to be dominated by university teachers, these new growth points did not receive the same attention.

Professional careers in sociology, too, are no longer necessarily teaching jobs. There are now about 900 people in full-time research jobs, particularly in Government and "parastatal" institutions.

These teachers and researchers have quite different concerns and confront different kinds of problems in doing sociology than do university teachers. Since the BSA has been slow responding to this new situation, other bodies have sprung up to cater for these new constituencies.

The members of these bodies, of course, have common intellectual and professional interests with their colleagues in universities and other kinds of college. They need to provide for the special interests and problems of their members, run their own meetings, etc. But the BSA urgently needs to begin working with them, too, and as a first step we have brought members from these organisations on to the Executive's Sub-Committee and begun a regular general two-way traffic with them.

I mention all this to dispel the notion that the BSA is a static and elitist body of "dons", unconcerned about sociology outside the groves of academe. We are equally keen to turn towards another crucial population interested in sociology: the general public. We believe that we have a responsibility to engage in dialogue with others than ourselves, to respond to social issues, and to communicate



Peter Worsley, BSA President 1971-5.

what we are doing and why, and what possible relevance it might have for the world.

Our intentions, then, are anything but elitist.

Unfortunately, partly owing to a certain ham-handedness on the Executive's part, people have got the idea that we are trying to do the exact opposite: to set up an exclusive "professionalizing" body.

A BSA which did not stimulate its members intellectually, however, would be a service-vending machine with no "ghost" in it. We intend to improve our Conferences, carry on our very successful Summer Schools, make *Sociology* a journal people will look forward to. And we will not neglect the practical things, too: arranging cheaper subscriptions to journals; publishing books; keeping an eye on infringements of professional ethics; submitting evidence to inquiries; stimulating discussion on new ways of teaching; monitoring research, and so on. The Great Leap Forward is about to commence.

The short time available to produce this issue necessitated a rather heavy reliance on solicited contributions from known BSA activists. Contributions will be welcomed. Next issue April/May then every 2 months.

COMMENT

Like the daddy on Goffman's roundabout who seeks to display that there is indeed a difference between his and his child's presence on it, sociologists are often to be heard resisting suggestions that they might be on the professional roundabout "for real". Meanwhile, before and after the disclaimers, they may be seen scribbling away, teaching and generally doing things which naive observers might regard as clear indicators of some kind of professional commitment.

But whether or not such work is properly to be viewed as "professional", or even "sociological", it may be able to benefit from information about what goes on in other places, and certainly does tend to raise issues and problems which get discussed, debated and complained about when sociologists meet.

The case for *Network*, then, seems to have less to do with the question of professionalism than with the absence of a readily available forum for the wider dissemination of information and views. That something may not be "academic" enough for the journals or be too specialised for periodicals like *New Society* does not necessarily mean that it must be unimportant, any more than it means that those involved with it are incapable of learning from others who may have had similar experiences.

If there are enough people in sociology and allied trades interested in telling their tales and grinding their axes, *Network* will probably have a future. But without a regular flow of news, articles, correspondence and ideas, it will surely fail — and deservedly so. For if there is nothing in sociological work that matters enough for pen to be occasionally put to paper, the presence or absence of a newsletter will matter even less than whether or not such work is called "professional".

IN THIS ISSUE: Unravelling the BSA committee structure — Banks on the history of the BSA — Hawthorn on why he resigned from the BSA — How Keele sociologists do without a syllabus — News and Notes etc.

'IF THERE ARE ENOUGH PEOPLE IN SOCIOLOGY AND ALLIED TRADES INTERESTED IN TELLING THEIR TALES AND GRINDING THEIR AXES, NETWORK WILL PROBABLY HAVE A FUTURE'

— first editorial, 1975

1975-79

Network launches with a 12-page edition carrying one photograph (of the BSA President, Peter Worsley), and entirely in black and white, bar a large red masthead (see right).

The contents include an editorial, an article about the BSA, and a feature on Keele University. The first Editor, Max Atkinson, states a philosophy still followed by today's editors: "That something may not be academic enough for journals, or be too specialised for periodicals like *New Society*, does not necessarily mean it must be unimportant..."

The magazine promises an issue every two months (this would turn out to be every four months, a rate that *Network* has kept to solidly).

Then, as now, not all was harmony in UK sociology — the first edition carries

an article entitled 'Why I resigned' by Geoffrey Hawthorn — an early manifestation of the debate about sociology's status as a profession in which he objects to the BSA's creating a teachers' section, seeing this as implying that teachers were not true sociologists.

The magazine reflects its era: one article talks of the 1960s "boom time" for sociology, and of "the responsibility to engage in dialogue with others than ourselves, to respond to social issues, and to communicate what we are doing and why, and what possible relevance it might have for the world."

Other issues tackled in 1975 include the formation of a Women's Caucus, and a note about Scottish Independence being treated as a joke by the English (see graphic below).

SCOTTISH UDI

To judge by the reactions of English newspapers, Nationalist atrings in Scotland are still treated as a joke. It seems fair to suppose that this view is shared by many sociologists South of the Border or at least those who are secure in the fleshpots of the South East. But these sentiments are deeply rooted in Scottish culture and even the anglicised scene of sociology is not exempt. The consequences raise a number of serious issues for the future of the BSA and for sociological enquiry in the UK.



In late 1976 Rosemary Deem takes over as Editor, and tackles a perennial problem for sociologists – what to say when asked what they do for a living at parties: “The reply ‘I’m a sociologist’ is likely to bring forth one or two possible responses,” she writes.

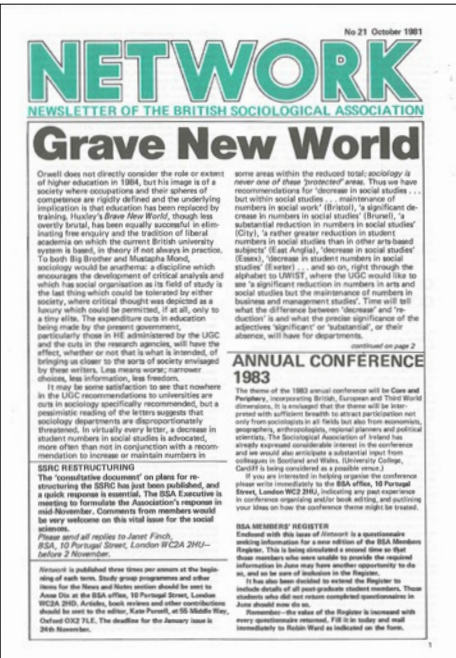
“Either it is greeted with roars of laughter and the comment, ‘really? So they do exist?’ or ‘sociology – I might have guessed – wasting the country’s money – ought to be doing something useful instead.’ I can’t be the only sociologist in the country who longs to tell people instead that I am a postman or a cook or a farm worker.”

Network features comments by students about sociology. They are a mixed bag, familiar to anyone who reads criticism of sociology through the decades: “often interesting, stimulating, controversial” says one; for another, it’s “a subject in which it is trendy to be late for seminars and drink coffee”.

In 1977 the first book reviews appear, on works tackling immigration, power and medicine. The reviews remain a vital part of the magazine today.

1978 the magazine prints its first obituary, of Professor Paul Halmos, of the Open University. It also notes the appearance of Dr Stuart Hall on TV, talking about racism and getting “unusually large ratings for BBC2”.

By 1979 the magazine reaches 20 pages. In an ominous note, it registers its first opposition to the cuts in higher education, with the headline “Sociology under attack” in its final edition in 1979.



‘SOCIOLOGY IS WELL ESTABLISHED, AND RIGHTLY SO’

1980-89

The early 1980s see Kate Purcell take over as Editor, at a time when cuts to higher education, and the government’s well-publicised dislike of sociology, are the dominant concern of the discipline. ‘Grave New World’ runs the main headline of the Autumn 1981 edition, predicting that the cuts will bring society closer to the dystopias of 1984 and Brave New World.

The cuts may not have been quite that serious, but they present a tricky issue for *Network*: whether to report them in detail. John Scott, Editor 1984-88, is against this: “As the financial and political climate has deteriorated, departments have understandably become less willing to see such reports published. There is a feeling among many BSA members that now is the time for *Network* to subordinate its information role to its support role,” he writes, appealing for members’ views.

“Should I print, for example, the fact that the Sociology Department at the University of Never-Never Land has lost four of its members, will not have its chair filled, and is under pressure to merge with a Department of Social Work? How far should I legitimately go in ignoring (suppressing?) stories which might damage particular departments?”

SOCIOLOGISTS ARE ‘ABSTRACTION-CRAZED EGALITARIANS’ AND ‘AN IGNORANT RABBLE LOST IN JARGON’

The other dominant theme was sexism, in its various guises. In 1982 the BSA’s Committee on the Equality of the Sexes contributes an article on sexual harassment at work, an “aspect of inequality between the sexes which is so fundamental that it is often assumed to be ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable,’ concepts which we, as sociologists, ought to be wary”. The *Daily Telegraph* later attacks the BSA for its published guidelines on avoiding sexist language, calling its members “abstraction-crazed egalitarians”.

It wasn’t a decade for the thin-skinned: in 1986 Roger Scruton, after claiming he had been ejected from a BSA annual conference session, uses his column in

The *Times* to attack sociologists as “an ignorant rabble lost in jargon,” saying the discipline has broken free of its foundations to become “pure opinion”.

Frank Bechhofer replies by writing that Scruton’s attack was “intellectually vacuous, factually inaccurate, and full of the tricks of the professional propagandist” – instead, sociology was “well established in British academic institutions, and rightly so”. John Westergaard calls Scruton’s comments an “unrecognisable caricature”.

Scruton writes a defence of his comments in the summer 1986 edition of *Network*, saying “it seems to me that standard A-level textbooks often contain extended passages of indoctrination, and that in very many of them a left-wing position is a foregone conclusion.” In the next edition the authors of *Introductory Sociology* beg to differ.

The most regular attendee of BSA annual conferences during the decade turns out to be Dalail Bujra. “I have been to all the BSA conferences,” writes Dalail. “This is why I have been asked to compare the creche at Cardiff with other creches I have been to. The creche was held in a little flat near to where we were staying. There were nine children and I knew two of them already. They were all boys except for one day when one girl came. It was a bit noisy but I did not mind. There were lots of things to do and they were nice. We made masks and pom pom balls and paper aeroplanes and ships. We went to visit a computer unit at the university which was interesting. I think the creche was one of the best I have been to.” Dalail is nine.

By 1982 the magazine is 24 pages in length, double its original length.

SOCIOLOGY UNDER SCRUTONY

Roger Scruton has been the main protagonist in an attack on sociology and sociologists in the columns of *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* during the summer and autumn of last year. A series of articles culminated in a piece in which Scruton, Professor of Aesthetics at Birkbeck College, gave full vent to his vehement anti-sociology feelings.

After a decade of budget- cuts and bickering, the '90s begin on a higher note: 'Sociology Booms', *Network* announces. Official figures show "rising numbers of applications and entrants into already hard pressed departments." Some departments are reporting "staff-student ratios in excess of 22:1," it reports incredulously. The number of students starting sociology at university could rise to an unprecedented 1,150.



Network reports that, in contrast to the vitriol thrown at the discipline in the 1980s, the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting that year had produced "several hundred column centimetres" of generally fair and favourable reporting in the media.

The positive note couldn't last. By 1992 the BSA is "very concerned" about the first Research Assessment Exercise, a very modern concern. A questionnaire it puts out to members finds that: "Most respondents noted greater encouragement, or pressure, to publish, which was sometimes stressful or demeaning for individuals" and some doubted this had "done anything for the quality of the content of sociological journals".

WHEN ASKED WHY SOCIOLOGY HAD BEEN SUSPENDED, AN APPARATCHIK REPLIED "BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL SOCIALISTS"

Network enters a lighter, if less fragrant, world with an account by Martin Parker of being locked in the toilet during the BSA annual conference at Kent in 1992, and the hours of effort by the porters to remove the door to free him. At his next conference, in Cardiff, he returns late from the pub and finds himself locked out of his room – more prolonged effort by porters and cleaners to find the keys to let him in. "Should I be paranoid? Will I go to any more conferences? If you see someone with a sledge-hammer tucked in his file at your next conference you may assume the answer to both questions is yes," he writes.

Network looks outward from the confines of a toilet cubicle to the wider world, with articles on sociology in Greece: "sociology as an autonomous academic subject and a profession with a clearly defined identity is of recent development," it notes.

That's still one step up from Albania, where sociology is suppressed by the new post-soviet rulers: "When asked why sociology had been suspended, an apparatchik of the Democratic Party said bluntly and with finality, 'They are all socialists.'"

Network leaps into the future in 1995 with its first handy guide on how to use the internet. "You'll need a browser, and Mosaic is the most common" it says, but "Netscape is better and faster". It lists 15 websites users might want to go to, including ones on frogs, French painting and HM Treasury. By 1996 a Durkheim website is launched, and a year later the BSA itself takes the plunge into the digital maelstrom.

The mood of scholarly unanimity in *Network*'s columns didn't last the whole decade: In 1996 Martyn Hammersley and Roger Gomm examine the state of sociology, saying that an obsession with inequality has distorted its work. "Sociologists' preoccupation with inequality sometimes operates at the expense of other values" and "the discovery of inequality seems to be privileged over the discovery of equality". Those who oppose this are sometimes accused of sexism or racism, they say. David Drew and David Gillborn reply, saying this is "the latest addition to a long-running and increasingly tedious project of methodological criticism".

In 1997 *Network* undergoes a relaunch, with a fresh design, the obligatory article about Peter Worsley, and pieces on BSA activities and research news. It quadruples its photo count (from one to four) but still finds space for Hammersley and Gomm to rebut the rebuttal of their article, saying that their critics may accuse them of "poor sociology", but they in their turn are guilty of "poor sociology" (and of an "unhealthy attitude" as well).

NETWORK HAS PICTURES!!

For the first time *Network* includes pictures! The editors would welcome any good quality black and white or colour photographs to accompany contributions.



DECADE OR DECAYED? TEN YEARS IN HIGHER ED.

2015-2025

The last 10 years have seen the landscape of higher education alter dramatically, not always for the better, and these changes have inevitably found their way into the pages of the magazine.

The decade began with cautious optimism. *Network's* 2017 Spring issue reported on a survey by the Heads and Professors of Sociology group, which revealed that they were broadly happy with their world. One wrote that: "Since £9K fees were introduced, we have been growing", and another that their department had a "first-year undergraduate intake up almost 40 per cent".

What was good for departmental spreadsheets wasn't always so for staff, though, as more students meant more work. One head wrote: "I would say that growing levels of stress at work, with all the corresponding effects on people's lives and wellbeing, are a particular concern." Another cited as current difficulties, "staff workload, morale and work-life balance pressures in the face of the twin, relentless

imperatives of teacher/students experience and quality research productivity". The perennial – or, more accurately, septennial – issue of the REF appears in their thoughts: "It is uncertain how the game will be played in the forthcoming REF," wrote one.

The particular difficulties faced by women researchers was highlighted in the Summer 2018 issue, which featured an account of an event on imposter syndrome in academia. Dr Vikki Turbine told the event that each time that a woman took maternity leave, her career had to be restarted from scratch.

"Every time you take leave and you come back, you're pressing reset, so your career is restarting – your past successes no longer count, so you start again," said Dr Turbine, who was then at the University of Glasgow, and had two young children.

The pressure on women at work began as soon as they announced they were pregnant, she said. Comments she had received from colleagues included: "Which poor colleague is taking up

the slack while you get a break?"; "When are you going on leave? Most academics wait till they go into labour – I mean we're not working down mines here. You can even go on field work – it's not an illness and it's not as if interviewing is strenuous"; "It takes years to make up this lost time, you've committed academic suicide."

She said: "I started to say 'right, I'm not working at night and I'm not working at weekends' and I've tried to do that, but what I've found is that causes profound stress. It's profound frustration that I feel at the moment – we should be able to enact some kind of changes...in terms of organisational culture."

Some of the stresses recorded in *Network* may have been behind the decision by sociologists and other academics to go on strike, as set out in the Spring 2018 issue, though disadvantageous changes to the pension scheme were the main trigger. As Professor Gurminder Bhambra wrote: "Our #ucustrike today is about pensions, but it is not only about pensions. It is also about the structural

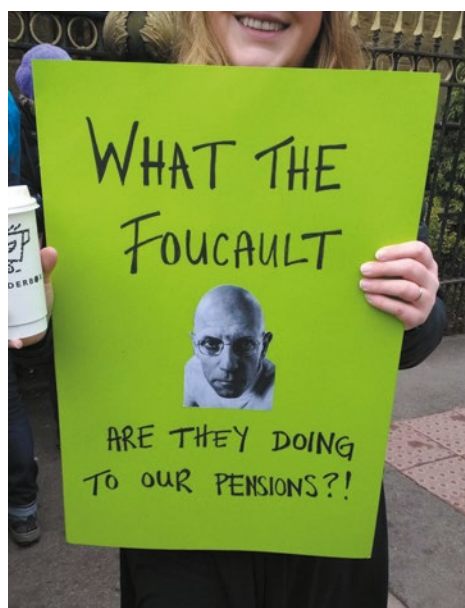


changes that have seen increasing numbers of colleagues employed on temporary/precious contracts.”

Dr Kirsteen Paton, of the University of Liverpool, took a melodic and seasonal tone during the wintry conditions on the picket line: “Oh the manag’ment inside is frightful. But the solidarity outside is delightful. The picket line’s the place to go. Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.”

The **Autumn 2019** issue recorded another round of strikes, saying that “Sociologists played an active role in the strike over pay and conditions, which saw academics, technicians and librarians in 60 universities walk out and picket campuses in a planned eight-day action.”

By the end of this last decade the spectre of job cuts loomed across the higher education sector. The **Summer 2024** issue recorded that 57 universities were considering voluntary or compulsory job cuts to meet shortfalls caused by a 27% drop in income per student over the previous dozen years, and a government keen to cut the number of people coming to the UK from abroad. An article said the number of posts scrapped could be 2,000 or more (we now know the real figure might be as high as 10,000, across at least 80 universities). “For now, *Network* will print the bad news,” an article promised.



On strike, spring 2018

‘I WAS OFFERED THREE JOBS AS A RESEARCH ASSISTANT!’

Anyone looking back at the post-war expansion of universities might be forgiven a pang of envy. In the **Autumn 2021** issue, *Network* reported on a new book, *Pioneering Social Research*, which set out the relative ease of finding a job then.

“Readers today will have the strongest sense that the past is a different country when they see how easy it was to find a job at a time when universities and sociology departments were expanding rapidly,” the feature says.

“David Hargreaves worked as a teacher in Hull after finishing his degree in theology and psychology in the 1950s. He wanted more of a challenge so applied to the University of Manchester”. The feature records that a professor of politics offered him a research assistant post. “I said, ‘but what, exactly, would you want me to do ... I really don’t know anything about government’. He said, ‘Don’t worry about that, you can pick it up in six months. You just have to do a bit of reading, we’ll find something for you to do’.

The professor then told him there was another job available in social administration, so he went to the professor there, who also offered him a job. “But then as we were chatting, he said, ‘if you’ve been in a school, there’s a job going, upstairs in anthropology, studying schools. Why don’t you go up and see Max Gluckman?’” Gluckman also offered him a job, which he took. “So I was offered three jobs as a research assistant!”

The feature goes on: “Robert Moore, after studying sociology at Hull

University, went straight into a job at the University of Birmingham. He wanted to work with John Rex, whose *Key Problems of Sociological Theory* was one of the few books on social theory at that time, the mid-1960s. Moore wrote to him and met him in a coffee bar in Golders Green, and invited him to join his research team at Birmingham. Moore said: “The year I graduated [1964], that was just at the beginning, there weren’t all that many sociology departments, and those that were there were beginning to expand. Heads of department were phoning round other heads of department, saying, ‘Have you got any good graduates? I’ve got a vacant lectureship’”

The feature records that “Not all the sociology pioneers needed PhDs to progress their careers in academia. Stuart Hall never completed his doctorate on the writer Henry James. Colin Bell went into academia after his Master’s degree and Mildred Blaxter was offered a job at the MRC straight after her Master’s in sociology at the University of Aberdeen.

Jobs may have been easier to get, but elitism and sexism were more obvious in those far off days. The feature records: “Leonora Davidoff was interviewed for a job on the steps of the Athenaeum Club because her interviewer, Charles Madge, was a member. ‘I was a bit taken aback – fortunately, it wasn’t raining, it wasn’t foggy, and I got the job. But it’s things like that that sort of stick in your subconscious.’ It was not until 2002 that the club yielded to public pressure and removed its ban on women members.”

SOCIOLOGISTS 'NOT MORE RIDICULOUS' ON SILVER SCREEN

Network's pages looked beyond the question of getting and losing pay and position. In the **Spring 2016** issue, it looked at how sociology is portrayed in films, drawing on the work of Professor John Conklin, of Tufts University, Massachusetts, who sat through 758 Hollywood movies depicting academia ("a feat surely deserving a Nobel in itself," the feature suggests).

"Overall, Conklin records that sociology fares relatively well in terms of numbers: while psychology (in an academic context) is mentioned in 76 films on databases he researched, and anthropology-archaeology in 34, sociology comes in with a 27, ahead of economics, 23 and political science, 21.

"What about qualitatively? Here, sociology gets a reasonable showing, linked to serious issues in a serious way in some films, even if at times the director seems to mistake it for psychology or other disciplines. Even when academics are lampooned in films, sociologists come out no worse, says Conklin: 'Sociologists and sociology students in comedies are not consistently portrayed as more ridiculous than the other characters.'"



John Burke, with Amy

The feature records the first portrayal of a professional sociologist in a full-length movie. "In *The Hoodlum* (1919), John Burke, 'a sociological writer' returning 'from parts unknown', is living in a New York slum to gather ethnographic data for his next book.

His daughter Amy (Mary Pickford) moves in with him, and there follows a series of implausibilities that teach her humility, reconcile her with her estranged grandfather and lead her to marry a neighbour."

The feature notes that sociology got a rougher ride in fiction. As it notes: "In 1979 John Kramer analysed more than 300 campus novels in the US and UK, 23 of them depicting sociologists. He finds sociology depicted as "without subject-matter boundaries or any detectable rigor". Fictional sociologists, says Kramer, are depicted as unconventional and extreme in their personal behaviour.

"This portrayal pre-dates the radical turn in the discipline in the 1960s and 70s, when sociologists were easily caricatured as Zapata-moustached revolutionaries. It was there from the early 20th century, when they were depicted either as earnest social workers or dull statisticians of society."

Why do novelists dislike sociology?, the feature asks. It notes, unsurprisingly, that most writers of campus novels are English Literature academics, and "here might lie one big reason for sociology's hostile reception between the covers: most of the books written about them are by academics from another discipline, and in the confined space of a campus there's scope for brewing resentment."

By contrast, the **Summer 2015** issue ran a feature on a book by Les Back, *Academic Diary: Or Why University Education Still Matters*, an assertion of the value of sociology, and a call for more generosity in academia.

In the book he writes: "There are colleagues who view being too positive about the work of other academic writers as Panglossian. As Harvey Molotch once pointed out: 'Sociologists like to eat each other... critics by disposition and occupation [they] freely take issue with each other, often ungenerously'."

Professor Back goes on: "This is because we are valued not for our generosity but for the sharpness

of our intellect, for the unflinching nature of our academic judgments. These qualities can be rewarded – for example – by being invited to serve as a judge on panels like those who determine the outcomes of the REF. Critical edge becomes a badge of excellence, while generosity shows suspicious signs of intellectual feebleness.



Les Back, with students

"In this kind of climate, I have come to think that valuing the work of others becomes a way to strike a small blow of munificence against miserliness in academic life. This is not just a matter of being 'nice' to others. Sometimes there are profound divisions and intellectual fault-lines that are important to fight over. A university without criticism and argument is no kind of university at all.

"One way of coping with life in the university today is – in part – to trade envy for admiration. Intellectual generosity can be a survival strategy and prophylactic against the corrosive aspects of intellectual cruelty that have been institutionalised by the audit culture. Try it. You might never get asked to serve on an assessment panel pronouncing on the intellectual merits of those in your field, but maybe you'll feel better about academic life."

A BITTER SPLIT, A POPULAR SUBJECT

Autumn 2016

Medical sociology and the disability studies movement need to heal a “bitter” estrangement dating back over 20 years, Nick Watson told the MedSoc conference in Aston.

Professor Watson, an editor of *Disability & Society* journal, said the split dated back to the early 1990s, when there were “really bitter engagements between medical sociology and disability studies”, with medical sociology emphasising the personal experience of living with impairment while the disability studies movement concentrated on the oppression experienced by disabled people.

“I don’t know who owns this split. The fault lay very much on both sides. It wasn’t one side taking umbrage and going away – neither could reach agreement.”

In the same issue, at an event in London former LSE Director Professor Craig Calhoun said that sociologists failed to predict the referendum vote to leave the EU because of a failure to study social movements they didn’t like.

“If sociology didn’t fully see it coming, what’s going on? I would say too much self-satisfied cosmopolitanism – too

much of sociology has been distorted by sociologists wanting to say they are on the right side of history and those other people aren’t,” he said.

“It’s not just about the particular theories labelled as cosmopolitan, it’s the choice of topics – sociologists too often study social movements they like, and don’t study social movements they don’t identify with, and this gives the whole field of social movement studies a somewhat distorted view of what’s going on.

“I hope sociology will develop a better understanding of populism and resist more the tendency to dismiss people who have somewhat inchoate and under-articulated responses as backwards.

“We need to join ethnography to theory and join both to economic sociology and political economy – in other words we need to do better at connecting up the various parts of our inquiries. We often know key things about what would shape Brexit but we know them in fragments – we know them as a study of this place or that group but we don’t adequately connect them into our picture of the whole social world.”

Summer 2019

Network featured a recent paper by three researchers who carried out the largest survey of sociology teachers in England. They found that sociology was a popular subject in schools, but was under-resourced and often delivered by teachers with no degrees in the subject. The subject was often found inspirational by students, but was rarely taken in grammar and private schools, so those most privileged in society did not benefit from its insights.

Autumn 2022

A book by Dr Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra looked at the research evaluation exercises of the past 35 years and concluded that they had made the social sciences in British universities “startlingly” more homogeneous.

Departments that had specialised in one research area, such as work and employment, for example, gradually moved away from this to tackle a wider range of subject areas similar to those found in other sociology departments. While this meant that a varied set of topics was being tackled widely within departments, it was the same range from one department to another.

It also noted a change in the productivity of British social scientists: from an average of fewer than two peer-reviewed articles published by each scholar in the earliest evaluation period, productivity rose to about five peer-reviewed publications per scholar in the most recent period of assessment.



Nick Watson

CATAPULTING TO COMMUNITY: NEW PROJECT TO FIND OUT WHAT WORKS

Sociology professors Louise Ryan and Andrea Wigfield write about their eight years of collaborating as co-investigators in a new £10 million funded ESRC research centre, C4 (Centre for Collaboration in Community Connectedness).

We first met when working in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield, where we successfully co-supervised PhD student Dr Liam Wrigley (along with Dr Joanne Britton). Louise subsequently left to take up a role as Senior Professor of Sociology and Director of the Global Diversities and Inequalities Research Centre at London Metropolitan University, whilst Andrea headed down the road to Sheffield Hallam University to become Professor of Applied Social and Policy Research, Director of the Centre for Loneliness Studies and, more recently, Co-Director of the Campaign to End Loneliness.

Despite going our separate ways, we remained connected through our mutual academic interests in the intersectionality of social connections across place and space. We both recognise the value of nurturing social networks, whether they be at work, at home, or in the local neighbourhood. It's fitting then that our venture will aim to identify how we can create and maintain stronger connectedness across the UK.

The UK faces growing socio-economic divides which touch upon key aspects of our everyday lives. Evidence indicates deep levels of poverty across many areas of the country¹. Indeed, child poverty has increased significantly in recent decades². Levels of income and wealth inequality are high by international standards, making the UK one of most unequal countries among the 38 OECD countries³.

Loneliness and social isolation are likewise increasingly becoming a societal challenge across the life course, and for many sections of the population, with young adults, older

people and more recently those in mid-life being particularly affected. People with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equalities Act⁴, and those at particular life transitions such as retirement, becoming a carer, being diagnosed with a health condition⁵, as well as geographical mobility including migrating⁶, are also at higher risk.

Against the backdrop, there is a pressing need to gather evidence on how social networks, connectedness, fostering trust and belonging can support responses which challenge inequity and empower people to lead creative and sustainable solutions. Therefore, we need to understand how local factors and the actions of local, regional and national organisations affect experiences of participation and connectedness.

The new Centre for Collaboration in Community Connectedness (C4), led by professors Sarah Pearson and Peter Wells at Sheffield Hallam University, has been co-created in collaboration with academic partners at London Metropolitan University, Queen's University Belfast, the University of Stirling, and Black Mountains College, with non-academic partners: Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface; Darnall Well Being; Local Trust; The Brixton Project; and The Young Foundation providing policy and practice input.

The centre will focus much of its activity in five new hubs, or catapult sites, which are being created with local partners in: Darnall (Sheffield), Market (Belfast), Alloa (Clackmannanshire), Brixton (London) and Talgarth (Brecon/ Aberhonddu) to trial new ideas and interventions which have the capability of being upscaled elsewhere. A wider consortium of policy, third-sector and funder partners will also bring policy and practice expertise, helping to ensure that the work of C4 leads to genuine change in the landscape for community-led research and innovation.

The research adopts interdisciplinary research themes: social infrastructure; natural and built environment; relationships; digital technologies; systems, institutions, and markets; and diversity and place. Moreover, C4 is committed to action research with local groups to co-create knowledge and innovation which brings local residents, universities, policy makers and practitioners together to generate evidence which has wide impact. Thus, the catapults will be central to developing knowledge on ‘what works’ and to helping identify approaches which can rolled-out in other areas.

As sociologists, we are particularly keen to explore contemporary understandings of participation and connectedness by critically appraising existing theoretical frameworks encompassing social capital, the meaning and definition of community, and the role that meaningful relationships plays in connecting people together and fostering a sense of belonging.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, C4 examines how social capital is embedded within disparities of power and unequal socio-economic opportunities within specific settings and this impacts upon the interplay with place and social interaction and feelings of belonging⁷. Our analytical

use of ‘community’ recognises substantial academic and policy interest in the role of place-based social relations and assets (material and social) in improving health, wellbeing, and economic outcomes.

Nonetheless, we also acknowledge that the term community is often shrouded in romantic myths of an idealised past and defined as ‘an unequivocal good’⁸. C4 will address factors that act to enable or deter participation and connectedness as well as change over time, for instance how digital and technological change can drive new modes of networks and connectivity beyond specific locales⁹.

New emphases on meaningful relationships (their existence and absence) is explored through psychological and sociological lenses¹⁰, to address how loneliness and isolation can shape not just social relationships but also engagement in economic relationships and social outcomes.

Through these conceptual frameworks we, along with the rest of the team, will be seeking to explore change and transition specific locations; the combination of people and place factors in explaining outcomes; and the interactions between technological change and the understanding of how connectedness manifests in lived experience.

For more information about C4 contact: c4@shu.ac.uk

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C4 is supported by UKRI through a five-year strategy, ‘Transforming tomorrow together’, one of five UKRI-wide initiatives aiming to harness the full power of the UK’s research and innovation system to tackle large-scale, complex challenges.



LOUISE RYAN



ANDREA WIGFIELD

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/bulletins/householdincomeinequalityfinancial/financialyearending2022>

² (<https://www.unicef.org/uk/what-we-do/our-uk-work/child-poverty-uk/>)

³ <https://equalitytrust.org.uk/scale-economic-inequality-uk/>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/1>

⁵ Wigfield, A. (2024). *Loneliness For Dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.

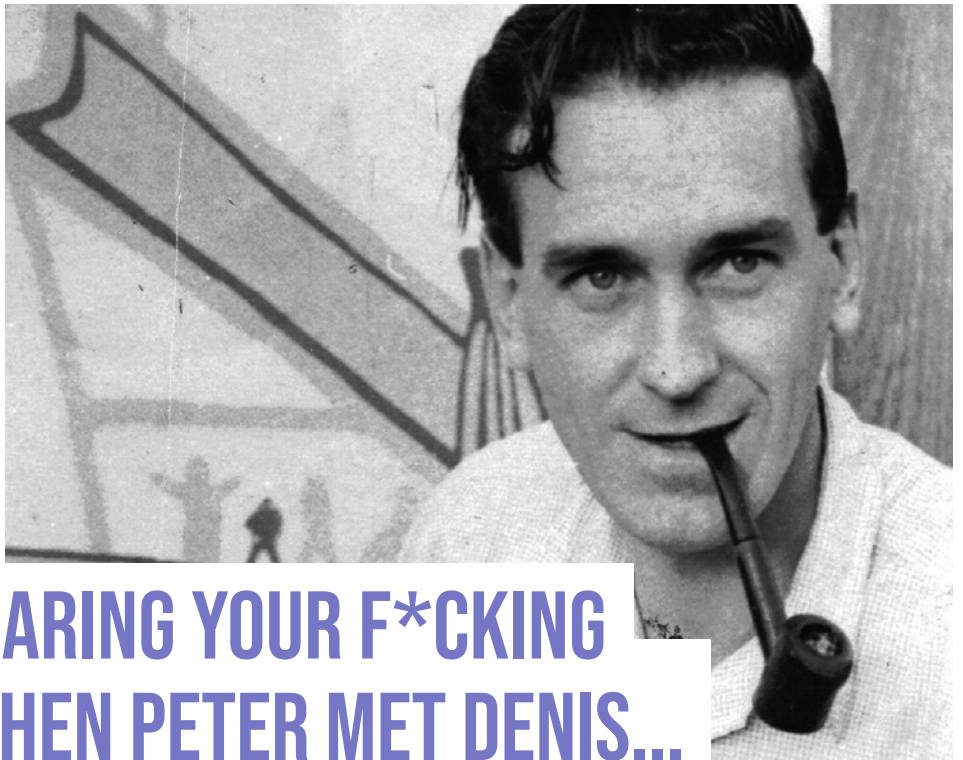
⁶ Wigfield, A. (2024). *Loneliness For Dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.

⁷ Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological theory*, 7(1), 14-25.

⁸ Joseph, M. (2002). *Against the Romance of Community*. University of Minnesota Press

⁹ Ryan, L. (2023). *Social networks and migration: Relocations, relationships and resources*. Policy Press.

¹⁰ Wigfield, A., Turner, R., Alden, S., Green, M., & Karania, V. K. (2022). Developing a new conceptual framework of meaningful interaction for understanding social isolation and loneliness. *Social Policy and Society*, 21(2), 172-193.



‘YOU’RE STILL WEARING YOUR F*CKING NAME BADGE!’ WHEN PETER MET DENIS...

The recent death of ‘Scotland’s greatest footballer’, Denis Law, prompted several of us to recall one of the best sociological anecdotes to have circulated in the UK.

Diana Woodward was first off the mark with her letter to The Guardian: “Denis Law was known for his robust use of the English language. Years ago I heard an anecdote from Prof Peter Worsley, then head of the sociology department at Manchester University. He was a big Man United fan and great admirer of Denis. Peter was standing in the urinals at Euston station before returning to Manchester when, to his surprise and delight, Denis arrived to use the adjacent stall. He looked across and said: ‘And how is Professor Peter Worsley today?’ Peter stuttered something appropriate and then asked: ‘But how do you know me?’ Denis replied: ‘You are still wearing your fucking name badge.’”

This has the core elements of the story, except that I had heard it from Max Atkinson (see obit in last issue) who had Peter Worsley as a Manchester City fan – Law played for City in 1960-61 before going to Italy and returning to

United 1962-73, with a final season at City in 1973-74. Part of the context was the depiction of Worsley as a hopeless romantic – City were then very much the poor relations in Manchester. The location was also translated to the Midland Hotel in Manchester, which was traditionally the grandest hotel in town, featuring in classic novels and celebrated as the place where Rolls met Royce and luxury cars were conceived. By the 1970s, Worsley would have been a senior figure in the University of Manchester, and BSA President (1973-75), so it was not improbable that he would have been attending an event in an elite location in the city.

I checked my version with Christian Heath, who was an undergraduate student in the Manchester sociology department in the early 1970s. His account was closer to Diana Woodward’s, locating the event at Euston, but without the expletives and with Law as the initiator. He had also had it from Max Atkinson, whose own language tended to be relatively sober except when describing SSRC/ESRC. A third informant, Rod

Watson, a member of the Manchester department at the time, locates the event in a Victorian public convenience that used to stand at the top of Oxford Road in Manchester and has the punch line as “Your LAPEL, Peter, it’s on yer fuckin’ LAPEL !” He had had the story direct from Worsley, who, apparently, regularly recounted it as a joke against himself, despite being a man who enjoyed a degree of celebrity and intimate media connections. However, it also seems that Worsley himself was not above introducing a few variations in different contexts...



Denis Law
Credit: Danny Molyneux

Clearly, it is no longer possible to verify this anecdote with any of the parties directly involved, which is a common problem with oral history. However, stories are known to be important for the solidarity of workgroups – who gets to tell them, to whom and on what occasions – and this is a nice one. Even our most eminent colleagues can be starstruck. We are reminded of the supposed unworldliness of scholars who omit to remove a name badge on leaving an event. Brute common sense confronts academic sociology. And

however famous we are, bladders still need to be emptied. Erving Goffman would have had a field day with these data.

But we also seem to be observing the creation of a legend. There is a famous, and still influential, study of memory from the 1920s by Frederic Bartlett, a pioneer social psychologist. Known as the ‘War of the Ghosts’ experiment, this asked participants to memorize a story collected from Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest of Canada. The story had significant supernatural elements that were meaningful to its original tellers but alien to university-affiliated residents of Cambridge. Bartlett asked his subjects to recall the story at increasingly long intervals. It is said he would hail them in the street a decade afterwards and ask them what they remembered. With only one exception, the supernatural elements were edited out as time passed and the story assimilated to the narrative conventions of inter-war England. Interestingly, the exception was later revealed to be AR Radcliffe-Brown, who, of course, became a celebrated anthropologist.

The concurrent versions of the Law/ Worsley story hint at the beginnings of a similar process. It will be interesting to see how, if at all, the story stabilizes over time. Will the re-tellers want to emphasise the elite Midland hotel version or the more demotic Euston Station/Oxford Road Gents plus expletives version? How would we prefer to represent ourselves to each other and to wider audiences? Do we favour thinking of our most distinguished professors in the cloakrooms of smart hotels or in the public conveniences of railway stations and city streets?

If we cannot print the facts, which legend should we choose?

BY ROBERT DINGWALL



EDUCATION ABOUT NUTRITION AND CLEANING AS IMPORTANT AS SEWERAGE, EVENT HEARS

Mass education about domestic science and nutrition has been as important as public health measures such as sewers and clean streets in cutting mortality and improving health, a BSA event heard.

Professor Ann Oakley talked about her new book, *The Science of Housework: The Home and Public Health, 1880-1940*, in which she brings to light the buried history of the domestic science movement.

Professor Oakley shows how domestic science was first developed in the 1880s, mainly by women discovering how cleaning the home of germ-laden dust and cooking nutritious food profoundly improved health and survival.

“This book tells a story about an international movement that flourished between about 1880 and 1940,” Professor Oakley told the online event, ‘Writing people’s lives’.

“It was a movement that started in the UK and in America, and it had the objective of encouraging people to clean their homes better and more

efficiently, provide safer and more nutritious food, and think about housework in a completely different way, not just as women’s work, but as a scientific practice to be performed.

“Therefore, according to scientific principles, this household science movement brought together biology, physiology, chemistry, and other subjects like physics and economics. And it brought these subjects together in a new and more systematic approach to the study of the home.

“Large declines in mortality rates between about 1890 and 1920 in countries like Britain and America are strong circumstantial evidence that the new domestic science education did actually change household behaviour.

“Population mortality rates began their decline after the domestic science movement had gained some hold, and this was before any medical intervention except the smallpox vaccination could have had any effect.

“Households adopted the new household science messages about



ANN OAKLEY



boiling water and milk, avoiding faecal contamination. Washing your hands and providing better meals would have increased their members' survival chances. Epidemiologists today are only just beginning to come round to the view that this mass education about domestic science and nutrition was more important probably than public health measures like sewers and clean streets."

She looked at the efforts to establish domestic science as a legitimate academic subject, and how this created a new scientific career for women until it was dismissed by male academics in the 1950s and was largely forgotten.

"The home became not simply a private place for families, but a laboratory of applied science. So participants in the household science movement wrote textbooks and curricula for schools and colleges. They taught classes, they advised governments, and they used all the available media to promote the message that housework needs to become a truly scientific occupation for the sake of both personal health and of public health.

MASS EDUCATION ABOUT DOMESTIC SCIENCE AND NUTRITION WAS MORE IMPORTANT PROBABLY THAN PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES LIKE SEWERS AND CLEAN STREETS

"Nowhere was it an easy task to persuade the male academic elite. Female professors of household science were paid less than their male

scientific counterparts, and they were often required to be a housekeeper on the campus. They had to provide meals for staff and students, and they had to order furnishings for the university and all that kind of thing."

She noted the absence of scholarly accounts of the movement. "Since domestic work, gender and health are long-term preoccupations of mine, I was very surprised to uncover the existence of an entire campaign that I didn't know anything about. I could find nothing that addressed its history as a social movement, nothing that drew together the personal biographies of its main participants, and nothing that connected these to the transformations that were occurring in domestic life at the time."

Also at the event, Professor Graham Crow, of the University of Edinburgh, spoke about his most recent book, *The Emerald Guide to Ann Oakley*, which summarises her published output since the appearance of her first article in 1970, weaving the story of her life into this account.

Professor Oakley, of the Social Research Institute, University College London, has researched and written in the fields of gender, health, methodology and social policy for more than 50 years. She set up two research units at the Institute of Education in the early 1990s, and has also published novels, short stories and poetry. *The Science of Housework* is a sequel to one of her earlier books, *The Sociology of Housework*.

Other speakers at the event were Professor Ann Phoenix, of UCL Institute of Education, on 'Writing narratives of varied everyday lives', and Professor Gayle Letherby, visiting professor at the universities of Plymouth, Greenwich and Bath, on 'Developing and sharing creative auto/biographical practices for writing people's lives'.

The BSA invites its members to work with BSA office colleagues to put on similar events. Those interested should contact Chief Executive Judith Mudd at: judith.mudd@britsoc.org.uk

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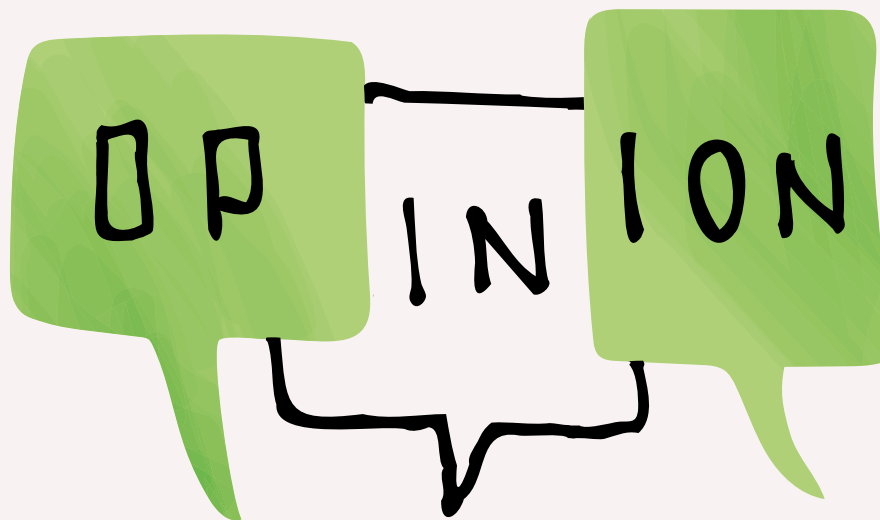
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Wednesday 8 April – Friday 10 April 2026

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Opinion



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HOW CLASS AND CONFLICT MADE A BIG IMPRESSION

Huw Evans writes about his experiences as a mature student, studying sociology and cultural studies at University of Sussex

Class, Culture, and Conflict was the first module of my undergraduate sociology degree to focus on working class experience. This was conducted through the experiences of working class people, and studied the roots of the current classification of what it means to be working class, the genesis and influences of the welfare state, the experiences of working class people, working class representations, and the effects of social mobility. I'm a white, working class male, and having the experience of studying a social issue from the subject position was intensely valuable, firstly, because I felt there was a place for me within academia and secondly, as a way of understanding better issues of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity that I was exposed to.

I started university off the back of five years delivering Chinese food. I worked more during Covid, but spent three years in financial and health precarity, due to my continued exposure to the virus and threats to the fragile stability of my mental health. During this time, I read a lot, walked a lot and worked a lot. My position as a 'key worker' was justification to be out enjoying that first summer on the South Downs, away from the small one-bed flat I occupied with my partner in a leafy part of Lewes. This flat was a product of necessity. My ex-partner and I were desperately trying to extricate ourselves from a shared accommodation arrangement when our former friend/roommate abruptly wanted us gone. We worked, so we were under-served by the benefits system, and we were poor, so we were

viewed as suspect by the private market. We got lucky and ended up in a decent block of flats, with families sharing the other one-bed flats on all three sides. It was noisy, it was crowded, the common areas were cluttered, but it was on a nice, quiet street. That was late 2019, I was 26 and having left home at 18, it was the first time I'd had my name on a lease.

The location is important to the mindset that I developed from the early months of living there. This was the first time I'd lived in a 'nice' neighbourhood. I come from the countryside where class lines are less clearly delineated, and during the periods of urban living, I inhabited estates because they were cheap. But now, when we walked out of our block of flats in its leafy suburb, there were five-bedroom houses directly opposite us. When Covid arrived, trudging up the hill to get some fresh air and peace of mind, the sounds of veritable garden parties and upper-middle class accents permeated the privet hedges and hopped the garden walls. On the news, I heard the same voices addressing the issue of mental health with calls to "get outside and get some sun". To start a new hobby. To do something with "all this free time".

I went outside because I could, and because I liked it – it's cheap and there's not much else to do where I come from in Wales. For my partner, the notion of expending energy just for the sake of it was absurd. Bar staff stand for 50 hours a week, so doing more of it for enjoyment doesn't make sense. We had no space for 'new hobbies'. Neither us, nor our friends, had the kind of private open space for a 'socially distanced catch up'. We had no money either, so I worked every evening I could. It was

becoming apparent to me, from very early in this 'shared' pandemic, that there was a vast difference between the experiences of the people on that side of the street and our own. And the people on that side of the street were on TV.

Awareness of class inequality is a tricky thing. People who have more privilege believe themselves worthy of it, and people who have less often view a system for overcoming it with suspicion. Social mobility is taxing, and I'd already learned long before that you can't just 'work harder' to overcome working-classness. The proceeds of working an extra shift every week for a year can be eaten up by moments of profligacy, celebrating that one remaining day off. Unexpected bills, losing a job, or car trouble, easily wipe out the rest. It seemed to me that the message was – learn to live with less, figure out a way to be happy, and keep your head down. I didn't know the intricacies of why it felt so taxing, and it felt contradictory to the stiff-upper-lip culture I'd grown up in to opine about the unfairness – I'd learned as a kid that no one wants to hear you whine. It was only rarely that I'd ever heard people expound these issues – the powerlessness, the Sisyphean push just to get by, and the unseen forces that push back.

The pandemic created questions. First, why was everyone okay with the fact that this issue (supposedly affecting everyone) was being so differently experienced by different people? Next – why was this event, cataclysmic for some and a minor annoyance for others, being seen through the lens of the privileged? Who had permitted this minority of people with big gardens to tell us the solution was sitting outside? Finally, why was it suddenly permissible

to express fear of uncertainty when there's a pandemic, but not fear of uncertainty when *you've spent your life in uncertainty*?

During the third year of the pandemic, I decided to go to university. It wasn't as easy as deciding, but it did happen. I'd found myself deeply perturbed by what I'd seen, and completely disillusioned by the answers I could find. It stood to reason, then, that to get some answers I had to go where the knowledge was. Sociology was the obvious choice for the kind of questions I had. When I arrived, there was so much on offer that it wasn't until the following summer that I came back to my old questions. I was in the same place – in that flat. But by now I'd spent four months in bed reckoning with illness, sorting through the aftermath of a failed relationship. I couldn't get to healthcare appointments and was facing eviction for being a sole occupant with no income. I did not qualify for most benefits as a student. My honesty and sincerity in engagement with DWP (I felt that chronic pain and a spinal injury precluded me from 'playing it up') meant I had been denied the rest. Being confounded by my impending homelessness, being outraged by denial of benefits, being deprived of healthcare, being unable to work – these were stigmatised issues. But they were inextricably tied up in the circumstances that were leaving me increasingly isolated.

My first year of university had addressed none of these issues. Class, outside of theoretical dialectic frameworks, was addressed only once. I am not diminishing the importance of the issues I had studied, or demeaning the committed academics I had encountered, but my presence at university was driven by an awareness of inequality. I was still experiencing that inequality daily – it permeated, compounded and complicated every challenge I faced. It seemed that university was another place where expressing dissatisfaction was only permissible on certain lines. Simultaneously, this was occurring in

the most middle class atmosphere I had ever experienced, funded by the largest financial commitment I had ever made. This drove the notion that it was another case of 'not rocking the neo-liberalism boat'. I'd have to keep my mouth shut, get the degree, and go back to trying to work my way out of precarity.

Starting my second year with the module Class, Culture and Conflict with Carli Rowell made a big impact on me. This was it – a firm and direct engagement with a systemic issue I had personally encountered and was still encountering: critical analysis on how society had created the strictures I found myself subject to, and the first instances of the questions I'd entered university with being answered. It piqued my interest from the outset, and when we moved onto the social effects, it was personally impactful. The Great Recession, the violence of austerity, and the myth of meritocracy were all elucidated. This, for an audience that were either having the outline of systemic issues they'd encountered filled in or were being exposed to the finer workings of class inequality for the first time. In a curriculum, a setting, and a media landscape where the features of these issues are subject to the influence of power, it is essential that the assumptions being made are questioned wherever possible. The presence of working class voices and non-academic sources keyed in the immediacy that rarely comes across in journals and monographs. It bridged the gap between the conceptual frameworks and the lived experiences. We permit the working class to express the rawness of inequality through art, music and literature. But in mass media, politics, and academia, this rawness is treated as a liability that facilitates the vacuum of permissible experiences.

When I finished, I had new questions. Foremost was the representation of working class people. How has it taken such a rigid and uncharitable character? Why are working class and poor people perceived as they are? Why is the default social conception of benefits recipients as people abusing

the system? Why not focus on the cases of desperate people who are given a leg up or room to breathe? And in these cases of the sincere and deserving, why are they not contextualised by the exploitation and systemic injustice that created them? These were issues that hadn't occurred to me, even in my 18-month long contestation of benefits. I, personally, have paid into a system and have been alienated from it. Yet I'd distanced myself from others in the same position. It wasn't just about informing the uninformed but reforming the reflexivity I brought with me.

These are complex issues that need to be addressed in their specifics, with the preceding circumstances that created them, disputing the artificial consensus, created by a detached and hostile media fuelled by corporate interest. Confronting class inequality is not as popular as other social justice cause celebre. There is no 'working class history month' or working class Pride. But I feel strongly that this is not due to a lack of compassion on the behalf of people who engage with these issues. Interest in equality is not mutually exclusive – I feel strongly about LGBTQ+ issues, and working class people are extraordinarily ethnically diverse. The problem, as I see it, is in the lack of marketability in a cause that is apparently prickly towards neo-liberal agendas. In the university then, where our choices of what to study and proliferate is based on need and curiosity, the issue of class equality must be met.



HUW EVANS

Desert Island Discourse



Alison Pilnick is Professor of Language, Health and Society at Manchester Metropolitan University, having previously held a chair in sociology at the University of Nottingham. She is a sociologist of health and illness, with a particular interest in communication between healthcare professionals and their patients and clients. Her book *Reconsidering Patient-Centred Care: Between Autonomy and Abandonment* was the winner of the 2023 BSA/ Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness.

Your first choice is Erving Goffman's *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Behaviour* – why did you choose that?

My first choice of author won't surprise any of my colleagues, and although I might have chosen almost any of his books, in the end it had to be *Interaction Ritual*. Plenty has been written about Erving Goffman's legacy by people far more qualified to do so than me, but I've chosen it because without the conceptual framework Goffman provided, there would be none of the sociological work that initially drew me to the discipline, and I doubt I could have done any of the work I've gone on to do myself. His delineation of the interaction order as not just a possible but also a necessary field of sociological inquiry, and one which required naturalistic and qualitative study of both the structures and processes of co-present interaction, also provided a sociological space for the development of the ethnomethodological and conversation analytic work I've subsequently found so influential.

In the same way that my own children – now young adults – can't really comprehend a life before mobile phones, my current students are so familiar with this kind of sociological work that I think it can be hard for them to grasp just how significant this legacy is.

I've chosen *Interaction Ritual* specifically because it lays out Goffman's vision so clearly on the first page of the book, where he writes: "The study of face-to-face interaction in natural settings doesn't yet have an adequate name. Moreover, the analytical boundaries of the field remain unclear." These analytical boundaries continue to expand, for example as sociologists explore technologically-mediated interactions across a range of societal contexts, so the contemporary relevance of his thinking remains significant. I've also chosen this book because it contains Goffman's essay on face work, which I come back to all the time. In my current research on communication with people living with dementia, I am often in awe of the way that skilled healthcare staff interact with those who might by standard measures be considered less-than-competent interactants, in ways that avoid exposing or dwelling on that incompetence.

What made you choose your next book – *Method and Measurement in Sociology*, by Aaron Cicourel?

My second choice is a book I read as a Master's student. I was a first-generation post-16 student and at 18 I had no idea that sociology was a thing to be studied; I did a degree in pharmaceutical science, qualifying and working as a pharmacist, before coming back to university via a now sadly defunct Department of Health scholarship scheme. It would be fair to say I struggled at the beginning; there were a lot of tears and doubt over why I had given up a secure and steady career to pursue something that really interested me but I didn't seem to be much good at. Perhaps because I had come from a background so rooted in the traditional sciences, the explanations Cicourel gives at the outset of this book of the natural scientist's imposition of scientific constructs on objects in the natural world, versus the social scientist's need

to attend to the meaning-structures employed by the actors in their site of interest, whilst simultaneously translating these meaning structures into constructs consistent with their theoretical problem, gave me a way of understanding that had eluded me until that point. This and his warnings of the potential dangers of inappropriate quantification, alongside his suggestion that the priority task of sociology was to search for the basic principles of social interaction, helped me to make sense not only of my own nascent research intentions but also many other sociological works that I had been attempting to read.

Why did you select for your third work, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, by Harold Garfinkel?

My third choice is one of those things that I had been struggling to read: Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. I'm not sure it ever got easier to read so much as that I began to develop an intellectual framework in which I could accommodate it (helped very much by John Heritage's excellent book on Garfinkel's work), and I'm pretty sure that with the time afforded by a desert island I could find plenty more in it that has evaded me up till now. The chapter written with Egon Bittner, on "good" organisational reasons for "bad" clinical record keeping, is another text I come back to time and again for its continued relevance to contemporary healthcare settings, and the way people find their own solutions to systems designed without adequate thought for the human actors who will use them. I was fortunate enough to meet Garfinkel at an American Sociological Association conference, but the idea that I was speaking to a living person who had founded a major sociological research programme, which proposed and developed a unique orientation to the problem of social order, was absolutely terrifying and I panicked. Of all the things I could have spoken to him about, I chose the

cardigan he was wearing, asking if it was new. He looked a bit surprised but asked how I had known (the lines in the wool where it had been folded around packaging). Courteously and kindly, he managed to turn this very unpromising opener into a conversation about common-sense reasoning, thus doing some impressive face work that I was very grateful for.

Your fourth choice is *Lectures on Conversation, Volumes I and II*, by Harvey Sacks – why this book?

My fourth choice is the collected lectures of Harvey Sacks (edited by Gail Jefferson and with an introduction by Emmanuel Schegloff). By the time this collection was published, I had started a PhD and I still vividly remember the palpable excitement among the Conversation Analysis research community that they would no longer have to rely on tracking down someone who had the right photocopy of a particular bit of Sacks' work and asking them to share it – in those days often by post from the US. Through its wide range of examples from everyday talk, this collection demonstrates the 'rules' of conversational sequencing and how membership categorisation devices are central to the social organisation of knowledge, both principles on which CA as a research approach is founded. But it is the work on explicating turn-taking in social interaction that I come back to all the time. Thinking again of the research on dementia care that I'm currently involved in, I'm fascinated by the work that is done in that context to support and preserve this turn-taking in all kinds of interactions. Sacks died in a car accident at the age of 40 and I find it remarkable (and remarkably humbling) that by that age he had already founded an enduring sociological approach which has also influenced other disciplines, including linguistics and psychology. I sometimes wonder whether and how CA might have developed differently had his life and career been longer.

Your last book is *The Republic of Motherhood*, by Liz Berry – what led you to this?

My last choice is a book of poetry. I read a lot of poetry; my kids joke that I don't really have any proper hobbies, that "it's all just words". But I work all day with words that often come tumbling out of people under time and organisational constraints, and so I love both the spareness of poetry and the unseen craft that goes into choosing just the right word for the right place, where the poet can revisit and revisit those words until they achieve the precisely desired effect. Liz Berry is a poet from the Black Country in the Midlands who sometimes writes in local dialect. My dad worked in the Black Country for all of his working life, as did many other family friends and relatives, and I love the way the words, rhythms and cadences of my childhood are evoked in her writing. *The Republic of Motherhood* is a slim book, but its size belies its power: I think the title poem is the most evocative, visceral, true poem about the fundamental (and brutal) life change that becoming a mother presents that I have ever read. I often give it as a present, because I think everyone who is a mother or has a mother should read it!

And for your luxury?

What I'd really like to take as my luxury is my friend Sam. We grew up together in Birmingham and joined a local group together to do our Duke of Edinburgh Awards. At the time we were inner city teenagers who were more comfortable on the night bus and I think our idea was that we'd meet boys who were more interesting than the ones we knew, but it inspired a love of hill walking we've never lost and we still put our boots on and get away for a day or a weekend together if we can. I have camped in a bothy on a blizzarding mountainside in the Cairngorms with her and because of

this I know that she is much better than me at all the survival skills that a desert island is likely to require: she's calm, pragmatic and quietly finds a solution to things while I am panicking and over-verbalising. But I assume I'm not allowed to take Sam, in which case I'd like my perfectly worn-in walking boots. I am comically afraid of spiders (I have been known to run away from tomato tops, pieces of fluff on the carpet and even the shadow of a bunch of keys on a shelf) so with my boots I can explore the island thoroughly by myself without fear of anything crawling over my feet.

Professor Pilnick's choices:

Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Behaviour, by Erving Goffman, Aldine (1967)

Method and Measurement in Sociology, by Aaron Cicourel, Free Press of Glencoe (1964)

Studies in Ethnomethodology, by Harold Garfinkel, Prentice-Hall (1967)

Lectures on Conversation, Volumes I and II, by Harvey Sacks, edited by Gail Jefferson, Wiley-Blackwell (1995)

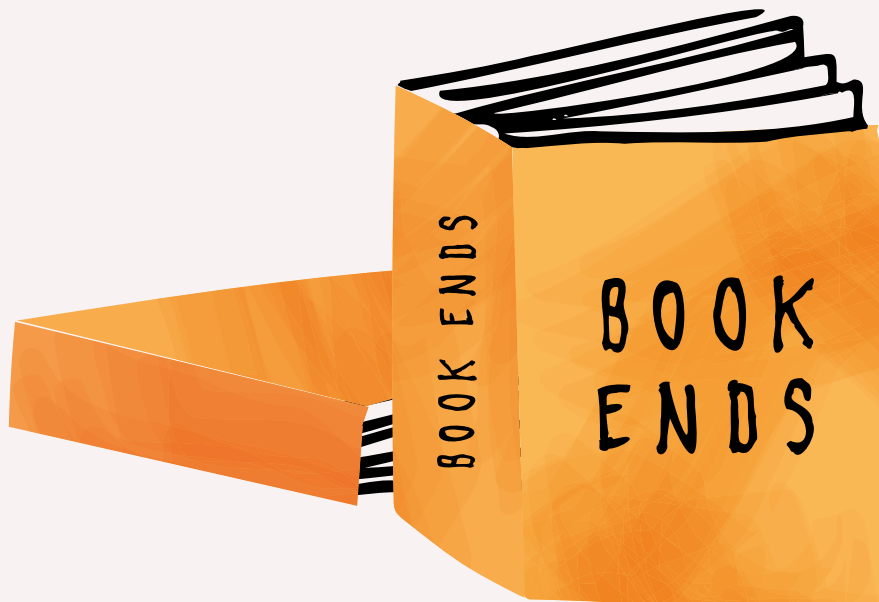
The Republic of Motherhood, by Liz Berry, Chatto and Windus (2018)



ALISON PILNICK

Bookends

Reviews of Recent
Books in Social
Science and Sociology



ALGORITHMIC INTIMACY: THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

ANTHONY ELLIOT

Polity Press, 2022

212 pages

£29.65 hbk, £15.65 pbk

ISBN: 9781509549801

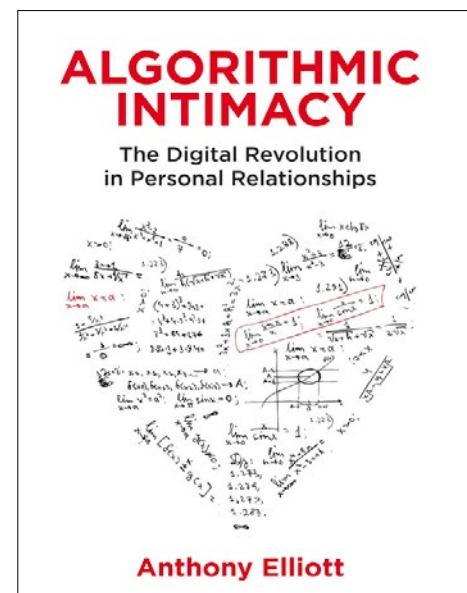
This book takes a fresh look at how artificial intelligence affects our personal relationships and emotions. Instead of a dry academic study, it raises crucial questions about the coexistence of AI use and meaningful human connections. The author seeks to broaden our understanding of the digital age by examining how technology impacts our identities, sexualities and relationships.

The book explores how algorithms (computer programs that predict outcomes based on data) shape our understanding of intimacy. The author argues that the main issue is our adaptation to automated systems rather than technology itself. Drawing on social theories, he emphasises the role of creativity in our personal lives: in our AI-influenced world, love and intimacy are evolving, presenting opportunities and challenges for relationships. The book examines how men and women form emotional connections amid artificial interactions, introducing the idea of 'algorithmic intimacy', in which human feelings merge with machine intelligence.

'Algorithmic intimacy' may seem an odd concept, one contrary to our usual view of closeness. Intimacy typically suggests deep emotional

bonds shaped by our experiences. However, in the age of technology, we encounter relationships redefined by structured interactions designed by machines. A key intrigue lies in the hidden algorithms that shape these connections, prompting us to wonder how they influence the way we relate to one another. Often complex and hidden from view, these digital decision-makers determine our recommendations and choices. While they significantly influence our daily lives, their impact remains unnoticed, mainly because they operate quietly in the background.

Communicating with these algorithms is not quite the same as having a real conversation. Even when we interact with chatbots or virtual assistants that mimic speech, it is not the same as genuine human dialogue. The American sociologist Erving Goffman studied how people interacted face-to-face and emphasised the importance of being present with one another; he believed that mutual attention is essential in keeping society connected. Our modern digital lives have changed how we seek intimacy. Thanks to smart machines, we can now engage in many conversations and relationships simultaneously, creating a new landscape of connection that is quite different from the past.



The concept of algorithmic intimacy may seem unusual compared to our traditional views of closeness in human relationships. While we often associate intimacy with deep emotional connections (like love shaped by personal experiences) algorithmic intimacy redefines this using technology. It treats our interactions as structured exchanges engineered by machines, opening a new way to understand relationships in a digital age.

This book is an introductory exploration of how technology, particularly algorithms and artificial intelligence, is changing our experiences of intimacy in today's digital world. It discusses how smart machines and automated systems are connected to how we build and experience close relationships and how they affect our daily lives. It also dives into the evolution of our personal connections and emotional expressions, shedding light on how predictive technologies shape our self-care, relationships and interactions with the world around us. It invites readers to explore the profound impact of these innovations on how we connect with ourselves and each other, encouraging deeper reflection on our place in an increasingly tech-driven society.

BY PALLAVI SANIL

Doctoral Fellow, Central University of Punjab, India

MIGRATION AS ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM

IMMANUEL NESS

Polity, 2023

272 pages

£49.70 hbk, £17.47 pbk

ISBN: 9781509553983

Ness's *Migration as Economic Imperialism* offers a compelling critique of traditional migration theories and a fresh perspective on the complex interplay between migration and global power dynamics. He challenges the neo-classical economic model, which reduces migration to individual rational decisions driven by wage differentials. Instead, Ness emphasises the role of structural factors, such as colonialism, globalisation and state policies, in shaping migration patterns, and so provides a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between migration, economic development and inequality.

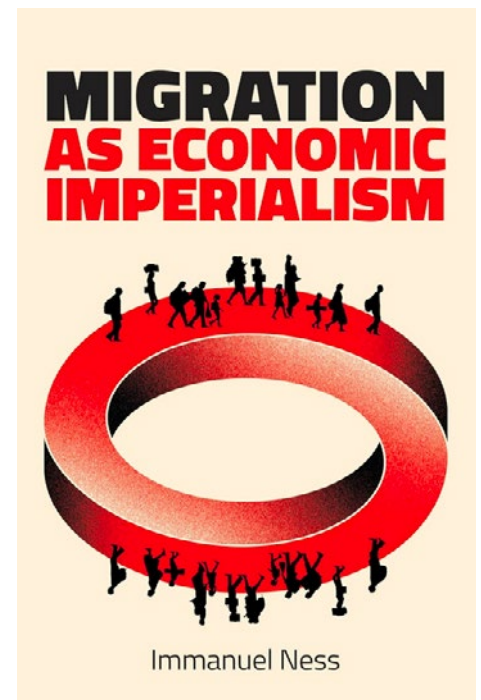
The book begins with Ness's reflection on his encounters with an informal settlement of migrants in South Africa in 2015 and 2022, in which he demonstrates the plight and inherent risks faced by some migrant workers.

One of the book's key strengths is its ability to highlight the role of political and social factors, such as conflict, climate change and discrimination,

in shaping migration flows. Ness argues that the global migration system is fundamentally exploitative, with wealthy nations benefiting from the labour of migrants while simultaneously imposing restrictive policies that limit their mobility and opportunities.

His analysis of the impact of foreign remittances, i.e. earnings returned to families in origin countries, on development is particularly insightful (p.70). While remittances are often celebrated as beneficial for developing countries, Ness argues that they can also perpetuate dependency and reinforce existing inequalities. He suggests that remittances may not always lead to sustainable development and can even exacerbate economic disparities.

Ness's arguments are richly illustrated with case studies and evidence from countries including Vietnam, Nepal, El Salvador and Moldova. These show how labour mobility, while benefiting rich countries in the global North and global South, undermines economic development in poor countries,

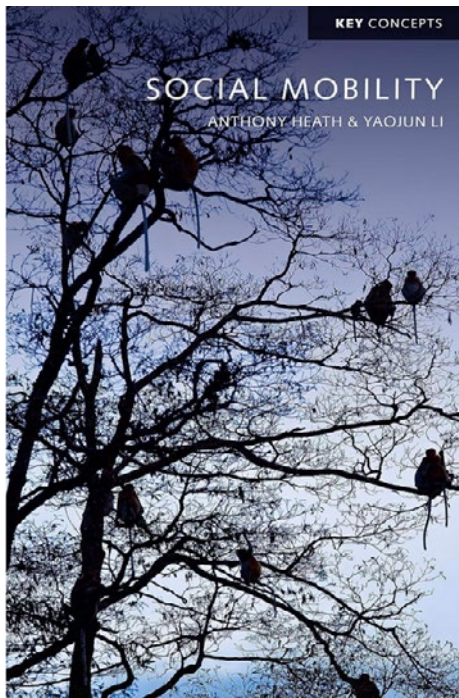


leading to a shortage of essential workers, dependency on the global North, and negative consequences for the social fabric and development of poorer countries.

Ness emphasises the importance of understanding migration as a gendered phenomenon, with women often facing unique challenges and exploitation. An insightful example in the book is that of migrant women workers returning to Vietnam, which highlights the "lack of job opportunities [and] stigma from their families and communities" (p.100).

Ness proposes an alternative (p.206) to foreign remittances to address labour exploitation, in the form of a wealth tax imposed in the global North and regulation of development through a polyarchic system of regional powers. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of migration in the 21st century.

BY DR CAROLINE BARRETT
University of York



SOCIAL MOBILITY

ANTHONY HEATH AND YAOJUN LI

Polity Press, 2023

214 pages

£48.15 hbk, £14.99 pbk, £14.24 Kindle

ISBN: 9780745683065

Social Mobility provides readers with an accessible investigation into the concept of social mobility from a range of different socio-political angles. Heath and Li explore some of the major patterns and trends in the rates of social mobility and their driving forces. Using both sociological and economic perspectives, the text explores social mobility, and how this varies across both the developed world and the global South.

In its simplest form, Heath and Li define social mobility as “movement in social space” or “movement between different positions in a society’s system of social stratification” (p.6). They uncover what this looks like in a range of different contexts, analysing the patterns and trends in social mobility, examining factors that influence upward and downward movement within social hierarchies. They explore the roles of education, family background and labour market structures, providing an analysis of how these elements interact to facilitate or hinder mobility, including intergenerational social class mobility and intergenerational income mobility.

One of the book’s strengths is its exploration of gender. Heath and Li investigate gender differences in mobility patterns from the 20th century, and how much sociological and economic research typically ignored the role of women in society. They explain this neglect of women in early social mobility research in a post-World War II context by studying the family unit, rather than the individual. Married women were primarily involved in labour within the household, and were economically dependent on men, and thus analysis largely focused on father-to-son mobility. The authors question how relevant it is to use this family unit for class and social mobility analysis in contemporary society, given the more dynamic and fluid notion of family that exists today.

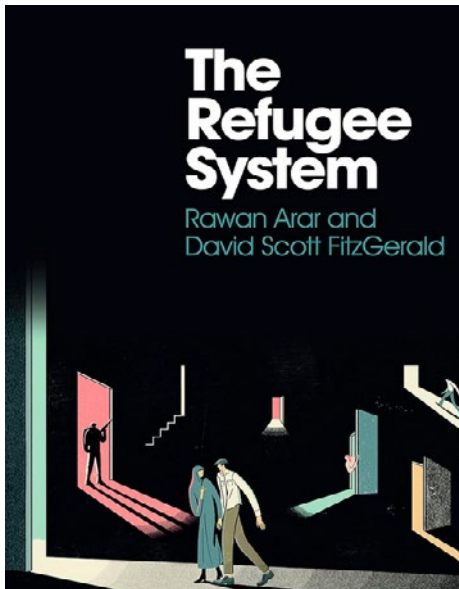
Another notable feature of *Social Mobility* is the way the authors explore race and ethnicity and make an effort to provide a comparative analysis of Western and emerging societies. Heath and Li explain how race and ethnicity are elements that have often been ignored within discussions of social class and income mobility. They explain how the effects of colonisation upon indigenous and first nations peoples, the slave trade, and the influx of migrants and refugees to western countries since the second world war, have often been overlooked in research on social mobility. In their analysis, the authors present data from various countries illustrating how different social, economic and political contexts shape mobility patterns. Heath and Li explore how race and ethnicity highlight persistent inequalities and the need for policies that promote inclusivity.

The text concludes by examining the individual and collective consequences of social mobility, effectively asking ‘how can we do better?’. Heath and Li discuss the implications for social cohesion, economic development, and the perpetuation of inequality. They argue for the importance of creating equitable opportunities for all members of society, suggesting that such efforts are essential for both justice and economic prosperity. Ultimately, they encourage more rigorous empirical research on these issues.

Overall, *Social Mobility* is a significant contribution to sociological discourse, providing a detailed exploration of the factors influencing social mobility and the broader implications for society. Its combination of historical context, empirical analysis and policy discussion makes it a worthwhile read for those looking to understand the dynamics of social mobility in contemporary societies.

BY HERMIONE PADDLE

PhD researcher, University College London



THE REFUGEE SYSTEM: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

RAWAN ARAR AND DAVID SCOTT FITZGERALD

Polity, 2022

272 pages

£54 hbk

ISBN: 9781509542789

In this book Rawan Arar and David Scott FitzGerald deliver a detailed, well-researched analysis of the refugee experience through a sociological lens, invaluable for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of global refugee dynamics.

In chapter one, the authors introduce a systems perspective, critiquing traditional approaches that focus on the isolated elements of displacement. By examining historical legacies, policy frameworks and power imbalances, this offers a comprehensive view of

refugee experiences across diverse regions and times.

Chapter two examines refugee identity, highlighting the limitations of the current legal definitions in capturing the varied realities of displacement. Using constructivist and realist perspectives, Arar and FitzGerald argue that refugee status is fluid and shaped by social, political and historical factors rather than fixed classifications.

Chapter three traces the evolution of refugee protections from early religious safeguards to the 1951 Refugee Convention, examining how European legal traditions shaped modern policies. It also addresses how geopolitical shifts redefine global attitudes toward refugees.

Chapter four presents the Syrian Asfour family's journey into exile, intertwined with Rawan's interviews. This chapter explores the factors shaping families' flight decisions and asylum choices, highlighting how economic pressures, violence and family ties influence migration routes and individual decision-making.

Chapter five examines how state policies shape refugee departures, analysing political, economic and social motivations behind encouraging or restricting refugee flows. It explores the broader effects of these movements on political landscapes, economies and social dynamics in both origin countries and the global community.

Chapter six highlights the crucial role of global South nations in hosting refugees, countering the view that they merely serve as transit points to the global North. It explores the complex hosting dynamics and heavy responsibilities these countries carry in the global refugee system.

Chapter seven investigates what influences refugee acceptance in different states, showing how economic, political and ideological drivers shape asylum policies, particularly in major host nations.

Chapter eight explores the lasting ties refugees maintain with their homelands through remittances, communication and political engagement, and assesses how these connections impact their assimilation and future repatriation prospects.

The final chapter advocates a systems approach to understanding the complexities of refugee experiences and calls for globally coordinated policies that comprehensively address these intricate challenges.

The Refugee System demonstrates notable expertise, blending theory with practical insights and offering a comprehensive view of displacement. The authors' systems-approach moves beyond fragmented views, revealing how policies, histories and individual actions intertwine with and impact upon the refugee system.

References to conflicts like Ukraine-Russia underscore the urgency of their analysis in today's geopolitical landscape. A narrative-driven style, supported by real-world case studies, enhances readability while highlighting the human impact of refugee policies.

The authors also compellingly examine refugee identities, showing how social and legal forces shape access to rights and resources. Their recommendations for policy makers and humanitarian organisations emphasise humane, effective refugee management and paths to long-term integration.

By primarily focusing on the experience of a Syrian family, this book could benefit from additional case studies from a broader perspective. However, the authors balance this with other examples to reinforce their arguments.

Overall, *The Refugee System* is an essential resource for those invested in refugee issues, combining academic rigour with practical relevance and offering significant contributions to the field.

BY DR CLAIRE PRINCESS AYELOTAN

Christ the Redeemer College, Harrow

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY: A RELATIONAL APPROACH

ELIZABETH SEALE

Polity, 2023

239 pages

£40 hbk, £19.15 pbk

ISBN: 9781509553327

“You say you are poor every day. Get out of it. It’s a mentality.” This striking quote, drawn from fieldnotes and interviews with participants in anti-poverty programmes, sets the tone for the author’s exploration of poverty, its lived realities, and the narratives that surround it. *Understanding Poverty* adopts the relational approach to explore its central questions, focusing specifically on the United States. As Elizabeth Seale argues, to understand the experiences of people in poverty without stigmatising ‘the poor’, we need to consider their relational context. This requires a combined but nuanced approach to culture and structure, similar to the method E.P. Thompson used to understand class as a historical relationship embodied in real people and real contexts.

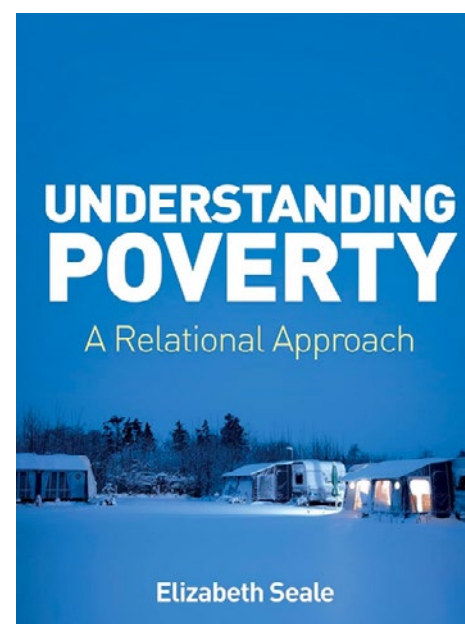
Here lies the paradox for the author: while poverty itself is damaging, the damage is not to the individual alone but to social relations. This perspective necessitates a shift away from viewing the individual as a problem and instead situates the individual within the context of social relations.

The book is structured around seven chapters dealing with difficult questions about the notions of poverty: who the poor are; the family dynamics

associated with poverty; culture and poverty; structure and social relations; human value and worth; relations of power and vulnerability; and inequality and people’s stratification by ability and will.

Poverty is a multi-faceted and diverse social phenomenon that does not affect everyone equally and is often compounded by other factors of social stratification, such as gender, race, citizenship status, ethnicity and disability. The assistance available to people also varies significantly between and within states. As Seale explains, even distinctions between different groups – such as those who are low-income but not poor, and those who often move in and out of poverty – are not always clear, complicating the identification of a group as the ‘poor’. To understand the advantages and disadvantages that arise from one’s position in the stratification system, we must consider the social relations involved.

Drawing on her comparative case study in two counties in North Carolina – one rural and one urban – she argues that personal change alone cannot lift an individual out of poverty unless accompanied by changes in their relations to others. What matters most is not the personal characteristics of



an individual but their relationships with other people and organisations. Through this relational approach, the intersectional nature of poverty becomes evident, supporting the view that “poverty is not created by the poor” (p. 148). Poverty, therefore, is a matter of positioning in relation to others, with its production and experience shaped by these other positions and relational dynamics.

Overall, this is an original and thought-provoking book that presents a clear argument and critical insights into the importance of relational contexts, particularly relations of vulnerability and the need for dignity, for understanding the lives and behaviors of people in poverty. Detailed explanations illustrate how poverty is reproduced through a lack of employment, disconnection from society, educational and social barriers that prevent access to high-paying occupations, and the institutional hostility of welfare systems that make the poor dependent on social charity. Most importantly, the author emphasises that eliminating persistent poverty and its harsh effects should be recognised as a central societal goal.

BY DR PARASKEVI-VIVIANE GALATA
Hellenic Open University

THE URBAN LIFE OF WORKERS IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA: ENGAGING IN EVERYDAY STRUGGLE

ALEXANDRINA VANKE

Manchester University Press, 2024

256 pages

£39.99 hbk

ISBN: 9781526167637

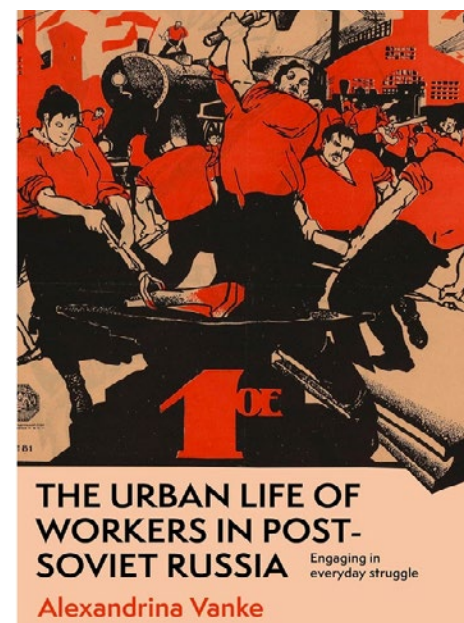
This book is the result of a decade of research into the world of working class people in post-industrial cities in Russia. It is based on a rich set of empirical materials collected by the sociologist Alexandrina Vanke between 2010 and 2022, and it draws on her comprehensive study of working class life and struggles. Presenting an analysis of valuable multi-sensory data, the book provides fresh, practical knowledge of how ordinary working class people become engaged in everyday struggles.

The book consists of three main parts. The first part introduces a theoretical framework in relation to the specific context of Russia; it proves helpful in getting a better grasp on the peculiarities of the country's organisational system and its government, which comprise elements of neo-liberalism and neo-authoritarianism. The second part focuses on living conditions, everyday inequalities and social divisions in contemporary Russian society. The third part illustrates the multiple forms that everyday struggle take in the urban contexts of Russian post-industrial cities. Interestingly, the book is written in a way so that "the chapters can be read either in

chronological order, inverse order or random order" (p.20).

Vanke's book has a number of strengths, derived from its original methodology. Along with standard methods such as interviews and ethnographic observations, the author makes use of informative arts-based methods in order to obtain additional insights through visual data, "helping to explain sensual and imaginative dimensions of everyday lives and struggles of urban workers and other class groups" (p.17). The result of this scholarly endeavour is to be found in the evidence provided by Vanke on the mechanisms of power dynamics and inequality that working class communities experience in post-Soviet Russia. She also sheds substantial light on the main barriers preventing Russian workers from uniting and self-organising, as for instance the risk of being fined, prosecuted for trade union activity, fired, or even imprisoned.

One of the main achievements of the book lies in its successful attempt to re-discuss the concept of class. In fact, on a theoretical level, Vanke effectively shows how class in Russia means something different when compared, for example, to Western societies. According to the author, this is due to the Soviet legacy which manifests



itself in a co-existence of tensions and conflicts that can be linked to socialist and post-socialist or neo-liberal structures of feeling. In parallel, the book effectively informs the reader of the fundamental processes going on in contemporary Russian society under the regime of Vladimir Putin, as well as on the consciousness of subordination and inequality felt by workers, particularly in contrast to wealthier groups and the capitalist elite "having a luxurious lifestyle and non-ordinary way of life" (p.134).

By showing how working class people in Russia actively engage in grassroots everyday struggle, the book helps the reader achieve a better understanding of the Russian society itself. Vanke's representation of Russia's workers as active people who care about the environment and human relations challenges the discourses which tend to represent them as being passive, weak and backward. It is therefore particularly recommended to those researchers focusing on the ways in which working class people around the world face the problem of overcoming difficulties in everyday life and their exclusion from politics that matters.

BY MITJA STEFANCIC
Independent researcher

Appreciation



PROFESSOR MICHAEL BURAWOY, 1947-2025

The world of sociology has expressed its shock and sadness at the death of Michael Burawoy, aged 77, the British sociologist who studied industrial workplaces across the world and became a leading advocate for public sociology.

The Sociology Department at the University of California, Berkeley, said that “Michael was a pillar of our community for decades, an intellectual giant, a dedicated mentor and educator, and a dear friend. Indeed, he played a central role in defining who we are as an intellectual and human community.”

The European Sociological Association said Professor Burawoy was “the father of Public Sociology and a sociologist of immense integrity, passion, kindness, and intellectual rigor.” The American Sociological Association, for which he was once President, said its membership “mourns the sudden loss.”

The BSA said he was “a respected colleague whose brilliant scholarship reshaped our understanding of industrial labour and its broader social impact, his absence will be keenly felt across our community.”

His death was noted in news media in the US and beyond, including the San Francisco Chronicle, the Huffington Post, Yahoo News and media in India and Uzbekistan.

Professor Burawoy was born in 1947 in England, his parents having fled Russia and Ukraine, eventually arriving in Britain in 1933.



After a first degree in mathematics at the University of Cambridge in 1968, he studied for a masters in sociology at the University of Zambia in 1972, and a PhD at the University of Chicago four years later, on the theme of the factory floor.

He began his academic career at the University of Chicago, before taking up posts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and the University of California, Berkeley, where he was head of department.

His studied the industrial workplace in Zambia, Chicago, Hungary, and post-Soviet Russia. He used participant observation in an ethnographic approach that was – literally – hands-on: for his book *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (1992) he worked as a furnace operator in a Hungarian steel

plant. He also worked on the factory floor in Chicago.

Two books, written with the students, *Ethnography Unbound* (1991) and *Global Ethnography* (2000) developed important methodological arguments for the use of participant observation data to build empirical and theoretical generalisations.

Professor Burawoy described his work as seeking to “advance Marxism by pursuing its reconstruction in the light of his research and, more broadly, in the light of the historical challenges of the late 20th and early 21st centuries [bringing] Marxism into conversation with the sociology of Karl Polanyi and Pierre Bourdieu.”

He will also be known as a proponent of public sociology. As his website

“MICHAEL WAS A PILLAR OF OUR COMMUNITY FOR DECADES, AN INTELLECTUAL GIANT, A DEDICATED MENTOR AND EDUCATOR, AND A DEAR FRIEND”

The Sociology Department at the University of California, Berkeley

says: “No longer able to work in factories, he turned to the study of his own workplace – the university – to consider the way sociology itself is produced and then disseminated to diverse publics. His advocacy of public sociology has generated much heat in many a cool place.”

Professor Burawoy was President of the American Sociological Association in 2003-04 and President of the International Sociological Association for 2010-2014.

In its statement, the BSA said: “The tragic passing of Professor Michael Burawoy, aged 77, leaves the BSA with a deep sense of loss. A respected colleague whose brilliant scholarship

reshaped our understanding of industrial labour and its broader social impact, his absence will be keenly felt across our community.

“Not only a distinguished scholar, Michael was also a compassionate advocate for public sociology whose warm spirit and relentless dedication enriched the lives of colleagues, students, and communities alike. His unwavering commitment to public sociology and his unique ability to connect with others will continue to inspire and guide us in the years ahead.”

Professor Burawoy was killed in an apparent hit-and-run car accident while crossing an intersection close to his home in Oakland, California.

DR CATHERINE WILL, 1977-2024



She was also a keen choral singer. Before university, Catherine took a gap year, teaching English to visually impaired people in Hungary. On her return to the UK, Catherine started a degree in History at Clare College Cambridge, graduating with a first.

It was whilst at Cambridge that Catherine made many friends who remained with her for life – including her partner, Tom. University also galvanised her lifelong concerns with injustice, inequality and environmentalism. She was politically engaged and politically active, organising events – in particular for Oxfam – and attending protests and rallies on issues that remained close to her heart.

After university, Catherine won a scholarship to spend a year at the Ruprecht-Karls University in Heidelberg, Germany. It was here that her fascination and love for sociology developed. She decided that she wanted to pursue a sociological path and completed a Masters and then a PhD in Sociology at Essex University. She was a gifted sociologist, and having completed her PhD was then

Dr Ben Fincham, of the University of Sussex, and Professor Alison Phipps, of Newcastle University, write about the life and work of Catherine Will.

Our much-loved friend and colleague Professor Catherine Will died on Monday 12 August 2024 after a long battle with cancer.

Catherine was born on 24 March 1977 and grew up in Leeds. She attended Leeds Girls High school, studying Greek, Latin and History at A-level.

awarded a Medical Research Council/ Economic and Social Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship back at Cambridge University.

In 2007, Catherine joined Sussex as a lecturer in sociology. At that time the department was small, and Catherine joined a group of nine delivering a highly regarded and typically 'Sussex' set of courses. She quickly established herself as integral to the delivery of sociology at Sussex, combining a sharp intellect with collegiality and a wicked sense of humour. It is testament to Catherine's skill as an educator and communicator that examples of her influence still abound in what is now a large Department of Sociology and Criminology.

As one example, Catherine designed what is still the most effective 'quantitative research methods for sociologists' module that any of us had encountered. Incorporating incremental learning, 'real life' research and secondary sources it has taught hundreds of sociology undergraduates how to analyse and produce social statistics. The module was so successful that although it has developed with technology, it has remained pedagogically unchanged for over a decade. Whilst this may seem a relatively trivial observation, any scholar that has tried to design quantitative modules will know quite how difficult a job this is.

During this period of Catherine's life, she also managed to balance the demands of an academic job with raising, with Tom, the source of her greatest pride and happiness – her children, Josie and Fred. Catherine threw herself into motherhood with the same conscientious thought and energy she applied to everything else, and was a role model for colleagues who were also combining work and home life. As part of this, she chose to

work part-time while her children were young, but still managed to achieve more in 3.5 days per week than most of us could hope to do in five.

In academia, Catherine's early concerns for equity and fairness blossomed into an impressive and impactful body of research. In particular, she developed an important theme around how patients understand their own experience of illness and care, whether this involved monitoring their own blood pressure, consumers deciding whether or not to take statins on prescription, or how we all processed the experience of the Covid pandemic.

SHE WAS A CAMPAIGNER ACADEMIC OF THE BEST SORT – DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE THAT THE WORLD COULD, AND WOULD, BE A BETTER PLACE

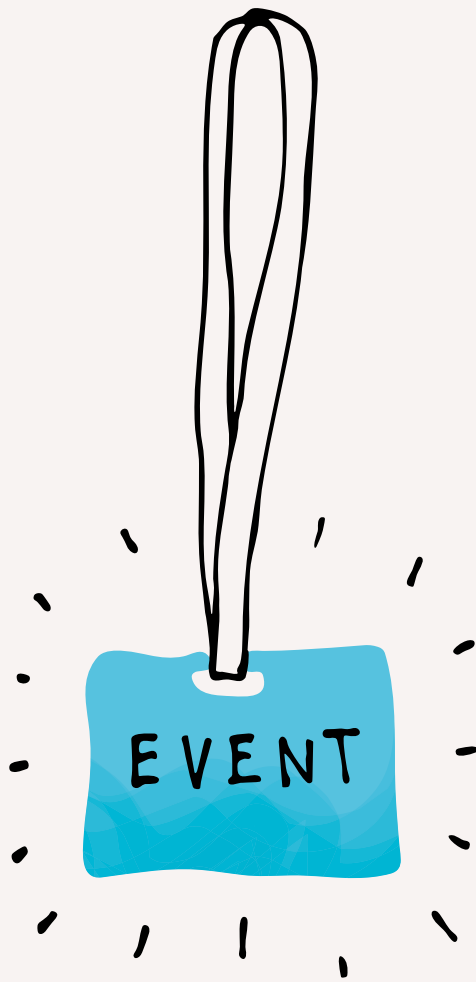
The quality of Catherine's research won praise and recognition nationally and internationally. She gained grants from the Economic and Social Research Council, the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness, and the Leverhulme Trust. In 2019, Catherine won a Wellcome Trust Investigator Award – a prestigious grant and the result of a huge amount of effort. The award was especially significant given its size – very large for a social science project. Catherine was excited to undertake such important and innovative work, so it was devastating

when Covid meant that revisions and compromises had to be made – particularly with regard to outcomes. Nonetheless, Catherine remained stoic and committed to the project, demonstrating her tenacity and strength of will.

It was during this period, in 2021, that Catherine received her diagnosis of a brain tumour, later identified as an anaplastic astrocytoma. Catherine's illness and the process of her treatment made it difficult for her to continue working, which was the source of great frustration. However, in a typical example of her sociological curiosity and insight, she began to reflect on her own experiences as a patient. In a post on the Cost of Living blog, she wrote a searching and achingly honest account of the impact of her diagnosis on her life and work, ruminating on how her own illness changed how she viewed research questions related to healthcare. Catherine continued to write about her experience online and become a champion for further research into brain tumours.

Catherine was a lovely human. Kind, thoughtful, funny, compassionate and wise. She was a natural sociologist, not content with documenting the world she encountered but determined to influence it in favour of the under-represented and disenfranchised. She was a campaigner academic of the best sort – driven by the desire that the world could, and would, be a better place. It is certainly a better place for having had Catherine in it. As a colleague she was supportive, interested, and always willing to do more than her share. She is already so missed – those of us that knew and worked with her are devastated at her death and will endeavour to follow the academic, professional and personal example she set.

Events



EVENT LISTINGS

As of 25.2.25 – for a complete and up to date list, see:

www.britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-lister

**BSA Annual Conference 2025:
Social Transformations**

23/04/2025 - 25/04/2025
University of Manchester

**Keeping Mum or freeing the
Madwoman in the Attic?**

07/05/2025
Online

**Originality and Creativity
in Everyday Arts**

12/05/2025
University of Edinburgh

**‘Insider-Outsider’: Navigating
Challenges and Complexities
in Cross-national and Cross-
cultural Fieldwork**

21/05/2025
University of Leeds

**The Process and Implications
of Doing Social Theory**

23/05/2025
University of Cambridge

**Deconstructing Donation
Conference 2025**

05/06/2025
Bangor University

**The Future of the
Sociology of Education**

06/06/2025
BSA Meeting Room, London

Material Culture & Emotions

10/06/2025
University of Warwick

**Materiality, society and
the more-than-human**

23/06/2025
Goldsmiths

**Sociology of Religion
Conference 2025**

14/07/2025 - 16/07/2025
Durham University

**BSA Auto/Biography Summer
Conference 2025: Home**

16/07/2025 - 18/07/2025
University of Reading

**Bourdieu Mid Term International
Conference 2025 - Rising
Complexities in Education:
Opportunities and Inequalities**

03/09/2025 - 05/09/2025
Vienna

**Work, Employment and
Society Conference 2025**

08/09/2025 - 10/09/2025
University of Manchester



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