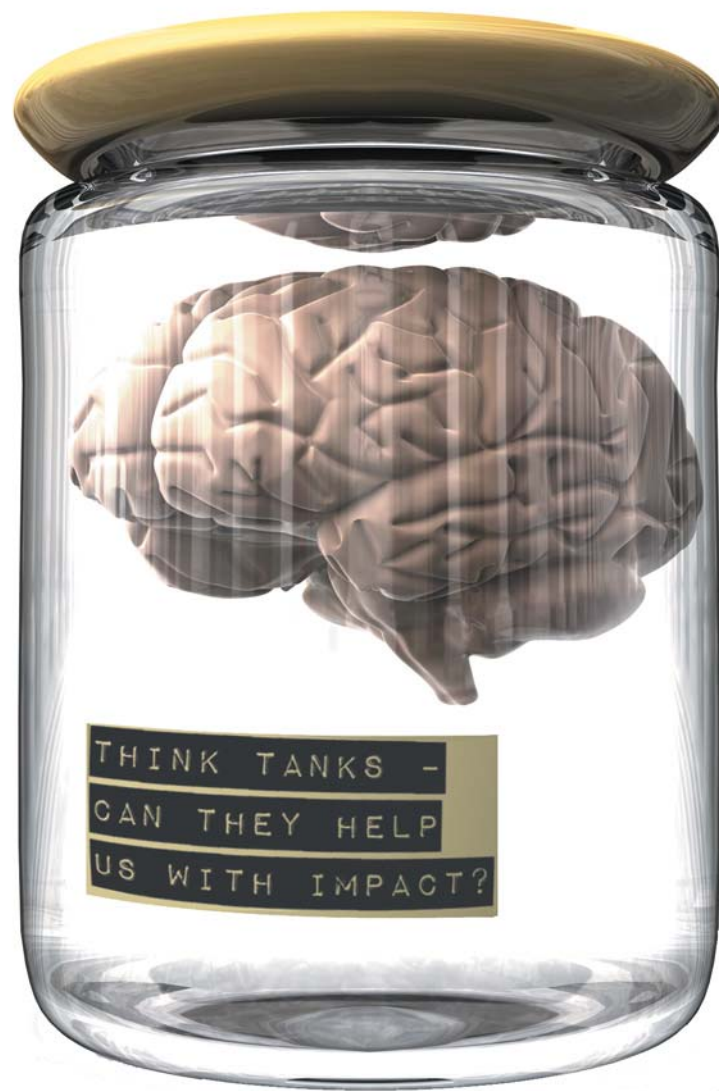




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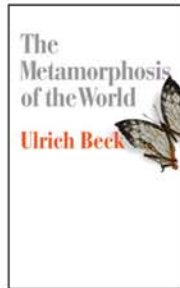
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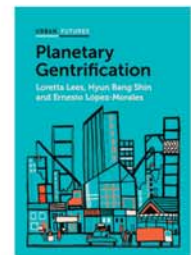
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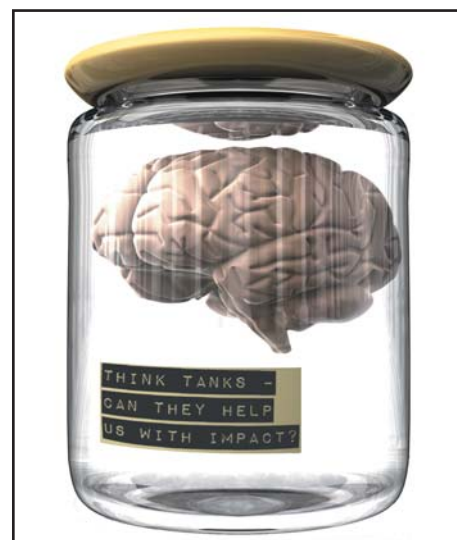
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Front cover image:

Our main feature looks at the opportunities think tanks offer us

See feature on page 16

Graphic: stock imagery



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Portrait of the Morgan Centre, aged 10

The Morgan Centre is celebrating its 10th anniversary with the help of a 'sketcher-in-residence', the urban artist, Lynne Chapman.

Ms Chapman is documenting a year in the life of the centre as part of a Leverhulme Artist in Residence grant. As well as producing her own sketches, she is encouraging staff at the centre, part of the University of Manchester, to take up pencil and brush.

Work so far has included 'speed portraits by novice sketchers' and works on the theme of the weather. It also includes sketches using the 'wrong' hand – one of David Morgan by Dr Vanessa May is pictured.

The sketches can be seen on the project blog: <http://tinyurl.com/ztnccvo> or by following @morgancentre and the hashtag #sketchresearch on Twitter.

As part of its anniversary, the centre will hold a 'multi-sensory day' in July to share ideas about creative approaches to sociological research. The special guest will be Professor Les Back, Goldsmiths.

Centre members are also convening the Creative Qualitative Methods stream of the popular 'methods@manchester' summer school for postgraduates from 4-8 July in the city.

- Information leaflets produced by the Morgan Centre's Relative Strangers project have proved popular. The project has created a series for parents and grandparents of children conceived through donor conception.

The leaflets were produced using advice



David Morgan, as sketched by Vanessa May

from fertility counsellors, family lawyers and networks of families of children born after donor conception. They are available in hard copy and online, and since their launch in last spring more than 4,000 copies have been downloaded or distributed, with some requested by the world's biggest sperm bank, Cryos, in Denmark.

Relative Strangers is funded by the ESRC and is carried out by Professor Carol Smart and Dr Petra Nordqvist at the Morgan Centre. More details: <http://tinyurl.com/zu9cnst>

Family relationships explored

University of Reading: A one-day interdisciplinary symposium exploring diverse family relations has been held, led by Dr Ruth Evans and colleagues.

'Family troubles: care and change in diverse contexts' explored changes in caring practices and intergenerational relations that shape family lives across the world.

Forty-five people took part, and 21 papers and plenaries were presented, examining themes such as support for troubled families, responses to death and bereavement, life-limiting illness and family caring practices.

Dr Jane Ribbens McCarthy, of the Open University, gave the opening plenary, discussing important conceptual approaches and examining ethical frameworks for interventions in children's family troubles, drawing on a book she has co-edited, entitled *Family Troubles*.

Dr Evans and Dr Sophie Bowlby, University of Reading, and Dr McCarthy presented key findings from their cross-cultural research on

care, family relations and responses to death in urban Senegal.

Rebecca Smith, of Save the Children, Dr Avril Maddrell, University of the West of England, Isobel Bremmer, of St Christopher's Hospice, and Professor Rosalind Edwards, University of Southampton, contributed comments as part of the plenary discussion.

The keynote lecture was by Professor Samantha Punch, University of Stirling, who highlighted the importance of an inter- and intra-generational family perspective in understanding interdependencies.

A journal special issue of papers presented at the symposium is planned and a research report is being published. For updates see <http://tinyurl.com/lqpcf3g>

The symposium built on earlier work on the same theme, sponsored by the Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance at the Open University.

For a fuller account of the event, see: www.britisoc.co.uk/members/network

Project studies East European children's lives

University of Strathclyde: A project that looks at the lives of children of Eastern European migrants is being carried out by Dr Daniela Sime.

'Here to Stay? Identity, belonging and citizenship among Eastern European settled migrant children in the UK' examines the sense of cultural and national identity of children who have lived in Scotland and England for three years or more.

The ESRC-funded study will survey 1,000 people aged 12-18 in six areas, and conduct focus groups and case studies with families using various participatory methods. The areas are Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Scottish Highlands, London, Birmingham and Devon.

In other Strathclyde news, Professor David Kirk has had published *Girls, Gender and Physical Education*, written with Professor Kimberly Oliver, New Mexico State University.

The authors call for a radical reconstruction of physical education teaching for girls, who are more likely to drop this subject than boys. Professor Kirk has also co-edited a collection, *The Female Tradition in Physical Education*.

Dr Cristina Costa has co-authored *Theory as Method in Research: On Bourdieu, Social Theory and Education*, which helps students, researchers and teachers put Bourdieu's ideas to work in their own research. Dr Costa is Editor of the journal *Social Theory Applied*.

Professor Yvette Taylor organised 'Compulsory coupledom, post feminist education and imagined futures' with Dr Kinneret Lahad, Tel Aviv University.

The event looked at the way that being single is seen as a social failure, despite more people living without a partner. It explored how feminist blogs have challenged this.

The annual David Stow Lecture was presented by Professor Diane Mayer, University of Sydney, and was entitled 'Learning teaching and doing teaching: lessons to be learned'. Professor Mayer examined how to ensure schools have high quality teachers in an age of pupil testing and teacher accountability.

For more on Strathclyde activities, see its Education Reflections blog: <http://tinyurl.com/zdgrcxv>



Professor Yvette Taylor

LSE debates class and mobility as new book is best-seller

The Department of Sociology at the LSE has considered the issue of class in various events and research recently. It co-hosted a public discussion to launch *Social Class in the 21st Century*, in which Professor Mike Savage and the rest of the team of sociologists responsible for the Great British Class Survey report their findings and propose a new way of thinking about class today.

Professor Savage and the book's other contributors attended the launch: Dr Niall Cunningham, Durham, Professor Fiona Devine, Manchester, Dr Helene Snee, Manchester Metropolitan, Dr Paul Wakeling, York, and Dr Sam Friedman, Dr Daniel Laurison and Dr Lisa McKenzie, LSE. The book sold more than 8,000 copies within a month of publication.

Dr Friedman has been awarded a £186,900 grant from the ESRC Future Leaders Award to lead a research project entitled the "Class" ceiling in Britain's elite occupations'. This explores rates of social mobility into and within Britain's 29 most elite occupations using new data. It also examines the relationship between rates of mobility and other forms of disadvantage, such as gender and ethnicity, in each of these occupations. It started in January and runs for three years. See page 10 for media coverage of class advantage in acting

Dr Friedman, Dr Laurie Hanquinet and Professor Philippe Coulangéon, Director of Research at SNRS, Sciences Po, took part in a public discussion with Professor Savage at



Dr Sam Friedman

the LSE on new forms of cultural capital.

They considered whether traditional forms of highbrow cultural capital are being eclipsed by newer and more fluid kinds of cultural tastes, such as contemporary music and art, sport, social media and computer games.

The department hosted a conference with its counterpart at the University of Bergen, Norway, on 'Changing elites in Europe', which included a public lecture by Dr Jérôme Bourdieu, Paris School of Economics, and Professor Mairi Maclean, Newcastle University, on 'Elites, inheritance, and inequality'.

In other LSE news, the *British Journal of Sociology* 2015 annual public lecture featured



Professor Fiona Devine

Professor Richard Swedberg, of Cornell University, who spoke on 'Before theory comes theorizing, or how to make social science more interesting'.

Professor Lord Anthony Giddens returned to LSE to talk about 'Sociology and the digital revolution – the transformation of everything', with Howard Covington, Chair of the new Alan Turing Institute, Cambridge.

More details: www.lse.ac.uk/sociology and the department's blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/researchingsociology> and Twitter feed: @LSEsociology

The department welcomes contributions to the blog and feed from outside the LSE.

News round-up: drink, death and families

The **Social Aspects of Death, Dying and Bereavement** study group held its annual symposium at the BSA's meeting room in London on the theme of carrying out death-related research.

Forty participants from academic disciplines and various organisations heard papers organised into sessions on the themes of 'research participants', 'working in the field', and 'researcher selves'.

Discussions tackled the ethical, biographical and practical issues related to doing research in these areas.

The study group's convenors will draw on the symposium when they guest-edit a special issue on researching death, dying and bereavement in the interdisciplinary journal *Mortality*, which will appear in 2017.

The issue will bring together papers that show how doing death-related research raises a wide variety of issues. The convenors believe that there has been

limited reflection on the opportunities and challenges of this.

The **Families and Relationships** study group is holding a one-day event on 6 May at the University of Manchester on LGBT parenting.

The event aims to extend debates beyond lesbian and gay parenting to identify future research areas, such as those who cannot have children or who choose not to have them.

The day will include two keynote speakers, who will look back at more than 20 years of researching LGBT parenting, and to the future. It will also feature presenters giving brief outlines of research interests. These will provide a starting point for roundtable discussions..

More details are available from Dr Kathryn Almack, group Co-convenor, at: k.almack@nottingham.ac.uk

The **Alcohol** study group is holding a one-day interdisciplinary symposium on the subject of 'How do different disciplines talk about alcohol and how can we work better together?'

The event, organised with Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems, takes place on 22 April at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Queen Street.

The speakers will talk from the perspectives of sociology, psychology, nursing, public health, and history. The subjects to be tackled include the question of who is an expert on alcohol, what counts as evidence when drinking is discussed and what prevents experts from working more closely together. For more details see: <http://tinyurl.com/hszbotm>

The group has some free places for PhD students or early career researchers who do not have institutional support for conferences. Contact events@britsoc.org.uk for details.

Two professors are appointed at York

University of York: The Department of Sociology has appointed two professors. Joanna Latimer joins from Cardiff University and Maggie O'Neill from Durham University.

Professor Latimer works within medical sociology and the social study of science and technology. She won the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness book prize in 2014 for *The Gene, the Clinic and the Family: Diagnosing Dysmorphology, Reviving Medical Dominance*.

Professor O'Neill has researched the areas of prostitution and the commercial sex industry, forced migration and asylum-migration, and specialises in innovative methodologies.

In other York news, the department has launched a series of four short courses in conversation analysis as part of continuing professional development. Topics include a general introduction, developing skills in conversational analysis and its use in medical settings. For more details, see:

<http://tinyurl.com/z6lcqyy>

The department is holding a one-day conference on 29 April. 'Every one a winner? Being and becoming socially mobile?' will take a fresh look at social mobility from a variety of methodological perspectives. Speakers will discuss identity, class culture, social divisions, families and schooling, with the aim of encouraging interest in social processes and mobility and tackling popular misconceptions.

Speakers include: Dr Vikki Boliver, Durham; Professor Alice Sullivan, UCL Institute of Education; Professor Harriet Bradley, University of the West of England; Dr Andreas Giazitzoglou and Dr Geoff Payne, Newcastle; Dr Steph Lawler and Dr Lena Sohl, York; Dr Andy Miles, Manchester; Professor Diane Reay, Cambridge; and Professor Mike Savage and Dr Sam Friedman, LSE. To register see:



Professor Maggie O'Neill



Professor Joanna Latimer

<http://tinyurl.com/h4snh5n>

The Regulating Time Network, a collaboration between the Department and Kent Law School, is running an international conference from 8-10 September entitled 'The new legal temporalities? Discipline and resistance across domains of time', which will explore law's relationship with time. Details are at: <http://tinyurl.com/h3289gu>

It also held a one-day workshop in January which addressed the regulation of techno-science.

Childhood and feminism event held at UCL

UCL Institute of Education: Members of the Department of Social Sciences organised a two-day workshop entitled 'Feminism and the politics of childhood: friends or foes?', held at UCL.

This considered how to ensure the wellbeing of children and women, especially in contexts where their interests may appear to conflict. It looked at how discussing feminism and the politics of childhood might reconcile these tensions, and the implications of theorising women and children together.

The workshop was a multi-disciplinary event, with participants from inside and outside of academia.

It featured 12 working papers that were circulated beforehand for discussion, with only five minutes allowed for each author to present before a more in-depth open discussion began. This encouraged detailed examination of the papers.

The convenors were Professor Berry Mayall, Dr Rachel Rosen and Dr Katherine Twamley from the department, and Professor Ann Varley, from the Department of Human Geography at UCL.

The convenors are working on an anthology of papers drawing on the themes discussed at the workshop, which will include commentaries on activism and advocacy. More information is at: <https://feminismandchildhood.wordpress.com>

The *Journal of Playwork Practice* has completed its second year. This is the first academic journal in the field of playwork, the work of creating and maintaining spaces for children to play freely. The journal was launched in 2014 by Policy Press, and is published twice a year. The most recent issue highlighted the importance of learning from history and challenges assumptions about play.

Project to research low-income men launched

A qualitative longitudinal research project exploring the experiences of men living on a low income has been launched.

'Men, poverty and lifetimes of care', based at the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the **University of Leeds**, examines the cumulative effects of living in poverty over time from the perspectives of men in a range of age groups.

The project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the university, will finish in the spring of 2018.

It runs at a time of uncertainty about boys' and young men's low educational

attainment and high rates of suicide, truancy and violence. A decline in secure and well-paid manufacturing jobs has been linked to a lack of older male role models. See *article on research on young men's educational attainment on page 32*

Dr Anna Tarrant, who is conducting the project, said: "During my work with this project it has become clear that the taken-for-granted causal link between father-absence and the problem of boys demanded further investigation.

"Reviews of academic literature reveal that there is actually very little evidence about

the relationship between men, masculinities and poverty, and questions still remain about the kinds of role models that societies expect men to be to their sons, grandsons, nephews, and so on.

"We know very little about men's gendered routes through poverty over time and what this means for men when trying to fulfil their care responsibilities in constrained material circumstances."

For more details, follow the project updates on Twitter at @menpovcare and visit its website at: <http://menandcare.org.uk>

Glasgow youth 'priced out of outdoor life'

Young people in Glasgow are spending less time socialising outdoors, but their counterparts in Hong Kong are taking to the streets more frequently, research has shown. The conclusions show how much has changed since Pearl Jephcott carried out similar research 50 years ago.

University of Glasgow researchers Dr Susan Batchelor and Dr Alistair Fraser compared the lives of 16-25 year-olds living in the Dennistoun area of Glasgow's East End with those living in the Yat Tung estate near Hong Kong's International Airport.

They found that in Glasgow young people were more likely to socialise online, partly because there were fewer spaces that they could use without paying.

Dr Batchelor said: "In the East End of the city, where our study was located, there has been a lot of regeneration to do with the Commonwealth Games.

"Formerly vacant land that was once used as a space for hanging about or playing football has been replaced by new supermarkets and private flats. In addition, local pubs and cafes which once served the community have been replaced with more expensive bars and 'bar-b-que' joints, which the majority of young people cannot afford.

"Young people have far more commitments than in the past, often combining full-time education with work, or working in more than one job.

"Despite this they have less money than they did, so less freedom in terms of public spending. Leisure space has also become more commercialised which means that young people often can't access it and that means that young people are more immobile."

By contrast, young people living in the Yat Tung estate were politically active in the 'umbrella movement', which occupied major intersections in the city for three months in



Umbrella demonstrators in Hong Kong

2014 to protest against plans by the Chinese government to screen candidates for the Hong Kong Chief Executive elections in 2017.

Dr Fraser said: "In both sites we found young people living simultaneously between online and offline worlds. Social media has clearly become a critical rallying point and instigator of real-world engagement in new and interesting ways. In Hong Kong, however, young people have taken their politics to the streets in a way that is much less common in Scotland."

Their research follows up work by Pearl Jephcott in the 1960s which found that while Glasgow's youngsters spent a lot of time outdoors, Hong Kong teenagers were usually inside working.

An exhibition held as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science illustrated the similarities and differences between the cities.

Food and culture events planned

A three-day conference on research into alternative forms of consumption, such as community food networks and fair trade, and new ways of economic production, is being organised at **Berkeley**, University of California, 24-26 June. It is held as part of the annual conference of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics.

The organisers are Professor Francesca Forno, University of Bergamo, Professor Paolo Graziano, University of Padua, Dr Lara Monticelli, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Florence, and Torsten Geelan, University of Cambridge.

For more information on the conference,

entitled 'Re-embedding the social: new modes of production, critical consumption and alternative lifestyles', see:

<http://tinyurl.com/zlcuck4>

• A conference entitled 'Doing research on participation: methods and data for understanding everyday participation' will be held to take a fresh look at the role of methods in cultural participation research. It takes place on 25 and 26 May at the Friends' Meeting House in Manchester and is part of a five-year research project looking at 'unofficial' participation practices. For more details see:

<http://tinyurl.com/h969qzx>

Voice and Vice as Durham hits headlines

Durham University: Researchers in the School of Applied Social Sciences have been in the news lately.

Work by Dr Vikki Boliver saying that most of the Russell Group universities have more in common with other pre-92 institutions than Oxbridge was featured in the *Times Higher*, as well as in that most prestigious of magazines, Laurie Taylor's *Newsletter of the University of Poppleton*. Her work on why UK minorities are more likely to attend university featured on *Voice of America*.

Professor Fiona Measham was interviewed for an article in *Vice.com* on 25 years of researching drug taking in night clubs. She was also interviewed for a piece on synthetic cannabinoids legal highs in the *Big Issue*.

In other Durham news, Dr Kimberly Jamie is drawing to a close a year-long project looking at young mothers' beliefs and behaviours regarding their health. The end of the project was marked by a 'family health' roadshow held in Stockton-on-Tees.



Dr Vikki Boliver

Dr Jamie is presenting her conclusions at the BSA annual conference in April. The project was funded by Cancer Research UK and carried out with colleagues at the University of Bristol and Queen's University Belfast.

Professor Dave Byrne and Professor Linda McKie are part of a team led by philosophy Professor Nancy Cartwright working on a €2.3m European Research Council project entitled, 'Knowledge for use: making the most of social science to build better policies'. The research is looking at developing a new way to use social science to build better social policies, founded on a philosophical study of the technology of social science and an emphasis on the effective use of knowledge.

Goldsmiths events focus on street art

Street art and photography were the theme of several **Goldsmiths** sociology events recently.

It staged the '(Re:)thinking the street: urban encounters' conference, which looked at street photography. This event brought together international artists, photographers and academics.

The conference panels re-examined what is traditionally understood by street photography, with speakers discussing the aesthetics and ethics of work in this area.

The conference, an annual event, opened with a keynote address by the London artist Rut Bles Luxemburg, whose large-scale photographs explore the public spaces of the city. Speakers included Saskia Sassen, Mitra Tabrizian, Julia Schulz-Dornburg, Vanley Burke and Charlie Phillips.

Also, Goldsmiths' Centre for Urban and Community Research supported an exhibition of contemporary photography and fine art called Streetopolis. The exhibition took place at in New York, Barcelona and central London.

The exhibition gathered more than 30 photographs that connect street culture with the broader context of urban life. The photographers and artists whose work was featured included graduates and staff of Goldsmiths.

The theme of the street continued with the launch of *Young Homeless People and Urban Space: Fixed in Mobility*, a book by Dr Emma Jackson. This study of a day centre in London for young homeless people argues that they are kept in a permanent state of 'being on the move'. Lingering in public space is dangerous but trips between the hostel, day



Professor Saskia Sassen

centre and jobcentre are necessary in order to get food and shelter.

In other Goldsmiths news, the Disability Research Centre was formally launched by Baroness Jane Campbell, co-chair of the all-party Parliamentary Disability Group, at a public debate on welfare cutbacks and retrenchment.

This explored disability in austere times and how the closure of the Independent Living Fund has changed disabled people's lives.

Other recent events at Goldsmiths included 'Refugees and forced displacement: a sign of a new world disorder', at which Ewen Macleod, of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, spoke on the current European refugee and migration crisis. A symposium, 'Social media, activism and organisations', was run to discuss how social media has shaped social movements.

Art show run on migrant dreams and nightmares

An exhibition on the subject of the dreams, hopes and nightmares of migrants is being run at Goldsmiths.

'Migrating dreams and nightmares: materials and movement' is staged until 31 March. It is run by the Sociology Department's Methods Lab.

The exhibition looks at how photographs, letters and words express experiences of migration, and explores the methodological issues raised when researching this area.

The exhibition includes text extracts and photographs from *A Seventh Man*, the 1975 book exploring migration by John Berger and Jean Mohr.

The exhibits also include Sadek Rahim's 'sponge boats', which hang from the ceiling and illustrate the fragile transport used by migrants. They are from his project No Crash! Boom! Bang!, originally installed in the Bibliothèque Nationale d'Algerie.

The organisers of the exhibition, Dr Mariam Motamedia Fraser and Dr Nirmal Puwar, Co-directors of the Methods Lab, have held seminars and talks as part of the project, supported by the *Sociological Review*.

In a linked off-site exhibition, Alia Syed responds to *A Seventh Man* with a new film, *On a Wing and a Prayer*, which explores the hopes and fears driving the movements of migrants and refugees to cross into the UK.

For more information, see: www.gold.ac.uk/methods-lab/migrating-dreams-and-nightmares

Research dilemmas portrayed on film

Goldsmiths is creating a series of short films that dramatise aspects of sociological fieldwork as an aid for teaching students.

The films, called Fieldwork Fables, will be made available to all BSA members to borrow for use in their lectures.

The films are produced by Maisie Bryceland, an actor who has worked in *The Bill* and *Casualty*, and a graduate of the Master's in Social Research at Goldsmiths. She worked with Professor Les Back and Dr Michaela Benson to produce the series.

Two films lasting around five minutes have been produced so far, using professional actors who enact challenges that researchers have experienced in their work. One film tackles interviewing technique and one research ethics.



A scene from one of the films

"For students, research methods courses are notoriously boring and dull," said Professor Back.

"Somehow the way we teach the techniques for doing research drains the excitement and passion out of the task of finding out new knowledge.

"This film series aims to produce teaching materials that will bring the exhilaration of conducting original research into the classroom."

Those interested in using the films should contact Professor Back at: L.Back@gold.ac.uk

The films also draw upon research materials created by Dr Robin Smith, of Cardiff University. More films will be produced later.

• The latest news on sociology at Goldsmiths can be seen at: www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/news and www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/replay

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News round up: new Academy fellows, headline research and convenor appeal

BSA members and other social researchers have been awarded **Fellowship of the Academy of Social Sciences** in the past few months. In October, the recipients included Professor Ann Brooks, Bournemouth University; Professor Alison Pilnick, Nottingham; Professor Sasha Roseneil, Birkbeck; Professor Louise Ryan, Middlesex; and Professor Judy Wajcman, LSE.

In March they included (all professors) Eileen Barker, LSE; Frank Bechhofer, Edinburgh; Harriet Bradley, University of the West of England; Nick Ellison, York; Sue Heath, Manchester; John MacInnes, Edinburgh; Sarah Nettleton, York; William Outhwaite, Newcastle; John Thompson, Cambridge; Rachel Thomson, Sussex; Valerie Walkerdine, Cardiff; Sam Whimster, London Metropolitan; Clare Williams, Brunel; Malcolm Williams, Cardiff; Linda Woodhead, Lancaster.

They were among 46 social scientists given the award after a process of peer

review for the excellence and impact of their work in the social sciences.

Dr Max Atkinson, the first editor of *Network*, was also conferred as Fellow. Dr Atkinson has also been awarded a 'lifetime achievement' award by the UK Speech-writers' Guild. He switched to speech-writing after conducting academic research into the speaking techniques of politicians.

A paper in *Sociology journal* prompted an article in *The Observer* on class advantage in the acting profession. Dr Sam Friedman, Dr David O'Brien and Dr Daniel Laurison analysed the Great British Class Survey database to show that there are relatively few working class actors and that they earn less than their middle class equivalents because of a 'class ceiling'. The article can be seen at: <http://tinyurl.com/hpwg214> and the paper at: <http://tinyurl.com/hcvjscu>

Professor Duncan Gallie, University of Oxford, featured in media including AOL

and BT.com for research which found that around a third of workers fear for their job security and status. For more details see his paper in *Work, employment and society*: <http://tinyurl.com/hatat95>

BSA press releases on the papers can be seen at: <http://tinyurl.com/o82djxc>

Dr Louise Ashley, of Royal Holloway, featured on **The Conversation** website for her research on the recruitment practices of elite City firms. She interviewed senior staff at a management consultancy, two law firms, an investment bank and two accountancy firms. The research appears in *Work, employment and society*. The article is at: <http://tinyurl.com/hcuteon>

The Early Careers Forum is looking for a new convenor to join from April, when Dr Mark Doidge steps down. Those interested should send a CV and a short text saying why they want the position, and what skills they would bring, by March 30 to Katherine Twamley, at k.twamley@ioe.ac.uk

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SOA looks to future at 10th anniversary

Members of the **Sociologists Outside Academia** group marked its 10th anniversary with a celebration at the BSA's London meeting room that looked back to its early days and also to its future.

The group's founders, Julie Cappleman-Morgan, Siew-Peng Lee and Keith Kahn-Harris, recalled how they, with Patricia de Wolfe, planned the group over lunch in an Indian restaurant after the BSA annual conference in 2005.

Dr Cappleman-Morgan and Lynda Nicolson became the first convenors of the group later that year, and part of their initial work was to explain to sociologists inside academia what those outside it did. Membership rose quickly and today stands at more than 240.

Dr Kahn-Harris, an associate Fellow at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and freelance writer, described his experiences of the sometimes precarious life that sociologists lead outside academia.

He said that sociology remained an academic identity, and it could be hard to keep up to speed with developments in the subject. But a non-academic sociology career had advantages too, being free from the constraints of academic managerialism and with no REF to worry about.

Researchers outside academia could sometimes respond more quickly to current issues and engage more with policy development, he said.

"Understanding what it is to be a sociologist outside academia means confronting what sociology actually is," said Dr Kahn-Harris. "This can be both an invigorating process and a stressful one."

The possibilities of a career path outside academia were discussed. The meeting heard that this was well-established in the



Dr Keith Kahn-Harris

US, where sociological concepts, theories and models were used to address practical problems in business, industry and the public sector.

SOA Co-convenor Nick Fox said that there could be much wider use of sociological ideas than at present. "Why is it that we see psychologists and economists in many employment sectors, but hardly anyone with the word 'sociologist' in their job titles outside academic and research organisations?"

'Practical sociology' will be the topic for a group event later this year when it will look at how sociologists can develop careers in different work settings, and explore the skills and expertise needed to work outside academia.

For more on the group, see: www.britsoc.co.uk/specialisms/soa

Let's speak sociology: PGs learn how

The **Postgraduate Forum** held a regional event entitled 'The making of the sociological researcher: critique, practice, performance' at the BSA London meeting room. Six presentations were given, grouped into two panels.

In the 'practising sociology' panel, Dr Charles Masquelier, of the University of Surrey, discussed how researchers can achieve perspective, given their social, economic and cultural privilege.

Professor Claire Alexander, Manchester, spoke on the perils and pitfalls of the writing process, and Dr Michaela Benson, Goldsmiths, on learning to 'speak sociology' as part of her postdoctoral journey.

In the 'critiquing sociology' panel, Professor William Outhwaite, Newcastle, explored the conditions in which sociologists engage either with the discipline's canon of work generally or with one or more paradigms.

Dr Simon Susen, City University, looked at the problem of Anglocentrism in contemporary sociological research, and Dr Mónica Moreno, Cambridge, spoke on researching race while developing a sociological imagination.

The keynote address was given by Professor Les Back, Goldsmiths, on the theme of 'Scholarly life and the university in ruins,' in which he discussed ways to resist the shift to the neo-liberal university and loosen the grip of self-regulation.

Katy McEwan, a Postgraduate Forum Co-convenor and Teesside University PhD student, has written an account of the event: www.britsoc.co.uk/members/network For audio of the event, see: <http://tinyurl.com/nbnxbvm> More on the forum can be seen at: www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/bsa-postgraduate-forum.aspx

Challenges of understanding faith explored

The **Sociology of Religion** study group held a Response Day on the theme of 'The future of learning about religion and belief' at the BSA London meeting room in November.

The speakers included Professor Robert Jackson, University of Warwick, Dr Amanda van Eck of the LSE and the charity Inform, Dr Matthew Francis, Lancaster University, and Martha Shaw, Goldsmiths.

They explored the opportunities and challenges involved in understanding faith traditions in different professions, sectors and organisations.

In other Socrelnews, its stream plenaries at this year's BSA annual conference will be delivered by Professor Grace Davie, University of Exeter, and Professor Yvette Taylor, University of Strathclyde.

The group's annual conference this year, entitled 'Construction and disruption: the power of religion in the public sphere,' will be held on 12-14 July at Lancaster University.

Keynote addresses will be delivered by Dr Abby Day, Goldsmiths, Professor Lori Beaman, University of Ottawa, Professor Gordon Lynch, University of Kent,

Professor Robert Beckford, Canterbury Christ Church University, and Dr Shuruq Naguib, Lancaster University.

The group's Mentoring Scheme continues to lead the way in promoting gender equality in the academy. The scheme remains open to women who are studying and researching religion, from first-year PhD researchers to Reader level.

The Socrel committee has thanked Dr Sarah-Jane Page for her work as interim Convenor in 2015.

For more details of the group's work, visit: www.socrel.org.uk

BSA concerned over arrests in Turkey

The BSA has written to the Turkish Ambassador to the UK to express concern about the arrest of academics who have called on their government to halt military operations in the Kurdish area of the country.

More than 1,000 academics in Turkey and abroad signed a declaration demanding their government halt “massacres” in the south-east.

The declaration prompted arrests of at least 27 academics by Turkish police, who accused them of engaging in “terrorist propaganda” and insulting the state.

They were later released, but all Turkish signatories of the petition are under ongoing investigation, according to the Doğan news agency. If convicted, they could face between one and five years in prison.

The BSA letter, sent to Ambassador Abdurrahman Bilgiç, expressed “grave concern” about the arrests.

“We call on the Turkish government and Turkish universities to protect academic freedom and to desist from the mistreatment of academics.

“The BSA understands that many sociologists are among those who signed a petition calling for an end to state violence against Kurds and for a return to peace negotiations.

“Some universities have fired staff members; others have begun proceedings to fire staff members who have signed the



Professor Lynn Jamieson

statement or are planning to take other punitive measures against them.

“We understand that a public atmosphere of intimidation and threat against academics is growing, with some calling for violence against them.

“If the repressive measures taken against these academics are not lifted, there will be serious consequences for the international collaboration between Turkish and British scholars, universities, and other institutions.”

The letter is signed by BSA President, Professor Lynn Jamieson. To read the full text, see: <http://tinyurl.com/gu4zl5n>

Sociology’s ranking rises

Sociology journal has risen in international ranking, its editors say.

Its impact factor in 2015 was 1.617, placing it 21st out of 142 journals in the discipline worldwide, and among the highest ranked in Britain, they say in their annual report.

This is a rise from the 2014 impact factor of 1.348, when it was 30th out of 138 sociology journals worldwide.

“The journal has continued to thrive during 2015,” the editors say. “This has been another successful year for *Sociology*.”

The time taken to make a decision on submissions in 2015 fell to 58 days on average, from 68 days in 2014. The time from acceptance to publication on Online First is now around two months.

“This reflects the quality, effectiveness and dedication of all involved in reviewing, editing and production. We acknowledge that these achievements also rely on the hard work of the BSA publications office and the staff at SAGE.”

There were 349 original submissions to

the journal in 2015, down from the 382 submitted in 2014.

More submissions came from abroad than from the UK, with the US contributions almost doubling and those from Canada and Germany significantly increasing.

To ensure the journal has a strong presence at the annual BSA conference, the 2015 event in Glasgow saw a SAGE prize session, a workshop session on peer reviewing for early career researchers, and sessions devoted to special issues on ‘Everyday life’ and the ‘Global economic crisis’.

The journal was also represented at the American Sociological Association and European Sociological Association conferences.

Sociology articles featured in news stories, and radio programmes, including Radio 4’s Thinking Allowed.

The editors are: Dr Andrew King and Dr Sarah Neal, University of Surrey, and Dr Karim Murji, Professor Sophie Watson and Professor Kath Woodward, Open University.

Members get extra access to journals

BSA members have access to more journals and e-books thanks to a new agreement with SAGE Publishing.

The agreement allows members free access to an extra 15 sociology and seven industrial relations and health journals.

This brings the total of free journals available to members to more than 60. A list can be seen at: <http://tinyurl.com/jlstluy>

In addition, members will have access to more than 1,000 sociology e-books in the SAGE Knowledge platform.

The new agreement with SAGE also brings free access to the recently-launched Cases module of the SAGE Research Methods database, with more than 500 examples, most of which relate to sociology.

The benefits are available through the Membership Resources section of the Members’ Area, of the BSA website.

The BSA also gains new resources to support sociologists, including extra funding for free places at the annual conference. These were allocated in January.

The BSA’s Publications staff and Directors, Professors Rose Barbour, David Inglis, Louise Ryan and Alan Warde, and Treasurer Linda McKie negotiated for the association.

Professor Eileen Green, BSA Chair, said: “I am delighted to have signed this new agreement with SAGE Publishing on behalf of the BSA during my first year as Chair.

“Unsurprisingly the negotiating process was lengthy and complex but I was impressed by the professionalism and courtesy with which both the BSA and SAGE teams managed a very complicated process. An excellent start to 2016.”

Miranda Nunhofer, Executive Editorial Director at SAGE, said: “The BSA and SAGE are long term publishing partners who champion the social sciences and are committed to the promotion of sociology globally.

“Our relationship with the BSA is a cornerstone of our social science programme and we look forward to continued development, innovation, and collaboration with it.”

Professor Green is pictured, middle, with Publications Officer Alison Danforth, left, and Company Secretary Kerry Collins, right.



Book series tackles wide range of topics

The BSA has launched a new book series, Sociological Futures, with Routledge.

The first three books of the series have been published, on Bourdieu, alcohol, and empirical sociology.

Sociological Futures will cover a wide range of topics related to sociology and feature contemporary work that is theoretically and methodologically innovative, as well as work that engages with classic debates in sociology.

This book series offers a publication outlet for sociologists at all career stages, BSA and non-BSA members, from the UK and the rest of the world.

The series editors are Professor Eileen Green, the BSA Chair, Professor John Horne, Vice-chair, Dr Caroline Oliver, former trustee, and Professor Louise Ryan, a Publications Director.

Details of the first three books are: *Bourdieu: The Next Generation – The Development of Bourdieu's Intellectual Heritage in Contemporary UK Sociology*, edited by Jenny Thatcher, Dr Nicola Ingram, Dr Ciaran Burke and Jessie Abrahams.

Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity, edited by Dr Thomas Thurnell-Read.

An End to the Crisis of Empirical Sociology? Trends and Challenges in Social Research, edited by Professor Linda McKie and Professor Ryan.

More titles will be published later. For details of the series see: www.routledge.com/series/SOCFUT



Sociology to mark its 50th anniversary

The BSA's journal *Sociology* is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year with a series of events and publications.

During the spring four e-special issues are being published online, at: <http://tinyurl.com/jz85k69>

Each issue draws together articles and debates on a particular theme from the *Sociology* archive. The topics covered are social class, gender and intersectionality, self-identity, and sociology in the 21st century.

The BSA annual conference will feature events looking at the history of *Sociology*, including a session with former editors of the journal, a 50th anniversary reception, and a special event discussing the themes of the e-special issues.

In October the journal will publish a special issue reflecting on sociology's development as an intellectual and multidisciplinary pursuit, and looking forward to the next 50 years. It will include a mix of short and substantive papers from contributors who have helped shape the discipline.

Winners of paper prizes named

The winning journal papers in the 2015 SAGE Prize for Innovation and Excellence have been announced in full. They are:

'Cosmopolitanism as translation,' by Esperança Bielsa, published in *Cultural Sociology*.

'Social mix revisited: neighbourhood institutions as setting for boundary work and social capital,' by Julia Nast and Talja Blokland, published in *Sociology*.

'The dereliction tourist: ethical issues of conducting research in areas of industrial ruination,' by Alice Mah, published in *Sociological Research Online*.

Three papers in *Work, employment and society* were joint winners – 'Critical realism in social research: approach with caution,' by Andrew Brown; 'Critical realism and systematic dialectics: a reply to Andrew Brown,' by Steve Fleetwood; and 'Do investors avoid strong trade unions and labour regulation? Social dumping in the European automotive and chemical industries,' by Martin Krzywdzinski.

The prize is awarded annually to the paper considered to be most groundbreaking in each of the four BSA journals. The prize is £250 worth of SAGE books or a free annual individual subscription to a journal of the winner's choice. For more on the awards, see: <http://tinyurl.com/qfuoh8q>

Association seeks trustees

The BSA is seeking sociologists to stand as Trustees.

Under its constitution, its three longest-serving trustees have to stand down each year. This year these are Rampaul Chamba, Membership Services, Professor Garry Crawford, Student Engagement, and Professor Louise Ryan, Publications.

Professor Ryan intends to stand again as Publications Director, while Mr Chamba and Professor Crawford are standing down permanently.

All paid-up BSA members are eligible to stand for the three vacancies. If more than three members are nominated then an election will be held. All members would be eligible to vote and would receive an electronic voting pack with voting closing on 25 April.

"We would like to offer our thanks to Garry and Rampaul who have committed much time and effort in supporting the activities of



Professor Garry Crawford

the association as trustees over the last eight and four years respectively," said Kerry Collins, BSA Company Secretary.

The Board of Trustees comprises 13 members whose role is to guide the direction of the association.

All around the world

Network takes a look at sociology beyond our shores

Most scientists not atheists

Research has shown that the common idea that most scientists are atheists is wrong, *Deseret News* says.

Professor Elaine Howard Ecklund, a sociologist at Rice University, found that only in France did a slight majority of scientists, 51 percent, say they did not believe in god. In India 11 per cent of scientists believe there was no god, and in Turkey, just six per cent.

Professor Ecklund's five-year study surveyed more than 9,000 biologists and physicists and carried out 600 in-depth interviews in eight areas: France, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Taiwan, Turkey, the UK and the US.

The study did, however, show that scientists were less likely to believe in god compared to the general population, except in Taiwan and Hong Kong, where they were more likely to believe.

- Reports of the death of religion are greatly exaggerated, according to a book by Rodney Stark, a US sociologist of religion.

In *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious Than Ever*, he drew on survey data from around the globe to argue that "contrary to the constant predictions that religion is doomed, there is abundant evidence of an ongoing worldwide religious awakening. The conventional wisdom about secularization is unfounded nonsense."

Across North Africa, the Middle East and Asia, Islamic belief was more fervent than at any time in recent centuries, he said, and there were now more church-going Christians in Africa than anywhere else. Hinduism had never been stronger than today.

China was experiencing an unprecedented surge in its number of Christians, and tens of thousands of traditional temples had been rebuilt since the days of Mao. In fact, among all of the globe's great religious traditions only Buddhism might not be growing.

According to *Deseret News*, Stark argued that while it is true that churches were almost empty in parts of Europe, this wasn't "the reliable sign of secularization it has long been said to be."



You're never too old...

Those who are finding their PhD a hard slog that seems to last forever can take inspiration from Benjamin Franco Suarez, aged 90.

Mr Franco Suarez can now style himself 'Dr' after finishing his sociology dissertation at Cornell University, some 48 years after starting it.

From 1967-72 he studied the impact of Bolivian women's education and employment on their fertility rate. But he ran out of money before completing his research and took a job for what he expected to be a short leave of absence, *Cornell Chronicle* reports. This turned into a career working on international projects.

After he retired, he was encouraged by his son to complete his writing up.

"He said it was like Christmas in September for him, knowing that he finally has his PhD," said Sue Meyer, Graduate Programs Co-ordinator at Cornell's Sociology Department.

Call to end Thai intimidation

University lecturers have called for an end to what they see as the Thai government's intimidation of students who express hostility to army's presence on campuses, the *Bangkok Post* reports.

A petition signed by 323 lecturers and freelance academics in Thailand and abroad expressed concerns about the detention of students charged with illegal assembly by the country's military dictatorship.

The students were protesting against the army's presence in seminars and events at universities. Many event organisers are required to submit requests to authorities prior to staging a discussion. Most of the requests relating to democracy and politics are rejected.

The academics' petition was submitted to the government by Anusorn Unno, Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology at Thammasat University, accompanied by 10 other lecturers.

It calls on the authorities to stop intimidating lecturers who sincerely express their political opinions, stop prohibiting students and people from holding political activities, and stop interfering in the learning and teaching methods of universities.

Iraqi women harassed

Nearly 90% of women in Iraq have suffered some form of sexual harassment, a survey conducted by students in the Department of Sociology at the University of Baghdad has found.

"This rate comes in large measure due to the failure of Iraqi laws to recognise the phenomenon and punish those who perpetrate it, coupled with the continued power and influence of those norms – inherited from culture and tradition – which blames the women when they are harassed," the report said.

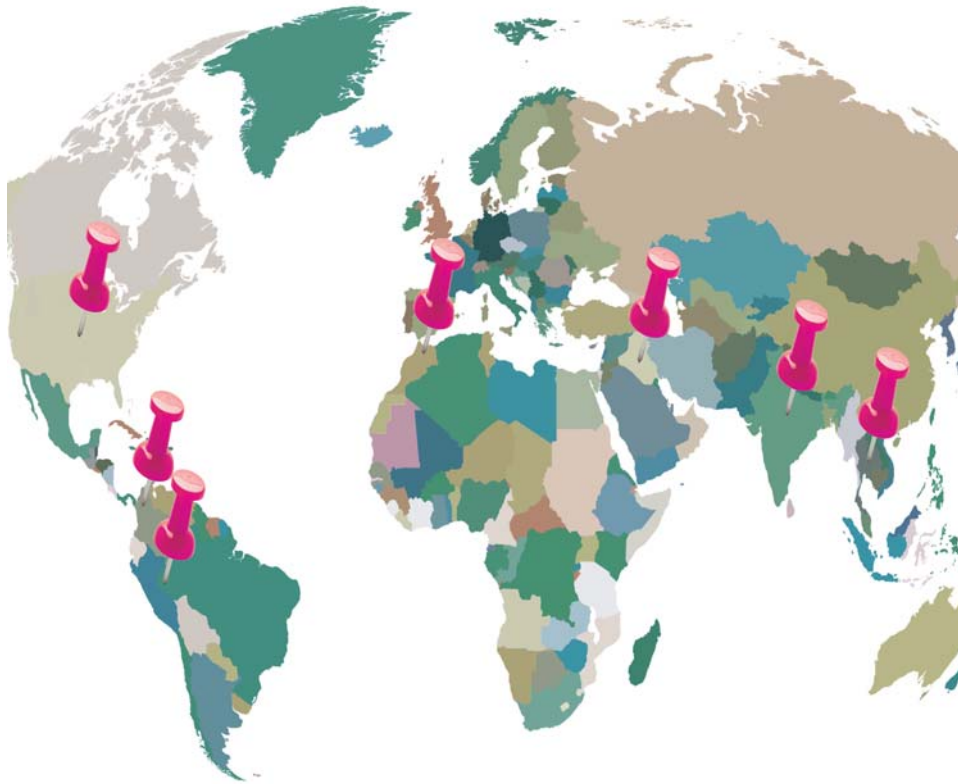
Until recently Iraqi women have had more rights than those in other countries across the Middle East – they were formally granted equal rights in Iraq's constitution in the 1970s, allowing them to go to school, vote, run for political office and own property, says Yahoo News.

But that began to change after the 1991 Gulf War with the US and the sanctions that followed, which disproportionately affected women and girls by limiting their access to food, healthcare and education.

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 worsened the situation dramatically, the website says.

Id...

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



Legacy of feminist writer

Fatima Mernissi, one of the Arab world's most celebrated feminist writers and sociologists, has died aged 75, reports *Morocco World News*.

Professor Mernissi made significant contributions to the reconciliation of traditional Islam with progressive feminism and women's rights.

She studied political science at the Sorbonne and gained a doctorate in sociology in 1974 at Brandeis University, US, before returning to her native Morocco.

At Rabat's Mohammed V University she taught methodology and family sociology.

Her work opened up discussion about women and tradition in order to build a society based on rights rather than tradition.

Her best known book was *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1975). In a detailed investigation, she cast doubt on the validity of some of the hadith, the sayings attributed to Mohammed, and therefore on the subordination of women that she saw in Islam.

She also undertook various roles including research for Unesco, the International Labour Organization and the UN Population Fund, as well as work for the Moroccan authorities.

In 2013 Professor Mernissi was the only Moroccan woman featured in *Arabian Business* magazine's 100 most powerful Arab women, ranking 15th.

Walter Wallace, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, has died aged 88.

Professor Wallace began work at Princeton in 1971, and worked in the sociology of education, sociological theory, and on issues of ethnicity, race and nationality. His book, *Principles of Scientific Sociology*, published in 1983, was an ambitious attempt to redirect the course of contemporary sociological thought and cast the study of sociology as a natural science.

Among his students was Michelle Obama, who was in his class of 1985. Professor Wallace advised Mrs Obama, then Michelle Robinson, on her senior thesis, 'Princeton educated Blacks and the Black community.'

"She was an extremely hardworking student who learned a great deal from doing the research and expressed that fact very clearly, honestly and impressively," he later said in an article in the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*.

Professor Wallace served in the military from 1950 to 1952 and worked in commercial art, silk screening and market research before graduating.

Decision on rebellion charge

Dr Miguel Ángel Beltrán, a sociologist at the National University of Colombia, is still in prison awaiting a decision on whether to prosecute him on a charge of rebellion.

Dr Beltrán, whose academic research has criticised the government's strategy against the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) group, has been in Bogotá's notorious La Picota maximum security prison since he was arrested in July.

The charge of rebellion relates to emails said to have been discovered on a computer in the jungle base of the guerrillas.

Dr Beltrán was detained for two years in 2009 while a decision was made about his case. All criminal charges against him were dropped then, but were reinstated last year.

More than 5,000 academics in over 20 countries have signed a petition calling for his release, which was presented to the Colombian Embassy in London in November. This calls on the Colombian's supreme court to make a swift decision on whether it will prosecute him.

His supporters fear that as he has been critical of paramilitaries in his writing, speaking out against their human rights abuses, his life may be in danger in prison.

Ban lifted on journal founder

A ban imposed in 1909 on the Indian nationalist Shyamji Krishnavarma has been posthumously rescinded by the Inner Temple, one of the four Inns of Court which train barristers in England.

The ban barred Krishnavarma (1857-1930), the founder of the magazine *The Indian Sociologist*, from practicing as a barrister because of his support for Indian independence.

Krishnavarma was a graduate of Balliol College and a scholar in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, and also a lawyer in India.

In 1905 in Britain he founded *The Indian Sociologist*, which became one of the most prominent conduits for revolutionary Indian nationalism outside India. He later moved to Paris and then Switzerland to avoid constant British surveillance of his activities.

He was disbarred from the Inner Temple and removed from its membership list in 1909 for writing anti-British articles in the magazine.

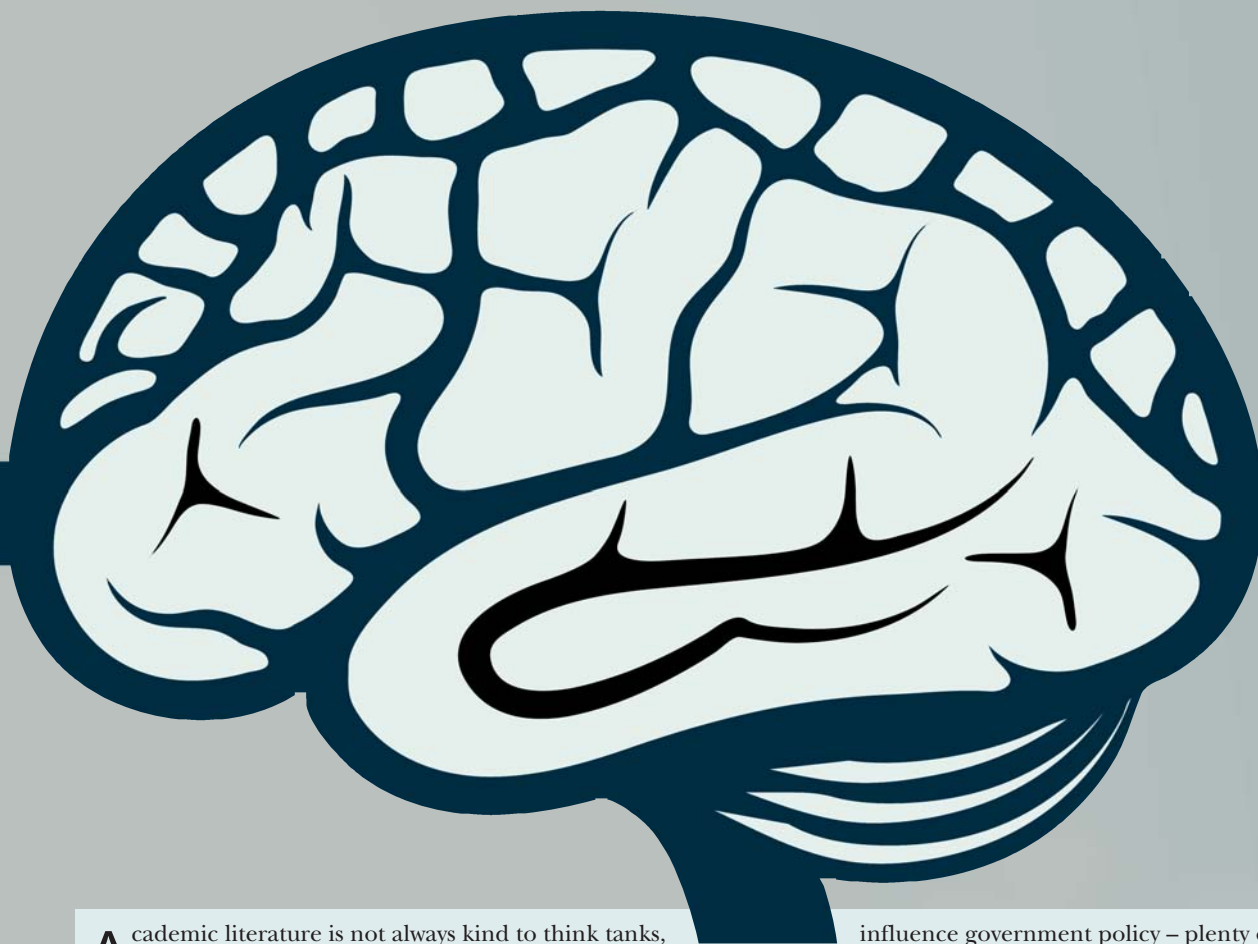
The Inner Temple's governing council has now acknowledged that Krishnavarma was the victim of a miscarriage of justice and "did not receive an entirely fair hearing".

Think tanks can offer impact on tap



Demonstrating the influence of their work on society and policy has become ever more important for academics. But they may be overlooking one way to have impact – through think tanks. Network takes a closer look....





Academic literature is not always kind to think tanks, sometimes depicting them as part of the opaque world of the special advisor and spin doctor, lobbyists rather than seekers after truth. Nor are they seen as the obvious natural home for sociological research – some think tanks, undoubtedly, have been the inspiration for policies behind the neo-liberal turn that has chipped away at the state over the past three decades.

But this is to take a lop-sided view because it misses the positive and honourable role that think tanks have played in setting the progressive policy agenda, a role that sociologists can play a part in, to their benefit as well as society's. Many ideas that chime with sociologists begin life in think tanks, organisations that often depend upon academic expertise to verify research they carry out.

Think tanks have one great strength: influence over government is their aim and everything they do is geared to getting the attention of ministers. While this can limit their scope, it means the reports they write find their way onto the desks of policy-makers, as academic research rarely does.

The broadcaster and sociologist Laurie Taylor knows this area well, as his son Matthew has worked as Director of the left-of-centre Institute for Public Policy Research. In a recent video interview Professor Taylor said: "Sociology doesn't have to

influence government policy – plenty of sociology can be done without having that end effect. But if it is going to be policy-orientated, it's got to get closer to government and it's got to get closer to knowing what is up for debate in government.

"I think a very valuable thing that has happened, which really opens the way for social scientists to have considerably more impact, is the development of think tanks.

"It seems to me in the past that often social science research was too slow – you'd apply for a grant to the ESRC and then after a year and a half you perhaps learnt that you got the grant, then you'd have your grant for three years and then after three years you'd produce your research findings.

"Think tanks, however, provide a little intermediary. They work quickly – not only do they work quickly, they tend to work to what the government agenda is likely to be.

"So if something like the Institute for Public Policy Research, which was quite close to the Labour government, knew that the government was doing x, y or z, they could come in and say, 'we will do some research and in a year's time we will come back with a report on that particular area you are interested in'." *To see the interview go to: <http://tinyurl.com/zarf6pg>*
Feature continues next page

'Sociology departments have a broader approach and are easier to work with'

The UK can claim to have invented the think tank. The Fabian Society was an early example, set up in 1884 and run by the sociologists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, among others, to promote collectivist policies to improve society. For the first half of the 20th century, think tanks provided governments with data that supported the idea of a welfare state and a Keynesian approach to economic policy.

This background – the think tank as a source of progressive ideas – is worth keeping in mind as a counterweight when noting the undoubted success of institutions that advocated economic liberalism and a smaller state after the second world war. These began with the Institute of Economic Affairs, founded in 1957, the Centre for Policy Studies, 1974, and the Adam Smith Institute, 1977. They found a ready audience for their ideas in Margaret Thatcher.

Think tanks' influence continued after the change of government in 1997. Under New Labour organisations such as IPPR (founded 1986) and Demos (1993) found their ideas were listened to by ministers. Demos in particular was important in shaping the Blair government's 'third way' concept. While the extent of this influence is debated by academics, one example can be seen in Matthew Taylor's move from the Institute for Public Policy Research to become head of the Number 10 Policy Unit, and that Geoff Mulgan, founder and Director of Demos, moved to become Tony Blair's Director of Strategy Unit.

Today there are over 100 think tanks in the UK, a figure that defies precision, given that there is no agreed definition for what constitutes one, though their core activities usually include producing research reports and policy papers, running events and obtaining media coverage. At their sharpest, think tanks tackle the issues that policy-makers are concerned with, write accessible reports with practical recommendations, and launch their ideas at specially organised events which ministers are keen to attend. They do the things that academics rarely do because of lack of time, resources or inclination.

In that sense think tanks represent an opportunity: research funnelled through them can arrive on a minister's desk without the researcher having the jump through the various hoops that political influence demands.

As to their value and integrity, in truth think tanks are like many other institutions in our society: some are working to ends that we might find progressive and desirable in an open and honest way, and some are not. Researchers can play a part in the former (and this article lists some of the institutions that might appeal) and can avoid the latter.



Network spoke to some of those think tanks who welcome closer links with sociology, beginning with the Smith Institute, a progressive think tank, not to be confused with

the larger and more conservative Adam Smith Institute. Its Director, Paul Hackett, pictured, says: "We're university friendly – we do lots of work with them. For example, we brought someone in from the States recently to do some work on place-making [urban planning to promote wellbeing] in suburbia, for which we teamed up with the LSE. We did a recent study on economic development with Newcastle University and we've also done some work with University College London."

"There's an issue here with university departments – whether sociology or another discipline – wanting to be more public-facing. That's a good thing when you consider the amount of research papers that end up stuck on a shelf and don't get a wider airing. Just because you've written a paper doesn't mean that the world is going to sit up and take notice – there's more to it than that."

"Universities are not usually close enough, in my mind, to the political process, purely because academics have to work very much in the confines of a research discipline with all its requirements, rather than necessarily trying to influence public opinion. You've got to put on events and you've got to have networks within Parliament and Whitehall, and work with pressure groups. It's a job in itself."

Mr Hackett said that the narrow focus of academic departments made working with them harder, but sociology had an advantage. "In academia, you tend to get departments focussed on one or two things. So you'll have a department that might have a specialism in housing, then you might have another one in health, but they're not in the same place. Think tanks like ours cover quite a wide canvas, so it makes it difficult sometimes to maintain an ongoing relationship. Sociology is slightly unusual, in the sense that it is cross-disciplinary – given that sociology departments are linked to many other areas, that makes them easier to work with."

"Their methodology is good because sociology has got a broad approach that includes interviews and focus groups. We've done stuff with them in the past on longitudinal studies, which we've really found useful. Work we've been doing on placemaking has been very interesting because the cross-disciplinary element is very helpful."

"I would think the most significant work we've done would be around early intervention – the Smith Institute was quite busy with that a few years back and sociologists played a part in interpreting the evidence base."

Natalie Perera, Head of Research for CentreForum, said one example of her organisation's influence on government was its proposal for a 'pupil premium', additional funding for schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, which was incorporated into the Liberal Democrat manifesto in 2010 and put into practice by the Coalition government.

She said that CentreForum was in regular contact with researchers from half a dozen universities. "We're keeping



ave a broad to work with'

open the option of commissioning academics to expand their research, if they don't have the funding to do so already, where we think that's important and where their research will shed light on some really important policy questions. That's definitely an option that we are considering."

CentreForum's work included drawing together evidence from a range of sources to consider how well education and mental health systems were serving young people. She had found university researchers helpful in this.

"They have been incredibly receptive and helpful. I think what academics recognise is that think tanks can play an important role, and can be really useful in bridging the gap between academic research and getting things out into the public domain in a way that is more succinct and resonates with political priorities. Think tanks generally have those links, and they are a really good channel to get academic research into the minds of government, into the minds of select committees, for example, and into the mainstream media as well.

"If any academic thought that they had research that might interest us, they are welcome to make contact. We are focused on three areas – education, and that includes further education, vocational and higher, children's mental health, and prisoners' education. Within those areas we'd definitely welcome academics coming and talking to us about their latest research and findings."

Researchers' role as a sounding-board for ideas and a resource for checking drafts of reports is emphasised by Amy Finch, a senior researcher at Reform, the non-party, pro-market think tank.

She wanted more academics to come forward and work with her organisation. "When we do research projects we have solicited meetings with academics who have a certain skill or understanding which we don't, where they could help either review a paper we have drafted or where they give us feedback on our ideas. We are always looking to use academia to support and guide our work.

"Politicians and civil servants are more likely to read think tank reports than academic papers because they don't always know where to go to if they are looking at academics work as there are so many different journals. We are trying to hold the government to account or influence policy in some way and so our reports will always be focused on what the government is doing, in a way academics reports won't always be.

"To do this we need to have an overview and a good grounding in the academic literature to know who has the best evidence for x or for y.

"The academics that we work with are already highly engaged in social media and events. We can get quite a lot from those people – they are prominent experts – but what I don't get back from outside that circle is necessarily a desire to engage with think tanks from academics. It's very much us trying to reach out to academics than the other way round.

"I often approach people in the academic sphere and ask them to help out in return for getting their name on reports,

A list of think tanks interviewed, with contact details for sociologists interested in putting their research forward:

Smith Institute

"We're looking at trying to shape policy for a better society that's more equal, more forward looking and progressive, as opposed to conservative. But around that, we're very keen on making sure that policy is delivered in the right way and that it's fit for purpose, so we do quite a lot of analysis showing how often that isn't the case." – Paul Hackett, Director

Email: paul.hackett@smith-institute.org.uk

Web: www.smith-institute.org.uk

CentreForum

"CentreForum is an independent think tank that is focused on improving education for all children in England and narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest."

– Natalie Perera, Head of Research

Email: info@centreforum.org

Web: http://centreforum.org

Social Market Foundation

"We are a non-partisan organisation which is politically independent. We also have editorial control over the research that we produce and publish and that's important to our credibility" – Nigel Keohane, Director of Research

Web: www.smf.co.uk

Reform

"We are a non-party independent think tank and our mission is to set out a better way to deliver public services and economic prosperity – we bring a pro-market perspective to reforming and doing public service differently"

– Amy Finch, Senior Researcher Web: www.reform.uk

but I don't always feel that we are used to the extent we could be as a place where ideas are generated and discussions held with ministers and civil servants who could influence policy."

Nigel Keohane, Director of Research at the Social Market Foundation, said that while most of its work was carried out in-house by its six researchers, there was a cross-over with academia. "In some instances we bring in specific experts to come and do research and in other instances we publish research from academics in our network.

"We organise partnerships with universities, for instance. One of the things we have been running for some time is a programme of public events called Ask the Expert where we get an academic from a UK university to talk about their expertise in a specific subject area where we know there is some policy interest." Recent speakers included Professor Karel Williams, of the University of Manchester, discussing UK rail policy and Professor John Hills, LSE, on the welfare myth of 'them and us', he said.

"Our aim is to time these to coincide with consultations and reviews and parliamentary committee enquiries so that we are feeding academic evidence into public policy – we are an educational charity so we see this as part of our work.

"There's a lot in terms of social sciences and sociology that we draw on in the way we think about policy.

"We can help universities to understand what are the sorts of topics that will have an impact – in that sense think tanks help academics to talk about their research with people who are may be actually making decisions in government.

"When you think of how much superb research is done in UK universities, we are trying to make that available to the government."

Continued on page 20

‘We work to tight deadlines’

So think tanks welcome the involvement of researchers. But the constraints that they work under need to be understood. They are usually quite small organisations, with only a few researchers and a tight budget, and this limits the areas of research they tackle, albeit these limits are often broadly set.

Around 80 per cent of CentreForum’s research is on its education programme, and the remaining 20 per cent is on children’s mental health and prisoner education. The Social Market Foundation concentrates on public services and welfare, education, health care and employment.

The Reform think tank looks at criminal justice, education, government systems, health care, the economy and welfare. The Smith Institute has a broad research remit, but Paul Hackett said the fact that it was not eligible for ESRC grants limited its funding sources to foundations, charities and corporates.

Within their remits, think tanks tend to pick particular topics that they know policy-makers might consider reforming. This need to put their finger on the legislative pulse dictates timing: they have to produce reports within weeks or a few months, before the issue comes off the boil.

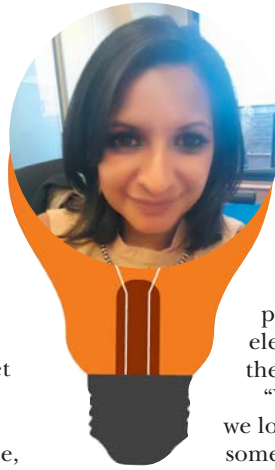
The speed think tanks work at is stressed by Nigel Keohane: “We do work to shorter timescales – our reports are determined predominately by the policy agenda and how quickly that’s moving. Certainly, most projects are completed in six months and sometimes within three months, though we do have longer projects that might be a year or even longer where policy isn’t moving as quickly, such as research on ageing.

“The issue of speed is affected by the policy agenda, but it’s also affected by the way we get our funding. In academia a lot of the money comes from research councils and other fellowships, where the lead-in time is long. It’s a long application process and often they give money for long periods of time.

“Our funding comes from a wide range of sources – we get money from charities, trusts and endowments such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Cadbury, and that range of funding sources comes with its own implications for timing – some sponsors might want research to come out quickly, so we work to tighter timelines.”

Most of the work of think tanks is done by their own researchers. As Natalie Perera (pictured above) says: “The bulk of what we do in-house will be the analytical quantitative research, where we have access to different datasets – the National Pupil Database, for example – and we’re able to manipulate those and see what that tells us. The qualitative research we do is a combination of our researchers doing literature reviews and engaging with academics who are leading in certain fields.”

Opportunities existed for outside researchers to contribute, she said. “There will also be an element of commissioning academics to do some of the work with us. For example, there’s been some academic research done on academy schools, and that’s the kind of area where we might commission the authors to update their work or widen its scope. There are five or six universities that we talk to frequently. There are some that we have more regular



conversations with, and there are some that we’ll meet once, twice or three times over a project.”

Nigel Keohane says: “The Social Market Foundation and most think tanks tend to do most of their research in-house, but there’s often something we can collaborate on with universities. For instance, when we were writing a proposal for research which had an ethnographic element, we talked to a university about whether they could do that for us.

“We recently collaborated with a university when we looked at how consumers make decisions. But it’s sometimes hard for think tanks to know who to go to in academia – one builds up networks over time but those connections could be stronger.”

Amy Finch said that Reform used groups of four or five external advisors, who read research proposals and report drafts and attended meetings. One of these typically would be an academic with expertise in that area.

Paul Hackett said his organisation tended to draw on a lot of expert specialists, some of them academics, in particular fields for background information and then wrote its reports in-house.

Despite the limitations they function under, the think tanks *Network* spoke to wished to work closely with academics.

Their details are on the previous spread and below ■

Others think tanks (descriptions from websites):

ResPublica

We are an independent non-partisan think tank based in Westminster that seeks to establish a new economic, social and cultural settlement for the United Kingdom.

Demos

A cross-party think-tank, Demos has always been interested in power: how it works, and how to distribute it more equally throughout society. We believe in trusting people with decisions about their own lives and solving problems from the bottom-up.

Fabian Society

The Fabian Society is Britain’s oldest political think tank. Founded in 1884, the Society is at the forefront of developing political ideas and public policy on the left.

Institute for Public Policy Research

Our purpose is to conduct and publish research into, and promote public education in, the economic, social and political sciences, and in science and technology; including the effect of moral, social, political and scientific factors on public policy and on the living standards of all sections of the community.

New Economics Foundation

New Economics Foundation is the UK’s leading think tank promoting social, economic and environmental justice. Our aim is to transform the economy so that it works for people and the planet.

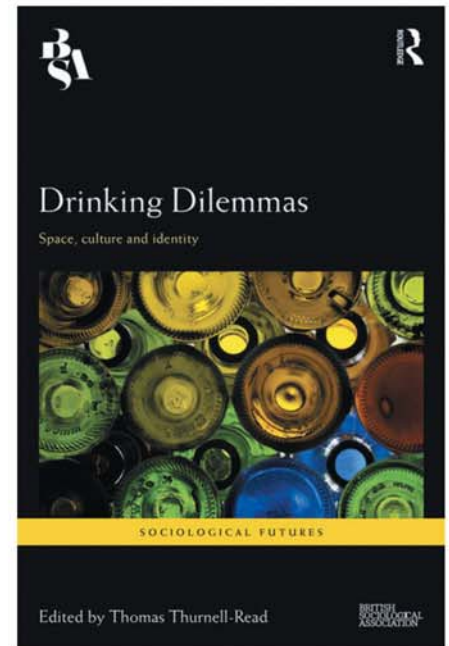
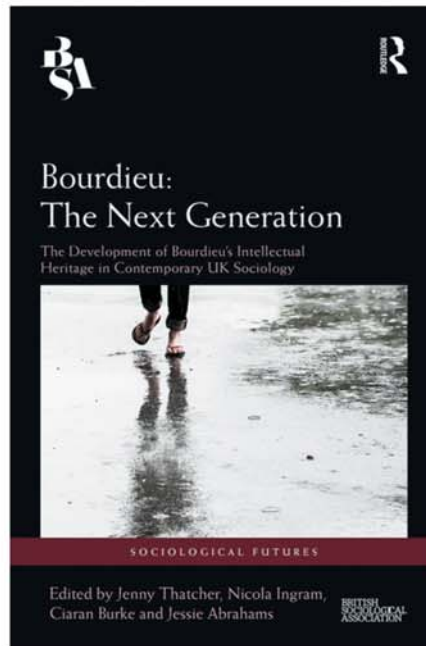
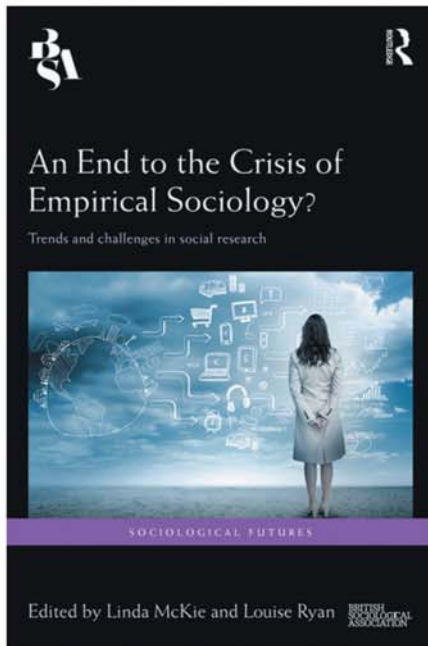
Compass

Compass is a home for those who want to build and be a part of a good society; one where equality, sustainability and democracy are not mere aspirations, but a living reality.

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EXPERT, NOSY, THOUGHTFUL - 100 YEARS OF SOCIOLOGISTS IN THE MOVIES

Sociology doesn't always get a good press, as we know. But if we move from the world of fact to fiction, do we get a better reputation? Network takes a look at how film directors and novelists portray us...

The most heartening aspect of sociology's portrayal on film is that it's quite positive at times. It's true that we don't have an equivalent of archaeology's Indiana Jones, striding purposefully through temple and jungle, square-jawed and whip in hand, or John Nash, heroically overcoming mental illness to win a Nobel Prize for his revolutionary work in mathematics in *A Beautiful Mind*. But anyone with a large box of popcorn and plenty of time on their hands can find some light amid the shade in the big screen's presentation of sociology, as John Conklin has proved.

Among the 758 Hollywood movies depicting academia that Professor Conklin watched for his research (a feat surely deserving a Nobel in itself), around 30 featured sociology. He concludes that "the movies acknowledge the expertise of sociologists", even if the discipline is at times portrayed as focusing on the trivial and the obscure.

Conklin, of Tufts University, Massachusetts, finds the first full-length film that refers to sociology dates to 1915 and an improbable silent movie called *The Cave Man*. In it a socialite, Madeleine Mischief, wagers that she can transform Hanlick Smagg, a coal heaver, into a member of the educated class in one week. She tutors him ("awakening a spark of mentality in his sleepy brain," according to the film's poster) so that he can assume the disguise of a sociologist investigating the working class. Hanlick begins at a steel plant and, in the best tradition of ethnographic research, gets closely involved with his subject. This leads him to develop an invention which improves production and earns him a fortune. Now Madeleine's equal,

he woos her and they elope in search of happiness, or at least a better scriptwriter.

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.

However unlikely their plots, these early films reveal an awareness of social inequality, according to Conklin. He might have added an awareness of ethnicity too: in *The Hoodlum*, Amy defuses an argument between a neighbour and a Jewish man, who is not depicted in a stereotypical way. Neither Hanlick Smagg nor John Burke – the first professional sociologist to appear in a full-length movie – is a figure of ridicule or absurdity. Perhaps, as Conklin notes, this might be because sociology was an established presence on American campuses for more than 20 years before *The Cave Man* made its appearance.

After this burst of promising social commentary sociology fades from the silver screen – no movies dealing with the stock market crash and the Great Depression of the 1930s feature the discipline for instance. It's not until 1939 that the first talkie involving sociology came out, but in the year of the war's outbreak this dealt only with the training of commercial airline pilots. In *20,000 Men a Year*, a woman sociology instructor at the college is, according to Conklin, "thoughtful, strong-willed, and socially well-adjusted". The film doesn't display an



intimate knowledge of the sociological canon, though – one character describes a professor of sociology as a teacher of “sociography”, who “learns kids about animals”.

It’s not until the 1960s and 70s that sociology is again plugged into the zeitgeist, in the form of sexual liberation, anti-Vietnam war protests and political activism. In **Boys’ Night Out** (1962) a sociologist, Dr Prokosch, carries out a mini-Kinsey survey on sexual behaviour. In **RPM** (1970) Paco Perez, a writer on conflict resolution and the acting president of the university, has to resort to force to get protesting students out of a college building. *See box on page 25 for more history*

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; the failings of sociologists and sociology students are the source of much of the humor in **The Beautiful Cheat** (1945) and **The Milagro Beanfield War** (1988), but they are more sensible than the other characters in **Boys’ Night Out** and **The One and Only** (1978). Even those who are sources of humor seem to be so more because they are professors than because they are sociologists per se.”

When sociology is disdained, it’s seen as impractical and obscure. Conklin notes that a college senior in **The One and Only** asks her boyfriend, “So I have this degree in sociology and what’ll I do with it?” only for him to reply, “open a sociology store”. In **Dirty Harry** (1971), when Inspector Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) learns that his new partner went to university he remarks, “Just what I needed, a college boy. Ah, sociology. Oh, you’ll go far. That’s if you live... just don’t let your college degree get you killed. I’m liable to be killed along with you.”

Summertime (1971) has a disaffected student, Jerry McAdams (Michael Douglas), who says he understands the concepts and theories he has been learning about but complains they have no personal relevance and do not make him happy. His father remarks, “I knew it was a mistake, majoring in sociology.” When his mother says that he might be studying too hard, Jerry replies, “I hardly study at all.”

Continued on the next spread



‘SOCIOLOGISTS ARE OFTEN RESPECTED FOR THEIR EXPERTISE’

By contrast, **Little Sister** (1992) is a model of enlightened social commentary. The main character finds out that he is the only man on a sociology course on the historical impact of women. He ends up in a thoughtful discussion of the role of women in history. In **New Best Friend** (2002), a rich party girl is paired with a diligent working class student on a video project and learns about poverty and how to help poorer children get ahead.

As Conklin says, “Hollywood movies present undergraduates in sociology courses in a mixed light. Some films suggest they lack academic ability and care little about learning. Others depict them as engaged with sociological material and capable of doing interesting fieldwork.”

Sociology academics get a mixed reception, overall, he finds. “On-screen sociologists are often depicted as researchers who should be respected for their expertise; but sometimes they are shown to reach incorrect conclusions, snoop into behavior that should remain private, and fail to maintain appropriate distance from their research subjects.”

Professor Steve Macinter, in **College Confidential** (1960) is a “thoughtful but pedantic intellectual who is committed to the search for knowledge”. He is conducting a study on “students’ response to modern culture, but he admits to being most interested in their sexual behaviour.” His fiancée demands he stop his research because she has heard (false) rumours that he has become involved sexually with students. She breaks off their engagement when he refuses to do so.

Sociological theorists make the occasional, and surprising, appearance in Hollywood. In **RPM** a student asks her professor (who she is having an affair with) what she should read for her paper on technology and its effect on personality. He recommends Talcott Parsons’ *The Social System* and *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*. “Can you give me the gist?” she asks. “Listen, do I have to do your homework for you?” he replies. “Do I have to

do your housework for you?” comes the riposte. (‘yes’, is the answer).

In **Inside Llewyn Davis** (2013), the Coen brothers portray the world of Greenwich Village just as the folk revival of the early ’60s is about to begin. Llewyn is a frustrated folkie, too purist and difficult to surf the wave that’s breaking around him. The film’s humour is partly supplied by a pair of sociologists whose cat Llewyn has to chase across New York. Professor Mitch and his wife Lillian Gorfein are hopelessly square and uncool, as are their friends and dinner guests. They are also kind and likeable, better friends than Llewyn deserves.

Why does sociology often get a more sympathetic image in films than novels (see next spread)? It would be nice to think that this came from close association with the discipline. As Conklin says: “Some screenwriters and directors might also be influenced by their own collegiate experiences with sociology, using a professor or a fellow student as a model for what eventually appears on the screen.”

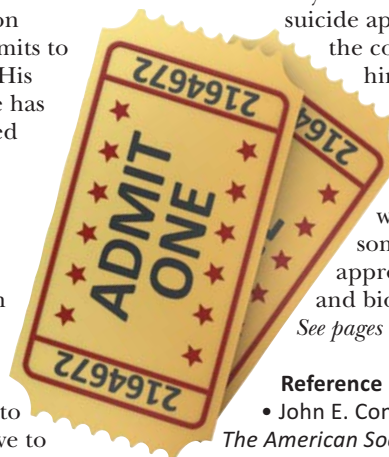
But the truth may sometimes be the opposite – it’s their mistaking of sociology for other disciplines that helps. (The boundaries are often confused – in **Dead Man on Campus**, a daft comedy set in 1998, a student looking for research on suicide approaches ‘Professor Emile Durkheim’, of the college’s Department of Psychology, to ask him for advice, a fine example of longevity and interdisciplinarity by the old chap).

“More likely, those who make films have little knowledge of what sociology entails or what sociologists actually do, which would explain why sociologists in the movies sometimes do research that seems more appropriate to anthropologists, psychologists, and biologists,” says Conklin.

See pages 26 and 27 for sociology in fiction

Reference

- John E. Conklin: ‘Sociology in Hollywood films’ *The American Sociologist*, September 2009





Images on opposite page: sociology makes its debut in full length movies with John Burke, 'a sociological writer', with his daughter Amy (The Hoodlum, 1919).

On this page, far left: Kim Novak and the men whose sex lives she is researching, in *Boys' Night Out*, 1962.

Left: Professor Emile Durkheim 'of the Psychology Department', in *Dead Man on Campus* (1998) (© Paramount Pictures)

Below: posters for *Summertree* with Michael Douglas (1971), *Inside Llewyn Davis* (2013) and *RPM* (1970).

A BRIEF HISTORY ON FILM

As we might expect, the depiction of sociologists in film reflects some of the prominent concerns of society of the time. The first films were concerned with wealth, poverty and class, taking their plots, seemingly, from Victorian melodramas.

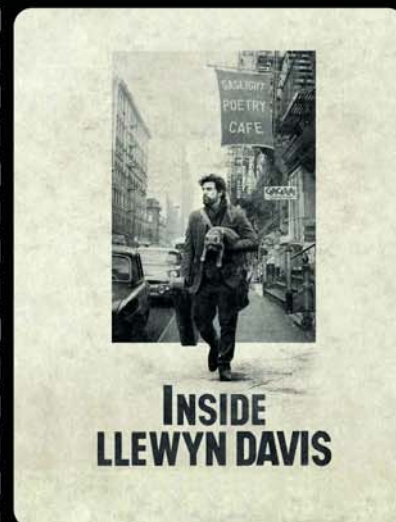
The first appearance of sociology in celluloid may well have been the 1913 one-reel (10-minute) film, *A Study in Sociology*. The plot, which doesn't bear too close an inspection, involves a will, a professional gambler pretending to be a sociologist, and the theft of a gold chain. The hero of the film, who gets the girl in the end, turns out to be a real sociologist who is pretending to be a chauffeur in order to understand the lives of workers. In *The House Built Upon Sand* (1916, 50-minutes), David Westbrooke is an altruist interested in sociology. He has made his home in the factory town of Oreville, where he works among his employees as factory manager. After a series of events including a fire and a separation, he and his new wife Evelyn live happily, and altruistically, ever after.

As our main feature notes, sociology largely disappears from the big screen during the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1960s, the preoccupation of Hollywood with sociology centres on sex, perhaps inspired by the Masters and Johnson research project. In *Boys' Night Out* (1962) four middle-aged men secretly rent an apartment with a young woman, Cathy, for a romantic rendezvous. But Cathy does not tell them that she is a sociology student researching the sexual life of the white middle-class male. In *College Confidential* (1960), sociology professor Steve MacIntier is conducting a survey at Collins College on the lifestyles of the young people. Some of the local citizenry begin to take exception to his sociological survey when they find out it includes questions about sex.

This perception of sociology as having an intrusive interest in sex has continued to the present day, perhaps because this is inherently more titillating for movie audiences than, say, seeing a sociologist of religion or citizenship at work. In an episode of the TV series, *Castle* (2009), Jessica Margolis is carrying out a sociological study of sexual domination, working in the 'House of Pain' dungeon as a dominatrix, 'Mistress Venom'. She is later found murdered in a park. In *The Road to Love* (2001), an Algerian-French heterosexual man begins a sociological study of gay Islamic homosexuality and discovers love with a French steward. In *Sesso in Testa* (Italian film, 1974), Diana Tornetti sits for the defence of her sociology thesis, a study of Italian men and their treatment of sex workers, for which she worked as a prostitute. Although initially shocked by her methodology, the review panel is won over by Ms Tornetti.

Sociology is sometimes portrayed as informative, if not character-building. In the TV series, *Minder*, one character tells Terry, "Did all my bird 20 years ago. That's when it was hard. Look at them now – all in the Open University. Big Bob Whitney. D'you know he's got a bleeding degree? Sociology. He's still at the thieving, but now he knows why he's doing it!" (*Gunfight at the O K Launderette*, 1979).

Main sources: IMBD database, Conklin ('Sociology in Hollywood Films').



Sociology is typecast as novelists lose the plot

The nuanced understanding of sociology in film doesn't find its way into novels. 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 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. As Kramer notes, it goes back at least as far as 1926, when Robert Herrick published *Chimes*, a novel set in Eureka University in the Midwest, where Edgar Mallory is head of the "Sociological Department" and works alongside his wife, Jessica. Sociology, and Edgar, prove unsatisfying for Jessica and she moves in with a psychologist, switching to research in his field. Edgar is, according to one character, "a good sort...but nothing fine. Just like him to be going in for a pseudo-science like sociology."

This is the earliest manifestation of a belief among writers that sociology doesn't focus on anything important. Kramer cites J B Priestley's *The Image Men* (1968), which features Hazel Honeyfield "sparkling and dimpling as soon as she talked or listened, no matter how idiotic the subject", who is researching "pot plants as status symbols".

The book's two main characters, professors Cosmo Saltana and Owen Tuby, use a large grant to turn their hand to public relations and so make their fortune.

Again, a confusion lies here about the remit of sociology. Sociology here is a sort of applied psychology, and one that can be

used against people – a hint here of another accusation against the discipline, that it is manipulative.

Which brings us to bad old Howard Kirk, anti-hero of *The History Man* (Malcolm Bradbury, 1975), a book and TV series that may have set sociology's image in stone, or rather the reinforced concrete of the post-war campus. No summary of sociology's portrayal in fiction can avoid tackling Howard, a sinister and destructive force who causes chaos on campus in his search for "an interesting term". His radicalism is phoney and amoral, if grimly fascinating. Sociology, according to Kirk, can explain everything (and perhaps, we are led to suspect, nothing at all), and now it is not irrelevant but dangerous. The book has Kirk triumphant over all opposition, including Miss Callendar, who represents poor, innocent Humanities (and humanism). She is wise to Kirk's tricks but helpless in the face of his power to seduce.

In a similar vein, in *Too Far to Walk* (1966), Sidney Gutwillig is an inveterate campus agitator who wants to lead any anti-establishment cause. In one scene he is depicted as childishly frustrated at not being able to get to the front row of a protest march. In Alison Lurie's *Imaginary Friends* (1966), Tom McMann studies a radical religious sect, and starts to manipulate their behaviour in the hope they will become so

controversial and interesting that his colleagues will take note of his work. He gets more than he bargains for, becoming converted to their belief and ending up in a mental asylum.

Why do novelists dislike sociology? There are, after all, other targets in academia they could aim at: the pointless cruelty of some animal research experiments, the absurdity of much of psychology under the influence of Skinner, and the chase-your-own-tail of philosophy



It's him again: Howard Kirk (right) with his head of department

We continue our feature on sociology in fiction by looking at its portrayal in novels

at its worst.

In his assessment, the US sociologist Michael Kimmel says: “We study things other people don’t especially want to think about – the persistence of poverty, the punitive disenfranchisement of prisoners, or the racial structure of crime and punishment in America. We use terms a quarter-century of right-wing assault has pretty much erased from national conversation – racism, oppression, and others like ‘class’.

“Sociologists are also relentlessly critical of platitudes and spend a good deal of time debunking the truisms ‘everybody’ knows. We reveal that many of them turn out not to be true at all. People may enjoy getting new information to arm their old prejudices, but they most assuredly do not enjoy deflating the tires of assumptions on which they ride. We’re the party poopers at the liberal, white party that celebrates our personal transcendence of racial attitudes, pointing out that racism would still be a problem even if every single white person was a nice non-racist in their personal lives.

“This is an honorable, if maddening position. Among academics, we’re akin to feminist women, constantly mocked in the media as man-hating feminazis. But the frantic dismissal is also an indication of how much feminists matter, of how they have to be constantly ridiculed because, well, they tend to be right.”

Some writers also see the literary spat as stemming from academic interdisciplinary hostilities. In his riposte to *The History Man*, Stan Cohen (1977) says it “certainly says a great deal more about the state of the British liberal intelligentsia than it does about the state of sociology.”

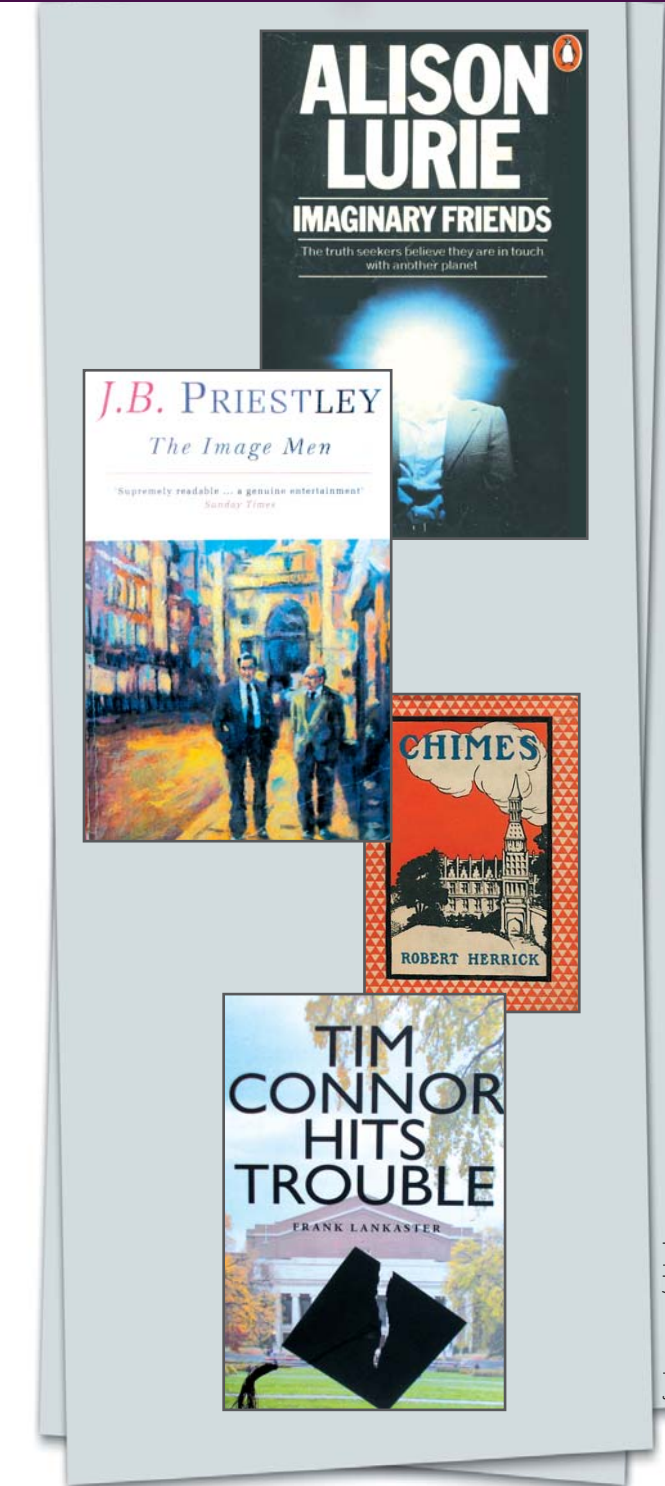
He writes that the “greater visibility of the social sciences over the last decade is conceivably leading to a replacement for that traditional devil of the intellectuals, the psychiatrist.” But “psychiatrists have become too institutionalized and their mythology exhausted...economists and political scientists have too faceless and grey an image for dramatic portrayal...sociologists are the obvious targets for the Literary Men; there is typecast association with trendiness, sexual permissiveness, pro-drugs, student militancy and all brands of political radicalism.

“The story of the war so far: the History Men [ie sociologists] are making a savage attack on the values of the liberal-humanist regiment of the Literary Men. The Literary Men are struggling bravely, but have neither the theoretical nor the practical resources to succeed.” The discipline is more varied than Bradbury would allow in his “parochial, snide and superficial” work he says.

Perhaps the lesson is never upset someone who buys their ink by the barrel, as the old saying goes, and it’s never truer than with sociology’s portrayal by writers over the decades: Kramer finds that “the high priests of the tribe, at least in academic circles, are likely to be members of English, Literature, and/or Creative writing departments. It may be significant that of the 21 novelists who created the fictional sociologists reported on in this essay, at least 17 hold or held long-term positions in these academic bastions of human learning.”

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. We might add that one of the reasons sociologists get a better showing from film directors, is that they haven’t spent their lives in academia.

When sociologists depict themselves in fiction, the result are



freeimages.com/sylvie.sh

less hysterical. In his book, *Tim Connor Hits Trouble*, Frank Lancaster (a pseudonym of a retired sociologist) has his main character escape a failing marriage to a new job in the Social Science Department at Wash University. Far from finding tranquillity, Tim is drawn into a conflict between an older rebel academic, Henry Jones, and the ambitious Head of Faculty, Howard Swankie, giving the author a chance to air debates about higher education in which Tim is portrayed as neither ineffectual nor sinister. Perhaps this will start a trend to a more realistic portrayal of the discipline? • by Tony Trueman

References

- John Kramer: ‘Images of sociology and sociologists in fiction’ *Contemporary Sociology*, May 1979
 Michael Kimmel: ‘Good Sociology Makes Lousy TV’ *Contexts* Spring 2008
 Stan Cohen: ‘Sociologists, history and the literary men’ *Sociology*, September 1977

Our favourite books

Network has traditionally given this spot to established academics to share the books that have most influenced their work.

In this issue, we open it up to those who are starting out on their careers: four students and early careers researchers tell us about one work they have found inspirational....

Nikki Matharoo, of the University of Northampton, writes about *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee

My father, aged 23 and a proud Sikh, arrived in England at Heathrow Airport in the summer of 1962, not long after this book was published. He came with only £1 in his pocket and successfully negotiated a taxi lift to Royal Leamington Spa, which would become his – our – ‘desh par desh’ (home from home). During the 1960s and 1970s, while endeavouring to be seen as British and fighting to be accepted, he simultaneously experienced the intensity of racism, prejudice and discrimination.

He was a successful businessman in India, running his own brick factory with his brothers and earning himself a degree in history from University of Delhi; and yet Britain at the time saw him fit only to be a storesman and a labourer in a cement factory – jobs worthy of his skill set, or of his colour? Bear in mind this was during the same time when ‘no blacks, no Irish’ was accepted practice in rented accommodation and other spheres.

Sociologically, this particular book is important because it parallels my father’s experiences and shows how society repeats itself. Thematically the book details the manifestation, the escalation and the festering of the structure and functioning of an intolerant society. The book is about exclusion – the ‘power of the mob’ – the norm being the mob. The mob does not like anything that does not look like it or behave like it.

The book illustrates eloquently how the characters Boo Radley, Tom Robinson, Atticus’s family and Ewell do not fit the norm. Moreover, and of paramount importance, it signifies the sociological effect that different morals and values, beliefs, principles, education and social class can have in society.

For example, Atticus’s children, Scout and Jem, remain perplexed about how to maintain faith and belief in humanity. They cannot comprehend how Tom Robinson can



Nikki Matharoo and Jalal Pour

be convicted of spurious rape charges which have been clearly fabricated – but our subconscious bias makes judgements based on our assumptions and interpretations, which can effect our socialisation and symbolic interactions and, therefore, we tend to like people who are similar to us.

Like my father, Atticus, in his defence of Tom Robinson, is impassioned about achieving equality and justice. Both my father’s and Atticus’s poignant stories provide a way to experience empathy and compassion for their experiences. As Atticus says: “You never really understand a person, until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

While I was writing this review, in the context of Pegida and immigration in Germany, another high profile book was sold out within minutes. That book was a reprint of *Mein Kampf* – it doesn’t feel like we have come a long way does it?

Jalal M. Pour, LSE, writes about *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and Its Method*, by Emile Durkheim

Whenever I tell anyone that I am a sociology student, I invariably find myself faced with the question, what is sociology?

To be perfectly honest, despite studying the subject for a number of years now, this is still a question I struggle to succinctly and coherently answer. My reply often consists of some variation on the admittedly vague and unenlightening notion that it is ‘the study of society’, which is usually met with blank



facial expressions and polite head nods.

Perhaps as a consequence of this lack of common understanding of sociology, I think it is fair to say that the sociological imagination is not particularly pervasive in society. For me the dominant – maybe even ‘default’ – worldview is one of implicit meritocracy, by virtue of which many patterns and phenomena are understood solely in terms of individual effort, aptitude and reward; for instance, that the top one per cent are there because they are the brightest and worked the hardest, while those at the bottom deserve to be there because they are lazy or unintelligent. To many, the notion of social structures seems alien – if not outright absurd.

It is with this in mind that Durkheim’s *The Rules of Sociological Method* fits in. Although it is a classic in the field, it was only relatively recently that I came to study this text in detail. The aspect of the book that had the most significant impact on me is the discussion of social facts. Here Durkheim clearly and powerfully articulates what I had been trying to explain and argue on many occasions: that some phenomena cannot be explained purely through individual, psychological, or economic factors, but must be understood sociologically. To a great extent, in this regard we as sociologists are all indebted to Durkheim’s efforts in establishing sociology as a distinctive academic, and indeed scientific, discipline.

Having studied Durkheim’s text, I now feel better equipped to explain what sociology is and what it investigates.

There is also a more profound point to be made here. I think the fact that individualist explanatory frameworks dominate the

Island Discourse



Our choices



Sara Louise Wheeler and Peter Phillips

public imagination can be seen partly as a failure of the discipline of sociology. That being said, I believe the arguments advanced by Durkheim in *The Rules* can still help us, and me, to challenge this and articulate an alternative, and so it is for this reason that this text is especially important to me.

Sara Louise Wheeler, of Bangor University, writes about Laurel Richardson's *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*

I'd missed out on the early career fellowship by a whisker and wasn't quite sure what to do next. My proposed interdisciplinary ethnographic project had a

strongly autobiographical component, as did most of my research ideas. Thus despite frequently being complimented on the originality, and even brilliance, of my "unusual" ideas, I somehow always seemed to fall just outside of the scholarly spheres in which I was seeking to gain a foothold. Then one day a colleague forwarded me an email about a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry*; it was a celebration of the work of Laurel Richardson – and "they like autoethnography", she said. My initial questions were thus: who is Laurel Richardson and what might autoethnography be? However it didn't take me long to discover the answers to both of these questions, and in the process I found a sociological field where I felt truly at home for the first time.

Laurel Richardson is Professor Emerita at Ohio State University, and she publishes prolifically. In her landmark chapter: 'Writing a method of inquiry' (*SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*) she boldly admitted to finding most qualitative research "boring". This chapter (and its updates) have become a sociological phenomenon, revolutionising the way in which many qualitative scholars choose to express themselves in presenting their work. Laurel has also published an astonishing number of journal articles – and it was through these that I initially discovered her genius.

Browsing with my iPad I downloaded a couple of her articles; they were so incredibly engaging that I sat transfixed, devouring them one after another. I was particularly fascinated by her work using poetics, and it was this that led to me tracking down the book I have selected here. *Fields of Play* showcases some of Laurel's most extraordinary sociological works, exquisitely accompanied by 'writing-stories' and reflections. She provides illuminating insights about the origins of the 'social sciences', including the false dichotomy between them and the literary genres. Eschewing such 19th century notions, Laurel also defiantly advocates writing in the first person and engaging in researcher reflexivity.

This book has become a valuable resource for my research and teaching, and it is also a treasured possession. In writing *Fields of Play*, Laurel built a sociological left-field, and invited other like-minded sociologists to come and play. Playing in this field enabled me to publish articles which genuinely

reflected my voice; her work showed me the way and gave me permission to write sociologically and creatively.

Revd Peter Phillips, of Cardiff University, writes about Gary Fine's *Authors of the Storm*

This book is like the weather itself, significant both globally and to individuals. It speaks to the whole discipline of sociology as well as to the individual researcher. It is also beautifully written, surpassing much occupationally-based fiction.

Gary Fine unwittingly supplied the link which eventually held together the theory framework in my PhD thesis. Holding ethnography and theology in equilibrium in my occupational ethnography of Anglican prison chaplains was proving difficult. As a practitioner in the field I needed to construct a theoretical framework which would defamiliarise my researcher role from the values and practices of my practitioner role.

I had read Fine's *Ten Lies of Ethnography* (1993) and moved on to *Kitchens* (1996). Fine's literary qualities next led me to *Authors of the Storm*. His location of meteorologists as public servants who "strive for autonomy and hope to serve according to their beliefs of what this public needs, while operating under a set of constraints imposed upon them through an organisational hierarchy" seemed to engage with one of my problems.

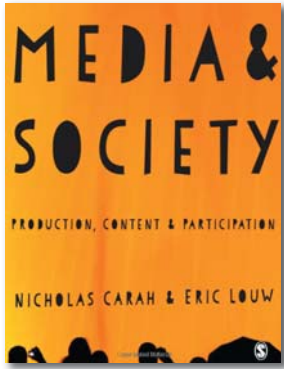
It allowed for a larger, indeterminate and unpredictable presence to be implied, if not actually invoked, in ethnographic studies of religion as it is practised in settings which are public but, nevertheless, hidden. Its relevance as a model of how ethnography might encompass theology lies in the antithesis between the scientific-technological and the mystical-magical elements of forecasting.

Fine shows how a grand concept can sit behind ethnography, available to be referenced in context – but not in control. He observes that "the environment is treated as an authentic reality: a domain that can be described but not bridled."

Fine's words were the key which opened my theoretical framework: "Truth is a social phenomenon...the assertion of a truth claim is not the same as the truth itself." He has authored the possibility of theology as a stage-set in ethnographic practice, indicating how we might examine its flexibility and that of its practitioners as actors when they are buffeted by the storms which arise in the public space.

Our reviewers' choices:

- 1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960), Lippincott**
- 2. *The Rules of Sociological Method: And Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method* by Emile Durkheim (1895), Free Press edition (1982)**
- 3. *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life* by Laurel Richardson (1997), Rutgers University Press**
- 4. *Authors of the Storm* by Gary Fine (2007), University of Chicago Press**



Media and Society: Production, Context and Participation

Nicholas Carah and Eric Louw

SAGE

2015

352 pages

£75 hbk, £24.99 pbk

ISBN: 9781446267684



Book

The teaching of undergraduate media sociology requires good introductory books that interrogate the media as part of society. Seen from this perspective, there is much to like in Carah and Louw's new book. For one thing, the book title speaks to the concerns of sociology, placing 'society' to the front and centre, something it does in its initial discussion of pluralist and Marxist models.

However, given the practice of minimising discussions of society in media sociology scholarship, it is perhaps unsurprising that after these initial chapters the book follows many of the contemporary books in avoiding reference to the term. Further, I notice it misses an opportunity to frame the book within innovative debates about the media and society relationship found in new theories of 'mediatization' (Hjarvard 2013), for example, or explicit calls to re-engage with particular existing sociological approaches (Hesmondhalgh and Toynbee 2008).

That said, the book gains a considerable degree of capital from the choice of its contents. *Media and Society* offers 14 chapters and in many of these retains an interest in the operation, and explicit and implicit use, of control and power. The introduction offers a brief insight into the book's contents, leaving a discussion of power and representation to set the tone of the early sections (chapter one). In a similar way to other books, this discusses concepts from neo-Marxism thinking that were prevalent within early cultural studies scholarship (i.e. ideology and

hegemony), which explain media culture as one "structured in dominance". Among these ideas there is also a reference made to the concept of 'ritual'. However, the chapter and the common discussion formula it uses sell short the rich sociological tradition of studying media ritual that, as informed by Durkheim, is alive and well in discussions of media events (Katz and Dayan 1992) and political ritual (see Matthews 2016).

What follows is of greater value to the sociological reader and reflects recent developments. The book discusses media industries (and their political and economic contexts – chapters two and four), media production and media professionals (chapters three and five), news-making and those who seek to influence it (chapters six and seven), branding and advertising (chapters nine and 10), social media (chapter 11), mobile communication and everyday life (chapter 12) and discussions of media audiences (chapter 13). Its attempt to think about the autonomy that media users appear to acquire in the context of debates about power, expressed in the book as a process of "managing participation" (chapter 14), offers an interesting concluding discussion.

An effort to bring together themes about audiences' media use and the operation of media power is exactly what a book of this title should (but many fail to) achieve. In addition to meeting what I assume are basic requirements of a good introductory manual, this book feels contemporary and sociological through the topics it chooses to review. In its discussions of media industries, production

and professionals for example, the reader is offered insights from the developing scholarship on cultural-creative industries and cultural work.

More specifically, the book discusses recent developments in studies of media and identity, and insights from the study of social media (mobiles included) in everyday life. Usefully, this captures the tensions between 'autonomy' and 'constraint' (key sociological interests, of course) that characterise thinking about these technologies. Hence *Media and Society* is a really useful book for the undergraduate sociologist who is aware of their discipline and is interested in the media – and it will help other media undergraduates who, in my experience, require a good dose of what C. Wright Mills termed the "sociological imagination".

• *References can be found at* www.britisoc.co.uk/members/network

■ **Dr Julian Matthews**
Department of Media and Communications
University of Leicester

Sans Papiers:

The social and economic lives of young undocumented migrants

Alice Bloch, Nando Sigona
and Roger Zetter

Pluto Press

2014

200 pages

£67.50 hbk, £20.50 pbk

ISBN: 9780745332611

This is a timely contribution to our understanding of the social and economic experiences of young adults living undocumented in the UK. The authors set themselves the task of exploring the intersections of globalisation, undocumented living and migration in the lives of young adults. This is an interesting perspective and relates to the body of work on youth transitions, identity and migration and the ways in which social, cultural and structural forces intersect with people's experiences.

A key part of the compelling readability of this book is the way in which participants' voices are embedded throughout. This successfully carries the reader along with the

authors' analysis and discussion, presenting what are nuanced, complex processes in an accessible manner.

This book flows logically, the chapters connecting to each other and to the overall central themes of their research (with the exception of chapter two, which – although written excellently and with stimulating content about the construction of illegality, borders and immigration policy – fails to resonate enough with the data).

Based on research led by the authors, this book is sensitive to the rich data collected, skilfully using it to illustrate the heterogeneous experiences of irregular migrants. Through their analysis Bloch,

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

Why Current Affairs Needs Social Theory

Rob Stones

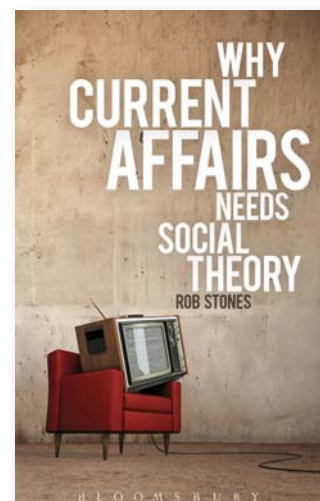
Bloomsbury

2015

224 Pages

£50 hbk, £16.99 pbk

ISBN: 9781780933481



ends

The title of the book captured my interest as I often engage in discussions with colleagues, students and friends about the use of social theory to understand everyday issues. I therefore read the book with interest to see Stones' perspective on how audiences can engage with current affairs and news more critically.

The book is structured into five chapters, a preface and a conclusion. The text offers a critical overview of reading current affairs by considering how audiences can use a number of conceptual tools to achieve a more critical and detailed analysis of current affairs. The preface introduces the reader to the aim of the book, which is to improve audience's engagement with current affairs and news. The idea that social theory can be useful and be adopted to analyse the news is forcefully discussed and a clear, concise discussion of the book's aims and structure is presented.

Chapter one explores the spectacle and entertainment aspect of much of television

news. It looks at ways of seeing beyond the immediate spectacle of the news by discussing the contextual field, introducing Iyengar's and Entman's approach. Here Stones presents a framework for the development of social theoretical news to enable audiences to critically interrogate news media in a methodical and systematic way.

Chapter two explores contextual fields and social theory, introducing some techniques such as mapping to discuss this more broadly. Using examples from the media, the contextual field is demonstrated and discussed.

In chapter three the audience skills of analysis are presented. Drawing on *Borgen*, a Danish political drama, Stones discusses the skills that the audience already use when watching political dramas in order to understand the plot and context and the complexity of timelines in dramas. Making use of information from episodes, he argues these skills could be used to offer a more critical reading of the news. In discussing political dramas more broadly, Stones considers how audiences can build up information and how these skills can be adopted in discussing or analysing current affairs.

In chapter four the issue of interpreting single reports is discussed, utilising the

concept of interdependence. Using examples of four reports of current affairs, the concept of interdependence is modelled as a way of enabling a more detailed discussion and analysis of single reports. Here figures and diagrams are skilfully used to discuss the different types of contextual fields and network of relations involved in current affairs.

Chapter five analyses the bigger picture by considering issues of power, hierarchy and gaps in news reporting, again offering tools for considering how audiences can analyse such events.

Overall the text demonstrates the importance of contextualisation for generating understanding of current affairs through presenting theoretical guidelines and tools to audiences. This is not an easy task and for those new to sociology or social theory the book will be difficult to follow and read. However, it is not necessary to understand or follow every argument or idea presented in the book for it to be useful to audiences who want to begin to critically engage in current affairs.

■ Dr Philippa Velija

Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Sport
Department of Psychology and Sport
York St John University

Sigona and Zetter are able to explore how participants' home countries shaped their departure, their arrival in the UK and their subsequent experiences. Through the data collected the authors have been able to show the way in which many came to occupy the liminal space of being an undocumented migrant.

The reader is also shown how being undocumented shapes the social and geographical mobility of participants and how being marginalised affects young adults' personal and social development, as legitimate opportunities for education, family and security are blocked.

One way which *Sans Papiers* achieves this is

by highlighting the ways in which being undocumented makes participants vulnerable to violence from partners and unable to access health and education, and how this shapes the aspirations and plans young people had for their future.

Sans Papiers is a timely book that would appeal to a wide audience beyond scholars focused on migration, youth transitions, undocumented status, biography and identity. The structure and writing style ensure this book is accessible to those who are interested in understanding the experience and meaning of what it is to live undocumented in the UK.

This is a book which discusses how

structural forces negatively affect undocumented young adults in the UK, highlighting how their creativity, endurance, maturity and resilience are deployed to negotiate their lives in the UK. The findings of *Sans Papiers* are developed critically in its conclusion, where the authors consider the way in which policy and legislation produce vulnerabilities, and identify possibilities for addressing this.

■ Catriona Hugman

PhD Candidate
Northumbria University

Valued as a sociologist

Dr Michael Ward writes about his work as a visiting professor at a Canadian university, studying young men's experiences of higher education

Since the 1990s, there appears to have developed an increased anxiety in the global north about boys and young men, centring on a range of issues including their supposed educational underachievement (when compared to girls), high rates of suicide, poor mental health and involvement in offending and anti-social behaviour. However, very little work has been conducted on the difficulties and challenges facing young men from working class backgrounds who achieve academic success and enter higher educational institutions.

Given this background, and my previous work on marginalised young men, I was invited to take up a place as a visiting professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, during the autumn semester to conduct a small study on marginalised young men's experiences of higher education.

I was based in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department, which was quite an honour as Simon Fraser was the first university in Canada to develop and credit a women's studies programme, and one with a strong interdisciplinary feminist and activist tradition. My colleagues were friendly, engaging and – due to the programme's interdisciplinary approach – varied in their research interests. These included sociological approaches to gender, work, trans-activism, fat studies, the women's movement in France, feminist science and technology studies, refugees and migrants to Canada, critical race and gender theory, theatre and performance studies, bioethics, disability studies, and environmental politics.

A fellow British colleague in the department, Jennifer Marchbank, helped organise my visit and navigate the huge amount of university bureaucracy (which surpassed the Open University's) to allow the study to go ahead. Jen also gave me a crash course in the Canadian higher education system and the way the university did things. At Simon Fraser a year-round teaching



timetable was in operation, with students able to study modules in the summer as well as in the more traditional autumn and spring semesters. They therefore had a huge amount of choice, compared with students at a UK university, about when to study, and they could opt to take between one and six classes each semester. However, some students I met found this flexibility a problem and most

‘Some interviews were challenging and quite upsetting, due to some of the educational experiences that they disclosed’

were well into their fourth year of undergraduate study, and some into their fifth!

I was pleasantly surprised with the amount of young men who came forward and wanted to speak to me. I interviewed 13, who were either the first in their families to go to university, from a low-income background or in receipt of low-income family grants. As an educator, some of these interviews were challenging and quite upsetting, due to some of the educational experiences they disclosed. Some participants told me that they felt under huge amount of pressure from their families to succeed in order to become the main breadwinner for the household, others had issues around not fitting in at university due to feeling out of place and some reported feeling disillusioned because of the

apathy they perceived their professor had for the subjects they were studying. I also ran a follow-up focus group with six of these young men to explore issues of masculinity further.

A key theme which was present was that all respondents seemed to acknowledge that the undergraduate degree alone was not enough. All the participants talked about further qualifications and the need to gain at least a Masters degree in a saturated graduate job market. In my previous research with working class young men in the UK, this wider awareness was not present.

What also emerged from these interviews was that for many young men the university experience offered the opportunity to perform masculinity in a different way to that of their home communities through academic labour. But this did not fit easily with their home communities, which were often situated in less affluent areas, or with other men in their families who were in more traditional low-income ‘male’ occupations. What I also found highly surprising was that these young men at the university did not engage with the ‘lad’ or ‘bro’ culture image student life. It would appear from these interviews that they simply didn't have the time for it, financially or culturally.

Alongside the research, I gave guest lectures, was interviewed for the student radio station, acted as a discussant on a film panel and took part in seminars, talks and grad classes. While I was there the head of department, Lara Campbell, kindly arranged an evening event in downtown Vancouver to launch my book, *From Labouring to Learning, Working-Class Masculinities, Education and De-industrialization*. I was quite overcome by the amount of people who attended and the interest in the book.

The experience of working internationally and in such an amazing city as Vancouver, with its wonderful beaches, mountains and people, was truly inspirational. To be able to spend my time doing research, writing, giving talks and having the feeling of truly being valued as a sociologist by colleagues in the department will stay with me for a long time. I think I must have left an impression on the students in the department as well, as for a leaving gift I was presented with a bag of Canadian goodies and a badge with a photo of my favourite sociologist on it, Erving Goffman!

• Dr Michael Ward, of the Open University and Cardiff University, is BSA Education study group and stream Convener. To read more about his experience, see his blog: <https://sociologistontour.wordpress.com>

In defence of research

Dr Zoe Morrison, of the University of Aberdeen Business School, writes about her research with the armed forces reserves



BSA members currently working in the UK as academic researchers are often asked about the impact of their work. Few would question that as sociologists we seek to influence future policy through understandings of current practices. As researchers, a more interesting question might be how policy developments are impacting upon our own practices.

To explore this question, let's consider the example of defence. Every five years or so, the outcomes of a Strategic Defence and Security Review are published as the definitive statement of policy direction until the next review. Whilst other government departments will influence ways in which the security resources outlined within the review are deployed, the focus is on enacting rather than renegotiating the content.

When I first started researching experiences of change in the armed forces, I frequently drew upon military and work sociologies. As a social scientist working with defence, I often found myself feeling defensive. My colleagues working on health-related studies did not necessarily see a connection with my other interests, as the military world seemed discrete from civilian society. For many, it was a world they did not know or did not endorse. Opportunities for conference presentations were few and some reviewers were harsh, dismissing the relevance of such a small group in society. Similarly, the defence community is a small one and it can take time to build collaborative relations as the new girl on the block.

Two reviews have since been published and defence policy continues to evolve. The research questions of interest have changed, as have the politics behind the policy.

One significant policy shift has been the increasing emphasis on more effective collaboration between different constituents of the defence and security services. Increased use of labour flexibilisation strategies has involved a headline-grabbing

phased redundancy programme for full-time service men and women. This downsizing has been accompanied by increased recruitment and deployment of part-time military personnel (reserves). Reservists are being offered enhanced roles, new training opportunities and improved terms and conditions of military employment, together with an accompanying increase in expectations. A new emphasis on working together, known as the Whole Force Approach, is resulting in a blurring of boundaries between civilian and military roles, and related policy changes have extended across the full extent of the defence workforce.

Implementing these policy changes is challenging. One response to these challenges is the Future Reserves Research Programme, funded by the British Army, the Ministry of Defence and the ESRC: <http://tinyurl.com/h4b92qg>

As work began, the potential for the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts became clear, and a decision was taken to integrate its four complementary projects into a single programme of work. This approach allows the programme to draw on a range of social science perspectives, from work informed by sociological and geographical studies of the military (Professor Rachel Woodward, Newcastle), family and medical sociologies (Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Edinburgh), to the sociology of work (Dr Sabir Giga, Lancaster) and security studies (Dr Sergio Catignani, Exeter). The programme further benefits from input by an Advisory Group of senior colleagues, including the BSA's own President Professor Lynn Jamieson.

The programme is one example of increasing integration between military and civilian work. Academics collaborate with defence staff to help identify and understand issues affecting members of the reserves across and between their different life worlds, including family life, civilian employment and

military service. Defence staff are getting to grips with sociological concepts that may be new to them and consensual ways of working that are sometimes unfamiliar yet productive. Military personnel have been generally positive when participating in interviews and discussions, and seem to have valued the opportunity to talk with someone who is interested in their experiences and understandings.

As a new team we have encountered some bumps along the way. Obtaining ethical approval has been slow. We've found that familiar everyday research practices may require review and revision, such as how we balance the expectations of civilian and military funding partners, and how we research with dispersed communities. Opportunities for conference presentations still need careful consideration and the case for researching this small section of society has been questioned.

Fortunately, we're committed to moving forward together. As findings begin to emerge, we are turning our attention away from issues of process to the exciting application of conceptual frameworks informed by sociological scholarship in its myriad forms.

The increasing complexities of the policy spaces sociologists explore may require us to step beyond our preferred ways of working and familiar traditions. There may be times when we need to cut across the tribal configurations of our own professional habitus to fully consider difficult social questions. Can we do more to exploit the potential of team social science to investigate our big issues? And if so, what difference will we make?

Defence policy has impacted my practice, almost certainly in ways I am not yet fully aware of. The encouraging point is that senior UK defence personnel are receptive to the contribution of sociology, and the programme is an example of sociologists influencing social development. The military are an enduring institution within societies throughout the world. Even as a function of democracy, the politics of defence will never be easy. Only through evidence-based argument and theoretically grounded discussion can we influence institutional norms, tacit assumptions and embedded conventions so that the military may be more reflective of the society it serves to defend.

As sociologists do we only study the aspects of the world that concur with our politics? If so, are we not ourselves seeking to prioritise and normalise our own viewpoints? I have learnt to understand policy over time, even if at times the politics behind that policy are personally difficult.

Some thought for food

Dr Rebecca O'Connell, Co-convenor of the Food study group, writes about a conference she attended on 'Our food future'



On Thursday 18 February I participated in the Food Standards Agency's 'Our food future' summit that was held in conjunction with Food Standards Scotland at the QE2 Conference Centre, London.

The event was attended by over 200 leading experts who were asked to consider what needs to be done to ensure 'the best food outcome' for people in the UK. This impressive interactive event attracted over 5,000 online participants, whose live questions to panellists were ably delivered by the facilitator, BBC News journalist and presenter Julian Worricker.

There were some excellent presentations, including one by Professor Chris Elliott, Director, Institute for Global Food Security, Queen's University Belfast, who demonstrated the fascinating ways in which food fraud overlaps with other criminal activity and is intimately linked to the price of food. It was a surprise to many that olive oil is the world's most commonly adulterated food.

Professor Charles Godfray, Director, Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food, also gave an excellent presentation, which considered the implications for citizens in the UK and globally of increasing food prices to reflect their 'true' costs to people and the planet.

He argued that, while the impact of higher food prices on UK households could be mitigated by national policies that reduce income inequality, the evidence from the majority world is that food price rises are associated with civil unrest and 'food riots'. The question I would have asked, if I had had the opportunity, was whether it was unthinkable that there could be intervention in global food markets to

mitigate these effects, too.

Many of us working in higher education appreciated the hot lunch and ready availability of cakes and biscuits that are often sadly absent from university events in the current era of economic retrenchment and reduced research funding.

Afternoon workshop breakout sessions sought to engage participants with the research, conducted by TNS BMRB, that formed the basis for the summit. Those attending different workshops seemed to have different experiences.

‘It was a surprise to many participants that olive oil is the world's most commonly adulterated food’

For my part I felt somewhat frustrated by a focus (again) on downstream interventions that seek to help people make better 'food choices'.

The reality that health and nutrition are only part (and often not a big part) of the reason people eat as they do may be a 'stale' point for some round the table, but it does not make it any less important for those who wish to change eating habits.

Likewise, the well worn point that the interests of the food industry, people and those elected to protect them, do not easily coincide is more not less relevant in the context of the increasing commercialisation

of food. There appeared to be great appetite for new technologies such as mobile 'apps' but much less evidence about their effectiveness for addressing obesity and nutritional inequality.

Back in the auditorium, though, a particularly important intervention that gave the organisers food for thought was a question about the difference it makes for food policy to address 'citizens' rather than 'consumers'.

Whilst Catherine Brown, Chief Executive, Food Standards Agency, did an excellent job of summing up, including weaving in a quote from Margaret Mead, many were left wondering about the plan for 'next steps' and the apparent absence of Public Health England.

Suggestions from some guests at the drinks reception that we need to reinstate the Ministry of Food were well received, with Jamie Oliver a clear frontrunner for the top position.

Further details about the Food Standard's Agency's 'Our food future' campaign can be found here: www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/ourfoodfuture

• Dr Rebecca O'Connell is a Senior Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education. She is Co-convenor of the BSA Food Study Group and principal investigator of a European Research Council-funded study 'Families and food in hard times' (foodinhardtimes.org).

For information about the BSA Food study group see: [www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/foodscoff-\(scottish-colloquium-on-food-and-feeding\).aspx](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/foodscoff-(scottish-colloquium-on-food-and-feeding).aspx)

Would you like to contribute to Network? We are looking for letters, opinions and news articles.

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

Tackling food topics

Raquel Ajates Gonzalez and Rebecca Wells explain what makes a new food systems programme innovative



The first innovation that IFSTAL (the Innovative Food Systems Teaching and Learning programme in the Department of Sociology, City University London) offers relates to its core approach to inter-university collaboration. We are a consortium of seven English higher education institutions working together to offer post-graduate students a new framework to think about the food system.

IFSTAL is a three-year project funded by Hefce and led by Oxford University. The other members of the consortium are City University London, Reading University, Warwick University and the Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health, itself a consortium of three institutions: the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Royal Veterinary College.

IFSTAL is open to all post-graduate students, both Masters and PhD, at the seven participating institutions, studying anything from sociology to engineering and all the subjects in-between. Inter-university research projects are common in higher education, but not inter-university teaching across programmes and disciplines, and this is an area for collaboration it sets out to explore and maximise.

Having access to leading thinkers on food across different higher education organisations is a big plus for postgraduate students enrolled on the programme. Additionally, they get the opportunity to collaborate with other students from different institutions who are studying related food or agriculture subjects.

Sociology students work with nutritionists. Veterinary students talk to food policy students. Anthropologists debate with geographers and engineers. It is fascinating to see how diverse disciplinary traditions and perspectives come together to discuss a wide

range of food-related topics.

And that is where another innovation comes in: interdisciplinarity. The programme recognises that the massive problems facing the global food system (climate change, food poverty, malnutrition, obesity, animal welfare, food shortages, food waste – need we go on?) cannot be addressed by one discipline alone. Indeed, the relatively new field of food systems thinking suggests we address these problems and challenges by thinking about the food system in a holistic way, taking other perspectives into account and using diverse methodologies.

We are confident that those working at the sharp end in the food world – in food policy, nutrition, agri-economics, crop science or animal welfare – need employees who are capable of solving food challenges by using the food systems techniques and skills this programme offers. There is also an active attempt to involve workplace partners in the IFSTAL network through away days, summer schools, panels of practitioners and post-graduation internships.

Our third innovative aspect comes from the learning technologies we are employing to enable students and staff from seven institutions on seven distant sites to work and learn together. This aspect has seen all of us travel on a very big learning curve.

We have been fortunate to have in our institutions some extremely helpful and creative educational technologists who have come up with a dedicated virtual learning environment shared across all seven institutions.

The virtual learning environment can support discussions, blogs, teaching materials, podcasts, quizzes and anything else programme members want to put there.

This learning space is available to students across seven institutions; each participant has a profile, with searchable research interests enabling them to interact and collaborate

with other students or staff working on similar topics.

Our core series of lectures is webcast live across lecture theatres in each of the institutions and is also available, live-streamed, to members who are not able to attend in person. These lectures have made use of interactive live polling technologies as well as live tweeting and question and answer sessions which span the participating institutions. Our international students, from places as distant as US and Zimbabwe, are also able to join and contribute to the discussion.

The project, which started in September 2015, currently has over 300 registered participants – we are hoping to recruit more from the widest possible pool of disciplines and foster deeper engagement on the virtual learning environment.

IFSTAL has an innovative approach to systems-thinking beyond reductionist models. In contrast to early systems-thinking approaches, the programme calls for an inclusive and wider understanding of food systems, encouraging students to think beyond their own disciplines, to consider non-obvious drivers and effects, and normally-unheard voices.

This is not just about qualitative and quantitative traditions working together; it is also about bringing different epistemological and ontological approaches to the table to shed light on the complex prism that food is. Being humble about our disciplines' power to improve the food system, while at the same time celebrating different contributions and becoming aware of diverse disciplinary approaches, are indispensable pieces in the convoluted jigsaw puzzle of food.

• Raquel Ajates Gonzalez (pictured above left) and Rebecca Wells are Teaching Fellows on the IFSTAL programme: www.ifstal.ac.uk

An invaluable journal

We are sad that our thoroughly enjoyable four years as editors of *Sociological Research Online* have come to an end. It has been a pleasure to work with all those connected to the journal and, in particular, our authors and the members of the editorial and management boards. Our editorial board – and others who regularly referee for the journal – have been essential in ensuring that the reviewing process runs smoothly, and that, wherever possible, authors receive a timely decision on their papers.

During our time as editors we also established an associate editorial board, which has helped with both turnaround times on submitted articles and ensuring we have had sufficient breadth of expertise to call upon in the review process. The associate board also offers early career researchers a potentially valuable opportunity to become involved with the journal and gain reviewing expertise, before progressing to membership of full editorial boards on SRO or elsewhere.

One of our aims when we became editors was to raise the profile of the journal, and we hope we have made some progress here. It now has a good social media presence

As they hand the baton on, Rachel Books and Paul Hodkinson write about their four years as editors of the journal *Sociological Research Online*...

(with over 2,000 followers on Twitter: @SocResOnline) and we also established a *Sociological Research Online* blog, which features short pieces summarising articles or special sections for a lay audience. Many of the blog posts have been widely read – often reaching school teachers and various ‘research users’, as well as academics.

Our role as editors also extended to running a number of courses (through the BSA) for postgraduate and early career researchers on how to get published in journals, as well as publishing from a PhD more generally. These have been well-attended, and we look forward to seeing the work of those who participated in these

sessions in print over the coming years!

We have also worked hard to ensure a good flow of special sections (which are run in addition to the general articles in most issues of the journal) on a range of subjects, from ‘the matter of race’ to ‘political sociologies of sport’, to ‘modern girlhoods’ and ‘Mass Observation as method’.

We have also run a number of successful rapid response calls – on, for example, the London Olympics and Paralympics, poverty porn and the politics of welfare reform, and, most recently, the Charlie Hebdo affair. These calls continue to provide a good opportunity for sociologists to apply their knowledge and analysis to topical debates.

It is now exactly 20 years since the first edition of *Sociological Research Online* was published. Though much has changed since then, we believe it remains a highly distinctive and invaluable journal, whose strong links to the BSA are still of great importance.

We’re delighted to be succeeded as editors by Charlie Walker and Steve Roberts and look forward to seeing the journal evolve under their stewardship.

...the new editors, Steve Roberts and Charlie Walker, write about their plans for the journal

Mirroring Rachel and Paul’s sadness in ending their tenure as editors, we were delighted to be informed late last year that our application to take over the editorship had been successful. Naturally, Rachel and Paul were extremely helpful in the handover process and continue to make themselves available to us for advice as members of the editorial board, as do the rest of the board and the journal’s management group at the University of Surrey and SAGE.

We both have a background in research on youth transitions to adulthood, although in rather different contexts. Steve’s work has explored British young people’s experiences in the areas of education, employment and housing, paying special attention to the changing form and function of social class and also masculinity.



Charlie, on the other hand, came to sociology from Russian and East European studies, having conducted research on transitions to adulthood amongst working class youth in Russia, and their experiences of training for work in the manufacturing and service sectors. These research backgrounds, alongside our editorial work on books and for other journals, have meant that we have always worked across a number of sub- and inter-disciplinary areas – the sociologies of youth, education, work and gender – which we hope will equip us well for our new roles as editors of *Sociological Research Online*.

In the short time we have been editors we

have already been able to work with colleagues on a number of special sections planned for 2016-17, and we recently launched our first rapid response call for papers on the impact of, and forms of resistance to, urban gentrification. In the coming months we are also planning to start work on a special section on future directions for different areas of sociology, with articles from leading authors in a number of key fields.

Like our predecessors, we want to ensure that the journal maintains and builds on its reputation for publishing high-quality, original research. We also see the journal as a vehicle for contributing to the public mission of sociology, engaging with and lending the sociological lens to pressing political matters from around the globe and communicating these analyses beyond academics to policy-makers, the wider community of sociology, and of course the general public. We hope to add podcasting to the growing range of media platforms the journal uses to reach different audiences and further promote the discipline as something that can influence the shape of society, rather than just study it.

Sharing good teaching

Kandy Woodfield, Head of Social Sciences at the Higher Education Academy, writes about its role

The government's Green Paper consultation on the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework and other changes to higher education closed in January. As yet the precise form a new TEF might take is unknown, as is its potential impact on sociological teaching and learning. Whatever methodology the TEF uses there is little doubt that closer scrutiny will be paid to the quality of teaching in higher education in the UK.

Commenting on the government's Green Paper, Professor Stephanie Marshall, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy, said: "We welcome the government's focus on teaching and look forward to contributing to the consultation process. Students have the right to excellent teaching to achieve their full potential, and this will come about through a shared commitment by institutions and individuals to improvement. We are clear that those involved in teaching must be given the incentives and rewards, as well as the environment for continued professional development so that students have access to the best possible learning experience throughout their time in higher education."

Whatever your personal or institutional position on the TEF, we can probably all agree that hearing fresh ideas, sharing good practice, supporting innovation and making connections with others teaching in our subject area is a positive move.

At the Higher Education Academy we have been supporting excellent practice in teaching and learning for over a decade. Over 70,000 academics in the UK are Fellows of the HEA. Our management of the UK Professional Standards Framework enables us to support individual academics who seek recognition for their teaching and learning activities, and connect those Fellows with others working in their discipline to share ideas and solutions to common challenges.

Research excellence has often been the key focus of learned societies and institutions, but as the TEF moves closer it's critical that we have a renewed focus on teaching and learning. Increasingly, members of learned societies will be looking to their disciplinary



communities to support their teaching and learning activities. Together we can reflect on the challenges we face and work to develop creative and innovative solutions.

At the HEA we develop resources and frameworks to support continuing professional development, consult with departments and institutions which are seeking to transform their teaching and learning, commission research to ensure relevant findings are shared widely with the sector, and run a range of continuing professional development events.

‘There is little doubt that closer scrutiny will be paid to the quality of teaching in higher education in the UK’

These activities aim to connect disciplinary communities and to showcase the work of our Fellows and National Teaching Fellows. We are also forging relationships with a range of learned societies, such as the BSA, working in partnership to ensure teaching and learning issues are kept to the fore.

In the summer of 2015 the HEA commissioned research with 23 learned societies, including the BSA, to explore the teaching and learning issues being faced by their members: <http://tinyurl.com/jfukqkj>

Our research found that while there is strong support for learning about teaching when academics begin their careers, lecturers feel less supported as they progress.

Participants also identified a clear need for

subject-specific rather than generic continuing professional development in teaching and learning. Lecturers participating in the study identified some key challenges including: encouraging self-directed and independent learning among students; supporting students in developing the study skills and critical thinking skills needed for higher education; keeping students engaged; managing increasing class sizes; developing new digital literacies to keep pace with technology; and managing wider diversity in the student body.

In recognition of the importance of ongoing continuing professional development at a disciplinary level, throughout this academic year we are delivering a range of discipline and subject-specific activities designed to support and connect social scientists looking to share good practice in teaching and learning. Our social science cluster is deliberately broad, allowing knowledge sharing between subject areas, but we also ensure each discipline has a range of focused resources to draw on.

Events range from an annual Social Sciences Teaching and Learning conference to a Dean's Summit and Network. We also have a series of Fellow-led workshops in the social sciences and we've introduced a range of new resources including pedagogic research, toolkits and case studies aimed at supporting innovation and quality in teaching. Also, we offer up-to-date research on higher education pedagogy, a monthly research webinar series and a regular Twitter chat (see #HEAchat). Our goal is to provide continuing professional development and networking opportunities which inspire and support those involved in learning and teaching across a wide range of subjects and roles.

• BSA members can find discipline specific resources and information here: www.heacademy.ac.uk/disciplines/social-sciences

• If you are looking for resources concerned with teaching sociology in higher education then you can visit our Knowledge Hub:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/search/site/sociology

• We have a range of Frameworks and toolkits: www.heacademy.ac.uk/frameworks-toolkits

• We recently published a series of over 60 personal stories from our National Teaching Fellows, exploring innovative and creative pedagogies in all disciplines: www.heacademy.ac.uk/nf-innovative_pedagogies

• You can find details of our events, including Fellow-led workshops, here: www.heacademy.ac.uk/social-sciences-events

• You can contact us on Twitter @HEA_SocSci or by email: social.science@heacademy.ac.uk

Linking up with China

Professor Xiangqun Chang, Director of the CCPN Global academic charity, writes about a recent event run to bring the UK and China closer together

British sociologists and the BSA as 'honorary organiser' were important contributors to the only social science event run during the 2015 'Year of UK-China cultural exchange'.

This cultural exchange, agreed by the Chinese and British governments, involved a series of artistic and cultural events in both countries. In the first six months the UK organised events in China which reflected its culture, and China did the same in the UK in the rest of the year.

As part of the latter, the Second Global China Dialogue was held at the British Academy on 23 and 24 November, organised by CCPN Global, of which I am Director.

In addition to CCPN Global, the University of Westminster and Fudan University of China, where I hold visiting professorships, were organisers. The BSA and the Chinese Association of World Politics Studies were honorary organisers. Support also came from the Cultural Section of the Chinese Embassy to the UK and the Beijing Office of the British Council, as well as from many other institutions inside and outside of China.

More than 50 academics, politicians, consultants, professionals and entrepreneurs from China and the UK, as well as from France, Belgium, Hong Kong and the USA, gathered together to discuss the theme, 'Transculturality and new global governance'.

The conference was also the only event in the Year of UK-China Cultural Exchange to have a global focus. It was prompted by the keywords 'cultural creativity' which the two countries had adopted when they planned the series of high-level cultural activities in order to promote cultural communication and industrial collaboration, as well as mutual understanding and friendship.

The conference extended this concept to comprise 'social creativity,' taking this as an invitation to extend the dialogue between the two countries to have a wider applicability to the global issues that every country must address today.



In the spirit of dialogue, all the sessions included speakers from China and the UK. Xiang Xiaowei, the Minister Counsellor, Culture Section, Chinese Embassy to the UK, opened by posing a number of questions for the participants, such as how an economic development model with a linear structure can be suitable for every country and how global governance can work when countries

‘It showed an event can bring institutions together to build a global society across disciplines and cultures’

are so diverse.

Lord Timothy Clement-Jones, Deputy Chair of the All Party Parliamentary China Group, addressed the impact of income inequality and the way this might shape the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. He looked forward to China's forthcoming chairing of the G20, with its extraordinarily wide agenda in terms of global governance.

Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, talked about the European Union's relationship with China, and what Britain leaving the EU might mean for the EU's relationship with China. Professor Martin Albrow, an Honorary Vice President of the BSA, highlighted the aspiration of the conference of enhancing the concepts for mutual understanding that a

new global governance would need.

Keynote speeches were given by Professor Bing Zheng, Executive Vice-President, Jilin University and Vice-President of the China Sociological Association, and Professor Kerry Brown, the newly appointed Director of the Lau China Institute, King's College London.

Professor Bing (pictured left) called for "cultural communication and regional co-operation in globalisation" in order to resolve the cultural contradictions between globalism and nationalism, and idealism and utilitarianism. Professor Brown posed the question, "do political elites in China matter anymore?" pointing to the huge increase in the frequency of visits to foreign countries from the time of Mao Zedong to the present. He said there should be comparative perspectives between China and other countries on the issues of nationalism and national identity and their effects on global governance.

Professor Yu Shuo, founding Director of the Centre for Transcultural Communication at Hong Kong Polytechnic, emphasised that transculturality involved the creation of new possibilities for global governance.

British sociologists contributing included Professor Sam Whimster, of London Metropolitan University, who spoke on the difficulties of transcultural conversation, Professor Scott Lash, Goldsmiths, on China's new ruralism, and Professor Albrow on global governance as public philosophy. Dr Maurizio Marinelli, Co-director of the Sussex Asia Centre at University of Sussex, discussed transcultural discourses on advancing global prosperity.

The closing speech was given by Professor Gil Delannoï, of the Centre for Political Research, Sciences Po, France, on 'From dialogue to co-operation – building instead of talking'. He suggested that global governance should begin with cooperation at different levels. An institutional framework was urgently required to tackle environmental problems, security, and stability, especially for world markets.

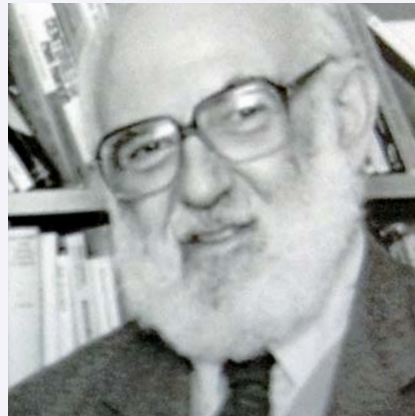
The founding of the *Journal of China in Comparative Perspective* and two book-series by CCPN Global were announced at the event – dual language publications with the aim of bridging the divides between Chinese and Western social science.

I believe the conference exemplified how an event run by a charitable academic organisation can bring mainstream institutions together to build a global society across disciplines, institutions and cultures.

– Xiangqun Chang, sociologist and social anthropologist, and Honorary Professor at

Ronnie Frankenberg, 1929-2015

Professor Mike Savage writes about his colleague Ronnie Frankenberg, who died late last year



In the 1950s, British anthropologists normally conducted their fieldwork overseas. Ronnie Frankenberg, who has died aged 86, broke the rules by focusing on the former slate-mining community of Glyn Ceiriog, then in Denbighshire and now in Wrexham county borough, for his first book, *Village on the Border* (1957).

In doing so, he showed how anthropological methods could be effectively applied to British society. His choice of subject was fortuitous: he had intended to write his doctorate on the Caribbean, but his outspoken communist sympathies led to him being deported from Barbados, and the Vice-chancellor of Manchester University demanded that he study within a day's journey from the city. Needing to conduct his research in a non-English language to satisfy the conception of anthropology at the time, he hit upon the settlement in the Ceiriog Valley, not far beyond the Cheshire border.

Frankenberg's study savaged the nostalgic romantic belief that small-town communities were cosy affairs, as well as the view that there was a settled sense of hierarchy and that people knew their place in a traditional and deferential social order. He emphasised instead how the town was riven with conflict, and showed how these tensions played out in the town's day-to-day life – notably in the affairs of the local football club. He also showed how migrant 'strangers' – far from disrupting community life – could actually assist solidarities within the town by acting as arbiters of local issues, though only where the locals gave them licence to.

His thinking was deeply influenced by Max Gluckman, founder of the department at Manchester University that gave rise to the wider Manchester school of anthropology, who had inspired him to

abandon his undergraduate medical studies at Cambridge. However, Frankenberg introduced new themes, notably an emphasis on the power of gender inequality.

The success of *Village on the Border* enabled Frankenberg to straddle anthropology and sociology in a way that has not been achieved in Britain before or since. His 1966 book, *Communities in Britain*, surveyed the growing number of community studies that had been carried out since the second world war and restated the fundamental division between urban and rural social life. This standpoint flew in the face of much urban theory, which was beginning to play down this division because of the steady proliferation of urban sprawl into the countryside, and so the book did not prove as significant as his earlier study.

By this time his energies had become devoted to academic leadership. In 1969, after working as education officer for the National Union of Mineworkers in south Wales, and then at Manchester and at the University of Zambia, he was appointed inaugural professor of sociology at Keele University, and helped make it one of the leading departments in Britain.

There Frankenberg used his authority to build a genuinely joint department of anthropologists and sociologists, and was inspired by the student protests of the period to develop the innovative workshop seminar system. Students met their lecturers at the start of term and hammered out a weekly curriculum and reading list together. Lecturers were not empowered to impose their views on the students. When I taught at Keele in the early 1990s, I responded to enthusiastic student demand to introduce a workshop on the sociology of Stoke-on-Trent, which proved to be one of my favourite teaching experiences.

This teaching format proved very effective

in allowing new and emerging topics to be rapidly put on to the curriculum. It helped make Keele a pioneer in key areas of research in science and technology studies, in visual culture, and in the sociology of time. Frankenberg also edited the *Sociological Review* from 1970 to 1994, positioning it as a more maverick outlet than its rivals, and held visiting positions at the University of California, Berkeley, and Case Western Reserve, Ohio.

Born in London, Ronnie was the son of Louis, a businessman, and his wife, Sarah (née Zaions). From Highgate school, north London, he went to Cambridge. A talk by Gluckman persuaded him to switch from anatomy, physiology and biochemistry for the first part of his bachelor's degree to archaeology and anthropology. In 1950 he moved to Manchester, where he gained a Master's in social anthropology and undertook the project in north Wales that brought him a PhD (1954).

His later research moved away from communities: in 1985 he became professor emeritus, but continued at Keele as Director of its Centre for Medical Anthropology until 1995, leading the first Master's course in the UK devoted to this topic. This move was linked to his Marxist-inspired concern with how power relations affected the experience of health, and he did fieldwork in Tuscany on health traditions and reforms. His last post at Keele was as a part-time tutor in medical social anthropology (1996-2000); he was also a part-time tutor and professor of medical anthropology at Brunel University (1989-2000).

After this final retirement, he continued to live in north Staffordshire, which he had come to identify with while at Keele. It was also where his third wife, Pauline (née Hunt), whom he married in 1977, conducted pioneering research on gender and class relationships in coal-mining villages.

In 1953 Frankenberg married Alison Sherratt, and they had two daughters, Ruth and Rose-Anna. In 1964, he married Joyce Leeson, and they had a daughter, Helen. Both marriages ended in divorce. With Pauline he had a son, Adam, and daughter, Rebecca. Ruth, also a sociologist, died in 2007. He is survived by Pauline and his other children.

• This obituary was originally published on *The Guardian* website on 4 January 2016 and is reproduced with Professor Savage's kind permission.

www.theguardian.com/science/2016/jan/04/ronald-frankenberg

Sociology in and of Birmingham: Studying and Celebrating Diversity

Tuesday 5th April 2016, Birmingham Midlands
Institute 7-9pm. (Margaret Street, B3 3BS)

Sociologists study how humans shape and are shaped by the social world, from local to global. Birmingham is of particular interest for many reasons, including its exceptionally diverse, 'superdiverse', population of different ethnic and cultural groups. Sociology is generally about analysing rather than celebrating. Yet decades of research give reason to celebrate this diversity; not least, by showing how failure to do so in popular culture feeds the social costs of racism.

This is an open public event chaired by Lynn Jamieson, the President of the British Sociological Association on the eve of their annual conference which is taking place in Birmingham. All with an interest in Birmingham are welcome and invited to participate in discussion, from those who have never heard of sociology to long-term sociologists.

Short presentations:

'Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, photography and diversity' Professor Matthew Hilton, University of Birmingham

'Mapping Birmingham's Superdiversity' Dr Nando Sigona, University of Birmingham and a contribution from Julia King, LSE.

'Superdiverse businesses in Birmingham' Professor Monder Ram, OBE, University of Birmingham

'Resisting Racism in Birmingham', Dr Kehinde Andrews, Birmingham City University

'Social Class and Inequality in Birmingham' Professor Karen Rowlingson, University of Birmingham

These presentations will be followed by open discussion with: Kehinde Andrews, Birmingham City University; Monder Ram, Karen Rowlingson, Nando Sigona University of Birmingham and Jill Robinson, University of Aston, a former Head of Regional, European and International Affairs for Birmingham City Council

- **This event will be FREE to all; but please register**
- **To register, please visit www.britisoc.co.uk**

For further information please contact Rachel at:
E: events@britsoc.org.uk

Letters to the Network Editor

Professor Eileen Green, BSA Chair, writes about the BSA's recent Presidential event on feminism

Event 'a wonderful example' of promoting sociology

Negotiating my way through the gloom of a wet winter, I am warmed by memories of attending a very successful BSA Presidential event presided over by Professor Lynn Jamieson in December. The title, 'Sociology and feminism,' attracted almost 200 participants to Kings Place, a venue by the canal in London's Kings Cross.

The key speakers, Finn Mackay, Stevi Jackson and Karen Ingal Smith, delivered a very lively introduction to the main themes, but it was the bold approach to turning the event into a dialogue with the audience that stole the show. The President encouraged groups of audience members to talk about their ideas and experiences in dialogue with each other, as well as with the speakers.

Challenging issues, including domestic violence, gendered identities and experiences of sexism and racism were debated in accessible language whilst drawing upon sociological approaches as reference. A wonderful example of promoting sociology in everyday life.

Sitting beside rows of young people taking sociology at A level from London schools including Graveney, La Sainte Union, Burntwood and Ursuline High, I was struck by the vibrancy of their individual and collective views and most impressed by the range of challenging questions directed to



Professor Eileen Green

both the speakers and their peers. The excitement in the air was palpable and culminated in many of the audience joining the speakers and President on stage at the end for group photos.

More events like this will help the BSA to both promote sociology outside the academy and to ensure that the association is sustainable via the recruitment of the next generation of members.

The exciting atmosphere of the evening is summed up by a comment from the Head of Social Sciences from Burntwood School: "We thought it was brilliant! Thank you so much for inviting us. Our students haven't really been to events like yours before and they thoroughly enjoyed it and benefited from it enormously. We are starting a Sociology Society (club) on the back of this."

Article on domestic violence 'ironic and frustrating'

Page 19 of *Network* Autumn 2015 began with an article about how "Polygamy raises [domestic] violence risk [by men]" based on research in Africa. How ironic, frustrating and demeaning, then, that page 18 started with a column ("Saudi Family Secrets Exposed") which repeated victim-blaming and inaccurate claims about domestic violence in Saudi Arabia.

Domestic violence is not, as "Sociology professor and family consultant, Abdulrazaq Al-Mubarak" claims, a "relatively new phenomenon in Saudi Arabia" nor is its existence connected to social media. Domestic violence has been on the Saudi public agenda for at least a decade (prompted by the abuse of TV presenter Rainia Al-Baz and work by women like Maha al-Muneef of the National Family Safety Program) and has existed, as it has in all societies, since before records began. The incidence of domestic violence in Saudi Arabia is estimated to be between 20 per cent (Barnawi 2015) and 32.7 per cent (Affi et al 2011) although both these studies are likely to be underestimates because they rely on victim disclosure within hospital settings.

Both studies found that around 40 per cent of women experiencing domestic violence are unable to do anything about it. It would take very little sociological imagination to link the findings about polygamy in Africa to domestic violence rates in Saudi, another country which allows polygamy. Indeed Barnawi also found that polygamy increases the likelihood of a woman experiencing domestic violence.

Network, as the British Sociological Association in-house publication, should show better understanding of domestic violence as a global, gendered issue riven by self-justifying excuses (such as it being caused by women's failure to meet gendered expectations of care) and attempts to demean and deny the work of women globally seeking to eradicate this social, and individual, harm. Neither study appears to have been published in an academic journal – the sources are newspapers and there are no links to, or indeed titles for, the studies. It is deeply concerning that *Network* is presenting this sort of material as legitimate sociological research without proper challenge or critical thought.

– British Sociological Association Violence Against Women Study Group
Professor Marianne Hester, University of Bristol
Dr June Keeling, University of Chester
Dr Emma Katz, Liverpool Hope University
Dr Louise Livesey, University of Gloucestershire
Louise Pennington, Everyday Victim Blaming
Dr Carole Wright, University of Leeds

Would you like to contribute to *Network*? We are looking for letters, opinions and news articles.

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or on 07964 023392; or
BSA Chief Executive Judith Mudd at:
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Tailback story flows freely

A traffic jam in France that lasts for months is the backdrop for the latest in our series on works of art that have influenced our readers

The latest in our series in which contributors talk about a work of art that has inspired them sociologically is on *The Southern Thruway* (La Autopista del Sur), a short story written by the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar (1914-1984) in 1966. This influenced the 1967 film by Jean-Luc Godard, *Week End*.

The story depicts a traffic jam on the main highway back to Paris from southern France on a summer Sunday afternoon. At first it seems like an ordinary delay, with people checking their watches, moving forward a few yards and waiting for the police to clear the road. But as we read, hours turn into days and days into weeks and months. The characters form groups, formulate plans, interact and network. They turn their attention from how to get out of the traffic jam to how to cope with it, beginning to lead an alternative life on the road.

Julian Molina, a doctoral student at the University of Warwick, writes about why the story is important...

The epigraph at the beginning of Julio Cortázar's short story, *The Southern Thruway*, is a provocation to respond to negotiations in social research: "Sweltering motorists do not seem to have a history...As a reality a traffic jam is impressive but it doesn't say much." Can social researchers treat fiction as a resource when the events depicted do not seem to say much?

Perhaps what will be interesting to social researchers reading this story, in which the timeline is stretched out to last a few weeks, is the provisional reality formed during a traffic jam en route to Paris.

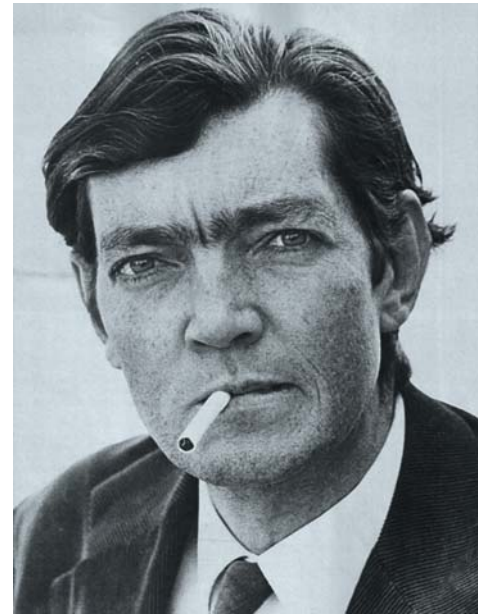
Between the cars, ad hoc negotiations, compromises and provisional arrangements emerge as neighbours form groups in order to locate water and food, maintain body heat, and re-purpose vehicles, looking towards the distant lights of the city as they do so.

The drivers and passengers initiate, maintain and develop arrangements as they guess when the traffic jam will be over, listen to rumours about the likely causes of delays, and act on announcements from the police forces and sightings from lookouts, their patchy knowledge circulating between different groups.

Being caught in an interrupted traffic flow, a reliable sense of time and distance fades as precise measures remain elusive. The lights of Paris on the horizon provide a point of reference to think about what takes place when arrival plans are delayed. In this sense the story describes how to pay attention to practices of waiting. When the regular flow of cars has slowed down to near standstill, discourses of mobility, speed and acceleration become inoperative ambitions. An alternative is found in the notion of static time.

The story pauses to reflect upon the affordances of transportation, information and social networks in producing provisional arrangements for dwelling in this static time. In a similar way that Justin Remes writes about what he calls a "cinema of stasis", suggesting that movement is only contingently related to film, *The Southern Thruway* takes a seemingly commonplace event, a static and unmoving traffic jam, and describes the forms of associational life that are generated in and around it.

In this point of pause there are possibilities for social research to pay attention to and ask questions about subjects without history and events that don't say much. What is going on when nothing seems to be happening? What methods hold reality together during this time? What practices go unnoticed and taken for granted when nothing seems to be happening? These are questions to ask as the traffic jam finally dissolves and the drivers accelerate towards the city: "each minute that slipped by convinced him that it was useless, that the group had dissolved irrevocably".



Julio Cortázar, by Sara Facio, 1967

‘What is going on when nothing seems to be happening? What methods hold reality together during this time?’

The Southern Thruway (La Autopista del Sur)

short story by Julio Cortázar (1914-1984)

Published in 1966 in the collection

Todos Los Fuegos El Fuego, Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, and first published in English in 1973 in the collection *All Fires the Fire, and Other Stories* by Random House

Which plays, books, films or artworks have fired your sociological imagination, and why? All submissions, from a paragraph to a full article, are welcome. Contact tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk

Events listing

5 April - 9 September

Not all events can be listed here – for a complete and up to date list see:
www.britisoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events.aspx

5 April	Birmingham Midlands Institute	BSA Presidential Event – Sociology in and of Birmingham: Studying and Celebrating Diversity
5 April	Aston University	Postgraduate Forum Pre-Conference Day
6-8 April	Aston University	BSA Annual Conference: Global Societies, Fragmenting and Connecting
13 April	Manchester Metropolitan University	Early Career Forum Regional Event – Ethnography in Action: Bouncers, Boxers and Drug Dealers
15 April	University of Edinburgh	Early Career Forum: What Next for Childhood Studies? Pushing Boundaries
16 April	University of Birmingham	One-day Symposium: Early Career Feminist Academics' Experiences of the Academy
22 April	Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh	Alcohol Study Group: How Do Different Disciplines Talk About Alcohol and How Can We Work Better Together?
28 April	Manchester Metropolitan University	Youth Study Group Research Development Workshop for Research Students and Early Career Researchers
5-6 May	University of Surrey	Climate Change Study Group: Re-Configuring Everyday Practices for a Post-Carbon World
12 May	University of Birmingham	Regional Postgraduate Event: Researching Social Inequality Across the Social Sciences
18 May	Lancaster University	Violence and Society Study Group Symposium: Towards Zero Violence? The Decline of Violence Thesis
19 May	Teesside University	Regional Postgraduate Event: Precarious Places, Precarious Lives
27 May	University of St Andrews	Regional Postgraduate Event: Examining Normativity in Consumer Culture and Labour Markets
8 June	Birmingham City University	Media Study Group Seminar: Gender, Crime and Media
10 June	De Montfort University	Human Reproduction Study Group Annual Conference
4-6 July	University of Bristol	Bourdieu Study Group Annual Conference
12-14 July	Lancaster University	Sociology of Religion Study Group Annual Conference
6-8 September	University of Leeds	Work, Employment and Society Conference
7-9 September	Aston University	Medical Sociology Annual Conference

NETWORK

Spring 2016

“ My father was a successful businessman in India, running his own brick factory and earning a degree in history – yet Britain saw him fit only to be a storesman and a labourer in a cement factory ”

“ Ah, sociology. Oh, you’ll go far. That’s if you live...just don’t let your college degree get you killed – I’m liable to be killed along with you ”

“ Just because you’ve written a paper doesn’t mean that the world is going to sit up and take notice. You’ve got to put on events and you’ve got to have networks within Parliament, and work with pressure groups. It’s a job in itself ”

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