



HE today: Breaking out of the 'Triangle of Sadness'

Also in this issue:

- **Les Back reveals what sociologists can learn from music**
- **Is social work applied sociology?, a new study group asks**
- **Unhomed alone: 20 years of Desert Island Discourse**
- **A project to understand the lives of Afghan refugees**

Sociology from polity

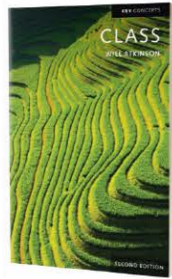
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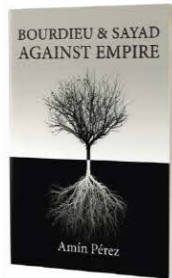


Bourdieu and Sayad Against Empire

Forging Sociology in Anticolonial Struggle

Amin Pérez

Translated by Andrew Brown
"This book is a revelation. Pérez uniquely offers insights into the anticolonial thought of two major social theorists of our times: Pierre Bourdieu, and his collaborator and friend Abdelmalek Sayad. Anyone interested in social theory, anticolonialism, and postcolonialism will have to read and reread this innovative, illuminating, and clarifying work of committed scholarship."
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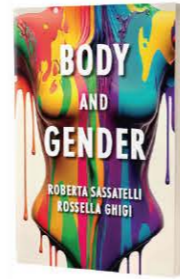


Body and Gender

Sociological Perspectives

Roberta Sassatelli, Rossella Ghigi

"*Body and Gender* is a comprehensive feminist and sociological account of how the body is socially constructed as gendered. Informative and thoughtful, it would be a broadly useful text for gender studies and embodiment studies."
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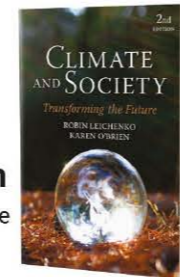
Climate and Society

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Diana Liverman, University of Arizona
ISBN: 978-1-5095-5929-9 | May 2024 | £19.99



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UK higher education is trapped in a 'triangle of sadness', according to one vice-chancellor — an event looks at how to break free

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graphic: AI-created imagery



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£4m video project will work with Man City, the LSO and War Museum

University of Salford: Professor Garry Crawford has led a successful application for a €4 million international research project that will evaluate the European video game industry.

The project, called Gamehearts, involves researchers working with the owners of Manchester City football club, Imperial War Museums and the London Symphony Orchestra to explore how gaming can be extended into the arts and cultural sector.

Researchers from Salford and the universities of Vienna and Tampere, Breda University of Applied Sciences and Wrocław University of Economics and Business will work on the project, which is funded by Horizon Europe. The team will also work with Ubisoft, the French video game producer.

"With Gamehearts we want to probe how gaming can be a driver for innovation and increased accessibility," said Professor Crawford.

"We will explore how gaming technology and influences could be extended into the wider arts and cultural sector, in a way that helps create new interactive experiences that can open up cultural engagement to wider audiences.

"What makes Gamehearts unique and exciting is that we will be working with some of the main players in the world of gaming



Professor Garry Crawford

as part of the research – Ubisoft is one of the biggest games companies in the world.

"We will be working closely with the City Football Group, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Imperial War Museums, who have been carefully selected as three case studies that will be used to explore the current and potential value of a closer working relationship between the video game and wider creative industries."

The project will study the economic value

of the video game industry and the jobs it creates. It will look at how museums use video game exhibitions and draw on game-related technology in their galleries, and will assess how virtual reality could be used to enhance or replace the live experience. It will also study how football clubs can use the metaverse to expand their audience reach.

Game policy will be researched by the Austrian team, the games industry's business practices and models by the Polish team, audiences and players from a psychological perspective by the Finnish team, while the Dutch team will build experimental games.

Gill Webber, Executive Director of Imperial War Museums, said: "Our recent War Games exhibition at IWM London was the UK's first at a major museum to ask how the reality of war is represented in the virtual world of a video game. Through this project we hope to further develop our relationship with the video games industry, and to explore how video gaming technology could be used to enhance IWMs' future public programming."

The team at Salford, which leads the project along with the University of Vienna, comprises: Dr Gaynor Bagnall, Dr Victoria Gosling, Professor Seamus Simpson, Dr Maria Stukoff and Professor Crawford.

Gamehearts began in January, and will last for three years.

EVs, climate crisis and Nepal: news round-up

Lancaster University: Professor Monika Büscher has contributed to a new report which says there must be a systemic shift in the way we travel if the UK is to achieve its net zero mobility target.

The report says that relying on a switch to electric vehicles alone will not be enough to meet transport decarbonisation targets.

The report, entitled Bridging the Gap, suggests instead that car use of any kind in the UK needs to be reduced by at least 20 per cent by 2030. Public transport or shared mobility systems need to be made more attractive than cars, particularly for journeys between five and 30 kilometres.

The study concludes that development focused on improved public transport and travel-friendly environments provides the most likely pathway to net zero transport.

Professor Büscher was among researchers who worked with Stantec, a global leader in sustainable design and engineering services, and the research network DecarboN8 on the report. Other contributors included Transport for the North, Transport for Greater Manchester, and Bury Council, as

well as Leeds, Newcastle, and Lancaster universities. The report can be downloaded at: <http://tinyurl.com/2dwvbufd>

Brunel University London: Dr Rohini Rai has been awarded funding to bring the culture of the Himalayas to the general public.

Dr Rai will work closely with the UK-based diaspora communities from Nepal and north-east India to create a digital exhibition using archival materials on the Himalayas.

The project will include a workshop that will engage the public in storytelling through dancing.

The £8,000 funding is given by the British Academy and the project is created with the Royal Geographical Society. It began in October and will run for a year.

"I am particularly glad that this project will open up academic and cultural spaces to under-served minority communities, particularly the indigenous Himalayan diasporas from Nepal and north-east India in the UK," said Dr Rai.

University of Manchester: A new Master's programme on the behavioural and societal change needed to tackle climate crisis and other human-induced environmental problems is being launched this year.

The MA course, entitled 'Social change, environment and sustainability', will be based within the Sociology Department and the university's Sustainable Consumption Institute. It will be led by sociologist Dr Daniel Welch.

The course will teach students about the changes needed to tackle the climate crisis, as well as general social science research skills. It will be grounded in sociological theory.

Students will study the need to shift society towards a focus on sustainability. Taught subjects include energy use, biodiversity and the limits to economic growth.

It is expected that graduates of the course will work in areas such as corporate social responsibility, government, non-governmental organisations and charities.

Over 90% of Black Britons report racial discrimination at work

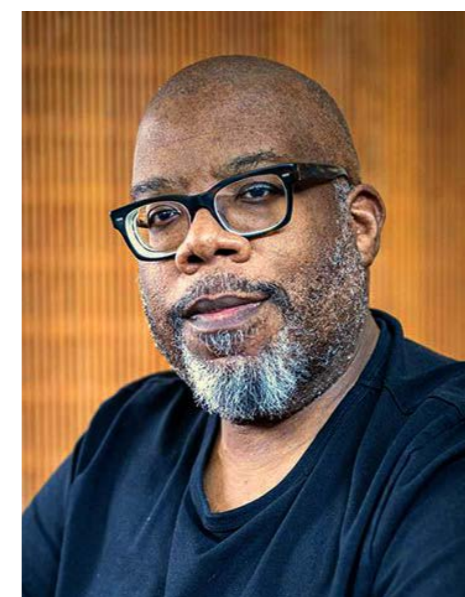
University of Cambridge: Almost half of Black Britons take little or no pride in 'Britishness' and nearly nine in ten have experienced racial discrimination at work, a survey has found.

More than 10,000 Black British people were interviewed on a range of social and cultural issues, from media and politics to mental health, for the survey, which was carried out for the Black British Voices Project.

The research found that 45% of those polled said they did not feel proud to be British and 98% said they had compromised self-expression and identity to fit into the workplace, for example by adapting their speech or hairstyle.

On education, around 95% of respondents believed the UK's curriculum neglects Black lives and experiences, and less than 2% thought educational institutions took racism seriously. Around 87% expected to receive sub-standard levels of healthcare because of their ethnicity and 79% believed the police still used stop and search unfairly against Black people.

When asked about media representation,



Dr Kenny Monrose

90% of respondents felt that advertising had improved over the last decade when it came to portraying Black culture.

However, over 93% said that Black men

and women were negatively stereotyped by the media, film and television.

Dr Kenny Monrose, the lead researcher, said the findings, published in a 104-page report and presented at a House of Commons event, should spark a "conversation into the unequal outcomes that members of Black communities face in Britain.

"If there's 10,000 people speaking, attention needs to be paid. You might not want to agree, but you've got to listen to what's being said."

Many interviewees still saw England's St. George's Cross flag as a threat. "When I see the [St. George's Cross] hanging out the window, I'm crossing the road. I don't feel safe," said one. "I don't think they understand that to us it's a symbol of fear and racism."

The research was conducted by Cambridge's Department of Sociology in collaboration with *The Voice*, Britain's only national newspaper for Black communities, and the London-based management consultancy I-Cubed, founded by two Black women.

More details are at: www.cam.ac.uk/stories/black-british-voices-report

Public is split on immigration

University of Oxford: Research has shown that public opinion on immigration is highly divided in the UK.

A briefing for Oxford University's Migration Observatory carried out last year found that 52% of people thought that immigration numbers should be reduced.

It also found that public opinion on immigration was split, with 33% of participants responding that it was 'bad' or 'very bad', compared to 31% who thought immigration was 'good' or 'very good'.

Around 21% of people aged 18-24 considered immigration to be 'bad' or 'very bad', compared with 40% of those aged 45-54. Half of university-educated participants considering immigration to be a good thing, compared with 22% of those without a degree.

Although concern about immigration had declined following the 2016 Brexit referendum, data now suggested that opposition to immigration was increasing again.

In April 2020, just 5% of survey participants were concerned about immigration, and concern about the pandemic displaced all other issues in 2020-21.

However, data from June 2023 showed that 21% of people now felt immigration

was a major issue facing the country.

Attitudes to immigration in the UK are more positive than in many other European countries, however.

While 17% of Brits thought that immigration made a country 'a worse place to live', the figure was higher in Belgium at 21%, 27% in France, 49% in Hungary and 52% in the Czech Republic.

The report was co-authored by Dr Lindsay Richards in the Sociology Department.



Dr Lindsay Richards

£1.6m grant to study inequality

Newcastle University: The ESRC has given a £1.6 million grant to a team of researchers at four universities to investigate the health and care inequalities experienced by marginalised minority communities in the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

The team will explore how health and justice systems could be improved to reduce the stigma and inequality experienced by these communities.

The evidence generated by this project will be presented to policymakers, practitioners and the public.

The research will be carried out by the North of England Research Consortium, led by Dr Stephanie Scott, of Newcastle University, and Dr Michelle Addison, of Durham University.

Other researchers from Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria and Manchester universities are involved.

The fourth annual meeting of the International Association of Vegan Sociologists, held online last year, is available to view on YouTube at: <http://tinyurl.com/yfyw8kyb>
The association was founded in May 2020 by Dr Corey Wrenn, of the **University of Kent**.

Parents spending more time with children, but class gap widens

University of Essex: Parents from all social classes in Britain are spending more time on childcare than ever before, a new study says.

The research also found a widening gap in the amount of childcare time between mothers who went to university and those who did not.

The study, published in the *Journal of Time Use Research*, spans 54 years and is the most extensive analysis of the time UK parents spend on caring for their young children.

Using data from the United Kingdom Time-Use Survey, the study showed that mothers and fathers from all social classes and all educational backgrounds increased the time they spent caring for their children under 12 years old between 1961 and 2015, with a significant rise between 1974 and 1983.

In 1961, mothers spent an average of 96 minutes a day on childcare, which increased to 162 minutes a day in 2015, the latest dataset available.

Fathers gave 18 minutes to childcare a day in 1961, which increased to 71 minutes a day in 2015.

In 1961, there was no gap in childcare among educational groups, but the study found that from the 1980s there was a growing disparity between mothers who went to university and those who did not. By 2015 university-educated mothers spent an extra 20 minutes a day on childcare, or about 120 hours per year.

The study found that by the 1980s women in the professional class, most of whom also went to university, were able to devote the most time to childcare despite the fact that they had the longest working hours.

"Childcare is a key factor in human



Dr Giacomo Vagni

development, so if children are not getting an equal amount of parental time, they are not getting the same life chances," said lead author Dr Giacomo Vagni.

"This should be a cause for concern because differences in child development are a cause of long-term inequalities. This is something policymakers should pay more attention to and look at what can be done to level up the amount of time mothers and fathers spend on childcare.

"One reason for this increase in childcare is the growing competitiveness for places at top universities and in the job market. Parents have become increasingly aware of the difficulties that their children will face in their working life.

"It is worth noting that this responsibility

still falls heavily on mothers. Fathers are lagging behind in terms of care responsibilities."

One explanation for the class disparity, said Dr Vagni, was that the unpredictable nature of unskilled jobs could make it difficult for working class parents to dedicate time to childcare, especially when they have non-traditional working hours such as early mornings, late evenings or weekend shifts.

"Physical demands of working class jobs may also leave parents feeling more exhausted after work, limiting their ability to dedicate as much time to childcare compared to parents in white-collar jobs."

Childcare was defined as a wide range of tasks, from feeding and playing to teaching and cleaning.

Liz Cain appointed head of MMU sociology

Manchester Metropolitan University: The Sociology Department has appointed Liz Cain as Head of Department and Professor John Goldring as Deputy Head.

Over the past 18 months the department has welcomed 17 new staff, some as replacements for leavers and others as it grows in response to an increase in student numbers.

The new staff are: Dr Liviu Alexandrescu, Carla Cordner, Lynn De Santis, Jessica Elias, Dr Sarah Fox, Dr Ben Hall, Sophie Harris, Dr Katie Hunter, Dr Nazneen Ismail, Karen Kent, Dr Simon Massey, Dr Lucy Newby, Anna Norton, Richard Remelie, Dr Chris Waugh, Dr Adam Westall and Jessica Williamson.

Staff have had books published recently, including: *Welcome to Social Theory*, by Dr Tom Brock; *Adverse Childhood Experiences and*



Liz Cain

Serious Youth Violence by Dr Paul Gray, Dr Deborah Jump and Professor Hannah Smithson; *Substance Use, End-Of-Life Care and Multiple Deprivation: Practice and Research*, edited by Dr Gary Witham, Professor Sarah Galvani, Dr Sam Wright and Dr Gemma

Yarwood; and *Long-Term Recovery from Substance Use: European Perspectives*, edited by Professor Galvani, Professor Alistair Roy and Amanda Clayson.

Recent completed research projects by staff include 'Supporting solutions for South Asian women: developing models for alcohol support', by Professor Galvani, Dr Fox, Professor Surinder Guru and Naima Khan. This study involved looking at the experiences of South Asian women who use alcohol and other drugs, and the support offered to them.

<http://tinyurl.com/234mhffp>

Also, Dr Haridhan Goswami leads an international research network dedicated to improving wellbeing policies for children in South Asia, more details at:

<http://tinyurl.com/32b8kjc6>

Gaza statement 'deplores systematic destruction of human communities'

A statement signed by around 300 social scientists, including the outgoing BSA President, Professor Gurminder Bhambra, has condemned the Israel military assault on Gaza.

The statement, issued during a brief ceasefire in the fighting, says: "Israel's devastation of Gaza is a disproportionate response to the terror attack undertaken by Hamas on October 7th which killed over a thousand Israelis, migrant workers, and foreign citizens and took over 200 people hostage.

"The Israeli response has killed over 15,000 Palestinian men, women, and children, with an unknown number still buried under the rubble and uncounted, and the displacement of over a million people from their homes in the north of Gaza to the south.

"We understand these events as part of the ongoing Nakba, beginning in 1948, but with a longer history. The Balfour Declaration in 1917, for example, saw the British pledge to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine and there was an exponential increase in the movement of Jewish people to those lands in the aftermath of the Shoah.

"The Nazi regime's systematic slaughter of Jewish populations across Europe in the 1940s followed centuries of pogroms by Europe's Christians against Jewish minority communities. Prohibitions on the free movement of Jewish people to the UK in the aftermath of the Second World War left few



Professor Gurminder Bhambra

options for Jewish people who no longer felt able to live in Europe. The creation of a catastrophe from ongoing European catastrophes must be acknowledged.

"As sociologists, we deplore the systematic destruction of human communities. The current ceasefire provides a vital respite from the death and destruction unleashed by Israel and must become permanent with a negotiated political solution that is just to all parties.

"We do not believe that there is any military solution. International support will

be needed to rebuild Gaza including the reconstruction of its hospitals, schools, and universities which have been destroyed. We commit to work with colleagues from the region to rebuild educational infrastructures in Gaza."

The signatories, almost all British social scientists, and including nine past presidents of the BSA, signed in their personal capacity and not as representing any institution: <http://tinyurl.com/33y428rh>
• See page 14 for a statement signed mainly by US academics.

Sociology graduates are sadder but richer

Studying sociology makes students unhappy but richer, a survey of 84,000 graduates has found.

The effect of dissatisfaction is small, a fall of 0.01 on a scale of 0-10, but it was enough to put the subject seventh from bottom among 35 studied.

However, sociology graduates were substantially better off than those without degrees, with wages over 40% higher.

The PwC consultancy analysed data from the UK Annual Population Survey for 2013 to 2022 on the wellbeing of 84,000 graduates and the earnings of 62,000 graduates.

Participants were asked to rate their wellbeing on a scale of one to 10. The results were controlled for age, sex, health, religion and nationality.

The research found that the average impact of undergraduate degrees on self-reported satisfaction of working-age graduates, on a scale of 0-10, ranged from

+0.4 for Celtic Studies, to -0.11 for Creative Arts. Sociology's score of -0.01 put it above Politics (-0.02) but below Psychology (+0.08).

The survey also looked at the average impact of undergraduate degrees on the gross earnings of working-age graduates relative to non-graduates with similar personal and work-related characteristics.

Here, a sociology degree added 43% to salaries on average, the 27th highest increase out of the 35 disciplines studied. This was below the figures for Politics (60%) and Psychology (48%).

The highest figures were for Medicine and Dentistry (123%) and Economics (91%).

The study was carried out by five economists at PwC, who used Bayesian estimation and regression analysis for the research.

For more details see: <http://tinyurl.com/37k5hzcj>



Would you like to contribute to Network?

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

The next issue comes out in July and the deadline for submissions is early May (please check with Tony or Judith). Books for review can be seen at: <http://bit.ly/2gM3tDt>

Event discusses consumption in HE

Consumption study group: The group has held an online event, entitled *Situating Consumption*.

The three panellists, Professor David Evans, of the University of Bristol, Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire, Sheffield Hallam University, and Dr Mariana Dias, University of Manchester, shared their experience of researching and teaching consumption sociologically across different disciplines and departments.

The event, held in November, initiated a series of discussions on the status and place of the sociology of consumption in contemporary academia.

Following positive feedback from the audience and participants, the study group plans to continue the *Situating Consumption* series this year, including an in-person event focusing on the post-pandemic high street.

The study group hopes to open a dialogue between sociology and other disciplines such as business, technology, food, fashion, sustainability, material culture, health, and social care.

The November event was organised by Dr Irmak Karademir Hazir, who stepped down as convenor in January. Dr Katherine Appleford and Dr Alexandra Kviat have begun as new convenors.

Dr Appleford is senior lecturer in consumer behaviour at the Business School for Creative Industries at the University for the Creative Arts.

Her research bridges sociology, cultural studies, human geography and fashion theory. She is particularly interested in the ways in which fashion is used to construct



Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire

and communicate social identity, and how consumption practices are shaped by gender, motherhood, race and class.

Dr Kviat is a lecturer in marketing at the University of Bristol Business School. She is an interdisciplinary scholar working across the fields of consumer and service research, cultural and media studies, urban sociology and human geography.

Her research focuses on the relationship between urban space, digital technology and everyday consumption in the context of the hospitality, retail and leisure industries.

Caste event audio put online

The audio recording of the BSA's Presidential event on 'Caste and its implications for sociologies of inequality' has been put online.

The event, held at the London School of Economics in November, was attended by more than 40 people.

The keynote speaker was Dr Suraj Yengde, one of India's leading scholars and public intellectuals, who spoke on the concepts of caste and race within broader sociologies of inequality.

His talk was followed by talks by Faisal Devji, Professor of Indian History and Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford; Meena Dhandra, Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Politics at the University of Wolverhampton; and John Holmwood, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the

Sports workshop helps researchers navigate careers

Sport study group: The group partnered with the British Society for Sport History to run a workshop to help doctoral students and early career researchers navigate the beginning of their career.

The event, in November, began with a keynote address by Dr Paul Campbell, of the University of Leicester, who spoke about how he had used history and sociology throughout his career.

The panel speakers were Dr Campbell, Dr Katie Taylor, of Nottingham Trent University, Dr Mark Doidge, of Loughborough University, and Katie Homes, an independent researcher and founder of the RunYoung50 blog.

During the event the participants peer-reviewed each other's work in order to illustrate how peer reviewers see submissions.

The event finished with a panel discussion about navigating careers in the social science and humanities of sport in higher education currently.

The positive feedback from participants has led organisers to plan to run the event again.



Dr Paul Campbell

Record for BSA's media coverage

Sociological research promoted by the BSA appeared in the news media 427 times during 2023, a record number.

The BSA issued 11 press releases during the year, on topics including the effect of private education on voting habits, stress from fragmented working hours, carbon dioxide emissions by different social class, and racial bias among referees.

National coverage included articles in the *Observer*, *Daily Mirror*, *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, and the BBC and ITV websites.

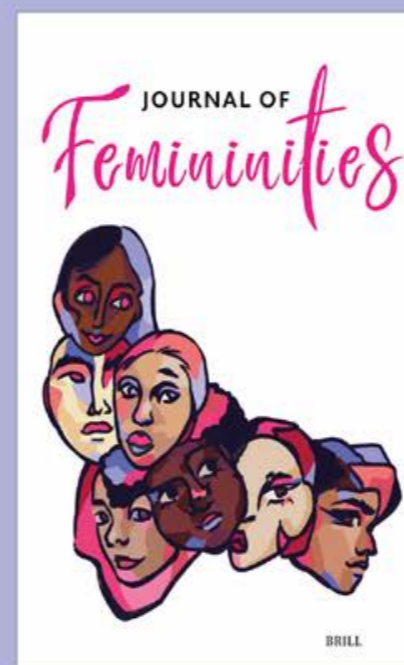
Most of the coverage was on online media, but also local papers in the UK and abroad.

The total of 427 exceeds the previous best of 319 in 2013. Over the past 15 years the BSA's work has resulted in 2,161 articles in the media from its press releases, an average of almost three a week.

New Brill Journals - Call for Papers

Journal of Femininities

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



brill.com/fem



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

The *Journal of Femininities* publishes cutting-edge research focused on femininity. It is a peer-reviewed international online only journal that publishes high-quality research from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, gender studies, business, public health, education, political science, media studies, legal studies, family science, etc.) and is particularly supportive of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary work from feminist perspectives. The journal welcomes submissions of methodologically rigorous empirical articles, both qualitative and quantitative, as well as critical essays, theoretical papers, and book reviews. The *Journal of Femininities* encourages submissions that examine femininity across intersectional axes of race, sexuality, disability, class, body size, religion, culture, or gender/sex.

Journal of Social Innovation and Knowledge

Editor-in-Chief: **Yaoping LIU**, Institute of Science Innovation and Culture (ISIC), Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand



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The *Journal of Social Innovation and Knowledge* (JSIK) is a **Diamond Open Access**, international, interdisciplinary, rigorously peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing research and practice in social innovation and knowledge production, dissemination, and application. Recent decades have witnessed significant developments in research focusing on social innovation. Social innovation is a broad field of study that comprises human, societal, professional, and organizational dimensions. It explores the processes, structures, and consequences of social innovation and of knowledge creation, transfer, and application. JSIK aims to be the premier platform for such research to reach a global audience of researchers, educators, students, practitioners, consultants, international leaders, and policymakers who recognize the value of social innovation and knowledge as cultural and economic drivers and who base their decisions on ground-breaking ideas and discoveries.

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Please visit the websites of these journals for more information on article submission.

SRO team will give voice to research that ‘does not fit elsewhere’

A new editorial team on the BSA’s journal *Sociological Research Online* will bring in two innovations to give voice to applied research that does not fit in elsewhere and to reach readers beyond the academic discipline.

The team of eight, who took over last year, is led by Dr Tim Butcher, of the University of Tasmania, as Editor-in-Chief, with, as editors, Dr Rachela Colosi, Professor Sam Hillyard, Professor Christian Karner, Dr James Pattison, Dr Laura Way, and Professor Anna Tarrant, all of the University of Lincoln, and Dr Edmund Coleman-Fountain, University of York. Dr Tarrant and Dr Coleman-Fountain carry over from the previous team. Professor Edwin van Teijlingen remains as book review editor.

In an article the team say: “How, where and to whom we communicate and publish our research are transformative in ways that could not have been predicted when *Sociological Research Online* was first published in 1996.

“Our digital devices are saturated with content seeking our attention. For any journal to reach into our digital lives and capture our imaginations it needs to be brave, learn from what others do today and try new things, but not forget its heritage. This gives us pause for thought as we consider what we will contribute to SRO as it reaches its 30th year in 2025.

“When first conceived, SRO was one of a few online-only journals; the only one in sociology. However, SRO is no longer alone in this space ... many journals are reaching academics, students, practitioners, policymakers and publics across various new platforms.

“We have asked ourselves as an editorial team how we intend to build on the journal’s legacy of innovation and



Dr Edmund Coleman-Fountain

participation in ways that continue to provide opportunities to publish timely, relevant and interesting social research that reflects the diversity of understandings, interests and activities across the discipline around the world.

“One of our objectives is to give voice to applied research that doesn’t fit in elsewhere and so pushes the limits of our thinking. The other is to enable those voices to reach readers across the discipline and beyond – the wider sociology community.

“To achieve our objectives, we have implemented two major projects. First ... we will publish a special issue that aims to draw out, reflect on and augment key contributions and debates issues. Our second project will create social content that reflects what is published in SRO and how we do that. This will include interviews with authors, insights into reviewing and

introductions to our different formats.

“This new content will be published on a unique platform that integrates resources we already have access to, such as the SRO Twitter feed, the BSA Everyday Society blog, and its Discover Sociology space, to not only reach and engage the sociology community in new and creative ways but also extend the conversation to invite in a greater diversity of voices that open up academic debate, inspire the sociologists of the future and reach new audiences.”

The editors said they would build on “the substantive work” of the previous editors, who brought in the *Beyond the Text* and *Sociology in Action* sections to broaden the content of the journal.

They thanked the outgoing team: Kahryn Hughes, Greg Hollin, Jason Hughes, Lucie Middlemiss, Katharine Venter and Katy Wright.

association throughout my career, in various capacities, and am very much looking forward to taking on this new role.

“Sociology has a key part to play in helping us both understand and tackle the challenges that we face in the world today, and I hope I will be a strong ambassador for the discipline.”

Professor Brooks is also an executive editor of the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, a co-editor of the *Research into Higher Education* book series, a member of Governing Council of the Society for Research into Higher Education, and a member of ESRC Council.

The BSA has thanked Professor Bhambra for her service.



Professor Rachel Brooks

Professor Brooks said: “I am delighted to be appointed as the next president of the BSA. I have been closely involved with the

Distinguished Service to Sociology Award is given to John Brewer

The BSA’s 2023 **Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award** has been given to John Brewer, Emeritus Professor at Queen’s University Belfast and an expert on crime, policing, peace processes and research methods.

The award is judged on service to British sociology and given to the outstanding individual who has contributed most to the discipline by leading an extraordinary life as a sociologist.

Professor Brewer said: “I am thoroughly delighted to receive this award. I have enormous respect for the BSA and I consider my service to the association as a highlight of my career.”

Professor Brewer grew up in Shropshire and was educated at the universities of Nottingham and Birmingham. He worked at the University of East Anglia and at the University of Aberdeen, where he was Head of Department, and at Queen’s, where he was Head of the School of Sociology.

He is author or co-author of 16 books, including *C. Wright Mills and the Ending of Violence* (2003), *Peace Processes: A Sociological*



Professor John Brewer

Approach (2010), *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland* (2011, 2013), *Ex-Combatants, Religion and Peace in Northern Ireland* (2013) and *The Public Value of Social Sciences* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

Professor Brewer is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, the Academy of Social Sciences and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, as well as a Member of the Royal Irish Academy. He was Chair of the British Sociological Association from 2004–2006, and President from 2009–2012.

In a plenary address to the BSA’s annual conference in 2012, he said: “What I have been trying to suggest is that sociology has a moral role to play – it is not just about the cognitive achievements of sociology teaching and research, it is about communicating its moral sentiment.

“Does it make sociology like theology and moral philosophy? Am I an evangelical preacher? Well, I do feel evangelical in that I believe sociology does have a moral purpose – to make us aware of ourselves as constituting a society, assisting in the reproduction of society and enabling us to deal with this series of wicked problems that the 20th century has bequeathed the 21st.”

More on the award:
<http://tinyurl.com/4vk2enh7>

BSA publishes new strategy

The BSA has published a **new strategy for the years 2024-2028**.

The association promises to “begin the strategic cycle with some very practical initiatives for our membership including holding membership fees at 2023 rates for 2024, reducing fees for our student community, developing new ways of recognising long-standing members, and exploring career-supporting expert training for our members.” It would also consider creating an associate membership category.

The BSA will make all its annual conferences in-person, and organise more online and in-person events for members, focused on specific and topical issues.

It plans to increase involvement at schools and colleges to ensure the uptake of sociology courses at colleges and universities.

The strategy said the BSA would also “replace our website and CRM [Customer relationship management system], which are coming to the end of their lifecycle, condensing and amalgamating the best of our website resources into one place.”

It will invest more in communicating with members and the outside world. As part of this, it will recruit a new Digital Communications Officer in the BSA office to create and coordinate internal and external communications.

The strategy can be read at:
www.britisoc.co.uk/about/bsa-strategy

Network magazine is celebrating its half century soon – its first editor, Max Atkinson, began work in 1974 for its initial issue, which came out in January 1975.

To mark the anniversary, this Spring 2024 issue features a look at the contribution made to our *Desert Island Discourse* feature over the 20 years since this was launched in 2004. A feature on this can be read on pages 24-29.

The BSA is also making an appeal to any members who either joined the BSA in 1974, or who were around at that time, to send their memories of what it was like being a sociologist then and any recollections they have of the BSA.

People can contact the *Network* editors Judith Mudd, at judith.mudd@britsoc.org.uk or Tony Trueman, tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk

• In an early version of the last issue of *Network* the headline for Professor Alison Pilnick’s plenary address to the MedSoc conference read, “By discarding professionals’ authority, we leave patients unable to make meanings”. This was later corrected to read: “By discarding professionals’ expertise, we leave patients unable to make meanings”.

Prize shortlist is announced

The shortlist for the **Philip Abrams Memorial Prize** has been published. The winner will be announced at the BSA annual conference in April.

The annual prize of £1,000, for the best first and sole-authored book within sociology, was established in honour of the memory of Professor Philip Abrams, whose work contributed substantially to sociology and social policy research in Britain, and who is remembered for the encouragement he gave to many young sociologists.

The shortlist is: *Expatriate: Following a Migration Category*, by Sarah Kunz; *Race, Class, Parenting and Children’s Leisure*, by Utsa Mukherjee; *Calling for the Super Citizen: Naturalisation Procedures in the United Kingdom and Germany*, by Elizabeth Badenhop; *Brexit, Facebook and Transnational Right-Wing Populism*, by Natalie-Anne Hall; *Revolution of Things: The Islamism and Post-Islamism of Objects in Tehran*, by Kusha Sefat.

Details of the winner will be given in the summer issue of *Network*.

• Nominees for the SAGE Prize for Innovation/Excellence can be seen at:
<http://tinyurl.com/5n8mnhpt>

BSA Medical Sociology Conference 2024

11-13 September 2024

University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

We are looking forward to welcoming you all to the annual BSA Medical Sociology Conference being held at the University of Warwick in September 2024. The call for abstracts is now open and we invite you to submit your innovative medical sociology papers for consideration. The deadline for abstract submission is Monday, 22 April 2024.

The following criteria will be applied when reviewing abstracts:

Academic Rigour: Is the research credible and trustworthy, and does it contribute valuable knowledge to the field of medical sociology? Are the methods used or proposed included?

Relevance to Medical Sociology: How closely does the research align with the core concerns and themes of medical sociology as a field of study?

Sociological Content: To what extent does the research apply sociological theories, concepts, or methods to analyse a particular phenomenon?

When submitting your abstract, please indicate if your submission is an oral or poster presentation, or a special event. Please note that presenters will be able to present only one paper at the conference, although they may be authors of more than one.

At the point of submitting your abstract, please consider where your presentation may best fit in the conference streams listed below.

- Citizenship and Health
- Critical Public Health
- Diagnosis, Screening and Treatment
- Embodiment and Emotion
- Environment and Health
- Experiences of Health and Illness
- Health Care Organisations
- Health Policy
- Health Service Delivery
- Inequalities and Intersectionality
- Lifecourse - reproductive health; chronic conditions; ageing; death and dying
- Mental Health
- Open
- Patient - professional interaction
- Pedagogy and Methods
- Politics and Ethics of Health
- Professions
- STS and Medicine
- Theory

We will make every effort to assign accepted abstracts to the stream indicated by the author on the submission form. However, this is not always possible when some streams are over-subscribed. If we are unable to place your abstract in your desired stream, we will endeavour to place your paper within a similar stream though may add it to the Open Stream.

The abstract submission deadline is Monday, 22 April 2024.

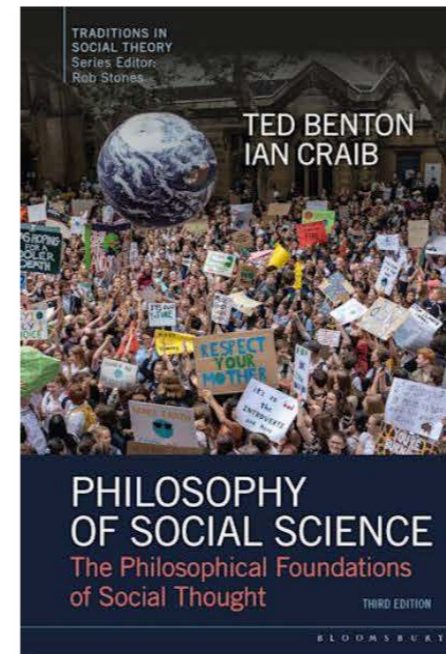
Abstracts received after this date will not be accepted.

Submit today at: <https://britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events/medical-sociology-conference-2024/submissions>

For any questions or enquiries about the conference, please contact the BSA Events Team at events@britsoc.org.uk
For further details about the Group, please visit the Medical Sociology Study Group:

<https://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/medical-sociology-groups/medical-sociology-medsoc-study-group/>

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Philosophy of Social Science

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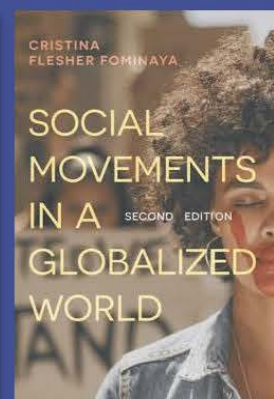
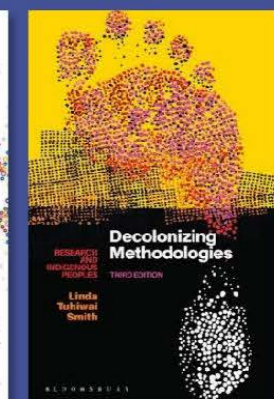
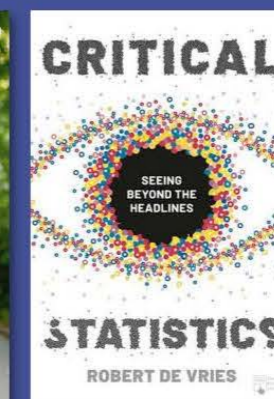
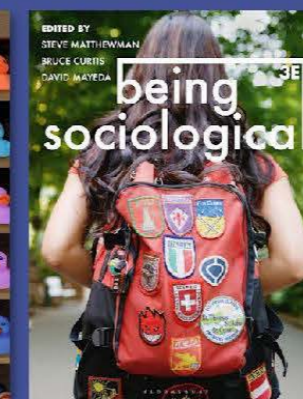
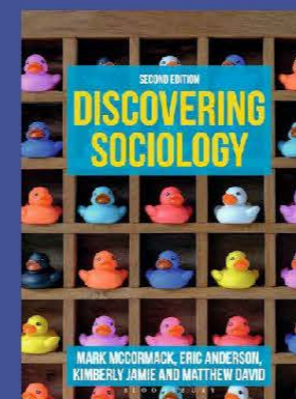
Ted Benton & Ian Craib

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All around the world...

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

Network takes a look at sociology beyond our shores

Letter condemns Israel attack

More than 2,000 sociologists and other social scientists have signed an open letter condemning the violence against Palestinians by Israeli forces.

The signatories, who are mainly based in the US, include well-known names such as Professor Michael Burawoy, of University of California Berkeley, Professor Craig Calhoun, of Arizona State University, and Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya, University of the Arts in the UK.

The statement says: "Sociology as a discipline is rooted in a recognition of relationships of power and inequality. As sociologists and human beings, we unreservedly condemn the latest violence against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank at the hands of the Israeli regime.

"The government of Israel has undertaken, in its own words, a 'complete siege' of Gaza – the second most densely populated place on the planet, home to 2.1 million residents, of which 1.7 million are refugees.

"While claiming its actions are a justifiable response to recent Hamas violence against Israeli civilians, it has targeted the civilian Palestinian population of Gaza, while exhibiting little regard for the loss of human life.

"We are witnessing internationally supported genocide. This latest siege comes as a continuation and escalation of the daily violence Palestinians faced for decades from Israeli colonization; an apartheid regime whose occupation is in clear violation of international law, but persists with the support of powerful governments globally.

"As educators, it is our duty to stand by the principles of critical inquiry and learning, to hold the university as a space for conversation that foregrounds historical truths, and that contextualizes this past week's violence in the context of 75 years of settler colonial occupation and European empire. We are also deeply troubled by the lack of concern and care for Palestinian and Muslim students at many of our universities, as well as efforts to clamp down on student organizing and free speech.

"We cannot sit back and witness the continuation of this genocidal war. We demand that our governments push for an immediate ceasefire."

Chile video game commemorates country's dirty wars

A Chilean sociologist has found an unusual way to commemorate the clandestine resistance to the brutal rule of dictator General Pinochet in the 1970s and 1980s.

Jorge Olivares has created a video game, *Dirty Wars: September 11*, named after the date that Pinochet launched his military coup against Chile's democratic government in 1973, torturing and killing thousands of socialists and trade unionists.

In the stealth and espionage game the main characters, Maximiliano and Abigail, confront the military regime by joining a resistance group and trying to avoid capture.

The game is Jorge Olivares' first project as a developer and took him two years to produce. He hopes it will educate young Chileans about Pinochet's rule.

"There is no consensus [about Pinochet's regime] in Chile," he said. "There is a so-called 'denialist' side, which I think actually justifies the game. Most of the people that follow the game are under 30. I made it for them. Youngsters learn more from video games than books."



You can't hurry love...

Couples who marry when aged between 28 and 32 are less likely than others to divorce, a new study shows.

Professor Nick Wolfinger, of the University of Utah, analysed US survey data from 2006-2010 and 2011-2013.

He found that prior to age 32, each additional year of age at marriage reduces the odds of divorce by 11 per cent. However, after that age, the odds of divorce increase by five per cent a year.

This drop in divorce rates may not be caused by couples' ages, though. Rather it could be that people who wait until their late 20s or early 30s may be the kind of people who are more likely to succeed in marriage.

"The kinds of people who wait till their 30s to get married may be the kinds of people who aren't predisposed towards doing well in their marriages," writes Professor Wolfinger in a study published by the *Institute for Family Studies*: <http://tinyurl.com/2enfcpv>

"People who marry later face a pool of potential spouses that has been winnowed down to exclude the individuals most predisposed to succeed at matrimony."

India's 'toilet man' dies at 80

Network readers may feel that the nickname 'toilet man' would be an undesirable one to aspire to.

But the soubriquet was a mark of honour for Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, who died recently aged 80.

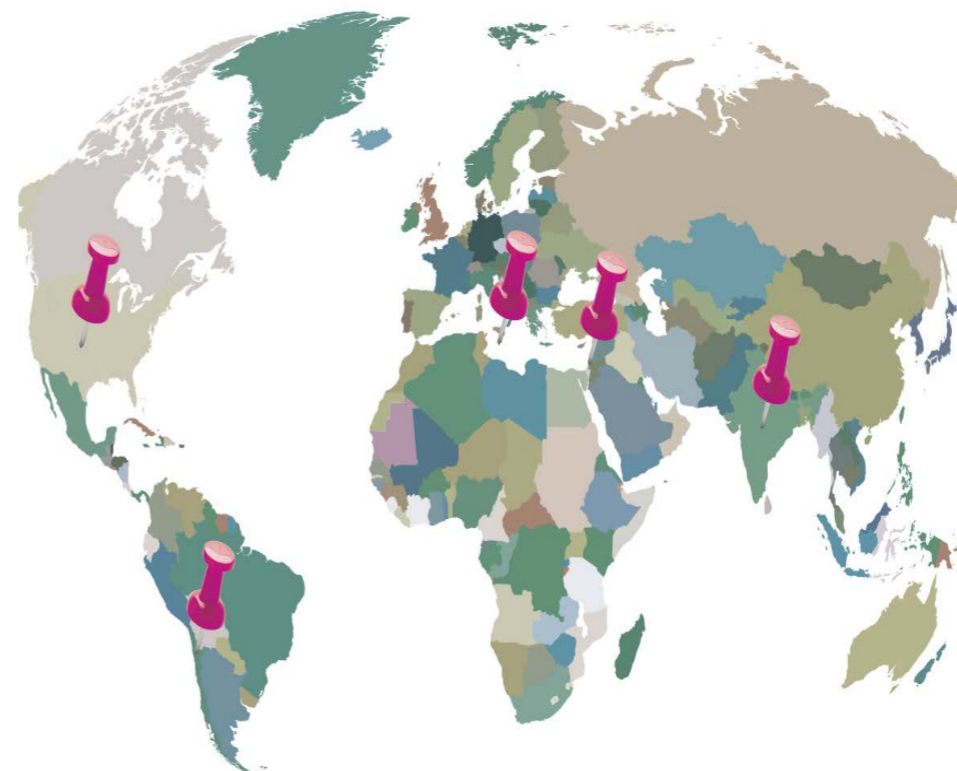
Dr Pathak made it his life's goal to leave India a cleaner place, by building public toilets and giving Indians from across the caste system access to clean sanitation.

Dr Pathak discovered his calling after seeing the work of poor scavengers, who he lived with in the 1960s for his PhD research, whose job it was to remove human waste from toilets with no water or flush.

In 1970, he founded the NGO, Sulabh International, which built its first public toilet in the city of Arrah in Bihar, his home state, to show the government that a cheap twin-pit, pour-flush toilet system was possible.

Sulabh went on to build nearly 1.3 million household toilets and more than 10,000 public toilets.

It also built public toilet complexes for the urban poor in slums and crowded public places. These comprised not only toilets but bathing areas and space for people to do their laundry.



Ace face gets men top place

Men benefit more in the workplace from being attractive than women do, a study has found.

Professor Alexi Gugushvili, of the University of Oslo, and Dr Grzegorz Bulczak, of the Polish Academy of Sciences, analysed survey data on 11,500 people in the US.

They studied whether physical attractiveness, assessed at age 15, was an important predictor of intergenerational social mobility 20 years later.

They took into consideration other factors such as family background, intelligence and personality traits when measuring success in the workforce.

The researchers found that attractive women had a slight advantage over other women deemed less attractive, more so than those deemed the least attractive. But the males saw the greatest difference.

"The results show that there may be more to gain from attractiveness for males than for females and that, with each step on the attractiveness ladder, males increase their advantage in income mobility."

The study is published in *Social Science Quarterly* journal.

Tributes paid to Malta prof

Tributes have been paid to Ronald Sultana, Professor of Sociology at the University of Malta, who has died, aged 65.

Professor Sultana was the founding editor of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, and was considered one of Malta's eminent scholars in the field of sociology.

He was a Fulbright scholar at Stanford University, and founded the Movement for Humanistic Education in 1988 and the Association of School Councils almost a decade later.

Professor Sultana was elected dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta in 1997, and later became the Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research.

His 1994 book, *Maltese Society: A Sociological Inquiry*, co-edited with fellow sociologist Godfrey Baldacchino, has become a staple text for a generation of students in the field of sociology in Malta.

University of Malta Pro-rector Carmen Sammut said that "the university lost one of the pillars of the Faculty of Education, we lost a respected colleague, researcher and critical friend".

Florida sociology ban attacked

The decision by Florida's state university system to remove sociology as a core subject has been condemned by educators.

The system's Board of Governors, which oversees a dozen public universities, approved replacing Principles of Sociology with a US history course.

The decision follows the lead of the state's Republican Governor, Ron DeSantis – many members of the Board of Governors are his appointees.

The American Sociological Association said that it was "outraged" by the vote and urged the university Board to reverse its decision.

"This decision seems to be coming not from an informed perspective, but rather from a gross misunderstanding of sociology as an illegitimate discipline driven by 'radical' and 'woke' ideology," the ASA said.

"To the contrary, sociology is the scientific study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behaviour, which are at the core of civic literacy and are essential to a broad range of careers.

"Failure to prioritise the scientific study of the causes and consequences of human behaviour is a failure of Florida's commitment to providing high-quality civics education and workforce readiness.

"There was no evidentiary basis for making this decision. In fact, the Board rejected a proposal from one of the governors to table the vote [after] relevant data could be gathered."

Florida Education Association's President, Andrew Spar, said that "the removal of sociology courses as a core general education requirement is part of a continued attack on our state's education system. We've seen it in our K-12 programs – first they banned books, then classroom libraries, and now they are removing dictionaries from shelves because of their content. Then they attacked the curriculum for being too 'woke' because it taught the truth about slavery."

The decision does not stop sociology from being taught at state universities, only that it can no longer form part of the core curriculum for students.

The attack on 'woke' also included the banning of an advanced placement class in African American studies. A recent Board ruling incorporates a plan by Mr DeSantis, who has dropped out of the race for the Republican presidential nomination, to abolish diversity, equity and inclusion programmes.

‘We are in a very unstable equilibrium, largely maintained by international student fees’

Although higher education was currently “thriving”, action needed to be taken to stop losing “what is great about the system,” Professor Shitij Kapur, Vice-Chancellor of King’s College London, told a recent event.

Professor Kapur was speaking after his paper, ‘UK universities: from a triangle of sadness to a brighter future’, was published by the Policy Institute. The paper attracted attention in the news media and the higher education sector generally.

In this, he said that students, universities and the government were all dissatisfied with the current situation, students because they were the most indebted in the world, staff because they were overworked and likely to be on insecure contracts, and the government and public because they were ambivalent about the value of universities.

Professor Kapur, who has studied and taught in universities in five countries, told the event that while the UK system was “one of the finest in the world and it’s a university system worth fighting for”, it was also “in a bit of a funk. It’s not a very technical term, but what I would like to say is this is not a system in decline. It’s a thriving system, but it’s a system that’s in a state of precariousness. And unless we do something about it, we will lose what is great about this system.” He cited a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report, which said that close to 40% of universities were working close to a deficit.

In his address, Professor Kapur (*pictured right*) set out the strengths of UK universities.

“Let me start with why I think we do have one of the finer systems in the world. It would be fair to say that the British university system now, since it has widened participation, offers one of the highest levels of access to all of our high school leavers.

“But more importantly, it’s not just access, it’s success. So if you look at the graduation rates of British universities – the average in the OECD is about 64% – we are at about 80%. So this is a university system with a high level of quality that takes students all the way through to graduation.”

Part of the reason for this was the high ratio to student ratio in UK universities. “It would be fair to say that British universities have historically had a favourable ratio, as compared to some international comparisons. And they have good things to show for it.

A recent event looked at the ‘triangle of sadness’ that UK higher education is trapped in, and how it might escape...

“If you look at the research outcomes in terms of international peer review and citations and a technical index called field weighted citation index, you see that our universities produce some of the very best outcomes in research. So it is a very good system, dare I say the finest in the world, but I think our system sits within a triangle of sadness.”

The first unhappy group was students, who were happy with their education, but not the loan they had to bear. “The average English undergraduate today leaves with a [debt] load of about £55,000. That is the highest level anywhere in the world.” Although some elite universities in the US had higher fees, “there are 18 million American undergraduates, all different sorts, and they do not on average leave with a £55,000 loan [to pay off].”

The English government today made a low contribution to university education, he said. “Across the OECD, the average public contribution to university education is

‘It’s a thriving system, but unless we do something about it, we will lose what is great about it’

somewhere in the range of about 50% [of costs]. The English contribution to higher education is about 10% to 15%.

“The second [unhappy group] is university staff. The English higher education system has been riven with industrial disputes. If you look at staff satisfaction surveys and the engagement of employees with their place of employment, you find that universities have been falling down.

“When you start to look for reasons and ask people about it, it turns out to be around workload and precariousness of employment. And it would be true that over the last decade that this has increased. So the students are not happy, the universities are not happy.

“When it comes to broader society, despite a considerable widening of access, the shine is coming off [universities] and it’s for different reasons. For some, the economic advantage of going to university is declining. It is still an economically good deal to go to university, there is a pretty good graduate premium, but it isn’t as high as it used to be.

“For many people in the public, universities have become a focal point of so-called culture wars.”

The success of bringing in international students had drawn universities into the debate about immigration.

“Universities have maintained their system over the last decade through a hefty increase in international students. While by many measures that’s a success – it is a mark of reputation – sadly it has gotten caught in



the immigration debates, where it’s being seen as a problem.”

But it was a sign of success that students from abroad wanted to study here, he said. “Whenever you do surveys across the world and you ask who has the best quality system, the British system is always the first or the second. The number of international students that are coming here has exceeded the government’s expectations, and by some measures international student education is our third largest export.”

Professor Kapur said that the one fundamental reason underlying all of this was “that the financial and the business model on which universities were set after the Browne review in 2012 doesn’t work any more.

“The first fix is that we have to find a way to resource our universities in a way that keeps up with inflation. To look at the numbers, fees were set at £9,000 [in 2012]. If this had kept up with inflation, it would be close to about £13,000 to £14,000 today, but it is £9,250. So we are in a very unstable

equilibrium, largely being maintained with the support of international student fees.

“So either universities will continue to increase their reliance on international students – and that is now becoming, I would say, politically difficult and toxic in our own domestic environment – or they will sacrifice their quality of outcomes. I think that would be really sad, given that we have one of the finest systems in the world at the moment.”

If dependence on international students were reduced, then either student fees or the grant given by government would need to be raised.

“My preference would be that, given that the English undergraduate already has one of the highest loans, and given that the English public through the English government subsidises education to the lowest level in the OECD, we do need to look to a higher grant rather than higher fees.”

He also spoke about research costs. “What many of us don’t know is that a year ago our

universities did about £16 billion worth of research, of which only £11 billion was externally funded. So where did that extra £5 billion come from? It largely comes from tuition fees. So there is a tremendous cross-subsidy.

“Where is research support coming from? Largely from international student fees. So I find it highly precarious that something that is vital to the nation’s strategic competitiveness is largely being funded by the decisions by individual families in Shanghai and Delhi to send their sons and daughters to be students at UK universities.”

He also advocated being open to a differential system, in which, through central decision mechanisms, universities are given different missions and funding according to this mission, as found in China and Singapore.

“Let me end by saying we have a world leading system. We need to defend it. The system is caught in a triangle of sadness, we need to break out of it.”

Feature continues overleaf ▶

▶ Feature continued

‘Because we got rid of number controls, more students now get their first choice of university’

David Willetts



David Willetts, a former Universities and Science Minister, (pictured right) said: “These sorts of rather agonised discussions about higher education have been going on for a very long time.

“All three political parties, at the end of these deliberations and enormous amounts of political argument, always end up with something basically like the system we’ve had for the past 20 years, though with changes in the calibration.

“I would say, as an observation of education secretaries across different political parties, higher education isn’t even a priority within the Education Department, let alone across government.

“I predict if Bridget Phillipson [current Shadow Education Secretary] were to become Education Secretary, I can tell you what her first speech would be. It’ll be about the importance of early years, how they’re going to invest in early years, how they’re going to increase access to childcare and how they’re going to enrich the primary school experience.”

He said that this lack of importance meant that there was little chance of universities getting extra funding, and that the tuition fee, which he raised to £9,000 a year when in office, would remain.

He said this was “relatively progressive – it doesn’t put off young people from applying to university. When my 9K fee came in, [student numbers] continued to grow.

“It doesn’t put off students, because they understand the system sometimes better than their parents.

“They’re not paying up front, they’ll pay back at 9% above a high threshold and if they’re earning £40,000 a year and the repayment threshold is £25,000, they’re paying 9% of £15,000 – just over hundred pounds a month.”

He said that it was progressive in the sense that graduates paid for much of their education, so that non-graduates, who were less well off on average, paid less.

It was wrong to compare UK student debt with the US’s, as the former was not a commercial or credit card debt, he said. “It doesn’t affect your ability to take out a mortgage, despite the anxieties of parents. On the other hand, it’s not a continental European system with higher levels of public expenditure per student.”

He said the fee level should be increased, at a minimum at the rate of inflation. “Most of this agonised debate [about the triangle of sadness] would not be happening if we had simply indexed fees for the last 10 years. That is a blindingly obvious solution.

“One reason why the sector’s in a bit of a funk is they somehow persuaded themselves that the blindingly obvious is also impossible, which is not the case. You can just do it.”

He admitted that he was wrong in believing that when he raised tuition fees to £9,000 a year for students in 2012, this would lead to universities setting different fee rates to students.

“I said in the early days there would be price competition, which was a silly thing to say and it was rapidly disproved.” This was because the “great graduate repayment system of the sort we’ve got” meant students were willing to pay high university costs.

He spoke in favour of the lifting of the cap on student numbers entering individual universities, because this had allowed more students to go to the university of their choice. “Because we got rid of number controls, more people are able to go, and more students now get their first choice of university, which is another good thing. Maybe that’s one of the reasons why the participation rates are quite high – we’ve got over 80% of students now given their first choice, which is another good feature of our system.”



‘I said in the early days that there would be price competition, which was a silly thing to say and it was rapidly disproved’

— David Willetts

He said he would also give more funding to high-cost courses, and fund new universities in areas of the country where there were none.

He did not want to see universities differentiated in function. “Thank heavens we are not differentiated as they are in California, where you’re told what your job is. What we have is an open system with lots of implicit differentiation.

“We don’t tell Northumbria or Lincoln [universities] that ‘it is presumptuous of you to imagine you should do some research which might be so good that it’s funded’.”

He said if extra funding was available, he would put it into bringing back maintenance grants for students, so they would not have to work long hours at jobs while studying. “I worry about students struggling to make ends meet at university. A most shocking figure, recently, is that we’ve now gone above 50% of students working. If it’s more than [a few hours a week], it really does start affecting their capacity to study and to enjoy their experience.”

Vivienne Stern

Vivienne Stern, the Chief Executive of Universities UK, said the issues raised in the debate were the consequence of moving away from an elite system to a “massification” of the higher education system.

“I would argue that the massification of the higher education system has been a good thing for us and it’s been a good thing for every other system that has been engaged in doing it. All but one of the countries in the OECD group have expanded participation in the last 10 years. The UK is out there towards the front with a 55% participation rate, though the countries that are

ahead of us are Canada, Japan, Ireland, South Korea, Australia and Luxembourg.

“When I’m engaged in arguments with politicians about funding higher education, I like to point out, you do make a profit on your investment in higher education. The IFS [Institute for Fiscal Studies] calculated a few years ago that when you thought about the higher tax-take and national insurance contributions, and you factor in things like the fact that only a very small proportion of graduates are likely to be on non-work benefits, the public purse makes a profit of about

James Purnell

James Purnell, Vice-chancellor of the University of the Arts London, (pictured near left) said that the success of higher education in Britain was because of “bold and wise decisions taken by people in the past, by governments of the last 25 years and people around the sector, and the aspiration of students and parents.

“But if that is the case, why is it that we feel very differently day to day in many of our institutions?”

He said there had been a failure in meeting the “central challenge of policy questions – how you can reconcile individual choice with having an overall strategy that includes a plan to fund that overall ambition.”

The 50% target for higher education participation set out in 1997 by the Labour government, for which he was a special advisor, created a framework for funding. But in 2014 the coalition government had removed the cap on student numbers attending each university, and participation levels had risen to 55%, but with funding given to universities per student falling.

“So, I would say that, in the end, we’re stuck in the triangle because we still have a system that supports participation of 55%, but without the money or the underpinning consensus and foundations to deliver that.”

The current government had become

uneasy about the numbers in higher education.

“I think it’s fair to say that this government doesn’t feel comfortable in its bones with that expansion – there’s a feeling that too many people are going to university, but on the other hand, the government doesn’t want to come out and set a lower target for understandable reasons.”

This was because parents wanted their children to go to university. He pointed to the Millennium Cohort Study finding that 97% of mothers wanted their young children to attend.

He recommended that there be a consensus on the number of international students.

“We would work out how to make the system affordable, either increasing the tuition fee and grants, or increasing the number of international students.

“Having that framework would mean that the system was internally consistent, and I think it would allow us to escape the triangle of sadness that we’re debating today.

“If we don’t do either we have to accept either a lower level of quality or a smaller level of participation.”

• James Purnell was special adviser on the knowledge economy to Tony Blair after the election of the Labour government in 1997. He was MP for Stalybridge and Hyde, and was appointed Culture Secretary and then Work and Pensions Secretary. He moved to the BBC in 2013 as Director of Strategy and Digital before taking up his role at the University of the Arts in 2021.



£110,000 for men and about £30,000 for women.

“It doesn’t help us with the problem that we face immediately, which is that it costs a lot to expand participation – but we have to

carry on down this road because you’re still twice as likely to enter higher education if you are from the highest social groups in society compared to the least advantaged. So I’d say we’ve

got massification, but we ain’t done with it.”

She said the simple solution was to link increases in the amount of money given to fund each student to inflation. “That’s not putting the fee up, that’s simply stopping it going down. It isn’t going to be a complete solution, but I think that at least puts the break on a decline which is accelerating and is beginning to lead to trouble in a number of cases.

“It’s essential for the UK to remain competitive that we preserve our position as a leading research system, and funding for that is coming, largely speaking, from the international student fee.

“My message to the government for the last

couple of months is if you cannot help us, at least stop it getting worse. Don’t actively do something that will make it harder for universities to subsidise domestic teaching and research [by taking international students]. It’s so incredibly important that we don’t do anything further to make the UK an unattractive destination for international students.”

• The event was organised by the Policy Institute and was entitled: ‘UK universities: from a triangle of sadness to a brighter future’. It was chaired by the institute’s Director, Professor Bobby Duffy. The phrase ‘triangle of sadness’ is taken from a film of the same title.

‘What can sociologists learn from music?’

‘Today’s musical sociologists often keep their musical lives to themselves,’ Professor Back wrote in his paper in *Identities* journal. “There are some exceptions of course but most are wary of making it part of their professional identity. There are many reasons for this shyness. For some, it is about making a clear break with the painful aspects of musical fame, or, in other cases, playing music becomes a kind of refuge and escape from academic life. The relationship between musicianship and sociological thinking is a hidden story, but what is it that sociologists learn from music?”

To answer that question, over the course of a decade Professor Back spoke to 28 sociologists who are also musicians and, as a guitarist, sets out his own thoughts:

“From the outset I should say that I am not outside this story myself although I am in the introvert camp. I have in large part kept my own life as a guitarist a secret. My involvement in music making has been a kind of hinterland for my sociological thinking, teaching, and writing.

“I was a member of Earl Green’s touring band for over 10 years (2003–2013). Earl was Britain’s first black British blues singer and garnered many awards, and we played hundreds of gigs together from London clubs to international festivals.

That experience informed my research and the way I teach. For example, at the beginning of a lecture, I often use music to set the key and mood of the session. I also get students to make ‘playlists’ as a way of engaging them including choosing ‘alternative national anthems’ or their own ‘personal protest songs’.

“[But] this article is not a personal exploration. Rather than taking an autobiographical approach, as others have done, sometimes successfully, I wanted to ask colleagues about their experience of being both a musician and a sociologist. Is there a relationship between their sociological identities and musical sensibilities?”

“They were not difficult to find, and over the course of 10 years I have been recruiting the participants in this study, otherwise known as colleagues, either through chance encounters or referrals. The core ‘empirical material’ is drawn from 28 life story qualitative interviews with contemporary

‘Sociologists are often secret musicians’, Les Back wrote in a recent journal paper. Thanks to him their secret is now out, and we have an account of the scale of musicality of a score of researchers. Network takes a look...

sociologists (10 women and 18 men) from a range of class and cultural backgrounds who either play music currently or have done in the past. Some wanted their identities to be anonymised although most were happy to be attributed and be the owner of their insights.

“I have utilized a loose and open definition of music as organized sound in the broadest sense, including a wide range of genres of music from the classical repertoire to punk rock to dancehall reggae. Musicians here are defined as people who have learned the techniques of music making and/or have been involved in the production or circulation of musical cultures; both the conventional learning of instruments and digital forms of production.

“Some of the participants had formal training in reading musical notation and keyboard harmony, while others are self-taught and learned their musical chops in a DIY fashion by playing in bands or being involved in musical scenes.

“The blurred lines between professional and amateur in both sociology and music provided an interesting point of departure.”

• Professor Les Back is Head of Subject (Sociology) at the University of Glasgow. The paper is ‘What sociologists learn from music: identity, music-making, and the sociological imagination’, in the journal *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*: <http://tinyurl.com/yc8yzk6s>

‘She realises how much sexism she experienced in music’



Emma Jackson

Photo: Les Back

Emma Jackson

Professor Back spoke to Dr Emma Jackson, of Goldsmiths (left). “At 17 she was playing bass in a female-fronted band called Kenickie, performing under the stage name of ‘Emmy-Kate Montrose’. Kenickie quickly rose to stardom as part of a wave of indie bands in the nineties. Kenickie had a meteoric rise but for Emma it was all over by the time she was 20. She had always planned to study sociology because it was her favourite subject at school, and at 23 she studied sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Having gained a PhD she is now one of the most interesting and distinctive voices in UK sociology.

“As a student Emma was very hesitant to talk about her musical life. More recently she has been more open to talk about it. Looking back on her experience now she realizes just how much sexism she experienced in the music business, from being abused on stage, to condescending journalists who would assume that the only male member was the leader, and TV presenters who would ask the band to model sunglasses when they were there to feature their music. Developing a strong cohesiveness within the band was a way of coping and protecting themselves.”

Dr Jackson told him: “Guitar shops I hate still to this day ... I went to go to buy a load of plectrums one day for the whole band – not just myself – and I was sort of ruminating

over my choices and the man in the guitar shop – this is back in Sunderland – in the nineties. And he’s like ‘do you know what a plectrum is? You pick ... you strum it, you draw it over the strings of the guitar and that’s what makes the noise come out. And I was like ‘yeah, yeah I know thanks? I am in a band’. I then noticed he had our local paper the *Sunderland Echo* on the table and there happened to be a piece about us in that *Echo* ... ‘Yeah my band’s in the paper. That’s me! ... ‘Ok err’. But just those little kind of things really – you know we call them micro aggressions now.

“Actually sociology helped me to understand what had happened to us. For me, having been involved in music, I am used to standing up in front of people. Which helps when you have to do this for a job, which is quite [a] strange job. Trying to create things as a group rather than always be this sort of lone wolf academic. I think that’s a model of scholarship that’s really important to me.

“Not feeling too over-precious about what you put out into the world ... I mean, more trying and experimenting with different forms of writing and having a go at something. Rather than being the equivalent of the person who works on their music demo forever and just adds more and more but never dares show it to anybody. Being the sociology equivalent of that is to be avoided – just having your one thing that you sort of polish and polish forever.”

Paul Gilroy

Professor Back began his article with Paul Gilroy, the renowned cultural critic who is now Professor of the Humanities at University College London and Founding Director of the Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Racism and Racialisation.

“While Paul Gilroy is recognized as one of the best interpreters of the experience of the African Diaspora it is not so widely appreciated that he is also an accomplished guitarist,” wrote Professor Back.

Professor Gilroy told him: “I am sure that ... my dabbling in music and my experience of playing, and my – sort of – rituals of playing, and the conversations that I have with

people who are musicians who are not academics about the world, has enriched my understanding of what culture is and how culture functions.

“It’s hard to begin to build an inventory of resources that come into one’s life in that way. There are people that really influenced my understanding about what culture is and how it works.

“The most obvious and the most important of those people is really Ralph Ellison [the American writer, literary critic, and scholar best known for his novel, *Invisible Man*].

“Someone went to the trouble of



editing together a little volume of Ralph Ellison’s writings on music and he is in my head in a sort of special place because I think he is someone who became a writer because they

couldn’t really cut it as a musician.

“Then of course there are other people [Ernst] Bloch and [Theodor] Adorno who are similarly people who have a musical life and write music and produce music and to whom the experience of musicking is an integral part of their critical commentary on everything else about culture and social life, in particular the question of utopia

and how utopias become apparent to us, how they are able to enter into our lives.

“I think as I got more confident about my understanding of the relationship between music and utopia I began to see that there are all sorts of ways in which I’d brought things in from my relationship with music as organised sound that just wouldn’t have been there otherwise.

“Music is not something we consider to be a representational medium. Making culture in art, in literature, in poetry, in painting – they are all about the world. There is the world and then there is the representation, but with music ... The music is the thing. It is not representing something else.”

Dave Beer

Professor Back writes: “Dave Beer expanded on the relationship between music and sociological form in an interview that took place in his office at the University of York in 2018. He is a guitarist and was deeply involved in indie rock subcultures in the north of England during his youth. He uses music to shape his style of sociology, but also to inspire him and give him the energy and desire to do it.”

Professor Beer explained: “I’ll let the music guide me and I still do that now. That is ... how I work and often in ways that are hidden in the texts. It wouldn’t be obvious necessarily. It permeates everything ... I imagine the books as albums and then that gives me the motivation to do it. And I imagine the covers as record covers.

“*Metric Power* [his book of 2016] has three

movements and a coda. So a musical structure starts to play out. Or, the tone of what I am saying I can kind of get out of the tone of a song. I’ll try and write in the tone of the Jesus and Mary Chain or something like that.”

Music helped him survive the red tape of university life, he told Professor Back. “You know when you’ve had those meetings? So you have those meetings and you come out dispirited and then ...’ he strums the melancholy sound of an E minor.”

Professor Back writes: “Music helps Dave shape his sociology but also acts as an incentive to complete his books and articles. Music is also a way of coping with the vicissitudes of campus life. The small guitar Dave has in his office was given to his young daughter by his grandfather. After being cast off by her, the guitar is now permanently in Dave’s study.”

Feature continues overleaf ▶

‘Music means encountering alternative worlds’

► Feature continued

Professor Back concludes: “If learning to be a musician involves implicitly learning to be a sociologist, then I would suggest the reverse is also true.

“While musical life guarantees no special ear for society, it does make sociologists get out and about within its fringes. I think this is perhaps the key lesson that Becker (*see below*) alerts us to: take sociology on the road and encounter the world in all its tangle of vice and virtue.

“The training in the non-verbal and non-discursive realm can foster an attention to feel, touch and an ability to tune in to social and cultural life. It also leads to an appreciation for the ways in which improvisation and interaction are at the heart of the choreography of life and the enactment of culture. Many of the people interviewed here have mentioned this as one of music’s great lessons.

“Being a musician is also an incitement to get off campus more. It means encountering routinely alternative worlds of value and values. Here there is also the opportunity to: first, test the theories of the lecture hall and seminar ... and second, to use sociological tools to make sense of the social divisions that shape music-making, as Emma Jackson describes so brilliantly in her description of sexism in the guitar shop.

“I am not suggesting that being a musician is the only way to understand society better. Neither is there anything inherently liberating about music as a vocation ... music as a vocation is self-punishing and unhealthy in many of the same ways that the neo-liberal university can be as a place of work.

“My argument is that all cultural producers need a hinterland to their craft that nourishes imagination, be it recreation or creation. Part of our opportunity now is to do sociology with these other crafts.

“The pressure placed on academics – particularly young scholars – from the twin forces of specialization and professionalization bear down on these possibilities. Do we have time for this, they might justifiably ask? The pressures are considerable, as Evelyn Ruppert pointed out (*see right*). Satisfying campus priorities to teach, write and publish books means we certainly do not have the time to put in enough practice time. But like Evelyn’s trumpet that sits silently in her flat, an unplayed instrument can continue to act as a resource for thinking differently.

“Living with music is inextricably linked to keeping the sociological imagination alert and attentive to the unfolding nature of society. In a time when universities around

the globe are often under attack – be it from political pressure, auditing academic worth, or ever-increasing commercialization – thinking with music is also a reminder to let our sociological ears be tingled by the things that really matter.

“Other participants said similar things about how playing an instrument opens a different way to think about a problem or cope with the everyday stress of academic life. In a similar vein to Gilroy, other participants recognize that music offered an interpretative device to understand cultural life.”

Howard Becker

Professor Back wrote about musicians in the past. “My experience is not exceptional, and the story of musical sociologists goes all the way back to founding figures like W.E.B. Du Bois and Max Weber in the nineteenth century, for whom musical life was always woven into their sociological thinking. These founding figures had strong attachments to music and both men had fine singing voices.

“In the twentieth century, Frankfurt School Marxist, Theodor Adorno, was himself an accomplished pianist and composer. As a young person Adorno even dreamed of being a professional musician. He famously argued that the commodification of music exacerbated this rationalization that resulted in a ‘regression of listening’ that also produces in the masses a moronic economic conformity to capitalism and political submission.

“Du Bois, Weber and Adorno are not isolated cases, I could have chosen many other examples including pianists Roland Barthes and Stuart Hall. In recent times, there have been numerous appeals to use music to reimagine sociology itself.

“Howard S. Becker’s classic study *Outsiders* is built out of his experience of playing jazz and popular tunes in Chicago strip joints and taverns in the 1940s and



1950s. He was just 15 years old when he started playing professionally in jazz trios during World War II when most musicians were in the army. He explained: ‘There was a shortage of musicians ... so everybody winked at the fact that there were these kids like me working in there’. He became a ‘tune hound’, fascinated with the chord structures of the jazz repertoire but he also studied with the legendary Chicago piano player Lennie Tristano. As a

teenager he was playing in bars 7 hours a night until 4am, making \$80 dollars a week and a living wage of \$4,000 dollars a year. This was as much as a junior academic was earning in the 1950s.”

Professor Becker told him: “There’s a lot of musicians who are not very attentive. They are just barely attentive enough. I think that’s a skill you know. You have to learn to pay attention; to me it’s a Zen lesson. That’s the basic lesson of Zen Buddhism: pay

attention. Pay attention to what’s right there in front of you.”

Professor Becker made the point that being a musician took sociologists off the campus and into a milieu they might otherwise not know.

“One of the worst things that happens to sociologists is they become academics,” he said.

• Howard Becker is pictured above, playing piano

In the second part of our feature on sociologists who make music, Les Back sums up his findings and we feature more of his interviews

‘It’s like a friend you take care of’

Evelyn Ruppert

Professor Back writes: “For musical sociologists, the physical and material aspect of music making taught other lessons linked to their scholarly craft. Professor Evelyn Ruppert, who is an authority on ‘Big Data’ and an actor-network theorist, illustrated this point.

“It is less known that Evelyn, who grew up in Toronto, Canada, is a jazz trumpeter (although, now she rarely plays). And yet her experience of learning to play music has had a deep effect on her life.

“She grew up in a large working class family, had a difficult home life and, in a way, the trumpet was her way of being noticed and of ‘getting through school’. Playing in jazz orchestras helped her understand how the music was enacted through all the elements interacting; from the instruments to the social dynamics of feeling together, tuning to other people and



improvisation when playing music together.

“There were also injustices and inequities in this world as the boys broke off to form smaller bands and develop their capacity.”

Professor Ruppert told him: “For the last thirty years I have had different fits and starts to return [to music] and it somehow never quite happens.

“I wanted to be heard ... I wanted that loud shiny thing ... it was a gender thing. I love the material and I spent hours shining that thing and cleaning it in the bath tub and taking it apart and reassembling, oiling ... it’s almost like it’s a friend that you take [care of].

“The object matters immensely but it is what comes out that is between you and the object that I feel is important. The sound, which is the two of you together, would be impossible for either to exist [alone]. That is amazing.

“That, I think, is maybe a good metaphor ... one could not produce that [sound] without the-more-than-human relation.”

Cath Larkins

Professor Back also spoke to Cath Larkins, “a specialist in children’s citizenship and a children’s rights activist who teaches at the University of Central Lancashire. She’s also a guitarist and singer.

“Cath was born in the English Midlands in the 1960s and she came from a musical family with roots in South Wales. Her mother played the organ in church and her grandmother, with whom Cath lived for parts of her childhood, sang in chapel choirs and Eisteddfodau.

“As a child she sang with her mother and grandmother and although she learned to play the piano and read music, it was the guitar that she embraced as something that was truly hers. She has played and performed widely including opening for the Manchester Mardi Gras in 2002 in front of thousands of people.

“So she was well-accustomed to performing long before she needed to take to a different stage, the lectern.”



She told him: “On a day when I’m not writing – particularly if I’m dealing with something that’s really challenging – instead of trying to deal with it, craft the email right or stress about how

I’m going to manage a variety of people, if I have a guitar, I will pick it up. I will walk away and I’ll play some music. Then I’ll come back and I’ll be able to do the thing that I need to do from a completely different space.

“There’s something really nice about having this whole part of you which is not the academic and not shared in that world. In the same way as it creates that internal space, it creates a sort of identity space as well.

“Doing my PhD, the way I analysed the data from the very first focus groups I did with Gypsy and Traveller young people ... I wrote a song about it. It was just brilliant because it meant I could deal with some of the things I’d found challenging about it and eye-opening”

See pages 24-29 for an article on *Desert Island Discourse* over the past 20 years, which features sociologists’ musical preferences

A half century ago this year, Network's first editor began work on the initial issue of the magazine. To mark this, we take a trawl through the archives, beginning with a look at the Desert Island Discourse feature, which began in 2004.

A little history...

Professor Garry Crawford played a big part in Desert Island Discourse, interviewing some of the earliest contributors to the feature and providing his own five books to the Spring 2012 issue. The idea for the feature was not his, however, as he explained in his contribution: "I can't actually claim to have come up with the idea for the feature, as the original concept came from Andrew Blaikie," he wrote. "I think, if my memory serves me correctly, it was an idea Andrew mentioned to Judith Mudd [the BSA's CEO], probably at the annual conference.

"I certainly remember it was Judith who brought Andrew's idea to one of our *Network* editorial board meetings, and I remember everyone on the editorial board being really enthusiastic about it. So, though I certainly can't take credit for coming up with the idea, at least I was able to recognise a good idea when I saw it. And I do think it has remained a good feature. Certainly I enjoyed the interviews I conducted over the years, and I have enjoyed reading them ever since."

The first contributor, in the Summer 2004 issue, was, fittingly, Professor Blaikie himself, now retired from the University of Aberdeen, who dreamt up the idea for sociologists to list books and a luxury that were important to them, in a written alternative to the venerable BBC4 series Desert Island Discs, where interviewees choose eight pieces of music.

Over the last two decades, a total of 30 men and 31 women have made 301 choices: 273 works of non-fiction, 23 fiction books, three journal articles and two book chapters.

Unsurprisingly C. Wright Mills has been the most selected author, chosen seven times, five for *The Sociological Imagination*, which makes it the most frequently selected book.

Other popular authors were Pierre Bourdieu (featured six times, four for his book, *Distinction*), Erving Goffman (five times), Zygmunt Bauman (four times), W.E.B. Du Bois (four times) and Stan Cohen (three times).

Along with the old masters, we find some popular living scholars: Beverly Skeggs was chosen four times (three times for *Formations of Class and Gender*), with Les Back, Donna

Haraway, Gurminder Bhambra and Anne Oakley cited twice. Albert Camus is the only fiction writer to be cited more than once (two times, for *The Plague*).

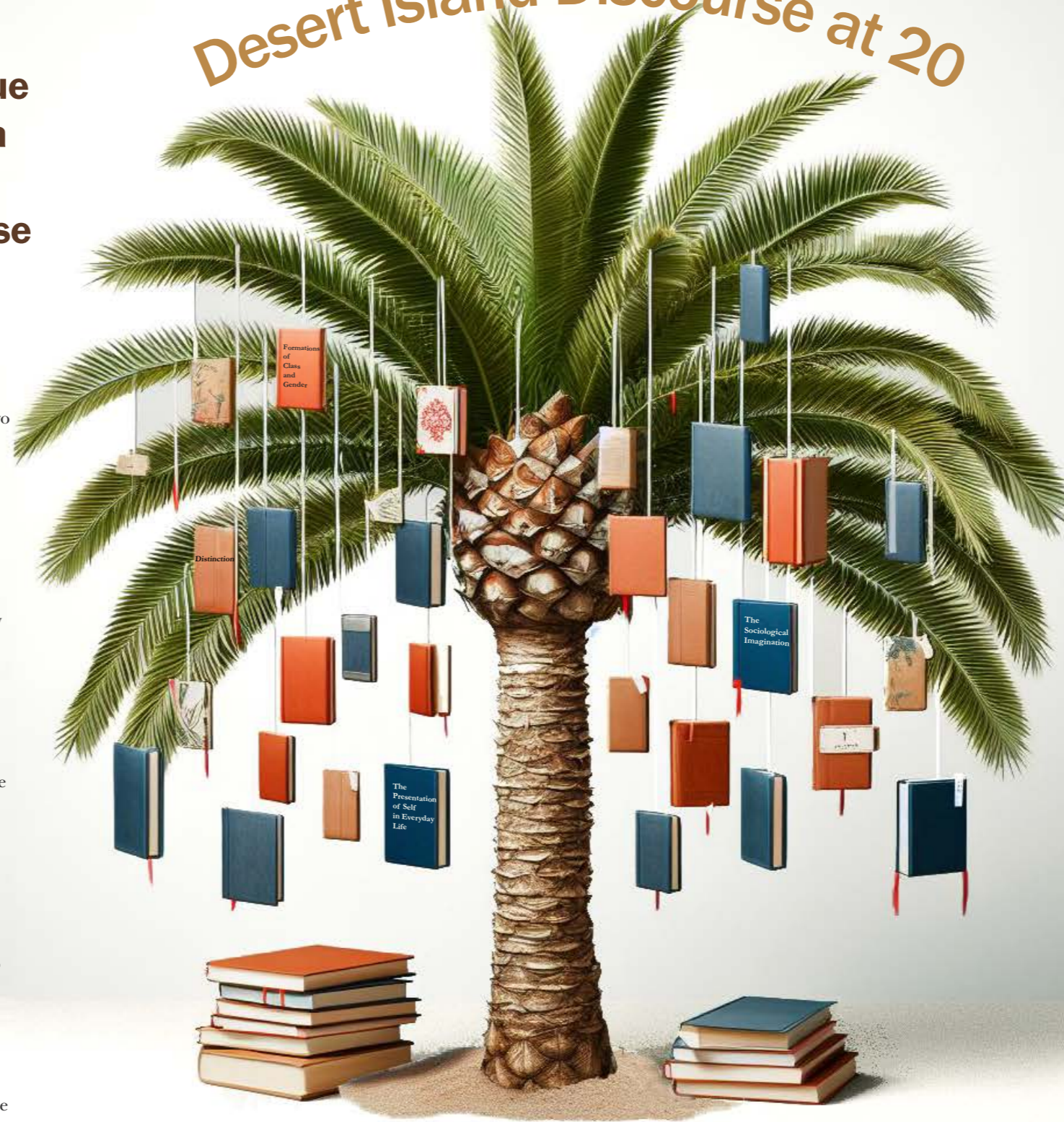
Important books

What do the 301 choices say about sociologists? There are, of course, many references to socially important work. Paula Black (Spring 2006) says of her choice, *Another Country*, by James Baldwin: "Reading this novel almost literally knocked me off my feet. It transports us into the lives of the characters in such a way that I not only learned about the wider world though this novel, I also felt emotionally drained when I had finished it. Literature like this can teach us much about sociology: it fleshes out the theories on racism or sexuality, it engages us on a human, emotional level. Baldwin for me is a writer who reminds me of my responsibilities as a social scientist. The greatest sociological work produces something akin to great novels like this but for the sheer beauty of language nothing beats James Baldwin."

The Making of Men, by Mairtin Mac an Ghaill, was chosen by Mark McCormack (Summer 2021) because "it was revelatory to me. Showing how teenage boys used homophobia to police each other's behaviours, Mac an Ghaill also showed how schools as institutions were implicated in these dynamics. His work was part of a broader British sociology of gender and education that captured both the importance of socialisation and the role of schools in the homophobic masculinity of the late 20th century. I found *The Making of Men* so powerful, not just because it explained my experiences as a trainee teacher, but because it perfectly captured my own school experiences as a closeted gay teenager at the time the book was written. My own youth had been a training in sociology through witnessing the way that homophobia was used to police gender and difference, and this book connected my own lay understanding with the sociology literature."

Oli Williams (Autumn 2021) chose Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* because "before university, I

Desert Island Discourse at 20



Bourdieu, Baldwin and Buffy the Vampire Slayer – 20 years on a desert island...

didn't know a great deal about feminism. It was not something I was taught much about at school or had much exposure to outside of education. I got the clichéd summary that I think the majority of young people (especially boys) who grew up in the '90s got – women causing unrest, and suffering and dying for the vote, and later on burning bras and declining to shave armpits and legs to reject the idea that women are merely sex objects for men ... as an undergraduate, I was for the first time exposed to books that laid out the history of feminism and the ideas, principles, politics and events that informed and defined the different waves and kinds of feminism. Later I read *Backlash* and it was life changing. Faludi documents the backlash against feminism after the advances made in the 1970s, and how feminism was painted as having won the fight for equality, but how this led to more, not less, misery for women."

Influential books

As well as influencing their minds, some contributors tell us about how books have altered their careers and lives more generally. John Brewer (Spring 2018) recalled the "dog-eared copy of Ronnie Frankenberg's edited collection, *Communities in Britain*, that I bought as an A-level student when it was reprinted by Penguin in 1969, with my aspiring sociologist's underlining and scribbles in the margins.

"The scribbles are an auto-ethnography. I liked it so much because from the beginning it grounded sociology for me as the study of real life, enabling me to make sense of the rural community in which I lived and the miners who travelled to a neighbouring colliery – the pit that killed, young, both my father and his father. From truly rural Wales, to the mining village of Ashton, to the new urban housing estates, the book gave a glimpse of worlds I thought I knew but which sociology helped me understand better."

For Rose Barbour (Autumn 2013), Beverly Skeggs' book, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, had a personal impact. "For me, this book was a revelation and served to confirm my feminist-acquired belief that 'the personal is political'. At last I felt I had identified a kindred spirit and this accent (complete with Skeggs's frank and reflexive comments) began to explain the feelings of guilt and anger, not to mention suspicions of 'fraudulence' that I had also experienced – indeed, continue to experience – as a woman from a working class background attempting to forge a career in academia."

Nicola Ingram (Autumn 2018) said that she "became a sociologist by a simple twist of fate – I signed up for a part-time Master's in education through a need to make sense of my own experiences of growing up on a council estate, attending a grammar school in Belfast, teaching in Belfast schools, moving to London and then moving back to the

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estate where I had grown up. My head was filled with thoughts of class, education and social mobility but my first degree was in art and design and I had no sociological training or exposure. This is one of the first sociology texts that I read, alongside a lot of Bourdieu, which was probably an odd and tricky way into sociology, but grappling with the complexities of Skeggs and Bourdieu fed what I now recognise as my craving for sociological understandings, as well as my anger about class inequalities.”

Chris Warhurst (Autumn 2010) wrote of his choice, *Working for Ford*, by **Huw Beynon**: “As a half-smart – or probably smart-arse, working class kid – I was destined to be an electrician on the docks in Hull. I fell into one of Britain’s posher universities by accident and my first year there was a culture shock. It was like being dropped into the television adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*, only I couldn’t switch it off or switch over.”

“*Working for Ford* got me through that first year. Long before globalisation became a buzzword, Beynon wrote about international capital and its impact on labour, and the possibilities and constraints of a response from labour. I sat in college one afternoon and read it from cover to cover. It was the first sociology book that really gripped me. It made me laugh, it made me cry, it made me angry; above all it made me think and made me want to be a sociologist.”

Exciting encounters

Some sociologists chose books by authors they had met in person. **Betsy Stanko** (Summer 2005), in choosing **Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison***, related how “the most exciting day was sharing a lift with Foucault when he was visiting the City University”. She did not speak to him – “it was a small lift, but in those days those people were god-like, you couldn’t just thrust your hand out and say ‘Hi, I’m a graduate student, I’ve read your book’. I didn’t have the confidence in those days to do that.”

It was a similar case of ‘so near yet so far’ for **Miriam Glucksmann** (Autumn 2007). In choosing **Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth***, she related that “one of my most vivid memories was of standing a few feet away from Malcolm X when he spoke at a packed meeting in the Old Theatre, days before he was assassinated.”

Her connection with **Norbert Elias** was closer, however. In choosing his book, ***Mozart: Portrait of a Genius***, Professor Glucksmann wrote that, “Elias wins out because of the personal connection. He was an old friend of my father’s and I knew him as a child. I was rather nervous of the very old man with the glass eye and the wagging finger who kept talking about forks and spoons. He was still at Leicester when I went there and, unlike the rest of the male staff, was encouraging about gender studies and research.”

“Yet I never seriously read any of his work until the *Essay on Time*. I needed to think about temporality when I was writing *Cottons and Casuals*, and found his insights really

enlightening. *Mozart* was a short step on from this and equally or more insightful.”

Writing it down

Among the celebration of the power of sociology to change minds and lives, there was the occasional and inevitable criticism, largely about writing style. **Geoff Payne** (Autumn 2012), in choosing ***The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*** by Daniel Bell, wrote that: “Bell knew how to put words together so that complex ideas became straightforward and the reader gets carried along. Just compare his writing to that of one or two of our very foremost British sociologists: you might think that English was their second or third language or you were reading a poor translation! I wish contemporary sociological education allowed space for learning the basic skill and techniques of how to write research in better English. I don’t claim to remember a golden age when we all wrote more eloquently and clearly, but I do believe it’s hard for today’s undergraduates to develop good style. So much of their written work is assessed by postgraduate tutors whose own writing skills have yet to develop very far, and by busy lecturers who don’t have time to offer supportive critique, even if they know how to write themselves.”

Andrew Blaikie agreed: “A second work distinguished by its clarity and concision is **Stan Cohen and Laurie Taylor’s *Escape Attempts: the Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life***. Very few sociology books are good bedtime reading, but the sheer sense of engagement with how we see daily life and deal with our desires makes this unputdownable.”

Some contributors were so engrossed in their choices that they lost track of time. Andrew Blaikie wrote about an essay by **Charles Phythian-Adams** (1972) “*Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry, 1450-1550*”: “I became so absorbed in reading this article that I was mistakenly locked in what should have been an empty library but blissfully unaware of this until a security guard found me an hour later.”

Several contributors urged sociologists to get out of the ivory tower. **Sam Whimster** (Summer 2011), in choosing ***Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change***, by **Sharon Zukin**, wrote: “*Loft Living*, a term originating from estate agents, captured the whole movement of how artistic bohemianism provided the tipping point for a new urban movement. It’s an inspiration to any sociologist – to get out there, spot the movement, name it and describe it. Too often sociologists fail to do this.”

Frank Furedi (Spring 2010) concurred: “I don’t think sociologists enter into real conversations with people, especially people that they don’t particularly like. I can say that in the last five or six years I have learned a lot about myself and my own limits and also about the world by the conversations I had through watching my son play football and talking to the other parents about their work and their problems. It’s important as a reality check.”



...tinkling the ivories, blowing one’s own trumpet: the island as a musical interlude...

Living it up

It is perhaps their choice of the luxury item they would take with them to the desert island that reveals most about their priorities in life. Even when offered the choice of a luxury, some chose to take books. **Howard Becker** (Spring 2007) chose the **complete works of Mark Twain** as his luxury, while **Paula Black** opted to stay in serious mode with her choice of all of **James Baldwin**. **Mike Hepworth** (Summer 2006) decided he’d like a few laughs during his exile and went for the **complete work of Richmal Crompton’s *Just William*** stories.

For some, enforced leisure time was an opportunity to play, or learn to play, a musical instrument. **Stéph Lawlor** (Spring/Summer 2008) wrote: “I’ve always wanted to learn the **saxophone**, so I’d like to have a saxophone, some sheet music and a ‘teach yourself’ book. I could learn without inflicting the noise on others and imagine myself in a smoky basement club.”

Kevin Hylton (Summer 2009) wanted his guitar: “I’ve been playing **guitar** since around 1983 and I’d pick that as you can play anything you want at any time, so I could play Tom Waits one day, and I could play Bob Marley the next; it’s so versatile. I don’t want to think about what would happen when I run out of strings though!”

Sam Whimster wrote: “My one luxury would be a **piano** to tinkle away on. Perhaps a ship’s square piano could wash up on the shore, complete with tuning fork and bit of sheet music.”

Gregor McLennan (Spring 2005) was tempted by earthly pleasures, but in the end turned to something more ethereal: “A mixed case of Islay malts immediately appeals, but it would only last a couple of weeks. So instead, I choose a **piano** – I would finally have the time to get to grips with some twelve bar blues and the ‘Moonlight’ Sonata.”

Mark McCormack wanted his **trumpet**: “I’ve always enjoyed playing music. I started lessons through the Merton Music Foundation when it still received some funding from the council. That funding was gradually eroded but the foundation prospered as a registered charity through brilliant and passionate teachers and dedicated parents, giving kids across the borough the chance to make music. I played in several different bands and orchestras, and was able to go on tour to Italy, Norway and France with the jazz band and the concert band. By the time I went to university, I was practising the trumpet an hour a day most days, but that gradually (and then swiftly) decreased as university life and interests took over. I sang in choirs instead, as that is much more forgiving of little practice. I recently found my trumpet again, and it’s a beautiful instrument. But I put it away as I knew it wasn’t the time to start playing again. I love the idea of having the time, space and absence of neighbours on a desert island to become good at the trumpet again.”

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Desert Island

Living it up (some more)

For others the passive experience of hearing music was enough. **Joan Busfield** (Summer 2010) wanted “sets of CDs of operas by ... **Mozart, Verdi and Handel** (as many as I am allowed) and something to play them on. These would help to distract me from the isolation that I know I would experience on a desert island.”

By contrast, **Chris Warhurst** wanted “my **Jam/Style Council/Paul Weller** music collection and obviously something to play it on. At the risk of gross generalisation, the generation before mine gained their political education through student reading circles and workers’ education; mine gained it through punk. We rocked against Thatcher, racism, everything. Music collections are an autobiography. To me Weller is less the spokesperson for a generation than the lyricist of a generation. From the line in That’s Entertainment, ‘Feeding ducks in the park and wishing you were far away’, that triggered me to leave my home town as a teenager, to the middle-aged self-affirmation of Heavy Soul’s ‘I still seek the same things that I once sought to be true’, Weller’s music has painted the musical pictures of my life.”

Graham Scambler (Autumn 2020) wanted a “selection of **jazz CDs** and the wherewithal to play them”, while **Rebecca O’Connell** (Autumn 2019) requested the **complete discography of Prince**. **Shamser Sinha** (Summer 2022) was similar if more specific in his request: “A **bootleg live recording from Prince’s Sign of The Times tour** in 1987. The concert in Amsterdam. On a bootleg TDK cassette. Played on a cheapo, non-Sony brand Walkman.”

For others it was vision rather than sound that was important. **Miriam Glucksmann** opted for “a solar-powered DVD equivalent of an **MP3 player**, complete with all my favourite films, to while away the long dark evenings.” For **Teresa Piacentini** (Autumn 2009) her “luxury item would have to be a **television**, with as many channels as

possible, please, and a big plasma screen! (There’d be solar power, right?).”

Gurminder Bhambra probably spoke for many when she opted for “**the complete box set of The Wire** and something to watch it on! It has become almost passé among sociologists to claim a liking for The Wire, but my sentiments about it echo Charlie Brooker’s comments which led me to it in the first place. He said that the people he was most jealous of in the whole world, were those who had not yet seen The Wire as they still had it all to look forward to.”

Brian Longhurst (Autumn 2004) wins the award for the most unusual small screen request, asking for **Buffy the Vampire Slayer**. “I find the whole thing about cult television interesting and the literature on fandom fascinating, but there are now all sorts of things happening about Buffy the Vampire Slayer in the literature and I feel a bit like a High Court judge in the ‘60s saying, ‘who are The Beatles?’ I’ve never watched an episode of Buffy, so I feel completely left out of this, there is obviously something interesting going on in cultural and media studies, and here is an opportunity to catch up.”

High tech was the theme for others: **Garry Crawford** requested his **Xbox**, while **Jacqui Gabb** (Summer 2014) plumped for an **iPod** “loaded up with all my favourite tunes, ranging from opera to punk, and I could then thrash happily around the island in blissful ignorance of my discordant vocals”.

Eileen Green (Summer 2015) wrote that “As an insomniac, I would need something to calm me during the long nights. I would take my own personal technology, a solar and wind-up **short-wave radio** with torch. This would be backed up by a powerful solar charger for an eBook reader, ready-loaded with books, including one on how to distil gin from rain or sea water!”

Aisha Phoenix (Summer 2023) was more ambitious, wanting “a multifunctioning solar-powered **robot**. It could serve as a companion and include a laptop that contains my music and photo albums. It would be equipped with an electronic piano, Microsoft Word and drawing packages.”

For others, the solitude of the desert island was unwelcome. **Abby Day** (Spring 2020) wanted “a **photo album of my family**, because they’re what I’d miss most”. **Paula Black** said that she would like “all of my **photos of friends and family** and old letters I have collected over the years. As I wouldn’t have any means of keeping in touch then at least to have photos and letters as reminders would stop me from getting too lonely.” **Kalwant Bhopal** (Spring 2021) felt the same, asking for “**Family photos** of my husband and four children.”

For **Lucy Mayblin** (Autumn 2017), photos weren’t enough. “So I am alone on a desert island with only five sociological books to keep me company? But what use is sociology without a society? Surely, then, I will need people! I have to take **my family and a few close friends** in that case, and we can forge a new island society, learning the lessons contained in my five books!”

Corey Wrenn (Spring 2022) wanted “My **dog Mishka and cat Keeley Jr**. Sometimes I feel we’re already stranded on a deserted island amid all these coronavirus waves that have me hiding at home!”

Karen Lumsden (Summer 2018) felt similarly: “It would have to be **my two dogs – Rebus and Lewis**. They are the harshest peer reviewers you will ever meet. We have missed the advantages of living on the Scottish coast since our relocation to landlocked Leicestershire. On our desert island beach we’d all enjoy some well-deserved rest and relaxation. And they’d be good at foraging for food – I hope!”

Richard Jenkins (Autumn 2008) went a step further. “I take it that Jenny Owen, my partner, is out of the question. So, can we bring back from the dead **my last dog, Sasha the lurcher?**”

Other contributors were more practical in their luxuries. **Betsy Stanko** would take up **knitting**: “People who know me from criminology know that I’m a knitter. I sit at conferences and knit. So I would probably have to go tame some animals and take their fur and do something creative with it or I’d go really bonkers. I would certainly need something as a long-term project.”

Judy Wajcman (Spring 2015) would take to the island like a duck to water: “Swimming in the sea is one of my favourite activities – although living in London makes this difficult – and so I would take a **pair of goggles** as my luxury. I would enjoy doing laps around the island and observing the tropical coral and fish that, hopefully, surround it. To be honest, the idea of being on this island now, with these books and the chance of swimming, is starting to sound like quite an attractive prospect!” **Gayle Letherby** (Autumn 2006) wanted “**my swimsuit and my pyjamas**”.

Comfort was uppermost in **Mike Savage’s** mind (Spring 2023): “One thing which will surely loom large on the desert island is sleeping. After years of sleeping on futons, in recent years I have become more aware of the glory of a comfortable **mattress** and (if this does not count as a second luxury) luxury duvet covers with fine cotton. Perhaps this is another link back to my doctoral studies? In any case, it might help me get a good night’s sleep.” **Nod Miller** (Spring 2009) was happy with just “a **large bottle of shampoo**”.

Robert Dingwall (Autumn 2023) was thinking ahead: “My luxury, then, would be a set of **garden tools**, with a view to increasing the productive capacity and aesthetics of the island. I am sure there will be plenty of seaweed to act as fertiliser and perhaps I can experiment with breeding palm trees.”

Graham Crow (Summer 2013) wanted a **pair of binoculars**. “With these I could not only watch the bird life, I could also keep an eye out for the approach of my own cargo cult boat. On my desert island, I would hope to have a variety of birds for company, even if fleetingly, and this book would help me to know what to look for.”

Dreading the thought of a diet comprising solely coconut pulp and juice, the thoughts of others turned to food and drink. **David Inglis** (Summer 2007) had a refined taste in mind: “Well, as I am originally from central Scotland, the habitus dictates that the luxury be some form of liquid refreshment. Actually the habitus defines this refreshment as a necessity, not a

luxury. However, embourgeoisification processes also demand that it be something quite classy. So a large supply of very good wine made in an excellent year should be the luxury. If I’m allowed anything at all, then it would be **Château d’Yquem, 1967**, the drinking of which is like listening to angels singing.”

Louise Ryan (Spring 2013) preferred caffeine to alcohol: “What I really miss when I am in Africa is freshly brewed coffee. No amount of palm wine can compensate for that first hit of fresh coffee in the morning. So my luxury item must be an ample supply of **coffee** and a **percolator**.” **Nicola Ingram** couldn’t choose between caffeine and alcohol, so went for both: “My luxury item would be a **grapevine** and an **Arabica plant**, because I like my sociology with coffee and wine.”

It was a case of nominative determinism for **John Brewer**: “My luxury of a **cider press** is biographical. As my luxury I thought about the two-volume letters of A.E. Housman by Archie Burnett, which I got as a 60th birthday present and which sit on my shelf in the study at home, mostly untouched; but I chose a cider press instead. Both, of course, are mementos of Shropshire in their different ways, but since I anticipate my island will have apples and I will have generous time on my hands for the first occasion in my professional life, I look forward to experimenting with cider making and its various mixes with the island’s exotic fruits. Apple and guava cider with plenty of sunshine will suit my retirement well.”

Geoff Payne was more solid in his preference: “I’ve decided to stick with my instinctively empirical and practical style, and to take a three-dimensional **sack of onions**: eating fruit, and sea food, will be no hardship, but a little added piquancy comes in handy from time to time.” **Anna Bull** (Autumn 2022) was similarly down to earth: “I spend a lot of time making and thinking about food, and without **garlic** these thoughts would be very flavourless. Is garlic a luxury, though? I think perhaps it’s a necessity”.

Discourse at 20

...onions and garlic, cider and wine: a main course to go with the desert island

Michaela Benson

Michaela Benson is Professor in Public Sociology at Lancaster University and Chief Executive of The Sociological Review Foundation. She is: the author of several books, most recently *Lifestyle Migration and Colonial Traces in Malaysia and Panama* (co-authored with Karen O'Reilly, 2018); host and producer of the podcast 'Who do we think we are? Debunking taken for granted understandings of race, migration and citizenship in Britain today'; and co-lead of *Rebordering Britain and Britons after Brexit* (MIGZEN)



Your first choice is *The British on the Costa del Sol*, by Karen O'Reilly – why did you choose that?

My first choice is the book that inspired my original PhD research. Don't judge this book by its cover!

It's a fantastic theoretically-informed ethnography that considers the migration of British citizens to southern Spain. It goes beyond the headlines of a population so often reduced to stereotypes – such as the image that graces the front cover, over which Karen had no choice – revealing their daily lives in intricate detail. Through this account, Karen makes visible transnational community-making, solidarity and care, and identity-formation among this population.

Nearly 25 years on from its original publication, it remains a path-breaking text. Not only has it inspired many of us working on related topics, it sets the stage for asking questions about the scope of the sociology of migration, not least in centring emigration which, in the British case, has led to the equivalent of 1 in 10 of the population born in the UK now living abroad. It features an approach that shifts beyond the methodological nationalism and problem-oriented approaches that predominate (even today) within migration research.

But it is more than this.

To my mind, this is a book inspired by a long tradition of sociological and anthropological work on class and community in Britain, albeit explored via the practices of those living in Spain. It offers important insights into nationalism, community and identity-formation. As such, it is essential reading for those interested in working on class formation, as much as it is for those working on questions of migration and citizenship.

This book is also personally significant to me. Karen is a scholar who has carved her own path while bringing others with her along the way. I first met her in 2007, when I was in the final stages of writing my PhD.

Any anxiety that I might have had about meeting the leading scholar in my field fast evaporated as we talked about our shared research interests over a coffee. Since then, she has been a firm mentor, colleague and friend, always on hand with advice and support.

An added bonus here is that looking at the cover will be a reminder to stay in the shade until I am rescued!

What made you choose your next book – *Teaching Critical Thinking*, by bell hooks?

bell hooks has always been good to teach with. In my first job post-PhD, I taught using her essay 'Representing whiteness in the Black imagination', alongside Gloria Anzaldúa's views onto whiteness in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. The majority white students were visibly taken aback by hearing about the violence of whiteness from Black and Chicana scholars. Talking to them, it became clear that this was the first time they'd been challenged in this way in the classroom, having to face not only their privileges but also how these were directly connected to the oppression of others. However, hooks' reflections on pedagogy in the short book of essays, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, were a more recent discovery for me.

After a few years doing funded research, with very little teaching, and after changing universities and preparing new teaching materials, I had lost my confidence in the classroom. This summer, I decided to address it and picked up this book for inspiration. It turned out to be just what I needed as I planned my teaching for the year. It put into words many of the concerns I have about teaching today, and much more. I was particularly inspired by how these essays went back to the question of what learning is and what it could be. Messages that stood out to me were: how to build trust in the learning process; working with conflict in the classroom; bringing humour, collaboration and imagination into

teaching; and encouraging creativity, curiosity and joy in students.

As in her other work, the frank and open writing style makes you feel that you are in conversation with hooks. It encourages you to think along with her and others that she is in dialogue with over the course of the collection. But, most importantly, the book made me take a step back and think about my own pedagogical practice and what I needed to do to refresh this. I knew that after the summer I would be delivering an optional module on migration for the first time, and while I felt confident in the content, I knew that I had work to do to bring engaged pedagogy front and centre in the design. Reading hooks gave me the inspiration to get off the starting blocks, developing small activities to include in lectures and seminars, and offering guidance and advice on how to approach the learning resources, from readings to podcasts, included in the module guide. But, above all, what *Teaching Critical Thinking* reminded me was that teaching is always going to be a work in progress.

Reading this again from a desert island, I'll be thinking about what I can bring to teaching when I return.

Why did you select for your third work, *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, by Lisa Lowe?

I am an avid reader of almost anything published by Duke University Press, but this one really stands out in my mind because of its scope and also its interdisciplinarity. Lowe effortlessly weaves together the relationships between Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, as she considers different elements of the emerging capitalist economy of the 18th and 19th century – among them slavery, indenture and imperial trade.

But above all, what she shows are the intimate interconnections and inextricability of Western liberalism and colonialism. Her central argument concerns how the celebration of abolition, underpinned

by the logic of freedom, obscures its origins in colonial conditions (and the continuation of colonial logics, such as those that produce race). Moreso, it stresses the need to recentre the peoples and events otherwise missing from these histories. This rests on an innovative methodology of 'reading intimately' that brings together archives of liberalism and colonial archives.

For me, connecting different corners of the globe within this retold history offered a powerful reminder of how resurfacing forgotten connections between peoples, places and processes challenges canonical thinking. Interdisciplinary in flavour, and firmly located in the arts and humanities, this work by Lowe offers inspiration, methodologically and analytically, as we seek ways of situating contemporary social issues within a global political economy past and present.

Your fourth choice is *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands*, by Hazel Carby – why this book?

A memoir, this book draws out the intimate transatlantic threads that made her family. This is a real labour of love that showcases why we need to remember that, within living memory, Britain was an empire, and that this history of slavery, colonialism and dispossession has left its marks in the present. It is one of those books that I have gifted to many of my

friends in sociology and beyond (along with Saidiya Hartmann's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*).

In a context where there are evermore urgent calls within the discipline and from our students to recognise the significance of colonialism in the present day, this book is an evocative and engaging text to think with. It encourages the reader to think otherwise about a range of sociological issues at their intersections, among them class, race, family and gender. I read this and Lowe's book against the backdrop of ongoing calls from our students, and from within the sociological community, to decolonise, which challenges sociology in the UK to consider and shake off its methodologically nationalist and presentist trappings. These two works are powerful examples of the affordances of troubling tendencies that underscore so much sociology today.

But it also offers a route map for those of us who, like Carby, have families made through empire. I read this at a time when I had started to try to make sociological sense of my own mixed heritage, informed by a family history made through 'imperial intimacies' between England and Hong Kong, a British colony until 1997. As *Imperial Intimacies* shows us, such family histories, all too often kept behind closed doors, offer important insights into the sociological issues of our time.

Your last book is *Indelible City*, by Louisa Lim – what led you to this?

I return to Hong Kong with my final book. This is one of several new non-fiction books about Hong Kong published against the backdrop of the pro-democracy uprisings. It deals with core issues that we address as sociologists: dispossession and resistance.

The pro-democracy uprisings were an important reminder that this is a place and people never given the right to self-determination that was supposed to accompany political decolonisation. Living in a territory handed from one world power to another, Hong Kongers have long been dispossessed of their own history and identity, its history told by others – whether the UK in its reflections on its 'last colony' or the People's Republic of China.

Uncovering the untold stories of Hong Kong and amplifying the voices of ordinary Hong Kongers, Lim carefully reveals the distinctive identity of Hong Kong and its people.

The golden thread through her enquiry is the King of Kowloon (who also inspired her eponymously named podcast www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/rn-presents/disappearance/13945078). From the 1950s until his death in 2007, he became known around the city for his graffiti – Chinese calligraphy that accused the British of stealing his land. Returning to the King throughout the book, she centres the story on how, in the past and the present, the people of Hong Kong have remained defiant, in the struggle for a city made in their image.

And for your luxury?

Running shoes, I don't go anywhere without them. They offer me a way of getting out and seeing places, whether close to home or further afield. Running helps me to clear my head, whether before or after a long day. I've run through problems at work and home, writer's block, procrastination and much, much more. A runner for at least a decade, what I like about it is that you can take yourself anywhere. I think that this might be useful on a desert island ... but it also helps that I'll have a comfortable pair of shoes.

Professor Benson's choices:

- 1. *The British on the Costa del Sol*, by Karen O'Reilly (2000) Routledge**
- 2. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*, by bell hooks (2010) Routledge**
- 3. *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, by Lisa Lowe (2015) Duke University Press**
- 4. *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands*, by Hazel Carby (2019) Verso**
- 5. *Indelible City: Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong*, by Louisa Lim (2022) Riverhead Books**

Staff 'feel pressured to return to work after a bereavement'

Professor Erica Borgstrom writes about research which shows that many staff don't take the bereavement leave they are entitled to because of workload pressures

Being bereaved during one's working life is not an uncommon experience. Despite research showing that bereavement can impact both one's wellbeing and work performance, very little is known about the bereavement experiences of staff in higher education institutes. Except in the context of bereavement following the death of a child, there is no legal entitlement to bereavement leave (paid or unpaid) in the UK. Nevertheless, many UK HEIs provide some form of leave to their staff following a broader range of bereavement experiences; this may sometimes be classified as compassionate/contingency leave or could include sick leave.

To understand staff knowledge of their institution's policies and their own bereavement experiences, members of Open Thanatology – the Open University's interdisciplinary research group for the study of death, dying, loss and grief – ran an online survey in 2023. This was open to staff at all levels and roles across institutions in the UK. A total of 539 responses were received within a three-week period. To help promote anonymity, the survey did not ask respondents to identify their HEI.

Staff's knowledge about their institutional policy around bereavement was the starting point. Just over 40% were unsure if their HEI had a bereavement policy, and nearly half did not know where to find such a policy within their institution. If people were aware of the policy, only 11% found it very easy to understand. People noted that the documents can be difficult to interpret, and have considerable variation within them in terms of what leave is allowed for different types of bereavement, due to the role of management discretion.

Less than 20% of respondents had actually used such a policy to support another bereaved member of staff, as they were entitled to.

One of the recommendations from the research is that policies are easy to locate and



Professor Erica Borgstrom

easy to read, with HEIs offering training to managers on how to apply discretion if that is a feature of the policy.

Over 70% of those who responded had experienced at least one bereavement whilst working for an HEI; 38% of respondents had experienced more than one bereavement during this time. A third of respondents who had been bereaved said the time they had off was insufficient.

For example, qualitative comments demonstrated that some staff felt they were unable to take time off either due to the nature of the bereavement or due to workload pressures, or they chose not to take leave as they didn't feel they needed it.

Of those who had leave, 24% felt pressured to return to work due to financial circumstances; this is notable because bereavement can create and exacerbate financial pressures for individuals and families, for example when having to pay for funeral costs. When on leave, if and how workload was covered varied and 28% said it was not covered at all. This means that a sizable number of bereaved staff are likely to return to increased workloads following a bereavement and in the immediate grief period.

Most felt supported by their line managers and/or colleagues, although 19% felt unsupported by managers and 13% felt unsupported by colleagues. Qualitative

comments indicated that some felt they were unable to talk to others about the bereavement or did not even let others know about the bereavement. Manager discretion around length of leave was indicated by some to be beneficial whilst others found it confusing and open to discrimination.

Based on the demographic and role-related questions people answered, we know the survey respondents are not representative of the whole of the HEI sector. For example, the majority of respondents were in permanent, full-time positions. However, the survey results are a useful starting point to understand staff bereavement in the sector. The project team are further analysing the data to understand these experiences and to consider additional recommendations for HEI policy and management.

• The project was led by Professor Erica Borgstrom, of the Open University, and the project team currently includes colleagues Claire A. Harris, Dr Kerry Jones and Khadija Patel, and Dr Sharon Mallon, University of Staffordshire.

To read the full report from the study, visit: <https://oro.open.ac.uk/88719> Borgstrom, E., Harris, C. A., Jones, K., and Mallon, S. (2023) 'Bereavement during employment in higher education (UK): 2023 survey report'. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

To what extent is social work applied sociology?, group asks

Rosie Buckland and Louise Isham write about starting a new BSA Social Work study group

We met randomly over lunch at a BSA conference several years ago, where many friendships and fruitful academic connections have surely been made. We realised that we were both social workers, as was the woman sitting next to us, which got us hypothesising that we probably weren't the only ones!

We'd all worked as social workers, variously in adult care, mental health services, child protection and generic emergency social services, and our routes into sociology were both informed by, and came directly from, social work practice. We'd noticed that at the conference we'd seen several presentations of research about particular groups of people or communities that we'd worked with as social workers where what was presented as sociology we felt to be actually social work. We were curious about this and what it meant. We'd all completed or were undertaking PhD research that straddled both disciplines and engaged with questions concerning the relationship between the two.

These were questions that we then asked each other and that was essentially how the Social Work study group in the BSA got started. They're questions that we'd still like to think about, or rather, that we'd now like to return to! For example: to what extent is social work applied sociology? Is there a

'To what extent is social work applied sociology – is there a disconnect between 'social work academia' and 'social work practice'? These were questions that we asked each other, and that was essentially how the Social Work study group got started'



Dr Louise Isham

disconnect between social work academia and social work practice and how could sociology help us to understand this perceived gap? What groups are dominant in creating the knowledge base for both disciplines and what might that mean for how we understand the relationship between social work and sociology? How might we mobilise better around shared aims for a different kind of society? Hopefully reading them you might think of others...

The initial reception of the group was positive and we came across many people who had trained and worked as social workers before becoming sociology academics. We held one in-person event back in 2019 and a fantastic range of people working across practice and academia

attended. We had presentations from Dr Jo Warner on 'Social work and sociology: then and now'; from Dr Jessica Langston on her ethnography, 'Why good social workers do bad things'; from Dr Will Mason on the groundbreaking Child Welfare Inequalities Project (CWIP); and from Dr Daniel Edmiston on ways of measuring poverty.

Dr Warner's presentation took as its starting point the lives of Jane Addams and Mary Richmond to trace tensions going back to the 1800s in social work, in what it should be, who it should be for and who should do it; Dr Langston talked about her own experiences as a children's social worker to better understand how children's social workers do social work; Dr Mason described some of the qualitative findings of the CWIP study to reflect on why children's social work interventions in Northern Ireland had quantitative differences in outcomes to England, Wales and Scotland, and Dr Edmiston considered the sociological implications of different ways of measuring poverty and the poverty gap.

Unfortunately we didn't manage to maintain momentum following such a promising start! Covid, family, new jobs, PhD completion and other usual life pressures meant the group fell down the list of priorities, and grand plans that included publishing from the event never came to fruition, but we'd really like your help to get it going again and we'd like to see where that can take us.

Do you have ideas about what you'd like to see us doing and, perhaps more importantly, how best to do it? We'd like to represent the interests of those who practise, research and teach in the fields of social work and sociology, as well as people who use social work services. We'd like to welcome services users, carers, students, educators, researchers and practitioners, and we want to stimulate conversations, hold events and share and create work that adopts a critical, sociological approach to social work research, practice and theory. In terms of our positioning now, Rachel, our other original co-founder, has left academia to return to social work practice, Louise is a social work academic and Rosie's work is mostly in systemic social work practice but with a foot in academia.

So what happens next? We've set up a BSA Social Work study group Jiscmail group and instructions for joining can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/5ynnnt76t>

We look forward to seeing you soon!
– Dr Rosie Buckland and Dr Louise Isham

New project aims to understand the lives of Afghan families in England

A multi-institutional research team of sociologists has been awarded funding of £268,792 from the Nuffield Foundation to understand the experiences and outcomes of resettled Afghans. The team comprises Dr Caroline Oliver, of University College London (pictured below left), Professor Louise Ryan, London Metropolitan University (below right), Professor María López, London Metropolitan University, and Dr Janroj Yilmaz Keles, Middlesex University.

Dr Oliver and Professor Ryan write: Following the scenes in August 2021, when the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the British Government moved to evacuate over 22,000 vulnerable and at-risk Afghans to the UK. Two schemes were hurriedly implemented to create migration pathways for resettled Afghans.

Firstly, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy is a scheme aimed at providing relocation and assistance to people who worked with or for the UK government or UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan. The relocation scheme was also open to vulnerable Afghan nationals, such as female politicians, women's rights activists and judges. A further separate resettlement initiative, the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, was established to relocate Afghan people most at risk of human rights abuse, such as women and girls, members of ethnic and religious minority groups and LGBT+ individuals.

Our project draws upon our previous work around local authority responses to refugees (Oliver et al 2020a) and with resettled Afghans in London (Ryan et al, 2023). This is especially urgent work, since the Afghan resettlement schemes have attracted increased scrutiny due to concerns about delays and procedural issues (British Red Cross et al, 2022; Ryan, et al, 2023). From 2021-2023, many Afghans were housed for extended periods of time in 'bridging hotels', initially designed as temporary accommodation. The Chief Inspector of Borders, the Women and Equalities committee and Local Government Association made calls for independent evidence to inform the schemes' ongoing implementation.

Our team will be working closely with local authorities across the country who have responsibility for resettlement. They have faced pressures to move Afghans into

Dr Caroline Oliver and Professor Louise Ryan write about a new project to understand the experiences of Afghan families who have settled in England



housing (in local authority properties or private rental) after the government announced at the end of April 2023 its intention to close the bridging hotels. Local authorities have warned that the short-term window given for rehousing, and combined pressure from the schemes, are leading to additional

pressures on housing, with a risk of potential homelessness following the closure of all bridging hotels in December 2023.

In the context of the government's hostile environment and growing anti-immigration measures over recent decades, our project aims to understand how resettled Afghans are embedding in their new localities. Our team is looking to explore what happens from this point on, using sociological insights to explore how these processes are experienced by individuals and families. We are interested in how Afghan families are actively negotiating opportunities and obstacles within the specific local infrastructures into which they are placed, especially in relation to employment and housing. Drawing attention to variance in local implementation and community responses (Oliver et al 2020b) and using the conceptual lens of embedding (Ryan and Mulholland, 2015; Mulholland and Ryan, 2022), we want to understand how they are endeavouring to rebuild their lives in new places.

The wide geographical reach of our project includes large cities like London, Liverpool and Birmingham, as well as smaller towns in the south-east of England. This will enable us, in collaboration with Afghan community organisations, refugee NGOs and local authority resettlement teams, to analyse how local infrastructure,

support services and economic contexts shape their embedding opportunities. The knowledge will inform a broader assessment of how the schemes are working, as well as give insight into how experiences vary regionally and according to the heterogeneity of the population (Oliver et al 2023).

Our research is based on a mixed methods design, working closely with stakeholders, Afghan researchers and Afghan resettled families. Following scoping work with local authorities to provide a state-of-the-art picture of the implementation of the Afghan resettlement schemes, we will carry out a survey of Afghans in an anticipated five regions to



investigate experiences and outcomes, especially in employment, income and housing. This will also describe inequalities in experience according to region and by population characteristics. During our third phase, we will use participatory qualitative methods of both walking interviews and Photovoice research to generate insight into how the most vulnerable, especially women and young people, are experiencing resettlement.

Our research aims to engage stakeholders throughout via podcasts, briefings, workshops and roundtables. It is expected that the results of the project will be of interest to Home Office policymakers, select committees and parliamentarians, and we will also be working with refugee NGOs and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Afghanistan and Afghan Women and Children. Findings from the project will enable national government, strategic migration partnerships, local authorities and NGOs to assess how resettlement schemes are working and how experiences vary regionally and by different populations.

For more information, please contact:

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- Professor María López: m.lopez@londonmet.ac.uk
- Dr Janroj Keles: j.keles@mdx.ac.uk

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'Lecture showed what decolonising the curriculum looks like'

Jacqueline Agyeman-Duah, Head of Sociology at City and Islington College Sixth Form Centre, writes about a recent talk by the former BSA President, Gurminder Bhambra

Since doing sociology as a 16-year-old A-level student over 15 years ago, I have held an admiration and respect for the discipline. Whether it be at A-level or degree level, sociology can play a vital role in enabling students to critically examine and engage with the complex world around them. Recently City and Islington Sixth Form A-level sociology students were fortunate enough to receive a bespoke lecture from the esteemed university lecturer and author Gurminder Bhambra. In this session Gurminder spoke about the sociology of the industrial revolution, and racial capitalism and its links to modernity.

Having such an engaging and knowledgeable speaker such as Gurminder come and speak to our students not only provided these students with a wealth of enrichment and sociological knowledge, it also provided a valuable insight into the high-quality academic expectations of higher education. Through providing a depth of expertise, Gurminder was the embodiment of sociology in action and true testament to studying sociology beyond A-levels.

Although the students were at first reserved and more content with actively listening rather than questioning Gurminder, they were able to make deep synoptic links not only to other topics studied in sociology but also to other specialisms. For instance, through drawing on the inter-connectedness of sociology, history and economics, Gurminder's lecture sparked the intellectual curiosity of many of our students, so much so that a few recited much of what they had learnt to other

students who were not in the session.

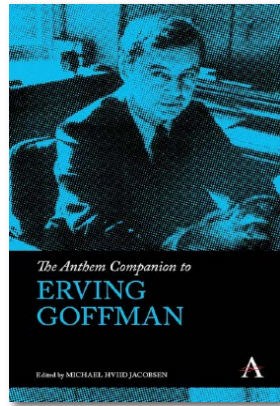
During Gurminder's profound session she explored the intricacies of racial capitalism and its relationship to the industrial revolution, the Empire and modernity. Racial capitalism explores how racial hierarchies are embedded in capitalist structures and its implications for society.

Despite only having one hour, Gurminder's talk encouraged students to analyse the role of the Empire and race in Britain's industrial revolution, and its far-reaching consequences. The students gained valuable insights and were able to draw links between the historical oppression of Britain's former colonies, as well as more contemporary forms of exploitation and 'otherness'. For example, both students and Gurminder were articulate in applying racial capitalism to recent policies surrounding migrants in the UK.

Gurminder argued that historical narratives must be adjusted to include the experiences of colonised societies, highlighting the interconnectedness of global histories and the impact of colonialism on shaping contemporary social structures. Therefore, through exploring the true, and often whitewashed, history of the industrial revolution, Gurminder's critical examination highlighted the significant relationship between this and the British Empire.

Gurminder was very successful in demonstrating the ways in which the exploitation of resources from the colonies and transatlantic slave trade contributed significantly to Britain and its stance as a global superpower. In doing so our students, and any others who are fortunate enough to have someone like Gurminder, who is both knowledgeable and passionate about her field, were empowered to challenge complex narratives and foster a more inclusive understanding of Britain's past.

As a lover of all things sociology, it was a true pleasure to have Gurminder provide such a profound and inspiring lecture to our students. She not only delivered insightful content at a challenging and yet accessible level, but she also demonstrated to both staff and students what decolonising the curriculum truly looks like.



The Anthem Companion to Erving Goffman

Edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Anthem Press
2023
234 pages
£120 hbk, £45 Kindle
ISBN: 9781839983191

This book comprises 10 chapters by different authors who focus on Erving Goffman, and an afterword written by Goffman's student, Gary T. Marx. Their purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview of his relevance within the field of sociology and related social science disciplines. The authors effectively engage with some of Goffman's major themes and outline some of the continuing debates about his work.

Themes tackled (in a chapter by Jaworski) include Goffman's approach to situational sociology, which blended traditions of pragmatism, functionalism and existentialism; his contribution to a general theory of interpersonal behaviour (J.H. Turner); and his influence on criminology (Hancock and Garner).

The volume effectively highlights the legacy of the author of *Asylums* and *Stigma* and the ongoing usefulness of some of his key concepts and metaphors, as noted by the editor, Michael Jacobsen: "Despite the fact that some of Goffman's examples may seem outdated or no longer as relevant as when they were first presented (after all, he did write about stationary telephones, referred to courtesy phrases no longer in common use today and analysed psychiatric asylums far from today's standards of psychiatric treatment) his work has retained its analytical edge and applicability" (p.12).

The book also sheds light on the sociologist's character, intellect and his thorough passion for observing the social world. Goffman was a rather complex and multifaceted academic writer, and Susie Scott

argues that there are different ways to interpret his work: for instance, he can be viewed as a "shrewd investigator, curious to understand what makes people behave in certain ways" (p. 25); a "devious transgressor: sinister, scheming, and deeply suspicious" (p. 29); or, alternatively, a "performative showman, who, respecting his audience's intelligence, wants to entertain us with complex, sophisticated drama" (p.32).

Among others, Philip Manning (chapter two) makes an interesting attempt to see whether Goffman is nowadays only broadly admired, or whether he is also sociologically still relevant. Manning concludes that providing a final evaluation of that question is a hard task; rather, it is up to the new generations of scholars to invest wisely in Goffman and make the best use of his theoretical legacy.

Substantial attention in the volume is paid to the political milieu and the time in which the Canadian sociologist lived and operated. This is well illustrated by Stacey Hannem (chapter 10), who notes that in the time when Goffman worked and wrote, the Western academic world was being increasingly penetrated by ideological and political movements. She argues that, despite criticisms of Goffman's approach as being apolitical, there is "ample evidence to suggest that Goffman's implicit moral and political commitments were woven throughout the corpus of his work" (p.202).

By contrast, Gary T. Marx writes: "Goffman was personally apolitical in his work, coming

Group Life: An Invitation to Local Sociology

Gary Fine, Tim Hallett

Polity Press
2022
224 pages
£50 hbk, £15.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781509554133 hbk

Group Life invites a reconsideration of the macro and micro dichotomy on which sociology tends to be based. The authors call for a sociology which addresses relations between and within groups by drawing on a range of empirical data that brings theory to life. Readers are introduced to a variety of groups that the authors have studied, from mushroom collectors to role-play gamers. These examples not only aid the understanding of their arguments but point to the implications for methodology. It is an advocacy for ethnographic encounters, as they suggest that "to understand how structures matter and how individuals navigate them, sociologists must watch and listen to groups and people gathered in local communities" (p.2).



Bookends

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

of scholarly age when the dominant view was that sociology's job was to get the facts without prejudice. To do otherwise could distort vision and delegitimize the fledging discipline ... He sought to be as independent of sponsors and organizations, whether academic or political, as possible" (p.212).

Reading the *Anthem Companion to Erving Goffman* proved to be a pleasantly rewarding experience. The volume helps one recognise how Goffman's ideas continue to represent a valuable source of inspiration for many scholars, including the younger generation of sociologists. It is a must-have for the expert and the most ambitious sociologist. The book is particularly recommended to BA and MA students focusing their dissertations on Goffman, those attracted by the history of sociological thought, and those attempting to redefine and adequately update Goffman's theoretical framework with respect to the developments occurring in contemporary societies.

■ **Mitja Stefancic**
Independent researcher

Fine and Hallett argue that culture is often subject to nationalism but that studying small groups can illuminate social order at local scales. Local sociology is conceptualised here as understanding the ways that groups organise themselves internally and in relation to external social interactions. They propose that the stability of groups is shaped by 'idioculture' – shared history, routine and action that creates belonging – and is at the intersection of individual practice and wider public life. These ideas help extend symbolic interactionism, as the authors refer to the likes of Cooley and Goffman to situate their work within traditions which remain familiar to sociologists today. However, Fine and Hallett focus on the ways in which

The *Making of Meaning*, a compilation of Niklas Luhmann's essays, curated by Christian Morgner, represents a significant contribution to contemporary sociology, particularly in the conceptualisation of meaning. Luhmann's theoretical framework, grounded in systems theory, extends to a nuanced understanding of how meaning is constructed within social contexts. The book's essays address various aspects of this process, underscoring the importance of Luhmann's work in contemporary sociological and interdisciplinary discussions.

Luhmann views society as constituted by communications, with each communicative act contributing to the ongoing construction and modification of meaning. This perspective aligns with the post-World War II shift in sociology towards a more refined understanding of meaning-making, influenced by globalisation, technological advancements and various social movements.

In his introduction, Morgner critiques the dominant narrative that limits Luhmann to systems theory, instead highlighting his broader contributions to the sociology of

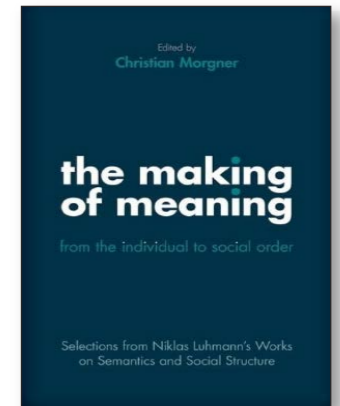
groups come to establish meaning through identities that are both collective and reflective.

The 'local' in 'local sociology' points to place in its broadest sense as a way to highlight the embeddedness of everyday interactions in context. Indeed, many of the empirical examples drawn on in the book are of groups that meet physically. To take this analysis further, it may be useful to consider the applicability to online spaces, where the boundaries of group life may be less fixed, and to question the distinction between groups, social identities and organisation. For example, in my own research, farmers engaged in bridging (connecting with the public) and bonding (connecting with other farmers) on social

The Making of Meaning Selections from Niklas Luhmann's Works on Semantics and Social Structure

Edited by Christian Morgner

OUP
2022
352 pages
£56 hbk
ISBN: 9780190945992



knowledge and cultural sociology. For instance, it explores how semantic traditions evolve in tandem with societal changes, emphasising the intricate relationship between society's structural transformations and the evolution of its semantic frameworks.

In examining social order, the book critically assesses various sociological approaches, discussing the interplay between individual and collective societal aspects. The analysis of social class, individuality and culture further enriches this discussion, providing a comprehensive view of the historical and conceptual evolution of these ideas and their relationship with social structures and cultural semantics.

The essay 'How is social order possible?' critically assesses sociological approaches to social order, considering their limitations and underlying assumptions. It examines the interplay between individual and collective elements within society and the impact of societal structures on these dynamics. In 'On the concept of social class', Luhmann offers an in-depth analysis of the historical and theoretical evolution of the social class concept in sociology, emphasising its close ties to social differentiation and stratification. 'Individual, individuality, individualism' explores the sociological evolution of individuality, tracing its historical and conceptual development in relation to social structures and cultural semantics. It highlights the transition from traditional definitions, based on societal inclusion, to

contemporary views where individuality is shaped by exclusion and personal achievement. Lastly, 'Culture as a historical concept' investigates the historical and conceptual dimensions of culture, addressing the challenges in defining it within the social sciences. It underscores culture's diverse scope, encompassing symbolic actions and human artefacts, and traces its evolution from the 18th century, emphasising its role in comprehending social structures and human development.

Michael King's reflections on the challenges of translating and interpreting Luhmann's complex ideas in the final chapter are particularly insightful. He highlights the difficulties in making Luhmann's essays accessible to English-speaking readers, pointing to the limited reception of Luhmann's ideas in Anglophone intellectual circles due to their abstract nature.

The Making of Meaning is pivotal for its in-depth exploration of the dynamic process of meaning-creation, modification and perception in social contexts. It not only broadens the understanding of Luhmann's work but also contributes significantly to the field of sociology, making it a must-read for scholars and students interested in the complex processes of meaning-making in contemporary society.

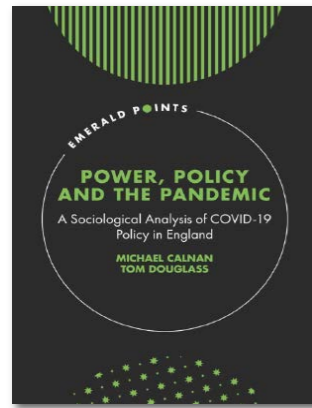
■ **Dr Steven Watson**
University of Cambridge

media whilst also disrupting group life through the communication of contested professional priorities. This resonates with the authors' suggestions that disruption and rivalry do not necessarily undermine group stability. *Group Life* allows us to look beyond organisational studies, offering opportunities to theorise and investigate DIY or marginalised communities that may congregate online.

This book would be a welcome addition to undergraduate and postgraduate reading lists on sociological theory as it grapples with the relationship between structure and agency which is considered to underpin the discipline, as well as key concepts such as identities and culture. The structure of the book into three sections highlights the

scope of group dynamics, with a focus on their relationship to individuals, collective affiliation and wider institutions. Therefore, this book would also be beneficial for social researchers studying communities as it offers insights into the levels of analysis possible. Following the Covid pandemic, we were reminded of the importance of small groups and *Group Life* invites renewed focus on the sociality at their heart.

■ **Dr Bethany Robertson**
University of Leeds



Power, Policy and the Pandemic

A Sociological Analysis of Covid-19 Policy in England

Michael Calnan and Tom Douglass
Emerald
2022
160 pages
£34.57 hbk
ISBN hbk: 9781802620108

Calnan and Douglass present a sociological analysis of the health policy response to Covid-19 in England to contribute to knowledge about the interplay between power, policy and pandemics. Building upon their previous work on the sociology of health policy, they begin by briefly outlining a theoretical framework to grasp the relations between pandemics, policy and power. They then present an analysis of government and policy documents, scientific and medical literature, and news media, mostly published between March 2020 and October 2021, accounting for three waves of infection. Analysis is enriched by having been undertaken in real-time while experiencing the unfolding events, yet the authors also note the challenges and limitations of this approach in their inability to look at the pandemic as a totality.

The analysis is presented in two parts: in the first the authors focus upon policy attempts to mitigate and suppress the spread of Covid-19 with non-pharmaceutical interventions, prior to the roll out of vaccines (wave one), and then whilst vaccines were being rolled out (waves two and three). In the second part the focus is on vaccination policy, covering both vaccine development and the implementation of the vaccine programme. The book concludes with an assessment of the success of the policies, considering health, socio-economic position, power, and the sociological factors shaping the policy response.

The focus on power which drives the analysis is conceived as an attempt to understand the role of various interest groups in shaping the health policy response to the pandemic. These groups include government, medical/scientific experts, health and care professionals, pharmaceuticals, the media and the public. In their conceptual framing the authors begin with the government as the central and most powerful actor, and then consider how other actors influence policy decision-making and outcomes, seeking both evidence of actors reinforcing the dominant interest as well as countervailing it. Drawing upon existing literature on the pandemic, the authors consider a number of issues related to the extreme uncertainty with which these

events unfolded and how this in turn shaped the influence of different interest groups, and also shaped broader social dimensions such as trust – the latter considered particularly in light of vaccine uptake, hesitancy and rejection.

The first of the two empirical chapters begins by considering pandemic preparedness, before presenting an unfolding analysis of the attempt to contain and suppress (wave one), ease and tighten restrictions (wave two) and enact personal responsibility (wave three). Within each wave the analysis considers how the shifting objectives and priorities of the policy response were influenced by specific actors, subsequently zooming out to consider the relative influence of different groups. The extent to which policy followed or was even guided by the science is given sustained attention. As the narrative unfolds, the authors show how policies became increasingly driven by economic, political and ideological concerns over scientific ones. The unfolding narrative provides a thick descriptive base upon which the authors build a comprehensive analysis, taking in an impressive range of critical moments and decisions in the unfolding scenario, and their complex inter-relations.

The second empirical chapter deals with the vaccination programme, describing the risk taken by the government in centring its policy response upon the programme in advance of any knowledge regarding its potential for successful development or deployment. The authors analyse the commercial and international political considerations (as opposed to scientific ones) shaping the emerging agreements making up the programme, which required unprecedented government support for research and development and absorption of manufacturing risk, yet long-term ownership rights remained with the pharmaceutical industry, which subsequently acted to restrict supply to low- and middle-income countries.

The analysis then moves to issues of national and then international access and equality in the government's prioritisation and delivery arrangements, raising critical issues such as the "colour blindness" (p. 56) of the domestic prioritisation strategy and the



Bookends

government's complicity in benefiting the pharmaceutical industry at the cost of global public health.

The author's concluding chapter focuses upon the overall impact of the pandemic and the policy response upon public health and social inequalities and evaluates the extent to which these can be explained by the theories of structural interests and countervailing powers. They conclude that the government's response in the first wave was "slow and ineffective", contributing to a "devastating death toll" (p. 89), with limited evidence of countervailing powers working to influence or shift the balance of power outside the centre. While the risks taken with the vaccination programme paid off to a much greater extent in successfully limiting population mortality and morbidity, the analysis also shows how the government used the programme to protect domestic interests at the expense of others.

Overall, this is a very concise, accessible and insightful analysis of a globally consequential set of events and is highly recommended for students and scholars of critical health policy, crisis management, and anyone who simply wishes to understand more about these momentous events.

■ Dr Simon Bailey
University of Kent

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

The Gender Order of Neoliberalism

Smitha Radhakrishnan and Cinzia D Solari
Polity
2023
224 pages
£55 hbk, £14.99 pbk
ISBN hbk: 9781509544899



ultimately placing notions of culture, and honour in the bodies of Indian Hindu middle class women.

The book introduces the readers to the framework of a "neo-liberal feminist cover story", and the authors explore this across the three regions, where a colour-blind understanding of feminism that places emphasis on women's individual choices, aspirations and mobility prevails. To understand how individual meanings of empowerment became dominant within certain regions and over time, Radhakrishnan and Solari visit the rise of human capital theory in policies and interventions and the focus on investment in individuals and individual growth. Individuals, along with nation states, are the main actors of what the authors call the current architecture of neo-liberalism's gender order. The state's protection of elites and global capital, and the strengthening of national borders while supporting global trade but restricting migration, are important conditions for the maintenance of this order. This control, together with the competition for global capital, desirable migrants and a desirable national brand, encourages ethno-nationalist imaginings of identity which is currently evident in all three regions under focus.

The authors focus on tracing the journeys within three regions in this book, namely, the USA, former Soviet Union countries and south and south-east Asia (mostly focusing on India). They found that while the many regions shared different historical trajectories, there were some critical areas of similarity across regions. One such commonality was the notion of expanded choice for women. The United States' promotion of capitalism through a gendered modernity that emphasises increasing consumption of appliances to ease women's housework is juxtaposed against the Soviet ideology of liberating women from "patriarchal isolation" and the creation of the "mother-worker"; while the trajectory in India gives an insight into the post-independence anxieties of forging indigenous nationalism between capitalism and socialism and

Radhakrishnan and Solari explore the neo-liberal aspirational role of migration towards

modernity and progress and what this 'modernity' means for the different regions and states and their individuals, especially women, from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. In contrast to the increasing mobility for women and their expansion into paid employment, the authors also bring to attention the gendered anxieties of men losing out on their sole breadwinner role and the shift from breadwinning and protecting families to now protecting nations and community borders. A focus is put on the three 'strongmen' in the regions – Donald Trump in the USA, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Narendra Modi in India – and their politics of hyper-masculine "manly protectors", protecting the nation and national identities and 'othering' through misogyny, homophobia, communalism and casteism. Drawing on more recent events like the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the rise of autocracy in many parts of the world, the authors locate gender politics in the larger context of nations, geopolitics and regional histories. The book ends with a note on "the need for joy" even within feminist counter-movements for change. Only then, Radhakrishnan and Solari say, can there be any chance of success!

Overall, the book was an interesting and wonderful read and provided many moments of thoughts and reflections throughout. The comparative narratives of the three regions throughout really clarified the differential historical trajectories within the regions while also drawing on the similarities. Through the authors' processes of learning and unlearning, the book provides the readers space for the same. While detailed, it is also a very easy to comprehend read because of the way the book is structured and written in non-jargonistic language. It will be a great read for people interested in thematic issues of gender, masculinity, neo-liberalism, empowerment and regional-global politics.

■ Nandini Das
University of Southampton

Would you like to review for Network?

We are looking for 600-word reviews of recent social science books. Please see our review list at: www.britsoc.co.uk/publications/network/network-book-reviews
Please contact Tony Trueman to request a free copy of the book: tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk

Teresa Rees, 1949-2023

Dame Teresa Rees, a 'wise and compassionate' expert on gender inequality and supporting students

The BSA has expressed its sadness at the death of Dame Teresa Rees, who died in September, aged 74.

Professor Rees was internationally-recognised for her research on gender inequalities in education, training, labour market and science policy, and was an influential advisor to governments.

She studied sociology and politics at Exeter University and in 1973 moved to Wales, joining University College, Cardiff (which became Cardiff University) as a research fellow. In 1974 she married Gareth Rees, a fellow sociologist at Cardiff. They worked together on many projects on the labour market, education and training in Wales.

In 1988 she was appointed Director of the Social Research Unit at Cardiff, conducting research on trade unions, evaluating training provided by employers such as the civil service, and specialising in policies to improve the employment of women in science, technology and medicine.

She then became Professor of Labour Market Studies at Bristol University (1995-2000), before returning to Cardiff as Professor for Social Sciences.

There she researched 'gender mainstreaming', an initiative which tries to ensure that no policy decision can be taken without an assessment first being made of its impact on equal opportunities.

She was an advisor on equality matters to the National Assembly for Wales (now the Senedd), when it was set up in 1999. She also chaired two reports for the Welsh government on how to support students in higher and further education: *Investing in Learners* (2001), which led to the introduction of a grant subsidising students' maintenance costs; and *Fair and Flexible Funding* (2005), which recommended the introduction of top-up fees.

Professor Rees was Cardiff University's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Staff and Students (2004-7), then Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research (2007-10). She sat on the BSA Executive Committee for two years (1989-1991).

In 2012, the year of her planned retirement, she agreed to stay on, part-time, to be the principal investigator for the Women



Adding Value to the Economy project, but her involvement was cut short two years later by the diagnosis of a brain tumour.

Cardiff University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Larner, said: "I am acutely aware of her inspirational work, both for her research and for her work as a Pro Vice-Chancellor. She was also a wise and generous mentor for many early career colleagues, myself included."

"Terry, as she was more commonly known, showed warmth and compassion towards everyone she met and worked with – she will be sadly missed."

Dr Sara Delamont, of Cardiff University, said: "I knew, and worked with, Terry for over 40 years. We taught on the same courses, worked on a few projects together, and we were friends. She was always committed to doing good research, to

collect reliable and valid data, communicate them, and then use them to change policy and practice.

"Her main interests were gender inequalities and Wales. Her legacies include the ongoing work of her successful doctoral students, and the tradition of Welsh scrutiny (aided by devolution) of the gender implications of social policies."

Professor Rees was made a Commander of the British Empire for her work on equal opportunities and higher education in 2003, and became a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2015 for services to social sciences.

Her marriage was dissolved in 2004 and she is survived by two sons and five grandchildren.

• Teresa Lesley Rees, social scientist, born 11 June 1949; died 22 September 2023.

Adele E. Clarke, 1945-2024

Dr Adele E. Clarke, the internationally known sociologist, died in January in San Francisco. She was 78.

Dr Clarke made important contributions to sociology, qualitative methodologies, women's health, and reproductive studies. She was recognised for her creative interdisciplinarity.

With colleagues at the University of California, Dr Clarke offered the first curriculum in the United States focused on social, cultural and historical dimensions of women's health.

She published important works, including *Women's Health: Differences and Complexities* (1997, with Sheryl Ruzek and Virginia Olesen) and *Revising Women, Health, and Healing: Feminist, Cultural, and Technoscience Perspectives* (1999, with Virginia Olesen).

Adele Clarke was born on 1 April 1945, in New York, and received a bachelor's degree from Barnard College in 1966 and a master's degree from New York University in 1970, both in sociology.



She moved to California in 1970, teaching at the College of the Redwoods and Sonoma State University, where she co-ordinated the women's studies programme. She earned her doctorate in sociology in 1985 from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

From 1987 to 1989, she held a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University. She was a faculty member in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Nursing at UCSF from 1985 until her retirement in 2013, holding roles including department chair.

Her 1998 book, *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the 'Problem of Sex'*, won the Eileen Basker Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Medical Anthropology and the Ludwik Fleck Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Social Studies of Science.

She also wrote about sterilisation abuse, abortion, cervical cancer, reproductive technologies and kinship.

Her 2005 book, *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*, was awarded the Charles Horton Cooley Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction.

• Based on information from: <http://tinyurl.com/354str3y>



Meet the PhD: Clemens Jarnach

'Television news consumption correlates with an increased likelihood of voting in favour of supporting the Conservative party'

My research focuses on understanding the complexity behind public opinion formation, including political attitudes and party identity. Do the internet, traditional news sources or our social network have the greatest influence on us? In this context, I cover topics such as political polarisation, voting behaviour, Brexit and media diversity.

By looking at the key influences on opinion formation – whether the internet, online or offline news sources, or social networks – my research adds valuable insights into the forces that shape public opinion in our time.

I have worked with digital trace data, including browsing history data typically consisting of a sample ranging from 200 to 600 participants over a span of six months. Additionally, I have used Twitter data, encompassing millions of tweets related to significant UK political events such as Brexit deal negotiations and recent general elections. More recently, my focus has shifted towards the extensive use of the British Election Study dataset, typically around 20,000 individuals.

The consumption of internet news appears to have a different and varying intensity of influence on voting behaviour when compared

with activities like radio listening. Notable trends indicate that television news consumption correlates with an increased likelihood of voting in favour of leaving the EU in the referendum and supporting the Conservative party in subsequent general elections. Conversely, the use of social media demonstrates opposing effects, with increased social media news consumption associated with a higher likelihood of voting to remain in the EU and supporting the Labour party in subsequent elections.

What surprised me about pursuing a PhD in sociology is the vast diversity in research subjects and methodologies. Some of my colleagues collaborate on interdisciplinary teams on sociogenomics, meticulously analysing social behaviour literally at a molecular level, while others have travelled into some of the most remote and dangerous places in the world to conduct interviews.

Perhaps one of the most important challenges of doing a PhD is accepting the responsibility for one's work. What I work on every day is my project and no one else's. This means I have to make important decisions, carry out my work diligently, and be able to

defend my work when challenged. It is a lot like running your own business. There is no line manager to blame if things go south. But that is also the best part – taking on full responsibility also means you can take credit for what you achieve.

I would advise anyone considering a PhD to choose a topic carefully, selecting something you are passionate about. Secondly, identify the best supervisor and reach out early. Your supervisor is truly the only other person actively supporting you, so ensure they are willing to do so. If you find a supervisor who shares the same passion for your project as you do, your PhD journey can be so much more rewarding.

To take my mind off my PhD work I either visit my family or do some creative work as a photographer. Besides that, I am a passionate hiker and mountaineer. Spending a day in the mountains clears your mind, not to mention the endorphin boost from conquering a mountain.

• 'News Consumption, Media Use, and Voter Choice in British Politics', University of Oxford, 2018-2024

John Stone, 1944-2023

Professor Stephen Mennell, of University College Dublin, writes about his friend and colleague, Professor John Stone



John Stone, Professor of Sociology at Boston University and internationally renowned authority on ethnicity, race relations and a host of related questions, died – still in harness, teaching and researching – on 11 October 2023.

John was my oldest friend in sociology. We both arrived at St Catharine's College, Cambridge in 1963, to read economics. Neither of us regretted receiving a good grounding in economics, but, being mathematically uninclined, we were both scared witless by the already self-evident future of that discipline. Fortunately, in those days sociology was taught as what might now be called a 'minor' within the Economics Tripos, and we were inspiringly taught by Philip Abrams, David Lockwood and John Goldthorpe. So, upon graduating, we both switched to sociology.

John went to St Antony's College, Oxford, for his DPhil. His thesis was on British migrants to South Africa. He had already been visiting the apartheid state as an undergraduate, of which I of course disapproved, but all was explained when he emerged with both a doctorate and a wife, Roleen. From 1970 to 1974 he was assistant professor at Columbia University, before returning to St Antony's as a Fellow, 1974–79. From there he moved to Goldsmith's College, University of London, as Reader in Social Science and Administration, eventually becoming both Head of Department and professor. And then it was back to America, first to George Mason University from 1989 to 2001, and finally to Boston University, from 2001 until his death. In both cases, he initially served six-year terms as Chair of the Department – of which more in a moment.

During his time as a Fellow of St Antony's, John founded the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and edited it until he departed for the USA. It rapidly became the leading journal in the field. Although ethnic and race relations always remained central to John's concerns, they were just the hinge on which his wide range of interests pivoted: group closure, exclusion, affirmative action, how the past was the foundation for present-day conflicts, and always power ratios at every level from the local to the global. He always had an acute

eye for sociological theory – much of which he dismissed as "nonsense", among stronger epithets – and how it could be applied to contemporary problems.

John and I wrote only one book together, *Alexis de Tocqueville on Democracy, Revolution and Society* in the Chicago Heritage of Sociology series, but that was enough to show me what a superb colleague and editor he was. Our aim was to place Tocqueville more firmly in the sociological pantheon by turning the attention somewhat away from his discussion of American political institutions, so beloved of political scientists and which Americans tend to find so flattering (not entirely with justification). John introduced me to Tocqueville on race relations, prisons, colonialism and other less familiar writings. And, in the less widely read and much less flattering second (1840) part of *Democracy in America*, I discovered a whole sociology of knowledge and culture.

John and I never entirely saw eye to eye about Norbert Elias, mainly, I think, because he had difficulty with the word 'civilisation', as so many people do (Elias should have found a better way of differentiating between the emic, or native sense of the word, and the etic, or technical concept he was attempting to develop). Nevertheless, he read through the entire first draft of my 2007 book *The American Civilizing Process*, making countless suggestions for its improvement. In particular, he proposed that I merge two long chapters that were beginning to make even me feel tired, and the resulting single chapter on integration struggles became one of the best in the book (well, I think so!). And this

generosity with his time, sociological insight and editorial skill were just some of the many traits that made John loved and admired by his colleagues.

At the memorial meeting for John organised by his friends in November 2023, his colleagues from Boston University and George Mason University reminisced about his wit and wisdom – his 'shredding' of post-structuralism was remembered – his good conversation and, especially, the unstinting help and support he gave to staff and students, both of which he regarded equally as friends. He was, said one friend – a Roman Catholic priest – "a good shepherd", even though he had no time for religion. John was memorably described as "an anti-bureaucratic humanitarian". He broke ruthlessly through formal procedures. He loathed the bureaucratisation, corporatisation and de-democratisation that have been ruining universities, and as Head of Department both at George Mason University and Boston University did his best to fight them off. More than two decades after he left George Mason University he was still remembered as "a giant in the land". A certain British manner and humour seems to have driven some of the apparatchiki wild. One dean at George Mason found John so impossible to deal with that, when he came to the end of his term of office, she awarded him not the usual one year's leave, but two years'. Thereafter, John honoured the Dean (well, sort of) for this period by referring to it on his CV as his 'Zita Tyler Distinguished Research Fellowship, GMU'.

Quite a character!

Events listing 25 March – 13 September

As at 1/3/24. For a complete and up-to-date list, see: www.britisoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-lister

25 March	Goldsmiths	Sociology and the New Materialisms: A New Materialisms Study Group One-day Conference
3-5 April	Online	Crisis, Continuity and Change: BSA Virtual Annual Conference 2024
26 April	Aston University	Drug Policy and Drug Cultures – Ambiguities and Tensions: A Postgraduate Regional Event
27 April	Coventry University	Connecting Postgraduate Researchers Through Gender Research: A Postgraduate Forum Regional Event
1 May	Online	Women's Spaces of Knowledge: An Auto/Biography Study Group Seminar
1 May	University of Derby	Querying the Effectiveness of the Social Mobility Agenda: An Early Career Forum Regional Event
7 May	University of Edinburgh	Exploring How Different Arts Inform Sociology Research: A Postgraduate Forum Regional Event
8 May	Online	Teaching Sociology in Higher Education: Pedagogical Practices and Possibilities: A BSA Event
12 June	Coventry/Hybrid	Being, Becoming and Belonging: Exploring Diasporic Identities: A Postgraduate Forum Regional Event
8-10 July	University of Northumbria	Religion, Justice, and Social Action: Sociology of Religion Annual Conference
10-12 July	University of Reading	Disappointments and Dissonances: Auto/Biography Summer Conference 2024
11-13 September	University of Warwick	Medical Sociology Conference 2024

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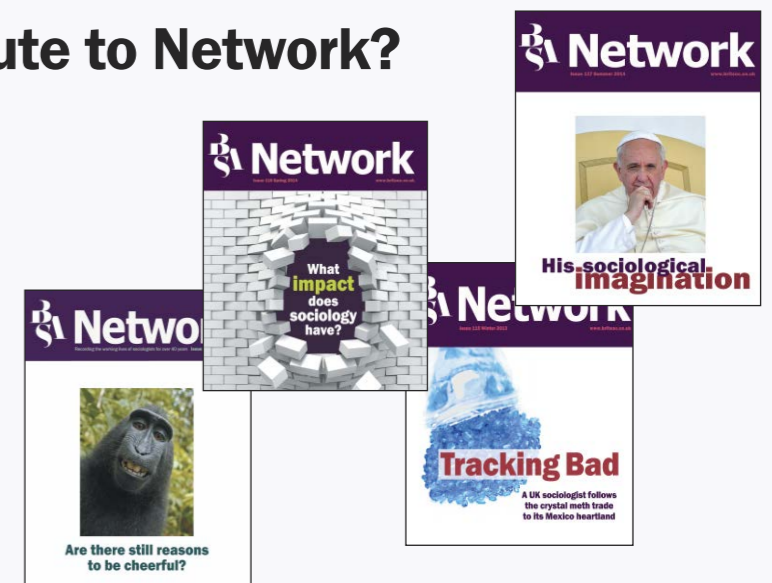
We are looking for letters, opinions and news articles

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

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

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

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



NETWORK

Spring 2024

“The UK system is in a bit of a funk – it’s a thriving system, but it’s in a state of precariousness, and unless we do something about it we will lose what is great about this system”

“I sat in college one afternoon and read it from cover to cover – it made me laugh, it made me cry, it made me angry, above all it made me think and made me want to be a sociologist”

“Looking back on her experience now, she realises just how much sexism she experienced in the music business, from being abused on stage, to condescending journalists who would assume that the only male member of the group was the leader”

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