



Back to the '80s? Job cuts loom in academia again

Also in this issue:

- How sociologists go beyond PowerPoint to engage students
- The hidden role played by sociologists' wives is revealed
- Full coverage of the BSA's annual conference
- We 'must tackle a narrow elite recruitment base'

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The Fallacies of Racism

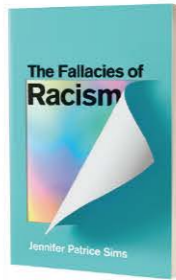
Understanding How Common Perceptions Uphold White Supremacy

Jennifer Patrice Sims

"An absolutely vital book that bursts the delusional fallacies of racism. Rigorous, authentic and eye opening this book is a must to offer substance to the debates about racism and how we challenge it."

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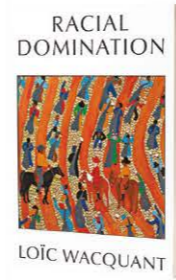
Racial Domination

Loïc Wacquant

"A much needed synthesis of the analytical approach to race and racial domination, written in Wacquant's characteristically pugnacious and brilliant style. The book dissects the logic of race making and the reproduction of racial inequality with precision and depth. A must read for everyone who longs for a theoretical analysis of race that goes beyond the routine and ritual evocation of its structuring power and offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms."

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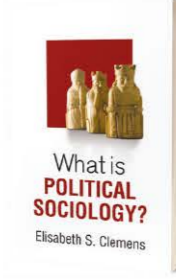
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The Interest in Disinterestedness

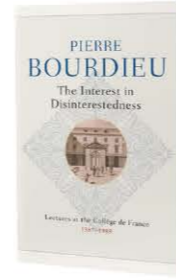
Lectures at the College de France 1987-1989

Pierre Bourdieu

Translated by Peter Collier

By reconstructing the conditions under which an interest in disinterestedness emerged, Bourdieu sheds new light on the formation of the modern state and legal system and provides a fresh perspective on the many professions in modern societies that are oriented towards the service of the common good.

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Transforming the Future

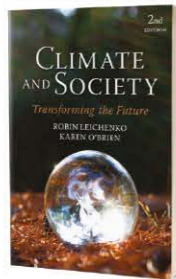
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Navigating Uncertainty

Radical Rethinking for a Turbulent World

Ian Scoones

"Whether it's climate change, financial volatility, pandemic outbreaks, or new technologies, navigating uncertainty – where we struggle to predict what may happen – is indeed much more than just managing risk. This book lays out a compelling argument on how institutions can transform uncertainty from a threat into new opportunities."

Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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Summer 2024

Main feature:

Job cuts are planned across a swathe of universities in Britain shortly. What does it mean for sociology?

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graphic: stock imagery



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Production/Enquiries:

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

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Essay on harassment wins prize for Kirsty

An essay inspired by a personal experience of public harassment has won Kirsty Davies this year's BSA Young Sociologist of the Year Competition.

Kirsty wins an iPad for herself and £500 for her school, Bishop Vaughan Catholic School in Swansea.

Her essay was written in response to the question, 'To what extent, and in what ways, is patriarchy alive and kicking?'. It can be read here (it contains references to a sex act and sexual harassment):

<https://tinyurl.com/4bjbzspa>

In it she writes: "As a young woman in such a society, I have read and watched innumerable amounts of advice on how I should use public transport or what I should not do to 'avoid trouble'."

"I must identify exits whilst on a bus. I must limit distractions whilst walking home. I must not travel alone on trains. It is due to these embedded 'norms' that I have chosen to investigate the comparative feelings of safety between men and women in public settings."

She conducted a questionnaire-based study among students aged 14 to 18 years old, collecting 220 responses.

She found that it was "abundantly clear" that women were more likely to have been intimidated in public by men, with 62% saying they had experienced this and 68% saying they had felt unsafe in public.

The judges, Jonathan Blundell, Nicola Ingram, Rémy-Paulin Twahirwa, Geoff Payne, Hannah Miles and Harriet Bradley, said: "The



Kirsty Davis

essay effectively linked the findings of the student's questionnaire to feminist writings to show how females are expected to change their behaviour rather than men changing theirs."

This year's competition attracted 174 entries, a record number. The significant increase in submissions led the BSA to invite its members to volunteer as judges, with four joining two BSA trustees on the judging panel. The judges were impressed by the exceptional quality of the entries. *The judges are unable to discuss their decision because of lack of time*

Papers win Sage journal award

Articles on disability and useless jobs have won Sage prizes for innovation and excellence this year.

Dr Stella Chatzitheochari and Dr Angharad Butler-Rees, of the University of Warwick, were given the prize for their paper, 'Disability, social class and stigma: an intersectional analysis of disabled young people's school experiences' in *Sociology* journal.

In it, they say that: "Recent decades have witnessed a renewed interest in stigma and its effects on life-course trajectories of disabled people."

"However, sociological narratives largely adopt monolithic understandings of disability, neglecting contextual meanings of different impairments and conditions and their intersections with other ascriptive inequalities, which may be consequential for exposure to stigma."

"Our article provides an intersectional analysis of disabled young people's lived

experiences of stigma in mainstream school settings ... we show that stigmatisation is contingent on social class background, which affects students' location within the school." The article can be read here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycywt78j>

Simon Walo, of Zurich University, won for his paper, "'Bullshit' after all? Why people consider their jobs socially useless", in *Work, Employment and Society* journal.

In it he confirms the theory that many people feel the work they do is pointless because their jobs are 'bullshit'. The research found that people working in finance, sales and managerial roles are much more likely than others on average to think their jobs are useless or unhelpful to others: <https://tinyurl.com/mr32nphc>

• *Work, Employment and Society* is hosting three interactive events linked to the themes of meaningful work in the digital economy, from 4-6 September, online: <https://tinyurl.com/jhtsfyh6>

'Remarkable' book on expatriates wins PAM prize

An "eclectic and remarkable" book about expatriates has won the BSA's prestigious Philip Abrams Memorial book prize.

Expatriate: Following A Migration Category, by Dr Sarah Kunz, of the University of Essex, traces the notion of the expatriate from the mid-20th century era of decolonisation to today's debates about migration, drawing on ethnographic and archival research.

This year's judges – two BSA trustees, Professor Catherine Pope and Dr Maryam Sholevar, and the BSA President, Professor Rachel Brooks – said the book was "engaging and methodologically original. It manages to situate the topic in historical and contemporary contexts, revealing uncomfortable truths about colonialism and racism."

"It shows us why the category of expatriate matters and why a sociological lens is needed to interrogate it. It makes important contributions to the sociology of migration, race and globalisation, and broader points about society are also drawn out well. An eclectic and remarkable piece of sociology." The book is published by Manchester University Press.

The prize, worth £1,000, is given each year by the BSA to a researcher's best first and sole-authored book within the discipline of sociology. It was established in honour of Professor Abrams (1933-1981), whose work contributed substantially to sociology and social policy research in Britain. The runner-up for the award was *Race, Class, Parenting and Children's Leisure*, by Dr Utsa Mukherjee, of Brunel University London, which looks at how parents organise children's leisure, relating this to class and ethnicity.

The other books shortlisted for the award were: *Calling for the Super Citizen: Naturalisation Procedures in the United Kingdom and Germany*, by Elisabeth Badenhoop; *Brexit, Facebook, and Transnational Right-Wing Populism*, by Natalie-Anne Hall; and *Revolution of Things: The Islamism and Post-Islamism of Objects in Tehran*, by Kusha Sefat.



Dr Sarah Kunz

Sociologists 'devasted' by news of deep job cuts at Goldsmiths

Sociologists have spoken out about widespread job cuts in the sociology department at Goldsmiths.

Goldsmiths announced 96 compulsory redundancies earlier this month among its academic staff, without giving details of how many sociologists were among these.

However, the total number of job losses is believed to be 17, taking the number of sociologists in the department down to seven.

This figure is around a quarter of the full-time equivalent number of 45 entered in the REF in 2021, when the department was ranked 13th out of 37 listed under the sociology unit. Since then voluntary severance schemes, retirements, departures and an internal move took the figure to 24.

Among those losing their jobs is Dr Emma Jackson, who tweeted: "So there you have it, I started the academic year with a promotion and a grant. Ending it with redundancy, along with most of my colleagues in Sociology. SMT are gutting Goldsmiths and it breaks my heart." See page 14 for Dr Jackson's account of her innovative teaching methods

The BSA said in a tweet: "Devastating news of sociologist redundancies at GoldsmithsUoL. Heart-breaking for those involved. Our solidarity and sympathy is with all affected."

Other tweets expressed opposition to the move. Professor Anna Tarrant wrote: "The depths of these cuts are making themselves strongly felt and Sociology as a discipline is



BSA Chair, Professor Chris Yuill, and President, Professor Rachel Brooks

being gutted. My solidarity and heartfelt sympathy to those at Goldsmiths facing this today." The BSA President, Professor Rachel Brooks wrote: "Really shocking news from @GoldsmithsUoL today; [it] has been – and still is – such an important department in the history of British sociology."

The BSA has expressed its concern about other job losses and course closures. The University of Huddersfield has scrapped its sociology courses, with several redundancies.

Professor Brooks and the BSA Chair, Professor Chris Yuill, have written to the then



Vice-chancellor of the University of Kent, Professor Karen Cox, to oppose planned redundancies that affect sociologists within the Health and Social Care BA programme.

Dr Simone Varriale has tweeted that sociology at the University of Lincoln "has been threatened with compulsory

redundancies until a few days ago, when the university announced they made 'sufficient savings' from voluntary redundancies (which have decimated staff in other social & political science areas)." See page 30 for our

feature on job cuts

Schools guidance 'stigmatises' trans pupils

The BSA has said that a draft of guidance issued to schools by the Department for Education on gender-questioning children "stigmatises trans and gender diverse pupils".

Responding to a consultation by the DfE, the BSA says that the draft guidance "frames trans and gender diverse students as innate threats to other pupils. It suggests that perfectly normal experimentation with gender expression and gender identity is a safeguarding concern and dangerous medical process."

"The draft guidance focuses on protecting other pupils from trans and gender diverse pupils, without stating what threat they present. This is stigmatising and could result in poor relations between minority gender diverse groups and the majority population in the school."

"There is a lack of detailed information on the practicalities of working with trans and gender diverse pupils. There are no case studies and there is a lack of reference to school systems."

"The guidance presents social transition,



BSA Chief Executive Judith Mudd

including even using a nickname, changing a hairstyle or uniform or experimenting with pronouns, as a medical and medicalised process.

"The guidance encourages a pathologising

response to pupils. It frames trans and gender diverse pupils as a default threat or danger to other pupils.

"This is unhelpful and stigmatising. A school is not a Gender Identity Service or CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service] and it would not be appropriate for schools to be involved with medical or clinical advice."

"By framing trans and gender diverse pupils as an inherent risk, threat or danger to other pupils, and by framing this as an immediate safeguarding concern, the guidance directs schools to immediately involve parents in any discussion about gender identity, preferred pronouns or name uses."

"Trans pupils have rights to use the facilities for the sex they identify as. Unisex provisions can be accessible to all and should be available. There is no practical information in this guidance about practical measures to accommodate pupils."

The guidance can be seen at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdzaxdvw> and the response at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr278dxr>

Manifesto says 'no significant guidance' available for AI in HE

University of Cambridge: Dr Ella McPherson and Professor Matei Candea have written a manifesto for AI and scholarship that calls for vigilance over its use.

The researchers say that “generative artificial intelligence has stormed higher education at a time when we are all still recovering from the tragedies and demands of living and working in a pandemic, as well as facing significant workload pressures. It has landed without any significant guidance or resources.

“Teaching and teaching support staff have scrambled to find time to carefully think through generative AI’s implications for our teaching and research, as well as how we might address these.

“For example, some colleagues are concerned with generative AI’s potential in enabling plagiarism, while also being excited about generative AI’s prospects for doing lower-level work, like expediting basic computer coding, that makes space for more advanced thinking.

“On the research side, we are being pushed various techno-solutions meant to speed up crucial research processes, such as summarising reading, writing literature reviews, conducting thematic analysis, visualising data, writing, editing, referencing and peer reviewing.”

The manifesto says: “AI is here to stay. It is



Dr Ella McPherson

increasingly pervasive, embedded in everyday applications and already forms part of staff and student workflows. We need to debate and discuss its use openly with colleagues and students.

“While we will benefit from technical training and ongoing information on the developing capacities of AI, we, as experts in the social sciences and humanities, have a leading role to play in analysing and debating the risks and benefits of AI. We

need to make our voice heard.

“While the use of AI may be justified or indeed increasingly unavoidable in some cases, we need to remain vigilant as to the way generative AI in particular is extractive, vis-à-vis both knowledge sectors and the environment, as well as the way it troubles important research values like empathy, integrity and validity. There is no ethically unproblematic use of AI.

“Just because AI seems able to undertake tasks such as summarising and organising information, it doesn’t follow that these skills should no longer be taught and assessed. To live in a world full of AI, our students will also need to learn to do without it.

“This means that, while we are likely to build an engagement with AI in diverse forms of teaching and assessment, zero-AI assessments (such as invigilated exams) will likely remain a core part of our assessment landscape going forward.

“AI takes many forms. Some seem relatively benign, speeding up basic tasks, while others take away from students’ ability to learn, or raise deep concerns about authorship and authenticity. Where the line is drawn will depend on different disciplinary traditions, different professional cultures, different modes of teaching and learning.” The manifesto can be read at: <https://tinyurl.com/4ezrpn95>

First global cybercrime index compiled

University of Oxford: Researchers have compiled the first World Cybercrime Index, which ranks each country as a source of cybercrime.

The index shows that a relatively small number of countries house the greatest cybercriminal threat, with Russia top of the list, followed by Ukraine, China, the USA, Nigeria and Romania. The UK comes in at number eight.

The index was created over three years by the Sociology Department’s Dr Miranda Bruce, Dr Jonathan Lusthaus and Professor Ridhi Kashyap, in collaboration with Professor Nigel Phair, of Monash University, and Professor Federico Varese, of Sciences Po, Paris.

The origin of cybercriminals is difficult to pin down as they can hide their location, so the researchers gathered data through a survey of leading cybercrime experts from around the world, who were asked to nominate the countries that they considered to be the most significant sources of five types of cybercrime.

These were: the use of malware;



Dr Miranda Bruce

extortion; data or identity theft, such as hacking or phishing; scams, such as business email compromise or online auction fraud; and money laundering and credit card fraud.

The survey, which is published in *PLOS One*, asked participants to rank countries according to the impact, professionalism and technical skill of its offenders.

Six countries – China, Russia, Ukraine, the US, Romania, and Nigeria – appeared in the top 10 of each category of cybercrime.

Russia was ranked number one overall, with Russian cybercriminals considered to be the most technically skilled in the world, and their crimes having the most impact. In comparison, many countries across the world were not associated with cybercrime.

Dr Bruce said: “The research that underpins the index will help remove the veil of anonymity around cybercriminal offenders, and we hope that it will aid the fight against the growing threat of profit-driven cybercrime.

“By continuing to collect this data, we’ll be able to monitor the emergence of any new hotspots and it is possible early interventions could be made in at-risk countries before a serious cybercrime problem even develops.

“For the first time, we have reliable data on the location of cybercriminals, and we also have a way to measure their impact. Government agencies and private enterprises tasked with tackling cybercrime now have a much better understanding of the scale of the problem in their own backyard.”

Report lists visa problems for people from Ukraine and Hong Kong

Lancaster University: A report sets out the difficulties that people who come to Britain under Hong Kong and Ukraine visa schemes face.

Researchers from the University of Birmingham and Lancaster University drew on interviews with 43 people from Hong Kong and Ukraine for the report, ‘Humanitarian visas in a hostile environment’.

It says there is a significant gap between the Conservative government’s rhetoric on humanitarian visas and the challenges faced by beneficiaries of the schemes.

People from Hong Kong faced difficulties in accessing suitable housing and getting recognition of their professional qualifications, and have limited access to public funds.

Ukrainians experienced a sense of temporariness and uncertainty due to time-limited visas and no route to long-term settlement.

Professor Michaela Benson, of Lancaster University, co-author of the report, said: “These insights come at a crucial juncture as the UK continues to evolve its policies on humanitarian issues.

“The report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, advocates and the public to better understand the realities faced by those seeking protection through these highly

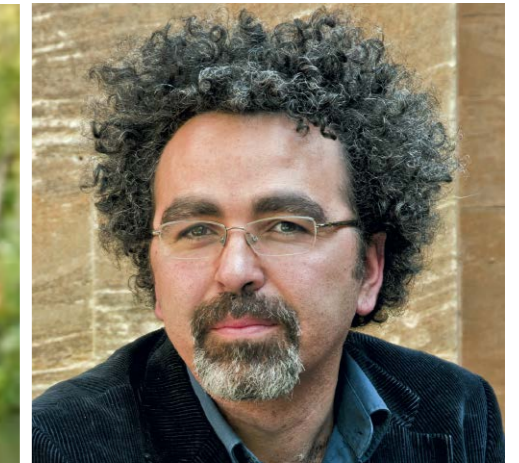


Professor Michaela Benson and Professor Nando Sigona

selective visa schemes.”

Professor Nando Sigona, Director of the Institute for Research into International Migration and Superdiversity at the University of Birmingham and also co-author of the report, said: “Our findings underscore the need for a closer examination of the implications of these humanitarian visa schemes.

“The UK government often refers to them to demonstrate its continuing commitment to international protection, but these schemes are no alternative to the asylum system – at



best they can be complementary. Significant concerns persist with the visa schemes, especially regarding the temporary nature of protection for Ukrainians and the restrictions and costs faced by Hong Kongers.”

The report calls for a more nuanced approach to address the challenges faced by visa holders, particularly in areas such as employment, educational qualifications recognition, and access to housing. It is part of the ‘Rebordering Britain and Britons after Brexit’ study and can be read at: www.migzen.net/publications

Cox is elected Labour MP

Professor Pam Cox has said she stood for Parliament because she believed that the new Labour government could match the Atlee administration’s historical achievements.

Professor Cox was elected as Colchester’s MP, the first time Labour has won the seat since the 1945 Atlee government.

Giving her election address, she said: “Our victory tonight will draw parallels with that of the Atlee government in 1945 – that government transformed Britain, and its achievements from our National Health Service to our national parks remain woven into the fabric of our lives today.

“I stood for Labour in this election because I believe in the new missions for our time that will help us to match those historic achievements and will help people in all walks of life to thrive.

“This result has also been made possible by a changed Labour party – a party which has won back the confidence of people around the country and now seeks to serve their interests above all else.”

Professor Cox, of **Essex University**, won 18,804 votes to beat the Conservative candidate, James Cracknell, into second



Professor Pam Cox

place, with 10,554.

Professor Cox’s research explores victims’ access to justice in the past and present criminal justice system. She has presented the BBC history series, ‘Shopgirls: the true story of life behind the counter’ tracing the history of Britain’s shopworkers and consumer cultures from 1860 to the present, and ‘Servants: the true story of life below stairs’, a history of domestic servants. She was a founding editor of the BSA/Policy Press book series, 21st Century Standpoints.

Event on modern marronage held

University of Bath: An event was held on ‘Modern marronage’, drawing on the work of a European Research Council-funded project of the same name.

Marronage was the historical term used when slaves escaped their bondage in the Americas. The project works with those at risk of modern slavery in Brazil, Ghana and Europe to encourage a more nuanced popular and political debate on the contemporary meaning of freedom.

The event took place at Universidade Federal Fluminense, in Niterói, Brazil, with 25 attendees. It was organised by Dr Samuel Okyere, Dr Angelo Martins Junior and Dr Pankhuri Agarwal, using post-doctoral funding from the Embed Dignity project: <https://embed-dignity.com>

The group also showed ‘Voices of Ipswich’, a short documentary film created and filmed by Eritrean and Ethiopian people seeking asylum in the UK. They have further events planned for this year including one in Leicester in July on the impact of interventions to help garment workers.

Research to improve data kept on children

Lancaster University is part of a consortium awarded a £750,000 grant to improve knowledge about children involved with early intervention and social care services.

The consortium will establish a 'Community catalyst', which will connect and support researchers and analysts, with the aim of improving the use of national datasets on children.

Data on children who come into contact with early intervention services or children's social care is scattered and has major gaps, which limits the policies, practices and research that could improve children's lives.

The new catalyst will also take the lead in writing a data strategy for children, setting out where there are gaps in knowledge and developing a shared understanding of new research priorities.

The consortium will work with the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Association of Directors of Children's Services.

The consortium is led by Professor Karen Broadhurst, of Lancaster University's Sociology Department, and Dr Lucy Griffiths, of Swansea University. It includes researchers from UCL, Imperial College



Professor Karen Broadhurst

London and the University of Sussex and is funded by Administrative Data Research UK.

Events explore feminist dilemmas

Workshops that explored the methodological dilemmas that interdisciplinary feminist researchers in the humanities and social sciences must negotiate took place in April.

The Spring into Methods events brought PhD and early career researchers together to learn about the politics of feminist knowledge, intersectionality, decoloniality, power relationships, participatory methods, feminist writing, queer-sharing and creative methods.

The workshops offered inspiration, space

for critical reflection, practical toolkits and opportunities for consolidating queer feminist networks to tackle questions of inequality across social science and arts and humanities research in Scotland.

The workshops were organised by a team from four universities: **Edinburgh, Queen Margaret, Stirling and Strathclyde**, with funding from the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science and Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities.

Reports show social science value

Two reports by the **Academy of Social Sciences** have shown the value of social science research in the UK.

'Reimagining the recipe for research and innovation: the secret sauce of social science' emphasises the critical role for social sciences in the UK's current research and development system.

It argues that there is untapped potential for the social sciences to do more to tackle the major societal challenges of our time.

It notes weaknesses in the system: the UK under-invests in research, particularly the private sector; the UK's research system is weighted in favour of London and the south-east of England; and it is heavily reliant on

universities, with limited institutional diversity: <https://tinyurl.com/57kuxerp>

A second report, 'The shape of research impact', was commissioned with the British Academy to assess the value of research in Shape (social sciences, humanities and the arts for people and the economy) disciplines and its societal impact through an analysis of the REF 2021 impact case study database: <https://tinyurl.com/4e4hh9bm>

The research includes an interactive dashboard which allows social scientists to see how many entries were submitted to the last REF, which universities they came from, who funded them and the subject areas of the submissions: <https://shape-impact.co.uk>

Court decisions on children 'lack consultation'

Lancaster University: Many children are not seen by the professionals who make important decisions about their future during the Family Court process, research says.

The research shows that when separated parents in England and Wales use the Family Court, almost half of the 67,000 children involved are not formally asked how they feel about arrangements made on their behalf, even though they are likely to have a significant and long-lasting impact on their lives.

For two-fifths of children aged 10 to 13 in England, and a greater proportion of older teenagers, there was no indication that they had formally participated in proceedings, with a similar pattern seen in Wales.

The study, carried out by the Family Justice Data Partnership, a collaboration between Lancaster University and Swansea University, explored children's participation in 'Section Eight' applications about their future in England and Wales.

There is currently no universal process in England or Wales to ensure that children's voices are systematically heard in private family law cases.

Within the current system, a child can only formally participate through welfare reports or, in a small minority of cases, the appointment of a guardian. However, these processes are not invoked in all cases.

Dr Claire Hargreaves, of Lancaster's Sociology Department, one of the partnership researchers, said: "For many years, concerns have been raised that current structures do not allow us to hear children well enough in private law proceedings, with their input coming too infrequently and too late.

"This study raises further questions about whether the system is meeting the needs of children and promoting their rights."

The research was based on data on all children involved in a private family law case that included a Section Eight application and started in 2019 – a total of 62,732 children in England and 4,293 children in Wales.

University of Strathclyde: Dr Nina Vaswani, Professor Yvette Taylor and Dr Michelle Donnelly have been awarded a Nuffield Foundation research grant for a project entitled 'Challenging justice inequalities with children in conflict with the law'. This involves a group of interdisciplinary academics, policymakers and practitioners who will consider how intersecting inequalities affect children's experiences of justice.

English football is '50 years ahead' of Europe in tackling fan violence

Teesside University: Football in continental European countries is 50 years behind its English equivalent when it comes to tackling fan violence, a study says.

While in England violence has fallen, on the continent there has been a rise in recent years, including attacks on team coaches, officials and fans.

The research, by Dr Kevin Dixon, of Teesside's Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor Ellis Cashmore, of Aston University, is published in *Soccer & Society* journal.

The study shows how a breakdown of ideas relating to toxic masculinity and the emergence of positive role models, such as David Beckham, helped to create a shift in England in recent decades.

Other contributory factors were the introduction of all-seater family-friendly stadiums, a softening in policing methods and an emergence of self-policing, with fans now more likely to report violators.

In contrast, incidents last year saw 11



Dr Kevin Dixon

German football fans arrested in Naples after violence on the eve of the Champions League match between Napoli and Union Berlin in Naples. In another incident, Lyon's Ligue One match at Marseille was abandoned after

the team's bus was attacked and Lyon's manager was taken to the hospital. Five Napoli and three Eintracht Frankfurt fans were arrested after violent clashes erupted in Naples ahead of a Champions League game.

"Football in continental Europe is about where England was 50 years ago," said Professor Cashmore. "Violence is still widespread and shows no signs of cooling off."

By contrast, in England, David Beckham signified a change in attitudes. "Beckham personified a new type of maleness. He was well-groomed and conscientious about his appearance.

"Combined with the rise of women's football, the new masculinities decisively put an end to the snarling masculinity that had fuelled violence.

"Football is unique in arousing passions and thrills. The violence we used to see at every game reflected the intensity of emotions and excitement that ran through the sport. We've swapped this for a different, more comfortable, experience."

Prisons, dogs, bones: round-up

Durham University: A new book calls upon the UK justice system to reduce the number of pregnant women sent prison and to improve services to those who are jailed.

The book, *Pregnancy and New Motherhood in Prison*, is the first to examine pregnancy and new motherhood in UK prisons.

The book, by Dr Lucy Baldwin in Durham's Sociology Department, and Dr Laura Abbott of the University of Hertfordshire, was written following the deaths of two babies after their mothers gave birth in prison.

Their book, which includes first-hand accounts from women with experience of pregnancy in prison, puts forward a number of recommendations, including changes to sentencing guidelines and reducing the imprisonment of pregnant women.

It also says there should be dedicated prison space for pregnant women, with better training for social workers, probation officers, midwives and prison staff on the experience of pregnancy in prison.

Both authors have hands-on experience in the field, Dr Baldwin as a qualified social worker and probation officer and Dr Abbott as a midwife.

Their recommendations draw on their own research, and trials that Dr Baldwin has developed with Sodexo, the operator of Peterborough Prison, which involved the establishment of a dedicated pregnancy wing, and enhanced staff training and prisoner support.

Goldsmiths: Dr Mariam Motamedi Fraser has written an open access book, *Dog Politics: Species Stories in the Animal Sciences*.

The book, published by Manchester University Press, questions the scientific story which claims that being with humans constitutes dogs' evolutionary destiny. It asks what evidence exists for this, and what expectations, demands and burdens it places on dogs. The book also engages with contemporary concerns, including the relations between dogs and 'race', individuality, and freedom.

The book can be downloaded here: <https://tinyurl.com/4nade2aw> and is also available in hardback.

Dr Motamedi Fraser is running a series of seminars entitled *Animals Scales*, co-hosted by UCL Anthropocene and the Goldsmiths Centre for Critical Global Change. More details: <https://tinyurl.com/n8m9wnw5>

The **Nuffield Foundation**, in partnership with Versus Arthritis, has announced £6 million funding for new research to improve the well-being of people living with musculo-skeletal conditions in the UK, with a focus outside clinical settings.

The deadline for outline applications to the Oliver Bird Fund is 16 September. Applications for work that challenges ethnic, income, gender and other inequalities are particularly welcome. Details at: <https://tinyurl.com/jb4teyns>

Department runs ethnicity event

University of Edinburgh: The Sociology Department hosted the 33rd annual conference of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism, this year on the subject of nationalism and memory.

Professor Jonathan Hearn is currently President of the association and several PhD students were on the organising committee.

Colleagues in the department also ran a 'Researching Latin America' talk series, which included a session on the links between social movements and political parties in Chile and Mexico.

This featured talks by Dr Elisa Niño Vázquez, of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and Carla Quiroz and Juan Pablo Orrego Miranda, of Edinburgh.

GENDER.ED, a cross-university hub for gender and sexualities studies, ran an event in April on 'Centring ethics, doing feminist research' with Professor Ana Marija Sobocan, in association with the university's early career network.

GENDER.ED, which promotes teaching, research and knowledge exchange in gender and sexualities studies at Edinburgh and beyond, also held a roundtable in March on 'Archiving feminist and queer voices, and the production of knowledge'.

‘When the Department opened, there were only six members of faculty’

The Sociology Department at the University of Oxford celebrated its quarter century this year. Network takes a trip down memory lane...

The University of Oxford's Sociology Department celebrated its 25th anniversary with a special event in March.

The event featured panels on impact, crime, the commodification of higher education and the education divide. This was followed by a networking session, a drinks reception and a dinner.

Special events included an interview with the first head of department, Professor Anthony Heath, and an address from the current incumbent, Professor Colin Mills. A webpage set up to mark the anniversary gave a history of the discipline at Oxford:

“Despite the Department’s relative youthfulness, the subject of sociology has a rich history at Oxford, with sociologists present at the University since the early 20th century.

A particularly influential figure in the early development of Oxford Sociology was political theorist and economist G. D. H. Cole, who in 1944 became the first Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory. Cole had previously helped politician William Beveridge on his pivotal report that laid the foundations for the British post-war welfare state.

During the late 1940s, the university appointed the first official Lecturer in Sociology; early lecturers included Donald G. MacRae and John Mogy. Bryan R. Wilson, the leading sociologist of religion in Britain, was the first Reader selected.

By the 1970s, Sociology was a sub-faculty of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and had developed a reputation for conducting large-scale social surveys. Chelly Halsey, working with John Goldthorpe and with funding from the newly established Social Science Research Council, undertook the Social Mobility Study of 1972. This interviewed over 10,000 individuals to explore patterns of social mobility – or changes in a person’s socio-economic situation – in England and Wales, establishing Oxford as a major centre for quantitative social research.

[In 1965] the BPhil in Sociology was established, open to graduate students only. In 1969, Human Sciences – with sociology as a core component alongside anthropology, demography, evolution and genetics – was introduced as an undergraduate degree.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the number



of students studying sociology at undergraduate and graduate level grew steadily. In Michaelmas Term 1998, the University’s General Board approved the establishment of an autonomous Department of Sociology, along with the creation of a Chair of Sociology. These were in place by summer 1999.

Anthony Heath was appointed the first Chair of Sociology, and Head of the new Department. At the time, Professor Heath told the *Oxford University Gazette*: “One of the new Department’s aims is to build on this tradition of empirical social research. While sociology elsewhere appears to have acquired a not wholly undeserved reputation for obscurantist grand theory, we will aim to develop, and test empirically, middle-range theories that engage with real-world puzzles and problems.”

The central focus of the new Department’s research was the integration of theory and data analysis, particularly in the areas of social stratification and mobility, education, politics, ethnicity, labour markets, ageing and the life course, social decision making, rational choice and signalling theory.

When the Department first opened, there were six members of faculty, two members of administrative staff, and around 30 graduate students.



Photos: left, Professor Anthony Heath; right, guests at the 25th event
Photos © John Cairns

More information on the event:
www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/25th-anniversary#widget-id-4725726

Anthony Heath remained Head of Department until 2008. Subsequent Heads of Department have included Jonathan Gershuny, Francesco Billari, Melinda Mills, Christiaan Monden, Federico Varese and Colin Mills – specialists in a wide range of research topics, from demography to criminology.

The Department’s breadth of research has always been complemented by its international character. Embracing a truly global perspective, the Oxford Sociology community has members from over 70 nationalities, creating a vibrant tapestry of cultural diversity. Our alumni now hold academic positions across Britain and around the world.

Innovation in sociology has always been a hallmark of the Department, which in 2014 launched the MPhil in Sociology and Demography. This innovative degree aimed to bring together the demographic macro perspective on population change with the sociological analysis of individual behaviour and outcomes embedded in social contexts.

The Department’s reputation for academic excellence has been consistently recognised, and Oxford Sociology has maintained a position in the top five best universities for sociology in the world since 2015, according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject. Since 2019, we have been ranked second in the world and first in the UK and Europe.

We are now a thriving community of over 30 faculty members and researchers, nine administrative staff, and 120 graduate students – along with over 1,200 former students and staff, who very much remain a part of our community.”

STS events series looks at care, collaboration and digital studies

STS study group: The group continued its seminar series this year with a talk by Dr Sarah Pennington, of Goldsmiths, on ‘Care-politics in design: toward an inventive feminist practice’.

In the talk, in January, Dr Pennington discussed the shift from matters of concern to matters of care and the implications of this for design research, and she proposed an analytical typology of what she called “care-politics” which is attentive to processes of “inventive ethics”.

In February, Professor Jane Calvert, of the University of Edinburgh, talked about her new book, *A Place for Science and Technology Studies: Observation, Intervention, and Collaboration*, which details 15 years of STS work, from observation to intervention and collaboration with scientists and engineers. In her talk she asked, “whether there is a place for STS, whether STS has to create new spaces, or whether it is fated to be forever itinerant”.

In March, Dr Michel Wahome, of UCL, gave a talk entitled ‘Challenging the “boys from the north”: epistemic identities and values in collaborative research on the deep



Professor Jane Calvert Image: Robert Smith

sea’, in which she discussed collaborative research in Africa, North-South scientific collaborations, and the boundaries of legitimate science and expertise.

For the BSA online annual conference in April, the group organised five paper panels

Event looks at art production

Sociology of Arts study group: The group has held a series of events recently. In June it ran its first symposium, entitled ‘The social production of art today: revisiting Janet Wolff’, which showcased contemporary work in the sociology of the arts alongside Janet Wolff’s seminal book, *The Social Production of Art* (1981).

The group hopes to produce publications from the event, which was funded jointly by *Cultural Sociology* journal and the Bauman Institute and held at the University of Leeds.

In May the group held an event, ‘The type of art matters’, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, which provided a platform for PhD students to engage in dialogue with junior and senior academics to explore how different art genres influence research practice and outcomes. It was funded by a BSA Postgraduate Forum regional event funding grant.

In January, the study group collaborated with the European Sociological Association’s Sociology of Art Research Network to host a well-attended online event on questions of artificial intelligence in the art world.

An international panel spoke about the primary ways that AI is disrupting the field of art, and what can we envision for the

future of AI and art. Continuing this theme, in February the study group hosted an online dialogue featuring the American sociologist Larissa Buchholz’s new book, *The Global Rules of Art*.

The group has welcomed new convenors and a PhD student representative, and plans to hold future events that will continue to forge international collaborations and nurture a community of British scholars who think sociologically with and about the arts.



Professor Larissa Buchholz

and a stream plenary on the theme of STS and digital studies, in a joint effort with the Digital Sociology study group. Presentation topics included AI, science and the environment, and digital divides in technology use. These showcased the range of research interests relating to science, technology and digital sociology.

In the stream plenary, Dr Lukas Engelmann, of the University of Edinburgh, discussed the notion of crisis in relation to epidemiological reasoning and mathematical modelling in the 20th century, raising questions about how epidemics have been theorised as crises and disruptions, and the role of mathematical modelling in shaping such disruptions.

The online format allowed the group to host more international presenters, from countries including Brazil, Hong Kong and Canada.

The study group is planning to continue its seminar series with more talks in 2024-25. It invites sociologists to give their views on the topic they would be interested in by filling in a survey at: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8u7wjr>

New leaders for donation group

Deconstructing Donation special interest group: Professor Laura Machin has stepped down as convenor for the group and Dr Leah McLaughlin and Dr Stephanie Parsons have taken over as co-convenors.

Dr McLaughlin, of the University of Bangor, has a wide range of research interests including health and social care services and policy. Dr Parsons, of Anglia Ruskin University, London, has a background in medical sociology.

They thanked Professor Machin for her work.

The group staged its conference in December at City University, London, where the number of delegates showed that it had grown significantly. The event was organised by Professor Machin and Dr Jessie Cooper.

The group plans a conference to be held in Wales next year and has also rebranded its logo. It will produce a newsletter shortly and encourages members to make suggestions for the group’s aims and objectives. Dr McLaughlin can be contacted at: l.mclaughlin@bangor.ac.uk and Dr Parsons at stephanie.parsons@london.aru.ac.uk

More details of the group’s activities can be read at: <https://tinyurl.com/4tskh4uy>

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

Murderer confesses in thesis

Sociologists are accustomed to supervising students whose theses record their private troubles. But few will have had the experience of Professor Charlie Barnao, of Catanzaro University, Italy.

Professor Barnao supervises Catello Romano, whose recent thesis began: "My name is Catello Romano. I am 33 years old, and I have been in prison for almost half my life, 14 consecutive years. I have committed horrendous crimes and have been convicted of several Camorra murders. What follows is my criminal history."

Romano is serving life for four murders, but in the thesis he confesses to three more, for which he has never been brought to justice. The Prosecutor's Office is now considering reopening the cases.

Romano's 170-page study, written in Catanzaro prison, in Calabria, focuses on the sociology of survival. In it he discusses family, education, childhood, divorce, drugs, violence and mafia history.

He argues that crime has a strong allure for young people who belong to marginalised groups.

"It is their way of trying to emancipate themselves and gain more respect and social recognition.

"Through this work, at least to some extent, I am carrying out a work of truth and reparation – I would not dare say 'justice' – toward those who have been directly affected by my misguided actions," he says.

Professor Barnao, who has been teaching at the prison for five years, told *El País* newspaper that Romano was "a brilliant student, who has got very good grades throughout his course of study" after going "through a very difficult process".

"He has recounted in detail circumstances that will have consequences – he was very determined to expose that in his thesis. He has put his life in order once and for all and organised the episodes of his life to analyse them through a sociological research method, which has also had a kind of therapeutic function."

Romano is not the first wiseguy to get a degree: Camorra godfather Sergio Ferraro wrote a thesis on socialisation within the mafia while serving a 20-year sentence.

Agustín is children's check mate

When thinking of ways to help children in the detention system to socialise and integrate better into society, the game of chess might not be the first idea that comes to mind.

But Argentinean sociologist Agustín Teglia (right) has run chess workshops in poorer Buenos Aires neighbourhoods and juvenile detention centres for over a decade. He has found that the game can help children to concentrate, manage their time and regulate their emotions.

"When I started working in Villa 21 ... five-year-old kids got excited when I told them the history of chess and immersed them in the cultural world of the game," said Mr Teglia.

One of the children said: "The best part is making the board and taking it home to play," while a father of another said: "Since he started playing chess, it not only helped him concentrate but also he started doing better in school. I can't explain why, but it's true."



Entire journal board resigns

The entire editorial board of *Theory and Society* journal has resigned, after saying that the publisher, Springer Nature, installed new editors-in-chief without consulting them.

The 10 editors, and the journal's corresponding editors, resigned after Springer replaced Janet Gouldner, the former executive editor, and widow of the journal's founding editor, Alvin Gouldner, without consulting the editorial board.

The editors said: "Springer Nature's unyielding position on this was a clear violation of our profession's academic norms and standards and was fundamentally at odds with the spirit of the journal."

A Springer statement said: "Feedback from researchers suggested that the field was becoming more interdisciplinary, although the scope of the journal remained unchanged. We also received a sustained volume of correspondence from submitting authors over this time which expressed deep concerns regarding turnaround times for their submissions.

"The decision to appoint a new editor-in-chief was not made lightly or without consultation."

Norwegian peace expert dies

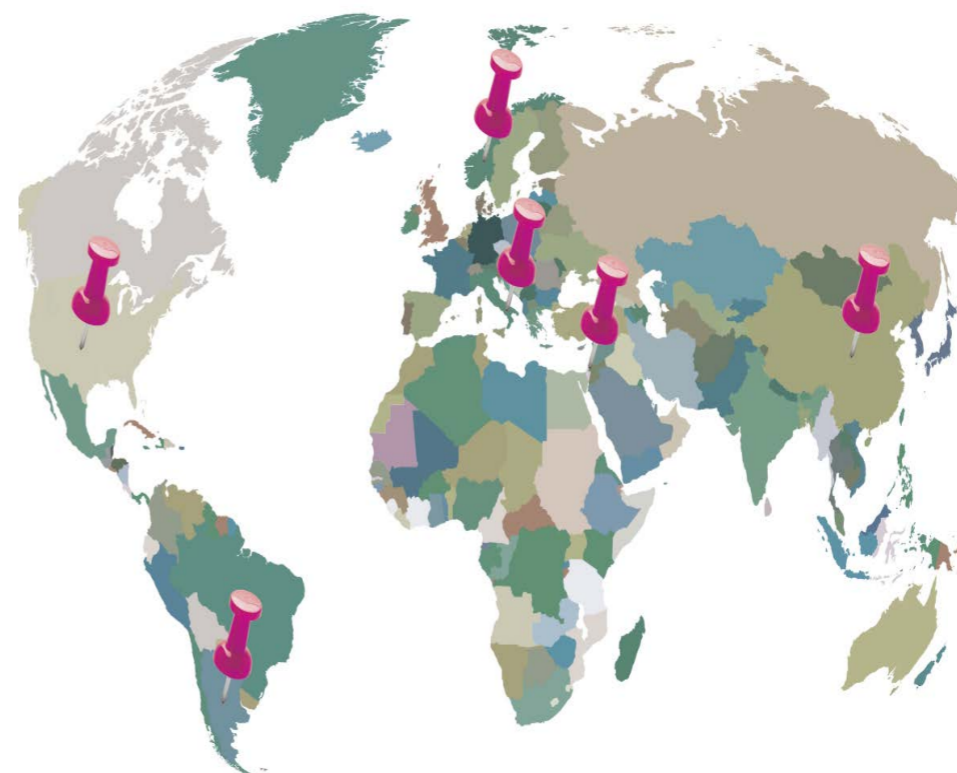
The Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, a leading contributor to peace and conflict research, has died, aged 93.

Professor Galtung's work began early when he refused the call-up to the Norwegian army in 1951. He used his six months in prison as a conscientious objector to read the writings of Gandhi.

He studied at the University of Oslo, gaining a postgraduate degree in mathematics in 1956, the year of his marriage to Ingrid Eide, a sociologist and later a minister in Norway's Labour party government. He was active in student politics, learning to speak eight languages and reading widely in history, psychology, economics and international relations.

He later set up a department for conflict and peace research in the Norwegian Institute for Social Research, which became the Peace Research Institute Oslo. It was also the home of the *Journal of Peace Research*, which Galtung founded in 1964.

He set out a set of 81 norms for non-violent conflict behaviour, and wrote a book and articles from this. Over time, his ideas about peace and structural violence have become taught in more than 500 universities.



Big brother is thwarting you

The more siblings a child has the worse their mental health, a study has found.

Sociologist Professor Doug Downey led an Ohio State University study that asked 9,400 Chinese and 9,100 American students, with an average age of 14, about their mental health.

Consistent with China's one-child policy, about one-third of Chinese children had no siblings (34%), compared with just 13% of American children.

In China, teens with no siblings showed the best mental health, while in the United States, those with one or no sibling had similar better mental health.

Some analysis could only be done on data from the US, where the researchers found that those having older siblings and siblings closely spaced in age tended to have the worst impacts on wellbeing.

"If you think of parental resources like a pie, one child means that they get all the pie – all the attention and resources of the parents," said Professor Downey.

"But when you add more siblings, each child gets fewer resources and attention from the parents, and that may have an impact on their mental health."

School detentions may harm

Even light punishment for bad behaviour at school can affect students' health and wellbeing later in life, research shows.

Dr Ashley Barr, a sociologist at the University at Buffalo, led a study that used survey data from more than 700 college-educated young adults,

These were categorised into three groups: those who were minimally disciplined; those who experienced punishments such as loss of privileges, written reprimands or in-school detention; and those whose offence was serious enough to involve parents, counsellors or law enforcement.

Participants with a history of school-managed discipline reported more depressive symptoms and worse self-rated physical health than classmates who were minimally disciplined. Where parents, counsellors or police were involved, children reported worse self-rated physical health than those in either of the other groups.

Dr Barr said: "It's time to rethink school discipline entirely. Narrow conceptions of exclusionary discipline, limited to expulsion and suspension, don't capture most of the disciplinary practices experienced by students."

ASA members split over Gaza

A division within the senior membership of the American Sociological Association about the Israeli attack on Gaza has been revealed by InsideHigherEd.

An article pointed out that in the past the ASA had issued statements on international affairs, such as one opposing the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but it had held back from calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

In December, a group called Sociologists for Palestine delivered to the ASA's Council a letter signed by 125 sociologists, including six former ASA presidents, asking it to support an immediate ceasefire.

The association declined, instead releasing a statement expressing "deep concern and dismay regarding the loss of civilian lives in the context of continued violence in Gaza and Israel as well as other contexts of conflict and suffering unfolding across the globe". It also called "for conditions that will support lasting peace".

In response, Sociologists for Palestine pressed the issue, with a resolution asking the ASA to call for "an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza", and that if the ASA held investments in defence and military corporations then it should withdraw these immediately.

The ASA's Council voted down the proposal, instead issuing a brief statement saying the group's members had "a range of backgrounds" and "a variety of perspectives" that the association "strives to reflect". It called for conditions "that will support lasting peace in the context of continued violence in Gaza and Israel".

Following the Council's rejection, the backers of the call for a ceasefire attained enough member signatures to put the issue directly to the ASA's 8,000 regular members. However, before putting it on the ballot, the Council edited out the part of the resolution that called for military divestment.

The members voted for a ceasefire, with 59% demanding it, on a turnout of about one-third.

Sociologists for Palestine pointed out that the ASA had previously divested "from corporations that supported South African apartheid, or that were racist or anti-labour".

"Silence is a position, and staying silent in the face of a US tax-funded genocide is political," said ASA member Heba Gowayed.

But other ASA members criticised the resolution. Ezra Zuckerman Sivan, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote that it was "super politicised" and "morally problematic".

Walking and podcasts: teaching beyond PowerPoint

The effectiveness of the traditional PowerPoint lecture has been discussed within academia for many years, and sociologists have long tried to move beyond it to engage their students in innovative and productive ways. This is particularly important today, at a time when students are less willing or able to attend lectures, as many work part or even full time and the habit of regular attendance fell during Covid lockdowns.

An event, 'Teaching sociology in higher education: pedagogical practices and possibilities', in May heard from leading scholars on how they approach teaching.

The first to speak was **Dr Emma Jackson** (below), an urban sociologist, who spoke on her walking and teaching course, which she led since 2016 at Goldsmiths.

"It's a second year undergraduate option, taught across five weeks, and in intensive four-hour sessions, though that doesn't mean we are walking for the whole four hours," she told the event. "What I've found is that teaching in this way really shakes up the classroom dynamic.

"The first thing to say about it is that the walking that we do in this class is collective. We are not pursuing this kind of 'lone figure walking around the city' that still haunts a lot of writing on the urban. We move

through the streets together and we discuss what we see here and feel.

"Moving through the streets together allows us to become attuned to how different forms of power unfold in and through public space, and to read spaces and the futures of spaces against the grain. So we talk a lot as we move about how history is represented in this space, what's missing from what you know of this space, and what are your experiences of this space."

One of the walks was in Westminster, where she draws upon the work of her colleague, Nirmal Puwar.

"This session we meet at Charing Cross station and the first stopping off point is a statue of the World War I nurse, Edith Cavell [executed by the Germans for helping Allied soldiers escape from occupied Belgium]. At this point we talk about the politics of statues – this statue is very unusual in being a named statue of a woman. There are more statues of animals in London than there are named

A recent BSA Presidential event heard about some innovative teaching practices within the discipline. Network takes a look...

statues of women.

"Then we walk to Trafalgar Square, which is very close by, and I send the students off for 15 minutes to do an exercise. We then cut through down a sidestreet past some homeless tents onto the Mall.

"I've timed this so that we get to see the Changing of the Guard as it goes down to Buckingham Palace. So we see the Changing of the Guard, we cut through St James's Park, where the students get distracted and take lots of pictures of wild fowl, then we come through onto the other side to the statue of Clive of India and Churchill's Bunker.

"These things are side by side, which give me the perfect opportunity to bring in Paul Gilroy – another key reading for the session is his idea of post-colonial melancholia and how that manifests in the built environment.

"We then cut down a street where there are lots of government ministries, and we take a detour to look at Downing Street. There's usually some form of protest outside Downing Street, or if not, there'll be one as we then turn right and go down towards Parliament Square, where we repeat the exercise from Trafalgar Square and have a break, have a sandwich, and then go to the tour of the Houses of Parliament, which isn't a sociological tour of course, but it gets us into the chambers."

She kept the class size to 20. "I find that if I'm shepherding students around, I can't speak any louder in the middle of London on a busy street than to more than that number of people."

"I see the dynamic in the group changing over time, which is really nice. I see them staying on to talk to each other or get a cup of tea, which I really love."

For the class assessment, students had to plan their own walk on an urban theme.

"Some students love that, but then it also does come with a certain degree of panic for some students because by the second year they've just got their heads around what the standard essay is, and then I say, 'no, do something different', but I show them examples and I tell them that we'll build up to that through doing class exercises."

Although the course started at 9am and students had to cross London in rush hour to get to the starting point, "the attendance has been brilliant and really stable".

One student told her that the course was "worth getting up early for". Another gave feedback: "On a walk, you'll always experience unexpected challenges that necessitate the nuance and reflection that are often lost in the text. Sometimes these will come from your colleagues and peers, sometimes from the space and sometimes from people you encounter, because people always talk to us. Walking is a grounded experience." *For details of redundancies at Goldsmiths, see page five*

THE EVENT

'Teaching sociology in higher education: pedagogical practices and possibilities' was a BSA presidential event, conceived by Dr Carli Rowell. *See page 17 for her talk*

Dr Rowell told the event: "It's about thinking and rethinking how we teach sociology. How we can best capture our students is something that I've had an interest in from the very first moment that I stepped inside a lecture theatre as a PhD student and

engaged with the students that I was teaching.

"This struck me as something that we don't tend to have within the discipline of British sociology, which is in contrast to the conversations that have been happening in the US, where they've got a journal, *Teaching Sociology*, where individuals regularly share their practices and their pedagogies.

"So I discussed the idea of doing something around pedagogy with [BSA President Rachel Brooks] and we

were totally taken aback by the amount of interest that we received. We intended to just have a very short session where individuals shared their practices. But actually 43 papers were submitted and we were spoiled for choice, and we had to turn a lot of high quality, interesting, innovative abstracts away."

Four presentations are set out in this feature. Space precludes accounts of the other speakers: Dr Peter Manning, of the University of Bath, who spoke on exploring questions of

'Time to challenge the fetishisation of journal articles'

Professor Michaela Benson (right), of Lancaster University, spoke on producing podcasts to use in the classroom, drawing on her own series, 'Who do we think we are', which questions common understandings of race, migration and belonging.

"My title is Professor in Public Sociology," she said. "I spend a lot of time thinking about this both in my day job but also in the work that I do as Chief Executive for the Sociological Review Foundation.

"I had this grand ambition that this would be a podcast that could attract the public generally, and I did quite a lot of work to think about what that would mean in terms of bringing the audience along.

"For example, I know about sociological jargon and the need to break that down. So I spent a lot of time breaking down those kinds of ideas so that people could understand what we were talking about, because we do tend, even in the classroom, to take for granted that students understand what we're talking about from the terms that we use.

"Aside from the audio content, I produce transcripts, I produce notes, and I produce recommendations for listening and reading from both academic and non-academic sources."

When she moved to Lancaster in 2021, she started to put her own podcasts, and other ones, onto the curriculum, and to refer to them in lectures.

"But I don't think that at that time I'd fully thought through what the challenges might be for students in terms of being presented with an unfamiliar way of engaging with this. Students don't really

know how to engage these alternative forms in their studies. So this was a reminder to me that when we incorporate new modes of learning onto our syllabus we need to provide guidance on how they should be used.

"I think that there really is something about hearing from scholars in their own words rather than words on the page. So being able to bring those voices into a classroom for students was really valuable.

"It becomes a way of incorporating academic knowledge into everyday life in a way that reading doesn't necessarily permit us to do, because it does require that we disengage from everyday life. I think that there's some value in that different focus. It shows that sociology matters outside of journals, books and classrooms. I think that that's really important because what we were doing was taking concepts and applying them to historical or current cases to offer students opportunities to understand that these academic ideas actually do have a wider resonance.

"Particularly in a topic like migration, where there's so much headline news, day in, day out, it offered a way of encouraging students to listen differently, to go beyond those very loud voices and to bring in a more intimate sense of what the issues were, by communicating with them as individuals, which is quite different to what we do in the lecture theatre.

"It's actually really helped me with my writing. It's helped me with my teaching a



lot because it's made me ask questions about how I present things."

She spoke about the relative value placed on podcasts.

"One of the major challenges that I face, and I know that other academic podcasters are facing, is to do with this hierarchy of values that is at play in thinking about the kinds of outputs we produce or what goes onto a reading list.

"There is a certain amount of fetishisation of journal articles. I hear from students all the time that when they've put a blog into their bibliography they're being told it's not sufficiently academic enough, even if they've then incorporated a range of different kinds of outputs and even if that blog may have appeared on somebody's course reading list.

"A challenge for us as a subject community, in terms of thinking about how other forms of outputs that haven't reached the level of prestige that we associate with journal articles or monographs, is how we incorporate those and how we encourage students to use them, and what's an appropriate way of using them and reporting on them.

"So I think that there are a lot of opportunities around bringing podcasts into the classroom and producing podcasts for student use, but I do also think that it requires quite a lot of thinking, in terms of how we embed them and how we develop our practices around that."

Feature continues overleaf



Dr Vassilis Galanos

• The event can be seen at: youtube.com/watch?v=yMZqpZXk-OU

What the f***? Making quant less alien to students

► Feature continues

Dr Nazneen Ismail, Sophie Harris, and Professor Julie Scott Jones, from Manchester Metropolitan University, spoke on 'What's the fucking point in this? Using playful pedagogy to empower sociology students with quantitative methods'.



Professor Scott Jones (right) said: "The Department of Sociology at Man Met is one of the biggest by undergrad numbers. We've got 550 in our first year, so we do everything at scale, which is quite remarkable when you hear what we do, or try to do. Quantitative methods is compulsory in our sociology and criminology programmes all through the first two years. And then there's a specialist route that about a quarter to a third of our students choose to take for their final year.

"Sociology and criminology students come to us already with baggage and barriers to learning quantitative methods. First of all, A-level sociology, which is a key pipeline into our discipline – something like 50% of all students will have taken it – has a particular take on what sociology is. I would argue it's quite dated. It's not empirical. There's an emphasis on qual, there's not a lot of quants there. So, already, our students are thinking, what's this quants thing?"

This chimed with "the cultural turn in sociology away from, or critiquing, the empirical, perhaps over-privileging qual, which problematises quantitative methods.

"The typical sociology students we see are usually female, from diverse backgrounds, lower socio-economic backgrounds, and have done a suite of humanities and soft social science A-levels, like sociology. So they're coming from a very particular take on the discipline – they like narrative, they like critique.

"We hit them in week one with quantitative methods as part of their core programme. It looks alien. It sounds alien.

'A-level sociology, which is a key pipeline into our discipline, is quite dated, it's not empirical'

This doesn't look like sociology. 'What the fuck is going on?' is quite often a thing that they say. So those are lots of barriers to learning. And the last barrier to learning is numbers, because you can't teach quants without showing them numbers and numbers are a big, big problem."

Sophie Harris (below) said: "As a previous secondary maths teacher, I've been in the classroom, I know what school pedagogy is all about. It's very structured. There is no creativity in that whatsoever. There's also a lot of time pressure from the curriculum because there's a lot to fit in and a short space of time.

"Every day students say 'maths is boring, and what's the point in it? It's irrelevant. I'm not going to use this in my everyday life'. What's really striking is that if a student is behind even by one lesson, because of this time pressure they then are constantly behind. If they've got negative attitudes towards maths, it'll negatively affect their confidence.

"Last year, only 72% of the population that sat GCSE maths actually passed and that meant the remaining 28% then had to carry on doing this post-16. So when they got to college they had to continue doing maths in some form. They're being made to do it for at least another two years. It's a struggle.

"So when they come to us at year one, they've got these negative dispositions that we try not to trigger, but we do. As soon as they see the numbers on the screen, they go back to that bad experience at school and they don't see the point in it, it's not relevant.

"They couldn't see past numbers because it's never been relevant to them at any point in their life until we show them how it's done. So it requires us to teach differently than at school, to not replicate that bad experience, and create a new pedagogic framework going forward to get them on board.

"There's two main data sets that we use in the first year. One is the Crime Survey for England and Wales, and the other is the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, so we teach them with the datasets, but they actually do the data analysis themselves.

"We emphasise the idea that it's all about finding patterns and trends in society. This is why data is



important, because if we don't have the data there, we can't analyse it, then we don't know if there's anything going on. We don't know if there are any problems in society, so sociology can't do anything about them.

"They're learning it from year one, and one in three jobs in Greater Manchester requires data skills. So it makes our students extremely employable. And these skills are in demand. So we see that a lot of our graduates do go into data roles working for organisations around the country that need these skills."

Dr Ismail (right) told the event about 'Working with quantitative evidence', which she said was "our level four core module that has 500 students. It is a large cohort, but what we're trying to do with the students is introduce them to quantitative methods, to numbers, and how to interpret the numbers, and to show them that actually it's not as scary as they thought it was.

"We essentially do this on our level four unit, but we also teach quantitative methods on level five and level six as a specialism.

"We introduce numbers, but we're trying to tell stories with them. So we focus on storytelling, the narrative, because we need to make the numbers less scary. The way to do that is introduce playful ways to learn about these numbers. We do this because playful pedagogy, we find, tends to build trust within the classroom, so students are able to explore and experiment with the data and not really be worried.

"It motivates them to take risks if they're feeling challenged. It allows them to experiment, make mistakes and learn from those mistakes, and what we essentially try to do is create that confidence, build that confidence, year on year.

"In the first week we'll have ice-breakers, we'll play games, we'll do people-bingo, we put students into groups. We want to try and create those peer-to-peer relationships, those peer-to-tutor relationships, which is what builds that trust.

"We encourage students to build communities within their own peers, which is why, with the games that we do in the first week, it means that the student, if they don't know anyone, if they're really scared of the subject, they've at least

got one or two familiar people that they can keep coming back to in the classroom.

"We use real data. The idea is that we make it relevant because it's relevant to them, it's relevant to what's happening within society. Those are the things that they're interested in.

"We use silly things, such as what percentage of people drink tea or how many people buy rum every year, just to break the tension up, alongside the more serious societal issues that they're looking at in the data.

"One of the tools that we use is yes/no cards. And that just means that students who are feeling a little bit shy, not as comfortable as others, can still voice their opinion. So we'll ask a question and they're able to lift their card, to say yes or no. If they want to engage but they're not comfortable speaking, the students are still able to interact with us, and that's been really useful.

"One of the other things that we've found is quizzes. It's a way to get them to revise the new terminology, the new stuff that they're learning. But also it can be a bit of fun, they can get quite competitive, and there's opportunities to win prizes, and who doesn't want to win the prize? This continues to make it more interactive for the students, despite it being such a large group together.

"Does this framework work? Yes, it does, because the overall student satisfaction rate is 89%. The satisfaction with teaching is 91%, the satisfaction with the resource that we provide, 94%, and the overall pass rate is 92%, so that just shows how well this pedagogy works. We've had students say that the teaching style has increased their confidence in using quantitative methods year-on-year, so innovative methods, even with a large cohort, are possible."

'Students say that the teaching style has increased their confidence in using quantitative methods'



Exploring class inequality from a working class perspective

Dr Carli Rowell, (below) of the University of Sussex, spoke on adopting a view from within in order to explore inequality from a working class perspective.

She designed a module in collaboration with a group of working class students at Sussex, entitled 'Class, culture and conflict: a view from within'.

"What I wanted to do is foreground working class voices in a way that's meaningful, ethical and devoid of the sensationalisation that underpins a lot of approaches to issues of inequality of class," she said.

"So, foregrounding the voice of working class persons in order to avoid the objectification and the fetishisation of teaching on class, class inequality and working class lives within academia.

"I identify as coming from a working class background and I identify as a working class academic, so I wanted to bring students into the conversation about how we craft and we move forward with the module, particularly when it came to thinking about what topics were important to teach.

"There's so much to say about class inequality and 11 weeks is by no means enough. It's not that the module did not engage with academic material, but it's just that when it did, it foregrounded and platformed the material produced by working class academics.

"Often these were working class feminists writing on issues of inequality in class within sociology. It also sought to extend beyond the ivory tower by considering non-academic forms of material as well. So we looked at Cash Caraway's memoir *Skint Estates*, as well as Scottish rapper Loki's book, *Poverty Safari*.

"It was really important to me that the students were paid for their intellectual labour and their time. There was at the time a scheme at Sussex called the Sussex Connector Scheme. I was able to apply for money that I was then able to pay the students in order to help them engage in this project with me, which I think is really important.

"The students that I worked with had a lot of really enriching ideas and they served to create a module that's



exciting and accessible and I wanted to make sure that they were remunerated for that.

"They were central in helping me select what topics to look at, they suggested key readings, they suggested non-academic material. They pointed me to contemporary rappers, artists and lyricists, etcetera.

"We also looked at Plan B's lyrics for the rap *Ill Manors* that talk a lot about living in a vilified social housing estate. We use that as a way in to unpick and explore these working class experiences. We've also looked at films such as [Ken Loach's] *I, Daniel Blake* and also critically interrogated media and cultural representations of working class life. We also used snippets from *Benefits Street*, the documentary series, as a way to critically reflect sociologically on this idea of worklessness and combine that with sociological insight.

"For the assignment, there was an option to bring in an auto-ethnographic element to the essay as a whole. Students were asked to identify a non-academic piece of material, a music video, a documentary, a soap, lyrics, a book, whatever it may be, and convey what it was that that non-academic material added to academic understandings or how it challenged academic understandings.

"It gave voice to students, it legitimised working class students' experiences and created a space for them where they were learning first-hand about their own experience and drawing upon that, rather than through secondary learning, and it encouraged students to question dominant understandings of class inequality in a way that perhaps they hadn't been encouraged to do before.

"I've been really supported by the department and wider university, and I think what Sussex wants to try to do is, where it fits and where it would add to the experiences of students, to try and foster more staff-student co-creation.

"But again, I'm very mindful that I wouldn't have felt comfortable taking students' time unless I was paying them for that labour, so that's really important for me."

'Event left me elated and extra motivated'

The last annual conference that the BSA plans to run online brought together a virtual audience from across the world to take part in what is the UK's biggest sociological event.

The conference, on the theme of 'Crisis, continuity and change', drew an attendance of 482 people from 37 countries, who gave 345 presentations. It featured three plenary sessions and 16 stream plenaries and special events.

The main plenary addresses were given by Professor Lynne Segal, who spoke on 'A politics of radical care'; Professor Ruha Benjamin, on 'Race to the future: From artificial intelligence to sociological imagination'; and a panel of sociologists, who spoke on 'Sociologies of artificial intelligence'. See pages 20-24

The four press releases sent out on research presented at the event led to 80 articles in the media, including *The Independent*, *Daily Mirror*, *MSN*, *Yahoo News*, *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Daily Mail* and papers in the US.

The press release topics included the influence of aristocrats in society, video game use, and the penalty for working from home. For details see: tinyurl.com/zh7bxyjc and tinyurl.com/yckhb638

The annual conference was popular. A survey completed by 150 delegates found that 91% strongly agreed or agreed that the academic content of conference papers was stimulating, and 88% strongly agreed or agreed that the delivery and presentation of conference papers was good.

Around 78% strongly agreed or agreed that the virtual platform was easy to navigate, and 54% strongly agreed or agreed that the opportunities for interaction worked well.

Social media posts gave a flavour of the event, with Nandini Das saying she felt "elated and extra motivated" after her first conference presentation, and Professor Les Back praising a "brilliant, joyful and insightful" session on sociological storytelling. See below

Next year's conference will take place from 23-25 April at the University of Manchester.

- The conference organising committee was Jonathan Blundell, Nicola Ingram, Chris Yuill, Rima Saini, Jennifer Remnant and Mark Doidge.

The BSA's 73rd annual conference is the last it plans to hold online. Network takes a look at the people, plenaries and prizes...

2024 VIRTUAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Wednesday 3 to Friday 5 April

BSA Crisis, Continuity and Change

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS
Ruha Benjamin - Princeton University
Lynne Segal - Birkbeck, University of London

PLENARY PANEL
AI Panel:
Jenny Davis - Vanderbilt University
Vassilis Galanos - University of Edinburgh
Susan Hallford - University of Bristol
Dan McQuillan - Goldsmiths, University of London
Lucy Suchman - Lancaster University

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
www.britsoc.co.uk #britsoc24

Dr Natalija Atas
@AtasNatalija
It was great presenting our work on students' lived experiences of the Cost-of-Living Crisis (@Dabrowski_V) at the @britsoc virtual annual conference. I really enjoyed our discussion with @mikeshaff @judithmudd1 and @stontian #BritSoc24

Nandini Das (she/her)
@nandinidas13
Presented at my first conference ever @britsoc. I shared findings from recently concluded fieldwork for my PhD research that looks at women's empowerment in the context of weavers in the handloom industry of Assam (India). Elated and extra motivated. Thank you. #BritSoc24

Les Back
@AcademicDiary
Such a fantastic session today at BSA24 on 'Sociological Storytelling' with @garyyoung @Michaelacbenon @ChantelleLewis and @NasarMeer - just a brilliant, joyful and insightful convention. Thanks to everyone who attended @policypress @britsocio

BSA to run extra online events and work more with schools, says Chair

The BSA will focus more on its membership over the next five years, its Chair has said.

During its online annual conference, Professor Chris Yuill gave a summary of the BSA's official strategy for 2024-2028.

He said that the BSA would be "a membership organisation, so we have to be really focused on making the experience as best as it can be for members of the BSA, trying to undergird all this by focusing on our core values – being compassionate, inclusive, supportive and thoughtful. It'll be up to the membership to hold us to account in this and judge us."

Professor Yuill said it was important to take into account a drop in members' income. "We should be very aware of the cost of living crisis and the money that people lost during the recent wave of strikes. That affects how much people can pay, so we're going to be very much aware of how we set fees. We have, for example, already reduced the postgraduate fee level to around 50% of what it was."

He said there would be a return to in-person annual conferences from next year onwards. "From now on, our full intention is to go back to people meeting in a building, walking around, seeing each other, and interacting. The one at Manchester last year was excellent, and that's the kind of vibe we want to carry on with."

However, Professor Yuill also said the BSA would run focused online events. "That's where we look at a particular issue that is happening in the world and get some sociological comment in there. It could also be, for example, careers advice for postgrads,

'We have to be really focused on making the experience as best as it can be for BSA members'



Professor Chris Yuill at a previous BSA conference

ECRs and those at mid-career level – a variety of online events that members want to watch and participate in."

The BSA would increase its recognition of long-term members. "There's a lot of people who have been around the BSA for a long time, and we're going to try and work out some way of rewarding people for that membership."

He said the BSA "must be better at communicating to members what we are doing. So that means appointing a communications officer because there are really fantastic things happening that we're not very good at getting out there. Also, the reverse – we need to listen more to what the membership is saying. "One thing we've done already is to have people from the advisory forum ... sit with the BSA board and act as participant observers."

The BSA would also look to promote the discipline. "We're also going to be focusing on schools and colleges, giving as much support and help that we can there. The fifth most popular A-level course in England is

sociology, which is utterly fantastic. We've got to try and do our best to make sure that enthusiasm translates into people going on to university to study sociology."

The association would also bring in a code of conduct. "Sometimes there is inappropriate behaviour within our association, within conferences, and so on. So we're looking at a way of making sure that we have a proper way to deal with anything that may be deemed inappropriate."

'We're also going to focus on schools and colleges, giving as much support and help we can'

Lynne Segal told her plenary audience that the idea of care was vitally important in the face of war and the assault on the welfare state

'Gaza war and neo-liberalism make these the darkest times I've ever known'

The Gaza war and the spread of neo-liberalism have made today's world "truly the darkest times I have ever known", Emerita Professor Lynne Segal told her plenary audience.

The Left was "shrinking in the face of the neo-liberal juggernaut rolling over us all", said Professor Segal, of Birkbeck, University of London, an activist who has worked for decades on justice for Palestinians and on gender, ageing and care.

"I've been writing and talking about the politics of care for several years now, but recently it's getting more and more challenging," she said.

"When I began discussing how to broaden and politicise our notions of care, I never expected that we would end up living in quite such dark times, times that in parts of the world are the very nemesis of care, the opposite of care.

"Indeed, as a Jewish activist who has long worked for peace in the Middle East, I'm finding it gets harder to talk in any composed and controlled way about anything ... in such very traumatic times.

"Western governments on the whole are still refusing to act seriously to try and prevent Israel's apocalyptic violence in Gaza, following the unexpected atrocity of Hamas on October the seventh, with the brutal massacre of over a thousand Israelis and others in southern Israel and 240 hostages taken to Gaza.

"The government of Netanyahu immediately declared war on Gaza, resulting in bombing for months, which still continues. People are now saying this is bombing that's unprecedented in human history, which leaves no safe space for civilians anywhere at all.

"In Gaza, so far as we know, over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed, many buried alive, with hundreds of thousands injured, two million displaced and destitute, more than half of them children. Those left alive are all homeless, shattered and now starving or freezing to death. The lack of Western action to prevent the extremity of such violence is unparalleled in my lifetime.

"Meanwhile, there is intensifying state-backed settler violence, terrorising villages in the West Bank and increasing the

demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. These are truly, for me, unspeakable times.

"In the face of so much suffering, it is devastating to see that one social media trend in Israel has been joyfully mocking all this suffering, dressing up as Gazans to laugh over their agony and loss. One such Instagram platform is, almost unbelievably to me, said to have six million followers.

"Surely it means that Israel too can only emerge as a lasting loser from such violence, given its genocidal nature. Thus, as someone who has worked for two decades for a just peace between Israel and Palestine, the situation transcends tragedy, creating inexpressible grief and making these truly the darkest times I have ever known.

"The only relief I find nowadays, the only care, is marching on the streets demanding a ceasefire. Moments of hope, practices of care, arise when solidarity is at its highest."

She turned to the challenge neo-liberalism presented for left-wingers. "So what has become of the Left? What has become of feminism, once a place of hope, standing for a more redistributive, caring and just world? Well, in most parts of the world, with brief exceptions, it's been shrinking in the face of the neo-liberal juggernaut rolling over us all.

"So this brings me to the need for a radical feminist Left politics of care, something for which the women's liberation movement, my own political formation and

home, then as now, paved the way for back in the 1970s.

"A key goal of the women's liberation movement back in the '70s was precisely to introduce new ways of seeing, indeed ways of envisaging, the total transformation of society, not just in terms of wages and state power, as far-Left groups had always called for, but in how we live and in how we care for each other.

"There were initially many victories, especially in securing reproductive rights, confronting doctors' arrogance, and increasing women's financial independence, while demanding as we did that men have greater involvement in domestic work. That was the life of me and my friends back in the 1970s.

"So what is so shocking now is how quickly such victories could start to be snatched away, with even reproductive rights being curtailed in many places as in the USA today, even further threatened by a possible Trump victory. While in Britain, with the arrival of austerity regimes, welfare and community resources have just kept on shrinking. It's hard to ignore the distress of so many mothers today, routinely pressed for time, money and resources in Britain and the USA.

"Half of all British mothers suffer mental health problems before and after giving birth. Fifty per cent of new mothers report chronic loneliness and, incredibly, suicide is



Image: from a previous event run by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona

the leading cause of death for mothers during the baby's first year.

"Similar patterns emerge in education. In my workplace for 50 years in the UK, as in the US and elsewhere, we've seen rising inequality within schools, along with attacks on the very notion of education for its own sake." She said that universities once "offered or tried to offer an alternative ethic, even an antidote to the commercial world, by insisting upon the value of learning entirely for its own sake, in the process producing more knowledgeable people and societies, and also making Britain famous for its universities". But now "they are increasingly forced to conform to market dogma."

"The assault on the humanities is just another attempt to marketise education and deny people the tools to understand the world better or to assist us in exploring useful ways to create a fairer and more caring world."

She also spoke about disability activists, who "at first won many struggles promoting what they called a social model of disability. They rejected the notion of themselves as intrinsically vulnerable, which routinely had been used as a pretext for their exclusion from public life. At first, in the 1970s and early '80s, disability activists won battles for greater access to social infrastructures, leading to increased social inclusion and increased self-reliance.

"The only problem with this language of self-reliance and independence was that it could, and later would be, distorted to tune in with the damaging contempt for dependency. Under the new austerity regimes beginning in 2010, such as we've seen in the UK and soon very much elsewhere, there have been constant assaults on those in need of disability support, with endless demands that the disabled had to prove themselves unfit to work. There were constant capability tests imposed on people receiving any disability benefits, which many failed.

"Ideal citizens today, male and female, must be tough and entrepreneurial, imagining themselves as entirely self-sufficient and encouraged to embrace self-care to keep themselves sleek and employable. Such pathologising of dependency accompanied the constant shaming heaped upon welfare. Claimants were declared scroungers, despite 12 times more tax evasion than welfare fraud,

"The cruelties of our time are also seen in the neglect and abuse of asylum seekers, with the UK, like Europe, completely failing to tackle this problem.

"Indeed, official hostility towards asylum seekers is evident globally. The bodies of refugees now carpet the Mediterranean, turning it into the largest burial ground of our time, following the reluctance of British and European governments to

rescue migrant boats in trouble.

"The [previous, Conservative] British government's shameful attempts to deport refugees to Rwanda have rightly been described as treating refugees like human waste, and is a refusal to understand what drives people to seek shelter elsewhere.

"We know we're now living with polluted rivers while aware of climate disasters around the globe. Yet, as climate activists like George Monbiot have been illustrating for decades, our government primarily responds only to their own largest backers for their party, who happen to be, of course, damaging fossil fuel producers. Today we have the maddening idiocy of the last Cop28 in Dubai, headed up by one of the leading fossil fuel producers globally.

"Underlying this ongoing crisis is a continuing entrenchment of neo-liberal policies and outlook. We are always hearing that neo-liberalism is over, but there's very little sign of that."

It was through caring for each other that we could begin to right these wrongs, she said.

"Where can we even begin trying to combat the devastation, the neglect and the greed we've seen in the wake of this prioritising of markets and maximisation of profits, when only the very opposite agenda can begin to shift us out of the resulting wreckage?

"Care is not only the hands-on care of directly looking after the physical and emotional needs of others, crucial as this is. It's also about recognising our human interdependence and our shared vulnerability throughout our lives, from cradle to grave. It's also about understanding our ever-greater global interdependence, which means caring across borders, caring for refugees, seeing the causes of people needing to seek shelter elsewhere.

"Care work has been undervalued because it's been seen largely as women's work, which traditionally went unpaid, barely seen as work at all, and marginalised as unproductive.

"So caring is gendered. Yet in today's world, both women and men are working long hours in paid work, creating a huge care deficit in richer countries, and it's met by the whole global care chain of predominantly poor immigrant, non-white women.

"Thus racism combines with traditional sexism and global inequality to further devalue caring. Caring, also care work, is undervalued, indeed often repudiated, because of widespread contempt and devaluation of so-called dependency.

"We must all be doing the work of caring, as well as helping to maintain our communities while preserving public space generally and working for a green sustainable economy. But that becomes possible only once we fight for and win shorter working hours, as well as a basic income for all."

'A small sliver of humanity is encoding their visions'

Technology is "amplifying and scaling up" segregation and inequity, Professor Ruha Benjamin told her plenary audience.

Professor Benjamin, of Princeton University, (below) said that sociologists should play the role of "challenging the monopolisation of power and resources that currently is shaping the world".

In an address entitled 'Race to the future? From artificial intelligence to sociological imagination', she said that two visions of the future of AI had taken hold.

"The first is what we might term the techno-dystopian narrative, the idea that AI is going to slay us, it's going to take all the jobs, it's going to rob us of our agency. This is the narrative that Hollywood loves to sell us, the Terminator, the Matrix, the list goes on.

"The second is what we might term the techno-utopian narrative: that technology is going to save us, it's going to make everything more efficient, more fair. If only we would hand over our major decisions to these systems, we would be in better hands.

"These seem like opposing narratives, and they have different endings for sure, one in which we're slayed, one in which we're saved. But they actually share an underlying logic, what we would call a techno-deterministic logic – that technology is in the driver's seat, propelled by a will of its own.

"But the human agents and agencies behind the screen are missing from both of those scripts. The values, the interests, the ideology, the desires that become encoded



Artificial intelligence was the theme of two of the plenary sessions at the BSA annual conference this year, with speakers warning about the need for sociologists to understand its dramatic growth. Network takes a look...

into our shared world are hidden.

"As it stands, a small sliver of humanity is currently encoding their visions into the infrastructure, into the world that the rest of us have to inhabit. And for me, thinking about higher education, thinking about sociology, thinking about African American studies and other related disciplines, this is the ground zero for us to radically expand who and what is part of shaping the future.

"Challenging the monopolisation of power and resources that currently shapes and is shaping the world is an important starting point. That is, pull back the screen to be critical about the way that these technologies have taken shape, and think about the ways that the sociological imagination can deepen our understanding, and contextualise and bring to light many of the dimensions of AI that often get hidden, whether in the hype or the doomsday scenarios around it."

She pointed to examples of where technology had created injustices. One was the use of an algorithm by the Conservative government in England to predict school students' grades when taking exams was not possible during lockdown.

"Predictably, for students who were at more working class schools and students of colour, their grades were predicted to be lower than their counterparts in white, wealthier areas."

One aspect that caught her attention was the connection between their predicted grades and their postal codes. "Postal codes were one of the inputs that help train an

algorithm what to output in terms of the grades.

"It's a reminder for us that the technology is not creating the problems of inequity from scratch but, in fact, is amplifying, scaling up and hiding pre-existing forms of segregation and inequity that we find in our geography, in our neighbourhood composition and in the resources that schools and parts of our cities get.

"This is an important starting point because it reminds us not simply about the impacts of any given technology, AI or otherwise, but also about the pre-existing forms of social domination, of inequity, of resource allocation, that are being inputted into these socio-technical systems."

As an example, she said that in 2022 the most popular advertisement during the US Super Bowl competition was for Alexa, Amazon's virtual assistant, in which a woman is shown shopping for a device. She sees a bus go by with an advert showing the actor Michael B. Jordan. "Eventually, he's embodying Alexa, reading her an Audible [story] in the bathtub.

"So we have this vision of a sexy black Alexa embodying this technology, which in some ways runs against the prototypical whiteness of many technologies and certainly of the tech industry. So it leads us to ask, is this a sign of progress?"

"To really answer that question, we'd have to move beyond Alexa and think about what's happening in the social milieu that might make this particular ad important for the company to roll out. Feature continues overleaf ▶

'The need is to understand a dysfunctional technology'

In their conference panel plenary, four other sociologists gave their thoughts on AI:

Susan Halford (chair)

"There is a great deal that can be said about this and should be said about this sociologically. This raises some really important questions about what those powerful sociologies of AI might do in the world, what they might mean for emerging futures, not only the ones that look rather likely at the moment, but also other possible alternatives."

Jenny Davis (pictured below)

"The sociology of AI is many things, of course, but one thing it is, is the systematic study of what AI means and an interrogation of the many diverse ways AI reflects and shapes individual and collective lives.

What a sociology of AI is for is to build scaffolds for scrutiny and informed imaginings that transcend the taken-for-granted and instead reconfigure the way AI systems might be built, deployed, regulated, integrated, omitted or dismantled as part of socio-technical future.

AI machine learning systems are often criticised for their mathematical black boxes, where the inner workings are inaccessible even to the programmers who encode them.

AI models iterate and change in unpredictable ways through

impossibly large data sets, using huge amounts of computer power. In a technical sense, such models are impenetrable. This seeming impenetrability should do little to deter

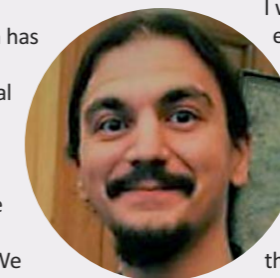
the sociologist. The sociological tradition has long explained processes with partial information. We theorise interaction rituals, for example, without knowing the hearts or minds of those who engage. We illuminate health disparities through statistical trends and theoretical overlays without a need for a medical degree, nor anatomical knowledge. We predict and explain social movements, military operations, legal processes and organisational dynamics without necessarily being activists, combatants, lawyers or managers. In the same way sociologists can interrogate AI and machine learning systems when knowledge is partial, unstable and even unknowable.

So sociology has this long tradition of bringing forth the taken-for-granted and insisting that we should not take it for granted any longer.

I also think that there's been a real understanding from academia that we can't just talk to ourselves anymore. And I think, at the same time, there's been a call for industry and the public sector as well as activist organisations to see the power of research-based practice. And so we've realised, I think, a need for each other."

Vassilis Galanos (above)

"Back in 2014, I was a jobless information scientist in financial-crisis Greece. And that was also the same time that my childhood hero Stephen Hawking announced that the end of humanity will be spelled by AI. And I was very much interested in this statement.



I was very much enthused to read conversations between AI scientists from the '80s and '90s who at some point considered their field as the centre of the world, like all researchers do at some point, of course.

So in their attempt to argue how hard it is to define AI, they concluded that AI is psychology, AI is education, AI is philosophy, AI is engineering, and so on. One of my interviewees, though, concluded by defining AI as a morass. And I like that. I guess in the AI context we have to use our sociological imagination to study the nuances and interactions between all these different contexts, why and how power structures and infrastructures are justifying decisions, and in what way.

The great asymmetry from the researcher's perspective is getting access to commercial settings and trying to get access to a big AI company and interview them after telling them you're a critical sociologist. Well, you won't find many doors open.

So you need to be sponsored by them to do your PhD and get some sort of magical agreement to be critical. So sometimes it appears as if academia becomes the right hand of industry in terms of sponsoring some critical voices."

Dan McQuillan (right)

"What does it mean, for example, when it's claimed that generative AI can produce synthetic subjects for social research, which are in some ways superior in efficiency, scale and

inclusiveness to just talking to people? This is something you might justifiably sneer at until the university cuts your research budget and subscribes to a cloud-based AI.

Because, yes, AI does work. It works to transform social structures and subjectivities, it works to control and dilute critical thought. It works to legitimate investment in so-called educational AI instead of fixing the literally collapsing roofs in schools, while at the same time treating students as assemblages of risk.

I think the rankings and classifications of predictive AI and the synthetic populism of generative AI will ultimately work as forms of eugenics. To me, the need here is to understand the unreasonable effectiveness of such a dysfunctional technology in marshalling off-the-scale levels of resources and commitment."

Lucy Suchman

"This project of AI, positioned as the epitome of innovation, is in fact a deeply conservative, reactionary, elaboration, acceleration and intensification of very familiar longstanding projects.

"I've been in a kind of agonistic relationship to AI since the 1980s, so about 40 years now. Alongside the enormous scaling of data and computer power, I would say that the proliferation of insightful and powerful critical scholarship is the main thing that's changed."

Jenny Davis is at Vanderbilt University; Vassilis Galanos, University of Stirling; Dan McQuillan, Goldsmith's; Lucy Suchman, Lancaster University; Susan Halford, University of Bristol.



AI: a 'new form of Jim Crow'

► Feature continued

"One of the things that's happening is that workers in one of Amazon's warehouses in Bessemer, Alabama, are working to unionise. There's a union drive happening, and this company's trying to squash it.

"So the question arises, if we ask [a Black woman employee] what her idea of inclusive design looks like, would it be sexy Black Alexa, that kind of cosmetic vision of inclusion, or would it be changes to the conditions of her worklife by the algorithms that are intensifying the pace of work?"

One woman employee had told her about Amazon working conditions, saying: "They're breaking our bodies. They're literally breaking us."

Professor Benjamin told the plenary: "Workers in these warehouses don't get time to rest. They have to, in some cases, wear diapers because they don't get enough time to pee. They can't take sick time off. This is the kind of gruelling pace that makes their limbs ache.

"At the end of the day, this tension between the convenience for the consumer versus the care or lack thereof granted to those behind the screen that are producing

that convenience is what I think a sociological imagination offers.

"It gets us to question beyond the rhetoric, the marketing, the platitudes and the promises of these technologies. What is actually happening in terms of the lived reality of people who are making these tools possible? I want to suggest that computational depth without social and historical depth is in fact superficial learning.

"This is an invitation for us to think about what forms of knowledge, what disciplines are necessary, in order to create our understanding about the world."

She pointed to bias in US healthcare and the "obvious form of harm that's been documented, social science data piled to the sky, that show the everyday biases that infect the vision and divisions in our healthcare system.

"We know in particular around pain treatment and management that Black patients' pain is often under-diagnosed or misdiagnosed or ignored throughout the healthcare system.

"So one might say, 'let's use technology as

a better form of assessment and diagnosis'. But we know through one of the first audits of a widely used healthcare algorithm that Black patients are routinely pushed out of needed services and programmes because they're not found as wanting it.

"Here again, just turning to technology to bypass the bias without looking carefully at the context, what the inputs and the outputs are, doesn't get us as far as we think it might.

"I can walk to the front door of any hospital, but there may very well be a healthcare algorithm making decisions about my care that's creating the same pattern of resource allocation and discrimination." She said this was a new form of the 'Jim Crow' laws.

"We see a number of recent initiatives, both the EU's AI Act and the AI bill that President Biden signed, to try to address this at the level of policy and create protections in the digital ecosystem, greater accountability and transparency. Certainly an important starting point, but there's a number of loopholes we might say that allow racism and discrimination to creep in through the back door." ■

AI: Grassroots and resistance groups

Below are some grassroots and resistance groups that can give information to BSA members who are concerned about the issues raised in the plenaries on artificial intelligence

Distributed AI Research Institute: www.dair-institute.org

Carceral Tech Resistance Network: www.carceral.tech

Black in AI: <https://blackinai.github.io/#>

Algorithmic Justice League: www.ajl.org

AI Now Institute: <https://ainowinstitute.org>

The Just Datalab: thejustdatalab.com

No Tech for Tyrants: <https://notechfortyrants.org>

Stop LAPD Spying: <https://stoplapdspying.org>

Pivot Nine: <https://pivotnine.com/blog/2023/07/10/venality-incompetence-and-cowardice>

LSE Blog: blogs.lse.ac.uk

Autonomy Work: <https://autonomy.work/adu>

Eleuther: www.eleuther.ai/about

Midata: www.midata.coop/en/cooperative

Posmo: <https://posmo.coop>

SAOS: <https://saos.coop/what-we-do/data>

Gisc: www.gisc.coop

Etui: www.etui.org/publications/artificial-intelligence-labour-and-society

Science For The People: <https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/?s=artificial+intelligence>

YCombinator: <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=31615770>

Emancipation: <https://emancipation.network>

Craphound: <https://craphound.com/category/internetcon>

The Anarchist Library: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/individualists-tending-toward-the-wild-communiques>

Prime Communities: www.primecommunities.online

Conference examines impact of EU enlargement and Brexit on migration

Professor Michał Garapich and Professor Louise Ryan, of London Metropolitan University, write about a conference they organised to commemorate the 20th anniversary of EU enlargement

Organised as part of the Global Diversities and Inequalities Research Centre, the hybrid event brought together migration scholars from the UK and beyond to analyse the impact of EU enlargement in 2004 on migration flows to the UK and how these have changed since Brexit. Speakers also discussed the impact of Brexit on the millions of EU citizens resident in the UK. Despite all the rhetoric around the Brexit campaign, immigration has actually increased significantly in recent years since Britain left the EU. However, the migrants coming now, mainly on worker visa and student visa schemes, have far more restricted rights than previous waves of EU migrants. Thus, it is not the numbers per se that have changed since Brexit but the rights of newly arriving migrants.

Sessions, chaired by Professor Anne White, UCL, and Professor Russell King, University of Sussex, drew significant attendance in person and online.

Louise Ryan opened the conference and reflected on her research with Polish migrants since 2004. Following EU enlargement, citizens from new accession countries like Poland not only gained freedom of movement rights but also the ability to extend their stay and settle in the UK. Drawing on longitudinal qualitative data generated over many waves of follow-up interviews, Louise explored responses to Brexit through the lens of embedding.

Michał Garapich's talk followed, reminding the audience that scholars were always wondering about the impact of EU migration on British multiculturalism, and how migrants will make sense of finding themselves in highly diverse localities. Although the picture broadly may be described as positive, his research on transnational far-right activism between UK and Poland showed that Brexit, shifting the nature of British and Polish far-right, and individual trajectories, had seen an increase in transnational far-right activism, including Polish immigrants who were radicalised in the UK and were now returning to Poland.

Professor Jonathan Portes, King's College London, shared his insights as both scholar and former civil servant. Being in the middle



Left to right: Izabela Grabowska, Mabel Encinas, Laura Morosanu, Russell King, Violetta Parutis, Louise Ryan, Michał Garapich, Anne White, Ifeanyi Nwachukwu, Elena Genova

of pre-enlargement decision making in the Blair and Brown governments, he reflected back on the geo-political motivations for the labour market opening up in 2004. He described this as a rare coincidence of migration and economic interests between the Home Office and Treasury to grant relatively unfettered labour access to the UK jobs market to migrants from Accession countries.

The second session had four speakers, but with a non-scholarly intervention to reflect on migration issues through poetry. Dr Mabel Encinas, London Metropolitan University, transported the audience to a different level of thinking with her poem, Patchwork, (starting with verses: 'Migration is a patchwork; I am also a patchwork').

Professor Izabela Grabowska, Kozminski University in Poland, presented data on the 24% drop in the number of Poles in the UK since Brexit and the pandemic. Germany has now become the primary destination for migrating Poles, as it used to be prior to 2004. Izabela's research in youth mobility, employment and social remittances has shown the strong role of what she called "tacit skills", enhancing people's position on the labour market after returning.

While the focus of the conference was primarily on EU enlargement in 2004, we also included presentations by two speakers who addressed the countries that joined in 2007: Bulgaria and Romania.

Dr Laura Morosanu, University of Sussex, and Dr Elena Genova, University of Nottingham, talked about the stigmatisation and othering of Romanians and Bulgarians in the UK. Both groups were often stereotyped and 'othered' as having a bad reputation, based on racialisations of inferiority. Contrary to the myth that Brexit turned EU citizens into migrants, it is clearly apparent that

groups like Romanians and Bulgarians were already stigmatised migrants long before the 2016 referendum.

Laura explained that Romanians grew from a relatively small proportion of the British population to the fourth most common by country of birth. Approximately 1.5 million Romanians applied for settled status in the UK post-Brexit.

Elena focused on the rather under-researched topic of Bulgarian migrants in the UK. After 2007, the UK emerged as a relatively new destination for Bulgarians – with migrant numbers reaching 128,000 by 2019. High migration coupled with a falling birth rate means that Bulgaria is now the fastest shrinking population in the world.

Also researching migration from the perspective of the origin country, Dr Violetta Parutis, University of Essex, presented data from Lithuania. While much attention on outward migration following the 2004 EU enlargement focused on Poland, in fact, per head of population, the numbers leaving Lithuania were very high and provoked concern about depopulation within that country – 23% of the population left in the years following EU accession. As a result, the Lithuanian government initiated a programme to attract citizens back to the country.

Overall, the conference shone a light on the implications of EU enlargement and Brexit for British society, as well as sending countries.

In the coming months it is vital for rigorous sociological analysis to inform balanced debates about migration.

Professor Sue Scott writes about the importance of the Philip Abrams annual book prize for sociology and sociologists

‘The prize made the difference between oblivion and a distinguished career’

As a past president of the BSA I am currently taking my turn as the Honorary Vice President on the association’s Advisory Forum and, in this capacity, offered to undertake an evaluation of the Philip Abrams Memorial Prize. I have been a member of the judging panel for the prize on a number of occasions and have always thought that it was important, not only to the individual recipient but also as a marker of the continued excellence of sociological research.

As most readers of *Network* will know, the PAM Prize was established in memory of Philip Abrams, who was Professor of Sociology at Durham University from 1979 until his death in 1981. He had previously been a university lecturer at Cambridge and was central to establishing the Social and Political Sciences Tripos, which became the main vehicle for sociology teaching at Cambridge prior to the establishment of a full degree in the subject. He was renowned for his contribution to historical sociology and to the sociology of social policy, and is remembered for the encouragement and assistance he provided to many young sociologists at the start of their careers. In recognition of this and of his commitment to sociology as a discipline, the British Sociological Association established this prize in order to support new ideas and fresh research in sociology by encouraging early career authors.

The prize is awarded for the best first, sole-authored book within the discipline of sociology. It was first awarded to Dick Hobbs in 1989 for *Doing the Business* and has been awarded to 39 individuals since then – on five occasions to two joint winners. In order to assess the value of the prize, I wrote to 38 past prize winners (one is deceased), asking them to write a couple of paragraphs about what winning the prize had meant to them and what they considered its effect on their career to have been. I also asked where they did their PhD and whether the book was based on it, as well as their current employment. I have had 32 replies, from 16 women and 16 men. This excellent response is, I think, testament to the importance of the prize to its recipients.

The following comments, from a range of

the respondents, give a flavour of the impact of the prize on the winners and their relationship to sociology. For a number, the sense of belonging to sociology was very important, especially when working across or beyond boundaries, real or imagined. One respondent said that “the work was so far outside the mainstream of sociology that most colleagues could not relate to it – I am convinced that the Philip Abrams Prize made the difference between oblivion and a distinguished academic career.” Another winner stated that they had “grown accustomed to people thinking [the PhD topic] was a bit peripheral and not to be taken seriously ... so it was more than a relief to find that these other people,

‘I was really affected by imposter syndrome, so being awarded the prize was a mark of distinction that meant that I really was good enough’

proper sociologists to boot, could see the point”.

Some made specific comments on the problem of fragmentation within the discipline, for example: “It gave me a tremendous boost ... in respect of my confidence, that I was right not to see a sharp boundary between the criminology space that I was in and the wider sociological one, and indeed to look suspiciously upon such boundaries in general ... I felt that it implied an intellectual right to roam.”

Relatedly, the prize has had a particularly positive effect for those located outside of sociology departments. As one respondent said: “Given that I have largely worked as a sociologist in medical school settings, having at least one prize to put on CVs and funding applications has been useful. Medics seem to award themselves lots of prizes.”

For a number of the women, the prize was an affirmation of the kind of work they felt was important and/or the struggle that they had been engaged in to produce it and to continue in an academic career. As one respondent put it: “Having the award meant that the discipline affirmed a commitment to feminist work.” Another spoke of the juggling that many women academics have to engage in: “The PhD on which it was based was a struggle – I did it part-time on top of managing a full-time job and a toddler, as [well as being] the sole earner in my household.”

Of course, the winners are now at different stages in their careers, depending on when they won, with some already retired and others still on the first rung, and there cannot be definitive evidence about the direct effect of the prize on appointments or promotions. However, many winners are sure that it made a significant difference in this regard. One stated: “I can say with absolute certainty that it was an element, possibly a big element, in being hired shortly after [winning the prize] at X as a lecturer.” For another, “it was also a factor in being promoted the following year ... and I assume it was important to the committee deciding on the Fellowship of the British Academy.” Another said that, “in applying [for a lectureship] I could flag up that I had been nominated for the prize ... I don’t think it would be a stretch to say suggest that it was a key reason why X University offered me the job.” She goes on to explain that she was then on a visiting fellowship at Yale when the winner was announced, saying: “My hosts were delighted to hear that I had won the prize, and knew what it was, so I think that gives a good indication of international esteem/recognition.”

Another respondent put it this way: “Winning the Philip Abrams award helped to launch my career as an ECR. It afforded my research and writing external recognition. This helped to generate interest in my book. It remains one of the best sellers in the series and my top citation ... the prestige of this external award has been credited as a highly important factor in career promotion decisions.” A number of winners thought that it had helped with posts and promotions, although they had no direct evidence, and felt that it gave them external validation and name recognition. There were even occasions when the prize had the effect of getting the winner and the discipline noticed in the higher echelons of their university – “When I won the prize, the V-c was informed, and he mentioned it in his various roundups when talking about the department of sociology.”

Just as important, though, has been the positive effect of the prize on self-confidence and as an affirmation of their right to inhabit the corridors of academe. As one winner put it: “As someone who came to university from a working class background, I feel that it consolidated the feeling that I should really be here after all.”

Another stated that, “As the first person in my family to receive any form of university education, I was really affected by imposter syndrome throughout my PhD and early career. Being awarded the Philip Abrams prize was incredibly important to me. I took it as a mark of distinction that meant that I really was good enough.”

This seems to have been particularly important for women. As one respondent put it, “I think the prize has been important to me, also, in combating gendered patterns



PAM winners: top left, Lucy Mayblin (2018); top right, Monika Krause (2015); centre, Amy Chandler (2017); bottom right, Paul Campbell (also 2017); bottom left, Remi Joseph-Salisbury (2019)

of confidence and self-belief whereby it is more difficult for women to believe that our ideas are worth writing and publishing.” A few respondents gave accounts of the personal importance of actually going to receive the prize, with one saying: “My Dad was keen to come to the prize giving and I tried to dissuade him because I thought I wouldn’t win. He did come and he enjoyed it and he’s no longer alive, so I am happy with that memory.” Another described it as follows: “I went to the BSA conference to collect the prize with my baby, and it was one of the most amazing days of my life. I really was just so happy that after many years of working away, someone had found my work worthy of a prize.”

Several mentioned the importance of having their work judged positively by people they admired or, as one put it, “thought of as gods of wisdom”. Another said: “The Abrams prize made me feel that if I hung on, I might have a future in academe, and the comments of members of the Prize Committee gave me some much-needed confidence.” Recipients were grateful for the time the panel took to read and comment on their work, and some felt that the prize had helped to promote the book, but others said that their publisher had not made any use of the award in marketing materials.

There was also an overall sense for the winners of being part of something – as one respondent put it: “I felt very honoured to be part of an imagined community with past and later prize winners and with the (also largely imagined) committee.”

The prize has, then, been rewarding, in many senses of the word, to its recipients and it has also succeeded in honouring the monograph, in all its forms. This latter aspect continues to be important in a world of journal proliferation and with many publishers focused on handbooks and texts. I hate to bring up the REF, but it is undoubtedly the case that books do well, and good books do very well. Sociology as a discipline needs monographs in order that authors can have the space to fully explicate a theory or do adequate service to the analysis of data and the voices of their respondents.

For these reasons, as well as all the others voiced by the winners who wrote to me, I hope that the Philip Abrams Prize will continue to be central to the BSA calendar. The prize not only boosts self-confidence and supports careers, it also showcases sociology, and perhaps we should make more of this as other disciplines do. Other disciplines also have more prizes, and, in this context, I am very pleased that consideration is being given to the establishment of another BSA monograph prize for a second or subsequent book – or perhaps a first book coming later in someone’s career.

I am very grateful to the prize winners who responded to my request and will be having further discussion with the BSA trustees about the detail of my findings and about ways to further promote the prize. Perhaps we could bring the past winners together to explore what excellent sociology has been produced over the past 35 years and make that imagined community real.

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Department of Sociology

Sociologists were vocal in condemning the loss of more than half of academic staff at the sociology department at Goldsmiths. Network takes a closer look

Sociological reaction to the announcement of Goldsmiths redundancies was swift.

The news, which had been expected for some weeks, provoked condemnation of the university's management and support for the 17 staff in the sociology department who were affected, who are among 96 people made redundant compulsorily.

Commentators noted that this took the number of sociologists in the department down to seven.

This figure is around a quarter of the full-time equivalent number of 45 entered in the REF in 2021, when the department was ranked 13th out of 37 listed under the sociology unit. Since then voluntary severance schemes, retirements, departures and an internal move had taken the figure to 24.

A BSA statement said that: "Goldsmiths is the most recent and high profile instance of cuts. The sociology department there has led on developing innovative teaching and research and the proposed restructuring would have a devastating effect on their ground-breaking achievements.

"If all of these threatened redundancies go ahead, staffing numbers could reach unsustainably low levels, and the pressure on staff could become intolerable. The distinctive inclusive and diverse profile of the department

could also be compromised."

Professor Les Back, now of the University of Glasgow, but at Goldsmiths for 28 years as a student and lecturer, said it had become "an exemplar of the sharpest and most destructive cuts in UK Higher Education. Eleven out of the 19 departments at Goldsmiths are facing ... full time employee redundancies, and Sociology is the hardest hit with over 50% staff losses planned.


"It is truly shocking to hear that Sociology is facing a devastating level of redundancies which amounts to a kind of intellectual vandalism.

"The Sociology Department at Goldsmiths has pioneered and retained a reputation for disciplinary excellence and creativity, pushing boundaries through the theoretical and methodological perspectives and innovations it has enabled. This is evident in its development of, and dedication to, the concept of 'Live Sociology, and to the discipline-shaping work of its research centres the Centre for Urban and Community Research, the discipline-shaping 'Methods Lab', the theoretical interventions of the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought, Political Economy Research Centre, and Unit of Play, and the high-impact interdisciplinary work of the Unit of Global Justice, Centre for

Feminist Research, and Centre for Global Media and Democracy.

"Goldsmiths Sociology runs innovative degree programmes of the highest quality. I am truly amazed that Goldsmiths Senior Management have failed to appreciate the qualitative value that Sociology at Goldsmiths has contributed to the development of the discipline and to the institution.


"On Friday 28 March 2014 Goldsmiths Sociology celebrated its half century. Within a decade this intellectually vital department – both in teaching and research terms – has been pushed to the precipice of viability. The decline and redundancies that will follow from the 'Transformation Programme' will eviscerate an incredible body of sociological scholarship and threaten to reduce it to a corpse fit only for autopsy. It is a source of sadness and dismay that one of the architects of this academic mortification is a sociologist from our own professional ranks. Under the pressure of this 'transformation', sociology at Goldsmiths will disappear and be reduced to a mere historical relic. Despite the devastating impact of these changes, academics worldwide have continued to view the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths as one of the most innovative departments in the discipline.

 Emma Jackson
@EmmakJackson

So there you have it, I started the academic year with a promotion and a grant. Ending it with redundancy, along with most of my colleagues in Sociology. SMT are gutting Goldsmiths and it breaks my heart

 Department of Sociology
@UoYSociology

We are dismayed by the breadth & pace of redundancies at Goldsmiths Sociology. York Sociology stands in solidarity with our friends & colleagues at Goldsmiths and all Sociology departments in the midst of these unprecedented attacks on our discipline

 Professor Michaela Benson
@MichaelacBenson

Following the news abt the decimation of @SociologyGold, as a subject community we need to remember the others places where the devastation of sociology and cognate disciplines has taken place or is in train and what this means for our colleagues

Background graphic: Goldsmiths sociology department's home page
Left: text of recent tweets

"It matters because the lives of generations of Goldsmiths student have been transformed for the better from studying here including my own. In the 1970s dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson studied sociology and while the department can't claim credit for his success, he was encouraged and emboldened by sociology teachers like Paul Filmer. When I returned to teach sociology here in the nineties, Paul Gilroy had an office downstairs in our building on Lewisham way. The most perceptive sociological interpreter of black experience, Paul was an extraordinary colleague and an inspiring teacher. In those days I would routinely notice a young Black student from the art department waiting outside Paul's office to see him during his 'office hours'. That teenager was Oscar winning film director and artist Steve McQueen.

"In 2020 Steve McQueen had an opportunity to acknowledge this debt publicly in a podcast with his former teacher who was for once lost for words. McQueen said: 'I first met [Paul] at Goldsmiths University. And I used to knock on his door... and he was always welcoming, and

he was always open to talking to me as a 19-year-old. Could you imagine? He opened his door, and I used to sit down and just talk to him. So, if there's ever a lesson in that, it's just to listen to young people... I think if anyone out there is in the vicinity of younger people... just to give them a bit of time... So, Paul, again, weird me turning the tables on you like this, but thank you sir, thank you so much.'

"Steve McQueen speaks for thousands of Goldsmiths students past and present who all have stories like this from their experiences with the staff who have nurtured their ambitions. This is what is at stake in these cuts to Higher Education, namely the future of thinking and knowledge itself. The bloodless revolutions of thinking that take place routinely on any given day not only change the lives of students but also create the conditions for the writers, filmmakers, artists and community workers of the future to find their voices and document our culture and knowledge on a horizon that has yet to be imagined."

A Goldsmiths statement said: "Universities

across the UK are having to make difficult decisions to navigate unprecedented financial challenges.

"This is a painful time for us all as we take steps to make our finances sustainable. We consulted staff and unions over our plans but unfortunately this did not result in viable ways forward which would have avoided or reduced the number of redundancies.

"Our plans will ensure that Goldsmiths continues to be a beacon for innovative research and teaching as well as an entry point for students, many of whom are the first in their family to go to university.

"We call on the government to engage in an open and honest conversation with universities to fix a broken funding system, so it works for students, the public and the university sector.

"We also want to see an end to the hostile policy environment, so the contribution of international students is recognised, and the arts, humanities and social sciences are valued on a par with science and engineering."

• For two BSA statements on the issue, see: <https://tinyurl.com/2s2ym2av> and <https://tinyurl.com/5389sb34>

See overleaf for feature on jobs

Back to the '80s? Widespread job cuts loom

The threat of redundancies looms widely across universities in the UK, for the first time in 40 years. Network continues its feature on the cuts and how they affect sociology today

Older *Network* readers will remember the bleak years of the Thatcher government, when the rapid expansion of universities in the 1960s and the consequent rise in the number of sociology students, lecturers and professors lurched into a precipitate fall as funding was hacked.

Britain's new Conservative rulers were suspicious of academia in general and paranoid about sociology in particular. The main article in the Autumn 1981 issue of *Network* was headed 'Grave New World', relating how the University Grants Committee, which advised the government on distributing money to universities, had sent letters to vice-chancellors singling out what was termed 'social studies' for particularly deep cuts.

By the spring of 1988, the *Network* editor, John Scott, noted: "In 1981, when sociology first began to feel the impact of the recent series of cuts ... the BSA published a supplement to *Network* called 'Counter Cuts'. This contained tales of woe from Departments all over the country: job losses, unfilled chairs, antagonistic vice chancellors and similar evils were subjects of these reports, written by members of the Departments themselves. The aim was to mobilise support from colleagues by publicising difficulties.

"As the financial and political climate has deteriorated, departments have understandably become less willing to see such reports published. Should I print, for example, the fact that the Sociology Department at the University of Never-Never Land has lost four of its members, will not have its chair filled, and is under pressure to merge with a Department of Social Work? How far should I legitimately go in ignoring (suppressing?) stories which might damage particular departments?"

Professor Scott's dilemma came to an end not long after: by the 1990s the era of cuts slowly shifted to a general expansion of student numbers. The Autumn 1991 issue of

Network recorded a "rising numbers of applications and entrants into already hard-pressed departments". Some departments were reporting "staff-student ratios in excess of 1:22", with the number of students starting sociology as a single subject at university rising to 1,150, having increased by about one-third since 1989. In polytechnics, 1,922 entered sociology courses in 1990, a rise of 150% since 1988. The rise in student numbers meant more jobs for sociologists, with new departments being created and existing ones expanding, and the next three decades were a time of stability.

There were exceptions, of course. As universities morphed from confraternities of like-minded scholars to exploitative sweatshops battling each other for a bigger share of the market, some sociology departments were discarded in faculty restructuring. Swansea's department was shut in 2004, and Birmingham's in 2010, and the single-honour sociology degree at Queen's University Belfast was cut in 2016. These cuts came not because of falling numbers of students but rather from their university management's latest five-year strategic vision. But in general, those sociologists lucky enough to have a permanent job were not much at risk of losing it. Hesa figures back this up, showing a growth of staff listed under the sociology cost centre from 2,860 in 2014/15 to 4,035 in 2022/23.

This is about to change. As we all know, higher education's funding model is no longer bringing in enough money to pay the bills, with experts predicting that some universities may not survive unless funding is increased.

The threat is less overtly ideological and more financial. The fee paid to universities by the government for each student in 2012 was raised to £9,000, and to £9,250 in 2017. It has remained at this level since, at a time when inflation has leapt up, meaning that the funding fee has fallen by 27% in real terms in the past dozen years. This funding gap has been plugged by the recruitment of more international students, who can be charged much higher fees, up to £38,000 a year for undergraduate courses. Their numbers rose from 469,160 in the 2017-18 academic year to 679,970 in 2021-22 as universities used them to plug their falling funding from domestic students.

But this rise collided with a (Conservative) government keen to cut the number of people coming to the UK from abroad. New rules mean international students could no longer bring family members with them unless they were on research courses or had government-funded scholarships. Universities

warned that numbers of international applicants fell sharply this year, by more than a third from large countries such as Nigeria and India. There were around 341,000 overseas entrants to degree courses at English universities in 2023/24, down 3% on the 2022/23 figure. While the number of international undergraduates increased slightly, the number of those taking postgraduate courses has fallen by 6%.

According to *The Guardian*: "The [Conservative] government's recent restrictions to its student visa regime – such as barring many international students from including family members on their visas – have already seen a significant fall in international applications, with one survey reporting a 27% drop in applications for taught postgraduate courses for next year."

A report by the Office for Students paints a bleak picture of universities' over-reliance on international students, warning that 40% of England's universities are expected to run budget deficits this year. "At the less extreme end, many places are looking at a 'shared services model' that would combine back-office functions such as HR, finance and estate management," it says. "Others are considering a more radical 'hub and spoke' model whereby academic staff in certain disciplines would be sent out from a core institution to universities struggling to keep courses in that subject open."

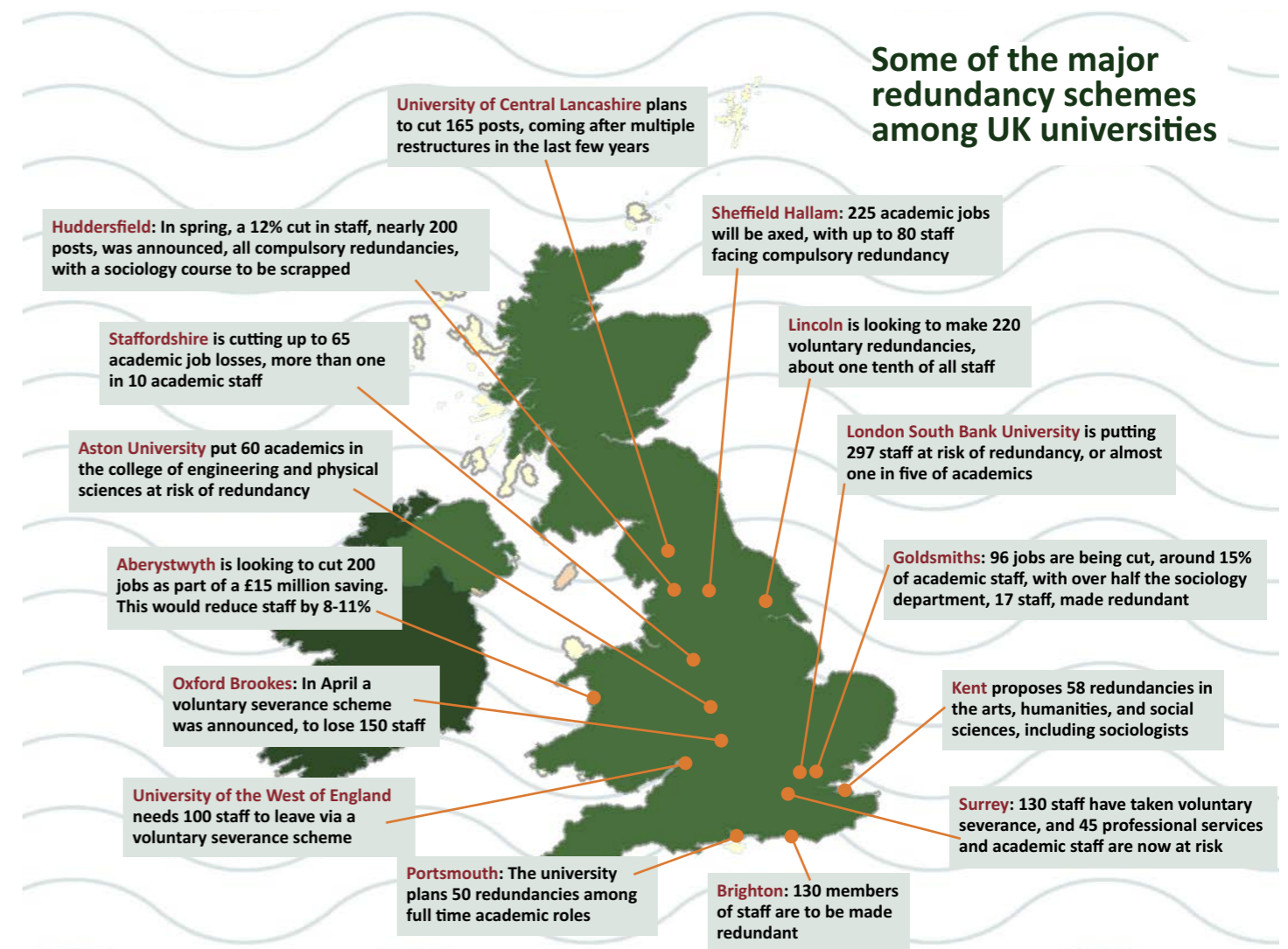
Or, as the *Times* puts it, "universities are drawing up plans for mergers and higher-education chains as they seek to stave off financial collapse."

The *Times Higher* notes that: "There are suggestions in the sector that a small number of institutions are concerned about the possibility of breaching their covenants on borrowing with their banks, which require institutions to maintain certain levels of financial performance. Breaching covenants could leave an institution unable to class itself in its accounts as a 'going concern', able to meet its financial obligations for the next 12 months."

What does this mean for jobs? A webpage run by the UCU union at Queen Mary University of London notes that 57 universities – more than a third – have some form of redundancy programme in place, with around 20 offering voluntary redundancy, and the rest threatening involuntary job cuts: <https://tinyurl.com/2xdsm3wh>

Figures for the scale of the cuts are hard to come by but at least 2,000, and probably many more, are expected. Lincoln is looking to make 10% of its staff redundant – more than 200 – and Huddersfield 12%.

Charles Knight, Assistant Director at



Advance HE, noted that in May 2020 there were 5,390 HE jobs advertised on jobs.ac.uk but in the same week in 2024 this had fallen to 2,162.

Could this be another 1981? Will we again see job losses in sociology, unfilled chairs and antagonistic vice-chancellors? There are similarities and differences between then and 2024. Sociology was specifically attacked by the Thatcher government for what was seen as its left-wing bias; today it is its sister subject of critical race theory that takes the blows. At least when the phrase 'mickey mouse' comes up now, it usually precedes the words 'media studies degree' rather than 'sociology'.

In most cases we don't yet have details of which departments will be affected by the cuts. What we do know so far is that a series of redundancies at Goldsmiths affecting 11 of its 19 departments are due to be implemented by September this year. Sociology is one of the departments affected, with 17 people

being made compulsorily redundant. The other departments include anthropology, English and creative writing, history, music, psychology, theatre and performance – with some losing half of their staff, according to the UCU. Staff are boycotting marking duties over the redundancy plans.

The BSA has written to its Warden, Professor Frances Corner, to express "deep concern". Professor Rachel Brooks, BSA President, and Professor Chris Yuill, its Chair, said that the department is "firmly embedded within Lewisham Borough. It plays a crucial role in widening participation to Goldsmiths of otherwise excluded groups." *See page five for details*

The University of Lincoln will reduce Sociology staff in its School of Social and Political Sciences, although it seems to have avoided compulsory job cuts in doing so.

The BSA wrote to its Professor Neal Juster, Lincoln's Vice-chancellor, to oppose the job

cuts. Professor Brooks and Professor Yuill say that: "Sociologists within the School of Social and Political Sciences are highly regarded subject specialists and contribute significantly to the research culture of Sociology both nationally and internationally."

The BSA also wrote to the then Vice-chancellor of the University of Kent, Professor Karen Cox, to oppose planned redundancies that affect sociologists within its Health and Social Care BA programme.

The University of Huddersfield has scrapped at least 12 courses, including sociology, geography and mathematics, with other departments also at risk. Last month it was confirmed that nearly 200 jobs were to be axed.

It's possible that some other sociologists, whether based in sociology departments or not, will also lose their jobs, or at least take voluntary redundancies. Professor Scott's dilemma is with us again, but, for now, *Network* will print the bad news.

We must tackle ‘our incredibly narrow elite recruitment’

People brought up in the wealthiest 1% of families are 20 times more likely to reach elite positions than the rest of the population, Professor Sam Friedman told a recent event.

The alumni of the nine most elite private schools, including Eton, Harrow and Winchester, are 52 times more likely to reach the top, he said.

Professor Friedman, of the LSE, (below) was speaking to an audience at the event, ‘How can sociology engage with the major challenges of our time?’, held at UCL and organised by its Sociology Network.

For a forthcoming book, *Born to Rule: the Making and Remaking of the British Elite*, written with Professor Aaron Reeves, of the University of Oxford, he interviewed nearly 200 people in elite positions, and analysed documentary evidence. They found that the narrow base of elites had not changed since 1900.

“In the book we analyse millions of probate records and the entire 125-year historical database of *Who’s Who*, which is Britain’s long-running catalogue of positional elite, to show that those brought up in families in the top 1% of the wealth distribution have remained fairly consistently, about 20 times more likely to reach elite positions than the rest of the population,” he said.

“Similarly, we show that the alumni of our nine most elite private schools, the group of Clarendon schools that include Eton, Harrow and Winchester, remain 52 times more likely to reach the British elite than those attending any other type of school.

“Although these schools educate less than 0.2% of all UK school children, they have educated 67% of all elected prime ministers



A recent event looked at how sociology can engage with the many challenges our world faces today. Network takes a look...

and 53% of all great officers of state, that’s foreign secretaries, chancellors and prime ministers.

“One of the trickiest things about interrogating elites we found in the nearly 200 interviews we conducted is that most push back strongly on the idea that they are powerful or an elite in the first place.

“Instead, most work hard to present themselves as ordinary, downplaying aspects of their background that might seem privileged, and foregrounding everyday cultural tastes.

“In many ways this makes sense. We use a range of experiments to show that people are much more sympathetic to elites who they see as coming from humble backgrounds or who they see as culturally down to earth.

“This obscures one of the biggest and most persistent challenges facing Britain as a country: the way we make our elites and, specifically, our incredibly narrow and exclusive channels of elite recruitment.

“Why does this matter? Obviously it poses pretty fundamental questions about equality, equality of opportunity, and entrenched class privilege.

“But I would argue that persistent elite reproduction is also important because who our elites are has an important bearing on how they think, what they do, and the politics they perpetuate. Those who have also attended elite private schools, or those in the book who are also in the top 1% of the wealth distribution, have very distinct political positions on a lot of the major policy challenges of our times. They are much less likely than other elites, for example, or the British population, to think we should increase taxes on the rich. They are less likely to prioritise reducing poverty and they’re less likely to think Britain is a racist country.

“In contrast, our results show that elites from working class backgrounds, women, and, to a lesser extent, elites of colour, all orientate the other way, to the economic left, and are more culturally progressive.

“My argument would be that sociology should engage with the issue of elite reproduction because this is not only a major challenge in itself, but because how it’s tackled has direct consequences for how a range of other challenges are addressed.

“What do we do about elite reproduction? We put forward a number of ideas in the book. Just to highlight two: first, to weaken the link between wealth and elite status we would advocate the introduction of an annual wealth tax [on people worth £2 million pounds] at a rate of 0.6%, which would raise about £10 billion a year.

“Secondly, we would advocate for undermining the distortionary stranglehold that private schools have on elite recruitment in Britain. One of the reasons why these schools are so powerful is because they’re incredibly successful at getting their alumni into elite universities, which are increasingly prerequisite for an elite career.

“To tackle this, we would therefore advocate restricting the proportion of privately educated students accepted to study at Russell Group universities to 10%, which is the proportion of people in the UK that have at some point attended a private school.

“If implemented, this would mean the proportion of privately educated students at Russell Group universities would fall by about 50%. Currently 20% of these students attended a private school.

“The overarching point I want to reiterate is that one key way sociology can engage with the most serious societal challenges is to direct the public to look upwards and scrutinise those at the top. After all, elites are not just significant because they enjoy more wealth, more status, than everyone else. They matter because they wield power over all our lives and are often our main representatives in tackling the most important challenges.

“In this way, the question of who elites are, how they’re made, and how they might be remade in the future really matters so that the elites we get are the ones we need.”

Violence, migration and history: other presentations

Professor Sylva Walby, (right) of Royal Holloway, said that violence should be studied in its own right as an “institutional domain”.

She told the audience that violence was “an institution, a set of practices. It’s not individual, it’s not psychological, it’s not pathological. It’s something that we should be analysing as an institutional domain alongside other institutional domains of the economy, politics and civil society. We should not be subsuming violence to other forms of power and inequality. We should not be reducing its significance.

“Slavoj Žižek is wrong – he thinks that the forms of inequality from capitalism are more important than the forms of inequality generated by violence.

“I think that underestimates the forms of violence against women and those who are minoritised, and underestimates the significance of colonial forms of power.

“Likewise, Bourdieu’s reinterpreting of violence as if it’s merely symbolic, neglecting its visceral physical modalities and significance.

“Again, by reinterpreting it as if it’s symbolic, it loses the specificity of violence and thus hides, and makes difficult to analyse, the specificities of inequalities associated with gender and with coloniality in particular.

“So I’m arguing for the specificity of the analysis of violence, and that sociology is well placed as a discipline to think about this. I can take you back to Durkheim’s social facts – violence is a social fact.

“So what should sociology engage in as an empirical discipline here? One of the questions is how do we define violence? How do we measure it? How do we count it?”

She said that her work had focused on rethinking the underestimation of violence against women, in particular of domestic violence.

She gave as an example the way that the Office for National Statistics measures crime in

England and Wales to produce its survey.

She found a different result to the ONS when she analysed the data, because the ONS caps the maximum number of violent incidents per person at five, although domestic violence victims often report more than this.

“If there were more than five violent instances, they were not including them in the estimates, even though they were there in the dataset. When we removed the cap this significantly increased the amount of violence and disproportionately the amount of domestic violence, rather than violence from strangers, and thereby violence against women.

“The detail of the methodology really matters here because of the tendency of the official data that underestimates violence against women, against minorities, against any disadvantage [groups].”

She argued for a broad theory of violence. “We should be rebuilding our theory of society to include a theory of violence so that all of contemporary sociology notices empirically the significance of violence.

“So sociology has a task to theorise violence and build on its historic strength in analysing society.”

Professor Ali Meghji, University of Cambridge, (below) told the audience that, “I contend that sociology needs to embrace three things in order to engage with the major challenges of our time.

“First, embracing an historical sensibility. Second, embracing the global in our analysis. And third, what we can call reverse tutelage.

“I want to emphasise the importance of historical sociology as we seek to move forward in the future of the discipline. In my ongoing work on the Du Boisian tradition of sociology, what I’ve



seen is that there were waves of critical sociologists who, while starting their careers as micro ethnographers, ended up recognising the impossibility of understanding social reality without adopting a historical sensibility.”

He gave the situation in Gaza as an example. “Without an historical sensibility, many people are prone to describing the current situation in Gaza as a ‘conflict’. I’ve been invited to speak on panels about the so-called conflict, and major conferences are using language of conflict, but there is no conflict. There is only a colonial genocide which has been stretching on for almost a century.

“Not only does sociology need to be historical, it also needs to reject methodological nationalism, because ecological, military and economic processes transcend national borders. So, too, does our sociological analysis need to embrace this transnational lens.”

An example of this was the way the US government was increasing its military budget in order to protect the border against refugees created by global climate change.

“So it seems to be fair to say that sociologists can’t really understand phenomena such as US economic policy, political infrastructure or migration policy without adopting a clearly transnational scope.”

In doing so, they should recognise that important ideas could come from outside the discipline.



“I contend that we need to be cognisant that sociologists do not have a monopoly on sociological thinking, and that there are multiple sources of sociological thought and theorising that derived from outside of the academy. We need to work on these avenues of sociological thought as we reflect upon present and future crises.”

Professor Lucinda Platt, LSE, said that: “Sociology is often seen as a discipline which is strong in identifying problems and rather weak in identifying solutions. But I’d like to emphasize more positively how bringing sociological insights to contemporary challenges not only increases our understanding and our problematisation, but has the potential to enable better policy and practical responses.”

She gave as an example the study of migration, which was “a multidisciplinary field with the different disciplines bringing different approaches and methods. So we’ve got economics, development studies, political science, and so on, treating different aspects of migration and bringing different methods.

“But I think sociology has a particular contribution to make, in its ability to engage with these different lenses, to draw on them and to synthesise them, to take from them what’s useful in formulating the theory and analysis of migration.

“So we will happily consider economic motivations alongside ethnographic insights, for example, whereas you don’t see the same in economics necessarily. Sociology is also distinctive in its focus on the interplay of structural factors and individual agency motivation, moving us away from migration as an individual act to more macro level drivers of migration, in a much clearer understanding of how and why people migrate.”

• The event was chaired by Professor Katherine Twamley. See page 38 for her *Desert Island Discourse*

Whose shoulders are today's sociologists standing on? Rosalind Edwards and Val Gillies look at the role of sociologists' wives over the last few decades

"Whenever in this book, I have written 'we' I mean my wife, Ruth Harper, and myself: during the last three years, her assistance in careful research and creative editing has often amounted to collaboration." – C. Wright Mills, 1951

It may be a surprise to contemporary sociologists that a wife of the hero of the sociological imagination contributed so heavily to one of his major publications (as well as other of his work) – gathering and analysing data and (re)writing the manuscript – to the extent of being considered a collaborator. And yet, Ruth Harper only merits a one sentence mention in the eight-page 'Acknowledgements and Sources' section at the end of his book. She is not a co-author.

This is not an unusual nod in passing that indicates a wife's involvement. The #ThanksForTyping hashtag began trending on what was Twitter in 2017, with people posting screenshots of the acknowledgement pages of scholarly books. The otherwise invisible work of academic wives in the past and through to the present coalesced into visibility under the hashtag.

Wives and post-war British sociology

Our own research has been considering the role of wives of noted post-war sociologists who set conceptual and methodological foundations for investigations of social change in working class communities and family life. We are exploring this issue in the face of a silence about the involvement of wives in their sociologist husband's work. Such a lacuna is significant because post-war Britain saw the flourishing of sociology as a science of society that was regarded as essential for understanding our everyday lives and for a rebuilding of British society. Community studies came to prominence in an effort to study new patterns of family, kinship and neighbouring, utilising ethnographic techniques of data gathering and participant observation.

Researchers undertaking community and family studies often lived temporarily in the location that they were studying, and they could be accompanied by wives and children. Phyllis Willmott, wife of Peter

Herstory: the hidden role that wives of early sociologists played in their husbands' work

Willmott, and Pat Marsden, wife of Dennis Marsden, are good examples of this practice, and what it meant for their husbands' scholarship and for the discipline of sociology. Both wives kept diaries while their husbands were undertaking intensive community studies in long-established poor



working class neighbourhoods, where multi-generational families lived side by side in sub-standard rented housing. Both came from working class backgrounds, quite like the communities their husbands were studying.

Both wives kept a diary during their husbands' fieldwork. Phyllis Willmott wrote a journal for the time she, her husband, and their children lived in Bethnal Green during 1954 and 1955, while Peter Willmott and Michael Young were undertaking their renowned 'Family and Kinship in East London' study. Pat Marsden's record of daily life for mothers and children on a slum clearance estate was kept while Dennis Marsden was undertaking his 'Salford Slum and Rehousing' ethnographic study. Pat, Dennis, and their two young children lived on the estate during 1963. Both Phyllis and Pat kept their diaries in the knowledge that the entries were to help inform their husbands' sociological analyses.

Examining the diaries, it is clear that these sociologists' wives actively formed a gendered and classed bridge between the community in which they and their children were embedded, and the intellectual research endeavours that their husbands were undertaking. They provided access to, and gathered knowledge about, the lives of working class wives, mothers and children, that it is unlikely their husbands would have been privy to otherwise. The wives were not just facilitating their husbands' community



Photos: below left, Phyllis and Peter Willmott; above, Pat and Dennis Marsden and their children; below right, Phyllis and Peter Willmott and their children

observations, but were undertaking their own participant observation from a vantage point that was distinct from their husbands. We provide brief examples below.

Phyllis Willmott's Bethnal Green journal

Phyllis' Bethnal Green journal typed entries contain detailed observations of life in the local community and of friendships with local mothers. When the parts of the journal were published by the Institute of Community Studies in 2001, Michael Young wrote in his foreword: "Phyllis found out, and recorded in her journal, so much more than we did ... Although we had Phyllis' journal at the time of Family and Kinship we clearly did not appreciate fully its underlying message."

One underlying message seems clear in Phyllis' journal entry for the 22nd October 1954, where she writes about chatting with a neighbour, Mrs C: "At the moment I am so anxious to try out my angle of leaning towards participator rather than observer. It seems essential to give as well as get. We swap opinions and experiences, and this way it runs true between us. I think that Mrs C. is aware of the fact that the Institute's work is on B.G. family life and that she wants to help. But she doesn't want to be 'interviewed', rather to give us large casual lumps of her knowledge and opinions."

In other words, Phyllis Willmott was

establish rapport while being distanced and objective as an interviewer.

Indeed, Michael Young and Peter Willmott could not have demonstrated their argument that 'Bethnal Greeners' are surrounded by dense and extensive networks of relatives and acquaintances without Phyllis' participation.

In their book, *Family and Kinship in East London*, they write: "Let us accompany one of our informants on an ordinary morning's shopping trip". They then relay verbatim 'our' informant's commentary on who she meets while out shopping and their connection to her and people she knows. There is a footnote: "We are indebted for this account to Phyllis Willmott". It was Phyllis who accompanied 'our' informant on her shopping trip and gathered the material.

Pat Marsden's Salford diary

Pat Marsden kept her handwritten diary in two exercise books, starting after the Marsdens arrived in Salford in August 1963 and ending in January 1964. It is a record of everyday life in the flats for children and mothers happening in the square outside the window of her maisonette.

It is clear that Dennis Marsden intended to use Pat's diary in writing up the Salford Slum and Rehousing study. His own fieldnotes have "(see Pat's diary)" inserted at several points.

There is also evidence in the careful logging he made about its contents. Using a red pen he numbered the pages in Pat's diary, and then on a separate sheet of paper he constructed a list of page numbers and the main topics Pat had written about.

Dennis also inserted codes next to most of the people she mentions in her entries that related to another index that he typed up, listing names and relationships.

Feature continues overleaf ▶



‘In reality, their work was propped up by input from wives on so many fronts’

► Feature continued

It is not possible to trace Pat’s observations through into a book or academic article, since Dennis did not write the research up in that format because he was recruited to a lectureship at the University of Essex before the study was completed. Nonetheless, the intention was there.

Further, the restrictions and hazards of the built environment faced by Pat and other mothers on the estate that were recorded in her diary – lack of outdoor play space, lack of drying facilities, sharp gravel pathways, etcetera – found their way into Dennis’ report and recommendations to the local Housing Department, resulting from his ethnography.

Whose shoulders?

So, there was the appearance of the male social researchers producing their foundational sociological insights and achieving academic recognition on their own or with other (usually male) academic colleagues. In reality though, this was propped up by input from their wives on so many different fronts: domestic, social, administrative, research, publication, and so on.

Accounts of the history of British sociology make the case for contemporary sociologists to know about whose shoulders they stand upon. This is an important point. Our equally important point is that it is wives’ shoulders that being stood upon, just as much as those of their prominent sociologist husbands, and that sociology needs to acknowledge this.

Afterword

If you are interested in finding out more about the project and wives’ contributions, visit academicwives.co.uk, subscribe to our ‘Thanks for Typing’ podcast: thesociologicalreview.org/podcasts/thanks-for-typing and view our film, ‘The Sociologist’s Wife’: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy-ZBDpBA4w An event about the research can be seen at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXIefae7oF0 ■



The film also considers the contribution of Sheila Abrams to her husband Philip’s work. They are pictured above

‘Our important point is that it is wives’ shoulders that being stood upon, just as much as those of their prominent sociologist husbands, and that sociology needs to acknowledge this’



Photos: above left, Professor Val Gillies above right, Professor Rosalind Edwards

Copyright of the images in this feature lies with Popping Orange video, the Marsden and Willmott estates or Sheila Abrams. The quotation the authors draw on to illustrate their theme comes from C. Wright Mills’ ‘Acknowledgements and Sources’, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, 1951, OUP p. 355



Pat Marsden
(b.1940 d.2023)



Phyllis Willmott
(b.1922 d.2013)



Sheila Jackson/
Abrams
(b.1936)

Events listing 22 July – 8 November 2024

As at 25/6/24. For a complete and up to date list see: www.britisoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-list

22 July	Online	Social Work Study Group Seminar: The Role of Supervision in Relationships in Child and Family Social Work
3 August	University of Warwick	Theory Study Group One-Day Symposium: The Legacy of Margaret Archer
4-6 September	Online	WES Online Series: Meaningful Work in the Digital Economy
11-13 September	University of Warwick	Medical Sociology Conference
18 September	BSA London Meeting Room	Childhood Study Group 2024: Writing Retreat and Social Gathering
6 November	Online	Theory Study Group: The Frankfurt School Beyond Its Centenary
8 November	University of Bristol	Bourdieu Study Group Event: Celebrating Feminist Sociology of Class, Gender and Race



Meet the PhD: rémy-paulin twahirwa

‘My history as a former refugee fleeing Rwanda during the genocide pushed me to question immigration policies’

My research looks at the use of administrative detention in the UK. I meditate on why and how immigration law, policies and rules maintain racial differences in Britain in detention. What does racial terror, that is, the normalisation of terror with racialising effects, mean in detention?

I combine multiple research methods to examine detention as a network of inter-connected sites and spaces, extending beyond detention centres to include migrant camps, asylum accommodations, and even cities.

In Calais, I conducted participant observation and interviews, and for two months I volunteered with a local association distributing food to asylum seekers in informal camps and interviewed long-term local activists. Next, I focused on the Brook House Immigration Removal Centre near Gatwick Airport. Due to the difficulty of accessing carceral institutions, I attended public hearings and collected written evidence from the Brook House Inquiry. Finally, I interviewed refugees and migrant organisers in the UK to understand their experiences with asylum

accommodations and reporting centres.

My journey into this research is deeply rooted in my activism and personal history. For a decade, I have been involved in the migrant justice movement in Canada, campaigning tirelessly against the construction of new detention centres and advocating for the permanent closure of those already in use by Canadian authorities. I have supported friends and comrades without immigration status – the ‘sans-papiers’, as we say in French – helping them secure bail or access the resources and contacts they desperately needed.

On a personal level, my history as a former refugee fleeing Rwanda during the genocide pushed me to question immigration policies that can prevent people from finding refuge in safer countries.

When I moved to the UK, my focus and activism evolved as I sought to understand the context here. Confronted with the violence and hostility of the British state towards displaced persons, I was compelled to direct my research towards the UK’s detention estate.

I think doing a PhD is really a transformative experience for good and bad. What I love about my discipline is its incredible diversity, encompassing a wide range of themes, subfields, research agendas and methodologies. I appreciate that most of my colleagues are curious, socially engaged individuals.

My greatest challenge has been my mental health. I have struggled with chronic depression since my teenage years, battling this invisible disability for much of my life. Living with such an illness, especially one shrouded in shame and silence, is already difficult. Adding the stress, anxiety and loneliness that accompany a PhD creates a perfect storm for ‘failure’. It’s not that completing a PhD with a disability is impossible, but academia and its institutions often fall short of being inclusive, sometimes even fostering toxicity.

• ‘Ghostly Lives: Life and Death in the British Immigration Detention Estate’, LSE, 2020-2024

Katherine Twamley

Professor Twamley, of UCL Social Research Institute, researches gender, love and intimacy, feminist practice and family, with a focus on India and the UK. She is author of *Love, Marriage and Intimacy Among Gujarati Indians: A Suitable Match* (2014), which was shortlisted for the BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Prize, and *Caring is Sharing? Couples Navigating Parental Leave at the Transition to Parenthood* (2024)



Your first choice is *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*, by Laura Ahearn – why did you choose that?

This is one of many books that set the scene for my PhD on love and intimacy in India and the UK, and kept me on course as I struggled to convince others that love was a worthy topic of research. The book documents the rising practice of love letter writing in rural Nepal, and, through a careful and detailed ethnography, connects it to wider access to education, shifting levels of literacy, international discourses around ‘development’, and new ideals and forms of agency amongst men and women. That the seemingly inconsequential and personal artefact of a love letter can bring all this together is surely exemplary of the best of social science.

Ahearn argues that increased literacy rates amongst young people, combined with globalised discourses of ‘development’ in school textbooks, have encouraged young people to turn away from family-arranged marriages to self-selected marriages initiated through the exchange of love letters. While, before, young people were reliant on their parents for marital introductions, the letters give them scope to select their future partner.

Comparing these letters with marriage narratives, she notes a shift in understandings of love itself, from something that happens to people to something that can be individually instigated. She notes how the young link personal agency in relationships (not always fulfilled) with notions of individualism and ‘success’, reflective of ‘development’ discourses alive in the village more broadly and the importance of literacy in particular. In this sense, the book skilfully navigates the macro and micro context in understanding, shifting ideas of love and marriage and the consequences for young men and women and the village they live in. If you want to know why sociologists should be interested in love, this is a good place to start.

What made you choose your next book – *From Here to Maternity: Becoming a Mother*, by Ann Oakley

I could have chosen any number of books by my mentor and friend Ann Oakley, but while reflecting for this feature it seemed to

me that this book is one that has most forcefully shaped my research directions. *From Here to Maternity* is one of two books published from the same project, which used observations, interviews and quantitative data to examine women’s experiences of having a first child in England. Oakley conducted repeat interviews with the women, starting in pregnancy until five months after the birth of their child. I see now how much my recent study on mothers and fathers, also involving repeat interviews starting in pregnancy, has closely followed this design.

Alas, observations of birth within an NHS hospital seem much less likely to be possible now (and I am surprised that women consented to this), but once you read Oakley’s observations of medical staff interacting with mothers and the mothers’ accounts themselves, you cannot forget them. Women reported being disregarded, chided and untrusted to give simple information about themselves. In a particularly telling vignette, an obstetrician insisted he knew better than a mother how many children she had... The contrast between Oakley’s close listening to her women participants and the medical staff’s disregard for their perspective couldn’t be greater. As she writes in the new introduction to the book, “women are the experts on their own experiences” (p.xi); their accounts certainly take centre stage in this book.

As Oakley shows us, the women’s experiences of being unheard coloured their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth (and, as recounted in the sister book *Women Confined*, were associated with a label of postnatal depression after birth). While I think many things have improved, a recent report on birth trauma suggests that these issues continue to affect women’s maternity care: <https://tinyurl.com/5bk4pt3x>

What is useful for sociologists more broadly are the ways in which Oakley weaves together the women’s accounts with broader structures. Coming from a feminist perspective, she is particularly astute in her analysis of the ways in which the organisation of a medicalised childbirth is shaped by a dominant patriarchal ideology which belittles women and assumes the right for men to have control over women’s bodies.

Why did you select for your third work, *Do Men Mother? Fathering, Care and Domestic Responsibility*, by Andrea Doucet?

This is an ethnographic study of Canadian primary caregiving fathers of young children, some of whom were revisited for this second edition. Doucet draws on interviews, group discussions and online surveys to understand the care that men provide and how this is experienced by the men and their families. Over the course of the book, Doucet explores the kinds of responsibilities that men take on as part of their care for children. She finds that primary-care fathers often take on emotional and community responsibility for their children, sometimes in different (and unique) ways than do mothers, but that the overall moral responsibility for care has not shifted from women to men. In detailing these practices, the relational nature of motherhood and fatherhood are highlighted.

Beyond the empirical findings, Doucet demonstrates an admirable attention to assumed truths and scholarly assumptions. What I like most about her writing is that I find myself finding answers to questions that I forgot to pose – ones that were treading at the edges of my brain, that seemed too obvious to interrogate. She reminds us, for example, that if we attend to what women lose when they take on the primary-care role, then we must do the same for men, even when we can recognise that their starting positions are not the same. More recently, drawing on the work of Margaret Somers and others, she has formalised this approach to the examination of conceptual theories and tools, interrogating their historical underpinnings and considering in-depth how they shape the kinds of research questions that scholars ask.

This is deeply reflexive work, beyond the usual paragraph or two added into methods sections. She reflects on her own position, as well as that of the disciplinary tools on which she draws, unpacking how these come together in structuring research methods and narratives.

This second edition of *Do Men Mother* exemplifies this work as she revisits the analysis of her first edition, contextualising it within the personal and scholarly moment in which it was written.



Your fourth choice is *Midnight’s Children*, by Salman Rushdie – why this book?

Selecting the ‘Booker of Bookers’ is perhaps not a very original choice, but I have loved this novel through and through, and often return to it, each time getting something different. The novel revolves around the protagonist Saleem Sinai, who is born at the exact moment of India’s independence from British rule, at the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947. After some time, Saleem starts to hear the thoughts of other children born in the first hour of India’s independence. The 1,001 children of midnight – whose count dwindles to 581 by the time they turn 10 – all possess mystical abilities, which differ depending on their proximity to midnight at birth. Mixing magical realism with historical fiction, Rushdie intertwines the children’s lives, in particular Saleem’s, with the historical events of the newly independent India, exploring how the personal and political connect in everyday experiences. Through its diverse cast of characters, *Midnight’s Children* explores issues of social class, caste and privilege in Indian society, and how inequalities shape and are shaped by the nation state. As such, despite its magical plot, it is a deeply sociological book, offering insights into how historical events and structural positioning shape individual lives.

Looking at my rather tatty cover, I can see that I first read this book while I was still in school. Back then, I suspect I mostly enjoyed it due to the sensuous language and magical

plot (this was pre-Harry Potter days). But I also now link this book (and others, of course) to my preference for an ethnographic approach in research. I loved how Rushdie set up and then later confounded his own narrative explanations within the book. The lack of ‘neatness’, for want of a better word, delighted me, and rang true to my own life. He sets up various ways to interpret events in Saleem’s life, then turns them upside down again, inviting us as readers to question the boundaries between reality and imagination, history and myth, and highlighting how narratives shape our understanding of society and self. For example, much is made in the initial part of the book about how Saleem has inherited his grandfather’s nose and other familial traits, shaping the course of Saleem’s life and the kind of magical abilities he develops.

Later, however, we learn that Saleem had been swapped at birth and isn’t in fact related to said grandfather at all (or at least not biologically). For me, this was one of those lightbulb moments as a teenager: we can make narratives true, even false ones, and they can deeply shape our lives. We may recognise later they are false, but still live with and by them.

This points to the complicated mix of culture, personal narrative, social structures and relationships which we come up against in our research. Rushdie brings all this complexity into his writing, which I also strive for when writing ethnography.

Your last book is *Small Things Like These*, by Claire Keegan – what led you to this?

I have recently discovered the writing of Claire Keegan and I am in love. I choose this book for two reasons. First, her prose is perfect. She reminds me of other familiar favourites (also Irish) such as Colm Tóibín and John McGahern. I long to write like these authors. I shall (continue to) strive to use only the most essential words to communicate in my texts. I will remember to pay heed to silence, in interviews, observations and writing. I will attend to the deep complexity of each individual, while also linking their stories to broader structures. It’s a goal, at least.

But the story of *Small Things Like These* is also a compelling and important read for sociologists. The novella is set in rural Ireland in the 1980s, focusing on the experiences of a conscientious Catholic man named Bill Furlong. Bill is a respected member of his community, known for his generosity and integrity. However, his world is turned upside down when he witnesses a disturbing incident involving a young girl in a local convent. The reader comes to realise that this is one of the ‘Magdalen laundries’ to which young unmarried pregnant women were sent to give birth before their child was taken away from them.

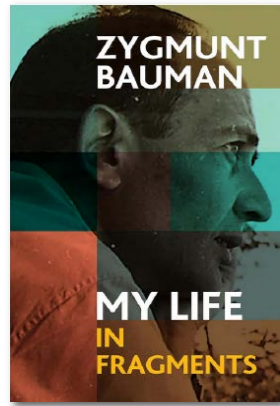
For sociologists, the book offers a compelling exploration of social dynamics, power structures and cultural norms in a tightly-knit community. It highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within such communities and the impact of norms and expectations on individual behaviour. Through Bill’s character, the novella examines the influence of power and authority figures in shaping action. Keegan raises questions about social justice and the responsibilities of individuals within a community to address issues of neglect and abuse. She pushes readers to reflect on the moral obligations of bystanders and the challenges of advocating for change. Readers are presented with ethical dilemmas that prompt reflection on issues of justice, compassion and personal integrity. The book challenges us to consider how we would respond in similar situations and encourages critical engagement with moral decision-making processes. This will have resonance for many of us who observe injustice in our research and universities, at a time of great upheaval in British academia.

And for your luxury?

Taking a leaf out of Rushdie’s book, my luxury will be the magical ability to watch over my children.

Professor Twamley’s choices:

1. *Invitations To Love*, by Laura Ahearn (1962) University of Michigan Press
2. *From Here to Maternity: Becoming a Mother*, by Ann Oakley (1981/2018) Bristol University Press
3. *Do Men Mother?*, by Andrea Doucet (2018) University of Toronto Press
4. *Midnight’s Children*, by Salman Rushdie (1981) Jonathan Cape
5. *Small Things Like These*, by Claire Keegan (2021) Grove Press



My Life in Fragments

Zygmunt Bauman

Polity Press

2023

232 pages

£19.45 hbk

ISBN: 9781509551309

A collection of his letters to his daughters, diligently put together by expert and editor Izabela Wagner, *My Life in Fragments* is a vivid recounting of the fascinating life of Zygmunt Bauman.

While Bauman was renowned globally as a sociologist, his letters reveal an equally significant story of growing up as a Polish Jew in war-torn Europe during world war two. The harsh events are recollected in a way that is deeply touching and yet surprisingly thrilling, and so it makes for an engrossing read as any edge-of-the-seat novel. If you love a good story about the underdog or about overcoming incalculable hardships then this book will not disappoint.

Bauman's pre-war childhood in Poland was dismally impoverished. He and his family were then pushed into horrific circumstances when the Nazis invaded Poland. They faced multiple setbacks each time things started looking up. If any life could personify the quote 'truth is stranger than fiction', it would be his.

Brutally honest, bold, witty, and self-deprecating, and narrated with a masterful command over language, Bauman's letters paint a disturbing yet deeply insightful and relatable account of refugee life and childhood experiences of bullying, fat-shaming and poverty. But, perhaps most importantly, this book casts a shining light on the indefatigable human spirit and the wonders that life can unlock through education, if only everyone could access it.

Despite being gifted with an exceptional intellect, Bauman recounts several serendipitous events that made his education possible and kept him alive.

The depth and breadth of his intellectual prowess is evident throughout the book. He adeptly covers a vast array of topics such as Polish politics, the Soviet and German occupations of Poland, totalitarianism, communism, post-traumatic stress disorder, and his vision for Poland. He also delves into philosophical musings on fame, fate, character, individuality, religion, the mind, reason, language, identity, freedom, responsibility, to name a few. If you are unfamiliar with Bauman's scholarly contributions, reading this book will strongly motivate you to start searching for his works. His erudition, presented in a writing style that is simultaneously accessible, intellectual and often entertaining, is remarkable.

Overall, whether you are a fan of Bauman's work, or enjoy reading biographies and world war two stories, or are inspired by underdogs who rise against all odds, or would like to learn about Polish history and Polish-Jewish life, this book has something for you. And even if you like none of these, this book will still draw you in by his sheer writing finesse and erudition.

Still, I would like to suggest a few improvements for the introduction section. One of Bauman's most famous theories on liquid modernity could have been briefly explained to the lay reader for better

Introducing Forced Migration, by Professor Patricia Hynes, arrived in 2021 as a well-compiled, reflexive, accessible and challenging addition to the field of migration, asylum and policy studies. Divided into eight chapters, the book unveils conceptual differences that have often led to misconceptions when it comes to the terminology that tackles themes within forced migration.

Refugees, asylum seekers, displaced stateless victims, and survivors of trafficking are the protagonists of this piece, which became key for the sociological literature in migration and international policy.

From a sociological and international law context, Hynes covers global migration, conceptual frameworks and historical roots within human rights and policy making at a



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understanding Bauman when he refers to it later in the sixth chapter. Similarly, a brief introduction to Maria Dabrowska, the Polish writer and novelist, and her influence on Bauman, could have also been provided, since Bauman often invokes her works in his musings.

Lastly, while the editor highlights the fourth chapter, titled Maturation, as very important because it captures Bauman's intellectual growth towards sociological issues, I found the sixth chapter, 'Before dusk falls', to be the most important from a sociology perspective because it is here that Bauman engages deeply with his subject, gifting readers with acute insights that will compel them to pause in awe and ponder in wonder. Consider the following (p.189): "For the mind, reason is a sleeping pill. Taken in small doses every day, it becomes a narcotic. Taken in a big dose, it is poison."

■ **Aditya Lal**
University of Leeds

global scale over the period 2015-2020. From the Venezuelan crisis to Palestine, Afghanistan and the Mediterranean, the author makes use of the most relevant events in the last decade, but also historically since the 20th century, to define key concepts and unpack complexities that define migration.

This book breaks dichotomies on traditional migration studies, and enlightens the discussion on how labels imposed deliberately on migrants – 'refugee', 'displaced', 'migrant', 'victim', etcetera – shape international humanitarian and human rights policies in today's era of migration and mobility. For Hynes, these labels matter, and she calls for the end of the common misconception of the dichotomy between voluntary and forced migration,

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

The Degree Generation: The Making of Unequal Graduate Lives

Nicola Ingram et al.

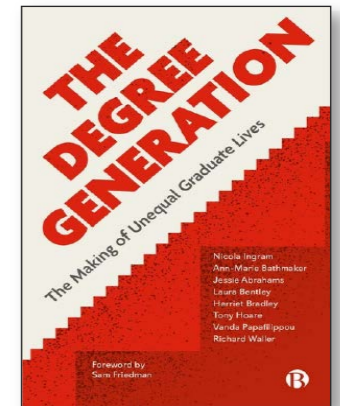
Policy Press

2023

212 pages

£80 hbk, £14.99 pbk

ISBN: 9781529208849 hbk



The study is informed by Bourdieusian theories of capital. The analysis explores how different forms of capital are used to ameliorate the effects of a difficult graduate job market. The book considers various forms of capital throughout its nine chapters. The analyses concentrate on different areas of employment: big-city banking, engineering graduate schemes, and working in the charity sector. This offers insight into how different forms of habitus, as well as material advantages, can impact a young person's route into employment or postgraduate study.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants from middle class backgrounds tend to fare better in the graduate job market when compared with their working class peers. This appears to be the case whether or not they have attended an elite university and does not appear to be significantly influenced by choice of degree programme.

The authors highlight graduate inequality by constructing clear comparisons between participants, for example, through gender, social class, degree choice and location.

For example, chapter three constructs the idea of 'London habitus' (p.46). Having a family home in London provides a geographic advantage for finding good graduate jobs and city salaries without the economic challenges of relocation. Additionally, Londoner graduates embody an understanding of the culture of the city that allows them to navigate the job market with greater ease. A salient comparison is

presented in the book. Freya, a lower-middle class Londoner and biology graduate, was able to endure a poorly paid internship within London and work her way up to a permanent position. This was partly because of a lack of financial pressure. In contrast, Zoe, a working class law graduate from the University Bristol, lacked the money to relocate for work experience or an insecure job, and was therefore compelled to stay and find work in her Welsh hometown.

Chapter five demonstrates, through the stories of engineering graduates, intersections of class and gender. They explore how embodied capital (such as gender) can determine outcomes over and above other forms of capital, such as institutionalised capital (qualifications). For example success in the industry is achieved by a working class, white, male graduate with a 2:1, while a middle class woman with a first-class degree struggles to establish herself professionally.

Overall, the project provides valuable insights for those interested in the sociology of education, and higher education careers practitioners focused on improving graduate outcomes. The reflections of participants are particularly illuminating. My only wish for this book is that it would have offered more qualitative evidence to enhance the reader's understanding of the participants and their diverse experiences.

■ **Philippa Costello**
University of Edinburgh

Introducing Forced Migration

Patricia Hynes

Routledge

2021

242 pages

£135 hbk, £36.99 pbk

ISBN: 9781138055476 hbk

providing a very detailed overview and an unpacking of the most relevant literature in the field that broadens the knowledge and understanding of any reader.

Hynes offers an in-depth examination of the authors of some of the biggest classics in the field of migration, policy and politics, such as Stephen Castles, Hannah Arendt, Homi K. Bhabha, Barbara Harrell-Bond, Liisa Malkki, Bridget Anderson and Laura Agustín, as well as the fields of human rights and international law. She includes key legal concepts and definitions from the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Human Rights Watch and more.

This book invites the reader to reflect upon the reasons and consequences of not just the

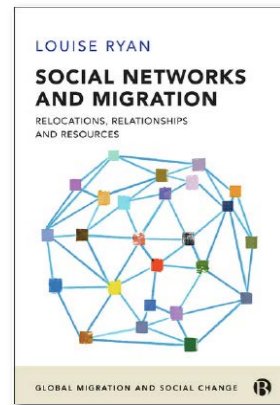
misuse and misconception of these labels, which hide and simplify the broader complexity implied by the reality of migration experience, pointing out the failures of international policy. She explores the regional, national and international policy response since the last century, including different cases across the globe and across history that shed light on international policy analysis within different contexts. By criticising the concept of migration crisis, Hynes refocuses attention towards an administrative and policy crisis instead, and advocates for the inclusion of migrants' voices within international policies for migration today.

This book provides ethical guidelines for researchers and integrates questions directed to the reader in every section, inviting them

to reflect upon all these complexities, something that she develops further at the end of the book, where she integrates two of the biggest events that marked 2020: Black Lives Matter and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inspiring, accessible, reflexive and challenging are some of the adjectives that describe this must-read for both students and teachers who want to gain a deep understanding of the most current matters in the area of migration and international policy. Giving some hope for the integration of migrants' voices to better build policies today, this is a must-have book for anyone interested in today's world migration.

■ **Esther Neira**
Queen's University Belfast



Social Networks and Migration: Relocations, Relationships and Resources

Louise Ryan
Bristol University Press
2023
214 pages
£80 hbk, £27.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781529213546 hbk

The author approaches the notion of social networks from a perspective that places network ties, their emergence and influences, not as a static phenomenon in the social network web but as something that is intertwined with social events, personal and group characteristics, as well as social experiences that evolve and adapt through time.

The book is a critical watershed for most social network analysis and migrant studies. Earlier linear ideas of 'weak vs. strong' social ties that had been suggested using simplistic and stereotypical concepts of ethnicity are challenged and enriched with 'vertical and horizontal' ties. Vertical ties are the ones between the individual and another entity of a higher socio-economic status that can potentially be resourceful for the individual. Meanwhile, the horizontal social tie would be between co-ethnic group members or individuals in the same category of any potential characteristics where one can provide resources for the other that are often shared and accessible for the in-group.

Furthermore, the author argues that social networks have varied significance based on the ever-changing lives of individuals whose ethnic identity can play different roles to varying extents throughout time and situations.

One of the strengths of the book's narratives is that it consists of several voices from migrant groups of different regions. Diverse characteristics such as racial, spatial and religious, as well as early-life social

experiences, create a matrix of perspectives with multiple variables, the combination of which provides a unique outcome in social network analysis.

For example, the intersectionality of migrants' multiple characteristics is well-highlighted and documented throughout the book. The dichotomy of one's stereotypical identities, versus the version of life they have chosen to adopt, is quoted brilliantly from one of the participants, Maryam, a well-known activist for women's rights and anti-racism, who says: "Once, a woman said to me that I should not do inter-faith dialogue, that I should not sit down with priests and rabbis. She said I was not a good Muslim... I went home and cried."

The author discusses the social networks within the migration diaspora in a way that reaches far beyond anthropology and migrant studies. Social network nodes are boldly and innovatively argued to include state agencies and institutes instead of migrant people only. Such methodological advances allow the study findings to reach beyond anthropology, social network analysis and migrant studies.

The reciprocity of social network nodes, consisting of individuals and institutes, opens multiple doors to other disciplines, such as political studies, sociology, criminology and hate studies. For example, Bowling, in his 1999 book, *Violent Racism: Victimization, Policing, And Social Context*, discusses the

This book offers a timely treatment of academic resilience, with stories and lessons learnt from academics across various contexts, institutions, actor type and roles (post-doctoral fellows, contract workers, researchers and educators). Using strength-based perspectives, the authors attempt to frame the notion of academic resilience against the possibilities for self-direction, collaboration and social support. These points of learning and growth are positioned, however, within an understanding of the complex nexus between power, authority, disruption and academic resilience. The Covid-19 pandemic certainly offered an opportunity to explore these connections.

In the section on personal experiences of resilience, authors use diverse accounts of academic workers to situate the weight of the uncertainties associated with the pandemic.

Academic Resilience:

Personal Stories and Lessons Learnt
from the Covid-19 Experience

Marian Mahat (ed) et al.

Emerald
2022

184 pages
£15 pbk

ISBN: 9781802623901



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notion of 'social process', where he argues that crime does not happen in a vacuum of social factors. Applying such criminological theory, along with the dynamic type of social network this book presents, is potentially matching the two missing puzzle pieces to portray hate crime victimisation as a process within social networks.

The author's professional and personal account of migration, social networks and their analysis resonates with many readers as if it is a narrated part of their life and social experiences. The book acknowledges the social changes and events such as Covid-19 and Brexit and their impact on the writing of the book, people's social struggles, and the stories they tell. The in-depth data analysis, reflecting on their migration, and social and resource networks through a range of periods is valuable to anyone interested in longitudinal studies.

■ **Moslem Boushehrian**
University of Surrey

The many points of dissonance for these authors and the distinct impacts on their personal and professional lives, as presented in the volume, also offer more nuanced and relatable points of reference. At one end, these discussions are used to underscore the relevance of identity, positionality and locality to their experiences, and also to the strategies for negotiating power structures, vulnerability and change during this period of crisis. At the other end, the chapters also centre the opportunities to build capacity and community, with the exploration of internal and international partnerships as key aspects of academic resilience. Adaptability, immediacy, trust and autonomy are also presented as important facets of such institutional collaborations.

In the section on resilience within and beyond the academy, the authors provide

With this work, Smith has written a piece that aims to persuade the reader that the English upper classes, rather than being, in the words of Max Weber, a "hindrance of the free development of the market" (Weber 1978:937 *Economy and Society*), have perpetually walked hand in hand with it. The upper classes are not, and never have been, the antithesis to capitalism that they have often been posited as. The core argument of this book is that they have taken on a role within the UK that has little or nothing to do with reality, acting as an idiom which is believed (by many outside of the upper classes), to bring the fragments of society that modernism has torn asunder into a unified whole. This can be found in a number of rather surprising places and people, which includes the fathers of the authors that Smith reads, organic farming, national heritage properties, independent bookshops and Sloane Rangers.

What all these have in common is the belief that they reflect the natural order of

accounts of building collective resilience through public-private partnership, civic engagement and institutional agility. These deliberations connect notions of academic and community resilience to wider debates on the university as a public good, and on the opportunities to add value through problem-solving initiatives and external partnerships.

The section also brings to the table the challenges of mobilising partnerships and the tensions related to role and site integration. It is therefore an exploration of the experiences and subtleties of service engagement, but with questions on their relevance, impacts, measurement, sustainability and bearing on academic assessments.

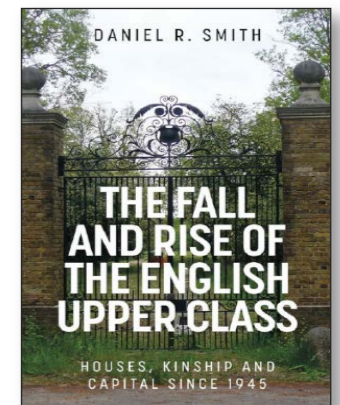
Collectively, the volume captures the many constraints on, and opportunities for, building academic resilience for academic workers during the pandemic. Pluses include the use

The Fall and Rise of The English Upper Class:

House, Kinship and Capital Since 1945

Daniel R. Smith

Manchester University Press
2023
272 pages
£85 hbk
ISBN: 9781526157010



things, above and beyond the social (nature always comes first). Simply put, the aristocracy are naturally superior, something that the past successfully reflected, and the past is another country. This country, to those in the know, is Arcadia, a kind of utopia that only exists due to modernity, but one that is "not the answer but the existential crisis of modern existence dramatized" (p.108). It is a place that is been and done with and is firmly based in the past, not the future. However, as Smith notes, there has also been little done to change things. Hugh Dalton, the Labour Chancellor during the radical post-1945 government, created the National Land Fund to maintain "aristocratic primogeniture [the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child]" (p.104). To be fair, he was also an old Etonian, and appointed one as Governor of the Bank of England, so this maybe isn't such a surprise!

Smith's book is rigorous, and has a large amount of empirical work and case studies to support his theory. When reading it through the first time, I did find the section on Roger Scruton the most readable, probably because he has some intellectual heft that the likes of Rory Stewart do not, yet the reading of Stewart, Nicholson and others are a central part of Smith's thesis and cannot be done without. I will not,

however, be searching out Stewart's biographical memoir *The Marches: A Borderland Journey Between England and Scotland* anytime soon. Equally, I fear I am more like one of his booksellers who believe that literature can offer an alternative to neo-liberalism than I may wish, with novels offering more moral certainty than the contingency of reality.

Smith has a strong Marxist strand running through his argument. He is clear that the aristocracy is emergent from social relations, and we must take care not to fetishise them. He states that "capital as phantasmagoria, a sublime excess devoid of origins or mystery unto itself, has, however, an underlying social structure which preserves this perception" (p.207). He clearly states that not only does the aristocracy rely on the law to maintain its identity, but that often these are the exact same laws which benefit the plutocratic rich, despite being held as invaders in our green and pleasant land. Smith is equally clear that if we are looking for a better future, it won't be found amongst the dead, haunted as it is by imperialism and a false sense of identity.

■ **Dr Simon Arthur**
University of Warwick

of personal or reflective narratives and a reader-friendly writing style, with practical points for building academic resilience within each chapter. The use of the academic resilience model, with attention to the importance of recalibration, structure, identity, loyalty, instrumentality, exchange, networking, support, skill and transformation, all present important points of action within and beyond the academy.

There are many prospects for building on the work explored through this volume. The gendered underpinnings of these experiences for the editors, authors and global participants provide a critical point for situating the experiences and trajectories of these women. These can be theoretically and empirically studied to also contextualise the diverse experiences and strategies for building academic resilience within and across

genders. The reference to Benedict Anderson's imagined communities in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006) also presents an opportunity to leverage on some of the advances that were made during the pandemic. The latter is particularly important given the increasing pressures for performativity within the neo-liberal university (acknowledged in this work), and for negotiating changing landscapes and power structures that continue to unfold.

Given the reflective and narrative approach to this work, as well as the still under-explored nature of these crisis-adaptive approaches to the field, the authors provide an excellent compilation of academic resilience stories and lessons learnt, which can be further advanced.

■ **Dr Talia Esnard**
University of the West Indies

Professor Howard Becker, 1928-2023

Dr Dagmar Danko reflects on the life of Professor Howard Becker, the sociologist of deviance, art, music, methods and work

"I signed up in sociology, without knowing what I was getting into," Howard S. Becker said, nonchalantly as ever, in a 1970 interview (with Julius Debro). At 18 it was understandable that he didn't know what he was getting into, and it is very notable that later he would make it sound like sociology is trouble one could get into, akin to the first step in a deviant career. In due course, he certainly knew his craft and went on to publish a wide range of books on the best ways of doing sociology, books aimed at students getting themselves into the kind of trouble that sociology, in the end, maybe is.

Howard S. Becker was born in Chicago in 1928 and died in San Francisco in 2023. An appreciation published here in *Network* shortly after his death cited the two essential studies which he is most famous for, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963) and *Art Worlds* (1982), and mentioned some of his other works on sociological methods and about sociology itself. The following thoughts are not intended to be a follow-up to that appreciation, simply expanding on the details of Howie Becker's decades-long work as a sociologist – by now, there are plenty of pieces that summarise his career in thorough and comprehensible ways. Rather, I would like to draw the reader's attention to what is very often left out or only touched upon in most of the obituaries published so far.

Becker finds himself categorised in multiple ways, none of which are wrong per se. For example: Becker as sociologist of deviance and Becker as pioneer of the so-called labelling theory, which follows the idea that certain qualities and behaviours (such as smoking marijuana) are not negative 'by nature', but come to be seen as negative because people agree to label them so (a bold statement from a young sociologist in the 1950s, when the main parts of *Outsiders* were written and published in articles well before the full book appeared in the more welcoming 1960s). Becker as jazz pianist and Becker as sociologist of art, pursuing the idea that works of art are not valuable 'by nature', but come to be seen as valuable (aesthetically, historically, economically, you name it) because

people agree to label them so (a bold statement from a well-established sociologist in the 1980s, when *Art Worlds* was published and when ingenious *sujets créateurs* were still a thing). Becker as Symbolic Interactionist and Becker as part of the so-called Second Chicago School, placing him in a lineage that he himself often referred to (on the one hand, Robert E. Park, Herbert Blumer, Everett C. Hughes, on the other hand, contemporaries like Erving Goffman and Anselm L. Strauss), but which, he argued, did not represent any kind of coherent 'school'.

One category into which Becker is not often placed is that of Becker as a sociologist of work (a notable exception is Perrenoud, 2017). And yet, if one wants to try to bring together all his themes, and find a single thread underlying all his different studies, it is Becker's understanding of sociology as being the study of what people do, how, with whom, to which purpose, and using which resources and tools. Consequently, *Doing Things Together* (1986) was the title of one of his anthologies, a recurring phrase throughout his oeuvre. Collective action does not necessarily mean that everything that people do is work, in the sense of professional work or a professional activity, but it is usually work in the sense of an effort put into an activity in order to produce something, or to achieve a desired result. Thus, for Becker, playing jazz together (e.g. *Do You Know ...?* *The Jazz Repertoire in Action*, 2009) is just as much work as studying (e.g. *Making the Grade: The Academic Side of College Life*, 1968); and acting as a 'moral entrepreneur' when trying to convince others to create or enforce a rule (as described in *Outsiders*) is just as much work as being an "art maverick" trying to convince others to support them in the creation and dissemination of their unconventional artworks (as described in *Art Worlds*). In this vein, sociology is work, too. And, perhaps even more so, a craft. A testament to this assessment are his books about the best (and worst) ways of doing sociology, with compelling titles such as *Writing for Social Scientists: How To Start And Finish Your Thesis, Book, Or Article* (1986) or *Tricks of the Trade:*

How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It (1998). Although these books primarily address students, one should not mistake them for 'basic' reading. For Becker makes sure to always trace simple and straightforward advice back to the core of what he understands sociology to be: the study of the various forms of collective action.

Ultimately, this means that doing sociology is a collective action, too. So how do people do sociology together? For there is no sociology practised and produced that is not a collective action, a co-operative effort. As he shows in later books on sociological work, methods and epistemology, there are myriad shared understandings of what sociology is and how it should be done, collectively accepted ways of doing sociology, the knowledge of which makes everyone's work easier (e.g. *What About Mozart? What About Murder? Reasoning from Cases*, 2014, and *Evidence*, 2017, a brilliant book on the quantitative-qualitative chasm in sociology that can only be mentioned here in passing). In other words, the production of knowledge takes place according to specific, current paradigms (and indeed Becker often refers to Kuhn, 1962).

To follow Becker's own sociology, though, is to wonder about the various drifts (cultural, social, economic, academic, political...) that challenge the shared and accepted understandings of what sociology is and how it is done. Or, more precisely, to wonder about what we might call the outsiders, or mavericks, of sociology. For any kind of organised world needs unconventional innovators in order to produce the variation required to rescue the world (of art, of sociology...) from ritual (see Becker 1982, p. 244).

Today, in 2024, it might seem strange or downright wrong to think of Becker as an outsider or maverick of sociology, when *Outsiders* is still one of the most widely read books ever having emerged from the world of sociology. Becker writes about mavericks as being denied the kind of reputation that comes with their world. This certainly cannot be said of Becker himself. Obituaries speak of him as a cult figure of the discipline (indeed, the French daily newspaper *Libération* calls him nothing less than a *monstre sacré*). Yet Becker's studies, and the way he wrote them – in accessible language, avoiding any kind of obscuring jargon – were

Max Atkinson, an early pioneer of ethno-methodology and conversation analysis in the UK, has died. Max was also the first editor of *Network*, running it for two years, from 1975 to 1977. We will carry an appreciation of his life and work in the next issue.



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very much unconventional at the time of their publication. This is not the place to elaborate on the historical and cultural contexts of Becker's times, when the idea of deviance as a label attributed by others, or the idea of art as a result of co-operation truly was (and frankly, maybe still is in some contexts) genuinely unsettling and surprising. It is important to note, however, as Becker explains, that all organised worlds adapt and that mavericks might become integrated professionals (ibidem).

This gradual shift from maverick to integrated professional is the very process that Becker's own sociological work seems to have undergone: his studies were seen as imaginative, but somewhat marginal, then came to be understood as game-changers, and now are considered as 'classics' full of depth and wit.

Howard S. Becker – a sociological classic? What would Howie Becker himself have to say about this category, this label that I and my sociological peers place on him and his work? Rigid categories were not for him. As a sociologist, and even more so in personal dialogue, Howie Becker was open-minded, curious to the end, and always welcoming of new thoughts and ideas that might challenge his own views. His own interests were constantly

evolving. This is one of the reasons why I can't think of his areas of study as different research foci, fields, or 'phases'. Rather, in my own analysis of Howie Becker's works, I label them repertoires. Repertoires can be reassembled, repertoires allow for improvisation, and, most importantly, repertoires evolve. In times like these – fast-paced, volatile, and ever-changing – Howie Becker's sociology reminds us not to get bogged down. It's a lot of work to think for yourself, to think twice, and to think on your feet: to do your own sociology, to get out there, to observe, not just to assume, but to ask why and how things are done. That is why I think that

Howard S. Becker's invitation to sociology is an invitation to the work of sociology. No one is born a master, as they say in art worlds. As a teenager, Howard S. Becker might not have known what he was signing up for, but he became a master of his art/craft – and to label him a sociological classic indicates a shared understanding in the world of sociology.

Endnote

1. *Zur Aktualität von Howard S. Becker* was published in 2015 by Springer VS. I am currently revising the book for a second, updated edition. This revised edition should be made available in English in 2025.

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Summer 2024

“As a Jewish activist who has long worked for peace in the Middle East, I’m finding it gets harder to talk in any composed and controlled way about anything in such very traumatic times”

“We hit them in week one with quantitative methods as part of their core programme – it looks alien, it doesn’t look like sociology – ‘what the fuck is going on?’ is quite often a thing that they say”

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