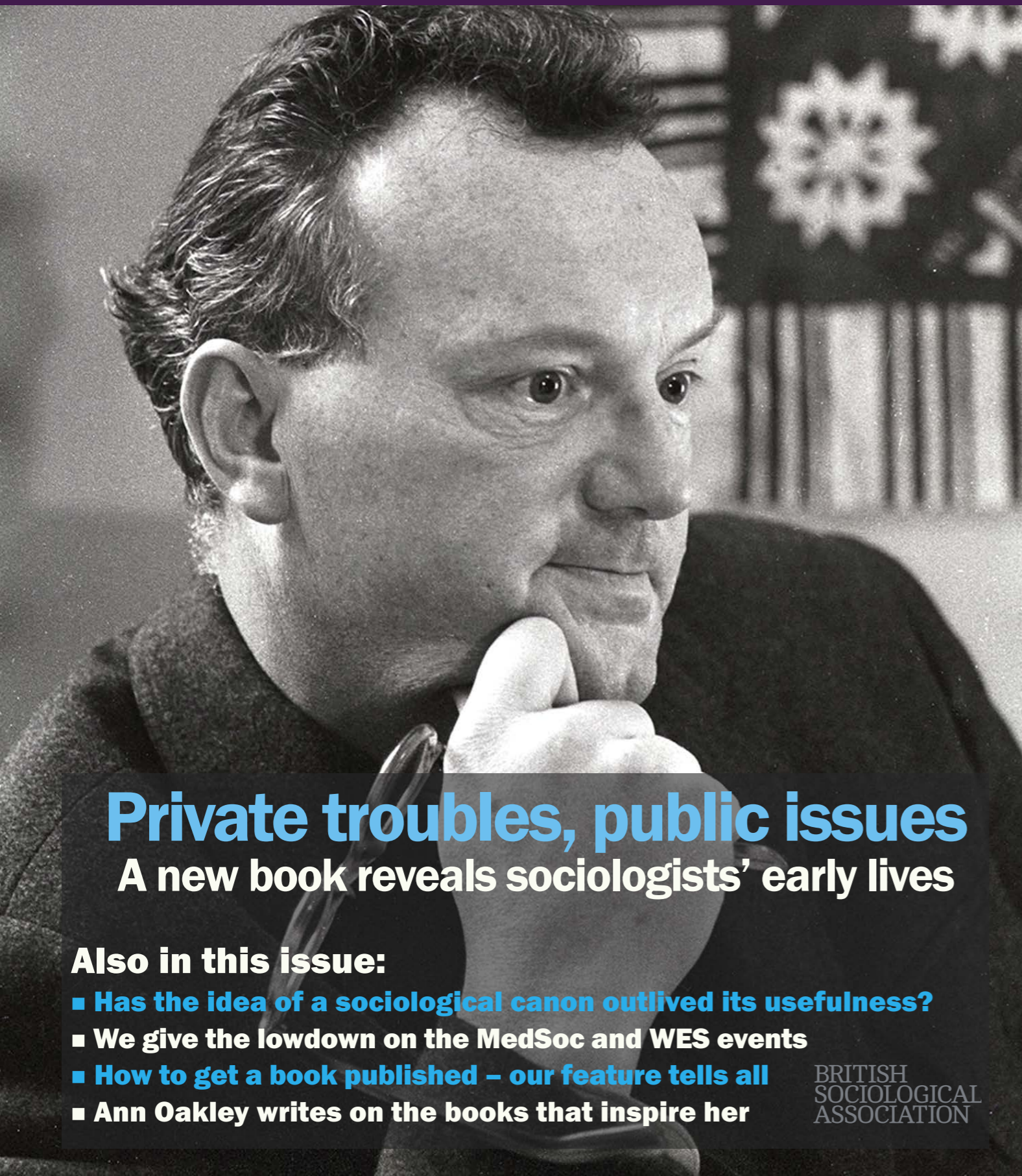


Network

Recording the working lives of sociologists for 50 years

Issue 148, Autumn 2024



Private troubles, public issues

A new book reveals sociologists' early lives

Also in this issue:

- **Has the idea of a sociological canon outlived its usefulness?**
- **We give the lowdown on the MedSoc and WES events**
- **How to get a book published – our feature tells all**
- **Ann Oakley writes on the books that inspire her**

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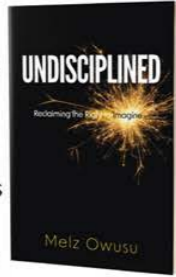
Undisciplined

Reclaiming the Right to Imagine
Melz Owusu

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Natalie Evans, Co-Founder of Everyday Racism

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On Antiracism

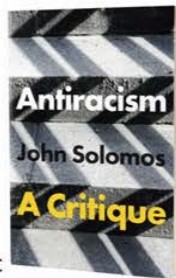
A Critique

John Solomos

"This compact yet laudably wide-ranging book offers a thorough exploration of the contours of antiracist movements, policy proposals, and arguments. Against sloganic battle cries, Solomos grounds urgent debates in nuance and complexity, for a deeper account of the recent past, present, and future of antiracism."

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Past and Present

Orlando Patterson

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The Empire of AI

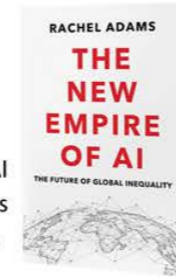
The Future of Global Inequality

Rachel Adams

"Incisive and alarming, The New Empire of AI lays bare the human and environmental costs of our AI-driven world. Adams deftly weaves together history, economics and ethics to reveal the troubling parallels between AI's rise and historical patterns of exploitation. Essential reading for anyone concerned with technology's role in shaping our global inequities and future justice."

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Integrity

The Rise of a Distinctive Western Idea and Its Destiny

Martin Albrow

"An overlooked subject explored with perfect timeliness. The author covers the sweep of Western history to show how evolving notions of integrity have been central to those countries' government and sense of themselves."

Bronwen Maddox, Chatham House

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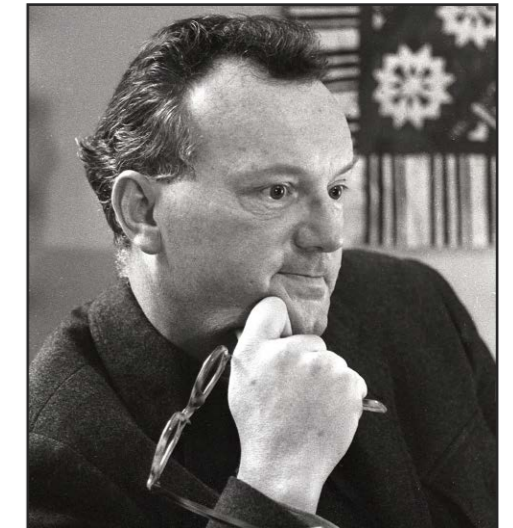
Autumn 2024

Main feature:

In a new book, US sociologists reveal, as in C. Wright Mills' famous dictum, the private troubles behind their public work

See page 20

graphic:
C. Wright Mills,
by Yaroslava Mills



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Children left in cells for 23 hours a day during Covid, study finds

Manchester Metropolitan University:

Children imprisoned during Covid lockdowns were left in their cells for up to 23 hours a day, which had a “devastating” effect on their mental health, new research finds.

Some children were unable to see their family for up to 12 months, had their access to education reduced or removed entirely and were offered minimal time for outdoor exercise.

Professor Hannah Smithson and Dr Deborah Jump conducted remote interviews and an on-site workshop with 22 incarcerated boys aged between 14 and 17, and 22 members of prison staff, including governors. The research took place between March 2021 and January 2022 in the Greater Manchester region.

In an article in *The British Journal of Criminology*, they convey how children endured isolation and an education that in some cases amounted to crossword sheets slipped under their prison door.

One 16-year-old boy told them: “We only got 15 minutes for a shower in the morning and if you missed that you don’t get another shower all day until the next morning. And you get 45 mins out on yard for football. I felt like I was a dog in a kennel.”

Another said: “You’re not allowed to do anything. So, basically, you’re on like a 23-and-a-half-hour bang up.”



Professor Hannah Smithson

The article, entitled, ‘Unmasked and exposed: the impact of Covid-19 on the youth custodial estate’, discusses what it calls the “devastating effect on incarcerated children” that these conditions have.

“The conditions in which children are kept in custody are dire, and poor conditions that pre-existed Covid, such as a lack of time out of cell, safety concerns, increases in violence and limited education provision

have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“In the post-pandemic climate, where public institutions are still licking their wounds, the youth estate should take note of its systemic failings and rebuild with a more humanitarian approach.”

The report calls for alternative solutions to child youth justice, including cutting funds for youth custody and reinvesting the money saved in housing, education, mental health services and training.

Professor Smithson said: “The situation for children in prison during the lockdowns was dreadful because their needs were simply not differentiated from the needs of the adult prison estate.

“The dire way they were treated during this time is a disgrace and should have been a national outcry. Even now, four years on, resources for children in custody have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. This needs to be addressed, and urgently.

“We don’t naively propose that de-investing in youth custody would be a short-term overnight solution. What we’re arguing for is an approach underpinned by the upholding of children’s rights. For the sake of basic human rights, the incarceration of children should only be used as a last resort, and for the shortest appropriate period.”

<https://tinyurl.com/yruX8der>

Prize given for new ‘big qual’ research method

Four researchers have been awarded an impact prize for developing a method for analysing large volumes of qualitative data.

Dr Susie Weller, Dr Emma Davison, Professor Ros Edwards and Professor Lynn Jamieson were given the National Centre for Research Methods’ 20th Anniversary Impact Prize.

The prize was launched in spring this year to recognise the impact of researchers who have participated in the centre’s activities since it began 20 years ago. It is part of a series of initiatives marking the history of the centre.

Their method, supported by two NCRM grants, is the culmination of more than five years’ work and provides researchers with a new tool that enables them to work across multiple datasets, combining computational text analysis with conventional qualitative methods.

The method included using computers to search text for areas of particular interest, followed by an analysis of multiple small samples of likely data, and an in-depth analysis of

selected samples using techniques and processes drawn from a repertoire familiar to qualitative researchers.

In a post on the centre’s website, the researchers say: “We set out to develop materials that would assist other researchers to remain true to the principles of qualitative research while working with what could be called ‘big qualitative data’, or ‘big qual’ for short – a data assemblage that is much larger than the typical volume of a single project and too large to readily tackle solely by conventional qualitative analysis techniques.

“We have called our method of ‘big qual’ secondary analysis the ‘breadth-and-depth’ method. In addition to publishing our outline of the method, we have produced a set of resources to help others to use it, teach it and teach with it.”

Following the technique’s development, the team have trained researchers in various sectors, published a book and journal articles, and created learning resources.

Dr Susie Weller is based at the University of Oxford, Professor Ros Edwards at the



Dr Susie Weller

University of Southampton, and Dr Emma Davison and Professor Lynn Jamieson at the University of Edinburgh.
www.ncrm.ac.uk/news/show.php?article=5837

80% of people globally want more climate action by their government

University of Oxford: Researchers from the Sociology Department collated and analysed the data behind the largest survey of public opinion on climate change.

More than 73,000 people in 77 countries were asked 15 questions on climate change for the United Nations Development Programme’s Peoples’ Climate Vote 2024.

It found that 80% of people globally want their governments to take stronger action to tackle the climate crisis and 86% want to see their countries set aside geopolitical differences and work together.

The survey, the second such by the UNDP, was conducted by GeoPoll, and the data was then collated and processed by analysts at Oxford, Professor Stephen Fisher, Matthew Blayney and Albert Ward. They weighted the data to create representative estimates of public opinion. The survey led to national and international media coverage.

Professor Fisher said: “A survey of this size was a huge scientific endeavour. While maintaining rigorous methodology, special efforts were also made to include people from marginalised groups in the poorest parts of the world. This is some of the very highest quality global data on public opinions on climate change available.”



Professor Stephen Fisher

The survey revealed support for stronger climate action in 20 of the world’s biggest greenhouse gas emitters, with majorities ranging from 66% of people in the United States and Russia, to 67% in Germany, 73% in China, 77% in South Africa and India, 85% in Brazil, 88% in Iran and 93% in Italy.

The survey shows support by a global majority of 72% in favour of a quick transition away from fossil fuels. This was true for countries among the top 10 biggest producers of oil, coal, or gas, including Nigeria, Turkey, China, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Australia and the US. Only 7% of people said their country should not transition.

People across the world reported that climate change was on their minds. Globally, 56% said they were thinking about it daily or weekly, including 63% of those in poorer countries.

More than half of people said they were more worried than they were last year about climate change, a figure that rose to 71% among people living in small island states.

In five of the biggest emitters – Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the US – women were more in favour of strengthening their country’s commitments than were men, by between 10 and 17 percentage points.

The survey included groups traditionally the most difficult to poll, with people in nine of the 77 countries surveyed never having been polled on climate change before.
<https://tinyurl.com/2ksjd3xy>

More children in north in care

Lancaster University: Researchers have written a report saying that children in the north of England are 50% more likely to be in care than those in the rest of the country.

The report found that in the north, the prevalence of children in care per 10,000 of the child population is 93, compared with 62 in the rest of England. In Blackpool one in every 52 children is in care; in England overall the rate is one in 140.

The report found that the north-east has the highest overall care rates, followed by the north-west, West Midlands and then Yorkshire and the Humber.

The research was led by Dr Davara Bennett, of the University of Liverpool, and included work by Professor Karen Broadhurst and Dr Stephanie Doebler, of Lancaster University. It was published by Health Equity North on behalf of the Child of the North All-Party Parliamentary Group.

In England in 2015, children in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods were more than 10 times more likely to be in care than children in the least deprived 10%.

There were more than 83,000 children in care in 2023 in England and the report warns that the risk of that number rising is high as health inequalities continue to

widen and more families are falling into poverty, particularly in the North.

A rise in child poverty between 2015 and 2020 led to over 10,000 additional children entering care, the report says.

It calls for the government to invest in prevention strategies, offer more support for older children and those leaving care, strengthen the workforce, and optimise children’s social care data. The report can be read at: <https://tinyurl.com/yejdx8w>



Dr Davara Bennett

Waring appointed as new Dean

Loughborough University: Professor Justin Waring has been appointed as the new Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Professor Waring, who joined Loughborough from the University of Birmingham in November, is a medical sociologist who researches strategic change in health and care systems.

He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science and the Royal Society of Arts, and has held positions at the universities of Cambridge, Nottingham and Gothenburg. He has longstanding collaborations with researchers at the University of Toronto and University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Waring said: “The school will play a pivotal and collaborative role in responding to the climate emergency, in fostering more inclusive and vibrant communities, and in contributing to the health and wellbeing of our regional, national and international communities.”

Loughborough’s Vice-chancellor, Professor Nick Jennings, said Professor Waring was “a world-leading expert in his field.”

Site to record deaths caused by police

University of Exeter: A new website will record deaths caused by police officers around the world.

Current monitoring efforts tend to focus on police killings in specific nations or cities, and usually do not allow comparisons across jurisdictions or over time.

Those using the website, Monitoring Lethal Force, can compare data for different countries, currently Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, England and Wales, France, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Philippines, Sierra Leone and Venezuela.

This will provide data that will help to promote accountability and the rule of law among the police, and improve practices.

The research team have expertise in law, policing and security around the world. It includes researchers from the University of Groningen, the Central University of Venezuela, the University of Rio de Janeiro, Ghent University, the University of Exeter, Monash University, the University of Pretoria, the University of Bordeaux, the National University, Mexico, and the University of the West Indies.

Professor Abi Dymond, of the University of Exeter, said the website would help people from all over the world "to strengthen their national work on this issue,



Professor Abi Dymond

make useful international comparisons and will ultimately assist in improving policies and practices around police use of lethal force, including increasing transparency, helping to prevent future deaths and enhancing accountability where deaths occur.

"There is no time to waste and we urge states, law enforcement agencies and other relevant bodies to take these issues, and our recommendations, seriously and to adopt them without hesitation."

<https://lethal-force-monitor.org>

Police use of tech researched

University of Essex: Professor Peter Fussey has helped draw up a new set of international human rights standards for the policing of peaceful protests, including restrictions on the use of drones and facial recognition systems.

Professor Fussey was part of a small team developing the new protocol for the United Nations, which will now serve as a core international standard for countries. Several states have begun to adopt the principles.

He led the work on law enforcement's use of technology at protests, writing a detailed document on human rights standards, limitations and accountability mechanisms, with Dr Daragh Murray of Queen Mary's University, London.

This sets out restrictions on using protests as opportunities for surveillance. Among its conclusions are that facial recognition technologies and other biometric systems, such as fingerprint and facial recognition, must not be used to identify individuals peacefully participating in a protest.

Professor Fussey said: "Police technologies such as drones, advanced biometric surveillance and digital data analytics are



Professor Peter Fussey

expanding at an unprecedented rate.

"They also often operate in a regulatory vacuum with minimal accountability. In addition to the human rights challenges brought by these tools, the right to peacefully protest is being eroded in many parts of the world, including in the UK.

"I was extremely fortunate to work with such a strong team from different parts of the UN to help develop standards aimed at embedding international human rights standards into police uses of technology."

News round-up: medical research and caste event

University of Cambridge: Sociologists commonly use their own life experiences as a way of understanding broader societal issues, and Professor Brendan Burchell has done so in a unique way.

Professor Burchell has contributed to a study of the medical condition Restless Leg Syndrome, which found genetic clues to its cause. He is among the one in 20 adults who suffer from the condition.

The syndrome, which affects the nervous system, causing an irresistible urge to move the legs, is a difficult disease to diagnose without a detailed interview with a medically qualified expert.

Using his skills as a survey methodologist, Professor Burchell developed a new questionnaire-based diagnostic tool that was relatively easy to complete, permitting research samples to be increased from dozens to tens of thousands.

The diagnostic tool, known as the Cambridge-Hoskin Restless Legs Questionnaire, has become the standard instrument in most research on the syndrome and has now been used in many studies.

When one large project started in Cambridge looking at the links between genetics and the syndrome, they initially used an inferior diagnostic questionnaire, but Professor Burchell convinced them to use the new questionnaire. The project led to a paper published in *Nature Genetics*, which reported finding genetic clues behind the syndrome and was widely featured in the media.

The former BSA President, Professor Gurinder K. Bhambra, of the **University of Sussex**, has organised a section of *Current Sociology* journal as a follow-up to the BSA Presidential event on caste at the LSE in 2023.

The section, which is available online, contains an introduction by Professor Bhambra and articles by the keynote speaker, Dr Suraj Yengde, and responses to these.

Dr Yengde, one of India's leading scholars and public intellectuals, spoke on the topic of racial castes, drawing attention to crucial debates on the topic within US sociology. This talk has been revised as the lead article for the section.

This is followed by the commentaries delivered on the day by Professor Faisal Devji, Professor Meena Dhandra and Professor John Holmwood, as well as an additional response by Professor Bandana Purkayastha and Professor Kalpana Kannabiran. The section is at: <https://tinyurl.com/3ksy882u>

Research to make plastic recycling simpler wins engagement prize

University of Manchester: An innovative research project to make plastic recycling simpler and more efficient has won a prize.

Dr Helen Holmes and Dr Torik Holmes won the university's Sociology Public Engagement Prize for 'One bin to rule them all', which brings together material science and economics to find ways of recycling plastic and reducing its use. The team also received the university's Overall Social Responsibility Prize.

The researchers worked with businesses and councils to propose a scheme where householders dispose of plastic into one bin rather than the separating it into various containers, which can be confusing as different local authorities have different schemes.

After the plastic is taken to waste centres, it can then be separated automatically by machines that pick up on bar codes that are printed on the plastic.

The researchers carried out a study with 30 households to see how their proposal could reduce plastic waste. They also

organised recycling events, produced reports for households and policymakers, contributed to government and business consultations and achieved extensive media coverage of the project.

"Our research into the complexities of the UK's recycling system found all these different rules and requirements have created a lot of confusion," the researchers say. "In some instances, this confusion can even result in people just not bothering to recycle at all."

• They share the prize with Professor Penny Tinkler, who won for her Teenage Kicks exhibition at Glasgow Women's Library, which shares the stories of eight women who were all teenagers in the 1960s,

Professor Tinkler said: "At the heart of Teenage Kicks lies a poignant exploration of aspiration as a catalyst for redefining young femininity. During this era, girls were encouraged to embrace opportunities for exploration and self-discovery, yet these new-found freedoms often came with inherent risks. Teenage Kicks combines data



Dr Helen Holmes

from our interviews with women now in their 70s and 80s with insightful illustrations."

The project includes intergenerational workshops exploring how gender shapes teenage experiences and later life.

Meer testifies at inquiry into death

University of Glasgow: Professor Nasar Meer has given testimony to a public inquiry into the death of Sheku Bayoh in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, in 2015.

Mr Bayoh, 31, sustained multiple injuries and died while handcuffed after officers responded to calls from the public about a man behaving erratically. His family believe his death was caused by positional asphyxia because of the tactics used by the police.

The inquiry is chaired by Lord Bracadale, a retired High Court judge, and is seeking to establish the circumstances of the death of Mr Bayoh, including any defects in operating models, procedures and training, or other systems of working, that contributed to the death.

It will decide if the actions of the officers involved were affected by his actual or perceived race and make recommendations for the future.

Professor Meer was asked by the inquiry team to provide a report on the issue of race, which included a discussion of racism, an overview of disparities in health, housing and work, and an examination of race and policing in Scotland. He also gave two days of evidence orally.

Professor Meer said: "It's an immense responsibility to contribute to the work of the inquiry. The research and analysis have been motivated both by rigour and an awareness that at the heart of this inquiry are people



Professor Nasar Meer

living with the impact of the events of Mr Bayoh's death."

Professor Meer's research examines how societies organise membership for minorities and experiences of inequality. His co-edited book, *The Resilience of Multiculturalism: Ideas, Politics, Practice*, was published in September, and in October he delivered a Unesco keynote lecture on asylum and refuge. He was among researchers made Fellows of the British Academy in the summer.

• Other sociologists made Fellows included Professor Lydia Morris, of the University of Essex, who has researched labour market

change, gender relations and the underclass in Britain. More recently she has worked on the politics of migration in the EU, with a focus on human rights.

Also made Fellow was Professor Helen Kennedy, of the University of Sheffield, who researches how data, AI and automation are experienced by non-experts, and whether these can be fair and equitable.

They were among 86 researchers recognised for their contribution to the humanities and social sciences. They join a community of more than 1,700 distinguished academics.

Anglia Ruskin University: A paper on age discrimination written by three researchers has won a prestigious award.

'A field study of age discrimination in the workplace: the importance of gender and race - pay the gap' won the award for Outstanding Paper in the 2024 Emerald Literati Awards.

The study shows that older British Black women and men find it harder to get jobs than younger British white men. When they get a job it is in a less well paid position.

The article, by Professor Nick Drydakis and Dr Anna Paraskevopoulou, of Anglia Ruskin, and Dr Vasiliki Bozani, of the University of Cyprus, is published in *Employee Relations* journal: tinyurl.com/4epke9ut

Group holds event on precarity and conflict

Emotions study group: The group held its annual symposium over two half-days in June, on the theme of 'Emotions and precarity: conflict, connection and change'.

Researchers and practitioners working on the sociology of emotions submitted abstracts examining the tensions, synergies and discontinuities between emotions and precarity for the virtual event.

Six panels saw selected participants presenting their work on themes such as social exclusion and justice, methodological innovations, love and care, institutionalised precarity, and productive and politicised emotions. The panels were organised against a backdrop of intensifying interconnected crises in recent years, from the local to the global.

The symposium closed with a keynote address, delivered by Dr Marwan Darweish, Dr Aurelie Broeckerhoff, Dr Laura Sulin and Dr Mahmoud Solimon, based on their project, 'On our land'.

This address drew on the experience of collecting oral history stories of 30 young Palestinians from Bedouin and farmer communities in the South Hebron Hills, also known as Masafer Yatta, in occupied Palestinian territory. It demonstrated the value of cultural heritage protection as an important resource to support Palestinian social, political and economic life at a time of profound precarity, conflict and change.

To build on feedback from participants in the network and from the symposium, the



Dr Laura Sulin

group is running a seminar series on current and relevant themes related to the sociologies of emotion, holding one seminar in the autumn and one in the spring, then an annual symposium in the summer semester. These will create opportunities for scholars to share their work on emotions and affect, as well furthering contemporary discussions on the sociologies of emotions.

The group's purpose is to stimulate sociological research on emotions across all domains of social life, including work and employment, culture, the economy, politics, social movements and family. It engages with all forms of intersecting inequalities.

The group will share more details on the seminar series on the BSA Emotions Jiscmail and via its social media platforms in the coming months.

Book on dying and bereavement is latest in series

Death, Dying and Bereavement: New Sociological Perspectives, the latest book in the BSA's **Sociological Futures** series, will be published in January.

The book, edited by Dr Sharon Mallon, of Staffordshire University, and Dr Laura Towers, University of Manchester, seeks to reinvigorate the sociological study of death, dying and bereavement.

It brings together international scholars from various career stages to show how sociology can re-engage with debates in the study of death and dying. It also shows the value of putting social meanings back into public narratives of death.

The 12 chapters are divided into three sections: theory, dying, and after-death.

The chapters consider the direction sociology is moving, in terms of topics to be studied and gaps to be addressed within the discipline. This presents an opportunity for sociologists to reflect upon the future of their discipline and its contribution to the study of death, dying and bereavement.

Chapter-length case studies explore issues including digital aspects of remembrance and memorialisation, and the impact and legacy of Covid-19 and climate change.

The book is the 16th in the Sociological Futures series, published by Routledge. Details of the book and the series, which began in 2017, can be seen at: <https://tinyurl.com/3fnv6tfp> and <https://tinyurl.com/4pe9nk3t>

Reading group tackles care homes and precarious work

Work, Employment and Economic Life study group: WEEL has set up a reading group designed to foster engagement and discussion among members on relevant scholarly articles and provide opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Meetings are held monthly via Zoom and reading materials are circulated in advance through the study group's Jiscmail.

With presenters' permission, video recordings of these sessions are uploaded to the BSA YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/@britsoci

Readings in the past few months include: Dr Lutfun Nahar Lata, of the University of Melbourne, speaking on 'The production of counter-space: informal labour, social networks and the production of urban space in Dhaka,' based on an article in *Current Sociology* journal.

Dr Sara Farris, of Goldsmiths, Dr Amy Horton, UCL, and Professor Eva Lloyd, University of East London, spoke on their article 'Corporatisation and financialisation of social reproduction: care homes and childcare in the United Kingdom' in *Environment and Planning F* journal.



Dr Amy Horton

Dr Leo Azzollini, University of Oxford, and Professor Ross Macmillan, University of Limerick, spoke on their article 'Are "bad" jobs bad for democracy? Precarious work

and electoral participation in Europe' in *Frontiers in Political Science* journal.

The reading group, which began in May, has proved popular, with 65 members subscribing. The group encourages members to suggest future readings on the intersections of work, employment and broader societal dynamics.

The study group plans a special issue proposal for *Sociology* journal on the theme 'Workers at the margins'. This will be published to coincide with the group's stream plenary at the BSA annual conference in Manchester in April. The plenary will feature talks, special events, paper presentations and discussions on the theme of social transformations.

The group has also launched a newsletter to inform members about events, webinars, calls for papers, conferences, funding opportunities and job openings. It also holds weekly Zoom meetings.

The study group is co-ordinated by its conveners, Dr Caroline Barrett, Dr Viviane Galata and Karen Tatham. It has 452 subscribers on its Jiscmail list and 1,085 followers on Twitter.

Books on fatherhood and dating published

Families and Relationships study group: Group members have had a series of books published this year on Muslim family life, young fatherhood, dating apps and caring.

Sticky, Sexy, Sad: Swipe Culture and the Darker Side of Dating Apps, written by Dr Treen Orchard, of Western University, Canada, relates her negative experience of using a dating app, such as ghosting, fleeting moments of sexual connection, and misogyny.

She concludes that dating apps are powerful technologies that are radically transforming sexuality, relationships and how we think about ourselves.

Understanding Muslim Family Life: Changing Relationships, Personal Life and Inequality, by Dr Joanne Britton, of the University of Sheffield, looks beyond the narrow perspective that shapes the understanding of Muslim families to the increasing diversity of family forms.

In *The Dynamics of Young Fatherhood: Understanding the Parenting Journeys and Support Needs of Young Fathers*, Professor Bren Neale,



Professor Anna Tarrant

of the University of Leeds, and Professor Anna Tarrant, University of Lincoln, focus on the transition of young men into early parenthood.

Caring is Sharing? Couples Navigating Parental Leave At The Transition To Parenthood, by Professor Katherine Twamley, of UCL, explores why and how mixed-sex couples

make decisions about parental leave at the transition to parenthood, and how these decisions shape their work and family care practices during and after the leave period. The book is free to download: <https://uclpress.co.uk/book/caring-is-sharing> On January 10, Professor Twamley leads a discussion of the book at a study group meeting.

The meeting is part of a series of study group events this year. Its reading group meets on 10 December to discuss with its authors the paper, 'How digital technologies become embedded in family life across generations: scoping the agenda for researching platformised relationality', published in *Families, Relationships and Societies*: <https://shorturl.at/hG9J2>

Previous events this year include a webinar by Dr Britton on Muslim family life; an early careers meet-up; a symposium on 'Families, relationships, religious and non-religious perspectives'; and an event on reproductive technologies.

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Network takes a look at sociology beyond our shores

Caste affects life expectancy

Lower caste groups in India suffered a greater fall in life expectancy than others during the Covid-19 pandemic, research shows.

A University of Oxford report found that mortality across India was 17% higher in 2020 during the pandemic, compared with 2019, implying 1.19 million excess deaths.

Using survey data on 765,000 people, the study found a larger fall in life expectancy among younger people, women and marginalised social groups.

While high-caste Hindu groups experienced a life expectancy decline of 1.3 years, the loss for Muslims was 5.4 years, and was 4.1 years for indigenous peoples who fall outside the predominant Indian social hierarchy.

Women in India experienced life expectancy declines of 3.1 years, one year more than the figure for men of 2.1 years.

This pattern could be explained by gender inequalities in healthcare and allocation of resources within households. It contrasts with the pattern found in high-income countries where excess mortality was higher among men than women during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Excess mortality in the youngest ages could be explained by children in certain areas being more susceptible to the coronavirus and by indirect effects of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, including deteriorating economic conditions and disruptions to public health services.

Professor Ridhi Kashyap, Professor of Demography and Computational Social Science at Oxford, said: 'Using unique demographic and health survey data, our study highlights the importance of focusing on inequality when measuring mortality and shows that pandemics can worsen, rather than equalise, existing disparities.'

"This was particularly noticeable on the role that Covid-19 had in further exacerbating the health impacts of pre-pandemic gender disparities."

The full paper, 'Large and unequal life expectancy declines during the Covid-19 pandemic in India in 2020', is published in *Science Advances*.

Not so swift Vienna runs new course

No magazine is complete without a story on Taylor Swift, of course, and the same applies to academic disciplines.

So it's good to see University of Vienna sociologists catching up with the 21st century by running a course on the all-singing, all-earning cultural legend.

The course, taught by sociologists Lisa Bock and Dr Michael Parzer, promises an analysis of the cultural and media phenomenon that the superstar represents.

Entitled 'Blank spaces: Taylor Swift in the mirror of sociological theories', it will explore the artist's economic, political and social impact according to various interpretations, including Frankfurt School critical theory, cultural studies, feminist theories and globalisation.

Vienna is playing catch-up, however: Taylor Swift is already the subject of study at numerous international universities in New York, Texas, London and elsewhere. Photo: <https://tinyurl.com/mnec2vda>



Foremost IQ test critic dies

Howard Francis Taylor, the foremost sociological critic of IQ tests, has died, aged 83.

Professor Taylor joined Princeton in 1973 and taught and researched social psychology, statistics, and IQ testing, at a time when arguments about the presumed genetic differences in the intelligence of Black and white people were prominent.

He was the author of books, including *The IQ Game: A Methodological Inquiry into the Heredity-Environment Controversy*, which the journal *Medical History* said "provide[d] the most comprehensive and closely argued criticism of heritability estimates for human IQ that has yet been made."

He took an early scholarly interest in the question of minority access to graduate education, conducting studies questioning how appropriate the examination was as a way of deciding entrance to many US colleges, with special attention to the question of bias in the test.

Professor Taylor, who directed the Department of African American Studies, was influential in the recruitment of prominent scholars, including Toni Morrison, the first African American woman faculty member hired at Princeton.

Better-off support Trump

It is not the poorest in society who give their support to Donald Trump, but those who are better off in poorer regions, new research says.

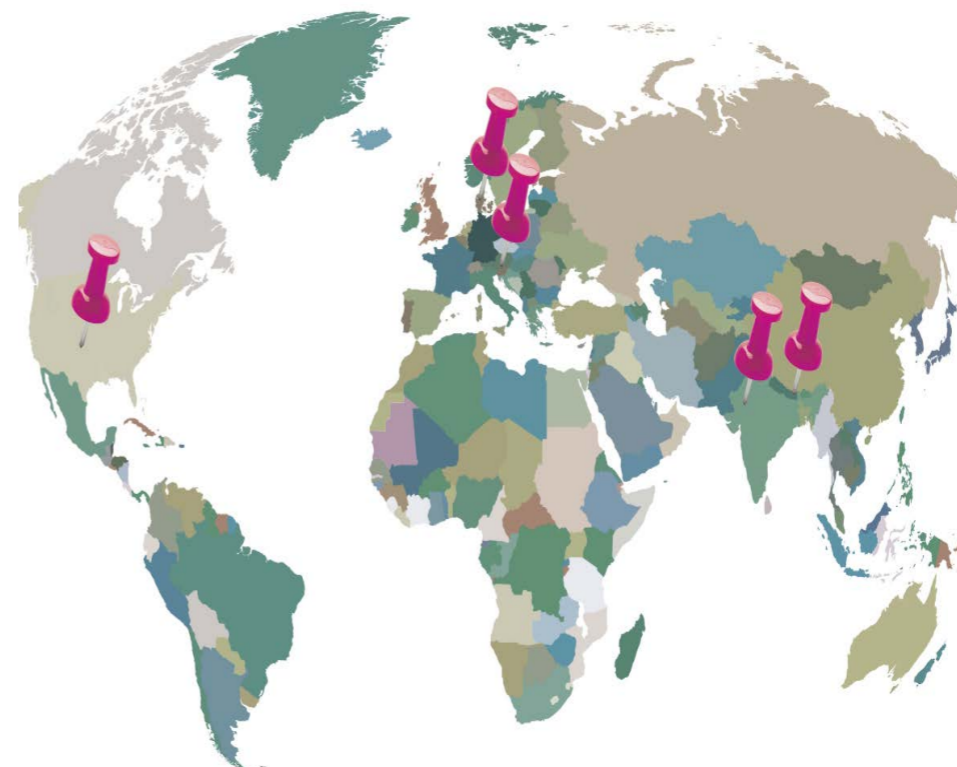
Professor Arlie Russell Hochschild spent time in Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District, one of the whitest, poorest and most Trump-supporting districts in the US.

In her book, *Stolen Pride*, she says that "those most enthralled with Donald Trump were not at the very bottom – the illiterate, the hungry".

Rather, Trump's biggest fans could be found among "the elite of the left-behind", meaning people "who were doing well within a region that was not".

Professor Hochschild found that those who were "locally rich" white people, were much more likely to support Trump than those who were locally poor. These people might make less money than a wealthy person in a big city, but were doing relatively well when compared to their neighbours.

This adds nuance to the prevailing theory that Trump is most popular among impoverished white people who are suffering due to globalisation.



Daddy's footsteps lead to €€€

Lawyers, doctors and engineers who have studied in the same field as their parents have higher incomes than their colleagues, according to a Danish study.

Assistant Professor Jesper Fels Birkelund, of the University of Copenhagen, mapped the income of 40-year-olds who followed their father's or mother's educational path and compared it with those who had not, using data on 139,000 Danes born between 1960 and 1979.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Sociology*, concludes that doctors and lawyers earn on average 5%-10% more if at least one of their parents has a degree in the same field of study.

However, these significant differences are only found in a few professions, and for many public sector employees, such as nurses and teachers, no effect was found.

The study did not find that those earning more had benefited from direct help from their parents as they were unlikely to have benefited from their parents' network.

Instead, it suggested that children receive generic skills from their upbringing and parents, and so had cultural capital that helps them later in life.

Dalit women face abuse

Dalit women in Nepal who marry men from another caste face violence and abuse from the public, a study has found.

Professor Tilak Biswokarma, head of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University, interviewed 120 women from the Dalit caste, also known as 'untouchables'.

According to the report, 72% had faced threats, and 71% verbal abuse in public because of inter-caste marriage, with 39% experiencing physical assault and 30% what the report calls 'false charges'.

Official figures for 2021 show that 2,681 incidents specifically targeted Dalit women and children.

According to the report, inter-caste marriages affect not only Dalit women but also their children, as their parents faced difficulties enrolling them at schools.

The report suggested that the government should make arrangements for the protection of couples who have been forced to move home after inter-caste marriage, including providing accommodation, and organising income-generating programmes to promote economic self-sufficiency.

Sociologists 'ignoring climate'

Sociologists in the US are failing to tackle climate change in their journal articles, courses and conferences, a new study concludes.

Sofia Hiltner, a sociology doctoral student at the University of Michigan, found few mentions of climate change in leading sociology journal articles, conference sessions, faculty biographies and course listings in top-ranked departments in the US.

Ms Hiltner studied the *American Sociological Review*, the *Annual Review of Sociology*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Social Problems* and *Socius*.

She searched titles, abstracts and keywords in each journal for climate terms for all years to 2023, finding that only 0.9% referred in detail to climate change.

Ms Hiltner also searched the titles and descriptions of presidential addresses, presidential panels and plenary sessions at the American Sociological Association's annual conference but found that only 1.5% referred to climate change.

Of more than 8,000 courses listed in the leading sociology departments in the US, only 0.2% focused on climate change.

"Why have the US sociological forums in this study neglected to substantially attend to climate change?" she asked in an article published in *The American Sociologist*.

"This pattern is puzzling given sociology's attention to important social problems. Perhaps sociology has not had as much time to define anthropogenic climate change as a coherent field, like race or gender.

"What are the implications of limited research and teaching on climate change in sociology? Scholars worry that a lack of sociological inquiry (and of social science in general) may risk marginalising sociology in the wider world of climate research, [including] international assessments such as those by the IPCC, and policymaking, with implications for how climate change is framed and responded to as a social problem.

"Though the natural sciences have thoroughly documented the changing climate and its implications for the biophysical world, and have modelled its future effects, they cannot fully explore questions such as how humans contribute to, are impacted by, and can respond to these changes.

"Where do sociologists go from here? In this paper, my intention is not to dissect the research of individual scholars and cast blame but rather to examine sociology in the US at large and to stimulate a conversation."

MedSoc 2024 unites sociologists from around the world for ‘stimulating and welcoming’ event

This year's MedSoc conference, at the University of Warwick in September, attracted 211 delegates from 16 countries, including Brazil, Ethiopia, India and Japan. A total of 131 oral presentations were given, with four posters presented.

The conference, the 56th held, included a ‘pitch and mix’ event where people could discuss funding and research ideas with colleagues, and a ‘connection cafe’ to discuss issues within medical sociology.

The conference proved popular, with people posting favourable comments such as “incredible”, “stimulating” and “welcoming” on Twitter/X. *see right*

The programme also included special events on disability studies, public health, ‘imposter participants’ and philanthropic actors in healthcare. A total of 41 free places were offered at the event.

Professor Nicky Hudson, Director of the Centre for Reproduction Research at De Montfort University, gave the opening plenary, on ‘The chronicity-fertility nexus: conceptive imaginaries, medical complexity and (dis)integrated care’. *see page 13*

Dr LaTonya Trotter, of the University of Washington, gave the closing plenary, entitled ‘Beyond health disparities: the medical workplace as a site of racialization, expropriation and resistance’. *see page 14*

Dr Jo Hope and Dr Kylie Baldwin stepped down from the MedSoc committee, with Emma Craddock and Chloe Phillips joining.

The Foundation of the Sociology of Health and Illness book prize was won by Professor Kate Reed, Julie Ellis and Elspeth Whitby for *Understanding Baby Loss: The Sociology of Life, Death and Post-mortem*. More details: <https://tinyurl.com/naxm6fcp>

The book offers a detailed account of how parents experience different forms of baby loss and make decisions about post-mortem examination. It analyses some of the challenges professionals face when working in this highly sensitive field of medicine.

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

The Phil Strong prize was given to Merissa Elizabeth Hickman, a PhD student

This year's MedSoc conference saw addresses on endometriosis and racial inequalities in healthcare, and featured a series of special events. Network takes a look...

at the University of Leicester, to help with her study, entitled, ‘Utilising different knowledges through co-analysis in the “What’s the problem represented to be?” policy framework’.

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

support postgraduate research.

Next year's MedSoc conference will take place at Northumbria University, from 10 to 12 September.

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

‘Endometriosis affects women’s fertility choices’

Some women with endometriosis are deciding not to have children because of fears of the pain that stopping contraception can cause, the conference heard.

Professor Nicky Hudson is conducting a study into how the condition – a chronic inflammatory condition that can lead to bleeding and scarring in the pelvic area – affects women’s fertility choices.

Professor Hudson said the condition was “difficult to diagnose and it’s often misdiagnosed as other conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome, sciatica, even appendicitis.

“That contributes to the fact that the average time to diagnosis in the UK is still eight years, which is an inordinate amount of time. And, as is the case with a lot of conditions with variable presentations, length of time to diagnosis is often really closely linked to a lack of understanding amongst healthcare professionals.”

This was despite the fact that it affected 10% of females of reproductive age – around 190 million women and girls globally – and was as common among women in the UK as diabetes.

She said that there had been little research into how the condition affected choices about having children. “For some people it was their inability to conceive as a main symptom that led them in the end to a diagnosis of endometriosis.

“Some people showed up at infertility clinics because they couldn’t conceive after years of trying, and at that point are diagnosed with endometriosis. For others, they received the diagnosis of endometriosis and this has shaped their decision-making about whether to try for a baby.”

This was because to conceive they would need to stop contraceptives, such as the pill or the coil, which reduced their symptoms.

“Contraceptive technologies must obviously be stopped when people are wanting to seek to become pregnant. Whilst that might give somebody the opportunity of trying for a pregnancy, which is by no means guaranteed, for some people it also means living with extreme pain, including painful sex, which, again, is a big barrier to conception. There was a great deal of ambivalence around this amongst women.

“Some people decided not to have children at all. Some decided not to have a second child or a third child because of the uncertainty that life with the condition might bring. So they limited their desire for families.” The decision to try for children also prevented having a hysterectomy to alleviate their symptoms.

“A common experience for those who did decide to have children, and were able to have children, was to have them earlier than they were planning.”

New treatments for the condition were on the horizon. “Management really focuses on symptom relief or control – there had been no new treatment for endometriosis in 40 years, but that’s starting to change. There are some new diagnostic tests and treatment in trial currently, but for a really long time endometriosis has been hidden and ignored.”




Professor Nicky Hudson




Nolwazi Ncube is pictured above, and her tweet is in the right hand column. The BSA events team are above right



 **Chloe Phillips** @Chloephillips28 · Sep 14
#MedSoc24 was absolutely incredible! It was great to be back at Warwick, and felt extra special that I was voted in as the one of the new PG/ECR Reps whilst here. Thank you to all of the organisers and presenters! Far too much to gush about for the character limit here 😊

 **Anya Ovcharenko** @OvcharenkoAny · Sep 14
My first time at #MedSoc24 was so lovely! Such a relaxed and welcoming group. Hoping to meet more people and introduce myself properly next time ❤️

 **Chandini Subramanyam** @Chan_SuperMario · Sep 12
Ready for day 2 of stimulating presentations and discussion at the @britsoci Medical Sociology conference at @uniofwarwick @LOROSEducation @SocSciHealth

 **Nolwazi Ncube, Ph.D.** @Nolwazi_Ncube · Sep 11
How lovely the ECR ‘Career Firsts’ event has been @britsoci MedSoc. Thank you to the organisers 🙏

LaTonya Trotter told her plenary audience that US medical academics were failing to accept the existence of some forms of racial bias

Racial bias is fundamental to the medical profession, but US academics are not fully acknowledging its existence, Dr LaTonya Trotter told her plenary audience.

Dr Trotter, based at the University of Washington, said that her work in a school of medicine researching race and healthcare had shown her the various ways that academics denied any problems.

"This disavowal takes many forms," she said. "There is, of course, the evergreen 'bad apple' explanation [that racism is an isolated phenomenon]. And although we may think that this explanation has very little currency among academics, I think it's important to point out that it remains rather common, not just in the lay public, but in academic medicine.

"There are still more subtle forms of this, the second of which is essentially an appeal to human nature which is that 'certainly, providers can participate in racist behaviour, but it's not their intention, nor is it their fault. It's simply a result of human cognition'.

"It was only three years ago that the Deputy Editor of *Jama* [*Journal of the American Medical Association*], when asked about the enduring existence of racial health disparity in the United States, stated in a podcast for the journal, 'personally, I think taking racism out of the conversation will help many people like myself who are offended by the implication that we are somehow racist'.

"And the third [form of denial] is one that even medical sociologists participate in. And that is to blame a kind of disembodied form of structural racism where one says, 'yes, racism exists, it's structural, but it is simply a part of the social background that medicine inhabits'.

"Three years ago I moved from a sociology department to a school of medicine, and I have to report back from that field that implicit bias has become the only institutionally approved way of talking about and somatically addressing racial bias in medicine.

"All of these forms of disavowal help to create the assumption that medicine itself is at best benevolent, that the science of the body and the evidence-based practices of the clinic have absolutely no relationship to race or to racial ideology, and that any racism that you see is in fact epiphenomenal to medicine's enterprise.

"But the perpetuation of racial ideology is not just epiphenomenal to medicine, but is

'Racial ideology has always been fundamental to medicine's professional enterprise'

actually fundamental and has always been fundamental to its professional enterprise."

She gave as evidence for this a history of how medicine had regarded Black people from the time the first slaves were brought to the United States.

She drew on a book, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840*, by Rana Hogarth, which argued that race medicine began in the 1600s with the transatlantic slave trade, when white physicians serving aboard ships on plantations in the Caribbean and the US, "began pulling together and circulating their observations and experimentation on the Black people they encountered. The book's argument is that it was in fact their ability to find and explain racial difference that served as the foundation of their claim to expertise."

One later example was a spirometer to measure the amount of air that a person breathes out, developed by Dr Samuel

'Slavery, however, not only supplied medicine with the bodies of the dead, but also the living'

Cartwright, a leading mid-19th century physician. This supposedly showed that Black people had weaker lungs.

"In 1851 when Cartwright was asked how he knew that Black people were inferior, his answer was simple: 'you can see it through the spirometer'. And I think that it was really quite important to underline that the spirometer at that point in time had no clinical value. Cartwright never intended it to either diagnose or to measure any respiratory condition. The sole purpose of this spirometer was to allow physicians to see racial difference so that science could more clearly see race – the racial 'fact' was that Black people in the US at that time had lower lung capacity than the white population."

Adjusting results from spirometer tests because of the mistaken idea that Black people had weaker lungs had continued in the US until two years ago.

"This was the foundational idea of what is still relatively common today, the practice of race norming measurements. So race correction of pulmonary function remained in established medical practice until 2022.

"So that means that until 2022, every time a person performed a test or interpreted the results using a kind of spirometer, they became implicated and reproducing a particular racial fact. And more generally, they became complicit in reproducing the idea that Black people's bodies are categorically different and weaker than other kinds of bodies."



Dr LaTonya Trotter

She said that while it was notorious that in the past the bodies of dead Black slaves were often used for dissection by doctors, experiments were also performed on the living.

"Slavery not only supplied medicine with the bodies of the dead, but also the living. Plantation physicians would often pay for the food and material upkeep of the enslaved in exchange for free rein to perform brutal experiments on their minds and bodies.

"The Civil War [1861-1865] did not mark the end of this practice, but it actually signalled its escalation. Continuing reforms to medical education simply increased the need for bodies. And as a result, the southern tradition of using Black people as subject of experimentation became a national one."

People who were incarcerated were also subject to experiments. "Black prisoners were subjected to unregulated medical experimentation from the 1940s through the 1970s."

She noted the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, an infamous clinical trial conducted between 1932 and 1972 by the US Public Health Service that left syphilis among some rural African American people in Alabama untreated in order to study the disease's progression. "So even when there was treatment for syphilis, they were denied treatment. They just kept following them until their eventual death."

"In addition to these newsworthy cases of exploitation, there were also more routine examples of exploitation. Medically underserved Black communities were forced to

'Closing up Black medical schools drastically reduced the opportunities of aspiring Black physicians'

turn to academic medical centres for free care. And this free care made them available for everyday practices and experiments by medical students attending clinical investigations."

She said that in the early 20th century most of the US medical schools set up to train Black doctors were closed "to dismiss the notion that we should even try to train enough Black physicians to serve the Black population, so that white physicians would and should continue to treat most Black patients. So the closing up and disinvestment in Black medical schools would drastically reduce the educational opportunities of aspiring Black physicians for almost a century."

She noted other research that showed the "exclusion of a diversity of people who were providing what we might think of as medical care during the formation of the institution

of medicine as a profession, a sort of institutional exclusion of women from the pool of practitioners as well as excluding indigenous and Black providers.

"That was actually quite important as part of the development of elite hegemonic, white, masculine physicians. So keeping these [other] folks out of being in the provider pool was also in effect placing them in a different kind of social status and relationship to physicians."

She gave as an example the case of Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman whose cancer cells are the source of the HeLa line, one of the most important cell lines in cancer research.

"When many people write about the story of Henrietta Lacks, they are thinking about the ways in which her family did not actually receive any benefit from the use of her particularly useful cancer cell line.

"But for me, a small but not insignificant note about that case is that she had to travel to an academic medical centre to receive free care [as no local Black doctor was available], and that is actually the site at which that exploitation became possible.

"The production of Black vulnerability in part through disallowing the training of Black physicians for over a century uniquely exposed Black populations to exploitation by American medicine. And to give a sense of this dearth of Black physicians, in 1910, 2.5% of US physicians were Black, and in 2022 the number was 5.7%."

‘Uber drivers only earn for half the time they work’

The growth in the number of Uber drivers has meant that some are only carrying passengers for around half the time they are working, the WES event heard.

James Farrar, the founder and Director of Worker Info Exchange, said: “In the past 10 years or so we’ve doubled the number of for-hire vehicles in London licensed to do this type of work. That’s been the Uber effect. We’re now approaching 100,000 licensed vehicles in London.”

He said that Uber workers were only earning income 40% to 60% of the time they were working. They were often driving back from one job with an empty cab to get to a location where they knew might get a booking.

“You’re working 10 hours a day on the road, but if you’re only going to get paid for six of those you’re going stay out longer because that’s the way it works. You’ve got rent to pay on your vehicle and you’re not getting paid by the hour. What money you need that you could get in eight hours a day last year is going to take you 12 hours a day this year, 14 next year.”



He said this also had an environmental effect. “It turns out that Uber’s emissions this year will surpass, if they stay on course, Transport for London’s entire emissions for all of their transport operations, bus, tube and rail. So that’s an incredibly heavy footprint of 600,000 tonnes of carbon. It’s also it turns out really inefficient from an environment perspective.”

A new system of automated ‘dynamic pay’ being brought in by gig platforms means that their workers were doubly unsure of their income. Not only did they not know how many hours they would be working, but now their rate of pay could vary hour to hour, he said.

“As gig workers, we look up to zero-hours contract workers because they may not know if they’re going to get work on a particular day, but if they do get work, they have a reasonable chance of understanding how much they’ll be paid for it,” he said.

“But in a gig economy people go to work in the morning, they don’t know if they’ll get work, and then if they do get work, they don’t know what they’ll be paid for it or the basis for that pay.

Work Employment and Society hosted three interactive online events on the theme of ‘Meaningful work in the digital economy’. Network takes a look at three of the presentations...

“That’s what’s happened with ‘dynamic pay’, it’s completely floating and there’s no understanding of how that pay has been set. And that’s unfortunate because section one of the Employment Rights Act states workers are entitled to understand the basis on which they’ve been paid, and that’s been really ridden over in the gig economy recently.

“What we’re seeing is, after 10 years of growth, the platforms’ growth is slowing, so they need to turn to algorithmic management for profitability. They’re turning to automated decision-making that decides how you’re being paid. So we’re moving to dynamic pay systems.

“Dynamic pay systems work really well when you’ve got this high supply that you can play with because you’re charging a premium to your customers, but you can use that to bargain down workers. They’re lucky to get a job at all.”

Mr Farrar talked about how he came to challenge Uber in the courts. He was an Uber driver from 2015-16, and one evening he was assaulted by a passenger. When he asked Uber to identify his attacker, he “found that Uber was not co-operating with

the police to identify the assailant. I was really puzzled by this because I thought the advantage of working for an app was that there would be strong digital footprints and it would be a very safe place to work because of that accountability for everybody involved.

“But of course, just because something can be done it doesn’t mean it will be, and Uber was wrongly demanding that the Metropolitan Police go to court and get an injunction for them to disclose the identity of the passenger who had assaulted me. Eventually, after 10 weeks, Uber did co-operate and identify who the person was.

“It caused me to start to look at the contract to understand what is duty of care. Where does it lie? And why is it that this company was not co-operating?” This was because Uber saw itself not as his employer, but his customer, and so not under a legal or moral duty to help him.

Mr Farrar then led a legal action against Uber. This led to a Supreme Court decision that its drivers must be treated as workers rather than self-employed. The decision could mean thousands of Uber drivers are entitled to a minimum wage and holiday pay.

The online event, which took place over three days in September, featured various speakers.

Professor Katie Bailey, of King’s College London, Dr Knut Laaser, of the University of Stirling, and Professor Marjo Lips-Wiersma, of Auckland University of Technology, spoke on the theme of theorising meaningful work.

Dr Sara Farris, of Goldsmith, Dr Shoba Arun, of Essex Business School, and Professor

Jason Arday, of the University of Cambridge, spoke on meaningful work and intersectionality.

Dr Livia Garofalo, of the Data and Society Research Institute in the US, Professor Valeria Pulignano, of KU Leuven, and James Farrar, of the Worker Info Exchange, spoke on meaningful work in the platform economy.

Network regrets lack of space precludes featuring all the presentations.

Care workers are ‘erased’ from feminist movement

Cleaners and care workers have been “erased” from the feminist and worker movements of the past century in various countries, Dr Sara Farris told the event.

“In many ways, they have been consistently a very important segment of the working population for two centuries in many different countries around the world, and 90% of them are women,” she said.

“Yet, in spite of these significant facts, they have been erased from two very important movements of the 20th century and the 21st century. Precisely those movements that one would expect to represent them, namely, on the one hand, the workers’ movement, and on the other hand, the feminist movement.

“Notoriously, both Karl Marx and E.P. Thompson did not include female servants in their description of the English working class, in spite of the fact that this was the most prevalent job for working women in the 19th and early 20th century.

“Marx and Engels erased domestic workers because they were considered too close to the enemy, beside the fact that they were not factory workers, and thus not subject to the type of exploitation regime that Marx identified as the true novelty of capitalism.

“But even today, domestic workers are not really part of class analysis. To give an

example, of the nearly 200,000 respondents to the Great British Class survey that was done around 10 years ago, none of them were domestic workers, despite the fact that they constitute 5% of the workforce.

“Similarly, when contemporary scholars of social class have included new categories such as the precariat to account for the important changes brought about by neo-liberalism – in terms of contract typologies, income or forms of mobilisation and class consciousness – domestic workers continue to be either ignored or subsumed into other class categories.

“Partly this has happened because the mainstream of the feminist movement tended to focus on struggles for political, civic and reproductive rights, whereas working class women’s rights in the workplace were not really a central concern.

“One more reason why domestic-worker organisations do not seem to be part, even today, of the feminist tradition is because in the decades that marked the so-called second wave of feminism in the global North there was the idea that domestic workers were no longer a significant



category of workers.

“It was an idea certainly to be proved wrong, not only because they were extremely significant, particularly in the global South, but also because in the global North from the ’80s onwards, it becomes clear that the domestic service was not really a pre-capitalist profession in decline, but rather a growing sector employing more and more migrant women and working class women.

“In the global North, while increasing numbers of women entered the labour market, they sought to out-source domestic tasks, cleaning, childcare and elderly care to other women – often migrant, racialised women – thereby contributing to the growth of domestic workers.”

Researchers were becoming more alive to the issue, however. “Scholars began to question whether feminists had unwittingly created a system where the liberation of one group of women implicitly depended on the exploitation of another group of women. So how do self-identifying feminists hiring domestic workers reconcile it with the commitment to free all women from traditionally feminised roles and exploitative working conditions?”

Nurses ‘struggle’ to secure sense of job meaning

Professor Katie Bailey carried out a qualitative study of nurses, creative artists and lawyers to ask whether they found their work meaningful.

“We could see, looking at the three groups, that they had slightly different ways of talking about their worth,” she told the event.

“Each group struggled in different ways to find that sense of meaning. You would perhaps expect nurses to more easily find a sense of meaning in their work, because it’s fairly clear to us outside that profession what a contribution they’re making.

“But if you talk to nurses, and also to doctors, there’s a real daily struggle to secure that sense of meaningfulness.

“The stories that we were told were very much about the nurse having to act as gatekeepers for the patient. They felt very much caught up between the doctors on

the one hand, who wanted to come up with medical solutions to the problems that people were facing, and the hospital administrative functions, which were very much concerned with getting the patients through and out, freeing up the beds in the hospital so that they could then bring more patients in.

“So here the nurses were very much laying claim to a sense of worth in their work through being the advocate for the patient, speaking up for the patient – with a sense of closeness and proximity to the patient – by acting as their real guardians in the face of others who didn’t understand them.

“In terms of the creative artists – and here we spoke to musicians, actors, writers,



singers – we got a sense that it was very difficult for them to have the feeling that their work was making a worthwhile contribution.

“Fundamental to their claims to worth was this notion of inspiring other people. So the artist is the outsider coming in and opening up the doors to people to see the world in a different way, to experience life differently because of having their eyes opened through their creative art.”

With the law firm she studied, their sense of worth came from “representing the individual claimants against organisations. So they positioned themselves as ‘I’m a crusader, fighting for the little person against the big corporations’.”



'Perhaps the whole concept of a canon has outlived its usefulness'

From: 'The sociological canon at LSE: past, present, and future'

Matt Reynolds,
LSE Researching Sociology Blog, March 2024
<https://tinyurl.com/5n8c6nfc>

The relative absence of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, Marx, Weber and Du Bois, in the early LSE syllabus is charted by Matt Reynolds, a PhD student and graduate teaching assistant.

In a blog, he writes that sociology first appeared in 1904 in the LSE's archive of 'calendars', which record who taught which subject. The earliest documents did not include reading lists, but by the 1910s and 1920s the catalogues began to specify the books recommended for students to read.

Instead of works by Marx or Weber, the reading lists featured books by Edward Westernmarck, Leonard Hobhouse and Morris Ginsberg, the founders of LSE's Department of Sociology, *The Sociological Review* journal and the British Sociological Association respectively.

Over time these names were dropped from the reading lists in favour of the founding fathers.

"Westernmarck and Hobhouse faded in significance over the course of the 20th century, though the latter still lends his name to a prize for the best master's dissertation. One of Ginsberg's textbooks remained on the reading list until the late 1970s, but by this point today's 'founding fathers' were dominant: 'familiarity with classical social theorists such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber' was a prerequisite for a course in 1976-77."

The first founding father to appear on a reading list was Durkheim. He was joined by Weber in 1932 and by Marx in 1948 (though Marx had been studied in political and economic history since the School opened).

"One name from these early years that [his students today are] familiar with was Émile Durkheim," Matt writes. "During their first-year 'Introduction to social theory' course, they critically analyse his influential theories of organic and mechanical solidarity, along with his problematic ideas on 'primitive people' and women."

"A more surprising name in the early curricula was Peter Kropotkin, whose theory of 'mutual aid' ran counter to Herbert Spencer's 'survival of the fittest', the Social Darwinist justification for colonial domination."

"Durkheim remains a canonical figure

today while Kropotkin dropped off the course by 1930, but it is interesting to see that an anarchist voice was given a platform within a university explicitly preparing people for a colonial career.

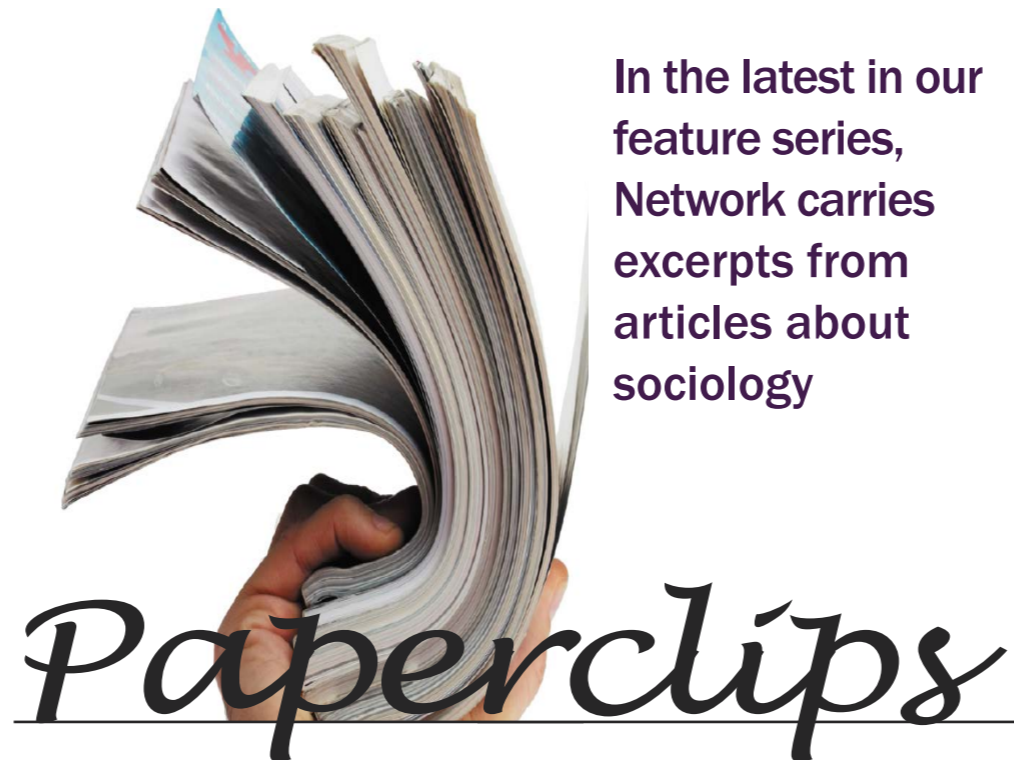
"It took until 2011 for W.E.B. Du Bois to take his place as the final 'founding father' on LSE's Introduction to Social Theory and the department has been enriched as a result. In the wake of the First World War, Du Bois encapsulated European hypocrisy by stating that 'What Belgium now suffers is not half, not even a tenth, of what she has done to black Congo.' My students drew parallels between this and contemporary nation-states making foreign policy decisions at odds with the human rights they claim to respect."

"In class discussion, they appreciated that they were now being taught about figures like Du Bois but remained frustrated that the sociological canon remained both Global North-focused and male-centric."

"In addition to looking forward, to the diverse contemporary sociologists taught by our department, we can also benefit by looking back at what we have lost along the way. Looking over LSE calendars from the 1930s, female scholars like Margaret Mead and Marianne Weber appear fleetingly, along with the Indian sociologist G. S. Ghurye. His 1932 book, *Caste and Race in India*, shows the insights we have missed, how caste is valuable to study both on its own terms and as a 'marked contrast to the social grouping prevalent in Europe or America'."

"When I asked my students to imagine that they were in charge of who made up the sociological canon, there was no clear consensus on the way forward. Some wanted

'It is interesting to see that an anarchist voice was given a platform within a university'



In the latest in our feature series, Network carries excerpts from articles about sociology

radical change [away from] the white, Global North, and male canonical figures, such as dropping Durkheim altogether. Other students were wary, responding with counter-arguments like – 'how can we understand Western domination without understanding the social theory underpinning it?' and, 'how can we understand Black Marxist feminists like Angela Davis without first understanding Marx?'

"As class teacher I did not contribute my own opinion, but the discussion stayed with me. I started to feel that leaving Émile Durkheim as the sole survivor of the early curriculum had turned him into a scapegoat for the discipline's other founders and their colonialist theories. Not only is it important for institutions to be transparent about their own history, but key texts like Said's *Orientalism* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* hold even greater significance when considered against works like *The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples*.

"Furthermore, most 'classical' sociological texts come from the 19th and early 20th century. We could go even further back to Ibn Khaldun from 14th-century Tunisia to find sociology's roots. Marx was added to the sociological canon in the 1940s, and Du Bois only recently. When can we expect the next new entrant? In order to achieve epistemic justice, perhaps the whole concept of a 'canon' has outlived its usefulness."

• Matt Reynolds is a PhD student at the London School of Economics. His research focuses on the relationship between domestic workers and their wealthy employers in contemporary London. He teaches on the second-year undergraduate course 'Key concepts: advanced social theory'.

Leading US sociology journals have turned away from publishing theoretical analyses in favour of using publicly-available information as their main source of data, research has found.

In two studies, Professor Roger Clark, of Rhode Island College, analysed articles in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review* and *Social Forces* for various years since 1938.

He found that while in 1938, 38% of the journal papers were primarily based on theory, this had fallen to 16% in 1968 and to 6% by 2008. Working with his student, Alexis Rei, he found the figure had fallen even lower since then.

Other sources of data such as questionnaires and fieldwork (both 5% in 2008) had remained similar over the decades.

The big increase was in the use of 'available data', defined by the researchers as "information, content, or records that are (usually) easily available; that is, that do not require the researcher to design and collect survey data using questionnaires or interviews or collect observations".

The proportion of papers based mainly on this rose from 20% in 1938 to 59% in 2008, and has increased since.

The researchers write: "One of the reasons that the use of secondary data has grown in popularity is undoubtedly that datasets have become much more numerous and accessible to other researchers over the years. As of this writing, the University of California at Berkeley gives free access to 18 different datasets, some collected at many points in time."

"As American sociology has evolved, readers will note that pure theory has become much less likely to be the sole data source in articles. This does not mean that articles in today's journals are atheoretical.

Leading US journals have turned away from theory in favour of using public data

From: 'Do sociologists put enough emphasis on the use of available data in teaching research methods?'

Alexis Rei and Professor Roger Clark,
Rhode Island College

Sociology Between the Gaps, July 2024
<https://tinyurl.com/4mj28n44>



In fact, all are informed by theory in one way or another. There are simply fewer articles based purely on theory today than there were in the late 1930's through to the late 1950s, when sociologists like Robert Merton and Erving Goffman were writing. Available data would still be by far the most 'popular' type of data used in recent years."

Professor Clark writes: "My personal feelings are that available data are also particularly useful for helping students concentrate on other critical skills – like reading and writing research papers – things that other forms of data collection can distract from."

"Over time I've increasingly had students focus on projects that involve the collection of available data, or content analysis (which is, of course, a subset of 'available data' where the data are texts, whether they be films, YouTube shows or documents of some sort). They generally pick from a long list of topics I supply on the first day of class."

Topics like: what are reasons for the gender voting gap, using General Social Survey (GSS) data; reasons for the changing gap in fear of crime by gender, using GSS data; how has the presentation of female lead characters in Disney animated films changed over time; what are some of the major reasons for variation in gun shooting death rates by state in the United States; what are some of the major reasons for variation in suicide rates

by state in the United States?

"Once chosen, these topics permit students to write bite-sized portions of their final research papers throughout the course. Thus, when we're talking in class about practical matters, like reviewing the literature, sampling, measurement and study designs, students can make these concepts 'real' by drafting the portions of their final papers that relate to these matters – rather than having to do these things all at once at the end of the course. And I can give them feedback at every stage – because they are, at this point, 'bite-sized,' and easily read and responded to with more care than if they all came in as parts of a full-sized research at the end of the semester."

"They may not be as 'sexy' as data collected through interviews, observations and questionnaires, but their use can be fun and informative."

Do you have news to share?



Network is looking for news, features, opinions and book reviews.

If you're interested in having your say, please contact Tony Trueman, at tony.trueman@britsoc.org.uk or on 07964 023392.

The next issue comes out in April and the copy deadline is late December.

A sociologist's task is to 'turn personal troubles and concerns into social issues and problems open to reason'

C. Wright Mills' quote goes to the heart of sociology, of course, but while it's not difficult to find which public issues sociologists are tackling, the personal troubles that may be the impulse for this work are less obvious – they may be a little too personal to reveal.

In a new book, 45 American researchers draw back the curtain and make the private public. *Between Us: Healing Ourselves and Changing the World Through Sociology* has an appropriate title, for this is a series of short accounts of what impelled the contributors to become sociologists.

The accounts are frank about their formative years in which they, loved ones, or friends suffer bullying, racism, poverty, murder, bereavement or suicide. The book is sometimes grim, but is never despairing: sociology is shown to be a way of understanding lives and giving hope for something better, for the writers and for wider society. *Network* takes a look at a few of the chapters.

Dr Victoria Reyes, of the University of California, writes about her experience in a religious cult:

My mother had me when she was 15 years old, so my Filipina grandmother raised me alongside my uncles and aunts as their sibling. My grandma always worked two to three jobs to take care of us, including as a restaurant server, a fast-food employee, and a domestic worker. At age 14, I started working 'under the table' at a Chinese fast-food restaurant to help pay for necessities.

[She then learned that her mother had been raped]. I started acting out and doing drugs. First weed, then trying acid and crack, one time each. That summer, my aunt invited me to visit her, so I took a Greyhound bus from Cincinnati to Arizona to stay with her, her partner, and their two boys. After multiple out-of-body experiences due

to drug use that summer, I vowed to quit and change my life.

Back in Cincinnati, we were evicted from our apartment. Months later, we moved into a small home across the street after my grandmother cashed in her 401(k) [workplace retirement plan] to pay for the down payment. Because I had stopped doing drugs, I lost my old friends. I was alone, lonely, and just 16 – the perfect conditions for being recruited into a fundamentalist international Christian church (read: cult), the International Churches of Christ (ICOC).

I remember my very first church service. The lead evangelist, as he was called, was a Korean-American man. His wife, a white woman, had the



There's a stigma with cults that feels different to other types of stigmas

formal title of lead evangelist's wife, a title that reflected the second-class citizenship of women in the Church. Sitting a few rows from the stage, I listened

to the evangelist talk about how 'sold-out disciples' were going to hell, and I asked myself what the hell I had gotten myself into. But when the service was over, the white teen leaders (adults in charge of teens' spiritual wellness in the Church) and the white, Black, and Brown teens in the ministry surrounded me and introduced themselves. They asked me questions and seemed to genuinely want to get to know me. I felt a deep sense of acceptance, one that contrasted starkly

Waverly Duck is Professor of Sociology and Associate Director, Center for Black Studies Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara:

In the summer of 1983, when I was about seven years old, the son of a neighbour and family friend, Percy, became the first crack dealer in my neighbourhood, on the East Side of Detroit. Percy rose to the status of local folk hero, facilitated by the economic downturn of the previous year, which led to layoffs for my stepfather and many other men employed in manufacturing. Percy was among the new crop of Black men in their late 20s and early 30s who discovered they could replace their lost factory wages with money from selling drugs. He had the money, clothes, and a Mercedes. Once, he hosted a big Fourth of July block party, purchasing most of the food and fireworks, and creating a much-needed celebration in our economically depressed community.

Although I was not aware of it at the time, the party signalled a fateful transformation then underway in my neighbourhood. By October, a new phenomenon had made its appearance: crack addiction. The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s devastated many communities. Directly or indirectly, it touched everyone in Detroit. I witnessed its effects firsthand with several relatives. Close friends and family members became almost unrecognisable, ghostly representations of their former selves. Once they were out of work, formerly trusted men and women succumbed to the enticement of drugs, abandoned their children, stole to support their habit, and were caught up in waves of violence from competition among dealers and raids by the police.

When I was eight, my childlike distance from death was shattered. Growing up, I often watched my parents struggle, especially during periods when we barely had enough to eat. One night, I heard the screeching of a car and several



men yelling, then gunshots. I heard a woman screaming for help, then more gunshots. My mother awoke and made me move from the couch to the basement. She called the police, but they didn't show up until the next day. We – mostly the kids in the neighbourhood – saw this woman's naked, burned, dust-covered, bloated body lying in the dead end of the street. We later learned that she had been raped and murdered, and her body set ablaze. We moved to the eastern outskirts of Detroit. In my new neighbourhood, there were maybe two years of peace. I thrived in school. I loved my life. My stepfather was a jazz musician, carpenter, painter, cook, and construction worker. He personified the Black American notion of a hustler, a person who worked any and every job to make ends meet. He had formerly worked in the foundry at the auto plant; the dirtiest and most physically strenuous jobs were always reserved for Black men. His stock emotion was happiness.

My stepfather adored me and believed I could do anything. I was his sidekick on carpentry jobs, an errand-runner for jazz musicians, and his good-luck charm for dice games. Here was a man who had fought in the Korean War, was profoundly active in the Civil Rights movement in the South, and was heavily discriminated against throughout his life, yet was always kind and generous. He was laid off by Chrysler after he was injured at work. Though he received a \$10,000 settlement, the money didn't last long. Once he realized that he was permanently unemployed, he had a nervous breakdown.

Though he became pessimistic about his own prospects, he saw nothing but endless

possibilities in and for me. According to the famous Black saying, "You can do anything you put your mind to", and my stepfather said it to me repeatedly.

I was lucky to have a man in my life who did his best in a world that was hostile to his existence

He taught me how to drive at eleven, used my left-handedness as a particular skill when teaching me how to box and play baseball, and protected me from other people's homophobic stereotypes about boys doing art when I started taking after-school art classes in elementary school.

When I left home, my stepfather co-signed on my first apartment. I was lucky to have a man in my life who did his best in a world that was hostile to his existence.

My stepfather is the reason I love Elijah Anderson's *A Place on the Corner* so much: the men in this book are my father, uncles, cousins. *A Place on the Corner* and Joyce Ladner's *Tomorrow's Tomorrow* were two of the first books by Black ethnographers to challenge a widespread belief that poverty in general, and the poverty of Black communities specifically, was the result of a culture of poverty that featured learned helplessness, bad habits, and lowered expectations that kept people from getting ahead. Instead, these books contained accounts and people I recognised, capturing the joys and struggles of the human condition under extreme pressure and structural anti-Black racism.

For me, becoming a sociologist has provided insight into the meanings and long-term consequences of economic inequality, structural racism, and endemic violence that so many children experience.

Feature continues overleaf

as family members or friends; or habitus gained from growing up in the Church. My dreams of rising in the ranks of the ICOC were quickly dashed. 'Kingdom Kids' – those who had been born and raised in the Church – were generally seen as the next set of leaders, particularly if they were white. I was neither a Kingdom Kid nor white. Once again, I felt like I didn't belong. I could do nothing right and could never be good enough, though I tried to do everything that was expected of me.

I was baptized soon afterward and threw myself into this life wholeheartedly. That meant trying to recruit other teens into the Church. It meant confessing all my sins – almost every waking thought – to my discipler. And it meant throwing myself into all the activities of the teen ministry and the Church more generally, including Wednesday and Sunday services, Friday-night teen devotionals, and Saturday

activities. If I did all this, I thought, it would be evidence that I belonged and was wanted, a part of the group.

In my second year of college, at age nineteen, I left the ICOC. I'd begun to question its practices and theology: the hierarchies, hypocrisies, lack of compassion and care, weaponising sin, and twisting of scripture. In response, I was gaslighted, told I was the one who lacked faith and that I needed to meditate on scripture and confess my own arrogance to my discipler and others.

The three years I stayed in the Church remain difficult for me to talk about. There's a stigma associated with it that feels different than other types of stigmas. I'm ashamed and embarrassed to admit to this period of my life because of the popular misperception that 'smart' people know better than to join cults. Certainly, academics know better.

Though I was recruited when I was young and in a vulnerable state, I fear that being a former cult member is evidence that I couldn't think critically – the very trait that is the foundation of scholarship – which brings me shame.

Sociology helped my healing process. After reading the work of Bourdieu, I realised that my outsider status would have prevented me from ever being able to be completely accepted in the Church.

I look back on my younger self, so filled with self-doubt, desperately trying to find a place and community to belong, doing whatever it took to finally feel valued and worthy. I'm not sure anything I could say or do would convince the younger me that she had nothing to prove, that she was worthy of love just on her own. More than anything, I wish I could reach back into the past and give her a hug. She deserves it.

▶ Feature continues

It was the hardest job – the scrutiny was intense and unrelenting, I never got used to it

Marika Lindholm, who edits the book with Elizabeth Anne Wood, tells of her experience of cancelling her wedding after her fiancé expressed doubts about going ahead. She was in the middle of a university degree in the US, but decided she needed to get away. She went to Sweden – the homeland she had left at age four – where no one knew her sad story. A trip to the local job centre told her that her truncated education qualified her for just two jobs, and she chose one at the post office, opting for work in the loading dock rather than sorting envelopes at a desk. She was given work taking mailbags from vans and sorting them into metal bins:



token as boundary heightening. Every day, these macho questions and the ban against using a forklift reminded me that I didn't belong. On the loading dock, I also felt like a walking stereotype. When we had our 3pm coffee break, the guys would expect me to clean up afterward. If the foreman wanted something from the cafeteria, I was the first to be asked. Physical boundaries were non-existent – they'd touch my butt, put their arm around me when we were talking, and lean into me when we worked side by side. No matter how I acted, I was teased for being too sexy, too motherly, too cute, too harsh. Over time, I felt an increasing sense of insecurity, discomfort, and, ultimately, failure.

Tokens are viewed as exceptions when they succeed and representations if they fail. One day, after nine months of being tokenised, I decided to throw my fear to the wind and attempt to fit in. This time, when the guys showed me a porn magazine, I took it and turned the pages in admiration. When they offered me a smoke, I went to the smoking area and laughed it up while choking inside. And, the worst of the worst, I accepted some chewing tobacco, which prompted such a flood of sickening sensations that I gagged and my head spun. I could do this. I would show them!

Back at my station at the hydraulic lift, I was giddy from my bold attempt to be one of the guys. Laughing and talking, I pressed the button to bring the packages up to the dock. What I failed to notice in my reverie was that the delivery truck's door was open over the lift. The screeching sound of ripping and crunching metal got my attention. By the time I pressed stop, the lift had ripped the door right off! For what seemed like an eternity, the Finnish foreman reamed me in front of everyone: 'You stupid girl! Look what you did! This will cost you! Go home!' In all the shame and confusion, I'm not sure if I was officially fired, but I never came back.

• After receiving her PhD in sociology at SUNY Stony Brook, Dr Lindholm taught courses on inequality, diversity and gender at Northwestern University for over a decade. She is the founder of ESME.com (Empowering Solo Moms Everywhere), a social platform dedicated to empowering a broad demographic of women.

The ghosts of shoe scarcity haunted me for decades

Marta Tienda, Professor in Demographic Studies at Princeton University, writes about the poverty of her childhood:

In the summer of 1960, just before my 10th birthday, I realised how poor we were. Once the school year ended, my father, stepmother, grandmother, and siblings and I headed from Detroit to Monroe County, Michigan, to join hundreds of transient farm workers who lived and worked in migrant labour camps.

It was the first summer that my siblings and I toiled alongside adults harvesting tomatoes. The days were long and hot; neither gloves nor hats were provided to protect us from the pesticides and searing sun. Only rainy days offered a respite from the drudgery. Communal outdoor pumps provided water for cooking and hygiene. We all dreaded the outhouse even more than the huge spiders lodged in the tomato plants. Camp accommodations consisted of single-room shacks with meagre amenities. Our family had two large beds, a small refrigerator, a table, two chairs, and a two-burner hot plate, which was used for the daily ration of beans, rice, tortillas, and guiso, a Mexican stew for tacos. Plus, all the tomatoes we could eat.

My Mexican immigrant parents had moved from Texas to Detroit in 1950, first settling in a ghetto basement, then upgrading to public housing, and finally in the summer of 1956, realising their dream of owning a home by securing a land contract, a purchase arrangement between seller and buyer that the poor use to bypass banks. Our joy didn't last long: just eight months later, my mother died from a botched routine surgery. At age 27, she left behind five children, ages 16 months to eight years. The second child, I was four months shy of my seventh

birthday when she died.

We were among the 22 per cent of families designated poor by the federal government, meaning that my dad's earnings from a full-time union job were insufficient to meet minimum living standards.

With limited understanding of the social welfare system and low proficiency in English, my father fended off social workers who counselled him to place his children in foster care. No one would likely take all of us, but several families might take one or two. Fortunately, he was stalwart in his refusal. "You not take my kids" was his standard broken-English response, despite the formidable odds he faced to keep us clothed and fed. After all, he had promised my mother five high school diplomas.

Despite his perpetual fear of being caught by Child Protective Services, my father sometimes left us alone while working the graveyard shift. After a close call (a neighbour reported him), he cobbled together the resources needed to secure a live-in sitter, who had a child of her own – which meant two more mouths to feed.

Although my father worked as much as childcare demands and steel mill schedules permitted, he was not too proud to refuse free food to supplement his meagre earnings. A social worker certified us for surplus commodities – leftover agricultural foodstuffs that the US Department of Agriculture stockpiled to keep food prices and farm incomes stable. Once a month we received canned and boxed food. We welcomed the cheese, butter, and peanut butter, but detested the canned ground meat, institutional



Spam, and dried milk, which tasted salty and never fully dissolved in water. The Catholic Church also came to our aid. Father Murphy's weekly sermons included appeals to help a newly widowed father of five whose children needed school clothes and supplies.

We often lacked basics, like shampoo, warm coats, and, yes, proper-fitting shoes. As a fourth grader, I was elated to receive a pair of ankle-height, fleece-lined boots that were all the rage that year. Expected to last two years, mine were too big and rather clunky. Because I had no other shoes, I was still wearing the oversized, tattered leather boots in late spring. As I skipped rope with my friends in a sleeveless summer top and cotton skirt, Mr Schroeder asked in front of my classmates, "Why are you wearing those boots? Don't you know the snow is gone?" Children can be mean, but I never expected such flagrant ridicule from a teacher. The sting of that reckless insult in front of my peers remains seared in my psyche.

The boots did not survive to see a second year, but the humiliation they brought lasted a lifetime. In eighth grade, our dog chewed the back of my new loafers, and I was forced to wear them taped for the rest of the year. The ghosts of shoe scarcity haunted me for decades. To compensate for my scars, as an adult – even well into my 60s – I purchased more shoes than I ever needed: standing shoes, sitting shoes, walking shoes ... way too many shoes.

But this was possible because my father delivered on his promise to my mother that my siblings and myself would complete high school; we also picked up several college degrees.

▶ Feature continues overleaf

I found the freedom to finally hold Brent's hand

Amin Ghaziani, Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, writes about how sociology helped him overcome his fear of coming out as a gay man:

Sitting alone in my room one day as a 13-year-old boy, I realised with a curious mixture of delight and dread that I was in love with my best friend, Adam. As a first-generation kid growing up in a working class, highly religious, non-English-speaking immigrant household in the suburbs of Chicago, I was too overwhelmed by being bullied for the colour of my skin to have any head space to figure out what it meant to feel this way about another boy.

My parents had relocated from Karachi in the late 1970s as part of a wave of South Asian immigration to the United States. Migration cycles like the one I lived through often fuel xenophobic backlash. "Camel jockey!", "Sand nigger!" All these years later, I can still hear the slurs in my mind. No wonder I settled silently into the closet.

The young boy in that room could not have imagined that sociology, of all things, would define who he became later in life. My parents wanted me to be a doctor, a lawyer, or maybe an engineer. Growing up as the child of

immigrants, as a person of colour, and as queer made me see the world through a unique intersectional lens.

A month after I moved into my dorm room in South Quad [Michigan University], on Tuesday, October 11, 1994, I walked nervously into my very first gay bar. The Nectarine (now the Necto) hosted a 'gay night' every Tuesday. The poetry of the night was unknown to me then, but October 11 also happens to be National Coming Out Day. That night, as I leaned against a rail next to the dance floor, I met a man named Brent. We closed the bar talking about all manner of topics, from the monomers that make up proteins (Brent was a biologist) to Kant's categorical imperative (I was taking a philosophy class). That was how I met my first boyfriend.

I came out in a milieu characterised by rising anti-gay hate crimes, including murders and attempted murders. Brandon Teena, the trans man featured in the 1999 film *Boys Don't Cry*, had been raped and killed the year before I started college. My first year on campus, I read one story after another in the student



newspaper about gay men being attacked with baseball bats in broad daylight.

Brent was kind and loving. All he wanted from me was to hold my hand as we walked down Main Street together – but I was too afraid.

My first year at Michigan, I took sociology classes that inspired me to convert my fear into a motivation for social change. I learned about the connective power of emotions for protest.

By the end of my first term, I proudly displayed pink triangles and rainbow flags on my backpack and spent weekends protesting for gay rights shoulder to shoulder with Michigan's vibrant LGBTQ+ community. This, I came to realise, was knowledge in action: what I was learning in the classroom inspired practices of social justice. Slowly, through sociology, I also found the freedom to finally hold Brent's hand.

[He later transferred to Northwestern University in Illinois]. Although I loved its intellectual culture, Northwestern's political climate couldn't have been more different than what I experienced in Ann Arbor [Michigan]. That year, student dorms were defaced with epithets

like 'Die Negroes', 'Kill All Jews', and 'Die Fags'.

No longer afraid, I was now angry. My first quarter at Northwestern, I enrolled in a sociology course called Social Inequality, taught, as fate would have it, by Marika Lindholm [see left for her article] who put me on a path that shaped the rest of my life. Marika taught me the mechanisms through which inequality develops and comes to be seen as legitimate. I learned that oppression has five 'faces': exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Armed with these conceptual tools and inspired by an event I attended in Ann Arbor, I co-organised with Jon, my dearest friend at Northwestern, a 'Queer kiss-in' on campus.

Over the years, I figured out how to make the rooms of my life uniquely queer for me by embracing the 'weird people' I was advised to avoid, by walking past my nerves and into the Nectarine on National Coming Out Day, by not allowing fear to stop me from holding hands with my first boyfriend, by learning about the multifaceted forms of social inequality, by organising a kiss-in to protest those faces of oppression, and by using activism across all these places to draw public attention to the injustices that LGBTQ+ people face.

They laughed at my 'funny' accent

► Feature continues

Between Us: Healing Ourselves and Changing the World through Sociology (2024) is edited by Marika Lindholm and Elizabeth Anne Wood, and is published by the University of Chicago Press, £86 hbk, £17 pbk ISBN: 9780226827117 hbk <https://tinyurl.com/57nbkk9c>

Kathleen Gerson, Collegiate Professor of Arts and Science and Professor of Sociology at New York University, writes about the racism she experienced growing up in Montgomery, Alabama, as part of a highly assimilated Reform Jewish community:

During the school week, I hung out with neighbourhood friends and classmates, while on the weekend, my social life shifted to worshipping, playing, and dining with Jewish relatives and friends.

The experience of tacking between these two social worlds structured my life and seeped into my consciousness. The challenges it posed prepared me for the resonance and inspiration I ultimately found in the sociological imagination.

While my friend Susan and I were strolling around the playground during recess, she asked if I knew that Rachel, another girl in our grade, was Jewish. Puzzled, I wondered aloud why she had raised such a question. Because, she said, "Jews don't believe in Jesus as their saviour they are all going to hell." Surprised and taken aback, I blurted out that I was Jewish too. Amid our shared embarrassment and discomfort, we quickly changed the subject. Despite our unspoken agreement to act as if nothing disturbing had happened, the exchange put an irrevocable distance between us. We continued to visit each other's homes and play together at school, but it never felt the same.

By the time I reached middle school, my school friends had coalesced into a close-knit group that gathered every weekend for sleepovers, where we stayed up most of the night to share our hopes, anxieties, and teenage secrets. Others called us 'the crowd', making it clear that membership in this

group conveyed social status.

[One day, they met a group of boys from another school, one of whom began taunting another boy with with insults, including "You're a dirty Jew!"]

Another boy wonder[ed] aloud if one of us might be Jewish. He then pointed to my best friend, Maria, whose dark hair and prominent nose made her the most likely candidate in his eyes. Without any hesitation, I quickly raised my hand to 'out' myself, correct the misidentification, and rescue Maria. Then, struggling to hide my embarrassment and recover my dignity, I once again did my best to shrug off the episode and continue as if nothing noteworthy had happened. Yet any uncertainty I may have harboured about my status dissolved altogether.

In their efforts to reassure me, my friends would later proclaim, as my friend Jennifer put it, "You're not really Jewish". She meant this as a compliment and assumed I would hear it that way. To the extent that I wanted to be accepted, she was right. Yet even if they made an exception in my case, reassurances that I did not belong to a group they considered distasteful only confirmed their prejudices. I knew their assumptions – about how members of my community looked and behaved – were not only wrong but also hurtful and dangerously harmful. As much as I wanted their acceptance, it would never be worth the price of renouncing my Jewish identity.

My fair colouring and assimilated ways might allow entry into a privileged social world, but I now understood that these traits would never be enough



to confer full-fledged membership in the group.

At 15, my experiences of marginality took on a very different cast when I moved to San Francisco with my single mother. It felt liberating to leave behind the insular world of a small Southern city. Shortly after my arrival, a distant relative hosted a party to introduce me to some girls who would soon be my classmates at the large, ethnically and racially diverse public high school I had decided to attend. As we sat in our host's living room drinking soda and eating snacks, these girls were the opposite of welcoming. They laughed at my 'funny' accent, commented on my dubious fashion choices, and fabricated silly 'Southern' names to introduce themselves. This was an early clue that, in an ironic inversion, the telltale signs of my Southern roots had replaced my religion and progressive politics as sources of marginality. At the time, this encounter seemed like nothing more than the boorish behaviour of a small group of 'mean girls' (who, in another ironic twist, were mostly Jewish).

My experiences tacking among conflicting social worlds convinced me that uncovering the sources of unequal status is an essential first step toward creating more just, humane, and equal societies. It is thus no accident that my work as a sociologist has sought to understand how people experience the social conflicts they face and how, under the right circumstances, they are able to overcome the obstacles and change the direction of their lives and their societies. Photo: imedia.org/wiki/File:Gerson_photo_full.jpg

I had a sense that I didn't cut the mustard as a human

Tristan Bridges, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, writes about how sociology helped him realise he wasn't alone after a suicide attempt:

I spent a portion of my senior year of high school hospitalised. I tried to take my own life multiple times. One of those times, I got caught. I hooked up a hose to the exhaust pipe of the car my parents had bought me and stuffed the other end in the window. I turned on the radio and fell asleep. I woke up on the street. I saw glass on the ground from the broken window where a man who'd seen my car got me out. As paramedics put me in the ambulance, I wanted to cry. "Oh no ... It didn't work."

I just had a sense that I didn't cut the mustard as a human, and somehow understood that this was a gendered failure. Looking back now, I realise my shame and insecurity were connected to what I perceived as my failures with masculinity. As a scholar of gender, I now know that my struggle is actually incredibly common. I often felt ill-equipped and always felt uncomfortable with the status-games boys (and men) play to enact masculinity in interactions with each other. They left me feeling empty. The constant teasing and competition that

characterises lots of young people's experience with masculinity was demoralising and painful. Designed to demonstrate dominance, masculine rituals and behaviour made me feel dominated, defeated, and often invisible. I tried to kill myself because I struggled with depression. I still struggle with it. But my feelings about myself were and are integrally related to gender.

There's a gender gap in suicide. It's not that boys try to kill themselves more than girls. They don't. Girls and boys attempt suicide at similar rates. Those identifying as trans or outside the binary are even more at risk. But, compared to girls, boys rely on much more fatal methods when trying to kill themselves. That's where the gender gap comes from. It's not what they are doing; it's how. Gender is something accomplished in everyday life. It's something we do. But it's a performance many are so accustomed to undertaking that we fail to recognise it as a performance at all. And when I tried to kill myself, I was doing gender, too.

As far back as I can remember, masculinity was always something I felt I never fully



understood. While I have friends of all genders, I've learned that I'm least comfortable in groups of only cisgender men. In high school, I think I thought this meant something was wrong with me. But I've come to see this as a resource rather than a flaw. I don't want to kill myself anymore. But I still feel lucky to be alive.

Masculinity is something I have always held at arm's length; I now realise it's always been something I've studied in one way or another. As a boy, I studied it because I always felt like it came so much easier to other boys. When I tried on masculinity, I felt like it didn't fit right, and it made me self-conscious. I have a vivid memory of coming home my first week in high school, pulling a chair up to a full-length mirror in my older sister's room, and looking at how I sat in it. I had been teased by a boy for sitting "like a girl". I tried to laugh while others laughed at me.

While growing up, my closest friends were mostly boys, but I also hung out with my sisters a lot. In one picture, I'm smooched between my two sisters in the backyard, all three of us wearing girls' one-piece bathing suits. In our family photo album, my dad

scrawled a little note next to it that reads "My son, the gender scholar." My sisters and I also dressed up like ballerinas. I desperately wanted to be just like my big sister, and wearing leotards wasn't policed by my parents. Femininity and girl culture saturated our house, and girl culture still feels more comfortable to me.

Now I study gender, sexual identity, and inequality. Most of my research deals with issues of masculinity. I study what men think it means to 'be a man', how people enact masculinity, the different kinds of masculinities they enact, and how all these various gender projects are connected with enduring systems of inequality that shape all our lives. My journey to sociology is informed by my early childhood experiences and the feeling that somehow I was failing at being a boy.

Sometimes sociology helps us understand that while we are each unique, we are also connected to something much larger than ourselves, and our experiences are often part of larger patterns. My students sometimes find sociology challenging because it can feel as if it strips them of feeling the idiosyncrasies that make them who they are. For me, it helped me realise I wasn't alone. That feeling of connection continues to inspire my research and advocacy for feminist change and equality.

Gerard Torrats-Espinoso, Assistant Sociology Professor at Columbia University, writes about his career as a firefighter:



Becoming a firefighter in Barcelona changed my life and planted the seed of becoming a sociologist. Growing up, I was captivated by stories of the loyalty and self-sacrifice of men and women in uniform. During adolescence, I knew I wanted to become a public servant, but that path was unclear to me. My parents ran a bicycle shop in Ripoll, Spain, that had been passed down the generations on my dad's side since 1888. None of my family members or friends were motivated by a career in uniform.

I started college in Barcelona the day after the 9/11 attacks, and the Madrid terrorist bombings of March 2004 happened as I was approaching the end of my undergraduate studies in building engineering. These events had a big impact on me and reinforced my aspiration of serving. After graduating college, I decided to enlist. I spent two years in a special operations team in the Spanish Army. We didn't deploy, but we trained in all elements and environments: parachuting, scuba diving, survival, and more. The bonds I formed with colleagues and officers are some of the strongest I can remember, and I maintain some of them today.

After my contract with the army ended, I sought to have more of an impact on the civilian population. Of all the options I considered, becoming a firefighter turned out to be the perfect fit. It allowed me to continue serving the public at the same time that I was applying technical expertise from my building engineering degree. Architects and engineers are very attractive to urban fire departments because of their knowledge of how buildings and structures behave under fire or potential collapse. So, in September 2007, I entered the firefighting academy.

Being a firefighter in a large city like Barcelona entails a wide range of tasks, from entering buildings engulfed in flames (less often than people think) to extricating passengers trapped in their cars after a crash, to rescuing cats from trees (yes, I rescued cats, many times). In between these two extremes lies a large set of tasks that have a marked social and human component. Our certification as emergency medical technicians, combined with tools and skills that gave us rapid access to hard-to-reach spaces, made the fire department a versatile resource that the city used extensively in all sorts of situations. We were called to assist elderly people living alone, prevent suicide attempts, and intervene in domestic violence incidents. Serving the city and its most vulnerable populations in this

capacity exposed me to a range of social problems and dynamics to which I had previously been oblivious.

As time went by, I gained perspective and started to see the bigger picture. Suddenly, I became aware of patterns that had escaped me before. I noticed that we were called

multiple times a day to the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the city, but months would go by without any calls from the most affluent areas. Fires, falls by older adults, domestic violence, suicides, severe structural damage in buildings, and gas leaks showed predictable spatial and geographic patterns.

Sociology was a framework for making sense of my experiences as a firefighter

I observed how residents activated their networks in the aftermath of a tragedy. I was struck by how interpersonal ties and networks differed across disadvantaged and affluent neighbourhoods. Residents of low-income neighbourhoods had very dense and localised social ties. It was common for residents in those neighbourhoods to know each other's names and occupations, and even to have each other's apartment keys. In contrast, residents in more affluent neighbourhoods rarely knew their neighbours. Yet their weaker connections were more effective at solving problems in the aftermath of emergencies.

As time in the fire department went by, I felt the need to understand these social phenomena more deeply and started to read books on sociology and urban planning. I was fascinated by how social scientists studied cities, neighbourhoods, and the social dynamics unfolding in them. The more I read, the more I wanted to learn. Eventually, I decided to go back to school. A fellowship from Spain allowed me to study public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School so I could serve the city of Barcelona as a policymaker and try to improve the conditions I'd seen as a firefighter. But in my first year, I took a sociology class on neighbourhoods and inequality with Robert Sampson, and I was hooked. Sociology became the clearest framework for making sense of the experiences I had lived as a firefighter.

I now study urban inequality, stratification, and how neighbourhoods and cities shape people's lives. In a sense, this is also a form of public service. While my path to becoming a sociologist was somewhat unconventional, and my interest in the social sciences emerged late, I am proud of the steps I took to get there. ■

Caroline Oliver, Louise Ryan and Katherine Twamley discuss the advantages of writing a monograph and how to go about publishing it

In June of this year, three of the editors of the BSA Sociological Futures book series led a webinar on turning a PhD thesis into a monograph. The event was offered in response to a request from the BSA Postgraduate Forum and was devised through discussions with two of the forum leaders, Karen Tatham and James Green. We planned a session covering not just how to propose and write a monograph, but also to relate our own varied experiences as editors and book authors.

It's fair to say we had not quite anticipated the level of enthusiasm for the event when we were initially planning the webinar. All in all, around 100 postgrads and early career scholars attended, from a huge range of sociology sub-disciplines, pushing us to think more deeply about why and how we write monographs in sociology. There were questions around choosing a publisher, the processes of approaching them, peer review and royalties (er, not often much) and what publishers look for. But, interestingly too, attendees wanted to discuss why (and why not) one might choose to write a monograph, and thus we reflected on our own multiple reasons for past books and the relative gains from other kinds of outputs.

Given this level of interest, we thought that a piece in *Network* might be useful as a way of sharing our experiences and insights with the wider BSA membership.

A significant difference between a book and a journal article (apart from the sheer scale) is accessibility. Articles in journals tend to be widely available through most university libraries. In the digital age, most articles – at least the title and abstract – can be accessed online without ever setting foot in a library. Moreover, even if the published article is not available through your library, it is usually possible to get a pre-publication version from the author or their university repository.

Books are a different story. Most are initially published in hardcopy and even if an ebook is available, it is likely to be expensive – at least in the initial stage of production. Many publishers wait for some time before bringing out a more affordable paperback version and unfortunately some never make it to paperback editions. So, therefore, books may remain largely inaccessible. Moreover, after going through

‘A PhD thesis and a book are very different beasts – a book will be judged on how appealing the topic is, as well as rigour of study’

the doctoral experience, many might never want to touch their material again; why deal with the fatigue of writing the same thing twice?

Then why publish a monograph? Not every thesis will be suitable for a book and choosing not to write a book may feel right for you. Our own experience is that a monograph can be more satisfying to write, gives you more space to think through complexities and can stand as a marker of your intervention in the field.

Your PhD thesis and a book are ultimately

‘Our own experience is that a monograph can be more satisfying to write, gives you more space to think through complexities and can stand as a marker of your intervention in the field’

very different beasts, and if a proposed book develops PhD material, a publisher will want to understand how it is different. Here, it's important to reflect on the different aims: a thesis needs to satisfy the rigour and expectations of doctoral level study and is judged by a senior academic. A book needs to be sellable, its vision and content based on well-crafted academic study judged by a publisher, peer reviewers or series editors. It will be judged according to how appealing the topic is (being innovative and exploring new directions is good here), as well as the rigour of the study and strength of argument.

Demonstrating how your book hits the zeitgeist can be immensely helpful to ensure publication, particularly in more affordable formats. For example, Louise turned her sociology PhD, on the Irish suffrage movement, into a book soon after her graduation. But the book failed to sell or have much impact. It may have been the wrong publisher, a poorly designed cover or just bad timing. However, in 2018 on the 100th anniversary of female enfranchisement, Louise had the idea to republish her book and managed to obtain a release from the original publisher. The new publisher produced an updated version of the book with a beautiful new cover, and the marketing was significantly aided by the timeliness and topicality of the subject-matter in that centenary year. The book became the publisher's top seller that year

and generated a nice, albeit modest, royalty cheque for Louise – this is actually quite unusual in academic publishing. Therefore, a key piece of advice when considering a monograph is timeliness and tapping into wider socio-cultural events and interests. These are issues we often consider as series editors of *Sociological Futures*.

Sociological Futures was set up as the BSA flagship book series, in partnership with Routledge, in 2014. Since then 16 books have been published, with several more in the pipeline. Overall, we have received 56 proposals, of which around half were rejected. However, it is noteworthy that the acceptance rate for monographs is lower than for edited collections. One reason for this is that edited collections usually involve two or three editors who bring together varied experience and expertise. Moreover, many of these edited collections come from our BSA study groups and draw upon pools of significant knowledge and research experience regarding topics of proven sociological interest.

A common error from novice writers is to assume that a thesis can straightforwardly be made into a monograph. But the two have distinct aims. A thesis is judged by its ability to demonstrate that you understand the craft of research and have applied the expected standards of rigour in theory and methodology to add knowledge on a defined topic.

A book is aimed at demonstrating knowledge in an engaging, creative way that influences the field, often more broadly. At the same time, you need to think about the kind of intervention that you want to make in the literature and consider the potential market for the book. Publishers may well have advice to share with you here. For example, Caroline was writing an ethnography with a working title of *Old Age Travellers* as a pun speaking to the self-perception of British people retiring abroad as pioneers of alternative ageing. The publisher however was not to be moved from their understanding that *Retirement Migration*, though a more dutiful description, would be a far more searchable and sellable title – which proved to be the case.

Thus, to conclude, ‘turning your thesis into a book’ is ultimately something of a misnomer. As noted here, they are different beasts. We hope that the advice given here is helpful and if you are interested in approaching *Sociological Futures* about your book idea, please visit the webpage www.britsoc.co.uk/publications/sociological-futures-book-series and get in touch for a chat. You should also be able to catch one of us at the upcoming BSA annual conference. We look forward to hearing from you.

• In the box on the right we give some practical advice for those considering writing a monograph for the first time, drawing on our experiences as editors and authors.

Tips on writing, crafting a proposal and approaching a publisher...

Crafting a proposal:

- Publishers will have a book proposal form that asks for fairly standard things: the vision; abstract; the content and chapter-by-chapter breakdown; length; competitor texts.
- Pay attention to presentation and how the proposal is crafted; it is easy to spot a rush-job!
- Seek advice and feedback – there is much to gain through understanding experiences; ask what well-published authors would have done differently with their first book.
- You need to convince them that you are a good writer, with attention to detail. You may be asked for a sample chapter.

Process of approaching a publisher or series:

- Many publishers have themed book series (such as *Sociological Futures*). Being part of a series might afford your book additional promotional opportunities and hence more exposure. Is there a series suitable for your work? What type of books are you reading and where are they published?
- Talk to publishers and series editors at conferences or via email; think about your pitch and summing up your work in two or three minutes.
- Ask for advice and have conversations. Editors and publishers are looking for good products, so are amenable to being involved in shaping these from the outset (within reason). Don't think your submitted form will be the end of it. You will get suggestions and be asked to revise.
- Get involved in editing roles yourself to understand the process from the inside-out.

Tips for writing:

- Overcome the fatigue of having just written a thesis – take your time to reimagine your topic as a new project, with a new mindset of how you do things – the freshness will come across.
- Don't feel constrained by the way your data were organised for the purpose of the thesis; there may be different and better ways to present this – this also makes it more fun to be thinking outside the box around your existing data.
- Listen to advice and take up suggestions by reviewers and publishers.
- Use your favourite books as models – explore how they are structured, look at the craft of how they convince and use as inspiration.

Left to right:
Katherine Twamley,
Louise Ryan, Caroline Oliver





Social Research for our Times

Thomas Coram Research Unit, Past,
Present and Future

Edited by Claire Cameron et al.

UCL Press
2023

412 pages

£50 hbk, £35pb, also in epub and free pdf
ISBN: 9781800084056 hbk

The 50th anniversary of a research centre's foundation marks a significant moment. Not all such ventures prove as enduring, or successful, as the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) has been. Successive generations of 'Coramites' (as its staff are known) have produced a remarkable body of influential investigations and policy-related discussions. This book includes informative reflections on these many and varied contributions to knowledge in the broad field of children, families and care. It also provides food for thought about how research organisations can survive and prosper in the long term.

The moral of the TCRU story is that building a reputation for doing good quality research is crucial. At several points the book highlights that its founder, Jack Tizard, insisted that projects undertaken should include strategic as well as tactical ones. He recognised that short-term problem-solving research had a place, but needed to be complemented by work engaging with longer-term visions of things like improving the provision of services for children. He was also determined that TCRU should be known for methodological and theoretical rigour as well as policy relevance. This philosophy provided a firm foundation for its consolidation and expansion, notwithstanding its founder's untimely death only six years into the organisation's existence.

Of course, organisations must change with

the times to avoid obsolescence, and adaptation to new circumstances is an important part of TCRU's history. The context in which research funding is secured has shifted a long way from TCRU's early days when projects were funded principally by government departments. As neo-liberal ideas have replaced the corporatist outlook of the 1970s, the need to seek more diverse funding streams has become pressing, and the consequences of Brexit for access to EU funding has complicated matters further. The last decade has seen teaching come to prominence as a complement to research as a source of funding. This has reinforced the interdisciplinary profile of TCRU as students' needs and interests are accommodated.

TCRU has also evolved by revising its focus to embrace new topics. Several of the 20 chapters that make up the book are devoted to recent topics of research, such as unaccompanied child asylum seekers and households' management of food in times of austerity. These shifts in topics illustrate how its research has become more international, sometimes through comparison of the situation in different countries and sometimes through studying global population movement. Such issues have presented methodological challenges and innovation in styles of working that have facilitated the extension of TCRU's agenda.

These changes in what is studied, how it is



Bookends

studied and how the research is funded are consistent with a deeper story of continuity: TCRU's mission and ethos have remained recognisably the same. References made to 'TCRU tradition' (p.172) and 'TCRU values' (p.247) express the linked ambitions of undertaking research that will improve policy and practice related to children and families, and working collaboratively. The book's contributors acknowledge the difficulties of fostering teamwork when some team members are on short-term contracts, but argue that things are improved when longstanding staff eschew hierarchical practices and focus instead on treating colleagues in precarious employment as the next generation, mentoring and training them as successors. Taking the long view in this fashion represents one way of securing institutional longevity.

■ **Professor Graham Crow,**
University of Edinburgh

The book begins by situating incels within a wider historical context, starting from the emergence of the men's liberation movement in the 1970s through to the dawn of the more overtly feminism-antagonistic men's rights movement of the '80s and the contemporary flourishing of online networked misogyny.

While exhibiting a shared hostility towards feminism, incels are distinguished from other manospherians by their nihilistic 'blackpilled' worldview. The blackpill combines pseudo-scientific principles of female infidelity, venality and 'hypergammy' (dating or marrying genetically-determined hierarchies of alpha, beta and lower-status males, with a deep sense of pessimism about the possibility of 'ascending' (finding romantic success in this cut-throat sexual marketplace). The ideology is also infused with anger towards women: as

Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

Sociology

9th edition

Anthony Giddens, Philip W. Sutton

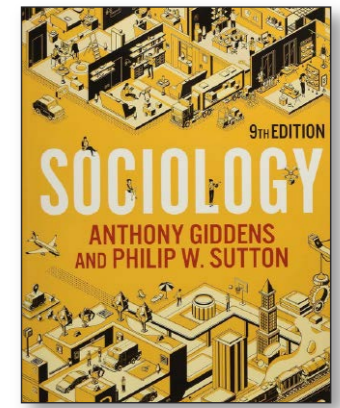
Polity

2021

1,152 pages

£29.99 pbk

ISBN: 9781509539222



norm. The age-long topic of social inequality is thoroughly examined, with in-depth reflections on the persistence of unequal wealth-distribution despite the overall rise in general wellbeing. Developments in technology, such as big data, artificial intelligence and robotics, lead the authors to consider the digital revolution as another major theme, one that is increasingly affecting multiple aspects of human life, and they present and discuss this theme in relation to the other social phenomena examined in the individual chapters, such as health, cities and urban life, crime and deviance, and the media. Identity, the concept that links an individual's experience to the social context, is discussed in relation to the key social issues addressed in each chapter, namely gender and sexuality, race, ethnicity and migration, social interaction, work and employment.

The ninth edition of *Sociology* provides a valuable tool that every sociologist would want in their toolbox. Written by Anthony Giddens, one of the most prominent modern sociologists, in collaboration with Philip W. Sutton, the book presents all the essential sociological concepts necessary to develop a critical appreciation of the discipline.

The book is structured around four main themes, namely globalisation, social inequality, the digital revolution, and identity. Although each of the 22 chapters focuses on a specific area of sociological study, the themes of globalisation and inequality each have two chapters dedicated to them entirely, while the digital revolution and identity are dealt with throughout the book. The chapter entitled 'Globalisation and social change' discusses how the world's societies continue to become more closely bound, affecting multiple aspects of human affairs, whether we like it or not; thus bringing the authors to view the phenomenon as the new social

one incel interviewee comments, "Society gives women a beautiful veil of pureness but the blackpill tore that veil" (p.42).

Throughout the book, Sugiura nuances generalisations that flatten contradictions and tensions within the community. For example, she challenges the view that incels are invariably 'Neets' (not in education, employment or training), arguing that incels in fact "overwhelmingly appear to be educated, often to degree level" (p.42). The book also refutes popular (and societally self-exculpatory) characterisations of incels as an aberrant 'folk devil', cleanly separable from mainstream masculinity. Instead, Sugiura emphasises the continuities between incel ideology and "normalised practices of 'everyday misogyny' (p.97), and highlights the genuine "humanity, vulnerability and pain" that often motivates incel communities (p.117).

Sugiura ventures into thorny territories at times: for example, when briefly noting a possible association between autism and (male) incelhood. As she observes, such a link is contentious, given that people on the autism spectrum are already widely stigmatised and have historically been characterised as deficient in quintessential human attributes and abilities. Moreover, proponents of the neurodiversity paradigm may chafe at Sugiura's hypothesised explanation for this link: that the incel community's "unnuanced world view" (p.44) is intrinsically appealing to some autistic people. In fact, as Sugiura herself demonstrates throughout the book, incel ideology is fraught with "contradiction, absurdity and inconsistency" (p.118), and one could equally make the case that incels' appeals to autism fulfil a similar function as

chapters focus on the environment; social stratification and class; poverty, social exclusion and welfare; life course; family; education; religion; politics; government; social movements and nationalism; conflict; and terrorism.

The breadth of knowledge gained through reading this book will not only stimulate the reader's capacity to perceive and comprehend, but also to imagine. This is achieved through linking the micro to the macro, showing how individual interactions can influence social institutions, and how the latter can affect our everyday lives, linking personal experiences (e.g. losing a job) to wider social issues (e.g. economic restructuring), and comparing societies from a historical perspective, using examples from both the global South and the global North.

The book also contains interactive features designed to actively engage the reader. These include 'research in practice' activities, which encourage the reader to focus on research methods, and a 'Society in the arts' assignment, which encourages the reader to harness the arts as a means to understanding society.

Future editions might want to increase the emphasis on alternative approaches, such as relational sociology, and the social network method. The clear and coherent style of the book renders it intellectually stimulating and easy to understand.

■ **Dr Marco Carradore,**
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan

invocations of short stature, small build or facial asymmetry: cementing one's identity as a blameless victim of an unjust sexual order. This link merited more thorough examination through an intersectional lens.

Such criticisms aside, however, Sugiura succeeds in providing a compact, sociologically rich and accessibly written entry-point into online incel communities, which benefits from direct insights from community members. The book serves a valuable demystifying function amidst the climate of heightened media interest in incels, often accompanied by a sensationalising focus on spectacles of extreme and public violence, and thus affording a compassionate outlook.

■ **Dr Katherine Allen,**
University of Suffolk

The Incel Rebellion:

The Rise of the Manosphere and the Virtual War Against Women

Lisa Sugiura

Emerald

2021

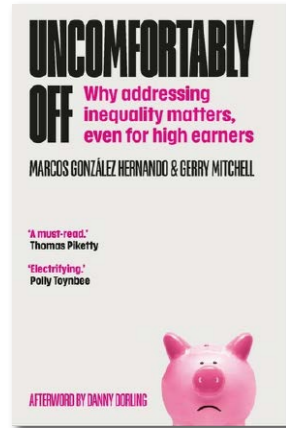
167 pages

£19.29 pbk

ISBN 9781839822575

The past decade has seen a spate of high-profile attacks perpetrated by self-identified involuntary celibates (incels) and fellow travellers from the wider 'manosphere'; a decentralised network of online groups linked by anti-feminism, anxious masculinity and aggrieved entitlement.

This book explores incels' motivations, beliefs and characteristics, and the relationship between online-offline identity and behaviour, and traces processes of (self-) radicalisation. Among the book's strengths is the blending of criminological and sociological analysis and qualitative methods, including interviews with current and former incels and an online ethnographic approach involving non-participant observation and thematic analysis of social media content produced by and for incels and fellow manospherians.



Uncomfortably Off

Why Addressing Inequality Matters,
Even for High Earners

Marcos González Hernández and Gerry Mitchell

Policy Press
2023
208 pages
£20 hbk, £12.21 pbk
ISBN: 9781447367512 hbk

In *Uncomfortably Off*, social researchers Marcos González Hernández and Gerry Mitchell write a quite unique book. Based on interviews with 110 high earners across Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the UK, it is not written for academics or the general public, but is instead addressed to the top 10% themselves, “who... are affluent in relative terms but do not necessarily feel so” (p.4), and invites them “to consider a future in which... they could become less anxious, more secure and less isolated” (p.20). The book combines analysis of these interviews with arguments about how their views and practices are a barrier to positive social change. Clearly, they are far better off than the overwhelming majority of people, but because of their social disconnection, they do not realise this. Indeed, many thought they were “not even in the top 50%” (p.2). In the current economic climate, many of the top 10% are finding it hard to maintain their present social position, while seeing a growing divide between themselves and the super-wealthy.

This is a book that aims to challenge the top 10%'s conception of their world, to unmask their own privileged lives, and to show that the system is failing everyone except those at the very top of the pile.

This is evident in the book's structure. The first chapter uses quantitative data to show how well off the top 10% are, while chapter two analyses the top 10%'s views on their own social position. The next chapter shows how their working lives are all-encompassing and isolating, before moving onto politics, demonstrating that, despite having political clout, the top 10% do not use their power for positive social change and are increasingly apathetic.

The following chapters discuss why the top 10% should care about creating a more equal society, starting by examining various political issues such as Brexit, housing, healthcare and precarious work, before showing how the top 10% are often insulated and largely unaware of issues that affect people in lower income brackets. The last two chapters focus on the barriers that stop the top 10% supporting progressive change, and then make a case for specific solutions to overcome these.

For academics, it is likely that the first few chapters would be of most interest. There are evident differences between interviewees, but taking the top 10% as a particular group makes for some very interesting reading, such as when some high earners become angry at even being called high earners, and themselves rage against “elites”. One interviewee was described as “angry to be even included in the 1% income band, which he finds a ‘nonsense bracket’” (p.52), while a management consultant on £170,000 a year considers himself to be in the “middle of the income spectrum” (ibid). Like anyone else, the top 10% make sense of their world through lived experience, and the dominance of long hours at work produces an extremely distorted view.

Their colleagues and superiors with capital assets, as Piketty argues in his book *Capital*, are becoming vastly wealthy – to be in the top 0.1% one needs to earn around half a million pounds a year. Experiences of working among much wealthier people distort the top 10%'s view of their own social position. Many top earners also take for granted that their work provides no real benefit or is even detrimental to society as a whole, but see no alternative. Their social lives are full of the consumption of brands that symbolise wealth, as a way of promoting idealised selves who are successful and wealthy, while in private they are depressed, isolated and anxious. The construct of the self-made individual is an essential part of their image, and recognising a lucky break, or acknowledging help from family, appears an admission of personal inadequacy.

Following this, the authors show how, in the face of a bleak political climate, they idealise ‘commonsense’ politicians and blame scapegoats for social problems. The authors do an excellent job of challenging simplistic one-dimensional views of high earners, who are shown to be anxious about political instability, yet are in thrall to the “prevailing ‘common sense’ in media and politics.” (p.11).

It is these feelings that the authors identify as an opportunity for change. While top earners have a nagging feeling that something is very wrong with society, their



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acceptance of the status quo and their social isolation means that they believe “there is little that can be done about the crises we are facing” (p.139). To this end, the later chapters rely largely on making a case to the top 10% that alternatives do exist. The authors make strong and concise arguments on issues ranging from democratic change, economics, privatisation, public services, tax and climate action.

The authors show how the 10%'s lives could be improved through greater equality, shorter working days, and meaningful employment. These arguments are well made but are likely to be familiar to academics – for example, challenging common narratives about lazy welfare recipients in the UK with data showing the majority of claimants are experiencing in-work poverty.

That said, the book is not focused on academic utility, but rather on convincing the top 10% to support egalitarian solutions, and the framing means these issues are presented in such a way as to address the specific concerns of the top 10%. In the conclusion, the authors assert that now is a critical time for them to support political change. While the top 10% are increasingly anxious, have a “fear of falling”, and are angry about inequality between themselves and those above them, they will have to make a choice: to support transformative change or to support the status quo. The authors make a very strong case. The biggest barrier might be to get the top 10% to read a book that makes them face many uncomfortable truths. If they do so, then they may even be convinced.

■ Alexander Lee,
PhD Researcher, University of Brighton

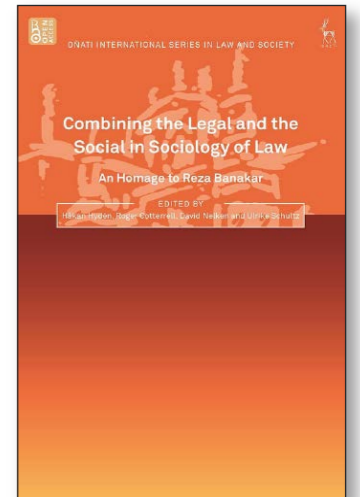
Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

Combining the Legal and the Social in Sociology of Law

An Homage to Reza Banakar

edited by Håkan Hydén et al.

Bloomsbury
2023
476 pages
£90 hbk, £44.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781509959389 hbk



the importance and the impact Banakar had, both as a scholar and as a human being. Each chapter not only discusses the intellectual merits of his legacy, but also touches on the relationships between him and the authors. This gives the collection both a scholarly value and a deeply human touch. After reading the many chapters I had the impression that Reza Banakar was a person that I would have liked to meet. And this feature is rarely seen, even in homages.

To call this collection extensive would be an understatement. The book is partitioned into six sections: introduction, theoretical debates, methods and interdisciplinarity, comparative legal cultures, sociology of law as a science, and applied sociology of law. Each of these sections consists of interesting contributions from a wide range of scholars, culminating in a total of 34 chapters.

The prospective reader should be already familiar with the field to a certain extent, as otherwise some of the references from two or more different disciplines are not easy to digest. Concepts from legal theory, social theory and sociological methodology are brought into conversation to not only show where frictions occur in the interdisciplinary field of socio-legal studies, but also how they might be made productive in concert. This demands a lot from the reader and as such it might not be suitable as an introduction to the field. What the book does, however, is to highlight the relation between the social and the law from many different perspectives, including

ethnomethodology, systems theory, legal theory, and even through the lens of literary studies. As such, this book is a must-read for anyone who wants to have a comprehensive overview of the field of the sociology of law and does not shy away from debating the different paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Reza Banakar argues that sociology of law is a “step-child”, uncomfortably situated between law and academic sociology. Both fields have their own paradigms, methods and theories. Yet, the sociology of law, according to Banakar, cannot and should not become a mere sub-field of either, but develop its own disciplinary identity, with a core of shared theories, methods and paradigms. This is a position that can and has been challenged, which is also highlighted in several contributions in the book. Thus, the homage to Reza Banakar can also be read as a reflexive moment on this uncomfortable but undeniably productive position of the sociology of law and its difficulties finding its place in the academic landscape.

Of course, such a comprehensive exhibition of topics and approaches comes with its own challenges. The single contributions are rather short, which sometimes leaves questions open that could have been addressed in a more in-depth discussion. With its over 470 pages this indicates at the same time the rich and comprehensive legacy of Reza Banakar. And it might also be a testament to the plurality of perspectives of a field that still seems to be a ‘step-child’ of the disciplines of law and sociology.

Thus, the edited volume is not only a great (advanced) overview of the field of the sociology of law, but also enacts the described multiplicity of its identity – which makes it an even more valuable contribution to the field and the debate.

■ Dr Nikolaus Poehhacker,
University of Klagenfurt

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A Child's Day

A Comprehensive Analysis of Change
in Children's Time Use in the UK

Killian Mullan

Bristol University Press
2022
212 pages
£79.99 hbk, £24.99 pbk
ISBN: 9781529201697 hbk

Killian Mullan, author of *A Child's Day*, specialises in quantitative methods, through which he applies a strong sociological imagination, debunking numerous myths about children's and their parents' behaviours, such as the idea that technology has necessarily stolen time from physical activities and that children are spending time away from family and becoming 'addicted' to tech¹. This notion is still being used to underpin causal claims about rising obesity in children and young people.

This book looks at change in children's time-use across more than four decades, based on Mullan's analyses of three nationally representative surveys. This comprehensive comparative approach provides an essential baseline of evidence within which to situate many issues researched in childhood studies: education and culture; health; family; technology (the topics of chapters two to five) and how children feel about how they spend time (chapter six).

The surveys analysed are: BBC Audience Research Department 1974-75 ("around 3,100 children providing just under 8,000 diary days" (p. 15)); Office of National Statistics 2000-01; and the Time Use Research National Centre 2014-15. Where possible, Mullan has split the age groups into a younger (8-11) and older (12-16) of those surveyed. Beyond these differences, binary gender and socio-economic background as well as mother's educational level are explored.

No attention appears to be given to other social categories, such as dis/ability or ethnicity, so it is difficult to know on what basis universalising-claims can be justified or who may have been excluded. As Mullan explains, "at the core of a time use survey is a time diary instrument used by respondents to provide details about their time use throughout the day" (p.14). However, unless these surveys were provided in accessible formats and multiple languages there is likely to be exclusion of some children's voice.

Nevertheless, Mullan is candid, for example, about "critical limitations in the data available in the surveys on income and social class" in the introduction, as he argues for using "education as a key indicator of socio-economic background about which there is information in all surveys for all parents irrespective of employment status" (p.17). I enjoyed the humble way in which he concludes this section, saying: "There is no completely satisfactory measure of socio-economic background and the approach adopted in this book is far from perfect. It has the advantage, however, of drawing on information about school-leaving age that is comparable across time and which gives equal weight to information from mothers and fathers" (p.18).

This style of writing brought me on side as the reader. Throughout, there is a sense of exploring data, alongside Mullan's considered thoughts about meanings that may be derived from patterns in the very many



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figures and tables provided.

As I write this review, nine years after the 2015 survey, I hope that Mullan is now busy preparing a fresh comparison of what has happened since, given that access to computing became a such an urgent issue within education during the Covid-19 lockdowns in the UK, when socio-economic inequalities became so obvious as children were expected to learn online. His sterling work on this 40-year time period is a strong bedrock on which to build.

For an easy way to explore different aspects of children's time use, Mullan provides a web app alongside the book. Available at <https://killmull.shinyapps.io/childday>

¹ 'Technology not taking over children's lives despite screen-time increase', NewsRx Health and Science, 14 January. 2018, p. 60. Gale Academic OneFile. Gale document no. GALEIA521759952

■ **Dr Richenda Power,**
Open University

public health crisis at the time. This is followed by a discussion of key ontologies and epistemologies in sociology, the classic paradigms in sociological and health research, interpretivism, structuralism and post-structuralism, realism and the critical Marxian lens. The latter provides critical realism's dialectic foundations for synthesising the best of existing methodologies and bridging across competing paradigms. This is explained well in chapters two and three.

The author takes a problem-centred approach throughout the book, which works extremely well as a resource for undergraduate and masters-level students of applied social sciences. As a sociologist of child welfare and health inequalities, I have used a critical realist lens in my work and have included it in my

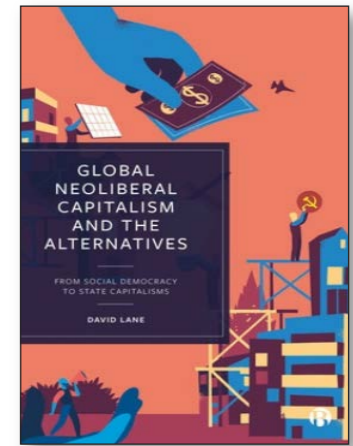
Reviews of recent books in social science and sociology

Global Neoliberalism and the Alternatives

From Social Democracy to
State Capitalisms

David Lane

Bristol University Press
2023
325 pages
£78 hbk, £22 pbk
ISBN: 9781529220902 hbk



... answers to the inadequacies of post-war forms of political co-ordination" in the UK and Soviet Union (p.15). This is important because 'neo-liberalism' is ambiguous and overused (p.53) and because we need to understand why it apparently offered solutions to the failings of late 20th century societies. However, an objective of Lane's book is to show where state interventions failed, before turning to other alternatives. Having outlined various socialist visions, he critiques state socialism, social democracy and the 'third way'. He suggests that the Soviet system provided "an effective form of modernisation" that could catch up with western capitalism (p.88) while noting (somewhat in passing, it seemed to me) the horrendous human cost of this path to modernity.

For Lane, the transformation of state socialism began with emerging internal class contradictions, rather than, one might argue, from chaotic planning dysfunctions. New class fractures appeared between older worker and peasant party members and ascendant professionals who supported radical market reforms. He notes the divergent pathways between European post-socialist states and post-Soviet oligarchic state-led capitalism (p.153). He could have developed this point to consider whether, having become locked into an extensive mode of accumulation based mostly on oil-gas revenues, Russia seeks to annex resource-rich areas of Ukraine along its western border, especially for cobalt, a key mineral for renewable energy storage. New

David Lane is one of the few British sociologists working on the analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet societies. Since the fall of communism in Europe and the Soviet Union, he has published extensively on post-communist transformations from a global perspective. Soviet systems represented an 'actually existing' alternative to western capitalism, even if this term was sometimes used ironically. The divergent trajectories of post-communist systems and the transformation of China have been key to later global social, economic, and political developments. But the failure of communism coincided with the exhaustion of traditional models of western social democracy, giving rise to widespread pessimism about the viability of alternatives to capitalism. Central to Lane's study are critiques of global neo-liberal capitalism, diagnosis of the failures of state socialism and, in the closing chapter, an outline of a model of regulated market socialism.

Lane begins with a critical exposition of neo-liberalism that, since the 1980s, became a powerful international force offering "feasible

teaching on social research methods modules. This has been a learning curve, due to the theory's complexity. Perhaps this complexity explains why mainstream British sociology has, for a long time, tended to overlook critical realism altogether and has instead too often indulged in dated paradigmatic in-fighting and the bashing of positivist straw men. I heard, on numerous occasions, sociologists who identify as "qualitative" interpretivists equate all quantitative approaches with "positivism". This is especially problematic if it happens in undergraduate classrooms.

Critical realism's fresh dialectic lens offers to overcome longstanding paradigmatic tensions in sociology and utilises the best of various approaches (qualitative as well as numeric) to achieve what should be the ultimate goal of all

social science – the solving of real-world research problems.

Alderson provides a clear, yet comprehensive discussion of key critical realist theorists and she nicely situates critical realism within sociological theory more broadly. The book helpfully gives brief and concise introductions of other theories, such as interpretivism, positivism, symbolic interactionism and grounded theory, as well as other (non-CR) flavours of realism. This is accompanied by helpful visualisations, making Alderson's book very accessible for undergraduate sociology students who often struggle with complex theories and methods. Alderson succeeds in making the study of critical realism and its applications entertaining while also demystifying some of

wars over new energy sources are part of the ecological catastrophe he also discusses.

There is a nuanced data-rich chapter on the transition from industrial to global capitalism, which he acknowledges has some positive outcomes, such as wider distribution of wealth, particularly benefitting Asian countries. Three main consequences are the formation of a global capitalist class, weakening of the nation-state, and (in a gesture to world systems theory) a bifurcation between Western core and 'semi-core' states. Global capitalism, though, has self-destructing propensities prompting a range of anti-globalisation and socialist protest movements. In a perhaps curious manoeuvre, though, having pitched analysis at a global level, Lane concludes that social democratic action through the nation-state is the more realistic route to major changes (p.262). He presents a sketch of regulated market socialism with a mix of sophisticated planning and market forces within a pluralistic democratic polity. He is right that this would improve the moral and social order (p.304), although how to get there and, crucially, how to sustain electoral support in the face of probably inevitable unintended consequences and planning failings is unclear. Nonetheless, this is a rich, informative and challenging analysis of the historical fate of and possibilities for socialism in the 21st century.

■ **Professor Larry Ray,**
University of Kent

the complexities and intricacies of its reasoning.

The final aspect I found really valuable about Alderson's introduction is its strong focus on interdisciplinarity. Academic disciplines are arbitrary and whilst they are often based on longstanding histories of academic thought and tradition, they are not in themselves meaningful to students aiming to gain the foundations and skills they need to tackle real-world social problems. In today's academic and policy landscape, there is a need to work together across and beyond disciplines to tackle urgent policy challenges. Alderson's book lays an excellent practical foundation for doing just that.

■ **Dr Stefanie Doebler,**
Lancaster University

Critical Realism for Health and Illness Research

A Practical Introduction

Priscilla Alderson

Policy Press

2021

251 pages

£58.54 hbk, £25.37pbk

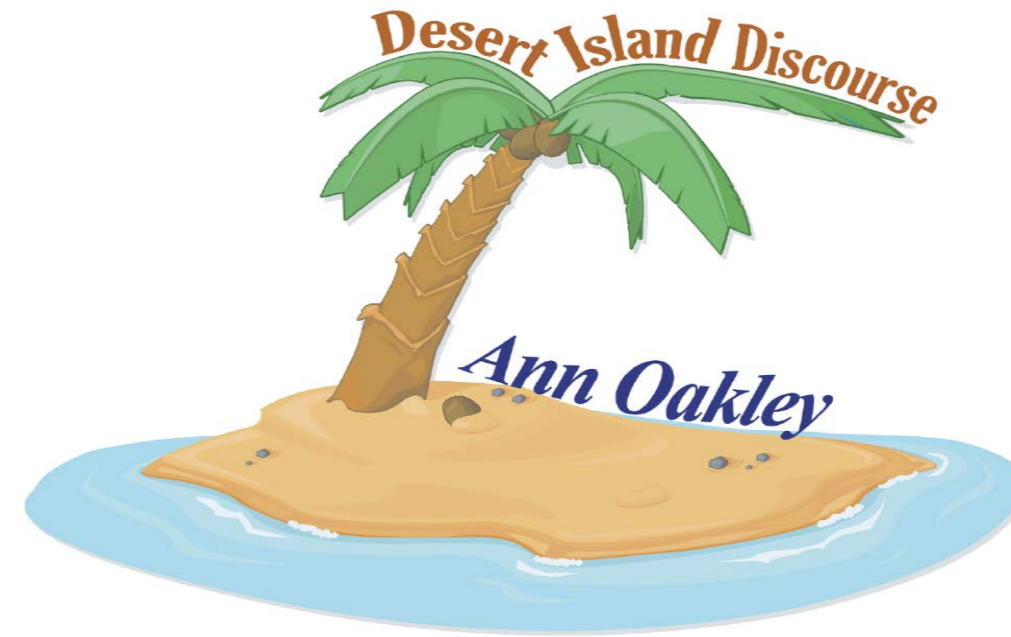
ISBN: 9781447354550 hbk

This book is a wonderfully written, rich discussion of a vastly underused and under-appreciated theory approach in British sociology. It is one of the best introductions to critical realism I have come across. The book evolved from a reading group formed by key founders of critical realism, Roy Bhaskar, Alan Norrie and Mervyn Hartwig, which no doubt inspired the applied style of this introduction and its wealth of helpful hands-on, real-world research examples.

Critical Realism for Health and Illness is intuitively structured, starting with a reflection on the enormous scientific and policy challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, exemplifying the weaknesses and dangers of a positivist response, the UK government's favoured approach in trying to address the

Ann Oakley

Ann Oakley is Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the UCL Social Research Institute. She has worked in social research for 60 years, founded two research units at UCL (the Social Science Research Unit and the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre), and has published many academic books as well as seven novels, short stories, poetry, biography and autobiography. Her latest book, *The Science of Housework: The Home and Public Health, 1880-1940*, was published by Policy Press in July.



Your first choice is *The Sociological Imagination*, by C. Wright Mills – why did you choose that?

The older you get the more books you've read and the more difficult it is to pick out the truly important ones. When I was a child my father, who was an academic and therefore ought to have known better, refused to buy me books and sent me on the bus to the public library instead. I love books – their smell, their weight, even their turned-down pages and coffee stains. The first of my chosen books is extremely well-worn, its cover has fallen off and it's full of underlinings. Charles Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*, published in 1959 and bought by me 60 years ago, is what, plus some sprightly teaching from A.H. Halsey in Oxford University's first year of recognising the subject, turned me into a sociologist.

First was that word 'imagination'. How could imagination possibly play a role in academic life? Imagination is what novelists and poets use. Academics rely on other capacities. Not so, says Mills. The sociological imagination is needed to create an understanding of how people's individual lives and the structure and working of societies operate in tandem to make the world the way it is. The sociologist's task is to bring history and biography together and map the relations between the two.

Wright Mills didn't make the kind of statements feminists would later make about the personal being political, and about the misleading practice of seeing private and public lives as separate, but this is what he was talking about. The Appendix to his book, 'On intellectual craftsmanship', is utterly brilliant, especially on the need not to separate intellectual work from personal experience. I also much enjoyed Wright Mills' rejection of grand theory and his reduction of one page of the most ponderous prose created by the most pretentious American grand theorist, Talcott Parsons, to two short sentences. I've spent too much of my own sociological life shortening other people's sentences.

What made you choose your next book – *Sexual Politics*, by Kate Millett?

This book belongs to a group of early so-called 'second wave' feminist texts (Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* is another). Millett, who wasn't a sociologist, produced a scathingly persuasive account of patriarchal power. Her starting point was the portrayal of women in sex scenes inscribed by three male writers who were leading figures in the progressive literary scene of the period: Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and D.H. Lawrence. Millett was effectively using examples of the literary imagination to probe the interior mindset of patriarchal authority. Only men who lived in a certain kind of culture could write like that about women. But what kind of culture is it? *Sexual Politics* is a big book and its journey through the territories of history, psychology, sociobiology, economics, politics, anthropology and literature is Millett's attempt to answer this question. The 27 pages devoted to Freud and psychoanalysis made a deep impression on me. Millett explained how a "nearly tragic" irony had pressed the important discoveries of a great pioneer into the service of a counter-revolution against women's liberation. *Sexual Politics* started out as Millett's PhD thesis and, as I was struggling with my own PhD at the time, her methodology of looking anywhere and everywhere for evidence about the origins and nature of patriarchal social systems inspired my own excursions into other literatures – a journey that led to my first book, *Sex, Gender and Society*, in 1972.

Why did you select for your third work, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, by Marge Piercy?

Millett was ahead of her time, and, like many such women, this took a toll on her mental health. The same was true of Connie Ramos, the central character in Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Connie is an intelligent and impoverished Spanish-American trapped in the nightmare of state welfare and discriminatory justice in 1970s New York City. She's lost custody of her

child because of drug-related child-neglect and is incarcerated in a mental hospital. So far this is a sadly ordinary story, but what makes Connie different is that she's able to communicate with an androgynous person from the future who, because of her/his ability to time travel, introduces Connie to a totally different world from the one that is so mistreating her. In the rural egalitarian community of Mattapoisett, from which Connie's communicator comes some 160 years in the future, patriarchy, racism, environmental pollution, consumerism, totalitarianism, imperialism and social inequality have all been dealt with. In this classless gender-neutral culture, free will, social harmony and co-operative decision-making are core values.

Piercy herself was involved in many political radical movements in the 1960s and 1970s and the novel is to some extent wish-fulfilment. However, when it becomes clear that Mattapoisett is only one of several possible futures, and that the others are much less attractive (in one, a wealthy elite live on space platforms and use advanced technology to control and dehumanise everybody else), we understand the point that Connie, like ourselves, is living at a pivotal moment in history. She, like us, can help to determine what happens next. Towards the end of *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Connie gets hold of some poison with which she intends to kill herself. But at the last moment she adds it to the doctors' coffee instead, thereby ending the ghastly mind-altering experiments they're inflicting on her and the other inmates of the institution. This is a revolutionary act. It's the only one possible to her, although it will mean that she herself has no future.

I found the ending of *Woman on the Edge of Time* disappointing when I first read it. I suppose that, in the novelistic tradition of happy endings, I wanted Connie to escape and join her communicator from Mattapoisett to enjoy all the freedoms they as a society had so cleverly engineered. This is science fiction, after all. But that's the point:

as a genre science fiction embodies elements of the real world its authors inhabit, and the imaginary landscapes they construct. For this reason much science fiction written by women takes apart, as does Piercy, the gender-restricting and blatantly sexist, classist and racist stories written by many male science fiction authors.

Your fourth choice is *Social Science and Social Pathology*, by Barbara Wootton – why this book?

The title of social scientist Barbara Wootton's autobiography, *In a World I Never Made*, is a line from an A.E. Housman poem. It wasn't a world she had made, but as an economist, a sociologist, a magistrate, a public intellectual and a savant of all sorts, Wootton did a great deal to influence the shape of the world she lived in. This isn't, however, the book of Wootton's I would take to a desert island. That would be her *Social Science and Social Pathology*. It's another big book – 400 pages – which would help with the problem of ensuring enough reading matter. It's also one with whose contents Connie Ramos would identify. And it's another book which anticipates the trajectory of my own career, here in its later stretches across the muddy swamps of evidence-based policy.

Barbara Wootton and her accomplice Vera Seal set out to discover what was reliably known about the causes of the anti-social behaviour that come to the notice of the criminal justice system. They began with a review of the statistics. Three factors associated with social/criminal misbehaviour

were motoring, age and masculinity. The typical criminal was a young, car-driving man. Wootton and Seal were particularly impressed by the third of these factors: 96% of the prison population were men (this figure remains the same today, 65 years on). Hence the memorable and much-quoted statement in the book that "if men behaved like women, the courts would be idle and the prisons empty".

As a magistrate in the juvenile courts, Barbara Wootton was painfully aware that she and her colleagues passed sentences without knowing, on the basis of reliable research evidence, which sentences would be likely to work and which wouldn't. I was privileged to write a biography of Barbara Wootton, and in the course of researching this I interviewed John Bird, the founder of *The Big Issue*, who remembered coming up before Wootton in a juvenile court for shoplifting. She was, he said, the only person who asked his opinion about the most effective sentence to give him. She did what he suggested and all was fine.

The central part of *Social Science and Social Pathology* is an early systematic review of the factors associated with criminality. As multiple later systematic reviews of social research would find, amazingly few of the pronouncements made by professional 'experts' were based on sound evidence, and most just trotted out subjective values. This was pioneering methodological work. The experts didn't like it one bit. One such expert was John Bowlby, the psychiatrist whose opinions on the importance of mothers to young children were extremely influential in the 1940s and 1950s.

Your last book is *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf – what led you to this?

Most people associate Virginia Woolf's name with her essay, *A Room of One's Own*, which is a trenchant critique of the obstacles women writers face and the need for them to share in the education and material resources of male writers. Whilst this is a pivotal text for all women writers, Woolf's *Three Guineas* is much more radical in its treatment of gender difference. Its focus is the connections between patriarchal culture and war. Written in the 1930s when a world war was looming, and based on a decade of research, *Three Guineas* ties together examples of masculine power and privilege in education, the professions, the armed forces, the church and government, on the one hand, with, on the other, the rise of fascism and the predilection for killing people rather than trying to resolve differences more peaceably. The problem was what today we would call 'toxic masculinity', and it was/is the same anti-social aggression that Wootton attempted to understand in her analysis of criminal justice.

Woolf's approach to the topic deploys the device of answering a letter from an unnamed 'gentleman' who wants advice about how to prevent war. This is a difficult question for her to answer, says Woolf, because her disadvantaged upbringing as a woman gave her an entirely different perspective from any that the gentleman himself might hold.

The only thing to be done, she concludes, is that women should form a kind of 'Outsiders' society, reject everything associated with war and aggression, and establish educational institutions that avoid teaching the tools of domination and pugnacity, transmitting instead "the art of understanding other people's lives and minds". The sociological imagination in other words. Or its close cousin, the literary one: the books I've chosen all exemplify the ability to cross borders and ignore conventional disciplinary divides.

And for your luxury?

On a desert island, with only our own company, we must, as Voltaire said, cultivate our own garden. He intended this to apply to the development of our own intellectual capacities, but I have always taken it rather literally.

My luxury, then, would be a set of garden tools, with a view to increasing the productive capacity and aesthetics of the island. I am sure there will be plenty of seaweed to act as fertiliser and perhaps I can experiment with breeding palm trees.

Professor Oakley's choices:

- 1. *The Sociological Imagination*, by C. Wright Mills (1959), Oxford University Press**
- 2. *Sexual Politics*, by Kate Millett (1971), Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd**
- 3. *Woman on the Edge of Time*, by Marge Piercy (1976), The Women's Press, 1979**
- 4. *Social Science and Social Pathology*, by Barbara Wootton (1959), George Allen and Unwin**
- 5. *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf (1938), published with *A Room of One's Own*, OUP 1992**

Dr Max Atkinson, 1944-2024

As Network completes its 50th year, Professor Robert Dingwall and Professor Christian Heath look back on the life and work of its first editor, Max Atkinson, a sociological pioneer and expert on speech and speech-writing, who died this summer, aged 80

Christian Heath writes: J. Maxwell Atkinson was a leading exponent of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis who made an important contribution to their development and recognition both within sociology and, more generally, the public sphere. His research addressed a broad range of substantive and analytic issues in areas that included the law, politics, language and social interaction. In later years, he became particularly known for his studies of speech making and oratory, work that formed the foundation of a series of highly regarded books, training programmes and commentaries on public communication.

Born in Pontefract, Yorkshire in 1944 to a farming family, Atkinson went to the University of Reading to undertake agricultural economics but soon changed to social theory and institutions. On leaving Reading, he joined the Home Office Research Unit and undertook a part-time MA in sociology at the LSE. He became increasingly interested in the quality and reliability of official statistics and how data from official sources might be enhanced. To pursue these interests, Atkinson registered for a PhD with Alasdair MacIntyre at the University of Essex (1967), who generously secured him a research position. It was here that he began his research on suicide not, at least initially, through an interest in suicide per se, but as a vehicle to explore the issues and challenges that arose in using data from official sources. In sociology it was a period of profound theoretical debate and, according to Atkinson, the project increasingly became a chronicle of one

“researcher’s attempts to come to terms” with these theoretical developments and their application to empirical research. It culminated in the monograph *Discovering Suicide: Studies in the Social Organisation of Sudden Death* (1978).

It is a remarkable book: a thorough and systematic investigation of the substantial corpus of sociological research on suicide that addresses how studies rely upon, use and analyse data from official sources and seek to resolve, or in some cases disregard, the limitations and problems of the data on which their theories are based. It is not a programmatic critique of different theories and models or even the shortcomings of data, but rather an empirical and analytic exploration that seeks to discover the ways in which we can undertake reliable and

‘This international impact was not confined to universities – for example, he ran a seminar on speech writing at the White House during Ronald Reagan’s presidency’

rigorous research into a social ‘problem’ such as suicide. The analysis leads Atkinson to realise that to understand suicide and the data on which much research is based, it was necessary to investigate how cases of suicides are identified, categorised and registered. Through a series of field studies, augmented by the analysis of records, official reports, newspaper articles and the like, Atkinson discovers that coroners and their officials rely upon a variety of taken-for-granted assumptions concerning what constitutes a typical suicide. He finds that there is a fundamental convergence between their commonsense theories and those used in research on suicide “that all or most of the ‘causes’ cited by suicidologists are indeed ‘involved in the very description’ of suicide” (Atkinson 1978:172). A project, then, that begins by seeking to address and enhance the quality, accuracy and robustness of data from official sources, progressively reveals a series of methodological and theoretical challenges, that lead Atkinson to propose a very distinctive approach to sociological inquiry, an approach that prioritises the concerted and collaborative production of social facts such as suicides. With the growing emphasis on big data and artificial intelligence, Atkinson’s analysis is as pertinent today as it was when first published.

In 1969 Atkinson secured a lectureship at Lancaster University and in 1973 moved to University of Manchester, drawn by the burgeoning interest in ethnomethodology at the Department of Sociology. He was a generous and inspiring teacher who drew on his methodological acumen and experience of undertaking various forms of research to explore and discuss analytic and theoretical developments within sociology. He would encourage and indeed assist his final years students to attend sociological conferences and take the trouble, when the opportunity arose, to introduce them to leading figures in the discipline. It came as no surprise when, in later years, he proved so successful in training public speakers, including politicians and business leaders.

Robert Dingwall writes: I first met Max when he came to Aberdeen in 1971 to talk about his suicide research and we discovered that we were both former pupils from St Peter’s, a private boarding school in York. Max had left before I arrived but the school’s long history – founded CE 627 – often creates a bond among people who had less in common than we did. Max was linked with people like Phil Strong, who had abandoned the National Deviancy Conference when it



Max Atkinson (left) with Paddy Ashdown

collapsed into a celebration of drug use and violent crime as modes of resistance to capitalism. Nevertheless, the NDC had played a key role in introducing labelling theory, symbolic interactionism and early ethnomethodology to the UK. Max’s paper on suicide statistics was part of a flagship collection, *Images of Deviance*, from work presented at the NDC. It trailed his eventual book and became an invaluable resource for introducing undergraduates to a critical understanding of official statistics.

Our paths crossed again in the summer of 1972 at the legendary Edinburgh conference, ‘Ethnomethodology, labelling theory and deviance’, where Harvey Sacks, David Sudnow, Jack Douglas and Roy Turner led a star cast in the face of some fairly blunt opposition from the likes of Ernest Gellner. Many established figures in British sociology found it hard at that time to recognise that ethnomethodology was legitimately concerned with the fundamental problems of order. Despite the numerical strength of the ethnomethodological group at Manchester, Max was delighted to have the opportunity to help create a new team at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies linked

to Wolfson College in Oxford – I was an early recruit. As it turned out, the environment was not quite as benign as he had hoped, particularly in the face of resentments from some at Nuffield College that the centre had not been linked to their work, and their firm belief that the only valid agenda for sociology was social mobility, studied through quantitative methods. Nevertheless, the 12 years that he spent as a senior research fellow (1976-88) were a brilliant period for Max. In addition to completing *Discovering Suicide*, he published the collection *Structures of Social Action* (1984, edited with John Heritage) and *Order in Court* (1979, with Paul Drew).

Structures provided a definitive introduction to conversation analysis and laid the foundation for a rich seam of both basic and applied sociological research over the last 40 years. It connected British work with the pioneers from California. The collection includes both fundamental work based on the data of telephone calls and Christian Heath’s studies of doctor-patient interaction, and Max’s own research on political oratory. *Order in Court* is less well-known today, partly because of the near-

extinction of the sociology of law in the UK. Max had hoped to study interaction in courtrooms and its implications for the conduct of trials but was blocked by UK legislation banning recordings. However, he was able to use transcripts from the Scarman Tribunal inquiring into violence and disorder in Northern Ireland in 1969 to demonstrate what might be possible and interesting, were recordings to be permitted.

This study was also important as a bridge to the work on political oratory that drew most public attention. One of the topics raised by courtroom research was how trial lawyers sought to persuade juries of the guilt or innocence of the defendants. Max looked around for other settings in which persuasion was a prominent objective of the speakers. For a while, he thought this might be found in prayers, where priests were trying to engage the attention of a non-corporeal, non-present party, and he sampled a number of churches, chapels, etc. However, he realised that political speeches might offer easier and less tedious opportunities for data collection.

Feature continues overleaf ▶

'CEOs and chairs would arrive by helicopter for training'

► Feature continues

This culminated in *Our Masters' Voices* (1984), where audience applause was used as immediate, local evidence of the impact of devices like contrasts and three-part lists adopted by effective speakers to elicit engagement. This book brought him national recognition, especially when Granada Television's *World In Action* challenged him to put these findings into practice. He coached Ann Brennan, who had no previous public speaking experience, in making a speech at the 1984 conference of the Social Democratic Party. The speech won multiple rounds of applause and a standing ovation at the event, with Sir Robin Day, commenting for BBC television, describing it as "the most refreshing speech we've heard so far". The programme is still shown to US undergraduates as an introduction to what can be delivered by conversation analysis – my informant said her students would be devastated by the news that such a handsome and charismatic figure had died.

This international impact was not confined to universities, although he held a visiting professorship at Henley Management College for 10 years and visited institutions in Sweden, Austria and the United States for shorter periods. In 1985, for example, he ran a seminar on speech writing at the White House during Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Max became increasingly disillusioned with UK academic life in the 1980s. Those of us who lived through those years do not see anything new in today's cuts. In particular, he felt betrayed by the ESRC's abandonment of its funding promises for the Centre. *Our Masters' Voices* had shown the possibility of developing another kind of career as a sociologist – there could be something other than salaried employment in the public sector. Max's farming background had given him an understanding of the practicalities of small businesses. When there was an opportunity for an exit package in 1988, following yet another round of ESRC cuts, he left Oxford, and academia, to found his company, Atkinson Communications, which he ran for more than 30 years.

I had less contact with him after that, although I was aware of his work (1987-99) as an adviser and speechwriter for Paddy Ashdown, then leader of the Liberal Democrats, and his periodic events at Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons, where corporate chairs and CEOs would arrive by helicopter for training to make better presentations for



AGMs and other public events. He wrote three books, post-academia: *Lend Me Your Ears: All You Need to Know About Making Speeches and Presentations* (2004); *Speech-Making and Presentation Made Easy* (2008); and *Seen and Heard: Conversations and Commentary on Contemporary Communication* (2014). In 2015, he received a lifetime achievement award by the UK Speechwriters' Guild.

He was delighted to be elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2016, as belated professional recognition for his contributions. Whatever else Max might have done, he retained an identity as a sociologist throughout his life, albeit a slightly maverick one. I will remember his courage in holding out for what he thought was intellectually right and his rigour in evaluating qualitative materials as evidence for arguments. He could be a challenging colleague, but never a threatening one, and helped many of us become better scholars and scientists as a result.

I also remember his wicked sense of humour, illustrated by one incident. For a while, the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies had a co-director, who was a close associate of Margaret Thatcher as well as the wine steward at Nuffield College, as a result of

which he got various quality freebies from the suppliers and had built a considerable, and valuable, wine cellar of his own. He would often hold forth on a Monday morning about the vintages that he had been drinking over the weekend. One April 1, he began ranting about how he had received a letter from the Inland Revenue notifying him of a change in that year's budget to impose a one-off tax on wine holdings and requiring him to submit a valuation of his collection within 28 days so the appropriate payment could be calculated. How dare his government do such a thing. He was all set to phone the Chancellor, when his attention was drawn to the date on the letterhead. Max Atkinson had very carefully copied the Revenue's letterhead, formatting and epistolary style, which took some doing in the days before Photoshop, and totally deceived him. Fortunately, the victim was a good sport and saw the potential for telling his own stories about the episode, but we did get fewer brags about the 1918 Sauternes after that!

Tony Trueman writes: I met Max when I was writing a feature 10 years ago to mark the 40th anniversary of *Network*, its 'coming-of-middle-age', as we put it. Max and I lived near each other in Somerset then, and I went to see him in his impressive house, the fruits of his successful business, no doubt. He wasn't fully well then, so we didn't talk at length, but he said how much he had enjoyed being the first editor of *Network* in 1971-72, writing away to departments, much as I do today, and travelling to the BSA's London office to put the mag to bed.

Another example of the humour that Professor Dingwall mentions can be seen in Max's quoting in *Network* from some of the amusing errors that students made in their exam scripts ("Durkheim was influenced by another sociologist of his time, Tabul Raza"; "Max Weber was a sociologist with very badly defined ideas on the whole. He tended to be very vague and was very much for generalisations"). As a result, Max received a complaint from an anthropologist about raiding scripts for laughs. Characteristically he decided to confront this head-on, reporting himself to the BSA's Professional Ethics Committee, which pronounced him not guilty.

It is a sad coincidence that as *Network* completes its 50th year its first editor should die but, as professors Dingwall and Heath set out, his work and influence live on. ■

Greg Philo, 1947-2024

Catherine Happer, Director of the Glasgow University Media Group, writes about the life and work of Greg Philo

It is with terrible sadness that colleagues in the School of Social and Political Sciences and the university heard of the death of Professor Greg Philo on 23 May. Greg was Professor of Communications and Social Change in Sociology and co-founder of the Glasgow University Media Group.

Born in 1947 in Kent, Greg moved north to pursue a sociology degree at Bradford University in 1971 before moving to the fledgling Sociology Department at Glasgow in 1973. In 1974, Greg joined a team of researchers on the Glasgow University Media Project, led by the late Professor John Eldridge. The project had one central idea: to record and analyse the daily news bulletins across the three main channels, empirically demonstrating the extent of bias and distortion in the reporting of economic and industrial news. The findings of this seminal study were published in *Bad News* (1976) and *More Bad News* (1978). They were denounced by many in the media industry, including the Director General of the BBC. As Stuart Hall noted: "Whether they liked it or not, everyone read *Bad News*."

The Group possessed unusual agility in responding to events in British political life. *War and Peace News* (1985) examined reporting of the Falklands War, and Greg's own book *Seeing and Believing* (1991), on coverage of the miners' strikes, consolidated their reputation nationally and internationally. Greg emerged in this period as a



leading spokesperson for the Group and went on to be Director for over four decades until his retirement in 2021.

During this time, Greg significantly developed the Group's early content analysis, establishing a more holistic approach to understanding media influence. This incorporated audience studies and expanded the focus to issues including the Israel-Palestine conflict, climate change, mental illness and disability. His 2004 book with Mike Berry, *Bad News from Israel*, shifted the terrain of public and academic debate on news coverage of the conflict.

Greg relished a battle. Following the financial crash in 2007, he campaigned for a wealth tax on the richest 1%. In 2015, alongside myself and Chatham House, he promoted a 'meat tax' to counter the environmental impacts of meat production, which was later introduced to Parliament by

Green MP, Caroline Lucas. More recently, he led the charge on the failures of political decision-making and the role of news on Covid mitigation efforts. He was a fearless and passionate activist, also donating his time, resources and money to local causes.

But Greg believed the real influence of scholars lies in their teaching of the next generation of thinkers, writers and activists. He prioritised teaching on level one sociology, even at the height of research activity. An innovative teacher, Greg often rejected the conventional lecture format for more interactive classes, anticipating advances in learning and teaching scholarship by decades. In the now legendary 'letters to the editor' sessions, students arrived at 7am to read and respond to that day's newspapers. Sometimes, at Greg's invitation, they brought their young children with them – a perfect illustration of his generous and supportive approach to students, many of whom have added to tributes in the last few days. This includes the large number of PhDs and researchers that Greg mentored over the years, who moved into media scholarship solely because of his influence.

Finally, Greg loved to perform. As an undergraduate in Bradford, he helped found a political theatre collective. He continued to perform wherever he could, whether singing karaoke or simply holding a room captive with his anecdotes and observations. Greg will be sorely missed as a colleague, teacher, researcher and activist. But, for all who knew him, perhaps his laughter will be missed most of all. The School sends its condolences to his wife, Ya, and four loving children.

Dr Catherine Will, 1978-2024

The BSA has expressed its sadness at the death of Catherine Will, Professor of the Sociology of Science and Technology at the University of Sussex.

Her research examined social and health care organisations and technologies, drawing on science and technology studies and political sociology. In her early work she explored the tensions between cost effectiveness, epidemiology, pathophysiology and clinical judgement.

After completing a PhD at Essex she won an ESRC/MRC postdoctoral fellowship in anthropology and public health at the University of Cambridge, working ethnographically to understand medical research.

She then worked with Dr Kate Weiner at

the University of Sheffield, researching lay practices and products for heart health, including ESRC-funded research on over-the-counter statins and a Leverhulme-funded project on self-monitoring for health.

She was a founding editor of the Cost of Living blog on the politics, economics and sociology of health and healthcare, and was on the board of the journal *Sociology of Health and Illness* and a member of its editorial team.

Her books included *Medical Proofs, Social Experiments: Clinical Trials in Shifting Contexts*, edited with Tiago Moreira (2010).

In a statement, the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness said: "Catherine was a stalwart of the medical



sociology community, and she will be greatly missed."

Professor Will, who died in August aged 46 from cancer of the brain, leaves a husband and two children.

• *Network* plans a longer appreciation of her life and work in a later issue.

Science festival hears about the significance of sociology's approach

Professor Ian Tucker writes about the work of the Sociology and Social Policy section of the British Science Association, of which he is 2024 President:

Founded in 1831 as an alternative to the Royal Society, the British Science Association – originally known as the British Association for the Advancement of Science – has consistently focused on making science accessible, inclusive and integrated with society. The Association organises Europe's longest-running science festival, an annual event that takes place in a different location across the UK, celebrating the people, stories and ideas at the core of science.

Sociology has been an important part of the association's work, with the Sociology and Social Policy section nominating a president each year and inviting them to deliver a presidential address at the annual festival. Presidents are nominated for making a significant contribution to the field and have included Professor Katharine Tyler (2023), Professor Henrietta O'Connor (2022), Professor Gurinder Bhambra (2021), and Professor Danny Dorling (2019).



Professor Ian Tucker

In September of this year, I delivered a presidential address, alongside Dr Ainul Hanafiah, at the University of East London. My talk centred on the key challenges and opportunities arising from the rapid growth of various digital mental health support

systems. Speaking to a diverse audience of social scientists, NHS professionals and third sector workers, I emphasised that it is important to understand that one size does not fit all. I said that digital mental health wasn't just an app or chatbot – it was an ecosystem. Digital tools must integrate with existing mental health care services, rather than operate in isolation.

Section presidents play a key role in promoting the discipline, and throughout my presidency I have emphasised the significance of sociological approaches in addressing these and other issues, particularly the concerns surrounding data storage and usage by commercial companies operating outside of the regulatory oversight of the NHS. These key issues were discussed in a follow-up press briefing with science correspondents from outlets including *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The 2025 festival will be held in association with Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Liverpool and will take place across five days next September.

BSA points out REF changes

The BSA has signposted members who are unsure about the changes to the REF system for the next assessment in 2029 to various online resources.

So far the changes that are confirmed include the 'environment' section being replaced by 'People, culture and environment', accounting for 25% of total scores – up from 15% in REF 2021. That extra weighting comes at the expense of the 'outputs' element of the REF (renamed 'Contribution to knowledge and understanding'), which will account for only 50% of total scores in 2029, down from 60% in REF 2021. A third section, called 'Engagement and impact' rather than just 'Impact', is worth 25%, the same as in the REF 2021.

Also, there is no minimum or maximum limit on the number of outputs an institution can submit per disciplinary submission; research sole-authored by postgraduate research students (including PhD theses) will not be eligible; research sole-authored by individuals employed on contracts with no research-related expectations also cannot be submitted; and the minimum number of impact case studies that an institution can submit per disciplinary submission will be reduced to one, and the removal of the 2* quality

threshold is confirmed.

The REF organisers say that institutions may submit any output with a "demonstrable and substantive link" to the submitting institution, but that "further work is needed to develop our guidance". It will also undertake further work on the method of weighting impact case studies.

The organisers have said there will be no requirement to make books open access when they are submitted to REF 2029.

The REF's structure is staying the same, with four main panels and 34 units of assessment, plus a continuing commitment to peer review and an arm's-length use of metrics. For more information see: tinyurl.com/yh6k9wyy, www.ref.ac.uk/news and tinyurl.com/5fpum9nc



Do you have news to share?

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

6% fall in A-level sociology students

The seemingly inevitable rise in the number of students taking sociology A-level has come to an end, at least temporarily.

In the summer of this year 44,359 took the subject in the UK, a 6% fall from the figure of 47,436 in the summer of 2023.

The fall comes after two decades in which the number rose in almost every year: in 2002, almost 23,000 took the examination.

A similar fall was seen in political science (from 22,163 in 2023 to 21,926 in 2024) and psychology (from 80,493 to 78,556).

Sociology is now the seventh most popular A-level, down from fifth in 2023, and behind mathematics, psychology, biology, chemistry, history, and business studies.

Of those taking A-level sociology in summer 2023, 18.3% achieved either A or A* grades, down from 18.6% in 2003, and another 28% achieved a B grade. Only 2.3% failed to get an E grade or higher.

In summer 2024, 6,900 students took sociology AS-level, down from 7,416 in summer 2023.

• More information: www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/2024-a-level-results

Events listing January 9 – April 25, 2025

As of 14/12/24. For a complete and up to date list see: www.britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-list

9 January 2025	Online	Moving from Academic to Memoirist: Auto/Biography Study Group Event
10 January	Online	Book talk: Caring is Sharing: Families and Relationships Study Group Webinar
24 January	Manchester Metropolitan University	Working with Bourdieu's Concepts: Bourdieu Study Group Event
3 February	Online	Palestinian Anti-Colonial Resistance: Sociology, Psychoanalysis & The Psychosocial Study Group Seminar
5 February	Online	Ghostwriting and the Impossibility of Auto/Biography: Auto/Biography Study Group Event
3 March	Online	The Psychoanalyticopolitics of Exigent Sadism: Sociology, Psychoanalysis & The Psychosocial Study Group Seminar
6 March	Online	Subjectivity in Rebecca May Johnson's Small Fires: Auto/Biography Study Group Event
23-25 April	University of Manchester	Social Transformations: BSA Annual Conference 2025

Would you like to contribute to Network?

We are looking for letters, opinions and news articles

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

The Spring 2025 edition of *Network* will be published in April. Copy deadlines are around two months before publication (please check with Tony or Judith).

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

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



NETWORK

Autumn 2024

“Uber’s emissions this year will surpass Transport for London’s emissions for all of their transport operations, bus, tube and rail – an incredibly heavy footprint of 600,000 tonnes of carbon”

“The perpetuation of racial ideology is not just epiphenomenal to medicine, but is actually fundamental and has always been fundamental to its professional enterprise”

“The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s devastated many communities – I witnessed its effects first-hand: close friends and family members became almost unrecognisable, ghostly representations of their former selves”

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