



Network

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Issue 150
Summer 2025



Extreme and exceptional Why is the UK so unequal?

Also in this issue:

- The challenge of racism and climate change for sociology
- A look at the career of Mike Savage
- Return of a native to the sound of gunfire
- Black pudding with caramelised apples: British cuisine?

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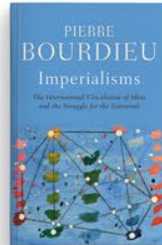
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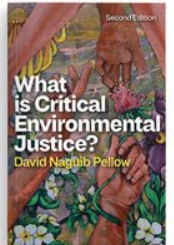
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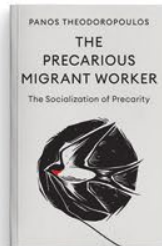
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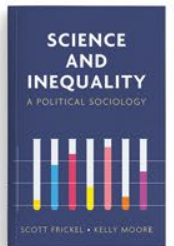
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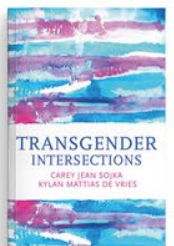
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Main feature:

UK is extreme in the increase in child poverty it has experienced in recent years

See page 37

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articles may be seen at:

<https://www.britsoc.co.uk/members-area/network>
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INEQUALITY MAKES RICH HAPPIER, SAYS RESEARCH

Research conclusions have challenged the idea that a country's economic inequality makes wealthy people unhappier, as previously put forward in *The Spirit Level*.

A study by Dr David Bartram investigated inequality and life satisfaction trends in wealthy countries over the period 1990 to 2019 and found that, overall, increased inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient meant a slight decrease in average life satisfaction.

But when the analysis considers higher earners and lower earners separately, the result was a diverging trend, with the wealthy becoming happier, and less wealthy unhappier.

The research, published in the *European Sociological Review*, rebuts earlier studies that suggested that economic inequality is bad for higher earners and lower earners alike, which

was a key message of the popular book *The Spirit Level*, by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

"The idea that even wealthier people suffer from economic inequality might be comforting, but it isn't true", said Dr Bartram.

"Earlier studies gave insufficient attention to other variables that influence this relationship. When we control for those other factors, a clear diverging trend appears.

"This research is consistent with the idea that the relationship between income and life satisfaction is mainly about relative status, not about consumption. As economic inequality increases, people who earn more can look down on those who earn less to an even greater degree. Granted, it's not a terribly attractive tendency.

"It was never obvious why increased inequality would undermine the life

satisfaction of higher earners – I'm now convinced it doesn't. It makes more sense that inequality benefits the economic winners."

The study used data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Study, conducted in wealthy countries including the UK, the USA, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and a wide range of other European countries.



DAVID BARTRAM

NEW BOOK ON SEX CHARACTERISTICS LAUNCHED

Professor Surya Monro and colleagues launched their book *Intersex, Variations of Sex Characteristics and DSD: Critical Approaches at the Intersex Insights conference held at Dublin City University*.

The book is intended to be useful for those teaching undergraduate and postgraduate sociology, as well as academics working in areas such as

sex/gender, healthcare, and human rights.

Professor Monro also chaired a panel at an interdisciplinary symposium on 'Reactionary politics, women and feminist critique', led by colleagues at the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture at Loughborough and the Department for Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths.

‘STALLED GENDER REVOLUTION’, AS MEN’S HOUSEWORK HOURS STAY THE SAME

British men’s contribution to housework has not significantly increased since the turn of the millennium, research says.

The GenTime research project found a “stalled gender revolution”, where men had not increased the time they spent cooking and cleaning.

The project, funded by the European Research Council, examines time use patterns from 1980-2020, using time use diaries from Western countries, China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The aim was to track changes in how men and women divide their time.

Findings from the project confirm a longstanding pattern: women do far more unpaid domestic and care work than men. This imbalance has profound effects – women have less time for paid work, are more likely to work part-time, earn lower wages, and have fewer opportunities for skill development and leisure.

One GenTime researcher, Professor Man-Yee Kan, said: “Between the 1980s and 2000s, gender gaps in paid and unpaid work began to close. Women entered higher education in greater numbers and participated more in paid work, reducing their time on domestic tasks.

“However, since the 2000s, progress has stalled. Men are lagging behind in increasing their contribution to domestic work, and the changes they do make tend to focus on more ‘gender-neutral’ tasks such as DIY or gardening, rather than cooking or cleaning.”

In the UK, the research found that although men had increased the time

they spent on housework between 1980 and 2000, this had stalled in the present century.

The study finds that welfare policies significantly affect how men and women divide their time. Countries with strong state support, such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, tended to have the smallest gender gaps in paid and unpaid work.

In contrast, societies where family members are expected to provide more child and elderly care – such as Japan, South Korea, Italy, and Spain – saw wider gender disparities that close very slowly over time.

Men in Japan and South Korea worked exceptionally long hours, which becomes a major barrier to their participation in domestic tasks, and many reported doing no domestic work.

Policies such as compulsory paternity leave for fathers have been shown to remove the stigma around men taking parental leave and increase their participation in childcare.

<https://tinyurl.com/3ctz5cjf>



MAN-YEE KAN

AGE-FRIENDLY EXPERTS WIN ENGAGEMENT PRIZE

A summit that brought together 300 experts on creating a more age-friendly world has won an engagement prize.

Experts from 20 countries attended the event in Manchester in March to share knowledge and shape the future of policies that will enable people of all ages to participate in community activities.

The organisers of the Age-Friendly Futures Summit – Dr Patty Doran, Professor Tine Buffel, and the Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group – were awarded the annual Engagement prize, which recognises colleagues who share their work outside academia.

Dr Amit Singh and Dr Laura Towers were highly commended by the award judges. Dr Singh developed a course for sixth-form students at Rochdale College linking sociological concepts around race, class, gender and inequality to students' experiences of social life in and around Rochdale. Dr Laura Towers worked with the charity The Compassionate Friends to share her research on the experiences of bereaved siblings.

Joana Salles won the PhD student category for co-producing and sharing

a documentary film made with social housing tenants in the Molenbeek area of Brussels. The film aimed to amplify the voices of older migrant and working-class communities in local and regional housing policy and practice.

Shengjun Zhang, Pippa Winship and Sandhya Sharma were highly commended for their Manchester Urban Film Series project which uses short films to spark conversations on social justice and the city. Yu Zhu was highly commended for her work with United Proud Women using webinars and online media to share queer scholarship and knowledge with LGBTQ+ people from the Chinese diaspora.



TINE BUFFEL



UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

BILLIONS GIVEN TO FIRMS TO MANAGE UK BORDER SECURITY

Billion of pounds have been given by the UK government to private companies for managing border security and small boat crossings in the past decade.

Research by a team from four UK universities has revealed that the UK government has awarded £3.77 billion in 213 contracts to private companies for border management, including small boat interceptions, asylum processing and high-tech surveillance.

The largest contract identified was a £1.96 billion agreement with Bristow Group for search and rescue operations. Other contracts include £276 million for detention centre operations, £23 million for the use of sniffer dogs, and £7.7 million for temporary accommodation facilities.

The study found that some of the most significant contracts were tied to immigration detention and deportation infrastructure linked to the now defunct Rwanda plan. For example,

the construction firm Galliford Try received more than £170 million for redeveloping detention facilities linked to the Rwanda deportation policy.

While most contracts relate directly to border control in the Channel, researchers found that others are tied to the wider asylum and immigration infrastructure, including facilities required to support deportation initiatives.

The industry is still expanding, with an additional £1 billion in open tenders as of December 2024.

**“THERE ARE CURRENTLY
NO SAFE AND LEGAL
ROUTES FOR REFUGEES
TO COME INTO THE UK
AND CLAIM ASYLUM
LEGALLY...”**

The research was carried out by the universities of Liverpool, York, Sheffield and Nottingham as part of an ESRC-funded project.

Dr Arshad Isakjee, of the University of Liverpool, who led the research, said: “There are currently no safe and legal routes for refugees to come into the UK and claim asylum legally, meaning that people continue to risk their lives by crossing the Channel in small boats to reach the UK.

“Instead of tackling this issue and creating safe and legal routes for people to apply for asylum, the government is subsidising private companies profiting from policies designed to repel them. At a time when the government is making severe cuts to other public services in the UK, this research raises pressing questions: who truly benefits from these policies? And at what cost to human lives and public resources?”

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR REFORM OF SEX WORKER LEGISLATION

Sex workers in decriminalised settings have greater awareness of their legal rights and are more able to report abuse, new research says.

Researchers from five universities in Britain, the US and New Zealand, carried out interviews with more than 700 sex workers, criminal justice professionals and support workers.

They looked at four areas with different rules around sex work: the USA, where the sale and purchase of sexual services is illegal in most states; in Nevada in particular, where sex work is legal in certain counties but strictly regulated within brothels; in the UK, where the sale of sexual services is legal but working in brothels is not; and in New Zealand, where sex work is decriminalised.

The study found that sex workers in decriminalised settings – such as New Zealand and Nevada’s managed brothels – have greater awareness of their legal rights and are better able to negotiate consent and seek support when violations occur.

By contrast, those in criminalised settings face legal barriers that leave them more vulnerable and less likely to report abuse.

Violations such as non-payment and ‘stealthing’ – non-consensual condom removal – were widespread: 76% of survey respondents who had experienced an incident reported a payment issue, while 44% had experienced stealthing.

Distrust of authorities was a key barrier to reporting – 92% of survey respondents did not formally report the last boundary violation they experienced, citing a lack of trust in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

The researchers were from the universities of Strathclyde and Leicester, Queen’s University, Belfast, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the University of Otago.

One author, Professor Teela Sanders, said: “Stigma against sex workers – particularly in criminalised and partially criminalised settings – can be embedded within essential services such as healthcare and policing. This stigma often leads to compounded harm for sex workers, further alienating them from the services they need.

“This study highlights an urgent need for legal and policy reforms to protect sex workers’ rights and empower them to set and maintain boundaries, while providing effective mechanisms for redress.”

Key recommendations include ensuring survivors have choice and control in reporting, building trust through specialist support, and forming partnerships between mainstream services and sex worker-led organisations.

The research also calls for full decriminalisation of sex work to improve protections and access to justice.

<https://tinyurl.com/bddavabb>

A book based on the research, *Voicing Consent: Sex Workers, Sexual Violation and Legal Consciousness in Cross-National Contexts*, is available to read at www.sexworkandsexualviolence.com.



TEELA SANDERS

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

GPS AND NURSES 'UNAWARE OF RAPE CLAUSE EXEMPTION TO CHILD BENEFIT RULE'



Research has found that health and social care professionals are unaware of the 'rape clause' exemption to the two-child benefit limit.

Parents claiming Universal Credit can receive benefits for two children only. However, if they can demonstrate that their third child was born following sexual intercourse to which they did not agree by choice, they can claim the benefit for this child too.

Dr Rebecca Hewer carried out research with practitioners who can certify that there are valid grounds for the exemption. But none of the four GPs, one nurse, two health visitors, three social workers, and three specialist workers in Scotland, she spoke to were aware of the exemption.

Her report calls for a repeal of the two-child limit and improved practitioner training and awareness.

It makes a series of recommendations, including: the repeal of the two-child limit; the adoption of a self-certification model, allowing rape survivors to claim the exemption

without requiring third-party verification; expanding the list of approved certifiers; and improving practitioner training and awareness to ensure survivors receive informed and consistent care from those they confide in.

Dr Hewer said: "The 'rape clause' was controversial from the moment of its enactment in 2017, and there has always been significant concern that survivors of sexual violence will find its implementation retraumatising.

"To date, however, we have learned very little about how the policy is playing out in practice. What this research demonstrates is that, in Scotland's central belt, fundamental flaws in the design and rollout of the 'rape clause' are likely to undermine its fair, consistent and equitable administration on a systemic level."

'The rape clause: how health and social care professionals administer the 'non-consensual conception exception' to the two-child limit' <https://tinyurl.com/33mtwmc9>

FARINI APPOINTED TO SOCIOLOGY ADVISORY GROUP

Professor Federico Farini has been appointed as a member of the Quality Assurance Agency advisory group responsible for developing the next sociology subject benchmark statement.

The QAA's statements offer a guide for universities on what graduates should reasonably be expected to know after they finish their studies.

Professor Farini said that his focus would be on widening participation

and, boosting the employability of sociology graduates.

"Sociology is a most flexible discipline, the ideal companion for many other subjects," he said. "It's a social science I hold in deep esteem, so I am delighted to join such respectful company as my QAA peers."

The new Sociology Subject Benchmark Statement is expected to be finalised next year and remain in place until 2032.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

NASAR MEER JOINS TALENT SPOTTING PANEL

Professor Nasar Meer has been appointed to the UKRI Talent Panel College.

The college comprises experts who evaluate applications to the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme, which supports talented people in universities, businesses and other research and innovation environments.

Professor Meer has also given keynote addresses at four events at the universities of Nottingham, Edinburgh, SOAS and University Southern California, on themes including epistemic disobedience, asylum and Islamophobia.

LSE

FRAN TONKISS APPOINTED MARTIN WHITE PROFESSOR

Professor Fran Tonkiss has been appointed Martin White Professor of Sociology.

Her work ranges from economic sociology to urban sociology and focuses on the overlaps of social, spatial and economic divisions. Her publications include *Cities by Design: The Social Life of Urban Form* (Polity, 2013) and *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Polity, 2005).

NEW BOOK REVEALS FRESH THINKING ON STIGMA

An edited collection, which critically assesses the ways in which stigma has been defined and investigated in research on health and illness, has been published.

Recalibrating Stigma: Sociologies of Health and Illness, brings together early and mid-career sociologists of health and illness to revisit the theoretical origins of stigma and consider the limited ways it has been conceptualised and researched. The book is intended to provide fresh thinking that can guide future research on stigma.

Its editors, Dr Gareth Thomas, Cardiff University, Dr Oli Williams, King's College London, Dr Tanisha Spratt, King's College London, and Professor Amy Chandler, University of Edinburgh, say that stigma has long been a central concern for social scientists studying health and illness, yet often escapes definition and clarification. It is treated as universal and constant, and becomes a vague catch-all term for a range of conditions and situations.

The book has chapters on diverse issues, including mental health, racism, sex, gender, reproduction, infertility, HIV/Aids, obesity, eating disorders, self-harm, exercise, drug use, Covid-19 and disability. It also includes a chapter offering methodological direction for studying stigma.

It offers new perspectives to stimulate conversations around stigma and highlights the valuable contributions of sociological approaches to understanding health and illness.

Professor Graham Scambler, University College London, called the collection "a state-of-the-art contribution to the sociology of stigma and to the ways in which it is now to be theorised and retheorised".

It is published by Bristol University Press open access and also in paperback.

NEW BOOK URGES ACADEMICS TO USE AI TO 'AUGMENT THINKING'

A new book that urges academics to use artificial intelligence platforms as conversation partners rather than replacements for intellectual labour has been published.

Generative AI for Academics, by Dr Mark Carrigan, of the University of Manchester, explores how rapidly evolving AI capabilities are reshaping

higher education, and examines challenges and ethical dilemmas across the sector.

The book has chapters on how to use generative AI to augment scholarly thinking, coordinate teams and enhance scholarly cooperation, relieve communication burdens, and support online engagement.

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

WHAT IS THE MONARCHY FOR?, ASKS NEW BOOK



A new book which examines the British monarchy's place in today's society has been published. *What is the Monarchy for?*, by Dr Laura Clancy, looks at whether the monarchy benefits the UK or causes more harm than good.

"Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's exit raised questions about institutional racism, allegations against Prince Andrew highlight troubling attitudes to gender and power, and the abolition of monarchy in Barbados accentuated its relationship to colonialism," says Dr

Clancy. "The death of Queen Elizabeth II and the dawn of the Carolean age makes these questions more pertinent than ever."

SIX SOCIOLOGISTS MADE ACADEMY FELLOWS

Six sociologists were among 64 social scientists awarded Fellowships by the Academy of Social Sciences in April.

Professor Michaela Benson is an expert in migration, citizenship and identity, particularly known for her research on lifestyle migration and Britain's relationship to its emigrants and overseas citizens. She is also the Chief Executive of The Sociological Review Foundation.

Stephani Hatch, Professor of Sociology and Epidemiology at King's College London, has expertise in sociology and psychiatric epidemiology, using mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to study the impact of discrimination,

social adversity and social determinants over the life course.

Professor Teela Sanders, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities, at the University of Leicester, has recently studied the experiences of violence among people engaging in sex work. She advises governments, the police, universities, NGOs and the third sector.

Professor Máiréad Dunne, of the University of Sussex, has worked in the field of gender, education and international development for over 20 years, with a focus on the links between education, social equity and inclusion.

Professor Chrissie Rogers, of the University of Kent, researches intellectual disability, autism, criminal justice, education, families, care ethics, visual methods, life stories and social justice.

Professor Sophie Woodward, of the University of Manchester, researches material culture, everyday life and consumption, with a particular interest in the materiality of everyday life and feminist theory.

The Academy's Fellowship comprises 1,600 leading social scientists from academia, the public, private and third sectors. Selection is through an independent peer review which recognises their excellence and impact.



EXAM BOARDS APPEAL FOR MODERATORS

Examination boards are appealing for teachers to become examiners or moderators.

There is no requirement to have taught a board's specification to qualify, and being an examiner can develop teachers' careers as well as earn income. Those interested should visit the Joint Council for Qualifications' website to learn more and apply with the relevant awarding organisation: <https://examining.jcq.org.uk>

SCHOOL CURRICULUM ON CLIMATE LITERACY CREATED

A curriculum that would equip students with the climate literacy they need throughout their lives has been drawn up.

A range of subject and professional organisations met at the behest of the Royal Meteorological Society at a workshop at the University of Reading in March to help draw up the curriculum.

Since the workshop, the society has worked with many of the organisations, including the BSA, to establish the Curriculum for Climate Literacy, which it hopes will influence school national

curricula and exam specifications now being drawn up.

The core principles of the curriculum state: "All students should leave school with the necessary climate literacy required to thrive as citizens of a world where the climate is changing, irrespective of their subject choices.

"Climate literacy includes an understanding of climate science as well as the complex social and economic factors which relate to an understanding of the interaction between people and the climate system.

"The curriculum should have the flexibility to keep up to date with climate science, climate solutions (adaptation and mitigation) and the current state of the world, not least because this keeps it relevant to the skills for green careers options open to school leavers. A mechanism for regular review and update should be a part of the curriculum approach."

More information can be seen at: <https://tinyurl.com/2vzwddke> and the curriculum is at: <https://tinyurl.com/5e638ukw>

BSA WELCOMES REF CHAIR APPOINTMENTS

The BSA has welcomed the appointment of Professor Claire Alexander, of the University of Manchester, as Chair of the Sociology sub-panel for REF 2029, and Professor Lucinda Platt, LSE, as Deputy Chair.

Professor Nasar Meer, of the University of Glasgow, a former BSA trustee, has been appointed Deputy Chair of the Social Work and Social Policy sub-panel.

In a statement, the BSA said they were "distinguished scholars whose expertise and leadership will be invaluable to

the discipline during this important assessment cycle. We recognise the significance of these appointments for the discipline and look forward to the REF 2029 process taking shape."

The sub-panel chairs will lead the process of criteria setting later this year and oversee the assessment of research in the discipline for the REF process.



NINGXIANG SUN AND JIAYI TIAN WRITE ABOUT A RECENT EVENT ON EVERYDAY ARTS:

The Sociology of the Arts Study Group hosted its second Edinburgh-based postgraduate forum regional event, 'Originality and creativity in everyday arts,' in May at the University of Edinburgh.

The conference brought together postgraduate researchers from across the UK and beyond to explore how creativity and originality are socially constructed, culturally directed and practically negotiated in diverse artistic contexts, with a particular focus on historically under-represented artistic traditions in our scholarly discourse.

The one-day postgraduate conference, supported by the BSA PGR Forum Regional Event Fund and the School of Social and Political Science's Student Initiative Fund of the University of Edinburgh, featured three thematic sessions, examining creativity across different domains of artistic practice.

The first session, 'The art-art: creativity within professional artistic practices,' included papers on creativity in music, aesthetic choices in pictorial culture, and feminist interventions in Turkish art. The second session, 'The quasi-art: aesthetic expression in everyday

life,' explored originality in Chinese online subcultures, curatorial practices on Instagram, and the sociology of everyday dress. The final session, 'The non-art: creative practices beyond traditional artistic domains,' examined creative practices in digital health design, Feng Shui, and geographical mapping.

The event's highlight was the keynote address by Professor Kat Jungnickel from Goldsmiths, University of London, entitled, 'Making things to make sense of things: research, writing and practice in and out of the academy.' As a feminist STS researcher, Professor Jungnickel demonstrated how creative methodologies could bring together different research fields, effectively expanding the boundaries of the sociology of the arts. Drawing on her extensive research experience, Professor Jungnickel also offered invaluable guidance on positioning research, creative research practices and sociological imagination. Her discussion of how ordinary materials can be used to reimagine socio-political worlds sparked enthusiastic engagement from the audience during a lively Q&A session.

This conference represented a significant step towards building a sustainable community of postgraduate researchers interested in the sociology of the arts. It followed the first event in this area that Jiayi Tian organised in 2024, entitled, 'The type of art matters: exploring how different arts inform sociology research', also sponsored by the BSA.

The conference continued to foster growing interest in this area of study in the UK and a professional identity as sociologists of the arts among emerging scholars. Participants particularly valued the opportunity to receive feedback on their research from peers with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The organisers aim to establish this series of events as an annual tradition, which promises to provide a regular platform for emerging sociologists of the arts to share ideas, build networks, and develop their academic profiles within the BSA community.

– Ningxiang Sun, University of Edinburgh, and Jiayi Tian, University of Edinburgh and co-convenor, Sociology of the Arts Study Group

EVENT TACKLES SOUTH AFRICA, COAL MINERS AND ART RESEARCH

A book that looks at the role of the early British sociologist G.D.H. Cole has been published by a group member.

G.D.H. Cole and British Sociology: A Study in Semi-Alienation, by Professor Matt Dawson, of the University of Glasgow, explores Cole's significant yet often overlooked role in the history of British sociology from 1920-1960. It suggests the value of a Cole-inspired approach to a critical, public sociology today. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-75484-5>

Also, Dr Paul Gilfillan, of Queen Margaret University, has written

an article, 'Sociology as science of liberation: a case-study of manual labourers', published open access in the *International Review of Sociology*. This draws upon three years of ethnographic fieldwork among manual labourers in Fife: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2025.2469061>

The group organised an event on understanding present-day Scotland. 'Understanding the Scottish present through the sociological lens' took place at Abertay University in June, with keynote address by Professor David McCrone on 'Changing Scotland: how society, politics and identity transformed the nation'.

FAMILIES CONFERENCE LOOKS AT INNOVATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

The group hosted a one-day conference at the University of the West of England in June on research methods.

'Doing research differently: methodological creativity and innovation in the sociology of families and relationships' brought together sociologists of families and relationships at various career stages to explore and reflect on the use of creative, interdisciplinary and innovative research methods.

It featured a keynote presentation by Professor Debbie Watson, in which she shared her expertise on creative, innovative and participatory research

with children and families. Dr Laura Way led a workshop on zine-making as research methodology.

The group also ran an online talk about Professor Katherine Twamley's book *Caring Is Sharing? Couples Navigating Parental Leave At the Transition to Parenthood* (2024), which explores why and how mixed-sex couples make decisions around parental leave at the transition to parenthood.

The group seeks a co-convenor for the group, with details to be given in a call for expressions of interest in the autumn. The group has thanked Julia Carter, who steps down from this role, for her services.

BSA TO SET UP NEW TEACHING AWARD

The BSA is to set up a new teaching award with categories for schools and FE colleges, and universities.

The award is part of a strategy to deepen the BSA's engagement with teachers and students as part of a strategy for advancing sociology in schools and FE colleges.

The first meeting of a working group set up to develop the strategy noted that after merging with the Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences in 2013, the BSA has welcomed teacher members. However, numbers have declined since then.

As part of the strategy, the BSA will conduct a survey to understand what support teachers need from it.

The working group noted that students, particularly at A-level, often did not identify as sociologists, and so there was a need to foster a sociological identity and communicate the

relevance of the discipline beyond academia.

The group proposed actions including developing partnerships with schools and exam boards and bringing in qualification pathways, similar to the British Psychological Society. It called for a focus on outreach by bringing sociologists into schools, promoting success stories and clarifying sociology's contribution to other disciplines.

Having Jonathan Blundell, from the school sector, as a BSA trustee has really helped inform our work on schools and FE colleges.

The working group is: Chris Yuill (BSA chair and meeting chair), Judith Mudd, Rosie Boparai, Daniel Nehring, Louise Archer, Karen Salt, Louise Ryan, Gavin Hutchison, Alison Bullett, Paul Campbell, Luke Ishmael, Emma Uprichard, Frankie Rogan, Aminu Musa Audu and Patricia Kelly.

BOOK ON THE MISEDUCATION OF BRITISH CHILDREN IS UPDATED

A revised and updated edition of *Miseducation* by Professor Diane Reay has been published, eight years after the original.

The book investigates why we educate social classes so differently – students from disadvantaged backgrounds are almost four times more likely to be excluded from school, for instance.

Professor Reay, who interviewed working class children as part of her research, examines the increasing focus on control in UK schools, charting the impact of academies. She recommends actions that would

create an environment that supports every child's potential.

She grew up in a working class coal-mining community before becoming an inner-city primary school teacher for 20 years. She is now Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge and visiting Professor of Sociology at the LSE. She has researched extensively in the areas of social class, gender and ethnicity across primary, secondary and post-compulsory stages of education.

The book is part of the BSA and Policy Press 21st Century Standpoints series.



DIANE REAY

NEW TRUSTEES ELECTED

Three new trustees will begin work at the BSA this September.



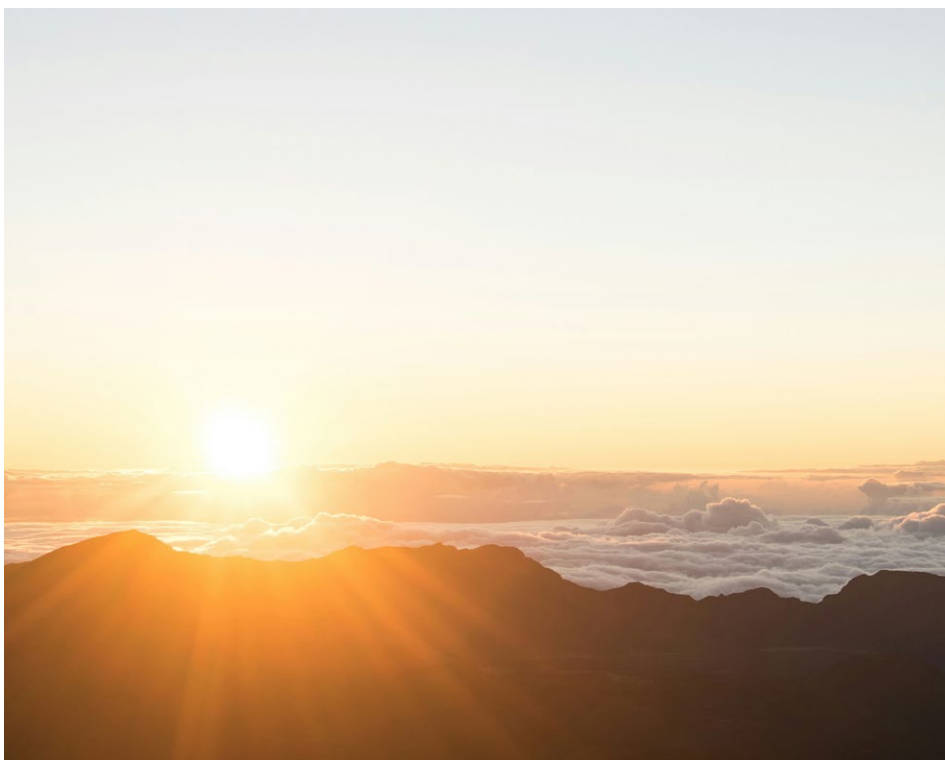
SHOBA ARUN



ANGHARAD BECKETT



KINDY SANDHU



Dr Shoba Arun, Reader in Work and Organisation Studies at Essex Business School, has served on the *Work, Employment and Society* editorial team since 2018. Her research spans sociology and business education, and she is an advocate for the value of public sociology.

Angharad Beckett, Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Leeds, is Editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*. She is committed to the decolonisation of the discipline and to balancing academic excellence with accessibility and inclusion.

Councillor Dr Kindy Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills at Coventry City Council, brings a background in sociology and computer science and work in local government. She has held board-level roles in housing and domestic violence services, including influencing the introduction of minimum wages for council employees.

The BSA has thanked Elizabeth Cotton, Finn Mackay and Rima Saini, who have stepped down as trustees.



RISE IN TEACHING-ONLY CONTRACTS CHARTED BY SURVEY

The number of sociology staff in universities rose by a quarter in seven years, and they were more likely to be from an ethnic minority and be on a teaching-only contract, new research shows.

A study by Jisc on behalf of the BSA found that the number of academic staff teaching or researching sociology in universities increased from 4,635 to 5,735 from 2015/16 to 2022/23, an increase of 24%.

In 2022/23, 52% of staff were both teaching and researching, 30% were teaching-only, and 18% were research only.

This marked a switch from teaching and research to teaching-only: in 2015/16, 23% of staff were teaching only and 57% were teaching and research.

Of all staff in 2022/23, 80% were white and 20% from an ethnic minority, up from 12% in 2015/16; the largest increase was of staff of Asian ethnicity, up from 5% to 8%.

Of all staff in 2022/23, 60% were women (up from 57% in 2015/16), 39% men and 1% other sex.

The proportion of staff with a disability rose from 6% to 10% over the seven years.

The proportion of those working full-time remained stable at around 65%, with 30% part-time, with 5% not carrying out any work during the year.

In 2022/23, a total of 1,150 staff were based in London, 995 in the south-east, and 650 in the north-west. Other regions varied from 55 in Northern Ireland to 460 in Yorkshire and the Humber.

The report also looked at students who studied sociology for part or all of their degree. The number of undergraduate entrants – those in the first year of study at a UK university – rose from 18,900 to 26,130 from 2015/16 to 2022/23. In that time the number of postgrads rose from 3,435 to 6,010.

During that time the proportion of entrants whose undergraduate degree was entirely sociology fell from 63% to 53%, and those for whom sociology comprised more than half of their study but not all of it rose from 28% to 36%.

The proportion of entrant undergraduate sociology students who were women stayed the same – 77% – but the figure for postgrads rose from 69% to 74%. The proportion of entrant undergraduates who were white rose from 76% to 79%; the proportion of entrant undergraduate sociology students with a known disability rose from 13% to 21%, and among postgrads 12% to 19%.

Most students were based in London, the south-east, the north-west, and Yorkshire and the Humber.

NETHERLANDS

BOYS GET LOWER GRADES BECAUSE THEIR FRIENDS MISBEHAVE

Secondary school boys get lower grades than girls, partly due to the fact that their friends are more likely to misbehave at school.

Dr Margriet van Hek, of the University of Nijmegen, analysed survey data from more than 10,000 children aged between 14 and 16 in the Netherlands, Germany, England and Sweden.

She was able to examine how the misbehaviour of their friends affected their grades in their national language and mathematics.

The study, published in *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, shows that the more their friends misbehave, the lower their own grades drop, and overall, boys' friends tended to misbehave more than girls' friends.

For language in particular, boys get lower grades than girls in all four countries. Boys get slightly higher

grades than girls in mathematics, but this lead seems to shrink between the ages of 14 and 15.

"If your friends misbehave, you are more likely to do the same," the researcher says. "And if you play truant more often, for example, you get lower grades. In this way, your friends' misbehaviour indirectly affects your results."

"But there is also a more direct impact: the grades of young people who behave well themselves also suffer from their friends' misbehaviour. For example, because the teacher cannot fully explain the material when some students disrupt the lesson."

<https://baku.ws/en/this-is-interesting/it-has-become-known-why-boys-perform-worse-academically-than-girls>

CHINA

HAVING MORE THAN ONE CHILD INCREASES PARENTS' DEPRESSION RISK

Parents with one adult child are less likely to report depressive symptoms than those with several, a new study says.

Researchers, led by Renmin University of China researcher Professor Dan Tang, used data from the 2018 Chinese Longitudinal Aging Society Survey involving 4,673 participants.

The researchers initially expected to find the opposite trend, reasoning that single-child parents have only one person to support them in their older years, and they face more years as 'empty-nesters'.

But they found that, compared with parents with several adult children,

those with only one adult child were younger, better educated, more likely to be married, reported better health, and less likely to live with their children.

One of the researchers, Dr Zhiyong Lin, of the University of Texas at San Antonio, US, said: "I was surprised to find that single-child parents report fewer depressive symptoms than those with multiple children. This challenges the common belief that more children provide a stronger support network."

The study was published in *China Population and Development Studies*.



AUSTRALIA

POLICE ABUSERS 'DRAW ON THEIR SKILLS TO ENTRAP THEIR PARTNERS'

New research highlights the difficulty women have reporting domestic abuse if the abuser is a police officer.

Four researchers drew on 17 interviews with women in Australia who reported abuse by their partners, husbands or relatives.

Professor Sandra Walklate and Dr Ellen Reeves from the University of Liverpool, Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Monash University, and Dr Silke Meyer, Griffith University in Australia, carried out the study, published in the journal *Violence Against Women*.

"Many perpetrators were able to draw on their police training and skills in control, surveillance and investigation to abuse and entrap their partners," the researchers wrote in an article in *The Conversation*.

When they did report abuse, many encountered police reluctance or refusal to take action against "one of their own".

"Many interviewees expressed frustration that family violence cases

where the perpetrator was a police officer are often not referred to Professional Standards Command, an internal police oversight body operating in most state and territory police forces."

One of the women told the researchers: "They're doing things that they believe they can get away with or that they know they can get away with. Police offenders are ... looking for these little insidious ways to skirt the system.

Another said: "I tried to report his stalking to the local police station. The moment I mentioned the name, I was pretty much told to get the fuck out."

One told them: "I had to report at the police station where he works, where everybody knows everybody. So the people coming to interview me are his colleagues. You can't trust them, you don't feel safe, and even the police stations nearby, it's still regional and they still work with each other."

One said: "They just had a chat to him and he went, 'No, that didn't happen' and then that was it, he just got more and more empowered."

In some cases, the police perpetrator had the victim-survivor arrested or subjected to a domestic violence intervention order.

One interviewee said: "He'd wake you up all night, he'd break in, he'd destroy property, intimidation. He did do an assault but it wasn't an assault – it didn't leave a mark, but then he said that I had dug my fingernails into his hand and that's what I was charged on the basis of. So I ended up with assault occasioning an actual bodily harm over that."

Another said: "He didn't get sacked, they let him resign ... and now he's on a nice cushy pension for the rest of his life."

<https://news.liverpool.ac.uk/2025/02/28/he-knows-how-to-make-sure-that-there-is-no-evidence-when-your-domestic-violence-abuser-is-a-police-officer/>

SOCIOLOGIST OF MEDIA AND POVERTY DIES, AGED 97

Herbert Gans, a sociologist of the news media, poverty, class and urban renewal, has died aged 97.

Professor Gans was a professor at Columbia University and a former president of the American Sociological Association.

In his work he adopted the approach of a participant-observer, embedding himself in the communities he wrote about for months or years.

His books included *The Urban Villagers* (1962), a chronicle of an Italian American enclave displaced by urban renewal, and *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (1967), which argued against the idea that suburbanites were bored, status-obsessed conformists.

In *Popular Culture and High Culture* (1974), he said that the way Americans

consume books, television and other media had become increasingly politicised. He dissected the state of American journalism in *Deciding What's News* (1979), the product of 10 years of research observing journalists at Time, Newsweek, NBC and CBS.

His 1995 book, *The War Against the Poor*, said the least privileged had been stigmatised through terms such as 'underclass'.

Professor Gans served on the Kerner Commission, which President Lyndon Johnson established in 1967 to investigate the cause of riots in cities around the country, helping to draft its report warning that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one Black, one white – separate and unequal".

The oldest child of non-observant Jews, Herbert Gans was born in Cologne,

Germany, in 1927. His father ran a small business before the family fled to England in 1938, then emigrating to the United States in 1940 and settling in Chicago, where his father found work as a door-to-door salesman and his mother got a job as a maid.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in 1947 and a master's degree in 1950, Dr Gans worked as an urban planner, earning a PhD in planning and sociology in 1957 from the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught, before going to Columbia University in 1964. He later taught at MIT before joining Columbia's sociology faculty in 1971. He retired from the university in 2007 as a professor emeritus.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/obituaries/2025/04/22/herbert-gans-sociologist-dead/>

IRAN

WRITER HAS JAIL SENTENCE CUT TO FOUR YEARS

Iranian sociologist and writer Saeed Madani has had an eight-year prison sentence reduced to four years on appeal.

Mr Madani has published extensively on Iranian social issues, including poverty, addiction and violence against women.

He was initially sentenced in January 2023 to eight years' imprisonment by Tehran's Revolutionary Court for "forming and managing groups hostile to the Islamic Republic", and "propaganda activities".

His original sentence was reduced to four years following a successful appeal to the country's Supreme Court.

The publication of some of Mr Madani's books has been banned in Iran. He has been imprisoned several times before for membership of the banned Nationalist-Religious Alliance political opposition group.

<https://iranwire.com/en/news/140435-iranian-sociologist-sentenced-to-4-years-in-prison/>

ISRAEL

SOCIOLOGISTS STOPPED FROM RECEIVING PRIZE BY ISRAELI MINISTER

Professor Eva Illouz has been prevented from receiving the prestigious Israel Prize over her stance on allegations of war crimes by the country.

Professor Illouz had been awarded the prize, but Education Minister Yoav Kisch said he would not allow her to receive it because of a petition she had filed urging the International Criminal Court not to trust Israel to investigate allegations of war crimes.

In 2021, the ICC said actions by Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem should be investigated.

Professor Illouz, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was among more than 180 Israeli scientists, intellectuals and public figures who asked the ICC not to rely on Israel to investigate the accusations against it.

Mr Kisch, who has the final say on approving prize nominations, had offered that Professor Illouz could still receive the prize if she publicly apologised and removed her signature from the petition.

But in an opinion piece in the newspaper *Haaretz*, Professor Illouz said: “I will not take back my signature because I will not bow to the attempt

to force citizens who are fighting for the future of the country to surrender to the dictations of a minister.”

Mr Kisch instructed the prize committee members to reconsider their selection. However, they were unable to unanimously agree on an alternative, and the award will not now be given out.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-prize-stripped-from-winner-over-war-crimes-petition-wont-go-to-anyone-else>

SWEDEN

QUARTER OF WOMEN UNSURE ABOUT HAVING CHILDREN

One in four women are either unsure about having children, or do not want them at all, a large increase compared to 2014, when only one in 10 felt this way.

A new study based on survey responses from 596 women, with an average age of 24 years, found that 75% stated that they wanted to have children, down from 91% in 2014.

The most common reason for not wanting children was that the woman had no desire to become a parent, with a smaller group stating that they did

not want to have children for health reasons.

The third largest group said that they valued their freedom, the fourth stated economic reasons, and a fifth group were concerned about overpopulation or saw the future as uncertain due to climate change.

Cerisa Obern, a doctoral student at Uppsala University and lead author of the study, said: “That one in four women do not want children or are unsure about wanting to have children – that’s a very high proportion. We

already know that the birth rate is declining, but we didn’t know whether this could be explained by other factors, such as fertility problems.

“Our study shows that it may be that some women simply do not want to have children, and that this may be due to uncertainty about the future, as the world has become a less predictable place in recent years.”

<https://www.uu.se/en/press/press-releases/2025/2025-03-20-new-study-fewer-women-want-to-have-children>

UNITED STATES

ASA CONDEMNS 'CLIMATE OF FEAR' IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES



The American Sociological Association has led a coalition of leading sociological organisations which issued an open letter condemning recent federal actions that threaten academic inquiry and free speech.

The signatories express their growing concerns over abruptly cancelled federal contracts, looming job losses for sociologists in academia and the public sector, and a climate of fear preventing scholars from exercising their constitutionally protected rights.

“SOCIOLOGISTS PROVIDE CRITICAL INSIGHTS INTO PRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES...”

“Sociology strengthens universities, the private sector and public institutions,” the letter says. “Through empirical

research, sociologists provide critical insights into pressing social issues – from the effects of immigration on crime rates to the benefits of family-friendly workplace policies. The suppression of this knowledge is a disservice to society.”

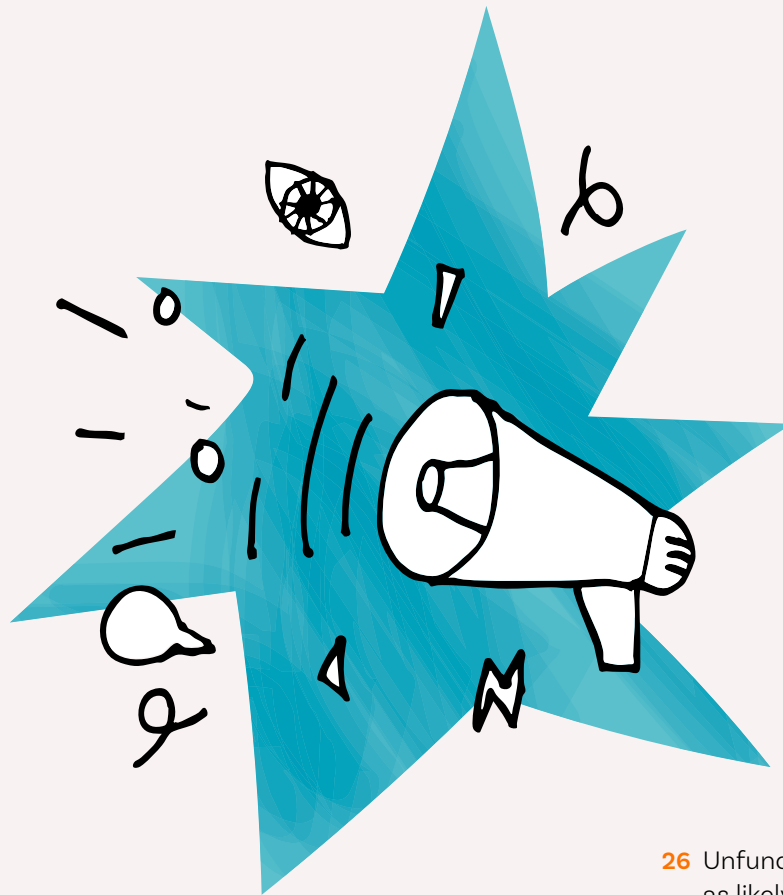
The authors urge university leaders to oppose efforts to restrict sociological education and research, saying that “dismantling academia doesn’t just hurt academics; it deprives everyone of trained specialists who contribute to critical industries.”

It calls on universities to actively support sociology departments, faculties and students. “Now, more than ever, leaders in higher education, private industry and the public sector must stand up for academia and affirm that sociology plays a crucial role in advancing knowledge and fostering a better society.”

<https://www.asanet.org/sociology-leaders-rally-in-support-of-academia-urge-protection-of-free-inquiry-and-research/>



Features



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UNFUNDED PAPERS JUST AS LIKELY TO GET INTO PRESTIGIOUS JOURNALS

Papers written by sociologists who are not funded for their research are as likely to get into prestigious journals as articles written by those who are funded.

Four researchers studied 1,091 articles in the fields of communication, political science and sociology to see if being funded for research correlated with being published in top journals.

It found that this was the case for communications and political science, but not for sociology.

The authors were: Professor Marton Demeter, Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest; Dr Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Pennsylvania State University; Dr Manuel Goyanes, Carlos III University of Madrid; and Dr Zsolt Kohus, Széchenyi István University, Győr, Hungary.

They studied journals selected based on their respective impact factors and quartile rankings, as reported in the Journal Citation Report.

In the study, published in *Online Media and Global Communication* journal, the authors write: “Funded papers typically have more co-authors and are more likely to be published in prestigious journals, especially in communication and political science.

“Interestingly, the association between journal prestige and funding was not significant in the case of sociology.

“One potential factor is the existence of a wide range of sociology journals that focus on specific societal phenomena or particular methodologies. Such journals may have lower impact factors compared to more general journals or those that prioritise advanced quantitative methodologies. While there are journals in sociology that

emphasise quantitative research, they are less frequently found in the first quartile of the JCR.

“When applying for research grants, sociology researchers might indicate their intention to publish in these specialised journals, and grant committees may recognise that quality in sociology is not always tied to journal quartile rankings.

“Furthermore, the discipline’s focus on societal relevance means that, for many sociologists, social impact may hold greater importance than academic impact in the traditional sense. As a result, sociologists might prioritise journals that provide a platform for research with practical applications and societal implications, irrespective of their quartile rankings.

“Communication with the general public and policymakers can be as significant for sociology researchers as publishing in top-tier academic journals, a characteristic that grant committees may take into account when evaluating proposals in this field.”

The authors noted that “Across all disciplines, non-funded papers are more common, reflecting the general under-funding of social sciences. There are significantly fewer funded papers in our sample than non-funded publications, and this tendency applies in communication, political science and sociology as well.”

‘Exploring the link between research funding, co-authorship and publication venues: an empirical study in communication, political science, and sociology’

<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/omgc-2024-0046/html?lang=en>



MOST CITATIONS TO SOCIOLOGY JOURNALS COME FROM OUTSIDE DISCIPLINES

The interdisciplinary relevance of US sociology journals has increased over time, with most citations to their articles coming from outside the discipline, research shows.

Two sociologists analysed citations of articles appearing in all 13 of the journals published by the American Sociological Association between 2000 and 2023.

They found that in 2023, over 70% of the 324,587 citations to 6,629 articles in the 13 journals came from non-sociological publications. This was a rise from 39% in 2000.

“SINCE 2019, EVERY SINGLE ASA JOURNAL HAS RECEIVED MORE CITATIONS FROM OUTSIDE OF SOCIOLOGY THAN FROM WITHIN SOCIOLOGY...”

“Since 2019, every single ASA journal has received more citations from outside of sociology than from within sociology, and most journals had achieved this by 2010,” the researchers, Soli Dubash, a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, and Professor Gordon Brett, University of Hong Kong, note.

“Given sociology’s under-representation in both public and policy discussion, our interdisciplinary appeal is crucial to establishing the discipline’s relevance beyond our own colleagues and students,” they say.

“Results show that sociology is less an insulated silo than it is a storehouse

of knowledge which other disciplines regularly draw from in their scholarship.

“For many sociologists, the mere fact that other disciplines appreciate and engage with our work is an undeniable cause for celebration.

“However, more pessimistic scholars may fear that sociology may become the victim of its own interdisciplinary success; that we are supporting the development of the same fields (e.g., women’s studies, communications, marketing) that we must subsequently compete with for students and other resources, or that we are at risk of having our work subsumed or redefined by other disciplines at the expense of our own disciplinary identity

“We suggest [however] that the growth of sociology’s interdisciplinary relevance over the past 23 years is healthy, gradual, and sustainable, and should not put our intellectual autonomy, institutional standing, or distinctive disciplinary core at risk.

“But regardless of one’s position on what this means for the prospects of sociology, the interdisciplinary appeal of sociological knowledge has shown no signs of decline since the turn of the century.”

In their article, published in *The American Sociologist*, researchers suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic had made interdisciplinary work more urgent, and that Black Lives Matter and the murder of George Floyd had made sociological research in these areas more relevant outside the discipline.

‘Does anyone use sociology, other than sociologists? The interdisciplinary relevance of ASA journals, 2000–2023’ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12108-025-09647-5>

Sociological Research Online



BSA JOURNAL CONSISTENT OVER TWO DECADES

The BSA journal *Sociological Research Online* has been generally consistent over two decades in the subjects its articles tackle, an article says.

Two researchers studied 1,148 abstracts of SRO papers from 2000 to 2022 and found that 'social inequality and stratification', 'family and identity', 'international case studies and communities', 'consumption', and 'methodological reflections' were prominently featured over time.

However, the researchers, Raphael Duerr, of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Professor Francisco Olivos, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, found a "significant decline" in 'public discourse and values', and 'migration, ethnic communities', and a significant increase in 'transnational organizations, solidarity and fair trade', 'globalism and universalism', and 'sociology of education'.

The researchers note that it is possible that "new topics are being covered, but under more established frameworks and theoretical approaches, reflected, for example, in the use of existing terminology."

They also say that SRO has "become an important outlet for studies circumscribed to digital technology and methods. This sharply contrasts with ... other long-standing British journals."

Around two out of three articles published in SRO since 2000 come from authors within the UK, and more than three out of four articles are published by authors located in English-language countries.

'Tracing three decades of sociological research: a computational abstract analysis to identify latent topics of Sociological Research Online', April 2025, SRO <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/13607804241299708>



BSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Photo credit: Tracey Gibbs
info@traceygibbs.co.uk





A 'BEAUTIFUL AND JOYFUL GATHERING' – BSA CONFERENCE LEAVES DELEGATES BUZZING



The BSA's annual conference in Manchester was the second-largest in its 74-year history, with 824 attendees from 47 countries, giving 607 presentations.

The event was headlined by three plenaries on the theme of social transformations and 15 stream plenaries featured across the course of the event.

The main plenary addresses were given by Professor Vron Ware, who spoke on 'Letting the land speak'; Dr Aaron Winter, on 'What can sociology say about right-wing extremism and the mainstreaming of racism and the far right?'; and a panel of sociologists, who spoke on 'Sociologists like to think they lead the way on social justice – where are they on climate justice?.'

The annual conference was popular. A survey completed by 196 delegates found that 90.63% strongly agreed or agreed that the academic content of conference papers was stimulating, and 93.75% strongly agreed or agreed that the delivery and presentation of conference papers was good.

Social media posts gave a flavour of the event, with Tongming Wang posting, "It is such a delight to have attended #BSA2025...huge thanks to the BSA for the funded place." Renasha Khan posted, "Buzzing after speaking at my first @britsoc conference! 3 days of brilliant talks by inspiring sociologists from across disciplines." Saskia Papadakis posted that "My heart is feeling very full after 3 days at #britsoc2025! A truly beautiful and joyful gathering."

Judith Mudd, BSA Chief Executive, said: "Nearly 900 colleagues registered for Manchester making it the second biggest-ever BSA annual conference. Across the three days, we witnessed some of the most thought-provoking and timely contributions to the discipline. The standard of papers and the breadth of sociological engagement were truly impressive.

"IT FELT LIKE A GENUINE COMMUNITY EVENT, WITH SCHOLARS FROM ALL STAGES OF THEIR CAREERS COMING TOGETHER..."

"What stood out most, however, was the spirit in which the event unfolded: open, generous, supportive. It felt like a genuine community event, with scholars from all stages of their careers coming together to listen, reflect, challenge, learn and just sit with each other.

"It was, without doubt, a resounding success – and, more than that, an exceptional gathering that felt almost joyous in nature."

Next year's conference will take place from 8-10 April at the University of Edinburgh.



BOOK ON GERMANY AFTER 'MIGRATION SUMMER' WINS AWARD

A book that looks at Germany in the wake of the arrival of more than a million migrants in 2015 has won this year's BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Prize.

Affective Bordering: Race, Deservingness and the Emotional Politics of Migration Control, is a powerful exploration of the initial hope and empathy during the summer of migration in 2015, and how this gave way to national anger and fear in the years following.

The award was given to the author, Dr Billy Holzberg, of King's College London, at the BSA annual conference in Manchester.

The award judges – the BSA President, Professor Rachel Brooks, and trustees, Professor Vanessa May and Dr Steve Raven – said the book, published by the Manchester University Press, “reveals the complex and at times paradoxical ideological and historical terrain ... surrounding the issue of migration in Germany during and in the wake of the ‘migrant crisis’.

“Overall, this book is an engaging read that makes use of complex theoretical terrain in a clear manner and that offers an alternative and much needed reading of the so-called migrant crisis of 2015. In doing so, Holzberg offers new conceptual lenses through which we can make sense of migration and popular responses to migration.”

The prize of £1,000 is awarded to the best first sole-authored book within the discipline of sociology. It was established in memory of Professor Philip Abrams, whose work contributed substantially to sociology and social policy research in Britain, and who is remembered for the encouragement and assistance he gave to many sociologists at the start of their careers.

The runner up for the prize was Dr Aideen O'Shaughnessy, of the University of Lincoln, for her book, *Embodying Irish Abortion Reform: Bodies, Emotions, and Feminist Activism*.

The judges said the book, an ethnographic study of the experience of living under the 8th Amendment of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland, colloquially known as ‘the abortion ban’, was “wonderfully written”.

“The reader gets a real sense of these women’s lives and the changing socio-political context over time, and is also treated to a fascinating and multidimensional sociological argument about the embodied and affective nature of reproductive inequality and social movement activism.”

Professor Claire Alexander, Head of School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester, was given her Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award at the conference. She has published work on race, ethnicity and inequality in Britain for more than 30 years, including her influential book, *The Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Identity, Masculinity* (2000). The award was announced earlier this year.





'I GREW UP WITH THE SOUND OF SHEEP IN ONE EAR AND GUNFIRE IN THE OTHER' – A NATIVE RETURNS TO HER 'COMMODIFIED' VILLAGE

Veron Ware gave a plenary address on her book, *Return of a Native*, in which she says that we can look to rural England to shed light on issues such as privatisation and the rise of the far right.

The book, published in 2022, is an account of her return to Pill Heath, a small village in Hampshire where she grew up, and in particular her investigation of the fate of nearby heathland.

She found that this had once been common land that was enclosed by a wealthy Scottish family from a neighbouring parish in 1818, who had made their fortune from owning a sugar plantation in the Caribbean.

Later, some of the heathland was taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and given to a local farmer in 1942 in order to boost the production of food during the war. In 1991, on the farmer's death, local residents fought a campaign to restore its status as common land. However, the field was sold to a private buyer after the government deemed that the maximum amount of money should be obtained from the sale of land of this type.

Today, many of the large agricultural estates in the area are owned by wealthy investors, including a man with military connections to Oman who had supported Sultan Qaboos when he ousted his father in a coup.

Professor Ware told her audience that the idea for the book "began in the mid-1990s as an exploration of the idea of an unpicking of what we commonly know as the countryside, centred on a small village midway between the former US Air Force base on Greenham Common and what is now the British Army garrison on Salisbury Plain. I grew up with the sound of sheep in one ear and gunfire in the other. A lot of which was aimed at pheasants, it wasn't all to do with soldiers.

"I finally wrote this book from 2019 to 2021. This is not an autobiography or even an auto-ethnography. It's not about me, nor is it reliant on interviews in the classic sociological manner, although I did have some initial conversations that I recorded and had transcribed, and which went back 20 years.

"I decided nothing was off limits. Memory, rumours, photographs, drawings, old and new maps, paintings, charity shops, second-hand books, current and past local history research, local media, records of local government, the parish magazine and Wikipedia – I used all these things, although it was never meant to be a local history.

"Writing this book covered roughly a year, which, in no particular order, included a murder in the next village, the start of the global pandemic, a fire in the automated Ocado distribution centre in the town four miles away, and the proposal to set up a holding centre for 500 male asylum seekers on the other side of town."

One of themes the book tackled was the "commodification of English farmland since 1996, leading to the creation of a global class of oligarchs with no allegiance to national or local culture and politics.

"What's behind the inheritance tax thing is that English farmland was basically sold off in 1996 by the Tories,

Feature continues >



which meant that if you bought some land and you did some certain categories of farming activity on it, which could be forestry, could be wetlands, you were exempt from certain forms of inheritance tax.

“So it then became this commodity which people bought as an investment for themselves and their families. So there are enormous numbers of these phenomenally rich people, who are from different countries, all over England. And these are the people who were now being asked to pay some inheritance tax [rather than] the sob story of the farmers not being able to keep their farm as it been for five generations.”

Although the countryside was owned by people from different countries, the popular image was different, she said.

“During that one year of writing, I was offered an opportunity to illustrate exactly how that vision of the English countryside as an ethnically homogenous space could be weaponised by the far right. In 2020, there was a proposal to create a holding centre for 500 asylum seekers on empty [Ministry of Defence] land, alongside the A303, which is a busy dual carriageway near the village of Barton Stacey.

“Nigel Farage turned up with his camera talking to villagers, making a film put on Breitbart about the likely problems of so many traumatised men preying on locals. So the government dropped the proposal, which was likely not serious given the absence of facilities in this place.

“But this episode, like many others of this type that were happening around that time, highlighted the representational power of an English village – ‘sleepy English village threatened by the invasion of unwelcome males’, effectively galvanised voters to conclude that immigration was indeed the most pressing issue that faced them.”

Professor Ware, who now lives in London and is a visiting professor in the Department of Gender Studies at the LSE, had visited the village to see her ageing mother, who is now dead. She said that she would “never go back to live in the place where I spent the first 20 years of my life – I’ve made my home elsewhere and that was my choice.

“But without realising it at the time, writing this book was also reckoning

with the inchoate sense of a universe into which I was born in that post world war two period, and the deep psychological structures of an early self that it shaped – a discovery that I cannot help myself returning to for the rest of my life, even if I never go there again.”

Plenary: Letting the Land Speak, chaired by Dr Elizabeth Cotton, BSA Publications Director



'CONSTRUCTING THE FAR RIGHT AS THE VOICE OF THE WORKING CLASS IGNORES RACISM'



AARON WINTER

In his plenary, Dr Aaron Winter spoke about how in recent years there has been a resurgence of an emboldened far right movement in Britain and globally, one which has become increasingly part of the mainstream.

He said that in response, academic interest had grown but sociology had failed to play a significant role in a field that was dominated by political science and terrorism studies.

"In response to [the rise of the far right], there's been a groundswell of academic interest and analysis, but sociology in general, and sociology of race and racism in particular, has not played a significant role," he said.

"It is a field dominated by political science on one hand, and what I would broadly call preventing violent extremism, which is made up of a host of other disciplines.

"There is some notable work that's been done [by sociologists], but this work tends to be not in the field of far right studies proper but in wider areas like sociology of race and racism. It is difficult to clearly demarcate a particular sociological approach to the interdisciplinary nature of a field with conventions created and maintained elsewhere."

Because of this academic context, and in wider society, the far right was rarely linked to wider structural and systemic issues and inequalities, notably racism.

Dr Winter, Director of the Centre for Alternatives to Social and Economic Inequalities at Lancaster University, said that, instead, the common belief that it was working class people

who were primarily behind voting for Trump and Brexit "scapegoats and stigmatises the white working class".

"It also ignores the racism and class inequality coming from the racialised capitalist system in which ... neither capitalism nor its effects are ever acknowledged or challenged. This is helped by constructing the far right as the voice of the working class."

Dr Winter also noted that in order to tackle the far right, political parties joined with less extreme right wing movements. "That creates the space for more 'moderate' mainstream racism, xenophobia, bordering transphobia, to be seen as legitimate.

"What ends up happening is the mainstream establishment parties fall over each other to appeal to racist and reactionary interests to siphon support from the far right who might otherwise represent such grievances in elections on the streets."

His work, he said, stemmed from his own background: "I can trace that back to growing up as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors." He had also experienced a skinhead revival in Toronto as a teenager in the 1980s.

"These formative experiences politicised me and taught me to see the relationship between state, systemic and street level racism as well as the personal and the political, and it has motivated my studies."

Plenary: 'What can sociology say about right-wing extremism and the mainstreaming of racism and the far right?'; chaired by Dr Paul Campbell, BSA Membership Trustee.



'SOCIOLOGISTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE MUST TAKE RESEARCH TO EXCITING AND IMPORTANT PLACES'

In a plenary panel on climate change, Dr Rebecca Elliott, of the LSE, spoke about the comparative lack of research on climate change within sociology.

She referred to a recent empirical work by Caleb Scoville and Andy McCumber in the US, “who did a study of some major sociology journals and found evidence of a kind of silence of climate change in sociology.

“Last year, at the British Journal of Sociology’s conference, I convened an editor’s plenary that I called, ‘climate change changes everything except sociology’.

“Environmental sociology as a sub-field has had a marginal status in the discipline since it was developed in the 1970s, and so the suggestion then might be that if we want a more muscular, assertive and broadly influential sociology of climate change, or more specifically sociology of climate justice, then we need to address that marginalisation in order to fix that problem.”

However, she saw the issue in broader terms. “My contention is that if we conflate the sociology of climate change with environmental sociology, or if we think of environmental sociology as the place where it ought to be and where it ought to develop, then we reproduce a limited and limiting understanding of climate change as an environmental problem.

“We then risk hiving off climate justice from other struggles, which activists themselves are telling us not to do,

given that climate change is a problem of how we live and work and produce and consume, given that it’s a problem of entangled systems and structures.

“Climate change is of our world, it’s in this world. Sociology can follow that assertion to some new places that are exciting and important and different. If we want a richer, potentially broader sociological engagement with climate justice, we don’t just need more environmental sociology or higher profile environmental sociologists. We need more sociologists across streams, across sub-fields, who see their empirical domains, their conceptual toolkits, and their political commitments as entangled with the climate crisis.

“We need concepts and frameworks that have already been developed in political sociology and economic sociology, the sociology of culture, the sociology of race, to give us new kinds of leverage in order to grapple with the impact that climate change is having across every facet of our social world.

“Scholars of colonialism who have elucidated the links between colonialism and the climate crisis provide a really instructive example of the explanatory and political returns to doing this, to say nothing of colleagues who are approaching climate change from paradigms in youth studies and social movements. Sociology can take the ethical and the political horizons of climate politics as neither pre-given nor universal.

“My overall point is that we have many tools across our streams and sub-

fields that might give us a fuller picture of what drives climate injustices because climate change is not just a problem with carbon, it’s a problem of power.

“We might therefore expand climate justice beyond measures of emissions and temperature, beyond environmental sustainability and resilience, beyond distributional accounting of goods and bads, to understand that the pursuit of justice is already always linked to the need to envision new and different modes of living.”

Plenary Panel: ‘Sociologists like to think they lead the way on social justice – where are they on climate justice?’

Other speakers: Dr Benjamin Bowman, Manchester Metropolitan University; Dr Charles Ogunbode, University of Nottingham; Professor Lisa Vanhala, UCL; Dr Catherine Walker, Newcastle University. Chaired by Dr Mark Doidge, BSA Membership Trustee.



REBECCA ELLIOTT



UK IS 'EXCEPTIONAL AND EXTREME' IN POVERTY, EVENT HEARS

The UK is “extreme” in the increase in child poverty it has experienced in recent years, Professor Danny Dorling told an event on inequality.

“We have one of the worst records – things haven’t suddenly got better because we’ve got a new government in 2024,” he said. “The situation that the new government has found itself in is terrible by international standards.”

Professor Dorling, of the University of Oxford, one of four speakers at the LSE event, ‘Peak injustice: solving Britain’s inequality crisis’, referred to a United Nations study of 40 countries, mainly in Europe, which found that the UK had the biggest increase in child poverty between 2012 and 2021. It was one of only five countries where it had increased.

“Child poverty has been reducing in Estonia, Canada, Romania, Portugal, Croatia, Japan, Ireland, Malta, Greece, Belgium, New Zealand. It’s an incredibly good news story worldwide of people taking child poverty more seriously. But you look down at the bottom and you find that the biggest increase has

been in the United Kingdom. So we are exceptional.”

Britain had also seen a fall in life expectancy among the general population. “Life expectancy for both men and women was lower in 2015 and 2014 [than previous years], it was still lower by 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and then the pandemic hit in 2020. And still, of course, we have many deaths every week from this new disease on top of the effects of austerity, on top of a cost of living crisis.

“Maternal mortality rose both in the United States and the United Kingdom. The main reason for more maternal mortality – mothers dying around the time of birth – was increased rates of suicide.”

Professor Dorling said that financial inequality in Britain had fallen steadily from its peak in 1918 until the 1980s, when it began to rise.

“Our public sector spending is the lowest of all major countries in Europe. Yes, it’s risen over time as our population has aged, but it is so much lower than all these other countries.

Feature continues >



“We’re sitting next to a continent with 15 of the world’s most equitable countries, which on average have inequality falling within them. They spend far more on health services and have better quality housing than we do. We really are exceptional and extreme.

“We got ourselves into this ridiculous level of pussyfooting around, behaving as a poodle for the United States and following US policy. Essentially that’s what we’ve been doing for two or three decades – looking at their school systems, looking at their innovations, but the US is completely the wrong place to look.

“The United States has done us a great favour by electing somebody that it’s very hard to take seriously, so looking at the US for how we do things becomes, I think, almost impossible.”

He criticised the UK government for its policy on water companies and on housing. “If your stance is we cannot possibly nationalise Thames Water because the overseas investors won’t like it, then you are simply going to be held hostage, which is the current situation we are in. I got my water bill last week from Thames Water and saw how much more they’re going to charge because the government is too scared to do something about them.

“Angela Rayner [the Housing Secretary] is quite serious about building 300,000 houses a year. It’s just that the private sector is not going to deliver them.

“We’ve had two political parties that have largely behaved quite similarly to each other since 1979. The differences may matter to us, we can have big debates about it, but they behaved similarly – until Liz Truss took us off to the far extreme – and this way of behaving doesn’t work.”

He warned that if the government did not act, it might see votes go to far right parties. “If we don’t actually do things in the next few years, there are other people that the population might vote for. It’s so easy to talk about British jobs, it’s so easy to talk about stopping the small boats.”

Kitty Stewart, Professor of Social Policy at the LSE, spoke about her research on people’s attitudes to the two-child benefit restriction.

“PEOPLE SHOULDN’T HAVE CHILDREN IF THEY CAN’T AFFORD TO LOOK AFTER THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES.”

“That is quite a popular policy in polling,” she said. “When I’ve tried to understand that and talk to people who support it, a really common phrase is ‘Why should I, as a taxpayer, have to pay for other people’s children? People shouldn’t have children if they can’t afford to look after the children themselves.’

“I find that really interesting because they never say, ‘why should I, as a taxpayer have to look after other people’s grandmothers? Shouldn’t those grandmothers have thought of that in advance and had children and brought them up so that they would be looking after them themselves?’”

She contrasted the “huge furore” over the cutting of the winter fuel allowance to middle and higher income pensioners with the reaction to the two-child cap.

“For those [pensioners] that they removed the money from, they took away a maximum of £300 a year in a context in which the state pension is rising by more than inflation.

“Contrast that to the two-child limit, which removes nearly £300 a month for every child it affects. So that’s 12 times as much money. And it covers all of the very poorest families, there’s no protection.”

She also highlighted the cap on the total benefits which can be claimed, a distinct policy from the two-child limit.

Feature continues >



DANNY DORLING



KITTY STEWART



POLLY TOYNBEE



DANNY SRISKANDARAJAH

“Some of the families that we speak to are losing £600 or £700 a month just from the benefit cap. And by definition, those families are among the very most vulnerable in the country, and 90% of them include children.

“In our project, looking at the two-child limit and the benefit cap, we were really struck by how often children’s health and disability is the reason why parents feel unable to take up paid work or to work longer hours. So in many cases that’s compounded by lack of suitable childcare.”

Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee said: “I want to raise some questions to think about which I don’t know the answers to: why is this country so extraordinarily right wing? Why are we always the worst at everything? Why are we the meanest and the nastiest, bar America, amongst rich countries?”

She put forward some ideas, including the hold the British empire still had in today’s culture. “It’s still deeply entrenched in Britishness and a sense of who we are and what our history is. You see that, because any attempt to slightly redress the balance gets such an avalanche of hate from the Tory press, the Tory party, all of them saying ‘it means you’re not proud of your country’ – of course, you don’t have to dislike your country by being honest about its history.

“What else would I say? Maybe royalty. I think that infects us in much the same way. I think we have a sense of being subjects, not citizens. That’s very deep within us too.

“We have a voting system that, this time has helped Labour for the first time, but has kept the Tories in power for most of my lifetime.

“I think that the Thatcher disaster of the ’80s was extraordinarily emotionally powerful. They managed to sell a narrative that went deep into the country’s bloodstream. The right to buy [houses] was regarded as the cleverest policy politically ever. It was hugely attractive, incredibly popular, with people who already owned their own homes and people who wished to.

“It’s only really now that all those pigeons that come home to roost, and we know what it feels like to have lost two million social housing units. Now we see what privatisation did to Thames Water. It’s only really fairly recently that the general public understand what it did to energy, to water, to trains, to everything that it touched, and what a disaster it was. And we’ve been left with the debts. To take back Thames Water means taking in £16 billion of debt – that seems an alarming prospect. We’ve been left with things that are very, very difficult to deal with.”

She was optimistic about the Labour government. “I think that Angela Rayner’s Working Rights [acts] are going to have much more effect than has got through to the public. The fact that a trade union will go into every single workplace to recruit is revolutionary. We’re going to see a big increase in trade union membership and activism – gig economy jobs turned into secure jobs, fair pay agreements, starting with social care. Angela Rayner promises the biggest wave of council housing in a generation. NHS waiting lists are already starting to go down.”

Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation, said that, “We’ve been sold this lie that there’s no point at which wealth is bad: it’s not actually a problem apparently that something like six or seven men, all men, many of whom were at Trump’s inauguration, own more wealth than half the world’s population. And yet we not only tolerate it, but we celebrate it.

“It’s time again to reinvent and reimagine what social protection means in the 21st century and, as a society, agree on what we think is extreme wealth, and reorganise politics so that we can make sure that this is seen by historians as peak stupidity.”

The event was hosted by the Department of Sociology and the International Inequalities Institute, and was chaired by Professor Aaron Reeves:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWII7itthI&t=3s>

LSE

MIKE SAVAGE, RELENTLESS IN HIS INTELLECTUAL ENERGY, GIVEN PRESTIGIOUS AWARD



Professor Mike Savage has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is the second Briton to be given the fellowship, after Anthony Giddens, and one of eight European sociologists elected.

Since 1780, the Academy has honoured excellence across disciplines. The first members elected to the Academy in 1781 included Benjamin Franklin and George Washington.

Professor Savage joined LSE in 2012 and was Martin White Professor of Sociology before retiring from the Sociology Department in 2024. He is now Professorial Research Fellow at LSE's International Inequalities Institute.

His research interests include analysing social stratification and inequality, and he has played a major role in the revival of the sociology of social class.

He said: "It's such a huge honour to become a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. I see my work as embedded in a rather old tradition, sparked by the British Marxist historians who inspired me as

an undergraduate, grappling with the dynamics of social class, inequality and long term social and political change. It's therefore deeply humbling that the value of my work has been recognised across the Atlantic and is seen to resonate today."

Professor Savage's career was highlighted at an event he chaired, 'Politics, inequality and social change' at the LSE to mark his retirement from the department.

The event was introduced by Professor Sam Friedman, who said: "I think Mike is a bit special. He has never been an aloof, big name sociologist. Certainly here at LSE, my colleagues will, I'm sure, attest that he has always been a fiercely collegiate presence, not just leading the department for several years, directing the dreaded REF submission, and setting up the International Inequalities Institute. But more generally, just being a dependable colleague who you knew you could always rely on to put up their hand, to contribute to the often everyday mundane labour

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“I SEE MY WORK AS EMBEDDED IN A RATHER OLD TRADITION... GRAPPLING WITH THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CLASS, INEQUALITY AND LONG-TERM SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE.”

of department life, while in the background and in a very non-showy way, providing lots of people with support in times of crisis and when they've just needed some help.

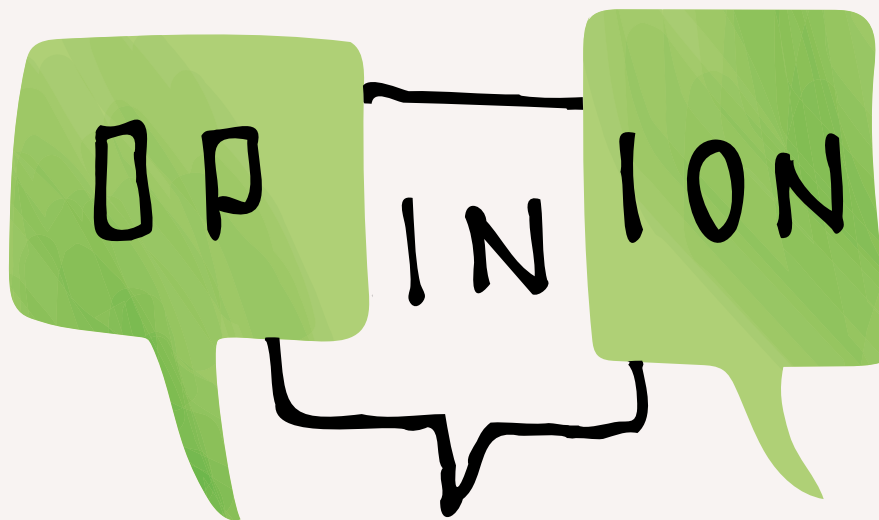
“He has had a profound impact intellectually, of course, but also as someone who continually goes out of his way to learn about the work of emerging scholars and then to cheerlead for them in his own forceful, but unassuming way. When it comes to his scholarship, I've always thought of Mike as relentless in his intellectual energy, tireless in his constant exploration of new subjects and new ideas, and unparalleled in defining and provoking new research currents and debates for the discipline to follow.”

The event looked at how Professor Savage has contributed to an enhanced interest in gender and race, and the recognition that the UK needs to be placed in global and imperial perspective, in books such as *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics* (1987) and *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method* (2010).

It noted that he was one of the leading voices who critically engaged with Pierre Bourdieu's sociological heritage to re-energise class analysis, through a greater concern with culture and lifestyle in books such as co-authored *Culture, Class, Distinction* (co-authored 2009), and *Social Class in the 21st Century* (2015).

Speakers highlighted how Professor Savage had contributed to urban sociology, insisting that identification with place plays a vital role in contemporary life. He had also been a consistent methodological innovator, co-authoring an important paper in 2007 with Roger Burrows, 'The coming crisis of empirical sociology', suggesting that the sample survey and the in-depth interview were increasingly dated research methods, which were unlikely to provide a robust base for sociologists in coming decades. This framed the rise of digital data and methods, and the field of digital sociology.

Opinion



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BLACK PUDDING WITH CARAMELISED APPLES: A RESEARCHER AT A LOSS FOR WORDS

Independent research consultant, Dr Ron Iphofen, writes about conversational snatches he has overheard.

Most sociologists will admit they cannot help taking the role of participant observer even when not professionally 'in the field'. It's an obsession of Goffmanesque human ethology to habitually take account of relations in public. I am both seduced and sometimes tormented by catching fragments of conversation that are overheard as I pass people or they are passing me. It is worse these days since often those conversations are held via mobile phone and if lucky I only get 50 per cent of the story. But all such unfinished snatches of life are replete with meaning, and while I am tempted to guess at the rest of the incomplete story, there are times that seems impossible.

All too often we hear the first few words of a mobile phone call: "I'm on the train..." and then we attempt to close off the rest, trying not to intrude but at the same time compulsively fascinated by the mundane, the seemingly trivial, but all the time wondering if it is not.

I could be on the train and the caller locates themselves before either lowering their voice or stepping along the carriage out of sensitivity to others. Or I am walking along the street, entering or leaving some premises, and you simply can't start following people to try to catch even the merest glimpse of denouement – that could be harassment!

Let me share with you a genuine collection of those sampled life histories that I wrote down immediately after hearing them.

I was walking along a busy street and an older man was speaking to a younger man: "...can you imagine? The woman who knows everything asking me something.... And she really does know everything!"

At first I thought – sarcasm – "she knows everything" then I am blind-sided, she really does know everything! But he then is honoured by her asking him something. I'd love to have met the woman.

Writers have just as an exploitative relationship with the world as social scientists. Look at someone like Alan Bennett who draws so much on vivid description of the people he encounters and their uninhibited remarks. I sometimes feel like one of Wim Wenders' angels – floating around the world grasping snatches of people's thoughts and feelings. Unfortunately we can't receive their thoughts, but we can hear their voices. And those snatches are insights into a humanity that I would hope we all share.

That's why I hate piped music. When I try to listen to some tasty morsel of a conversation it interrupts, usually at the vital disclosure. One catches sound of a seductive phrase: "Well...it seems to me that all it takes is a simple apology..." ...and...MUZAK... and the sentence remains unconsummated hovering in the air.

Some of the most intriguingly elitist conversations can be heard at places of high culture. At the Wigmore Hall there were two older ladies sitting behind me waiting for the concert to begin: "There's a wonderful place in southern Austria where Haydn composed most of his music." How did she know? Had she been there? Now I want to go there.

And later from the same ladies: "...well, what has she got? No job, no house." The co-conversationalists stare collusively at each other, eyes a little to heaven. "...still she'll have to find somewhere ...Oxford or Cambridge will do... anyway she says she'll go to Italy for a while..." Wish I could bloody afford a house in Oxford or Cambridge – or even to go to Italy for a while!

The open air narrative en passant is the most frustrating since the chances of completion are even slimmer. As someone passed me by on the street:

"...and I'm very happy to be in that state..." What? What state? What makes someone so happy? I want to run after them and find out – what state? What state?

"WE'LL ALL BE JUDGED ONE DAY. AND IT WON'T BE JUST ON THE BASIS OF ONE ACTION, ONE MISTAKE."

I was in Chester train station and waiting to buy a ticket. There were two rough-looking working men in front of me in the queue – smoking cigarettes. As I came up behind them I heard one say: "We'll all be judged one day. And it won't be just on the basis of one action, one mistake." Spirituality can be found in many surprising places.

Cafes offer better prospects, but you really must strive not to lean towards the conversationalists for better hearing. It was in a café I heard: "Actually he's a very nice guy – really on

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side – so you should...” Should what? What ‘should’ she do???

In another café a woman telling a man: “... and when I got back to my hotel room there was a beautifully wrapped present...and a card thanking me for my loyalty to the firm, and I was...” – hopefully she was really pleased that the firm showed appreciation of her support. I wished I had worked for a ‘firm’ that would have shown its appreciation. I have never had anything like that from any of the institutions I worked for. Perhaps there is danger in not hearing the whole story since there must have been downsides. There have to be.

My wife and I had located a wonderful vegan restaurant in Tallinn, Estonia. On only our second visit the owner had greeted us as old friends – she was a genuinely warm and inviting individual. After our meal we were sitting and thinking of leaving when an older gentleman arrived, looking excited and sat down not far from us. He too was greeted warmly by the owner and keen to display a purchase he had made from an antique shop. The owner, decades younger than either of us, could not recognise the item but we did instantly – a desk inkwell with ornate carvings. This prompted a conversation with the gentleman – a medical doctor from Munich. After we shared our motives for veganism he said: “I have met the Dalai Llama” – and that led to us sitting down and staying far longer than we had expected. Of course not every overheard or over ‘seen’ encounter leads to such wonderful discussion. But it does show the value of perhaps taking an opportunity to intervene, admittedly cautiously, in the overheard.

Cafes and restaurants do offer the kind of opportunities for sustained overheard of course, since one is expected to be seated for a while. Public transport is perhaps the most irritating location for overheard. Heard on the tube: “I told my boss I’d

been invited to...(unclear) ... that way he wouldn’t challenge it.” “Were you invited?”

They looked into each other’s eyes – a cautious smile – as if each daring the other to say that this was wrong. Then one said: “Everybody tells lies in this business.” I needed to know – what was that business?

Rarely do you hear conversations in public conveniences and maybe you shouldn’t linger long enough. I was in a gents’ toilet when two little boys aged about five came in. They pointed to a notice on the door: Nappy Changing Facilities....

Their conversation began: “No nappies needed here.”

“No...sir!”

“Well, apart from your little sister.”

“And yours!”

They laughed...

“Oh, mine sometimes wears knickers.”

“Whoa... cool!”

As I passed a row of parked cars – a car door slammed and one woman said to another: “So are you gonna feel guilty about wearing sequins now?”

The problem is that there are so many intriguing openings and so few informative closings.

“My father always used to say...” What... what did he say?

“You know how people talk...” What about?

“I don’t know... it’s supposed to be animals...” – one can only guess at that.

And the frankly bizarre:

“I’ll have the warm black pudding with the caramelised apples please.” Surely that isn’t on the menu?

Or: “I didn’t want it dyed, it’s a nonsense to take the sheen off the grey. Do you approve?” It took me a while to figure that must refer to hair styling.

I realise how far removed I am from modern youth culture when I couldn’t help overhearing a lengthy conversation between two teenage girls on the bus – it was the longest of my encounters and it was frustrating for a different reason – the limitation in vocabulary leading to the application of one word across the entire grammatical spectrum. The word? – ‘like’. “I was...like..” and “She was...like...” and “We were...like...”. And truly the sentence that nearly killed me: “Like, I was like, deciding whether to like like him or not and he like said he did not like like me any more.” It deeply pained my syntactical sensibilities.

There are times when one hears the snippet and is almost driven to comment. Near the British Museum on one occasion I saw two American tourists studying a restaurant menu at the entrance to the establishment. One turned to the other: “British cuisine... well there’s an oxymoron.” If I had disagreed I might have been inclined to make the challenge.

And then sometimes you really don’t feel you have a right to know what the comment was about and perhaps best if you don’t know the denouement. At dusk one evening as I passed in the street I overheard a young woman say to her companion: “I am searching for a hand to hold in the dark...”

I truly hope she found it.



RON IPOHEN

Desert Island Discourse



Choosing five books to take to a desert island is different from selecting the five books that most shaped one's thinking, or five books to take on a holiday (assuming a desert island is not your idea of a holiday – it may well be mine!). Many of the books I would have selected outside of this context are social theory, which is about relations (in the late Lauren Berlant's ingenious framing, the inconvenience of other people). On a desert island, however, I think I would be inclined to choose books that speak to the intellectual, emotional and philosophical aspects that open to us in solitude.

Your first choice is *An Ecology of Wisdom*, by Arne Naess – why did you choose that?

This is one of those magical books that convey a deep sense of place and time while remaining relevant. Naess wrote most of the fragments in his hut in the Norwegian mountains, Tvergastein, and the book radiates grounding in one's everyday environment, but manages to reach across time and space, weaving together elements of Spinoza's philosophy, Gandhi's theory of non-violent resistance, Buddhism and systems thinking. This, to me, is a mark of truly original thinking that does not remain ignorant of the paths before it, but also does not fear veering off course.

Naess himself avoided disciplinary enclosure – he is often described as the “founder of deep ecology” but his work encompassed analytic philosophy, linguistics, politics, as well as – most importantly, in my view – the development of a comprehensive system for understanding the interdependence of humans and other beings. This is where the concept of ‘deep ecology’ stems from – Naess saw human-centric and ‘engineering’ approaches to ecosystems, which seek to make them ‘optimal’ for human use, as superficial and wrong. By contrast, deep ecology accentuates the natural balance of systems, and

the need for humans to refrain from aggressive intervention, not least the kind that seeks to maintain human ‘reign’ over other beings and forms of life. While deep ecology – like many other progressive ideas – has been occasionally appropriated by conservative and reactionary movements, Naess was deeply critical of capitalism and its exploitative and hierarchical approach to the world, and was also deeply internationalist: any ecological approach understands that borders, like many other human constructions, can never stem the flow of life.

What made you choose your next book – *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* by Pema Chödrön?

It is difficult to select one Buddhist book, in part because they all, in a manner, speak about the same topic – the origin of human suffering, and how to change it – but in different ways. Buddhism sees human attachment to the world – by attachment, we mean ‘clinging’, the possessive wish to own and hold things permanent, and the forms of discrimination, judgment and ignorance that stem from it – as both inevitable and the source of pain, as it recognises the world is not human-centred nor permanent. Some people refer to Buddhism as a religion, but I like to think of it as a philosophical (ontological, epistemological and ethical) system: it tells us how the world is, why we (mis)perceive it in a certain way, and discusses the right way to act based on this. I only read Chödrön's book very recently: when I was younger I tended to prefer primary sources, and, while I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, I always thought the title sounded a bit too much like self-help literature. Turns out it isn't, though it does precisely what self-help should: it helps decentre our sense of self and places it in the broader context – of the world, nature and human life.

This, in fact, is a good example of what Buddhists refer to as discriminating

mind – we form preconceptions about things (including assigning value to them, in my case, disdain for self-help literature) that lead us to cling to or reject things as ‘useful’ or not to us. I now make a conscious effort not to do that, and I also teach and write about certain kinds of preconceptions – for instance, that minoritised people write about their own ‘experience’, while (usually) white and male philosophers write about how the world ‘truly is’. Buddhism reminds us that the link between the two is closer, and different, than we may like to think.

Why did you select for your third work, *Unforbidden Pleasures*, by Adam Phillips?

Speaking of self-help: I do, in fact, have a favourite – not book, but author: the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips, whose books I sometimes jokingly refer to as my favourite kind of self-help. Phillips weaves together psychoanalysis (mostly of the Freudian bent, but not dogmatically so), philosophy, literature, film and often references from general culture or his work with clients. The result is the kind of syncretic, engaging and thought-provoking writing I enjoy most. What I particularly like about *Unforbidden Pleasures* is that it reinforces the point that we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously – in other words, that we are masters of not knowing ourselves, and that sometimes even practices or forms of inquiry ostensibly most dedicated to the pursuit of self-knowledge or personal growth (psychoanalysis included!) are ways of avoiding certain questions. I could have probably selected any Phillips' book, but this one strikes a particularly good balance between theoretical depth and conceptual width (speaking of balance: Phillips' *On Balance* is another good read!)

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“WE ONLY EXIST IN RELATION TO OTHERS. HOW, AND IN WHAT FORM, DO WE ACCOUNT FOR OURSELVES AND MAKE OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE TO/FOR OTHERS?”

Your fourth choice is Giving an Account of Oneself by Judith Butler – why this book?

While not one of their most well-known or cited books, this is one of my favourites in Butler’s multi-faceted theoretical oeuvre. I like it because it links the question of self-awareness or self-perception – in other words, what it means to refer to our ‘selves’ as a source of agency, decision-making, and claims – with the question of politics and ethics, demonstrating through other means what I also take to be Naess’ and Chödrön’s main point: that we only exist in relation to others. Butler takes this as a starting point, and asks the question that I keep coming back to: how, and in what form, do we account for ourselves and make ourselves accountable to/for others? It won’t come as a surprise that Butler also engages with some of the sources I have mentioned earlier – psychoanalysis, Spinoza, the question of “I” as the locus of thought – but, more importantly, as the locus of action, which brings us back to the question of ethics. This, I think, is the core question that the ongoing wars, new and old forms of repression, and the climate crisis force us to consider over and over again: what does it mean to act in a world on fire?

Your last book is Area X/Southern Reach, by Jeff Vandermeer – what led you to this?

OK, this is a bit of a dirty trick, as Area X is in fact a tetralogy – three original (Annihilation, Authority, Acceptance) and the most recently published fourth, Absolution. Vandermeer’s book is a vertiginous examination of what happens when reality fractures, or perhaps wasn’t one to begin with – equal parts thriller, sci-fi (or maybe cli-fi), character study, and a mystery – it narrates the events, characters and organisations surrounding the creation of what is referred to as ‘Area X’: a zone of exclusion that appears in the south of United States, and the attempts of a government agency (Southern Reach) and multiple teams of scientists to explore, document and – least successfully – contain it. This includes a biologist, who forms part of one of the expeditions sent to investigate it; an intelligence operative, who oversees the expedition and later becomes as fascinated by trying to understand what happened; and a host of other characters, some scientists, some working for the government agency, some more difficult to identify. It also features some of the most profoundly isolating situations imaginable – not least because, despite the name, some areas are truly...out of reach. If you were the kid who enjoyed exploring abandoned buildings, overgrown parking lots, or just enjoyed reading about forms of life that do not conform to human intentions, designs or analyses – this is the book for you. You can, of course, choose to read it literally – as a sci-fi mystery/thriller – or metaphorically, as a journey into self-awareness, or from annihilation to absolution.

And for your luxury?

What counts as ‘luxury’ for different people can vary – I am sure that

many things I consider luxuries will be deemed necessities for others! Given that I’ve had the chance to select books, though, the one element that would really make my desert island life complete would be music – I guess the easiest would be an MP3 player (remember those?) with music downloaded on it, which would also be less cumbersome than a record or CD player. Back in the day, I used to carry about 10G of music on my MP3 player – I listen to almost all kinds of music, but I guess the list would have to include some jazz, electro, post-punk and reggae, as well as favourite soundtracks, such as Wim Wenders’ ‘Until the end of the world’ and Eric Serra’s ‘The Big Blue’.

Dr Bacevic’s choices:

An Ecology of Wisdom, by Arne Naess, (2008) Counterpoint

When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times, by Pema Chödrön (2002) Shambhala

Unforbidden Pleasures, by Adam Phillips (2015) Hamish Hamilton

Giving an Account of Oneself, by Judith Butler (2005) Fordham University Press

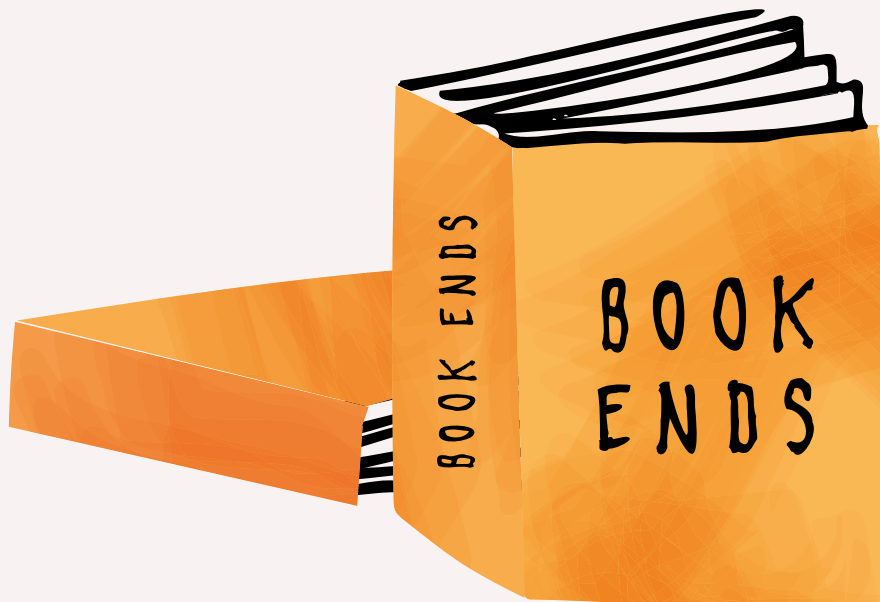
Area X/Southern Reach, by Jeff Vandermeer (2014) FSG Originals

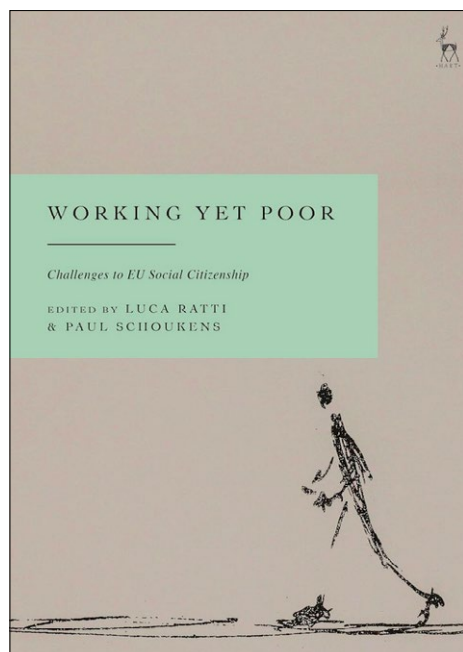


JANA BACEVIC

Bookends

Reviews of Recent
Books in Social
Science and Sociology





WORKING YET POOR. CHALLENGES TO EU SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP

EDITED BY LUCA RATTI AND PAUL
SCHOUKENS

Hart Publishing, 2023

288 pages

£76.50 hbk, £38.69 pbk

ISBN: 9781509966547 hbk

The phenomenon of so-called in-work poverty has been strongly increasing since 2018 across the whole EU, although its impact has been diverse among the different countries. In-work poverty occurs when people are employed or in paid work but whose situation does not reach what is considered the

standard of living in a specific society. In-work poverty usually impacts the low or unskilled, self-employed, flexible-workers, and atypical and platform workers.

However, in-work poverty is not a clear-cut issue to measure. For instance, low salaries are not the only criteria to consider; the household situation must also be included in the analysis, as low salaries are often neutralised by the redistribution of incomes within a shared home. Also, the eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the consequential cost-of-living crisis aggravated the situation of those affected by in-work poverty.

The 288 pages of this volume are structured in a brief introduction followed by four parts. The first consists of four chapters introducing the concept of in-work poverty and its European context. The second section proposes the establishment of 'EU social citizenship' in which everyone has a decent standard of living by ensuring adequate wages and assigning a central role to social security. Part three delves into ways of addressing in-work poverty: intersectional and radical policy changes and the inclusion of social partners (especially trade unions). The last section suggests additional research around the socio-fiscal welfare state and antidotes to structural in-work poverty.

I greatly enjoyed chapter four, which delves into the significant "gender paradox" within in-work poverty. Gender analysis also features significantly in chapter one, about the conceptualisation of in-work poverty; chapter six, about adequate salaries; and chapter eight, on policy proposals. Also, I found pleasantly surprising the mention of au pairs, mostly migrants who work in childcare in private households but who lack worker status, in chapter five. This element shows the thorough knowledge of the phenomenon by the writers and the excellent academic effort behind this publication.

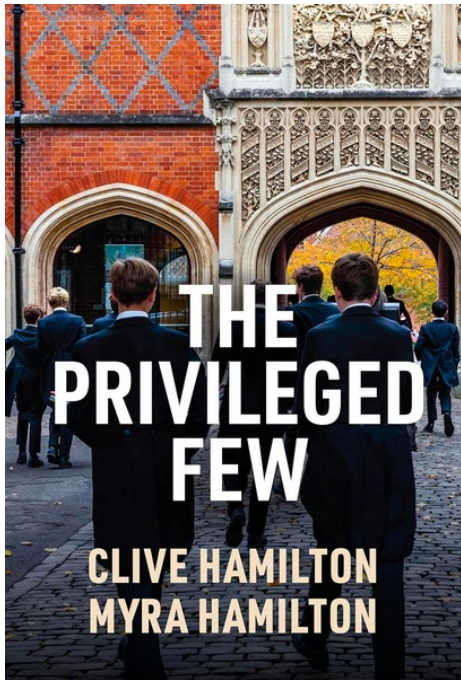
The range of contributors is a strong positive point for this publication.

To expose the seriousness of the phenomenon and propose viable but ambitious solutions, the editors, Luca Ratti (Associate Professor of European and Comparative Labour Law) and Paul Schoukens (Professor of Social Security Law at the KU Leuven) invited contributions from 14 experts, a wide range of sociologists, gender specialists, researchers, and professors in labour, social security, law, and economics at European universities and labour and social rights institutions.

As a note for the editors, I suggest using the concept of in-employment poverty instead of in-work poverty. People who care for others do work, undertaking material tasks (cleaning, feeding, housework, for instance) and subjective or affective tasks (emotional support, health activities management, etc.), even when many are not employed and do not receive remuneration. The classical binary concept of the economy and the market does not recognise the importance of non-paid care and does not recognise the vital role of carers in sustaining so-called productive activities. My proposal is based on the suspicion that carers play an important role in the phenomenon of in-work poverty addressed in this book. However, research would be needed to understand its degree accurately.

This is a technically well-developed and detailed volume, and a big effort has been made in that area. In general, the book is not too difficult. However, it is advised that first-time readers pay attention to the general introduction and first chapters, as well as the abbreviations and table of legislation. Some chapters, such as number 10, on unveiling the hidden welfare state, require extra attention for non-specialised readers. For anyone wishing to conduct research or gain a deeper understanding of in-work poverty in the EU and ways to address it, this is an excellent volume.

BY LAURA ROSA BERRO YOLDI
University of Leeds



THE PRIVILEGED FEW

CLIVE HAMILTON
AND MYRA HAMILTON

Polity Press, May 2024
240 pages
\$20.00 E-Book, \$24.95 Print
ISBN-13: 9781509559701 hbk

The *Privileged Few* examines the social dimensions of elite privilege, by specifically focussing on how, during the time of the 2021 Covid-19 lockdowns, privileged communities managed to evade restrictions while the rest of society bore the brunt of stringent government rules. Rather than merely identifying who holds privilege and describing what they own, the book explores how elite privilege is enacted and sustained in developed societies, particularly contemporary Australia. In other words, the book focuses on how privilege is ‘done’ as opposed to merely describing what privilege is and who ‘owns’ it.

Drawing from a series of focus group discussions with participants recruited from Melbourne and Sydney, as well as a specially commissioned public opinion survey of 1,229 Australian adults, the authors ground their arguments in empirical research. They also engage with a range of theoretical frameworks, particularly Thomas Piketty’s work on wealth-income inequality and Pierre Bourdieu’s work on social stratification. Specifically, the authors deploy Bourdieu’s four-fold conception of capital (financial, social,

cultural and symbolic) as key analytical tools to demonstrate just how privilege functions as a social phenomenon – one that is sustained, reproduced and legitimised through structured practices and processes.

“PRIVILEGE IS NOT MERELY A BYPRODUCT OF WEALTH AND POWER; IT IS ONE OF SOCIETY’S KEY ORGANISING PRINCIPLES.”

In the authors’ view, privilege is not merely a byproduct of wealth and power; it is one of society’s key organising principles. They argue that systems of privilege are upheld through broad social compliance in which individuals and institutions actively participate by granting privileges to a select few (the elite) while simultaneously reinforcing the disadvantages of those outside these

Feature continues >

circles. The authors also contend that elite privilege causes a range of social harms and should, therefore, not be viewed as merely a private matter affecting only a small group of people. It should, instead, be seen and treated as a broader societal malaise in need of critical examination and reform.

The scope of *The Privileged Few* is extensive, as it examines both the everyday interpersonal interactions that reinforce privilege as well as the larger sites and institutions that sustain and reproduce it. While the book effectively demonstrates how sites such as elite suburbs, exclusive private schools, the judiciary, philanthropic institutions, the arts, sports and honours systems serve as mechanisms through which privilege is perpetuated across generations, the book could have benefited from a more detailed analysis of how elite privilege in these sites intersects with other forms of identity and marginalisation. For instance, although the authors acknowledge the intersection of elite privilege with male and white privilege, they do not fully explore how other aspects of identity – such as sexuality, transgender identity, and disability – also shape the dynamics of privilege. For instance, how do elite networks exclude those who do not conform to heteronormative and cisnormative ideals? To what extent do individuals with disabilities face additional barriers in accessing elite spaces, even if they come from privileged backgrounds? These kinds of questions remain unexplored.

The authors draw primarily from Australian evidence, with references to the United States, Britain and Europe, yet they argue that their conclusions can be adapted to most developed countries. However, applying findings from one context to another may not always be appropriate, as

elite privilege operates differently depending on historical, cultural and political conditions, even within the developed world. Furthermore, additional studies examining how elite privilege is enacted and sustained in developing and under-developed regions would be needed to provide a more comprehensive and globally relevant perspective. In such regions, elite privilege may be found to have been shaped not just by wealth and institutional power but also by other factors such as deep-rooted colonial legacies, informal patronage networks, and region-specific forms of social stratification like the caste system in India. Exploring these kinds of variations could improve our collective understanding of privilege across different socio-economic and political landscapes.

All said and done, *The Privileged Few* is a thought-provoking and deeply relevant sociological examination of the hidden structures that shape opportunities, influence decision-making and reinforce social hierarchies. Readers – whether they are scholars, activists, or simply those who are curious about social inequality – will have come away with a deeper understanding of how privilege functions in society; they may also, perhaps more importantly, come away possessing a heightened awareness of their own place within these structures. While the book does not provide a definitive, actionable roadmap for dismantling privilege, it does serve as an essential starting point for much-needed conversations about fairness, power and the future of social equity in a classed society.

BY KANAV NARAYAN SAHGAL

Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, India

BOURDIEU AND SAYAD AGAINST EMPIRE: FORGING SOCIOLOGY IN ANTICOLONIAL STRUGGLE

AMÍN PÉREZ (TRANSLATOR, ANDREW BROWN)

Polity Press

219 pages

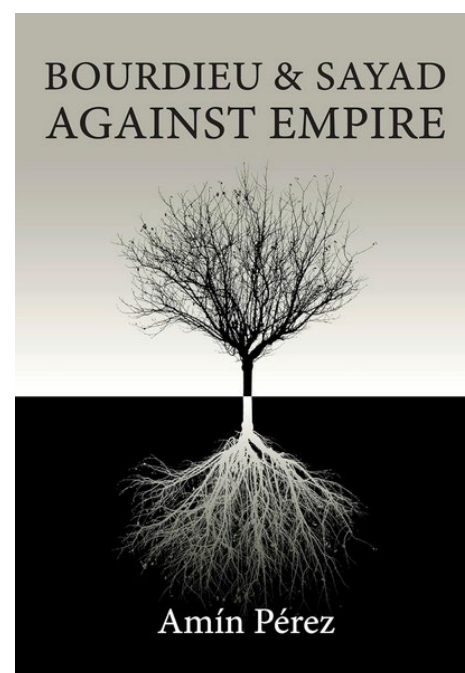
£49 hbk, £17.50 pbk

ISBN: 9781509557851 hbk

Amín Pérez's *Bourdieu and Sayad Against Empire* offers a compelling historical reconstruction of the intellectual collaboration between Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Drawing on previously unexplored archives and correspondence, this meticulously researched work illuminates how these sociologists transformed their experience of colonial violence into a revolutionary approach to sociology as emancipatory practice.

The book's central contribution lies in demonstrating that Bourdieu's theoretical innovations, particularly habitus, field and forms of capital, emerged not from abstract theorisation but from witnessing and documenting French colonialism in Algeria. This historical grounding provides crucial context for understanding Bourdieu's theoretical edifice, now foundational to contemporary sociology.

Pérez reveals how wartime conditions forced methodological innovations that became hallmarks of Bourdieusian sociology. Conducting fieldwork under military surveillance, navigating subjects' suspicions of being



army informants, and developing techniques for understanding social transformation under extreme violence, Bourdieu and Sayad created a unique synthesis. Their collaboration, with Sayad providing cultural mediation and linguistic expertise while Bourdieu brought French sociological frameworks, challenged both colonial ethnography and revolutionary romanticism.

“THEIR DOCUMENTATION OF THESE SPACES AS SITES OF “SOCIAL DEATH” AND CULTURAL DESTRUCTION EXEMPLIFIES HOW SOCIOLOGY CAN SERVE AS BOTH WITNESS AND WEAPON AGAINST DOMINATION”

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Particularly illuminating is Pérez's analysis of their research in resettlement camps where over 2.3 million Algerians were forcibly displaced. Their documentation of these spaces as sites of "social death" and cultural destruction exemplifies how sociology can serve as both witness and weapon against domination. This research directly informed their critique of 'modernisation' and 'development' narratives that justified colonial violence.

For scholars working within Bourdieusian frameworks, the book offers invaluable insights into conceptual genesis. Pérez demonstrates how symbolic violence emerged from observing internalised colonial domination, how field theory developed through analysing traditional society's transformation under capitalism, and how different forms of capital were theorised through witnessing the destruction of peasant economies. The concept of 'double absence', being neither fully accepted in new environments nor able to return to old ones, provides a powerful analytical tool for understanding contemporary displacement and marginalisation.

While exemplary in archival research, certain limitations merit attention. The book acknowledges, but doesn't fully explore, gendered dimensions of colonial violence and resistance. Additionally, while Pérez critiques Bourdieu and Sayad's sometimes paternalistic attitudes toward the Algerian peasantry, deeper engagement with postcolonial and decolonial critiques of sociology itself would strengthen the analysis.

Bourdieu and Sayad Against Empire makes a vital contribution to understanding sociology's political possibilities. In an era when academic sociology often retreats into technical specialisation, Pérez's account of sociology as "militant craft" offers both inspiration and practical guidance. The book demonstrates that rigorous empirical research and political commitment need not be opposed; indeed, powerful sociological insights often emerge from engagement with urgent social struggles.

Pérez's epilogue, reflecting on his journey from Dominican political activism to academic sociology, articulates the ongoing relevance of their approach: "By endeavouring to describe ... the journey of two men 'fighting as sociologists', I wanted to show that it is precisely by describing the complexities of social reality, and in particular the processes of domination, that it is possible to produce alternatives and support social resistance."

This essential work illuminates Bourdieusian sociology's origins and offers a model for responding to contemporary crises with scholarly rigor and political commitment. For scholars investigating domination, displacement and institutional exclusion, it provides both theoretical resources and ethical orientation, reminding us that powerful sociological concepts emerge from sustained engagement with the struggles of the dominated.

BY DR DAREEN ASSAF

Sheffield Hallam University

Appreciation



DR CATHERINE WILL, 1977-2024



Professor Alison Phipps, of Newcastle University, writes about her friend and colleague, Dr Catherine Will:

I knew Catherine for 17 years – we met in 2007 when she started in sociology at Sussex. There were only nine of us at that point, so we spent a lot of time together and became good friends.

On meeting Catherine, it was immediately obvious that she was scarily clever. She had an enormous breadth of interests that crossed academia, arts and culture. She also had this way of looking at you – kind, but quizzical, and without saying anything, that made you realise you were saying something imprecise, being sentimental, being disingenuous, or all of the above. Some academics are all style and no substance – Catherine was all substance (although she did have style as well, and a wicked sense of humour).

We weren't in the same field but I really looked up to her. She was a proper academic heavyweight and it felt like she'd always been one. She was a committed public sociologist without ever dumbing herself down. She was a generous colleague – she never shirked work unless she was on the picket line, and whatever role she had in the department, you knew she'd do it better than anyone else. Everything she did, she did it properly – no matter how big or small.

Catherine did science and I did gender; she was a serious intellectual and I felt like an amateur! When we first met I thought she'd be one of those medical sociologists who found gender studies a bit silly. I couldn't have been more wrong. Catherine was one of our great advocates. This speaks to her humility – she never set herself above anyone else. It speaks to her principles and sense of fairness. It speaks to the expansive, holistic approach she took to her scholarship.

Catherine and I became mothers at around the same time – Josie and Fred were just a bit older than my kids, Caitlin and Johann. I can't remember whether our maternity leaves overlapped, but we

did approach it together. And Catherine, of course, was as diligent about making Christmas cards with a kitchen full of toddlers, as she was about her academic work. Her investment in family led her to go part-time, which I'd also done, and we supported each other with that as well. From that point on especially, Catherine was staunchly committed to making sure academia was as family-friendly as possible.

Catherine was driven by curiosity, which meant she could move between different social issues, between sciences and arts, and between high theory and real life. When she was diagnosed with brain cancer, she used sociology to try to understand it. It was during Covid, which meant that the equation between risk and intimacy was even more difficult to solve. But she was also thoughtful about her own advantages, even as someone with a serious disease.

My last memory of Catherine is of her laughing. It was just a few weeks before she died. What strength of character, and what vitality, that although words didn't come easily by that point, laughter still did. I can only hope to face my own mortality with half as much grace. It was the final – and most special – thing she modelled for me, and I'll never forget it.

Near the end, as she was sleeping but before she drifted away, I sent a text for Tom to read to Catherine, about how much it had mattered that she had been here. I meant it on so many levels. Catherine was more than a big intellect – she was a multidimensional, fully actualised, extraordinary human being. Her impact on medical sociology is considerable, and so is her impact on my life and the lives of many others.

Contributions from Dr Ulla McKnight and Eleanor Kashouris can be seen here https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/26930/network_summer25_catherine_will_appreciations.pdf

SOCIOLOGISTS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE PAY TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL BURAWOY

Sociologists from Britain, America and the wider world have paid tribute to the Michael Burawoy, who died earlier this year.

The BSA invited sociologists to send recollections of the influence that Professor Burawoy had on them personally and professionally.

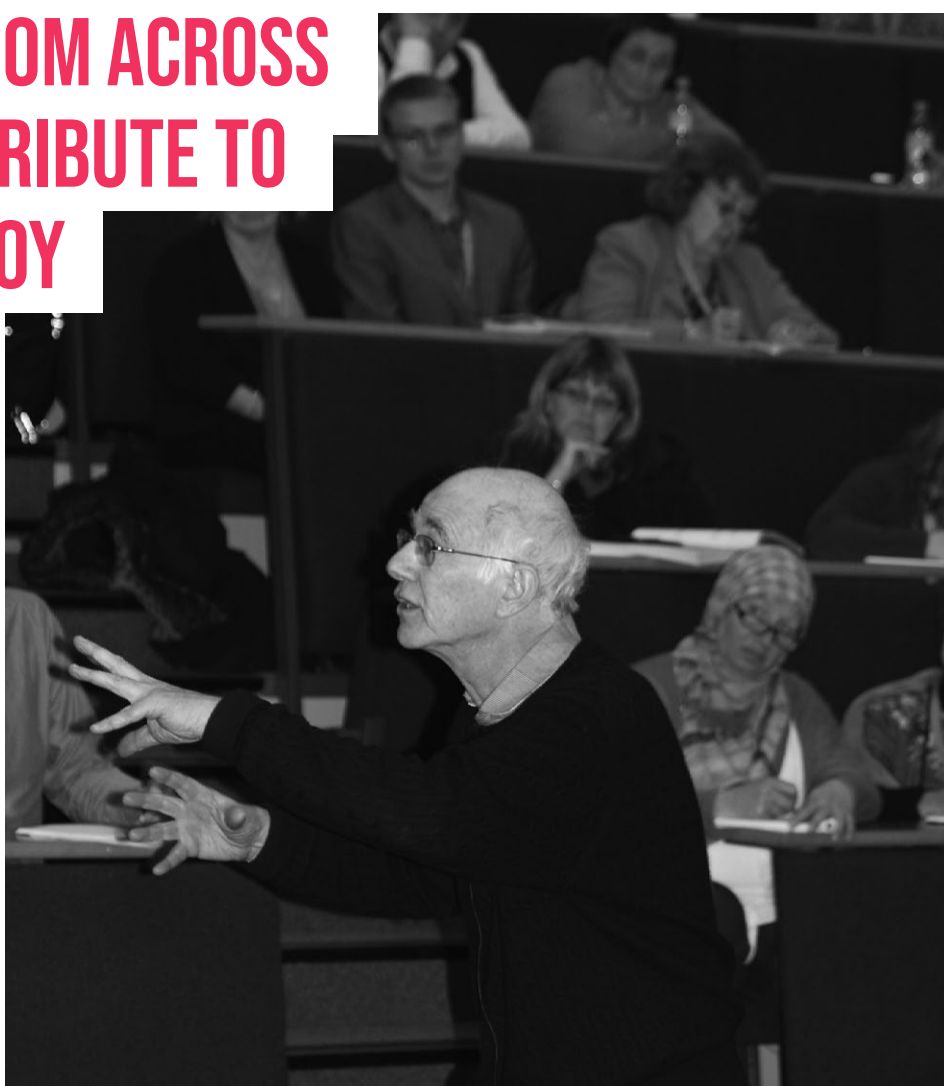
Many wrote about his personal kindness, and the way he was helpful to colleagues and students, devoting time to answering queries and debating issues.

Typical of the writers is Yuchen Yang, University of Birmingham, who described Professor Burawoy as “one of the kindest and most humorous people I’ve ever known”, who had written on one of his papers: “This all augurs well for your future as a sociologist.”

Ali Meghji, University of Cambridge, wrote: “Whenever I sat down with Michael at [the ASA conference], every other minute someone would come up to him to quickly thank him for something – whether that be a peer review on a paper, or a reference for tenure.”

Andrew Sayer, Lancaster University writes that at one public lecture, “He not only gave a very interesting and entertaining talk to a packed lecture theatre but offered to see any postgrads who wanted to chat about their work to him the next morning, which was much appreciated.”

Mike Sheaff, University of Plymouth, remembered that when he sent him a paper he had written “His reply was positive and encouraging, and I was struck that he had taken time to read



and think about this without regard for our different academic status.”

John Brewer writes that “It is as a person, however, that I think he stood tallest. For all his deserved international fame, he was kind, generous, helpful, always supportive and fulsome in giving his time and advice to others. He was never arrogant or conceited; I will forever remember his kindness and generosity.”

Marc Blecher, Oberlin College and Conservatory, wrote, “I managed to meet Michael twice in later years – the second time through the good offices of BSA member Leslie Sklair. He was so generous with his time – how did he do it all? – and his penetrating but always sympathetic, smiling critique. He and Leslie spent hours debating the role of the state, and I mainly watched in awe.

A gentleman and a scholar if there ever was one.”

Several noted that his willingness to debate those who disagreed with him. Ali Meghji said: “Despite disagreeing with him sharply on his theorization of ‘public sociology’, Michael embodied the true spirit of sociology: he recognised that (collegial) disagreement was a driving force for knowledge production. These friendly disagreements only carried on as we began discussing Du Bois together in-depth, questioning both his intellectual lineage and influence. Anyone who knows him will agree to this fact that Michael loved getting into such disagreements, and he loved to be critiqued, because he loved sociology.”

Feature continues >

Others commented on the way his advocacy for public sociology was exemplified by his political actions. Sabina Knight, Harvard University, wrote: "I first met Michael Burawoy at UC Berkeley in November 1992. Along with other Graduate Student Instructors, I was walking the picket line along Berkeley's main entrance at Bancroft and Telegraph Avenue. We were on strike, trying to make the university recognize our union. One day an energetic older professor with short, wiry hair showed up with his class. He wasn't dressed up, but he had an obvious command of his students' attention. "Who is that guy?" I asked my friend Charlie Bertsch, one of stalwarts on the picket line. "Michael Burawoy," he answered. "He's in sociology. I don't see any of those [other] 'supportive' professors from my department here on the picket line."

Scott Timcke, University of Johannesburg, wrote that: "Most recently, he has spoken out on behalf of Palestine, yet another testament to his lifelong commitment to critical engagement. In every endeavour, there has been something distinctly inspiring about the expansiveness of his work and the clarity of his thought."

Many contributors wrote of the influence that Professor Burawoy had on their careers and their research.

Eurig Scandrett, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, wrote that, "The sociology team at Queen Margaret University somewhat stumbled upon Public Sociology, but once we had, Michael Burawoy became a central feature of our work. Michael Burawoy's analysis enabled us to locate our academic practice, and we have delivered a BSc in Public Sociology since 2014, an MSc in Public Sociology 2018-2020."

Mark Doidge, of Loughborough University, "The first time I saw Michael was at his plenary address of the 2012 BSA conference. His style, narrative

and passion were inspirational. Shortly afterwards I began my first permanent position at Brighton and Michael's words carried me through. There was already a strong culture of community engagement at Brighton, but Michael's work gave me the theoretical and political justification to build a career around working with publics and for publics."

Bridget Fowler, University of Glasgow, said that he was "a formidable teacher – who had supervised an extraordinary 83 doctoral students. He was also, of course, a brilliant ethnographer, particularly of Hungarian industry under the Stalinist regime. More recently, he had been a powerful advocate of public sociology. Nobody who heard him speak – as I did – about our obligation to spread the concepts and empirical discoveries of our discipline could fail to be convinced about public sociology's imperative importance."

Others noted the international connections he built up through working in so many countries abroad, their recollections forming a series of snapshots of Professor Burawoy as he crossed the globe.

Paul Thompson, Stirling Management School, wrote: "When I met Michael in the flesh in 1990, I was in for a bit of a shock. When this Berkeley Professor walked into the room and introduced himself, I wasn't expecting someone with a Lancashire accent. I had just returned from six months in China, culminating in the Tiananmen Square massacre, whilst Michael was writing up his experiences of working in a Hungarian steel plant."

John Brewer: "I first encountered Michael the person when my presidency of the BSA coincided with his as president of the ISA and we met up in Sweden."

Dave Wield, Open University and University of Edinburgh: "I got to visit

his flat for a party for Luli Callinicos, visiting from South Africa. Luli had worked way back with my former colleague Ruth First and only then, from Luli, did I find out about Michael's long-standing work with comrades from South Africa."

William Outhwaite, Newcastle University: "I only met him twice, once at a conference in Moscow in I think 1991 when he and a colleague were catching the night train to Kiev, a route now less travelled."

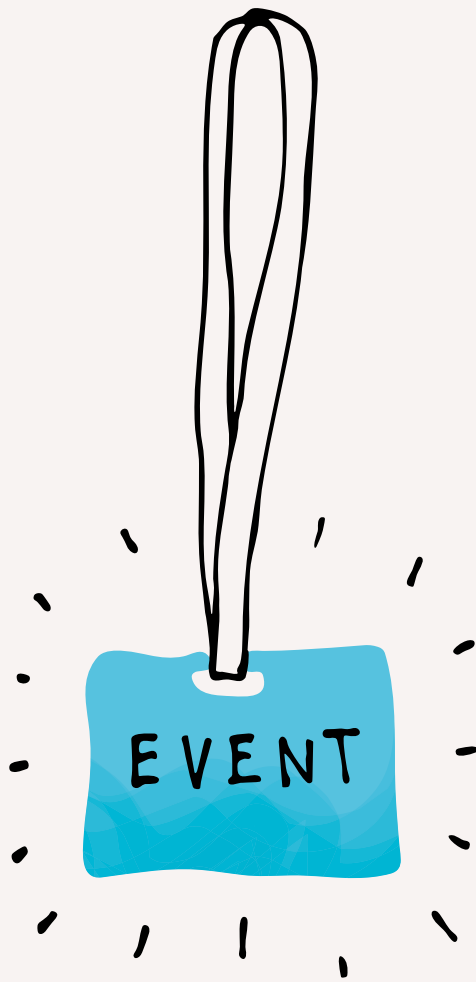
“HIS LOSS AT THIS PARTICULAR JUNCTURE IN US AND WORLD POLITICS IS PARTICULARLY HEART-RENDING, GIVEN THE NEED FOR STRONGLY COMMUNICATED DEMOCRATIC VALUES.”

Perhaps his death is best summed up by Miriam Glucksmann, Essex University, who wrote: "His loss at this particular juncture in US and world politics is particularly heart-rending, given the need for strongly communicated democratic values."

A compilation of tributes from a number of sociologists can be seen here https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/26931/network_summer25_michael_burawoy_appreciations.pdf

See also: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/09500170251336979> for Huw Beynon's tribute in *Work, Employment and Society* journal, and also <https://tinyurl.com/muxzumkd> for a piece by Alex Wood.

Events



EVENT LISTINGS

As of 13.6.25 – for a complete
and up to date list, see:
[www.britsoc.co.uk/events/
key-bsaevents-lister](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsaevents-lister)

**Bourdieu Mid Term
International Conference**

3 – 5 September
Vienna

**Work, Employment and
Society Conference**

8 – 10 September
University of Manchester

**Making the Most of MedSoc
Online Workshop**

8 September
Online

Medical Sociology Conference

10 – 12 September
Northumbria University

**Innovative and Inclusive Methods in
the Sociology of Health and Wellbeing**

23 September
Northumbria University

**Subjectivity in Rebecca May
Johnson's *Small Fires***

1 October
Online



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