



Network

Recording the working lives of sociologists for 50 years

Issue 153
Summer 2026



75 Years: The BSA celebrates our work since 1951

Also in this issue:

- 1.23 million people on zero-hour contracts, a record number
- New activism and revolutions study group launched
- Ukraine sociologists show 'resilience and vitality' since invasion
- Mike Savage is 'flabbergasted' that Bourdieu is a go-to figure

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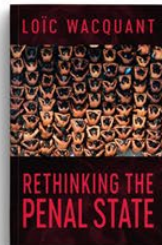
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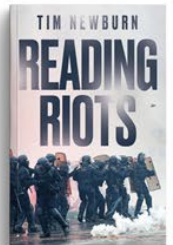


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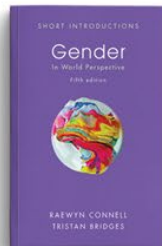
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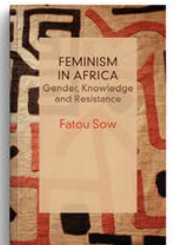
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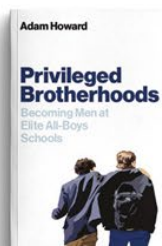
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Translated by Pedro Hurtado Ortiz

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Main feature:

75 years: The BSA celebrates our work since 1951

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LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

ZERO-HOUR CONTRACT NUMBERS RISE TO RECORD HIGH

The number of people employed on zero-hour contracts has risen by 91,000 in a year, reaching a record total of 1.23 million in 2025, a study has revealed.

The Work Foundation study also found that one in eight workers aged 16-24 were on zero-hour contracts and were 5.1 times more likely to be employed under zero-hour contracts than those aged over 24. Women comprised 54% of those working zero hours and men 46%.

Almost a third of those employed on zero-hour contracts depended on them as their full-time employment. Many expressed a desire for more hours and work.

**“EMPLOYERS CONTINUE
TO RELY ON HIGHLY
PRECARIOUS FORMS OF
EMPLOYMENT”**

Ben Harrison, Director of the Foundation, a think tank for improving working lives in the UK, said: “This new data indicates that some employers continue to rely on highly precarious forms of employment such as zero-hour contracts, despite the government’s commitment to curb their use.

“Such arrangements underpin the kind of one-sided flexibility that leaves over a million workers unsure how many hours they will work or how much money they will earn next week.”

The Foundation believes the study highlighted the need for the reforms to employment law on rights such as guaranteed hours, advance notice of shifts and financial compensation for late shift cancellations.

The foundation analysed ONS data for the study.

COST OF LIVING AND JOB DISSATISFACTION LED TO RISE IN POPULISM

The cost of living and men's job dissatisfaction played a major role in the surge in support for populist politics a decade ago, research says.

Dr Lorenza Antonucci and her team analysed data on more than 75,000 people in 10 European countries between 2015 and 2018, when populism surged, including the UK's 'Brexit', Poland's PiS taking power, and the AfD entering the Bundestag in Germany.

Her findings, published in a new book, *Insecurity Politics*, show that working people who were increasingly stressed by money worries and disillusioned with their jobs became far more likely to back populist parties.

In 2018, scoring above average for worrying about finances increased the chances of voting populist by 17-20 percentage points in Germany, France and Sweden, compared to those who felt more financially secure. The figures for Italy, Spain and the Netherlands were between 4-10 percentage points.

The research also shows that disillusionment with quality of work was linked to voting populist in most of the large European nations, by up to 12 percentage points.

"The data suggest that populist support is rooted in everyday insecurities that affect the lower-middle classes as much as the so-called left behind," said Dr Antonucci.



LORENZA ANTONUCCI

**"MANY WORKERS FEEL
LIKE THEY ARE FIGHTING
A LOSING BATTLE"**

"Even for people with stable jobs, many workers feel like they are fighting a losing battle against job intensification, work pressure, declining wages, and a loss of control over how they do their job."

For men, being in a high-pressure job – working at speed to tight deadlines – increased the probability of voting for radical right-wing parties from 14% to 18%.

Dr Antonucci said that this age of financial precarity was compounded by the agendas of big political parties.

"Europe's mainstream parties have abandoned much of the traditional political ground on security, family and social safety nets, focusing instead on enhancing competitiveness through deregulation, hire-and-fire flexibility, and offering more targeted benefits. This has made our societies more economically competitive, but less socially secure.

"Populist parties exploited the gap by offering simple answers to insecurity. On the right, that meant claiming voters were losing out to migrants in the competition for jobs, welfare and resources. These parties offer security through welfare chauvinism and a return to the role of the family as provider."

"Financial insecurity and disillusionment with poor-quality jobs are at the heart of Europe's populist boom. Hostility towards migrants resonates because money worries and status anxiety are widespread and anti-migration feelings are an easy way to channel frustrations that people have about their lives."



**NORTHUMBRIA AND
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITIES**

ANIMATION ON WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AT STADIUMS CREATED

A project to make football stadiums safer for women fans has created a short animation that shares their experiences.

The Safer Stadiums project made the film after running workshops in London, Newcastle, and Birmingham with groups of women fans, who talked about their experiences at football grounds.

In the animation, one woman said that when she went alone to one match a man kissed her hand, and "it felt really different, like everyone was staring at me. I've not been to any more games since then." <https://youtu.be/xnkGH9uWJwc>

Safer Stadiums, an initiative by Northumbria and Loughborough universities and the Football Supporters' Association, say that while some fans have become used to the rowdy nature of stadium spaces, for many the experience was emotionally charged and risky.

A 2024 survey conducted by UK anti-discrimination organisation Kick It Out found that 52% of women had experienced sexist language and behaviour travelling to and from stadium sites, with 86% of ethnic minority and LGBTQIA+ women fans witnessing or experiencing sexist behaviour on match days.

The project lead, Dr Aarti Ratna, of Northumbria University, said: "All of football needs to take ownership to make all fans feel safe and at home in the stadium and on the way to the match. Creating safe spaces outside the stadium, particularly on the way to public transport, can help women fans to belong and bring their vital support to the match." <https://research.northumbria.ac.uk/safer-stadiums>

CHILDREN EXCLUDED BECAUSE PARENTS CANNOT AFFORD SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Thousands of children are being excluded from education activities because their families cannot afford expensive and mandatory school uniforms, according to research.

Dr Matt Barnes conducted a poll of 3,000 parents in the UK for The Children's Society, which found that 44% of their children had experienced negative consequences because their family could not afford the uniforms. These included detentions (12%), isolation (9%), and exclusions (8%).

Around 38% of parents reported difficulties affording uniforms and PE kits.

The data showed widespread support among parents (78%) for the urgent introduction of a statutory limit on the cost of uniforms.

Dr Barnes said: "These findings show that, despite recent progress, too many families are still under real pressure to afford school uniforms. The strong support for limiting branded items makes clear that parents want practical, affordable solutions.

"I hope the government moves quickly to implement the new limit on the number of branded uniform items school can have, and that schools review and amend their uniform policies accordingly."

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

RESEARCHER GIVES EVIDENCE TO LORDS HEARING ON VACCINATION

Professor Pru Hobson-West gave evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee looking into why vaccination rates are falling.

The Committee, chaired by Baroness Walmsley, is interested in trying to understand why there are inequalities in vaccine coverage, who is responsible for reversing the decline in coverage, and whether the government has identified the right priorities for reversing this decline.

Professor Hobson-West was invited to give evidence based on her qualitative and ethnographic research into childhood vaccine hesitancy, carried

out using an EU grant from VAX-TRUST, a consortium of partner organisations in seven European countries.

This work led to the creation of a free online resource for healthcare professionals, which has been accredited by the Royal College of Nursing. <https://tinyurl.com/36ah92zh>

Clips from Professor Hobson-West's oral evidence to the committee, given in March, were included in the Yesterday in Parliament programme on BBC Radio 4.

The Committee was live-streamed, with a transcript made public:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/event/26829/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session>



PRU HOBSON-WEST



DURHAM UNIVERSITY

STUDY ON CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE WINS AWARD

A study on child-to-parent violence has received a European award.

The research, led by Dr Nikki Rutter, explored how parents seek help when their children harm them. Her study has been recognised by the European Social Work Research Association, receiving its 'Outstanding publication in European research' award.

It found that many families reach out for support early on, but do not always receive the help they need. Findings showed that parents were sometimes

blamed for their child's behaviour or advised to 'wait and see' rather than being offered practical support.

Using a participatory approach, Dr Rutter encouraged families to share their experiences openly. It found that children can internalise negative labels, seeing themselves as the problem rather than part of a wider situation.

It called for services to respond more quickly and with greater understanding of the complexities involved in family relationships.

Dr Rutter accepted the award on behalf of her team at the association's conference in Aberdeen in April.



NIKKI RUTTER

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

BOOK EXPLORES HOW DOXXING CAN LEAD TO HARM ONLINE

A new book, *Doxxed: How Privacy Abuse Harms*, explores how the non-consensual disclosure of personal information can lead to harm online.

The book, by Dr Briony Anderson, offers a new examination of doxxing, drawing on in-depth interviews with 18 victim-survivors and revealing the harms of privacy abuse, including public shaming and reputational damage.

<https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/doxxed>



TOOLKIT FOR WORKING WITH NEURODIVERGENT MEN DEVELOPED

A new toolkit to support professionals working with neurodivergent men who commit domestic abuse has been launched.

The Neurodiversity in Domestic Abuse Practice toolkit offers practical advice on working safely and effectively with neurodivergent men.

The toolkit, created by the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse, draws on input from neurodivergent people, neurodivergent-led organisations and domestic abuse specialists.

It fills a gap in training and practical guidance reported by professionals who deal with neurodivergent clients.

<https://ndidapractice.com>

£1.8 MILLION GRANT GIVEN TO STUDY POWER STRUGGLES OVER MINING

Professor Claire Blencowe has won a £1.8 million ERC grant to study the role of religion in power struggles over mining.

The European Research Council Consolidator Grant will fund a five-year investigation into how religion is used both to advance the interests of mining corporations and to empower marginalised local communities who challenge them.

It will research case studies in the USA, Brazil, India and Indonesia.

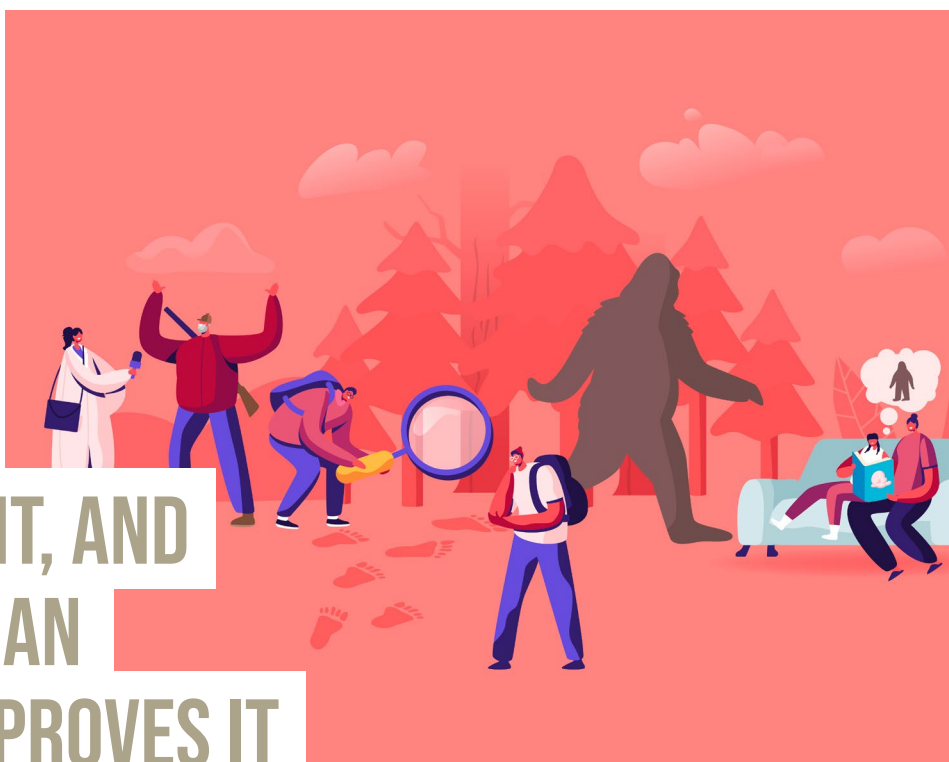
Professor Blencowe said: “The project will transform academic theories about the power and knowledge-tactics of extractive industry corporations, spotlighting religious racism and religious nationalism. Equally, it will demonstrate the enduring importance of religion in supporting people who are caught up in the damages and disputes generated by mining.

“WE AIM TO CELEBRATE, CONNECT AND BUILD THE EXISTING EXPERTISE AND CAPACITY OF MARGINALISED LOCAL COMMUNITIES”

“Employing participatory action research, we aim to celebrate, connect and build the existing expertise and capacity of marginalised local communities, fostering democracy for people and the planet.”

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

WEBER WAS RIGHT, AND THE SEARCH FOR AN EIGHT-FOOT APE PROVES IT



When he developed his theory of the need to find magical enchantment in a bureaucratic, science-dominated world, Max Weber might not have been thinking of Bigfoot as an example.

Dr Jamie Lewis and Dr Andrew Bartlett have found that he missed a trick. They spoke to more than 160 ‘Bigfooters’, people who spend weeks or months in the dense forestry of North America looking for evidence of the mythical eight-foot ape.

The sociologists spent three years interviewing believers, academics and sceptics for their recent book *Bigfooters and Scientific Inquiry*. The hunters, mostly middle-aged white men, often ex-military with blue-collar jobs, set out with drones, infrared cameras and audio recorders to search in vast and sometimes dangerous environments.

Dr Lewis, of Cardiff University, said there were a “masculine energy” and a “frontier” mentality to the community.

**“THE IDEA THAT AN
EIGHT-FOOT APE IS
STILL LIVING IN THE US
AND IS NOT KNOWN TO
SCIENCE IS QUITE AN
ENCHANTING IDEA”**

“A lot of it is kind of an attempt to re-enchant the world, so to speak. The idea that an eight-foot ape is still living in the US and is not known to science is quite an enchanting idea.”

Bigfoot leapt into the public sphere in 1967 when grainy footage was captured of a tall ape-like figure in California. The debate about its existence has continued for 60 years, with naturalist Sir David Attenborough supporting the possibility of a Yeti, Bigfoot or Abominable Snowman, while others remain sceptical. Dr Bartlett is based at the University of Sheffield.



NEW EDITORS-IN-CHIEF APPOINTED TO EUROPEAN JOURNAL

Professor Karim Murji has been appointed as an editor-in-chief of the journal *European Societies*, with Professor Sarah Neal of the University of Sheffield.

This appointment makes Professor Murji and Professor Neal the only people ever to be editors of the flagship journals of the British, International, and European sociological associations, the pair having previously edited *Sociology* and *Current Sociology*.

European Societies is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by the

MIT Press, focusing on sociological research related to Europe and its social dynamics.

Professor Murji, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Professor Neal and I are pleased to achieve this 'triple crown' in journal editing as a service to the discipline. As the editors-in-chief we will seek the strongest articles that showcase the strengths of sociological research across Europe, while developing the journal's reach, readership and impact factor."

MICHAELA BENSON MOVES TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Professor Michaela Benson has been appointed to the Chair of Sociology from October this year. She is currently Professor in Public Sociology at Lancaster University.

Professor Benson, who is known for her contributions to migration studies and urban sociology, has published several academic monographs, including *The British in Rural France* (2011), and *Lifestyle Migration and Colonial Traces in Malaysia and Panama* (co-authored with Karen O'Reilly, 2018).

Since 2022, she has been the Chief

Executive of *The Sociological Review* and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Professor Benson said: "I am delighted to be taking up the Professorship of Sociology and to be joining a department renowned for its bold approach to sociology. I see this role as an opportunity to foster the project of thinking together about where sociology can and should go next."

Previous holders of the Chair of Sociology include Sarah Franklin and Anthony Giddens.



MICHAELA BENSON



Louise Ryan, left, with Adel Pásztor, Head of the Institute of Social and Political Sciences at Corvinus University

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

LOUISE RYAN TO STUDY MIGRATION IN BUDAPEST

Professor Louise Ryan has been awarded a fellowship at Corvinus University in Budapest to research highly skilled migrants in the city.

Professor Ryan will be a visiting fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies during the academic year 2026-27.

As part of the International Research Excellence Fellowship, she will work with colleagues on a new research project on highly skilled migrants, researching

various economic sectors in Budapest, a city that has seen a recent increase in highly skilled migration.

Professor Ryan's work looks at what motivates professionals to migrate to particular cities around the world, and what factors enable those migrations.

This includes recent work in Hong Kong, with sociologists Professor Roger Patulny and PhD student Mary Han at Hong Kong Baptist University, on highly

skilled migrants, as well as her initial ESRC-funded work with highly skilled migrants in the City of London in 2010-12, with Dr Jon Mulholland.

Professor Ryan is leaving London Metropolitan University, where she has been Director of the Global Diversities and Inequalities Research Centre since 2020, to take up a new role at the University of Greenwich.

JEWISH TALES AND TRAGEDIES BROUGHT TO THE STAGE BY RESEARCHER

Dr Michal Nahman is performing a solo show in the character of a Turkish Sephardi grandmother, as a way of exploring heritage, food, solidarity and victimhood.

Bendichas Manos (Blessed Hands), which was written by Dr Nahman, takes her scholarly research into Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewish identities to tell the tale of a fictionalised woman.

Dr Nahman, who researches biomedicine, reproduction, nationalism and globalisation, takes on the fictional role of Savta, “a ghost conjuring timeless Jewish foods, anxieties and migrations”, according to the show’s promoters.

It features storytelling, comedy, clowns, dance and music, and showcases ethnic minority performers from Artists from the Global Majority collective.

The show, funded by Shores UK, Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation

and an AHRC Impact Accelerator Award, was performed in Birmingham in June, and will take place again at the Wardrobe Theatre in Bristol on September 23.

In other UWE news, staff and students organised a public seminar, ‘What a waste! Food waste from production to post-consumption’ in Bristol.

The seminar brought together academics, practitioners, stakeholder organisations, policy makers and the public to explore food waste from production to post-consumption. Presentations tackled topics including the role played by the domestic fridge in food waste, the content of Bristol’s bins, and adopting a vegan diet.

The event, in March, was organised by Dr Jon Mulholland and Beth Benker, and BA students Sienna Cottam and Olivia Truong-Brown.

Also at UWE, Dr Finn Mackay was listed as a ‘2026 Changemaker’ by the charity Trans in the City. The awards are given to people who help improve trans and non-binary people’s lives and wellbeing.

The award citation states: “Finn Mackay is the author of a book on female masculinities and the gender wars and writes regularly for the mainstream media, such as *The Guardian*, on LGBTQI+ rights, as well as giving talks and debates on trans inclusionary feminist politics. Finn is currently doing work in European policy on understanding gender expression as a human rights ground and is committed to solidarity activism at a time when no minorities or minoritised groups are safe.”

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

REBECCA EYNON ELECTED TO THE ACADEMY FELLOWSHIP

Rebecca Eynon, Professor of Education, the Internet and Society, is among social scientists elected to the fellowship of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Professor Eynon’s research highlights people’s experiences of using technologies for learning across the lifecourse and examines how injustices can arise from their design and use.

Her work has been cited by Unesco, the OECD, the European Union, the United Nations, the World Bank, and various national and regional governments.

The Academy’s Fellowship comprises 1,700 leading social scientists, elected for excellence in their fields and substantial contribution to social science for public benefit.

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS GROUP

EVENTS SHOW HOW REFUGEES NEED A NETWORK



The group has run two online events this year, on refugees and methodological innovation.

One, entitled, 'You need a network: how highly skilled refugees build social networks to convert cultural capital and reclaim professional identities', featured speakers Professor Louise Ryan, Professor Maria Lopez and PhD student Alessia Dalceggio.

The speakers drew on social network analysis and longitudinal research with recently resettled Afghans in London to explore upward mobility. They looked at how, after forced migration, even the most experienced and highly qualified professionals can face having to start from zero.

The speakers noted the extent to which social connections help to reclaim a former career depended partly on forging 'vertical ties' with those who are willing and able to legitimise professional status.

The event, in February, was based on the speakers' recent publication on the issue, in *Sociology* journal: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00380385251363897#con2>

At the second event, 'Innovating ego-network research with interactive visual tools', speakers Nuria Targarona Rifa, Professor Ryan and Dr Alejandro Ciordia made the case for new interactive qualitative data collection strategies to exploit the potential of visualisation tools and personal network research.

Their presentation introduced an innovative methodological procedure for in-depth interviewing, in which participants are asked to report on members of the network being studied while using two novel interactive visual tools displayed on electronic devices.

The presenters illustrated the method's potential in the data collection and analysis stages, and highlighted the technical, methodological and conceptual contributions it could make to the study of social boundaries.

The event, in March, was organised in collaboration with early and mid-career researchers in the Social Networks Group in the Netherlands. It was based on an article in *Sociological Research Online*: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/13607804251347267>



MARIA LOPEZ



BOOK LOOKS AT ENLIGHTENMENT ROOTS

A group member, Professor Alex Law, of Abertay University, has written a new book, *The Roots of Sociology: Scottish Enlightenment and the Civilising Process*.

“IT IS SOCIOLOGY THAT HAS INHERITED THE AMBITIONS OF THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS”

This argues that, of today's core social scientific disciplines, it is sociology that has inherited the ambitions of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. It says that sociology continues to explore many of the central themes in their work: historical processes, relations of power, societal differentiation and integration, morality, jurisprudence, violence, civil society and the state, as well as social divisions of class, gender, race and nation.

The group will hold a one-day symposium entitled ‘Sociology in, and sociology of, Scotland’, on 11 September at the Roma Cultural Centre in Glasgow. This will explore how sociology is being done in and about Scotland. The keynote address, ‘New ethnicities, old racisms in Glasgow’, will be given by BSA President Professor Les Back. Abstracts are invited by 14 August, to pgilfillan@qmu.ac.uk

ELITES GROUP HOLDS RESEARCH CLINICS

The group has hosted two **Elite Studies Research Clinics, informal spaces where attendees received peer feedback, support and inspiration.**

One clinic tackled the issue of research publications threatening access to the field, and the other examined innovative and creative methods in elite studies. The clinics were organised with the Elite Studies Working Group.

The study group also hosted a stream plenary at the BSA annual conference

in Manchester, entitled ‘A wealth of insight: what 75 years of studying elites can tell us about social change, inequality and sociology’, featuring speakers Professor Mike Savage, Dr François Schoenberger and Dr Liz Mann. The event was followed by a study group social at a nearby pub.

The study group will run a mentoring programme jointly with the Elite Studies Working Group in the autumn.

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION AND MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GROUPS

RELIGION AND MEDICAL GROUPS HOLD FIRST JOINT EVENT



The two groups held a joint event, the first of its kind, organised because issues covered by the sociology of religion and medical sociology often overlap.

The event, online and at University of Nottingham in April, featured 11 papers on topics including faith and healing in Kerala in India, the intersection of faith and biomedicine, Black women's cultural duty of care, and vaccine

refusal among ultra-orthodox Jewish mothers in Israel.

It also featured a roundtable discussion by Professor Paul Higgs, of University College London, Dr Krysia Waldock, of Swansea University, and Dr Victoria Cluley and Dr Céline Beniot, of the University of Nottingham.

The event was well attended and the groups hope to make it an annual collaboration.

FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS STUDY GROUP

FAMILIES GROUP HOLDS READING GROUPS

The group has held reading groups on two texts, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* by The Care Collective, and *Abolish the Family*, by Sophie Lewis.

The reading groups featured discussions about the post-Covid desire for collective care, and the realities of family life within capitalist societies.

The study group will run more reading groups shortly, and is starting a regular 'Queering family research group', where

people can drop in to discuss and present their research in a supportive environment.

The group's new convenors are researching queer aspects of family, covering the lifespan, surrogacy, parenting, platonic relationships, and death and dying.

The convenors are: Polly Maxwell, Alice Ferrari, Hanna Andersen and Natalie Bennett.



NEW MATERIALISMS STUDY GROUP

GROUP HOLDS CONFERENCE ON THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN

The group ran its annual conference in June at the Royal Free School of Medicine, UCL, featuring guest keynote speaker, Professor Nick J. Fox.

The event, 'Matter, rhizomes, and more-than-human', brought together researchers, artists, educators and practitioners from across disciplines to explore contemporary developments in new materialist teaching and research.

The papers presented covered topics including mental health, climate change and artificial intelligence, and the day featured a short film and exhibition.

Professor Fox's keynote, entitled 'Capitalism and the secret state: matter, rhizomes and undercover cops', applied a more-than-human

approach to explore the sociology of secrecy. It looked at how the state uses undercover policing and covert overseas actions to, in his words "do what the state needs to do to assure capital accumulation, but cannot publicly avow".

Professor Fox, who is a co-convenor of the group said the annual conference was an important opportunity to foster dialogue and collaboration between established academics, early career researchers, postgraduate students, artists and independent scholars working across sociology and related fields. It was the group's main space for critical conversations around the application of materialism, relationality and more-than-human approaches to sociological topics and methodology.



NICK FOX

CONSUMPTION STUDY GROUP

BOOK EXPLORES HOW CONSUMPTION SHAPES OUR LIVES

Members of the group have contributed to *The Research Handbook on the Sociology of Consumption*, published in February.

The book, edited by Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire, explores the role of consumption in shaping the ways in which we live, work and relate to each other.

It brings together sociological research from around the globe to investigate how, where and why we buy and use things, and what daily consumer choices reveal about society. <https://tinyurl.com/2x6thwhv>





SOCIOLOGY ONLY FOURTH MOST LEFT-WING DISCIPLINE, STUDY SAYS

Around 90 per cent of politically relevant social science articles published between 1960 and 2024 were left of centre, a new study has found.

A researcher analysed the abstracts of almost 600,000 articles in 367 journals, including several UK-run sociology journals, using large language models to pick out evidence of political stance.

Eleven social science disciplines were analysed: anthropology, communications, criminology, economics, ethnic studies, gender studies, political science, psychology, public administration, public health and sociology.

The disciplines were scored from 0 (far right) to 10 (far left), with 5 as politically neutral. The scores ranged from 5.7 for economics, to 7.6 for gender studies. Sociology was the fourth most left-wing, with a score of 6.9, behind anthropology, ethnic studies and gender studies.

In an article published in *Theory and Society*, James Manzi, a doctoral

student at the University of Oxford, noted that the left stance had increased over time, probably because younger academics were more left-wing, rather than older ones changing their outlook.

“REVEALING BOTH THE PERSISTENCE AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF ITS LEFTWARD TENDENCIES”

“The analysis provides the first systematic, cross-disciplinary evidence of the long-run political orientation of Anglophone social science scholarship, revealing both the persistence and the intensification of its leftward tendencies, particularly in socio-cultural domains,” he writes.

“These results should not be interpreted as dispositive evidence of ideological bias. They do not, in themselves, imply partisan distortion

or suppression of alternative perspectives. One possibility is that sustained, disinterested inquiry into social phenomena has arrived at conclusions that happen to align more closely with liberal than conservative viewpoints.”

The research found that academics were less left-wing about economic issues. “Social scientists moving substantially further left on socio-cultural versus economic issues has allowed them to remain members in good standing [with] a coalition that includes some of the wealthiest people in an increasingly economically unequal society.”

‘The ideological orientation of academic social science research 1960–2024’. *Theory and Society*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11186-026-09690-2#Sec2>



TALKING BACK: KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW'S JOURNEY FROM SPIRITED GIRL TO CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

The prominent civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw has published a memoir of her life's journey, from a spirited girl in Canton, Ohio, to Harvard Law School and her role as one of the most influential sociologists today.

In *Backtalker*, she recalls that, as a young child, when her family moved to the predominantly white suburb of Canton, neighbours treated them as intruders and shouted slurs as they walked by. An estate agent knocked on their door urging a quick sale.

When she was five years old, Kimberlé, the only Black girl in her class, was the only one not given the opportunity to play a princess in a school play. This “marks the stirring of my nascent

awareness that my colour and my girlness were linked,” she writes.

Prejudice did not stop in the playground: at Harvard she was called the N-word on her first day, and was directed to enter the university's exclusive Fly Club through the back door because she was a woman.

From her experience, she developed the influential ideas of intersectionality and critical race theory. In the era of Trump, these ideas are being contested, thrust into the centre of the culture wars, and denounced by a coalition of conservative activists, media figures and politicians.

In a recent *Guardian* interview, Professor Crenshaw says: “The fact that they are targeting this ... it is because

they understand the power of these ideas, the power of this history. Our very presence in power is treated as preferential treatment. This narrative of reverse discrimination has been central to the attack from the start.”

Backtalker: A Memoir is published by Allen Lane.



KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW

ANGELA MCROBBIE IS NEW HEAD OF STUART HALL FOUNDATION

The Stuart Hall Foundation has appointed Angela McRobbie as its new Chair and Martha Awojobi as Vice-chair.



ANGELA MCROBBIE

The Foundation focuses on achieving a more progressive and just society through public education and artistic and intellectual initiatives, inspired by the work of Professor Hall. Its Peer Network of scholars, fellows and activists has grown to 150 people working in different fields.

Angela McRobbie is Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths and is a leading figure in British cultural studies and feminist media studies.

She was a student at the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, co-founded by Professor Hall, from 1974-1977.

Professor McRobbie said: “Stuart Hall was one of the great thinkers of the post-war period. As an academic, he believed in breaking down barriers. The Foundation has done so much to reflect the values that Stuart upheld – social justice, social inclusion, and the necessity of extending the politics of difference, diversity and equality.”

Martha Awojobi has worked in fundraising and now runs an anti-racism consultancy for the charity sector.



EVENT EXPLORES CONSEQUENCES OF SORTING PEOPLE BY RACE AND SEX

The science journalist Angela Saini will explore how gender, race and history shape critical aspects of our lives, from medical diagnoses to government policies, at an event.

Ms Saini will preview her forthcoming book, *Other*, at the Sociological Review Foundation public lecture on 2 September. The lecture, 'Anatomy of a myth: why human classification

can't cure health disparities: the fatal consequences of sorting people by race and sex', takes place at SOAS in London.

She will argue that while we accept human classification as a part of life, this classification is rooted in oppression and discrimination.

More details: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/thesociologicalreviewfoundation/2089715>

ACADEMY PUBLISHES VIDEO SERIES ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

The Academy of Social Sciences has published a series of short videos highlighting the impact social science make on everyday lives.

The four videos, each featuring two leading social scientists, explore how the social sciences strengthen the UK economy, make the population healthier,

navigate an increasingly digital world, and help to accelerate climate action.

The videos, available in a playlist on YouTube, are part of the Academy's advocacy work to highlight social science: <https://acss.org.uk/category/making-a-difference>

BOOK ON INFLUENCERS' STRUGGLE FOR AUTHENTICITY WINS PAM PRIZE

A book which shows how online influencers struggle to carefully manufacture and stage their image while at the same time appearing authentic, has won this year's BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Prize.

Influencer Creep: How Optimization, Authenticity, and Self-Branding Transform Creative Culture, by Dr Sophie Bishop, argues this results in a sense of precarity for creative workers.

Dr Bishop, of the University of Leeds, was awarded the prize for what the judges called an "elegantly written and thoroughly researched book" at the annual conference.

The prize of £1,000 is given each year by the BSA to entrants' first, sole-authored book within the discipline of sociology. It was established in honour of the memory of Professor Abrams, whose work contributed substantially to sociology and social policy research in Britain.

The judges said that the book was a "profoundly original study that captures emerging new patterns of work and the personification of an online presence as part of their economic value and worth. A big part of an influencer's work is relentless self-branding, intimacy and cultivating a platform-ready persona.

"Influencers must optimise their content to be favoured by the mysterious, invisible algorithms that determine whether their followers rise or fall, leading to economic success or failure.

"This image and presentation of self are carefully manufactured and staged, but to succeed, they must also be perceived as authentic. The author shows how this imperative also leads to complex forms of exclusion along the lines of class, race and sexuality.



Dr Sophie Bishop receives the Philip Abrams Memorial prize at our annual conference

"The book also explores how some creative workers resist influencer creep despite the algorithmic forces that insatiably drive influencers to reveal more of themselves. This tangle of manufactured artifice and authenticity results in a sense of precarity and nervousness for the creative worker."

The judges – BSA President, Professor Les Back, and trustees Professor Vanessa May and Dr Shoba Arun – were also impressed by the "elegance" of *Influencer Creep's* readable prose, saying it was "a work of sociology that is a real page turner, like a novel". The book is published by the University of California Press.

The runners-up were *Migrants in the Digital Periphery: New Urban Frontiers of Control*, by Dr Matthew Mahmoudi, of the University of Cambridge, and *The Personal Life of Debt: Coercion, Subjectivity and Inequality in Britain*, by Dr Ryan Davey, of Cardiff University.

The judges said that *Migrants in the Digital Periphery* "tackles the timely

topic of the digitalisation of border management. It traces the colonial roots of practices of categorisation and containment that are taking new forms as tech giants partner with governments to digitise migration governance. Ambitious in theoretical scope, the book draws on the empirical fieldwork to reveal broader trends in migration governance, notably the racialisation of mobile populations."

They said *The Personal Life of Debt* was a "compelling ethnography of the personal life of debt which examines living with debt as social practice. Based on extended fieldwork on a housing estate between 2012 and 2019, it shows the working class experiences of debt, resistance and regulation. The book powerfully foregrounds how central debt is in our time, offering an original and rigorous analysis of the personal experience and consequences of indebtedness."

MENTORING PROGRAMME VALUABLE, SAY 97%

The BSA Mentoring Programme proved popular again this year.

All 31 researchers who met more experienced mentors online or face-to-face to get advice and support said they would recommend it to their peers, a survey found.

As a result of the mentoring programme, 82% said they had gained clarity on a specific challenge, 59% said they had increased confidence, and 32% had developed a new skill.

The programme was a valuable membership benefit, 97% said, with 71% saying their mentor's support was 'extremely helpful', 26% said 'very helpful' and 3% 'somewhat helpful'.

Dr Alexandrina Vanke wrote: "I really enjoyed the mentoring session with

Professor Neli Demireva, who helped me think about potential cases for further research.

"She also provided helpful information about research foundations and potential publishers that may be interested in the topic of environmentalism. I would like to thank her for the insightful mentorship."

Esha Dey wrote: "In academia, especially where I am, we only talk with ourselves and with our walls for clarity. We stay inside our mind, but one can only grow when there is a viable ecosystem where we can interact, argue or even share. These events help us to come out of our head and see things from others' perspectives."

Another participant wrote: "I was shocked by how helpful this meeting

was. I wasn't sure what a mentor who did not know my work/history would be able to help with, but the experience of my mentor was phenomenal and I walked away with so much. It was incredibly worthwhile."

Dr Rachael Barrow wrote: "I had a wonderful experience with Toma. She was friendly and a pleasure to chat to with a wealth of knowledge on progressing in academia. We had discussed publishing and writing but she tailored her advice to the specifics of my area of interest and contract type."

The programme was also popular with mentors, who gave it an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Of the 18 mentors, 68% said it gave them personal satisfaction, 54% a meaningful connection and 32% new perspectives.

YOUNG SOCIOLOGIST COMPETITION RECEIVES RECORD NUMBER OF ENTRIES

The BSA's Young Sociologist of the Year Competition 2025-26 attracted 184 entries, a record number.

This year, for the first time, there were two categories of entrants: written and audio-visual, both answering the question, 'What are the most significant social challenges facing your generation?'

The winner of the written stream was Charlie Giles, of Norton Knatchbull School in Ashford, Kent, for his entry entitled, 'Pressuring teens to love: the greatest challenge of the teenage generation'.

The judges said that it was an "original and interesting essay, focusing on

the often-neglected topic of young people's emotions. The essay provided great insight and the student had conducted their own research and discussed the findings. It was well written, with a good, logical structure and acknowledged sources."

For his research, Charlie conducted a survey of 16-22 year olds, which found that 68% of respondents suggested that society pressures teenagers into relationships. "Respondents believed that society applies these pressures through glamourising intimacy and romance, making relationships seem benevolent and appealing ... creating a herd mentality amongst teenagers," he wrote.

Sofiia Olikhovska, of The Sixth Form College, Colchester, Essex, was winner

of the audio-visual stream. Her untitled video featured interviews with students from different backgrounds, "connecting what came out from the interviews well with sociological ideas," the judges said. "The video was visually engaging and the student's interest came across well." The prize for both winners was an iPad.

The judges were Professor Nicola Ingram, Jonathan Blundell, Dr Kate Stewart, Dr Hannah Miles, Professor Geoff Payne, Danika Waddell and Professor Karen Salt.

Details of runners up are at: <https://es.britsoc.co.uk/young-sociologist-of-the-year-winners-announcement>

JEN REMNANT TAKES OVER AS BSA CHAIR



JEN REMNANT

The BSA has welcomed Dr Jen Remnant as its new Chair.

Dr Remnant, a senior lecturer at the Scottish Centre for Employment at Strathclyde University, primarily researches workplace inclusion and disability rights.

As Chair for the next two years, she will help guide the BSA's strategic direction and ensure it stays close to the concerns of its members. She will be working alongside Dr Paul Campbell, the new Vice-chair.

The BSA has thanked Professor Chris Yuill, its Chair for the past two years.

"Chris saw the Association through a genuinely difficult period," said BSA Chief Executive, Judith Mudd. "Keeping things steady when the ground is shifting isn't easy, and Chris did that with commitment and good judgement. The Association is in a stronger position because of his work, and we are grateful for it."

PAPER ON WHY PEOPLE AVOID TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE WINS PRIZE

A paper on why people avoid talking about climate change has won a Sage Prize for Innovation and Excellence.

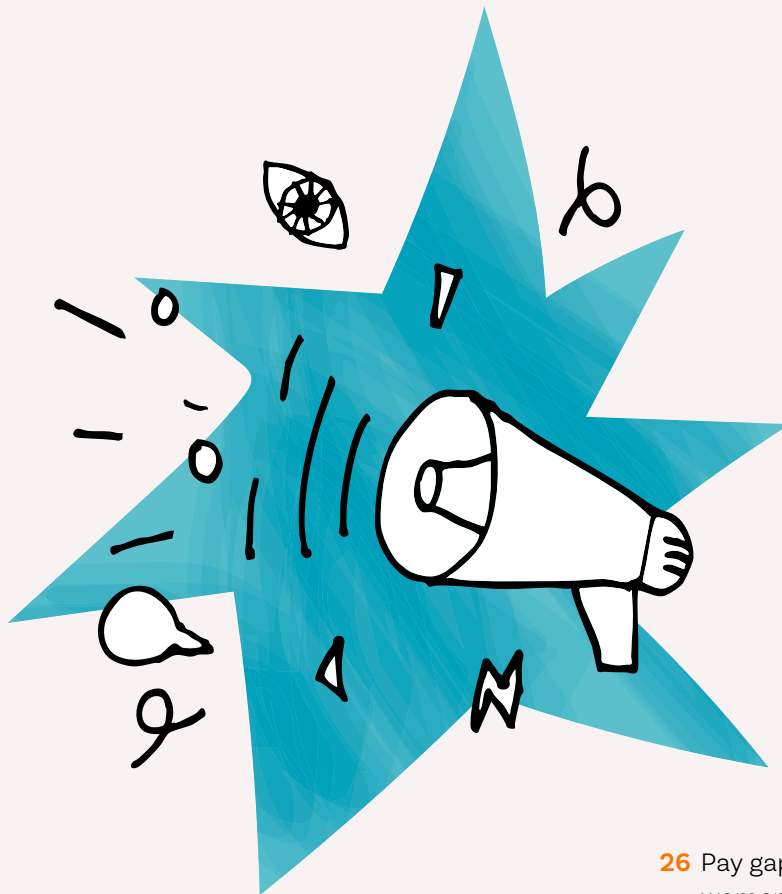
'Not talking about climate change: everyday interactions, relational work and climate silences', by Dr Katy Wright and Professor Sarah Irwin, of the University of Leeds, won the prize for their *Sociology* journal article.

The research analyses data from new qualitative research and explores forms of self-silencing.

The prize – £250 worth of SAGE books or a free annual individual subscription to a journal – is awarded annually to one paper in each of the BSA's journals.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00380385241289743#tab-contributors>

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ALL AROUND THE WORLD

NETWORK TAKES A LOOK AT SOCIOLOGY BEYOND OUR SHORES

NETHERLANDS

PAY GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN PHDS REMAINS THROUGHOUT CAREER



The pay gap between men and women with PhDs persists after they leave university, a study says.

Immediately after obtaining their doctorate, women earn €171 less a month than men, and this gap increases throughout their career, according to research by two Dutch universities.

Researchers used salary data from Statistics Netherlands to track more than 4,500 PhD researchers for up to 16 years after obtaining their doctorates.

One researcher, Anne Maaïke Mulders of Radboud University, said that the pay difference “only increases in the years that follow, regardless of whether they work within or outside the university.

“Even when you take working hours, type of contract, field of study and family composition into account in the data, there is no clear explanation for this development.

“Wherever women end up, they systematically earn less than men with similar backgrounds.”

The research is published in *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* journal. The other institution involved is the University of Groningen.

UKRAINIAN SOCIOLOGISTS 'SHOW RESILIENCE AND VITALITY'

Sociologists in the country have shown resilience and vitality since the Russian invasion four years ago, carrying out work including gathering eyewitness accounts of massacres, a journal article states.

The author, Professor Geoffrey Pleyers, said that Ukraine sociologists had continued to teach and research “despite bombardments, displacement, and occupation. Under these adverse conditions, they have produced a substantial body of empirically grounded and theoretically robust research.

“Ukrainian sociologists have systematically recorded war crimes and atrocities ... they have collected first-hand narratives of traumatic experiences of violence, notably following the massacres of civilians in Bucha and Mariupol.”

Professor Pleyers of FNRS, Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, writes in an article in *International Sociology* that “some researchers have emigrated, and others have been conscripted.

“Some regions of the country are under occupation. Maintaining teaching and research activities requires coping with electricity cuts and the stress of regular bombardments. Every researcher is struggling to balance their time and energy between professional duties, the challenges of daily life in wartime, and voluntary solidarity actions.

“Quantitative researchers and survey institutes have adapted rapidly. Traditional face-to-face surveys have become increasingly difficult and were partly replaced by phone interviews, with their inherent challenges and limitations.”

Despite this, sociology in Ukraine had thrived, with surveys on societal

change carried out by the Institute of Sociology, the National Academy of Science and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

“Maintaining methodologically solid and uninterrupted survey series documenting social dynamics during a full-scale war is an achievement with few precedents in the history of sociology.

“Surveys suggest that the war and widespread violence do not seem to lead to a collapse of democratic ideals. On the contrary, the war appears to have galvanised Ukrainians’ commitment to democratic principles.”

Professor Pleyers said that surveys and analyses “document how universities, professors, and students strive to maintain educational quality despite the circumstances: expanding online learning, relocating universities to safe territories, and multiplying collaborations with international partners.

“A further essential role of sociology is to expose and debunk propaganda, misinformation, and false narratives, which are extensively used in war-time. The invading power seeks to negate the history and culture of the people they attack. Empirical research counters such erasures by documenting social realities and historical depth.

“The resilience and vitality demonstrated by Ukrainian sociology represent a collective achievement, grounded in sustained personal and collective efforts. Many Ukrainian sociologists have endured displacement, loss, and severe disruption. Yet, despite immense difficulties and uncertainties, they have continued to produce empirically rich, theoretically robust, and socially

relevant research, published in national and international academic journals and books.

**“FAR FROM BEING
PARALYSED, UKRAINIAN
SOCIOLOGY IS
EXPERIENCING A
PERIOD OF DYNAMISM,
RECONFIGURATION, AND
CREATIVITY”**

“Far from being paralysed, Ukrainian sociology is experiencing a period of dynamism, reconfiguration, and creativity. Sociologists have undertaken large-scale surveys and developed methodologically innovative qualitative research. Building upon established national traditions, they have also revitalised the field through innovative methods, fieldwork, and expanded international collaborations. Active engagement in international sociological associations and research networks and a growing presence in international publications have resulted in unprecedented global visibility for Ukrainian sociology.”

‘What sociology can do in wartime: the resilience and dynamism of Ukrainian sociologists’, Professor Geoffrey Pleyers, *International Sociology*, March 2026 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/02685809261423129>

SWEDEN

ONLY HALF OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CAN BE REPLICATED

Only half of research published in the social and behavioural sciences can be replicated in new studies, articles in *Nature* say.

An international collaboration on scientific reliability involving 865 researchers analysed nearly 3,900 scientific articles published between 2009 and 2018 in 62 journals in the fields, including sociology.

Three studies published in *Nature* looked at whether the results could be reproduced, were robust and could be replicated.

In one study, the researchers analysed 164 previously published results, finding that just 49% could be replicated.

“This shows that transparency is key to achieving credible research results,”

said Dr Gustav Nilsson, associate professor of neuroscience at Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, who is a co-author of all three papers.

“This is the world’s largest research project to date investigating the reliability of reported scientific results, and an example of how large-scale collaborations can address questions that no single research group could answer alone. I hope we will see systematic replication attempts in more fields of research in the future.”

The study looked at the fields of criminology, economics, educational science, health sciences, leadership, marketing, organisational behaviour, psychology, political science, public administration and sociology.

UNITED STATES

MAN CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER OF MICHAEL BURAWOY

A man has been charged with killing Michael Burawoy in a hit and run car accident.

Kermith Miller, 62, of Oakland, California, was charged with a felony count of leaving the scene of an accident and a misdemeanour count of vehicular manslaughter.

Professor Burawoy, 77, was struck and killed in February last year as he crossed a street near Lake Merritt in Oakland.

Professor Burawoy joined University of California Berkeley as an assistant professor in 1976. He served as President of the American Sociological Association in 2003-04 and President of the International Sociological Association from 2010 to 2014. He retired in 2023.

UNITED STATES

HANDS-IN APPROACH FOR MARK'S LECTURES

Sociologists who feel they lack free speech might like to adopt Mark Cohan's way of restoring control in the lecture room.

He teaches a class called 'Can puppets save the world?', in which he uses puppets he has made as a way of exploring censorship, particularly book bans. Since July 2021 there have been 22,810 cases of book bans across the United States.

"I had become particularly concerned about a rise in book challenges and book bans, beginning in about 2020," said Dr Cohan, Department Chair for Sociology and Anthropology at Seattle University.

"I decided to frame the course as a study of what I call New American



Mark Cohan and puppet

censorship, and I created a sort of bizarre little backstory to try to involve the puppets.

"Puppets lower our guard a little bit. We can hear things from a puppet that we wouldn't maybe feel comfortable hearing from a human. Or a human might be comfortable saying something as a puppet that they wouldn't say as themselves. It allows

them to take on a different identity that expands who they can be."

He was inspired to teach a puppetry class after visiting Taiwan's puppet community and learning about the connections between Taoist and Confucian religious traditions and puppetry, in which people put on puppet shows to worship gods.

UNITED STATES

SOCIOLOGY TEXTBOOK CENSORED IN FLORIDA

Florida's public university system has removed several core subject areas from a textbook, *Introduction to Sociology*.

The new version removes entire units on media and technology, global inequality, race and ethnicity, social stratification, and gender, sex and sexuality. It also removes a section addressing the genocide of Native Americans.

The book, which also omits reference to the shooting of Trayvon Martin that led to the launch of the Black Lives Matter movement, is now 267 pages long, down from 669 pages in the original.

The state decided to create the new textbook after the Board of Governors, which oversees higher education in Florida, determined that all of the books being used for introductory courses violated new academic restrictions imposed by state law.

So far, Florida State University and Florida International University are using the new version. The University of Florida has declined to adopt it officially, treating it instead as a resource or recommendation.

Sociology studies have been the subject of increasing scrutiny from

Florida lawmakers over the past few years. The Board of Governors eliminated sociology courses from the general education curriculum in 2024.

Professor William Marsiglio, of the University of Florida, said the change was an "affront to academic freedom. It's something that never has happened in my career before, where administrators, whether close or far removed from the topic, are pushing to have a course taught in a certain way which really is inconsistent with the discipline."

GERMANY

INFLUENTIAL SOCIOLOGIST JÜRGEN HABERMAS DIES

Jürgen Habermas, one of the most influential philosophers and public intellectuals in post-war Germany, has died aged 96.

Professor Habermas was known for his criticism of the commodification of mass media and entertainment, arguing that a mass-produced culture destroys critical public debate.

He was born in 1929 in Düsseldorf and underwent surgeries in early childhood for a cleft palate, which resulted in a speech impediment. This is often cited as having influenced his work on communication.

He was enrolled at the age of 10 in the Hitler Youth, but was too young to fight in the war.

Professor Habermas began teaching philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt in the 1960s, vocally supporting the student revolt at West German universities at the time.

He became a leading member of the Frankfurt School, working alongside

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, and was critical of capitalism from a new left perspective, distinct from traditional Marxism.

He was an early critic of the rapid absorption of East Germany into the West, fearing a revival of nationalism, and arguing for a more gradual change.

In the 1990s he championed a united Europe, which he regarded as the best defence against the resurgence of nationalist rivalries.

The German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, described him as “one of the most significant thinkers of our time”.



Jürgen Habermas
Image credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Habermas14_%2814277269236%29.jpg

INDIA

INDIAN SOCIOLOGIST PROFESSOR ANDRÉ BÉTEILLE DIES

The renowned Indian sociologist and writer, Professor André Bêteille, has died aged 91 at his home in New Delhi.

Professor Bêteille, who was of Bengali and French descent, was best known for his studies of the caste system in South India.

He was born and raised in West Bengal and later moved to Delhi after completing his MA at Calcutta University.

He taught for decades at the Delhi School of Economics. He also served as the first chancellor of Ashoka University.

He wrote books including *Caste, Class and Power*, *Society and Politics in India* and *The Idea of Natural Inequality and Other Essays*.

In tributes, academics called him a “towering figure”.

Championing sociology for 75 years:

**The BSA celebrated our
anniversary at the
annual conference in
Manchester in April**

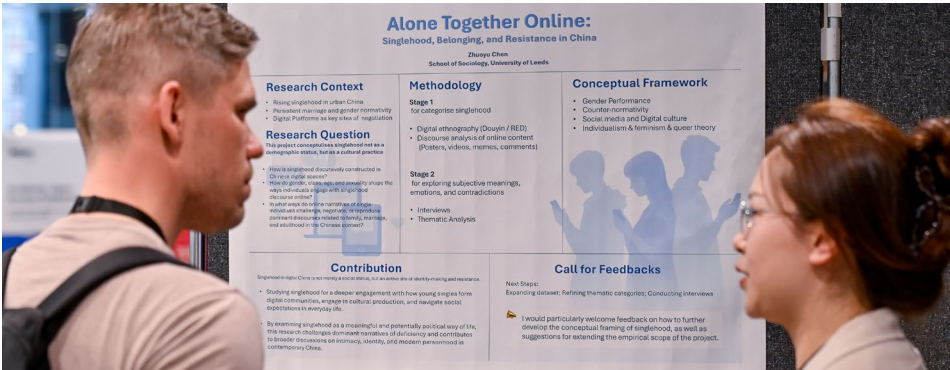
The next 17 pages highlight the
people, prizes and presentations
in this sparkling event



BSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Photo credit: Joel Fildes





“WHAT A GREAT CONFERENCE THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION WAS THIS YEAR.”

I’VE COME AWAY ENERGISED. IT WAS ALSO LOVELY TO CATCH UP WITH COLLEAGUES OLD AND NEW.”

JON RAINFORD

“INTERESTING RESEARCH INSIGHTS, GREAT DISCUSSIONS AND LOVELY REUNIONS AT THE ANNUAL BSA CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER”

MARIA KEIL



“IT WAS SUCH A PLEASURE DISCUSSING THE CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF STUART HALL AND THE BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL FOR SOCIOLOGY AT THE CURRENT CONJUNCTURE... WITH COLLEAGUES.”

DR YUCHEN YANG

“THANKS FOR AN INSPIRING CONFERENCE. GREAT TO PRESENT A POSTER WITH PROF NORMA DAYKIN. SHARING INSIGHTS FROM OUR UPCOMING BOOK CHAPTER. AS WELL AS NETWORK AND LEARN FROM SOCIOLOGISTS AROUND THE GLOBE”

KATEY WARRAN

'SOCIOLOGY MUST GO BEYOND MILLS AND BOURDIEU TO TACKLE ELITES'



Sociology needs new theory that goes beyond the work of C. Wright Mills and Pierre Bourdieu in order to understand power elites today, Mike Savage told a conference event.

Professor Savage, the founder of LSE's International Inequalities Institute, said he was surprised at how often researchers looked to Mills and Bourdieu, who had done "great work" on elites, but whose worlds were different to ours today.

"C. Wright Mills was writing in 1950s, at the height of Fordism and the Cold War," he said. "We are living in a very different world now. Bourdieu, similarly, [was writing] in the 1970s and 1980s, when French society was unusually corporatist. And yet those are the two figures people who people keep referring to.

"I'm going to be very provocative and say I'm flabbergasted at how people like C. Wright Mills and Pierre Bourdieu are still go-to figures."

However, Professor Savage said that while the study of elites had "really disappeared" in the years after those thinkers, it had been growing since the financial crisis of 2008.

"In the last 10, 15 years we've seen this remarkable renaissance ... since then it's become a massively extensive repertoire". This work included, for example, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*, the 2010 book by Shamus Khan.

Professor Savage said this renaissance was "really important work. We are living in a world that is in desperate straits. And why is it in desperate straits? A lot of that is to do with the way elites are behaving, so the sociology of elites is vitally needed to understand the travails and malaise of the 21st century global capitalism.

"This is an area where sociology has stepped up to the plate and tried to offer resources, ways of thinking, and data, which does help us address this incredibly problematic world."

The sociology of elites was inclusive. "In terms of research methods it can actually operate across the quant/qual divide, with sociologists of elites who are predominantly ethnographic doing quantitative work, and vice versa. This is not that common in sociology generally."

Article continues >

He called for a study of elites that took their relationship with wider society into account.

“There’s a danger, I think, that we are looking at elites as if they’re kind of exotic species in a zoo, in a kind of cage with ‘elite’ on it, and you look at these exotic animals behaving appallingly.

“But that is not the classic tradition of thinking about elites, which is relational – elites are part of wider social structure.”

So the study of elites should take into account “wider elite infrastructures, whether it’s central media platforms, the way in which networks operate, global capitalism, financial markets – there’s a whole series of concepts. One of the really important issues today is how it is that people who are supremely wealthy but have no executive power – Elon Musk, as an example – have such power.

“Why is it that elites remain so popular? When we look around the world, they’re getting a lot of support. What is it about elite aesthetics, beliefs, fantasies, imaginaries that have that appeal?”

In a talk at her same event, Dr Liz Mann spoke about the need for sociology to be “bolder” in its research on elites.

“Sociologists, alongside all of us in social sciences, have a tendency to allow the conversation to be dominated by the economists. I recently went to a public lecture by a world renowned economist, I won’t name him, but within this lecture he stated that he had come to the belief that we must interrogate what it means to be unequal. And I thought, ‘welcome to sociology.’”

She said sociologists should “be louder, be bolder about our contribution, and try for a better understanding of the ways in which the system has worked to advantage the already-advantaged.”

Dr Mann spoke about elite figures in America, including US Vice-President, J.D. Vance, and about his book *Hillbilly Elegy*, which sets out his humble background.

“From the outside, Vance’s meteoric rags to riches story can easily be used to evidence the possibility of the American dream,” said Dr Mann.

“This is the ultimate story of the power of hard work, self-determination and meritocracy – if you just work hard enough, then the world is your oyster – evidence of the power of individual effort over explanations of structural disadvantage.

“However, if we dig a little deeper into Vance’s story, it is peppered with the support of Peter Thiel and other interested elites. Vance is on record as saying ‘Never Trump’, and yet now he’s Trump’s V-P.

“IS HE A USEFUL MERITOCRATIC FACE WITH THE RIGHT SORT OF POLITICS, BEHIND WHICH MORE TRADITIONAL ELITES CAN HIDE THEIR INFLUENCE?”

“Is this a living, breathing demonstration of US meritocracy or is it the hand-picked puppet singing from the puppet master’s hymn sheet? Is he a useful meritocratic face with the right sort of politics, behind which more traditional elites can hide their influence?”

“I could go further with the discussion of the disproportionate influence of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, not only in their direct funding, lobbying and actions in US politics, but also in their influence over international politics, media and social media, and the power to affect the political sentiment of masses.”



MIKE SAVAGE

‘A wealth of insight: what 75 years of studying elites can tell us about social change, inequality and sociology’, featured Professor Mike Savage, LSE; Dr François Schoenberger, University of Oxford; and Dr Liz Mann, University College Cork. Chairs: Dr Emma Taylor and Dr Sarah Kunz. ■

PLAGIARISM ALLEGATIONS AGAINST BLACK SCHOLARS ‘A DISGRACE’

Wrongful allegations of plagiarism and academic misconduct made against Black scholars by conservative activists are an “abhorrent disgrace”, Jason Arday told his plenary audience.

Professor Arday spoke about one activist in America who had laid charges “under the guise of academic integrity. He targets, particularly in the US, Black women. You have these charges of plagiarism or academic misconduct but, miraculously, nothing’s ever come up.

“He says ‘look, EDI is the reason why people of colour obtain certain positions. And I’m going to unravel that conundrum by showing that these people are inadequate’.

“Now this playbook, as far as he sees, is very well publicised, but what is actually really interesting is how few people know about it.

“There are cases that are just dragged out, and for a lot of Black academics in the US this has destroyed their careers, and ... it’s just become normal.

“IT’S REALLY DIFFICULT TO PUT YOUR HEAD ABOVE THE PARAPET, BECAUSE IF YOU ARE THE PERSON THAT DOES THAT, MAYBE THEY’LL COME FOR YOU”

“These [activists] are resourceful, they are pretty formidable. And it’s really difficult to put your head above the parapet, because if you are the person that does that, maybe they’ll come for you.

“I always think of how driven people are to engage in the absolute destruction of another person’s life on the basis of something they don’t agree with.

“Is that a reaction to a system that they feel has been unfair towards them? And maybe this is their way of lashing out or trying to create some sort of balance in terms of their own experiences?”

Professor Arday, of the University of Cambridge, said that he would “do a role play with myself. You have these people who complain, right? You get the email and they say you conducted academic misconduct. And you think to yourself, ‘well this is incredible. I’m on the back foot here. How do I defend myself against this machine?’

“Now, the instruments that are designed to protect academic integrity, designed to protect our wellbeing and our intellectual property, are weaponised under the guise of them.

“These people are brilliant, perversely brilliant. There are times when you look at what they’re doing and you say to yourself, ‘well done, well played, very good. You’ve caught me a thousand knots – how do I get myself out of this situation?’”

As a way of fighting this, Professor Arday looked to kindness within academia.

“It’s about how we look after one another in this space. It’s about how we create our own playbook to combat

what is happening. And that is the only way we’re going to do it. There isn’t any room to sit there and to watch your fellows suffer for no reason, it’s abhorrent, it’s a disgrace. And quite frankly, evil. That’s the cancer that we need to eradicate from academia.

“The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people, but the silence of good people. Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Love can do that.”

Professor Angharad Beckett, who chaired the session, said: “Those of us who were involved as editors or editors-in-chief of journals are perhaps familiar with the fact that there is a rising number of these kinds of rather difficult cases that are brought to our attention, where somebody – they don’t often have very much evidence – is making an accusation about the integrity of an author who is published in your journal. Obviously when you go through the formal processes, the burden of proof for this must indeed lie with the accuser.”



JASON ARDAY

'COME TOGETHER AROUND IDEAS, EVIDENCE, HOPE AND SOLIDARITY AMID UNFOLDING HORROR'

It is important that sociologists come together in hope and solidarity, at a time of “unfolding horrors” in the world, Professor Angharad Beckett told the annual conference.

Professor Beckett, a publications trustee for the BSA, was speaking at the plenary address of Jason Arday, which she chaired.

“This is a particularly special year for us at the BSA,” she said. “The BSA turns 75, and our conference theme reflects that, as a celebration and also an invitation to reflect on sociology and what it has given to the world, to take stock of where we’re at and to think carefully about the future, both of the discipline and the societies that we want to help shape.

“I think we all agree that we’re also meeting at a particularly genuinely difficult moment across the world. There is conflict, there is horrific suffering. There are horrors unfolding that we just cannot and should not look away from.

“Experts are warning that an economic crisis looms and we all know that that crisis will fall, as in always does, on the hardest, on those least able to withstand it – the already marginalised, the already precarious, the already forgotten and failed by politics and

policy. At the same time, we are witnessing an alarming and continued rise of authoritarian populism as a potent global force shaping life through a mix of cultural, economic and nationalist appeals.

“We’re seeing, alongside this, the erosion of democratic norms in the increasing use of culture wars as a governing strategy and, closer to home, we see the erosion of commitments to equality, to diversity and inclusion – hard won and still contested, but that are now ... being dismantled.

“THE SOCIAL SCIENCES ARE NOT BYSTANDERS IN THIS. WE ARE ALSO THE TARGETS”

“The social sciences are not bystanders in this. We are also the targets – our methods are questioned, our findings politicised and our colleagues trolled, threatened and harassed for the work that they do. In that context, what sociology does, naming power, refusing easy comfort, and speaking carefully and honestly about the world as it is, matters more than ever.

“I feel that no argument between academics in this room or at any point in this conference will, sadly, directly change the course of governments, stop wars, stop bombs dropping or bring an immediate end to suffering. And that gives me pause and perhaps a measure of humility.

“But yet we do have power in this space, do we not? How we use disagreement – whether it opens up thinking or closes it down, whether it engages or whether it wounds.

“That is why I feel it is so important that over 800 of us are here today, and we have the scholarship of people from over 40 countries, even if they’re not all present in the room, they’re represented in their co-authorship. They’ve come together around ideas, evidence, hope and solidarity.”



ANGHARAD BECKETT

DECOLONISATION IS USED AS AN 'UGLY' CHALLENGE TO MUSLIMS

The Indian government was using the concept of decolonisation as a way of challenging Muslims and other minorities, Professor Maitrayee Chaudhuri told her plenary audience.

This was taking place against a background where teaching and research institutions in India were increasingly governed by global metrics and triumphant cultural nationalism.

Professor Chaudhuri, of Jawaharlal Nehru University, said that 'global' was the buzzword in India now. "We have a certain kind of public discourse that the global universities are better. And in this ... global metrics have captured our imagination. Every day we have advertisements and visuals saying global ranking is crucial for Indian universities."

But in India 'global' also meant looking to its own ancient heritage of learning. "We have a lot of writings in the public discourse, which say, for example, that global is ancient. That our country always was a hub of intellectual prowess. This is all rooted in ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Sutras. We've always had a very rich educational heritage."

But this heritage was used in what she called a "triumphant nationalism", an "ugly phase of majoritarianism" against minorities in the country.

"You have a regime which is hegemonic, which represents a particular dominant community, say the Hindus, which uses the word 'decolonising', in order to attack all others, not just the colonialism of the British, but others – Muslims and other communities," she said.

"That majority regime uses the word 'decolonial', but spins it in a very different language and tries to glorify an

ancient past, without much validity. So it's a dangerous term, but very popularly used in public discourse today.

"WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE TERM DECOLONISATION PLAYS OUT VERY DIFFERENTLY IN DISTINCT CONTEXTS"

"We need to understand that the term decolonisation plays out very differently in distinct contexts, and what indigenous knowledge would mean in a diverse and unequal society in India."

Professor Maitrayee Chaudhuri was speaking at a plenary, entitled 'Exploring the commonalities, solidarities and international – challenges for global sociology'.

Another speaker at the event, Professor Bandana Purkayastha, said intensive data extraction processes behind surveillance systems globally had led to sociologists, who speak out again inequality, becoming objects of suspicion in many societies.

In her role as Vice President of National Associations for International Sociological Associations she said it was important to support sociologists' attempts to survive and build legacies based on their different theoretical approaches and methodologies.

[Article continues >](#)

The third speaker, Professor Beáta Nagy, of Corvinus University in Hungary, spoke about the transformation of universities under the Orbán government.

She said that after he came into office “we saw the immediate erosion of democratic institutions and the media system. The government started taking over universities, sending chancellors to universities, who controlled everything financially.

“The central government centralised institutional control over the universities, and they sent very important political messages to universities on how to do science, and how to teach, or not to teach, and how to behave. Marketisation brought in more international students, and a greater emphasis on teaching in English.

“Slowly but surely almost all universities underwent privatisation and commodification, business interests became more and more important in daily work, and the academic faculty lost power.



BANDANA PURKAYASTHA

“THE REFLECTIVE CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENCES ARE EXCLUDED MORE AND MORE OFTEN”

“The reflective critical social sciences are excluded more and more often. The business perspective doesn’t acknowledge sociology’s contribution to science. At the same time, faculty and researchers are very poorly paid so many people leave the country.

“At our university, the sociology Bachelor and Master programmes closed down from one day to the next.”

She said there developed a strong anti-gender and anti-LGBQ bias from the government, and diversity Master programmes were closed down. This was opposed by the European Union. “The EU reacted to the steps and we have been excluded from the Horizon programme.”

International support was important, she said. “Last year for example, we had the annual meeting of our sociology association, on the dismantling of democracy. It was very good because many international scholars arrived at this conference. I think it’s very important to have this kind of workshop or conference and to have more collaboration because otherwise we become very marginalised.”

Professor Nagy’s address was given before the April general election which resulted in Orbán leaving office after 16 years in power. The BSA event was chaired by Shoba Arun, a publications trustee. ■

COURT TRANS RULING MAKES PUBLIC SPACES ‘INHOSPITABLE’

Last year’s Supreme Court ruling that the legal definition of a woman is based on biological sex has made public spaces and workplaces “inhospitable or uninhabitable,” said Finn Mackay.

Dr Mackay, speaking at an event on sociology and gender, said that “the mainstream gender options of male masculinity or female femininity are becoming more and more segregated and scrutinised.”

Part of this was the “entirely predictable and totally planned effect of anti-trans campaigns, which are resizing gender, aiming towards a gender normativity for everyone, and no trans people at all, or at least no out-trans people in public life or civic society.

“This is already happening here in the UK, with bathroom bans and the ideological and quite probably illegal overreach after the Supreme Court ruling of April last year that are pushing curfews and make public spaces or workplaces inhospitable at best or uninhabitable at worst.

“Trans investigation – once a niche conspiracy corner on the internet – is now being practically encouraged as a national sport by this incoherent Labour government, and public harassment and hate crimes against trans and gender diverse people are unsurprisingly booming.

“Organisations like TransActual in the UK have been gathering data on the lives and experiences of trans and gender diverse people in the UK, finding in the most recent research that 97% of respondents have experienced transphobic discrimination.

“In the UK, for example, there have been reported incidents of cis women being harassed in women’s toilets or other public spaces due to having a more masculine expression.

“CULTURE AND POLITICS ARE OBSESSED WITH HOW LESS THAN 1% OF THE POPULATION IS DOING GENDERING”

“So culture and politics are obsessed with how less than 1% of the population is doing gendering, while conveniently shoving the gender activities of the dominant majority out of the realm of public attention, let alone concern or critique.”

Dr Mackay drew on feminist history, saying that Shulamith Firestone in 1970 had said “there will be no feminist revolution until sex itself is erased and ceases to matter as a cultural marker”, and citing the actions of Kate Millett, who physically defended a trans woman in 1973 at a lesbian conference in the US when a small group tried to forcibly evict them.

“So feminism is not a lineage marked by a universal trans exclusion. And this is a history that demands much more concern and focus. And no doubt it has not received it because neither women nor trans communities in general are seen as worthy subjects, nor history-making agents. But indeed they are.”

Dr Mackay was speaking at a special event on ‘The gendering of sociology and the sociology of gender’, chaired by Professor Sue Scott. Other speakers were Professor Stevi Jackson, Professor Jeff Hearn, Professor Mary Holmes and Dr Radhika Govinda. The panel explored the emergence and development of gender as a sociological concept, focusing on the part played by feminism in the creation of a space for research on women and for feminist critique within the BSA and UK sociology more widely. The panel noted that gender originated as an analytical concept, which challenged essentialist and biological assumptions about women and men, but more recently, with the emergence of ‘anti-gender’ movements associated with the resurgence of the political right across the world, gender had been branded as a dangerous concept.



FINN MACKAY

SOCIOLOGY ‘NEEDS TO LOOK BEYOND THE DISCIPLINES AND ACADEMIA’

In his plenary address, Professor Les Back emphasised the need for sociology to look beyond the discipline for inspiration, both within academia and outside it.

Professor Back, who is the new BSA President, looked back over the BSA's history, drawing attention to a letter to *The Times* in 1951 announcing its formation, written by two specialists in demography, an archaeologist, two social anthropologists, two social psychologists and two social administrators.

“OUR VOCATION IS ONE THAT CAN’T BE CONFINED TO THOSE OF US WHO HAVE ACADEMIC JOBS”

“From the very beginning [it was] social – that’s my key point,” he said. “The point of why I’m sharing this is to try and make a case for [looking] beyond the campus and sociology, and why our vocation is one that can’t be confined to those of us who have academic jobs.”

In preparation for his address, Professor Back read through addresses to the BSA conference by 19 past presidents, including Stuart Hall’s.

“Stuart embodied in his life a suspicion of – at the same time as a connection to – established disciplinary forms of knowledge, and an insistence that education should be beyond the campus in every sphere of life.

“It’s something that I feel very passionate about, at a time when our day jobs are very often not equal to the passion that we carry into them.”

As part of this, Professor Back had visited schools to talk about the work of sociologists. “One of the things that I wanted to do is to take the ideas that we cherish into places where there is a thirst for them, not just in schools, but in many other places.”

As evidence for this, he said that in 2024, A-level sociology was the seventh most popular subject, with 44,359 students taking it, behind psychology, biology, chemistry, history, business studies and maths.

Professor Back, formerly at Goldsmiths and now Head of Sociology at the University of Glasgow, said it was “paradoxical” that, at a time when sociologists around the country were losing their jobs, there was an “unprecedented interest in studying sociology amongst school students.

“We can foster a sense of the sociological home for ideas and imagination where the windows and doors are open, where there’s a library to dwell in, to read, to care about,

where there’s plenty of room and shelf space to borrow books and new acquisitions. A more homely sociology in which the sum of its fragmented curiosities can all speak to the larger story of society.”

Professor Back spoke on ‘Sociology’s past and future: 75 years of the BSA’. His published work is mainly in the areas of the sociology of race and racism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, urban culture, music and sport. His co-authored books include *Migrant City* and *The Unfinished Politics of Race*. He is also a journalist, broadcaster and musician.

The session was chaired by Professor Vanessa May, a BSA publications trustee.



LES BACK

'CREATE SOLIDARITY TO PROTECT JOBS AND RESEARCH', SAYS PRIZE WINNER



BRIDGET FOWLER

Professor Bridget Fowler, the 2025 winner of the Distinguished Service to British Sociology Award, spoke of the need for sociologists to create solidarity.

"We live again now in what Hannah Arendt called dark times," said Professor Fowler, of the University of Glasgow, in her acceptance speech at the annual conference.

"She was referring to the 1930s – I think we can use that same phrase now, with the rise of the far right and increasing threats to universities.

"I want to urge you all to create the sort of solidarity that will protect people's jobs and people's research. Durkheim thought that solidarity was a distinctively human attribute. May it triumph over the dull material necessities that incite people to conformity or, even worse, complicity."

The award is given to an outstanding individual who has contributed most to the discipline by leading an extraordinary life as a sociologist.

In giving it, the BSA President, Professor Les Back, said that Professor Fowler had in her work "reflected a generation of female academics who had to

battle strongly enforced patriarchal expectations in order to maintain themselves in academia.

"The space was hard won, requiring her and her colleagues to repeatedly contest institutional inertia and challenge conservative objections.

"Bridget has made a formidable contribution in print, too. In her sociological studies, she explored the contestations and exclusions that are characterised by a wide range of cultural fields, including photography, fiction, painting, architecture and drama.

"She's a sophisticated theoretician, sometime translator of Pierre Bourdieu's work, as well as a critic and evaluator of that rich legacy.

"Bridget is also a fabulous teacher. There are many former students in this room and they'll attest to that much better than I.

"This award is a recognition that our craft is not just about what we write and the fame that follows that, but how we live in the service of understanding and in the service of fostering a sense of education that is open to all."

PANEL DEBATES SCOTLAND'S PROGRESSIVE REPUTATION

A special panel at the annual conference brought together contributors to discuss sexuality, migration, citizenship and belonging in contemporary Scotland.

The panel was held following the publication this year of a collection, *Queer in a Wee Place: Small Nations, Sexuality*

and Scotland, edited by Professor Yvette Taylor, of the University of Strathclyde.

This open-access collection examines Scotland's reputation as a progressive nation for LGBTQ+ rights, and explores the exclusions and inequalities that lie beneath narratives of exceptionalism.

Contributions address themes such as queer migration, intersectional inequalities, queer data, disability, education and cultural representation.

The panel reflected the book's interdisciplinary approach, spanning sociology, cultural studies, education, creative practice and policy analysis, while foregrounding how 'wee places' shape queer lives and imaginaries.

It highlighted the timeliness of the collection amid ongoing debates on

equality legislation, public discourse on gender and sexuality, and questions of national identity in Scotland and the wider UK.

It also showcased the collaborative ethos of the project, with contributors engaging the audience in conversations about queer lives in small nations, supported by a visual map illustrated by artist Madeleine Leisk.



YVETTE TAYLOR

OUR BACK PAGES: 60 YEARS OF SOCIOLOGY JOURNAL

The annual conference featured a glance through the back pages of *Sociology*, the BSA journal now in its 60th year.

Five former editors, whose work spanned the last four decades of the journal, gave their thoughts on what has changed and what still remains from the old days, each choosing a paper they considered particularly important.

The session was introduced by one of the current editors-in-chief, Dr Jill Timms, who told the conference that “the journal has certainly built an international reputation as one of the top journals in the field of sociology.

“Our current impact factor went up again at the last count – we are now at 2.9. Last year there were over 700,000 downloads of full articles.

“We aim to advance the theoretical understanding of, and promote and report empirical research about, the widest range of sociology topics. So in a way we are a general journal for sociology, which allows us that wide scope.

“WE ARE TRYING TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF HOW WE UNDERSTAND SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND TOPICS”

“We are trying to push the boundaries of how we understand sociological concepts and topics and it is a very exciting place to be working to see these coming through.

“We’re not a methods journal, but we are very conscious of how important methodological innovation is to

our discipline. So accounts of that methodological innovation and the research process are important too.

“We see it as a place to support our early career colleagues as well. For example, we do a teacher’s newsletter, trying to inspire not just teachers but future sociologists. We’ve also started video abstracts and podcasts.”

Professor Alan Warde spoke about his time as a reviews editor from 1988 to 1990.

“Review editor was a job in those days – at least 25% of the journal was given over to book reviews, so in our 12 issues we published 415,” he said.

He and his co-reviews editor, Professor Larry Ray, chose as their paper, ‘Patriarchy and professions: the gendered politics of occupational closure’, by Anne Witz, which came out in November 1990.

“It does a great many things in a relatively short space,” said Professor Warde. “It connects concerns of professional closure, patriarchy, capitalism and labour market segmentation. It identifies the strategies that professions use to turn themselves into professions to exert closure. And what it did in the 1980s was it put a gendered dimension to that. One of the consequences for the medical profession was that doctors were men, nurses were women, and their conditions of work and their status were very different.

“It’s conceptually precise and innovative. It has historical data to support it – it studies the development of women in medical occupations between the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century. It’s clearly written, and it’s a lovely piece of work.”

Professor Sue Scott was a reviews editor in the team that followed

Professor Warde in the early 1990s, when the editors were Professor David Morgan and Professor Liz Stanley.

“It was back at a time when universities could support academics who were editors, and the Manchester department gave us an office,” she said. “My memory is that they paid for the editorial assistant.

“Some extremely senior professors would send in reviews that were just not publishable. Not because they were insulting or because of the content, but because they were so shockingly badly written, in terms of the standard of English. But it was very difficult to send them back, so I got really good at rewriting reviews.”

She chose as her paper, ‘On auto/biography in sociology’, by Professor Stanley, which came out in February 1993 and which followed the establishment of BSA Auto/Biography study group, set up by Professor Stanley and Michael Urban in 1992.

“She argues that a concern with biography and autobiography is fundamental to sociology, saying ‘significant sociological interest lies within the epistemological problematics concerning how we understand the self and life, how we describe ourselves and other people and events, how we justify the knowledge claims we make in the name of the discipline.’”

Professor Maggie O’Neill was a co-editor of *Sociology* between 1999 and 2002. She was based at Stafford University, and related how she drove down in a van to Plymouth to pick up filing cabinets full of documents from the previous editors.

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She chose for her paper one by Steven Castles, 'Toward a sociology of forced migration and social transformation', published in February 2003. This resonated because she had been working with young migrants from Bosnia, Somalia and Afghanistan.

"The article, for me, and I think for all of us working in the sociology of migration, marked a sea change in the study and analysis of forced migration, taking the focus away from more policy-oriented work to focus on migration systems, networks, transnationalism and structural network bases.

"His main point is that we need a sociological argument that points to the significance of forced migration in contemporary society and in current processes of change.

"He focused on the numbers – that forced migration had increased significantly since the end of the Cold War, and that it had in fact become an integral part of north-south relations. It looked at border controls, the securitization of borders, gender-based issues in migration, as well as processes of social transformation."

Professor Graham Crow edited the journal from 2006 to 2008, with Professor Cathy Pope. They chose 'The coming crisis of empirical sociology,' by Professor Mike Savage and Professor Roger Burrows, published in October 2007.

"There was a bit of a history to it in that this paper divided opinion amongst referees," said Professor Crow. "One of our referees wants to reject this, and the other one thinks it's wonderful. So I read it and I thought it definitely should be published."

The paper urged sociologists to look to methods beyond surveys and interviewing, using the new streams of data that were being generated digitally.

"It wanted to shake people out of a certain sort of complacency that this was the way that sociologists do things. So it was deliberately provocative and it worked in that way.

"DIGITAL DATA ARE GOING TO BE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN OUR SOCIAL WORLD"

"The authors wanted to promote a debate. They said that digital data are going to be increasingly important in our social world and we should be preparing for this, we should be thinking about how we engage with this."

The paper had had 1,675 citations. "Interestingly, most of those [were] since 2017. So in the first decade it had very good citations, but they've actually increased in the second decade."

Professor Andrew King was one of the editors from 2013 to 2017. He and another editor, Professor Sarah Neal, chose 'Everyday bordering, belonging and the reorientation of British immigration legislation', by Professor Nira Yuval-Davis, Dr Georgie Wemyss and Professor Kathryn Cassidy, published in May 2017.

Professor King said the paper "includes observations and interviews conducted in London between 2013 and 2015, against the backdrop of the UK government's hostile environment immigration policies.

"A whole range of actors are interviewed, including immigration compliance and enforcement officers, small-business owners, metropolitan professionals and EU residents living and working in London.

"Looking back on this paper, a lot of the things that are written about seem to be really relevant, with the rise of populism that we see today."

The event's question and answer session heard that the journal had begun with three issues a year and gradually increased this to six. It now had 77 board members, many based abroad, so face-to-face meetings were replaced with online ones.

The chosen papers will be published on a special collections page of the *Sociology* website and will be freely accessible for 12 months. A paper on the history of the journal will be published in October. ■



'A LONG-OVERDUE HOME FOR SCHOLARS WORKING ON GRASSROOTS MOBILISATION'

THE CONVENORS OF A NEW STUDY GROUP ON ACTIVISM WRITE ABOUT THEIR WORK

From climate camps to anti-racist uprisings and right-wing mobilisations, collective action is reshaping the social world. Protest, resistance and counter-mobilisation are once again central to how power is contested and futures are imagined. Yet within UK sociology, there has been no dedicated space to bring together those studying activism, social movements and revolutions as a coherent field.

That is now changing. A new BSA study group on Activism, Social Movements, and Revolutions (ASMR) has been established to provide a long-overdue intellectual home for scholars working on grassroots mobilisation and transformative collective action. The group launched during the BSA annual conference, featuring a well-attended activist archive tour and workshop at the Working Class Movement Library.

The sociological study of collective action is both theoretically mature and rapidly evolving. 'Social movement theory' emerged in the late 20th century, challenging earlier traditions that portrayed protest as irrational. Resource mobilisation theory, political process

approaches, and framing analysis reshaped the discipline's understanding of how movements emerge, sustain themselves, and decline.

However, the field is far broader than this canonical lineage. Contemporary research engages with Marxist, Gramscian, feminist, postcolonial, decolonial and Black radical traditions. It explores how movements produce knowledge, cultivate emotions, generate alternative temporalities and experiment with new organisational forms. It interrogates the strategic dilemmas of coalition-building and the tensions between reform and rupture.

Crucially, this scholarship is not confined to progressive movements. Analysing the rise of right-wing and far-right mobilisations, authoritarian backlash and counter-insurgency strategies is equally central. The study of ASMR provides indispensable tools for understanding the contradictory political trajectories of our time.

Today, we are living through escalating climate breakdown, intensifying racialised and gendered inequalities, and widening democratic erosion. The

criminalisation of protest, expansion of surveillance, and policing of dissent are reshaping the terrain of collective action. Concurrently, new forms of digital organising, transnational solidarity and prefigurative politics are emerging. Sociology cannot adequately grasp these transformations without sustained engagement with movements.

Despite this vibrancy, scholars of activism have historically been dispersed across existing BSA study groups. While cross-fertilisation is valuable, it can result in fragmentation: panels may lack thematic coherence, researchers struggle to find specialist audiences, and promising abstracts are sometimes declined simply because no dedicated space exists.

The creation of the study group addresses this structural gap. It seeks to provide a focused forum where theoretical debates, methodological innovations and empirical findings can enter sustained dialogue.

The establishment of ASMR further ensures that UK sociology is fully connected to its international

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counterparts, with collaborations with the International Sociological Association, the European Sociological Association, and the American Sociological Association.

While maintaining a dedicated stream at the BSA annual conference is central, the study group's ambitions extend further. Future plans include: specialist workshops and summer schools; book launches and reading groups; scholar-meets-activist events; and an active email list to circulate calls for papers, job opportunities and recent publications.

“MOVEMENTS ARE DYNAMIC AND ADAPTIVE; THE SOCIOLOGY OF MOVEMENTS MUST BE EQUALLY RESPONSIVE”

Central to this mission is the acknowledgement that knowledge production is a dialogic process involving the very people and dynamics that ASMR scholarship strives to understand. Movements are dynamic and adaptive; the sociology of movements must be equally responsive. By creating an ongoing forum rather than a once-a-year encounter, the study group seeks to nurture conversations that evolve alongside the political landscape.

At its heart, the new study group is about community-building. It aims to connect established scholars and early-career researchers, those working in UK institutions and transnational collaborators, and researchers approaching movements from diverse epistemological standpoints.

Particular emphasis is placed on supporting ECRs. In a higher education context marked by precarity and competition, capacity-building initiatives are essential. The study group plans to introduce mentoring schemes, proposal development workshops and ECR-led panels to provide emerging scholars with constructive feedback from peers who understand the specific challenges of movement research.

Inclusivity also means embracing methodological plurality. The study of activism encompasses archival research, ethnographies of contemporary organising, participatory action research, digital and computational analyses of online mobilisation, and visual approaches. The study group welcomes this diversity and encourages reflexive discussion about the ethical and political dimensions of researching contentious politics.

The range of topics falling under the umbrella of ASMR includes: labour, feminist, queer, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and climate justice movements; migrants' activism, disability justice, and national liberation struggles; right-wing and far-right mobilisation; coalition-building, prefigurative politics, and alternative social formations; emotions, temporality, and imagination in collective action; repression, authoritarianism, and counter-revolutionary strategies; the relationship between movements and political parties; and engaged scholarship and activist knowledge production.

What unites these themes is an interest in how people organise collectively to transform or defend social orders. The group provides a platform for examining both emancipatory and reactionary projects, recognising that sociology must analyse the full spectrum of contentious politics.

Sociology has always grappled with questions of power, inequality and social change. Yet the organised collectives, insurgent networks and counter-movements that contest the status quo sometimes appear at the margins of our institutional structures. The formation of the study group signals a recognition that activism, social movements and revolutions are central to understanding contemporary society.

At a moment when protest is both expanding and being curtailed, and when grassroots organising continues to shape public debate, the need for rigorous sociological analysis is acute. Providing a dedicated space for that analysis within the BSA strengthens the discipline as a whole.

The ASMR study group invites scholars interested in collective action, whether as a primary research focus or as part of broader inquiries, to join the conversation, consolidate the field, and advance its future.

The study group welcomes participants from all career stages, methodological orientations, and geographic locations. Those interested can join the group and stay informed through its website, Bluesky account, and mailing list.

Written by Birgan Gokmenoglu, Birmingham City University, Camilo Tamayo Gomez, University of Huddersfield, and Steven Speed, University of Greater Manchester, on behalf of all ASMR convenors.

Editor's note: There have been two other study groups on related topics in the BSA's history. A Revolution Study Group ran from 1975-78 and a Protest and Social Movements Study Group ran from 1995-2001. A BSA Activism in Sociology Forum was established in 2013 and continues to operate. ■

THE BEST SENTENCE IN SOCIOLOGY?

IT'S TOP MARX TO KARL

What is the best sentence in sociology? A recent invitation to BSA members to send in their choices resulted in a “joyful” response that proved more interesting than just a shortlist.

Out of more than 100 replies, it was Mark Doidge’s nomination of Marx’s line from the *Theses on Feuerbach*: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” that came top, with 34 likes.

Not far behind came Foucault’s: “Where there is power, there is resistance”, attracting 25 likes, nominated by Bethany Simmonds. C.Wright Mills’ “Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both”, nominated by Victoria Nunn, was equally popular.

Donna Haraway’s call to “make trouble, to stir up potent responses to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places” (nominated by Nick Fox), and Carol Hanisch’s: “The personal is political” (Neelam Dey) each attracted 25 likes.

Tom Hall’s nomination of Bourdieu’s: “The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden” was also a popular response, as was Les Back’s nomination of the closing lines from W.E.B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*: “Let the ears of a guilty people tingle with truth, and seventy millions sigh for the righteousness which exalteth nations, in this drear day when human brotherhood is mockery and a snare.”

The competition, run by the Mid-Career Forum as part of the BSA’s 75th anniversary programme, also produced some lesser-known quotes, including one from Jean-Luc Godard’s *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, one from John Donne’s *Meditation XVII*, a

line from a Stafford Beer cybernetics paper, and a remark attributed to Philip Abrams in a Durham tutorial in the mid-1970s: “If you can’t see there’s a problem, there isn’t a problem.”

One member reported meeting an old hippie in a pub in the North Pennines who defined sociology as “looking for justice and finding there none.” Another contributor offered simply: “Culture is peer pressure from dead people.”

Kathryn McEwan, who helped organise the invitation, said: “The response was joyful. Contributions arrived from across career stages, continents, and specialisms. People shared sentences they had first encountered as undergraduates, lines they had returned to across the course of their careers, and fragments from surprising and unlikely sources. Some came with a brief attribution. Others came with a story. What emerged was something more interesting than a shortlist.

“We received over 100 contributions spanning classic theory, contemporary work, and personal reflections on sentences that have shaped how members think, teach, and research ... a collection of small stories about why certain lines stay with us and what we do with them.

“A sentence matters because of the relationship a person has to it: when they encountered it, what it allowed them to name, how it travelled with them into their teaching, their research, or their life.”

A Padlet with details remains open to browse.

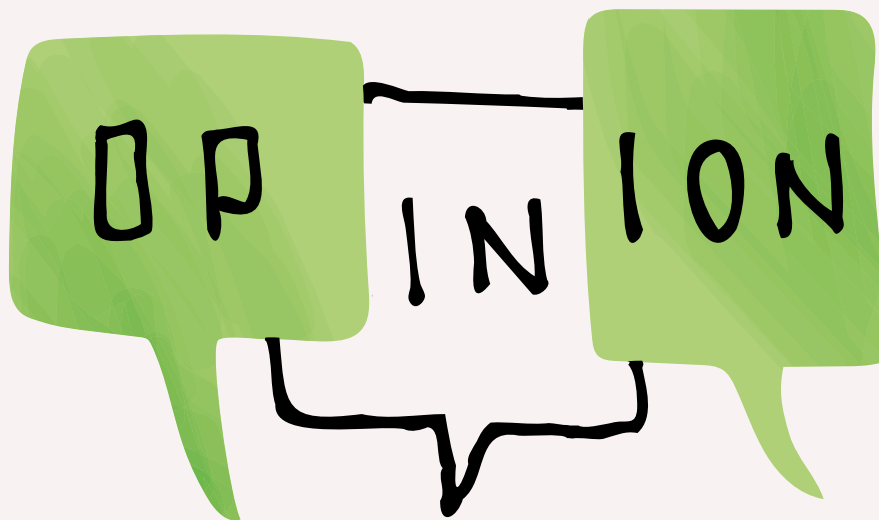
<https://padlet.com/kathrynmcewan/best-sentence-in-sociology-k9qn8z01u9ggvy8g>

Dr Saorfhlaith Burton is the other convenor of the Mid-Career Forum.



KATHRYN MCEWAN

Opinion



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Desert Island Discourse



CATHERINE POPE WRITES ABOUT THE BOOKS THAT HAVE INSPIRED HER

Catherine Pope is Professor of Medical Sociology in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. She is an expert in qualitative and mixed methods for applied health research, and has published empirical, theoretical and methodological work, including more than 200 peer reviewed journal and conference papers.



CATHERINE POPE

Your first book is *Sidewalk*, by Mitchell Duneier. What made you choose this?

I've chosen Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk* because I remember how much I loved it and because, unlike lots of ethnography, this one comes with evocative black and white photos (taken by Ovie Carter). It takes a deep dive into the lives of poor, mainly Black and minoritized men who survive by scavenging and selling second-hand books and magazines on New York sidewalks.

Whilst I remembered noticing these street sellers on a visit, I had not, until reading Duneier's book, understood that this sidewalk vending is an unintended consequence of historical 'free speech' laws in the USA. Duneier shows that, despite its legal status, this vending is located at the heart of American systems of injustice. His descriptions are rich and vivid – he captures the patter of sidewalk sellers, and documents, for example, how they scavenge from trash cans to obtain fashion magazines for resale and even explains the not insignificant challenges of finding a toilet when working on the street.

In the methodological appendix, Duneier details his methods and working practices and reveals more about his collaboration with Hakim Hasan, a long-time sidewalk vendor (who also contributed the foreword). I remember reading this section and wishing I could have taken the class they taught together about this research.

Your second choice is *Sociology and Medicine: Selected Essays*, by P.M. Strong. What led you to this?

This book holds the collected essays of my much-loved PhD supervisor, Phil M. Strong, who died in 1995. I treasure this book because it brings him back – I can hear his voice in the papers

collected here, and imagine him in his office, leaning back precariously in his chair, rolling a cigarette (how the world has changed), talking about some of the ideas explored in this book.

Edited by his partner, Anne Murcott, herself a distinguished sociologist, the book gathers Phil's essays from the late 1970s to the year of his death. It is eclectic and at times tantalising, making sociological forays into the ceremonial order of the clinic and the etiquette of paediatric consultations, and then jumping to the introduction of general management in the NHS and the turf wars between the professions of medicine. The final chapters begin to develop ideas from research he was undertaking at the time of his death, with the historian Virginia Berridge, on the social history of Aids.

Alongside his engaging writing style, dotted with literary references and wry observations (for example about sociology's imperialist tendencies), the book shows Phil's deep preoccupation with the moral order, and the breadth of his sociological imagination and curiosity about the social (and medical) world. These ideas and arguments still shape my thinking about interactions and practices of care and, of course, the material about Aids resonates and, indeed, feels prescient in a post-Covid world.

***Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown is your third book – why choose this?**

Brene Brown is a guru and something of a celebrity in the leadership world, and this is one of several books she has written about courageous leadership. Yet, unlike some of her contemporaries in the self-help/leadership space, she

Article continues >

writes with authority as a researcher and social scientist.

By profession, Brown is an academic social worker and her doctoral training introduced her to grounded theory (supervised by Barney Glaser, no less). She describes herself as a researcher-storyteller and the book combines her research on shame and courage with personal stories and anecdotes that bring her ideas to life and make them stick.

Hailed as “unputdownable” and a “must-read”, *Daring Greatly* is accessible and inspiring. It draws on President Teddy Roosevelt’s famous 1910 speech, sometimes referred to as ‘The man in the arena’, about doing your best, accepting failures, and not being swayed by the voices of external or internal critics. The book develops Brown’s ideas about the myth of vulnerability as weakness and argues that recognising and embracing vulnerability is a path to braver, more courageous leadership.

This is a book that I have bought and given away many times, and one that I return to when things get tough.

Your fourth choice is *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, by Erving Goffman – why did you choose this?

Goffman is another author who presented me with a difficult choice, because there are several books to choose from. I have two copies of this, one is a slim, tatty Pelican (Penguin imprint) edition from the late 1980s, with a black and white maze on the cover that might fit in a largish pocket – perfect for taking to a desert island.

This book documents everyday ‘underlife’ in a psychiatric hospital, based on ethnographic data collected at St Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington DC in the late 1950s. Goffman explains the dehumanising effects of these institutions and the moral careers of patients, and provides a critique of the medicalisation of mental illness and “some notes” on the professions who tinker or try to repair those ‘broken’ by mental ill-health. Each essay was written as a

standalone piece, but together they develop enduring themes that have stood the test of time.

The ideas developed in the chapter about ‘total institutions’ have made their way into cinema (*The Shawshank Redemption*) and stand-up comedy (Stewart Lee), which is pretty good reach for academic sociology! This conceptualisation of psychiatric hospitals and prisons as places where inmates and staff are separated from society and lose their sense of self remains powerful for understanding the totalising impact of closed institutions.

The book remains relevant and I often reference it – particularly when teaching qualitative research methods – not least because I contend that Goffman would not, in this day and age, get ethical approval to undertake covert participant observation, locked away from the world, disguised as an athletics instructor.

***Second-Hand Time* by Svetlana Alexievich is your last book – what made you choose this?**

This book won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2015 and I am sorry to say I only read it for the first time last year when it was gifted to me by a dear colleague and friend. It reminds me of Studs Terkel’s oral histories, and has left a powerful impression.

Second-Hand Time is a collection of fragments of monologues and conversations with Russian people, recounting the break-up of the Soviet Union, the anti-Putin protests in 2012, remembrances of World War II, and the creation and maintenance of the communist state.

Using what has been described as her “polyphonic approach”, Alexievich, a journalist, weaves together emotionally rich testimonies of ‘sovoks’, the people who lived through the Soviet regime and its collapse, and who, in various ways, are struggling with the new order that has replaced it. These are stories of loss, pain, incomprehension, and, sometimes, weary resignation. Some of the accounts describe the brutality of life in the Soviet Union and yet at

the same time capture a yearning and nostalgia for the promissory that Soviet communism offered.

As the book unfolds it becomes clear that the euphoric welcoming (by some, but by no means all) of glasnost and freedom in the early 1990s has been reappraised in the years that followed. Alexievich’s interviewees are widows, the elderly, the jobless and the frightened, who have been forced to watch as the wealth of a nation has been plundered by the few. They tell how capitalism delivered blue jeans and many kinds of salami, along with hyper-inflation, starvation and ruin.

It is not an easy read – ultimately it is a book about pain and suffering – but it provides the human stories that are perhaps a vital accompaniment to theoretical sociological works on capitalism and political analyses of the current Russian regime.

And for your luxury?

As I have gotten older I have developed insomnia and my remedy is listening to the radio – most often the BBC World Service or podcasts, though sometimes these are too provoking and do not have the desired soporific effect. However, I was worried that this request might contravene the rules, so if I am to be cast away, sans radio, perhaps I should take my beginners’ crochet project, not least because my grandson Franek is waiting patiently for me to complete an Amigurumi I promised him some time ago.

Professor Pope’s choices:

Sidewalk, Mitchell Duneier (1999), Farrar Straus & Giroux

Sociology and Medicine: Selected Essays, P.M. Strong, edited by Anne Murcott (2006), Routledge

Daring Greatly, Brene Brown (2012), Gotham Books

Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates, Erving Goffman (1961), Anchor Books

Second-Hand Time, Svetlana Alexievich (2019), Fitzcarraldo Editions ■

PALANTIR IS A COMPANY OPENLY COMMITTED TO THE POLITICS OF HARD POWER

NASAR MEER WRITES THAT SOCIOLOGY SHOULD BE “RELENTLESS AND VOCAL” IN RESEARCHING THE ROLE OF PALANTIR



NASAR MEER

The recent manifesto from Palantir, the US data and surveillance company co-founded by Peter Thiel and led by Alex Karp, presents AI as the next arena of strategic supremacy and summons Silicon Valley engineers to recognise their obligation to serve the American state, the military and the wider West in building the technological infrastructure of hard power.

“APPARENTLY TECHNICAL CATEGORIES CAN CARRY SOCIAL ASSUMPTIONS”

At first glance, the manifesto may appear startling – a defence-tech company openly declaring that software, artificial intelligence and state power belong together – yet this is familiar sociological territory. Sociology has long studied how states count, sort and govern populations using censuses and welfare files, policing records, immigration systems and risk assessment tools. Specifically, sociology has shown how apparently technical categories can carry social assumptions, and how administrative systems can turn inequality into routine procedure.

Palantir brings these older questions into the age of artificial intelligence, defence technology and platform power, but in ways that also echo Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s ‘Futurism’ in the early 20th century, and its glorification of speed, machines, youth, aggression and war.

Marinetti saw technological force as a route to national renewal and, while Palantir’s language is less flamboyant, the structure is a familiar account of liberal hesitation weakening the West.

Marinetti, of course, co-wrote the *Fascist Manifesto*, the original manifesto of Italian fascism, and the civilisational language is no less relevant today in giving political meaning to the technology amidst a history of Western security politics that has repeatedly attached danger to racialised and migrant populations: at the border, in the street, in the database and on the battlefield. So when Palantir speaks of protecting the West through superior software, it draws on a vocabulary in which race, culture and security have travelled through empire, border regimes, policing, counter-terrorism, immigration control and public administration.

This is made pressing in the knowledge that Palantir supplies the UK state and is expanding into highly sensitive public data spanning NHS patient records, policing intelligence, defence operations, financial regulation, local government and immigration-adjacent systems.

Palantir’s role in the NHS Federated Data Platform, for example, is a contract reportedly worth around £330m, and the Financial Conduct Authority, too, has also awarded Palantir a contract to analyse sensitive internal intelligence data for financial crime work.

The Metropolitan Police meanwhile has reportedly discussed Palantir tools for AI-assisted intelligence analysis in

criminal investigations, while trial tools have also been linked to misconduct detection. Here the concerns are privacy, algorithmic policing, intelligence automation and opaque decision making. Which data is analysed? Which communities are made visible as risks? Who audits the outputs? How can someone challenge an inference made by a system they cannot inspect?

This is precisely where sociology should be relentless and vocal in showing how data systems help decide which problems are visible, which groups are monitored, which risks are prioritised and which forms of intervention appear reasonable. A platform trained on institutional records inherits the world those records describe: stop and search, neighbourhood surveillance, gang databases, immigration enforcement, counter-terrorism referrals and patterns of suspicion.

Given the Palantir manifesto – and that its leaders tell us the company understands technology as a means of securing power and organising the state in defence of a racialised, civilisational project – the question for Britain is, who Palantir’s systems serve, how they are governed, and how democratic institutions should respond when sensitive public data infrastructures are shaped by a company so openly committed to the politics of hard power.

For sociology, this is a familiar public question for our age.

Professor Nasar Meer, University of Glasgow

'SOCIOLOGY IS THRIVING HERE IN THIS PASTORAL ENGLISH MARKET TOWN'

BSA PRESIDENT LES BACK REFLECTS ON AN EXTRAORDINARY GROUP OF SCHOOL STUDENTS "FULL OF QUESTIONS AND THINKING HARD TOGETHER"

I have some time to kill here at Peterborough station before catching the train back to Edinburgh. It's been a glorious spring day visiting Prince William School in Oundle, which is about a 40-minute bus ride away in north Northamptonshire, on the banks of the River Nene. Today, I gave a talk to the sociology and criminology students as part of the outreach work I am doing as BSA President this year, which I mentioned in my address at the BSA conference in Manchester.

It's exam season. As I waited in reception earlier today, students streamed through the entrance, leaving a mock exam. I overheard one say to her friend: "With sociology there's just so much to say... isn't there?" Quite so, I think to myself, as I go through my notes for today's talk.

There are well over 100 students studying sociology here, and this afternoon I am talking to them about a radio documentary I made last summer on football songs as folk music. Oundle is an affluent market town and home to the famous Oundle School, a private boarding school second only to Eton. By contrast, Prince William School is a large secondary school and sixth-form with a very diverse range of students in terms of class and ethnicity, drawn from a catchment area stretching from Peterborough to Corby.

That diversity was immediately striking as I watched the students file into the assembly hall for the talk. I think it's a good test for any sociologist if you can keep the attention and interest of a room like this.

Part of the point of my talk is the value of ritual forms of solidarity, like singing in crowds at football, in highly individualistic societies like ours. I ask the students when they last sang. Most said they didn't sing, except occasionally in the shower. One person put up their hand and said they sang Justin Bieber songs with their friends, another said she sang Kate Bush songs in her bedroom, but generally they didn't sing. It prompted a discussion about the experience of isolation and loneliness in their generation and how this relates to the screen-based nature of their culture.

"FOOTBALL SONGS ARE INTERESTING BECAUSE THEY ARE LIKE A SOCIAL BAROMETER"

You could feel the group's excitement as they listened to my sound clips of people talking about singing and their beloved teams. I told them that football songs are interesting because they are like a social barometer. I play them a clip of Leon Moosavi talking about the songs Liverpool fans sing about Mohamed Salah being 'a gift from Allah'. We debate whether this is a sign more of religious literacy and less of racism.

A young woman in the back of the bleachers put up her hand and said that she is a Norwich City fan, and that she'd been learning about the experience of Black players at the club.

Justin Fashanu, Ruel Fox, Sébastien Bassong, as well as recent players like Abu Kamara, Max Aarons, and Jamal Lewis had really made her think about the things people take for granted about the club. I told her that Norwich City is distinguished by having the oldest recorded football chant, On The Ball City, written in the 1890s, which predates the club. She nodded proudly and said that she wanted to share the radio programme with her dad.

The sun is going down now, in the golden part of the day, as I wait for my train, and I am reflecting on that extraordinary group of young people, full of questions and thinking hard together. The school has a diversity, equity and inclusion group open to all students, regardless of their background. Sociology is thriving here in this pastoral English market town in ways I couldn't have ever imagined.

Next month, I am contributing to Amit Singh's sociology course being taught at ISIS/Belmarsh Prison. I'll keep you posted.

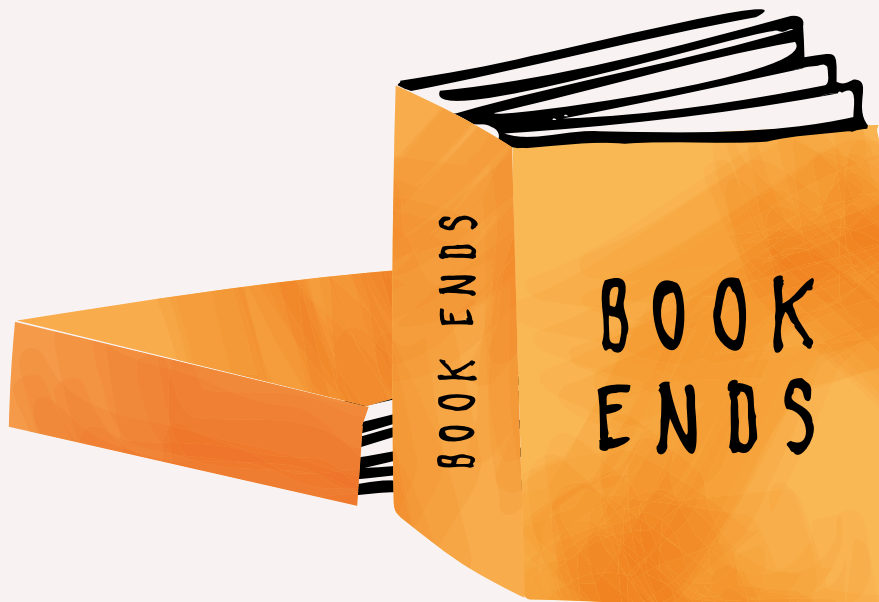


LES BACK



Bookends

Reviews of Recent
Books in Social
Science and Sociology



CRIME, VIOLENCE AND MODERNITY: CONNECTING CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE IN SOCIOLOGICAL CRIMINOLOGY

GORDON HUGHES

Routledge, 2022

252 pages

£150 hbk, £36.99 pbk

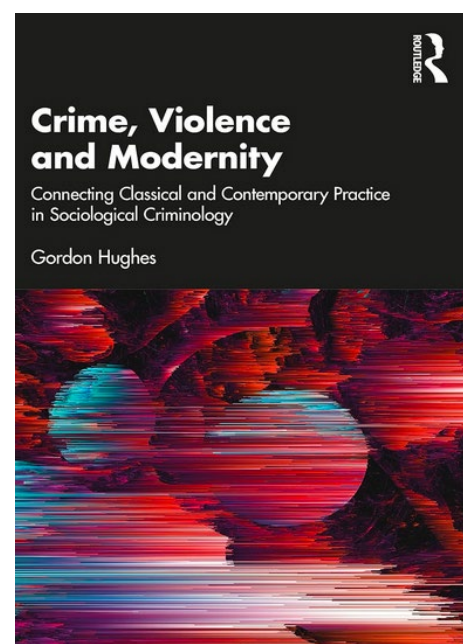
ISBN: 978-0367768942 pbk

Once in a while a book appears that defies easy classification. This is not a textbook, a monograph, a polemic, or a manifesto, but it has elements of all of these. It seeks to reinvigorate the intellectual connection between sociology and the study of crime, harm and violence. The extent of Hughes' ambition is clear from a glance at the range of issues covered, from the recent history of UK criminology to the historical global perspectives of Norbert Elias, Steven Pinker and Michael Mann.

Hughes celebrates the disappearance of post-modernism, reminding us that research should be about asking open ended questions, testing theories and generating empirically verifiable research answers. Hughes claims that too many 'critical' criminologists have abandoned the simple Weberian insistence on the need to acknowledge that research findings will not always coincide with deeply held political or ideological views. Instead, there was a tendency to carve out a political position which must be defended, regardless of available evidence. Hughes reminds us, pace Weber, that we should always be prepared to face up to the inconvenient fact that our favoured explanations might actually be wrong or at least need modification or revision.

Several intellectual currents in contemporary criminology come in for criticism. The influence of cultural studies is condemned because it became too focused on "issues of self-identity, choice, difference and fluidity, thus losing its intellectual anchorage in questions of institutional power, structural inequality and organised violence" (p.12). Advocates of cultural criminology are also criticised for ignoring or dismissing the importance of quantitative research.

Hughes offers a stinging critique of the relevance of radical criminology because it has remained "remarkably silent on the crime problems that persistently define public debate" (p.121), and such a lacuna "is a serious flaw in the collective status of criminology as a social scientific vocation" (p.142). Critical criminology is in the dock for its failures to address some of the most pressing questions of urban violence in the UK. It has, apparently, "turned its back on investigating the persistent, and often violent, harms and injustices in contemporary societies" (p.12). Referring to violent urban gang-related crime, Professor Hughes throws down a gauntlet: "The lacuna in serious public criminological debate of such destructive and brutalizing



developments is a serious flaw in the collective status of criminology as a social scientific vocation" (p.27).

Angry, insecure and marginalised young men with a "shared habitus of protest masculinity" are too often erased from the research world. Hughes argues that their "plight is linked to a crisis in authority in the family, crises of physical hardship and poverty in childhood and the transition to adulthood" (p.123), and he states unequivocally that "the quality of parental supervision and monitoring has a key role to play in the delinquent careers of young men" (p.144).

The charge sheet for critical criminology is profound and includes a tendency to elide the problem of the local victim in favour of humanising the transgressor. Hughes and colleagues have carried out ethnographic work in the most underprivileged housing estates. Based on the rich data gathered over many years he accuses radical criminology of a tendency to romanticise the extent of neighbourliness and community solidarity on working class estates (p.121). He fears that "prior ideological commitment has led to a blanking

[Article continues >](#)

out of uncomfortable evidence of the harms done by marginal groups” (p.10), and a tendency towards an “amoral romanticism of deviance” (p.104). His preparedness to regard the underclass as a “real type” sets his research apart from much so-called critical criminology (p.10).

Criminology textbooks are charged with paying insufficient attention to methods and being light on empirical data. Critical criminology has “stagnated into a closed orthodoxy of impassioned irrelevance”, and this has exposed its “relevance, or lack of it for wider public debates on the crime and violence question” (p.103). The ubiquitous separation of theory and method is condemned because “social theory should thus be practised as a set of tools for guiding and analysing empirical enquiry rather than being a substitute for it” (p.26). At first sight this point seems so obvious that it would not need repeating. However, a cursory glance at academic publications show how such a separation of theory and method has become entrenched. Indeed, we can see this bifurcation in the undergraduate curriculum, in publishing and indeed in individual academic careers.

“POWER IS RELATIONAL AND A SIMPLISTIC ASSERTION THAT SOME GROUPS ARE ‘POWERLESS’ IS SIMPLY UNSOCIOLOGICAL.”

The book makes a powerful case for a comparative/historical approach to issues of crime and violence, and it argues for restoring power relations to a central role in research theorising. Drawing on Weber and Elias, Hughes says that such relations are understood as always contested, subverted and dynamic. Following

Elias, the key to understanding power lies in the interdependency of people who make up multi-polar reciprocal dependency figurations. Power is relational and a simplistic assertion that some groups are ‘powerless’ is simply unsociological. Power is not a possession of any individual or group, it is polymorphous, many sided and inherent in all human relationships.

The book identifies a weakness that is present in many sociological/criminological accounts. It involves an abrupt switch from a structural analysis that focuses on the significance of systematic patterns of behaviour and associated differences in life chances, to an approach which foregrounds agency or voluntarism. What determines this shift in theoretical focus is often unclear, but is usually driven by extraneous ideological considerations. This analytical switch is also evidenced when critical criminology urges us to ‘humanise the deviant’, whilst State actors – social workers, prison officers, police officers, magistrates and judges – are rarely accorded the same analytic courtesy.

The ‘authoritarian state’, a centrepiece of so much radical criminology, is found wanting, not least because such a conceptualisation, “both exaggerates the coherence, role and capacities of the state and narrows the possibilities for the rigorous and open-ended examination of complex evidence” (p.164).

Hughes argues that one of the enduring strengths of Western social science lies in its foundation in a sceptical tradition of inquiry. In this tradition, the answers to research questions are not known in advance but are discovered through empirical investigation. It might seem otiose to even make these points, but the idea that the accumulation of useful knowledge is dependent upon posing falsifiable questions, testing rival hypotheses, and weighing alternative explanations is a core principle of social scientific research that is too often brushed aside.

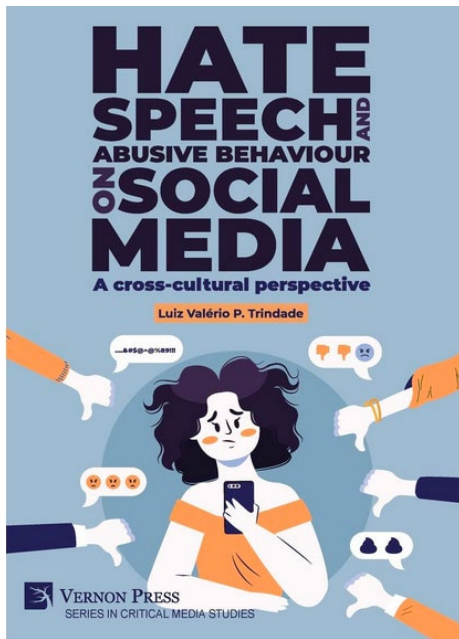
The later chapters broaden the focus to include a discussion of genocide and State crimes and a detailed examination of the debates between Pinker and his critics on the decline in death from crime and warfare. The book makes an important contribution to contemporary debate about how to judge and evaluate historical periods and covers recent debates about empire and colonialism and the harms inflicted by imperialism. All too often contemporary academics, from their lofty vantage point, dole out praise and blame depending on their prior ideological convictions.

Professor Hughes puts it pithily: “A major problem with writing history from whatever may be the influential values of the present day is that it may lead to simplistic moralising and lack of ‘verstehen’ for beliefs and practices of earlier generations...Blame attribution often comes too easily in liberal and radical writing on the past sins of our shared histories” (p.31). As Elias reminds us, the attribution of blame is psychologically satisfying but rarely sociologically revealing.

Written in a provocative and lively style, the book has a boldness and decisiveness born out of Hughes’ long engagement with criminological research. Hughes is pessimistic about the quality of much that passes as radical sociological criminology, but is ultimately optimistic about the potential for an invigorated historical and comparative sociology. One can only wish him well in seeking to challenge the “fragmented and amnesiac” discipline of sociology and help it to “return it to its ambitious, outward looking modernist tap-roots of the classical sociological imagination” (p.229). ■

PROFESSOR ROBERT MEARS

Bath Spa University



HATE SPEECH AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

LUIZ VALÉRIO P. TRINDADE

Vernon Press, 2024

132 pages

£42 hbk

ISBN: 979-8881900243

Luiz Valério de Paula Trindade is an eminent scholar in critical media studies and his intellectual oeuvre analyses the intersection of digital communication, race and structural inequality. His *Hate Speech And Abusive Behaviour On Social Media: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* represents an epistemological inquiry into contemporary digital media scholarship.

Trindade's previous work examines racialised digital discourses, platform-mediated power relations and online hostility, in particular in his books, *Discurso de ódio nas Redes Sociais [Hate Speech in Social Networks]* and *No Laughing Matter: Race Joking And Resistance In Brazilian Social Media*. He brings robust epistemological grounding and intercultural sensitivity to *Hate Speech* through his extensive involvement with the International Panel on the Information Environment and his academic engagements across European and Latin American institutions.

Moving from conceptual foundations to empirical synthesis and comparative cross-cultural analysis, the first chapter of this book offers a historiographic account of the evolution of the internet, the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. He charts the normalisation of hate speech through

factors such as algorithm-driven selections and platform monetisation, underscoring online abuse as a structured, mediated phenomenon.

In chapter two, he systematically interrogates the socio-psychological and ideological drivers of abusive online behaviour. He argues that social media platforms act as a "backstage space" to this. He demonstrates that digital spaces are neither emancipatory nor neutral, reflecting how these spaces are deeply embedded within offline power relations.

The analytical core of this book is a systematic analysis of 108 scholarly papers written in Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, published between 2004 and 2022, encompassing 11 countries. By evaluating findings from different countries and languages, the study sheds light on how cultural norms and language shape online harassment and abuse.

This analysis reveals how cyberbullying, misogyny and racism are conditioned by digital inequality, racial hierarchy and the colonial aftermath. The author's approach reveals how cultural norms modulate the targets of digital abuse.

Although substantially relevant, the book has limitations. Working with three European-origin languages

and secondary literature leads to the under-representation of other global regions, particularly Asia and Africa. The book's use of theory serves as an impediment to readers, creating unfamiliar conditions for understanding critical media studies.

Despite this, the book is particularly germane for policymakers, scholars, postgraduate students and digital media activists who are interested in regulatory regimes such as platform governance and media regulation. Its epistemic critique and transcultural orientation help in developing holistic understanding of how hate speech asymmetrically influences marginalised communities, thereby jeopardising their democratic values. Holistically, Trindade's work amounts to a substantive intervention and advances a refined interpretation in critical social media studies for assessing structurally embedded phenomena.

PRAGYAN CHATURVEDI

Banaras Hindu University, India

INSIDE DIGITAL ADVERTISING: PLATFORMS, POWER, AND MATERIAL POLITICS

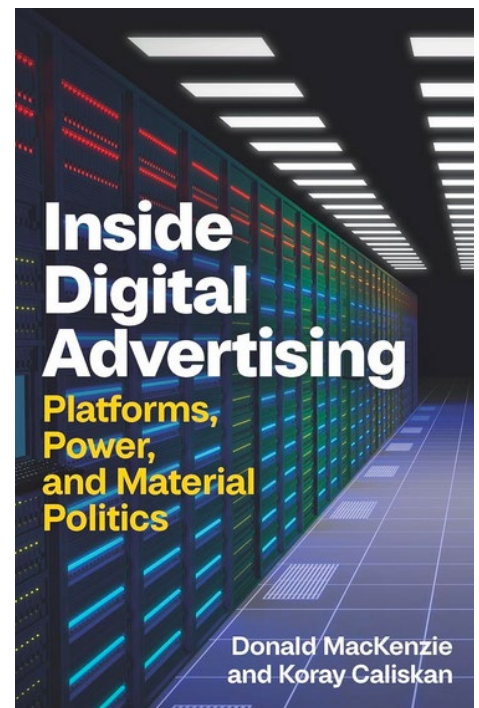
DONALD MACKENZIE AND KORAY CALISKAN

Polity Press, 2025

250 pages

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This book discusses the processes, dynamics and tensions that underpin contemporary digital advertising industries. Drawing on existing work on advertising, and from economic sociology, cultural economy and market studies, it effectively illustrates how this type of advertising has evolved into an infrastructure of interconnected systems shaped by market power relations, politics and the pervasive need to secure profit. Indeed, as the authors put it in laymen terms in the introduction, “many of the news and other websites you visit, games you play, or apps you use could not survive without advertising income” (p.2).

The volume describes how multinational technological and service provider companies, such as Google, have proved successful in building their global systems of warehouse-scale computing, turning them into an unprecedented profit-making instrument. Major developments in digital advertising from the mid-1990s onwards are tracked and successfully discussed, thanks to an accurate account of the defining characteristics of the new forms and tools of advertising. These

include: the capacity to select an ad for specific users and tailor it to them; the increasing preponderance of ‘direct-response’ advertising; and an automated optimisation consisting of strategies to maximize the cost-effectiveness of advertising in real time.

Currently, digital advertising could hardly exist without a material system capable of handling huge volumes of digital activities without slowing down. The term ‘megamachine’ is extensively used throughout the book to capture this vast and impressive scale of the materiality of today’s digital world. According to MacKenzie and Caliskan, two types of megamachines need to be distinguished. The first inhabits a giant, tightly integrated assemblage of physical machines, with a single corporate owner such as Google/Alphabet or Meta. They are consciously designed. On the other hand, the second type has no single owner and is an emergent assemblage rather than a conscious design – as such, it cannot be programmed as a whole; web-displayed advertising is a megamachine of this second type.

Article continues >

“DESPITE ITS PERVASIVENESS, SUCH POWER CAN STILL BE SUCCESSFULLY CONTESTED”

Another key aspect emerging from the analysis advanced by the authors is to be found in platform power, where only a small number of platform-owing corporations (notably, Google’s parent Alphabet, and Meta and Amazon) are at the core of digital advertising. Indeed, one of the main achievements of the book is in its ability to show how such a type of power operates and is being increasingly organised through infrastructural design (rather than through ideology or overt coercion). This helps in explaining the ways in which digital advertising is subject to power structures and power (dominance) relations. At the same time, the authors provide

convincing arguments that, despite its pervasiveness, such power can still be successfully contested. They also provide useful insights on potential conflicts over user privacy and issues of surveillance that are highly relevant in both institutional discussions and academic debates.

In the conclusions of the book recommendations for further research are set out, with the aim of finding new ways to adequately balance power among digital publishers, the largest providers of search engines, smaller ad firms and other market participants, while, at the same time, securing some degree of privacy for the web surfers. *Inside Digital Advertising* is therefore highly recommended reading for both experienced researchers and younger students in sociology, and organisational and business studies, particularly those focusing on the advertising markets, creative industries and trends in contemporary digital markets. ■

MITJA STEFANCIC

Independent Researcher

Appreciation





PROFESSOR MARTIN BULMER, 1943-2026

JOHN SOLOMOS AND AMANDA EASTELL-BLEAKLEY
WRITE ABOUT THEIR COLLEAGUE, MARTIN BULMER

Martin Bulmer was born on 25 August 1943 and died on 6 March 2026. His death followed a long illness that began in 2020. During that period, he was cared for and supported by his wife, Joan Bulmer, and his family.

Martin was the child of Sir Charles Trevelyan and Edith Bulmer, and he grew up in Northumberland in the north-east of England. Having been educated at Ackworth, the co-educational Quaker boarding school, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, but found the history syllabus too narrow and traditional, so he did not complete his studies.

After Cambridge, he moved to the London School of Economics to study social science, marking the beginning of his academic career. He saw himself as a sociologist, but from the outset he had a strong interest in social research methods, the history of sociology, and the use of social research to shape social and public policies.

Martin's academic career spanned four universities. First, at Durham University, he researched the social consequences of the dramatic decline in coal mining and lectured in the Department of Sociology; then the London School of Economics, where he worked as a sociologist in the Department of Social Science and Administration from the 1970s to the early 1990s. In 1993, Martin took

up his first Chair in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton, and in 1995 he moved to the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey, where he remained until his retirement. He was deeply involved in the workings of all four universities and made significant contributions to research, teaching and administration.

Martin had a strong commitment to the practice of social research generally and to sociology in particular, and he was particularly interested in the integration of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he was instrumental in writing and editing a wide range of books on the history and practice of social research methods. This came at a crucial time in the development of sociology in Britain, and he did much to foster a better understanding of the role of research methods in both teaching and research.

Martin's scholarly and research interests were wide-ranging, encompassing the history of sociology and social research methods, the impact of social research on public policy and society, and the study of racial and ethnic relations. This breadth was reflected in his classic study of the Chicago School, which highlighted his interest in the history of sociology and the evolving role of qualitative and quantitative social research methods.

One of Martin's key contributions from the early 1990s onwards was his role as editor of the international journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. When he took on the role, the journal was a relatively small, quarterly publication. Under his leadership, it expanded rapidly, and from the late 1990s onwards it grew from four issues per volume to the current 16. He was instrumental in placing the journal at the heart of global debates about racial and ethnic relations and in broadening its coverage of emerging areas of scholarship and research. He actively sought to bring a diverse range of scholars onto the editorial board and to encourage the work of scholars in racial and ethnic studies from a range of perspectives.

It is also important to note that Martin was an active participant in institutions closely aligned with his research interests, particularly the Social Research Association, the British Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association and the International Sociological Association. He was one of the few British sociologists to play an active role in the American Sociological Association, and he was a regular participant in its annual meetings from the 1980s onwards. He also played an active role in developing resources central to social research, including the Question Bank and the ESRC Survey

Article continues >

Link Scheme. A key contribution Martin made throughout his career was the wide range of edited books and readers he helped to produce. He was widely read in the history of social research methods, sociology, social policy and social research on race and ethnicity.

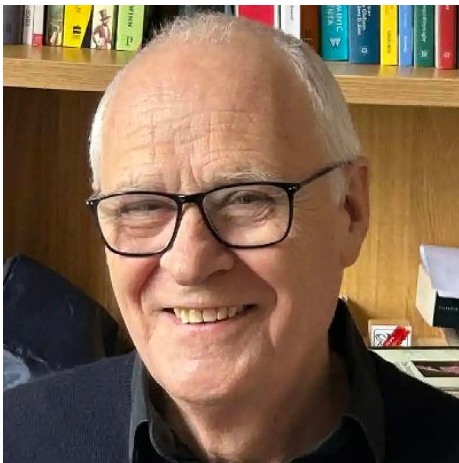
Martin had a deep love of books and scholarly research. Anyone who saw his offices at LSE, Southampton or Surrey would know they were crammed with books and papers, stacked on desks, on the floor and in nooks and crannies. His home in Thames Ditton was a veritable library of academic writing in sociology and social research, collected over decades.

Much as we shall miss Martin, it is important to say thank you for all that

he has given us as a colleague, friend and fellow human. His generosity and willingness to support both his colleagues and students were perhaps a product of his Quaker background, but they were also the outcome of his view that academic life was not about individuals but about the broader community of scholars, researchers and students. We shall miss Martin but we shall also treasure his contributions to the social sciences, social research and the study of race and ethnic relations.

John Solomos, Editor-in-Chief, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

Amanda Eastell-Bleakley, Managing Editor, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* ■



PROFESSOR ANDY ALASZEWSKI, 1949-2026

The medical sociologist, Andy Alaszewski, has died, aged 76. He was a prolific author and founded the *Health, Risk & Society* journal in 1998, developing it into an influential forum for empirical studies.

Professor Alaszewski was born in London, his parents being refugees from Nazi and Soviet-invaded Poland. He studied social anthropology at the University of Cambridge and in 1976 was appointed lecturer at the University of Hull, where he taught health policy. He founded MBA programmes in health and social services and was appointed to a professorship in 1992.

From 2001 he was Professor of Health Studies at the University of Kent and Director of its Centre for Health Services Studies, advising the UK Research Councils on priorities of risk and risk governance.

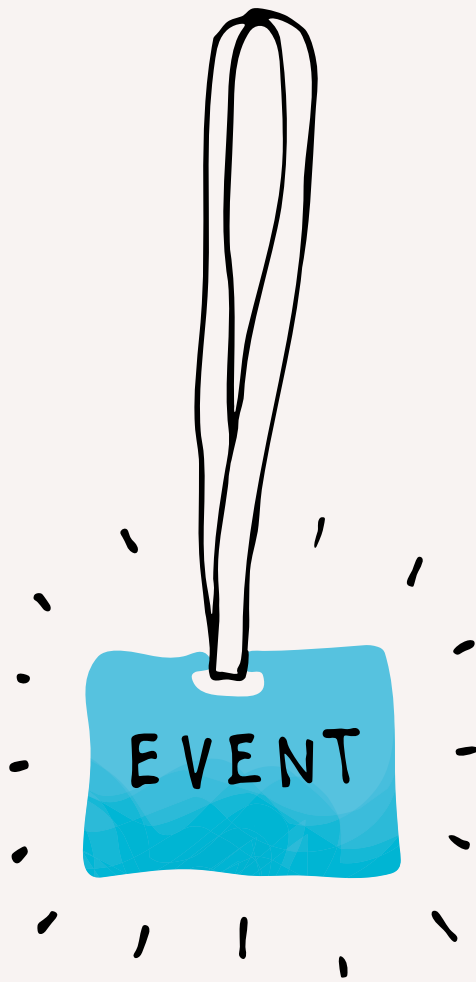
In 2008, he joined the government's scientific advisory committee on pandemic influenza and later published two books, *Covid-19 and Risk: Policy Making in a Global Pandemic* (2021), and *Managing Risk During the Covid-19 Pandemic* (2023).

Illness led to his retirement in 2010 from the University of Kent, after which he completed an archaeology degree there. His 12th book, *Listening to Stroke Survivors: Life after Stroke*, is due to be published later this year.

His commitment to social justice was evident in his support for the city's food bank and anti-racism demonstrations. He and his family hosted Ukrainian refugees at their home in Canterbury after the Russian invasion.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, four children and nine grandchildren.

Events



EVENT LISTINGS

As at the end July 2026 – for a complete and up to date list, see: <https://www.britsoc.co.uk/events/key-bsa-events-list>

Engaging the Public: Translating Sociological Research involving Children and Young People into Societal Impact

Postgraduate Regional Event

25 August

University of Edinburgh

Making the most of MedSoc 2026

PGR/ECR and Ordinary Committee Members

2 September

Online

Making the Most of the WES Conference

WES

3 September

Online

Medical Sociology Conference 2026

MedSoc

8-10 September

Northumbria University

Work and Employment in the Great Reshuffle: Work, Employment and Society Conference 2026

WES

9-11 September

University of Bath

When Research Goes Wrong: Failures, Friction and What We Learn

Mid-Career Forum

16 September

Online

Early Career Workshop on the Sociology of Work and Wellbeing

Early Career Regional Event

18 September

University of Oxford

Theorising from Lived Experience: An Interdisciplinary Workshop for Early Career Researchers

Theory Study Group Event

24 September

University of Birmingham

How to Apply for a Job in HE

BSA Members-only

30 September

Online

The Aesthetic and Culture in the Arts

Arts Postgraduate Research Symposium

7 October

University of Edinburgh

Rethinking Educational Inequality: Class, Race, and Gender through Bourdieu

Bourdieu Study Group Annual Conference

9-11 June, 2027

Manchester Metropolitan University



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