

Society Matters



The Newspaper for all Social Sciences Students and Staff at the Open University

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Tilting the balance away from catastrophe

Lord David Puttnam, the Open University's new Chancellor, outlines the challenge ahead for the University in the 21st century

I feel an enormous sense of pride in my new role as the fifth Chancellor of this unique institution. This is not only the University that most closely equates to my own, rather bumpy, academic journey – it is also the repository of the dreams of hundreds of thousands like me, who thought that the chance of higher education had, for whatever reason, passed them by.

In all the careers I've had, in every job I've ever done, all the roads lead back to education. I think the OU has a massive contribution to make to the whole area of what we have come to call 'widening participation', which is why I was so delighted to take up this position.

Although I have no experience of the day-to-day management of an educational institution, I do know a thing or two about turning dreams, or aspirations, into tangible reality. That's what drives me, in the same way as it has always driven students who have committed themselves to the OU and its courses.

I also know that if the UK is to be a sustainable, fulfilled and prosperous society in the 21st century with all that that implies, there is not the slightest room for any let up in our efforts to deliver a world-class educational opportunity for every man, woman and child in this country, an educational goal that has inspired the vision of the OU since its inception.

More than ever, we need people who understand how to deal with the complexity of the challenges that arise in a world in which we are all increasingly interdependent. That's why lifelong learning, and the opportunity to engage with it, must be at the heart of any worthwhile vision of education.

I also passionately believe that this institution needs to draw on the opportunities presented by digital technologies to transform the delivery of learning.

Designed primarily for business or for entertainment, these technologies have been successfully adapted to help people overcome isolation and create communities of common interest, in ways that simply weren't possible in the old analogue world.

Such technologies have allowed us to store, share and search knowledge in ways that librarians of the past would have only dreamed of. And they have enabled us to create worlds of delight, pleasure and excitement that hundreds of millions of people around the world immerse themselves in daily.

Imagine what we could achieve if we turn the collective talents that developed these imaginative, immersive and engaging resources to solving real human problems, to creating

new social interactions and practices that meet the complex needs of learners.

I believe the OU, largely because of its origins, and the way in which it has used mass communication to deliver learning in the past, is in a unique position to act as a leader and advocate of change in the relationship between digital technologies and learning. Let's take just one example.

The OU's Digital Education Enhancement Project (DEEP) shows exactly how much can be achieved by technologists and educators working with local communities. Based in Sub-



Lord Puttnam pictured at his installation as Chancellor at the Barbican Centre, London, April 2007

Lord Puttnam of Queensgate was installed as the new Chancellor of the Open University in late April 2007. He is the son of an Army Film Unit cameraman. Having left school at 16 with 'limited' academic qualifications he enjoyed an early and not unsuccessful career in advertising before entering the film industry. During the next 30 years he produced and marketed a great number of influential British films, including *That'll Be the Day* (1973), *Stardust* (1974), *The Duellists* (1976), *Midnight Express* (1978), *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Local Hero* (1983), *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *The Mission* (1986). He was awarded a CBE in 1982, knighted in 1995 and made a life peer in 1997. He is a trustee of the think tank of the Institute for Public Policy Research. In February 2006 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from BAFTA. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and sits on the Labour benches in the House of Lords.

Saharan Africa, the project has challenged the idea that the first thing rural communities require is books, and that only when they have some sort of 'library' should they be allowed to access other resources!

Instead, the OU team has demonstrated the huge impact on teaching, learning and educational attainment, when teachers and families in these communities get to design and commission the resources *they* want to meet their needs.

Small, simple technologies and new teaching methods placed at the service of the teacher and meeting the needs of the child have been developed – not just kit, but whole new ways of working, teaching and learning. In fact, in many cases the schools have leapfrogged the traditional development phases, and have found they were able to compete more effectively in the world around them.

Such initiatives also underline the fact that education is fundamental to any serious concept of development, be it poverty reduction, improving the lives of women, infant mortality, or child exploitation.

I'm hugely looking forward to helping the OU tackle some of these big challenges in the next few years. One of the things I find most exciting is that, unlike conventional universities where people enter at the age of 18 or 19 from, for the most part, middle-class families, at the OU every successful graduate carries with them their own unique story.

Each has a tale to tell of what they went through, how they had to organize, or even compromise, their work, their family life, their children. The challenge for me is to become a credible and successful advocate for the role and purpose of the OU.

Everything I've learned through my work for the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), and in various spheres of domestic government has only reinforced my view that, in the words of H.G. Wells, the future really is becoming 'more and more a race between education and catastrophe'. Personally, not finding the idea of catastrophe all that attractive, I've thrown in my lot with education!

Knowledge and understanding are the twin pillars upon which any sustainable future for this planet will be built. This great institution has an important role to play in tilting the balance away from the catastrophe we sometimes seem intent on inflicting upon ourselves. As Chancellor, I am looking forward to playing my own part in tackling that enormous task.

Gleneagles aid promises broken by G8 nations

The pledge by G8 nations at Gleneagles in 2005 to double aid to the poorest countries of the world and thus make poverty history by 2010 is already significantly off track. Aid to Africa is already half of what is needed and Oxfam, in a hard-hitting report published in June 2007, claims that if present trends continue, the G8 nations' target will fall short by a staggering \$30 billion. Last year the G8 nations spent ten times more on military expenditure than they did on aid.

Despite promises, global aid actually fell in 2006 for the first time in ten years. The UK is doing best of all, the charity reported, and will fall short of its target of \$14.9 billion by only \$1.6 billion. The UK's aid budget is currently three times what it was in 1997.

Italy is the worst performing G8 nation. Oxfam estimates it will deliver an \$8.1 billion shortfall on a pledge of \$9.5 billion. The Italians spend more on ice cream in a year than they do on aid, and last year the government slashed its aid budget by 30 per cent.

Oxfam produced some striking comparisons. Britons spend twice as much on champagne and wine than their government does on aid. German women alone spend more on shoes than their government spends on aid; the French spend more on perfume. In the USA the aid budget in 2006 was less than half the annual profit of the ExxonMobil oil company.

Oxfam calculate that it would cost the British consumer less than what UK consumers spend on celebrity magazines each year to transform the lives of people in the poorest countries. The USA could make a massive difference by spending as much on aid each year as its population spends on nail varnish, while for Germans an effective aid budget would cost only one half of what Germans spend each year on pet food.

In total, the richest countries need to spend only \$1 dollar extra a year per citizen in order to achieve the pledge made at Gleneagles of raising aid from \$25 billion to \$50 billion each year by 2010.

Web links at: www.oxfam.org.uk and www.makepovertyhistory.org



A demonstration in Edinburgh before the G8 Summit of world leaders at Gleneagles

Creating the future

Dot Miell, Dean of Social Sciences, sees challenging times ahead for the Faculty

My title comes from the planned theme for our Faculty conference to be held in Nottingham at the beginning of October, 2007. The conference will allow all members of staff in the Faculty (including associate lecturer and student representation) to ask searching questions about the future of society. We will be taking some time out together to consider what this holds not only for our research and teaching, but also for the Social Sciences more generally.

What are the key concerns of society as we move further into the twenty-first century, and how can we as an academic community both respond to and indeed influence the key debates that are to be had? How should we be preparing ourselves to set the agenda for relevant teaching and research in our existing areas of expertise? What new areas should we be exploring and developing? These and other questions will be occupying us in October and I look forward to reflecting on our discussions in the next issue of *Society Matters*.

Last year I talked about a major challenge that the Faculty faced in replacing the hugely successful foundation course DD100 *An Introduction to the Social Sciences*. A new course team was formed from all departments across the Faculty.

Editorial

The first edition of *Society Matters* was published as Tony Blair's opening year in office came to a close. Now, nine years on, it survives and Tony Blair has gone amid bitter recriminations concerning legacy, cash for honours and the war in Iraq.

Welcome to our tenth issue. We have come a long way from our humble two-colour, 12-page issue in 1998. We have tried to create a space where students and staff can debate freely the key issues of the day and how the social sciences can get to grips with them. We have tried to inform and stimulate imaginations and to demonstrate the relevance of social science to all we do in our lives, especially in those areas over which we have little or no control.

We have not ignored the vital international agendas – 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Middle East, Chechnya, the arms trade, migration, rapid urban population growth, HIV/Aids, child poverty, water scarcity, climate change and global warming – each has been investigated in our pages.

Following many discussions and debates over the intervening months, the team has made excellent progress towards mapping out what the replacement course will look like, what topics it will cover and what pedagogical model it will adopt. We now have an outline for a course that promises to attract and excite students interested in current issues in the Social Sciences and also, importantly, to equip them for future study in one or more of the discipline/interdisciplinary areas offered at Levels 2 and 3. The new foundation course will be presented for the first time in October 2009, and as the production develops, more news about it will be available to members of the Faculty, notably in the next edition of *Society Matters*.

Other new course developments have also been progressing over the last year and I'd like to take this opportunity to write about one of them here. We have been thinking of ways of providing some topical, shorter courses to complement the existing Social Sciences programme (for continuing students) as well as to encourage new students to 'try out' study at Higher Education level in the Social Sciences. Given the success of short course suites in the Science and Arts

Faculties we decided to explore the possibility of a similar approach and are now developing five such courses for first presentation during 2008.

These exciting new offerings will be 15 – point courses at Levels 1 and 2. The first to come on stream will be a Level 2 course *Applying Psychology*. Other proposals are currently being firmed up. New areas of study could include *Sport, Culture and Society* (at Level 1), and *Politics, Media and the War* (Level 2). Several of these courses are not only based on some very creative research synergies in the Faculty, but also link to other teaching offerings both within the Faculty and beyond and so we are expecting them to be a very successful experiment! More details on these new short courses will be available soon, and will feature in your next issue of *Society Matters*.

Altogether, this promises to be an exciting and challenging time for Social Sciences and one where we are very focused on the future. I look forward to reporting on some of the outcomes of our current thinking and the decisions from our autumn conference next year.

We have explored UK issues: the July 7th bombings, the rise of Islamophobia, the Stephen Lawrence legacy, gender and disability inequalities, the role of the media in everyday life, the future of welfare, and the way in which New Labour has turned increasingly to spin and deception. These are contentious and hotly contested areas of everyday life, but they are examples of the way in which *Society Matters* has risen to the challenges connecting us to our contemporary world.

Neither have we shirked from key issues that affect the future of our Faculty. Ten editions of *Society Matters* illustrate how we have changed as a Faculty. They chart important shifts in curriculum and pedagogy, and testify to the way in which research too has tried to hit the ground running.

We have campaigned for greater equality across the University and, through our cartoonists, we have tried to see

the funny side of life. Humour is important, as this issue of *Society Matters* shows. It enables us, quite often, to see the truth around us rather than the fog of obfuscation. We have also tried to make sure that student voices are heard too.

In terms of our legacy, *Society Matters* has tried to blaze a trail that triggers imaginations and enlightens, that challenges our mind-sets, that informs, and that stimulates us to think 'beyond the box'. What is vital is the explanatory power not of one discipline in the social sciences, but of all of them together.

We hope, however modestly, we have made a difference to your learning and teaching experience with the University. No other Faculty within the University has a *Society Matters*. What began as an experiment has now become an enduring fixture in the University publishing landscape. We hope to be here in another ten years.

Richard Skellington, June 2007

Women's inequality worldwide is increasing

The plight of women worldwide has been highlighted during the last year by a series of reports from British Government development agencies and human rights groups. Among the disturbing findings are:

- Seventy per cent of the world's 1 billion poorest inhabitants are women
- Women produce half the world's food but own less than 2 per cent of the world's land
- Over two-thirds of the world's 800 million illiterate adults are women, since girls, in many parts of the world, are not seen as worth the investment
- Domestic violence, where women are predominantly the victims, kills and injures more people in the developing world than war, traffic accidents or cancer
- Each year, two million girls aged from 5 to 16 years join the commercial sex market
- A third of the world's women are homeless or live in inadequate housing
- Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, but earn only a tenth of the world's income



A woman and her only cow, near Dessie, South Wollo region, Ethiopia, August 2006

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A toolkit for critical multiculturalism

David Herbert, Production Chair of AD252 *Islam in the West: the Politics of Co-existence*, explains how his new course will enable us all to understand Muslim communities better post 9/11

Do you want to think through issues raised by the media spotlight on Islam? Are you curious to get behind media images of Islam to find out what the religion really means to Muslims in the West? Want to know why the French have so many problems with the *hijab* (headscarf)? Are you interested in arguments about whether Islam is compatible with democracy? Or do you work with a multi-faith public? If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then *Islam in the West: the Politics of Co-existence* may be the course for you.

It's designed to help you think critically through the issues raised by current controversies surrounding the Muslim presence in the West, to get a sense of the range of opinion and diversity of groups represented amongst Western Muslims, and of the surprisingly different ways in which Western societies in Europe and America have responded to the Muslim presence. I like to think of it as a toolkit containing the elements needed to develop a kind of critical multicultural awareness post 9/11; while it focuses on Islam, the presence of other groups and the impact that the focus on Islam has had on them is not forgotten.

When I was a student in the late 1980s and the controversy over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* broke out, it's the kind of course I would have liked to have been able to do then – because you need tools from more than one subject area to get a handle on the issues: some religious studies, some sociology, a little history, politics and philosophy. Of course, the situation has moved on since then – but in some ways the experience of puzzlement at that controversy, and the limits of any one perspective to make sense of it, is my inspiration for putting together this kind of an interdisciplinary course.

It's designed for the 'interested layperson' – so I've not

assumed any particular background knowledge, and basic information is provided on Muslim traditions, beliefs and history, backed up by access to the Oxford Reference Online collection via the library website, if there's something you want to follow up in more depth. AD252 is an electronically taught course and we've been able to make good use of the library's e-resources.

Then there are elements that I think are really important for understanding how Islam is perceived and the way public debate tends to get framed: critical work on media presentations of Islam and how audiences read those images and stories, material on ideas of secularism and how Western societies treat public religion, and insider (Muslim) and outsider (philosophy and social science) perspectives on the whole range of issues raised: education (separate schools?); where does Muslim radicalism come from? Sufis and Muslim spirituality; who represents British Islam? What impact has 9/11 had on Muslims in America?

We've used two course texts (provided in the course pack) – one by Jocelyne Cesari, an anthropologist who has studied Muslims in Europe and America, and the other by Tariq Ramadan, a leading Muslim intellectual and reformer. One of the pleasures of making the course was the opportunity to talk to Muslim leaders and commentators in the UK, continental Europe and America about how they see the issues, and these interviews have been distilled into two audio CDs which are an integral part of the course. The tuition will be mostly on-line – the monthly tutor conferences should produce some lively debate – but there are also a couple of one-to-one phone chats with your tutor built into the course, to help prepare for the first assignment and end of course assessment – an essay which takes the place of an exam.

We think AD252 will be relevant to lots of people who



The shrine of Pir Muhammad Abdul Wahab Siddiqi in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, the first Sufi place of pilgrimage in Britain

work with the public and will help them to understand Muslim communities better – but it also raises important issues facing all of us, and while it won't tell you what to think, it will give you some tools to think with.

Studying science in a social context

If everything is social, even the production of knowledge itself, how do other Faculties teach the context of the core curriculum? Many students still study for an Open Degree and choose a rich variety of courses as they progress through the University. Pat Murphy, Associate Dean in the Science Faculty, shows how one new course he chairs successfully connected with its social reality

As a new course, S250 *Science in Context* was included in the Institute of Educational Technology's 2006 End of Course Survey. One student wrote, 'often science is taught and discussed in a scientific "bubble" away from connection with real life. This course bridged the gap ... Some students seemed to prefer parrot-style learning without the social reality aspect, but I really enjoyed this perspective in the course.' Another found the link between the 'hard science' and social context 'very thought provoking'. On the other hand, two other students opined 'there was too much waffle' and that 'it was all a bit woolly for me – I prefer science rather than science in a social science context.'

S250 replaced the Faculty of Science's first 'science issues' course – S280 *Science Matters* – after the latter had run for 13 years (with minimal updating except via offprints associated with assessment). I recall being present at a staff development meeting in the early 1990s when a long-standing Associate Lecturer carefully explained to members of the Course Team that there was a subtle play on words in the title of the new course, which might have escaped their attention! Of course, since then other publications have adopted titles that are not that dissimilar.

S280 was a very wide-ranging course that covered topics as varied as BSE (just a poorly understood cattle disease in those days before vCJD had been identified), nuclear power (before this topic went 'off the boil' somewhat), climate change (at a time when it didn't appear in quite so many OU courses) and genetic engineering (long before the human genome had been sequenced).

While S250 covers several of the same topics as its predecessor, it also deals with a few entirely new ones. Although

the BSE/vCJD story is now quite mature, it does reveal quite a lot about the relationship between science and wider society – and, incidentally, continues to spring some biological surprises.

We know that the Earth has been struck by asteroids and comets in the past with devastating effects. How should society respond to the discovery of such a body on course for a collision with Earth in (say) a couple of decades?

The drilling of deep tube wells in West Bengal and Bangladesh has inadvertently exposed tens of millions of people to entirely natural arsenic contamination of their drinking water, leading to skin cancers and other serious ailments. How could this problem have been overlooked for so long and what is to be done about it?

Although plants are undoubtedly a source of many valuable medicines, the internet has allowed the promulgation to the unwary public of much 'pseudoscience' in relation to plant-based treatments.

Climate change and the genetic manipulation of organisms are two fields that have continued to develop since S280 was written and couldn't possibly be ignored in S250. Finally, we suspect that the factor that convinced many students to study the course is that it culminates in a book on nanotechnology.

So, S250 includes a diverse range of interesting scientific topics, all of which have a societal dimension. However, the Course Team knew that many students taking the course would previously have concentrated on pure science. How could we help them analyse science's broader societal context reasonably systematically?

After considerable discussion, we opted to complement the seven 'topics' with four 'themes' (or CRED for short): (science) communication, risk, ethical issues (not ethics per se) and



decision making. Across the course as a whole, we aimed for a balance of 80 per cent 'science' and 20 per cent 'themes'. In order to help students 'get their eye in' for the themes, the letters C, R, E and D – in apparently handwritten form – appear in the margins of the first four books adjacent to passages considered to be particularly relevant to the themes. Furthermore, a different one of these marginal symbols is omitted from much of each of the first four books, with students being invited to annotate the books for themselves as an activity. Thus, in studying the BSE/vCJD book, a student might decide that feeding animal remains to cattle, experimenting on animal 'models' even to investigate serious diseases and the decision whether or not to inform someone that they may have become infected with a disease, the symptoms of which may not appear for decades and for which there is currently no cure, are ethical issues that merit E being written in the margin alongside.

As the IET Survey shows, students varied in their enthusiasm for the 'in context' aspects of S250. We know that comparatively few S250 students come from primarily social science backgrounds. If you happen to be one, I would really like to hear what you think of the course and how you got on with the 'science' aspects.

Launch of *You and Your Money* a great success

Ed Balls, Economic Secretary to the Treasury – and famously Gordon Brown's close adviser – launched the innovative new Faculty course, DB123 *You and Your Money: Personal Finance in Context* at the Open University in London.

He warmly endorsed the University's decision to go ahead with the course and argued that it made an important contribution to the development of 'financial capability'. Both the Treasury and the Financial Service Authority have put improving the financial capability of UK citizens very high on their list of objectives.

The launch was also attended by many journalists, senior staff from the financial services industry, as well as colleagues from educational organizations, such as the Basic Skills Agency, and voluntary organizations, like Age Concern. Also present was the BBC Economics Editor, Evan Davis, a recent Honorary Graduate of the Open University.

At the launch, the Dean of Social Sciences, Dot Miell, described

the work of the Open University, whilst Course Team Chair Ian Fribbance outlined the main features and themes of the DB123 course and showcased the course materials. Ian also surprised the guests with a fun quiz of their own financial knowledge. In a result that seemed to bear out many survey findings about the inadequate levels of financial capability in the UK, only one of the guests was able to get all five questions correct. Reassuringly, this was the Open University's Finance Director!

The launch provoked a flurry of media interest, and DB123 was featured in over 70 newspapers, magazines and websites globally. In the UK, coverage ranged from the *Financial Times* to *The Sun* (which reported a 'Course for the Cash Confused') and the *Daily Mirror*, which repeated Ian's quiz with the advice that anyone getting three or less correct answers should sign up for the course! Ian was also interviewed on over 20 radio stations in the same week.

The results were incredibly successful and DB123 recruited over 1,400 students – over three times its original target. The coverage also provoked many enquiries from external organizations who wanted to become involved with the course in some way, or help to showcase it for the wider population. Course recruitment proved so successful that the Faculty was asked to run the course again in May 2007 and November 2007.

The Faculty's Economics Department is looking into the possible expansion and further development of personal finance as a curriculum area in our course offerings.



Ed Balls at the launch

Desmond Tutu: defusing the arms trade

The world could eradicate poverty in a few generations were only a fraction of the expenditure on the war business to be spent on peace. No longer should the peace business be undermined by the arms business

For many years, I've been involved in the peace business, doing what I can to help people overcome their differences. In doing so, I've also learnt a lot about the business of war – the arms trade. In my opinion it is the modern slave trade. It is an industry out of control; every day more than 1,000 people are killed by conventional weapons. The vast majority of those people are innocent men, women and children.

There have been international treaties to control the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons for decades. Yet, despite the mounting death toll, there is still no treaty governing sales of all conventional weapons, from handguns to attack helicopters. As a result, weapons fall into the wrong hands all too easily, fuelling human rights abuses, prolonging wars and digging countries deeper into poverty.

This is allowed to continue because of the complicity of governments, especially rich countries' governments, which turn a blind eye to the appalling human suffering associated with the proliferation of weapons.

Every year, small arms alone kill more people than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki put together. Many more people are injured, terrorized or driven from their homes by armed violence. Even as you read this, one of these human tragedies is unfolding somewhere on the planet.

Take the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, where armed violence recently flared up again; millions have died here during almost a decade of conflict. Despite a UN arms embargo against armed groups in the country, weapons have continued to flood in from all over the world.

Arms found during weapons' collections include those made in Germany, France, Israel, the USA and Russia. The only common denominator is that nearly all these weapons were manufactured outside Africa.

Five rich countries manufacture the vast majority of the world's weapons. In 2005, Russia, the USA, France, Germany and the UK accounted for an estimated 82 per cent of the global arms market. In contrast, the amount rich countries spend on fighting HIV/Aids every year represents just 18 days' global spending on arms.

In October 2006, during a meeting of the UN's Disarmament and Security Committee, 139 governments voted in favour of a resolution to start work towards an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The vote was confirmed in the UN's General Assembly. By the summer of 2007, the number of states supporting the ATT will have increased to 153.

In addition to the deaths, injuries and rapes perpetrated with these weapons, the cost of conflict goes deeper still, destroying health and education systems.

For example, in northern Uganda, which has been devastated by 20 years of armed conflict, it has been estimated that 250,000 children do not attend school. The war in northern Uganda, which may be finally coming to an end, has been fuelled by supplies of foreign-made weapons. And, as with so many wars, the heaviest toll has been on the region's children. Children under five are always the most vulnerable to disease, and in a war zone adequate medical care is often not available.

The world could eradicate poverty in a few generations were only a fraction of the expenditure on the war business to be spent on peace. An average of \$22 billion is spent on arms by countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa every year, according to estimates for the US Congress. This sum would have enabled those countries to put every child in school and to reduce child mortality by two-thirds by 2015, fulfilling two of the Millennium Development Goals.

In October 2006, governments will vote on a resolution at the UN General Assembly to start working towards an Arms Trade Treaty. That Treaty would be based on a simple principle: no weapons for violations of international law. In

But while the profits flow back to the developed world, the effects of the arms trade are predominantly felt in developing countries. More than two-thirds of the value of all arms is sold to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.



www.controlarms.org

A child soldier from the JEM rebel movement, near Durum, Darfur region, Sudan

other words, a ban on selling weapons if there is a clear risk they will be used to abuse human rights or fuel conflict. The UN resolution has been put forward by the governments of Australia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya, and the UK. These governments believe the idea of an Arms Trade Treaty is one whose time has come.

I agree. We must end impunity for governments who authorize the supply of weapons when they know there's a great danger those weapons will be used for gross human rights abuses. Great strides are being made towards ending impunity for war criminals. It cannot be acceptable that their arms suppliers continue to escape punishment. No longer should the peace business be undermined by the arms business. I call on all governments to put the control of the international arms trade at the top of their agenda.

The civilian toll from cluster bombs

According to Handicap International, 98 per cent of cluster bomb victims during the last thirty years have been civilians, a third of them children. Their report, published in November 2006 and based on investigations into 24 countries and regions affected by war and armed conflict since 1976, revealed that 11,044 people have been killed or maimed by cluster bombs, a weapon still being used by the USA and the UK. The pressure group warned that this total of casualties was likely to be below the real figure because of under reporting of incidents in Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam. Typically, a cluster bomb, dropped from an aircraft, contains 6000 bomblets that scatter and explode over a large area on impact. The UN estimates that as

many as 80 per cent of the bomblets fail to explode immediately. Many victims, especially children, are killed in fields and groves as they play. In the Lebanon war of 2006, the UN estimate that over 100,000 bomblets failed to explode. It is estimated that every day in Lebanon three casualties from cluster bombs are reported.

In March 2007, the British Government announced it was to abandon the use of 'dumb' cluster bombs in order to reduce the risk of civilian casualties. The Defence Minister, Des Browne, explained, 'It is our duty to make sure our forces have the equipment they need to do the job we ask of them. At the same time, we should strive to reduce civilian casualties to the minimum.'



War: the facts 2007

- The world spends over \$2 billion every day on arms
- Every day over 500 people, mostly civilians, are killed in armed conflicts across the globe
- Since 1945 there have been 250 major wars
- In 2006, at least 35 nations were involved in armed conflicts
- The last year when there was no war of significance anywhere on the planet was 1816
- In 2006, over 530,000 military service personnel were deployed around the world; 70 per cent of them were American
- The USA spent over \$450 billion on defence in 2006

The cost of war puts international aid in the shade

The United Nations' millennium goals and the aid commitments agreed at Gleneagles in 2005 are severely impaired every time there is a war in the developing world, according to a House of Commons international development committee report published in October 2006. The report concluded that 'preventing and ending conflicts will do more to create a climate for poverty reduction than any amount of costly aid programmes.'

It was revealed that the cost of a single war was equal to two-thirds of the total global aid budget. The report estimated the average cost of a civil war for a low-income country at £29 billion, against a total global aid budget in 2004 of £42 billion. It urged British companies not to participate in trading in diamonds and oil from war zones, and desist from fuelling conflicts through arm sales.

9/11 and the 'War On Terror': creating official reality



Andrew Johnson, a tutor on T224 Computers and Processors and a DSA Assessor for the University's Access Centre, explores the official story about 9/11, and shows just how important it is to question what it is we are being told

In progressing through academic studies and disciplines, one of the key activities is the development of critical thinking. In order to develop our understanding of a subject, we should question what we are being told and, sometimes, how the information is being presented. Only when we can answer questions we have about a subject to our satisfaction can we say that we understand that subject. However, perhaps we should pause and consider, can we usefully apply similar critical thinking skills outside our area of study?

For example, when considering daily news reports, how often do we stop and think, 'How accurate is this information? What is the source?' or 'How has this or that conclusion been drawn?' 'Is the information complete?' There are two expressions that are pertinent to the thrust of what I am saying, 'Don't believe what you read in the papers!' and 'Never believe anything until it's been officially denied.' The latter aphorism is attributed variously to Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay, the writers of *Yes Minister*, Benjamin Disraeli, Otto Bismarck, or Claude Cockburn.

In recent years I have found I have to apply critical thinking much more widely to news reports, following a realization I had, some time in 2004, that the official story of the attacks on 9/11 could not be true. A video I watched clearly showed how the World Trade Centre Towers in New York could not have been destroyed solely as a result of jet impacts and burning jet fuel. It seems strange to some people that anyone should question any of the essential elements of the official story of 9/11, which is now widely recognized as the trigger for the 'War on Terror' – a basis for many significant elements of foreign policy, and even domestic laws.

Once it was highlighted to me in the video (called *9/11 – The Great Illusion*, made by George Humphrey), I realized that there is absolutely no way that either of those towers could have been destroyed by about 60,000 gallons of kerosene. Why? Kerosene burns at about 820°C under optimum conditions. The WTC towers collapsed in 8.1 and 10 seconds, respectively – this is (essentially) at a rate of free fall, i.e. they fell with no resistance at all. For this to have happened, all 283 steel beams, which ran (in welded sections) from the top to the bottom of the building, would have to melt through or snap very suddenly.

Unfortunately, for proponents of the official story, the melting point of steel is about 1480°C so no kerosene or office-flotsam-and-jetsam-based fire could have caused the steel to either melt or weaken to the point of collapse. This conclusion is borne out by the result of the 24-hour-long fire at the Windsor Tower in Madrid (on 12 February 2005). This was also a steel-framed building and, though badly damaged, it did not collapse to the ground. Neither did the Empire State Building collapse in 1945, when it was hit by a B25 Bomber.

Many people do not seem to be aware that three large, steel-framed buildings were completely destroyed on 11 September 2001 – WTCs 1 and 2 and WTC Building 7 (sometimes called the Salomon Brothers' Building). At 5:20 pm, the building collapsed at virtual free-fall rate, in 6.6 seconds, into its own footprint – no plane had hit this building, only a small amount of debris.

It has now come to light that BBC World reported that WTC 7 had collapsed about 20 minutes before it actually had! This revelation has made 9/11 researchers question how the BBC was able to see into the future.

These facts seem, to me, to represent significant omissions from the story reported on news bulletins and in subsequent documentaries. When news reports consider 9/11, there has been little analysis of what actually happened. The 'run up' to 9/11 has been the subject of a significant BBC documentary series called *The Power of Nightmares*, first televised in 2004. This BAFTA award winner, made by Adam Curtis, exposes the real history of Al-Qaida and concludes that stories of this group's ability to commit acts of terrorism on a large scale have been grossly exaggerated, if not completely fabricated.

Other documentaries have analysed the events of 9/11, but all of them have either made questionable statements or omitted or 'glossed over' the facts. A BBC Horizon documentary, *The Fall of the World Trade Center* (7 March 2002), omitted to state that the three towers fell – at close to free-fall rates – but contained the statement, 'the aircraft was swallowed up by the building as it hit at 440 miles per hour. At that speed the force of the impact was massive.' The programme did not attempt to explain how the fuselage of the plane – essentially a weak hollow tube made of light materials – could crash through several steel

girders, penetrating quite deeply into the building.

Similar omissions were apparent in a Channel 4 documentary, *The 9-11 Conspiracies* (9 September 2004), and in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (shown on Channel 4 on 27 January 2005). A brief discussion of the free fall of the towers was included in a 14-minute segment on *The Heaven and Earth Show* (10 September 2006) – a Sunday morning religious programme, not a news or news analysis programme.

A BBC documentary, *9/11 – Conspiracy Files* (18 February 2007), mentioned that steel loses half its structural strength at 600°C. However, the black smoke from the fires in the towers indicates an oxygen-starved fire, which in most places did not even reach 600°C. Also, the buildings were over-engineered and would have remained standing even if the steel had lost half of its structural strength.

So, what did official bodies say about 9/11?

The Kean Commission Report into 9/11, meant to be a 'full and complete accounting of the events of 9/11', has some extremely significant omissions. For example, it does not contain a discussion or analysis of the collapse of WTC 7. Retired Theology Professor, David Ray Griffin, has described this report as 'a 571 page lie'. Griffin is one of a small number of people, with significant academic credentials, who has looked into what really happened on 9/11. An author or editor of over 20 books on Religion and Theology, he stated in an *LA Times* article (28 August 2005), that he believed the official story at first, but when he had looked at a detailed timeline of events he became suspicious. In 2004, following extensive research, he published a book called *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11*. In this book, he examines the 9/11 attacks in the context of a document called *Rebuilding America's Defences*. This document, which was published by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC – 2000), states that PNAC is a project 'to promote American global leadership' and it later refers to the threat of a 'surprise' attack on America 'like a New Pearl Harbour', which could then afford an opportunity to 'transform' America's defences.

Another body in the USA, NIST – the National Institute of Standards and Technology – was tasked with analysing the cause of the destruction of WTC towers 1, 2 and 7. They have still not yet issued their final report for WTC 7. However, their report for WTCs 1 and 2 fails to answer how the 'pancake' collapse theory explains the evidence observed on the day – mainly the speed of collapse and the lack of any 'pancakes' in the WTC rubble (of which there is a distinct lack).

The terms of reference for the production of the final NIST WTC 7 report have now been the subject of a Legal Challenge by Professors Morgan Reynolds (Emeritus, Texas A&M University) and Judy Wood, Professor of Mechanical Engineering (formerly of Clemson University, North Carolina). Their challenge is made as a 'Request for Correction' and they charge that, as it is framed, the NIST study of the WTC 7 collapse will be fraudulent and deceptive.

All readers are encouraged to check my sources and to explore the evidence in the reports above. Do this and it may challenge many aspects of what you took to be true. It may make you ponder what former US Presidential Advisor, Karl Rove really meant when he said, 'We're an Empire now. We create our own reality.'

For further information, see:

9/11 Commission Report in Full
www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm

PNAC
www.newamericancentury.org/
NIST 9-11/WTC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
wtc.nist.gov/pubs/factsheets/faqs_8_2006.htm

Other sources
www.911scholars.org, www.911review.org

Guantánamo Bay: five years on

January 2007 marked the fifth anniversary of the first arrival of detainees from Afghanistan at the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay, the major US detention centre, but not the only one, established after the attacks of 9/11. Since 11 January 2002, over 770 'enemy combatants' from 45 nationalities, including children and the elderly, have arrived at the base. Many have been ill-treated. None have appeared in court. They have come not only from Afghanistan, but from Gambia, Egypt, Indonesia, Bosnia, Mauritius, Zambia, Thailand, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

- 520 detainees were defined by military panels as 'enemy combatants' without access to lawyers
- 0 of the detainees have been convicted of any offence
- 385 have been subsequently transferred to other countries, including the UK
- 17 out of 18 under 18 year olds have been held; 4 still remain
- 10 detainees were charged for trial by military tribunals, but in June 2007 the US Supreme Court declared that these tribunals violated US and international law
- 3 detainees committed suicide in June 2006
- 40 suicide attempts have been reported
- 200 hunger strikes have occurred
- 5 per cent of the detainees were captured by US forces
- 86 per cent were initially detained by Pakistan or Afghanistan Northern Alliance Forces; many allegedly were turned over to US custody for cash payments

In the early summer of 2007, over 400 detainees were still held at Guantánamo, effectively in six camps. In December 2006, 14 detainees were moved into the newly built high detention centre, Camp 6. On 11 January 2007, demonstrations were held in London, Belfast, Cardiff and Birmingham to mark the fifth anniversary.

In October 2006, President Bush introduced the Military Commissions Act, which effectively stripped US courts of jurisdiction to hear appeals from any foreign national held as an 'enemy combatant' in US custody.

Source: *Amnesty International; United Nations*



What has violence ever accomplished? What has it ever created? Whenever we tear at the fabric of a life which another man has painfully and clumsily woven for himself and his children, the whole nation is degraded.

Robert F. Kennedy, 1966

For a compelling account of Guantánamo Bay read *Guantánamo Bay and the secret prisons* by Clive Stafford-Smith, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007

The struggle continues

Rob Berkeley of the Runnymede Trust sets out the ongoing challenges for a race-equality agenda and says our segregated University system must be less resistant to change

Inspired by travels around the southern states of the USA during the civil rights movement, a young lawyer and an academic established *The Runnymede Trust* as a 5-year project to counter racist propaganda in the UK. Nearly 40 years later, Runnymede is still here. Yet the fight against racism is not the one that our founders Antony Lester and Jim Rose began fighting a generation ago. Racisms mutate, societies are dynamic, and hydra-like, injustices persist.

As our government enters a state of flux and the 'war on terror' extends across borders and into communities, it seems an apposite moment to think about what the next few years may hold in terms of the challenges we face in creating a successful multi-ethnic society. Here, I have picked out six areas to consider.

Hyper-diversity

Previous patterns of migration have occurred over longer periods, allowing for policy responses and appropriate public services to be developed over time. The ease of international travel, the immediacy of crises in certain parts of the world and the responses of entrepreneurial individuals in the light of ongoing global inequalities have made the speed at which patterns of migration can change much swifter. For Britain, the long-term strength of the economy and the primacy of the English language are assets, which also make it an attractive place to emigrate to.

Whereas policy on race equality has, in the past, been focused on white, black and Asian people, the realities of modern patterns of migration, diversity within these broad groupings, and the speed of change, has meant that these categories are inadequate. If we are to understand the identifications and heritages that people bring to our society, we must move beyond a notion of Britain as black and white to a much more diverse community.

This speed of change poses a challenge to the policymaker who recognizes that the country of heritage is an important factor in defining ethnic and cultural identities. For ease of classification, it has been the pattern, in the past, to draw up categorizations that included a broad number of countries. The UK Census operates with 16 categories, which become more stretched as they are forced to include a greater diversity of peoples and experiences. Such great diversity of experience within a category makes it difficult to generalize from and questions the usefulness of the category.

Over time, ethnic diversity has a more complex relationship to immigration. Those from black and minority ethnic communities are becoming more likely to have been born in the UK. In 1971, 60% of the black and minority ethnic population of the UK was born overseas. By 2001 only 20% of the African Caribbean, 30% of the African, and 50% of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities were born overseas.

The speed at which change can occur is dramatic and has repercussions for the political stability and social solidarity in an area. For example, in the 2006 local government elections, Barking saw a major increase in representation of the BNP, the largest far right party in the UK, making it the second largest party on the local council. Policy was slow to understand this change and opportunist racists were able to capitalize on distrust of newcomers and of difference by claiming that many were asylum seekers or receiving welfare support or taking public housing.

Increasingly, migration is not only to major urban conurbations in the UK but to smaller cities and rural locations (especially in the case of agricultural workers). This has spread debate about immigration and ethnic diversity away from London, Manchester and Birmingham, to Lincolnshire, Sunderland and Plymouth, areas that had previously been perceived as having relatively ethnically homogeneous communities.



A journalist holds an invitation to a dinner party at British National Party leader, Nick Griffin's home near Welshpool

Multiple identities

While people's ethnic backgrounds are often important to them, they are not the sum of anyone's experience or identity. The identifications with which we operate are shifting, mutable and dynamic. They are also based on a wide range of experiences and the ways in which groups are treated within our society. In terms of policy this becomes particularly salient where the communities with which we identify are marginalized – women, people from minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people with minority sexualities, or by age. These influences are not felt separately but combine to create a new experience, for example black women have a distinct experience based on their gender and race that is different to that of black men or of white women. The challenge for policy is to respond not to monolithic conceptions of race but to appreciate the diversity of experiences. The current policy confusion about people of mixed heritage serves to highlight the urgency of this challenge. The new Commission for Equality and Human Rights is well placed to deliver on this aspiration, though the challenges posed in understanding discrimination based on multiple identities should not be underestimated.

Segregation and integration

There are numerous reasons why communities may choose to live together – for mutual support, to enable cultural or faith groups to flourish, to preserve language, to gain access to familiar foods and traditional activities. Such ethnic communities include Chinatown in London and New York, the Banglatown of London, Harlem and Brixton. Such clustering becomes a problem when it leads to segregation.

The debate about how segregated our cities are in the UK continues to rage among statisticians and demographers. If people are unable to leave an area or feel constrained to remain in a place then we have due cause for worry. If people are less likely to interact with others from different ethnic backgrounds then the benefits of diversity are in danger of being lost as communities live parallel lives rather than working together to create a successful multi-ethnic society.

This is a problem for the higher education sector, where a clustering of choices and the educational disadvantage existing in the schooling system is leading to segregated universities. For example, Bristol has about 14,000 British undergraduates but only 15 declare themselves to be of Bangladeshi background, 20 of black Caribbean descent, and 45 of Pakistani origin. At London Metropolitan there are 1,575 students of black Caribbean heritage – more than in the whole of the Russell Group of elite universities. There are 53 institutions with less than 5% ethnic minority students. About 20 institutions have more than 40%. Some 50 institutions have fewer than five black Caribbean students. Half of the Russell Group has fewer than 30 black Caribbean students each. Meanwhile, of the 11 institutions where white students are in the minority, seven are post-1992 urban universities.

Creating a human rights culture

Many of the high-profile challenges to human rights in the UK have impacted on minority ethnic communities. This is not surprising since it is marginalized communities that often have the most to gain from a rights discourse – from the horrific murder of Victoria Climbié and the failure of social services to intervene on the basis of claimed 'cultural rights', to the decision by courts to overrule a school uniform in favour of allowing a young woman to wear a traditional Muslim jilboab, to the experiences of those interned in Guantánamo Bay after 9/11, or the introduction of ID cards. The challenge is to ensure that race relations become less about special treatment of particular groups and more a necessary part of upholding rights for all.

Intra/inter minority ethnic tensions

The main thrust of efforts to promote race equality and good race relations has been to ensure that people from the white majority ethnic communities and those from minority ethnic communities can understand each other so that potential tension between them is minimized.

However, in the light of the hyper-diversity, this approach may need to be re-thought. The likelihood is that good race relations will need to be established not just between Asian and white or black and white, but also between Asian and black. As seen in the outskirts of Birmingham in 2005, tensions can be raised between minority ethnic groups. This is also true of conflict that may be difficult to perceive from outside of minority ethnic communities, such as the overspill from communal violence between Muslims and Hindus in India to the streets of British towns.

War on multiculturalism

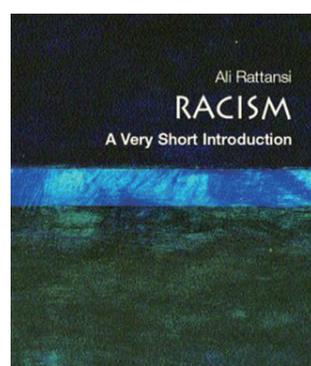
The bombings in London on 7 July 2005 reverberate still. The actions of the bombers and those who attempted to replicate their terrorist act two weeks later shocked the nation into recognizing that there were some people who, though born and raised in Britain, reject completely the British way of life. These people claimed to be declaring war on Britain from within and on behalf of an entire minority community.

For them, multiculturalism had failed and was not what they wanted to promote. It was a constraint because it allowed values that they did not share. Some commentators saw the bombings as evidence that multiculturalism had failed, so siding with the bombers, though for very different reasons.

Multiculturalism had long been under attack from the political right who had argued that assimilation was the only policy that would work, that allowing space for ethnic identities (other than the allegedly 'neutral' white British ethnicity) is unnecessary and indeed divisive. The race riots of the early and late 1980s were, in part, a response to this approach. Now, however multiculturalism has come under attack from the progressive left. The argument has been that multiculturalism challenges social solidarity and therefore reduces mutuality. This will discourage people from wanting to support people seen as too different.

This is a profound misunderstanding of what multiculturalist policies set out to do. In the report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, multiculturalism was defined as a balance between cohesion, equality and diversity. Common values and a shared sense of belonging, ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities, and a recognition of different and fluid cultural identities are all part of multiculturalism. Have the bombings and attempted bombings of July 2005 changed our society so much that these things are no longer true?

These six areas do not represent the totality of the challenges that we will face in the coming months and years, but coming to a better understanding of them will help in meeting further challenges. Runnymede started out as a 5-year project; 40 years later we have an urgent agenda for the next generation.



Racism: A Very Short Introduction

If you buy one social sciences book this year make sure it is this one. This very short introduction to racism is part of a new series from Oxford University Press, which explores in microcosm many of the key issues and debates in contemporary social sciences. But do not let the 'very short' fool you. This little masterpiece of a pocket book not only provides a comprehensive introduction to the history of race and racism – in all its brutal and painful realism – it also brings compelling insight to both our understanding of the history of racism and how it continues to shape our 21st-century world. Books four times its length have delivered much, much less.

The book unpacks some of the clichéd simplistic definitions of racism and goes beneath those often dangerous generalizations. Rattansi challenges

these water-tight definitions of racism and suggests that the idea of institutional racism has outlived its usefulness. He reminds us that racism, like Islamophobia, is not an irrational aberration. The future of our society depends upon our ability to further challenge racially discriminatory practices.

During the 1990s, Ali Rattansi chaired ED356 *Race, Education and Society*, which today, 8 years after its last presentation, remains the only OU course to deal with the importance of racism in our everyday lives. For those students interested in how race and racism inform our knowledge of the everyday this is a must.

Ali Rattansi, *Racism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

Ageism and the Open University

Is there ageism at the Open University? Heather Simpkins, who at 67 is taking a year off from her BA Open Degree, explores some of the tensions between teaching and ageism in the hope of stimulating fresh debate within the OU

The OU has devised a system of learning that suits all ages. My interest here is in the ageing student. As a 67-year-old student, ageism is not something I have had to deal with while studying with the OU.

I believe strongly in the adage that 'you're never too old to learn' and those who prefer to argue that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' are missing the whole point of the opportunities offered by OU education. The range of courses available is quite staggering. If you don't want to go for the full-blown degree, you can take a single course.

The Cambridge Guide to English Usage defines ageism as a word that denotes a particular form of social prejudice, alongside examples such as sexism and racism. I speak as I find, so accept that others may differ in their views.

There are those who ask why people of my vintage bother to study when we have reached pensionable age. Well, I don't suppose I will ever do anything specific with my degree when I finally get it, but the knowledge I am learning with minimal entry requirements is very gratifying. It gives me something to do with my brain, which I would like to keep sharp.

I was particularly interested to see, in the 2006 autumn edition of *Sesame*, a whole centre-fold providing three case studies devoted to older students. Many of their sentiments and attitudes to learning echo mine. And their age range? One was over 80, two were over 90! (In the same issue of *Sesame* there is also the story of another octogenarian's success.) If you don't use it, you'll lose it. What excellent ambassadors these achievers are for the OU. Such success surely suppresses any thoughts of ageism. Suddenly I feel quite young to be studying.

For some of us, embarking on tertiary education after leaving school was impossible. Obscenely huge student loans were as ridiculous a notion as the prospect of putting a man on the moon.

Since then, maturity has given us a completely new perspective on education, and in our third age (or whatever politically correct euphemism is presently being applied to growing old), we now have the opportunity to return to study if that is what we want to do. We can even save our Tesco loyalty points towards the fees.

Sesame's editor reminds students in the 2007 winter edition of a founding principle of the OU – to 'promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all...' So I was somewhat surprised to learn that there is what could be defined as a kind of ageism towards associate lecturers – our tutors – who do their utmost to make sure we stay the course.

Before embarking on any research for this article, I was further surprised to read in the January 2007 edition of *The Oldie* magazine that the OU has 'announced that in future it will not consider applications to teach from anyone over 64'. A quoted former lecturer (unnamed) tells us, 'the OU will welcome you cordially if you want to spend your money on gaining a degree with them; just don't expect any grey heads amongst your tutors!' Ouch!

Melanie Newman reports similar findings to those quoted in *The Oldie* at various universities in her article, 'Scrapheap still looms for those who hit 65' in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* later that month.

Are there double standards at play here? In the *Sesame* centre-fold, Peter Taylor-Whiffen argues, 'with no upper age limits for courses at the Open University, older people play an integral role in many courses – and in turn, the university plays an important part in enriching older peoples' lives, as these case studies prove.' Could this quote also be applied to the question of the non-renewal of older associate lecturers' contracts?

Vice Chancellor Brenda Gourley, welcoming Lord David Puttnam, the new Chancellor of the OU, in *Sesame* comments, 'he embodies a vision of encouraging educational aspiration for all – a vision that precisely reflects the university's mission.' Don't lecturers have educational aspirations as well, albeit from a teaching point of view? In my opinion, if they want to work they shouldn't have to make a case to stay on beyond 65; a case should be made to prove they are no longer fit for the job, something that should apply to an OU employee of any age group.

Interestingly, a recent press release from Cranfield University School of Management says that older workers have better time keeping, are more likely to think before they act, are more loyal, conscientious, reliable and dependable.

What a pity if older lecturers are to be given the push sooner than they would wish – all those years of accumulated knowledge being denied to students. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the OU could be as innovative in dismissing ageism within its ranks as it has been courageous in revolutionizing higher education from its inception.



Young, gifted and black: why the OU must embrace multiple identities

Tony O'Shea, Policy Officer for Equality and Diversity, urges the OU and other public bodies to develop more sophisticated equality monitoring tools and to take decisive action in responding to difference. Without a greater willingness to use positive action, we will not close the gap between some entrenched inequalities in the next fifty years

A new equalities commission and a single equality act together create a tremendous opportunity for us to understand difference in a way that moves away from classifying people using narrow definitions of identity.

Universities, health services, local authorities and other public bodies around the country have recently completed new gender equality schemes, in response to the latest in a string of piecemeal equality legislation. In December 2006, public bodies published disability schemes, and many institutions will either have recently completed or be in the process of commencing a review of race policies. These public-sector duties are complemented by a series of additional protections in employment and vocational training, on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion and belief, and more recently age.

While UK equalities legislation may be described as advanced by many measures, the approach to developing equalities legislation, in response to demands from particular social movements and EU directives, has left the UK equalities environment in something of a muddle. For example, universities are required to 'involve' disabled people in the development of disability schemes and in reviewing services, but are only required to 'consult' with different ethnic groups. Those same universities are required to promote good relations between different ethnic groups, but not between different religious groups, or between men and women, or between people of different ages.

In recognition of the need for a more coherent joined-up approach, UK Government passed an Act in 2006 that will create a new single equalities commission – the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) – which will come into force in October 2007. Government is also conducting a major review of legislation and has committed itself to a single equality act in the lifetime of this parliament. A new single commission and a single equality act creates the opportunity to recognize what might seem obvious to many but which is relatively invisible in research, policy and the measures used to monitor progress

towards greater equality – that people have multiple identities.

Each aspect of an individual's identity interacts with the other aspects and creates a complex hierarchy of experience and need, which is unique to each individual. While institutions have been responding to race, disability, gender, and to other aspects of identity to a lesser extent, there has been little focus on a whole person approach – meeting the entire individual needs of customers (or students in the case of the OU).

There are some exceptions to this. Some recent research on the experience of higher education students, for example, has crossed two strands of identity – ethnicity and gender, religion and gender, ethnicity and age, religion and social class. Little of this research attempts to cross more than two strands, at least not at the same time, and very little equality policy and practice recognizes that poverty and capabilities are inextricably linked to opportunity and outcomes.

Looking at the experience or outcomes of individuals across several strands of identity is challenging, not least because when we try to analyse an increasing number of identity variables, we can end up with information overload. Also, unless the sample size was very large to begin with, sample sizes can become so small that the findings may not be reliable. As a result, many researchers and equality practitioners are unwilling, and sometimes unable, to move beyond more than two aspects of identity in a single analysis.

Institutions need two things in order to move forward

Firstly, we need more sophisticated monitoring tools to enable us to see clearly the interrelationship between the outcomes associated with different multiple identities. For example, it will be useful for a university to be able to identify clearly which groups of students are performing less well, based on a wide range of identity and other characteristics. Until we are able to know how our young black male students living in affluent areas are performing, perhaps in comparison to those living in more deprived areas, then we don't really have the full picture. A sophisticated tool is one that will enable us to carry out this

level of analysis but, at the same time, prevent data overload by highlighting the most pertinent findings.

Secondly, there needs to be a willingness to respond quickly and decisively to monitoring information. Legislation already provides institutions with the tool they need to enable this to happen in the form of 'positive action'. The term invokes a shudder from some, who misinterpret it as a way of discriminating against the majority in order to further the outcomes of people from minority groups. Even some people who have a minority identity see it in this way and want 'no special treatment'. Positive action does not offer 'special treatment'. It offers a way of targeting resources where there are clearly identified inequalities; inequalities that are often the result of historical and institutionalized processes of marginalization, exclusion and discrimination. Without a greater willingness to use positive action, we won't close the gap on some entrenched inequalities in the next fifty years.

Several factors may conspire to prevent a whole person approach to meeting needs and responding to inequalities. For example, the Disability Rights Commission is a relatively new body and understandably seeks to safeguard the rights of disabled people under the new CEHR. A separate disability committee has therefore been agreed. The Commission for Racial Equality is also concerned about a loss of focus on race issues and has fought to keep a network of Race Equality Councils. Other social movements will no doubt clamour for their voices to be heard. This separatist approach doesn't bode well for individuals. People are, after all, many different things.

In addition to the two key actions for institutions outlined above, the OU and other public bodies therefore need to monitor closely the emerging new legislation and the manner in which the Commission conducts its business, ensuring that the opportunities for a coherent multiple identity approach are not missed.

The new OU strategy 'Equality and Diversity: making it happen!' is available at: www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p4_1.shtml



Widening the UK wealth gap between young and old

Between 1996 and 2005 the personal wealth of British people between their late thirties and early sixties doubled, while the wealth of those between 18 and 24 years of age stood still. But, according to Bank of England research published in March 2007, people between the ages of 25 and 34 are worse affected. This age group saw its median personal wealth fall from £3,000 in 1996 to a mere £950 ten years later.

The reasons for the rise in personal wealth of those from their late

thirties can be found in the property market, where the average house price tripled in a decade. However, even in the most prosperous group – those over 55 years of age – many people have found that they have taken on much more debt than in 1996. The Bank concluded that younger people have increasingly tended to borrow less because they are entering the property market at a later stage, or simply because they have been priced out of the property market altogether. Since 1994 the average age of the first-time buyer has risen from 28 to 34.

Should Britain replace Trident or end its nuclear arms capability?

Just before Christmas, Tony Blair told the House of Commons it would be 'unwise and dangerous' for Britain to give up its nuclear capability. But what are the arguments for and against? Paul O'Brien, who is completing his OU degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, explores the options

The end of the operational life of the Trident weapons in 2024 has rekindled decades of debate in Britain about nuclear arms. Some experts argue a decision needs to be made now in order for a replacement to be ready in time. Britain has 16 Trident missiles based on four Vanguard-class submarines, providing 200 nuclear warheads in total. The British Government estimates it will cost between £15 and £20 billion over 30 years to replace Trident. It has been suggested that savings could be made by cutting the number of submarines to 3 and the warheads to 160.

Government arguments for replacing Trident are based upon the idea of an uncertain future in an increasingly hostile world where more nations in the developing world and any number of terrorist groups could develop a nuclear option. The government, like all governments since Hiroshima, feels it would be failing in its duty to protect its citizens if Britain did not have an independent nuclear capability.

The key question is what kind of security threats would Britain be facing in 20 years time? The Cold War has been over for some time but new nuclear 'players' have emerged. Iran and North Korea have either developed or are developing a nuclear capability. With other countries increasingly eager to join the nuclear club the government feels it prudent to retain its nuclear arsenal as an insurance policy. There is also the growing nuclear capability of Israel to take into consideration in an increasingly unstable Middle East.

Nuclear weapons are not effective against current terrorist threats. But despite this the British Government believes renewing our nuclear arm capability after 2024 could act as a deterrent to rogue states wishing to pass on or sell nuclear



technology and components to terrorists. Those opposing the replacement of Trident believe the billions of pounds could be better spent elsewhere – on the infrastructure of our economy, on caring for the elderly, on improving the environment, or on the education of our children.

Even if a nuclear threat did emerge in the future, nuclear weapons are something that could never be contemplated in a civilized world. The moment a nuclear warhead is fired the world as we know it would be finished. Retaliations could destroy the world several times over.

And how independent is the capability? Trident and its replacement will almost certainly rely upon US technology. It is also hard to envisage a scenario in which Britain would use its weapons independently from another country, especially the USA. If a nuclear war was to erupt, the USA by itself has so many warheads that Britain's contribution would not only be insignificant but pointless.

There may also be legal complications given that Britain has signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Lawyers, academics, the military establishment and, most of all, politicians will continue to debate interpretations of the treaty, but its overall aim is quite clear. There is a

commitment to disarm, by nuclear weapon, states and a commitment by countries without nuclear weapons not to pursue them.

Does replacing Trident contribute to the 'good faith' disarmament negotiations that the treaty calls for? The government believes it does, as it is reducing the overall number of warheads in compliance with the treaty. But what message does this send to non-nuclear states? It seems fine for some countries to possess nuclear weapons but not others. Do as I say, not as I do seems to be the message.

For all the arguments put forward for and against replacing the Trident system, one seems to be largely ignored, which could explain why Britain will not abandon its nuclear arsenal for the foreseeable future. What would happen to Britain's international status and prestige if it were to become non-nuclear? With other countries such as India increasing in economic importance and more countries acquiring nuclear weapons, would a non-nuclear Britain continue to hold influence? Would there still be a permanent seat on a UN Security Council that is under mounting pressure to better reflect the world's national demographics?

Britain's leading role in NATO and its special relationship with the USA has rested on its nuclear capability. It is also hard to imagine British politicians willing to cede to France the status of being the only nuclear power in the European Union. For all the rhetoric about security and future threats, Britain cannot afford not to have an independent nuclear capability if it is to maintain its ever flagging international status.

Paul O'Brien works in music royalties and has just finished DD203 *Power, Equality, Dissent*.

Don't suffer in silence – there are people ready to listen

What do you do if you need peer support? Catriona Nedin, who is studying D315 Crime, Order and Social Control, finds out how the OU can help

Anyone who has been reading *Society Matters* over the past few years will have seen my progression through the OU, and the many problems I have encountered on the way. Well, I am not ashamed to say that I have only made it with the help of people from within the OU. Friends I made through the OU have been there as a shoulder to cry on – sometimes literally. Fellow students have given me tremendous support, and tutors have shown understanding and leniency wherever possible within the guidelines. However, what many students do not realize is that there are a group of people – Peer Supporters – who are available to help, be it short term for a one-off issue or as a course-long guide and mentor.

I came across the Peer Support system accidentally and now feel that I am ready to face the world again. I now know that there are a group of volunteers ready to listen, give constructive help and to advise on a suitable path to follow in order to help try and overcome any situation. For those out there who are as unaware of Peer Support as I was, here is a little information, just in case you need help.

Peer Supporters are volunteers who are available online to provide support to any student who feels they require it.



Peer Support On-line

They can give assistance on many topics: First Class help, exams, awards, financial help, assignments and assessments. They also give understanding and support for people with problems in their personal life, students with disabilities, and those who are just floundering with a course and merely need someone to talk to who will not judge them.

All the Peer Supporters are, apparently, past or current students who, between them, are from most or all of the OU Faculties and therefore have extensive knowledge of courses, as well as many years attending the University of Life! They can discuss your problems online and offer constructive help, or suggest what you might consider doing next and provide leads for the best person to help you.

Where are they found? On First Class, go to your desktop and click the OU shield, then click the OUSA shield and a

big red circle will appear with a white question mark on it – that's the Peer Support On-line icon. Either fill in the 'help request' or 'ongoing support' form and wait. Very soon you will have halved your worry as a reply pops into your First Class mailbox.

Still have doubts? Well, there are many options available to you. You can ask for a male or female supporter, someone who has a disability and knows what you are going through and/or someone who is from the same course background or programme of study as you. I understand that the Peer Support team try to match up the supporter and supported as well as possible, although it cannot be guaranteed.

I'm now in my penultimate year with the OU before I graduate – hopefully – in 2009. Without the support system I have been blessed with, I would have put away my books long ago. D315 is a difficult course, with masses of reading to do and not enough time available. There is no time to wallow in self-pity, so it is vital to have someone there to listen. So, to the person out there who has been my rock, listener and mentor, a heart-felt thank you. As I was told – 'Don't suffer in silence, let Peer Support On-line help!'

Laugh and the world laughs with you

Children laugh about 400 times a day, about 30 more times than adults, according to research. Laughter reduces blood pressure, allergic tensions, and bolsters the immune system. But what is laughter? And why is it so important? Scientists investigating how the brain responds to emotive sounds now believe that positive sounds such as a giggle trigger an involuntary response in the brain that prepares facial muscles to react. Human laughter is often an involuntary response in group situations in particular where we mirror the behaviour of others, and this, according to University College London researchers, facilitates social bonding and helps us interact socially. As a result there is a greater emphasis today on using laughter as a form of therapy. In Mumbai in India the first 'laughter yoga' club was formed in 1996. Now there are over 5,000. For genuine students of comedy the University of Haifa has just started a degree in musical clowning, which is designed to provide vocational skills for use in hospitals and other welfare institutions.



WAG lifestyles

A survey of 2,000 young women aged between 21 and 25 found that the average twenty-something female spends around £1,000 a month on clothes, beauty products and going out. The average young woman went out 4 nights a week. Her wardrobe contained 151 items, including 25 pairs of shoes, 8 handbags and 4 hats. She is more concerned about femininity than feminism. She believes she has a better sex life than her mother did at her age. Over half of young women have credit bill debt above £3,380. Her role model is Victoria Beckham. Only 10 per cent of young women expressed an interest in politics.



Inside Acacia Avenue

Acacia Avenue has always been a byword for contented suburban life in situation comedies. But what is life like in reality? Research in 2006 by the Automobile Association into the lives of residents in 15 Acacia Avenues in England and Wales – *A Portrait of Middle England* – found Acacia Avenues to be inhabited by families and older couples. One third of residents are aged 60 and over. They tend to stay put and go away on holiday for only one week of the year – to Spain. Acacia Avenues house people on average incomes but, mysteriously, one in seven residents work for the NHS. Four out of five residents spend their time watching TV, and four out of ten report fish and chips to be their favourite meal.



DD306 Living political ideas

Jef Huysmans and Raia Prokhovnik, co-chairs of DD306 Living Political Ideas, explain how their new multi-media course will make political ideas exciting, easily accessible and highly relevant to our understanding of some of the most pertinent questions in contemporary world politics

Where does the idea come from that pop celebrities can claim to represent Africa? Can chimps have a political voice? Are religious ideas political? How are sexuality and race markers of political identity? What do humanitarian interventions tell us about the violent nature of modern politics? These are some of the questions that are discussed in DD306 *Living Political Ideas*, which will be presented for the first time in October 2008.

The course invites students to explore political ideas in a guided way by showing how they inform, play out, transform and clash in contemporary world politics. It brings to bear a range of political ideas on some of the most provocative and challenging questions in today's world. Moreover, in stimulating students to work on how classic texts illuminate challenging political questions, the course clarifies that political ideas are not, and should not be, the privileged possession of an academic elite. On the contrary, by putting together readings from texts and debates on political ideas we can articulate concerns that matter greatly for everyone and therefore should be the property of all.

Much has been made in recent years of claims that ideologies are dead and that politics today is not about ideas but about what works. Can politics indeed be reduced to simply balancing the books, to efficiently managing global resources, to effectively protecting the national interest? Maybe, but the more important and ironical point is that a managerial understanding of politics is itself one of the great living political ideas, and one that is challenged, among other things, by religious and nationalist political claims, as well as by ideas of social justice seeking to address racial and sexual discrimination.

Living Political Ideas is a thought-provoking mix of political theory extracts and contemporary political debates. The debates are specially chosen to enable students to reflect on contemporary issues in the light of key pieces of argument selected from modern and classic political theory. The course has no specific prerequisites and contains lots of support. We asked some current OU students to test out sections of the materials, and their feedback was very positive. More specifically, the course addresses five topical political questions:



Aristotle and Plato, in arch centre: Raphael

- 1 How has the relation between leaders and masses been conceived of in modern politics? And how is this relation being re-envisaged in a world of global networks, a crisis of parliamentary representation and a revolution in communication technology? How can extracts from Machiavelli and others help us answer these questions?
- 2 In a world of environmental crisis, should we give nature a political voice and if so how? Can the great divide between political beings and natural beings be broken down in the interest of animal rights and environmental sustainability? Do Aristotle's and others' views throw any light on these questions?
- 3 Should religious beliefs shape how politics is conducted? Where would you stand in relation to the positions we set out? How do religious ideas play out, and how are they accounted for, in riots, abortion debates and the Iranian revolution?

4 What do bodies and sexuality have to do with politics? Have ideas about bodies and biological aspects of human life, ranging from Darwinist evolutionary accounts to the manipulation of the genetic make-up of people, had a significant impact on modern politics?

5 Isn't politics, at root, about violence? If so, does this help us to understand why violence is such a recurrent phenomenon in modern world politics? Can key theoretical writings on violence help us make up our mind?

Each of the five topics is presented on a DVD-rom in the form of a virtual 'room', which takes students on a structured and guided journey of ideas in which printed, audio-file and visual media are used to examine the living relevance of political ideas. The integrated multi-media presentation builds on the experience of learning through various media that OU students already have. It gradually improves students' skills to critically and pro-actively develop knowledge in a multi-media age.

The course offers a high degree of flexibility in how and where to learn. Audio-visual parts can be studied on the computer or through a DVD player. Shorter clips can be downloaded on a portable music/video player. Text extracts can be read on screen but also in a printed Reader. Audios can be listened to on the computer, a CD player and as a downloaded mp3 file.

DD306 also presents a more active way to learn, through guided activities that help students to develop their own interpretations of the materials with sound arguments to back them up. The activities give students the support and opportunity to reinforce and take forward their learning at every stage. They also make it possible for students to 'own' what they are studying, rather than being 'told' by an authority what to make of it. Both the multi-media presentation and activities provide the best way to study the materials and to gain the confidence and skills of an independent learner. There is plenty of back-up to help and support students, both from tutors and within the study materials.

So, not just a standard ideas course at all then! But one that seeks to make political ideas easily accessible, exciting, alive and highly relevant for understanding some of the most pertinent questions in contemporary world politics.

OpenLearn and the Social Sciences

Over 400,000 people visited the OpenLearn website in its first few months. E-learning innovation fellow, Volker Patent, explains what is on offer in OpenLearn for those seeking to make sense of contemporary society. He finds crime and the environment high on the list

Since 1969, the OU has been the pioneer in making learning materials freely available through its successful partnership with the BBC. Many of our television and radio programmes are already supported by free internet activities and print materials. We wanted to use our knowledge of the latest technologies in education to extend our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

The OpenLearn story started in 2005 with a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to fund a pilot in free online education until 2008. Website development began in May 2006 and the site was launched in October 2006 with the aim of adding new content and features on a regular basis. Already OpenLearn offers a full range of OU subject areas from access to postgraduate level. At the time of going to press there were 253 study units on offer.

There are two main sites or information 'spaces' on OpenLearn: LearningSpace and LabSpace. The main difference between LabSpace and LearningSpace materials is that materials in LabSpace may be more experimental or may include different versions of materials presented in LearningSpace. In addition, LabSpace includes archived courses, including those that are no longer on offer from the OU. It is expected that by April 2008, 5,400 learning hours of content will be available online in the LearningSpace and 8,100 in the LabSpace.

Both LearningSpace and LabSpace provide a 'Society' link to materials related to the Social Sciences. Approximately 29 OpenLearn units related to the Social Sciences have been released so far, providing a rich spectrum of material from which to choose from.

Units in both the LearningSpace and the LabSpace range in level of difficulty, but may be accessible with little prior experience of OU study. To help you identify the best way to start using OpenLearn, read the Get Started section on the OpenLearn website at www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/get-started

Not surprisingly, with huge public interest in crime, criminal psychology and other related areas, the Social Science materials in OpenLearn LearningSpace include the unit *The Meaning of Crime*, which provides a sociologically informed exploration and discussion of contemporary perspectives on crime in society. This is ideal for people interested in the sociology of crime, or those who are considering a career in law, law enforcement or other areas related to law and justice.

In the light of global warming, another topical area that



The Blackwater Estuary: scene from web downloadable video, *Managing Coastal Environments*

currently enjoys increasing popular interest relates to the environment. Given that the degradation of the environment is largely due to human behaviour, it would seem plausible to consider that the solution for managing the environment is also anchored in human action. *Managing Coastal Environments* covers social and historical aspects of environmental impacts on coastal environments, and provides a good starting point for building a working knowledge that could help in understanding and participating in the emerging environmental debates of the future. This unit also relates to the popular BBC programme *Coast* – series 3 will be broadcast in the summer. For people with an interest in this area, this is definitely one to watch.

There are many exciting aspects to OpenLearn, not just the materials. Using the materials in LabSpace allows visitors to participate in modifying existing content and uploading new content (remix) that could be shared with others. Also, OpenLearn features FlashMeeting, an interactive tool that allows setting up of online live video discussions, and which could be a great resource for visitors from other education sites. A well-featured mind-mapping tool, *Compendium*, is also available free of charge to allow users to create their own knowledge or concept maps.

In future, there may be many different ways in which visitors to OpenLearn can benefit, for example by exploring career interests, understanding issues better, exploring whether to study at the OU or not, and meeting other people with similar interests. This is likely to prove attractive to former students wishing to extend their knowledge, as well as to prospective students wishing to sample what the OU has to offer. It should also appeal to organizations looking to develop the knowledge and skills of their employees.

The Social Sciences, where a pluralistic view of society is at the core of all knowledge, are a particularly interesting area to benefit from the 'democratization' of allowing OpenLearn visitors to participate in creating remixed or even new content. Although some critical voices might suggest that allowing individuals to remix and add content could risk watering-down academic quality, this is unlikely to occur in practice. The process of remix and upload involves reviews of newly versioned materials, through a process of peer review that will ensure the high level of quality and academic rigour expected of OU course materials. Based on this, the playing out of the dynamic between user-created content and OU quality materials will be an exciting and fertile opportunity for future researchers and students to explore.

To date, the total volume of Social Science materials in LabSpace is around 1,000 hours and around 250 hours in LearningSpace, with more to be added in the future. Considering the current breadth of Social Science materials under the OpenLearn banner and the possibilities of innovative course development, including testing of experimental courses and materials via OpenLearn, it is possible that new Social Science courses and qualifications may be developed, thus building on the strength of Social Science teaching at the OU.

To visit OpenLearn go to: www.open.ac.uk/openlearn

To visit the LabSpace, go to: labspace.open.ac.uk

To visit the Social Science materials in OpenLearn LearningSpace, go to: openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/category.php?id=11

To get involved with the project see the intranet page at: intranet.open.ac.uk/open-content

Taste matters

Patrons of a Swansea pub, landowners in the borders of Scotland and members of a Midlands' Pakistani community centre are some of the people helping research into how our tastes not only reveal much about who we are but about our class and privileged status. Elizabeth B. Silva, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, and David Wright, Research Fellow in the Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change (CRESC), explain how tastes can help us understand inequality better

It has become something of a truism that in contemporary society what we are is shaped by what we choose. A new study, conducted by a team of sociologists from the Open University and the University of Manchester, offers strong evidence that what we choose – our likes and dislikes – are shaped by who we are in relation to a number of social and economic factors.

The Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion Project (CCSE) seeks, through an innovative combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, to interrogate patterns of taste in a variety of fields of culture and to 'map' these tastes in relation to a range of socio-economic variables.

The research draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose study of cultural taste in 1960s France – *Distinction* – has become a defining work in the sociologies of class and consumption. For Bourdieu, taste, rather than being a matter of personal choice, is a driver of social organization. Individuals with the 'right' kinds of taste, i.e. tastes held by the dominant class, that have been consecrated by the state through the education system, are more likely to be able to gain advantages in life. They are able to cash in what he terms their 'cultural capital' and pass it on to their children both at home and through the informed use of the education system. In this way the middle classes are able to use culture to reproduce their positions of privilege.

To investigate these relationships in the UK, the CCSE project began with twenty-five focus groups with participants from a variety of socio-economic, ethnic and national profiles from across the UK (from the patrons of a Swansea pub to landowners in the borders of Scotland to the attendees of a Midlands' Pakistani community centre). Talk about cultural likes and dislikes from these groups fed into the design of a major new survey which combined questions about cultural taste (what people like to do) with questions about cultural participation (what people actually do) and linked these to a series of questions about socio-economic data and social attitudes.

The survey was administered to 1,781 post-code sampled individuals representative of the UK population. Thirty households were then re-contacted and survey respondents and their partners were interviewed at length about their engagements with various cultural practices and tastes, giving a more rounded picture of the place of culture in their lives than the survey alone provided. Eleven people in prominent business, political, or other professions were also interviewed.

Clearly Britain at the start of the 21st century is different in important ways from Bourdieu's 1960s France. The emerging findings of this study, however, suggest a persistence of some elements of the relationship, identified by Bourdieu, between tastes and forms of inequality. We can see, for example, that people in higher occupational classes are still far more likely to own and read books and have 'higher brow' tastes in



reading material for modern literature or biographies. At the same time, though, reading, when newspaper and magazines are taken into account, is a common and widespread past-time, comparable to television watching. Even though cultural participation can be quite widespread, when 'culture' is broadly defined, only some activities can be seen to be effective in the generation of cultural capital.

This can be demonstrated by the project's use of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), a statistical technique allowing relationships between survey respondents and their tastes to be viewed as a totality. Whilst conventionally plotted graphs allow researchers to locate individuals in a study in relation to specific variables, MCA allows us to see individuals plotted in relation to one another in a 'cloud of individuals' (see illustration).

The technique then allows us to identify the locations of specific kinds of activity (effectively the averages of answers to particular questions) and to plot them in relation to other

activities. This generates a 'space of lifestyles', through which we can illustrate how particular activities and tastes group together.

Of course, it is not the point of our project to suggest which activities are 'better' or 'worse' than others. What the MCA reveals strikingly about tastes in contemporary Britain is not that they are stratified in terms of 'high' and 'low' culture, as Bourdieu might have attested. We discover that there is a stark division between those who like and do anything, positioned predominantly amongst the higher occupational groups (individuals located on the right of our 'cloud' illustrated) who take intense interest in publicly organized arts that take place outside the home, and those who broadly do not engage with 'culture' thus defined at all (individuals located on the left in the illustration). This division raises questions about the current priorities of cultural policy. Bourdieu's assertions about the relationships between culture and class might appear anachronistic in an era when Arts Councils fund hip-hop and 'high' art. Despite this, the CCSE project reveals the persistent relationship between tastes, cultural capital and inequality in the contemporary UK.

The CCSE project was funded by the ESRC between March 2003 and March 2006. Preliminary findings have been published in a special issue of the journal *Cultural Trends and Social Divisions*, Vol. 15 (nos 2 & 3), 2006, edited by Tony Bennett and Elizabeth B Silva. The project's website contains more information and links to further publications: www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/cultural-capital-and-social-exclusion

Cloud of individuals

Axis 1 measures participation: it indicates people's actual attendance or non-attendance at various cultural events

Axis 2 measures people's likes and dislikes

Activities and likes on the right side include, among others

- Visits to art galleries and museums
- Attendance at the opera
- Eating in French restaurants
- Appreciating Impressionist art
- Owning more than 3 paintings or reproductions
- Going to rock concerts

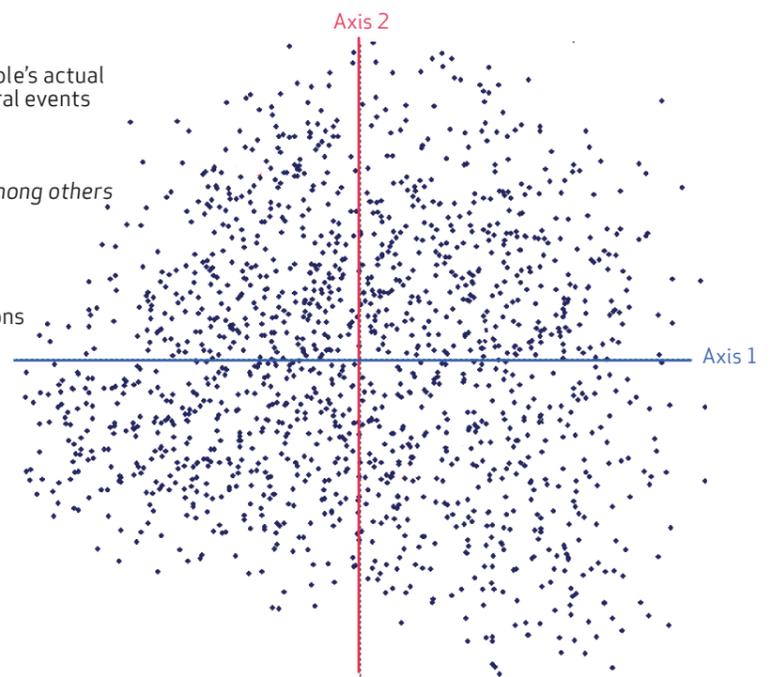
Activities on the left side are mostly negative ones

Dislikes include:

- Never eating out
- Not owning any books
- Never going to museums

Likes are:

- Eating fish and chips
- Western film genre
- Social sports
- Watching more than 5 hours television a day



Does society matter? Maybe not as much as we think

After reading a UNICEF report which placed the UK bottom of a league table on child welfare, Harjit Sandhu, who is studying DD202 Economics and Economic Change, argues we shouldn't wait for reports to highlight the obvious

Are we too quick to highlight the gross inequalities of other nations and neglect the differences within our own society?

Back issues of *Society Matters* have tried to remind us of the inequalities in both the developed and the developing world. They have explored the relationship between the two, especially how the legacy of Empire and foreign policy continue to prevent the developing world from realizing some of those rights and obligations that we have long taken for granted in the developed world.

But we should never forget our own dark history, when inhumane treatment and widening equality – for example at the height of the British Empire – were the norm. When we judge the developing world we should look at how we used to be. Let's not stigmatize developing countries. Let us not write in ways to make it appear they have social ills that we do not.

I believe that far too often we look negatively at developing nations and fail to reveal the positive, especially the positives emanating from within the developing world that occur without our 'benevolence'. It does not make things any better if we can see they are making some of the same mistakes we did. With growth they themselves will no doubt form unions, demand education, and fight for human rights, just as we did.

If you visit the poor in the developing world you will see that they have no money and struggle to eat. If you sit with the poor children in Mumbai (India), you will see the skills that they do have. They are brave, independent, have strong communities and friendships. This is not heaven on earth and no-one should be subjected to such poverty, but many are. We could learn much from their family culture and cohesiveness.

These links and embodiments remind us of things we have lost from our societies. We may think society matters but few of us take responsibility for our own impact on the people around us.

So, as a society, in 2007 what is important enough for us to fight for? Is there anything worth us standing up for? Or are we all too pre-occupied with ourselves?

The UNICEF report on child welfare in the developed European nations generated much media attention but did not stimulate a national debate. Why not? Is the fact that Britain is the worst country in the developed world for children to grow up in not important enough?

We don't seem to have the will or the need to fight injustices and we no longer protest – maybe because we are all too busy. We should reflect more on our collective values. As the UNICEF report shows, we are failing the future generations of Britain. Will we soon be living in a more violent society where disaffected young people, who feel let down by the system, grow into angry adults? Look at countries where the young feel they have no hope and then look at the crime statistics. It is clear that by not nourishing the youth of our country we threaten the chances of a better future for everyone.

So how do we find ourselves in such a position? Where are good old British values now?

As with many problems in Britain today, we are obsessed with blaming others. We demand quick fix solutions. We don't want to wait; we won't be told what to do. Many are selfish rather than altruistic, and careless rather than responsible.

Do we really need to think about why we are becoming

more obese, why our families are struggling, why the NHS does not fix itself, why we are failing the nation's children in education?

In the case of the NHS, it does not have infinite resources and we can help if we all eat better, exercise more, reduce binge drinking, stop burdening doctors with common colds, and stop missing appointments. Increased health awareness will reduce the burden on our amazing health system.

Parents fail their children more often than schools. Would a politician survive if they said, 'take some responsibility, feed your child well, take time to read to them, show them hard work is important, teach them to respect others, don't just blame long days at work as an excuse to neglect them, and give them ready meals before you sit them in front of a TV?' Big Brother and Jade Goody created more news coverage than the UNICEF report. This tells us about priorities in the UK today. Do we read reports showing that we treat the elderly worse than many other developed nations or that we have poorer basic education systems?

Society has to matter! There is no choice, and we should not have the choice to ignore our responsibilities and obligations to it. We all should do more to bring back some sense of community and family values, because these are the very things that shaped this country.

Maybe if we all accepted that we lack social responsibility we might be in a position to do more about it.

An overview of child well-being in rich countries, UNICEF, 2007. See article on page 16.

Every little helps, or does it?

Earlier this year the Open University announced a partnership with the supermarket giant Tesco, whose annual turnover in 2006 matched the GDP of Peru. Clubcard members can now put their points towards OU courses. Joanna Blythman thinks there is much more in the partnership for Tesco than the OU and finds her sums fall short

Number of UK largest supermarkets in 2001 and 2006		
	2001	2006
Tesco	685	1,898
Sainsbury's	436	752
M & S	303	408
Morrison's	110	373
ASDA	241	308
Waitrose	136	173

Sounds great, doesn't it? Anyone who has wanted to do an OU degree but has wondered how to finance it has been offered a helping hand. All they have to do is sign up for a Tesco Clubcard. But how much of a helping hand is it exactly? Well, buy goods worth £1,000 at Tesco, and you get £40 off a degree at the OU. If that doesn't sound like the best deal in retail history, try thinking of it this way. If you spend just £100,000 (that's a mere 16 years of food shopping on a monthly spend of £500), you will qualify for a free degree. Wow, what a bargain!

Still, it is arguably a better proposition than some of Tesco's other 'deals'. Think of its annual *Computers for Schools* scheme. When *Which?* magazine investigated this scheme, it calculated that shoppers had to spend £44,900 in Tesco to earn enough vouchers for a scanner that Tesco itself sold for £80. More recently there was the embarrassing matter of the Tesco trampoline. This spring the *Daily Mail* revealed how, in order to qualify for a trampoline worth £3,000, parents would spend £1 million at Tesco.

Of course, there's something terribly seductive about the idea that you can use money that you would be spending anyway to accumulate a 'free' benefit, but looking at the arithmetic of such deals, only the extremely naïve would believe that it amounts to anything more than a clever marketing exercise by Tesco.

Just look at what Tesco stands to gain from the partnership with the OU. It gets to associate its increasingly criticized brand with one that commands respect, by creating a dissonance in the mind of the thinking consumer who is beginning to get the

idea that the chain's seemingly endless expansion may not be an entirely good thing. It's hard to believe that any significant number of people will keep saving vouchers for 16 years to qualify for a 'free' degree, but the initial enthusiasm for the deal may encourage more people to transfer a greater percentage of their retail spend to Tesco before they get round to doing the maths and losing interest. Our choice of shop, like our newspaper preference, is largely a question of custom and habit. Once drawn to shop in Tesco by a Clubcard marketing lure, inertia sets in. We are likely to keep on shopping there on auto-pilot, simply because that is what we have got into the habit of doing.

Those who do the sums and work out what a steep hill of vouchers they have to climb will have to consider not just devoting their food spend to Tesco but signing up for an all-round Tesco lifestyle. That means buying your clothes in Tesco, getting your internet from Tesco, buying all your non-food goods in Tesco, taking on several of Tesco's insurance products – all profitable new business for Tesco.

Tesco also stands to benefit from the personal information it will glean about its faithful Clubcard customers. Let's assume that OU students are more likely than average to go on to be reasonably affluent customers. How convenient for Tesco to add these potentially well-to-do consumers to its database, or seduce existing ones into upping their spending. According to Dunnhumby, the company that analyses information on Tesco customers, the information gleaned offers 'a 360-degree view' of its customers. With the Clubcard as the spy in your wallet,

Tesco can use details of expenditure to build up a picture of your behaviour and preferences. It can dovetail its sales effort with manufacturers and advertisers to make sure that they decide what profit-spinning products you will want to eat before you have even given it a second thought.

The partnership is great news for Tesco shareholders, but stop for a moment and think what the OU gets out of it. There's a slim outside possibility that the odd would-be student is trusting enough to go for the deal, and that this strengthens his or her resolve to take a course. You might also argue that the OU stands to benefit from the 'free' publicity that surrounds Clubcard deals. That's supposing that prospective OU students – presumably a bunch of thinking and aware people – do not react badly to the fact that the OU, that liberal bastion of democratic access to education for all, has hooked up with Tesco, the retail behemoth that is rapidly becoming as controversial as McDonalds or Wal-Mart.

If Tesco really wanted to help the OU, it could make a straight, no-strings-attached donation, or fund a one-off capital project. In truth, it really wants to help itself.

Joanna Blythman is the author of *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* (Harper Perennial, 2005). Joanna is one of Britain's leading investigative food journalists, and an influential commentator on the British food chain. She has won five Glenfiddich Awards for achievements in writing, publishing and broadcasting on the subjects of food and drink.

Open for business?

When OU Humanities student Paul Rowlinson heard about the OU's new partnership with Tesco, he decided to voice his concerns, which were subsequently published in the *Guardian* earlier this year. Here he considers whether the deal compromises the OU's mission statement on social justice

When I read about the Tesco/OU partnership, I was stunned. I asked my fellow A215 *Creative Writing* buddies if I was the only one who felt, shall we say, 'uncomfortable' about it. When it turned out that I wasn't alone, I thought that I should put my freshly-honed writing skills to good use and submitted an article to the Editor of *Education Guardian* to explain how concerned I was that the only organization 'extending its reach' would be the infamous mega-retailer. They decided to publish it. A letter was printed the following week from someone who disagreed, suggesting that I either had a 'pathological hatred of Tesco' or a 'political belief that the private and public sectors should not work together'. To the first charge, I'd have to plead guilty to avoiding the Tesco 'experience'; but to the second, regarding public/private partnerships, I would respond, where is the synergy in this partnership? How can there be a unifying vision?

Let's get real here. Tesco can only benefit from an association with an institution of substantial integrity and equality. The OU has been offering the opportunity of academic improvement to millions since the beginning of the 1970s. This has been achieved with little assistance from the private sector and they've never implemented a loyalty scheme, yet the OU is the UK's largest university, with around 150,000 students in the UK, who are all potential (or current) Tesco customers. This large number may sound like a small drop in Tesco's ocean, but it's like having access to a 'virtual' large town, roughly equivalent to the population of Reading, but without having to build superstores,

fight planning applications and edge out all the competition. On average, an OU degree course takes around 7 years to complete. Anyone shopping for that length of time at Tesco is likely to have forgotten where all the other shops are.

The debate has divided opinion, though some just shrug their shoulders and say, 'so what?' Many already have a Clubcard, with unused points stacked up, and are looking forward to getting 'something for nothing'. Loyal customers of other supermarkets are far less enthusiastic, since their brand of points count for a big fat nothing, unless they can trade them in at Tesco, which some do. Others feel that Tesco customers are being unjustly rewarded in a kind of 'supermarket lottery'. There are those who prefer to avoid supermarkets altogether and shop locally, as well as loyally. A common response across all groups has been, 'they get everywhere, don't they?' One wonders how long it will be before degrees will be available in aisle 54, graded Finest, Premium, Standard and Value?

Would any other university care to cheapen its academic status by getting into bed with Tesco? Let's imagine for a moment that Clubcard holders will be encouraged to consider study through the OU. But might other students just as easily be dissuaded, feeling that the OU 'brand' has become devalued? The OU mission statement says that it 'promotes educational opportunity and social justice'. While the former remains intact, isn't the latter in jeopardy of being compromised, since social justice has hardly been the driver of Tesco's rapid expansion

plans, both in the UK and now globally?

The OU have many worthy schemes in place to help students on lower incomes finance their studies, so just how great is the need for yet another scheme, especially one that encourages spending with one retailer above all others? Just how many of the Clubcard points gained from pounds spent at checkouts by well-intentioned students will actually be converted into real OU courses, assuming the results will be as black and white as the data that Tesco fervently mines using its Clubcard 'loyalty' scheme?

The OU says, 'This is an exciting and innovative partnership that is true to the University's founding mission – to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.' With this statement in place, anyone who questions the partnership leaves themselves open to the accusation of being a narrow-minded zealot. The problem with a literally open-ended mission statement such as the OU's is that it must, by its own definition, be open to abuse. Maybe it *should* be open to all-comers in the private sector? Maybe it *should* be open to being floated on the stock-market? If the values of the OU continue to be interpreted in this way, many students may withdraw their loyalty and shop for the rest of their education elsewhere.



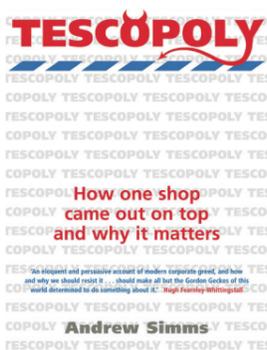
What came first, the cause or the marketing?

Andrew Simms, the policy director of nef (the new economics foundation) and the author of *Tescopoly: How One Shop Came Out on Top and Why it Matters*, asks who is helping who in the new OU/Tesco deal

The supermarket Tesco wins friends for its highly publicized involvement with education. First there were computers and sports equipment for schools; and now Tesco Clubcard points can be used towards OU fees. Both initiatives win the store praise, and help to develop an 'emotional bond' with the consumer. At a low cost to Tesco, this is what they are designed to do. It is known in the trade as 'cause-related marketing', and it even has its own award scheme.

In 1998, Tesco Computers for Schools won the 'Cause-Related Marketing Award for Excellence and Example of Best Practice' bestowed by an outfit called Business in the Community. The scheme was commended for its impact on increased sales, enhancing Tesco's profile in the local community, reinforcing Tesco's brand values, improving customer loyalty and creating recognition as an innovative retailer.

However, the award made clear that there is more emphasis on marketing than the cause. It is not immediately obvious how much money you have to spend at Tesco to benefit from the



scheme. Vouchers for the scheme are available at limited times during the year (although Tesco benefits from the publicity all year round). In order to get one of the mid-rank computers on offer, you would have to spend around £250,000. A pair of plastic inflatable armbands for swimming would set you back £840; a football, £2,200; and a hockey stick, £2,360. To get a pack of three tennis balls, available from any average online retailer at around just £1.25, you would have to spend £1,140.

Even by taking advantage of a special 'Clubcard Deal', potential OU students wanting to pay their fees with Tesco vouchers will need to plan the kind of shopping spree capable of putting Paris Hilton in the shade. A nine-month Spanish for beginners programme would need £9,875 worth of shopping, while an MBA would stretch the bank account of a successful corporate CEO, who would need to buy £275,000 worth of groceries. It's worth asking, who is really helping who?

Tescopoly: How One Shop Came Out on Top and Why it Matters is published by Constable&Robinson, London, £7.99.

Supermarkets accused of exploiting women

In April 2007, ActionAid urged UK supermarkets not to drive for high profit margins on the back of vulnerable workers – especially women and children – in developing countries. The charity called for an independent watchdog to be established despite supermarket initiatives in the last 12 months, which sought to establish greater ethically and socially responsible credentials.

The charity researchers found that the recent banana price wars between British supermarkets had resulted in women plantation workers being forced out of regular work into casual employment for lower wages. In Bangladesh, the charity found young women working for as little as 5 pence an hour manufacturing clothes for Tesco; cashew nut processing workers earned as little as 30 pence a day and suffered permanent damage to their hands from corrosive acids. Of the retail price of cashew nuts, for example, ActionAid found that 45 per cent went to the supermarkets, 54 per cent to the producer and importer, and just 1 per cent to the worker. A Tesco spokesman promised, 'We are ready to listen to any ideas for making progress. But we think this will be best achieved not by framing more rules from a distance, but by engaging on the ground.'

Forty years of occupation

On the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, Richard Kuper tries to make sense of one of the longest lasting occupations of recent times, and calls for Israel to be held to account for violations of the Geneva Convention

The Israeli occupation is an illegal occupation, denying Palestinians their right to self-determination. Israel is in daily breach of its obligations under international law. There is a *prima facie* case for investigating some of these breaches as war crimes.

The Fourth Geneva Convention regulates the treatment of civilians in times of war. Civilians are protected persons, who are 'entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.'

Israel's violations are endless. The daily harassment and humiliation at the checkpoints (in the six years from September 2000, 68 pregnant Palestinian women gave birth at Israeli checkpoints, leading to 34 miscarriages and the deaths of four women); the fragmentation of the West Bank into three main enclaves (excluding East Jerusalem) and many subdivisions within each of these has led to the isolation of one Palestinian community from its neighbours. The sweeping nature of restriction of movement in the form of closure, siege and curfew constitutes a form of collective punishment, as does house demolition of the families of militants, Israel's racist Family Unification Law (which forbids Israeli citizens currently or prospectively married to residents of the Occupied Territories from living in Israel with their spouses), and the deportation of relatives of suspects.

The movement of over 400,000 Jewish settlers into East Jerusalem and over 100 settlements on the wider West Bank post-1967 violates another provision of the Convention. So does the building of the 'separation' wall. Far from being a security barrier on Israel's recognized international borders, the wall goes deep into Palestinian territory, displacing large numbers of Palestinians, isolating tens of thousands from their lands, trapping around 30,000 Palestinians in towns and villages and 220,000 in East Jerusalem on Israel's side of the wall, and effectively annexing most of the fertile farm land of the West Bank and its limited water resources to Israel.

Student and academic life has been particularly hard hit, with students often spending hours every day at checkpoints, unable to reach their schools or universities. Foreign academics, including Palestinians not from the West Bank, are forced to apply for visas from the Israeli authorities and recently these have been increasingly denied.

If the 'separation' wall had been built in the interests of security, it would have been built on Israel's green line border, not deep within Palestinian territory. Checkpoints, barriers and roadblocks would be on Israel's borders and not scattered throughout the West Bank. In the West Bank more than 600 of these barriers divide every Palestinian city from each other, and also separate them from their hinterlands. And Israel would be encouraging the development of a flourishing Palestinian economy as a viable alternative to the



The map reveals a section of the Separation Barrier in the West Bank. The red line shows the completed route, the purple line the planned route, and the green line the 1949 Armistice boundary. Dashed lines show further planned routes.

poverty, degradation and sheer lack of hope which its policies inevitably foster.

Israel's 'withdrawal' from Gaza is worthless, as it continues to control the movements of people, goods and finance to and from it. In legal terms it remains occupied territory.

How can we make sense of one of the longest lasting occupations of recent times? We are faced with the systematic fragmenting of Palestinian society, an attempt to break the will of the Palestinians – what Baruch Kimmerling has called 'politicide'. In my view, the best framework for understanding the realities beneath the occupation is the 'colonial settler state'. Israel is *sui generis*, but is behaving in a similar fashion to other colonial states in the past, where foreign settlers are in dispute with the indigenous population, variously expelling them, exploiting them, classifying them, fragmenting them and oppressing them. Palestinian citizens of Israel – around one million of them – are formally equal; in reality they are systematically discriminated against. But real colonial-style oppression is reserved for those in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Of course there are specificities to the situation that are not paralleled elsewhere. Although Zionism was a 'settler' philosophy, committed to 'redeeming' the land, most Jews who came to Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s did so as refugees, fleeing fascist oppression and finally extermination, not as citizens of some imperial power. So Zionism became Janus-faced, representing liberation for Jews – but at the expense of the indigenous population, the Palestinians. Its ideology

of liberation, rebirth, regeneration, and return was at the expense of the Palestinians, 750,000 of whom were expelled or fled in 1947-49, and never allowed to return.

The occupation in 1967 fuelled a messianic fundamentalism and a movement of settlers into the newly occupied lands – first into the illegally annexed East Jerusalem. Jerusalem was later illegally declared the capital of Israel – 'complete and united'. The settlement movement may have been driven by fundamentalists, but it has been supported and reinforced by every government since 1967 – indeed most heavily during the Oslo years. Over time, large swathes of the West Bank have been settled or earmarked for later Jewish settlement, and their inhabitants displaced wherever necessary, the land *de facto* incorporated into Israel, inhabited by Jews who've been given financial incentives to settle and who – of course – retain full citizenship rights in Israel. Indeed, if you drive from Tel Aviv to Ariel or Jerusalem near Ma'ale Adumim you drive on Israeli-only roads and are not even aware that you have crossed the internationally recognized green-line border.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, are deprived of any existence not mediated by Israel – no movement of people to or from the outside world, no import or export of goods without Israeli permission (and Israel collects – and is currently withholding – all import taxes and duties due on such goods). What very limited employment there is of Palestinians in Israeli enterprises is either illegal, or takes place in special industrial enclaves where workers are paid well below the Israeli minimum wage. But generally Israel (unlike apartheid South Africa, with which there are many analogies), eschews Palestinian labour, preferring around a quarter of a million traditional migrant labourers who can be simply expelled when surplus to requirements.

What is to be done? Here the international community's failure to enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention or United Nations resolutions with regard to the occupation is a festering sore, creating cynicism and feeding extremism in the region.

The world needs to put an end to the occupation, and help negotiate a solution that recognizes and accommodates the legitimate desire of Israelis to live in security, gives Palestinians the rights to self-determination with full access to Arab Jerusalem as their capital, and provides a just and fair solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. It doesn't seem much to ask.

Richard Kuper is acting chair of Jews for Justice for Palestinians, but the views expressed here are his own.

You will find lots of useful maps of the occupied territories and other information on the websites below from the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, StopTheWall, the United Nations, and Occupation Magazine.

- www.btselem.org
- www.stopthewall.org
- www.ochaopt.org
- www.kibush.co.il

History's top ten boycotts: apartheid in Israel?

In the last issue, Andrew Trigg described Israel as an 'apartheid' state. Joy Wolfe, whose husband recently graduated with an MPhil from the OU Business School, disagreed. Here is her reply

It would appear that some people are never prepared to accept the reality that the last thing Israel can be accused of is being an 'apartheid' state. It is probably one of the most inclusive countries in the entire world, with all religions and a myriad of nationalities among its citizens.

Non-Jews make up 20 per cent of Israel's citizens, and they enjoy full citizen's rights. Israeli law does not differentiate between Israeli citizens based on ethnicity. In Israel, Arabs possess the same rights as other Israelis, whether they are Jews, Christians or Druze. These rights include suffrage and political representation. The Israeli Supreme Court has often ruled in favour of Arab complainants against governments.

Arabs can and do run for office – there are several Arab political parties, and Arab-Muslim legislators have voting powers. Raleb Majadele, an Arab, is the science and technology minister in Israel's cabinet and there are Arab diplomats representing Israel.

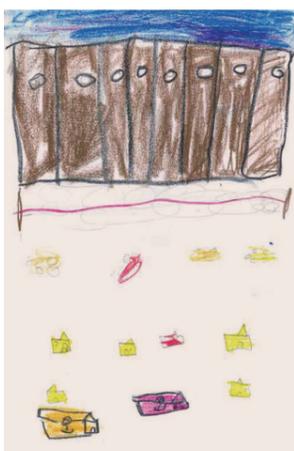
Israel is one of the few Middle Eastern states where Muslim women are allowed to vote. They have free education and good employment opportunities. If you want to level the term 'apartheid' against anyone, I would argue it should be the many Muslim countries where Jews are not welcome at all, or discriminated against, and where Muslim women are not free to develop as individuals or enjoy equal rights.

I live in hope that those readers who keep repeating their apartheid allegation will one day see the light. In the meantime, they should familiarize themselves with the many grassroots co-operation projects between Israelis and Palestinians that are mushrooming, and which could help produce a peaceful political solution.

Of course, Israel struggles with prejudices amongst its many minorities, just as all multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracies do – Britain included. As South Africa's minister for home affairs, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, said, 'The Israeli regime is not apartheid. It is a unique case of democracy!'

Is Israel an apartheid state?

A UN report by South African professor of law, John Dugard, published in January 2007, likened Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories to apartheid South Africa and recommended, on humanitarian grounds alone, that 'serious consideration' should be given to bringing the 40-year-long occupation to the international court of justice. Professor Dugard's report criticized the closed zones, the security fence that often splits villages in two and separates Palestinians from their crops, the demolitions in Palestinian areas, and the preference given to Jewish settlers – actions supported by the army. 'Israel's laws and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories certainly resemble aspects of apartheid... Can it seriously be denied that the purpose of such action is to establish and maintain domination by one racial group (Jews) over another racial group (Palestinians) and systematically oppressing them?'



Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign. Drawing by Mahmoud, 11 years old, a child facing the Separation Barrier

Poverty rises in West Bank

A UN report, published jointly in February 2007 by the World Food Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organization, revealed that 46 per cent of Gaza and West Bank households are 'food insecure' and malnourished, while another UN report labelled the occupied territories as 'being like apartheid South Africa'. The food report painted a bleak picture of human welfare in the Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza where the UN found four out of five families have reduced their expenditure on food essentials since the impact of the global boycott of the Hamas-led Palestinian authority, which the British Government endorses, took hold. The UN found that 34 per cent of households struggle to survive on an income of less than \$1.68 a day. Young children were suffering from reduced growth, vitamin deficiencies, anaemia and other conditions and illnesses associated with malnourishment.

Will we ever learn the truth about Rwanda?

Rwanda is a story from another lifetime, unable to compete with Iraq and Afghanistan. On 6 April 1994, President Juvenal Habyarimana was assassinated. During the next 100 days tens of thousands of civilians were massacred. Fergal Keane, who received an honorary degree from the Open University in 2005, argues Rwanda is now a largely forgotten sideshow

In the months leading up to the explosion of genocide in Rwanda in April 1994, human rights groups, diplomats and UN peacekeepers were warning of the danger of large-scale killing. Here is what the human rights organization Africa Watch wrote:

'The perpetrators, high within government circles, had made meticulous plans. A radio station under their control, Radio Mille Collines, had been whipping up anti-Tutsi hysteria for months. Secret arms caches were kept ready for use by government soldiers and the party militia, the core cadre of which had been trained in the tactics of slaughter. Lists of Tutsis and their Hutu sympathizers had been compiled for targeting. Only a trigger was needed.'

None of this would have escaped the attention of the leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, Major General Paul Kagame. Like everybody else watching Rwanda closely, he would have been well aware that Rwanda was a tinderbox. Any violent action by a group linked to the Tutsi minority could provoke a terrible response from the Hutu extremists.

And it is this that makes recent allegations from the French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière so potentially devastating if proved to be true. It is an important 'if'. As yet, nobody has seen the evidence that Judge Bruguière has gathered, let alone tested it in open court. What we have had are leaks, including one that came shortly before the tenth anniversary of the genocide, a development many observers believed was more than coincidental, and which infuriated Rwanda as survivors prepared to mourn the dead. In essence, Paris is alleging that Paul Kagame and senior colleagues not only murdered two heads of state (Burundi's president was also travelling on the plane) but



A sign outside a genocide memorial church indicates that 5000 were killed here in the genocide of 1994

threw a match on a bonfire they knew to be soaked in petrol.

When the French first made these charges several years ago, President Kagame reacted with outrage. One consequence was a Rwandan commission of inquiry into the role of France in supporting the old genocidal regime. French support for the Hutu regime has been well documented. It included military and intelligence support that helped keep President Juvénal Habyarimana in power. Human rights groups have criticized the French for failing to conduct any top-level investigation into the country's links with the genocidal forces.

Some observers and supporters of Mr

Kagame will see the latest French allegations as an attempt to distract attention from France's own role in 1994. Judge Bruguière is a man renowned for his toughness and independence of mind. Over the past decade he has emerged as probably the leading anti-terrorist judge in Europe. But given the secrecy surrounding the Bruguière investigation, apart from his selected leaks to the French media, it has been impossible for observers to get any idea of what further evidence he may have gathered.

Will any of this ever come before a French or United Nations court? The short-term verdict must be that it is highly unlikely. The head of the UN tribunal has already declared the

assassination of President Habyarimana to be outside the court's mandate. Investigators who did look at the matter for the UN have claimed their inquiries were shut down on orders from above.

The UN court's mandate finishes in two years and people close to the process believe there is little chance of any indictments against Paul Kagame or any other Rwandan Patriotic Front representative before then. Given the past record of French support for the Hutu state, there isn't the remotest possibility of any Rwandan co-operation with a judicial process launched from Paris.

An independent inquiry would not alter the fact that a campaign of extermination was launched against the Tutsi minority and moderate Hutus. But just as we have discovered in painful detail how the genocide was planned and carried out by Hutu extremists, we need to know who was behind the killing of the Hutu president. Was it hardline Hutus opposed to power sharing with Tutsis, as many believed at the time of the genocide, or was it, as Judge Bruguière alleges, the Rwandan Patriotic Front? An independent UN inquiry with full judicial powers might have a chance of determining the truth. Even then it is not certain.

But let me finish on a note of cold realism. I don't believe it will happen. Realpolitik will see to that. Rwanda is a story from another lifetime, haunting those who were close to it, but unable to compete with the political demands of Iraq and Afghanistan. The world is preoccupied with other things. Rwanda is a sideshow now.

The writer is a BBC Special Correspondent who has spent the last year writing on another African genocide, in Darfur.

Darfur and a new genocide

The current conflict in the Sudanese region of Darfur began in 1993. Darfur is the size of France and home to six million, mainly nomadic, Muslim rural people. Darfur means homeland (Dar) of the Fur – one of the region's largest ethnic groups. Darfur is now home to 14,000 aid workers, the largest humanitarian operation anywhere on Earth.

Since 1993, more than 150,000 Darfuran civilians have died through violence, and a further 250,000 have perished from disease and starvation. In May 2007, the UN estimated that nearly 3 million people had been displaced,

and a quarter of a million Darfurians had left the region mainly for the neighbouring country of Chad, where they faced further suppression. Nine out of ten villages in Darfur have been destroyed.

The UN are currently providing humanitarian assistance to over 3.6 million people, with tens of thousands more beyond the reach of humanitarian workers. There are over 14,000 aid workers helping survivors in Darfur but, since the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed in May 2006, beatings, rapes, robbery and murders against aid workers and peacekeepers have risen by 90 per cent.



A family displaced by violence shelters under a tree, IDP camp of Gereida, Darfur region, Sudan, May 2006

Zimbabwe health check

After 27 years of Robert Mugabe's rule, Zimbabwe's economy is in tatters. Between 1999 and 2006 it shrunk by 50 per cent. Since independence in 1980 the inflation rate has risen from 7 per cent to 2,600 per cent in 2007 – the highest in the world. In 2007 many people survive on grain handouts. In 2006 the price of a standard loaf of bread was Z\$250; it is now over Z\$1,000.

The country is gripped with widespread poverty. There is massive unemployment and an HIV/Aids pandemic. In June 2007, unemployment reached a record 80 per cent. Political strife, censorship, surveillance, the abuse of power, denial of justice and repression increasingly characterize the Mugabe regime (BBC, Reporters Without Borders, 2007). In 1997 the average life expectancy of a Zimbabwean woman was 65; in 2007 it is 34.

The population, officially estimated to be 12.2 million in 2006, is believed now to be only 8 million. It is estimated that 4 million people have migrated or died since the last census in 2002.

Life expectancy	36 years (men); 34 years (women)
Gross National Income per capita	US\$340
Adult HIV infection rate	35 per cent
Infant mortality rate	120/1,000 – twice the 1990 rate
Female deaths in labour in 2006	42,000



An illegal foreign exchange dealer holds a \$US10 bill and its Zimbabwe equivalent, \$Z350,000 in 2005

Why the US war on drugs in Latin America is counterproductive

Drug addiction is both a social and an individual problem. But, particularly in Latin America, a lot of other issues such as poverty, capitalism, organized crime, violence, the rights of indigenous peoples, human justice and a huge amount of money, and imperialism, are also tied up with drug distribution and addiction

Most of the world has drugs flowing in from other countries. Four countries produce the bulk of the drugs: opium in Afghanistan, and cocaine from Peru, Bolivia and Colombia.

In 2000 the world spent as much on food as on illegal and legal drugs put together. For narcotic drugs in 2003, at the point of production, \$13 billion exchanged hands at a retail value of \$94 billion. The 'street price' paid by the consumer was an astonishing \$320 billion. The producer got a mere 4 per cent of the income generated – the rest went to the middle-men. This explains the entry of organized crime in the business.

Nixon declared 'war on drugs' and drugs as Public Enemy Number One in 1971. Since then American interference in Latin America has increased considerably. The policy was to destroy coca plantations so that the drug problem could have its 'final solution'. Observers of American policy will not be surprised by the historically rooted approach. The American preference to seek military solutions abroad to domestic problems and impose its version of capitalistic and democratic models on the rest of the world unilaterally, to serve its economic interests, shapes all policy agendas.

The war on drugs was thus to be fought first on foreign soil, often at the expense of the economic, social and cultural characteristics prevailing on the ground in Latin American countries. A 'one size fits all' policy was created.

Coca has a special cultural significance for the indigenous Andean people. Using coca leaves in drinks or social exchanges or chewing coca are part of both the cultural heritage and social fabric. The assumption that any coca grower is the first link in drug production is wrong. This confusion probably first arose in 1961 when the UN introduced the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. This listed both coca and cocaine as substances to be controlled. But now, some 45 years down the line, one can legitimately wonder if this confusion serves some vested interests. Of late, Bolivia has been pressing for deletion of coca from this list. 'Coca yes, cocaine no' is the slogan of Bolivia's newly elected president, Evo Morales.

In the 1980s, coca plantation production in Bolivia and Peru declined due to American pressure, but the result was to transfer production beyond the two countries' borders – to Colombia. Colombia is now the major producer of coca for cocaine production.

In 2000, America reacted to Colombian coca expansion by declaring a new draconian policy. 'Plan Colombia' was designed to eradicate Colombian cultivation through the use of force. America financed the operation by training military and police in Colombia to fight the drug cartels, and by deploying planes and helicopters to spray the area under coca cultivation with herbicides. This forced changes in land use without providing any viable alternative, changes that resulted in social misery on a massive scale.

End child exploitation

In their new book, 50 Reasons to Buy Fair Trade, Miles Litvinoff and John Madeley show how all consumers can benefit from fair trade, and how their actions can improve and even save lives. Millions of children worldwide are exploited, trafficked and enslaved by adults for money, and some are injured or die as a result

Work is not always bad for children, as long as it is light, undertaken willingly, and does not interfere with their health, safety or education. Such work is allowed under international law for children aged 12 and over.

But the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that 126 million children aged 5–14 work in hazardous and illegal conditions worldwide – 73 million of them are younger than 10. Many are trapped in forced and slave labour, debt bondage and prostitution.

Poverty is the overriding reason why children are exploited. With adult wages often not enough to feed, clothe and house a family, children are sent out to work. Coffee, cocoa (chocolate), bananas, oranges and sugar are among the food industry supply chains that exploit child labour the most. Other sectors include cotton and textiles, carpets and rugs, and jewellery and sportsballs.

Cocoa is one of the worst cases. A few years ago evidence emerged about the trafficking of boys and youths as forced labourers on cocoa farms in West Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, which produces almost half the cocoa for the world's chocolate industry, more than 200,000 children were estimated as working in dangerous conditions on cocoa plantations, many of them trafficked from Burkina Faso and Mali.

There were reports of boys working as young as nine. Many were never paid. Beatings were common. Boys who tried to escape were sometimes killed.

'I travelled over 300 miles from home ... I worked on a cocoa plantation in Côte d'Ivoire ... from dawn till dusk tending and collecting the cocoa pods,' said Drissa from Mali, who was enslaved as a teenager. 'I was weak from hunger. If I slowed in



Doctor's surgery in Petare, a poor neighbourhood Barrio in E. Caracas

The newly created Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in Fort Benning, Georgia, is the training ground for counterinsurgency personnel. Here sniper training, commando and psychological warfare techniques, military intelligence and interrogation tactics (i.e. torture techniques) are taught. But this kind of American intervention is not new. Such training was originally provided in Panama in 1946. Since then Latin America has seen the emergence of twelve dictators including Manuel Noriega of Panama, who fell out with America later on, Rios Mont of Guatemala and Hugo Benzer of Bolivia. The graduates of these training institutions – some 60,000 by now – have been against the leftists in Latin America and have deliberately targeted coca cultivators, i.e. the poor and the indigenous.

As far back as 1997, Amnesty International declared the American 'war on drugs' to be in violation of indigenous human rights. The war effectively displaced people, who were unable to withstand the ensuing violence, from the hinterland to cities in search of livelihood, making many refugees in their own countries.

Now, even granting America the benefit of doubt that its sole aim is to eradicate coca plantation, the simple economics do not seem to be working out. And it is hard to believe that America is unaware of it. In 2004 the black market price of coca increased ten-fold and attracted new farmers to coca plantation. That year a hectare of coca gave \$7,500, a hectare of cocoa \$1,000 and a hectare of coffee \$600. Added to this were the facts of the rising demand for cocaine in America and the near or below subsistence level of survival of Colombian or Peruvian peasants. Cultivation now becomes comprehensible.

Evaluation of Plan Colombia has been going on since 1986. In both 1986 and 1994, the RAND corporation, appointed by the US Government, concluded that neither eradication

nor interdiction (intercepting the drugs in transit) had any effect on the quantity of drugs entering America or its street price. Further, it proved that such military interventions abroad were 23 times costlier than providing treatment to drug addicts at home. Interdiction was 11 times costlier. A recent study by California University showed that one dollar spent on treatment saves seven future dollars towards the maintenance of law and order.

America benefits both from the drug traffic and from Plan Colombia. The American beneficiaries in the drug traffic are the chemical companies who manufacture chemicals to process cocaine from coca and the banks based in America who launder drug money. Plan Colombia serves the project of colonization indirectly and enriches companies who supply the herbicides to be sprayed under Plan Colombia directly. Also, since the war on drugs, the American prison industry has thrived on the arrests of drug traffickers and addicts.

The obvious inefficacy of the Plan has prompted some soul searching in Washington. Following his re-election as the Colombian president in 2006, Alvaro Uribe requested a further increase of American military aid under Plan Colombia. A few members of the US Congress wrote a letter pointing out that the expansion in cultivation occurred despite a record number of hectares having been sprayed in 2005. The letter explained: 'Currently, 80 per cent of US assistance goes towards military/police and fumigation efforts, while only 20 per cent addresses economic assistance and strengthens the rule of law. This distribution of assistance has failed either to break the cycle of rural poverty or to remove economic incentives that favor drug cultivation ...'

Although the production of coca takes place in the three countries mentioned, Mexico is the main country through which drugs travel to America. At present, 70–90 per cent of the drugs coming into the USA come via Mexico. Between January 2005 and the autumn of 2006, Mexico has seen more than 2,000 drug-related murders.

However, America and the Mexican Government interpret the rise in violence to be a measure of the success of anti-drug policy. This is disputable since most of the killed are innocent victims, and the drug inflow remains unaffected.

Once again, the problem is exacerbated by false prioritizations – America should be placing the emphasis upon treating its own addicts at home rather than forcing the obliging governments of Mexico or Colombia to wage wars against their own people. At the end of 2006, it is estimated that while 8.1 million Americans need de-addiction treatment, only 1.4 million get it. It is more long lasting and socially and economically cheaper to focus on this side of the drugs problem than to implement a policy based on the premise: we got a problem because you supply drugs.



The book, *50 Reasons to Buy Fair Trade*, was published by Pluto Press in February 2007. *Society Matters* is pleased to publish, with permission, two edited extracts that deal with the exploitation of children and the production of sports goods. Each account explores how you can help the planet. See page 22 for the second extract. There is a third extract in *Society Matters Extra*.

day or more, often suffering pesticide exposure and sexual harassment.

HRW reported that some boys had attached harnesses to themselves, hooked themselves to pulleys on cables from which banana stalks were hung and used this pulley system to drag approximately twenty banana-laden stalks, weighing between 50 and 100 pounds each, over one mile from the fields to the packing plants five or six times a day.

In the unfair banana trade, wholesalers and retailers take most of the profits. Plantations get little more than 10 per cent of the retail price, and their workers just a fraction.

The problem of child labour needs large-scale political and economic solutions. Campaigning groups such as Anti-Slavery International and Save the Children are working for change.

But individual action is important too. By switching to, and staying with, fair trade produce we can help low-income households earn a decent living, so that they don't have to send their children to work. We can ensure that no child has been exploited or trafficked to produce what we buy. And we put pressure on the unfair traders by showing that, as consumers, we are committed to, and expect, seriously ethical purchasing.

All Fairtrade-certified food, drink and other produce is guaranteed not to involve exploitative child labour. The FAIRTRADE symbol means that children aged under 15 are not employed at all. Older children (15–18) may only work if this does not harm their education or their social, moral or physical development, and if they are given non-hazardous tasks.

Why do we punish the victims of slavery?

Britain has created a legal framework that makes it virtually impossible to take action against trafficking argues Aidan McQuade, the Director of Anti-Slavery International

There are slaves in Britain today. Impossible, most people would say. Not so. It is just that they are hidden away. It is a problem that both the police and the Home Office acknowledge, but which is kept out of the political spotlight because of contradictions between the Government's attitude to immigration – on which it seeks to placate populist opinion – and its avowed determination to crackdown on people trafficking.

What do we mean by slaves? A slave is anyone who is forced to work through coercion or deception, for little or no pay, and who is controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or threats. The International Labour Organisation estimates that there are at least 360,000 people living in slavery in industrialized countries. Two-thirds have been coerced into forced labour by people traffickers in a worldwide industry worth at least \$32 billion a year. This is plainly big business.

No one knows how many of these people are in the UK. There are thought to be thousands of people in Britain who are slaves today. Most of them are caught in deliberately sprung debt traps. They have been tricked into taking a loan for as little as the cost of medicine for a sick child – or more commonly to buy passage into the UK.

To repay the debt, many are forced to work long hours, seven days a week, up to 365 days a year. They receive basic food and shelter as 'payment' for their work, but may never pay off the loan. Such unfortunate people are to be found in agriculture, construction, cleaning and domestic work, food processing and packaging, care and nursing, and the restaurant trade.

British politicians are happy to fulminate about the iniquities of people trafficking. But they have created a legal and political framework that makes it virtually impossible to take sustained and effective action against the criminal gangs who undertake the trade.

After the incident in which 23 Chinese cockle-pickers in the thrall of a gangmaster lost their lives in Morecambe Bay, the Government made trafficking for forced labour a criminal offence. A licensing system came into force in 2006 and the Government is setting up a UK Human Trafficking Centre with a mandate to pursue trafficking for both labour as well as sexual exploitation.



Title: Slavery – foundations. The bridge is the Forth Road Bridge in Edinburgh

Yet despite these positive initiatives, there has not been a single successful prosecution for the offence since it was introduced in 2004. Nor is there any special assistance available to people who are trafficked for forced labour. Most mystifyingly, the Government still has not signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, which would ensure that people trafficked into forced labour are provided with minimum standards of protection and support. More than 30 other European countries have signed.

Why this lamentable failure? A central reason is that the investigation of trafficking is fatally hampered by the UK immigration policy and the 'prism' of organized immigration crime, through which trafficking is seen at the policy level.

For the police to have any prospect of catching those who run international networks, they must have the co-operation of the victims. However, when the victims have irregular status in the country, there is limited incentive for them to co-operate with the police. The police cannot guarantee them protection, access

most likely to have happened as a result of coercion from the traffickers.

What all this means is that trafficking people to the UK remains a high-profit, low-risk business for those criminal gangs who organize it. In countries such as Germany and Italy, which have signed the European Convention Against Trafficking – and where minimum standards of protection to the victims of human trafficking now exist – prosecutions have increased. In the UK there has still not been a single prosecution.

This situation has always been unacceptable from a human-rights perspective. What is clear now is that it is unjustifiable from a law-enforcement perspective as well.

Society Matters is grateful to Aidan McQuade and the Independent. A version of this article was first published in the Independent on 27 December 2006.

Slavery: the facts



A Negro Hung Alive by the Ribs to a Gallows. William Blake

The abolition of slavery in 1807 did not result in immediate slave emancipation. It was another 26 years before Parliament passed the necessary legislation, and it was not until 1838 that the slaves of the West Indies were freed. Abolition had its roots not just in white opposition, but crucially in African protest and organized revolt. For decades prior to 1807, slaves had been agitating for their freedom. In 1772, for example, Lord Mansfield's edict brought the 'sons of Africa' to Britain to fight for the abolition of the trade, among them Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana, leading activists in the abolitionist campaign. In 1792, 400,000 Britons boycotted slave-grown sugar.

The Slave Trade Act of 1807 was limited in its scope. The Act prohibited British subjects and residents of the UK or any of its islands, colonies, dominions, or territories, from engaging in the transatlantic slave trade from the shores of Africa. The Act did not, however, prohibit the inter-colonial slave trade in the British Caribbean islands and the Americas.

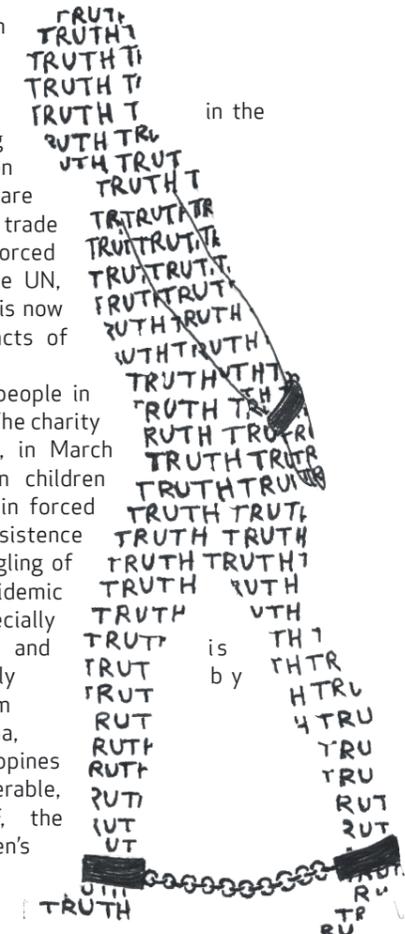
The 1833 Emancipation Act allocated Caribbean plantation owners £20 million in compensation, equivalent to 40 per cent of the then national budget. Emancipation was 'squeezed' out of the system, with slaves given 'apprentice' status, which effectively meant they continued to work and toil without pay for many years. Freed slaves received nothing in assistance, and continued to work in slavery-like conditions long after 'emancipation'. It is possible that Britain made more money out of slavery after the Slave Trade Act of 1807 and the 1833 Emancipation Act, which made owning slaves illegal. The enslaved were freed only in the West Indies and Cape Town; the last Acts abolishing slavery were in Sierra Leone in 1927 and the Gold Coast in 1928.

The slave trade lasted 300 years; 20 million Africans were enslaved. A slave sold in 1760 could fetch £50 (over £4,000 in today's money), an amount that would provide a comfortable life for one person for over a year. Over 1.25 million West Africans

died on their way from Africa to the Caribbean.

Today, each year, over two million people world join the growing millions, mostly women and children, who are recruited into the sex trade and other forms of forced labour. According to the UN, no country in the world is now immune from the impacts of human trafficking.

In 2007, 27 million people in the world are enslaved. The charity War on Want revealed, in March 2007, that 132 million children worldwide are trapped in forced labour in barely subsistence conditions. Illegal smuggling of people has reached 'epidemic proportions', especially in southeast Asia, and fuelled mostly the sex trade. Girls from poor rural areas of Burma, Cambodia and the Philippines are especially vulnerable, according to UNICEF, the United Nation's children's agency. Many end up working as prostitutes in the USA, Australia and Japan.



Scottish elections and the question of poverty

Gerry Mooney, Social Sciences Staff Tutor, argues that the new Scottish administration will be judged on how successful it is in reducing inequality and poverty in the new Scottish political landscape

From the radio on my desk a heated debate on BBC Radio Scotland is booming out. Two leading members of the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish National Party (SNP) are debating the aftermath of the May Scottish Parliament elections. The SNP had marginally eclipsed Labour as the major political party in Scotland; it had secured the largest number of MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament). A second outcome, perhaps less significant, was also being debated: the 'shambles' that many saw as a reflection of the complex voting system in place for the election, which resulted in well over 100,000 'spoilt' ballot papers. But crucially, for the first time in half a century, Labour had been replaced at a general election in Scotland as the dominant party.

For many commentators, the rise in support for the SNP only partially reflected a renewed sense of 'Scottishness'. For some it was arguably more of a sign of opposition to the war in Iraq. It also reflected concerns about the 'bread and butter' issues that are often central to elections – health care and education provision for example. In Scotland there is mounting evidence of widespread public anger over the privatization of public services. In a survey of voters conducted for *BBC Scotland* in April 2007, pollsters ICM asked respondents to score policies from 1 to 10 with 10 representing the top policy to be followed. The most popular – 'to ensure that all state schools and hospitals are built and run by public bodies rather than private companies' – received an emphatic score of 8.10.

A range of social policies received 'top billing' in this survey, but for some observers all of these issues can be traced to an increasing concern about poverty and inequality. Ensuring that the question of poverty featured prominently in the Scottish Elections was an important factor behind a new book, *Poverty in Scotland 2007*. The book brought together a range of campaigning organizations, researchers and academics, including academics from the OU, and reminded people, if such a reminder was needed, that poverty remained a major issue in contemporary Scotland. In 2007, 910,000 people in Scotland live in poverty (18 per cent of the population). Over 240,000 are children (23 per cent of all children).

While there has been some progress in reducing the numbers of children and pensioners in poverty since 1997, no reduction in the number of working-age adults without children who live in poverty has been made. Alongside children,

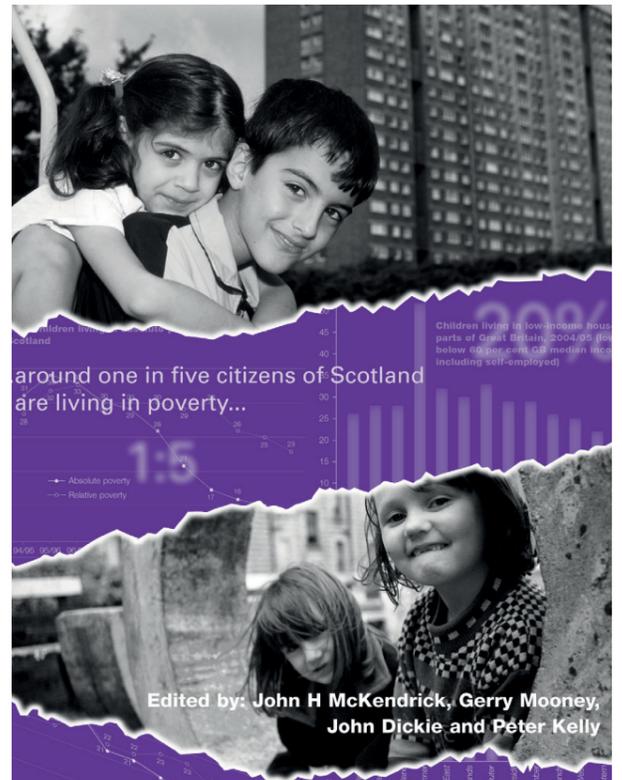
certain groups of people are at particular risk of poverty. These include young adults, lone parents, people affected by disability, ethnic minorities and asylum seekers.

The scale and intensity of poverty varies from place to place. One fifth of Scotland's poverty is in Glasgow city, which has a disproportionate share of Scotland's poorest areas. However, large numbers of people in poverty live in areas with lower concentrations of poverty. Amidst claims that it is a 'booming' city, evidence that more people are income deprived in Edinburgh than in any other local authority area except Glasgow and North Lanarkshire may come as some surprise. This serves to illustrate a deepening polarization and growing income inequality. While poverty is most prevalent in urban areas, one in ten of the rural population (100,000 people) are income deprived.

Detailing the extent of poverty is one thing. Explaining the reasons for it is a different task and it is in relation to this that there is growing controversy in Scotland today. The contributors to the book were unanimous in firmly rejecting any argument that individual behaviour is the primary factor explaining poverty. Yet, such arguments rarely disappear. They are, unfortunately, a recurring theme in debates today, as they have been in the past.

In Scotland, some journalists and academics have been arguing of late that 'poverty will always be with us', that there is a need for a 'non-material' approach to poverty, that it reflects a 'cultural and spiritual malaise'. These ideas chime well with other arguments, increasingly influential in both UK and Scottish governments, that focus on socio-psychological factors. There is an emerging 'happiness industry', which would have us accept that 'unhappy attitudes' are holding people 'back', while a related brand of pseudo-psychological thinking has emerged from the Scottish Centre for Confidence and Well-Being. It has bemoaned the 'Scots' crisis of confidence', which it claims is undermining attempts to transform Scotland as a modern competitive nation. It is a sad (dare I say unhappy?) state of affairs to note that these ideas have found a ready home in the Scottish Executive, not least with ex-First Minister Jack McConnell.

It would be a mistake to dismiss such thinking as media sound bites, merely political rhetoric. As far as questions of poverty and inequality are concerned, however, such ideas matter immensely. They bring with them enormous



Poverty in Scotland is published by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG, 2007), in association with the Scottish Poverty Information Unit, the Poverty Alliance and the Open University in Scotland and is available from the CPAG at: www.cpag.org.uk/publications

consequences for poor people and other disadvantaged groups across society. Against such thinking, campaigners and academics struggle to shift the emphasis toward the structural and material causes of poverty.

Under a new Scottish Prime Minister it remains to be seen whether Gordon Brown's British Government will renew its commitment to reducing poverty in Scotland. The prospects may not be encouraging given that Gordon Brown's final budget income tax cut in March 2007 was at the expense of the poorest in society.

Poverty is no residual phenomenon but the daily lived experience of many millions of people across the UK. Understanding and addressing poverty means not only challenging dangerous and backward thinking but also moving the analytical and explanatory lens 'upstream' to focus more on the activities of the rich and powerful and on the underlying processes that generate so much wealth – but yet at the same time produce so much poverty.

The truth about rural Britain

The British countryside is polarized between rich and poor and is characterized by rising levels of bigotry and racism, according to research by the Young Foundation. One in five households in 2006 live below the poverty line; 23 per cent of rural children live in poverty.

The highest proportion of low-wage workers in England live in rural areas, but house prices mean that many rural dwellers can not afford the cheapest properties in their own neighbourhood. Since 2005, in England, the proportion of homeless families rose by 30 per cent. In North Cornwall the average house price in 2006 was 14 times the equivalent local average income. More than 20 per cent of Britain's inhabitants live in the countryside and, according to the Rural Communities Commission, by 2011, 46 per cent of households will be unable to afford to buy or rent.

Racism and mental ill health are increasing, while the take-up of access to higher education and public services remains low. Northumberland, Devon and Cornwall experienced big rises in racially motivated incidents. Between 2001 and 2006, North Wales witnessed a 400 per cent increase in racially motivated incidents. Areas covered by the top ten police forces for racial incidents have an ethnic minority population of just 5 per cent. Rural areas are also experiencing increases in mental ill health accompanied by declining consultation rates. The Shetland Isles, for example, have the highest male suicide rate in Britain – double the national average.

Distance to services and geographical factors were found to be a factor in the growing inequalities, but despite a boom in the rural economy the less affluent, faced by cutbacks in public service provision, were losing out.



An elderly disabled man searches for fuel for his fire from the roadside, in an area of rural poverty in southwest Wales

UK children's well-being hits rock bottom

The government's millennium goal of halving child poverty by 2010 has suffered a huge setback. In 2005–6, 3.8 million UK children lived in relative poverty – defined as households on less than 60 per cent of average income net of housing costs – a rise of 200,000 on the previous year, and almost a third of UK children. The figures also showed that over 12.7 million people now live in relative poverty, an increase of 600,000 on the year before.

Since 1998–99, 600,000 children in the UK have been lifted out of relative poverty. But to reach the government's target a further 1.1 million children must be lifted above the poverty line in the next 4 years. The government blamed an increase in the number of self-employed people falling below the poverty line. In his March 2007 budget, Gordon Brown announced increases in tax credits and benefits designed to lift 200,000 children out of poverty, but the millennium goal is rapidly slipping out of reach.

The official figures came a month after a seminal UNICEF report* on child welfare across 21 industrialized countries. UNICEF ranked Britain bottom of the league table on child well-being and noted this was especially related to the number of children living in relative poverty. Britain was ranked in the bottom third on five of the six UNICEF dimensions of child welfare, especially in relation to child poverty. In addition to material well-being, the dimensions compared data on health and safety, education, and peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks. UNICEF's report is a wake-up call to the fact that, despite being a rich country, the UK is failing children and young people in a number of crucial ways. Interestingly, UNICEF asked children for their own perceptions of their well-being. Britain came bottom of the 21 countries in the league table.

* An overview of child well-being in rich countries, UNICEF, 2007.

Cops to kissagrams, barmaids to bouncers: the role of women in the UK security industry

We observed people having parts of their ears bitten off, being chased down the street with scaffold poles, and being threatened with kettles of boiling water. And that was just the women. Louise Westmarland, Lecturer in Social Policy, reports on the first UK study into women bouncers

Has your bank been turned into a trendy wine bar? Over the past ten years, pubs and clubs have increasingly become an important feature of UK city centre development. Has the increasing numbers of female door security staff in the UK night-time economy meant the emergence of a new gender order? Could women train and redesign their bodies in order to break into what is often seen as one of the last masculine outposts, where men use intimidation and threat in their occupational roles? Are women now cashing in on their physical capital to cross gender boundaries at work?

The evidence suggests a recent rise in women bouncers. For example, in Liverpool it was reported that women accounted for between 10 and 15 per cent of Merseyside's 5,000 door staff, compared to less than 2 per cent in 1995.

The study had its roots in the increase of interest in 'the body' in social sciences. But in the past, researchers have tended to concentrate on philosophical problems, such as 'mind/body dualism', rather than the 'dirty hands' experiences of physical, violent occupations. The fieldwork, which took place over two and a half years, was a collaborative venture with Dick Hobbs of the LSE, and was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It was completed in the summer of 2006.

The fieldwork involved conducting taped interviews with 50 women working as door staff in five British cities; in some cases accompanying police and Local Authority licensing officers as they carried out their duties, and often observing women working as bouncers in bars and clubs. One of the researchers did, in fact, train and work briefly as a bouncer. We also observed and interviewed staff who were involved in training door security staff, police officers, security firm proprietors and managers of licensed venues.

The fieldwork was carried out mostly at night as researchers scoured city centre areas – such as busy night strips in Manchester, London and Cardiff – for women standing at pub and club doors in traditional black clothing, often looking 'mean', and usually with their hair cut short or tied back. If the researchers couldn't find any women, we would resort to approaching male bouncers to ask them if they knew any female security staff working the doors in the area. We were, of course, regarded with suspicion and disbelief. As part of the informal and illicit drugs economy, 'working the doors' has traditionally been a closed and 'need to know' world. Once we had assured the women that we were not from the police, Local Authority or the Security Industry Authority (SIA), we could begin conversations with them about what it was like to work in an occupation where intimidation, threats and the ejection of troublemakers is usually carried out by large muscularly enhanced men with shaven heads and a reputation for violence.

The study found that female bouncers formed a more diverse occupational group than their male equivalents in terms of age range, body type (size, shape, fitness etc.), sexuality, 'day job', family circumstances and background. In contrast to male door staff, who tend to come from a narrow range of industrial working-class occupations and are often employed for their size or strength, the previous work experience of our female interviewees included an ex-Metropolitan police officer, a woman working as a 'kissagram', a civil service customer service manager, a bus driver, a matron, a gym instructor and an engineering student. The largest group comprised what we called the 'barmaid to bouncer' women (there were 13 of these), who had trained for the more desirable and higher paid work of door security after having observed it from serving behind the bar. As well as a wide range of occupational backgrounds, the female bouncers we interviewed were of diverse ethnicities, ranged in age from 18 to 'past 50' and worked from 5 hours to over 50 hours per week.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, women bouncers do not simply act as a 'calming, diffusing' influence in violent encounters. Our evidence suggests that a significant group from within our sample were 'not bothered' by violence and treat it as a normal, everyday occurrence. Violence is part of some women's life experience. They drew upon it as part of their cultural and physical capital. One woman told us:

I think violence... It just doesn't bother me at all. It wouldn't be something that I'd be worried about... I just think, 'Well, it's nothing,' do you know what I mean?

Another reported:

A lot of people are under the impression that a guy is not going to turn around and hit a woman... but that's not the case. If you get in the way of half the guys here then they'll just smack you back out of the way unless you're prepared to defend yourself in some way. The guys don't care whether they're hitting a guy or a girl at the end of the day.

In many cases, women claimed to be working in ways that echoed the actions of male colleagues in threatening situations. We found ample evidence of female door staff willing to take part, where necessary, in violent action, despite the fact that their occupational identity would not seem to be so heavily dependent on a large, well-muscled physique. Many of the women interviewed regarded their role as equal to that of the male bouncers. One of the women explained how she would deal with a group of customers who were required to leave her club.

You just say, 'right, come on, you've had enough... come on, put your bottles down, you've got to go,' and, I mean, you use minimal force, minimal force, so you'll ask them to leave...



You've got 2,000 clients to think about; it's exactly the same way as a man would do it, exactly the same. Everyone's trained the same way... you step in and defuse a situation whether its girl on girl or guy on guy or girl on guy.

In addition to their roles as enforcers or controllers, a significant number of the women interviewed were employed for searching purposes, primarily for drugs and weapons. Licensing authorities can insist that searches are carried out and that a female member of the door team be on duty during licensed hours. Hence, using female security personnel to search female bodies has become common policy, typically in night-club venues.

The women also told us they were busy in the toilets of these clubs, as violence would often break out in the confined and crowded areas where women were queuing to use the facilities. We observed female bouncers as they attempted to maintain order in the toilet and washroom areas where illicit drugs were being taken and traded and opposing groups of women would wait to ambush each other.

Due to the increasing numbers of female customers, the employment of women as bouncers at mainstream venues (rather than those aimed at the lesbian or gay market) has increased. Male licensees expressed the view that female bouncers made their premises more 'attractive' or 'woman friendly'. Unlike their male counterparts, unsurprisingly, the majority of female bouncers were not employed for their ability to intimidate. Male pub and club owners and managers told us:

The girl at the door gives it a really soft feel, just to talk to, say 'Hiya,' it calms them down, it says to customers, 'This is a nice place, it's not violent, I'm at the door, I'm looking after you.'

In addition to their violent work, changes in policy and legislation have made female door security staff an essential and central part of the security industry, and not a mere appendage of their male counterparts. Their commercial value to the night-time economy is not in dispute. They appear to be diffusers of violence rather than instigators, and are able to search and control troublesome women customers.

Britain's happiest place

If you live in Elmbridge, Surrey, smile. A survey of more than 400 local authorities by Halifax Bank put the stockbroker town at the top of the British quality of life league table. A range of criteria from employment and income levels, house prices, and the standard of local health and education services were used in the rankings: Elmbridge was closely followed by Hart, Wokingham, Chiltern, east Dorset, south Buckinghamshire, east Hertfordshire, the Aylesbury Vale, St Albans and south Cambridgeshire. Nine of the 10 happiest places in the country to live were found in the southeast or the east of England. In the north of England, the happiest place to live was deemed to be Hambleton. Scotland's highest ranking entry was the Shetland Isles at 114th. Elsewhere, a University of Warwick study into lottery winners suggests that while money may not bring you love, it can bring increased happiness. An investigation into men and women who had won medium-sized lottery prizes of between £1,000 and £120,000 found that the sense of happiness was delayed. In the first year of winning, winners reported higher stress levels and anxieties, but once the money had been spent these doubts disappeared and well-being increased to above the levels present before the win.

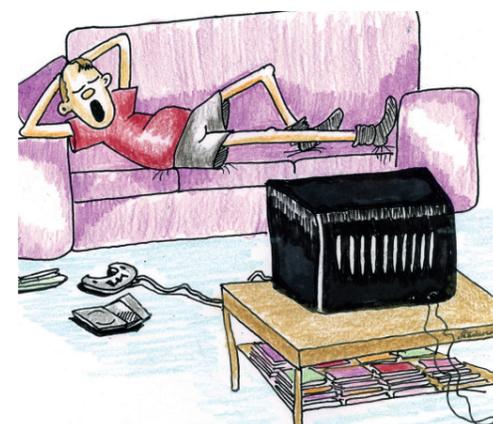
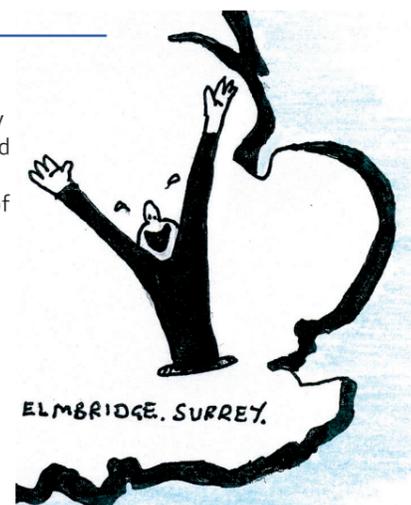


Ireland is the best place to live in the world

According to *The Economist* magazine, Ireland is the best place to live in the world. Comparing a country's wealth, health, freedom, unemployment level, the quality of its family lives, its climate, political stability and security, gender equality and community cohesion, and the strength of its traditional values, the magazine produced a league table at the end of 2006 that placed Britain in twenty-ninth place – the lowest ranking for a pre-expansion European Union nation – just behind France in twenty-fifth and Germany in twenty-sixth place. The top ten countries were Ireland, Switzerland, Norway, Luxembourg, Sweden, Australia, Iceland, Italy, Denmark and Spain. The *Economist* ranked 111 countries; Zimbabwe was at the bottom of the list.

British children are amongst the laziest and unhappiest in the world

A survey of 3,500 children from 10 countries around the world ranked Britain as the seventh least healthy nation. Between the ages of 7 and 16, the average British child spends 4,339 hours – or half a year – in front of the television or the computer. The survey found that children in the UK spend an average of 9.4 hours a week playing computer games or watching television, but less than 30 minutes a day being active. Only Indian, Russian and South African children fared worse. The healthiest country in this survey was Australia. Australians actually spend slightly more time watching television or using computers but they compensate for this by being far more active, especially in individual and organized sport. China was the second most healthy country and Germany the third.



The good life in Havana: Cuba's green revolution

Twenty years ago, following the collapse of the Soviet empire, Fidel Castro's small island faced a food crisis. Andrew Buscombe of the Independent explains how, from humble co-operative origins, a network of small urban farmers has established an organic revolution that is feeding the nation

To the right lay revolutionary tomatoes and to the left lay revolutionary lettuces, while in the glass in my hand – filled to the brim and frothing with vitality – was the juice from revolutionary mangoes. It was thick, unfiltered and fabulously sweet. It was also organic.

'Yes, it is very good. It's all natural,' said Miguel Salcines Lopez, his brow dotted with sweat from the midday sun, as he raised a glassful to his lips. 'Growing food in this way is much more interesting. It is much more intelligent,' he adds.

Almost five decades after the now ailing Fidel Castro and his comrades overthrew the dictator Fulgencio Batista and seized power in Cuba, another revolution, largely unnoticed by most visitors and tourists, is well underway on this Caribbean island. And Mr Salcines and his small urban farm at Alamar, an eastern suburb of the capital, Havana, are at the centre of a social transformation that may turn out to be as important as anything else that has been achieved during Castro's 48 years in power.

Spurred into action by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disastrous impact this had on its subsidized economy, the government of Cuba was forced to take radical steps to feed its people. The solution it chose – essentially unprecedented both within the developed and undeveloped world – was to establish a self-sustaining system of agriculture that by necessity was essentially organic.

Laura Enriquez, a sociologist at the University of California Berkeley, who has written extensively on the subject of Latin American agriculture, said, 'What happened in Cuba was remarkable. It was remarkable that they decided to prioritise food production. Other countries in the region took the neo-liberal option and exported "what they were good at" and imported food. The Cubans went for food security and part of that was prioritizing small farmers.'

Cuba is filled with more than 7,000 urban allotments or 'organoponicos', which fill perhaps as many as 81,000 acres. They have been established on tiny plots of land in the centre of tower-block estates or between the crumbling colonial homes that fill Havana. One afternoon I visited a small garden of tomatoes and spinach that had been dug just a few hundred yards from the Plaza de la Revolution, a vast concrete square where Castro and his senior regime members annually oversee Cuba's May Day parade. More than 200 gardens in Havana supply its citizens with more than 90 per cent of their fruit and vegetables.

Of all these gardens, the Vivero Organoponico Alamar is considered one of the most successful. Established less than 10 years ago, the 0.7 hectare plot employs about 25 people and provides a range of healthy, low-cost food to the local community. The handwritten blackboard at the shop attached to the garden listed mangoes at the equivalent of 2 pence a pound, black beans at about 15 pence and plantains for 12 pence. Everything looked as if it had been picked just that morning, which it probably had.

Mr Salcines led a brief tour of his garden, stopping off to point out things of which he was particularly proud. There was the shed of tomatoes that had produced five tons of fruit in six months, a self-designed metal pyramid structure that he claimed focused natural energy and benefited not just the plants but the gardeners as well; a worm farm wriggling with California Red worms and the bright marigolds planted at the end of each row of vegetables to attract bees and butterflies. He was also very proud of his crop of splendid,

shiny mint. 'The Hotel Nacional [Havana's state-run landmark hotel once frequented by the likes of Al Capone] uses our mint for its mojitos [a mint-based cocktail], he said. 'It's because it's organic.'

The economics of various organoponicos differ. At the Metropolitana Organoponico in the city centre, two of the four workers who tend the plot said that the land was owned by the government and that everything grown there was split 50/50. 'It's very good. It means that food does not have to be brought into the city,' said one of the men.



At Alamar, Mr Salcines said that once the workers had grown their set quota of food and given that to the government, the surplus was theirs to sell with the profits then divided among them. Such a sense of co-operation – along with the free meals for the workers – added to the heady sense of idealism at Alamar, the sort of socialist idealism that has earned Cuba many international supporters over the years, despite Castro's dictatorial rule and his repression of political dissent.

Such farms barely existed in the late 1980s. Back then, Cuba's economy was extraordinarily reliant on subsidies from its political older brother, the Soviet Union. Its agriculture was designed with one aim in mind – namely to produce as much sugar cane as possible, which the Soviets bought at more than five times the market price, in addition to purchasing 95 per cent of its citrus crop and 73 per cent of its nickel. In exchange, the Soviets provided Cuba with 63 per cent of its food imports and 90 per cent of its petrol. Such a relationship made Cuba extraordinarily vulnerable. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, such subsidies halted almost overnight. Suddenly, the future looked bleak.

Nowhere was the impact felt more strongly than in the stomachs of the ordinary people. Figures produced by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) suggest that the daily calorie intake of the average Cuban fell from about 2,600 calories a day in the late 1980s to between 1,000 and 1,500 by 1993. Essentially, people had to get by on about half the food they had been eating.

With no subsidies and limited resources, the Cuban regime took the decision to look inwards. Ceasing to organize its economy around the export of 'tropical products' and the import of food, it decided to maximize food production. By necessity, this meant a back-to-basics approach; with no

Soviet oil for tractors it turned to oxen, and for its fertilizer and pesticide, which had been produced using Soviet oil, it turned to natural compost and the production of natural pesticides and beneficial insects.

Professor Jules Pretty, of the University of Essex's department of biological sciences, recently wrote: 'Cut banana stems baited with honey to attract ants are placed in sweet potato fields and have led to control of sweet potato weevil. There are 170 vermicompost centres, the annual production of which has grown from 3 to 9,300 tons. Crop rotations, green maturing, intercropping and soil conservation have all been incorporated into polyculture farming.'

Remarkably, this organic revolution has worked. Annual calorie intake now stands at about 2,600 a day, while UNFAO estimates that the percentage of the population considered undernourished fell from 8 per cent in 1990–2 to about 3 per cent in 2000–2. Cuba's infant mortality rate is lower than that of the USA, while at 77 years life expectancy is the same.

Everyone appears to agree that this new, organic approach is far more efficient than the previous Soviet model that stressed production at all costs. Fernando Funes, head of the national Pasture and Forage Research Unit, told Harper's magazine, 'In that old system it took 10 or 15 units of energy to produce one unit of food energy. At first we did not care about economics, [but] we were realising just how inefficient it was.'

A second step Cuba took in the mid-1990s to try to save its economy was the establishment of mass tourism. Yet while this has provided the government with a ready source of millions of dollars in hard currency, it has also helped produce a dual-track society with its own tensions and clear divide between those who have access to foreign currency – or the Cuban Convertible Peso – and those who make do with the lowly Cuban Peso, which cannot be used to buy many goods.

By contrast, Mr Salcines believes that the introduction of organoponicos – a loosening of government control that also saw small restaurants and some private businesses established – has been a success. He also believes these allotments have stayed true to Cuba's revolutionary ideas.

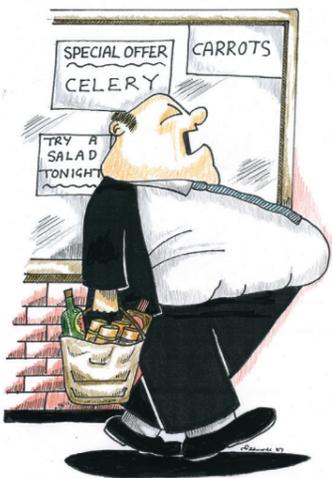
Experts, such as Professor Pretty, believe Cuba may be one of the only countries in the world to have adopted wholesale a self-sustaining system of agriculture. 'Their only choice was to look inwards to the resources they had and say, "Can we make more of these resources?"'

Champions of organic, non-intensive agriculture might cite Cuba as an example that other countries could adopt rather than following the large-scale, industrial agriculture system. But could Cuba's labour-intensive example be repeated without the availability of large numbers of enforced workers? 'I don't know. I think it is true that it has required much labour,' said Professor Pretty. 'The thing is that it has also produced a lot of food ... People are also closer to their food production. [In the West] we are worried that we don't know about where our food comes from. In Havana, people are closer to their food production and that may also have psychological benefits.'

On the same day as visiting the allotment at Alamar, I took a visit to the other side of Cuba's dual-track economy. The Hotel Nacional has hosted the likes of Winston Churchill and Fred Astaire, and more recently Naomi Campbell and Leonardo DiCaprio. On a lawn overlooking the ocean, I paid the equivalent of an ordinary Cuban's weekly wage for a mojito. It tasted great, but it didn't taste of the revolution.

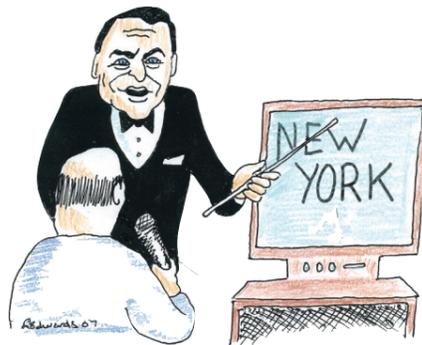
Bad news for Brummies and Scousers

If you want to get a seat on a bus don't live in Liverpool or Birmingham. According to research carried out by the retailer, Somerfield, Liverpoolians and Brummies are the least likely to give up their bus seat for a pregnant woman or elderly person. Glasgow and Sheffield topped the 'politeness poll'. Ninety-nine per cent of people questioned online said they would give up their bus seat while the proportion in Liverpool was as low as 88 per cent. The survey also asked about punctuality. Sheffield again topped the poll, with Londoners more likely to say it is 'alright' to report 15 minutes late for an appointment.



The cost of a beer gut

In 2006 the average British male spent £1,144 on cultivating his beer gut. Including take-away meals this amounted to 5 per cent of the average male take-home pay. The research, based on interviews with 2,476 men, showed that around 1.7 million British males regularly spend £40 a week on alcohol and £10 a week on fast food, with single men in their twenties spending more. In Scotland, over 4 per cent of males regularly spend around £150 a week on booze.



Millions of UK adults too illiterate to play karaoke

In 2007 the Department of Education's Get On campaign, designed to increase the level of UK literacy, reported that 5.2 million adults lacked the reading skills of an 11-year-old child and thus did not have the necessary reading skills to sing classic songs such as Frank Sinatra's *New York, New York*, at karaoke nights. More complex karaoke hits, for example Robbie Williams' *Angels*, were found to be beyond the reading skills of 18 million adults.



Humanity crosses urban milestone

In the last issue of *Society Matters* we revealed that the world's urban population will double in the next three decades. David Satterthwaite, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development, asks whether aid agencies and governments are ready for the social and environmental implications of the urban phenomenon

Some time this year or next, humanity will officially cross the line from being a rural to an urban species. For the first time in history, more of us will live in cities and urban areas than in the countryside, and the social and environmental implications of this transition to a predominantly urban world are enormous.

UN figures for urbanization, published in the *State of the World 2007* report, show that more than 60 million people – roughly the population of the UK – are added to the planet's cities and suburbs each year, mostly in low-income urban settlements in developing countries. Unplanned urbanization is taking a huge toll on human health and the quality of the environment, contributing to social, ecological, and economic instability in many countries.

Yet few governments or aid organizations seem to have grasped the fact that a large part of the world's poverty is now in urban areas. Most aid agencies have no urban programmes and although reducing greenhouse gases will need strong urban programmes, urban issues are rarely mentioned in most discussions on climate change.

Urbanization and the growth of large cities are mostly linked to economic success. The world's largest cities are heavily concentrated in the world's largest economies, including China, Brazil and India, as well as Japan and the USA. The growth of 'mega-cities' with 10 million or more inhabitants is often highlighted as a problem, but these have less than 5 per cent of the world's population, and most mega-cities have more people moving out than in, as smaller cities attract new investment.

Two other milestones help explain the increasingly urbanized world. By around 1940, the economic value generated by industry and services had grown to exceed that generated by agriculture, forestry and fishing. In the early 1980s, for the first time, more than half the world's workforce was employed in industry and services; today, around two-thirds are.

In general, the more urbanized a nation the higher the average life expectancy and the literacy rate and the stronger the democracy, especially at local level. And, of course, cities are centres of culture, of historic heritage, of social, cultural and political innovation, of fun.

In stressing these positive aspects, however, there is a danger of underplaying the scale of global problems. The positive aspects of urbanization should not hide the deprivation and environmental problems that urban areas concentrate. Cities may be centres of wealth and opportunity, but they are also centres of huge and often growing inequality.

Around a billion urban dwellers – a sixth of the planet's population – are homeless or live in crowded tenements, boarding houses or squatter settlements, often three or more to a room. Most have to live with inadequate provision for water, sanitation, healthcare and schooling. Many are denied the vote, even in democracies, because they lack the legal address required for voter registration. They are often exploited by landlords, politicians, police and criminals. The global extent of urban poverty is underestimated because it is usually measured by poverty lines based on the cost of food, ignoring the high costs that most low-income urban dwellers have to pay for renting a room or bed and for water, healthcare and transport.



Refugees, going where the blind lead the blind

Meanwhile, on the environment front, urban centres concentrate much of the world's pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. But most of these problems are not inherent to urbanization. In fact, concentrating people and industries in cities lowers the cost of goods, provision for water, sanitation and healthcare, and the cost of implementing environmental regulations.

Most urban problems are best seen as failures by governments and international agencies to adjust to the economic changes that drive urbanization. This is not to pretend that these problems are easily addressed. But at their core are powerful corporations, real estate interests and politicians that oppose most of the needed changes – for pollution control, adequate wages, better working conditions, land for housing that low-income groups can afford and realistic charges for water, sanitation and electricity.

Because aid agencies provide money, 'solutions' for lower-income nations are always discussed in terms of how much money is needed. Yet most urban problems have to be addressed by local political changes. Many of the best urban innovations of the past 20 years required no aid because they were developed by citizen groups, often working with local non-governmental organizations and local politicians.

In Latin America, much progress has been made since democratically elected mayors were introduced and city governments were given more scope to plan, act and raise revenues. Porto Alegre, in Brazil, which pioneered participatory budgeting – giving each district's population more influence in prioritizing municipal investments – has a life expectancy and quality of life that rivals cities in Europe and North America. In Asia and Africa, hundreds of thousands of the poorest urban dwellers have benefited from better housing and services through their own slum-dwellers' and shack-dwellers' federations.

Such federations are now active in 16 nations and, where city government work in partnership with them, the scale of what can be achieved multiplies. Urban resource centres in cities in Pakistan have shown how citizen alliances, that include

grassroots organizations, can successfully challenge anti-poor and anti-environment policies and present viable alternatives. Similar centres are developing in cities in many other nations.

External funding is still required, but it has to support these kinds of processes. Aid agencies and international development banks were set up to fund national governments, not local processes. They are expected to spend their budgets, or make loans, with the least possible staff. Most have withdrawn from funding local initiatives because they are too staff intensive, and most avoid funding anything for extended periods. Yet the best support for urban areas would be funding that could be drawn on by grassroots organizations, local national government organizations and local governments as and when needed, over long periods, while drawing in local resources wherever possible. This would not directly address global issues, but global environmental agendas require competent local governments.

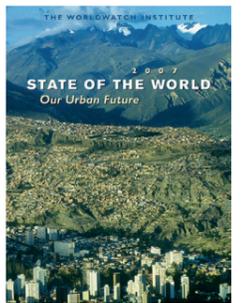
Cities also provide many opportunities to address global issues, including breaking the link between higher living standards and increasing greenhouse gas emissions – for instance, through urban designs that encourage people to choose to walk, cycle or use public transport. Concentrating people and industries and their wastes is dangerous without good waste management, but it provides more possibilities for waste reduction or recycling.

For decades, arguments have raged between those who feel that rural poverty is the primary development issue, and those who feel that urban problems need more attention. But this overlooks the links between rural and urban areas. Prosperous agriculture usually supports booming local urban development. Hundreds of millions of rural households are less poor because of money from family members working in urban areas or from urban consumers who purchase their products. Of course, urban development can disrupt agriculture, pollute land and water and displace poor rural dwellers. But, again, this is down to bad governance.

Hopefully, as the world becomes more urban, attention will be attracted to the importance of good urban policy for poverty reduction, in rural and urban areas, and for environmental management, including climate change.

Two changes are needed in the UK. First, an overseas aid programme that recognizes the importance of an urban agenda, one that supports local innovation and works with and is accountable to the urban poor. And second, a domestic urban policy that breaks the link between high living standards and high greenhouse gas emissions. The high-consumption lifestyles of the wealthy, mostly in Europe or North America, created the problem of climate change. But many of those most at risk from its effects live in coastal cities in Africa and Asia and have contributed very little to greenhouse gases.

David's chapter in the *State of the World: Our Urban Future*, published by Worldwatch Institute, 2007, can be found at: worldwatch.org/node/4752



There were Africans in Britain before the English came

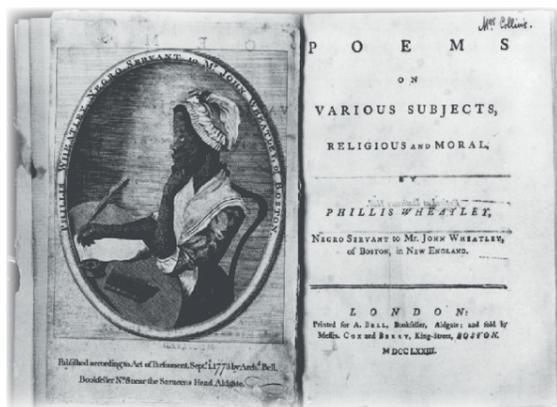
The historical roots of the black presence in Britain can be traced back over 2,000 years. A new companion to black history provides an enlightening insight to the meaning of 'Britishness'

In AD138, an African, Quintus Lollius Urbicus, governed Roman Britain. Urbicus was a native of Numidia (modern Algeria), and former governor of Lower Germany, who was sent to Britain as one of the first commissions of the emperor Antoninus Pius soon after he came to power. He was later followed by the first black Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus, a native of Libya, who came to Scotland in AD208.

The *Oxford Companion to Black British History* places Quintas as one of the forefathers of modern black Britain. The Romans in Britain were not all born in Italy; they did not all have white skin or speak Latin. Ever since the Emperor Claudius's multi-ethnic Roman army landed at Richborough in Kent in AD43, there has been a black presence in Britannia. The late Peter Fryer's claim in his key book on black British history, *Staying Power*, that 'there were Africans in Britain before the English came here', is magnificently reaffirmed.

The companion realizes the hopes of Fryer that a fully comprehensive reference work spanning two millennia was needed in order for all to fully understand the vital role black people played in British history. In December 2005, the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority acknowledged that 'too little attention is given to the black and multi-ethnic aspects of British history'. The companion will mean that schools can no longer inadvertently undermine the overall contribution of black and minority ethnic people to Britain's past.

The *Oxford Companion to Black British History* has valiantly taken up the challenge. Its credentials could hardly be more



Phillis Wheatley, whose collection of poetry, published in 1773, was the first book to be printed in Britain by a black woman.

impressive. Professor David Dabydeen headed a team of three general editors with Caribbean expertise from the University of Warwick. Supporting them were five distinguished advisory editors, and more than 100 specialist writers have provided the 400 plus entries.

The format includes discrete entries for notable historical figures, key events, concepts and summarized topics (such as literature, the media, music, politics, religion, science, and sport). The chronology ranges from AD42 to 2006, although 2000 is the formal cut-off for coverage. Themes with continuing resonance are well represented, whether immigration or reparations; the

notion that the first large group of blacks to arrive in the UK came in 1948 on the SS *Empire Windrush* from Jamaica is put into perspective.

Abolition is the alphabetical starting point – we learn that one of Wilberforce's motions relating to the slave trade was defeated at the House of Commons in 1796 because MPs among his supporters went instead to the opening of a comic opera called *The Two Hunchbacks*.

There is much to enthral and inform here from black people who made significant contributions to the arts and sciences and, importantly, to the abolition of the slave trade itself: Samuel Taylor Coleridge – whose first major poem was an ode against the slave trade, and whose *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* depicted an ill-fated vessel much like those involved in the Middle Passage – and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the classical composer who achieved celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic, hailed as 'the black Mahler'.

Among little-known names is that of John Edmonstone, a freed captive from British Guiana, who taught Charles Darwin taxidermy. The first African ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1765 was Philip Quaque from Cape Coast in Ghana. In 1773, Phillis Wheatley was the first black woman to publish a book in Britain – *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*.

Dabydeen, D., Gilmore, J. and Jones, C. (eds) (2007) *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, Oxford, OUP.
Fryer, P. (1984) *Staying Power: Black People in Britain Since 1504*, London, Pluto Press.

Comedy to the rescue

Want to know what's going on in politics. Forget the news. Armando Iannucci explains how comedians are filling the gap where serious debate used to be

I was watching Mastermind recently and a contestant had chosen Alan Partridge as his subject. My reaction was a combination of being thrilled at being responsible for something that was asked about on Mastermind, while thinking, 'God, Mastermind's gone downhill a bit, hasn't it?' I sometimes find myself lowering my opinion of a body when it asks me to appear in front of it.

And yet comedy matters to a lot of people. Surveys show that a high proportion of people aged 18–36 get most of their information about British politics from Have I Got News For You. In America, similar figures show that Jon Stewart's topical comedy, The Daily Show, supplies many 18- to 36-year-old Americans with their main news fix.

Why is comedy taking up so much space in our culture? Why is it so present, so dominant? There are things that should matter more, but at the moment they just aren't there.

I suspect that most of us who work in the creative arts occasionally feel that what we're doing is interesting, fun, and is probably the only thing we can imagine ourselves doing. But is it a proper job? Is there a point to what anyone in the arts is doing? It's only recently that I've come to find out that there is a point – that spending one's life just imagining things, making things up, performs a crucial role today. It matters because it's an act of imagination, and imagination is one of the things that defines us as human beings rather than monkeys. It's an act of imagination that is just as valid, just as crucial, I think, as a drama or a novel. But I think we sometimes see comedy as an inferior art form.

This irks me. Comedy allows the imagination to be at its most revolutionary. Because, when you treat something comically, you can do anything. You can distort or exaggerate, you can break out of the form, you can be as real or as unrealistic as you like. You can invent, you can deny, hide or reveal, you can be as free or as controlling as you like. The most groundbreaking novels are usually comic. In return, though, you make a devastating pact with your audience. Because, though you can pour all your energy into doing any of these things, if they're not funny (worse still, if they're not instantly funny) then you're a failure. No court of appeal.

That's why, over questions of taste and taboo in comedy, my instinct is always first to ask, is it funny? That's why I probably would have had more sympathy with the Christian protest groups if 'Jerry Springer: The Opera' had been less amusing, and would have had more sympathy with the Danish cartoonists if their efforts in depicting Muhammad had been more witty. And I'm sure the Labour MP Sion Simon – who parodied David Cameron's web diaries with a send-up of himself dressed as a yooof called Dave, inviting people to sleep with his wife, because that was cool – would have earned less derision if his material had been not so dire. Simon defended his efforts on the basis that it was 'just satire'. No, Sion, it was just bad.

I thank my lucky stars I'm not elected, like a politician, and don't have to arm myself daily with opinions, arguments and reactions that hang together and stand up to examination. I don't have to have a recognizable point of view or ideology, and, if all else fails, I can always change my mind. So long as it's funny. It's the privilege of being irresponsible.

But here is the confusing bit. Despite this, I still want comedy to matter a great deal. I want it to tackle big subjects. The idea that we are making someone laugh about something does not mean we don't take it seriously. Sometimes, we can take something so seriously that the only practical way to release the tension is to make a joke. Sometimes, we can be so appalled by someone's behaviour that the only effective way to run it again in our heads is as farce. Luckily, we do not live under tyranny, but those who do so know the creative freedom the joke gives them. You can ban writing, but you can't stop people finding things funny.

I should be honoured that comedy plays such an influential



The Big Ben Detention Centre without Trial – foreigners welcome. Established in 2006 by the Rt Hon Anthony Charles Lynton Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

part in cultural life. Look at politics. So much of it today is conducted in the form of a joke – not necessarily an amusing joke – that it's practically impossible for a professional jokesmith to go one better. When Gordon Brown has to get comic writers to supply him with some gags about the Arctic Monkeys and the Arctic Circle, is there anything left for a comedian to say? When the only way a Prime Minister can get round his wife publicly calling his Chancellor a liar is with a joke, then what's left for a joke-writer to do? Comedy is so prevalent now, it's cool by association. So politicians speak and act according to the rhythms of comedy.

This has come about for three reasons: politicians have stopped speaking to us properly, the media has stopped examining their actions in anything like a forensic way, and broadcast culture has become so watered down, so scared of fact, that people are less inclined to turn to anything other than entertainment for information.

Broadcast journalism today promotes itself not so much on what it talks about but on the method it uses: 'Broadcasting 24 hours a day, correspondents in over 50 capital cities, giving you all the headlines every 15 minutes, up to six generations of journalists gathered in one newsroom, making you feel all the news you want to feel, even on Christmas Day.' Hi-tech software and speedy transmission makes everything instant news, but we lose sight of the skilled individuals who can process this random unstoppable flow of information and somehow construct a meaningful examination of it. We need narrative.

I found myself hungry for narrative in the build-up to the war in Iraq. Here, surely, were facts – or, indeed, a glaring

absence of facts – that required piecing together. Here, surely, it was clear that political debate was operating on a curiously surreal level. We were being asked to attack a country on the basis that the weapons we knew (but couldn't prove) it had would definitely be used against us, especially if we attacked it. This 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' logic has continued after the invasion. Now, it seems, it was necessary to have invaded Iraq to rid the world of the terrorist cells who have flooded into the country since it was invaded. The terrorist attacks in London and mainland Europe that have occurred since are, officially, unconnected with the invasion of a country that was invaded because it had links with terrorist attacks in mainland Europe.

My favourite quotation from the eminently quotable George W. Bush is a remark he made last year about the constant attacks on US troops in Iraq: 'The insurgents are being defeated; that's why they're continuing to fight.' Measuring success in terms of how far you are from success is a stunning reversal of all logic. An even stranger utterance came from Tony Blair at Labour's 2004 Conference when he defended his actions by saying, 'Judgments aren't the same as facts. Instinct is not science. I only know what I believe.'

I only know what I believe. I find that one of the most chilling statements uttered by a seemingly rational politician. Apart from the fact that it overturns about sixteen centuries of western philosophy and questions the entire principle of scientific inquiry, it's also, surely, how the Taliban get through their day.

Of course, I'm being selective in the way I have treated this logic. I have written my sentences with the deliberate aim of getting a laugh. I have treated it comically, but what else can I do? That's what I do; it was up to others to provide a more sober analysis. The media didn't stop to analyse the facts. The media didn't work, and it left a gap.

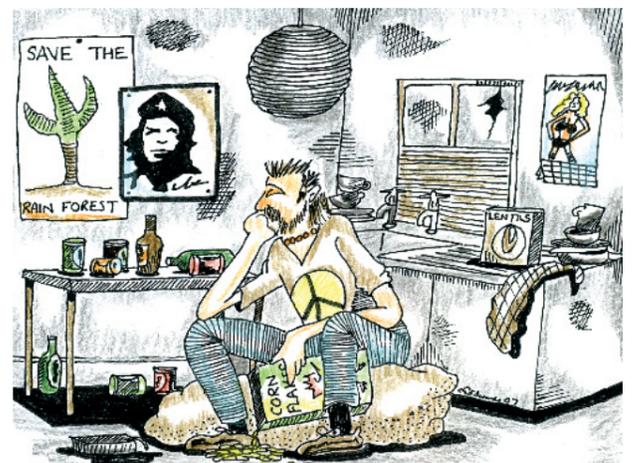
That's why I find myself stepping into that gap. Not just me, but many other humorists, satirists, comics and artists – people who make a virtue of the fact they distort logic for comic effect, but who still feel compelled to analyse that logic because no one else will. Everyone has analysed the result of the Hutton inquiry. But no one has analysed all the evidence given during it, because the result, not the evidence, was deemed to have been the story.

But how can we expect the media to want to do anything more when the political debate they are meant to be reporting has become restricted to the point of non-existence? When politicians themselves want to debate image, postpone policy to the last moment, defer content until style has been sorted and sold, then there's a decreasing pool of ideas and arguments to analyse.

What amazes me is how much this has accelerated in the past five years or so; how far it seems to have gone past a tipping point where there's no longer anything factual left to talk about. There is an emptiness in public argument waiting to be filled. That's where my lot come in again. If politicians fail to supply politics with content, is it any wonder people turn to other, more entertaining sources?

Given that there is no absolute meaning, no hard, unquestionable kernel of truth at the centre of what we see, how can we take anything seriously ever again? But we do, by turning to those who do offer narratives, even if they are fictional ones, because they are better than no narrative at all. That's why I think comedy, and indeed any act of imagination, matters – it matters fundamentally. But this is not the sort of thing it should have been left to a comedian to say.

This is an edited extract from the Tate Britain Lecture given by Armando Iannucci in October 2006, published with thanks.



Surprise, surprise: hangovers affect student performance

Does having an alcohol-induced hangover impair psychomotor and cognitive performance? You might have thought this question was a no-brainer but psychologists at Glasgow Caledonian University spent £40,000 trying to find out. The research, for the Alcohol Education and Research Council, recruited 70 students – half drank alcohol, half abstained. The next morning both groups were invited to perform a variety of simple tasks. Those with hangovers reported tiredness and lapses in concentration but, according to the research, alcohol did not impair short-term memory. However, the ability to carry out functional tasks was affected. What made this research distinctive was that, unlike most other studies into alcohol and its effects, this research was not conducted in a laboratory.

The social life of jokes

What kind of jokes do we tell? And what, if anything, do they tell us? Marie Gillespie, Professor of Sociology at the Open University, reports on a national survey of British jokes carried out by the OU and the BBC, and explores the relationship between jokes and social life.

What's in a joke? Why would anyone want to do a joke survey? Surely, a joke is just a bit of fun? Jokes are, by definition, not serious. You could call them a pleasurable escape from social restrictions. And they must be understood in that light. But that doesn't mean that they can't reveal something about our society, about who we are and how we've changed.

Jokes are a barometer of the social and political climate. They have their origins in everyday spontaneous humour and they have a social life of their own, passing through many places, changing shape as they travel, before sometimes ending up in a comedy act on TV and so spreading even further. They have a serious side, for they can be seen as a way of coping with the absurdities and adversities, the tensions and trials of life. Joke cycles, most commonly about sex and death, disaster and stupidity, circulate in mysterious ways. Jokes tackle taboos and flout rules about how we are supposed to speak about serious topics. They can be rude or silly, dangerous or clever, defiant or compliant, hurtful or mirthful. But they have no fixed serious meanings. What matters is how they are used. Researching jokes and their relationship to society, especially in a comparative and historical light, can help us answer questions that have challenged us since the time of Aristotle: questions on the relationship between tragedy and comedy, reality and illusion, identities and differences.

As part of Lenny Henry's tour of British humour for a BBC 1/Open University television series, a joke booth toured the country gathering jokes from the British public. During 2006-7, the joke booth 'dropped in' to shopping centres in London, Glasgow, Exeter, Wolverhampton, Blackpool, Newcastle, Belfast and Swansea.

The joke booth videos offer an intriguing insight into what people find funny and what makes people funny – by no means the same thing! The extraordinary verbal skill of many of the joke-tellers was impressive. This is all the more surprising when you consider that the contributors had to tell their jokes 'cold' to camera, without the benefit of an audience – only Sam the cameraman.

Some joked with Sam to relax: 'This isn't really a joke room. This is something else. You're testing us for something else.' Some performed like stars, while others read jokes from their mobile phones – a sign of the times. Some used performance techniques such as impersonation, body language, clowning, or deadpan delivery style to get their jokes across.

So what did we find out? Over 420 people entered the joke booth to offer us over 600 jokes in all. Half our jokers were aged under 20 and a quarter were over 50, so 'medium-age' people were in a minority. We had a roughly even number of males and females.

One intriguing finding is that 6 out of 10 jokes fell into the 'riddle' category (i.e. jokes that begin with a question and other variants of the puzzle type joke), while 3 out of 10 jokes were based on stories or 'narrative' jokes. That's a very high proportion of riddles as compared to other surveys. Why might this be so?

There are several reasons. There is a long tradition of riddles and word play in English – from Anglo-Saxon riddles, through Shakespeare, to jokes in Christmas crackers. But since the 1950s there has been a big rise in riddle jokes which have come to Britain from the USA, mainly via television. The jokes told at any one time reflect dominant popular and media cultures. Previously, narrative jokes were much more common. Now, jokes circulate via email and mobile phones, and short, riddle-

type jokes may be better suited to those media. What's more, our sample of joke-tellers was very young. Riddle jokes ask questions that you cannot answer using logic or experience. You just have to know the joke: that's punch line power, and it's a young people's thing. Narrative jokes require a lot more skill, which it takes time to acquire.

Narrative jokes were commonest in Swansea, Liverpool and among Irish contributors. Perhaps this reflects something about Celtic cultures? What's certain is that wherever the art of story-telling is valued, people are more likely to become good narrative joke tellers.

Word play features in the majority of jokes we collected. The jokers demonstrated great playfulness with the English language – a very idiomatic language with a huge vocabulary and endless possibilities for word play. Our jokers played with puns, delighted in ambiguities and incongruities, and generally revelled in breaking the rules of language and logic.

Most narrative jokes (and some riddles) have a 'butt': the target or victim of the joke. The main butts of our jokes, in descending order, were: national or ethnic identity, women, men, stupidity, religion, disability, celebrity, old age, sexuality, class, and regional identity (jokes often combine more than one butt: e.g. sexuality and regional identity).



Image from the website – Lenny's Britain

Jokes mocking national, ethnic or racial identities and sex jokes were the most popular, especially among young people. The number of sex jokes was highest among teenagers and the over 70s. Younger people are more curious and older people less anxious about sex than those in the sexually active stage of their lives.

The over 50s made most jokes at the expense of 'stupid' people. Men made most jokes about nationality, women and stupidity – often combined. Men made jokes about stupid people much more than women did. They also told more pointedly homophobic and xenophobic jokes than women. Women made jokes about nationality and men but not about stupidity.

Sexual, ethnic, racial and national jokes were roughly even in number but, surprisingly, there were no political jokes. Is this a sign of the growing political disenchantment and disaffection that we hear so much about? Or does it reflect the fact that we live in a relatively open democracy so political jokes are not taboo? The absence of political jokes certainly suggests that politics doesn't resonate much with our joke tellers. People tend to tell jokes about subjects that they can easily relate to or that matter to them.



There were also very few disaster jokes. This was surprising as jokes about disasters and stupidity are among the most common joke types in the world, according to top international joke expert Professor Christie Davies, who worked with us on the project.

Men told twice as many ethnic, racial and sexual jokes as women. Ethnic jokes fell predominantly into the 'Irish stupidity' category, a tradition of English humour that goes back to the 17th century. There were no such jokes referring to the Welsh, in fact no jokes at all about the Welsh, except one or two told in Swansea. There was once a rich English tradition of jokes about aggressive and boastful Welshmen, but it ended around 1620.

Sexism was fairly mild and there was little overt or pointed racism, and the few jokes with racial content were not always along white/black lines. In multicultural Wolverhampton, an Asian contributor used a sequence of riddles to put down black people – maybe he feels less constrained than others by fears of 'PC' condemnation?

We have to be careful not to speculate about the intentions, racist or otherwise, of joke tellers, and it's really important to distinguish between a joke and the uses of that joke. A joke can easily be turned into an insult, but it needn't be meant that way, or taken that way. The social context in which the joke is told, and the power relations between joke tellers, joke receivers, and joke butts, are decisive in how a joke is treated – as a bit of fun or as an insult. Jokes thrive in safe and secure social situations and the opposite is true of insults.

Surprisingly many jokes had a religious theme, for example featuring vicars, priests and nuns who swear or drink or are associated with sauciness or sex. Jokes about football were common compared to other sports – there was even a joke about football in heaven.

Few jokes were about class, and these mocked the upper class, aristocrats or posh English accents. This contrasts with other joke research which has found that, compared with other countries, British jokes reflect the class-based structure of our society.

On the whole, the jokes were good natured. But then who is going to tell a really nasty joke to the BBC on camera?

This research will now carry on via the internet, so if you would like to send us your joke, see some of the joke tellers perform, or find out more about the series and the research then visit: www.open2.net/lennysbritain/index.html

With thanks to Christie Davies, Mairead Gillespie, Wendy Lawson and Ben O'Loughlin for their contributions to the joke survey analysis.

Couples spend only two waking hours together each day

The notion of marriage and co-habitation as a celebration of companionship may be flawed. Government researchers have revealed that couples spend a relatively paltry two hours together during their waking hours. And worse, if you have children this waking contact is reduced to only 78 minutes. While this may, for some, be a merciful relief, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report, after interviewing 6,500 households and investigating 21,000 personal time logs, that couples spend on average 126 minutes together on weekdays – 51 minutes of this time is spent in front of the television! The study found that whatever the working pattern of each partner, whether full, part time or not working, couples spent more time doing things apart than together. ONS did find that married couples tend to spend 30 minutes a day longer together than cohabiting couples and concluded that age and number of children impacted most on time spent together. Some things did not change: ONS found 90 per cent of the housework was done by the female partner. It was not possible to ascertain whether studying for an Open University degree played any role in keeping couples apart, but ONS concluded that couples with no educational qualifications spent about 30 minutes longer together. Ignorance may be bliss after all.



Cows moo with a regional accent

Cows moo with a regional accent, according to their farmers. Dairy farmers in Somerset noticed a local twang to the sounds made by their animals, and experts confirmed that different herds made different sounds. John Wells, Professor of Phonetics at the University of London, said, 'This phenomenon is well attested in birds. You find distinct chirping accents in the same species around the country. This could also be true of cows. In small populations such as herds you would encounter identifiable dialectal variations which are most affected by the immediate peer group.' Dr Jeanine Treffers-Daller, reader in linguistics at the University of the West of England in Bristol, said the accent may be learned from relatives.

Most expensive year of your life is 34

If you are 34 years old, look away now. A survey of 1,990 people by Axa Wealth Management found that, on average, 34 is the most expensive year for Britons, with 34 year olds requiring an average of £32,441 extra to live. The priorities at 34 that raised expenditure were property, home improvements, weddings, babies and cars. However, each of the age groups studied had peak years of expense. So, among the 25 to 43 age group the peak year was 26, and for the 55 to 64 age group it was 43, about the age when parents put children through University. Rather alarmingly the study revealed that over 56 per cent of respondents confessed to not having saved ahead, which simply raised consumer debt.



THIS IS YOUR LUCKY YEAR, MY FRIEND

Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: the 'I' of the Tiger

Kath Woodward, Senior Lecturer in Sociology and former Chair of DD100, has been busy researching the boxing world. Her new book on the sport was published in 2007. Here she explains why she is so interested in the sport of Kings and the significance of what it might mean to have been a contender

Boxing seems an unlikely subject for the academic interest of a middle-aged, non-violent woman like me, but this is the focus of my latest book, *Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: The 'I' of the Tiger*. I have always followed the sport (but never participated!) and argue that its relevance extends beyond the confines of sport.

Boxing is an exciting sport that retains much of its popularity, but its practices are also troubling, especially for spectators, which is what makes it such an interesting site for research. It retains considerable popularity among boxers, spectators and followers and the sport is part of a wider cultural field. In addition, its inherent contradictions of extreme violence and beauty and of regulation and spectacle have long been a source of inspiration for writers and film makers.

Boxing is a sport characterized by the extremes of discipline and excess where beautiful and fit bodies can be broken and damaged. Although there are more injuries sustained in many other sports, when serious damage is incurred in boxing there are calls for it to be banned. The sport itself is often subject to moral censure.

Boxing is one of our most traditional of sports, one that has provided a route, perhaps the only route, out of poverty in the 'rags to riches' stories that permeate its legends. It is infused with ideas about gender, race, ethnicity and social class. Thus it provides an ideal lens through which to examine some of the processes by which identities are forged, especially in changing times.

Boxing has particular attractions for a study of cultural and social transformations. It is especially important since exponents have used the support for boxing to challenge society's status quo, and because it has often been for racialized minorities a path out of the ghetto.

The brutality and violence that are associated with boxing



Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: The 'I' of the Tiger, Routledge, 2006

also pose some issues in the contemporary world in which it might seem to be something of an anomaly, especially in the context of civilizing processes. It also, through the emergence of women's boxing, has exposed some of the ambiguities and complexities of new gender identities.

Boxing, Masculinity and Identity: The 'I' of the Tiger explores the changing sociology of identification, especially

in relation to gender, in the sport by focusing upon the making and remaking of masculinities. Drawing on material from film, literature and journalism as well as ethnographic research, the book explores the broad social and cultural field of boxing and includes the networks through which the culture of men's boxing, in particular, is reproduced. The book incorporates discussion of the routine, embodied practices of the gym and the ring and links personal and public social worlds. Analyses of identification with masculinities are central and, through this, wider implications for the understanding of the process of identification and the possibilities of assembling the self are explored.

The situation of women within the sport and its culture is shaped by the gendered identifications and histories that make up boxing and the wider cultural terrain. Women's boxing is increasing in popularity, especially in the USA, but the book focuses on the traditions and cultures of men's boxing and the gendered identifications that make it difficult for women to be part of the dominant discourses of boxing. The configuration of gender is also addressed through a discussion of methodologies and the situated knowledge that is produced by doing research, especially in so strongly differentiated a field as boxing. Gendered identities are made visible and invisible in the sport, with particular versions of masculinity carrying strong visibility in the spectacles and performances of boxing and in the

myths that pervade it whether they are told in the gym or in the more public arenas of the media and the cinema.

Boxing offers a space in which the ambiguities and vulnerabilities of masculinity can be explored as well as the reiteration of hegemonic masculinity and traditional versions of 'what it means to be a man' and, most importantly, what it might mean to have been a contender.

Give bad balls the boot

In our second extract from 50 Reasons to Buy Fair Trade, Miles Litvinoff and John Madeley show how people who sew fair-trade footballs, basketballs, volleyballs and rugby balls get a living wage, decent working conditions, medical care and low-cost loans. That's a real first in the sportsball industry

It's a little known fact that around three-quarters of the world's footballs are made in and around the city of Sialkot in Pakistan, whose sportsball industry employs approximately 30,000 people.

It takes close to 700 hand-stitches to make a 32-panel football, and an experienced stitcher will complete up to five balls a day. Wages are low for the men, women and children who sew the balls, mainly working for subcontractors. In the past, thousands of children as young as seven had to work long hours with their families to help make ends meet, often going entirely without any school education.

In 1997, under pressure from Save the Children, UNICEF, the International Labour Organisation and others, major sportsball brands such as Nike, Adidas, Reebok and Puma signed the 'Atlanta Agreement', which committed them not to employ child stitchers younger than 14. The next year the world football governing body FIFA adopted a code of conduct prohibiting use of child labour for international soccer balls.

Despite reported violations, the Atlanta Agreement and FIFA code were steps in the right direction. But they caused new problems. Manufacturing of low-quality machine-made balls moved to China. In Sialkot most of the stitching had been done in family homes. Many women, unable to leave the home to work, and prevented in Pakistan's Islamic society from working in the same room as men, lost their only source of income.

By 2002 three Sialkot sportsball manufacturers had begun to make Fairtrade-certified balls, initially for sale in Sweden and Italy, and now also available in Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, the UK, the USA and other countries.

Fair trade has made a big difference to the stitcher families. Pay has risen to about 50 per cent above the industry average. Wages are calculated to provide a decent income for a family as long as two adults sew fair-trade balls eight hours a day. This works out at around 6,000 Pakistani rupees (£57.00) per month per family – a decent income by local standards that ensures children can go to school.

No children aged under 15 are allowed to work on fair-trade balls. Children over 15 can work only part time so that they can continue their education. One of the supplier companies, Talon Sports, was an early winner of the International Labour Organisation's Without Child Labour award.



The work is organized differently from before. Fairtrade-certified suppliers organize stitching in small village centres. Designated women-only units enable women to work without sharing the space with men. Acceptable standards of ventilation, lighting and safe drinking water availability have to be met. Workers receive information on fair-trade conditions, wage rates and the monitoring system in their own language, Urdu.

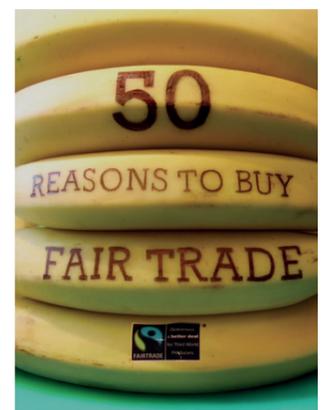
The fair-trade 'social premium' on sports balls is about 20 per cent of the price that the supplier company receives. 'Joint bodies' of workers and management agree how to spend it. The premium covers free health care for all employees, including hospital costs for pregnant women, and a lot more besides. There are small businesses credit schemes to enable workers to develop new sources of income, funds for local irrigation projects and for buying school exercise books. Talon has set up nurseries in some of its production centres, where women

can leave their children to be properly cared for and prepared for school while they go to work. A third of Talon's balls are now reported as sewn by women.

Talon's Fair Trade Workers Welfare Society, which manages spending of the premium in partnership with the sewers and local non-governmental organizations, also supports a relief programme for refugees from Afghanistan.

The range of fair-trade balls now includes volleyballs, rugby balls, basketballs, junior and mini-footballs, as well as FIFA international match ball standard footballs. Football kits and goalkeepers' gloves are also available. In the UK, the main supplier, FairDeal Trading, considers the balls are no more expensive than other good-quality balls.

Fair-trade sports balls are becoming popular in the UK. Football clubs using them include Genesis FC, a Christian team from Loughborough who play in the North Leicestershire League. And when Royal Holloway, University of London, won University Fairtrade status in late 2005, the college rugby club played its part by using fair-trade balls. Much has been achieved, but fair-trade sports balls are still just a small fraction of those made every year in Sialkot, and only a small percentage of the sewing families currently benefit. There's never been a better time to kick your old ball into touch.



The book, *50 Reasons to Buy Fair Trade*, was published by Pluto Press in February 2007. Each account explores how you can help and by doing so help the planet.

Too individualistic: why England pay the penalty

Drawing on his research findings, OU Senior Lecturer Jon Billsberry explains why England's national culture means that they will not win another major international football tournament until penalty shootouts are replaced with a fair method of determining the results of drawn games

If England reach the next European football championship finals we all know what will happen. They will struggle through a qualifying group and then, in the knockout stages, the latest pre-pubescent wunderkind will get sent off for breathing too heavily on an opponent. The brave lads will soldier on and get a draw, only for some Galáctico to blast his spot kick over the bar in the shootout. This is so inevitable it isn't funny. England's penalty shootout record is the worst of any major football nation in the world.

Penalty shootouts have become the bane of the England football team. They have taken part in six penalty shootouts in international football tournaments; winning one and losing five (see Table 1). The only one they won was a false dawn as elimination by penalty shootout awaited them in the next round. In contrast, the success rate of some countries is very high (see Table 2).

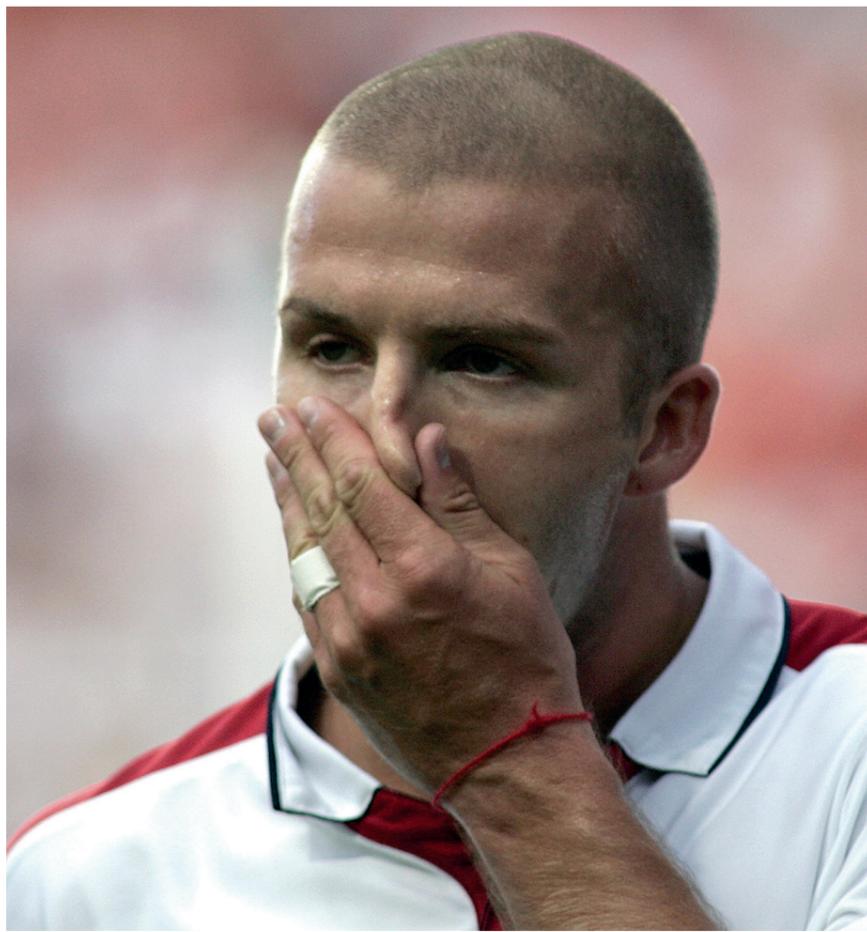
Shortly after England were knocked out of the 2006 World Cup by losing another penalty shootout, Nathalie van Meurs, me of the OU and Gareth Edwards of the Leadership Trust Foundation met for lunch. We were meeting to discuss some cross-cultural research projects and our discussion drifted to penalty shootouts. We had seen tables like the ones in this article printed in national newspapers and they had piqued our attention. We thought we saw geographical clusters in the data and it reminded us of some cross-cultural index data from a Dutch researcher called Geert Hofstede.

Fortunately our colleague, Patrick Nelson, had a little spare research time, which we persuaded him to use unearthing the records of every competitive international penalty shootout that has ever taken place. Having got used to modern internet and electronic searches, he reports that it was quite exciting visiting musty international newspaper archives to read reports of games played in Thailand in the early 1970s.

Patrick's endeavours produced a database of 184 penalty shootouts in competitive international matches that we were able to analyse (see www.penaltyshootouts.co.uk for more information). Once we had filtered out nations that had not played in at least five penalty shootouts, had taken at least twenty penalty kicks in these (to make the data robust), and had competed in at least two penalty shootouts in 'major' world or continental tournaments (to ensure quality of opponents and higher levels of stress), we had 16 nations in the sample.

We then calculated each nation's win/loss performance in the shootouts and compared this with national cultural data from Hofstede's website (www.geert-hofstede.com). We were particularly interested in his individualism/collectivism data because of recent comments by Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA. He said, 'When it comes to the World Cup final, it is passion, and when it goes to extra time it is a drama. But when it comes to penalty kicks, it is a tragedy...Football is a team sport and penalties are not for the team; it is the individual' (British-Swiss Chamber of Commerce, Zurich, 27 September 2006).

What we found amazed us. The correlation between nations' win/loss performance and the national culture dimension of individualism/collectivism was -0.629 ($P = 0.009$), which is immensely strong. The adjusted R^2 , which tells us how much of the variance in performance is explained, was 0.352, meaning that about a third of factors influencing nations' performance in penalty



Beckham pictured shortly after missing a penalty in Euro 2004

TABLE 1 England's penalty shootouts

Event	Opponents	Outcome	Villains
1990 World Cup Semi Final	West Germany	Knocked out	Stuart Pearce Chris Waddle
1996 Euro Quarter Final	Spain	Went through	
1996 Euro Semi Final	Germany	Knocked out	Gareth Southgate
1998 World Cup Last 16	Argentina	Knocked out	Paul Ince David Batty
2004 Euro Quarter Final	Portugal	Knocked out	David Beckham Darius Vassell
2006 World Cup Quarter Final	Portugal	Knocked out	Frank Lampard Steven Gerrard Jamie Carragher

TABLE 2 Selected nations' penalty shootout record

Selected	Shootouts	Success rate (%)
South Korea	8	75
Argentina	11	73
Germany (inc West Germany)	7	71
Nigeria	6	67
Brazil	11	64
France	6	50
Iran	11	46
Uruguay	7	43
South Africa	7	43
Mexico	11	36
Spain	6	33
Italy	6	33
Netherlands	5	20
England	6	17

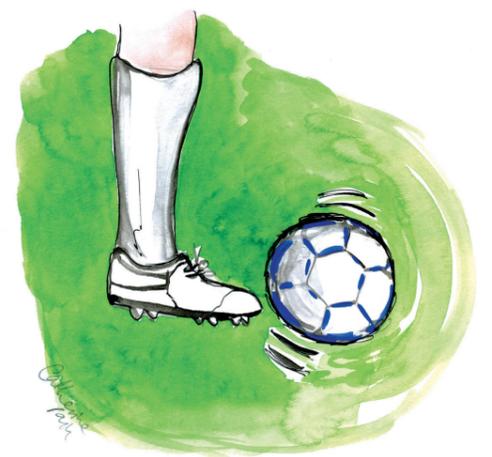
shootouts are directly attributable to the degree of individualism/collectivism, with higher degrees of collectivism being helpful.

This means that, over time, assuming a randomized spread of nations as opponents and holding all other factors constant (e.g. skill levels, training), England will only win 17% of the penalty shootouts they compete in. They are significant underdogs against some countries. Germany will win three out of four penalty shootouts against England, whilst Portugal will win an astonishing seventeen out of twenty shootouts against England.

This finding is somewhat counter-intuitive. Surely, if penalty shootouts are for 'the individual', they should favour more individualistic nations. How then, do we explain these results? The explanation seems to lie in the mind and how people respond to stressful situations; and nothing is more stressful to a professional football player than taking a spot kick in a penalty shootout in a tournament that you've dreamed of winning your whole life in front of millions of people.

Individualists are disadvantaged in two ways. First, as there are weaker social ties in individualistic cultures, there is less binding people together. In such national cultures, we would expect to see more singling out of individuals for criticism and less tolerance of failure. Second, people in individualist societies tend to have a greater concern for their personal image and reputation. Hence, in individualist societies, people are likely to be criticized more and criticism is likely to have a greater impact on them. The extreme pressure and personal isolation of a penalty shootout is the perfect venue for this influence to exhibit itself, resulting in more missed spot kicks.

There is unfairness in many sports, with particular national attributes contributing to success. The problem with the penalty shootout is that it is an artificial tiebreakers which has different success criteria to a normal game of football. The degree of individualism or collectivism does not appear to determine the result of these games; why should it be used as a tiebreaker? The penalty shootout has a predictable and powerful bias that provides an enduring benefit to some nations. It is a biased mechanism imposed on a largely unbiased game. I cannot see how it can continue in use in international football tournaments. England are unlikely to win another football tournament until it is removed and replaced with something fair.



Sport: new courses in Openings and Level 1

In 2005, the Society Matters centre spread called for the University to create sports-related curricula. Ben Oakley, from the Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Head of the new Award in Sport, Fitness and Health, outlines three exciting initiatives in sport-related courses at the University

In September 2006, after a couple of years of discussion and debate about the relevance of sport to our everyday lives, two new members of staff, with a responsibility for developing sport-related curricula, were appointed to the Faculty of Education and Language Studies. I came from an Olympic coaching background via Portsmouth University whilst Caroline Heaney, a sports scientist with a particular focus on psychology, had previously taught at Anglia Ruskin University. We will be joined by a third member of staff who is being appointed at the time of going to press. In collaboration with others we are currently working on three projects:

- A 10 credit point Openings course entitled Y164 *Exploring Sport Online* is being developed by the Centre for widening participation with support from other faculties, including Social Sciences, and will be delivered online from March 2008.
- A 60 credit point Level 1 course entitled *Introduction to Sport, Fitness and Management*, which considers the provision and management of sport and fitness in the UK along with discussion of some of the scientific principles underpinning health, training and nutrition. An unusual feature of this course is the inclusion of a heart-rate monitor as part of the course materials. The first presentation date is May 2008.

- A planned co-production with the BBC of an Olympic sports project. This will take the form of a longitudinal series of programmes that will track the stories of those young people already training towards the London Games from now until 2012. The series will be broadcast from 2008 onwards and is likely to include an interactive website.

There are plans for a wider Sport and Fitness award, which is going through the internal validation process at the time of writing. Other Faculties are considering developing courses in sport-related issues and also raising the profile of sport as a 'hot topic' in new courses.

History's top ten colonial partitions

In situations of conflict between colonial powers, or tensions between ethnic groups, partition is the classic solution. Andrew Trigg, Senior Lecturer in Economics, reveals his top ten colonial partitions of all time

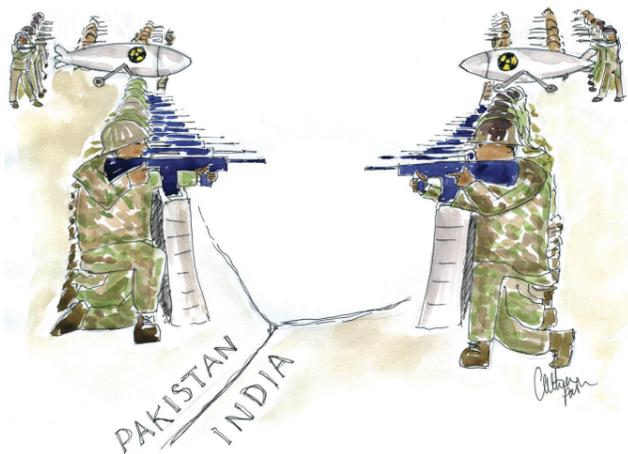
Partition

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission,
Having never set eyes on the land he was called to partition
Between two peoples fanatically at odds,
With their different diets and incompatible gods.
"Time," they had briefed him in London, "is short. It's too late
For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:
The only solution now lies in separation..."

W.H. Auden

1 India

India was partitioned in 1947 by Viscount Radcliffe (the subject of Auden's poem). Most of the Indian states were allowed to decide which side to join, but the Punjab was split down the middle. Ten million people fled for their lives, and up to a million were massacred. Bengal was dismembered, with a 'rural slum' created in east Bengal – cut off from Calcutta. Kashmir, which was predominantly Muslim, joined India, leading to its partition in the first Indo-Pak war. In recent years there have been some encouraging signs of reduced tension, although India and Pakistan now point nuclear weapons at each other.



2 Korea

Americans still buy T-shirts that display a map of Korea emblazoned with 'The Place Where Communism Was Stopped'. Yet the 1945 partition of Korea, at the 38th parallel, agreed by Roosevelt and Stalin, was meant to be temporary. Historians cannot even agree why the Cold War protagonists threw themselves into the subsequent Korean war – was it Stalin, Kim Il Sung or General MacArthur who wanted it most? What is certain is that MacArthur proposed a nuclear attack on China in response to its intervention. The Labour Prime Minister Clem Attlee scurried across the Atlantic to urge moderation (those were the days!). The aftermath was a pointless return to the 38th parallel. North Korea has recently carried out a nuclear test in the face of international condemnation.

3 Africa

Italy invaded Libya, the French took Algiers, the British occupied Egypt, and Germany took part of east Africa. Even the Belgians got a slice of the Congo, fixed up by Stanley – the one who met up with Dr Livingstone at Victoria Falls – with disastrous consequences. They held an 1884 partition conference in Berlin to divide up the spoils. Greedy for Africa's mineral deposits, the rivalry between European powers brewed up into the First World War. Although most of Africa has been granted independence, strong ties with the former colonial powers remain. France, for example, made 19 military interventions in Africa between 1962 and 1995.

4 Palestine

The British Expedition Force occupied Jerusalem in December 1917, running Palestine as a British colony until 1947, when it was partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. About 90 per cent of the Arab population were expelled from the Jewish state. Soldiers would typically surround three sides of a Palestinian village and force the occupants to leave by the fourth side. Even the names of the villages were changed as they lost their Arab identity: the village of Luby, for example, was changed to Lavi, and Safuria to Zipori. David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, explained that this was to preclude future Arab claims. Visiting academics might like to think about this the next time they fly into Ben-Gurion airport. Israel is the only country in the region to have nuclear weapons.

5 Vietnam

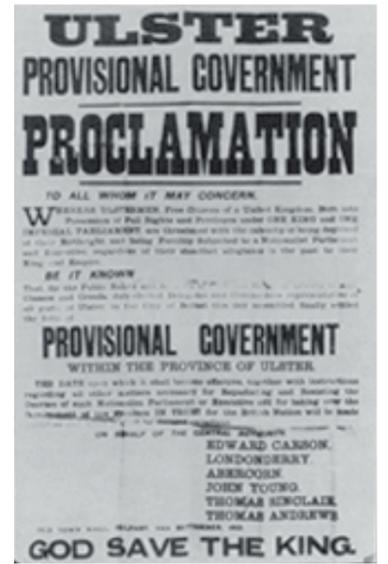
No agreement was made in 1945 to give independence to Vietnam. It was reoccupied by the French, which set off an armed resistance campaign led by Ho Chi Minh. Under the 1954 Geneva Accords, Vietnam was partitioned at the 17th parallel. Under this agreement an election was to be held in 1956, with Ho Chi Minh predicted to win 80 per cent of the vote. The Americans refused to sign the Accords, propping up their South Vietnamese puppet dictator, and putting more troops into the conflict. The Cold War case to beat off the Communist threat was overwhelming: the House of Representatives voted by 416 to 0 for American intervention. The rest is history, but for once the partition did prove to be temporary.

6 Iraq

In 2002, 133 members of the House of Representatives voted against an unprovoked invasion of Iraq. On this occasion there was no scurrying Labour Prime Minister to urge moderation, despite considerable opposition in the UK. But what of the anti-war Tories? 'We must partition Iraq and get out now,' argued the *Sunday Times* columnist Simon Jenkins. Let the governors of Iraq's provinces decide whether they will go into Sunni, Shi'ite or Kurdish states, he advised. Never mind that these groups live alongside each other in Baghdad and many other parts of the country. Ethnic cleansing is a price worth paying. If his paymaster Rupert Murdoch would allow, why don't we send Jenkins to Baghdad's green zone to do the Viscount Radcliffe job?

7 Ireland

Around 95 per cent of the manufacturing output of Ireland was concentrated in the six counties that were partitioned in 1921. They cannot properly be referred to as Ulster, or even as 'northern' Ireland, since Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan are all in the north and are part of Ulster. The partition was based on gerrymandering, to fix a false protestant majority. I was once in a Faculty meeting where someone complained that we were not doing enough to recruit OU students from the Irish catholic community. Well, retorted the Dean, dry as a bone, we did educate the military command of the provisional IRA (the recently deceased former UVF prisoner David Irvine also studied social sciences with the OU). Our Faculty can claim some small credit for helping to enlighten participants in the peace process.



8 Cyprus

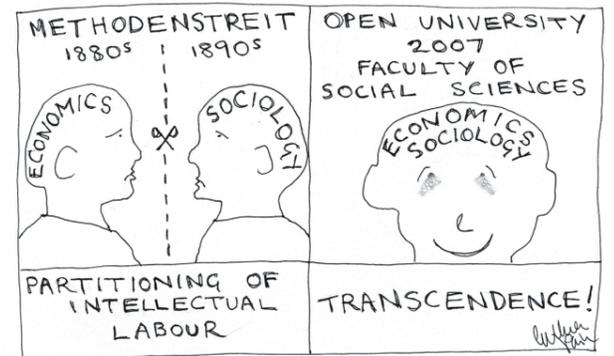
My neighbour is from northern Cyprus. Though his childhood memory is of Greeks and Turks living in harmony, the family house is now the site of a Turkish football pitch. By all accounts, the British and Americans could have stopped Turkey's illegal invasion of Cyprus in 1974, but they were more interested in keeping Cyprus as a military base. A potential union between Cyprus and Greece threatened its NATO status. Cyprus is actually partitioned into four parts: the Greek and Turkish zones, the UN patrolled border and the British military zone.

9 The London Borough of Haringey

A colleague in the Faculty told me a story of an African friend who came to live in Tottenham as a teenager. His grandmother advised him that he should 'kick those white boys' arses'. The boy was shocked to discover that there were no white boys in his new school. In the London Borough of Haringey, former colonial subjects have been forced by economic pressures to live in the east, while city bonuses are invested in leafy white districts such as Highgate in the west – a colonial partition in our very own backyard.

10 Economics and sociology

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, a methodological dispute (the Methodenstreit) took place over the future of economics. The Austrian Karl Menger argued that economics should be based on micro foundations, in which agents are treated like individual atoms. The historical school, in contrast, argued that institutions and history should be the basis for economic analysis. The result was a partition of intellectual labour in the social sciences. Economics was colonized by mathematics, and sociology became a conceptual side show, divorced from its material basis. This is obviously not the case in our Faculty, which transcends such things!



I have had a number of suggestions for boycotts I missed out for my 'top ten boycotts' in *Society Matters* no. 9. The cricketer, Geoffrey Boycott, was one witty suggestion; the case was also made for a boycott of Nestlé. One critic disagreed with my argument that Israel is an apartheid state. (I have since heard that President Jimmy Carter also thinks that Israel is an apartheid regime.) This is, of course, entirely my own point of view, and not University policy – a caveat that also applies to my list of colonial partitions: a.b.trigg@open.ac.uk

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We welcome your contributions and letters. If you would like to write for our eleventh issue – deadline 1 April 2008 – please contact the editor, Richard Skellington, at the address above or e-mail him at: r.s.skellington@open.ac.uk

Further articles and updates are available. The following can be found at: www.open.ac.uk/societymatters

Society Matters Extra

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The rise and fall of the political party, Vernon Bogdanor
Show solidarity with Palestinian farmers, Miles Litvinoff
And Still I Rise, Rosie Wild on Doreen Lawrence's autobiography
Don't overlook the impact of empire on our identity, Madeline Bunting
The neocons have learned nothing from five years of catastrophe, Francis Fukuyama on US policy and Iraq
The white country, Janet Bush on the black presence in rural Britain
The truth in chains, Lola Young on the history of slavery

For PDF format versions of this edition and numbers 6 to 9 see: www.open.ac.uk/societymatters

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World's urban population to double in 38 years

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