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Society

THE NEWSPAPER FOR ALL SOCIAL SCIENCES STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY



MATTERS

IS OUR WORLD BECOMING MORE UNEQUAL?

The UN report the richest 1 per cent of the world's population receives as much income as the poorest 57 per cent. The income of the richest 25 million Americans is the equivalent of the income of 2 billion of the world's population. *Society Matters* finds increasing poverty in less developed countries, a disturbing extension in the divisions between rich and poor in America, and further proof that New Labour is struggling to alleviate poverty in the UK. Rich & Poor, written by Richard Skellington, Open University. Continued on Page 2

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Social Sciences on the WWW

<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences>

Information on:

The Faculty, Subject Areas, Courses, Research, Staff, Partnerships, Events, Situations vacant, Enquiries



More interesting than ever?

Phil Sarre, Dean of Social Sciences, handed over to new Dean Peggotty Graham in August. Here he reflects on his seven years in office, the difficulties overcome, the challenges ahead and the legacy he leaves behind

When I wrote my first column as Dean, I referred to the 'interesting times' we were then in. At the time, we were managing a financial crisis, coping with Teaching Quality and Research Assessment reviews, worrying about what recommendations would be made for HE by the Dearing Committee, and starting to launch a new Masters Programme. I set myself four targets, and as I leave office it seems appropriate to report on how well they have been achieved.

Raising course excellence

The first was to maintain the excellence of our courses, while reducing the number we offer and fitting them better into named degrees. We have indeed produced more excellent courses, increasingly including ICT components along with books and tapes. The named degrees are now more coherent and more apparent to students. However, I did not initially realize that our plans for the Masters had committed us to double the number of courses we offer, so it has taken most of the six years to slow, and perhaps just to reverse, the rate of growth in the curriculum.

Enhancing tutorial support

The second was to keep up the standard of tutorial support. At the time, this seemed in our power, but I had not reckoned with the possibility that the OU would renegotiate the AL contract in a way that offended many ALs, and without consulting us along the way. It has taken an immense amount of work, both within the deanery and by all our staff tutors, to keep people motivated and working well in the face of the insidious messages that many read into the contract. Because so many are so committed to the OU, I think standards have been maintained, but I can't help wishing we'd been able to focus on systems to improve retention rather than just to counteract the negative effects of a contract.

Improving research

The third goal was to improve the amount and quality of research. Here I know we have succeeded, even though several disciplines have lost out in the RAE, because we have many more excellent researchers than ever before. In the era of performance indicators I'm glad to be able to report that the ESRC annual report for 2002-3 shows the OU to be equal second in terms of successes in their Major Grants Scheme, with five large awards, including two centres in sociology and psychology which will run for at least 5 years. The next RAE is going to be a formidable challenge, but we have made a major step forward in external funding, so we should not be downhearted.

Prioritizing staff welfare and career development

My final objective was to value our staff and defend them from overwork. In the face of the huge rise in courses produced plus greater demands for research output, it might seem that this was bound to fail, but during the middle years of my time as Dean, there were opportunities to expand the staff, which we took wherever we could, so I don't think overload got any worse. What is rewarding is that the OU has been more realistic in considering promotions cases, and we have been able to secure record numbers of promotions to Senior Lecturer, Reader and Chair status. This confirms that the staff of the Faculty is not only bigger than ever before, but also highly skilled and successful. Although not exactly planned in advance, this staffing outcome is probably the thing that I'm most pleased about, since it provides the key resource which we will need in tackling future challenges.

Financial security but no room for complacency

The times are now more interesting than ever, with another financial crisis to deal with, worries about what the HE White Paper is proposing and new systems of Quality Assurance and Research Assessment to adjust to, not to mention a rising tide of reorganization prompted by the Vice-Chancellor's Senior Management team. We should not be complacent, because the pressures are formidable, but the Faculty is attracting growing numbers of students, so is financially sound and has a multi-talented staff to call upon. My successor, Peggotty Graham, will have a great deal to do, with many interesting challenges. I wish her well.

Continued from page 1

Divide between rich and poor widens



During the 1990s poverty increased in one-quarter of the world's countries. A lethal combination of HIV/Aids, war and conflict, failed economic policies, and famine resulted in 54 countries falling further behind many in the West. The annual United Nations Human Development Report published in 2003 saw sub-Saharan Africa and the nations that have arisen out of the collapse of the Soviet Union suffer significantly.

The UN aims to halve by 2015 the number of people living on less than a dollar a day and to reduce mortality for the under fives by two-thirds, but the developing trends of the last decade may have made these goals unrealistic. During the 1990s the number of people living on less than a dollar a day did fall – from 30 per cent to 23 per cent – but nearly all the decline was due to improvements in China, India, Ghana and Senegal. Thirty of the 34 countries classified as experiencing 'low human development' are in sub-Saharan Africa. The latest data suggest that it would take the UN until 2147 to halve the number of people in sub-Saharan Africa living in poverty. In Zimbabwe, life expectancy has fallen from 56 in the early 1970s to 33 today.

The UN report 13 million children were killed by diarrhoea in the 1990s – more than all those killed by armed conflict since 1945. Thirty thousand children die each day of preventable illness. They conclude: 'though average incomes have risen and fallen over time, human development has historically shown sustained improvement... but the 1990s saw unprecedented stagnation, with the human development index falling in 21 countries'.

The UN has called upon the West to abandon the one size fits all market-liberalization agenda for a more interventionist strategy. Such a strategy would involve the removal of trade barriers, the provision of increased debt relief and the doubling of aid from \$50 billion to \$100 billion a year.

Rich and poor in the USA



The number of poor Americans rose in 2002 to 32.9 million, an increase of 1.3 million in one year, while the proportion living in poverty rose to 12 per cent. The United States Federal Reserve reports the difference in median net wealth between the top 10 per cent income group and the bottom 20 per cent leapt by 70 per cent between 1998 and 2001. The US Census Board confirmed the disparity when it announced in 2003 that US income fell for the first time since 1991 – by 2 per cent – and reported the first increase for eight years in the number of people living at or below the poverty line. Average yearly income for the top 5 per cent rose to \$167,000, while for most other people it was static or declined. The disparity in incomes between white and minority ethnic Americans grew by 21 per cent.

Rich and poor in the UK



Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has shown that the number of UK households without any assets at all has doubled since 1979, while the wealth gap has continued to rise under New Labour.

New Labour policies have hit the poor harder than the rich according to the Office for National Statistics. The least well off in the UK pay more than the rich in tax. In 2002, the total tax bill for the richest 20 per cent of households was 34.2 per cent of their incomes compared to lower income groups who paid 42 per cent of their income in taxes. The least well off also have to find 7.1 per cent of their income in local taxes, compared to 3.7 per cent for middle income, and 1.8 per cent for high earners. VAT also hits lower income groups harder. They spend 30.1 per cent of their incomes on indirect taxes, compared to 10.4 per cent of the richest 20 per cent of society. Council tax hits the poor hardest while the take up of council tax benefits is low. Two million eligible households did not claim rebates in 2001-2.

New Labour is also behind its promise to cut child poverty in the UK by one quarter by 2004-5. In 1998-99, 4.2 million children lived in poverty. By last year this had reduced to 3.8 million, but another 600,000 children have to be taken out of poverty to meet the target in the next two years. Since 1979, salaries for the top 10 per cent of earners increased three times more than those on lower incomes while the percentage of children in relative poverty increased from 14 to 32 per cent - one of the highest levels in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Third World debt: crises and paradoxes



Despite promises by the G8 countries to write off \$100 billion of Third World debt only one third has been written off according to research by Cafod and Jubilee. Researchers found that 19 of the 26 countries targeted for help in the late 1990s still have debts of more than one and a half times their national income. Falling commodity prices have cut poor countries' export earnings, while the International Monetary Fund's insistence that poor countries must cut public services hugely and privatize state industries in order to qualify for relief has hampered progress on debt. There are 41 poverty-stricken countries that can sustain debt, but so far only eight countries have qualified for relief.

In 2002 World Bank data also showed that developing countries are actually net exporters of capital to the high-income developed world. For the first time the data showed that money sent home by relatively poor migrant workers in the developed world now exceeds the combined total of government aid, private bank lending and IMF/ World Bank aid and assistance. India received \$10 billion in migrant remittances, nearly double the income it receives from its lucrative IT software industry. In Tonga more than 37 per cent of GDP is remitted by migrant workers; in Lesotho, 26 per cent, and in Yugoslavia between 10 and 20 per cent. Remittances from Bangladeshis have built schools and hospitals, while non-resident Bangladeshis from the UK send far more home than the amount of UK aid to the country.

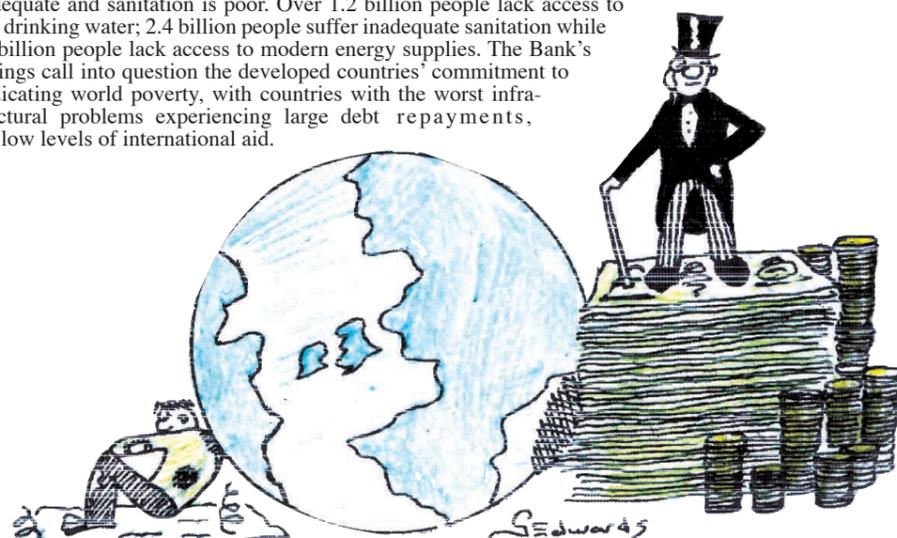
Third World investment decline increases poverty



Since 1995 investment in developing countries has declined, undermining infrastructure, and placing the lives of millions at risk. New figures produced in 2003 by the World Bank show loans and private sector investment in transport, water, and power to have 'dramatically dwindled'. External financing has dropped from \$4.5 billion in the mid-1990s to \$2.5 billion in 2001.

The problem has been exacerbated by the withdrawal of public sector finance for infrastructural regeneration as governments rely increasingly on private sector investment. The Bank is considering offering contracts to companies who comply with poverty alleviation programmes. Barry Coates, Director of the World Development Movement, highlighted the paradox of privatization: 'if you privatise services, investment actually falls'. One problem is the importance placed on quick returns for investment by multi-national companies.

The situation is especially acute in regions where water supplies are inadequate and sanitation is poor. Over 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water; 2.4 billion people suffer inadequate sanitation while 2.5 billion people lack access to modern energy supplies. The Bank's findings call into question the developed countries' commitment to eradicating world poverty, with countries with the worst infrastructural problems experiencing large debt repayments, and low levels of international aid.



EDITORIAL

Richard Skellington
The Editor, August 2003

The last year has shown just how much society matters. It was the British philosopher Bertrand Russell who once observed: 'war does not determine who is right, but who is left'. One regime – at least – has changed in the world since our last issue, but is the world a safer place than a year ago? We doubt it.

One of the dilemmas of producing *Society Matters* is sustaining the contemporary relevance of argument, analysis and evidence. *Society Matters* seeks to share with students, staff, associate lecturers and the academic community, some dominant agendas and concerns that make Social Sciences so relevant to our understanding of the contemporary world. The newspaper is produced as a resource to be dipped into during the study year. We hope it stimulates debate and learning. It may not offer profound insight or solutions, but it reflects something taught many years ago by my university teacher, Tom Weingraff, 'question everything that moves'.

It is the end of August 2003. Lord Hutton has opened his inquiry into Dr Kelly's death, Israel is building a wall which makes Palestinian refugees in their own land, Liberia is the latest African country to be mired in bloody civil war, the coalition's occupation of Iraq is meeting resistance from unpredictable sources, the UN headquarters has just been bombed and George W. Bush is turning his administration towards thoughts of more regime change.

The newspaper reflects the concerns of four new course offerings. Two new innovative Government and Politics courses emerge in 2004 and 2005: DU301 *A World of Whose Making?* and DD203 *Power, Dissent, Equality: Understanding Contemporary Politics*. They join DD305 *Personal Lives and Social Policy* and U216 *Environment: Change, Contest and Response* in an exciting post-foundation course curriculum.

Andy Dobson and Sarah Neal examine debates around environmental citizenship and identity. George Callaghan takes the lid off call centres. Gillian Rose asks why we keep family snaps. John Allen examines lost geographies. Melanie Mauthner explores the many sides of sisterhood. Louise Westmarland reveals an interesting discrepancy in comparative criminology, and in an issue with a healthy gender balance in authorship, we are pleased to get permission to publicize Joni Seager's new *Atlas of Women*, a must buy for any student. Sally Baker shows how students can use online innovations in the OU library to enhance course study.

Ann Phoenix, one of our newest professors, and one of the few black staff to break the glass ceiling at the OU, provides a helpful guide for would-be researchers. How to get a research grant gives every budding researcher thinking of making an application a wonderful check list. For the first time, we devote more pages to the research interests of our associate lecturers. We hope in future issues to explore ideas for establishing far firmer dialogue between the Faculty and our teachers using *Society Matters* to help create a heightened sense of academic community.

If this issue has a theme it is inequality – at home and abroad. Is the world becoming more unequal? The evidence, while not conclusive, suggests that the final decade of the last century saw some disturbing trends emerging, especially in Africa. We could not avoid tackling some of the political consequences of inequality. Vice-Chancellor, Brenda M. Gourley, asks if we have lost our humanity in the West? Her question frames some of the concerns of several contributors, especially Gary Slapper, who asks if the Law can help ameliorate inequality in the Commonwealth. Within the UK, Ali Rattansi and Karim Murji explore fault-lines in our multi-racial society.

We are pleased to have recruited a new honorary OU doctorate Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent of *The Independent*, who puts recent events in Iraq in historical context, and questions the role of the West in the Middle East. The American commentator Randy Rader reminds us of the tensions and divisions in America before the war and in its aftermath. Richard Stevens challenges us all to think carefully about the future of the United Nations. Should it survive? You decide.

The last year has witnessed the erosion of hard-earned freedoms in the West and undermined fundamental tenets of what constitutes a civilized society. Has the war in Iraq made the war against terror more problematic? How can the billions of dollars invested in US military might be justified in a country which is experiencing widening gaps between rich and poor? Since 9/11 our focus has understandably shifted towards the international, but we may pay a higher price at home. There are strong signals that neither the US economy nor the UK's is in rude health. For all the emphasis on war abroad the prospects for George W. Bush and Tony Blair may be undermined critically by economic failure at home, especially in public services.

Politics is the art of the possible, but in order for that to happen, rulers have to keep the trust of their people, not indulge in a war on truth. Some things cannot be spun.

We do hope you like the new all colour format and our mix of informative, amusing, stimulating, and provocative articles. My thanks to John Hunt our design and layout wizard, cartoonists Kate and Gary, and copy editor Julie Laws. We try to balance serious content with humour and reflection. The next issue will deliver feedback to readers about how the Faculty responds to your concerns and priorities. We would like to hear from you, especially if you want to write for our pages.

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Why and how the United Nations must change!

Does the UN have a future? Our planet and all of us who live on it desperately need a vital and effective UN. At the moment it totally fails to live up to its aspirations. Psychologist Richard Stevens' health check finds it sick and impotent and urges radical change

The United Nations has been the most paradoxically tragic failure of the twentieth century. The UN has massive public support (do you personally know anyone who does not think it a good idea?) and yet is totally ineffective in its primary role. It is the only supra-national body that has the moral authority to intervene and to protect human rights where these are being abused – in other words to act as the world's policeman – in a world that desperately needs policing. Yet its own procedures prevent it from effectively carrying out this role. We are all only too familiar with the many examples over recent years of the UN's failure to make effective interventions – from Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia to more recent events in Iraq and Liberia.

Erode state sovereignty in favour of peoples' rights

Hypocrisy was built into the foundation of the UN. 'We, the peoples of the United Nations...' begins the declamation. But member states are in fact represented by their governments not their peoples. The UN works explicitly from the politically expedient but ludicrous and disgraceful principle of national sovereignty. This not only gives the same rights to tiny states run by dictators to much larger democracies, but means that the UN cannot intervene in the domestic (internal) affairs of member states, even where they abrogate the most basic human rights and where enormous suffering is being endured by their people. The first fundamental change needed is to replace the emphasis on sovereignty with a concern for human rights and to ensure that these are upheld even if this requires interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

If human rights rather than sovereignty became the UN's principle of operation then a related and frequently discussed issue is thrown further into relief – proportional representation. Should an equal vote be given to every state regardless of size? Should the 80 thousand inhabitants of the Seychelles have the same representation as India with its hundred million inhabitants? At the very least, some weighting for population should be incorporated into the voting system.

Enforcement of policy

Another issue demanding radical change is the degree to which UN policy can be enforced upon member states. Member states can ignore (and frequently do) those resolutions agreed by both Security Council and the General Assembly. The evolving European Union provides a salutary contrast. Here we have a supranational organization whose decisions can be made binding on member states. A decision made by the European Parliament (or by the European Court of Justice) will be enforceable in all member states, even if it conflicts with judgments made at a national level. Such a principle is essential for harmony in a community of nations, as it is in a community of individuals. Individuals in a democratic community accept a decision established through agreed procedures as binding even where they may have voted against it. This is not to say that the EU should be regarded as a precise model for the UN, only that there are some interesting pointers here.

Membership rights must be earned

Membership of the UN is in principle open to all applicants. Compare again the EU. Here the right to membership has to be earned by the achievement of specified criteria. These depend not just on economic considerations but on the clear establishment of political and judicial systems designed to guarantee the rights of individuals. As far as the latter are concerned, I would advocate a similar procedure for the UN. So that membership has to be earned. And membership brings with it obligations (as does membership of the EU); for example, that members need to accede to any agreements reached by the UN. Making membership conditional on meeting key criteria might give some incentive to countries with insufficient concern for human rights to put their house in order. The downside, however, would be that this would leave many states formally unrepresented in the UN. Two points here. First, there could be a form of associate membership, with advice and support provided for associate member states aspiring to attain full status. Second, in the case of states whose authoritarian leaders are not democratically elected and who do not seek to meet the conditions for UN membership, the UN should still regard itself as the guardian of the rights of their people, and should do everything it can to advance their interests.

Principles

While the UN advocates human rights, the reformed UN that I am proposing would go further. It would make membership conditional



Refugees being taken out of Kosovo

The UN has a history of being abused by state sovereignty. Cummings' 1957 cartoon in the Daily Sketch shows Antony Eden taking his case against Nasser to the Assembly before the Suez invasion. The UN was portrayed as a haunt of knaves and horse-traders.



'Justice!!! You won't find justice on ANY floor here'

on the implementation of such rights. Evaluating whether or not such conditions are met will inevitably be a somewhat muddy operation. But establishing whether or not certain key principles are broadly adhered to in practice should not be so difficult. Such principles would include the operation of democratic procedures which provide people with some, albeit limited, control over the political decisions that affect them, freedom of speech, access to basic food and shelter, and to educational and medical resources. It is hard to justify the notion that such basic provision offers legitimate ground for controversy. While it is true that such conditions may be more likely to be found in Western democracies, they are not simply relative. They have been hard won and evolved over centuries of political conflict because they do address fundamental human needs. If they are opposed on ideological or dogmatic fundamentalist grounds for example, such opposition should be rejected for what it is. More likely, however, such basic human rights would be resisted only by authoritarian rulers who seek to exploit their countrymen and benefit from their subjugation.

An effective UN needs teeth

Morally, the task of intervention cannot be left to the USA, the EU or NATO. A reformed UN must have its own teeth – in other words a military arm which would be a highly efficient intervention force under direct UN control. While it might also draw on the military resource of member states, it should be sufficiently powerful to intervene on its own accord. Direct funding from the UN itself could be supplemented by no-strings funding from philanthropists. Retired generals could contribute expertise and technical advice, and idealistic young men from all and every country (including associate and non-members) could join – the UN's own 'foreign legion'. This task force would need to be powerful, efficient and able to conduct quick, effective 'surgical' interventions with minimal damage and suffering to the population of the country concerned.

Infrastructural support

The reformed UN also needs to have at its disposal pragmatic support systems – shell administrative structures and personnel for political systems (both at national and local level), the organization of health, and education and public transport provision, policing and the judiciary. The personnel involved should be sensitive to cultural differences in these areas and to problems of implementation. They should be ready to be deployed wherever such systems have collapsed, particularly in countries where intervention is taking place. These administrators should also offer training and internships for local people until they can effectively take over for themselves. This is not colonialism. It is trying to ensure a decent life for as many people as possible. And, if they understand what is actually intended and can be achieved, such interventions will be welcomed by the majority of those unhappy people whose politicians and tyrants create the conditions which make intervention a moral and humanely desirable action.

Implementation

All of these reforms are formidably difficult to achieve. As psychologists will be well aware, the diffusion of responsibility that occurs in groups makes them far less likely to act in a moral manner than individuals on their own. Another core problem is the attitude of the major players. The USA, for example, provides about a quarter of the UN's budget and it would undoubtedly resist what it would perceive as a potential erosion of its domestic rights. But the US government has to come to terms with accepting the obligation to follow UN legislation where this has been constructed according to clear principles of democracy and human rights – principles to which the USA itself subscribes. If the USA cannot do this, then it needs to be sidelined, for all the difficulties this would bring. At least then its moral position would be clear, and the UN could get on with its proper job. Unfortunately these are not the only problems. The radical nature of the reforms suggested above mean that they will not be implemented by the current Assembly. Almost surely we need to start from scratch and set up the UN as an institution all over again.

Our planet and all of us who live on it desperately need a vital and effective UN. At the moment it totally fails to live up to its aspirations. There may be many obstacles to bringing about change. But at least we can begin by setting up dialogue and debate about what kind of change is necessary and how it might be implemented. And we need to get on and do this fast!

July 2003

DD305 Personal Lives and Social Policy

Course chair Janet Fink outlines the unique attractiveness of the new 2004 Level 3 social policy course

Sexualities Care

Personal narrative 1

'Immigration officer. You'd be good at that. I had to admit I couldn't find any immediate objections. Minimum requirements were two A-levels, which in those days meant a degree at least and the basic salary looked like an exotic amount of money for someone who had never lived in London...[However] the trainers did not entertain the notion that we needed the cash and couldn't find anything better. No, we were there because destiny had chosen us. And this was a seige, this was the Alamo. 'It's not a job,' they kept telling you, reciting a mantra. 'It's a way of life. Way of life'. I had been posted to Terminal 3, the South Armagh of the immigration business, the port for Third World arrivals, stuck right at the point where the global tensions of race, wealth and history get personal.... Fortunately, I was assigned a Terminal 3 stalwart who was a path-of-least resistance merchant. 'The secret to being a sprog here', he told me, 'is to let everyone know your face and everyone know your name but never for them to be able to put the two together. That way they'll never ask you to do anything'.

Personal narrative 2

My name is Anya Souza and I'm in my 30s. I'm a woman with Down's syndrome but a person first, and a stained glass artist. I have Down's syndrome but I don't 'suffer' from it. I feel very strongly that plastic surgery should not be done on people with Down's syndrome just for their appearance. It should only be done for medical reasons. I can't get rid of my Down's syndrome and you can't get rid of my happiness. I have the right to a job, to a decent standard of living, to speak my own mind.... When I was born, the doctors told my mother that I'd be mentally and physically handicapped for the rest of my life. What a silly thing to say. I'm very lucky because my mother made me independent. She wanted me to have an education and the same chances as everyone else.... When I was small, the local authority told my mother that I should go to a special school. She said, 'Over my dead body!' I did go to a special school when I was five. But then I went to the same [mainstream] school as my sisters and got three CSEs.

These two very different personal stories are extracts from a selection of narratives that provide the framework for the first two weeks of study in the new third level social policy course, DD305 *Personal Lives and Social Policy*. The narratives are used as resources to open up the course's concerns with the ways in which our personal lives determine the shape, remit and effects of social policy and the extent to which social policy influences the shape, experiences and trajectories of our lives. What the first brief extract helps illustrate, is how the personal lives of welfare professionals – in this case the reluctant immigration officer – influence their engagement with welfare practices and discourses and, for good or ill, affect the delivery of welfare services. The second extract is a useful reminder that users of welfare services also have their own personal lives, which provide the context through which they understand and negotiate those services. Anya Souza's story offers a clear illustration of how one self-defined welfare user has successfully crafted an identity of autonomy and social worth despite attempts by welfare professionals to designate her otherwise in her early life.

In such ways DD305 explores the connections between social policy and people's lived experiences of welfare. It uses four key themes – sexualities, care, work and citizenship – to provide a route through these complicated and often contradictory connections and to examine both highly visible debates and questions in social policy and those that tend to be marginalized. What is on offer are opportunities to explore 'new' and 'old' sites of interest in the field of social policy and to ask 'different' questions about the policy-making process in the past and today.

A range of conceptual tools, theoretical perspectives and research evidence are used to help students engage with these sites and questions while the assessment strategy offers the opportunity to explore them further through a small piece of independent research. For these reasons, students are very strongly recommended to have completed a second level course in the social sciences before registering for DD305.

DD305 is an exciting and challenging new course – what more could you ask for the study of social policy in the twenty-first century?

Work Citizenship

England a nation of five million unpaid carers

Over five million people in England provide unpaid care for a relative or friend, according to the 2001 census findings published in 2003. Rising numbers of elderly, the high costs of nursing care, and cuts in provision mean that more people than ever are looking after others, often while holding down a job. More than one million people provide over 50 hours of unpaid care a week. Over 4,000 people in their 90s said they were acting as unpaid carers.

Motherhood and work

Over one-half of UK mothers go out to work according to Department for Work and Pensions' research, while 15 per cent of working mothers with dependent children are their families only breadwinner. The 2003 report, *Families and Children 2001: Work and Childcare*, shows that three-quarters of households where no adult was working were headed by a lone parent. Lack of childcare or its cost was cited by lone parents as preventing them going out to work. Five per cent of families with children had two unemployed parents, and in half of these instances, one of the parents was disabled.

A second report by Leeds and Manchester universities found that if women workers want to earn as much as men they should decide not to have children. Sylvia Walby and Wendy Olsen found that women who take time out to have children earn much lower wages on their return. Over a seven-year period the researchers found that women who remained in their careers experienced a 15 per cent increase in salary while those who took a career break saw their income drop by 2 per cent each year they were out of work. In the UK in 2003 men earned on average 25 per cent more than women. Walby concluded: 'The importance of motherhood in women's pay is nil... the UK has massively increased subsidised child care, but it's still very little compared with other European countries'.

Childcare provision remains an obstacle for mothers going back to work

A study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies claims that up to one-quarter of women caring for young children would like to work but can not because of the high cost of nursery and child-minding provision in the UK. The Institute, which is pressurizing the Government to introduce state-sponsored childcare, found it was not uncommon for mothers to face bills equivalent to up to 40 per cent of family income. Instead, mothers are heavily reliant on relatives and friends to look after their children. The average cost of childcare was £3,257 a year for a family with one pre-school child. The provision varied enormously. Hampshire, for example, had 1,300 child-minder places per 10,000 population, compared to London's central boroughs where the average was around 300 per 10,000.

Increase in 'illegitimacy' and the lowest ever birthrate

Four out of every ten children in England and Wales are now born to unmarried parents, a rise of 40 per cent since 1991 as couples increasingly opt for co-habitation. Government data for 2002 also showed a birth rate of 1.64, the lowest since records began in 1924. Ninety per cent of teenage mothers were unmarried.

Teenage abortion rates increase

The Department of Health target to halve the under 18 conception rate by 2010 looks likely to produce an increase in abortion rates, after a period of decline in the 1990s. In 1998 the Government announced a drive to cut teenage pregnancies and in every year since there has been an increase in abortion rates. Among under 18s the rise has been acute. Between 1998 and 2001 pregnancies among under 18s in England dropped by 6.5 per cent from 41,089 to 38,439 a year. But abortions rose from 17,300 to 17,700, from 42 per cent of pregnancies to 46 per cent. Among the population as a whole the proportion of terminations is 23 per cent.

Addicts' children failed by the state

Over 350,000 children in Britain have to deal with parents addicted to hard drugs. Research for the Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs found that 3 per cent of children under 16 in England and Wales, and up to 6 per cent in Scotland suffer physical and psychological damage. Most affected children came from single parent households and families whose composition frequently changed. Some were not fed properly, others beaten, and fear prevented children from seeking help. Despite the abuse and neglect the report *Hidden Harm 2003* found that social services offered very little help for the children of addicts.

Infant mortality in UK second worst in Europe

Infant mortality (IM) in England and Wales declined from 7.9 child deaths every 1,000 live births in 1990 to 5.8 in 2000. However, a rate of 5.8 is still only marginally better than Greece and the second worst in Europe. Of the 15 EU states Sweden's IM is best – at 2.9 child deaths per 1,000 live births. Since 1960 IM has fallen in Britain by three-quarters, down from 22.5. The statistics, released in June by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), reveal far steeper declines in Spain, Italy and Portugal over the past 40 years.

Neurotic tendencies

Women are 50 per cent more likely than men to suffer some form of neurotic disorder, according to figures from *Social Trends*, 34. Of those reporting a disorder, three out of four had no employment. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of antidepressant drugs dispensed rose dramatically from 9 million to 24 million items. The cost of £342 million in 2001 is 6 per cent of the total prescription bill.

Domestic violence increasing

Twenty-five per cent of violent crime, according to the Home Office's latest figures, is attributed to domestic violence, but only one in three attacks resulting in injury were reported to the police. On average victims are assaulted 35 times before they seek help. The Home Office confirm that some courts have been reluctant to send fathers to prison for domestic violence offences because of the consequences of depriving the family of its breadwinner.



Depression, suicide and young people

Over one-quarter of young people have contemplated suicide according to research for the charity Depression Alliance. A further 24 per cent of young people knew someone who had tried to kill themselves, while 18 per cent knew someone who had taken their own life. One in ten saw depression as 'a sign of weakness'. As suicide rates for people aged 19 and over fell by as much as 15 per cent in the last ten years, young people suicides are increasing, with the biggest increase being found in teenage girls. The Royal College of Psychiatry found a 20 per cent rise in young women (15–19 year olds) taking their own lives over the past ten years.

Class divisions still evident in mental health data

Working Class children are three times more likely than the children of professional parents to develop mental illness according to Government Statistics. In 1999, one in ten children had a mental disorder, but the figure for children of unskilled manual workers was as high as one in seven. Children of lone parents had double the chance of developing psychiatric problems than those from couple families – 16 per cent compared with 8 per cent. In all areas of children's lives inequalities exist. Disadvantaged children experience more mental health problems. It will be some years before it is possible to measure the impact of initiatives aimed at reducing these inequalities.

Singletons more likely to be older women

Is the picture presented of single female life in *Bridget Jones Diary* and *Sex in the City* a myth? Are the media stereotypes of partying single women living alone representative? No, says the census office. Between 1991 and 2001 the number of one-person households rose from 26 to 30 per cent. But the latest census data reveals that most 'singletons' are not young women happily living alone, but elderly women pensioners. Of the 6.1 million single householders in England, over one-half are pensioners. Of the other 3 million, there are three men to every two women.



Have we lost our humanity in the West?

Sub-Saharan Africa has 70 per cent of the world's Aids cases and the United Nations has predicted that life expectancy in Botswana will be only 29 by 2010. Vice-Chancellor Brenda M. Gourley asks if our response to the Aids pandemic is the greatest moral lapse in history

Barbara Tuchman writes in her book *A Distant Mirror* about the plague of the 14th century. She tells of the fear of contagion that froze every other instinct. The plague was not the kind of calamity that inspired mutual help. 'Its loathsomeness and deadliness did not herd people together in mutual distress, but only prompted their desire to escape each other.' The calamity chilled the hearts of men, wrote Boccaccio in his famous account of the plague in Florence that serves as an introduction to the *Decameron*. 'One man shunned another... kinsfolk held aloof, brother was forsaken by brother, oftentimes husband by wife; nay, what is more, and scarcely to be believed, fathers and mothers were found to abandon their own children to their fate, unattended, unvisited as if they had been strangers.' The Pope's physician, Guy de Chauliac, in his account concluded: 'Charity was dead.'

I write of these things to make the point that the present HIV/Aids pandemic is much larger in scale than the plague. It is the largest catastrophe in human history. Some 20 million people have already died and most of the 40 million people living with HIV are likely to die prematurely. Without a massive response (so far unforthcoming) there will be another 45 million new infections by 2010. Every indicator of human development is slipping and the epidemic is travelling at an alarming rate through the rest of the world – with China, India and Russia being epicentres.

Women and children hard hit

The scale of human suffering being wrought by this disease is difficult to underestimate. It is particularly hard on women because many of the societies where it has taken hold are very patriarchal ones and women do not have the status to insist on the preventative measures that would save them. They also bear a huge proportion of the direct effect since it is they that care for the sick and dying. Children are very vulnerable. They are being orphaned at a horrendous rate (in some African countries more than 15 per cent of children were orphans in 2001). They are not getting proper schooling because many are at home helping with nursing the sick or because the ranks of the teachers are also being devastated. In one part of Africa that I know one-third of the teachers are infected and they are not

'I am appalled by the fact that we found so much money for conflict but we cannot respond to Aids... I find it extraordinary to hear it reported that 200 people have been infected with Sars when we know 2,000 babies are born with HIV every day. One cannot help jumping to the conclusion that this is because most of those babies are born to parents who earn less than a dollar a day. There is a sort of psychotic detachment on the part of Western governments as to what is happening in Africa. I think our generation and our governments will be harshly judged by history....'

Emma Thompson, the actress, launches Action Aid's Campaign for the Global Fund Against Aids, Malaria and Tuberculosis, 16 June, 2003



John, an undertaker from Mbarara, Uganda, sells four child's coffins each month

being replaced at an adequate rate. Agriculture is threatened because people are too ill to work in the fields. Health services are overwhelmed by the devastating demands of the pandemic. They have to cope not only with the disease itself but the upsurge in other diseases that it has triggered.

Absence of concern

My readers may wonder why I am repeating what has been documented elsewhere. I do so because I am constantly being reminded that in those parts of the world where the epidemic is under control (for

example, in the rich countries – the UK and other parts of Europe) it would seem that 'charity is dead.' It is clear that the HIV/Aids situation can be vastly improved by an injection of funds. Kofi Annan has made one desperate appeal after another to this effect – and yet such funding is not forthcoming. So it is not an absence of knowledge that excuses this, it is an absence of concern. It seems to be more than the death of charity. Stephen Lewis, the UN Envoy to Africa on Aids sees it as 'the greatest moral lapse in the history of the planet.' So what is it about our society that makes this possible?

What psychological or sociological or any other human instinct makes such an absence of concern acceptable? The people who lived through the great plague at least had their very short-term survival threatened. They were personally terrified. We have no such excuse. We seem to have lost the very essence of what might well define our humanity.

We need to examine the very impulses that govern our lives and ask ourselves what defines a society worth defending, what defines a life worth living?

Women bear brunt of Aids toll

In the developed world HIV/Aids strikes at both genders, but across Africa, where Brenda Gourley was previously VC of the University of Natal, it is women who bear the brunt of the pandemic. In South Africa more women carry the virus than men. They are infected at a younger age, and they die much earlier. And it is the women who shoulder the caring responsibilities too. It is the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters who have to sacrifice work or leave school to care for dying relatives. In South Africa, two-thirds of those caring for Aids patients are female relatives. In South Africa 18 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 are HIV positive, compared to 13 per cent of men. HIV is the leading cause of death in pregnant women. In 2003, 28 million people in Africa suffered from HIV/Aids; in the developed world there was an estimated 1.5 million sufferers.

Africa and G8 countries: rich world, poor world

At \$580 billion the entire African continental economy is no larger than Spain's. The combined GDP of over 40 countries in Africa totals the annual turnover of the oil multinational ExxonMobil. Here are some other disturbing comparisons:

- Number of people living on less than \$1 a day: G8 countries 0; Africa 291 million
- Life expectancy: G8 countries 77; Africa 48
- Deaths of children under 5 (per 1,000): G8 countries 6; Africa 17
- Number of African children under five who die each year: 4.5 million
- Deaths in pregnancy: G8 countries 1 in 4,085; Africa 1 in 13
- Average annual income: Developed world \$27,854; Africa \$1,690
- Amount spent by G8 countries on subsidizing western farmers: \$311 billion
- Amount spent by G8 countries on aid for Africa: \$13 billion

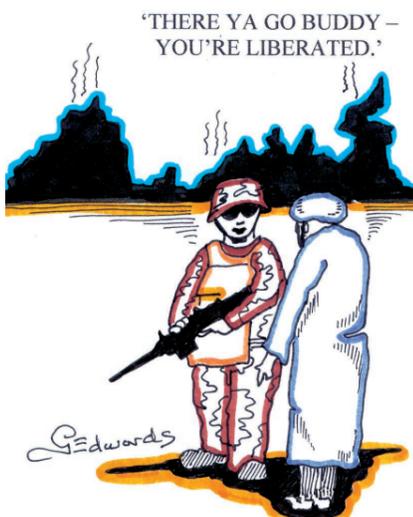
More than 50 per cent of the world's population are still to make or receive a phone call. 1.1 billion people, a sixth of the world's population, do not have access to safe water. 470 million people live in regions of severe water shortage – by 2025 this will rise to 2,820 million. 2.4 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation. 6,000 children in the world die each day from unsafe water and sanitation.

Sources: UN; Independent/Guardian 31.5.03; World Health Organization

War is something humanity is good at, especially as the world becomes more developed and 'civilized'. On average 500 people, mostly civilian, are killed every day through armed conflict and thousands injured. In the first decade of the twentieth century 90 per cent of casualties in war and conflicts were military. In the 93 wars that killed 5.5 million people between 1990 and 1995 the vast majority of the casualties were civilians. It is estimated that nine out of ten of those killed in war today are civilian, and half of these are children. Children also form a growing proportion of soldier deaths too.

Since 1945 there have been over 250 major wars, and the world spends around \$2 billion a day on arms. In 2002, according to *The Independent*, there were 22 significant wars happening in the world, excluding conflicts temporarily suspended by brittle peace agreements, numerous incidents of terrorism, and after 9/11, the 'war on terrorism' itself. The Centre for Defense Studies in Washington puts the number of wars in progress higher, at 36. Of these over one-half are motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, while 7 per cent are driven by drugs and crime.

War is becoming less quantifiable. While estimates suggest that the number of deaths in war has declined from 110,000 in 1999 to half that figure in 2002, these data do not include those escalating numbers of people, mostly civilians, killed in terrorist attacks. The nature of war itself is becoming more difficult to define. For example, Israel is not officially at war with the Palestinians, and the only war it is fighting is the ongoing conflict with Lebanon which began in 1978.



WAR IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The war with Iraq added one more to the 250 major wars fought in the world since 1945

Society Matters examines the cost



How we made sense of the environment

Course co-chair Professor Andy Blowers describes how the U216 course team rose to the challenge of trying to answer the biggest question on the planet – survival. Have we reached a ‘historic crisis’ in terms of the relationship between environment and society?

‘I must admit that this course seems really worth waiting for!... I am really impressed with how accessible the course seems to be.’

‘Well, having looked at everything, thought about things and looked at it again I think this course has been put together very well indeed.’

These are just two of the positive comments made by students starting the course, comments which made the four years of planning and preparation by an eighteen member interfaculty course team backed by around fifty support staff worthwhile.

U216 *Environment: Change, Contest and Response* has already built a reputation for educational innovation in the world outside the OU. Featured in *The Guardian*, U216 was billed as ‘grappling with the big question facing the planet – survival’. The course has also been selected by a House of Commons committee as a model for teaching sustainable development. But, it is its success with its 1,000 or so OU students that really matters, and here, as the course ends its first-year presentation, the evidence is very encouraging.

Starting from scratch: core themes and key concepts

Back in 1999 the Course Team, drawn mainly from Social Sciences, Science and Technology (with contributions from Arts and Maths), had to work out from scratch what and how to teach. There was very little to go on beyond the fact that the course would be a U course at second level and, with another new course U316 *The Environmental Web*, would provide the cornerstone for environmental studies at the OU. U216 could build on the popularity of its predecessor U206 *Environment* which ran from 1991 to 2002 but would need to reflect the very different intellectual and educational demands of the new millennium.

A major challenge for any U course is to devise an interdisciplinary narrative or language to which academics from very different disciplines and



The former Soviet Union has its ecological disasters: diversion of water for irrigation has converted much of the Aral Sea into desert

perspectives can relate. This was done through two primary integrating devices: core themes and analytical concepts. Through intense discussions and workshops the three core themes of environmental change, contest and response emerged. Although interrelated, each theme provides a focus for a block of the course (Block 2 Changing Environments, Block 3 Contested Environments and Block 4 Environmental Responses).

The second integrating device was the use of key analytical concepts that could be used to frame the interpretation and understanding of environmental issues. These concepts are time and space; values, power and action; and uncertainty and risk. Again, each set of concepts features prominently at different points in the course but, together with

the core themes, they help to achieve the insights, coherence, interrelationships and application that is the essence of teaching and learning.

Case studies debate real world issues

Deciding how to begin a course is always difficult especially if it is interdisciplinary. U216 begins with an estuary, the Blackwater in Essex, as a way into thinking about how to approach the study of environments. For the rest of Block 1 the idea of species extinction is used to introduce, define and debate the core themes and analytical concepts which are developed as the course progresses.

Throughout the course examples of environments and environmental issues are used to ensure that debates, ideas and concepts engage with

the real world. Case studies of GM foods, oceanic circulation, climate change, wind farms, landscape painting, river management, environmental justice, news media, radioactivity, biodiversity loss and many others illustrate environmental issues from all parts of the world. They provide the evidence to help explain such questions as why environments are changing, why conflicts arise, why environmental issues are so pressing and whether sustainable development is possible.

U216 is a pretty lavish production with four full colour interactive texts co-published with John Wiley supported by Study Guides. There are six video programmes bringing case studies from the UK and Shanghai, China, Los Angeles, the USA and Lake Baikal in Russia. Four audio programmes convey lively debates on key issues. There are also computer-based interactive learning programmes which teach mapping and modelling skills, the calculation of ecological footprints as well as using CDROM and web-based activities on the interpretation of news media. Finally, there is a series of moderated student and tutored conferences which are used to encourage interchanges among students and tutors.

Great care has been taken to ensure careful pacing, accessible language, ample time for assessments and avoidance of any overloading of students. Aims and learning objectives are set throughout to help consolidate learning. There are seven TMAs including a small project which is carefully introduced from the outset.

Overall, U216 is a vehicle for understanding that environments are dynamic, open to a range of contested interpretations and responsive to changes brought about by a variety of interacting natural and human processes. If students enjoy using it half as much as we did producing it then they will be well satisfied.

The course ends by echoing the question in *The Guardian*. Have we reached a ‘historic crisis’ in terms of the relationship between environment and society? As might be expected U216 offers various answers to this. But, having finished the course, students should be able to find answers for themselves.

Educating environmental citizens

Do we have a right to an environment adequate for our health and well-being? Professor Andrew Dobson of Government and Politics explores how citizenship is key to both environmental sustainability and social justice, and urges schools to ask hard questions relating to the competing claims of this and future generations

It is the statutory responsibility of secondary schools to teach citizenship. This is a tremendous opportunity. It offers the chance to expose students to a crucial yet underdeveloped dimension of citizenship – environmental citizenship

Broadly, there are two kinds of reasons why people might move to more sustainable forms of behaviour – because of incentives and disincentives associated with doing or not doing so, or because they regard it as the right thing to do. The Government’s sustainability strategy is based almost entirely on the former. Faced with the task of complying with EU regulatory demands to reduce the volume of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill by 2010, the Downing Street Strategy Unit charged with proffering policy alternatives noted that ‘there are few financial incentives in place for either industry or householders to seek alternatives to landfill’. With this premise established, the solution to the problem is obvious and the Unit predictably recommends, ‘Greater freedom for local authorities to develop new financial incentives for householders to reduce and recycle their waste. Householders currently pay the same Council Tax no matter how much waste they produce or whether they recycle or not. This means that they have no incentive to manage their waste in more sustainable ways.’ A concrete suggestion floated in the summer of last year was to charge people for taking over-quota sacks of rubbish away – say £1.00 per sack or £5.00 per month.

The line of least resistance

From one point of view the logic is impeccable: people will want to avoid paying the rubbish tax and so will reduce the amount of waste they throw away. But critics of the proposed scheme immediately pointed out that this model contains the seeds of its own demise. People uncommitted to the idea behind the scheme will take the line of least resistance in a way entirely consistent with the model of behaviour on which the scheme depends – but entirely at odds with its desired outcomes. As a *Guardian* newspaper leader pointed out, ‘Rather than pay up, the public are likely to vote with their cars and take their rubbish and dump it on the



New Bradwell household waste recycling centre, Milton Keynes

pavement, in the countryside or in someone else’s backyard’ (12 July, 2002).

No thought was given to the ‘long haul’ approach whereby more deep-seated commitments to sustainable living are encouraged, developed and enabled. This is where environmental citizenship comes in. Before we say more about environmental citizenship education, though, we need to take a couple of steps back and think for a moment about citizenship more generally, and how it might connect to environmental sustainability and social justice.

We are used to thinking of citizenship in two different but related ways. On the one hand there is the liberal tradition of citizenship according to which citizenship confers upon citizens certain rights which citizens claim against the constituted political authority – usually the state. Then there is a tradition of citizenship which stresses its obligations – usually obligations to the state (to pay taxes, to do military service where required, to vote, for example), but sometimes these obligations are regarded more generally as responsibilities to work towards the public good. Both of these dimensions of citizenship are connected with environmental sustainability and social justice in important ways.

First, we are by now well acquainted with the idea of civil, political and social rights, and we expect them to be upheld. Citizenship in this context is about defending these rights and ensuring that they are made good. Recently, the existence of another set of rights has come to be canvassed: environmental rights. One common formulation is that, ‘All human beings have the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being’. Entire social movements have come to be built around attempts to make good these rights where they have been systematically abrogated, as in the case of the American environmental justice movement. Poor people are so often denied their environmental rights as a direct result of their poverty. This makes them vulnerable to the imposition of ‘bad’ environments, such as landfill sites.

‘Ecological footprints’ and social justice

Second, we know that each and every one of us makes an impact on the environment in living our daily lives. We also know that individuals make different impacts – the impact of a wealthy Briton is much greater than the impact of a poor Angolan. We have, in other words, different sized ‘ecological

footprints’. The question for the environmental citizen is whether some of our ecological footprints are too big, in the twin sense of (a) being unsustainable and (b) robbing others of their just proportion of ecological space. If we come to the conclusion that they are too big, then we have a citizenly duty to reduce their size. We should, in other words, compost our domestic organic waste not only because the government will charge us £1 per week if we don’t, but because it is unjust for others not to do so (those who live near the landfill site where our waste is taken). As a matter of justice we should not export the effects of our oversized ecological footprint.

Hard questions

What has all this got to do with environmental citizenship education? In my judgement what the syllabus should not be is a series of bits of technical advice on how to live sustainably. There are two reasons for this. First, this would not, in my experience, be the best way to engage students. The last thing they want is to be talked at in this prescriptive way. Second, and more importantly perhaps, the key questions are not technical in any case – they are normative. Values are key in a number of ways. One way of seeing this is to ask the classic sustainability question: what kind of a world do we want to pass on to future generations? This raises questions of value related to environmental protection: do we want *Blade Runner* or *The Waltons*? Or something else entirely? Is it possible that future generations will want electronic birds and plastic trees? It also obliges us to think about the relationship between sustainability for the future and justice and democracy in the present. Is there a trade-off between them, or can we have them all at the same time? How much might future generations legitimately ask us to sacrifice for the sake of their well-being? And who in the present generation should bear the greatest burdens? VAT on domestic fuel might lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, for example, but it is a regressive tax, and so hits the poor hardest.

These are all big issues, underpinned by hard questions relating to the competing claims of this generation, future generations, and non-human nature. And it is questions of value that interest and excite students, so we have a happy coincidence between what interests students and what matters in the sustainable development debate. This is what environmental citizenship education should be about.

Tensions in the countryside?

As more minority ethnic groups settle in the countryside, research by Sarah Neal, Lecturer in Social Policy, will challenge some accepted myths about the 'whiteness' of rural England

In the autumn I will begin a qualitatively designed project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, which aims to develop understanding of the relationship between changing rural communities and majoritized ethnic identities in the contemporary English countryside. The main objectives of the research are:

- To investigate how the concepts of ethnicity, sameness and difference and national belonging are perceived and reproduced within everyday rural settings
- To explore the extent to which, in changing rural environments, civilian discourses and values relating to ethnicity, Englishness and identity are shaped by location and landscape
- To examine the relationship between the membership and identity of traditional rural social organizations and contemporary rural communities

Racialized tensions?

My previous work on whiteness and my own rural biography has shaped my interest in the English countryside as a racially inscribed space. The 1992 BNP local election success in Worsthorpe, a small, picturesque village in the North of England and local protests against the current Home Secretary's proposals to create rural-based asylum seeker and refugee centres are stark and overt indicators of the racialized tensions that lie at the heart of more coded, racialized constructions of national identity and belonging.

Both historically and contemporarily the rural landscape has provided a normative discursive frame around which ideas of nation and Englishness can be easily hung. Correspondingly, changes within, or the presence of various 'others' in, rural spaces appear to pose dangers to Englishness itself. The populist evocation of Englishness as rosy-cheeked bucolism has become more salient as metropolitan England is associated with cultural diversity and social problems and rural England is imagined as



Photo: John Hunt, 2003

a mono-cultural and problem-free space despite neither of these imaginings being accurate.

Recent events such as the foot and mouth crisis, the hunting debate, the Tony Martin case, the fuel prices row and the high public profile of the Countryside Alliance have pushed the rural back onto the political and policy agenda and provided a site in which struggles over what and who is rural have been very publicly staged. These struggles have been influenced by recent transformations in the English countryside. The shift from agricultural based economies to service-based economies in rural areas, for example 73 per cent of jobs in rural Britain are now in services, has had important effects. Increasing numbers of people are moving from urban

(idyllic) rural areas. Between 1971 and 1996 the population of rural England grew by 24 per cent compared with 6 per cent across England as a whole (*Countryside Agency Report*, 1999). While there are clear class dimensions to this 'gentrified' migration there are also racialized dimensions. Research has shown that this pattern of migration is partially motivated by a range of anxieties about the urban and contains a set of 'white flight' racialized desires for a mono-cultural, non-metropolitan England.

A dynamic multi-ethnic rurality?

However, it is important to note that urban to rural resettlement patterns are not ethnically straightforward. Affluent minority ethnic groups

have relocated to rural areas and this pattern is likely to increase as the social, economic and geographic mobility of these groups continues. In Tyler's (2003) study of Greenville on the outskirts of Leicester, the racialized constitution of that village was very much shaped by the presence of affluent middle-class Asian families buying and living in some of the most expensive properties in the village. What this series of changes illuminates most predominantly is that the rural, far from being static or fossilized is a social space that is constantly in a process of (re)formation, contestation and becoming. It is these processes that the project is seeking to understand. It will use group interview settings involving members of civilian social organizations in three socially, economically and geographically diverse areas of rural England, and it will focus on the particular micro-social worlds captured by talking to individuals.

The role of rural social organizations and their involvement in the countryside is multi-motivated and multi-layered. Being a member of the Church Group, the Women's Institute, the Bowls Club, the Young Farmers Club, and the Round Table involves a process of belonging to the village and to a particular version of rurality itself. Such organizations are about leisure provision, but crucially they are also about the construction of 'villageyness' and networks of belonging. Seen this way rural social organizations can occupy a conflicting place in the terrains of rural identity. The potential duality of community organizations stems from their role as 'border guards' or defensive sites in which (white) English ethnicity and 'village values' are reproduced and reaffirmed. But they can also be open and alive to the changing constituents of contemporary rural worlds. By accessing the voices and perceptions of their members the research project can explore these tensions.

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DU301 A World of Whose Making?

Course chair Simon Bromley outlines the ground-breaking new third level international studies course which begins in 2004

A *World of Whose Making? Politics, economics, technology and culture in international studies* has been designed to provide an exciting, up-to-date and challenging approach to studying a wide range of issues and debates relevant to the contemporary international system. It is the core course at level 3 for the named degree in International Studies and contributes to the level 3 curriculum of the Government and Politics discipline in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

A World of Whose Making? is divided into two halves. The first half aims to equip you with the knowledge and skills to make sense of a range of issues in the contemporary international system. From debates about growing economic integration among countries and the governance of international trade in the World Trade Organization to the problems in achieving international collective action over threats such as global warming, the first half of the course covers some of the crucial issues facing the world community today. Students will study how to analyse the ways in which countries make their distinct national policies in the face of international constraints; the relationships between economic interdependence and inequality and questions of power and bargaining among states; and the fate of weak, aid-dependent economies and their attempts to realize their sovereignty and exercise a degree of autonomy over national policy.

Different voices

These issues are addressed from a range of different intellectual and regional standpoints – from the vantage point of developing countries, from perspectives informed by the political and economic experiences of India, Mexico and Africa, as well as from the viewpoints of the United States and the European Union. While studying the main concepts, models and theories of international politics and economics, students will be exposed to a wide range of different voices and analyses. Through these exciting and important debates, the first half of *A World of Whose Making?* gives students a solid grounding and confidence in the skills of economic

and political analysis necessary to make sense of contemporary international political economy.

Key questions of global importance are explored in the second half of *A World of Whose Making?* What role will the United States play in shaping the future of international order and disorder? What role does notions of culture, and ideas of rights and justice, play in international politics? How can we understand the complex politics of Islam in international affairs? In what ways is technology a source of inequality and power in the world and how are international inequalities changing? And are we witnessing the development of a global network society and a world of governance and agency beyond the sovereignty of nation-states?

Culture, rights and justice

By seeking answers to these questions the second half of the course looks at the international system as a whole and analyses how the international order is changing. It examines the various sources of agency that contribute to the shaping of the future of international order. It begins by examining the origins, nature and transformation of the modern state and the states system, considers the place of difference and the contested debates about the universality of the norms of international society, looks at the idea of a liberal international order and investigates the special role of the United States in the future of international order. The course then examines the place of culture in international politics, as well as the contested claims of rights and justice in international relations.

It considers the complex politics and culture of Islam in the Middle East and asks whether a global culture of human rights is emerging and, if so, with what effect. Issues of technology and technological innovation and their relation to international leadership and to global inequalities are also investigated, as are trends in international inequality over the long-term and in recent decades of globalization. The idea that new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, are transforming forms of social organization, enabling the development of a global network society and a greater role for actors in global civil society, is also considered. Finally, the concluding part of the course seeks to address the general theories of international order, especially its continuity and transformation, which are debated in contemporary International Studies.

The course has been produced by a strong, interdisciplinary production team drawing on politics and economics as well as development and area studies from the Faculties of Social Sciences

and Technology. It presumes no prior study of International Studies or its component disciplines. The course involves compulsory computing and uses sources in the *eLibrary* and on the WWW to take students' study beyond the course materials.

The first half of DU301 may be taken separately as a 30 point course, DU321 *Making the International: Viewpoints, concepts and models in international politics and economics*. This has exactly the same teaching materials as the first half of DU301 and runs for the first half of the academic year. DU301 and DU321 represent an excluded combination of study.

DD203 Power, Dissent, Equality: Understanding Contemporary Politics

Politics is about much more than Parliament, leaders and spin. Course chair Mike Seward, Professor in Politics, outlines an exciting new second level course for presentation in 2005 which places politics at the heart of most things

The United Kingdom has seen a new surge of interest in politics. The run-up to the war in Iraq saw two million people take to the streets and demonstrate. The rationale for decision making in the UK and in the United Nations is being questioned daily. We have witnessed a heightened engagement with the politics of evidence and argument. Just and unjust wars, imperialism and dictatorship, issues of sovereignty and national independence, have grown in the public imagination while the meaning of democracy is being increasingly challenged. Politics is much more than voting at elections.

But politics also starts at home. Who runs your life? Tony Blair, MI5, the OU? We like to think we make our own choices, but who has the power to set limits to our choices? Politics is about parliament and political leaders and their critical debates about war and peace, for example, but it is much more than that. What happens every day in supermarkets, schools, hospitals and in the street is 'political' as well.

Power, Dissent, Equality, which will first be offered in 2005, invites students into the world of contemporary politics in a manner that is fresh and accessible, capturing its diversity and importance. Whether we know it or not, we are all 'doing politics' all the time. The course hopes to catch the imaginations of even the most hardened political sceptics.

Seismic historical changes

Right now our world is in the midst of huge, historical changes, shifts in the political landscape nationally and internationally. Tumultuous events like 9/11, the war in Iraq and its aftermath, have reminded people how vital – and sometimes how deadly – the world of politics can be. Even at the very local level, the everyday politics of petitioning, local council debate, and of schools and hospitals affects people's lives in material ways. Using a

wide variety of case studies drawn from the UK and beyond, *Power, Dissent, Equality* sheds light on the inner workings of power, decision-making and protest. It covers the politics of ideas as well as institutions, and European and international affairs as well as the UK.

Five course themes

The course is built around five themes which capture fascinating and major shifts in politics today. *Powers and structures* explores the meaning and location of power in contemporary societies. What is it, and who has it? It asks questions about some of the more enduring structures within which power is to be found. This includes study of institutions and processes like the House of Commons and the European Union. *Centre and periphery* looks at issues such as the role of the state in our lives, and how and why it is changing. What is nationalism, and why has it revived in the post-Cold War world? The changing role of the state in an age of globalization, and the devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, are also covered. *Participation and dissent* leads us to look, on the one hand, at voting and elections, and on the other hand at demonstrations and new, unconventional forms of political protest (such as anti-globalization protest loosely coordinated via the internet, and the Countryside Alliance marches in the UK). *Equality and difference* takes us through how we are seen as 'equal' and 'different' to each other and how this matters politically. For example, when it comes to health or education should it be our commonalities or our different needs that count? And finally, *Evidence and argument* takes a fresh angle on what counts as knowledge in political debate and political science. How far can we rely on 'facts' being reliable in political argument? Issues like this one are often seen as dry and 'methodological'. But from hospital waiting lists to intelligence about weapons of mass destruction, disputed evidence is at the core of politics.

Innovative and provocative

A good illustration of the breadth and style of the course is its very short introductory book and accompanying audio debates. These use the example of asylum seekers and refugees to explore some basic, critical questions. What is politics, where does it happen, who does it, and how do we encounter the state? Events that are not normally thought of as being 'political', such as having to shop for food using food vouchers, are discussed to develop an understanding of politics that goes beyond the main political institutions. The book uses a story-led approach, drawing general ideas and concepts out of the stories, dialogues, press cuttings, etc. linked to asylum. It represents an exciting and innovative introduction to studying politics. We are confident that new students to politics – those aroused by curiosity but who are maybe uncertain of the subject – will find this an enticing and provocative entry point into the subject. Subsequent course books look at comparative politics, politics in the UK, living political ideas, and the ways in which policy making shapes lives.

Power, Dissent, Equality represents an exciting new departure for politics at the OU. We think you might enjoy taking it as much as we are making it.

Lost geographies?

Geography, argues John Allen, Professor of Geography, is now more relevant than ever when it comes to understanding the challenges of the twenty-first century. He offers his thoughts on space and power that form the basis of his recent book, *Lost Geographies of Power*

Let me start with a confession: I'm not really sure that geography is something that we can lose or, for that matter, that the connections between geography and power are simply out there waiting to be found. Perhaps we have not so much lost sight of power's proximity and reach as settled for a more familiar understanding. And often nothing is harder to understand than what is directly in front of us – what we take for granted.

If asked to think about the whereabouts of power in today's global world, the answer is almost too obvious to bear thinking about: the mix of awe and fear that US power generates in equal measure tells us pretty quickly where power lies. It is concentrated in the institutions of the United States, in Washington, and propelled outwards seemingly at will. End of story? Well, perhaps not.

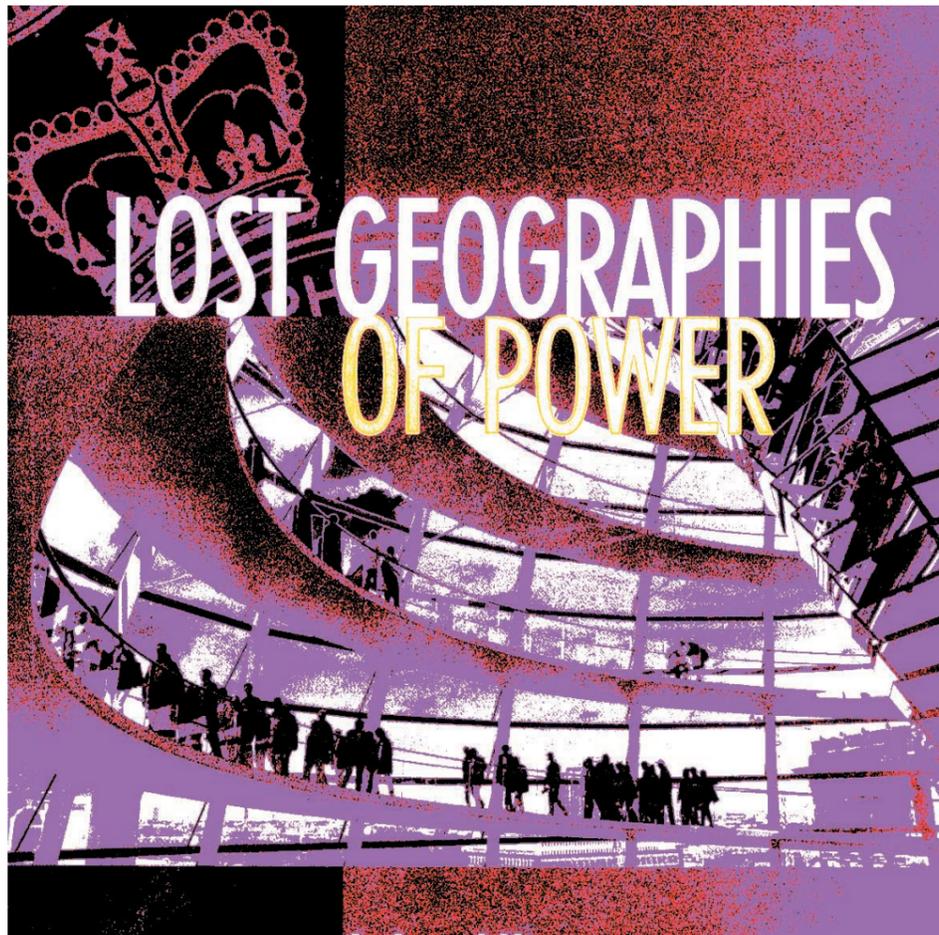
Naomi Klein, global activist and author of *No Logo* (and more recently *Fences and Widows*) suggests otherwise when she informs us that nowadays power is so everywhere it seems nowhere. With nothing apparently outside the seamless logic of corporate rule, there are no centres of power to speak of, no edges or spaces to occupy. Power turns up more or less everywhere, because it comes from everywhere. The French historian and philosopher, Michel Foucault, said much the same thing, although for different reasons.

Yet neither view, to my mind, is entirely convincing. For if we are forced to shuffle between either a concentrated or a diffuse view of power, it seems to me that we miss the difference that geography makes to the exercise of power in the contemporary institutional landscape. We lose the sense in which geography shapes our experience of power. Let me elaborate.

The whereabouts of power

The graphic example of the US power of arms provides an easy template for us to understand the location of power, but the durable image of its weighty institutions 'holding' power, it has to be said, is far from unique. The sheer concentration of decision makers, money or might, and sometimes all three, in the big multinationals or monolithic state bureaucracies often give the impression that power may be 'stored' or held 'in reserve' – ready to be dusted down and drawn upon at will. In this somewhat exaggerated view, power is invariably portrayed as something which radiates out from an identifiable central point, with a reach that appears almost effortless. As such, it gives us something to resist and defy, or even run away from should the odds look distinctly unpromising.

All this, though, is a far cry from our new-found appreciation of the global roundaboutness of power. Rather than being located at the apex of anything, the sense in which power is believed to be all around us can leave you thinking that there really is no one out there working the levers of power. Far from being something that is imposed from above or from the outside, power reaches so far into our lives that it is no longer possible to discern its point of application, nor even begin to question its whereabouts. Power, in this line of thought, is not something that is wielded by the likes of a 'superpower' like the US, it is more akin to an all encompassing rule where things are 'bundled' together – free trade, open markets, human rights, democracy and freedom – and if you 'buy' one you buy from all. It is as if by donning a pair of Nike trainers or by drinking a coffee at Starbucks or by purchasing private education we buy into a 'lifestyle' package: one which constrains possibilities and leaves no room for political alternatives.



Lost Geographies of Power, Blackwell, Oxford, 2003

As scary or as reassuring as these scenarios may be, however, we do not have to believe in either the ubiquity of power or its mirror image, power of the massed sort that moves people and mountains. As I see it, there is no uniform substance called power that has the enchanted ability to circumnavigate the next block, let alone the globe. Reach, proximity and presence are not straightforward givens; they make a difference to the exercise of power precisely because the many and varied modalities or power are themselves constituted differently in space and time.

To press the point, authority works through relations of proximity and presence if it is to be at all effective in drawing people into line on a day-to-day basis. The more direct the presence, the more intense the impact. The same holds for coercion, that most visible imprint of power, where the threat of force lasts only for as long as people feel constrained by its possibility. Manipulation, in contrast, is a distinctly one-sided affair where the concealment of intent gives it real spatial reach, as do the hit-or-miss qualities of an act of seduction, where possibility of rejection and indifference are central to its exercise. Domination as an act of blanket constraint is different again in terms of both its key characteristics and reach, as is the reward-based nature of inducement and so on and so forth.

In short, there are no pre-defined distances or simple proximities to speak about when it comes to talk of such things as corporate or state rule. In

distance terms, what is near and what is far is not simply a question of miles and kilometres; rather it is one of connection or simultaneity as different groups and institutions mark their (co)presence through interaction in all kind of powerful and not so powerful ways: close to, nearby, at a distance and through the tangled arrangements of place. It is in these ways that geography may shift the register of power. So how does such a register mesh with our everyday experience of power?

Neither a prepackaged nor a ubiquitous force

Consider the power relations surrounding something like the 'great debate' over GM foods launched by the UK government this summer and the previous high-profile attempts of biotech companies like the US firm, Monsanto, to bend the will of European consumers. Indeed, Monsanto's failed attempt to bridge the gap between here and there, to break down everyday opposition to all things genetically modified reveals much as to why geography makes a difference to the exercise of power.

Back in the late 1990s, Monsanto was a real biotech giant compared to its diminished size today, but then as now, its driving force was to establish a genetically modified presence in the European food chain. With its HQ in St Louis, Missouri, one could be forgiven for thinking that this represented the 'site' of its concentrated power. That would be a misplaced assumption, however. Rather, the St Louis HQ acted as a resource base from which it

hoped (in vain as it turned out) the biotech word would be spread. And given the obvious lack of enthusiasm for GM foods among British and European consumers in general, it is fair to say that acceptance of biotechnology in our daily lives is far from all pervasive.

Much of this came as a complete shock to Monsanto. In a state of near exasperation at the consuming public's inability to perceive the 'obvious' merits of GM foods, it launched an all-out advertising campaign in 1998 to win the 'hearts and minds' of the British public. What was noticeable about the appeal was its measured tone and serious intent. As an attempt to seduce consumers it appealed to both 'scientific' authority (the safety of the new seed technologies) and attitudes that were already present (fruit and vegetables do not taste 'as they used to'). Its distant authority went unrecognized, however, and its persuasive appeal met with indifference.

Monsanto was busy buying-up companies further along the food supply chain (in particular, seed companies) to enhance their influence in the global distribution networks. It was alleged, Monsanto coerced farmers into restrictive contracts that left them with no choice but to purchase fresh seed from the same source year after year. The multinational's attempt to dominate at a distance, to close down the choices of all involved, thus ran alongside the practice of arms-length seduction and the futile attempt to exercise distant authority.

Monsanto's 'at a distance' strategies were patchy in terms of success, to say the least, but that has not stopped the company from adopting more proximate strategies of inducement (offering to abandon its 'terminator technology') or from exerting indirect pressure through the US government to break the EU's ban on the import of GM crops. Indeed, if one were to be cynical about such matters, it is entirely possible to view the UK government's 'great debate' on GM crops as an exercise in manipulation designed to placate an otherwise resistant population. Members of the EU can ban the import of GM crops if damaging scientific evidence (on the environment or peoples' health) is forthcoming, but if none arises from the 'great debate' – then the Government may just find itself unable to say no to the next round of crop approvals!

The key point is that such mutating relationships either by governments or corporations are not exceptional. The erosion of choice, the closure of possibilities, the manipulation of outcomes, the threat of force, the assent of authority or the inviting gestures of a seductive act are always mediated by a geography that makes a difference.

The challenge of geography

Power is but one example of the relevance of geography to understanding many of the challenges of the twenty-first century. The play across proximity and distance that disrupts our time horizons and makes the world appear at our doorstep, or the tension between national borders and the free flow of peoples that curbs emigration, or the boundary between nature and society called into question by the latest biogenetic developments, are all part of what makes geography matter.

Such preoccupations form the backbone of our courses, whether it is the new U216 *Environment* course or D215 *The Shape of The World* or DD304 *Understanding Cities*. In each, we try to show how geography has relevance to people's lives – and, indeed, why the familiar is often the hardest thing to grasp!

Online innovations

Open Library social science students will see huge improvements in the future. Sally Baker outlines the significant changes

The social sciences subject pages on Open Library have been reorganized. The resources are now divided into seven subject areas. You can choose to look at General Resources for Social Sciences as well as the electronic resources available for different subject disciplines – Economics, Geography, Politics, Psychology, Sociology and Social Policy.

The URL is <http://library.open.ac.uk/index.html>. From here scroll down the 'your subject' menu, and click over social sciences.

What sort of resources can you find?

First on the index page is a link to the General Resources for Social Sciences, useful if you want an overview of what you can access from Open Library for social scientists. To help you to find your way around the pages, each set of resources – for the general area as well as for each of the subject disciplines – is divided into five headings: e-journals, databases, e-books, websites and online tutorials.

e-journals

Under each of the subject areas there is a link to a selection of electronic journal titles that are available to you in full text. You may be looking for a specific journal title or want to browse a few articles or the table of contents from some of the journals in your area of interest. Remember that these are only a selection of social sciences journals. On each of the

seven social sciences e-journal subject pages, you will find a link to the complete A-Z list of electronic journals subscribed to by the OU Library.

databases

This list is divided within each subject area into databases that offer full text and those that provide references only. The majority of full text databases are electronic journal collections, such as *Academic Search Elite* and *Science Direct*. Rather than look at an individual journal via the A-Z listings, you can use these databases to search by subject, author, or title keyword across all the journals in the individual collections to find articles to support your work.

- **Full text newspapers** – *LexisNexis Executive* is an excellent database for accessing the full text of a large collection of newspapers and news sources for the UK, Europe and many other countries worldwide. Many date back 20 years to make it possible for you to check contemporary views of significant events as they happened.

- **Specialist databases** – the OU Library subscribes to some specialist databases and you will find links to them under their specific subjects. For anyone studying economics, for example, there are two databases in particular that are worth mentioning. *Business Source Premier* gives full text access to a large collection of journal articles in economics,

your subject resources your services getting help libraries

finance and accounting. *EconLit* is an easy-to-use index to around 800 economics journals. For psychologists *PsycINFO* is a database without full text, which indexes 1,300 journals with coverage from 1887 onwards. Coming soon – the Library is taking a subscription to *PsycARTICLES*. This database gives full text access to over 28,000 articles from 43 key peer-reviewed psychology journals.

e-books

The OU Library subscribes to a number of electronic books. One that you may find useful is the online version of the 26 volume *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, which you can search by author, article, title or subject.

websites

There are links to a selection of subject-related Internet gateways or resources in each of the seven subject areas. Included is a link to ROUTES (Resources for OU Teachers and Students), Open Library's database of free internet resources selected to support specific courses. Even if your course is not included in the database, you can browse the resources available in your subject area by entering subject keyword(s) and looking through the list of results.

online tutorials

These provide a subject focus to help you improve your search skills and make the most of the information sources available to you. Open Library's tutorial *SAFARI (Skills in Accessing, Finding, and Reviewing Information)* is especially suitable if you are new to searching. It has activities

around the general and social sciences specific electronic resources available from Open Library.

The final two categories are *Statistics for Social Sciences* which lists a number of web sources of statistical information, and *Keeping up to Date* to help you set up e-mail alerts for different kinds of material such as books, journals, government publications and news. Remember that to access most of the electronic resources described here, you will need passwords. You will find a link to 'Obtaining Passwords' on Open Library's home page.

How can we help?

If you need any advice on the best resources to use for your course, if you are trying to find some information for an assignment or your research, or if you are having difficulty getting access to the resources on Open Library, then contact our Learner Support team.

You can e-mail the Learner Support team via lib-help@open.ac.uk or phone 01908 659001. There is also Librarians on Call. This is a messaging service available during office hours you can use to get instant help from OU Library staff. Click the Librarians on Call icon on the Open Library home page to talk to a librarian.



How to get a research grant

Professor of Social and Developmental Psychology, Ann Phoenix, provides some useful tips on writing research proposals. Ann sits on the ESRC Consumption Commissioning panel and advises the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The publication of the proposed changes to the research assessment exercise in the long-awaited review by Sir Gareth Roberts (May 2003) has underlined the importance of research to the standing of academic departments. Since the assessment panel will award stars to individual researchers (zero to three) and departments will be funded on the basis of the resulting total score, an increasing number of researchers are competing for research funding and new researchers are anxious about their chances of success.

The Open University produces guidelines for grant applications and supports applicants in the process. This article is not meant to replace that process or to be prescriptive, but discusses some of the points we all have to address in order to maximize our chances of success with a view to making explicit some issues that new researchers may not be aware of.

Persistence, preparation and planning

One 'secret' of success that is often overlooked is persistence in putting in proposals. All active researchers get some proposals rejected – usually many more than are funded. However, since writing an application is time-consuming and rejection painful, many people put away failed proposals and wait a long time before making a further attempt. However, it is worth resurrecting failed attempts as well as putting in new proposals. The topic of my current funded project, for example, was funded at the third attempt (having been rejected by two funders) and was eventually funded by the first funder to have rejected an earlier version. Each new attempt requires the rethinking of method and focus and so takes time, but in our case, this paid off after we increased the number of methods we were using and the sites in which we planned to work. Even so, the funder (the ESRC) offered us less money than we requested.

As well as persistence, careful preparation and presentation are key to having the best chance of funding. This may seem so obvious that it does not require stating, but many proposals fail because they are not well prepared and are poorly presented. In particular, it is important to identify and use the most relevant funders for particular topics including government departments; research councils; charities; private foundations; the EU etc. Having identified a funder, it is important to fit the

research proposal to the funder's specification. This is one reason that re-applications require additional work.

Funders are, however, keen to help their applicants in this process and always produce information on what they are looking for and how proposals should be delivered. These are now usually available on the worldwide web. For example, Professor Margaret Wetherell in the Psychology Department has recently become the Programme Director for the ESRC programme on Identities. Her programme specification is available on the web and she welcomes contacts from researchers thinking of applying. In addition, she will be holding workshops for would-be applicants before the deadline for application is imminent. The point is that funders are keen to encourage high-quality applications and are well aware that academics are discouraged if funding criteria are opaque or seem unfair. So if possible, it is worth discussing the area you intend to develop with a representative from the funder.

Essential features of research proposals

Proposals obviously differ according to the discipline from which the applicant comes, the topic being researched and the funder to whom application is being made. Nonetheless, there are some common features that can be identified. First, all have to state the problem being addressed. This includes a statement of the aim(s) of the research; the research question and the hypothesis (if appropriate). Second, some explanation of why this work is necessary or desirable is also necessary. Basically, some explanation has to be provided of why the research problem is important and interesting. Third, the proposal needs to specify how the proposed study will address the problem identified in the proposal. Fourth, there needs to be a brief, but persuasive, argument that the applicant is the right person, with the resources to complete the research proposed. Finally, a clear, succinct abstract needs to be provided. Overall, a good proposal will anticipate and answer questions that an informed (and sceptical) person might ask. For that reason, it is helpful to get someone who has been funded by that grant giver to read your proposal critically.

Common reasons for rejection

More research applications are rejected than are funded and scarcity of money is a major reason for rejection, so applications rated 'expensive' are clearly at risk (and, as I have found to my cost, a fairly modest proposal can be considered *not* to provide value for money). There are five other sets of reasons often given for rejection.

First, the problem is not well defined or convincing. It may not be considered to be of sufficient importance or likely to produce new or useful information. Alternatively, the problem may be more complex than the investigator appears to realize, be of only local significance, or fail to fall sufficiently clearly within the field. In addition, the research as proposed may be too complicated or there may be no clear research aim.

Second, the proposed methods or materials may be deemed unsuited to the stated objectives. The description of the approach may also be too nebulous and lacking in clarity so that the overall design of the study appears not to have been carefully thought out. The number of observations/interviews proposed

may be considered inappropriate – unfortunately I have also fallen foul of this reason for rejection when the proposal aimed to look at a variety of group differences with a sample size considered too small. The equipment/methods proposed may be judged outmoded or otherwise unsuitable or there may be requests for equipment that are considered unrealistic because they are too expensive. Reviewers may also recommend rejection if the analyses have not been discussed sufficiently.

Third, there may be problems with the investigator(s) who may not have the adequate experience or training for the proposed research. This is one reason that new researchers are sometimes advised to ask for small grants initially or to make joint applications with more experienced researchers. Funders will also reject proposals where the referees suggest that the investigator(s) are unfamiliar with recent literature or methods or are known to have other responsibilities that would prevent devotion of sufficient time and attention to this research – perhaps proposing to rely too heavily on insufficiently experienced research assistants. The requirements for personnel are, therefore, deemed unrealistic.

This relates to the fourth set of reasons, which is that the institutional setting is unfavourable in some way – maybe because research will not be well supported by the department in which it will be based or by the university research administration.

Finally, if there are two-stage proposals (as in many research programmes), it may be considered that the investigator has taken insufficient notice of suggestions from the panel (another reason for rejection that I have experienced and found most painful since it seemed so clearly – and avoidably – my fault).

Wishing all of us the best of luck with our next applications!

The University research offices website address is:

<http://intranet.open.ac.uk/research-school/ResOpps/>

The University publishes a monthly list of research opportunities that are available on the Intranet homepage. Click on 'R' in the A-Z of sites, then scroll down to 'Research Opportunities' and click on that.



Letters.....

Dear Editor,

As an associate lecturer of some years standing teaching D309 *Cognitive Psychology*, it was with concern and extreme disappointment that I read the article entitled 'Why the Open University always wins at home' in your last issue. The tone of the article is mocking and derogatory concerning the work of two psychologists, Wolfson and Neave.

The home advantage is a well-known phenomenon in sports competition and has been extensively researched. The work of Wolfson and Neave is innovative. It is refreshingly interdisciplinary, taking account of psychophysiological variables, and is an important contribution to the understanding of the home advantage and to the interplay of brain and behaviour in general.

The *Society Matters* article attempted to ridicule this work, and in particular the analysis of salivary testosterone or 'spittle' as you would have it! The analysis of saliva is an accepted and valuable technique in physiology and psychophysiology, and yields important information in an immediate and non-invasive way.

As a psychologist I resent being sent a magazine that attempts to ridicule fellow psychologists and important work in my discipline.

Jan Graydon
CHICHESTER

The Editor replies: I can only hold my hand up and apologize for any offence caused. I will not try and defend the piece. It was a misguided attempt at generating a satirical take on what many football observers believe to be a fairly obvious correlation between home location and heightened performance.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending me the excellent issue of *Society Matters*. You did me proud!

John Pilger
LONDON

Dear Editor,

I have just finished reading *Society Matters* and feel moved to write to you. Let me start by stating that I am English, male, white, heterosexual, Christian, Euro-sceptic and, until my recent retirement, I was the managing director of the UK subsidiary of a major multinational corporation. In fact, an MNC that has figured in several of the courses I have studied at the OU.

You may find it strange to receive a letter that starts with a list of facts, beliefs and views but let me explain. I do not believe that this list makes me racist, sexist, xenophobic or an uncaring capitalist. However, during the six years I have been studying at the OU I have found it increasingly uncomfortable to say things because there is an implication that statements of this kind are no longer politically correct.

So why do I choose to raise this now? Reading *Society Matters* the overall tone and content creates a feeling that the only issues capturing the minds of the Faculty are racism, inclusion and xenophobia. These are important issues and deserve attention.

There is an opportunity for the Faculty to take a lead in researching ways to deal with inclusion, racism and other forms of discrimination so as to help the disadvantaged without alienating the rest of the people. This is the next essential step to creating a better more equitable society and I would be even more proud of my association with the OU if it were seen to be taking a lead role in such a research and programme development.

Albert Shipton
HARLOW

Dear Editor,

Can I thank you for the last issue of *Society Matters*? This was the best in a series of relevant issues you have produced in the last few years. The depth and range of detail is refreshing. It was a privilege to read Anoush Ehteshami's historical analysis of the Muslim world, Jeremy Roche's article on whether children have human rights, and Colin Clarke's thought-provoking account of traveller children in Europe. I also like the cartoons, the short pieces of valuable research information, and the tone. Knowledge mixed with humour and humanity.

Charles Roach
PENZANCE

Dear Editor,

The Vice Chancellor is right (*Brave New World*, front page, *Society Matters* No. 5) about the vital importance for the Open University to embrace more fully ethical concerns which transcend disciplinary boundaries. What the Open University lacks most of all is a course in human rights and citizenship. Such a course would be popular and timely.

Veronica Burton
STOKE ON TRENT

Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate you on the content of *Society Matters*. The type of information and comment found in the Faculty newspaper is hard to find and of the kind I have long wished to read. I will be starting my sixth and final year in 2003 and I do hope you can continue to send me such an informative and interesting newspaper.

F. Ballington
NOTTINGHAM

Letters always welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit letters. Contact information is on the back page.

Researching 'race' and ethnicity: entanglements, challenges and lessons learned

The Black Researchers' Group (BRG) used the opportunity provided by Sage's publication of Yasmin Gunaratnam's book *Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity* to organize a seminar on the theme. The aim was to initiate a dialogue across the different 'worlds' of those involved in research in academia, the voluntary sector and the commissioners of research. Over 60 people from a variety of academic and practice settings attended the seminar held at the London Regional Centre. The BRG is a cross-University group coordinated by staff in SHSW and Social Sciences. Members who define themselves, or could be defined by others, as Black are welcome. The Group's seminars are open to all.

Yasmin Gunaratnam explored 'the treacherous bind' of working with racial and ethnic categories in research. Using personal experience and stories drawn from her ethnographic research, Yasmin emphasized the importance of discussing and expressing, rather than concealing the contradictions that we work with in researching lived experiences of difference.

Jabeer Butt, Deputy Director of the Race Equality Unit, spoke of a very different experience of research, where the need to challenge racism had often involved working with racial and ethnic categories. Jabeer drew examples from early research on ethnicity and housing in a policy context of 'integration' that had led to the dispersal of families in a local authority. This demonstrates how research could have detrimental effects for people from minoritized groups. He also gave examples of how REU's work (notably their work on family centres and the inclusion of Black families) had led to policy changes, greater awareness and additional parenting research.

Alex O'Neil, Principal Research Manager at Joseph Rowntree Foundation, spoke next about participatory research on 'race' and ethnicity and how important it was to achieve higher degrees of participation in research and service development and provision by people with the lived experiences that were being researched. This would involve joint actions and decisions across all aspects of service design and delivery, and where possible, user control. He challenged researchers to use inclusive methodologies that valued and reflected these lived experiences. In the same way as Yasmin wants more time for people to reflect on what ethnicity means and not treat it in a simplistic, descriptive way, Alex called for a deeper and less tokenistic treatment of research participants and a greater valuing of their experiences.

Ann Phoenix, Professor of Psychology at Walton Hall reminded us of the researchers (many of whom were black feminists) who had for over 20 years been challenging conventional thinking about 'race' and ethnicity. She questioned the false divisions between research and theory and pointed to how practice always has theoretical underpinnings although these are not always acknowledged, or made explicit. Ann also challenged research on ethnicity that seems to set out at the beginning to use ethnicity as a way of comparing people's experiences. She was not against this in principle but the research question may not lend itself to being treated in this way. So for example, a question that explored the experience of young mothers and took place in an area that enabled a diverse sample to be included might allow both differences and commonalities to emerge.

The enthusiasm and liveliness of the debate during the seminar demonstrated the need and value for a space to discuss some of the critical tensions and ethical dilemmas that can confront us in research concerned with questions of 'race' and ethnicity.

Ronny Flynn for the Black Researchers' Group

Verbal Gaffes 2003

Earth Summit offers no hope to East Kent
East Kent Mercury

Teletubbies. The friends play a game explaining what it is to be 'on top' and 'underneath'
Radio Times

If you enjoy working with people, why not become a mortuary attendant
Dorset Echo

Vicar marries own daughter
Barnsley Independent

A traveller with one arm and one leg is hopping mad about the zone bays
Bedfordshire on Sunday

12 year wait for toilet ends
Long Eaton Advertiser

At last – a large share of government cash is to be poured into worsening
Highland potholes
Oban Times

Correction

In the short article 'On any day in 2001' on page 9 of *Society Matters* No. 5 there were two notable negatives missing in the list:

Number of people with access to adequate sanitation should have read *without access*...2,400 million

Number of people with access to safe drinking water should have read *without access*...1,100 million

Do we need to forge new links between

Making sense of pain

Linda Bates, a D317 Associate Lecturer, outlines her research into pain perceptions, beliefs and coping strategies

Pain is not only sensory; it is unpleasant and associated with wide-ranging physical, psychological and social disruption. As a consequence, my research work aims to quantify these effects, using the results to develop more effective assessment and intervention strategies.

Initially, a range of 'biopsychosocial' assessment tools were used which measured 247 dimensions of pain experience. The tools measured important issues such as sensory dimensions, mood states, perceptions, beliefs, coping strategies, physical and social interference effects. 120 pain patients took part in the first study; 30 of those going on to evaluate the developed 10-week community-based Pain Management Programme.

Findings strongly indicate that on a psychosocial level, suffering in chronic pain was heavily influenced by catastrophic thinking and decreased feelings of pain self-efficacy (an ability to do things despite the pain). These two factors appear to be negatively influenced by depressed mood, fear, anger, anxiety and avoidance behaviours. On the positive side, when these elements were addressed and people felt active and involved in their pain management, suffering decreased and well-being increased.

As my belief is that research should not sit on a shelf growing dusty, I introduced some of the measurement tools used to the clinical setting of our pain clinic. Patient response is very encouraging and the research continues, extending soon to encompass cancer pain.

If any of this has sparked your interest, please contact me on 01292 310641 or e-mail lindabates@zeronet.co.uk

Following an advertisement asking for details of research being undertaken by Associate Lecturers in their newsletter *Snowball*, *Society Matters* was inundated with requests to raise the profile of their work. Here we give a flavour of some of their research projects.

Is Julia Garritt's statement below typical? What do you think?

What I am finding hard is the 'going it alone' feeling – no institutional mechanism to disseminate my work, no specific point of call for research guidance, no network of research-active colleagues to bounce ideas off. Of course the OU cannot offer to its geographically disparate ALs the face-to-face daily contact that the permanent staff enjoy; but perhaps a Faculty initiative to create a research mentor and network, albeit e-based, would help create an AL research culture.

MARGINALIZING NON-SCIENTIFIC VIEWS ON NATURE?

Julia Garritt, a DU310 Associate Lecturer, questions the role of experts

Has it ever seemed strange to you that although we all see nature as intrinsic to our lives – we enjoy a walk in the countryside, a Christmas tree in the house, a photograph of a wild landscape – we see nature conservation as being primarily an 'expert' issue? And I know that I am not alone in being puzzled as to why, in the name of 'conservation', we see small areas of land being fenced off as more 'special' than the land lying immediately next to it, tracts of woodland cut down, and some flora and fauna given more importance than others. Exploring these issues is the main aim of my research agenda.

The key theoretical trajectory I take is based on Science Studies. It provides a way of looking at how and why science is positioned

as objective and authoritative, yet still open to political and social appropriation. One bonus in adopting such a trajectory is the ability to explore the marginalization of non-scientific interpretations of nature, which potentially deny local communities, as well as others, the chance to integrate successfully their lives and livelihoods with their local environment. This work lends itself to interdisciplinarity (indeed, I am a natural scientist turned social scientist), and I would be very pleased to hear from other OU academics with similar research agendas.

My recent work on these issues has resulted in two chapters for a textbook, currently lying on an Editor's desk somewhere; a couple of papers for journal publication; and an idea

or two for a research bid, rattling around my head. Four years into being an AL many of my research aspirations are frustratingly latent, taking second place to TMAs, e-mails, and the other elements of AL life. Yet these commitments are common to all academics; what I am finding hard is the 'going it alone' feeling – no institutional mechanism to disseminate my work, no specific point of call for research guidance, no network of research-active colleagues to bounce ideas off. Of course the OU cannot offer to its geographically disparate ALs the face-to-face daily contact that the permanent staff enjoy; but perhaps a Faculty initiative to create a research mentor and network, albeit e-based, would help us create an AL research culture.

The stigma of obesity: 'fat' in contemporary British culture

Angela Kennedy, a DD100 Associate Lecturer, is investigating how women are constructed as 'fat' in contemporary British culture. She exposes how academic discourse and media representation reinforces negative stereotypes

Women's experience of obesity is one of the most important and misunderstood features of contemporary British society. Britain's growing obesity problem is generating increasing pressures on women, especially surrounding perceptions about being 'fat'. Our contemporary culture generates images that stigmatizes larger body shapes as deviant, and abnormal, thus exposing the person to increasing psychological and social pressures.

Is being 'fat' really a symptom of underlying emotional conflicts or simply the logical outcome of bad eating habits or of a particular body type? Does the overweight individual, especially if she is a woman, suffer more from the social and psychological stigma attached to obesity than she does from the actual physical condition? In a wide variety of ways she is negatively defined by her weight and excluded from full participation in the ranks of the normal.

Building on this observation, the research explores how and why certain women are constructed as 'fat' within contemporary culture in Britain. The historical and cultural specifics of these constructions are vital. They raise four key questions:

- How do they affect the lived experiences of women called fat?
- What does it mean for women themselves to be designated 'fat'?
- How do they attempt to construct more positive identities?
- How do they resist and/or subvert 'fat' labels?

Analysing the cultural significance of the 'fat' female body has revealed some interesting discursive categories that were assigned to body fat in women within the academic literature itself. While a few writers have critically engaged with and analysed certain cultural representations of women designated as 'fat', significant others have merely reproduced, uncritically and without reflection, various assumptions about fat



The Teletubbies, courtesy of Joanna and Georgina Hervey

women and their lives, drawing on previously assigned categories to describe them without analysis or interrogation of those categories. Negative denotations and connotations around body fat are frequent, and women designated as having 'too much' body fat are assigned categories such as 'grotesque', in 'excess', 'disgusting', 'disorderly', and 'diseased'.

In many of these cases such categories were not interrogated. There is an (almost) universal assumption within the literature that fat bodies are accurate signifiers of compulsive excess consumption of food, related to an 'eating

disorder'. Both psychological and moralistic discourses are employed to arrive at this conclusion in various ways, implying that a fat body is an outer projection of a disordered mind.

A significant amount of literature sees becoming fat as a purposeful (if sometimes 'unconscious') 'flight' from femininity or even from sexuality, or body fat itself was seen as a signifier of asexuality. Yet other accounts assign fat women's sexuality as 'excessive'. Significantly, these recurring discursive categories were also found during textual

analysis of various newspaper, magazine, and even health professional journal articles where the subject of the article was related to body fat, but especially body fat in women. There appears too to be significant class and race ramifications around body fat.

The study qualitatively interviewed women, who self-identified as fat, but are also, importantly, part of a size acceptance movement, and who mostly buy clothes over a size 20. These methodological choices were for ethical reasons, but also because both dress sizing in women and the category of 'fat' itself is subject to enormous complexity and instability. The aim is to address the experiences of women who are categorized as 'fat' by others, not those women who may position themselves as 'fat' but who are categorized as 'normal' by others. The research will document how women engage with the discursive categories assigned to them (and their bodies), and how these affect their lived experiences in various ways.



London builds research bridge with Walton Hall

The series of evening seminars designed to build a bridge between Walton Hall academics and Associate Lecturers and extend the sense of research community between the two is to be expanded in 2004. Dr. Suma Athreya from the Economics discipline launched the series with a very successful seminar on 'The Impact of Globalization on Developing Countries'. Professor Ann Phoenix and Professor Doreen Massey gave further seminars. Ian Fribbance, Staff Tutor, London region, would like to hear from you if you are interested in the series planned for 2004.

the Faculty and our Associate Lecturers?

Should we do more to recognize the research responsibilities of Associate Lecturers and seek to improve communication between researchers and between research subjects? What do you think?
Letters to the Editor welcome (email r.s.skellington@open.ac.uk)

The Global Reach

Tony Wakeford, a DD100 Associate Lecturer, is measuring the global connectivity of DD121 and D122 tutorial groups

When we look around us it seems more and more that the world is getting smaller. There is an ever-increasing connectivity with other parts of the world through, for example, aspects of trade, technology, culture and information. This vast web of complex dynamic processes has become encapsulated in the concepts of globalization and global village.

I am fascinated, yet daunted, by the concept of the six degrees of separation. This phrase derives from the work of Harvard social psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s. He claimed that everyone could be reached in the world through a short chain of social acquaintances. His research involved 300 randomly selected people living in Nebraska sending a letter to a target person living in Boston. Letters were forwarded through acquaintances until a person knew the target. A significant proportion of the chains were successfully completed in an average of six links. New research by Columbia University is currently testing this theory using the Internet.

That a total stranger anywhere in the world may be able to reach me through a chain of no more than six people is quite remarkable. This prospect really does reinforce the probability that we do live in a global village. This fascination has led to a modest research project with my successive DD100 and DD122 tutorial groups. The issues of connectivity present an ideal opportunity to further explore the concepts and theories of globalization. The Global Reach Project began in 2002 to identify and measure the extent of connectivity and global reach of each tutorial group. It also provides a chance for students to do some empirical research and use their results to analyse and interpret the complexities of globalization.

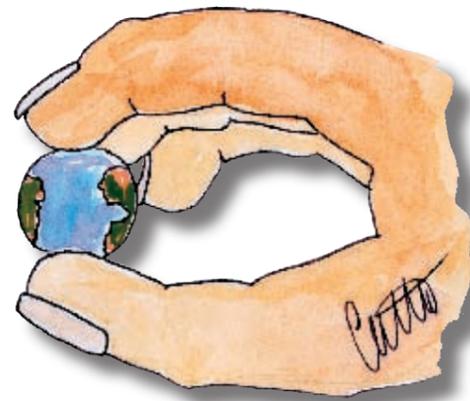
Each student is asked to record the number of people they know in other countries that they could either e-mail or send a letter. Each category is then subdivided into family, friends, work and interest connections. They then ask two friends or colleagues in this country, and one contact living abroad, to provide similar information. No personal details are recorded,

only the number of people in different countries within each category. There is a set of basic counting rules to ensure uniformity in data collection.

The results so far have been interesting and surprising, clearly demonstrating the extent of connectivity. One tutorial group was able to establish 697 contacts in 52 different countries, whilst another could reach 485 contacts in 36 countries. The results provide some clear and tangible evidence from the research to demonstrate the extent of their global reach. So far, the overall majority of contacts are through e-mail (80 per cent), mostly involving friends and family (70 per cent), although work contacts are significant (24 per cent). The greatest connectivity is with Europe and North America, whilst about a third of the world's countries, in most continents, could be contacted.

Measuring the 'global reach' profile of each tutorial group provides an interesting and fascinating insight into our connected world. This is achieved with a minimum amount of additional work for students, but

with maximum interest leading to practical and positive learning outcomes. The research is still in its early stages and the intention is to develop the scope and analysis in due course. In a quiet corner of the global village work is well underway preparing for the next group of DD100 and DD122 students!



Validating social and behavioural research on the Internet

Claire Hewson is a DSE212 Associate Lecturer

Researchers and students in the social and behavioural sciences are becoming increasingly aware of the way the Internet can be used to gather large amounts of data. A rapidly increasing number of 'Internet-Mediated Research' (IMR) studies are being implemented and reported, including online personality tests, questionnaires, interviews, observational research, and experiments. But is the data from such studies valid and reliable?

In collaboration with colleagues in Ireland and the UK I have been assessing the scope of IMR, considering the types of methodologies which can be adapted and the unique possibilities that IMR offers, as well as the extent to which we can trust Internet-accessed data. I have recently carried out a study which compares Internet and traditional (pen and paper) administrations of a 'health beliefs' questionnaire. Preliminary analysis shows the Internet data to be as valid as the traditional data, and the Internet participants to be more diverse in terms of a number of variables (including age, sex and nationality). This study contributes to a growing body of literature that supports the validity of Internet-accessed data. Further studies, across a range of domains, is a current research need in this still young area. I am currently in the process of creating an 'Internet Research Laboratory' at Bolton Institute of Higher Education, the purpose of which is to facilitate further studies that will contribute to this area.

My colleagues and I have presented our ideas in a book published by Sage early this year (Hewson et al, 2003, *Internet Research Methods: a Practical Guide for the Social and Behavioural Sciences*). Here we review the current state of IMR, describe some studies we have implemented, along with lessons to be learned, and provide a detailed description of how to get an Internet survey up and running. Emphasis is on outlining techniques that will enhance data validity. Given the rapid pace of technological developments in Internet-based communication, the increasing number of people obtaining Internet access, and the growing interest in IMR amongst social and behavioural researchers, the expansion of IMR seems guaranteed.

Wartime evacuation and education

Sid Brown, a D214 and AA303 Associate Lecturer, explores the impact of wartime evacuation

The study focuses upon the recollections of former evacuees who went from Tottenham to March, Cambridgeshire during the war. It suggests wartime evacuation had a significant impact on teachers' roles. The study examined how policy makers perceived evacuation during and after the war. It signalled a move towards a far greater emphasis upon caring pastoral responsibilities rather than the narrow pre-war scholastic focus. The period of evacuation saw teachers move away from being mere educators to providing 24-hour pastoral care for children. Data collected from former evacuees recalling their experiences will be supplemented by archival material. The NUT archive and NAS collection at Warwick University will be used; supplemented by local

collections and specialist evacuation archives at the Universities of Reading and Cambridge.



The usual suspects?

Adrian James, a D315 Associate Lecturer, asks how intelligent is our policing

The perceived ineffectiveness of traditional, reactive, policing methods has brought increasing enthusiasm for innovative policing strategies in the 'businesslike' police service of the twenty-first century.

This research looks beyond the rhetoric and examines the true extent of those developments in the UK. Some (unintentional) implications of the 'professionalization' of police intelligence gathering (through implementation of the Government-sponsored National Intelligence Model) are investigated. Future developments, particularly the impact on police/public relations, if proactive and intrusive strategies are utilized, are considered through a focus on the police use of informers. The ambiguity of the term 'intelligence-led policing (ILP)' as applied by police forces throughout England and Wales is highlighted, as is the variation in implementation of ILP strategies across Britain.

The research indicates that the defining characteristic of ILP strategies is the claim that they are intelligence-led. However, the real extent to which these policies truly represent rational cost-effective strategies responsive to public needs rather than ILP focusing upon the 'usual suspects' remains an empirical question that is currently being explored.

Labour Market Research

Pamela Clayton, a DD100 Associate Lecturer and research fellow at the University of Glasgow, is currently involved in three European research projects

Age discrimination in the Glasgow labour market

This is part of a large European project looking into labour market discrimination in general. It has produced a statistical survey of the situation in Glasgow (using the local Labour Force Surveys), a review of the literature and interviews with older people.

Tremplin: the skills mismatch in the labour market: an analysis of training solutions

This is an EU-funded project, looking at the current position in Europe on the supply and demand for skilled labour. Surveys will be conducted in France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, and will be supported by case studies of good practice by firms seeking to overcome the skills gap.

GenderNet: European Network for Assessment, Validation and Dissemination of Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in Vocational Guidance and Qualification

The project evaluates the relative success of mainstreaming gender considerations into vocational practice.

Mavis Cracknell, a DD100, DSE212 and D317 Associate Lecturer, is researching social constructionism and religion.

Howard Feather is a member of the Radical Philosophy Collective examining issues relating to intersubjectivity and contemporary social theory especially in relation to the phenomenological analysis of popular culture.

Nathan Abrams, a D214 Associate Lecturer, is conducting the first detailed critical study of the history of one of the key Jewish periodicals in post-war America, *Commentary*. The Rise and Fall of *Commentary Magazine* 1945–95 explores the impact of radical politics by investigating the concerns of the American Jewish community and its reaction to the Holocaust and antisemitism. The lives of the first two editors, Elliot Cohen and Norman Podhoretz, are examined. The wider impact *Commentary* had on American life, particularly intellectual, cultural and political affairs, is evaluated.

Mel Evans, a DD304 Associate Lecturer, has completed a three-year European Framework Research Project on the contribution of social capital in the social economy to local development in Western Europe.

Jerry Dixon, a DES212 Associate Lecturer, is investigating why job seekers experience difficulty in constructing CVs. The work evaluates the effectiveness of CVs from a cognitive perspective.

Sistering and siblings in the sociology of everyday life

Melanie Mauthner, Lecturer in Social Policy, examines the silence around sistering, helps to fill in the void, and calls for its higher profile in social research

Sistering is peculiarly absent from the sociology of everyday life. So are sibling relationships more broadly. Most of us have a sister or brother, whether biological, step or half. Yet the experience of being and having a sister or a sibling is strangely absent from social research on family life. Women's lives figure far more in their roles as mothers, carers, workers, daughters and wives than they do as sisters. What lies behind this absence?

Images and sensational tales about celebrity sisters proliferate in the media, popular culture and fiction. Remember the coverage of tennis champions Venus and Serena Williams at Wimbledon 2000, the rivalry between glamorous entertainers Jackie and Joan Collins, and novelists Margaret Drabble and A.S. Byatt's arms-length relationship? Numerous films explore sister jealousies: *The Heart of Me*, *Lovely and Amazing*, *Hilary and Jackie*, *Ama Soeur*, *Mina Tannenbaum*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Yet the social and cultural meanings of these bonds as lived experience for our gendered identities and changing biographies are strangely missing from research on everyday lives.

The shifting gaze

One reason for this marginalization lies in family sociology's focus on more institutionalized aspects of intimacy: sexuality and reproduction, childhood and parenting, marriage and divorce. Only recently, with the gaze shifting to private lives beyond nuclear heterosexual households to families of choice and the ethic of love, has any interest been shown in the significance of sibling ties.

Like gay relationships, sister and sibling bonds offer the possibility of negotiating ties of exchange, reciprocity, or distance as these are the least prescribed and regulated by either personal expectations or the State. In theory, they can be adapted and modified according to individual inclination and different circumstances throughout life. In everyday life, however, they remain entrenched in sistering discourses and practices to do with emotions of care and affection and power relations.

Sistering: Power and Change in Female Relationships (Palgrave 2002) dissects sisters' investments in maintaining or reshaping their ties. Based on qualitative research with 37 girls and women between the ages of 6 and 50 from diverse social backgrounds it maps out different ways in which women sister. It illustrates through their own words the meanings of being a sister for girls and women. These autobiographical case studies show

how sisters' relationships change over time at key moments: at the end of girlhood, when leaving home, starting work, and as a result of marriage, motherhood, divorce, and bereavement.

Sistering and social care

Sisters can go from being best friends as teenagers to distant companions in their thirties and forties. Growing up, they take on 'big' and 'little' sister roles of caring and cared for sibling. Some become mini-mothers; others try to reverse their dominant or dominated roles within their family structure for more equal positions of power. Sistering is as significant as mothering or daughtering for the formation of gendered subjectivity.

These emotions and power dynamics reveal the complexity of this widespread social tie, another reason for its invisibility. Power relationships among women persist as one of the last taboos in feminist research except for work exploring the history of the women's movement. Women's relationships with both their political hermanas and biological sisters stir up fierce passions in second-wave politics and in family life. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the ambivalent connection between sisterhood and sistering. Indeed sisterhood remains far more visible in the public and sociological imagination than sistering. While debates about the future of sisterhood continue, researchers ignore this intimate and social dimension of our biographies. Yet sistering is what many of us do in our everyday lives. The paradox between the prevalence of sisterhood, the silence around sistering, and the myths that lie behind both remain to be further investigated.

Sociologists' neglect of aspects of women's lives beyond their caring and servicing responsibilities, such as their friendships, also sheds light on this marginalization. Only in childhood and old age do sisters and siblings attract any attention. Sibling rivalry and the age gap still exercise social scientists for their effects on children's intelligence, learning, socialisation, psychological and physical health. And the onset of caring relations between elderly sisters and their siblings and/or their parents, who often decide to live together, fascinates policy makers. The decades of teenage and adult life remain curiously undocumented.

Two sociological studies currently underway examine young people's sibling relationships as part of everyday life. *Sibling Relationships in Middle Childhood: Children's Views* www.jrf.org.uk, concentrates on 8 to 12 year-olds' perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses and strategies in

their sibling ties. Funded for two years, the team, including Melanie Mauthner, Rosalind Edwards and Lucy Hadfield (both at South Bank University), will disseminate their findings in 2004. *Sibling Practices: Children's Understandings and Experiences*, directed by Helen Lucey and Rosalind Edwards as part of the

ESRC Families and Social Capital Research Group www.sbu.ac.uk/families/about, explores the social capital of sibling groups aged 5 to 19. Building on *Sistering*, these projects firmly establish the presence of sibling ties on the sociological map.



Photo: The cover of *Sistering: Power and Change in Female Relationships* by Melanie Mauthner, Palgrave 2002

Women's inequality in the 21st century

On International Women's Day, Joni Seager's *The Atlas of Women* was published. It charts women's inequalities in the world and calls for increased empowerment

A little conscious-raising atlas was published earlier this year that maps out the inequalities and disadvantages women experience in the world. *The Atlas of Women* tells us that women comprise a substantial majority of the world's poor – nearly 70%. Two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women, and many live in countries with higher literacy rates for men. Most of the unpaid workers of the world are women too.

All this in a world where nearly all the countries have signed up to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Some states though have signed and ratified the Convention but continue to discriminate against women. Ethiopia routinely practises female genital mutilation. Uganda, where men can inherit their dead brothers' wives, has signed too, along with Nigeria, where women can be stoned to death for sexual improprieties. Brazil, like many states where abortion is illegal, has also signed.

Britain outside top ten

The top ten countries which show the least disparity between men and women are Canada, Australia, the USA, Iceland, the Netherlands, Japan, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Britain finished outside the top ten but was ranked as 'high'. All the bottom ten countries that exhibit the greatest disparities are in Africa.

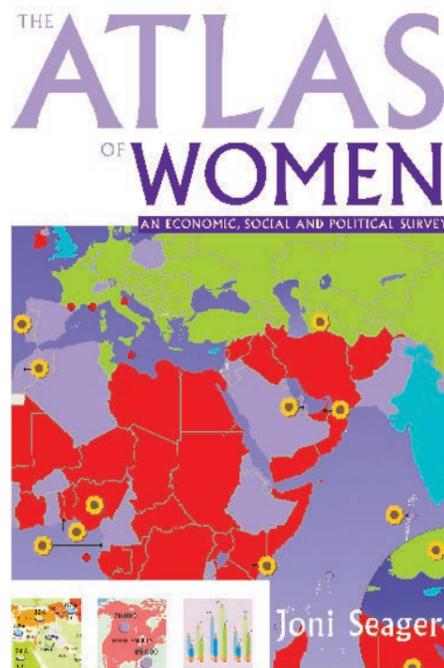
Fascinatingly – in Mongolia, Latvia, Panama, St Lucia, Cyprus, Cuba, Namibia, Bulgaria, Burma, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait – 60 per cent of university students were female. There are paradoxes of course. In Kuwait women are not allowed to vote and homosexuality is illegal, as it is in the UAE and Qatar. But there are surprises too. In Iraq homosexuality is 'legal or has no laws banning lesbian or gay behaviour or activity'. In the USA however, 22 American states outlaw same-sex partnerships.

The West is also culpable in exploiting women from the Third World. A third of the world's land's mass comprises the main originating countries for sex trafficking, and unlike ten years ago when the atlas was first published, the global sex trade destinations now include Russia, South America, and many African countries, as well as Europe, Canada and the USA.

Greater empowerment needed

We also learn that Rwanda has the highest rate of maternal mortality; New Zealand and the USA have the highest proportion of women in the armed forces; half of Sweden's government ministers are female; and that in Niger 92 per cent of adult women are illiterate. Author Joni Seager ends with a warning:

'Gains in women's empowerment should not be taken for granted: they are fragile and reversible and always under pressure. The warning has never been more pertinent... evidence suggests that a remarkable number of governments now seem committed to turning back advances in women's autonomy.'



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Women experience workplace discrimination despite breaking the glass ceiling of company management

A survey for the Institute of Management of 1,509 women managers reveals that the number of women securing senior management jobs has risen sharply since the early 1990s. Women now hold 25 per cent of management jobs, compared to 9 per cent in 1991. Women fill 10 per cent of boardroom posts. Over 40 per cent of female executives living with a partner are the dominant breadwinner.

This relative success, however, has coincided with persistent sex discrimination in the workplace. Forty-seven per cent claim their company discriminates against women in promoting and paying staff. One-third believed they were paid less than male managers in equivalent positions. Over 25 per cent said that family commitments and motherhood posed potential career barriers because of attitudes to child rearing among male managers.

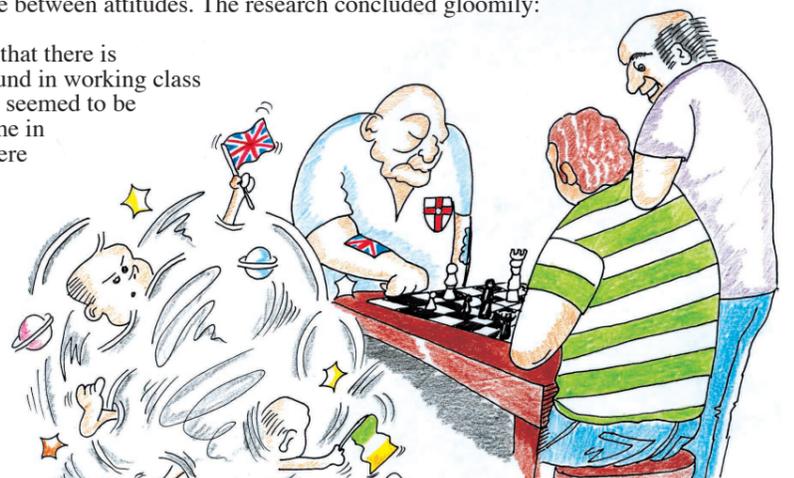
Fat cats get fatter as shares plunge

Noticed how inflation constraints never apply to boardroom executives? In 2002 fat cats pay rose seven times faster than average earnings of 3.2 per cent, while another 60 executive directors were paid more than £1 million taking the total to 190. While most of us, especially those in the public sector, struggle along on annual increases pegged to inflation, senior directors of the FTSE-100 companies received increases averaging 23 per cent. Average pay for a FTSE-100 chief executive rose to £1,677,685 including share options and bonuses. All this in the year the FTSE-100 share index recorded its biggest decline, it fell 24.4 per cent, falling for the third year in a row. Since 1999 the value of the companies in the FTSE-100 index has fallen almost 50 per cent. During these three years boardroom pay rose by a staggering 84 per cent.

Belfast youth sectarianism increasing

Belfast is more bigoted and divided now than it was before the Loyalist and IRA ceasefires of 1994 according to new research in Northern Ireland. The survey of 1,800 Catholic and Protestant homes found that young people, those with the shortest memories of 30 years of the troubles, were more prone to bigotry, and less likely to forgive. Seventy-two per cent of respondents felt that divisions had deepened since the 1998 Good Friday agreement. The research revealed that, despite the peace process, people's choice of schools, hospitals, shops, libraries, leisure centres, and social security offices, were now influenced by sectarian perceptions. Eighty-eight per cent said they would not enter an area at night dominated by the other religion. While pensioners appeared less intolerant, primary school pupils evinced deep religious hostility. There was no gender difference between attitudes. The research concluded gloomily:

'The message is that there is little middle ground in working class Belfast.... There seemed to be more social shame in admitting you were not bigoted.'





Family snaps

Every picture tells a story. In her study of mothers' photographs Gillian Rose, Senior Lecturer in Geography, shows how family photographs help women cope with the task of parenting



The Refugee Council in Britain has recently been distributing a leaflet appealing for funds. Its front and back pages are the same: next to a picture of a clock-face, the text asks, 'In just a few minutes soldiers will break down your door. They've already killed your father and raped your daughter. Now they are coming for you. What should you take? Quick. Think. Money? Your passport? A family photo? You have two minutes left to decide'.

A family photo? Do we imagine that a family photo is as vital to the survival of a refugee as money and a passport? The Refugee Council clearly thinks we do. And on the basis of a small-scale research project talking with a group of women about their family photos, the Council is quite correct in its assumption. Family photos – the kind of snaps that almost all of us have in our homes, taken of, for and by family members – are indeed extraordinarily important, emotionally resonant objects.

This is not a conclusion you would come to from reading much of the academic literature on family photography. Despite the recent burgeoning of interest in the social sciences in 'visual culture', the everyday taking, displaying and looking at family photos has almost been ignored. And when it hasn't, the critical verdict is hardly complimentary: the range of what family snaps show has been described as 'astonishingly narrow', with 'the most stultified and stereotyped repertoire of composition, subject-matter and style' which produces an 'overwhelming sense of similarity and redundancy'. Family photos are, according to these critics, 'a great wasteland of trite and banal self-representation'. Hardly enticing research material, it would seem.

Instruments of integration

Now, to a degree these critics have a point. Several large-scale, quantitative analyses of the contents of family photo albums have established that subject matter of family snaps is pretty limited. Photographs of family members together, at leisure and happy predominate overwhelmingly. There are no photos of sad and lonely individuals in family albums, no photos of disgruntled mums slaving over the ironing, no pictures of family rows or toddler tantrums (although a snap of a baby screaming in the bath is often there). Hence the accusations of stereotyping, banality and redundancy. And hence too a claim that family photos are simply a means to reproduce a particular ideology of familiarity. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, has described family photos as 'both an instrument and an index of integration'.

But the derogatory opinion of family photos held by so many cultural critics is only sustainable – at least in part, I think – because photos are treated as visual images in isolation from their material surroundings. A great deal of work in the field of visual culture discusses visual images as if they were abstracted from all but the 'discourses' in which they are embedded. Hence family photographs are criticized because they are seen only in relation to a conservative construction of familial ideology. Clearly such ideological and discursive contexts are crucial to understanding how visual images work. But so too must be the space in which they are seen and all the things that happen to make that space.

This became very clear to me in my interviews about family photos. All the women I spoke with were comfortably middle-class, married and white. All had at least one child, and in all but four cases these children were too young to go to school. While I cannot generalize my substantive findings beyond this group of women, my analytical point holds, I think. For when I visited these women in their houses in Bedford and Cambridge to talk to them about their family snaps, what became very evident was the enormous number of things done with these photos. They were not simply images contemplated for their meaning. They were objects produced, sorted, stored, displayed, resorted, circulated, and looked at repeatedly. They were objects worked on in all sorts of ways. And this working was complex.

Family togetherness and solidarity

One of the kinds of work that these women did with their photos was the work of reproducing familial connections. All were quite explicit about the need for the photos on display in their houses to show their family together. So favourite pictures often showed family members side-by-side. And pictures were displayed en masse to show togetherness too, often across several generations; ten of my interviewees had whole walls devoted to family photos. Collages and multi-frames were also popular. And this reproduction of familial togetherness extended into how the photos were looked at. A favourite activity of the mums was to look at photos with their children. They also imagined other family members looking at their displays of photographs, and commented on the consequent need to be comprehensive in their coverage. Indeed, three of the mums I spoke to had been given photographs of their husband's parents' wedding to put in a frame after their mother-in-law had visited and seen only a photo of the mum's parents' wedding on display.

So a lot of the things done with family photos is certainly about reproducing a certain kind of familial togetherness, and my interviewees were



Photo: Gillian Rose

quite aware of this. They were also conscious of the predictability of their family albums. But I do not think this reproduction of familial integration can quite explain the importance of these photos to the women I spoke with. They all had huge numbers of photographs, and none had ever thrown away any of their own children; in fact, when I asked them if they had, they were horrified at the suggestion. There were also moments in our conversations when the most ordinary of snaps produced quite intense emotional reactions. The women fell silent in front of photos, or exclaimed, or stumbled, pushing at the limits of language to describe what they felt.

In his book on photography, *Camera Lucida*, Barthes suggests that photographs do indeed have this kind of double effect. On the one hand, they participate in codes of cultural meaning: the ideology of the family as happy and together, for example. On the other hand, some photographs also puncture those codes in startling and shocking ways. Barthes argued that this was because, uniquely among visual images, photographs carry a trace of what they picture. In the case of photography, he remarked, 'a pipe, here, is always and intractably a pipe'. To encounter that trace is to go beyond culture, discourse and ideology, into an encounter with the real.

These mothers took the realness of their photos absolutely for granted. Their photos were not simply of their children, husbands and mothers: at some level they were who they pictured. In every interview, there were moments when the women addressed a photo as if it was the person it showed. My favourite example of this is from Diane and Sam, who both expressed some anxiety about having certain sorts of photographs in their bedrooms. Sam said 'some people find it a bit strange that you've got your children in your bedroom' when we were looking at a photograph of them. Diane was rather self-conscious when she told me she had pictures of her mother and father on her bedside table, and in fact in the end did not show them to me. Both seem aware of taboos about children, parents and sex, and to feel that having a photo of onlookers to the marital

bed was tantamount to having the actual parents or children there. Hence, I think, the moments of speechlessness, or exclamation or stumbling in my interviews. These mothers were encountering the shock of the real that photographs can carry.

Coping strategies

But there is something more about the relationship between family photography and mothering that I keep on coming back to. As I have said, all the women I interviewed were mothers. And in all cases, they were the only ones in their household who did anything with photos once they were taken. Only they bothered to date, sort and display photographs, to make sure they were stored safely, and to send them to family and friends. Why?

Well, speculatively, I have ended up wondering whether photographs do not in some way help women deal with the difficulty of mothering. Mothering is hard, difficult work; children are hard, difficult work. As Wendy Hollway has written recently, 'there is a period in children's lives ... when their ruthlessly narcissistic demands place terrible strain on mothers, since, in this relationship, they [the mother] are getting no consideration whatsoever'. This is also the period when the women I spoke with took most photographs of their children.

So let us go back to what gets done with photos. They get looked at, caressed, dusted, loved. They are a trace of the child and invite a tactile kind of looking. But they are only a trace, and so they can be put back in their place. Photos are picked up, studied, put down again and left. Unlike actual children, photos do not return of their own volition time and time again. Even if the display of photographs is not always under the mother's complete control, she can nonetheless interpret them how she wants. Photos do not answer back. They are precisely objects to which things are done. Perhaps, I wonder, in their status as objects, they allow these mothers for a few moments to feel distinct again from their child, perhaps even their own person again.



The bad fairy of soap operas

Soap operas invariably present a negative view of family life according to research by the National Family and Parenting Institute. *Eastenders* was found to present the most negative picture of family life because of its emphasis on conflict scenarios and unhappy, depressed and aggressive characters trying to resolve complex issues with anti-social behaviour, which sometimes turned violent. *Coronation Street* offers caricatures and unrealistic situations and characters, and was more likely to present a disproportionate number of broken families with individuals failing to find new relationships. The Street, however, was praised for its positive images of father-child relationships and how it tried to convey family issues from a child's perspective. Other soaps tend to consign youngsters to the background and project them as burdens. *The Archers* was found to be the most middle class soap with more married couples than the national average, and the least amount of family conflict. Childless couples and single people are under-represented in all soaps. The researchers concluded: 'at the slightest hint of a happily ever after ending, it was as though a bad fairy lurking in the workings gleefully sprang back to life and steered the warring family back to their customary game of unhappy families'.

The Bad Fairy of Soap Operas



Soap characters better known than world leaders

Less than half of the population can name three or more world leaders, according to a survey by *Whitakers Almanac*. Only one in ten can name members of the Cabinet, while 40 per cent can name no Cabinet members at all. However, almost half of us can identify at least five soap opera characters, while the cult of celebrity has pushed current affairs further off the mainstream agenda for ordinary Britons. The survey showed that 86 per cent of us watch some form of soap opera or sitcom in an average week, while 4.3 million of adults do not watch, listen or read any news items at all.

A third of relationships will cohabit by 2021

Cohabitation is a significantly growing trend in British relationships. Over 15 per cent of British couples now cohabit, compared to 5 per cent in 1986. By 2021 this trend is expected to double to 30 per cent.

The British Social Attitude Survey reveals that only one in four Britons believe married couples make better parents than unmarried couples. Long-term cohabitation is now seen, according to the BSA report, as quite normal and as having no advantage over marriage in everyday life. A quarter of children are born to cohabitants. Marriage is now at its lowest level since 1917, and the UK divorce rate is the highest in the European Union.

The BSA survey showed a decrease in the proportion of people who thought pre-marital sex was wrong, and a decline in those who thought that people who want children should marry. It criticized the Government for failing to keep pace with social change, with family law still discriminating against the legal rights of cohabiting couples, who argue that marriage laws should be extended to cohabitants in long-term relationships. Such a policy has been introduced in other countries. If introduced, the spirit of the common law marriage, which was abolished in Britain in 1753, could be restored.

High self-esteem is a danger to society

Heard this before? People with a very high opinion of themselves could pose a greater menace to society than people wracked by self-doubt and insecurities. Remind you of anyone, of your bosses, or work colleagues? Psychologists have long claimed that low self-esteem leads to delinquency, violence, drug and alcohol dependency, and crime, but research at the London School of Economics suggests that this much peddled explanation is more myth than fact. The research, published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, suggests that high self-esteem is more important than we thought in influencing behaviour. What the research does not contend is that people who lack self-worth are at greater risk of depression, victimisation, pregnancy, eating disorders and suicide.

For centuries, we've been 'liberating' the Middle East: Why do we never learn?

Robert Fisk sees history repeating itself in Iraq

August 2003. The Iraq war may be over and Saddam removed from power but the coalition forces are struggling with the peace. In March, when Robert Fisk wrote this article for *The Independent* before the invasion, Heathrow was surrounded by tanks, chemical suits were on sale in the shops, Tony Blair told the commons Iraq could strike at the UK within 45 minutes, and the United Nations was being side-stepped. *Society Matters* is proud to reproduce Robert's perceptive historical account of the legacy of previous Iraqi occupations and their relevance for today.

On 8 March 1917, Lieutenant-general Stanley Maude issued a 'Proclamation to the People of the Wilayat of Baghdad'. Maude's Anglo-Indian Army of the Tigres had just invaded and occupied Iraq – after storming up the country from Basra – to 'free' its people from their dictators. 'Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators,' the British announced.

'People of Baghdad, remember for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her Allies for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity or misgovernment.'

General Maude, of course, was the General Tommy Franks of his day, and his proclamation – so rich in irony now that President George Bush is uttering equally mendacious sentiments – was intended to persuade Iraqis that they should accept foreign occupation while Britain secured the country's oil.

General Maude's chief political officer, Sir Percy Cox, called on Iraq's Arab leaders, who were not identified, to participate in the Government in collaboration with the British authorities and spoke of liberation, freedom, past glories, future greatness and – here the ironies come in spades – it expressed the hope that the people of Iraq would find unity.

The British commander cabled to London that 'local conditions do not permit of employing in responsible positions any but British officers competent ... to deal with people of the country. Before any truly Arab façade [sic] can be applied to edifice, it seems essential that foundation of law and order should be well and truly laid.'

Establishing unity

As David Fromkin noted in his magisterial *A Peace to End all Peace* – essential reading for America's future army of occupation – the antipathy of the Sunni minority and the Shia majority of Iraq, the rivalries of tribes and clans 'made it difficult to achieve a single unified government that was at the same time representative, effective and widely supported'. Whitehall failed, as Fromkin caustically notes, 'to think through in practical detail how to fulfil the promises gratuitously made to a section of the local inhabitants'. There was even a problem with the Kurds, since the British could not make up their mind as to whether they should be absorbed into the new state of Iraq or allowed to form an independent Kurdistan. The French were originally to have been awarded Mosul in northern Iraq but gave up their claim in return for – again, wait for the ironies – a major share in the new Turkish Petroleum Company, newly confiscated by the British and recreated as the Iraq Petroleum Company.

How many times has the West marched into the Middle East in so brazen a fashion? General Sir Edward Allenby 'liberated' Palestine only a few months after General Maude 'liberated' Iraq. The French turned up to 'liberate' Lebanon and Syria a couple of years later, slaughtering the Syrian forces loyal to King Feisel who dared to suggest that French occupation was not the kind of future they wanted.

Promises and lies

What is it, I sometimes wonder, about our constant failure to learn the lessons of history, to repeat – almost word for word in the case of General Maude's proclamation – the same gratuitous promises and lies? A copy of General Maude's original proclamation goes under the hammer at a British auction at Swindon this week but I'll wager more than the £100 it is expected to make that America's forthcoming proclamation to the 'liberated' people of Iraq reads almost exactly the same.

Take a look at Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations – on which Mr Bush claims to be such an expert – that allowed the British and French to divide those territories they had just 'liberated' from Ottoman dictators. 'To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them, and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves ... there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization ... the best method is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position, can best undertake this responsibility ...'

What is it about 'liberation' in the Middle East? What is this sacred trust – a ghost of the same 'trusteeship' the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, now promotes for Iraq's oil – that the West constantly wishes to visit upon the Middle East? Why do we so frequently want to govern these peoples, these 'tribes with flags' as Sir Steven Runciman, that great historian of the 11th- and 12th-century Crusades, once called them? Indeed, Pope Urban's call for the first Crusade in 1095, reported at the time by at least three chroniclers, would find a resonance even among the Christian fundamentalists who, along with Israel's supporters, were so keen for the United States to invade Iraq.

Righteous wars to overthrow tyrants

Urban told his listeners the Turks were maltreating the inhabitants of Christian lands – an echo here of the human rights abuses which supposedly upset Mr Bush – and described the suffering of pilgrims, urging the Christian West's formerly fratricidal antagonists to fight a 'righteous' war. His conflict, of course, was intended to 'liberate' Christians rather than Muslims who, along with the Jews, the Crusaders contentedly slaughtered as soon as they arrived in the Middle East.

This notion of 'liberation' in the Middle East has almost always been accompanied by another theme: the necessity of overthrowing tyrants.

The Crusaders were as meticulous about their Middle East invasions as the US Central Command at Tampa, Florida, is today. Marino Sanudo, born in Venice around 1260, describes how the Western armies chose to put their forces ashore in Egypt with a first disembarkation of 15,000 infantrymen along with 300 cavalry (the latter being the Crusader version of an armoured unit). In Beirut, I even have copies of the West's 13th-century invasion maps. Napoleon produced a few of his own in 1798 when he invaded Egypt after 20 years of allegedly irresponsible and tyrannical rule by Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey. Claude Etienne Savary, the French

equivalent of all those Washington pundits who groan today over the suffering of the Iraqi people under President Saddam – wrote in 1775 that in Cairo under Murad Bey 'death may prove the consequence of the slightest indiscretion'. Under the Beys, the city 'groans under their yoke'. Which is pretty much how we now picture Baghdad and Basra under President Saddam.

In fact, President Saddam's promises to destroy America's invasion force have a remarkable echo in the exclamation of one of the 18th-century Mameluke princes in Egypt, who, told of an eminent French invasion, responded with eerily familiar words: 'Let the Franks come. We shall crush them beneath our horses' hooves.'

Napoleon, of course, did all the crushing, and his first proclamation (he, too, was coming to 'liberate' the people of Egypt from their oppressors) included an appeal to Egyptian notables to help him run the government. 'O shayks, qadis, imams, and officers of the town, tell your nation that the French are friends of true Muslims ... Blessed are those Egyptians who agree with us.' Napoleon went on to set up an 'administrative council' in Egypt, very like the one which the Bush Administration says it intends to operate under US occupation. And in due course the 'shayks' and 'qadis' and imams rose up against French occupation in Cairo in 1798.

Finishing the jobs of fathers

If Napoleon entered upon his rule in Egypt as a French revolutionary, General Allenby, when he entered Jerusalem in December 1917, had provided David Lloyd George with the city he wanted as a Christmas present. Its liberation, the British Prime Minister later noted with almost Crusader zeal, meant that Christendom had been able 'to regain possession of its sacred shrines'. He talked about 'the calling of the Turkish bluff' as 'the beginning of the crack-up of that military impostorship which the incompetence of our war direction had permitted to intimidate us for years', shades, here, of the American regret that it never took the 1991 Gulf War to Baghdad; Lloyd George was 'finishing the job' of overcoming Ottoman power just as George Bush Junior now intends to 'finish the job' started by his father in 1991.

And always, without exception, there were those tyrants and dictators to overthrow in the Middle East. In the Second World War, we 'liberated' Iraq a second time from its pro-Nazi administration. The British 'liberated' Lebanon from Vichy rule with a promise of independence from France, a promise which Charles de Gaulle tried to renege on until the British almost went to war with the Free French in Syria.

Lebanon has suffered an awful lot of 'liberations'. The Israelis – for Arabs, an American, 'Western' implantation in the Middle East – claimed twice to be anxious to 'liberate' Lebanon from PLO 'terrorism' by invading in 1978 and 1982, and leaving in humiliation only two years ago. America's own military intervention in Beirut in 1982 was blown apart by a truck-bomb at the US Marine headquarters the following year. And what did President Ronald Reagan tell the world? 'Lebanon is central to our credibility on a global scale. We cannot pick and choose where we will support freedom... If Lebanon ends up under the tyranny of forces hostile to the West, not only will our strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean be threatened, but also the stability of the entire Middle East, including the vast resources of the Arabian peninsula.'

Lessons from Suez

Once more, we, the West, were going to protect the Middle East from tyranny. Anthony Eden took the same view of Egypt, anxious to topple the 'dictator' Gamal Abdul Nasser, just as Napoleon had been desperate to rescue the Egyptians from the

tyranny of the Beys, just as General Maude wanted to rescue Iraq from the tyranny of the Turks.

And always, these Western invasions were accompanied by declarations that the Americans or the French or just the West in general had nothing against the Arabs, only against the beast-figure who was chosen as the target of our military action. 'Our quarrel is not with Egypt, still less with the Arab world,' Anthony Eden announced in August of 1956. 'It is with Colonel Nasser.'

So what happened to all these fine words? The Crusades were a catastrophe in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. Napoleon left Egypt in humiliation. Britain dropped gas on the recalcitrant Kurds of Iraq before discovering that Iraq was ungovernable. Arabs, then Jews drove the British army from Palestine and Lloyd George's beloved Jerusalem. The French fought years of insurrection in Syria. In Lebanon, the Americans scuttled away in humiliation in 1984, along with the French.

And in Iraq in the coming months? What will be the price of our folly this time, of our failure to learn the lessons of history? Only after the United States has completed its occupation shall we find out. It is when the Iraqis demand an end to that occupation, when popular resistance to the American presence by the Shias and the Kurds and even the Sunnis begins to destroy the military 'success' which President Bush will no doubt proclaim when the first US troops enter Baghdad. It is then our real 'story' as journalists will begin.

It is then that all the empty words of colonial history, the need to topple tyrants and dictators, to assuage the suffering of the people of the Middle East, to claim that we and we only are the best friends of the Arabs, that we and we only must help them, will unravel.

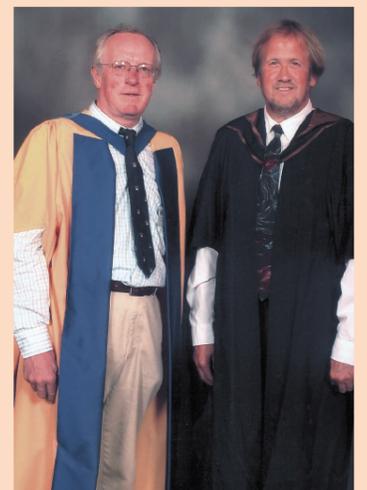
Here I will make a guess: that in the months and years that follow America's invasion of Iraq, the United States, in its arrogant assumption that it can create 'democracy' in the ashes of a Middle East dictatorship as well as take its oil, will suffer the same as the British in Palestine. Of this tragedy, Winston Churchill wrote, and his words are likely to apply to the US in Iraq:

'At first, the steps were wide and shallow, covered with a carpet, but in the end the very stones crumbled under their feet.'

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Robert Fisk, Middle East Correspondent of *The Independent*, received his honorary doctorate at a degree ceremony at Portsmouth in June. Robert (on the left) is pictured here with nominee, *Society Matters* editor Richard Skellington, before the ceremony.



The citation read

'In a world of human suffering Robert's reporting testifies to the vital importance of the lives, rights and freedoms of the persecuted and oppressed. His work challenges the taken for granted assumptions about our world and the mendacity of its leaders. He alerts us to dangers, exposes myths and debunks cant and hypocrisy. There is nothing embedded about Robert, other than his fierce independence, his honourable determination to report the horror that lies behind political rhetoric and action, and to explain its context'.

Replying, Robert spoke of the courage of his profession in the front-line, how journalists too became victims of war, and how, in this divided and violent world, the first duty of a journalist is to ensure that truth is not the first casualty.

After receiving his honorary doctorate Robert returned to Baghdad where he continues to send front-line reports and analysis for *The Independent*.

British troops entering Baghdad in Mesopotamia during the First World War

Photo: Michael Keep/MPL International

What next for American might



The Independent Review, April 2003

Political activist and American political observer R.G. Rader, playwright and Professor of Writing and Literature at a college in the United States, explores the roots of Bush's foreign policy since 9/11 and his thirst for regime change

The United States has reached out to the world again. A nation known throughout history to be unusually generous and altruistic has shown its darker side. George W. Bush and a large percentage of the American people have come to accept an offensive policy that allows the United States to attack at any group or nation it defines as an enemy to its freedoms and economic interests. It is a foreign policy that is being implemented regardless of the world opinion and that of the United Nations. The US government appears determined to evangelize the world with the democratic principles it has lauded since its inception but hidden in these ideas is an agenda that will only make the US more enemies and harbour distrust among its allies.

America's foreign policy has changed from one of containment to a pre-emptive policy of attack. Granted, in the past the USA has seemingly attacked without provocation—in Granada and Panama—but it was never a stated principle of the way the USA ordinarily dealt with its enemies. In a speech to the nation on 20 September, 2001, President George W. Bush told nations who supported terrorism 'We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.'

The foundation of Bush's new policy is the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon of 11 September, 2001. According to the Bush administration, the mere nature of the attacks justifies the policy of pre-emption. What was once a method used in the grimy hands of the Central Intelligence Agency is now public policy. If you don't like them, get rid of them. Given this policy the question is what happens next? More importantly, what do the American people think of these new policies?

Conspiracy or reaction?

The policy has its roots in the neo-conservative movement in the USA. Formed during the Reagan era, this group of intellectuals, government agents, journalists, and political pundits now sit at the heart of Bush's presidency. Although the specifics of these new policies vary among neo-and hard-line conservatives, the general principle of the use of American might to change the direction of world politics is pervasive. Some of these voices reside in the Bush administration or are closely connected to it: Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defence;

Richard Perle, member of the Defence Policy Board; Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld; and Vice-President Dick Cheney.

A crucial influence is the *Project for the New American Century*. Its principles emphasize American leadership, superiority, and aggression in extending US values hegemony. The group's founding 1997 Statement of Principles asks: 'Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favourable to American principles and interests?' Their answer is a strident Yes. And they warn: 'If we shirk our responsibilities, we invite challenges to our fundamental interests.' The document immediately affirms the primacy of pre-emption: 'The history of the 20th Century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire.'

So far, the administration's experiments with this new policy in Afghanistan and Iraq have yet to be judged by the distance history allows. We can not evaluate their full impact on the 'war on terror' while within these countries there remains much instability, and a vital need for genuine humanitarian reconstruction.

The ever-increasing immediacy and complexity of inter-global relations and, more importantly, the incompetence of US intelligence analysts mired in the political agenda of those in power to get it right exposes some of the weaknesses of this policy. In the case of Iraq much of the intelligence that provided the justification for the war was founded mostly on the word of defectors who had their own political agenda. In addition, the Bush administration's analysts interpreted any additional intelligence it received only in light of the policy of regime change. Bush sold a warped and artificial argument to the American public—that the danger to the USA was imminent.

The American people and isolationism

What do the American people think of Bush's new foreign policy? To find we must reflect on the tragedy of 11 September, 2001 and how it transformed the way Americans perceive their relationship to the rest of the world. Before 9/11 the USA felt invulnerable to attack. Noble causes brought the pain of familial separation and loss of life that war brings, but those at home were safe. 9/11 shattered that complacent feeling of secure isolationism that was embedded in the psyche of the American mind.

No one who studies or thinks about the American people's support of Bush's policies should underestimate the conflicting notion of the American public's past hesitation to enter war and the present feeling of vulnerability that overcame a nation after 9/11. Before 9/11 the American people tended toward cautious isolationism. Public opinion prior to America's major wars reveals a hesitancy when war becomes an option. Woodrow Wilson ran for the presidency on the promise that he would keep

the USA out of the First World War. In 1940 when Great Britain asked President Roosevelt for arms, polls showed that four out of every five Americans did not want to enter the war. Even polls before the Gulf War and the Iraq War showed the American people ready to go to war only if the USA went as a coalition of countries and not alone.

President Bush is not an empty vessel manipulated by neo-conservative elements. He is responsible for the decisions that come out of the White House, not some power-hungry ideologues that have seduced a powerless, inarticulate Texas-hick cowboy. Bush's response to 9/11 has its roots in the neo-conservative drive to have America, and only America, define the future of world politics. His reaction embodied the shock and anger of much of the American public, including many on the Left. Only after the tragedy, when the ugly voice of prejudice began to speak unspoken fears and long hidden hatreds, did calmer and thoughtful voices offer words of caution in the midst of an immediate and visceral anger. It was hard to ignore the likes of Jerry Falwell, the well-known fundamentalist minister, blaming homosexuals, loose morals, the feminist movement, and everything else he hated on the 9/11 event as God's way of punishing the USA. It was difficult to listen to the hyperbolic pronouncements of many politicians of both major political parties about a tragedy that for many was really a very personal tragedy. George W. Bush felt no differently than many Americans. He embraced and articulated the utter hopelessness that many felt after this event.

The new evangelism

Bush's foreign policy is guided by another influence—an evangelistic fervour and faith that, if it were not in the hands of one of the most powerful individuals in the world, might be cause for admiration. This fervour drives the view that America, along with other lesser nations of course, has the right to choose which nations to strengthen and which to discard. All this is done in the name of a higher principle—God-given, democratic values. To many American ears, 90 per cent of who believe in a personal God, Bush's words seem comforting and energizing. His general inability to voice his worldview in clear effective speech changes the minute he speaks of his faith. He is more certain, his sincerity is evident. However, that sincerity now envelops a policy that has radical implications for the community of nations. His embracing of the neo-conservative's philosophy of American power and its distribution is now his own.

Where it will lead has yet to be known. Given opposition to the United Nations from neo-conservative elements within the Bush administration, the US government will be the sole arbiter of what will come next. The disingenuous speech of President Bush before the delegates to the UN and the farcical presentation of Secretary of State Powell to the Security Council soon before engaging war with Iraq are clear indications of

the Bush administration's contempt for the UN. Bush's and Powell's visits were merely attempts to appease congressional purists who felt the need for procedural accuracy—let's follow the rules, go to war anyway, then no one can say a word.

Where will it lead? Already the administration has voiced questions about Syria and Iran. The questions and accusations about Iran sound suspiciously like those Bush and his comrades asked before they announced war with Iraq. The neo-conservative philosophy, with its emphasis on an arrogant, condescending attribution of democratic principles and economic nepotism regardless of cost, is dangerous, and could bring more doubt and despair than democracy to the world.

There is now a great chasm between the outcry against the terrorism of 9/11 and the world's negative reaction to the US claim to pre-emptive superiority in the name of revenge. Within the USA there is xenophobia, especially against those nations who vetoed the UN motion to invade Iraq. The French suffer the most abuse, fuelled by the lurid pronouncements of Donald Rumsfeld. Such intolerance reflects the dark side of America that is claimed by reactionary politicians and zealots who disguise themselves as patriots.

The numbers—9/11—have now become a noun in the vocabulary of a nation, a rallying cry for an administration determined to do what it wants, regardless of the consequences, to get its revenge in the name of justice. What the Bush administration names as evil becomes evil in the eyes of many Americans because of the fear, loss of innocence, and pain the nation's people have felt since 9/11. In a moment of such deeply felt pain when silence would have meant the most, many, not all but many, from the political establishment and the Bush administration spoke volumes of meaningless threats and extreme diatribes against shadows. They have always preached the sermon to send America forth, with all its might and power, to promulgate their brand of democracy that has at its core a capitalism that ultimately puts power in the hands of corporate profiteers, not the people. A clear symbolic example of this effort is the building in Baghdad that housed Hussein's Ministry of Oil. This building, guarded by the US military 24 hours a day, was not touched by US bombs nor was it looted like so many other national buildings and sites after Baghdad was taken by US troops.

After Iraq

The administration's ability to stage just the exact image they want for George Bush surpasses even Hollywood's talents for image making and theatricality. Witness the way in which Bush entered his stage on the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln to announce to the world that the combat phase of the war in Iraq was over. Senator Robert C. Byrd told the Senate Chamber the next day, 'President Bush's addressdeserved to be marked with solemnity, not extravagance; with gratitude to God, not self-congratulatory gestures. American blood has been shed on foreign soil in defence of the President's policies. This is not some made-for-TV backdrop for a campaign commercial. This is real life, and real lives have been lost.'

Important questions remain. Have the deaths of these young American and British soldiers and the thousands of innocent Iraqi citizens been in vain? Did these young men and women go with ideals of a democratic faith to offer people freedom and have those ideals shattered by the political realities and complications of a people used to constant abuse from authority? Have their lives been pawns in the larger strategy of the Bush administration to destroy without rebuilding, control without commitment? Will Americans tolerate continued threats at everyone and anyone that gets in the way of spreading the false gospel of the neo-conservative faith? What has happened to the determined commitment of the USA to find and bring justice against the terrorists?

If America stays the course started soon after 9/11 to find those criminals who supported these treacherous acts and who continue to take innocent lives in the name of a warped understanding of Islam, the American people just might not tire of the sacrifices necessary. However, if the Bush administration continues on its impetuous, arrogant, war-bound cause of spreading the neo-conservative gospel of American supremacy and economic control at any cost—disguised as only another way to achieve justice—the American people might wisely revert to their inclination toward caution and peace. At least, I hope they do.



Iraq war and its aftermath

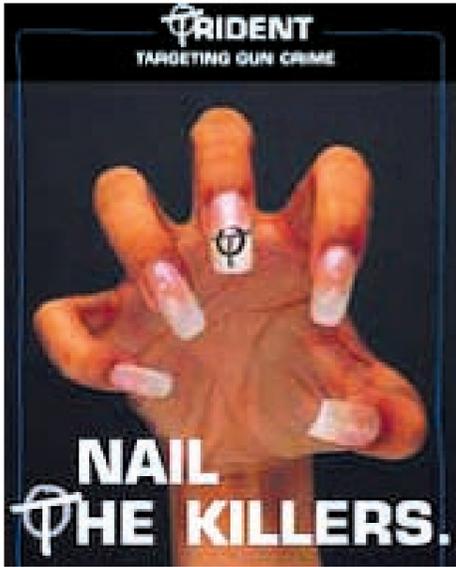
The Iraq Body Count (IBC), a volunteer group of US and British academics and researchers, have compiled estimates on the civilian cost of the Iraq war. In June 2003, they estimated that at least 5,000 civilians were killed. They expect the toll to rise to 10,000. IBC believe that between 1,700 and 2,356 civilians died in the battle for Baghdad. IBC visited hospitals and mortuaries and interviewed families throughout Iraq and used forensic methods similar to those adopted in New York after 9/11. If the IBC calculations can be substantiated the total civilian dead in the Iraq war of 2003 will be four times the total of civilian deaths in the 1991 Gulf War.

In the first 100 days since 1 May, when President Bush declared an end to the war, over 1,000 children have been injured by unexploded ordnance. Fifty seven US troops and 11 British troops have been killed. The Red Cross estimate that between 15 to 25 civilians are shot dead every day in Baghdad alone. In mid August 1.6 million barrels per day of oil were being pumped out of Iraq compared to 2.8 million before the war began. Oil and water distribution pipelines, the Jordanian embassy, and the UN headquarters have been bombed. Three mass graves had been found but no weapons of mass destruction.



It's not a Black thing

Karim Murji, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, explores a flawed premise in how the police and media describe the perpetrators and victims of crime



The violent murder of two teenage girls, Charlene Ellis and Letisha Shakespeare, at a new year's party in Birmingham was widely reported as the latest instance of what has come to be called 'Black on Black' violence. The idea of, and the expression, Black on Black crime is relatively new in the UK, though it has been used in the USA for some time to refer to person crimes deemed to be 'intra-racial', including street crime. In Britain there has been much coverage of 'inter-racial' crimes such as mugging, as well as racial violence and harassment. However, Black on Black crime seems to mean just one thing: the use of guns, and sometimes other weapons too, in violent attacks and murder. In recent times guns, gangs, turf wars between drug dealers, clubland and bystander shootings have become a familiar, even banal, staple of media 'infotainment', of crime fiction and of popular culture. In the wake of the Birmingham shootings the 'UK garage' group So Solid Crew were accused of glamorizing these links through their lyrics and demeanour, creating a vicious circle of violent criminality linked to race, masculinity, drugs, urban culture and rap music.

The dangers of misrepresentation

Drugs, especially crack cocaine, have been at the forefront of associations between race and violent crime, particularly through the figure of the yardie. Hyper-masculinity, sexual promiscuity and conspicuous consumption in the form of fast cars and flashy jewellery demarcate yardies as 'other'. They have been racialized (for instance as a 'foreign invasion' swamping particular areas of major cities) and sexualized in ways that personify 'dangerous masculinities' as base and potent. Thus, yardies are 'over sexed' as well as 'over here'. While these representations undoubtedly reify race through physicality, the discourse stretches to infantilize yardies too as 'childlike' (they 'have a big thing about shiny, large calibre handguns in bright colours' said one senior police officer) and primitive. Although race is central to these constructions, it is clear that there are dimensions as well. Yet, when it

comes to Black on Black crime only race is deemed significant.

Yardies, drug trafficking and gun crime have prompted a number of special police operations since the 1980s. The latest of these is the Metropolitan Police's Operation Trident (there are similar operations in other British police forces). Put this way, Trident sounds like yet another special unit to deal with drug-related crime and violence. Indeed the linking of some or all of these has fuelled developments such as transnational policing and increased legal powers. Trident is, however, different in at least two ways. First, it was set up to tackle gun crime and murders, which its website (www.met.police.uk/trident) says, the 'majority of which are perpetrated by black criminals on members of the black communities'. This has become known as Black on Black crime, though the police do not seem to use this term officially. Perhaps, following their unique racial coding system, they call it IC3 on IC3 crime? As far as I have been able to establish, the BBC does not have an official line on whether it should be used or not. But it has become commonplace in the media – in quote marks and in hyphenated and plain forms. Although the police are obviously not directly responsible for the language used in the media, I believe that their approach, along with many journalists, is steeped in a particular way of thinking about race.

Objectionable and absurd intra-racial typing

To follow this, ask yourself whether there is something called 'White on White' crime? Since Whites make up over 90 per cent of the population of the UK this might be too general to serve any purpose, though such 'intra-racial' typing is used to identify patterns of homicide in the USA. If 'minority' crime were to be designated by racial/ethnic markers, logic would dictate that we should also have Asian on Asian crime. Or, if we adopt the categories used in the 2001 census (and the Government does want public agencies to use them), why not Chinese on Chinese crime, or Irish on Irish crime? If this sounds absurd why is Black on Black crime any less absurd? Even the problematic categories of the census recognize that 'Black' is divisible into African, Caribbean, Black British and mixed – but none of these distinctions are recognized in Black on Black crime. Similarly White is also not a homogenous category and the census does at least recognize some divisions within it. But this is not a plea for more refined and careful use of categories – the idea of 'mixed on mixed' crime is no less objectionable than these other constructions.

The flawed premise of race

All these categories rest on a flawed premise: that race is a meaningful way of grouping humankind. Visible (skin, for instance) and bodily (blood and bone) qualities are summoned in essentializing race both biologically and culturally – they serve to fix heterogeneous groups into some imaginary common type. The invocation of community embodies this view in relation to drugs and gun crime. This is the second significant difference about Trident. It is presented as a police response to 'community' pressure. Trident is presented as 'an initiative set up by the police in response to requests

from the Black community over concerns about gun crime' (Watson, 2001). Who speaks for or represents 'the community' is problematic not just in relation to Black and minority communities. The wider problem is that the idea of 'the Black community' shares – with racial categories and the descriptor Black on Black crime – the assumption that there is an essence that constitutes Blackness and provides a basis for some common state of consciousness and identification. A key element of Trident's strategy is an appeal to community, as its adverts appealing for information indicate. For instance, 'local community groups play an integral role in Operation Trident', or 'community support was identified at an early stage as being vital' (see met-police.uk/trident). The idea that criminals come from 'outside' the boundaries of community is a familiar one.

The imperative of sensitivity

An appeal to the Black community flattens all elements of diversity and difference. Class, gender and power seem not to cross the boundaries of seemingly fixed racial identities. This thinking is also evident in Trident's Independent Advisory Group (IAG) which is based on a similar body that the Met formed after the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. Its chairman is Lee Jasper, who is also the race adviser to the Mayor of London. He says that the IAG's role in Trident is to develop 'a whole range of policing strategies that were more attuned to the sensitivities of the community' (Watson, 2001). However, Jasper's (2002) comments that 'black neighbourhoods have become free trade zones for every kind of drug and illegal contraband, including guns', and that a moral vacuum leads Black men into crime do not seem to me to be evidence of such sensitivity.

Violent crime involving guns is serious and it does involve some Black people. My argument is that calling some of it Black on Black crime is flawed because it draws on an idea of a bounded

racial grouping. It draws attention to a spurious 'sameness', rather than acknowledging difference. Beyond that, its use is ideological in a rather old-fashioned sense of the word: it draws attention to some things while obscuring others, and it makes race meaningful as a supposedly obvious and natural way of comprehending social (dis)order.

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Is Operation Trident a success?

In August the Metropolitan Police produced the following data to suggest that Operation Trident was beginning to have impact on 'Black on Black' crime. Murder, attempted murder, and shootings declined in 2003 while the proportion of cases which ended with a suspect brought to trial increased from 20 per cent in 2001 to 70 per cent in 2003.

Operation Trident

Jan to July 2001	21	'Black on Black' murders
Jan to July 2002	24	'Black on Black' murders
Jan to July 2003	11	'Black on Black' murders
Jan to July 2001	94	'Black on Black' attempted murders
Jan to July 2002	70	'Black on Black' attempted murders
Jan to July 2003	26	'Black on Black' attempted murders
2001	82	shootings*
2002	118	shootings*
2003	71	shootings*

* those not serious enough to be classified as attempted murders



Photo: Sophia Evans, *The Observer*, 25 November 2001

Summer murders in Maryland

Louise Westmarland, Lecturer in Criminology, spent a month at the University of Maryland analysing how some American cops carry out homicide investigations. Her first problem was to decide how to measure the number of murders there had been that year

In the United States there is no compulsion for the police to record the homicide rate. You might think that statistics on death and the manner of dying are codified, internationally recognized and agreed, but you would be wrong. Comparing the US homicide rate with the UK is unexpectedly difficult to do.

So Louise's first task was to arrive at some reasonably comparable means for deciding how the police in each country decided whether someone has been the victim of an intentional killing – what we would describe as murder or manslaughter, depending on the motive and circumstances. Again, this proved very difficult because, as you may be aware now that there has been significant publicity surrounding the Shipman Inquiry, the coroner's system in the UK is in need of updating.

A system that began in the twelfth century was a rather perplexing issue for the academic with whom Louise was collaborating. Brian Wiersema is a nationally acclaimed expert in research methodology around homicide and violence in the USA. He thought that Louise had made a typo when he saw the date she had sent him in an email.

Homicide rates require international comparators

So the work that was conducted last year resulted in a paper that was delivered at the American Society of Criminology Annual Conference in Chicago by Louise and Brian. They concluded that until a more common system of recording and reporting homicide is developed (and Brian Wiersema is working on this right now at the University of Maryland) it will be impossible to decide with any accuracy whether homicide rates are rising or falling comparatively, or in their own terms. Louise concluded that because the UK uses a system of recording homicides as 'murder' only when someone has been pronounced guilty of the crime in a court in England and Wales, and the statistic is entered as such, this renders the crime rate for homicides in the UK unreliable.

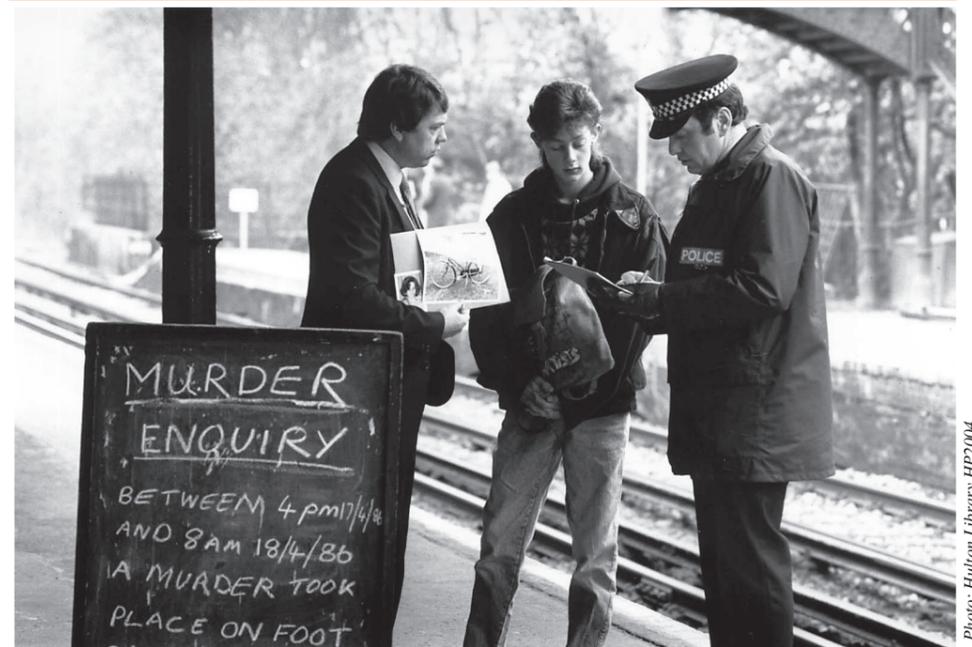
There were other difficulties. For example, if New Year celebrations happen to occur on or around a weekend, details will not be entered into the system soon enough after it has occurred for it to be in the year in which the murder occurred. As many as 20 deaths (both by intentional killing and accidents) may not be entered in that year's figures, but will be carried over. The murder rate for that year could show an erroneous 4% increase (as was in fact reported in 2001–2). The discrepancy simply reflects the day New Year's Eve happened to fall.

These matters obviously require further investigation and Louise has successfully applied for Research Development Funding. She now intends to carry out more in-depth work with the police in Maryland, comparing their practices with those in Milton Keynes. Ultimately she plans to write a book about the ethics of criminal justice practitioners such as the police and lawyers, focusing on homicide investigations.

Youth crime: charities act

Five British charities have joined to create *Shape*. The project is designed to reshape the public debate about young offenders and persuade people to be more sympathetic about alternatives to custody. Moral crises about young offenders have tended to exaggerate the actual rate of criminal activity. In 2002, 2 per cent of young people were cautioned or convicted. The fear of youth crime is far, far greater than the reality; all this in a society which has one of the lowest ages of criminal responsibility in Europe. At 10 a child is held to be as accountable as an adult.

In 2002, 7,000 under 18 year olds were placed in custody, yet Home Office data show that up to 88 per cent of young people reoffend within two years. *Shape* hopes to pressure the Government for radical change. It brings together Barnardo's, the Children's Society, the National Children's Bureau, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the children's charity NCH.



Murder enquiry, 1986

Photo: Hulton Library, HP2004

The end of multiculturalism?

New Labour, 'race' and the nation

Ali Rattansi, Visiting Professor of Sociology at City University, explores the record of New Labour administrations on 'race'. He calls for a more sophisticated debate on British national identity and multiculturalism in a new global context rather than pandering to Far Right agendas. Ali chaired the making of ED356 'Race', Education and Society in the early 1990s

Since the fateful arrival of over 400 Jamaicans on the *SS Windrush* in the summer of 1948, the history of 'race' relations in Britain has witnessed a series of defining moments (I set aside the little known fact that Black and Asian people have been living in Britain since the sixteenth century). The 1958 disturbances in London's Notting Hill Gate, Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech, the arrival of the expelled British Asians from Uganda in 1972, the Brixton and other rebellions of the 1980s, the unofficial inquiry into the murder of an Asian boy at Burnage High School in 1987, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry of 1999, and the 'Mill Town' disturbances in Britain's northern cities in 2000, have produced media headlines and been subject to much academic research.

The present media-driven panic over asylum seekers and refugees and the increasingly Draconian policy responses from the present Home Secretary David Blunkett together constitute another crucial moment in this troubling narrative. In effect, we may be witnessing the demise of an experiment that in any case has never had unambiguous official backing: British multiculturalism.

It is hard to define British multiculturalism. That such an idea has never had wholehearted governmental backing from either main party and that it seems now to be in terminal decline is symptomatic of an important truth. The arrival and establishment of the Black and Asian ethnic minority population in the second half of the twentieth century has revealed a deep, racialized ambivalence towards the non-White populations from the former British colonies.

Labour and the ambivalence of 'race'

Labour governments since the Second World War have been pulled both ways around the fault line created by this profound ambivalence. For instance, it should be better known that the then Labour Government of Attlee tried its best to prevent the *SS Windrush* from leaving Jamaica. Having failed, the government made frantic attempts to re-route it away from Britain. Finally, attempts were made to prevent any more ships from setting out. Messages were sent out to colonial administrations in the West Indies and the new government in India to spread the word that there were no jobs available in the mother country, despite the acute labour shortages. Instead, efforts continued to recruit White workers from Eastern Europe until the supply finally dried up.

It was only in the late 1960s that the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, inaugurated a significant shift in official policy. Equal opportunities, an appreciation of cultural diversity and legislation against racial discrimination became three elements of a new vision of what was usually called 'multiracialism'. However, it was taken for granted that the success of the new cultural settlement depended on tough restrictions on new 'coloured' immigration so as not to worsen 'race' relations by straining the tolerance of the fair-playing British. A rigid adherence to this nostrum led to the shameful episode when British Asians in Kenya were stripped of their citizenship rights in 1968. The contradictions that have plagued British multiculturalism were already becoming evident.

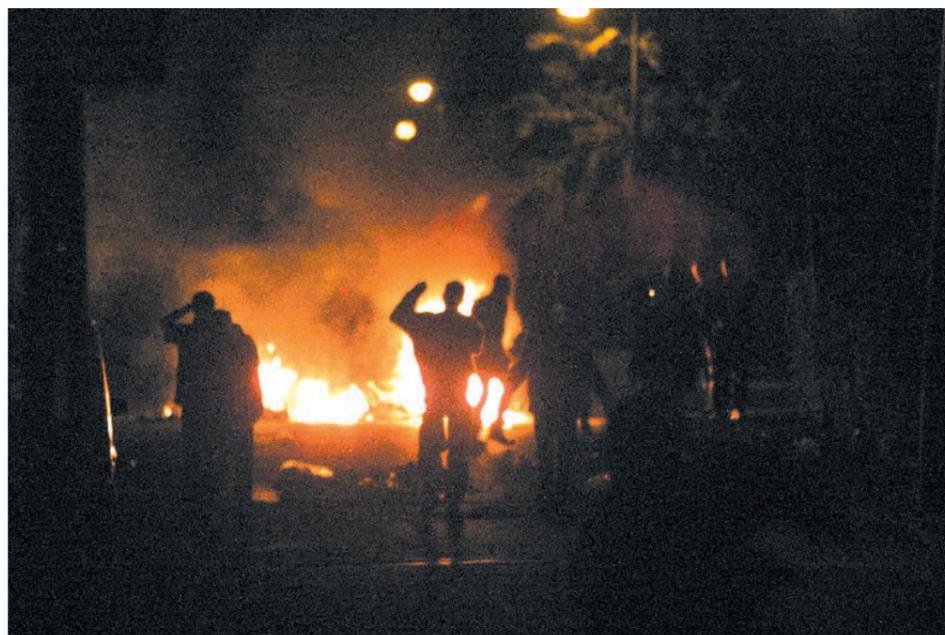
The genesis of New Labour

The 1980s witnessed a battle between Ken Livingstone's radical Greater London Council (GLC) allied with other radical local Labour administrations, and Mrs Thatcher's rallying cry against the 'swamping' of Britain by alien cultures. Livingstone and others pioneered egalitarian policies in a wide range of social spheres, especially multicultural and anti-racist education. Thatcher's administrations demonized ethnic minorities (especially young Blacks), decried multiculturalism, redefined British nationality through overt racialized legislation, revived a backward-looking imperial nationalism and in a fit of anti-democratic political vandalism abolished the GLC. And kept winning elections.

The New Labour project was borne of these successive electoral defeats and a historic struggle against the Labour Left of which Livingstone had been a prominent member. In redefining Labourism, New Labour appeared to have bought into the media characterization of the radical local councils as a tragi-comic and electorally disastrous 'loony left'. It seemed hardly likely, then, that New Labour would be determined and principled in its anti-racism. Indeed there is still a lively debate about whether New Labour has broken decisively with Thatcherism in many spheres of ideology and policy.

New Labour: the first term report

However, New Labour's first term in office was marked by significant departures from the Conservative administrations' authoritarian and unsympathetic approach to questions of racism and cultural diversity. It was only with the arrival of Jack Straw as Home Secretary that the Lawrence campaign succeeded in obtaining a public inquiry into young Stephen Lawrence's murder in April 1993 and the subsequent botched police investigation. The findings and recommendations of Sir William Macpherson's inquiry were momentous. The seriously flawed police investigation, the Inquiry concluded, was not merely the product of incompetence but institutional racism in the London Metropolitan Police. Whereas Lord Scarman had dismissed such fears in his inquiry into the Brixton disturbances of the early 1980s, Macpherson was in no doubt that the Metropolitan force was riddled with a deeply ingrained hostility to British ethnic minorities. The occupational culture and routine procedures and practices of the whole force led to serious discrimination against the Black and Asian population and contributed substantially to the failure to apprehend Stephen Lawrence's killers.



Silhouetted figures of young White rioters in front of burning barricades in Oldham, Lancashire, on the third night of race-related rioting.

Straw unequivocally accepted the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry. He started a courageous process of reform with potentially far-reaching consequences for the way the police and other public institutions interacted with Britain's ethnic minorities. He also supported the Race Relations (Amendment) Act which now requires all public bodies (although, significantly, not immigration procedures) to abide by anti-discriminatory codes of conduct specified in the Race Relations Acts. Straw also initiated a Race Relations Forum at the Home Office that brought in advisers from the ethnic minorities. The Human Rights Act has been another signal achievement.

However, other measures begin to reveal the limits of New Labourism. Straw's equivocation over the excellent Runnymede Report on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* was disappointing although some of the recommendations of that report are being quietly implemented. Creating large numbers of Black and Asian peers (and now the elevation of Boateng and Baroness Amos to the cabinet) does little to empower local communities. And recognizing, and consulting bodies such as the Muslim Council of Britain, dominated by the middle aged and elderly continues a longstanding practice of marginalizing ethnic minority youth.

Asylum hysteria and war fall-out

It is difficult to be enthusiastic about New Labour's second term in relation to 'race' as in other areas of policy and governance. Blunkett's arrival at the Home Office and his high profile public interventions, the disturbances in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford, the media-led hysteria over the asylum question and the fall-out from the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have been a potent, perhaps disastrous combination. Blunkett's demand that

immigrants not only take lessons and tests in English and British culture but abandon a variety of their own cultural practices has begun a process that could take policies to a pre-Jenkins agenda. Immigrants must generally 'integrate' tightly into the British 'way of life'. But there is no single 'British way of life', especially in a world in which national cultures are increasingly fragmented. The tone of his remarks, using Thatcher's infamous 'swamping' word, has been unfortunate.

Blunkett is not a little disingenuous. Contrary to the impression he created, the protests in the northern towns were not led by illiterate grannies demanding the right to impose forced marriages and genital mutilation on their daughters (practices abhorred by the majority of Asians and other minorities) but by third generation youth. The irrelevance of English tests and citizenship classes for these British Asians speaking in broad Lancashire tones and actually demanding the genuine fulfilment of their citizenship rights is obvious. A conflation between the issue of asylum seekers and the (rapidly changing) cultures of long-established minorities has prevented a constructive debate on the meaning of 'integration'.

of promoting an open globalized economy and the belief that non-White immigration in itself worsens 'race' relations. Note that there has always been an element of self-fulfilment here. If the immigrant (rather than the low 'tolerance' threshold of the British) is officially defined as the problem it is always going to make it difficult to then insist that immigrants (and even the third generation) already here should have proper entitlements.

- Valuing cultural diversity while believing, as Blunkett does, that a 'secure sense of national identity' is the only foundation on which tolerance towards ethnic minorities can be created. This misses the point that the need is to create a more cosmopolitan sense of national identity that includes ethnic minorities and a culture of openness to others as an integral part. New Labour had flirted with a more cosmopolitan pose by floating the idea of 'Cool Britannia'. But who now remembers that? Instead, a hot racialized, 'secure-national-identity' agenda has trumped cool cosmopolitanism.

- The recognition that racism and racialized disadvantage have to be tackled, but without alienating genuinely deprived sections of the White working class, some of whom have begun to desert New Labour for the BNP. This contradiction is particularly evident in the northern cities. It is worth remembering that all of the areas affected by the disturbances in the northern cities were amongst the poorest 20 per cent in the country and some parts of Oldham and Burnley are amongst the most deprived 1 per cent. There is a broader tension here between tackling the severe, shared disadvantage of the White and ethnic minority working class through redistributive policies while not challenging the deep inroads made by market forces into a wide range of social institutions.

Blunkett's new authoritarian assimilationism, focusing primarily on limited cultural aspects of 'integration' combined with tough measures to keep out asylum seekers and punitive sanctions against 'job culture' in general, is an attempt to prevent these contradictions from seriously damaging the New Labour project. If this trajectory continues it will inflict a severe blow to what in any case has been a meandering, confused, half-hearted multiculturalism that has been the British response to the Black and Asian immigration of the second half of the twentieth century.

No doubt all multiculturalisms, including the British version, are in need of rethinking in new global and national contexts. But New Labour's new authoritarian assimilationism on present evidence does not appear to be adequate to the task of finding an effective strategy to deal with the contradictions. 'Integration' does not have to be crudely assimilationist or incompatible with multiculturalism. To achieve a new cultural settlement New Labour will have to develop a much more sophisticated understanding of new British ethnic identities. Arguably, when it comes to questions of 'race', national identity and the new immigration, the Third Way so far has merely generated contradictions rather than offer a genuine way forward beyond the old Left and Right agendas.

New Labour pronouncements feed and draw sustenance from a generalized anxiety and fear that is now the background noise against which daily life is increasingly lived. Importantly, the prominence given to the new immigration, international terrorism from political Islam and the small numbers of radicals amongst British Muslims ensures that this sense of dread is thoroughly racialized. The possibility of a genuine dialogue on how to fashion national policies for a new global order is undermined by the way Blunkett and New Labour conflate these issues, and add on other concerns such as the law and order issues of 'job culture' and 'anti-social' behaviour.

The desire to placate rather than challenge a rampant media and a BNP growing daily in influence and confidence means that on issues of immigration, asylum and 'race' Blunkett and New Labour's rhetoric are bringing them depressingly close to the agenda of the Far Right. There has even been talk of withdrawing unilaterally from the Geneva Convention on refugees. Predictably, far from undercutting the BNP, Blunkett appears to be ending up reinforcing its message. Again, not surprisingly, the BNP has notched up more electoral successes.

New Labour and 'race': the contradictions of the Third Way?

New Labour is now caught up in a series of policy dilemmas generated by at least three main contradictions:

- Between the need for labour from abroad in industry, education and the health service and the desire to placate media hysteria over the new immigration and asylum patterns. This is part of an overall tension between the strategy



Black people six times more likely than White to be jailed

Black people are disproportionately treated by the criminal justice system compared to Whites. One-quarter of Britain's prison population come from ethnic minorities, with Black prisoners accounting for over 15 per cent of those jailed. If 'Black Britain' were a separate country, the report argued, it would have the highest imprisonment rate in the world. Black people are five times more likely to be stopped and searched, and once arrested, twice more likely to be remanded in custody than others charged with similar offences. The prison study examined data on 3,000 prisoners and found that White prisoners were more likely to come from an impoverished background than ethnic minorities.

Black people up to 27 times more likely than White to be stopped by police

The law introduced by Michael Howard in 1994 to target noisy ravers and football hooligans has resulted in an unprecedented rise in the number of Afro-Caribbean people stopped by the police. The Crime, Justice and Public Order Act allows stop and searches without an officer having reasonable grounds of suspicion. The disproportionate use of Section 60 of the Act is far higher than the more commonly used search powers governed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, where reasonable suspicion is the guideline. Under this law Afro-Caribbeans are eight times more likely to be stopped.

Crime Prosecution Service failing in 'race' hate crime

A review of the CPS's handling of crimes with a race element, by its own Inspectorate, has concluded that prosecutors are wrongly reducing charges in more than one in four racist incidents. Charges of racially aggravated crimes are either downgraded and the 'race' element removed, or prosecutors are accepting guilty pleas minus racial aggravation. The report found a strong body of opinion 'within the police that their substantial effort in racist incident cases is being plea-bargained away'. The inspectorate concluded that charges had been reduced in 28 per cent of the 146 'race' cases reviewed, and that in these cases, plea-bargaining should not have been accepted by the CPS.

The report also compared prosecutions where the accused was from a minority ethnic group with those involving White defendants. It found that police over-charged non-White defendants with serious offences, compared to White defendants. In 2001, the Sylvia Denham inquiry found that the CPS suffered from 'institutional racism'. The CPS is undertaking a review to identify racial bias in decision making.

Asylum: the facts

The UK hosts 1.98 per cent of the world's refugees, 0.3 per cent of our population.

£2.5bn is the net fiscal contribution made by migrants – including asylum seekers – in 1999/2000; migrants contributed £31.2bn in taxes and consumed £28.8bn in benefits.

There were 85,865 applications for asylum to the UK in 2002, a year on year rise of 20 per cent. 8,100 or 10 per cent of applicants were granted asylum, 19,965 or 24 per cent exceptional leave to remain, and 54,650 or 66 per cent were refused.

During the controversy over the Sangatte camp in France the UK media used 51 different terms to describe asylum seekers, including 'parasites' and 'scroungers'.

£1,050m was spent on asylum support in 2001-2; an average family seeking asylum receives 24 per cent less than its British-born equivalent in income support and benefits.

In 2002, 790 asylum seekers were kept in detention; about a third of these were there for more than four months.

There has been a dramatic rise in children seeking asylum. In 1996, 631 children aged 17 and under applied for asylum in the UK. In 2002, 5,945 children applied. At any one time over 300 juveniles, some as young as 13, are living alone in bed and breakfast accommodation.

10,410 asylum seekers were forcibly removed in 2002 – 13,335 including dependants – the highest annual total on record.

84 per cent of new applications are determined within six months; 20 per cent of appeals are successful.

The UK was ranked twelfth in the EU in asylum applications received compared to national population in 2001; eighth in 2002 – 1.9 asylum applications per 1,000 of the population; Austria is top with 4.6.

The main countries from which applicants came in 2002 were Iraq (14,940), Zimbabwe (7,695) and Afghanistan (7,380).

72 per cent of the world's 12 million refugees are given asylum by developing countries – only 28 per cent moved to the developed world.

3 per cent of the world's population are defined as international migrants.

300 schools have more than 10 per cent of asylum seekers' children in England and Wales.

£36.54 is received each week by a single adult asylum seeker in the UK.

90 per cent of UK employers want to take on refugees to meet skill shortages.

80 per cent of asylum seekers and refugees report that they cannot afford to maintain good health in Britain.

Sources: *The Independent*, 23.5.03; *The Guardian*, 1.5.03

War and repression main reasons for asylum

A report in May 2003 by the Director-General for Justice and Home Affairs at the European Court concludes that push factors such as war and oppression far outweigh the pull factors of economic opportunities and European benefit systems in influencing migration. Most asylum seekers are not single men who desert their families for economic reasons, as Ministers in the UK and France have argued, but are forced migrants fleeing persecution. The Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University confirms the EC findings. Its analysis of the ten countries that send the most refugees to Europe shows that seven have experienced war since 1990, and the three which haven't – Iran, Turkey and Romania – have a poor record on human rights and repressing minorities, especially in relation to Sunni Muslims, Kurds and Roma Gypsies.

Migrants contribute £2.5 billion to UK economy

Research by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) confirms that immigrants neither take jobs from native Britons nor drain public expenditure, exploding one of the dominant myths of UK popular culture. The CBI study found that migrants contribute over £2.5 billion a year to the UK economy, and that allowing in more immigrants was 'beneficial' to the UK. 'Migrants have... brought valuable and scarce skills that have benefited business and helped contribute to economic growth', they conclude. The Government's White Paper on Immigration, Asylum and Citizenship, published in 2003, recommends quotas in critical areas of skill shortages, especially in IT, engineering, health and education.

Can the Law help the poor of an unequal Commonwealth?

Gary Slapper explores how, in an unequal world where many leaders hold the Law in contempt, contradictions between rich and poor stretch social governance in the Commonwealth beyond its limits

The celebrated English cricket commentator, John Arlott, was once asked by officials in apartheid South Africa to fill in a form which, among other things, asked him for his race. He wrote down 'human' and refused to change it.

One of the primary virtues of law is that it is supposed to apply equally to all within its jurisdiction. If rules are created in a democracy, and applied evenly across society, then law can be seen as a civilized system for ordering human affairs. It is better to be ruled by rules than ruled by a tyrant. The former offers its citizens clarity and predictability whereas under the latter uncertainty and unpredictability prevail. Dictators and autocrats can rule in an erratic or capricious way, and often do so with all the terror, cruelty and insecurity that such a regime entails for the subjugated population.

national annual health budget is only £12.6m, the King of Swaziland, 35-year-old Mswati III, recently made arrangements to purchase a new private jet costing £28m.

Even if it had a legal system in which constitutional democracy and the rule of law were embedded, the economic divide in Swaziland would mock the legitimacy of any system of government wanting to exercise power on behalf of the whole community. However, things are worse than that. The situation is exacerbated by the open contempt of the ruling élite for the rule of law. When the country's most senior judge, Chief Justice Stanley Spire, refused to dismiss a case brought against the King for allegedly abducting an 18-year-old girl to be his wife, the King sacked the judge. There have been no free multi-party elections in Swaziland since 1968, and political parties have been banned since 1973.

to how well it suited any relevant feature they saw themselves as possessing. Thus a person who was very strong, or clever, or disabled, or atheist (or all of these) might look at the blueprint of a posited society to see how well off and well treated such a person would be in such a society.

To counter such tactics, and to make the decision making more objective, Rawls introduced the idea of a 'veil of ignorance' to cover those who were deciding whether any given society was one for which they would sign up. So, when they came to choose the basic principles of justice, people, we have to imagine, would not know their own characteristics. They would then have to opt for a society that they believed would give them the best life if they were, because of their personal circumstances, in the worst position.

The hub of the theory comes in contrast to the way we live today. Rawls argues that:

'...each person finds himself placed at birth in some particular position in some particular society, and the nature of this position materially affects his life prospects. Yet a society satisfying the principles of justice as fairness comes as close as a society can to being a voluntary scheme, for it meets the principles which free and equal persons would assent to under circumstances that are fair.' (Rawls, 1971, p. 244)

What if...?

This theory is highly contentious and has generated a response in over 5,000 books and articles. It has provoked counterblasts from right-wing and left-wing political theorists, myriad jurists and philosophers. Whatever one's detailed analysis of Rawls's theory, however, it is worth pondering what people would say if they were presented with an accurate description of life in some parts of today's Commonwealth, and asked whether they would like to become members of such societies without knowing in advance what status within the society they would occupy.

What if, in respect of a number of countries, you found many facets of the society attractive,



Wealthy picnickers enjoy strawberries and cream and champagne at Henley Royal Regatta, Henley on Thames

People in the modern world feel much more comfortable if they are compelled to do something by a democratically enacted law that applies to everyone. Filling in a tax return, driving within the speed limit, or respecting human rights appears more acceptable in a democratic system rather than if dictated by an unelected or unaccountable ruler.

It is important, however, to recognize that although law can be seen as an equalizing system that enhances and secures the civil life of populations, it often struggles in circumstances where there is a marked economic inequality among the population. In such societies, any equity that the law purports to exercise is discredited by stark inequalities in a population. This point was made in a particularly sharp way by the French writer Anatole France in 1894, who noted: 'the majestic equality of the law, which forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread'.

Of palaces and paupers

We live, six billion of us, on the same planet but yet in very diverse circumstances. We are one people but the conditions we live in vary greatly. Most people on the planet do not have a toilet. While one-third of the world's population overeats, another third is malnourished. We exist in a world where palaces cast shadows over pauperism. The economic differences between the haves and have-nots (both within many Commonwealth countries, and between some Commonwealth countries) is so pronounced that the respective rich and poor populations look like they are peoples from different historical epochs.

A few years ago, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization released statistics showing that 30,000 children were dying every day of malnourishment-related conditions. That fact is repellent enough but it takes on an even more discomfiting dimension when one considers that, as from this year, clinical obesity is the number-one unnatural killer in the United States.

Kings buy jets while their people starve

Swaziland provides an illustration of how far the legitimacy of a system of social governance can be attenuated by economic factors. In this Commonwealth country, two-thirds of the population live below the poverty threshold. The unemployment rate stands at 45 per cent of the workforce, and the country is one, where, along with Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho, over 14 million people are at risk of starvation. One in five of the adult Swaziland population is HIV-positive. Yet, although the



Photo: Marxism Today, August 1991

John Rawls, who died in November 2002, was one of the great philosophers of the twentieth century. One of the central parts of his work was on the theme of 'justice as fairness'. Following from the philosophies of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and developing the notion of a 'social contract', Rawls posited the principle that in order to test whether social arrangements are fair, we must ask whether people would have signed up to an original agreement articulating 'the principles of justice for the basic structure of [that] society'. These are:

'...the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. These principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social co-operation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established. This way of regarding the principles of justice I shall call justice as fairness'.

A Theory of Justice, Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 243

People, though, might hypothetically sign up for all sorts of things that they do not really want. They might sign up for a society founded upon the principles of slavery if they were under sufficient duress to do so. Also, people might decide whether to sign up for a type of society according

and so notionally signed up for it, but then found that when the 'veil of ignorance' was lifted, you were a man or woman with several children, a partner who had died from Aids, and no income? What if you were a political opponent of the government, or a gay or lesbian person, or a trade union member, or a member of a minority ethnic group?

King Mswati of Swaziland recently resisted social and legal change with these words:

'Although the whole world is preaching democracy, it does not mean we have to follow them. Democracy is not good for us, because God gave us our own way of doing things.' (*The Independent*, 21 April, 2003)

Swaziland is a stark case of social injustice but it is not the only country among the Commonwealth's 54 that can be put into such a category. The question is for how long the peoples of the Commonwealth will tolerate such a state of affairs.

Gary Slapper is Professor of Law, and Director of the Law Programme, at the Open University. He is co-editor of *The Journal of Commonwealth Law and Legal Education*, and an expanded version of this article will appear in the next issue of the journal.

Inside call centres

Call centres represent the fastest growing area of office employment. Like many others, the Open University's call centre has expanded in the last five years. George Callaghan, staff tutor in Scotland, argues that call centres have the potential to show how empathetic management and labour power can transform these robotic environments into more humanized workplaces

Call centres have come under critical scrutiny for their working practices. The twin drivers of cost reduction and managerial control have created a new generation of employees working in factory-like environments. Call centres are Britain's fastest growing area of office employment and it is estimated that 3 per cent of Britain's working population is now employed in call centres. But they are shrouded in controversy as tensions between management and worker collective action begin to transform the industry.

Victorian values of worker exploitation characterize the call centre industry. The centres hark back to the assembly line with time controls and robotic working practices. The work commonly done in call centres is highly routine. Conversations are often scripted, calls measured in great detail and workers closely monitored. This production system puts incredible pressure on employees. It is a system built on intense pressure, obsessive control, and huge contradictions. Regimes are oppressive, with few promotion opportunities, and the average pay is relatively poor. In Telebank, where most of my research took place, workers were expected to get through 120 three-minute calls per day. Every call and computer keystroke was recorded. Workers are aware they may be listened to at any time and are also aware that each morning they will be presented with the previous days production statistics. A flavour of the intense working environment this created was given by one worker criticized for visiting the toilet for more than six minutes in one day.

The simple and the routine

The first and most important imperative of call centres is the continual desire to cut costs. In factory work the techniques for doing this popularly date back to Henry Ford where work tasks were simplified and speedy assembly lines drove production. The work may have been dull but falling costs allowed increased profits. A mixture of high pay and tight supervision maintained quality. This impulse to closely supervise and control workers is dominant, as the organization's objectives are determined by capitalist production. Any creativity associated with craft knowledge was squeezed out of production. Instead workers executed simple and routine tasks. This industrial ideology was accompanied and popularized by the growth of scientific management as an academic discipline. Teams of academics and consultants carried out time and motion studies to measure tasks and then change the way work was organized.

As the twentieth century progressed, industrialists, recognized the limitations of such a rigid production process and they developed techniques to improve quality and productivity. Cost and control still set the parameters of production but there was space for teamwork, trust and training. Reflecting such changes whole academic departments began to emerge, including Human Resource Management and Personnel. These began to process thousands of Business Studies graduates.



The primacy of control

But interestingly, despite the increase in the number of executives trained in techniques to improve productivity through humanizing scientific management, when we get to the organization of work in a new industry like call centres the priorities of cost reduction and control immediately resurface. As the call centre industry grew through the 1990s corporate managers across a number of industries independently began to use and adapt existing technologies to create a form of work organization based on low cost and high control. These new workplaces are making insurance claims, mortgage deals and holiday bookings instead of cars, fridges or televisions but the priorities which established the early call centres are similar to early blue-collar work – put people in large sheds on the outskirts of big cities and get them doing simple jobs.

One additional pressure facing call centre workers that did not bear on factory workers to the same extent is the need to draw on their personalities. In producing units of customer service, workers need to manipulate their emotions so that they sound enthusiastic even if they are in fact tired and bored. Some researchers have argued that this need for emotional labour partially explains the fact that three-quarters of the workforce are women. It is more likely that call centres are simply another example of white-collar managers turning to women when routine white-collar work needs to be done.

Collective action

The women and men who work in call centres, like earlier generations of factory workers, do not passively accept such difficult working conditions. Although there is not much space in the working day for people to express themselves, employees still find avenues and adopt strategies to engage with the system. Collective action that has been taken through trade unions has led to some very real gains including site-specific agreements on monitoring and guaranteed break times. There are also instances of individual action, usually involving humour to tease customers and managers but also including workers using their knowledge of the technology to fool the system into thinking they are working when they are not. One example I came across was of a customer service representative keying in a code suggesting they were doing paperwork when they were really looking out the window.

Despite such strategies the most striking way workers express their feelings about their work is by leaving. Like earlier intensive assembly line factory work, call centres have high levels of turnover. Most staff last only 18 months to two years. The industry is rife with high absenteeism. Industry managers are coy about this but turnover probably lies at the end of a spectrum running from the official rate of 30 per cent to an unofficial rate of 100 per cent. While some of this may be people leaving one call centre to walk across the road to another, one survey found that 41 per cent of those who leave would never return to the industry. This is not popular work.

The need for humanization

This is one of the outcomes call centre managers genuinely struggle with. Corporate managers have organized work according to the principles of minimizing cost and maximizing control. What we then see is individual call centre managers and supervisors desperately trying to deal with the outcome. Very interestingly what seems to be happening is that the industry is learning in 10 years the same lessons manufacturers learnt over 100 years. They are drawing on the same type of motivational tactics and techniques used in earlier forms of blue-collar work. So we see managers splitting workers into competing teams, setting outputs, devising awards, and developing loyalty bonuses. People are still leaving the industry but attempts to humanize the work are taking place.

Call centres allow us a glimpse of the mechanics of capitalist production. These mechanics are often disguised under terms like empowerment, teamwork



Teams of telephone operators in a huge BT call centre

or goal setting but the underlying push is to continually cut costs and control workers. The latest example of this tendency is to move call centres overseas. Again this is very similar to manufacturing – shift production of low skill work to low wage economies. So we see call centres moving to India where English-speaking graduates get £2,000 per year. UK unions are fighting this and are working to ensure exploitative conditions are not simply exported overseas.

That the call centres industry, with its complex technology and large financial investment, can be developed so quickly shows the tremendous strength and vitality within our own economy. The tough task ahead for us all is to turn this ingenuity, creativity and drive to developing work and working conditions that are more meaningful and rewarding. As my research shows we could start by overhauling structures and procedures, providing greater flexibility in work patterns and improving promotion opportunities.

Outsourcing: the next industrial and social earthquake?

Unions claim that Britain faces the most severe industrial collapse since the 1980s if hundreds of thousands of service sector jobs drain to India. Call centre jobs will continue to be lost. It is feared that outsourcing overseas may cause significant damage to communities that have become over dependent on service sector employment. If steps are not taken Britain could become 'a nation of fat cats and hairdressers', the union Amicus warned. The Communications Workers Union expect employers to export 200,000 call centre jobs to India during the next decade in order to capitalize on cheaper labour (in India wages are a fifth of those paid in the UK). The claims were made after BT announced it intended to relocate 2,200 customer service jobs to Bangalore.

Towards a unified e-learning strategy: Government praises U130 Get Connected

In the Government's new e-learning consultation strategy the Social Sciences new course U130 *Get Connected* is cited as an exemplar of innovative teaching. The citation is the only mention of the OU in the report.

How should education leaders, teachers and learners turn a traditional educational institution, whether school, college, or university, into one that blends the best of e-learning with more traditional methods? Embedding e-learning will not happen fast. The Government looks ahead to years when the technology will probably have evolved further. That is all part of the unified strategy for the UK – how we prepare ourselves, through our education system, to cope with an ever-changing world. The consultation process runs for several months, until 30 January 2004, to allow all members of the education and training professions, learners, and suppliers to engage in the debate.

The consultation document citation says:

GET CONNECTED! STUDYING WITH A COMPUTER is a short computing course at the Open University. Learning is done through print and an interactive website with a personalized 'workspace'. Students take part in e-tutorials and use multi-media to explore the cultural and historical connections between members of the Bloomsbury Group. Nearly 70% of the students are female, which is unusual for computing courses.

'I was a complete technophobe until I started but I've completely changed now!'

Enrol today!

Summer schools for the information age

The cutting edge information society course DXR220 *Social Science in Action* is highly recommended for students who want to learn more about social science in practical settings. It introduces a range of research skills which allow students to explore the 'information society'.

At the exciting Brighton summer school students investigate people using the Internet and mobile phones by conducting interviews in the seaside town's Internet cafes.

Our picture shows DXR220 student Derek Naysmith with his laptop and guide dog Nick on Brighton beach. DXR220 is a 15-point course, and can be usefully paired with U130 or DXR222. It is best studied after DD100 (or DD121/122) and preferably at an early stage of Level 2 study.



Photo: Judith Walker 2003, DXR220 student.

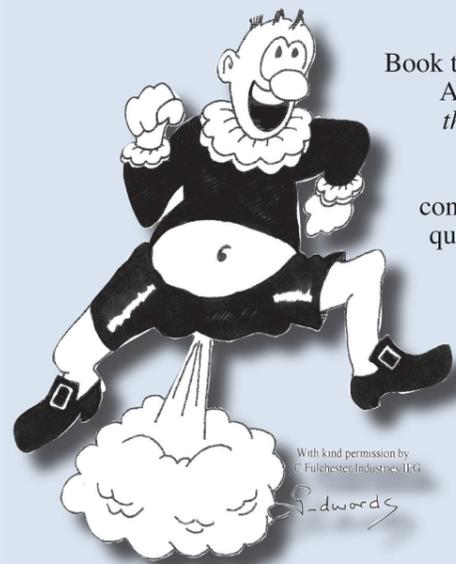
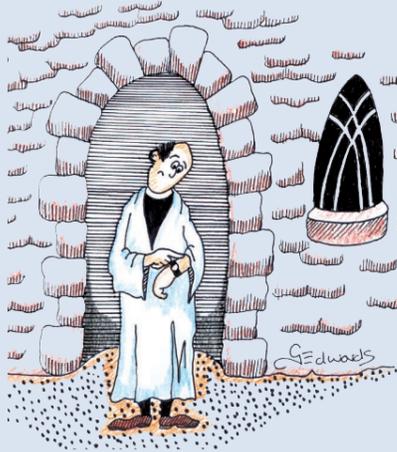
Short courses in boozing and car salesmanship

There are a range of offbeat and unusual courses now on offer at British universities. Students at Bradford University can study a course in the sociology of alcohol and the affects of consumption as part of a BA degree in local and regional studies. The course focuses upon the way people in England have drunk alcohol from 1750 to 1920. Students can study stand-up comedy at Salford, surfing at Plymouth, football culture at Staffordshire, and how to sell cars at Loughborough. The Open University? Watch this space.



Weddings lowest for 100 years

The number of weddings in England and Wales has fallen to its lowest level in over a century according to official statistics published in spring 2003. There were 249,227 weddings in 2001, almost the same as in 1897 when there was a much smaller population of 31 million, compared to 53 million today. Weddings peaked in 1972 at 426,241. In 2001 there was a slight increase to 60% in the proportion of first-time weddings for both bride and groom. The average age for a groom was 34.8 and 32.2 for brides. The average age for a bachelor to get married had risen to 30.6. For women the average age for tying the knot for the first time was 28.4. Fascinatingly, in 1897, there were only 503 divorces, compared with 143,800 in 2001. In 1897, only 4 per cent of births took place outside marriage, compared to 40 per cent in 2001.



On farting

Book title of the year has to be American criminologists Allen and Thompson's *On Farting: Bodily Wind in the Middle Ages*. This study of the fart in medieval culture is part of a contemporary fascination with the body. Let me quote the book reviewer: 'as a consequence of the cultural materialist interest in the quotidian, recent criticism has moved away from an abstracted conception of selfhood toward an appreciation of how the concrete daily regimens of bodily habitus, generally taken for granted, shape the horizon of our cultural and individual consciousness'. Is this a parody of Descartes: 'I fart, therefore I am'? No, the reviewer is undaunted: 'The fart, in its parodying of language and its logic of affinity, leads us ultimately to the problem of hermeneutics, of the art of interpretation itself'. Maybe, but how did this pan out in medieval England? 'Although much of the medieval preoccupation with flatulence originates from the aesthetic of comic inversion, whereby fart 'sing' or parody human language or are mistaken for departed souls, it also reflects a more serious interest in bodily health. A multifarious typology of the fart will permit a better understanding of the phenomenon's protean wealth of meaning'.

So now you know.

Illegal UK drug market worth more than Do It Yourself

The first Home Office estimate of the size of the UK illegal drug market, worth £6.6 billion in 2002, exceeds the turnover of the Do It Yourself (DIY) sector of the economy, which is worth £5.3 billion. The trade amounts to around a third of the £20 billion spent annually on alcohol. The Home Office findings show that illegal drug use is more widespread among young White people (52 per cent of whom have tried drugs), than among young Black people (37 per cent), or youths of Indian (25 per cent), or Pakistani and Bangladeshi (13 per cent) descent. Over the long term there has been a decline in drug use among teenagers, from 34 per cent of 16 to 19 year olds in 1994, to 27 per cent in 2000. The study found that more than three million people spend money on illegal drugs, from cannabis (£500 a year on the drug) to heroin (£15,000 a year).



Middle age spreads misery?

The middle aged are the most miserable people in Britain. Frustrated idealism, work fatigue and financial anxieties blight and demoralize the radical youth of the 1970s, and Thatcher's generation of a decade later. A social attitude study in 2002 found people aged between 35 and 54 were the most negative about almost everything in life. Jobs do not satisfy them. Education, health and transport are dark worlds without light. Authority is deeply mistrusted and they appear politically apathetic. The Social Research Institute traces their disaffection from disappointment at how their lives have turned out. They believe the young and the old are having a whale of a time while they struggle with unfulfilled career expectations and anxiety over diminishing pension prospects.

North Dorset people live longer

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on current life expectancy has ranked Dorset local authorities as the healthiest in England and Wales, with North Dorset ranked first, Christchurch second, and East Dorset third. The lowest ranked areas were Manchester, Blackpool, Liverpool, Middlesbrough and Tower Hamlets. The discrepancy in male life expectancy between Dorset and Manchester was an alarming ten years, while women add more than seven years to their lives by living in the right area; women in West Somerset had the highest life expectancy – at 83.5 years, followed by Guildford and Purbeck. Although the areas with the highest life expectancy were mainly rural, social factors such as wealth played a part. An ONS study last August showed men from professional, managerial and clerical classes can expect to live three years longer than manual workers due to significant differences in cancer and heart disease rates, caused by poverty, smoking and poor diets.



Fat facts

If all the world's population consumed at the same rate as Americans we would need three more planets to provide the raw materials.

In 1960, a serving of McDonald's French fries contained 200 calories; today it contains 610 calories.

61 per cent of Americans experience health problems caused by obesity; 26 per cent are so obese that they will die prematurely.

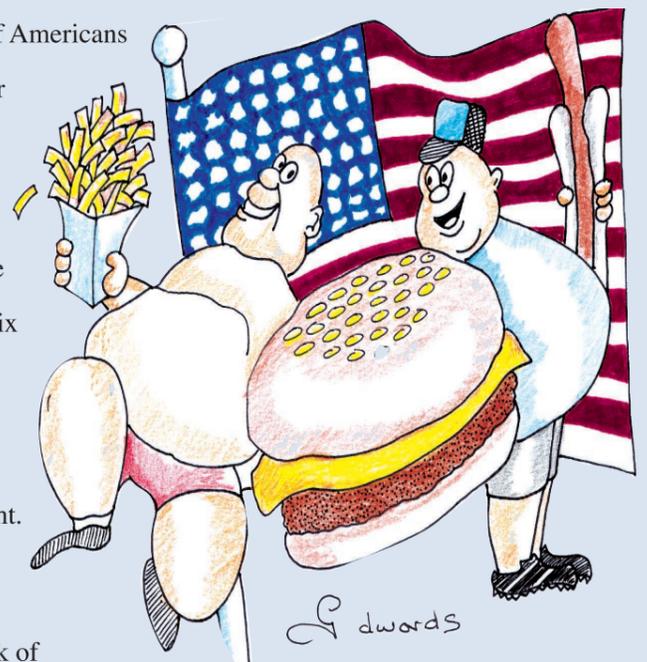
Obesity kills an estimated 280,000 Americans each year.

More than 5 million Americans now meet the definition of morbid obesity.

30 per cent of young American women now wear a size 14 (a UK size 18) or bigger.

25 per cent of Americans under 19 are overweight or obese; the figure has doubled in the last 30 years.

In Britain one in ten 6 year olds, one in six 15 year olds, and one in five adults is obese. Over one-half of British adults are overweight. Obesity removes a decade off your life, and triples the risk of diabetes and heart disease. It costs the NHS half a billion pounds each year.



About our cartoonists

Catherine Pain has just completed D317 *Social Psychology*, and the sixth and final year of her OU honours degree in Psychology, and is seeking employment as an Associate Lecturer in and around Cambridge. Gary Edwards is a freelance cartoonist and author. Gary lives in Leeds. He has a new title out now called *Paint it White*, published by Mainstream Publishing, and available from bookshops. It is a comic cartoon travelogue about his travels supporting his beloved Leeds United. It is not just about football. Some reviewers have labelled him 'Yorkshire's Billy Connolly'!

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