This special edition of Nexus focuses on the applied work of sociologists. There are multiple interpretations of what this might mean. People work as sociologists without necessarily using the title of ‘sociologist’ – they may be employed within the criminal justice system, in agriculture and planning, or in the health and welfare sectors. They sometimes float in and out of academia: they might start out working in business or government and then go on to work in a university - but they may not teach or do research within a sociology department. Applied sociologists sometimes collaborate with academics on specific projects, and academics sometimes carry out commissioned contract work for clients (typically government agencies or community organisations). Perhaps the very existence of TASA’s various Thematic Groups is proof that all sociologists are applied researchers: TASA currently hosts 12 specialised research committees on topics ranging from migration, the media, and leisure/tourism. The idea of ‘applied sociology’ is therefore quite fuzzy.

Despite the fluidity between the academic and applied sociological realms, this special edition of Nexus argues that our discipline needs to better understand applied sociology as a specific sociological practice.

In the introductory edition of the journal of clinical sociology, Sociological Practice, Bruhn defines applied sociologists as those ‘practitioners [who] use sociological theory and methods to produce positive social change through active intervention... Therefore, the clinical and applied sociologist is uniquely a practitioner scientist’ (1999: 1). More specifically, Steele and Price (2004) define applied sociology as the translation of sociological theory into practice for specific client groups. That is, the use of sociology to answer research questions as defined by clients (rather than the researcher) in the intervention of social life. For the purposes of our Thematic Group, we loosely see Applied Sociology as doing sociology outside of the academy, including in non-government organisations, private consultancy, public service, and in other forms of contract (non-ongoing) work. By the same token, however, we have members who work as university lecturers and research fellows, and others who collaborate actively with various academic groups, or who retain some external affiliation with a university. We therefore recognise and welcome the support of academics in advancing the profile of applied sociology.

The Applied Sociology Thematic Group was established in 2007 as a response to the need for professional support both within TASA and our workplaces. There was a feeling among our members that non-academic sociologists practice our craft on the margins: we work in between academia and the public, and yet our colleagues on both sides of the academic/industry divide do not really understand what we do or how we do it. The group is working towards several initiatives to promote the work of applied sociologists and to increase their participation within TASA, including at the annual conferences. A lack of career mentorship for sociology graduates, limited or non-existing funding and access to resources, and a limited recognition of our research activities by mainstream academic publications are all on our agenda in order to increase the visibility of applied sociology. This edition of Nexus addresses one of our Thematic Group’s primary objectives. It aims to give voice to some of the positive and problematic issues that applied sociologists face in their everyday work.

The Across the Divide section focuses on breaking down the ‘otherness’ of applied sociology, by focusing on the intersections of applied sociological practice and academia. It presents three case studies that examine the ways in which non-academic research is shaped by the demands of specific work contexts. Zuleyka Zevallos sketches some of the broader issues in doing applied sociology, touching briefly on its applications in national security policy and research; Bruce Smyth discusses his move from producing policy-driven research within a government-funded organisation, to developing a research program within a university setting; and Joy Adams-Jackson provides an example of ‘clinical sociology’, in this case, the critical application of sociology to mental health practice.

Our other contributors discuss their personal and professional journeys as applied sociologists. Anthony Hogan reflects on his career trajectory outside academia and the various policy applications of his work. Scott Burrows shows how social theory can be applied to study social policy issues of youth unemployment in regional Australia. Jan Ali considers the use of participant observation in an Islamic Revivalist movement in Sydney. Anna Bennett discusses her experiences teaching sociology outside a university as part of an enabling course for youth aged 17 to 20 years who hope to qualify for tertiary study. Given TASA’s initiative to promote sociology in high schools, this paper offers significant
insight. Susan Pitt offers an introspection on the importance of peer support and networks for non-academics, and how this shapes her identity as a sociologist. Her paper also provides an example of one career path available to sociology students, within one of the various public service graduate programs.

We are privileged to have Julie Cappleman-Morgan and Annika Couglin contributing to the Across The Border section. They share with us their experiences of establishing the Sociologists Outside Academia Group within the British Sociological Association, including their successes, strategies and issues in getting more involvement from non-academic members. Their group objectives mirror those of our Applied Sociology Thematic Group, and we are discussing ways to increase our collaboration, and of applied sociologists more broadly at an international level.

In keeping with our Thematic Group’s focus on supporting graduate careers outside academia, Karina Butera’s article provides some practical advice for postgraduates who might wonder about how to turn their thesis topic into an entrepreneurial business endeavour.

This collection of papers showcases a small sliver of what applied sociologists are achieving around Australia and beyond. Whether we work within a university or in some other context, applied sociologists and academic sociologists need one another in order to ‘do’ productive sociological work. This special edition of Nexus aims to develop the links between different sociological practices within TASA, so that we might all better work together to strengthen Australian sociology.

Zuleyka Zevallos
Co-Convenor


References


### The 2008 Conference of The Australian Sociological Association

**Re-imagining Sociology**

2-5 December 2008

The University of Melbourne

The 2008 TASA conference will provide a forum for re-imagining the contribution of sociology in engaging with major emerging social issues in a period of rapid global transformation. Contemporary societal transformations require innovative responses from sociology, in terms of the theoretical and methodological tools used, and in exploring creative ways to engage actively with the world. The conference theme is deliberately broad, and we invite papers and abstracts, and proposals for conference innovations, from all who are interested in contributing to the process of re-imagining sociology.

| Call for Papers and Abstracts | OPENS | 10 March 2008 |
| Registration | OPENS | 10 March 2008 |
| Paper Submission | CLOSES | 28 July 2008 |
| Abstract Submission | CLOSES | 29 September 2008 |
| Early Bird Registration | CLOSES | 13 October 2008 |
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Guilding

Annual General Meeting and Public Lecture

Our Annual General Meeting and Public Lecture are on the horizon – Tuesday the 30th of September at the University of Sydney. If you are a Sydney member, please do come to this AGM. To put it bluntly, we need a quorum! The Public Lecture this year will be delivered by the University of Sydney’s Professor Michael Humphrey – look out for more details on this occasion through the e-list.

Annual Conference and the Stephen Crook Memorial Prize

Our Annual Conference is also on the horizon. The deadline for refereed papers is Monday 28 July. For full conference details, go to: http://www.tasa.org.au/conference/

One of the highlights of this year’s conference is the award of the Stephen Crook Memorial Prize. We have 9 impressive nominations this year. Professor Chilla Bulbeck, recently retired from the University of Adelaide, has kindly agreed to chair the judging panel. Other panelists are Rosemary Pringle (recently returned from the UK), Jo Lindsay (Monash), Fran Collyer (Sydney), John Scott (UNE, for JOS), and myself (Swinburne, representing the TASA Executive).

Strategic directions

At the AGM the TASA Executive is proposing that the Executive be expanded to include another general member. This is partly because of the increasing demands of our existing activities. It is also because we have embarked on a number of strategic undertakings in the past six months. These include:

1. Journal development
2. A membership drive
3. Support for teaching sociology in secondary schools
4. Development and reconfiguration of thematic groups.

Journals

The most robust sociological associations in the world have a strong stable of journals, which makes them financially secure and able to embark upon a more ambitious range of activities. The TASA journals – Journal of Sociology and Health Sociology Review – are both travelling well, but the Executive would like to develop their profile. This will be an important consideration in the selection of a new editorial team for JOS, and in our upcoming negotiations for the renewal of publishing contracts. The Executive is also exploring whether we should extend our publications, for example by forging a new journal. This is an issue on which we will be seeking suggestions and comments from members.

Membership drive

TASA’s main income currently comes from its membership fees. The Executive’s strategy will have worked when that is no longer the case. In the meantime we need to optimise our membership insofar as we are able. To this end TASA has been studying its membership and its articulation with sociology departments around Australia. Katy Richmond has helped immensely in this task, as many of you would know through her correspondence with sociology departments.

What we find is that there are some universities which are TASA strongholds and others which are ‘black holes’. In other words, there are ‘local cultures’ regarding involvement with the wider community of sociologists.

For the record, the strongholds with 20 or more current TASA members are - in order - Monash (34 members), University of Melbourne (29), University of Queensland (28), University of Western Sydney (26), UNSW (23), University of Sydney (22), Swinburne University of Technology (20), and University of Newcastle (20).

In my view postgraduates located in the black holes are labouring at a heavy disadvantage in their studies. They miss out on opportunities to test their ideas in conference papers, networking with other sociologists in their field, and getting a better understanding of pathways in their careers.

In the next few months I will be writing to sociologists who are not members of TASA throughout Australia, drawing their attention to these issues and encouraging them to join the Association. If you have an opportunity to persuade a colleague to join (or rejoin), please put in a good word. A robust sociological association is an important platform for a robust discipline in Australia.

Working party on sociology at secondary schools

Since the last newsletter, a TASA Working Party on Sociology in Secondary Schools has formed. It is primarily based in Victoria, where Sociology has recently been introduced in Years 11 and 12. The Chair of the Working Party is Pam Wallace from La Trobe University, Albury-Wodonga Campus. Other members are Millsom Henry-Waring (Melbourne), Roberta Julian (UTas), Helen Marshall (RMIT), John Scott (UNE), Jacqueline Wilson (Ballarat) and myself (Swinburne). Members of the Working Party have so far consulted with secondary teachers and teacher associations, and we are in the process of organising an afternoon lecture event for students studying sociology at VCE level. This Working Party is working very well, and provides a model for what might happen in other states as sociology becomes more widely available at secondary level.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

(cont.)

Thematic groups
Following consultation, the TASA Executive has changed the terms of reference for Thematic Groups (TGs). All TASA members are now automatically entitled to belong to one TG as a condition of membership, but will pay a small fee for extra TGs. In this way we hope to provide a modest revenue base for TG activities, proportionate to the number of members committed to the TG. So far TG activities have included a mini conference (Health Sociology), a symposium (Cultural Sociology), and a special edition of JOS (Economic Sociology). We are hopeful that TGs will provide a vehicle for a more decentralized TASA, driven by the ground-up activities of its members.

Old blood, new blood
We have a nice mix of old and new blood in the TASA Executive for 2009-10. I will continue as President; Eileen Clark will continue as Secretary; Wendy Hillman will continue as Treasurer; and Roberta Julian will continue as Immediate Past President. Deb King will be stepping up as Vice President. Alan Peterson and Jo Lindsay, both from Monash University, have been elected to the Executive as General Members, and Peta Freestone from the University of Melbourne has been elected as Postgraduate representative.

Five people stood for general member, and three for postgrad rep. Thanks to everyone who stood. It is fantastic that there is such interest in joining the Executive, and it reflects well on the health of TASA.

Tim Marjoribanks, Tara McGee and Angie Dwyer are leaving the Executive. Tim has been the stalwart of our conference organisation in the past couple of years. Tara is a past Executive Officer, and has been the ‘institutional memory’ of the Executive for the life of the current Executive. Angie has been responsible for our very successful Postgraduate program at TASA conferences. They will be greatly missed.

Our Executive Officer Noelle Hudson has also left, and Gabrielle Rowan-Clarke has kindly filled the breach between her first baby and her second! We are indebted to Noelle, especially for her work on our accounting system, and Gabrielle for pulling us out of another tight hole.

At this stage we are still searching for a new Executive Officer. We are also deciding on how to manage the location of the Office, given the substantial shift in the geographical location of Executive members in the past few years – from Brisbane to Melbourne! We’ll keep you posted on this.

Michael Gilding
President, TASA

QUESTIONNAIRE – SOCIAL VALUE OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The China Media Observatory at the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the University of Lugano is cooperating with the Asia Media Research Centre at the Communication University of China in Beijing in the worldwide project “Communications in the Olympics” promoted by the International Olympic Committee and the Information Office of the State Council of China.

The aim is to investigate the role of communication, in particular the mass media, in the construction of the social value of the Olympic Games. We kindly ask you to help us to learn about some relevant opinions on the Olympic Games and China. We are very grateful to you if you accept to answer the short questionnaire that you can find at the following link: www.interviste.lu.unisi.ch/mrWeb/mrWeb.dll?I.Project=BEIJ%20%20%20

Thank you for your contribution.
China Media Observatory

For queries, contact: Professor David Rowe Email: d.rowe@uws.edu.au

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This short article discusses the way I have experienced studying a social policy issue such as unemployment outside of an academic setting. As is well known in professional and research consultancies, many social policy problems examined by private organisations are sometimes limited in scope, analysis and funding. Indeed, submitted tenders to funding bodies in a private organisation are delivered under relatively quick deadlines with the expectation of having fairly sophisticated literature reviews, methodologies as well as proposed timelines and expenditures. This article discusses studying youth unemployment outside of an academic setting by contextualising the ‘sociology of work’ context. It also considers important private sector dimensions that differ from research undertaken in an academic context.

Understanding Youth Unemployment in the Illawarra: Background and Perspective

In my current capacity, I am responsible for the management of a study entitled, “Youth Unemployment in the Illawarra: An Investigation into the Problems facing Young Job Seekers in our Region”. This project, funded by various local organisations, aimed to understand the complexities of youth unemployment not only from existing research and data but through in-depth interviews with young people who are having difficulties getting by in their lives. The research project comes after many years of attempting to address one of the major social issues in the Illawarra region.

As most readers of Nexus would be well aware, programs and policies regarding young people have been transformed in recent years through active labour market policies (ALMP). During the last decade, and more recently, policies and programs emphasizing ‘work-first’ and ‘workfare’ formed part of helping young people obtain work who had experienced unemployment for long periods of time. Active labour market policies were considered to be an important part of developing better social cohesion and to lower chronically-high youth unemployment rates by deregulating Australia’s welfare economy (see Burrows 2007).

The Illawarra area has suffered very high youth unemployment rates for many years. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ December 2007 figures, the youth unemployment rate was 21.6%. The disproportionate concentration of high unemployment rates among young people aged 15-24 is in stark contrast to the overall unemployment rate across the Wollongong Statistical Region of 6.8% (ABS 2007).

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study was a semi-structured discussion guide with young people (N=15) aged 15-24 from a variety of cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds. The discussion guide queried young people on their experiences of their family and social context, educational background, transition from school to post-school options, and their perceptions and assumptions about the world of work. Many young people were participating in a program administrated by a service support provider under the Job Network who assisted them in regular case management meetings that addressed a number of individual needs such as counselling, job preparation and training and finding a job.

Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings indicate concerns with a range of services for young people in the Illawarra. These include education, housing, transport, family issues and support, alcohol/drug and mental health issues, job preparation and motivation as well as job generation throughout the region. For an applied sociologist working in a private organisation these issues can be viewed from a number of different sociological frameworks. One framework that I have found useful for studying youth unemployment in the transition from university to a private organisation is citizenship.

The Use of a Sociological Framework in a Private Organisation: Citizenship

The use of applying a sociological framework can be very helpful in understanding research findings in a private organisation. Citizenship is one perspective that I have used previously in a university context and have found useful in applying to a private organisational context in an issue such as youth unemployment. Citizenship forms part of the essential cohesion of social bonds that connect young people to education, housing, transport and other essential social needs. TH Marshall, writing last century, noted that the important aspect of citizenship was the notion of social rights guaranteed by the welfare state (Marshall 1950).

Today we have very well developed policies in education, housing, transport and others but many young people sometimes suffer enormous barriers to citizenship and participation. Many of the young people interviewed as part of this study expressed the very high value of work not only for economic gain but for the fulfillment of personal and social needs. As Wyn and Woodman note that:

A sociological framework for conceptualising youth starts with the recognition that the experience of age is shaped by social conditions, including the operation of the state (among other facets such as civil society and globalising processes), and that both individuals and the state actively contribute to its meaning (2006: 497).
Indeed, many young people interviewed felt let down in their attempts to find work not only by the state but their own deficiencies and individual traits.

Typically, sociological frameworks in a private organisation tend to be limited in the sense of project scope and analysis. Usually, the use of theory can inform the initial direction of the research project but it can be applied in a fairly loose fashion without really testing its validity. Indeed, within literature reviews for a client research project, a brief mention of theoretical use is perhaps mentioned citing relevant studies before an explanation of its use. This is usually done in a fairly superficial fashion unless specifically required to go into further depth.

Alternatively, some research projects require quite sophisticated use of theories. For example, if governments or clients want to embark on new courses of action to try and address a particular problem they may require the successful stakeholder/s to develop a specific theoretical/methodological model. Many projects with a sociological perspective pursued in a private organisation require the experience and expertise of the type of academic specific skills applied from a university context. This includes having an understanding of the way in which a particular theory can inform an appreciation of the problem or issue being investigated.

**Transition from University to a Private Organisation**

I have found that the transition from university to a private organisation challenging yet rewarding. The main difference I have found is the tighter deadlines in the private sector than in the academic world. The tighter deadlines are principally the result of a highly competitive sector where 'money talks'. Indeed, some funding organisations sometimes require quite unrealistic timeframes and deadlines on consulting researchers (Bickman and Rog 1998, 10). This is particularly stark when it comes to preparing tenders or commissioned research. It is also relevant when preparing literature reviews and methodologies. Literature reviews for example, for a tender document, are likely (depending on the study) to be less rigorous but no less meticulous. This means that the skills brought over from an academic environment are very useful in citing important information while the skills learnt in an academic environment such as using citation indexes and search engines are indispensable.

I have also found that in terms of knowledge and professional practice, private organisations require researchers to have knowledge on many projects from a wide range of issues whereas academic organisations tend to have a more thorough in-depth knowledge in a smaller cohort of studies. This is not a criticism but rather a reflection of the way in which a private organisation operates.

**Conclusion**

This short article has discussed some personal reflections on the research process in the private sector for someone who is working as an applied sociologist. It has discussed a research project I am currently leading on youth unemployment and the application of a sociological framework from a university context to a private organisation. While this paper highlights some limitations of working in an applied sociological context, better development in resources and leadership is required to better improve the transition from an academic to a private organisation for someone who is trained in Sociology. The creation of an Applied Sociology Thematic Group could not be timelier.

Scott Burrows
Senior Social Researcher, IRIS Research

Scott Burrows is a Senior Social Researcher at IRIS Research. He previously worked in the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare in casework and policy roles. He has also taught and worked in research and the universities of Wollongong, Sydney and NSW.

References

This Across The Divide section focuses on the dis/connections between academia and applied sociology, with a view to breaking down the divide between these complimentary spheres of sociology. The authors discuss the production of specialised sociological research for specific interest groups, primarily in regards to different social policy contexts, and how their position as ‘other’ shapes their professional practices. Zuleyka Zevallos considers the conceptual distinctions between applied and academic sociologies. She provides a framework for situating applied sociology, drawing on Burawoy’s (2004) theory of public sociology, and she discusses her work on national security as an example of public/policy sociology.

Bruce Smyth shares his new experiences of working in a university, after having previously established his career with a government-funded research organisation. He sees that the divide between academic and applied sociologies is not so distinct, given the changing nature of Australian universities. Joy Adams-Jackson provides a case study of how academic and applied sociologies intersect for clinical sociologists, given her experiences as a registered nurse working in the mental health system. Her paper shows that being an ‘other’ both within the discipline of sociology and in her occupation is advantageous. First, her work simultaneously challenges ideas of where and how we do sociology outside academia, and second, it also highlights the potential for sociological theory to transform existing professional paradigms (in this case, a biomedical/psychiatric discourse).

The authors exemplify that, while there may be a divide between sociologists in and outside of academia, the intersections between our work strengthens the value of sociology to a broad range of audiences. The application of sociology outside academia therefore has a significant benefit to sociology’s scientific influence and its significance to the general public.

INTERSECTIONS OF APPLIED AND ACADEMIC SOCIOLOGIES

In some ways, applied sociologists are the ‘other’ of academic sociologists, primarily because they have different requirements of their research output due to funding and client interests. At the same time, our otherness is not so absolute because there are intersections between the demands of academic and non-academic sociological work. This paper discusses the connections and intersections between applied and academic sociologies, and it provides a brief case study of the applications of sociology towards national security research and policy.

Situating Applied Sociology

Last year’s combined TASA/SAANZ conference in Auckland was themed around issues of ‘Public Sociology’ and the plenary guests discussed how to best make sociology more visible to broader audiences. Burawoy presented his typology of sociology that he has also discussed elsewhere (for example, see Burawoy 2004). Burawoy (2004) argues that there are four ideal sociology types. First, there are two sociologies that speak to an academic audience. Professional sociology deals with theory and empiricism. Critical sociology is concerned with interrogating the value assumptions of intellectualism, with the aim to generate internal debate about the discipline. Second, there are a further two sociologies that are aimed at an audience beyond the academy. Policy sociology is focused on social intervention through social policies, and it also aims to find solutions to specific problems of interest to particular client groups. Public sociology aims to communicate ideas about social problems to different types of audiences in order to stimulate community dialogue at the local, national and global levels. All four sociologies are interdependent, although they are sometimes positioned as being ‘antagonistic’ (Burawoy 2004: 9).

The Applied Sociology Thematic Group encapsulates both the policy and public sociology types proposed by Burawoy (2004). Within TASA alone, members are employed in almost 50 non-university groups and organisations or in self-employment ventures. There are also an unknown number of sociologists who do not belong to TASA, but who work in diverse environments. Nevertheless, Applied Sociology is perhaps the least visible aspect of sociology, even within the boundaries of TASA.

I am employed as a social scientist by the research organisation belonging to the Department of Defence. By way of providing an example of applied sociological research, I give a brief overview of how my role as a sociologist contributes to national security policies and research.

Doing Sociology Towards National Security

Data on terrorism is difficult to obtain; there is a breadth of publicly-accessible data that seems prolific, but this data is limited on what it can comment. A small proportion of researchers produce much-needed empirical data, including interviews with terrorist groups or other forms of ethnographic analysis. The overwhelming majority of researchers conduct analyses using media reports on terrorist events, such as the number of incidents in various countries, the number of casualties, the types of weapons used, and the individual terrorists’ characteristics, such as their age, gender, religion and education. Academics are not privy to the specific security questions of intelligence analysts, and they do not have access to the same types of data. Understandably, they ask questions that are scholarly and, more to the point, that their data can answer.
The literature therefore tends to conceptualise terrorism within a particular discourse - it is seen primarily as an effective political tool (for example see Kruglanski and Fishman 2006; Schmid 2004: 199-202). This argument has its merits, but it only tells us about the strategic aspect of why groups engage in terrorist activities. It tells us very little about other sociological conditions of which policy makers need to better understand, such as the historical relations between different social groups, and the culture, structure and agency issues that may influence political violence in different contexts. For example, rather than using media reports to propagate the idea that terrorists are motivated primarily by political ideologies, sociology can help analysts to think more critically about the construction of media discourses. In another, more specific example, I have used Durkheim's typology of suicide to explore the role of social structure in shaping the social motives of suicide terrorists (for one aspect of this research, see Zevallos 2006).

My role is to bridge the gap in between academia and the national security community. In Burawoy’s (2004) terms, I perform policy sociology. I develop a range of sociological conceptual frameworks to rethink dominant ideas about terrorism and national security issues. For this, I rely on professional/critical sociology to provide the toolkit so that I might help non-sociologists understand complex social problems in a basic way.

Sociology’s public engagement in society is enhanced by its application outside academia, and academic sociology would better thrive if applied sociology was more widely understood by all sociologists. For example, the work of applied sociologists provides ‘real world’ examples on how sociology can answer specific questions for various audiences. Both the academic and applied spheres of sociological work stand to benefit from a fuller appreciation of their intersections. Hopefully, this edition of Nexus will open up further dialogue on how to make this happen.

Zuleyka Zevallos

Defence, Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO)

References available from the author.

Dr Zuleyka Zevallos joined DSTO in January 2006, and she is also an Adjunct Research Fellow with the Institute of Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. She was previously employed as a lecturer, tutor and research assistant within Swinburne, and lecturer/tutor at Monash University.

SOCIOLoGY AS OTHER: SOCiOLOGICAL THINKING APPLIED TO MENTAL HEALTH CLiNICAL PrACTiCe

In this piece I write about my clinical observations and experiences from the perspective of a sociological ‘other’. While I work primarily as a registered nurse in a rural community mental health facility, I also have a background in sociology. Despite the current context of my clinical work, I readily identify as a clinical sociologist because I strive in my day-to-day work to challenge the status quo by unsettling some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about medical interventions that underscore much of psychiatric/biomedical practice. This paper demonstrates the divide that exists when attempting to apply a sociological perspective to risk management that is underpinned by health policy and biomedical imperatives. Risk discourse forms a ubiquitous part of the cultural and political landscape and dominates the thinking of many decision makers from political and economic forecasters to the architects of health policy. Indeed, the discourse of risk in mental health policy and practice has come to designate a domain that is problematic, dangerous or threatening, and in doing so tends to justify intervention and management. Risk thinking, assessment and management are the significant features of this paper. Risk management is essentially a means of ‘ordering reality, of rendering it into a calculable form’ (Dean, 1999:131 cited in Schehr 2005). The need for order and control drives risk management strategies within the practice of contemporary psychiatry. Within contemporary psychiatric/mental health practice, risk assumes an objective entity capable of measurement, management and control (Althaus, 2005). Indeed, new zones of intervention have emerged to make risk management the responsibility of both individuals and governing authorities. For example, in common with other western jurisdictions, my local Area Health Corporate Manual defines risk as the ‘chance of something happening that will have an impact upon objectives’ (AS/NZS 2004). The manual goes on to explain that risk is inherent in all aspects of Health Service business and that ‘risk management is a culture, process and structure, which come together to optimise the management of potential opportunities and adverse effects’ (AS/NZS 2004). Such a view of risk and risk management postulates that in probabilistic and actuarial terms as a likely disease, epidemic or major catastrophe waiting to happen, and implies that with the application of appropriate knowledge and the implementation of strategic and anticipatory measures the risk can be contained (Althaus, 2005). That, at least, is the rhetoric. The reality of course is different, because people will feature in any risk equation and, unlike medicine or scientific approaches, people do not necessarily react to risks in predictable, logical or rational ways.
Althaus (2005) states that an erosion of the dominant scientific paradigm has created a sense of despair concerning the definition and treatment of risk. She argues that because of this malaise or despair, the opportunity has arisen for politics and various players in the political process to determine what constitutes risk and how best to deal with it. Without scientific guidance our definition of risk ‘has become loaded with ideas of fear or trust’ (Althaus 2005). In the Australian context, as in many parts of the world, governments are preoccupied with both a desire and the determination to ‘help’ us. Governments seek to protect us from smoking, from being fat, from irresponsible financial spending, from gambling and so on (Conde, 2005).

Risk resides within the governmental strategies of disciplinary power to monitor individuals and populations in order to fulfill the goals of ‘democratic humanism’ (Lupton, 1999; Castel, 1991). The strategies, actions and thoughts that endeavour to ‘conduct the conduct of others’ (Foucault, 1994; Rose, 1996) form the basis for new techniques of governing not only the conduct of others, but also the conduct of oneself. While this might seem reasonable, within the ‘administration of risk’ milieu, psychiatric/mental health professionals now operate within a ‘culture of blame’ that regards adverse events as avoidable tragedies for which someone is accountable (Rose, 1996).

Management is a bureaucratic and all-encompassing theme within the discourse of risk, shaping the professional obligations of all mental health clinicians to the extent that risk management and risk avoidance measures underscore all professional interventions, and in the process often replace previous forms of expert clinical judgement and interventions.

While it would be foolish to argue against the necessity for the importance of psychiatric risk assessments, I would suggest that it is equally important to understand that professional confidence and capacity in clinical decision-making are often at stake in the bureaucratic process. Furthermore, efforts to make clinical decisions and manage risk are complicated by the ever-increasing categories of mental disorders.

Drawing on current clinical experience, it is apparent that larger numbers of people are receiving psychiatric diagnoses for ‘problems’ that once sat outside the psychiatric scope. Problems such as homelessness, financial woes, anger, low mood, relationship difficulties and antisocial behaviours are just a few examples of the increasing biomedical/psychiatric classifications of mental disorders.

The ever-increasing categories of mental illness and mental disorders are set against a backdrop of limited resources and heightened community and consumer expectations which are further complications for clinicians who must assess and manage risk. This is because the current climate of heightened expectation ushers in a new discourse of uncertainty and apprehension.

As a registered nurse and clinical sociologist I am positioned within both the nursing and sociological discourses which allow me to critique the dominant biomedical/psychiatric perspectives. A sociological perspective underpins my ability to deconstruct the dominant psychiatric/biomedical paradigm with its capacity to exacerbate the diagnoses and treatments of various mental disorders. Furthermore, a sociological perspective provides the basis for critiquing bureaucratic and managerial imperatives inherent in any discussion of risk assessment and risk management. My sociological position as ‘other’ is advantageous because it provides an opportunity for me to apply sociological theoretical thinking to new ways of doing clinical practice.

Joy Adams-Jackson

References available from the author.

Joy Adams-Jackson was previously employed as a lecturer at Sydney University, the University of Canberra, and the University of Western Sydney; she has also worked for the NSW Police Academy (CSU), and as a policy analyst in the NSW Department of Health.

CHANGING PLACERS

Until recently, I worked at the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) as a researcher in the area of family law and post-separation parenting. I am now at the Australian National University (ANU) building a research program around family law issues. While both workplaces have very different cultures with respect to collegiality, intellectual property, and bureaucratic process, the reality is that not much has changed. In essence, I continue to work as an applied sociologist conducting specific ‘problem-focused’ research directed at pressing policy problems (e.g. Why after divorce do one in four children in Australia have little or no contact with their father?).

At AIFS, only applied research with a hard policy-edge is conducted. This means that researchers quickly learn the importance of being able to (a) identify emerging social problems (often via stakeholder networks), (b) argue for funding for a particular project, and (c) communicate findings to politicians, policy makers, practitioners, and the public. In this context, there is often not much room for theorising, theory-building or theory-testing. Should some theory turn up during the research process, of course,
it can be incredibly helpful in shaping the design of a study, the questions asked, the analytic frames, and the interpretation of findings (especially unexpected ones!). For me, the divide between pure research and applied research is not that large since either without the other can lead to constricted thinking. The big problems of the world will never be solved by any single discipline. This surely holds true within disciplines too in relation to the pure–applied divide.

My sense from moving to the ANU is that universities are changing. While pure research and abstract thinking are still highly valued, there is increasing interest in attracting applied researchers who can work with government on important policy problems. While my own research rarely produces obvious solutions or answers, it does chip away at our understanding of particular social phenomenon. Hopefully, it also changes people’s lives.

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ACROSS THE DIVIDE: CONCLUSION

In order to break down the divide between academic and non-academic sociologies, our discipline needs to better understand the contributions of applied sociology and its synergies with academia. To ensure that sociology’s public engagement continues to grow into the future, we need to re-position applied sociology not outside academia, but as complimentary and central to the long-term efforts of academia.

Agenda for Social Justice, Solutions 2008

The SSSP is pleased to offer the Agenda for Social Justice, Solutions 2008, which represents an effort by our professional association to nourish a more “public sociology” that will be easily accessible and useful to policy makers. We hope that you find it helpful in your challenging work of crafting successful solutions to contemporary social problems.

The Agenda for Social Justice, Solutions 2008 addresses a variety of social problems in three sections: global issues, Americans at risk, and health & welfare. This is an effort on the part of scholars at the Society for the Study of Social Problems to disseminate the findings in social problems research.

More information on the project is available at www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/323. You can download the full version, and you can link directly to the one-page briefs and individual chapters. The chapters are available for free download, and may be suitable as cost-effective supplementary readings in many social problems-related courses.
Managing multiple roles in a postmodern life

I am not about to claim that combining the PhD journey, teaching, developing a business and raising a family has been a simple endeavour. Success (or at least survival) required precise time-management strategies and the ability to adjust to multiple role changes throughout the day. These changing roles were most extreme between my academic and business settings. Although the power of both worlds, in both the academic and commercial worlds, are driven by improving performance, results and profits, that is where the similarities end. Otherwise they have an entirely different language, culture and set of values that one must learn to adapt to in order to maximise effectiveness in each arena. Further to that, in the business arena I have played the role of someone with a fair degree of experience and practical know-how, whereas as a postgraduate in academia, I assume the role of novice and am still a fledgling in the language, protocol and discipline of sociology. So my confidence levels tend to be stronger in the commercial than the academic arena. In the business world my clients and colleagues have taken little interest when I say I am completing my PhD (I suspect some – like myself a decade ago – do not actually know what is a PhD), so I have tended not to share much about that side of my life with clients. In the academic world my peers and mentors have been somewhat curious about my business life, but I have tried to keep that side of myself hidden for fear that they may think I am not fully dedicated to my studies. As a result, I probably have created for myself something of a double-life.

Having these dual aspects of my career, however, has not been entirely problematic.

That was my initial motivation for attending university. Something happened between then and now, and I became addicted to sociology. I loved turning my personal observations of life into research to help me clarify the social forces behind what I experienced. Hence, my original idea of getting ‘some sort of social work’ degree grew to doing my honours in sociology and then, somehow, my supervisor talked me into doing a PhD. At the time I was hell-bent on starting a wellbeing centre that somehow, my supervisor talked me into doing a PhD. At the time I was hell-bent on starting a wellbeing centre that would offer personal training, nutritional consultations and life coaching. As part of my business plan, I had already commenced a life coaching course, which I felt would be important if I was to help people overcome obstacles, and set and achieve goals. The plan for the centre was put on hold, but I continued to work with life coaching clients (never more than a few at a time) so that when my PhD was complete I would have some practical experience to draw upon. Along with this I also took on sessional tutoring, as is the usual practice for postgraduates in topping up their incomes.

How I ended up an ‘academic’

Ten years ago I had no education higher than my high school certificate and a handful of industry-specific diplomas. I had been working for a dozen years in various corporate jobs. When my second child was born, I was taking a break from paid work, but took on a volunteer job at a domestic abuse shelter. Each Monday night, I would leave the centre buzzing with energy. Working with those courageous clients opened my eyes to the social injustice experienced by these women and I gained an incredible sense of purpose and self-worth to realise I was able to turn tears to smiles, despondency to hope and social paralysis due to uncertainty into action. I had found my niche, but realised that if I was to get paid employment in this area, I would need some sort of qualification. So, off to university I trotted.

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Throughout my postgraduate experience I have operated within both the worlds of academia and commercial enterprise. I am perhaps a strange hybrid because I have entwined my ‘sociological imagination’ with my interest in a movement referred to as ‘positive psychology’ – in lay terms life coaching. As I have worked through the various stages of my PhD, I have also baby-step by baby-step, built a corporate wellbeing business, which is (I hope) positioned to take something of a quantum leap now that my thesis has been submitted. In this article, for ease of reading, I will refer to my research and teaching work as my ‘academic’ work and the work I do running my business as my ‘commercial’ work.

Having these dual aspects of my career, however, has not been entirely problematic.
library database, something most life coaches have no training in or access to. All this means that in my business I am able to position myself as a life coach with sociological grounding. In other words, I can help my clients achieve what they need to achieve while being in tune with the social structures that they need to find ways to realistically overcome. So, although the worlds are very different, they do not necessarily collide; rather, they complement each other due to the variety of skills and resources to which I have access.

Advice from the ‘coal-front’
If you are considering starting your own business, there are some things you will need to be sure of first. If you need to rely on a steady income, do not do it! Although there is very good money to be made in the corporate world, you need to invest massive amounts of time, energy and money before you will start making a profit. If you do not have a sound business concept, plan and marketing strategies, also steer clear of this option. Finally, if your family and friends are not going to be 100 percent supportive of you building a business, rethink your options.

However, if none of the above aspects present problems for you, there are some real benefits in combining your sociological training with setting up a business of your own. If there is some line of work that you feel deeply drawn to, even if it seems the polar extreme of your sociological training, there is likely to be a way you can combine the two. Here are some words of advice that might help if taking the entrepreneurial path appears to be calling you:

START NOW:
Do not wait till you are wearing the silly-looking hat and holding your certificate in your hot little hands. Get started now. If nothing else, register a business name and begin to put together your concept, ‘branding’ (logos, key words etc) and a list of the services you can offer. You will also need a good website – my advice is, unless you are a total computer wiz, outsource someone who will build your site for you. By setting up your basic business structure now, by the time you have finished your thesis and you are ready to put some serious time into developing your business, you can already claim your business to have been ‘established’ for several years.

GET OUTSIDE OF YOUR OWN WORLD: Most of us are privileged when doing our PhDs because we are studying a topic of our choosing that we are intrinsically interested in. However, your knowledge needs to have a practical application to someone outside of academia if you are going to be able to market it in the commercial world. What angle can you lead from to make your research commercially alluring? For example, my PhD was on the gendered aspects of friendship interaction – I am now using that knowledge to work with executives to help them cultivate healthy friendships and gender relations in the workplace.

SET YOUR TOPIC ACCORDINGLY: When you choose your research topic, choose one that will provide answers to questions that people in your target market will have. If there are topics you are interested in, but other people will not be, still put these ideas into your research plan, but ensure you have aspects covered that will give you something relevant to people willing to pay you to share that information.

CULTIVATE YOUR IMAGE AS A SPECIALIST: Once you have completed your PhD, you should be an expert in whatever it is that you have studied. Do not be afraid to throw that piece of information around in appropriate conversations. If you are speaking to an editor of a magazine who may be interested in your research, make sure you advise them that ‘nobody else in Australia/the world’ can offer quite the perspective that you can from a well researched position. This puts you in a very powerful position, and you will have to do very little else to sell yourself once that fact is understood.

ASK QUESTIONS: This is something that we do as part of our research work, but do we do it in our own careers? Do not be afraid to ask questions to those established in your field of interest. People love telling you about their own careers, experiences, contacts and ideas. You will gain an enormous advantage by simply asking questions: Who do I need to talk to? Who can help me get published? Is it more important for me to be published in journals, books or popular/business articles? How do I get introduced to this person? How did you get to where you are now? The more questions you ask, the better advised you will be on what the next best steps are for you in your business planning and implementation.

DO NOT EXPECT YOUR PHD TO GET THE BUSINESS FOR YOU: I have been surprised and disappointed to find that some business people actually think that academics are out of touch with reality. To counter these stereotypes, in your marketing literature make sure you pitch to the bottom line first (what can you do for ‘them’ that is what ‘they’ need/want) and then tell them about your credentials. Your credentials will impress them, but more importantly, they need to sense that you know what their day-to-day issues are and how you can help provide solutions to these problems.

LEARN HOW TO PRESENT WELL: In academia, we tend to be more interested in, or critical of, the content than the quality of a presentation. In the commercial world, however,
the expectations of a highly polished presentation can mean negative judgements are made before the peak of the argument is even fully reached. You will need bells, whistles, pitches, angles, counter-angles, graphs, bold fonts, professional images and catching colours, smoke, mirrors, gadgets and gadgets, not to mention, a charming smile and good ‘close’. Make sure you can put together a great written proposal and a good visual/verbal presentation before even attempting to pitch your goods and services in the corporate arena.

OPEN YOUR EYES TO OPPORTUNITIES: They are everywhere! Do not limit yourself to one income revenue. It might be that you can call upon others to help you build your business as sub-contractors, or there may be another business in existence that you can ‘piggy-back’ off or ‘align’ with. Just as a pool player reassesses the lay of the table before taking each shot, always observe all the options before plunging ahead with the next action in your career. For example, my original idea of opening a wellbeing centre morphed as I realised that there is better money to be made by taking the practitioner (myself or one of the other specialists who have joined my team over the years) to the office of the client. I have saved myself massive costs in rent and salaries by adapting and growing the business in this different direction.

SURROUND YOURSELF WELL: Seek out people who are doing what you would like to be doing. Spend time with others who will support you in your decisions and help introduce you to the right people. Also, make sure everyone in your network knows the type of work you do. Do not ram it down their throats, but make sure that they understand what you offer so they know when to refer you to others.

REMAIN AN ACTIVE PART OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: Once you have completed your degree, do not lose touch with your academic roots. Stay attuned to the latest developments in your area of interest, attend conferences and continue to foster academic relationships. By doing this you will continue to learn from your counterparts who are full time within academic institutions and you will hear about research being conducted in areas that you may wish to be involved in. You can also relay information to your counterparts in academia from your experience in the field that will help them identify hot research areas that need exploring or consideration in their own work.

BE RESILIENT: Academics are good at taking criticism - in the commercial world you do not necessarily have to handle criticism, but you are likely to get avoided, knocked back, let down, lied to and even hung up on. Do not let that faze you. Take a ratio approach to your work – for example, decide in your mind that for every successful business transaction, you will have to make 50 phone calls, send out 15 quotes or proposals, give six presentations, 20 follow-up emails and calls, and maybe shout a drink or two. Take the attitude that each knock-back is getting you one step closer to your goal, and you will maintain momentum and soon be achieving with confidence.

DO NOT DOUBT YOURSELF: People in the academic world may not understand your ‘commercial’ side. People in the commercial world may not understand your ‘academic’ side. Get used to people not quite ‘getting’ you. But do not allow this to erode your confidence. By bridging these worlds you are doing something unique and innovative. Establish strategies for standing firm when others do not appreciate you, or worse still, attempt to cut you down.

I hope this has given some insight into a somewhat different career option for budding sociologists. If this article has peaked your interest, feel free to shoot me an email or seek me out at the next conference and throw any questions you may have my way. I’m more than happy to help however I can.

Karina Butera
PhD Candidate – Deakin University
Director – Project Balance Pty Ltd

Karina Butera currently divides her time between tutoring/conducting social research at Deakin University and running a corporate wellbeing business: Project Balance Pty Ltd. She is eagerly awaiting the results of her PhD thesis, which she submitted in March this year.
I am a sociologist by trade, having completed my undergraduate work at University of Western Sydney (UWS), a PhD with the amazingly wonderful Gary Dowsett at Macquarie and then a Postdoctoral Fellow in Health Sciences at the University of Sydney.

I can see two clear aspects to my career - the part where I undertook deep sociological thinking, research and writing and the part where I have wanted to bring those ideas and other peoples’ ideas into reality through policy and social changes. I did my best deep thinking, reading and writing while employed within the academy during my doctorate and then as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Sydney, working on an ARC post-doc to examine the social aspects of hearing loss. Four years of research bliss that I think has spoilt me for life! Notably, I have done some of my best advocacy and research work outside the academy. It is this latter experience that I want to share with you in this brief paper.

To provide some context, in the last two years I have worked on a series of projects that have resulted in significant policy and strategic change. The projects were not about developing original ideas but taking existing ideas and bringing them into practice. Some were conducted within government and others from within consultancy. Some of the major projects I have worked on have included researching and documenting:

- the social position of people with disabilities at work
- occupational health and safety risks faced by Australian workers
- worker exposures to noise hazards in Australia
- farmers’ perceptions of climate change and strategies for adaptation
- cost shifting in the workers’ compensation system
- a threshold effects model of health and communication disability
- employment outcomes for deafened people
- food security in the peri-urban regions of Australia
- disease ‘burden’ of hearing loss in Australia; and
- social values underpinning the use of recycled water in Australia.

When one is at the policy table, you can see policy changes resulting from your work occurring in terms of weeks, months or a year. The work I did within the academy on hearing services took over 15 years before it was adopted into Australian government policy. The two types of work are of course different. The work I did on noise exposures in Australia within government, for example, fed directly into a Commonwealth review of national hazard exposure standards and greatly influenced the outcome of the review. However, the original thoughts about what constituted hazardous exposures and the like, had already been done by others.

The work I have done in hearing services policy called for a significant paradigm shift. It seems that paradigm shifts, however well justified, argued or supported, occur slowly. Momentum needs to develop around them. To sustain oneself as an advocate, the slow influential progress of writing papers that certain people do not want to read needs to be offset by the benefits of sitting down at the table with those who actually make the policy decisions that count; the people with access to the resources to make things happen; those who can push through the decisions that change things.

To me there appears to be four key benefits to working outside the academy - the kinds of projects you get to work on (as noted above), the chance to influence, the opportunity to work with a critical mass of like-minded people and a well resourced, tenured working environment.

As a sociologist at the ‘coal face’, I engage in empirical work which documents human outcomes, and I do so in a way that can directly feed into policy development. It is work such as this that challenges the rational with the empirical, the ideological versus the documented. In this setting one cannot work from refined assumptions. The work is informed by theory and is supported by the rigours of social research methods. Critique alone is insufficient – workable solutions are required. This does not mean that critique has no role to play, and it does not mean that critique cannot influence policy. However, I have found it a lot easier to influence the process by being a partner in the change process, through having a seat at the decision-making table. This does not necessarily mean that it is any easier, but you do get to see the fruits of your work changing things on a daily basis. A tension obviously exists here.

In towns like Canberra, the rational economic discourse is all pervasive.
Economic theory, when it assesses the cost of policy, does not take account of what are called social costs. This is an information gap that a group of social researchers can, and do, fill.

The limits of economic rationalism are beginning to be realised in policy circles. The impact of not supporting the left hand of the state (as Bourdieu calls it - community development, social housing, public transport, public health and education etc) is being realised. Moreover, policy makers are realising that if communities are to withstand shocks that result from climate and the economy, a social infrastructure is required which provides a locus for community, places to focus resistance, and which enable opportunities to build resilience. The economic, in itself, is not necessarily democratic. Such limitations need to be offset. This is the space people like myself are trying to work within.

In recent years the notion of the triple bottom line has been popular in policy circles, with particular emphasis being given to economic and environmental outcomes. However, the third aspect of this equation - the social - has not been well articulated. Some may well say it has been constrained. In the agricultural sector, the social is now seen as important but it is not well understood, documented or described in ways in which it can be taken up and used. The questions to be asked need to be given form so that people can run with them. This is where we, outside the academy, look back to you, inside the academy, for help. With social inclusion on the agenda, for example, one can well ask what does social exclusion look like in the specific contexts of rural communities?

The philosopher Sun Tzu advises that one should never embark on an exercise without the necessary resources. In government in particular, the projects I have been involved in have rarely progressed without the necessary human and financial resources to ensure their successful completion. Moreover, a single project does not pivot off just one person. If a person is away, unwell or the like, the machinery kicks in to ensure that the project continues on. Unlike in academia, it is difficult to own a space in the public sector. At the end of the day it is not your work, even if you write it.

It would be wrong to suggest though that it is all beer and skittles outside the academy. Government employees do not enjoy academic freedom. As in other places, the only constant is change. We are beset with a myriad of daily disruptions, but we are not alone here either. Government processes are subject to a high degree of transparency which means reams of paper work and, like everyone else, we need to engage with stakeholders and secure resources for the work we do. Contrary to popularist notions of public servants, we do work hard. It is not uncommon to see people in our team still working at 6.30 pm or 7 pm and Sunday mornings are often the best time to get through the reading one wants to do. Our hands do not tremble on pay day either! However, this life does offer a chance to work on things I value, to publish, to have access to training and conferences each year, to enjoy tenure of employment and have some life balance.

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Anthony Hogan

Over the past few years Anthony has worked as a sociologist in government in areas such as occupational health and safety and rural sociology as well as in the private sector as a research consultant.
The world of sociology and sociological research is changing. The increasing demand for policy-related and ‘evidence-based’ research within public services and private business, in addition to a progressively marketising higher education system, has led to a rapid reduction in the availability of largely secure university lectureship tenures and research positions and an increase in fixed-term and part-time research contracts both inside and outside of academia. These changes have resulted in mixed fortunes for British sociologists.

New graduates now experience only limited opportunities to develop an academic, theoretically-focused career while, conversely, the world of ‘applied sociology’ has opened up with increasing numbers of research and evaluation positions available. That these latter positions can impact directly (and relatively speedily) on social and economic policy developments is very tempting to many of us, particularly when higher education institutions are experiencing so many upheavals. However, the positive aspects of sociology’s ‘cultural shift’ are accompanied by negative consequences that need to be addressed for the benefit of all of us. The emergent diversity within the sociological community appears, unfortunately, to have produced a kind of ‘class system’ in terms of the status afforded to practitioners of sociology, of the work they do (and how it is used) and of the support given to undertake it.

From our experiences at least, it appears that those working outside academia in the UK are sometimes considered by those within as the ‘poor relations’: that is, those who are not doing ‘real’, quality sociology. It is quite ironic that some sociologists (often quick to uncover and critique the causes of societies’ inequalities) may be among those resorting to ‘victim blaming’ and reinforcing inequalities in their own field, when in fact external factors are impacting on the location and quality of sociological and social research undertaken. This state of affairs is neither good for sociologists, sociology nor, ultimately, for society.

Those within and outside academia have much to continue learning from and teaching each other. Both make vital contributions to our understanding of society and the communities that comprise them. From our perspectives, a symbiotic relationship between those practising within and outside academia is highly desirable if sociology and society at large are to benefit. Indeed, what value is academic and theoretical work if it is not accessible to a wider audience? Similarly, what use to a fairer society is policy-related research without an understanding and critical view of the theoretical models underpinning the social and economic policies upon which our societies are built? In our view, sociologists of all shapes and sizes need to be valued and supported equally and mutually to secure both the future of sociology as an academic discipline and of high standard ‘applied’ sociological and social research within and outside academia.

Considering ourselves to be a part of this emerging, diverse sociological community we were attracted to joining the British Sociological Association (BSA) due to its recognition of the evolving roles of sociologists. Although the organisation has been very supportive, it appears that a cultural change among the more traditional institutions has been slow to follow. Conferences are a particular case in point. Registration forms invariably ask for the name of your ‘institution’ for identification on the delegate list, despite the growing number of delegates working outside academia. Additionally, bursaries and reduced fees are rarely offered to those on low incomes who are not also students. Further, if one is to be taken seriously at conferences it is still more desirable to have had one’s work published in an academic journal rather than reported more widely in (dare I say it) less prestigious ‘public’ formats. We have yet to attend a post-graduate conference that offers workshops on how to disseminate one’s work in the non-academic ‘public sphere’!

Conversely, organisations outside academia often do not recognise the importance of the theoretical underpinnings of the work we do and the necessity for rigour and transparency in the research process. They often want quick answers, arrived at as cheaply as possible. Many organisations fail to recognise the need to fund research employees’ professional development despite government concerns to promote ‘lifelong learning’ and encourage ‘transferable skills’ in our ‘knowledge-based’ economy. Further, access to research tools (e.g. analytical software), academic journals and other resources considered vital to ‘legitimate’ academic research are rarely available to sociologists outside academia since most non-academic organisations (e.g. public services), small enterprises and independent ‘freelance’ researchers find the licensing costs prohibitively expensive.

These difficulties serve to further reinforce the sociological ‘class system’, with the road to social research outside of academia becoming a ‘one-way-street’. While academic researchers are generally equipped with up-to-date skills and theoretical knowledge enabling them to find research positions outside the university, the reverse route becomes more difficult to negotiate for those who have worked for some time outside academia unless they have maintained links with universities and possess the financial means to fund their own professional skills and knowledge development.
Those on the margins of academia and beyond, in addition to those without permanent affiliations to universities, find themselves experiencing many of the issues outlined above. Indeed, after several BSA members’ letters were published in the organisation’s newsletter ‘Network’ expressing such concerns, a group of us decided to get together to do something about it. Consequently the ‘Sociologists Outside Academia’ group (SOAg) was launched in 2005 with the full support of the BSA, who generously created a SOAg representative position on the BSA Council in recognition of this distinct section of the sociological community. The groups aims and objectives are to:

- strengthen the idea that we are first and foremost sociologists regardless of our circumstances
- raise the profile and value of sociologists working largely outside of the academy
- raise the status of sociological work undertaken beyond an academic context
- raise awareness of the need to support new and ‘budding’ sociologists and others not working directly within the discipline but whose work sociology informs
- provide a forum through which our interests, views and concerns can be related to the BSA so that appropriate support and recognition is afforded to all sociologists.

The group has developed from the ‘bottom-up’, evolving to represent the needs and desires of the wide variety of BSA members who, for whatever reason, do not have full institutional/academic affiliations. Our membership is diverse and increasingly international, with members ranging from permanent and contract researchers in the public services (e.g. planning, transport, prison services, local and devolved governments, health and social services) to retired sociologists and mature and post-graduate students, many of whom do not seek an academic career thereafter.

Since its inception, the group has developed both a networking and campaigning focus. Networking opportunities are offered through our web-forum, periodic informal gatherings, our new Google Group and at the BSA’s annual conference where we host a promotional stall/meeting point. This year we teamed up with the BSA’s Postgraduate Forum (with whom we share many issues in common) to co-host a stall during conference hours and a ‘pub quiz’ in the evening which enabled post-graduate delegates and those without full institutional affiliations to get together and have some fun! We also have our own web-page on the BSA website and produce our own newsletter ‘Sociology for All?’ in which we invite all SOAg members of any background and level of experience to share their news, achievements, views and profiles.

Campaigning elements of the group provide more of a challenge, particularly with regard to accessing academic knowledge. Many universities, increasingly concerned about the legal implications of copyright and database licensing etc., are restricting public access to electronic journals and resources even among their alumni members (now considered no longer ‘appropriate’ users). We have begun to look deeper into the implications of this for public access rights and have made contacts with other groups like the Research Information Network to progress the issue further.

We have also made some progress regarding funding, with the BSA now considering our proposals for membership tariffs and conference fees to reflect more realistically the needs of those on low incomes and without institutional support. Additionally, following a consultation with SOAg members, the Medical Sociology group has now extended bursary applications to include sociologists outside academia. In terms of status and identification, the editors of BSA journals such as ‘Sociology’ and the newsletter ‘Network’ are now actively encouraging article submissions from sociologists outside academia and have enabled contributors to state their own professional designations rather than asking for their ‘Institution’. These are small achievements which are nevertheless having a real impact. More recently SOAg has taken forward members’ various proposals for BSA Council consideration, including the setting up of a mentoring service and a freelance researcher’s registration database on the website.

We are thrilled at SOAg’s development and growing international recognition, which in the long-run, we hope, will benefit both the future of sociology and sociologists working outside academia, wherever they are!

Julie Cappleman-Morgan
Annika Coughlin
Co-convenors of The Sociologists Outside Academia group (BSA).

Sociologists outside Academia:
http://www.britsoc.co.uk/specialisms/SOA.htm
Participant observation has long been an important social inquiry tool in sociological investigation of the social world and in applied sociology. It is a complex blend of methods and techniques of observation, informant interviewing, respondent interviewing, and document analysis. Researchers and social science practitioners use participant observation to gain a meaningful knowledge about the existence of a specific social world through experiencing "real" social milieus or through lived experience. The purpose of this paper is to offer a practical demonstration of the utility of participant observation as a method of social enquiry. I argue that, given the 'religious' nature of the Tablighi jama'at, no other research method, whether qualitative or quantitative in nature, would have proven more useful and applicable other than participant observation. Only participant observation allowed me to enter the world's largest Islamic revivalist movement through its Sydney group and gain an understanding about its social and cultural world - an understanding useful for sociology of religion and applied sociology.

Also, I want to argue that applied sociological research methods have the power to affect social change, including the researcher, and sociology as an academic discipline and practice needs to appreciate that 'doing' sociology has the power to change not only society, but ourselves as sociologists. Sociologists' role then is not only to interpret the world but wherever warranted to change it including him or herself. In this light, this paper therefore discusses participant observation as a reflexive methodology that shows how the application of sociology can positively affect the researcher's identity and worldview.

**Participant Observation**

On a day-to-day basis people make sense of their subjective world through interaction with each other and the meanings they assign to their actions and their environments (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1978). People experience social situations as 'reality', although they could be mistaken or hold an erroneous belief about it, because it has real consequences (Thomas and Thomas, 1928). The world of everyday life is a social construction (Berger and Luckman, 1966) and the conception of reality, by the insiders of this world, is not directly accessible to strangers (Schutz, 1967). The world of everyday life, as perceived from the insider's perspective, is the quintessential reality to be delineated by participant observation. In the final analysis, therefore, participant observation attempts to unearth, make accessible, and expose the meanings people assign to their daily lives. Participant observation permits an understanding of the people being studied and their behaviour in direct reference to their own constructs and meanings about their subjective world. In terms of applied sociology, this is very important because, through participant observation, a better understanding of a social world is made possible. This in turn helps advance our collective knowledge of social phenomena, improve social interaction, and enhance human social life.

Participant observation is not a single method but a complex blend of methods and techniques such as observation, informant interviewing, respondent interviewing, and document analysis employed in researching particular types of subject matter. Instead of limiting the research, participant observation helps fulfill the research objective and purpose. Participant observation can be defined in various ways. Suffice it to say that it is a method of data collection that takes the researcher into the actual social setting or field enabling him or her to gain first hand experience and understanding of its complexity and inner realities.

The use of participant observation has not escaped criticisms. Critics first argue that the people being studied or specific social setting in one way or another are inevitably affected by the presence of the researcher. Secondly, they say that the researcher has to rely almost entirely on impressionistic interpretation of the information to reach generalizations (Van Krieken et al., 2000). They claim that the data gathered under such a method is highly likely to be unreliable, invalid, and over-generalized because of "observer bias", "going native", and "hearsay" (McCall and Simmons, 1969: 2).

While some critics denounce participant observation as a quixotic approach to coming to grips with the data, the proponents of participant observation celebrate its utility arguing that in comparison to other research methods, participant observation is less likely to be unreliable, biased, or invalid. The fact that the social world of the people being studied has its own internal system of checks and balance naturally authenticates the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and any concerns for data contamination and researcher bias is dispelled (Van Krieken et al., 2000).

Within participant observation a range of participant roles exist. Buford Junker (1960) identifies four participant roles which can be used in conjunction with each other or independently:

1. complete participant,
2. complete observer,
3. participant-as-observer (more participant than observer), and
4. observer-as-participant (more observer than participant).
In my research on the Tablighi Jama’at, I employed complete participant role. This was motivated by my sociological research into the Tablighi Jama’at.

Tablighi Jama’at, which originated in India in 1927 and is the world’s largest transnational Islamic revivalist movement, sees the West with suspicion. For the Tablighi Jama’at, modernity is seen as grossly polluted by Western imagination and therefore anything or anyone linked to it are viewed with a sense of apprehension. Modern Western thinking, the academy, and pedagogy are no exception and are perceived as anti-theology in general and anti-Islam in particular. As a consequence, the Tablighis (members of the Tablighi Jama’at) see social research as a mode of investigation by the West (or by Muslims sympathetic to the West) and its values, to ascertain information for the purpose of monitoring and undermining the movement. They denounce social research as counter-productive because its focus is on investigating the “social”, not the “divine”. Social research is therefore devalued. As many Tablighis informed me during my research, the time, money, and energy invested in research can be better spent in the path of Allah (God). Their claim is that the Islamic way of life itself is a research: a research into the realm of divine and omnipotence of Allah. It is a way of life that seeks to find Allah. Thus, the Tablighis eschew giving interviews, filling questionnaires or participating in surveys. These are seen as worldly pursuits devoid of any genuine and pure fulfilments. It was for these reasons that I employed participant observation, in particular the role of complete participant. Although the Tablighis usually refuse to cooperate with any type of survey or research, on this occasion, they openly welcomed me because they were not required to fill any questionnaires or forms or take special time out to participate in any experiment and, most importantly, for them this was their opportunity to proselytize me.

Complete Participant

A complete participant usually withholds his or her true identity and purpose as a researcher in the field. The researcher participates in the aspects of daily living of the people being studied by learning to play the vital everyday roles successfully and interacting with them with natural ease. This is done, on the one hand, to avoid detection as a researcher and, on the other hand, to facilitate and secure acceptance into the participants’ setting so that the knowledge and understanding of the inner workings of their subjective world can be achieved: in short, so that the research objectives can be achieved.

In this sense, the basic tenet of complete participation is a role-pretence. 1 In role-pretence nothing matters as much as for the researcher to realize that he or she is pretending to be someone which he or she normally is not. In my case, however, no form of deception was employed. In fact, I unequivocally informed key members of the Tablighi Jama’at in Sydney that I was conducting an empirical research about the movement to learn more about it from a sociological perspective. Joining the movement was essentially to conduct empirical research about the Tablighi Jama’at. However, because I am a Muslim, my role as a Tablighi apprentice meant that I also inevitably learnt more about Islam, my religion. Thus, during the data collection and in the final analysis, my complete participant role entailed a Muslim researching other Muslims – an insider’s perspective of a sociological phenomenon.

The role-pretence is for the duration of the research project. Therefore, in my case, for example, I had to be consistent with my complete participant role throughout the course of the research. I attended the movement’s meetings and went on tour as both an apprentice Tablighi and a sociological research. To maintain my role as a complete participant, part of my everyday self as an ordinary person had to be opened up for minor changes, for instance, wearing kameez (long baggy shirt) and shalwar (baggy trousers), in light of accentuating my Tablighi self. Although I was able to balance up, with relative ease, my roles as a Tablighi (complete participant self), an ordinary individual (actual self), and a researcher (professional self) in the context of the Tablighi Jama’at, for a non-Muslim researcher in particular this role reconciliation would have no doubt proven to be problematic.

It is worth pointing out, therefore, that the complete participant self was not totally an alien phenomenon for me given that this role had some common features consistent with my everyday self by the virtue of me being a Muslim. Accentuating my complete participant self or the Tablighi self, in this context, did not mean becoming alienated from my everyday self but indirectly giving my everyday self, particularly the embodiment of my Muslim identity, a clarity and expression. This was through learning more about the different social and cultural expressions of my own religion. As a Tablighi apprentice I managed to fulfill the dual role of an ordinary Muslim seeking to know more about his own religion and a complete participant undertaking an empirical research to understand a religious movement. Becoming a Tablighi apprentice, in the context of participant observation, meant that I had to wear kameez and shalwar all the time when in fact I usually only wear them on special religious occasions—such as Eid al-Fitr (the feast at the completion of the fasting month of Ramadan), Eid al-Adha (the feast of sacrifice), and Juma (Friday congregational prayer)—not shave when I am used to shaving everyday, and sleep on the floor when I am used to sleeping on a bed with an inner-sprung mattress. I did not have an issue with moving in and out of this assumed
role. Perhaps for a non-Muslim, this situation would pose a major problem, and it would potentially make the participants suspicious of the researcher's interest and lead them to become aloof in their interactions with the researcher, possibly restricting the flow of information.

**Participant Observation and Applied Sociology**

Researching is an important and unique experience. In this section I want to argue that participant observation, apart from being a social enquiry tool, is a research experience in its own right and therefore a form of applied sociology. I see participant observation as the quintessential nexus of applied sociological methods – that is, in the application of sociological theory and practice.

Sociology encourages us to conceptualize social change as an ongoing process and social research theories teach us to remain objective in our attempt to understand a new social world and preserve the purity of the data. Despite this, change occurs in some measure in the newly discovered social world but, more importantly, it unavoidably occurs in the sociologist’s own expectations and behaviour as he or she responds to new and distinct patterns, and in recognition of past experiences/knowledge. Although I took every precaution not to ‘disturb’ the naturalness of the Tablighi social environment, the complete participant role inevitably had impact on me personally as I learnt more about my religion - Islam. Participant observation enabled me as a sociologist to advance fundamental knowledge about the Tablighi Jama’at as an important part of the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism. My research also contributes to Australian society’s understanding of an undiscovered part of Australian social fabric and an untapped Australian socio-cultural resource. It also provided me with a religious enlightenment which I can now apply to enrich my personal as well as professional life.

Thus, here is an empirical example of how a particular research method has the power to transform an individual subjectivity and how the application of sociological theory affects us. Applied sociology is therefore not only something that sociologists ‘do’ but it is also something that embodies us as practitioners of the discipline of sociology and defines who we are and our place in the world. Ultimately then, it is not just the social theories that carve out our sociological reflexivity, but also our professional endeavour – the research practice.

**Conclusion**

Participant observation has proven to be a vital and useful tool for the understanding of the unique world of the Tablighi Jama’at. However, more generally as part of qualitative research, participant observation empowers social science practitioners with a useful tool to study people within the context of their everyday social setting. In general social science practice, and in applied sociology in particular, participant observation is a very useful and powerful means of discovering the complex inner workings of many unexplored and unexplained social phenomena. But, on another level, participant observation is a reflexive methodology that helps social scientists affect change in society, as well as the practitioner’s self understanding.

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Jan Ali

Dr Jan Ali is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University, investigating the most effective community-based activities for improving relations between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians. He also coordinates and lectures in Cross-Cultural Communication at Macquarie University and Religion and Politics in Contemporary Society at University of Newcastle.

Contact author for a list of references.

1 There is an opinion that sees role-pretence as unethical. However, in my research, the role-pretence operated strictly within the practices of social scientific research and no deception or falsity was used to gain access to the Tablighi Jama’at.
Sociology not only offers us the tools to analyse and assess the society around us, but it allows us to consider our own experiences and assumptions. Because of its wide focus on the relational dynamics within society, sociology provides the opportunity for a broad range of approaches to understanding life, promoting inquisitiveness and innovation by integrating both “theory” and “practice”. Sociology not only studies dynamics; it is dynamic. Thus, sociology is often delivered by engaged teachers who ask their students to analyse the society around them and (re)consider their assumptions, promoting analytical thought that is creative and meaningful. The following discussion outlines the context of teaching sociology “outside” academia. It considers the benefits for both students—in terms of fostering the development of analytical skills and opportunities for achievement—and for teachers, in providing a rewarding and enriching environment. This work takes my recent experience of teaching within an enabling course as a case in point.

For me, the decision to pursue an academic career was sparked by my inspirational teachers and supervisors and the passion they had for sociology. The attraction of the academic road has been, therefore, the “classroom” which allows for a collective analysis of experience and thoughtful discussion of the what, where, why and how—of how do things stay the same? How can things be changed? I loved teaching for providing me with the opportunity to stimulate, to inspire students who may not have recognised their own talents and abilities.

Like many others in various professions, I had not completed my qualifications (doctoral degree) to secure a permanent position by the time I reached the parenting stage of life. Caring for young children took time away from the position by the time I reached the parenting stage of life. Having moved cities after completing the PhD, away from the kind of support the postgraduate role offers, I found myself in the strange territory of trying to get casual work without this status—without supervisory support, contacts and mentorship. As mentioned, meeting the demands of the increasingly competitive and rarefied field of permanent jobs in academic sociology requires early but solid publishing and research experience (itself difficult to navigate), and although I had some publications, the “gap” in my career due to childcare was evident.

To establish a permanent position in lecturing/pure research takes most of us into our thirties (that is, if we have dedicated our study and working lives to getting a proper academic job). If you wish to have children and need to provide full-time care for them when they are young—itself a challenging occupation—the academic path is an increasingly challenging one to negotiate. Strangely, even though these issues of parenthood, gender and equity are analysed within sociology, in vocational terms it has not seen a way to address these issues in the modern academic career-track context.

Whilst navigating my way around these issues, an opportunity for teaching within an enabling course came up as a way for me to “do/teach sociology” again. The experience of teaching in an enabling course has enriched my skills as a teacher for young people. The course I teach is a wonderful and important resource for 17 to 20 year olds who, for various reasons, have been adversely affected in their schooling and/or have not attained the necessary entrance score for admission to university. There are two compulsory subjects: Maths and English, and two electives, one of which is a sociology course named “Australian Culture and Society”.

The directors facilitate a teaching staff where opportunity and success for students is the main priority. The course is designed to teach students how to write a sociological essay, analyse sociological texts and develop beyond narrow forms of expression, to formal, informed research-based analysis. It therefore asks students to question their approach to the often restricted and restricting notions of the society and to question their acceptance of narrow ideas and ideals. This not only assists their analytical skills but also their consideration of the issues within the world and their relations with others/otherness. A broader outlook also provides them with the capacity to look beyond their specific experiences and perceived limitations to the possibility of developing other ways of empowering themselves (a transformation in their raison d’être).
TEACHING SOCIOLOGY ‘ON THE OUTSIDE’:
Opportunities for Teaching Sociology within Enabling Courses

In many ways then, opportunity courses like this are an instance of “sociology at work”—in terms of sociological “theory” offering the possibility for personal transformation and, to a certain extent, to affect change on the micro level. Such courses serve an important social purpose.

I consider teaching in enabling courses an opportunity for me to engage with the needs of students and inspire their interest in sociology, their education and general sense of achievement. The students realise that they are given an opportunity to enter first year university studies with specific sociological skills and experiences on-campus that most students straight out of the HSC will not possess. In addition to anxiety, there is excitement at the prospect of attaining a university place and enjoyment of being treated as an adult without the restrictions and limitations that being a school student entails. The importance of opportunity courses is also highlighted by another of The University of Newcastle’s initiatives in providing enabling courses for indigenous students. On the teaching side, there is nothing better than feeling you have the potential to inspire a young person’s otherwise undeveloped interests, and to help them reconsider the world around them. This is especially important when, due to difficult circumstances, this opportunity has been largely unavailable to them, given that they might be facing issues such as abuse, depression and other personal crises.

The students get exposed to illuminating theories from Marx-to-Bourdieu-to-Baudrillard without becoming overly preoccupied with the confusing background of theoretical debates and movements. They are encouraged to apply aspects of the theories to their own experiences. Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus”, for example, helps them understand how—in the words of one student—“views on politics and other topics are influenced by family beliefs and social peers”. Not only are one’s set of dispositions, specific experiences and tastes heavily influenced by one’s “habitus”, our “cultural capital” influences our opportunities and shapes our expectations, ambitions, and future. Recognition of these dynamics may enable students struggling with limitations gain insight into, and work towards challenging, elements of their histories that they believe have restricted them.

Drawing on Baudrillard, the students have found his concepts of “simulation” and “hyperreality” interesting in analysing their experiences of consumption, advertising and the media. Their experience of communicating through text and computers means they rely on technologies beyond the interpersonal bodily presence that older generations experience(d). Young people’s social worlds are mediated by technology—one student explained that she “would not have a social life” without technology and text. They have to pay for these additional “necessities” in life (computers, servers, phones) and keep them up-to-date.

Through insights gained from the readings, many students have found a way to articulate their feeling that their experiences were misrepresented by the media, which they believe “hype up” the problems of teenagers and young people. They see that media representations often form simplistic, marketable “stories” with images of “problem youth” dominating much of current affairs television and public perception. Cohen’s work on “moral panic” is particularly illuminating in this respect. Baudrillard helps them to articulate the possibility that it is not that “the real” no longer exists, but in many areas of the media and advertising, reality is simulated.

Sociology is unique in that it asks students to analyse the society and media around them...

Sociology is unique in that it asks students to analyse the society and media around them—it takes examples directly from experience and culture and then asks students to analyse, question and consider the nature and implications of the “taken for granted” aspects of everyday life. This applied analysis enables the new sociology student to move beyond secondary education, developing their awareness and skills into broader fields of thinking and doing.

This experience as a sociology teacher “on the outside” has provided some space for me to rediscover my own foundational knowledge of sociology and reignite my passion and skills as teacher. Of course, the publishing component of a sociologist’s career must also be strong, and this experience has also opened up opportunities and renewed my interest in the areas of pedagogy, youth and foundation skills. Enabling courses should be considered a significant way of doing sociology outside academia, either as a valuable and rewarding way of developing one’s “spath to an academic career, or as an enriching alternative to teaching in the academic tradition.

Anna Bennett

Anna Bennett completed her degree at The University of Newcastle and PhD at The University of NSW. She teaches in the English Languages and Foundation Studies Centre at The University of Newcastle - Newstep (17-20 year-olds) and is a course coordinator for “Social Enquiry” Open Foundation (20 years +).
I have finally come to the realisation that I am a sociologist, but sometimes I have felt like a ship without a rudder. I have drifted off course without the benefit of others around me to steer me back, and I have had to work hard to stay headed in the right direction. I have in the last year completed an Honours degree in Sociology and left the protective bosom of University to find my place in a working world. I no longer have the privilege of being surrounded by people that share my viewpoint on the occurrences that arise continually around me. Here is my story about the discovery of my sociological imagination, and how never having worked inside the realm of academia, my conviction that I am a sociologist has been challenged.

To become a sociologist was not a given. I did not choose sociology, it chose me. I started my university career later in life and I remember innocently asking one of my friends what was sociology. For a long while sociology was a means to an end of completing my degree and being accepted into a Psychology Honours course. By the end of my second year I was working full steam ahead and toiling away at excruciating units such as Research Methods and Neuropsychology that were prerequisites to the Psychology Honours programme. Sociology was my second major and fortunately I was also completing the units that were pre-requisite to the Sociology Honour program as well—prerequisites that would steer me in the right direction.

It can be funny how things work out. While being a means to an end, my interest in sociology was becoming heightened. This heightened interest and prodding from lecturers was becoming difficult to ignore, and I made the decision to go with my instinct, venturing away from the Psychological discipline. Sociology changed the way I viewed the world. I was on my way to becoming a sociologist, I just did not recognise it. I was becoming reflexive about my own life, and how the concepts I had learnt had shaped the outcomes of my own experiences and life course. To use Bourdieu, I was managing to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things I thought I had always understood.

The completion of my Honours year is one of my greatest achievements. I was able to put all my skills into practice, into a project that I was not only interested in, but passionate about. I designed my project, and even though at times it was not clear to those around me, it was always crystal clear to me. I could see the connection between gay men’s construction of masculinity and their mental health help-seeking pathways, even if no-one else could, and I would not to be deterred. I must have sounded like a broken record rattling on to anyone that would listen.

By the end of my Honour year I had completed and achieved success in my project and I felt confident of my place. I felt like a sociologist and I was surrounded by those that shared my passion and was fully embraced in the bosom of university and sociology. I earned First Class Honours and PhD scholarships followed at three universities. I felt privileged and confident, yet I did not realise how lucky I was until after I left. I made a difficult decision not to continue with my studies; instead taking up employment with the Australian Public Service—never thinking that I would question my place as a sociologist. I have been fortunate to gain a Graduate position which I liken to a traineeship for university graduates. Over the course of a year, I am rotated through three different sections of a Department, to equip me with a broad knowledge and skill base. These rotations are accompanied by training which details my responsibilities as a public servant. The only prerequisite is that I have university degree. I have not specifically been employed for the skill set of my chosen discipline. I am not working with other sociologists and am not required to use my hard-earned skills. This disconnection from all that had been hard earned and familiar lead me to question my place as a sociologist.

The transition from university to employment has been discommodulating to say the least. In my Honours year at university I never questioned my sociological standing. I left confident that while my sociological skills would always be developing, they were firmly entrenched. I commenced my new employment around the same time that I would have been commencing university for another year. I had moved interstate for my employment and away from all the networks I had developed over the last five years at university. I realised that I had taken many things for granted. I took for granted the libraries that tertiary institutions offer, and while inter-library loans are available to me through my employment, it is for work purposes only. I do not have free access to sociological texts that others may take for granted. Nothing classic, like Marx, or contemporary like Connell, and while one can always peruse on the internet, there is nothing like picking up a book and having a good look. The on-line access to sociological materials through my employment is limited too. I have been fortunate to retain, until the end of the year, my free of charge library log-in details through my alumni university, and I have used this to access relevant information on more than one occasion. But more than anything, I miss the people.

I miss people that share my ways of looking at the world, and who understand the basis of my opinions. I have been fortunate to retain ties with my Honours supervisors and former students, but somehow it is different. I am not in constant contact with them and when we are in contact we have other things to catch up on as well. We are all so
I CAN FEEL LIKE A SHIP WITHOUT A RUDDER

(cont.)

dispersed around the country and busy with life, and we do not have the resources to all be in the one place at the one time. We do not have the ability to talk until the wee hours of the morning about our ‘religion’, and I miss it. I do not get the opportunity to pass people in the hall and pause for a moment to discuss my latest idea or request clarification on confusing issues.

Without all these valuable resources I have felt lost, like a ship sailing without a rudder, with few resources and no one to help me stay on my sociological course. I do not have a ready network or peers to draw on for support or to clarify and stimulate my thinking, like I did last year. While it is different, I have come to realise that I am changed forever and there is no going back. My life and the lives of those around me are viewed through a sociological lens and I know that the glasses will never come off. I view the aspects of everyday life that surrounds me in ways that others do not see and I view and tackle employment tasks in the same manner. I see social discourses, perceptions of risk, the nexus between gender and power, and the gendered division of labour as important issues that I try to incorporate into the way I think about my job and how I might affect social change.

I feel fortunate for the new opportunities and skills that my graduate placement has given me, however those of us that work outside academia may sometimes question our identity as a sociologist and we have to work hard to stay connected. I am hoping to attend the TASA Conference in December. To do this I will be taking holidays to travel interstate, financing my own travel and conference registration, and hopefully staying with friends while in Melbourne. Please do not mistake this as a complaint as I will be thrilled to be there. It is all part of a long-term plan I have for myself, to continue working and begin studying part-time to complete my Doctorate. I will keep my foot in both camps until I can make up my mind where I need to be. I think that I already know, but time will tell. The time will come where I need to be surrounded by those who speak my language and share my passion. Oh and I think being Dr Pitt would be quite satisfactory too.

Susan Pitt

Susan Pitt has recently commenced employment with the Australian Public Service in Canberra after graduating with First Class Honours from the University of Tasmania. She was previously employed in the retail sector where she developed her fascination with people and their lives.

Call for contributions

If you would like to contribute to an upcoming edition of NEXUS please contact the Thematic Group Coordinator with your contribution by the deadline.

Sociology of Indigeneity 23 August  Margaret.Walter@utas.edu.au
Teaching Sociology 31 October  helen.marshall@mit.edu.au
Welcome to all higher degree students! I hope that 2008 has been a productive year for you all so far. I want to start with thanking all of those students who made the TASA Postgraduate Workshop 2007 such a success in New Zealand. It was fabulous to have so much support from enthusiastic higher degree researchers, even with the expense of international travel. I wish to extend a very special thank to all those who volunteered their time to develop and convene workshop sessions: Dr Zuleyka Zevallos, Dr Virginia Dickson-Swift, Associate Professor Greg Newbold, and Dr Samantha Jeffries. I would also like to thank those who participated in the career options panel: Dr Bruce Curtis, Dr Samantha Jeffries, Dr Louise Humpage, and Dr Nicky Welch. The 2007 workshop was once again successful. Feedback indicated that students liked the focus on one theme and the parallel session format organised around being early/ later in higher degree candidature. They also stated that they would like to see more sociologists outside academe being involved in the career options panel and to have more opportunities for networking.

Things are gearing up for this year's Postgraduate Workshop at the TASA Conference. It has been scheduled for Tuesday 2nd December, from 1:30-6pm. After collating student responses to my e-list announcement in March, the workshop sessions will include sessions about publishing, a panel of sociologists working outside academe, and a research methodologies roundtable and 'getting-to-know-you' session where students can network with other students using similar methodologies in their research. A call has just gone out for applications for the TASA/AASR Postgraduate Conference Scholarship in December 2008 so take a look at the website (www.tasa.org.au/awards/postgrad.php) and get your applications in.

Angela Dwyer
Postgraduate Member
TASA Executive

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**TASA Postgraduate Workshop 2008**

**Tuesday 2nd December 2008**

1:30pm-6:00pm

Session topics include: networking session, publishing, research methodologies, and postgraduate sociologist career options outside academe.

Aims:

- To provide a supportive environment in which sociology higher degree students can network
- To promote the development of academic skills applicable during and after higher degree study
- To showcase a range of post-higher degree career pathways to sociology higher degree students

To register tick the box on the online registration and download the registration form (registration is free).

For more information contact Angela Dwyer on ae.dwyer@qut.edu.au
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2008 Postgraduate Conference Scholarship

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- TASA will pay for your registration at the Postgraduate Workshop; a full day of activities, seminars and info especially tailored to postgraduates.
- Receive formal acknowledgment from the TASA Executive for your Award.

Here is what some of last year’s recipients have to say:

“In the first year of my research, I attended the TASA conference in Perth and presented work-in-progress. For me, as a PhD candidate in my second year, the process of writing a paper, having it peer reviewed and then presenting it to fellow researchers at the TASA/SAANZ Conference in Auckland was as an important part of the learning process and it was as constructive as it was affirming. Writing the paper for the conference helped me to hone my thinking and advance my thesis. Presenting my contribution, testing it in a scholarly context and receiving peer feedback on the progress and quality of my work were each of particular and practical value to me. The Postgraduate Conference Scholarship provided welcome financial assistance and a fillip to both my confidence and my enthusiasm. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend to postgraduate workshop, though the feedback I received from colleagues who did attend is that I missed out!”

Christopher Baker, PhD Candidate, Swinburne University of Technology

“The highlight of attending the TASA/SAANZ conference last year was the opportunity to hear and meet Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the author of Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Her work has had a huge impact on my thinking and practice as a researcher, and her plenary gave us all insights into the labelling of Maori iwi as terrorists, and the contentions around the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. I was really pleased to have the opportunity to present to well known scholars (and receive feedback on my ideas). And of course, the social aspect of meeting other post-grads and academics made all the theory of ‘networking’ seem less trite. Many thanks to TASA and SAANZ for the award”

Ruth Nicholls, PhD Candidate, University of Western Sydney.

For a nomination form and more information go to the TASA website: (www.tasa.org), or directly to www.tasa.org.au/awards/postgrad.php. You can also contact the TASA office for a copy of a form and for any queries about the award and TASA membership at admin@tasa.org.au
For most of us, we are coming to the end of semester and into a period where, for some of us, we will be making decisions about whether or not to write up a refereed paper for the TASA conference. For higher degree students, this can be a difficult decision to make. It requires a bit of time away from your thesis and, depending on your supervisor, it can require a bit of negotiation. More importantly, it requires an understanding of the types of publishing that is important in your discipline as well as an understanding of exactly what you can publish from your thesis. So in our second instalment in our discussions of postgraduate issues, I will engage with a few of the key issues in negotiating this type of work and provide some advice on working smarter when publishing.

In academic institutions, academics are more and more being urged to publish in refereed journals with impact factors to maintain the flow of funds for the university from DEST. In fact, publishing has become one of the most important parts of academic work for giving a job applicant the edge in their applications and for gaining research funds internally and from external sources. For the aspiring academic who is undertaking higher degree research, this will be a key consideration. Students are now more than ever being urged to ‘publish-as-you-go’ as they work through their research theses. A lot of institutions are now offering students the opportunity to do their thesis by publication. How receptive your supervisor is to this is a different situation. While some may support publishing as a student works, others may advise against doing this in the interests of timely higher degree completion. This will be a key area of negotiation between most students and supervisors. The extent to which a student is pressured to publish or not to publish over the course of their research will depend on a number of issues, the key one being whether or not the student is aiming to move into academia as a career option.

The pressure to publish is not necessarily a priority area for some post-doctoral career opportunities. For some, it is far more important to focus on producing a practical, useful product or program that will make a valuable contribution to processes or practices in their field. For others, publishing in refereed journals is not a priority as their research is better disseminated in professional journals that practitioners engage with. For students, then, it is important to consider from the very beginning of your project where your time is better spent in terms of publishing and research dissemination. If a journal article or book chapter is not really going to assist you in getting the dream job that you are seeking, then it is probably best to avoid this. If attending conferences is important to disseminate the results of your research, then focus your energies on going to one conference every year where you can do this. If your discipline highly values research-informed practices in your discipline, then focus on professional journals and hone your skills in writing for practitioners.

My key point here is that you can be strategic. Get to know what other students and researchers are doing in your discipline area so that you can spend your time wisely. For academic sociologists, this is fairly straightforward – refereed publishing is strongly encouraged. However, if you know that you are aiming to work in industry as a sociologist and there are a number of good professional publications that are well regarded in this industry, then work to publish a bit in these journals. Quiz the people you know already working in your preferred industry, including the employer that you are aiming to work with: what (if anything) do they publish in these jobs and where do they publish? Other than honing your writing skills, there is little to be gained spending extensive hours preparing and submitting journal articles if it is not going to get you the job you are seeking. If you are seeking to get into academia or a post-doctoral fellowship, then it is undoubtedly going to be in your best interests to publish everything you possibly can in higher-tiered journals. In the current academic climate, it can be difficult to gain employment without refereed publications. This is only marginally easier than gaining a post-doctoral fellowship without publications, which most academics will tell you is now impossible.

If publishing is an important factor for getting you a job, think about how you can work smarter instead of working harder. Publishing can be laborious work when you are doing it on your own so, again, be strategic. Write papers with other higher degree students and with your supervisor. Think about areas of overlap, particularly with your postgraduate colleagues and other students of your supervisor. Are you using similar methodological approaches or theoretical frameworks that you can write about? You can both gain from this collaboration, not only in getting a paper published but also in doing half the work that you would normally do for a single authored paper. If you lack the time to write up a 7,000 word journal article, focus on attending one conference a year, like the TASA conference, that publishes refereed publications of only 3,000 words. You can work on writing these up as refereed journal publications later in your candidature or when you have finished. Another factor to consider is whether or not to publish your work as a book when you are finished. Talk to...
publishers and have a look online at the types of books that are being published. A book contract is a very persuasive publication to have listed on your CV, particularly if you are aiming towards a post-doctoral fellowship.

You can also publish smarter by publishing areas of your work that you have already written about in your thesis. If you want to present a conference paper and you are currently working on articulating and clarifying your theoretical framework, then publish a paper about this. Writing a smaller, more condensed version of a larger set of ideas can be immensely helpful in focusing your thoughts. The question of whether or not to publish as you study is one fraught with tensions and flush with opportunities. This is a conversation that most students will have with their supervisors at some point during their higher degree candidature. The outcome of this conversation will very much depend on where you are seeking to work. Only last week, supervisors in my Faculty were being urged to produce publications with their students in a bid to make the best of DEST publishing revenue. But before you jump into the publication race, think carefully about how this is going to benefit you and your future job prospects. While it is important to make your supervisor and the university happy, it is more important for you to be strategic and publish in the interests of your future career.

Angela Dwyer
Queensland University of Technology

Call For Proposals For The 17th Sociology Of Health And Illness Monograph

Proposals are invited for the seventeenth volume in the monograph series to be published by the Sociology of Health and Illness in conjunction with Wiley-Blackwell Publishers. The Board of the journal will consider all proposals for the 17th monograph at its next meeting in September 2008. The monograph will be between 70,000 and 72,000 words in length comprising between 8 and 10 peer-reviewed papers and will appear both as a regular issue of the journal and in book form. The planned publication date is February 2011.

Proposals can be discussed informally with the Monograph Editor (Hannah Bradby of the University of Warwick, UK: email: H.Bradby@warwick.ac.uk) before submitting the final document.

Finalised proposals should be sent to H.Bradby@warwick.ac.uk by August 22nd 2008 and will be reviewed and the outcome notified by October 10th 2008.

For more details please visit: http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0141-9889&site=1
Murdoch's Sociology Department is bubbling along, despite reductions in the numbers of its staff over the last few years (most recently the retirement of Prof Trish Harris) and a constant tightening of budgets. The Department offers Sociology and Community Development majors, with the latter developed a number of years ago as an 'applied sociology' option for students at our regional campus in Rockingham, and is now offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the main campus. Dave Palmer is program chair of Community Development, and the new program chair of Sociology is Farida Fozdar. Enrolments and completions in postgraduate research degrees and in the Community Development coursework/postgraduate qualifications continue to look healthy, and a number of PhD and Masters students have recently graduated. Staff and students work closely with Murdoch’s Centre for Social and Community Research, which provides opportunities for postgrads to hone their research skills, and enables engagement with the wider community and government contracts.

Areas of research strength in the department include social theory, Indigenous and youth issues, migration and race relations, and the sociology of work. Staff are engaged in a number of funded research projects including work on animal movements in Cambodia and Laos; helping Fire and Emergency Services become more culturally sensitive; analyzing discourses of citizenship in Australia; and settlement issues for migrants and refugees; working with Indigenous communities in the North of Western Australia; a review of a youth project and Healthy Living project undertaken by a local council; and evaluations of a Narrative Project in a public housing estate in Sydney, and a number of art and theatre projects for disadvantaged young people and Indigenous young people.

Staff have submitted 3 ARC Discovery applications this year and have a number of recent publications in journals and books. Farida Fozdar and colleagues Raeline Wilding from LaTrobe and Mary Hawkins from UWS will launch their OUP book, Race and Ethnic Relations, at the TASA 2008 conference. She has published a number of articles in major journals over the last 12 months. Gary Wickham continues to publish on the topic of 'the social' and the history of the sociological project, and law and morality, in journals such as JOS, Current Sociology, Law, Text, Culture, Journal of Classical Sociology. Mick Campion, who is now free of his NTEU responsibilities, drives himself to distraction pulling his own thinking apart (direct quote from Mick!) and helps keep the whole show rolling.

Several members of the department presented papers at last year’s TASA conference – two staff Mick Campion and Farida Fozdar, and two PhD students, Eric Whittle and Mark Jennings. We are encouraging students to offer papers again this year. Interest amongst postgraduates in presenting at TASA was raised by having the conference in Perth in 2006, with two sociologists from Murdoch as co-convenors, and a number of postgrads and staff presenting papers.

Some staff and students were involved in the organising of an anti-racism conference (the National Conference on Racism in a Global Context) in November 2007 which drew around 300 delegates. The three day event brought together a range of academics and researchers, local and national government representatives, NGOs, Indigenous representatives, and community members, to explore experiences and effects of racism, and to develop practical solutions. A film festival with screenings of movies themed around anti-racism was associated with the conference.

Farida Tilbury

Murdoch 2006 TASA Prize winner

The winner of the Murdoch University 2006 TASA Prize was awarded to Angela Leahy. After having been told by a close relative, "You do not have the brains to go to university," Angela enrolled as an external, part-time student in the Women’s Studies program at Murdoch University in 1998, taking one or two units at a time while working as a full-time typist. In 2001 she began studying Sociology as a second major, and eventually graduated in 2005.

Under the supervision of Associate Professor Gary Wickham, Angela commenced Honours in Sociology in 2006, again part-time, while working as a tutor in the Sociology Department at Murdoch University. Her Honours project looked at the treatment of human rights within classical and contemporary sociology.

Angela's thesis explored the treatment of human rights in classical sociology and its influence on contemporary sociology’s treatment of human rights. It also considers the contribution sociology might make to the study of human rights. These two inquiries are carried out with reference to the work of Bryan S. Turner, who has written extensively on the subject of human rights in sociology, criticising what he contends is its poor reputation within the discipline, as well as presenting his own sociological approach to the study of human rights.

The thesis provides an examination of the Marxist critique of human rights, followed by a discussion of Weberian sociology and the concept of rights. Turner’s sociological theory of human rights was also examined and briefly revisits the Marxist critique of rights and the Weberian influence, in the light of Turner’s work. Other contemporary sociological approaches to human rights are considered by way of comparison with Turner’s approach.
The thesis concluded with a discussion of the future possibilities for the study of human rights within sociology, taking up some aspects of Tumer's work as well as considering other approaches that might be taken.

Angela was successful in obtaining a PhD scholarship and is happily studying full-time, exploring links between early modern natural law theories and the functions of contemporary human rights.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE (UoN)

At UoN, Sociology is housed within the School of Humanities and Social Science (www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/). The Discipline is going through a renewal phase, with a number of new appointments and range of research projects, events and publications combining to produce a dynamic environment in which to work.

The time of writing, we are the process of appointing two new positions, one in sociology and the other in social anthropology. Late last year, Dr Alex Broom was appointed as a Lecturer in Sociology, who since joining the School has published Therapeutic Pluralism: Exploring the Experiences of Cancer Patients and Professionals (Broom & Tovey 2008, Routledge). He is currently working on a co-edited book (with Tovey) entitled, Men’s Health, to be published by John Wiley & Sons. Alex was also a CI on a successful NHMRC grant ($450 000) to investigate complementary and alternative medicine among mid-age women (with colleagues at UQ and UoN).

Later in the year, the ‘Health, Culture and Religion in South Asia: Interdisciplinary and Cross-national Social Science Perspectives’ workshop will be held, funded by the ARC’s Asia Pacific Futures Research Network and jointly hosted by the School’s Centre for Asia Pacific Transformation Studies (CAPTRANS) and the ANU Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

John Germov is involved in $110 000 Carrick Discipline-Based Initiatives Grant entitled ‘Sociology in Australia: A Scoping Study’, headed by Dr Helen Marshall (RMIT - lead site) and Eileen Clark (La Trobe). John is also continuing his empirical research on Slow Food, in addition to completing work on the 4th edition of his edited book, Second Opinion. Assoc. Prof Pam Nilan is continuing her ARCDG funded work (2006-09 with Parker & Bennett) on ‘Ambivalent Adolescents in Indonesia’ as well as working on a forthcoming edited book, Indonesian Masculinities (Donaldson, Nilan & Howson). Dr Terry Leahy is currently undertaking research on landcare initiatives in South Africa, and utopian environmental thinking in Australia. He has recently completed a book on sustainable agriculture and food security for South Africa which is with publishers. The Discipline has also been honoured to have Professor Michael Allen as Visiting Professor of Sociology (from Washington State University) for the past 6 months. Professor Allen is currently completing a comparative study of the Australian and American film industry, as part of a wider book project on global film. He is also working on a wider comparative project that examines cultural participation in the same countries.

Finally, I would like to announce the prize winner of the TASA Prize for Excellence in Sociology at 1000 Level for 2007 was Mathew Toll. Congratulations Mathew!

John Germov

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

John Western-TASA Sociology Award

Jonathan Smith is the 2007 recipient of the John Western – TASA Sociology Award with the highest weighted percentage score in Sociology honours for 2007. Jonathan’s thesis was titled Digital Natives: Student ICT Use and Educational Participation in Queensland Secondary Schools.

The thesis examined how Year 8 students in Queensland secondary schools adapt their use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to the changing realities of schooling life. Reflexivity theorists claim that ICTs contribute to the declining influence of traditional structures by allowing individuals to form ties that circumvent boundaries between diverse social groups (Beck, 1992; Castells, 1996; Giddens, 1991). This assumption, evident in rhetoric and policy promoting ICT integration, suggests that ICTs can enhance educational participation. However, in line with the literature on social capital in education (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), Jonathan argued that students vary in their access to the resources shaping their willingness to engage academically and socially. Employing the idea of reflexive habitus, which treats agency as embedded in social relations, he hypothesised that class and gender affect how students adapt their use of ICTs for academic and social purposes. Jonathan used quantitative data to test these claims and found that student’s use of ICTs reflect differences in their dispositions towards engagement, but also that, when reflexive choice does arise, it has varying consequences on their ICT use trajectories. Upon examining the theoretical implications of these findings, Jonathan suggested directions for further research in this area.

Jonathan is currently doing some part time research work on the “Our Lives” project. The Chief Investigators of the project are Prof. Zlatko Skrbis and Prof.
Mark Western. Jonathan hopes to continue working on the project as a PhD student in 2009.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

Development of Sociology within the School of Social Sciences

Since 2007, Sociology has been changing its shape in the School of Social Sciences. Associate Professor Michael Bounds and Dr. Rob O’Neill retired at the end of last year. Staff and students from the school greatly miss their intellectual and collegial presence. Nevertheless, Michael has kept some academic link with the Urban Research Centre (UWS) and Rob with The Social Justice Social Change Research Centre (UWS). A departing sociologist who worked with the criminology team in the School was Dr. Murray Lee, who has recently taken up a Level C position at the University of Sydney.

Professor Deborah Stevenson left the University of Newcastle to head our school a year ago. Her books include Cities and Urban Cultures and the forthcoming Tourist Cultures (London, Sage) She was awarded an ARC Discovery Grant commencing in 2008 with Prof. Stephen Tomsen and Prof. David Rowe for a project entitled ‘The City after Dark: The Governance and Lived Experience of Urban Night-Time Culture’. Prof. Jack Barbalet came back to Australia after eight years at Leicester University to become the Foundation Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Sydney. His new book, Weber, Passion and Profits: ‘The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’ in Context, will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year. Jack is currently writing another book, The Constitution of Markets, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2010. Dr. Adam Possamai has recently been promoted Associate Professor and his new book Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y is published by Equinox (London) at the end of this year. Dr. Mary Hawkins has a new book in press Race and Ethnicity (with Farida Fozdar and Raelene Wilding, Oxford University Press). Dr. Debbie Horfall is the co-editor (with Higgs, Titchen, and Armstrong) of the recent (2007) Being Critical and Creative in Qualitative Research with Hampden Press (Sydney). Ms Sharyn McGee is the recent co-recipient of two grants from the Mental Health Coordinating Council. The sociology staff is in expansion in the School of Social Sciences and two new Level B are about to come on board.

The criminology and policing team from the same school is going through a major expansion and is now one of the largest such academic and research groupings in Australia. Its new staff includes two recently appointed sociologists working in this field. These are Professor Stephen Tomsen who recently left the University of Newcastle and whose current and forthcoming books include Crime, Criminal Justice and Masculinities (Ashgate, 2008) and Violence, Prejudice and Sexuality (Routledge, 2009); and Dr Greg Martin, a new Level B, who is currently working on setting up a Social Movements Thematic Group with TASA.

Adam Possamai

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

The Department has recently organized various Master classes in Sociology and Social Theory, and has brought out various prominent intellectuals to Adelaide to foster research and teaching in the discipline.

In March 2008, Professor Bryan S. Turner returned to Flinders University for a series of lectures as a part of a Flinders Masterclass in Sociology. Professor Turner offered a Masterclass titled “Globalization and Social Theory: Rights, Cosmopolitanism and the Public Sphere”. The Masterclass was attended by students from Flinders University, UniSA and Adelaide University. He is currently Chair of Sociology at Singapore National University and is a pioneer in the study of sociology of the body, as well as innovations in the sociological research of globalisation, citizenship and religion.

Sociologists in Wollongong are busy helping to build the 9th Conference of the Asia Pacific Sociological Association. It will be held in Bali in mid-June 2009. The Conference, entitled “Improving the Quality of Life in the Asia-Pacific: A Challenge for Sociology”, aims to comprehensively and critically define, explain and provide solutions to improve the quality of life in Asia-Pacific societies. Conference fees are low and postgraduate students are encouraged to participate. Conference organisers are expecting around 500 participants, and an extensive and entertaining program has been developed for non-participating partners and children. More news will be available soon at www.asiapacificsociology.org.

Further information about the Gramsci Society (Asia-Pacific) can be found at (www.uow.edu.au/arts/research/gramsci)

Mike Donaldson
In April, Professor Liz Stanley commenced a seven week appointment as Visiting Research Fellow. Stanley is the Research Professor in the Department of Sociology, Edinburgh University and Director of the Centre for Narrative and Auto/Biographical Studies (NAABS). She is internationally recognised for her work on feminist methodologies, narrative studies and auto/biography, and the life and work of the feminist socialist Olive Schreiner (published in The Auto/biographical I, Manchester University Press, 1992). While at Flinders, Professor Stanley continued her work on the Schreiner letters and the epistemological and ontological aspects of epistolarity. She gave a Departmental seminar and was a keynote speaker at a symposium 'To the Letter: Contemporary Perspectives on Epistolarity', presented by the Department of Sociology and the Flinders Humanities Research Centre.

Professor Charles Lemert from the Department of Sociology, Edinburgh University and Research Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Oxford, commenced a seven week appointment as Visiting Research Fellow. Lemert was working at Flinders on an ARC Discovery project on globalisation, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.

In addition to the Masterclass, Professor Anthony Elliott, Mr Daniel Hsu and Mr Eric Bommel, a long-time member of the human-animal studies group. Professor Elliott continued her work in the sociology of globalisation.

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The Department welcomed a new member of staff, Dr Nik Taylor who moved to Flinders from Central Queensland University after earlier appointments at Edinburgh and Oxford, UK. Her research interests include the sociology of human-animal interaction and relationships, the links between domestic violence, child abuse and violence to companion animals, family violence prevention, and, substance abusing parents. Dr Taylor is also involved in a new interdisciplinary human-animal studies group.

ARC Professorial Fellow, and Emeritus Professor, Riaz Hasan has been presenting his work to Melbourne Law School as part of their Courting Controversy series. His first paper was an overview of his book Inside Muslim Minds, which is a groundbreaking comparative study of contemporary Islamic consciousness; an important insight into aspects of the Muslim faith, and its place in the twenty-first century. The second paper was titled War on the West: Changing Ideas of Jihad.

Carolyn Corkindale

MONASH UNIVERSITY

People and news

The Monash Sociology Program in the School of Political and Social Inquiry (PSI) has seen some staff movements in 2007 and 2008. These include the arrival of Professor Alan Petersen from Plymouth. Alan joins other new appointments, Dr Mark Davis from UEL and Professor Denise Cuthbert, formerly from the Centre for Women's Studies & Gender Research at Monash. Professor Gary Bouma takes up his new role as Emeritus Professor and Dr Jan van Bommel, a long-time member of the program, recently retired.

Major publications

Alan Petersen has recently published two books with Routledge The Body in Question and Biobanks, an edited volume with Herbert Gottweis.

Gary Bouma has recently been awarded a prize from the Australasian Theological Forum (ATF) for his book, The Australian Soul, published in 2007.

Tseen Khoo's edited collection, Locating Asian Australian Cultures (Routledge) also appeared in early 2008.

Research Seminar

Sociology at Monash University is convening a series of research seminars for 2008, featuring cutting-edge research and critical reflection on research practice from Australia and overseas. The seminars cover issues such as the ethics of research practice, researching filmic representations of the body, narrative research regarding HIV, and builders and nurses negotiating labour and family life. For information regarding these upcoming events, including the abstracts for the presentations, please see: http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/sociology/research/seminars.php. For further information, contact Mark Davis (mark.davis@arts.monash.edu.au).

Other Forthcoming Events

Tseen Khoo is convening an ECR workshop on trauma/mourning on 11-12 December 2008 as part of the Asian Australian Studies Research Network (www.asianaustralianstudies.org), the event is supported also by ANU and the Cultural Research Network (UQ). For more details: tseen.khoo@arts.monash.edu.au.

Denise Cuthbert is co-convenor of a symposium, Adoption in Australia: Contemporary Cultural, Theoretical and Political Perspectives to be held 3-4 July. For more information contact Amy Dobson (amy.dobson@arts.monash.edu.au); she is also co-convenor of a symposium Doctoral Subjects: producing research, researchers, knowledge and innovation in Australian humanities, arts and social sciencedoctates, 6-7 December 2008 for which a CFP will soon go out. Contact: katherine.deziwa@arts.monash.edu.au.

Suzi Adams is convening the symposium entitled Castoriadis in Dialogue, on Friday 28th November. For information contact: suzi.adams@monash.edu.au.
Eco-Social Students Show the Way on Climate Change

The world is facing a sustainability crisis, which demands social and political responses well beyond the customary ‘business as usual’ and ‘politics as usual’ approaches. This was the clear message delivered by David Spratt, the Keynote Speaker at The Eco-social Present and Future conference in May. This conference was organised by students undertaking Dr Russell Wright’s sociology unit, The Eco-social: Place, Policy and Politics. David Spratt pointed out that climate change is both more extensive and happening more quickly than previously predicted (100 years ahead of schedule). Crucial ‘tipping points’ of irreversible or ‘runaway climate change’ were now imminent. This has led the world’s leading climatologists and the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to re-assess projections and estimates with respect to the harmful impacts of climate change.

Student presentations at the conference also underlined how recent developments, such as the rapid disintegration of the Arctic and Greenland ice sheets in 2007-2008 demonstrated the urgent need to decarbonise global economies. Papers examined the link between the wider question of renewable energy and possible energy futures as societies seek to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions and move away from dependence on fossil fuels and the carbon economy.

David McCallum

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

While the social sciences and humanities have recently been under threat at many Australian universities, the past year has been particularly tumultuous at QUT. As many TASA members are aware (and we thank you for your support) on 20 April 2007, VC Peter Coadldrake announced to affected staff his desire to immediately cease intakes into the BA and BSoSci degrees, and to close the School of Humanities and Human Services (HHS) by the end of 2007; all of which being the home and location of sociology at QUT. Our colleagues in Languages were subsumed into the Faculty of Business, while human services/social work was relocated to the Faculty of Health. Staff in social sciences and humanities remained, and their futures uncertain.

All affected staff immediately rallied together, and continue to be a cohesive force despite considerable internal pressures. While a significant point of action has been to confront and dispel the data used to justify the mentioned changes, we have been largely blocked from presenting our data to those on the university committees who ultimately decide the future of our courses and disciplines.

The majority of our students discovered the VC’s intentions through the media in the weekend immediately following the announcement, rather than through official university channels. Their consequent reaction has been very inspirational and admirable. In the week after the announcement, the students had already organised their own campaign and an on-campus protest. Further protests were held at the Kelvin Grove and Gardens Point campuses and at various QUT committee meetings, such as QUT Council and QUT Academic Board. Many of these events were covered by the media.

It is notable that QUT is highly centralised, and we are external to the major hubs of QUT by being placed at the Carseldine campus, 13 kilometres north of Brisbane city. Since the decisions surrounding the BA, BSoSci and HHS, QUT has also decided to abandon and lease out the Carseldine campus at the end of this year. This was considered a separate issue, with the effect of our location and isolation considered a mute point; irrelevant and unimportant.

Where does this currently leave the sociology program? Along with our colleagues in geography, history, international and global studies, politics and ethics, we are stuck in a ‘never never’ land. We are no longer part of a School or a Faculty, but operate as a pseudo-School/Faculty under the banner of the Humanities Program. We teach the many continuing and commencing BA double degree students, our existing students, and students who are required or nominate to undertake elective studies in the social sciences and humanities from other courses. We also continue to research and publish.

While the annihilation has had devastating effects, we are still surviving. We have been told that we are moving to the Kelvin Grove campus in 2009, though this may not be our permanent home. Indeed, without our own degree/s to teach into, we are very concerned about our future and the future of social sciences and humanities at QUT.

Peta Cook
International Conference on Child Labour and Child Exploitation

Cairns, Queensland

3-5 August 2008

The International Conference on Child Labour and Child Exploitation will evaluate the progress and achievements made in relation to the eradication of the worst forms of child labour and child exploitation and will explore the challenges ahead in securing rights for children in the 21st century and meeting the UN Millennium Goals by 2015. The right of children to be free from exploitation in whatever form it might take is the key focus of this Conference. We are naturally concerned therefore about forms of exploitation of children involving sexual exploitation, trafficking and servitude which come hand in hand with the new technologies, the globalised world and the increasing movement of economic refugees across international borders. An international conference provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at this issue from these perspectives. Holding it in an affluent country such as Australia highlights the contribution its citizens can make to the problems we seek to identify and address, and focuses attention on the need for change.

For further information about the Conference go to www.childjustic.org/wsec1/. The Hon. Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC

Menzies Centre for Health Policy
Emerging Health Policy Research Conference

University of Sydney Thursday, 9 October 2008

Call for Abstracts from current doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in health policy.

The conference will showcase the work in progress of current doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. We invite researchers working in all areas of health policy - including international health, health systems, history of public health, indigenous health, health economics and health promotion - to submit an abstract of their presentation.

There will be two keynote addresses during the day. Professor Don Nutbeam, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, will deliver the morning keynote address and Dr Helen Zorbas, Director of the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre, will conclude the conference with a session on evidence into clinical practice.

Participation in the Emerging Health Policy Research Conference will provide an opportunity for:

- Emerging researchers to present their ‘in progress’ health policy research to a wide audience of students, academics and practitioners;
- Health policy researchers working in a range of academic disciplines to meet and discuss new ideas and identify opportunities for collaboration;
- Health policy responses to current local, national and global health challenges to be discussed.

Current doctoral and post-doctoral researchers should submit their abstracts of no more than 250 words by 1 August 2008 to ahpiadmin@med.usyd.edu.au.

For further information, please contact: Jordan Thomas on jordant@med.usyd.edu.au or visit our website www.ahpi.health.usyd.edu.au/Menzies/conference08.php
CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY THEMATIC GROUP

Reflecting the emergence of the growth of cultural sociology as a paradigm, the Cultural Sociology Group is pleased to announce that from 17 December 2007, the Thesis Eleven Centre for Critical Theory has been formally renamed the Thesis Eleven Centre for Cultural Sociology. As stated in the Centre’s 2007 Annual Report, the broad horizon of cultural sociology is a more accurate indicator of the Centre’s actual operations and where it is heading. Located in the Sociology Program at La Trobe University, the Centre is aligned with the critical theory and historical sociology journal of the same title. Published by Sage, Thesis Eleven is now in its 27th year of operation.

In recent months several members of the Cultural Sociology Group have been involved in conference and seminar activity. Co-convenor of the Group, Eduardo de la Fuente (Monash) was an organiser of the Music, Culture and Society Conference which examined the paradoxical, deeply-felt and often contradictory roles that music plays in social life and culture more broadly. Presentations included a keynote address ‘Musical Taste, Ageing and Lifestyle’ by thematic group member Andy Bennett (Griffith). Co-convenor Brad West (Flinders) meanwhile presented an Anzac Day public lecture at the Australian Embassy in Copenhagen. Members Jane Haggis and Mary Holmes (Flinders) hosted a symposium by Liz Stanley (Edinburgh) entitled ‘To the Letter: Contemporary Perspectives on Epistolarity?’. Several members of the thematic group are also attending the International Sociological Association Research Committee on Sociological Theory (RC 16) Mid-Term Conference, which will be taking place 23-25 June 2008 at Pusan National University, South Korea.

The Cultural Sociology Group also welcomes several new members, including the former international fellow Sarah Baker who after several years working as a researcher at institutions in Britain has returned to Australia taking up a lectureship in cultural sociology at Griffith University. Our best wishes also go out to our colleague and friend Jason Pudsey as he continues to fight serious illness.

Brad West

ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY THEMATIC GROUP

The new economic sociology group convenors have been busy since December. We have developed a website www.economicsociology.org.au and a biannual newsletter ‘exchange’. Both will be published in early July 2008. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email info@economicsociology.org.au. We’d like to thank TASA’s thematic group funding program for helping with the costs related to hosting the site.

We have developed a Facebook presence (www.facebook.com) ‘Economic Sociology Australia’ and an associated group ‘economic sociology’. This group enables international networking and information sharing. If you’re a Facebook user please join the group and contribute to the discussion.

The Facebook group complements the TASA thematic group forum, which tends to be underutilised, but is a great forum for discussion among TASA members – follow the links on the TASA website.

We adopt a broad definition of economic sociology as the examination through a sociological lens of economic processes (production, consumption and distribution) and relations. We are hoping for a strong economic sociology presence at the TASA conference and encourage people to submit a paper.

For more information check out our website, Facebook, thematic group forum or email us. Dina Bowman (dbowman@economic.sociology.org.au), Peta Freestone (pfreestone@economic.sociology.org.au) or Lee Glezos (iglezos@economic.sociology.org.au)

Dina Bowman

WORK AND LABOUR STUDIES THEMATIC GROUP

A number of members from the TASA Work and Labour Studies Thematic Group will be attending the mid-term ISA proceedings for the RC44 Labour Studies Group in Barcelona in September this year. This will be a very exciting event, as scholars from Europe, America, South Africa and Asia will be participating. Informed by the concept of public sociology, the RC44 proceedings will take up issues of labour movements and trade union renewal, organising women in the informal economy, labournứvements in Europe, labour migration and implications for trade unions, a panel discussion on transnational movements, gender and labour movements and work and labour. Anyone interested in finding out more about papers are welcome to contact the Work and Labour Studies convenors, Donella.Caspersz@uwa.edu.au, or Iain.Campbell@rmit.edu.au.

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