



**The Sociology Department
at The University of Essex**

**26th Graduate
Conference
21st and 22nd February
2013**



The Westcliff Hotel Southend-on-Sea

Conference Schedule 2013

THURSDAY 21ST

10.30 – 11.00 ARRIVAL, CHECK-IN & TEA/COFFEE at the Westcliff Hotel

11.15 WELCOME – Eamonn Carrabine (Head of Department)

11.20– 1.00 – 1st SESSION (Chair: Eleana Nikiforidou)

PANEL: Accounts from below: meanings and trajectories of violence in Latin America and UK.

Tom Davies – Dealing In Violence? Deconstructing Instrumental & Expressive Violence in London's Illegal Economy

Falko Ernst – Beyond structural-rationalist assertions: Mexican drug violence revisited

Juan Carlos Ruiz Flores From physical to symbolic urban periphery: violence and social fragmentation in Santiago de Chile.

Rachel Kenehan – The nature of violence in a juvenile young offenders' institution.

1.00 - 2.15

LUNCH

2.15 – 3.15 - 2nd SESSION

READING GROUPS (*Student-only session*).

Readings from the British Journal of Sociology's 60th anniversary edition

3 reading groups, based upon readings selected, voted upon and distributed in advance.

GROUP 1: 1960s: 'The Meaning of Poverty' by Peter Townsend

GROUP 2: 1970s: 'A world-system perspective on the social sciences' by Immanuel Wallerstein

GROUP 3: 2000s: 'Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda' by Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider

3.15 – 3.30

TEA /COFFEE

3.30 – 5.00 - 3rd SESSION (Chair: Eduardo Goncalves)

PANEL: Is a disciplinary approach to Human Rights possible or desirable?

Colin Samson

Eadaoin O'Brien

Lydia Morris

5.00-6.00 - 4th SESSION (Chair: Joan Busfield)

Visual representations of work in the department: 1-SLIDE-1-MINUTE

This session invites ALL conference participants – staff and students - who haven't presented elsewhere, to submit a single SLIDE on their research (or research interests) and speak to it briefly for 60 seconds in turn.

6-7.30 pm FREE TIME, 7.30-9 pm DINNER, 9-12 ENTERTAINMENT

FRIDAY 22ND

7.00 – 9.30 am BREAKFAST

9.45 – 11.00 am Free time (Top tip? Take a train to the end of the longest leisure pier in the world, and then stroll back...)

11.00-12.45 – 5th SESSION (Chair: Robin West)

PANEL: Sociology and the Natural World

Cathy Duxbury – Vivisection and the male gaze: 1965-1980

Sean Nixon – Drawn to Nature: Popular Engagement with the Natural World in Post-War Britain

Carol Hakins – The role of sociology in the study of allotments

Emma Saunders – Flowers and their Role in the Cultivation of Society: A Sociological World View of the Function of Flowers as Natural Symbols in Interaction.

1.00 - 2.15 LUNCH

2.15 - 4.00 6th SESSION (Chair: Yasemin Soysal)

PANEL: 3 members of staff on aspects of the research and writing up process in their work

Mike Roper, interviewed by Sylvia Meichsner on 'writing up'

Dick Hobbs, interviewed by Anna Sergi and Kenny Monrose on 'the after PhD'

Pam Cox, interviewed by Giacomo Orsini and Heather Shield on 'engaging with outside audiences'

4.00 Concluding thoughts with TEA /COFFEE

Yasemin Soysal and Joan Busfield

4.15 Departure

Abstracts



1st Session: Accounts from below: meanings and trajectories of violence in Latin America and UK (Chair: Elena Nikiforidou)

Tom Davies: Dealing In Violence? Deconstructing Instrumental & Expressive Violence in London's Illegal Economy

The presentation examines the validity of the analytical distinction between instrumental and expressive violence, in the context of professional and gang related crime linked to London's illegal economy. Drawing on key academic works as well my own previous research, the complexities of the relationship between the two distinctions are discussed. Particular consideration is given to the influence social, cultural and individual identity may have on expressive and instrumental elements of gang and drugs related violence in present day London.

Falko Ernst: Beyond structural-rationalist assertions: Mexican drug violence revisited

Predominantly, explications of Mexican "drug-fueled" violence postulate a deterministic relationship between rising numbers and structural features such as macro-political changes. The new quality of the phenomenon – manifest in form of unprecedented brutality – is, however, frequently ignored or reduced to a rational necessity. In this presentation, I retrace the trajectory of one specific violent practice from its origins to its subsequent diffusion within the field of Mexican Organized Crime to illustrate the existence of time- and place-bound "cultures of violence". Highlighting the necessity of going beyond assertions of a structural-rationalist fashion, my argumentation is informed by new institutionalist insights into organizational analysis.

Juan Carlos Ruiz Flores: From physical to symbolic urban periphery: violence and social fragmentation in Santiago de Chile.

Everyday violence taking place within the residential, excluded inner city is re-shaping our understanding of urban periphery in Latin-American cities. In a context of long-term inequalities and stigmatisation, while in the past shantytowns were in Santiago's outskirts; today they seem to be placed also on the symbolic periphery of the city. The symbolic periphery refers to the stigma of been a violent and dangerous community within inner city. It also refers to an identity of resistance which in a mirror game mutually reinforce the fragmentation processes and urban segregation.

This presentation is drawing upon ethnographic research in a stigmatised, excluded shantytown of Santiago de Chile. It is argued that the symbolic periphery is an outcome of two parallel processes. First, all kinds of undergoing violence taking place within leads to the shantytown's lack of social and cultural integration with the rest of the city. A division between 'us' and 'them' is made by the inhabitants of the shantytown. Second, its inhabitants face a cultural fragmentation within the shantytown's community mainstream social norms. The community divides itself into two opposing status groups — "decent people" and "thugs" — each with its own value orientation. These distinctions are not simply instrumental but also expressive in operation, which means that not only keep people alive, but also enable them to live with honour, infusing public social situations with meaning but at the same time reinforcing the experience of been in the symbolic periphery.

Rachel Kenehan: The nature of violence in a juvenile young offenders' institution

Based on observations and interviews with young prisoners sentenced for serious violence, this presentation will discuss the nature of violence in a juvenile young offenders' institution where fights and assaults are an everyday feature. For campaigners the high rates of violence are evidence that 'children' should not be imprisoned, emphasising the powerlessness and vulnerability of young prisoners. Yet the way the interviewees tell it, violence is both an inevitable feature of prison life and something that they choose to engage in – and in any case, prison is less violent than the outside world they are used to. The presentation will describe the various functions of violence in this setting, highlighting the agency of the participants and contributing to the literature on prisoners' adaptive strategies.

3rd Session: Is a disciplinary approach to HR possible or desirable?

Colin Samson: When researchers study human rights they almost inevitably come into contact with disturbing and distressing situations and people in such situations. A single disciplinary perspective will be limited in such instances, which also call for different non-academic qualities in the researcher. In my view studying human rights therefore lends itself to drawing on many imaginative possibilities, disciplinary, non-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary. Finally, such studies also provide an impetus to the researcher to work to promote positive social change and confront powerful institutions.

Eadaoin O'Brien: Drawing from my experience of conducting human rights research, I will outline what I consider to be the benefits and drawbacks of engaging in interdisciplinary human rights work. Undoubtedly an interdisciplinary approach can produce a richer, more holistic understanding of human rights processes than a purely legalistic (the dominant language of human rights) approach can offer. However, as research output and interaction often takes place within clearly demarcated disciplinary lines, the interdisciplinary human rights researcher can encounter problems associated with not falling neatly into one field of speciality or another. I will explore these points further in my talk.

Lydia Morris: I see human rights as an interdisciplinary space, but one to which different disciplines can make different contributions. However, we must guard against reifying disciplines, which means that we should be alert to the different approaches that can be generated from within sociology, as well as the way that sociology engages with, contributes to, and learns from other disciplines. I will try to give some examples in my talk.



5th Session: Sociology and the Natural World (Chair: Robin West)

Cathy Duxbury: Vivisection and the male gaze: 1965-1980

This paper shall examine the vivisection debates that developed in the UK during the mid-twentieth century, focusing on the period 1965-1981. It shall consider how the powers of the scientist and government of the time were constructed, and the manner in which they were interpreted in the cultural milieu. Drawing on Foucault's notion of the gaze, I posit that the operationalisation of animal experimentation by scientists was deeply contingent upon the gendering of the animal body and its association with feminine sexuality. Its subsequent legal sanctioning drew upon the male gaze of the scientist and permeated into the public sphere of the press in which their powers could be exercised without impediment in a patriarchal fashion. This involves analysing the construction of and concentration upon the renaming of certain typologies of vivisection constructed by scientists that I call the Power-Pain Nexus. The paper goes on to discuss informal tactics used by the antivivisection movement in order to interdict the powers held by the scientists and politicians of the time, and the representations of these methods by the press and popular anti-vivisection literature of the period.

Sean Nixon: Drawn to Nature: Popular Engagement with the Natural World in Post-War Britain

Contemporary debates about climate change, concerns about the degradation of the environment, threats to biodiversity and the concomitant challenges to human health and well-being have placed the natural world – non-human nature – at the centre of political deliberation and campaigning, both nationally and internationally. This paper introduces a new research project that will explore the links between a growing consciousness of the natural world fostered by both policy makers and environmental and conservation organisations and the everyday feelings about and engagement with nature by the public. Taking Britain as our principal focus, we will explore how these feelings towards the natural world have shifted since the end of the Second World War. In doing so, we will look beyond the current moment of environmental crisis to a longer period of social change in order to understand the historical formation and development of the engagement with nature and the subjective meanings that it holds for a largely urban population. We argue that such an analysis is important because these everyday feelings about and connection with the natural world point to an openness towards forms of pleasure and well-being which challenge the dominant consumerist definitions of the good life; definitions which have contributed through their emphasis on ever increasing levels of consumption to the environmental crisis of the late twentieth and twenty first century (Offer, 2006; Pretty, 2007). Encouraging alternative forms of hedonism and shifting how the public relate to the

natural world constitute important pre-conditions for more sustainable relationships with other species, the planet and its finite resources (Soper, 2007).

Carol Hakins: The role of sociology in the study of allotments

Drawing on data obtained from semi-structured interviews in three allotment locations in three different socio-economic areas will enable me to address the changes that are taking place on allotments in England in the 21st century. This paper will show the effect of social changes on allotment culture. Reasons for having an allotment and allotment practice have all changed. I will argue that there is now less likely to be a typical allotment holder. Instead, plot-holders may come from a variety of social class backgrounds, with men and women almost equally represented. Is the 1950s 'cloth cap' stereotype of the elderly male plot-holder now outdated? Also, depending on the site location, various ethnic minority groups may be present. I will consider the extent to which the changing social characteristics of allotment holders affect allotment culture. Finally, I shall look at the way in which the effects of social class intersect with gender, ethnicity and age.

Emma Saunders: Flowers and their Role in the Cultivation of Society: A Sociological World View of the Function of Flowers as Natural Symbols in Interaction.

Cultivated flowers are utilised as symbols that create and sustain connections with others and the natural world. They have evolved as symbols of nature and are considered important components of many rituals and gatherings that cultivate, define and maintain society. They are a significant aspect of our culture; the Wedding and Funeral, embedded with sentiment, are key elements of flower culture in the UK. The ubiquity of the use of flowers within society indicates that they provide us with something important. This paper presents a current research project that will examine flower culture in East Anglian communities from a sociological perspective. Exploring rites of passage rituals, the function of flowers within them and the extent to which flowers as natural symbols in interaction assist in the cultivation of society whilst also maintaining social solidarity, mutual meaning and sustaining emotional well being within communities, the research will consider why flowers are a significant aspect of our society's interaction rituals. I argue that this would be better understood on a micro level, where the intimate everyday interactions take place in communities; the rituals that bind us together not only reminding us that we are part of a wider network but sustaining, reinforcing and creating feelings and shared belonging.

During a practical demonstration I will identify some of the functions of flowers and how they contribute to well being and a sense of belongingness within a community.

