

# THE SOCIOLOGY TEACHER

THE JOURNAL OF THE BSA TEACHING GROUP

**BSA Teaching Group  
Regional Conference**  
Friday 08 July 2016  
University of Sheffield  
SchARR,  
30 Regent Court,  
Sheffield

*Provisional programme see Page 27*

**At the Crossroads  
of Globalisation  
and Education**

"What is the most important  
topic for sociologists"

**Rationale for  
teaching Sociology  
in China**

Reflection on teaching  
Sociology in China.

**READ ALL  
ABOUT IT!**

News Values and the  
Media: A Teaching Idea





Patrick Robinson



### *Sociology in China.*

This issue of the Sociology Teacher looks to China for our two lead articles. Many thanks to Richard Driscoll for his piece on teaching Sociology in China and well done to Kari Wang, one of Richard's students, who was successful in winning the BSA Student essay competition this year.

In the past, I have referred to China when teaching the family module, especially when explaining demographic change in society. Due to longer life expectancy and the low birth rate of China (due to the history of the one child policy), it is a great example of a society that has an ageing population. Of course, the UK has the same trend but in China, the trend is described on such a larger scale that the numbers involved are astonishing eg: predictions are that by the year 2050, China will be a society in which 450 million people will be aged over 60 (source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-18091107> ). The full BBC programme on this can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01hl29c> entitled: "China: Growing old before it can grow rich?" This refers to the situation China is in regarding the experience of economic development occurring at the same time that services for the elderly are in need of funding.

If any Sociology Teacher readers have international experiences of teaching Sociology, it would be great to have you send in a summary of your experiences:

- Did you teach in the same way as you might in the UK or did your teaching style adapt? How?
- Was it harder to explain sociological concepts and ideas if you were a different nationality of your class? I'm thinking that the references to real life examples/popular culture links may not have worked as well?
- Or does globalisation mean that if you use a reference to the music video of "Blurred Lines" by Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams to describe the objectification of women in the media, it's something that students from all over the world can recognise and relate to?
- What did you learn from your students from their interpretation of Sociological ideas?
- Did it change the way you saw the education system in the UK?

*All the best and have a good Spring break, Patrick.*

Patrick Robinson  
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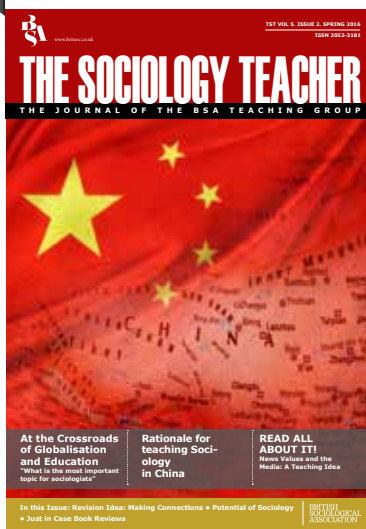
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Could you write for THE SOCIOLOGY TEACHER?



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If you're a BSA Teaching Group member with an idea for something we could include in the journal, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Any aspect of teaching and learning in the Social Sciences can be suitable, but we'd be especially interested in material relating to GCSE and/or KS3, which are currently under-represented in the publication. Articles, classroom resources or offers to provide regular features will all be considered, as will any other ideas for suitable copy. In the first instance please contact commissioning editor, [prs@cadcol.ac.uk](mailto:prs@cadcol.ac.uk) and we will pass your proposal to the editorial board.



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Sociology teachers in schools and sixth form colleges, are now offered full BSA membership at the concessionary rate of £57pa (Jan to Dec), See last page For Benefits Details.

The BSA Teaching Group is a network of anyone keen to further the interests of sociology teaching from secondary to tertiary education.

The aim of the Group is to encourage and promote the teaching of the Social Sciences in Primary, Secondary, Further and Higher Education. The Group therefore provides opportunities for those teaching in Sociology to develop and share ideas and strategies for the promotion and delivery of the teaching of the Sociology. To this end, one of the main activities of the BSA Teaching Group is the dissemination of information relating to teaching materials and teaching methods. The Group is also active in promoting the interests of Sociology teachers to examination boards, academic bodies, governmental and political agencies and the wider public.

Members of the Group can be found in every sector of education, but the majority are teachers of Advanced Level Sociology. Members are encouraged to be active in the running of the Group, either nationally or through local activities.

RATIONALE FOR TEACHING  
SOCIOLOGY IN CHINAAT THE CROSSROADS OF GLOBALISATION  
AND EDUCATION

## MAKING CONNECTIONS









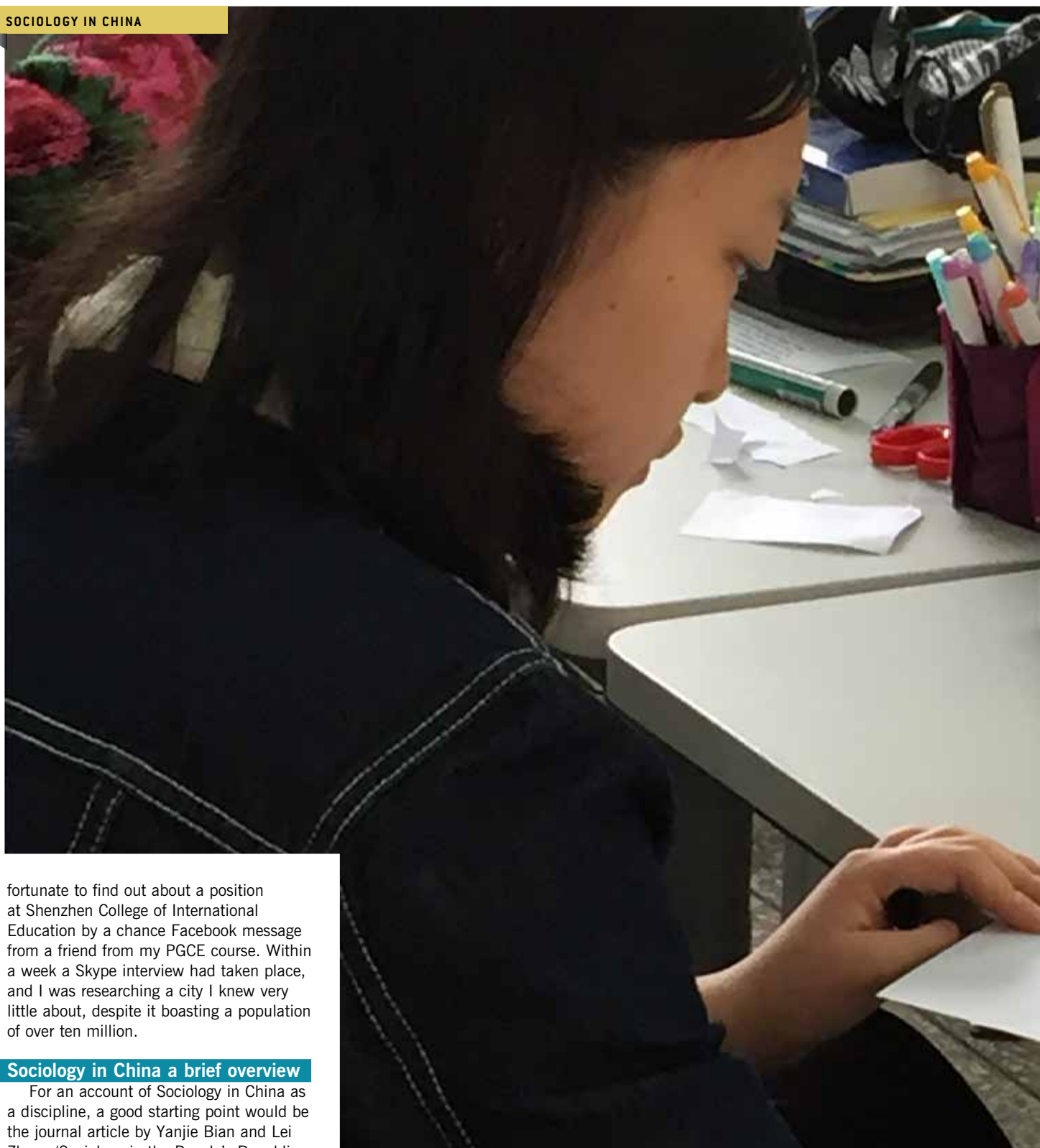
# Rationale for teaching Sociology in China

Richard Driscoll offers a reflection on teaching Sociology in China

On completing my PGCE in social sciences at the Institute of Education in 2007, I spent a month travelling around China and developed a fascination with the country which would lead to subsequent visits and eventually to my current situation of leading an expanding Sociology department. Many of my initial observations on my first trip to China formed the basis of my introductory lessons on both the formation of culture and global culture. For example, on a local Yangtze river cruise (in which I was one of three western tourists) I was exposed to the differences in personal space and privacy. I would regularly have my shoulder tapped by a Chinese man who would request a photo with his wife or children by a professional photographer. In addition, a group of teachers on board would ask direct and personal questions in relation to my marriage status and income. I was also intrigued to see first-hand what Ritzer had referred to as Starbuckization of society (1) and the cloned shopping centres in every major city with conspicuous consumption clearly evident. In Chengdu I had a Sichuan fish which despite off the spiciness scale was particularly tasty. The staff outnumbered the customers by a ratio of three to one. Next door an overpriced and bland pizza hut had a queue to get a reservation. My Sociology students in the state comprehensive school where I taught in Epsom were fascinated by many of the cross cultural examples in class and would occasionally attempt filibuster tactics to try and steer a discussion onto the topic of China.

After seven enjoyable years teaching and then leading a social sciences department, I was hoping to get the opportunity of finding a Sociology job in China. With very few international schools offering Sociology (I did not see any adverts on TES in two years), I was





fortunate to find out about a position at Shenzhen College of International Education by a chance Facebook message from a friend from my PGCE course. Within a week a Skype interview had taken place, and I was researching a city I knew very little about, despite it boasting a population of over ten million.

### Sociology in China a brief overview

For an account of Sociology in China as a discipline, a good starting point would be the journal article by Yanjie Bian and Lei Zhang 'Sociology in the People's Republic'. (2) In brief, Sociology as a subject emerged in China in the 1920s only to be banned in 1952, partly influenced by Lenin's assertion that Comte's sociology was bourgeois. In the modernisation era, Sociology returned in 1979 with the reestablishment of the Chinese Sociological Association. Whilst over seventy universities offer Sociology at undergraduate level, the picture is different at high school. The public schools do not offer Sociology, with the typical humanities offer being history, politics and geography. Whilst there has been a substantial growth in the number of international schools in China, very few have Sociology as part of their curriculum. Based on the uptake at

the school I would not be surprised if this was to change in the short to medium term, especially in the context of a recent discussion I had with a professor of Social Policy at York who highlighted that the significant proportion of students are from the South East Asia region.

### Teaching sociology at Shenzhen College of International Education (SCIE) First impressions

I started employment at SCIE in August 2014. SCIE is a fee paying international school following the IGCSE and IA Level

with only a few non-Chinese students. It has a high ability cohort with typically about 16 students going on to study at Oxford or Cambridge University. There has been a recent increase in the number of applications to American universities. Sociology had been introduced the previous year following the Cambridge International Education (CIE) International A-level.

My first challenge was that I had been given one class but had 72 students wanting to enroll onto the course. So I was in a new experience of delivering lessons in an auditorium and then devising a fair



I quickly realised that I was in a privileged position and had an exciting opportunity. It was also a very difficult decision to have to turn away many enthusiastic students who could not be accommodated and to see their obvious bitter disappointment.

selection criterion to narrow down the students. At the end of my second lesson on the nature/nurture debate it became apparent that one of the students had ordered in advance the vast majority of the CIE recommended reading list and had in fact read and understood Gender by R W Connell applying the readings to the lesson. I quickly realised that I was in a privileged position and had an exciting opportunity. It was also a very difficult decision to have to turn away many enthusiastic students who could not be accommodated and to see their obvious bitter disappointment. This is something I never had to do in the

UK where on occasion, students would be recommended towards signing up to make up the numbers, as opposed to having a specific passion for the subject. I was pleased therefore that the department was expanded this year. With 3 students from the first cohort obtaining A\* and the highest examination result in China I expect the demand to continue to rise.

### Challenges and experiences of teaching sociology in an international context

When teaching Sociology in an international school for the first time there

are many challenges which at first can be somewhat daunting. The CIE exam board has a syllabus which allows for flexibility so as to utilise the experiences of the student's home country, whilst still having a framework based upon the context of Sociological research from UK and USA. A good starting point to the course is the well known 'Shirbit Culture' example to explore some of the features of British culture although I was surprised that one student guessed first time where this culture was, having been accustomed over the years to guesses of the Amazon, to the Pacific islands to somewhere in Africa.

The topics I teach on the Sociology of the Media, Religion, Education and the Family require a substantial amount of contextual knowledge of the situation in the UK. When I taught in the UK I used Twitter to share contemporary examples which were often used in a starter activity called 'Have I got Sociology for You'. In China, Twitter is blocked alongside many useful blogs. The guardian website is available and alongside 'Sociology Review' magazines I was able to provide the relevant material from the UK. I found it interesting that the writings and





One of the most interesting aspects of teaching in an international school is adapting a teaching style which is suitable to your students whilst staying true to your teaching philosophy.

television interviews of Owen Jones were just as popular with the Chinese students as the UK. The case study of the media portrayal of Shannon Matthews, in the excellent chapter in the demonization of the working class, resonated equally with my Chinese students as it had with my previous students in Epsom. Similarly, when exploring subcultures, the popularity of Louis Theroux is obviously universal. In fact, surprisingly, my poor attempts of humour, for example, on questions on conflict approaches asking students to check their MARX scheme, have the very same groans as I encountered in England

One effective teaching strategy I have adopted to assist with the context of the sociological research is role play, in which students read sections of research findings in character. This has worked well with studies such as Learning to Labour, Wilmott and Young's Kinship networks and Ann Oakley's Housewives study.

Having established the importance of explaining the UK or USA context of Sociological research, another challenge is to have the right balance of cross cultural comparisons from China, in order for the lessons to remain relevant and engaging to the students. Of course it is a two-way process and I am fortunate to gain an insight into Chinese culture. One effective example to illustrate this point is, following a lesson on family diversity, a student of mine, Hecate exposed me to a rare example of a matriarchal tribe, the Mosuo. Hecate decided to carry out a small scale ethnographic piece of research in the summer with a research partner. I shared the findings with text book author Chris



Livesey who has included this on his blog (3).

One of the most interesting aspects of teaching in an international school is adapting a teaching style which is suitable to your students whilst staying true to your teaching philosophy. Having been trained in a pedagogy which places great emphasis on the importance of questioning, I found





it disconcerting in my first few lessons when I posed a question to be met with absolute silence. At the end of the lesson, feeling a bit disheartened that I had failed to enthuse, I was then met with a queue of students all asking me excellent and insightful questions based on the lesson. When I asked why they had not asked them in the lesson, it became apparent it was largely not to lose face in case the rest of the class thought the questions were not of sufficient usefulness. It took a while to embed a culture of questioning. Similarly, it took a while before students worked effectively through group work. Other teaching methods were assimilated far more quickly. For example, the WWW (What Went Well.....), EBI (Even Better If.....), INT (I Need To....) feedback approach appeared to be popular. Students acted on feedback in a more thoughtful way to my students in UK and their progress particularly in terms of essays was rapid. In fact, by the end of the year many of the essays would gain full marks.

### Student successes

In a short period of time there have been many successes by SCIE sociology students. A few students inspired by fourth wave feminism campaigns, such as the work of UK Feminista decided to create awareness around school by designing a T-shirt with the slogan "The F-Word not a Dirty Word" and on the back "Proud to be a SCIE Feminist". Students have carried out some really exciting research on China, on topics such as cultural capital, parental pressure on marriage and impact of mass media on changing perceptions of Americans. Undoubtedly the success which has caused most excitement in the school was the news that Kari Wang had won the BSA's annual essay competition with her entry on globalisation and education.

News of her achievement spread through the social networking application "wechat" rapidly and is likely to have a knock on effect with even more students being encouraged to study Sociology. From my point of view what was most impressive was that she had only been studying Sociology for just over three months. I asked Kari to summarise what she has gained from studying sociology so far and she wrote "It's been really a pleasure and privilege to read the works from people who had dedicated their whole life in hopes of making a better society for all of us. Though different sociologists have different approaches and look into different issues, they're all more or less contributing to the human society in terms of understanding social relations, improving government policies, and maintaining social justice". This strikes me as a very mature and perceptive attitude from a sixteen-year-old student.

In addition, I arranged for Stefan Kühner from the University of York to give a lecture to the students on 'Are we growing unequal, and if so should we care?' Events such as this, as well as extra sessions I deliver which go beyond the curriculum, have helped to inspire six students to study sociology or social policy at institutions such as LSE, Durham and Warwick.

### The future

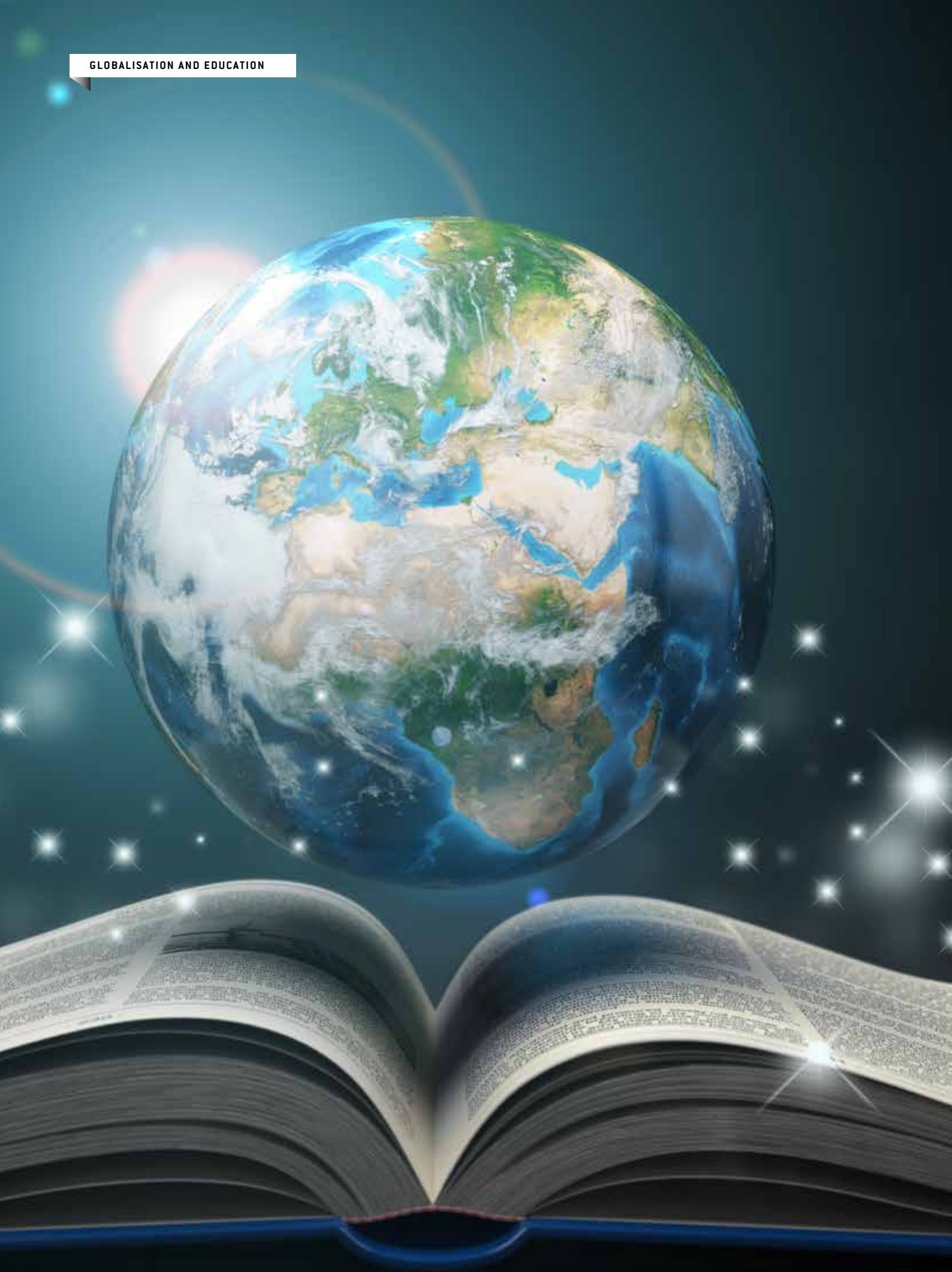
Next year I look forward to even more students going on to study social sciences at university and perhaps explore the opportunity of a project with UK students. A student I taught as a NQT teacher went on to become a teacher of sociology in Epsom and I joke to my current cohort that in five years' time I hope to return to see one of them teaching. It may not be such a far fetched idea!

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# At the crossroads of globalisation and education

—In response to “What is the most important topic for sociologists to study over the next 20 years?”

By Kari Wang

**Having** spent my first thirteen years of life in a quiet small city, I had absolutely no idea what kind of life I would step into when I made the decision to enter an international high school in Shenzhen—one of the most prosperous cities in China. From my very first day, I was overwhelmed by the thousands of imported books gracefully arranged on shelves, English pop songs played inside the shopping malls, and foreigners in bars chatting around...three years have passed, and now I am amused to the fact that the idea of ‘globalisation’ had diffused into every street corner of this modernised city with less than forty years of history.

More remarkable is the trend of overseas studying. In Shenzhen solely, there are more than 30 international schools and education centres providing international courses. A variety of overseas studies agencies smartly locate themselves around schools and occupy metro stations, websites and their sponsored events with eye-catching advertisements. A recent survey conducted by a group of students from No. 3 Senior High School of Shenzhen found that, among 2,985 middle-school students in Shenzhen, more than 70% inclined to study abroad (despite the fact that over 60% of all students had little or no overseas experience), and over 60% of families would support their children to do so. Even for kids, there are thousands of them living in Shenzhen who travel back and forth the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border daily to attend kindergartens and schools in Hong Kong.

Same situation applies to other parts of China. According to Project Atlas, 459,800 students left China for overseas studying in 2014, and each year the figure rewrites the record. The reason behind these phenomena is worth thinking. Why are students from the most affluent cities of China—world’s largest and fastest growing

economies with one fifth of population on this planet, rushing out of their country for foreign education? Is it that people think Chinese education is falling behind, or they all have an extremely open and global mind? Are those so-called ‘international’ schools in China actually providing a free and cosmopolitan environment? How could they be sure that foreign education would really be better for them before trying it out?

With these questions, I conducted a research on the globalisation of education in China, which was specifically focused on Chinese Student



Migration. I designed an online questionnaire and received 57 responses ranging from primary to college students (with a majority of high school students)

Among the 51 students who are currently studying in an international school/programme in China, 84% claimed that their schools valued extracurricular activities as well as academic knowledge, and 78% believed their school had a great cultural diversity (for example, have teachers from different parts of the world). 60% said their school had a combination of Chinese



and foreign values, while 27% suggested Chinese traditions were maintained as the core value. However, 14% of them said their schools only focused on preparing students for exams, showing that some schools are still exam-oriented despite their 'international' nature.

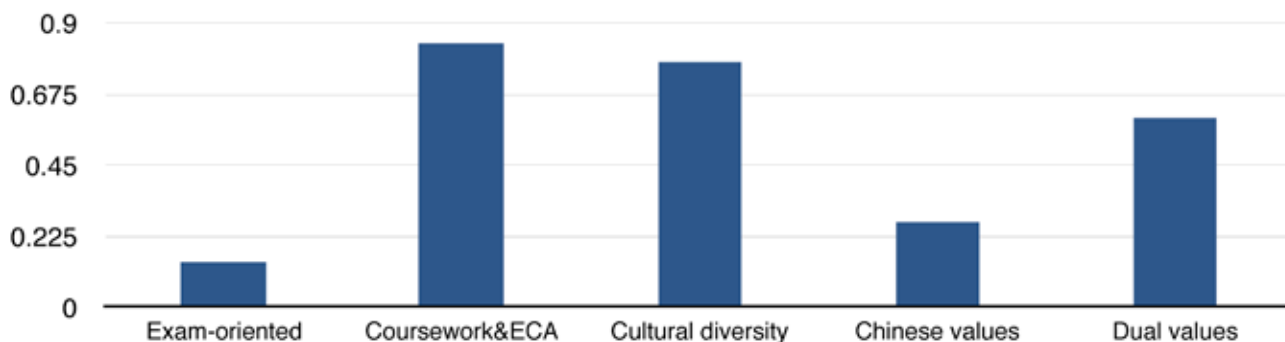
Many Chinese parents would discourage their children from becoming artists or musicians for the 'instability' of those careers.

The good news is there has been an increase in the variety of major's taken by Chinese overseas students. In the past,

all positive signs of diversity.

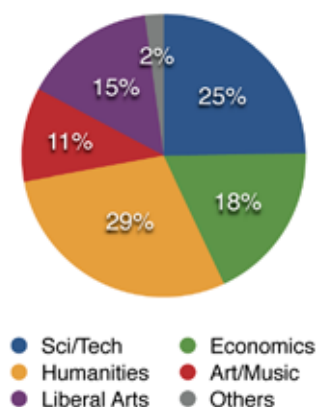
Since the tuition fee of overseas studying is often high, it is only affordable for the more wealthy families. This is also tested in the questionnaire. Most participants are high school students who are economically dependent, which means

Features of 'International schools' in China

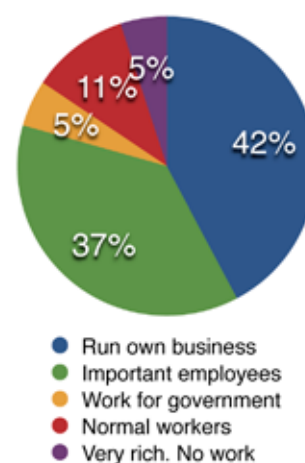


When asked about their reasons for studying abroad, three quarters (74%) of the participants said they believed foreign education would make them more well-rounded individuals (as a way to increase human capital). For example, they could take part in more extracurricular activities and community service. 68% saw overseas studying as an opportunity to explore about different culture and enrich their experience. 60% believed more resources and information would be accessible in foreign schools. 20% said it would be a good way to get a decent job, which means a better future. This might be both a pull factor and a push factor due to the inflation of degrees, that a foreign diploma is not only necessary for getting better jobs abroad, but also particularly useful when finding jobs in China.

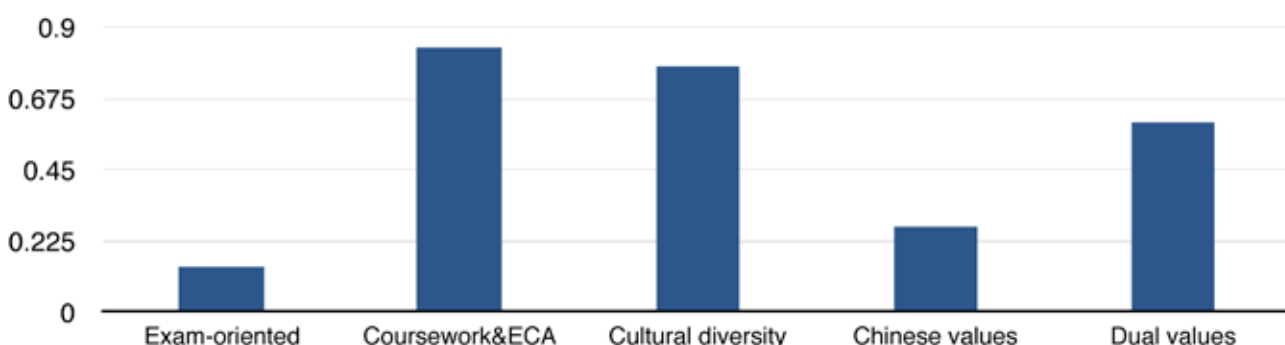
Preferred majors in university



Main financial provider's work



Features of 'International schools' in China



68% students felt the Chinese education system was not suitable for them, and wished to escape 'Gaokao' (The National Higher Education Entrance Examination in China). An interesting point is over 80% of those students intend to have a major in either art, music, humanities or liberal arts. As a matter of fact, the Chinese education system values less on humanities subjects compared with science and economics.

most students would choose 'safer' subjects such as maths, engineering and economics which Chinese students are generally good at. Now, students devote themselves to different areas, and most participants' interests are not restricted to one single subject. As for their destination, USA (32%) and UK (30%) are taking the lead, followed by Canada (12%), Australia (11%) and other European countries (9%). These are

they have their parents to pay for the education. 42% of the participants' family run their own business, and another 37% had parents with decent salary, and in relatively important positions at work place. 5% of parents work for the government, and another 5% are very rich that they don't need to work. Thus, at least 84% of the families are presumably privileged financially.

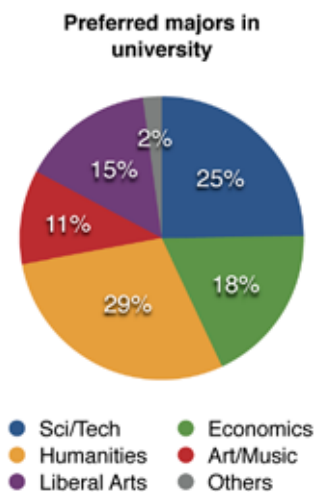


This is a perfect illustration of social stratification in China. In 1981, the State Council approved the Temporary Regulations on Self-financed Overseas Education, and a decade later a new policy known as “support study overseas, encourage returns, guarantee freedom of movement” was introduced, causing a rapid increase in the number of overseas students, especially since the 2000's.

According to recent data, the average cost for an international student at undergraduate level is £11,987 per year in UK, which is 7.4 times of the per capita disposable annual income of urban households in China (15699 yuan in the first half of 2015) and 20 times of the per capita disposable annual income of rural households (5554 yuan). Obviously, only the rich can afford to send their children abroad, while the poor have almost no chance.

This can be further linked to Marx's idea of ‘social reproduction’, in which social inequality is transmitted from one generation to the next. The elites, or those who receive the best education usually come from the best backgrounds, and are far more likely to provide the same or even better opportunities for their offsprings. In this way, in equality is reinforced in society. As for the participants' plan after graduation from foreign schools, only 24% of them said they would immediately

or eventually return to China, and try to make use of the knowledge and experience abroad to make China a better place. 28% thought it doesn't really matter which country they work for, (which seems like a very globalised idea on the one hand), and a significant minority (22%) are determined to stay over seas and hopefully take up another citizenship.



On the other hand, these figures are quite worrying. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, though the ratio of

returnees to the total number of Chinese students leaving for overseas had reached a climax at 85.4% in 2013, accumulatively there have been over 1.5 million Chinese students who went abroad and never returned. A large proportion of the returnees are ordinary people who relied on parental financial support to study abroad for several years, while those best-educated people tend to stay overseas. A strong evidence of this is a retention rate as high as 87% for both science and engineering fields. Chinese government had introduced several programmes to attract the talents back, nevertheless there is still no substantial solution to the massive ‘brain drain’.

Is it that people don't recognise the heavy responsibility of their generation in constructing the country's future? Two thirds of the participants believe a country's future depends on education to a great extent (5 out of 5 mark), and the rest of them all think education plays quite a significant role in shaping a country's future (3 or 4 out of 5). This might be either suggesting a possible dilution of patriotism or indicating an increasingly globalised mind set.

Through observation I noticed that many teenagers and some adults (in my school it's probably everyone) have access to online education. Comparing with books and newspapers, I see more fingers sliding over phone screens and

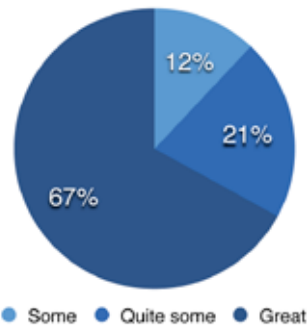




Kindles on trains. Will online education ever replace our current form of education now? If that happens, what are the benefits and drawbacks it would bring us? Would Chinese students still be eager to study abroad, or would they be satisfied with the global environment on the Internet?

Only 44% of the participants genuinely think school education is the best way for teenagers to access knowledge, and less than half (46%) believe school education can prepare them for work in the future. 18% said they didn't like school that much but they had no other choice. About three quarters (74%) think they can acquire useful skills such as social skills, flexibility, and the ability to deal with pressure in schools.

Influence of school education in shaping values

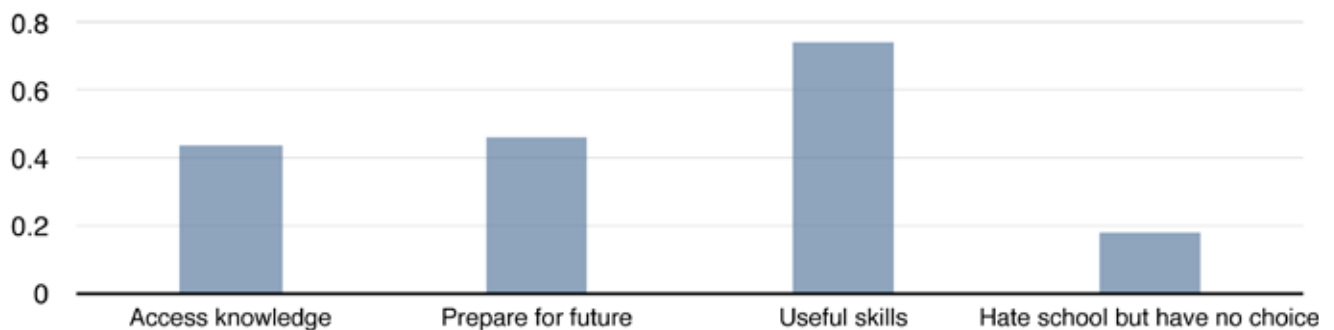


start to diverge from the ideal of 'value consensus' into a more diverse and versatile reality.



in India, there are still 287 million illiterate people. Class reproduction, credential inflation, under-education, over-education, bullying, disrespect towards teachers, a lack of parental involvement...the list can go on and on, and it will be our generation's mission to gradually come up

Opinions on school education



The participants gave an average rating of 3.67 on a scale of 5 when they were asked about the influence of school education on their values. This suggests that school education plays a fairly important role in the socialisation of most people, which seemingly supports from Parson's idea of education as the main agent of secondary socialisation. The thoughts of quitting the Chinese education system, however, is obviously not directly taught by the Chinese education system, but something produced from dissatisfactions with the system. In this case, it seems that more and more people

Going back to my personal story which might not interest you much, but from a perspective I believe millions of Chinese teenagers now stand—I gave up my peaceful life in that small an answer to (and will probably never figure out).

What I am presenting you is not just the interesting phenomenon of Chinese Student Migration, but more importantly what it reflects. Education is apparently a global issue—in some states of the USA, the high school dropout rate is as high as a quarter; in the UK, the dual education system reinforces inequality between the upper-middle class and the working class;

with solutions to some of those problems.

The future of education is, and will continue to be a major topic for sociologists and those who genuinely care about the future of human beings as long as our species still exist. It is a matter of the persistence of human intelligence, the prerequisite of further advancement, and is definitely not just limited to the school curriculum. A reform of education in a global context is taking place through a silent revolution. Standing at the junction of globalisation and education in this interconnecting world, I wonder where the path will lead 'us' to.

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Chinese students leaving for overseas studying&returning: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CUKNBikWEAAuYcf.jpg>

Why Are Overseas Chinese Students Not Returning to China: <http://www.chinasmack.com/2013/>

[stories/why-are-overseas-chinese-students-not-returning-to-china.html](http://stories/why-are-overseas-chinese-students-not-returning-to-china.html)

Sociology 7th edition by Anthony Giddens



The future of education is, and will continue to be a major topic for sociologists and those who genuinely care about the future of human beings as long as our species still exist.







REVISION IDEA:

# Making connections

Writer: **Patrick Robinson**, Sociology Teacher at Cadbury College, Birmingham





**At** this stage of the academic year, students should be directing their attention to how to revise the work they have completed during their course. Revision seems to work well for long term memory when learners can make connections between knowledge.

After watching a BBC quiz show called “Only Connect” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00l5khg>), I had the idea to make my own connection conundrums for revision tasks in class. The idea is that a grid is presented: 4 columns and 4 rows

creating 16 “cells”. In the grid, there are 4 sets of 4 things that are connected to each other. The task is to deduce which 4 are connected to each other.



I wrote the following grids for A level Sociology students: see worksheets below. Can you find the connections yourself? Stuck? There are some tips/guidance ideas in the section called “Clues” beneath each grid. I then left a space for students to make their own grids which had some success in offering the class a different way

to revise and some potential to share the grids they write as peer to peer revision.

### Sociology: Quick revision

Connections: in each grid below, there are 16 words/names/phrases from the Sociology course. Your revision task is to identify four groups of four connected things

eg: Wright, Mac an Ghaill, Gilbourn and exclusion data would all be connected as they are evidence to support the view that schools are institutionally racist. If you are stuck, there are some clues beneath the grids.

### Grid 1: Synoptic module (Easy)

Moore	Durkheim	Volunteer	Kincaid
Quota	Pilot study	Westergaard	Parsons
Braverman	Opportunity	Respondent validation	Snowball
Triangulation	Davies	Resler	Being value free

### Grid 2: Synoptic module (Harder)

Bargaining power	Manufacturing jobs	Prostitution/trafficking	Glass ceiling
% of aristocracy in the Rich List	Wage gap	Status	Proletariat
Party	Routine	Bourgeoisie	Trade union membership
Housework division	Market position	Exclusion rates in school	Semi-skilled

### Grid 3: Education module (Easy)

Role allocation	Academies for “failing” schools	GCSE grades	Becker
Willis	Tuition Fees Introduced	Education Action Zones	Meritocracy
Value added	Social Solidarity	Bourdieu	EMA
Bernstein	Selective or Non-selective?	A level results	Value consensus

### Grid 4: Education module (Harder)

Subject choice data	Increased class inequality	7 UP	That’ll Teach Em
BBC news: Education Headlines	Francis	Free schools	Changes to teacher pay and pensions
Exclusion data	Created too much stress	Led to “teaching to the test”	Francis
Guilty of cultural capital bias	Humphreys: unequal opportunities	End of January modules for A level	Curriculum reform

# Clues

Grid 1 = sampling?Neo-Marxists, Functionalists, ways to improve validity

Grid 2 = Weberian theory, evidence to support the view that patriarchy does exist, things that have declined over time, words/terms used to measure class groups

Grid 3 =, information about schools that can be found in school league tables, sociologists that measure class differences in education, policies introduced by the New Labour Government:

1997-2010, four key ideas of Functionalist theory on education.

Grid 4 = evidence that describes gender differences in education, videos relevant to the education module, criticisms of the 11 plus, policies introduced by the Conservative/Liberal coalition, 1997 – 2015.

Extension: Can you make your own revision grid? 16 things, 4 groups of 4 connected things, remember to jumble/mix them up:

## Grid 1 Module =


Share these with your friends: can you complete each others?

### ANSWERS:

#### Grid 1 =

Sampling techniques: Opportunity, Quota, Snowball, Volunteer  
Neo-Marxists: Braverman, Westergaard, Resler, Kincaid  
Functionalists: Durkheim, Parsons, Davies and Moore  
Ways to improve validity: Being value free, Triangulation, Respondent validation, Pilot Study

#### Grid 2

Weberian theory: Bargaining power, Status, Market position, Party  
Evidence to support the view that patriarchy does exist: Housework division, Wage gap, Prostitution/trafficking, Glass ceiling  
Things that have declined over time: Manufacturing jobs, % of aristocracy in the Rich List, Exclusion rates in school, Trade union membership  
Words/terms used to measure class groups: Routine, Proletariat, Semi-skilled, Bourgeoisie

#### Grid 3 =,

Information about schools that can be found in school league tables: Value added, Selective or Non-selective? A level results, GCSE grades  
Sociologists that measure class differences in education: Willis, Bourdieu, Becker, Bernstein  
Policies introduced by the New Labour Government: 1997-2010: Tuition Fees Introduced, Academies for “failing” schools, Education Action Zones, EMA  
Four key ideas of Functionalist theory on education: Role allocation, Social Solidarity, Meritocracy, Value consensus

#### Grid 4 =

Evidence that describes gender differences in education: Subject choice data, Exclusion data, Francis, Spender  
Videos relevant to the education module: BBC news: Education Headlines. That'll Teach Em, Humphreys: unequal opportunities, 7 UP

Criticisms of the 11 plus: Created too much stress, Led to “teaching to the test”, Increased class inequality, Guilty of cultural capital bias

Policies introduced by the Conservative/Liberal coalition, 1997 – 2015: End of January modules for A level, Curriculum reform, Free schools, Changes to teacher pay and pensions



READ ALL ABOUT IT



# READ ALL ABOUT IT!

## News values and the Media: a teaching idea

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**When** teaching the media topic in Sociology, one aspect of the syllabus is to assess the idea of news values and agenda setting: do news editors make bias decisions regarding what kind of headlines dominate the focus of the mass media? Marxist thinkers would argue that the news values in the mass media reflect the interests of the powerful eg: are headlines designed to steer attention away from class inequality? Or present members of society that receive state benefits as some form of folk devil? More Post-modern arguments would be that the media is so divergent today that no single message dominates, especially in an era of consumer choice and consumer written content from social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

When teaching this topic, I like to carry out the following activity with my classes:

### TASK

Imagine you are the editing team of a national newspaper on Thursday Feb 3rd, 2016.

Seven of your journalists have sent you their top stories of the day. You need to decide the order that the stories appear in the paper, ready for publication on Friday, Feb 4th, 2016.

Rank them in order of how much importance you would give the story in your paper

eg: 1 = Top story, FRONT page, BIG PICTURE

7 = least important story: middle pages of paper, small/no picture.

News Story	Ranking  1=TOP story  7 = Least Important story	Reason for ranking
Scientists say they have made a new breakthrough in trying to find a cure for cancer		
Football player found guilty of sexually assaulting a 15 year old girl		
Man used a dating website to meet women that he eventually raped and assaulted		
French President warns David Cameron that if the UK votes to leave the EU, the UK may be worse off		
New laws proposed to prosecute people who abuse others via social network websites (known as "trolls").		
Changes to pension contributions for those saving for retirement		
Ex-husband of Cheryl Cole says that her evening with 1 Direction singer was just a publicity stunt		

These headlines were all taken from the real newspaper cover stories of the day. This lesson does depend on the teacher buying the newspapers on the day/the day before lesson.

During the plenary, aim to get students to make well-reasoned justification for why they would argue some headlines have more "news value" than others. It is useful to hold up the actual newspaper that made the same ranking decision as the students. For example, one pair decided that the "French President warns David Cameron that if the UK votes to leave the EU, the UK may be worse off" was the most important headline of the day. This was justified by stating that it could

have the biggest impact on the largest amount of readers. I was able to hold up the newspapers that made the same choice and make statements like: "That's the same decision made by the Daily Telegraph today". Meanwhile, another pair of students prioritised the Cheryl Cole headline as they could then place a picture of Cheryl Cole on the front cover of their paper, seen as a good idea to appeal to celebrity/gossip style readership.

At the end of the plenary, I would ask the students to write 2/3 sentences regarding the conclusion of the task. Try and steer this to be something like:

"Different editors make different decisions regarding what should

make the headlines in the press. These decisions can be based on ideas to do with what editors think will sell their paper, what may interest their readers and whether or not the story can be supported with visual stimulation such as a photo or video footage. It may also be influenced by the general bias of the editor: what stories they feel are important will be subjective, based in the influence of their political loyalties or ownership".

My class seemed to enjoy this task: firstly working in pairs to decide the order of the news, and then in the whole class plenary when they justified their decisions to others. If this goes well, you may have students challenging each other's decisions.





# The Potential of Sociology

Alexandra Hay, Professional Doctorate Student at Keele University, outlines the value of studying Sociology.

In January 2016 I wrote a blog post for the TES 'subject genius' section. It was titled 'Realising the Potential of Sociology' and was based on a visit I had from a former student who had just began a nursing degree. Whilst we chatted she told me how useful her Sociology A level had been in her first term as a trainee nurse, more so than both her Health and Social Care BTEC qualification and A Level Psychology. This struck a chord with me, as I have felt, and continue to feel, that a huge part of my job as a Sociology teacher seems to be 'in defence' of Sociology, as it is so often chronically undervalued. The reaction of

differently to other A levels and why this approach to subject promotion is crucial to ensure Sociology remains a viable A level during the various challenges facing post 16 provision. I will also share a selection of responses to the original TES article that demonstrate not only the wider application of Sociology, but why it is important we, as teachers continue to promote and encourage students of the subject.

## Encouraging our little sociologists

Teaching A level Sociology is not without its trials, as it competes against the core subjects that our prospective students will

have already have completed a GCSE in and thus have prior knowledge of. Why should they pick this unknown subject over History or Geography? We are also saddled with the curse of the 'ology'; some students opt for an 'ology' be it

Sociology or Psychology, as they have been conditioned by parents or other teachers into the misguided notion that they will be easier than the core subjects. This is of course a huge misnomer, as logically why a subject in which you have no background knowledge in is going to be easier than one you have been studying for the better part of 10 years is baffling. But this is what we face before the students get to our classroom. In addition to this in many

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surprise by my student at the usefulness of the content of her Sociology A level reflects the wider unfavourable attitudes towards the value of the subject, but it also demonstrates the diverse application of the course.

In this article I will discuss the many difficulties faced when engaging students with pre-tertiary Sociology and techniques to overcome this, why sociology as a discipline can be viewed and promoted



schools and colleges Sociology A level is still often regarded as the 'soft' option, recommended to students unsure of what to study, or those who do not meet the entry requirements for the core subjects. Sociology often does not have great press in secondary education – jibes such as; Sociology is just 'common sense', Sociology is 'easy', 'you will never get into a Russell group university with Sociology, do a core subject' are common place.

So how do you go about engaging students with Sociology, a subject that they probably have never studied before and may already be forming their own unfavourable opinions about?

I have found to keep students engaged they have to understand the wider value or application of the subject. This is hardly a ground-breaking notion, as countless teaching manuals and behaviour

we cover (families, education, beliefs and crime) students can easily relate to and have wide applicability to many other academic and vocational areas. The themes explored in Sociology A level such as class and ethnicity, feminism, Marxism and globalisation complements other subjects such as A Level Religion Philosophy and Ethics, Psychology, English, Geography, Drama and BTEC Health and Social Care should you need an additional promotional angle.

However the emphasis on practical skills is not be enough – it should be the goal of the teacher to develop a love for the subject that lasts beyond 6th form and to do this you have to win the hearts and minds of the students. Once you have made the students see what they will gain from the subject you must tell them what they will be able to offer once they have their A Level.

In the first few weeks of the course I explain to my students that being a sociologist is different from being a historian, geographer or an English student. Being a sociologist

means you commit yourself to social action. I tell them that by learning about society, constructing theories, conducting research and revealing inequalities the sociologist arms themselves with the tools of change. The purpose of sociology, and its very reason for being, is to change society. I am aware this is only one of the many epistemological outlooks of sociology, however it is the one that resonates most strongly with me, and thus my students.

This is a really important lesson. To be successful students need to be fired up and inspired. They need to understand why Sociology is such an important subject, and it must jump off the textbook page at them. They must be given the opportunity to research examples of how Sociology has influenced policy, helped our understanding of society and revealed injustices and inequalities. They should be assisted in the discovery of both historical (the text books are full of this) and recent sociological work and its influence on their lives, and the lives of people they know. And the most exciting thing of all; tell them if they stick with sociology, potentially one day they could contribute to this change.

### The change makers

What kind of change are we talking about here? In my experience I have found the majority of 6th form students do not cope well with abstract – they need specifics.



I have a large back catalogue from my own teaching, such as the nurse, the midwife, the primary teacher, the social worker, all whom have benefitted from their sociological 'imagination' (Bauman 2001, available in Jenkins R. (2002) see references at end). However the response I received from the original TES blog post 'Realising the Potential of Sociology' illustrated the widely diverse application of the subject and multitude of ways former students have used the knowledge gained during their A level. I shared the article on Facebook, it was tweeted by the TES themselves and Keele University posted a link on their social media sites. This led to an influx of comments, not only from my friends who had their own stories of how Sociology has helped them professionally, but others, via Keele, for whom Sociology A level has had a lasting impact. For example I was contacted by an international HR manager who recalled fondly her A Level and claimed she uses concepts and insights from the subject during her working life as 'every day is a social science experiment'. Also an engineer manager who stated that his knowledge of 'labelling theory' gained during his Sociology A level continues to influence his management style today. And a copy writer and former catalogue editor for a major department store told me how grateful she was that Sociology A level had equipped her with a level of insight, and an awareness of shared values and the motivations of different demographics



management strategies suggest that to promote engagement the students must know why they are doing what they are doing, the purpose must be obvious. We are lucky with Sociology however that the application to their lives is so clear and direct.

So how do you do this? I start with a language the students (and importantly parents) will understand; 'Sociology A level will give you useful practical skills'. For example even the weakest student will leave the course with essay writing skills and the ability to use evidence to construct an argument. Students will begin to think philosophically and critically and to tentatively understand the relationship between theory and methods. The topics



which has helped her to create material that will appeal to diverse audiences. And the final year medical student who had sat both Sociology GCSE and A level despite them being 'black listed' by her school. She told me not a day goes by when she doesn't use Sociology in one way or another and illustrated this with a quote from Hippocrates 'it is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has'. This small group show that not only is Sociology A level of wide relevance to a diverse array of future careers, but it is also a subject that people look back on fondly and credit with the development of perception and insights that other A level subjects do not always offer.

#### **Why we must continue to promote Sociology**

With the continued cuts to post-16 funding and the removal of the AS/A2 system of exams gone are the days whereby we could sit back and ignore the criticisms and misinterpretations that blight the subject. The dark shadow of A level reform and continued cuts to post-16 funding continues to test even the most seasoned professional. The value of Sociology must be promoted effectively to assist student uptake, and then entrenched early in the course, to avoid student drop outs. The move to linear A levels and subsequent reduction from 4 subjects to 3 raises pertinent questions. For example how often was Sociology the 4th subject

option in the past (and the one likely to be dropped post AS exams)? In my experience not often actually, or if students began the course of that opinion, they soon changed their minds. However we cannot be complacent, the removal of the AS exam in some centres will limit the uptake of 'try it and see' students, and will mean our initial promotion of the subject becomes all the more important. Sociology was a strong and healthy A level pre curriculum 2000 and the introduction of the modular AS and A2 levels, thus there is no reason to suggest that recruitment numbers will suffer under the new linear system. However with continuing cuts to funding received per 6th form student it is imperative to ensure our class sizes are healthy. In this climate we must continue to fight hard for the subject that clearly is of so much value.

#### **Conclusion**

Sociology A level and its students should not be underestimated. Not only does it jar even the most passive 6th former out of their slumber, and provide much needed essay writing skills, it opens student's eyes to the effects of things they have taken for granted, and plants the seeds of alternative possibilities. It can empower students to stand up for their beliefs and excites them at the thought of the potential of their futures. It highlights how each seemingly isolated human action can have far reaching consequences for others, as we are bound together in increasingly complex networks. Above all Sociology

is of huge use beyond the classroom, be it in management or medicine, the ability to understand groups of people is a phenomenal tool.

So I suggest if you are having difficulty convincing students to opt or engaging your current cohort with the subject, strip it back to basics, tell them to ignore the sceptics, roll up their sleeves and think about things they want to change. Encourage them not to just study Sociology for the sake of an A level or UCAS points, but to develop into sociologists.

As you never know where it might lead them.

Such is the potential of Sociology. And why it is so important to continue to fight for it.

**Alexandra Hay is a social science teacher in the Midlands and a professional doctorate student at Keele University.**

Original TES article <https://www.tes.com/news/blog/realising-potential-sociology>

Jenkins R. (2002) Foundations of Sociology: Towards a Better Understanding of the Human World. Palgrave Macmillan Hampshire.

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/hippocrate132701.html#2a4lxYslQsLsUv2g.99>



# Just in case

If you are looking for ideas or inspiration to liven up your sociology teaching, in each issue we review ICT related activities, guides, websites and book reviews for you to explore.

## NEW BOOK:

**Miguel A. Centeno and Elaine Enriquez. 2016**

War and Society.

ISBN: 9 780745 645803.

**Centeno and Enriquez, both based at Princeton University, have written a well-researched book that uses a range of Sociological ideas and concepts to analyse War in Society.**

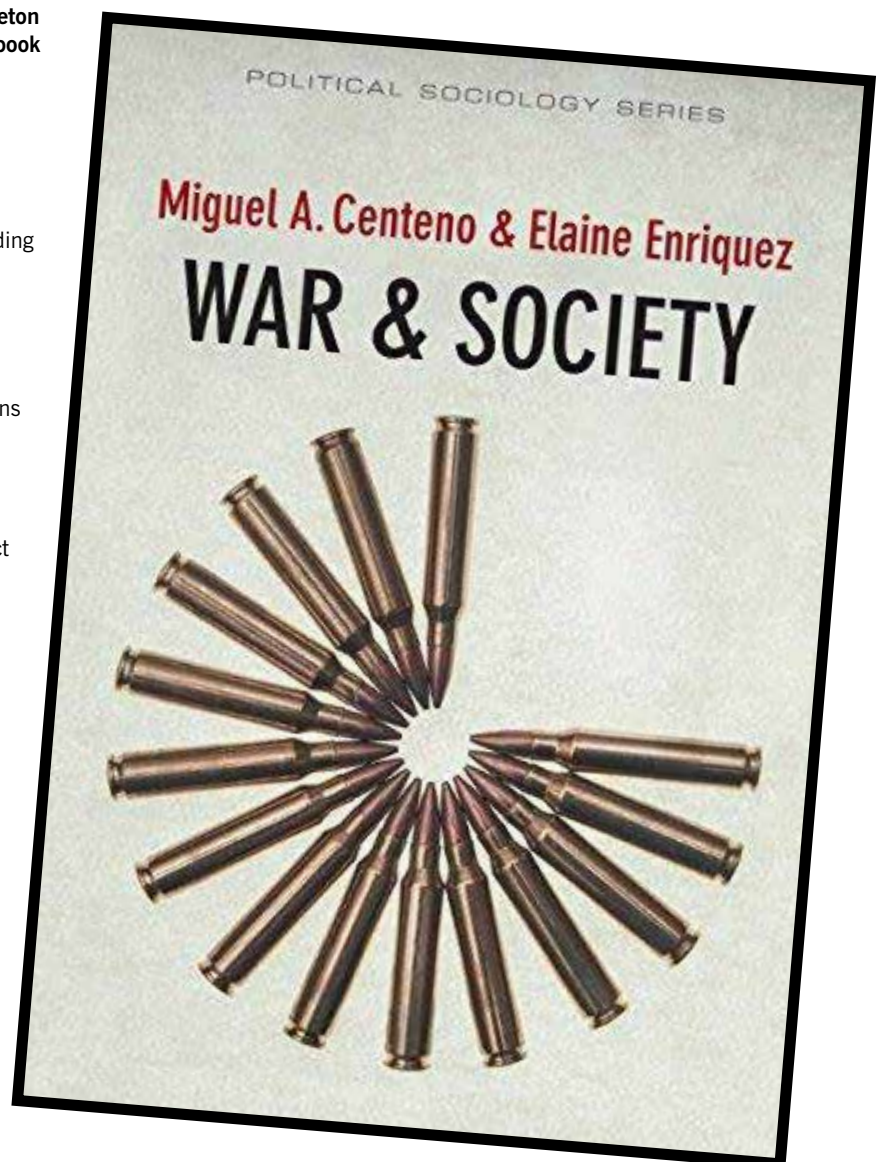
Although this book might focus on a topic that isn't directly linked to A level/GCSE specifications, it is written in an accessible manner that would be very useful wider reading for the higher ability level student. The writers explain their points with clarity in a language that most A level students would find accessible.

Although the focus is on war, the explanations of theory and concepts are useful for many topics in Sociology. For example, I thought the explanation of how war can be analysed at different levels of enquiry (the micro, the meso, the MACRO: see page 7) was succinct and clear to the reader.

Debates about the explanation of war were well phrased so that the non-specialist reader can make sense of the points eg: the Hobbes v Rousseau summary was clear and concise. Chapter 2: "War of the Warrior" covers useful material on the concept of social control and total institutions referencing Milgram, Foucault and Goffman.

I read this and saw good potential to turn this material into a good "taster" session in Sociology that might be useful in the summer term when explaining what Sociology is for prospective students.

Other Chapters in the book are entitled: "*The Nature of War*", "*War of Armies*", "*War of Societies*", "*How Wars Build*" and "*War and Society in the Twenty First Century*". This last chapter had some very useful quantitative data regarding the composition of U.S army recruitment. In short, "War and Society" is a very well written book that students with a higher level of ability could be steered towards in order to broaden their overall sociological understanding.





# BSA Teaching Group Regional Conference

Friday 08 July 2016

University of Sheffield

Pemberton Room

ScHARR,

Regent Court, 30 Regent Street

Sheffield S1 4DA

*Provisional programme*

- 9:30 Registration, tea & coffee
- 10:00 Introduction and welcome by Patrick Robinson, BSA Teaching Group Convenor
- 10:15 Professor Nick Fox, University of Sheffield - *The micropolitics of obesity* covering the optional *Health* module for A Level
- 11:00 OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)  
Helen Hemmings, Sociology Subject Specialist at OCR & Dawn Manns, Head of Sociology at St Mary's College, Hull
- 11:45 Patrick Robinson, BSA Teaching Group Convenor & Sociology Subject Leader, Cadbury Sixth Form College, Birmingham
- 12:15 WJEC Examination board  
Joanna Lewis, Subject Officer – A Level Sociology at WJEC
- 13:00 Lunch & networking time  
Delegates are invited to bring at least one resource with them they find useful in the classroom to discuss during the break
- 14:00 AQA Examination board  
Christine Pascall, Qualifications Developer at AQA
- 14:45 Maddie Breeze, Winner of the BSA Philip Abrams Prize, Author of *Seriousness and Women's Roller Derby: Gender, Organization, and Ambivalence* covering the optional *Culture and Identity* module for A Level
- 15:30 Close

**Delegate rates (include lunch & refreshments):**

BSA Member £40; Non-member £55

BSA Concessionary (student) member £30; Non-member (student) £35

**Registration:** <http://portal.britsoc.co.uk/public/event/eventBooking.aspx?id=EVT10561>

For further information please contact the BSA: [bsatg@britsoc.co.uk](mailto:bsatg@britsoc.co.uk) Tel: (0191) 370 6639

*Please note the programme is subject to change, however start and finish times will remain unchanged.*



## **Sociology teachers in schools and sixth form colleges, are now offered full BSA membership at the concessionary rate of £57pa (Jan to Dec), with the following benefits:**

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- Three issues per year of the BSA's popular magazine, 'Network'
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- And of course existing, valued Teaching Group member benefits, which include:
  - FREE subscription to The Sociology Teacher, the online journal published three times a year which includes articles written by leading academics in the Social Sciences, reviews of recently published books and other informative editorial.
  - Regional staff and student events which include member discount
  - Regular news and views, ideas and proposals for lessons and a range of useful resources
  - Support enabling you to raise the profile of Social Science teaching in your own region



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