THE SOCIOLOGY TEACHER

THE JOURNAL OF THE BSA TEACHING GROUP

Understanding Fathers:
An Insight Into Primary Research.

The Journey Travelled:
The difficulties and dimensions of value added.

The Mystery of Metaphors
Lewis Simpson

In this Issue: 'The Bamboozling Of A Generation'? ● Why do students choose Sociology ● Just in case Book Reviews

Patrick Robinson

Exam season is nearly finished as I write this in June.

It's always interesting to measure how students felt about the exam paper and whether or not their revision was good enough for what came up. A colleague of mine enlightened me to the fact that some of this conversation now goes on between students themselves, via social media networks. I'd recommend a look as it makes interesting reading: #exam module code. I would say that several of the comments I read are unfair and inaccurate points about the exams. Taking one statement as an example, my view would be that you can't refer to the use of a concept that is clearly declared on the syllabus as a "curveball" (notice the Americanisation of the phrasing too: social media meets globalisation).

Recently, a GCSE Maths paper question "Hannah's Sweets" made the national news, often with the original question being misquoted or not described in full in order to ridicule it. I think this brings out a Functionalist in me: exams are fair, they create a meritocracy etc……….This social media activity is also a good example of an unrepresentative sample of course: it will tend to be the students with gripes that will say a lot, whereas I would guess the students that felt the paper was fine would not be bothered enough to declare their feelings. They'd just be relieved another exam was over and want to move on.

Just to end this with a useful weblink: http://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/bsa-teaching-group/archive.aspx for copies of the presentations shared at the BSA Teacher Group conference that was hosted by University Of East London in May: many thanks to the University of East London who acted as excellent hosts to those that attended and to all the speakers that gave up their time and energy for a very useful day.

Have a good summer, *Patrick Robinson*.

Patrick Robinson
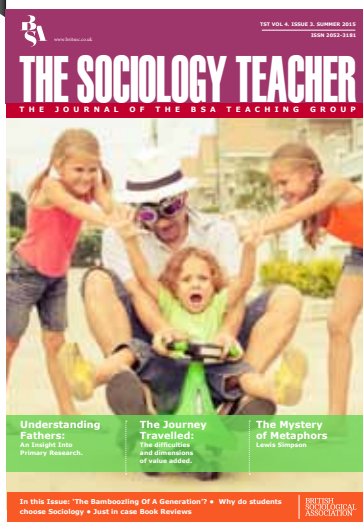Patrick prs@cadcol.ac.uk
Co-editor of the
BSA Teacher Group Journal.

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 and we will pass your proposal to the editorial board.

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BRITISH
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ASSOCIATION

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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 on 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.

UNDERSTANDING FATHERS:
AN INSIGHT INTO
PRIMARY RESEARCH.

Introduction:

In 2009, Katie Hollingworth was part of a team that carried out primary research regarding family life in the contemporary UK: Hauari, H and Hollingworth, K (2009) "Understanding fathering: masculinity, diversity and change". This work was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and can be found in its complete form at:

http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/understanding-fathering-diversity-full.pdf

Methods used in this research included unstructured interviews with family members and asking a sample of families to keep a record of time spent in family interactions over a period of time. Children in the sample were also asked to take photographs of their family day to day life.

In 2015, students from Cadbury Sixth Form College sent Katie a series of questions concerning the details of her methodology in her study. This article presents her replies and acts as a useful insight into the design and use of research methods in Sociology.

Design of method.

Why was the topic of fatherhood of interest to you?

Over the last 50 years, dramatic changes in social attitudes and family structures have occurred. Parenting practices have steadily become more diverse and complex as divorce rates climb and children are increasingly born to single parent households. In addition, the need for childcare continues to rise as more mothers return to paid work. This shift in employment has initiated a parallel, albeit slower, shift in fathering behaviour, suggesting that fathers are steadily assuming more responsibility for the day-to-day care of their children. These changes should result in positive outcomes for children, as research consistently suggests that children benefit significantly when their fathers are actively involved in their care and upbringing (Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Goldman 2005). For these reasons, fathering – what it is, and how it can be supported - is a topic of great interest for UK policy makers and for us as researchers.

Much of the research knowledge that existed at the time this study was proposed had been gained through large-scale surveys, primarily conducted in North America, which did not consider how socio-cultural variables might interact and influence parenting practices at

the individual or family level. There was also a gap in terms of understanding the specific ways in which diverse socio-cultural contexts influence fathers', mothers' and children's conceptualisations of fatherhood

Did you do a pilot study? If you did, what did you learn from this? How did your plans/design change?

We conducted a few pilot interviews including piloting the diaries and taking of photographs. Those taking part in the pilot responded well to the interview questions and to the diaries and being asked to take photos which was very encouraging and so we didn't need to make any significant changes.

How did you define "deprived" family?

The families we focused on were 'ordinary', not deprived, but they lived in deprived or poor areas. These areas were identified using scores from the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Carrying **out the method.**
In the research diaries, was there **any sign/evidence that the sample** made up their answers? **Was**

> **We were actually surprised at how honest the fathers that we spoke to were; we were expecting some of them to give socially desirable answers but when we compared what they reported with what the mothers and children reported there was a great deal of agreement.**

it possible to check this?

We found no evidence that people made up their diaries. As part of the interviews with each family member we talked through their diaries with them and this gave us the opportunity to probe and investigate what they had recorded in them. Some people admitted to filling in their diaries the following day or a few days later but most people were very aware of/familiar with their own family routines so there was no reason to believe that what they had recorded was not accurate. Also, because we had diaries and interviews with three different family members we were able to triangulate the evidence so anything false or made up would have become evident in talking to other family members.

You carried out the interviews in the homes of the sample: what were the benefits and disadvantages of this?

This is standard practice in research of this kind. It is far more convenient for those taking part and helps to put respondents at ease for the interviews because they are in a familiar and comfortable environment. This was particularly important where we were interviewing younger children. Interviewing three family members one after the other in any other setting would not have been practical or feasible.

Were the children in the same room as their parents when they did the interviews?

In most cases the parents left us to speak with the child alone, there were one or two cases where the child asked mum to stay but these mothers were very good and sat apart from us and occupied themselves with something else so there was a reduced risk of potential interference.

Did you feel the fathers in your sample were fully honest or did they "keep back" information? Eg: Is there a problem of the fathers in the sample providing "socially desirable answers" i.e answers that make them seem as excellent fathers?

We were actually surprised at how honest the fathers that we spoke to were; we were expecting some of them to give socially desirable answers but when we compared what they reported with what the mothers and children reported there was a great deal of agreement. We spent a lot of time and effort to put the families (and dads) at ease and to assure them that we were not there to judge in any way but that it was really important to us that we got a true picture of family life. A lot of dads were very open and self-reflective, commenting on how some of the things they did/didn't do weren't so good and that they would like to be more involved but talked about the numerous pressures on them from things like their employment and the experience of their own upbringing. None of the fathers were spoke to described themselves as excellent fathers, most were actually quite overly self-deprecating.

> We were surprised at the number of fathers who in their interviews specifically stated that they were trying to be very different fathers to how their own fathers were with them

the size of each sample group was varied: 10 British Pakistani compared to 2 British Black African?

This final sample size was purely a result of the huge difficulties we experienced in trying to recruit Black Caribbean and Black African families. We had intended to have 10 families from each of the 4 ethnic groups but could not recruit the intended number for all despite multiple different attempts and strategies.

What was the detailed background of the two British Black African families: British Nigerian? British Somalian? Etc?

These two families were Black West African.

Looking back on the project.

1. **How did your findings about the role of fatherhood compare to what you expected?**

Some of the things we found were

what we expected for instance in most families the mother is still the primary carer in terms of the division of time/responsibility for nurturing and domestic activities and the father often had a greater role in terms of time spent/responsibility for things like leisure activities and protecting/disciplining. However, we did find that there was a lot of blurring and crossover of these roles so that there were a lot of fathers who did take on what would be seen as traditionally maternal roles and responsibilities. Fathers were often very competent and comfortable with very traditionally domestic roles such as physical care for children e.g. nappy changing, feeding. Many fathers took equal if not greater responsibility for cooking for the family. This was one particular area that I think fathers were very comfortable with.

We expected that many mothers would be working and so would have to juggle employment as well as still retaining primary responsibility for a lot of things at home and this is what we found in many families. Fathers were taking on more roles and responsibilities at home and helping out but mothers usually still

retained ultimate responsibility for these things.

We were surprised at the number of fathers who in their interviews specifically stated that they were trying to be very different fathers to how their own fathers were with them – many said that they wanted to be more involved, more loving and to have a more emotional relationship with their children than their fathers had with them.

2. **You are a female researcher: do you think the interviews would have been different if a male researcher was asking the questions?**

This is a very difficult question to answer and my thoughts can only be speculative but it may have been that the dads would have given more socially desirable answers and may have actually felt less able to be honest and to open up if the interviewer was male - it is impossible to say.

3. **Do you feel that the funder of your research, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, influenced your research in any way?**

The only influence they had was at the outset with the research call itself where they set out their interests and priorities for the kind of research they were looking to fund, beyond that they remained completely independent and allowed us to conduct the research without any interference.

4. Do you think your conclusions would be different if you studied fathers in other family types eg: lone fathers, homosexual fathers, step-fathers, fathers in families with higher income levels?

Yes I definitely think we would have found different patterns of involvement, engagement and activity in families where there was a lone father or homosexual fathers. I think that fathers in these family types often adopt far less 'traditional' roles and active engage with a much broader range of caring responsibilities and activities with and for their children, largely out of necessity I would imagine. I am less certain in relation to families with high income levels, in these families the availability of the father could be restricted (if he has a high powered job with long hours) or equally he could be more available if

he has more autonomy and seniority to manage his work-life balance.

If you were to do the study again, what would you change?

I think we would change our recruitment strategy for finding families and might possibly go through a school setting as I think we would have been able to find our quota of Black African and Black Caribbean families more easily via this route. In terms of methods I don't think we would change anything, the methods we used were quite innovative and varied which meant we captured a lot of rich information about family life and focusing on three different family members was also very advantageous.

Many thanks, Patrick Robinson and the Sociology staff and students at Cadbury College.   © Katie Hollingworth, 2015.

'THE BAMBOOZLING OF A GENERATION'? STUDYING THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Patrick Ainley, University of Greenwich

Patrick Ainley is author of 'Deceiving a Generation, Education, Class, Employment' to be published by Radicalread in October. He is Professor of Training and Education at Greenwich University.

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Introduction

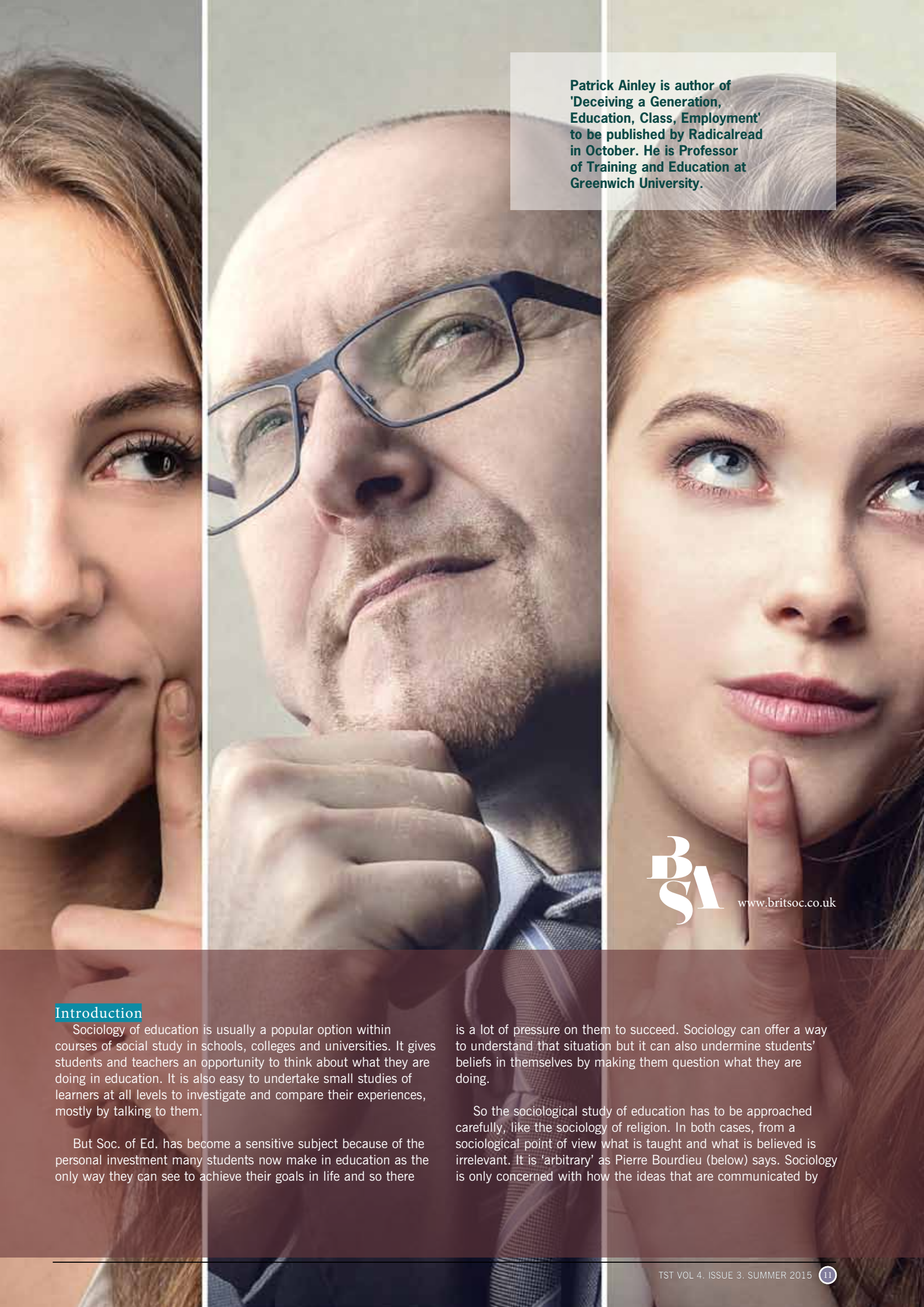Sociology of education is usually a popular option within courses of social study in schools, colleges and universities. It gives students and teachers an opportunity to think about what they are doing in education. It is also easy to undertake small studies of learners at all levels to investigate and compare their experiences, mostly by talking to them.

But Soc. of Ed. has become a sensitive subject because of the personal investment many students now make in education as the only way they can see to achieve their goals in life and so there

is a lot of pressure on them to succeed. Sociology can offer a way to understand that situation but it can also undermine students' beliefs in themselves by making them question what they are doing.

So the sociological study of education has to be approached carefully, like the sociology of religion. In both cases, from a sociological point of view what is taught and what is believed is irrelevant. It is 'arbitrary' as Pierre Bourdieu (below) says. Sociology is only concerned with how the ideas that are communicated by

the social institutions involved help to explain what is going on in society as a whole.

The Inheritors

Anthropology and history provide perspectives from which to look at societies often very different from our own.

conservative. It knows what and who it is looking for. It preserves the knowledge that the Chiefs and their Medicine Men consider important for the continuity of the society and it identifies who possesses this so as to preserve the succession of hereditary rulers over it. The sociologists found the same processes at work when they interviewed French students leaving lectures to ask

This is what the sociologists of education, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, did more than fifty years ago when they began their short and very readable – for Bourdieu! – 1964 book on *French students and their relation to culture*. This was based on an extensive programme of surveys and interviews across higher education institutions in France. However, it begins with a quote from the anthropologist Margaret Mead describing the initiation ceremonies of North American Omaha warriors.

Like many tribal peoples, these rites of passage often involve a trial or test following an Aboriginal-style 'walk-about' in the bush from which the initiates return to tell the visions they have seen to the Medicine Men. Mead then comments that by an apparent coincidence, no matter how elaborate their accounts are – often enhanced by various vegetable stimulants – the Medicine Men always judge that the sons of the chief have had the best visions. This is therefore, Bourdieu and Passeron explain, an education system in miniature that appears to treat everyone equally but in practice privileges some initiates over others so as to preserve the social order.

Education is thus profoundly

them what they had understood of the lecture. When most students admitted 'not very much', Bourdieu and Passeron declared that this did not matter because those who could had assimilated the style of the lecture.

This leads to Bourdieu's key concept of 'cultural capital', which he elaborated at greater length in his many other books on education and other aspects of French society. 'Cultural capital' is different from money capital or wealth but it represents the cultural privilege which money can buy so that the students who understand the style of the lecture are familiar with it from the way they have been brought up, not only in their families and/or the schools that they went to but through the books they have read and the plays, films and paintings they have seen, places they have visited and concerts and other 'high' cultural events they have attended.

This privileged enculturation gives upper-class children a sure but indefinable sense of their own 'rightness'. Those who lack this social background are unsure what 'being right' is. Of course this does not work in every case but in sociology we are always talking averages, not the anecdotal exceptions that prove the rules. Also, of course, these rules can change – sometimes just to confuse the uninitiated but also because excluded groups challenge

it makes more sense to them. This again is an arbitrary *Distinction* (the title of another of Bourdieu's books) that makes one sort of knowledge and culture more powerful than another.

Bourdieu was more hopeful than Bernstein as he thought that what he called 'a rational pedagogy' (what Bernstein called 'compensatory education') could teach minority ethnic and working-class students 'the tricks of the trade', so that they could 'play the academic game' as well as the then-majority of more upper-class students. However, Bourdieu later came to consider that this was only placing additional demands on the minority because they would have to learn this as well as everything else.

Instead, he and Passeron concluded that the education system would have to change and could not go on as it was without 'a showdown over the very foundations of the social order', such as occurred in May '68 when students and workers took to the streets in what was nearly another French Revolution. Although there is a similar crisis of legitimacy in education today – with many more staying on for longer at school, college and university only to find themselves overeducated and underemployed, it is

the rules and seek to make new ones. The rules of the game also hold more strongly in some subjects of study than others so that Bourdieu and Passeron noted, 'enrolment in Science faculties seems to be less related to social origin' [but] 'the teaching… implicitly presupposes a body of knowledge, skills, and, above all, modes of expression which constitute the heritage of the cultivated classes'.

This is a cultural inheritance that is 'arbitrarily' privileged over other sorts of knowledge and experience. This 'translation' of economic into cultural capital is accomplished by education to appear as 'natural', for example in the student ideal of 'effortless achievement' – not reading and revising all the set books, or even turning up to many lectures but still sailing through

the exams with top marks. Not, Bourdieu and Passeron explain, because the effortless achiever is more 'intelligent' than others but because he (or less often she) already knew, if not every detail but the overall 'style' of what the university had to teach. Thus, the authors conclude, 'The university only preaches to the converted'.

Similarly, Britain's foremost sociologist of education, Basil Bernstein explained in 1970 how on its own *Education cannot compensate for society*, just by treating all school children equally and teaching them all the same things. This was because middle-class children are more familiar (literally – from their family background) with the school and its teachers' way of thinking and presenting the curriculum than working-class children and therefore

doubtful that educational institutions will collapse so dramatically as they did in France because education now plays such a large part in regulating the lives of nearly all young people.

The new student experience

Rather than a means of realising social aspiration, sociological understanding reveals that education is primarily an agent of social control. At all levels it teaches people their place and only exceptionally enables them to leave it. The exception is then made the rule that all should aspire to and it is their individual fault if they do not succeed – they did not try hard enough or they are not 'intelligent' enough.

In hopes of achieving such a distant goal, from childhood on into 'prolonged youth', pupil-students face a series of hurdles that mark critical divergences onto one pathway or another. Without necessarily realising it, individuals can get locked into one or another

of these tracks so that recovery from what it later becomes evident is an inferior option (defined both by subject and institution), while not impossible, becomes increasingly difficult.

These crunch points – and the pressure put upon young people by their parents and themselves – intensify in frequency with age: only once every four years after initial testing in primary school (although the government wants more tests at age four!); then in secondary (after retesting that government also wants but teachers are resisting), guided 'option choices' are made after three years followed by two years to the first critical cut-off point of five A-C GCSEs. Whether on the academic or vocational route from there on, modularised assessment avoids the stress of end-of-course examinations (that government favours) but breaks the individual's scores down into a running total, which there is constant pressure to maintain. If these add up to three 'good' A-levels, options are open for application to the hierarchy of higher education institutions.

Yet, such is the current competition between these institutions for students on whom their funding now depends, recovery is again possible even at this stage since all degrees are supposedly equally valued. As long as you pass the first year, of course – if only with a 'fuck-it 40', as Cheeseman's subjects put it (2011 and see also Ainley 2008) – to leave the high point of the student experience which is 'freshers' behind and return to 'the student bubble' for two more years of semester module tests that you desperately hope add up to more than 'a deadly Desmond' (2.2). Otherwise you have lost your fee/loan investment and might as well have left at 18 for what employment you could find – with or without 'apprenticeship'.

The risk of failure is more significant the less you can afford to take it, so that a lack of confidence in their ability afflicts students from poorer and minority family backgrounds. They therefore often choose to 'play safe' at seemingly less demanding and local, new universities with people like themselves – a powerful attractor up and down 'the endless chain of hierarchy and condescension that passes for a system of higher education in England' (Scott 2015).

The odds on gaining a 2.1 or first are good however since these are now achieved by c.70% of graduates, as compared with c.20% 30 years ago. They enable entry to usually only one-year Masters (when 'real higher education' begins for two years in the USA), if not endless internships. Even on this academic Royal Road, capped by a PhD (increasingly required to teach in HE), in the

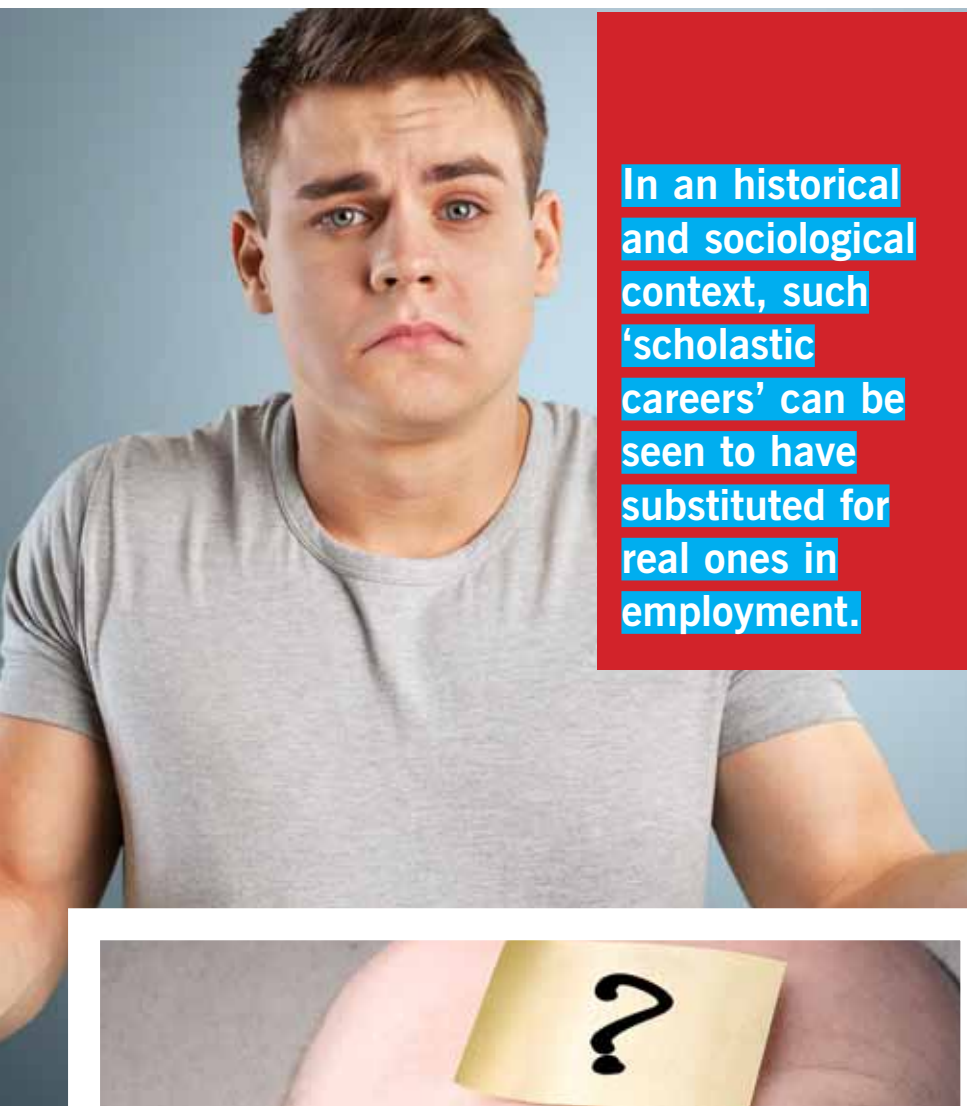English education system, as has been said, 'It doesn't matter how far you go, they'll fail you in the end!'

Omitting the 'gap year' spent travelling by those who can afford it and saving by those who can't but can find a job, this is the real 'student journey' that is so much celebrated and regulated at universities – and it is an increasingly long one! It does however impose a coherent structure upon young people's lives which is comprehensible to their parents and themselves but which, like most occupations or jobs, is subsidiary to their more immediate social concerns – merely a tedium to be 'gone through'.

So, learning (increasingly reduced to training) becomes an end in itself – and a dead end at that! The result is profoundly alienating for teachers and students alike as institutionalised education turns into its opposite, foreclosing imaginative and critical possibilities in pursuit of the next examination hoop to jump through that certifies only ability to pass on to the next stage. There is thus decreasing intrinsic interest or content in this institutionalised 'learning' – let alone any enlightenment!

In an historical and sociological context, such 'scholastic careers' can be seen to have substituted for real ones in employment. In place of the wage as the main means of social control over youth, education has from this point of view enhanced the key role that it

> **In an historical and sociological context, such 'scholastic careers' can be seen to have substituted for real ones in employment.**

has always played in the reproduction of inequalities.

Conclusion

Sociology is one of the few subjects of study where it is possible to confront directly these contradictions in what education has become but such opportunities are being squeezed from the sixth-form curriculum (eg. A-level Anthropology has been dropped) and are sidelined in HE. Others, like Economics, are confined to the dominant neoliberal approach – though there are moves against this with the development even of Critical Business Studies.

The unrealistically *Too Great Expectations of Education* to transform society and restart social mobility are acknowledged on all sides but are not fully explored. Building on this often uneasy recognition, it is possible to go further in discussion, sometimes around the edges of official learning tasks, to see that there have to be economic policies that reduce both youth unemployment and also youth underemployment to give purpose to the performance that education at all levels has become. These conversations can point towards an alternative programme for youth, recognising in turn that this is only possible if an alternative stance to the economy is taken to replace 'austerity' with planned and sustainable growth.

Sociology of education affords individuals an opportunity to understand themselves as part of a social situation which is not of their own making and for which they cannot be blamed.

© Patrick Ainley, 2015.

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Creation of a new level-3 course in Social Analytics for Wales

Q-Step is a £19.5 million programme designed to promote a step-change in quantitative social science training in the UK. Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE), Q-Step was developed as a strategic response to the shortage of quantitatively skilled social science graduates. Q-Step is funding fifteen universities across the UK to establish Q-Step Centres that will support the development and delivery of specialist undergraduate programmes, including new courses, work placements and pathways to postgraduate study. Stronger links between Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) colleges/secondary schools will result in a plethora of benefits including; smoother transitions for students

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into university and the collaborative development of teaching resource, related to quantitative social science. The resulting expertise and resources will be shared across the higher education sector through an accompanying support programme, forging links with schools and employers (Nuffield Foundation 2014).

The Q Step Centre for Excellence in Quantitative Methods is based in the Cardiff School of Social Sciences (SOCSI). In the past six years the School has made significant investments to develop the quality of undergraduate skills in quantitative methods. This centre will consolidate and appreciably develop this work, enabling Cardiff to be a leading centre of quantitative pedagogy nationally.

A major strand of the Cardiff Q step centre work will focus on the development

of a new Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics, (A' level equivalent) with the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC). This course will encompass statistical thinking and analysis to explain various social phenomena such as, for example, health inequalities, differential educational attainment and the role of science and technology in society. This new course is likely to be launched in September 2016.

The development of a Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics will be in partnership with schools and colleges in South Wales, the WJEC and the International Centre for Statistical

On a national level, standards of numeracy in Wales are a cause for concern, with 51% of 16-19 year olds having numeracy skills that are at or below entry level

Education (ICSE). Students who complete the qualification will be eligible to apply for entry onto the BSc Social Analytics programme, although the new degree course will enrol its first cohort and launch in September 2015 at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences. This innovative undergraduate programme will build upon and augment the content delivered throughout the Level-3 course in Social Analytics. The entry criteria for the new degree programme will not, however, require students to have taken the level-3 course in Social Analytics. In terms of widening participation, Agored Cymru are already in the process of developing

Social Analytics units, to be made available for 90% of their courses in Wales for September 2015. Social Analytics as a subject area for Level-3 learners, will be launched at Agored Cymru's annual conference on the 18 of June 2015, held in Llandrindod Wells.

On a national level, standards of numeracy in Wales are a cause for concern, with 51% of 16-19 year olds having numeracy skills that are at or below entry level (i.e. below GCSE level mathematics) (WG, 2011). These worrying levels place Wales at the bottom of countries within the UK; suggesting current initiatives are inadequate to address these poor levels of mathematical skills (Tanner and Jones, 2013). The development of pre-university Social Analytics courses will aid in addressing the numeracy deficit in Wales, fostering the development of statistical thinking to investigate social processes. In addition,

Aims and Objectives of the FE Q-Step initiative

The creation of a new Level-3 course in Social Analytics involves several initiatives:

The development of a Pilot Scheme of the Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics, currently being delivered at Cardiff University.

A teacher placement scheme, which includes FE lecturers and secondary school teachers, to collaborate in the development of the new Level-3 qualification, as well as CPD events for FE lecturers/school teachers.

Recruitment and training of postgraduate students, to support the development of the Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics

Engagement events for local schools, external organisations and other Higher Education Institutes, to promote the development and expansion of quantitative methods in social sciences.

The pilot scheme story, so far . .

A pilot scheme launch event of the Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics was held at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences, in September 2014, with over 50 parents, teachers and sixth form students attending (http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/qstep/events/launch-of-the-level-3-pilot-scheme-in-social-analytics-24-september-2014/). Following this successful event, 50 sixth form students from 5 local schools and colleges applied to join the pilot scheme course. Due to the overwhelming response of excellent applications, it was decided to put on two evening classes, which started at the beginning of October 2014. Attendance has been consistently high, with many students at the end of the course expressing a keen interest to apply for a variety of degrees at Cardiff University (Figure 1).

these new courses will compliment student's educational development in a variety of other popular subjects, such as; biology, mathematics, psychology, business studies, geography and economics.

The rationale for creating these new qualifications rests on a number of studies that indicate relatively small numbers of undergraduate entrants are likely to enter social science programmes with A' Level mathematics (Williams, Payne and Hodgkinson 2008, Payne 2014, Platt 2014). Most enter social science programmes with sociology/ humanities A' Levels and are at times unaware that they will be studying quantitative methods (Williams, Payne and Hodgkinson 2008, Payne 2014, Platt 2014). Students applying to social science undergraduate degree programmes with the proposed courses in Social Analytics should be better prepared for the quantitative methods training they will receive.
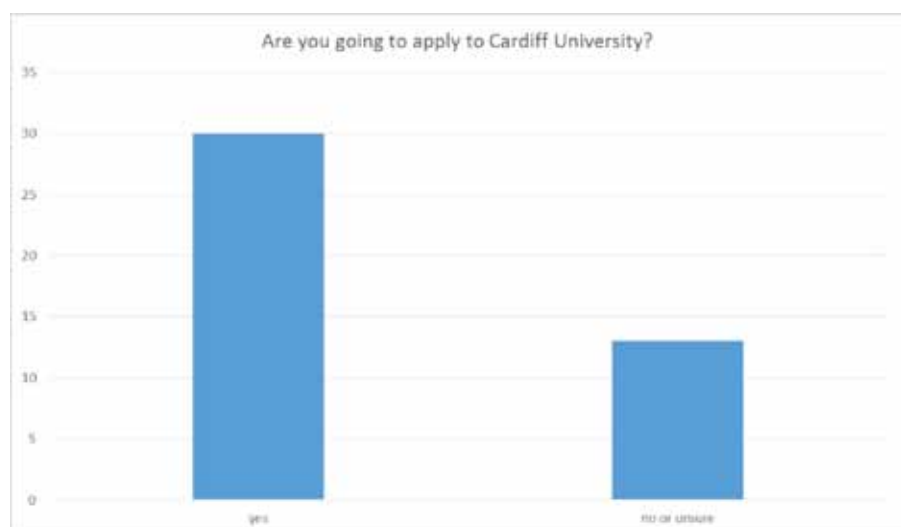

Figure 1. Student's response as to whether they were going to apply to Cardiff University to study.

The pilot scheme Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics is a yearlong course, formatted to follow an AS Level qualification. The course maps across A' Level content in mathematics, biology, psychology, sociology and geography, from all exam boards present in the UK. The course also supports many other subject areas at Level-3, including: business studies, economics, physics, and chemistry. Evaluation of the pilot scheme Level-3 qualification in Social Analytics for 2014-15 revealed a mixture of students studying A' levels in the sciences and mathematics, as well as several humanities subjects (Figure 2).

Student feedback of the course (December 2014 and also April 2015) revealed that the majority could see the value of the course to their other A' level studies, enjoyed the statistical elements of the course, and also thought that these statistical elements were linked well with relevant examples (Figure 3). The deliberate overlap of several subjects with this new qualification has enabled students to conceptually make the links, explore concepts in more detail, and have a greater appreciation for the use of statistical analysis as a tool to support scientific investigations. Several students actually asked for more statistics to be delivered in the pilot scheme! Stating that an appreciation of where certain numbers were coming from would help them to understand the underlying theory and subsequent context. From my own experience,

The refreshing mixture of educational specialists from a range of backgrounds and organisations has created an explosion of unique and collaborative ventures
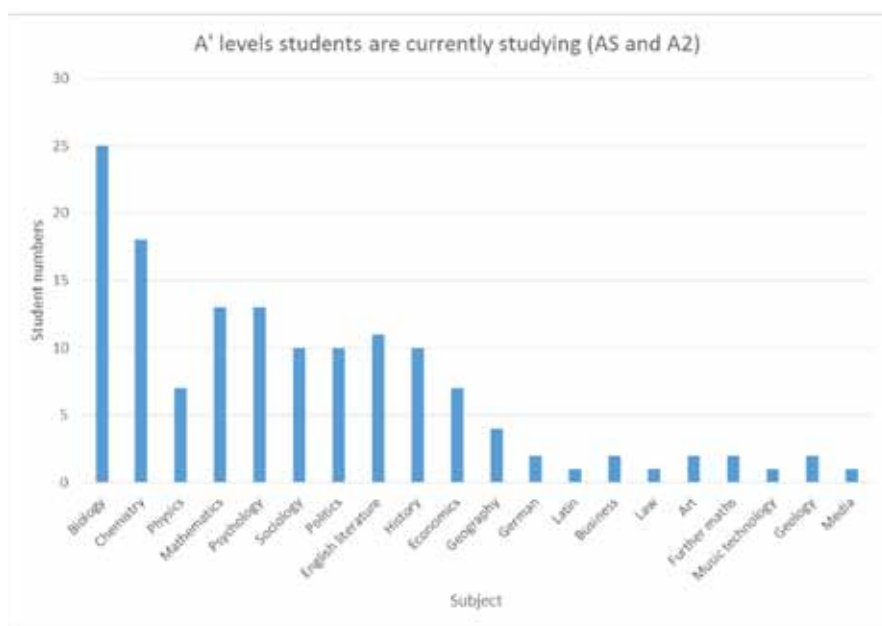

Figure 2. A 'levels students subject choice (AS and A2). N = 44 (most students are studying 3 A' levels, with a small minority studying 4).
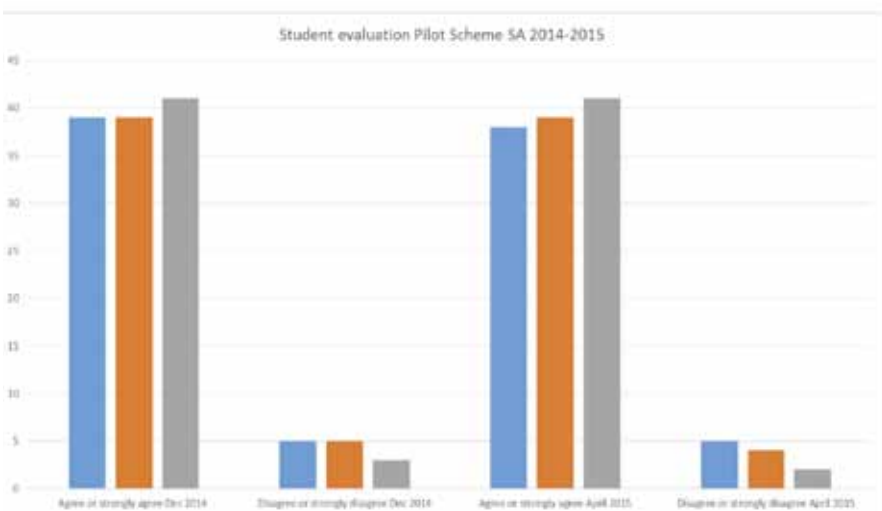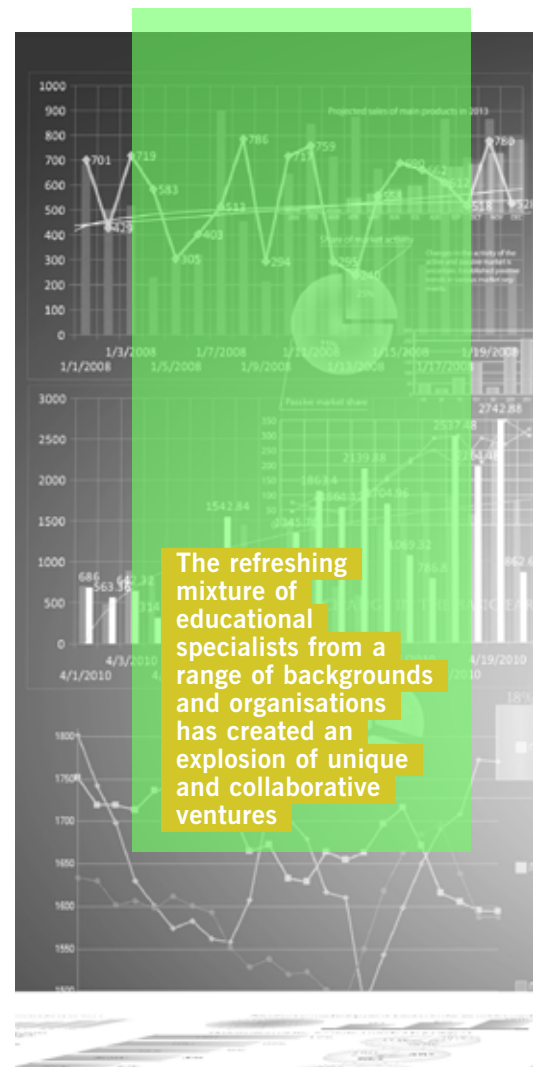

Figure 3. Student evaluation of the Pilot scheme in Social Analytics (December 2014 – N=44 and April 2015 – N=43).

it is very rare that students ask for more mathematics! Which suggests this approach of heavily embedding statistics in other subject areas, has resulted in students actually enjoying the mathematical content.

Teacher feedback, from the schools and colleges involved in the pilot scheme, revealed how supportive and complimentary the course was to the student's other A' level subjects. One teacher stated, 'Our students found the topics on crime particularly interesting, which linked well with thier AS Sociology course. They found it very relevant, looking into the reasons why people commit crime, comparing crime rates, and investigating which people in society are more likely to commit crime.' Another teacher from a large sixth form college in South Wales reported that, 'Students knowledge and understanding of statistical analysis had improved dramatically. The skills development was the most successful because for a large number of students this was a new aspect to their learning and supplemented their knowledge of research methodology.

Since students were mixed with different schools and colleges, it provided a unique learning environment one teacher especially picked up on, stating, 'Students working with other students from different institutions when undertaking tasks in

the class promoted cooperation and clear improvements in their confidence in Sociology and other subjects.'

Creating a Curriculum across the educational landscape

As part of the FE Q-Step initiative, it was recognised that crucial expertise from across the educational sector would be needed to facilitate the development and dissemination of Level-3 qualifications in Social Analytics. Consequently, a teacher placement panel was set up involving teachers and lecturers from 5 local schools and FE colleges (disciplines ranging from mathematics and biological sciences, to psychology and sociology), postgraduate students from the Cardiff School of Social Science, Cardiff University staff involved with the PGCE in FE and also educational consultants working for Agored Cymru and the WJEC. The group has met 4 times in the academic year 2014-2015, to discuss the development of the Level-3 course, with associated learning outcomes, assessment

Teacher feedback, from the schools and colleges involved in the pilot scheme, revealed how supportive and complimentary the course was to the student's other A' level subjects.

strategies and content, and also the implications for staff training to deliver this innovative course.

The refreshing mixture of educational specialists from a range of backgrounds and organisations has created an explosion of unique and collaborative ventures, which continues to grow and grow. One sixth form college in particular have proposed to make a substantial investment to create a new academic post at Cardiff University to continue this new way of creating courses, between HEI's and FE colleges/schools. The collaborative group's functions extend much deeper than simply performing outreach work, or widening access activities.

Looking to the future, we are currently awaiting the WJEC's decision to create a new level-3 course in Social Analytics, which is supported by a strong business case that echoes the need for these qualifications across the educational sector.

If require further information on any aspect of the project, please contact me:

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Why do students choose Sociology at AS and A level, and how will qualification reform affect uptake?

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A level Sociology has been reformed for first teaching in 2015. As well as moving from a modular to a linear system, the AS and A level are being decoupled, meaning that the AS level will no longer count towards a student's performance in the overall A level. Data from UCAS (2015) indicates that many schools and colleges are still undecided about what provision they will offer in the reformed system, but many providers suggest that they will only enter students for three A levels, rather than four AS levels as is currently commonplace. These changes have particular implications for future uptake of Sociology. In particular, Sociology is often a new subject to students at this level, and there is a perception that it is often chosen as a fourth subject (i.e. one which is initially intended to be dropped after AS). This has caused concern that students may be more reluctant to choose Sociology in the future, due to not wishing to commit to the full two-year course without prior experience of the discipline.

An additional concern is the transition of responsibility for careers advice and guidance from local authorities to individual schools. This has not been mirrored by additional funding to help schools develop their own guidance programmes. Whilst some schools and colleges provide in-depth, excellent services, these structural changes have compounded the variability in provision and have caused concern that some students may not receive appropriate guidance about the transition to post-16 study. It is noteworthy that the National Careers Service, a service intended to provide centralised careers advice, only provides a cursory glance at subject choice at A level and has no information about Sociology either at A level or as a career.

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Which factors influence student subject choice?

Students' experience of post-compulsory education in Britain is characterised by choice, not only in types of qualification and subjects, but also in providers. Research has investigated why students choose particular subjects, especially with the recent political drive to increase uptake of STEM subjects.

This research has shown that the single greatest determinant of students' subject decisions in post-compulsory education is prior enjoyment, if studied at GCSE, or interest, if it is a new subject (Blenkinsop, McCrone, Wade, & Morris, 2006; Garratt, 1985; Vidal Rodeiro, 2007). This is particularly true of Humanities, whilst the decision to study Mathematics or Science is more likely to be driven by perception of the subject's *extrinsic* value: how useful students believe the subject to be in preparing them for a future career. Additional factors include prior attainment – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the importance of A level results for admission to university – as well as career and educational aspirations, which in turn are affected by the type of school a student attends and their socioeconomic background.

Nevertheless, none of the existing research has investigated students' reasons for studying Sociology in particular. Given that it is predominantly a new subject at A level, it seems likely that interest in the subject will be the dominant factor. However, reasoning may change between AS and A level, and according to demographic factors. Consequently, we sought to examine the reasons current students chose Sociology, as well as the advice they received about studying the subject. A particular aim was to investigate whether the AS level itself affects the decision-making process, and thus whether changes to the A level structure will be likely to affect uptake.

The questionnaires

We created two online questionnaires, one for Year 12 students and one for Year 13, asking about participants' reasons for choosing Sociology at AS, their reasons for continuing it to A level, their intended destinations, and the advice they received when making their choices. We also asked whether students in Year 12 intended to continue Sociology to the full A level. The questionnaires were emailed to Heads of Sociology at colleges and sixth forms across England and Wales, using email addresses taken from school websites.

The sample

In total 341 students participated, 240 of whom are currently taking AS level and 101 the A level. 82.9% of participants were female, reflecting the national gender imbalance of A level Sociology. We did not ask participants which school they currently attended, due to a desire to maintain student anonymity, and consequently school-level factors were not explored.

However, we did ask students for two optional demographic factors: the highest qualification obtained by their parents, and their postcode. Postcodes were linked to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) score for that area, a score produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government that measures the proportion of children under 16 in a given area that live in a low-income household. The score is on a scale of 0-1, where 0 is the least deprived. We split this data equally into three 'levels of deprivation', which were used in later analyses.

Overall, parental data was given for 73.8% of participants. Of these, 39.7% had at least one graduate parent. IDACI data was available for 55.4% of participants, and the mean score was 0.23.

Reasons for choosing Sociology

Participants' intended destinations after A level showed that an overwhelming majority (85.3%) planned to go to university. They also intended to study a wide range of subjects, suggesting that students consider A level Sociology to be useful for a wide range of careers. 45% reported that they wished to study Sociology, Psychology or another Social Science, and whilst very few wished to study a Physical Science, 8% intended to study a Medicine-related subject such as Nursing or Midwifery.

Participants were also studying Sociology alongside a wide range of subjects. At AS, the most common subjects were Psychology, English, History and Health and Social Care, but Biology and Chemistry were also reasonably popular choices. In Year 13, Psychology, English, History and Biology were again popular. Consequently, whilst we may expect Sociology students to specialise in the Social Sciences, these students have wide-ranging academic interests.

Students were asked how important certain factors had been in their decision to study Sociology at AS level. Perhaps predictably, students were primarily motivated by the interest value of Sociology, especially as it was a new subject for most. However, participants' responses suggest that they were also motivated, although to a lesser extent, by their ability to attain high grades and the subject's relevance to their career plans. Reassuringly, although students indicated that they thought they would do well in the subject, very few thought that it was an inherently easy qualification.
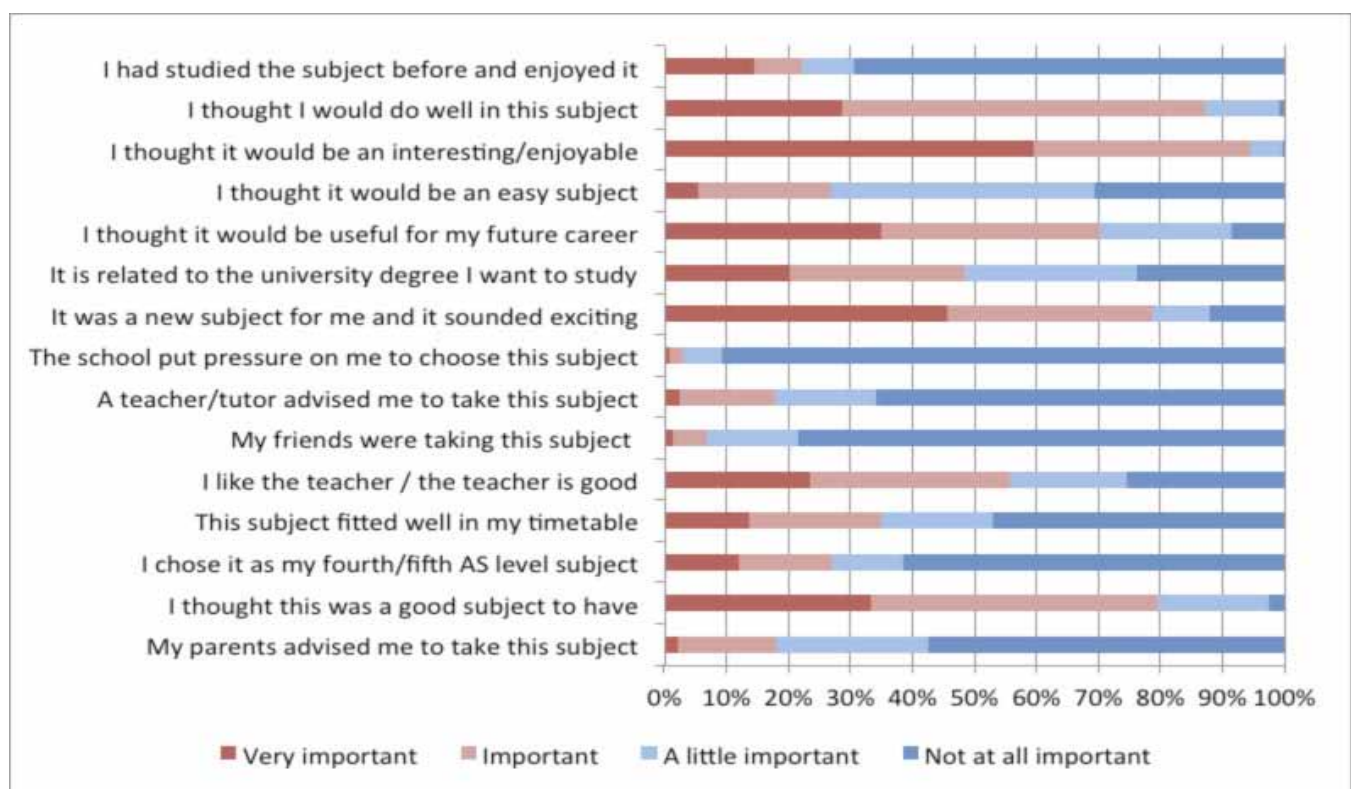
There were few differences between different demographic groups, but generally students with graduate parents were more likely to agree that Sociology being an interesting or enjoyable subject was important, whilst students from areas of high deprivation placed more emphasis on their expected attainment.

Figure 1: Reasons for choosing Sociology at AS level

Additionally, we were interested in whether students intend to study Sociology for the full two-year course when they make their subject decisions. Three-quarters of Year 12 students reported that they intended to continue studying Sociology next year. However, we also asked participants in Year 13 whether they *originally* intended to study Sociology after AS when they began the course. Interestingly, 18.8% reported that they did not, suggesting that a sizeable proportion

Chart categories (y-axis, top to bottom):
- I had studied the subject before and enjoyed it
- I thought I would do well in this subject
- I thought it would be an interesting/enjoyable
- I thought it would be an easy subject
- I thought it would be useful for my future career
- It is related to the university degree I want to study
- It was a new subject for me and it sounded exciting
- The school put pressure on me to choose this subject
- A teacher/tutor advised me to take this subject
- My friends were taking this subject
- I like the teacher / the teacher is good
- This subject fitted well in my timetable
- I chose it as my fourth/fifth AS level subject
- I thought this was a good subject to have
- My parents advised me to take this subject

x-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Legend: ■ Very important ■ Important ■ A little important ■ Not at all important

of students change their minds throughout the AS level.

Participants in Year 13 were again asked to rate how important certain factors were in their decision-making, this time with reference to their decision to continue studying Sociology after AS. We found that the decision-making process at A level had changed, with students taking a considerably more pragmatic approach at this level. Whilst relevance to future careers and university study were still important, the most influential factors were prior attainment at AS and expected attainment at A level. Given the importance of A level grades for students, this is perhaps unsurprising, but enjoyment of the subject seems to be a less important factor at this level. Students with graduate parents and those from the most deprived areas were most likely to rate their performance at AS as 'very important'. Participants in areas of high deprivation were also most likely to agree that timetabling issues had been an important factor in their decision-making.

The transition in focus from interest and enjoyment to both prior and expected attainment further suggests that the AS level plays an important role in students' decisions. If, in future, students are only entered for the full A level, it is not unreasonable to suggest that their decision-making processes might come to mirror the more pragmatic, reasoned approach demonstrated here.
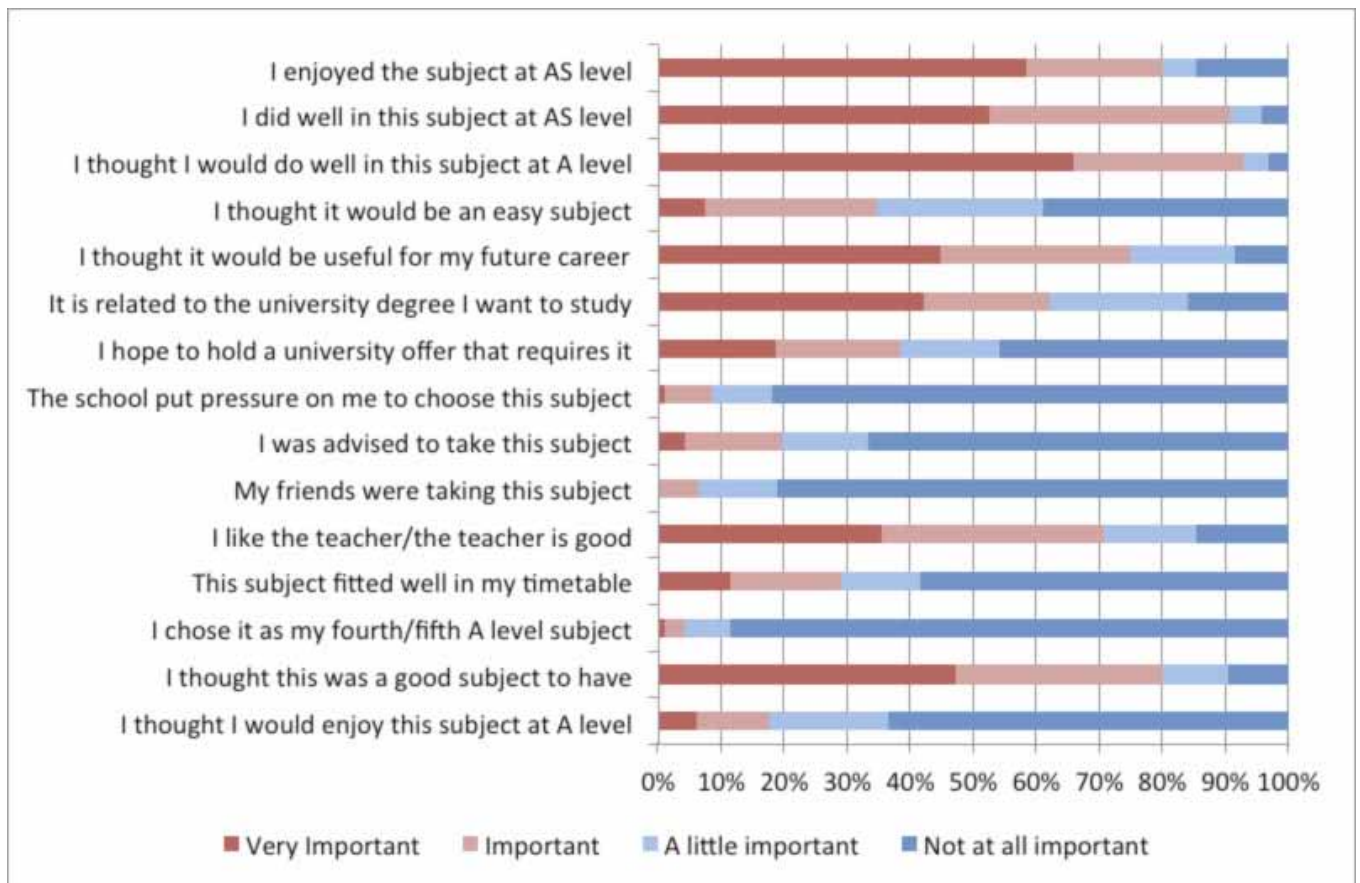

Figure 2: Reasons for continuing Sociology to A level

What advice do students receive about studying Sociology?

We were also interested in the advice students receive about A level Sociology, as well as how useful this was considered to be. Additionally, we asked participants whether this advice was positive or negative, due to concern about misconceptions that Sociology is an 'easy' or 'irrelevant' subject.

Participants in this study were not particularly well-informed about Sociology before commencing their A level studies. Only 53.3% of participants reported that they had received any advice about studying Sociology when making their decisions. Students were most likely to have received advice from teachers, friends, the internet and open days, whilst very few had spoken to employers or admissions tutors.

However, access to advice was affected by demographic factors. Students were significantly more likely to have received advice from their parents if one of them held a degree. Conversely, students from non-graduate backgrounds were more likely to have received advice from secondary school teachers and from teaching staff at their sixth form. Participants from the most deprived areas were generally least likely to access every source of advice.

Where applicable, participants were asked to rate how useful and positive or negative each source of advice had been. Out of the more frequently accessed sources, students regarded Open Days and careers events to be the most useful, as well as siblings and teachers. Friends, parents and the internet were the least useful.

The fact that teachers at both secondary school and college were considered to be useful sources of advice suggests that students value information from people that teach the subject, and in the case of secondary school teachers, people that already know them. Advice from sixth form staff was considered to be more useful than secondary school teachers. This may be a consequence of students moving from an 11-16 school to a different post-16 provider, where secondary school teachers may not be as able to advise students about A levels as those who currently teach these qualifications.

Reassuringly, all sources were broadly positive about A level Sociology, although some were more muted in their enthusiasm. Open Days, admissions tutors, teachers and family members were the most positive, with over 60% of participants stating that the advice they had received from each was positive. Other students and friends were the least positive about Sociology, followed by the internet and employers. Only half of those students who used the internet found it to be positive. Although we do not know which sites students accessed, it may be concerning that such a commonly used source was not particularly positive about Sociology.

Unsurprisingly, participants would have liked more information about studying Sociology. In particular they would have liked to know more about related careers, but more information about the course content at A level and the type of assessment used would have been appreciated.

What does this mean for the reformed A-level?

These findings suggest that the AS level plays an important role in students' decision-making processes and the subjects they eventually choose to study in Year 13. Whilst an interest in the discipline and the fact that it is a new – and therefore exciting – subject are the primary motivating factors at AS, students move to a more practical focus in Year 13, basing their decision on AS grades and predicted achievement at A level. Additionally, given that 18.8% of our Year 13 participants did not originally plan to continue with Sociology, it seems that the AS level presents an opportunity for students to gain risk-free experience with the subject before making their final decisions.

Nevertheless, there are positive implications: students did not perceive Sociology to be inherently easy, and most considered it to be a valued subject with relevance to both degrees and careers. Given this, and the high proportion of students that had not received any information about Sociology before making their AS choices, it may be possible to counter any negative effects of decoupling on uptake by ensuring students are well-informed before they make these crucial decisions. The BSA resources are a useful starting point, but greater collaboration between stakeholders such as universities and schools may be beneficial in ensuring that students see the numerous advantages of taking Sociology at A level.

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2005

2010

2015

The Journey Travelled:

The difficulties and dimensions of value added.

Sarah McLaughlin

The Department of Education defines 'value added' as a measure of the progress students make between different stages of education. It is a growth measure which indicates how well a school has brought on pupils from one test level to another. Each learner's performance in a set of tests is compared with the middle performance of all pupils nationally who had a similar performance at the previous test level. The measurement quantifies how much of a positive or negative effect teachers have on their student during a specified time frame; therefore the value added measurement provides a bigger picture

than taking information from league tables in isolation. But what happens when your students have no previous performance measurements in which to compare? How does a teacher quantify their creativity, commitment and care, which can often be time consuming and emotionally strenuous? For younger students, SATS and GCSE results will be utilised as a bench mark; however mature learners may have been absent from education for decades, gained previous qualifications in other countries, or do not hold any formal qualifications.

Access to Higher Education is a level three course which for many students is a trajectory to the higher echelons of academia. Sociology forms part of the diploma for a number of the different qualification pathways. The curriculum is similar in content to AS and A2 levels in the same subjects, however because this subsists in the post compulsory education arena, league tables are not required by government, yet as expected, individual education providers have their own performance measures; of which value added is often incorporated.

The study of sociology as an academic discipline develops skills such as critical thinking, the ability

to analyse and an awareness of contemporary issues. My teaching encourages individuals to gain a sense of understanding of the world around them. The recent general election was a theme running through sociology lessons over the past few months and a number of students on my course had never voted or did not understand confusing manifestos. Through discussions, research tasks and class debates an understanding of the voting system, influence of the media, utilisation of social networking to gather opinions; an atmosphere of interest and excitement was cultivated. Students could explain the significance of a hung parliament; they started to form opinions about the representation of political parties in the media and questioned media ownership. The college library created an election wall and invited all departments to contribute comments and questions in relation to their subject area to demonstrate the significance of political agendas to their disciplines. The photograph taken of one of my sociology groups standing confidently by the display demonstrates the pride felt by my trainee sociologists who were able to make an informed contribution

to the wall which they had researched and formed an opinion about for themselves. The number of adults who were delighted to inform me that they had voted this year for the first time, or that they had made an informed vote and were confidently able to hold an intelligent conversation with friends about politics, was so rewarding. Because of these sociology lessons England increased the number of informed voters. Individuals had gained a valuable understanding of politics and how to contribute to our democratic society. Studying Sociology enabled them to become active members of their society. But how does this translate into performance figures? Learners received valuable life skills and I gained a real sense of achievement, but how does one sociology teacher quantify this? How do I validate this as a value added measure?

Value added is a subjective term. The significance of the Access course varies amongst students. For some who have delayed university but have gained recent qualifications, Access is a path to university. For others it is a tentative step back to the classroom but one where, for them, success is measured by the acceptance of classmates, themselves and teachers who will gradually embed into them the confidence that are not actually a failure, but it was school which once failed them. The sense of achievement lies in completing the diploma and not just the grade at which they attained.

For others it a paradigm shift. A road to where only 'those other types of people' may tread. A pulling up of the deep-rooted assumptions that university is for the rich or the higher classes. This shift in class consciousness often leads to a change in identity and frequently a crisis of identity can manifest itself into the staffroom through a tearful student having a 'wobbly' due to the juggling of families and work.

For me, there is an extra dimension to value added. It is the extra worth provided to students that affords a sense of satisfaction: the reason I teach. The witnessing of individuals gradually believing in themselves and realising their potential. The critical thinking skills developed and the raised aspirations and epiphanies that education unlocks many doors and provides opportunities. Value added is not just about the academic progress to reach an end goal, but the significance of the journey travelled. The meaning of the qualitative (in addition to the quantitative) outcomes of education for my mature sociology students is the achievement I value most as a teacher. It is not just the 'value added' provided by teachers, but the value my students add to my role which is the measurements I value and the reason I teach sociology in the post compulsory sector.

About me – My name is Sarah McLaughlin. I am an Access to Higher Education lecturer in sociology, business studies and education. You can find me on twitter @ graduatesarah

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The Mystery of Metaphors

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Using metaphors seems to be a crucial element of sociology. Not only are they used in discussion and teaching, but are pragmatically applied in the communication of research and theory. Metaphors seem to be a standard 'form' of practice within sociological inquiry, becoming the method of transferring and communicating ones understanding of subject content and ideas to others; and can be seen as a strong 'form' of social interaction within teaching practice. This form of teaching will be the base of discussion in this paper, and will give discussion to the use of metaphors in sociological practice and also in the practices of teaching and learning in sociology. Following discussions will also be given to the element of creativity identifying the metaphor of 'society'. The nature of this discussion has led to a number of difficulties and issues within the discipline, mainly surrounding the way that the 'sociological language' or 'sociological imagination' can be learnt; exemplified in key texts by Bauman (1990) C. Wright Mills (1959) and Nisbet (1967). However Giddens (1982) takes a critical stance to the nature of communication in sociological debate, suggesting it is restricted by its use of academic jargon and conceptualisations of the social world; thus removing the possibility for sociology to become embedded into everyday conversation and social action, neglecting the ability for sociology to change and engage in daily life. Giddens (ibid) goes further,

> The discipline of sociology focuses on the engagement with a multitude of perspectives and theories surrounding the nature of human life

and effectiveness that students feel surrounding the use of metaphors in their learning, and will be highlighted in the responses given by student following a mixed methods questionnaire on using metaphors in Higher Education (HE) sociology lectures.

The discipline of sociology focuses on the engagement with a multitude of perspectives and theories surrounding the nature of human life; which is not a small or simple task. These ideas are often communicated in a complex literary maze that students are asked to navigate without any map or idea of its structure. The problem arises with the interpretation of meaning behind complex conceptualisations of basic terms; argued by Simmel (1895) in *The Problem with Sociology* as the first challenge is

suggesting that sociology creates a double hermeneutic for students; firstly, the interpretation of concepts and jargon, and secondly the interpretation of social life. This double hermeneutic is the beginning of the challenge when teaching this discipline; how can a teacher give students the ability to interpret the social world before students have developed an interpretation of the concepts in social theories, and how can this become an engaging and enriching experience for them; this opens the debate to the use of metaphors further.

As a teacher in practice, metaphors are used daily during teaching sessions. The rationale for such a linguistic tool is to allow explanations and descriptions to be transferred from personal thought to a coherent image or expression that students

can use to understanding the ideas being presented. The application of these metaphors in teaching, in personal practice at least, take different shape and form that allow these ideas to be communicated; most notably in my practice using a table to identify specific sociological imaginations, where climbing, drawing and moving became the key for students to grasp a set of complex philosophical thoughts into one comprehendible image, this will be explained later in this article.

Educational theories that acknowledge metaphors as a useful tool are of wide availability, most notably is the thoughts of Sfard (1998). Sfard identifies the distinction between two metaphors in teaching; acquisition metaphors and participation metaphors. The nature of acquisition metaphors is based around the idea of knowledge being a commodity, where knowledge is taken and given, shared and taught, to students to achieve a greater scope of information, an approach that can deliver goal enablement education to students. The participatory metaphor offers the opportunity for learning to take place through self-reflection, suggesting that students "should be viewed as a person interested in participation in certain kinds of activities rather than in accumulating private possessions" (Sfard, 1998: 6). The latter of these two metaphorical tendencies in education can be likened to the evolution of the classroom into a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), surrounding the situated learning that takes place by the participation of students together; where the students become members of that teaching practice, in this instance they participate as beginner sociologists. The nature of Sfard's (1998) article is interesting in its entirety and gives thought-provoking conclusions surrounding the use of the two metaphors that are characteristics of her teaching practice. A final call that Sfard leaves is the way that metaphors will offer "local sense-making" (1998: 12) to students. The local sense-making can be interpreted in two ways; firstly local-sense as cultural sensitivity, where the creation of metaphors are unique to the cultural knowledge that a group may hold, this could include traditions and cultural norms; and secondly, local can be taken from the eyes of the beholder (in this case the tutor), whose own knowledge is being presented through the metaphor. Each case offers a rich interpretation of metaphors in teaching practice, however further application of metaphors in teaching is needed to build on Sfard's ideas.

'Stripping back' the theoretical debates surrounding metaphors brings forth a different perspective that becomes further intriguing applying this to education; as
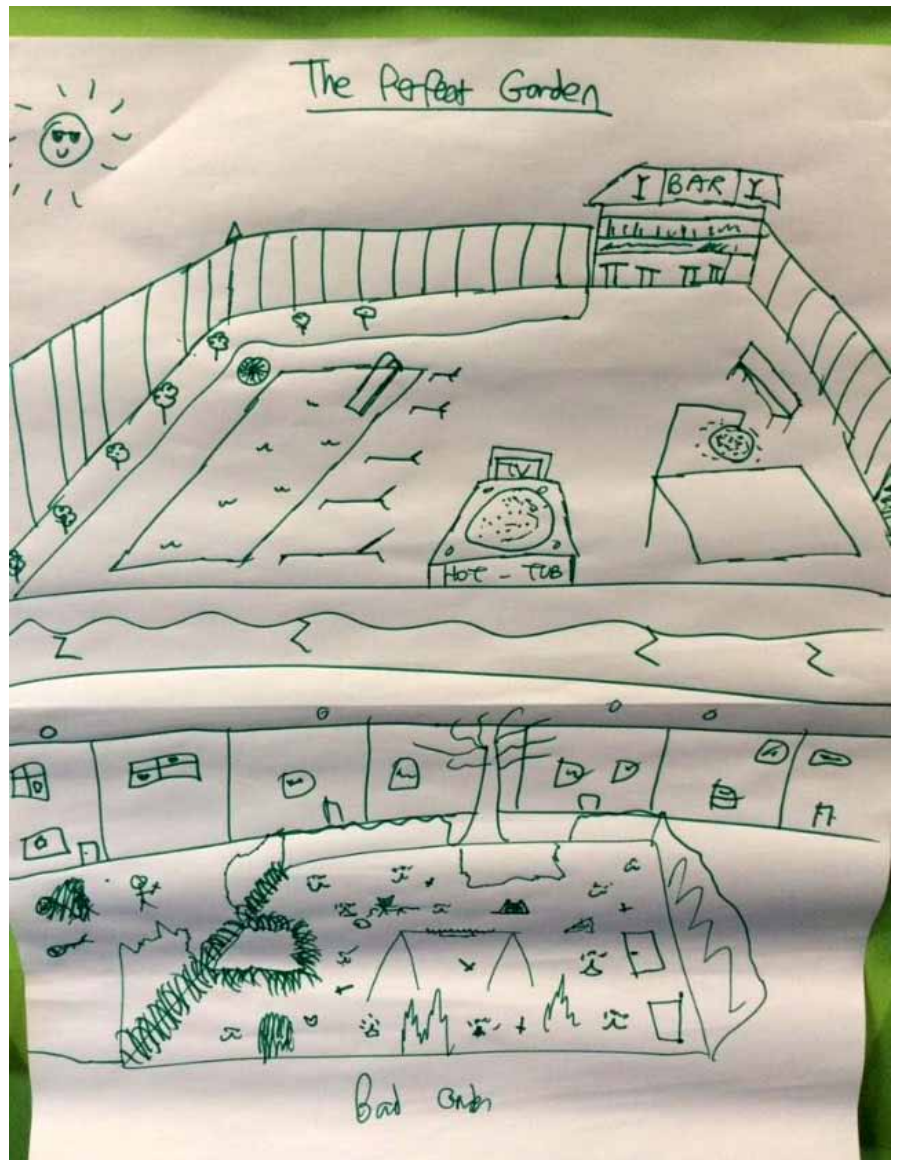
well as interesting for a sociologist. Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 5) highlight the nature of metaphors precisely, albeit simply, when they suggest, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". The experience can be seen as the crucial element of the learning experience taken place when applying metaphors as a linguistic tool for learning. This experience is something within the hands of the creator of such metaphors, and can bring pressure to the creator in order to conceptualise a relevant and appropriate metaphor for the audience; and this, more importantly, is required in the field of sociology where the challenge is to develop "metaphors that are not only better adapted to the world today, but are also receptive to a world that is constantly changing" (Blackshaw in Davis and Tester, 2010: 73). Experiences of sociological metaphors is something that is seen in the eyes of the audience, in this case the students. After researching my own students, surrounding their feelings about my use of metaphors, it was clear to see a number of important conclusions

that allowed students to *experience* memorable and enjoyable metaphors for their development in sociology.

One metaphor that the students found extremely useful was a metaphor that included the use of a table to link to key sociological theories; I did this to exemplify the social thought of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Simmel. The idea of this metaphor is to allow the student to explore the physical table so that they can interpret the physical structures to the ideas of the four key theorists. I began my explanation of this metaphor by identifying the key feature of the theories presented by the four classical sociologists, and then using the table to give a physical quality to the sociological idea. For example when discussing Marx I suggested that the table represented capitalist class structure, with the table top exploiting the table legs for higher achievement and power; whilst with Simmel I drew a line on different areas to represent the 'splinters' of the table and the interactions that happen between the top and the legs to give a physical explanation

of the elements of the table, that would be of interest to Simmel. With Durkheim the focus was on functionality and forms of solidarity; where I spoke to students about the construction of a particular table to outline differences between mechanic and organic solidarity, discussing each element as an individual entity. With Weber, the table was used to consider the concept of ideal types, both historical and general, by considering the key concepts that would be associated with a table. This particular metaphor gives students innovate ways to create their own metaphors for sociological theory, and allows them to help revise and remember theories with everyday objects. This idea was also adapted into a task for another group where they were asked to explain sociological theories with other everyday objects.

There are also other useful methods in developing sociological metaphors that allow students to learn from everyday life and activities. The benefit of such metaphors allow students to apply skills that they are already familiar with to understanding a process or idea that is used in sociology to explain the nature of society. An example here was taken from the work of Zygmunt Bauman (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*; where description of the spirit of modernity is identified as a gardener (pp. 91 – 92). To consider this in a teaching session I allocated students with the equipment to be able to draw; and asked them to design a perfect garden and the worst garden they could think of. Naturally, this was an entertaining process, with extravagant poolside bars and perfect weather; as well as the incorporation of weeds, broken walls and the occasional chav (all in the picture attached) . By the students taking time on their designs they were able to complete a number of tasks that are within the main characteristics of what Bauman associates was "modern culture" (1989: 92). After presentation, of the garden, it was possible to discuss with students the way that they chose what to include and exclude, this allowed time to define the characteristic of order and also an appropriate way to explain to students the classification that occurs, as a gardener, to weeds and

also the methods that they would use to prevent and sustain their perfect garden. This metaphor gave great ability for the students to see the nature of modernity, whilst linking this, closely, to an activity that they are all familiar with; allowing them to understand a complex area, such as modernity, with ease and detailed application.

The metaphors that are used can come in a multiple of ways and methods; the importance is in considering the 'experience' that comes alongside using a metaphor within teaching practice. When a student is entertained in some way by such a metaphor they gain a greater sense of experience from it; thus they tend to remember the sociological relation to the metaphor with greater ease. This is something longstanding within the teaching of sociology, and has even been developed into a number of texts that demonstrate how pop culture can be used in the experience of teaching sociology; Sutherland and Feltey's (2013) *Cinematic Sociology: Social Life in Film* offers a good basis and overview of this. Metaphors then, benefit from connections to the students own interests and pop culture; it is quite often, in my own teaching, my own experiences of contemporary pop culture appear in my teaching.

There is, however, a warning that comes with adapting your use of metaphors in teaching sociology; this can come from the oversimplifying of the metaphor applied. Often when simple or basic metaphors are used the experience is lost due to the simplicity of the metaphor; considering this, applying 'simple' metaphors should be seen as a challenging task for both teachers and students, as these metaphors require depth of explanation that can often lose students interest or go beyond their focus.

Considering the above, metaphors should be considered to be an essential tool in the holster of sociology tutors. Where directed, spontaneous and quick metaphors can be fired in the direct of students to give them an experience that is fulfilling and memorable. This method of teaching becomes useful in the early

stages for sociology students; where language and conceptual codes are not yet learnt nor understood. This is where experimentation and risk taking with metaphors is needed from the tutor; and along with experimentation brings forward a new outlook on sociology and also some extremely useful teaching tools.

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CONCEPT/IDEA	Metaphor to aid learning
FUNCTIONALISM	Organic analogy: society is similar to a human body: interconnected, interdependent, functional for the greater whole.
WEBER: BARGAINING POWER	Similar to the situation the Apprentice candidates have in the BBC show "The Apprentice": Lord Sugar has all the bargaining power: "You're Fired".
MERITOCRACY	Sports: all play by the same rules, all have the same opportunities to excel.
MERITOCRACY DOESN'T EXIST	Sports: money can buy privileges eg: Chelsea F.C can buy the best players in the world to win the Premier League.
MARXISM: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE	A jam doughnut: jam is the centre, the most important part (infrastructure). Dough (superstructure) gets changed by jam. This can also be done by discussing an egg, in a similar light.
HEGEMONY	Show Braveheart – winning the hearts and minds of the people
FALSE CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS	Show them the Matrix
PARSONS' THEORY ON THE FAMILY	Warm bath: women, as housewives, create a caring and supportive environment for the breadwinning husband to rest and recover from paid work, ready to return to work again the next day.
POST-MODERN THEORY: CONSUMER IDENTITY	Most perfume adverts: say little/nothing about the actual smell of the scent, but everything about the character/persona of the person who wears it.
CONSUMERISM	Buying a product, because they tell you 'Your worth it'
POST-MODERN THEORY ON IDENTITY	Just like 'Build-a-Bear' – 100 choices for cloths, colours and shoes; but you choose everything to get a 'unique' bear.
EDUCATION POLICY: SCHOOL LEAGUE TABLES	Premier League in football (or any league for any sport: winners and losers, standards rise?).
HIERARCHY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY	Ladders: some are higher than others, can people travel upwards? Downwards?
FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD TRENDS	Student task: ask students to summarise family and household trends by completing a picture that summarises information onto a representation of a single street with 10 houses.
MARXIST FEMINIST THEORY THAT HOUSEWORK SHOULD NOT GO UNPAID	The Simpsons metaphor: Consider the role Marge Simpson has in preparing Homer Simpson for work for Mr Burns at the power plant.
WORKPLACE SEGREGATION	Glass ceiling verses concrete ceiling??
MARXIST THEORY: RESERVE ARMY OF LABOUR	Consider the substitute/reserve in a sports team: they fill the gaps when needed but when "star player" is fit, it's back to the bench…..

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, website and book reviews for you to explore.

Book:

Contemporary Sociology

A Guide to Using Social Theory

polity

Edited by Martin Holborn

First Edition, Polity Press

Published in 2015

Martin Holborn and Polity Press have released an up to date and in-depth textbook aimed to introduce Sociology to students at undergraduate level. The book contains 21 chapters that cover the current topics in sociology such as inequality, globalisation and violence in society. Each chapter has been written by a range of contributors with excellent academic expertise. Chapters are written with clarity, at an undergraduate academic level that would challenge the most able A level student. Each chapter ends with a range of seminar questions that could help a teacher of A level Sociology think of extension questions for their students. The lists of further reading are very useful and up to date. This book can be recommended as one for teachers' own subject updates (eg: the entries on the identity and disability were easy to find and very useful for my own subject update needed).

Review: Patrick Robinson.

Edited by MARTIN HOLBORN
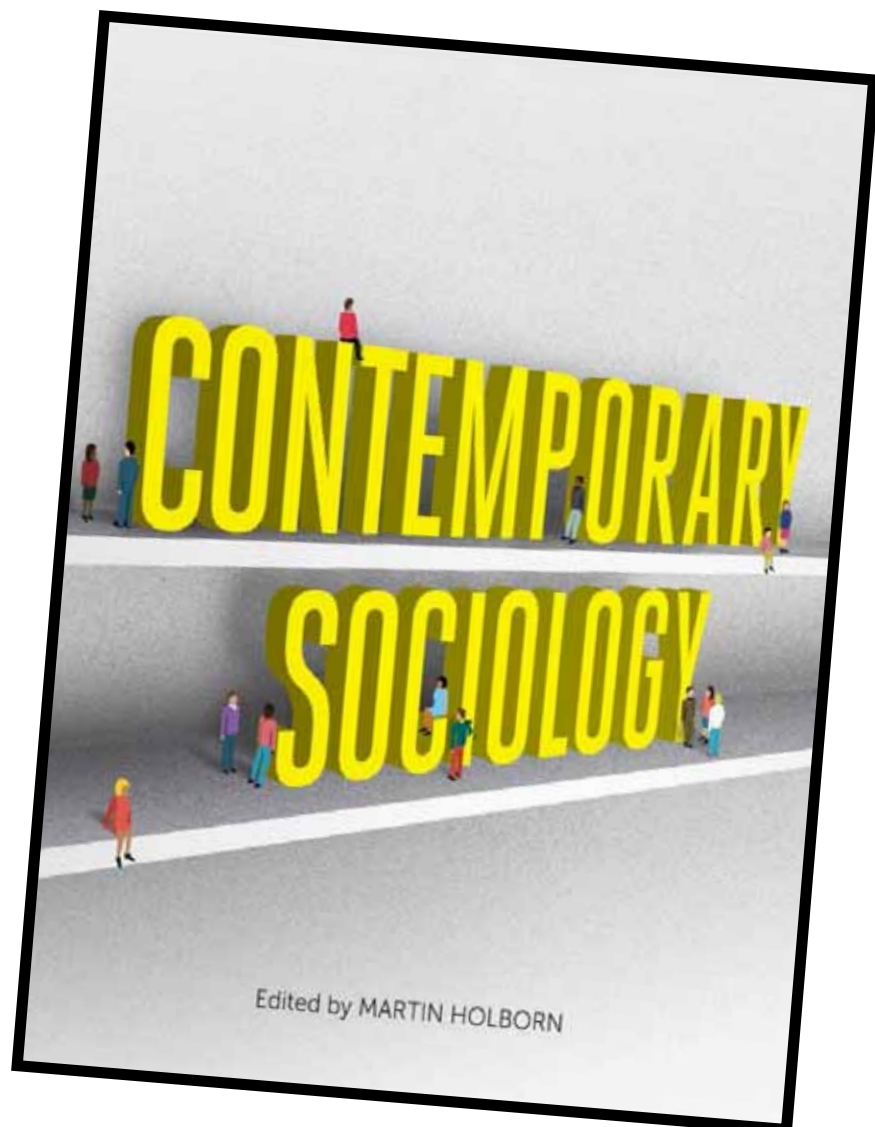
Book:

Ken Browne,

Sociology for AQATheory

Volume 1: AS and 1st Year

A level, 5th Edition, 2015

Polity Press

ISBN: 9 780745 691305

Ken Browne and Polity Press have released an excellent textbook for AS and 1st year A level Sociology, designed to fit around the new AQA 2015 specifications.

The book comes with AQA approval and is a thorough preparation for the assessment objectives for the new AQA exam papers from 2015. Assessment objectives for the exams are described well in the start of the textbook and there are lots of examples of exam questions that both teachers and learners will benefit greatly from.

Explanations of sociological ideas are written in a clear and understandable level. Students will appreciate the clarity of writing. Key terms are supported with an overall glossary at the back and "key term" boxes on the pages when they appear for the first time. Illustrations are very relevant to the points on the page and add variety and colour to the layout of the overall book. The book has some good on-line support at: http://www.polity.co.uk/kenbrowne/home.asp where teachers and learners can find very useful on line resources for free eg: on-line multiple quizzes provoke thought on knowledge and understanding, matching exercises for key terms exist as pdf files that can be printed off for use in class/homework. The methods revision tables are very useful to cover the evaluation of the main methods in an efficient manner. Weblinks to other resources are useful (although the ATSS link needs to be replaced with a link to BSA Teacher Group http://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/bsa-teaching-group.aspx). Ken Browne shares very useful sociology updates via his Twitter account: @BrowneKen. Overall, this textbook is highly recommended for the 2015 generation of Sociology student.

Review: Patrick Robinson.

TBC
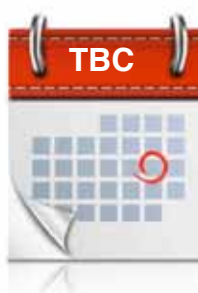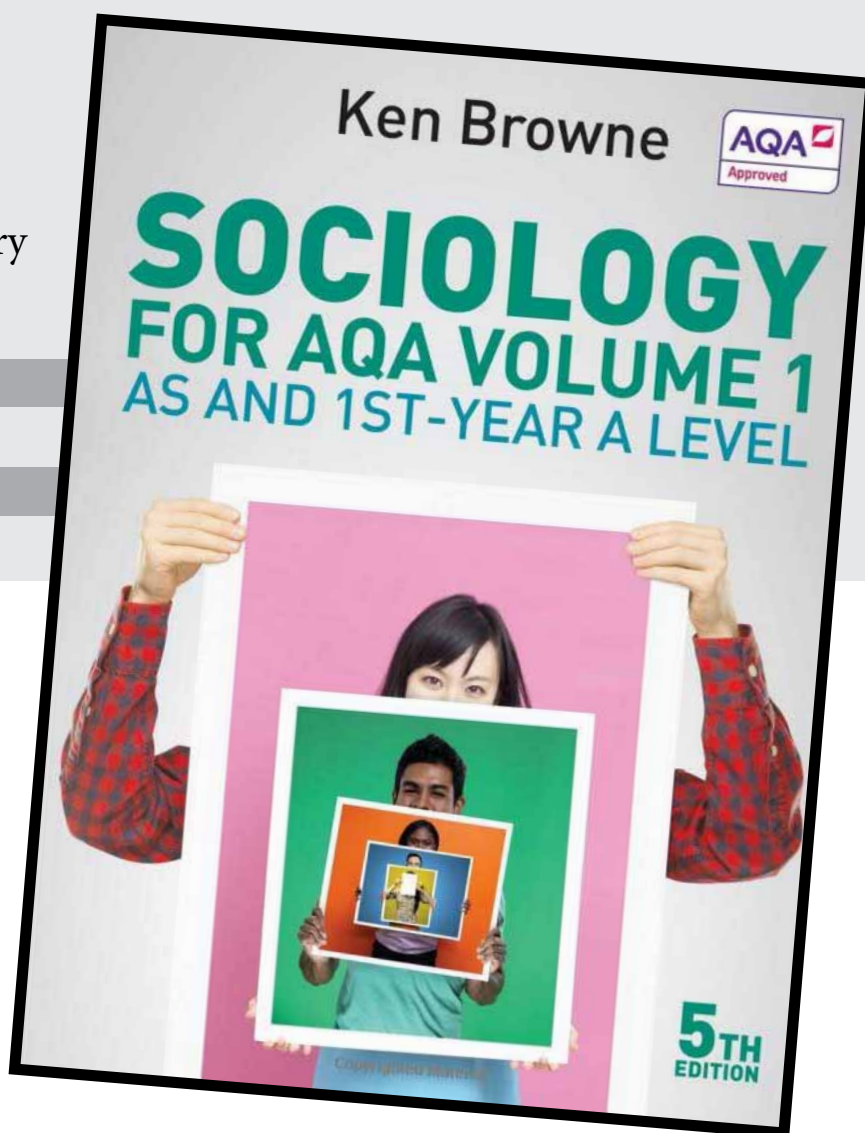
Forthcoming Events for the BSA Teacher Group in 2015

Next academic year.

Late September - early October, Lancaster University,
University of Brighton - late October
Friday or a Saturday one day conference for Sociology Teachers.

Programme and details to be confirmed.

www.britsoc.co.uk

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