It’s my party
Who joins political parties and why?

AMR: The role of social science in the fight

Wealth gap: Differences between generations

Voices: How social science can help address global problems
Welcome to the Winter issue of Society Now, the ESRC’s regular magazine which showcases the impact of the social science research we fund.

This issue examines a recent Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report on the wealth generation gap between today’s young adults and their parents.

We talk to Professor Jennifer Rubin, ESRC’s new Chief Executive and Executive Chair Designate, about her background and goals for the organisation.

Features include a look at the role of social science in the fight against antimicrobial resistance, and an interview with Professor Ken Gibb, Director of CaCHE, a major new research centre on housing.

Members of the ESRC Party Members Project examine who joins political parties, why they join and their opinions on key issues.

And Professor Helen Ball of Durham University’s Parent-Infant Sleep Lab explains their work on perceptions of infant sleep and how parents manage night-time infant care.

Finally, please turn to page 32 to see why new data protection legislation means you need to resubscribe to Society Now if you want to continue receiving the magazine. And how you can do it.

Nick Stevens, Editor - nick.stevens@esrc.ac.uk

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USER SELF-GOVERNANCE could play a key role in limiting spread of harmful content on social media, reports the Digital Wildfire study.

The two-year project was led by the University of Oxford in collaboration with the Universities of Cardiff, Warwick and de Montfort. It finds that the rapid growth of social media platforms such as Twitter has been accompanied by ‘digital wildfires’, which involve the viral spread of harmful content such as rumour, hate speech or malicious campaigns. “A wide range of agencies including the police, councils, news agencies, anti-harassment organisations, anti-bullying groups and schools are now attempting to manage the harms caused by rapidly spreading content that is in some way inflammatory, antagonistic or provocative,” says researcher Dr Helena Webb. “Young people are particularly vulnerable to this content, both through what they see and through making posts which they might later regret.”

Existing governance mechanisms to deal with social media content are often limited. “Legal sanctions tend to be slow and the police lack capacity to deal with the high volume of problem content online,” says Dr Webb. “Social media platforms mostly rely on user reports after content has already spread and caused harm.”

In view of these limitations, the Digital Wildfire team concluded that user self-governance could play an important role in limiting the spread of harmful content in real time. This involves actions by users to protect themselves and others. Education, particularly among young people, can foster more personal responsibility, digital maturity and digital resilience.

The team’s analysis of social media content also found that counter speech could be effective in limiting the spread of hate speech. “Examination of racist, sexist and homophobic posts on Twitter suggests that the greater the number of individuals prepared to challenge such posts through counter speech, the more likely this is to quell it. Posting counter speech may encourage others to reflect before sharing or forwarding content while also upholding rather than undermining freedom of speech,” says Dr Webb.

Social media platforms could, the researchers believe, employ specific features to support communities of people in coming together to halt the spread of harmful content in real time as well as using their terms and conditions to encourage more civil behaviour online.

Recognition of shared responsibility by all those involved is needed. “The law is too limited to deal with this problem alone,” she says. “But other opportunities exist to promote responsible behaviour online while upholding freedom of speech.”

Contact
Dr Helena Webb, University of Oxford
Email helena.webb@cs.ox.ac.uk
Telephone 01865 270 551
Website www.digitalwildfire.org
ESRC Grant Number ES/L013398/1
IN BRIEF

TESTING DECISIONS
The offer, interpretation and consequences of genetic testing raise complex issues for counsellors, patients and families. New research will explore how patients come to a decision about whether to take a genetic test or not. By following people during the decision-making process, researchers aim to improve understanding of how thinking develops and the other people and factors that influence this.

ESRC grant number ES/R003092/1

GENDER IDENTITY
Young people seem to be moving away from the traditional binary identities of male and female and adopting a more nuanced, fluid and non-binary understanding of what gender means today. Researchers aim to explore the way in which gender meanings have changed for young people between the ages of 15-24 and investigate the impact of shifting notions of masculinity and feminity.

ESRC grant number ES/P011772/1

TOWN MARKET BENEFITS
Traditional retail markets (TRM) have played a key role in UK towns and cities for centuries. More recently they have supported deprived neighbourhoods by providing affordable food and offered start-up business opportunities as well as fostering social inclusion in increasingly diverse cities. Researchers aim to understand who uses markets, how markets are changing and assess their economic, social and community value.

ESRC grant number ES/P010547/1

Older generation need help to stay food secure

The food industry and health agencies could all do more to ensure older people have access to a healthy, affordable and safe diet, says a University of Hertfordshire study into food provision in later life.

One in 10 people aged over 65 in England and Wales suffer from, or are at risk of, malnutrition with an estimated cost to the health and social care system of £29.5 billion in 2017. The food landscape can become more problematic in later life, with older people likely to experience a range of factors working against them when sourcing, buying and preparing food, says researcher Professor Wendy Wills.

In a 30-month project, researchers set out to explore the challenges older people face within the UK food system. Findings suggest that staying in control of their own food shopping is considered key by older people determined to retain their independence and sense of community belonging. For some older people living alone, a trip to the supermarket may be the only opportunity for community interaction each week. Researchers say supermarkets have considerable scope to make the weekly shop a more inclusive, enjoyable, sociable and less stressful experience for older people.

Such measures range from the introduction of ‘slow’ checkout lanes to the launch of tailored incentives that encourage older people to shop during quieter periods. Other potential innovations include providing more seating areas or rest points, arranging in-store cafe lunch events aimed at older people, targeting some in-store promotions at older customers and increasing staff training on meeting the needs of more vulnerable customers.

Local authorities, the voluntary sector and agencies could also better meet older people’s food security needs, say researchers. Community food services such as lunch clubs would benefit from rejuvenation and meals-on-wheels services, which offer a lifeline, desperately require funding to survive. GPs, carers and charities could do more to spread advice on appropriate nutrition in later life, including eating more energy-dense foods to avoid weight loss and malnutrition.

Supermarkets, the Food Standards Agency and a range of voluntary and social enterprise organisations are considering how to use the project findings to ensure older people remain food secure and safe for as long as possible. “Industry and policymakers have a real opportunity to introduce practical and cost-effective measures that support the older generation to eat healthily and safely,” says Professor Wills.

Contact Professor Wendy Wills, University of Hertfordshire
Email w.j.wills@herts.ac.uk
Telephone 01707 228535
Web www.foodprovisioninlaterlife.com
ESRC Grant Number ES/M00306X/1
FOREIGN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES may under-report their UK taxable profits by about 50% relative to domestic companies, according to a recent study by Katarzyna Habu from Oxford University Centre for Business Taxation.

Using a confidential UK corporate tax returns dataset from HMRC, researchers explored whether there are any systematic differences in the amount of taxable profits that multinational and domestic companies report. Identifying such differences would be important because multinationals are key global corporate players and, in the UK, contributed almost half of total revenues between 2000 and 2011.

Findings suggest that foreign multinational companies report lower ratios of taxable profits to total assets (12.8%) than comparable domestic standalone companies (25.2%). Assuming that similar sized companies from similar industries should be reporting similar taxable profits (unless they are involved in practices that aim at minimizing their tax liability in the UK), then this difference suggests that foreign multinational subsidiaries shift a large proportion of their taxable profits out of the UK. The fact that more than 60% of foreign multinational subsidiaries report zero taxable profits than domestic companies (28%) may indicate very aggressive form of tax avoidance, Habu concludes.

IN BRIEF

CIGARETTE WARNINGS
The introduction of standardised (ie, plain) packaging of cigarettes in the UK means that health warnings on packs are now more noticeable. New research aims to investigate which warnings are most effective in encouraging smokers to quit or not to take up smoking. Findings will also help in developing effective warnings for other unhealthy products such as alcohol and junk food.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES
Migrant perspectives will be a key part of new research that aims to incorporate migrant viewpoints into urban planning to create safer and more sustainable cities. By working directly with migrant populations and urban planners in Chittagong, Bangladesh, researchers aim to generate new priorities in building sustainable places and learn lessons that can be applied across the Global South.

INFORMATION ACCESS
Right to access information held by public authorities has been a major feature in changes to governance in recent decades. Has the policy of providing access to environmental information successfully engaged the public and achieved the intended environmental benefits? Analysis of statistical data, questionnaires and interviews will highlight how public access is currently being used and determine any substantive impact on environmental regulation.

Contact
Katarzyna Habu, Oxford University Centre for Business Taxation
Email dorota.pawlik@sbs.ox.ac.uk
Telephone 01865 288786
ESRC Grant Number ES/L000016/1

Contact
Professor Antonia Bifulco, Middlesex University
Email a.bifulco@mdx.ac.uk
Telephone 020 8411 3705
Web www.clearaboutstress.net
ESRC Grant Number ES/K00638X/1
IN BRIEF

SCHOOL CHOICES
Analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England will help evaluate the effect of attending a better school on long-term outcomes for secondary school students. Researchers will study the effect that not going to one's most preferred school has on educational attainment and on outcomes such as aspirations to higher education, mental health, being bullied and crime.

ESRC grant number ES/R003629/1

WOMEN’S VOICES
Myanmar and Nepal are countries in transition, both having recently emerged from long-term civil conflicts and natural disasters. Rates of internal displacement in both countries are among the highest in the world. By asking women who have lived through rural-urban displacement to share their personal experiences, researchers will document women’s explanations of how displacement has affected gendered relations and women’s resulting experiences of violence.

ESRC grant number ES/R002622/1

FINANCIAL INFORMATION
The quality of information provided to investors by corporate management in publicly traded companies in the UK is of central importance to financial market participants. In partnership with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) – the body responsible for promoting high quality corporate governance and financial reporting – researchers aim to explore the transparency and usefulness of financial information and disclosures.

ESRC grant number ES/R003904/1

Street children gain a voice

LISTENING TO THE voices of young people living in street situations is essential, not only to realise their rights, but to ensure the success of programmes aimed at supporting them, say Professor Lorraine van Blerk and Dr Wayne Shand of the Growing Up on The Streets Knowledge Exchange Programme developed with StreetInvest.

Researchers based in the African cities of Accra – Bukavu and Harare – built the largest ever database of the lives of young street people. Using this expertise, the research team developed a Knowledge Exchange Training Pack which is engaging many other young people worldwide in policy dialogue and development. In particular, it helped ensure young people’s voices were heard in the drafting of the UN General Comment on Children in Street Situations, 2017.

Contact Professor Lorraine van Blerk, University of Dundee
Email guots@dundee.ac.uk
Telephone 01382 385445
Web www.streetinvest.org/guots
ESRC Grant Number ES/M006107/1

Victory in war needs radical rethink

THE IDEA THAT war is all about winning is deeply lodged in popular thinking. But how useful is the notion of ‘winning’ when applied to contemporary warfare? New research into the ethics of war, exit strategies and how wars end suggests we should consider how useful the language of victory is to modern society.

Decoupling the idea of military success from the notion of decisive battlefield victories could lead to a more realistic understanding of modern warfare and what it can achieve, say researchers from the University of Glasgow’s Moral Victories project.

“In an age of seemingly unwinnable wars and messy endgame situations such as those in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya we have lost a clear notion of what victory in war looks like or how to end wars well,” says researcher Dr Cian O’Driscoll.

While President Obama was uncomfortable with the idiom of victory, and tried to excise it from US strategic discourse, the notion of winning is very much hardwired into people’s thinking. “It’s not a concept you can easily erase from people’s consciousness, especially when it comes to war,” says Dr O’Driscoll. Events have borne this out, as the rhetoric of victory has made a comeback under the Trump Presidency.

But clear benefits could ensue, the study suggests, if, rather than seeking to pretend that the term victory does not exist, politicians and military minds engaged it in new and creative ways. O’Driscoll says these benefits could be significant: “If we could better tailor what we think war can achieve to the realities of modern warfare then we may produce more realistic objectives rather than mortgage populations to never-ending wars.”

Contact Dr Cian O’Driscoll, University of Glasgow
Email cian.o.driscoll@glasgow.ac.uk
Telephone 0141 330 2082
Web www.moralvictories.gla.ac.uk
ESRC Grant Number ES/L013363/1
Going clubbing three or more times a week triples a person's experiences of violence from strangers and acquaintances, says new research from Nottingham Trent University. Going to clubs once or twice weekly, using cannabis and being divorced or separated are the other key factors likely to increase the number of experiences of some kind of violent assault by a stranger or acquaintance. And some risk factors differ: men, for example, experience 170% more incidents of violence from strangers than women.

This insight into who experiences most stranger/acquaintance violence results from research why crime rates – including violent crimes – have fallen dramatically in England and Wales over the last two decades.

“According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales,” says researcher Professor Andromachi Tseloni, “acquaintance violence fell by 73% from 1995 to 2013 (for 16-24 year olds the fall was 83%) while stranger violence dropped by 43% between 2002/3 and 2013/14. Interestingly the ‘crime drop’ has not touched repeat victims of violence. “Rather, the drop is most clearly seen among 16-24-year-olds and people who in the 1990s might have had just one experience of stranger or acquaintance violence within a year,” she says.

The current fall in young people, particularly men, going to clubs and pubs in the evening could explain some of the trend, suggests further research by Dr Laura Garius. An increase in the numbers of older clubbers and pub-goers may be resulting in a more balanced and less ‘testosterone-fuelled’ night-time economy. A gentrification of city centres with more sitting down drinking venues which also offer food or snacks, or night bus schemes, are other possible explanations. But further work is required, say researchers, to answer questions arising from the study such as why separated/divorced people experience more non-domestic violence or why those living in social housing face more violence from acquaintances but not strangers.

Recommendations from the study include a greater focus on licensing policies for clubs and pubs that encourage good practice for violence prevention as well as raising awareness via drug counselling services of the significantly increased risks and frequency of stranger/acquaintance violence faced by drug users.
Public sector ombudsmen need to earn consumer trust

MOST CONSUMERS in the UK purchase goods and services with confidence, but the most recent figures still point to some 18 million problems a year. A 2017 EU report finds the cost to consumers of such problems across Europe could be £51 billion.

Ombudsman schemes give consumers free, accessible and informal methods to resolve disputes with public bodies or businesses. But the public has mixed views on how well ombudsmen are measuring up and ombudsmen schemes could better respond to users and do more to improve the consumer experience, says a new three-year study.

Findings show that half of some 3,000 recent users of ombudsmen in the UK, France and Germany expressed confidence in the process. But satisfaction rates between private and public sector ombudsmen revealed a stark divide. In the UK, respondents in public schemes were far less likely than those in private schemes to be satisfied with how their cases were dealt with: almost 60% claimed to be ‘very dissatisfied’.

Respondents reported a favourable outcome for only 11% of public cases, compared to 53% of private cases. Moreover, while 56% of UK respondents would recommend private sector ombudsmen to others, 52% of the public users would not.

The research further showed that peoples’ expectations of ombudsmen were generally too high or they simply did not know what to expect. Satisfaction was more likely when certain key criteria, such as giving people the chance to voice their story, were met. “The data suggests that if user expectations were managed better at first contact and appropriate forms of communication are maintained throughout the complaint journey, then people know what to expect and this makes acceptance of the outcome more likely,” explains researcher Dr Naomi Creutzfeldt.
Toolkit balances people and profit

A FREE, ONLINE, diagnostic toolkit developed at the University of Sheffield is helping organisations worldwide achieve financially sustainable supply chains and excellent employment practices.

The SCA-Emp (Supply Chain Accounting and Employment Practices) project studied 100-plus organisations in the automobile and textile sectors in Brazil and South Africa. Findings suggest that while these companies tried to treat workers fairly, arm’s length contracting with suppliers meant little was known of employment practices further down the supply chain. “We developed the SCA-Emp toolkit to enable businesses to apply more ethical approaches to their supply chains, which should lead to improvements in employment practices,” says researcher Professor Pauline Dibben. “I hope that this will meet the end goal of making a positive difference to vulnerable workers across the world.”

Deaf find reading a challenge despite improved hearing aids

Better hearing aid provision over the last decade for children with severe to profound congenital hearing loss has improved some language skills, says recent research.

The study is the first to make a direct comparison between children recruited before and after the widespread availability of cochlear implants, digital hearing aids and the introduction of newborn hearing screening. It finds a significant improvement in children’s oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge.

But contrary to expectations children in the recent cohort were not reading better than children in the earlier cohort, says researcher Professor Margaret Harris. “Analysis indicates that this was because their phonological skills – knowledge of sounds that make up words – had not improved to the level shown by hearing children of the same age,” she explains.

Findings suggest that many children with severe-profound hearing loss still find reading a challenge and will benefit from continued support for literacy throughout school. “The next stage in taking our findings forward is to develop a structured approach to teaching the key skills that we have identified as crucial for deaf children who are in the early stages of learning to read,” Professor Harris concludes.

EATING TOGETHER

Eating in a group of friends or family increases consumption at that meal by around 70%. New research will investigate whether the increase in food intake that occurs when eating with others is compensated for by reduced food intake later. Findings will contribute to the development of advice on healthy eating environments and how overeating in social contexts may be avoided. ESRC grant number ES/P01027X/1

LEARNING IN NIGER

Less than 30% of the population in Niger is literate. One barrier to improvement is a high level of teacher absenteeism. Previous research has shown that weekly telephone calls to teachers can improve teachers’ attendance and student performance. In a new study, researchers will explore how mobile phone technology could enhance the relationships between teachers, communities and education service providers in remote rural areas. ESRC grant number ES/P005594/1

ENDANGERED PLANTS

Illegal trade in wild plants is a growing problem and threatens numerous species and important natural resources. The Internet has vastly increased this illegal trade by making it far easier for potential buyers or sellers to do business. Researchers aim to combine innovative and cross-disciplinary ways of analysing online marketplaces as well as a review of existing policing practices to assist in combating this criminal trade. ESRC grant number ES/R003254/1
Tackling antimicrobial resistance

The ESRC has been working on a cross-council initiative to identify research challenges in tackling the rise in antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and funding research projects that put social and behavioural issues at the forefront of the fight against it. By Mark Gardner

Antibiotics were discovered in the early 20th century. Ever since then we’ve been using them to treat and cure infections and diseases. Unfortunately resistance to these drugs has also spread because the more we use antibiotics the more opportunities there are for bacteria to evolve resistance. In the past we’ve been far too liberal. For example, by using antibiotics routinely to make livestock grow faster.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. We can only fight back by giving researchers around the world the means to work together on pioneering research to confront the problem from all sides, and move towards tangible solutions.

“We have been overusing antibiotics for decades to treat mild infections that would usually get better on their own.”

Social science research is a crucial component in this endeavour and ESRC has been working with the six other UK research councils, along with other UK funders, on a cross-council initiative to identify a number of research challenges in tackling the rise in AMR. There is a vast amount of research taking place and by working together, we believe that UK researchers will remain at the heart of effort to tackle antibiotic resistance.

What are we doing?

We provide the strategic direction and financial support to enable researchers in the UK to work collaboratively, locally and globally to control resistance and to develop new scientific approaches. That strategy includes addressing patient demand, developing alternative treatments and new antibiotics, and reviewing farming practices. But we also need to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance with good communication, education and training and research can underpin these things too.

The Science Museum in London has opened its doors to a new exhibition, sponsored by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), called Superbugs: The Fight For Our Lives. The free exhibition highlights the causes of antibiotic resistance, such as the overuse and misuse of antibiotics, what the solutions might be, and how we can all get involved in preserving the effectiveness of antibiotics. The exhibition runs until spring 2019.

As part of WHO World Antibiotics Awareness Week (November 2017) the research councils’ produced a range of information for a general audience about our work in this area, including a video, blogs, research overview and timeline of AMR. We also produced a new newsletter for those involved in AMR research. To find out more visit: www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/xrcprogrammes/tackling-antimicrobial-resistance/antimicrobial-resistance-uk-research-overview/

What is ESRC funding?

ESRC has been the main financial backer of research projects that put social and behavioural issues at the forefront of the fight against antibiotic resistance. Other funders joined this effort, including the Department of Health, the Medical Research Council, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Some examples of the exciting research now underway are: Anti-Microbials In Society (AMIS): a Global Interdisciplinary Research Hub, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, ES/P008100/1

Policymakers are agreed that we must reduce our reliance on these medicines. But how? Efforts to change patient behaviour are often called for but have not had the widespread impact required to curb the emergence and spread of resistance. This research proposes that antibiotics are embedded within our socioeconomic infrastructure in such a deep way that attempts to change behaviour of patients, physicians of farmers are peripheral to our underlying dependency on their use. By understanding the ways in which antibiotics are intertwined with our lives, institutions and infrastructures today...
we may identify ways to replace their use while minimising unintended consequences.

Preserving Antibiotics through Safe Stewardship: PASS University College London, ES/P008321/1

We have been overusing antibiotics for decades to treat mild infections that would usually get better on their own. This overuse makes bacteria evolve so that they can survive the effect of an antibiotic, making infections much harder to treat. If we are to preserve antibiotics for the future, we need to make sure that they are used carefully and not wasted. This careful use of antibiotics, making sure that those who need them can benefit but that they are not over-used is known as ‘antibiotic stewardship’. This project will provide the information necessary to design approaches that can support safe antibiotic stewardship.

Diagnostic innovation and livestock (DIAL): towards more effective and sustainable applications of antibiotics in livestock farming, University of Exeter, ES/P008194/1

The widespread use of antibiotics in livestock farming in many circumstances increasingly serves as an alternative to the diagnosis, targeted treatment and prevention of disease in individual animals, flocks and herds. Better, smarter, more rapid and more accessible diagnoses, driven by a shift in the behaviours and conditions associated with diagnostic decision-making (whether performed in the laboratory or at the point-of-care by veterinarians or farmers) represents a critical step to delivering a more effective and sensible use of antibiotic medicines in animal health. This interdisciplinary research team will work with and draw from original, empirically driven information, understanding and analysis from diagnostic tool developers and regulators, professional bodies, farmers and the food industry to develop durable and innovative strategies for facilitating and advancing smarter approaches to the use of antibiotics in agriculture.

Understanding and improving antimicrobial prescribing in care homes: a multidisciplinary approach, University of Dundee, ES/P008224/1

Older people living in care homes are prescribed many more antibiotics than average and as a result often get antibiotic resistant infections later, which are then harder to treat. There is general agreement that antibiotic use in care homes could and should be safely reduced.

What is AMR

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.

Key facts

- AMR threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi.
- AMR is an increasingly serious threat to global public health that requires action across all government sectors and society.
- Without effective antibiotics, the success of major surgery and cancer chemotherapy would be compromised.
- The cost of health care for patients with resistant infections is higher than care for patients with non-resistant infections due to longer duration of illness, additional tests and use of more expensive drugs.
- In 2016, 490,000 people developed multi-drug resistant TB globally, and drug resistance is starting to complicate the fight against HIV and malaria, as well.

Source: World Health Organization
However, to design effective approaches to reducing antibiotic prescribing for care home residents we need to understand more about how, when and why they get prescribed, from the perspectives of nurses, carers, GPs, and residents and their relatives.

**Antimicrobial resistance as a social dilemma: Approaches to reducing broad-spectrum antibiotic use in acute medical patients internationally, University of Leicester ES/P004784/1**

Attempts to change the ways antibiotics are prescribed, to tackle the problem of antimicrobial resistance, have met with variable success. This is partly because the prescription of antibiotics is influenced by many social, cultural and organisational factors, and those prescribing antibiotics have to balance competing interests, values and short- and long-term benefits when making decisions. By comparing attitudes to prescribing antibiotics in England, Sri Lanka, and South Africa this study will consider and predict the influence of different contextual factors on various attempts to change the ways antibiotics are prescribed.

**Corporate food retailers, meat supply chains and the responsibilities of tackling antimicrobial resistance, Newcastle University, ES/P011586/1**

This project makes a path-breaking contribution to the agenda for tackling AMR by focusing scoping research and significant networking events on a link that has so far been missing from academic and policy debate – the pivotal role of corporate food retailers. The aim of the project is to address the responsibility of retailers in tackling the antimicrobial resistance challenge in the context of their chicken and pork supply chains, and to investigate this evolving role and how it might be shaped in the future, in the UK and at a global scale. Antibiotics are essential for treating animal diseases and maintain animal welfare. However, use of antibiotics – whether in animals or in humans – will encourage development of resistant bacteria. Meaningful and sustainable changes are needed to ensure diligence from farm to fork, promoting best practices to reduce development and spread of resistant bacteria in the food chain; thereby keeping our antibiotics working for both animals’ and humans’ benefit.

Combatting antibiotic resistance isn’t easy, and it will take the hard work of researchers, policymakers, clinicians and individuals to keep the bugs at bay. But we’re not powerless. When it comes to antibiotic resistance, knowledge is power. The more we understand this problem, the better equipped we are to fix it and together, we can make a difference.

The UK is a world-leader in antibiotic resistance research, supporting a huge variety of research in the field. This is a complex problem, which requires complex solutions, and the multifaceted nature of UK research reflects this.

There’s no single magic bullet when it comes to resistance, and we’ll need to draw on the efforts of policymakers, clinicians and individuals if we want to see profound, long-term improvement. But if we are to overcome the challenges posed by antibiotic resistance, we’ll need a unified approach that draws on an array of innovative and pioneering research.
Training to help your statistical and data skills

We offer a range of courses to help non-statisticians understand the basics of statistics and data analysis. Below are some of the courses we are running in Spring 2018. Book early to get a discount! Additional discounts available for RSS members.

**Introduction to Bayesian Statistics**  
20 March  
This two-day course aims to provide a working knowledge of Bayesian statistics for interested researchers.

**Identifying Trends and Making Forecasts**  
10 April  
This two-day course illustrates the basic practice for summarising and measuring trends as well as the best methods to extrapolate trends into a forecast.

**Introduction to Python**  
2 May  
Through the use of taught material and practical examples, participants will build up the skills needed to perform data analysis using Python.

**Introduction to R**  
15 May  
This two-day course focuses on entering, working with and visualising data (Day 1), as well as regression modelling in R, including linear, general logistic and survival models (Day 2).

**Big data: tools and statistical methods**  
22 May  
The objective of this two-day course is to train statistically-minded practitioners in the use of common Big Data tools, with an emphasis on the use of advanced statistical methods for analysis.

To find out more or to book please visit our website: [www.rss.org.uk/public-courses](http://www.rss.org.uk/public-courses)
PARTY MEMBERSHIP IS vital to the health of our representative democracy. Members contribute significantly to election campaigns and to party finances. They are the people who pick party leaders. They constitute the pool from which parties choose their candidates. And they help anchor the parties to the principles and the people they came into politics to promote and protect.

Beginning just after the 2015 General Election, and with funding from the ESRC, we have, with the help of YouGov’s huge internet panel, been surveying the members of the country’s six biggest parties.

The surveys we’ve conducted – after the 2015 and 2017 general elections, as well as an additional survey of Labour Party members in 2016 and a survey of those who’ve decided to leave their parties – constitute a rich resource for anyone wanting to understand who joins political parties, as well as why and how they do so. They give us an insight into their ideas and their priorities. And they give us a sense of what members do for their parties at election time, how they see candidate selection, and their impressions of, and their satisfaction with, the organisations they’ve joined.

There have, of course, been surveys of party members before. Indeed, the pioneers in the field were the British academics Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley who, beginning in the early 1990s, together with various collaborators and with the aid of the parties themselves, produced three full-length books on Labour, Tory, and Lib Dem members.

“Members of both parties are overwhelmingly white and very largely middle class”

Following their example, there are a number of completed and ongoing studies of party members in various, mostly European countries carried out by scholars who, like us, are part of the international MAPP project hosted by the Free University of Brussels. Closer to home, scholars have recently completed surveys of the membership of the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens, of UKIP, and of the DUP.

The added value of the Party Members Project based at Queen Mary University of London and Sussex University consists, first, in its fielding simultaneous and largely identical surveys of members of the Conservatives, Labour, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, and UKIP without having to rely on the cooperation of the parties themselves: this allows us to better compare those members and to ask any questions we want without worrying about whether the parties would approve.

Second, because these surveys were conducted immediately after two general elections (in 2015 and 2017), they allowed us to ask about participation in campaigning when memories were still relatively fresh.

Third, along with our 2015 survey we were able to field similar questionnaires to people who identified strongly with one of the six parties but who hadn’t gone so far as to actually join it. This allows us to investigate the prompts for and the obstacles to joining more comprehensively than ever before: what differentiates those who joined from those who did not, and how do these two groups compare when it comes to campaigning?

Fourth, because the ESRC very generously (and very speedily) gave us an additional grant to run a second wave of surveys after 2017’s snap election (which constituted a third wave in Labour’s case because we had already run a supplementary survey in 2016 in order to explore its ‘Corbyn surge’ in membership), we will be able, effectively, to put together a panel study.
Members of both parties are overwhelmingly white and very largely middle class.
Fifth, and finally, our ‘leavers’ survey’, also conducted in 2017, already contains a panel element and will allow us to conduct the most comprehensive study of why people give up their membership – something which should prove interesting not just to academics but also to parties, who are understandably keen to improve retention as well as recruitment.

So what have we found out so far? A lot – indeed so much, that here we’ll focus on the parties that have dominated British politics for nearly a century: Labour and the Conservatives.

First up, what do they look like and what (at least in that respect) do they have in common? Well, based on our latest research, which Queen Mary University of London’s Mile End Institute has just published as a report called Grassroots, we can say that members of both parties are overwhelmingly white and very largely middle class. Members of the black and minority ethnic communities may make up around 13% of the UK population, but they constitute just three and four per cent respectively of the Tory and Labour grassroots. And while only just over half of British adults can be put into occupational groups ABC1, those same ABC1s make up 86% of Conservative and 77% of Labour members.

But there are more significant differences between the memberships of Britain’s two main parties. For one thing, partly as a result of so many more women joining the party to elect and/or defend Jeremy Corbyn from 2015 onwards, Labour is much closer to gender parity than its main rival: some 47% of Labour’s members in the summer of 2017 were women, while just 29% of Conservative members were female.

For another, the average age among the Tory rank and file is 57, rather than the absurdly old 72 that gets bandied about in the media despite the absence of any reliable source that we’ve been able to find. But while that doesn’t seem much greater than the average for Labour members (53), it disguises the fact that the Conservative Party has a significantly higher proportion (44%) of members who are over 65 years old than does Labour (where the proportion is 30%).

Some readers may be surprised that, although Labour (because of its sheer size) now has far more young members than its main rival, the party’s membership as a whole isn’t necessarily as young as all the photos and footage of Momentum activists and Glastonbury-goers chanting ‘Oh Jeremy Corbyn’ would suggest. But our work on those who joined the party fairly recently reveals that quite a few of them were actually ‘re-treads’ – folk who left Labour as Blair led it into the centre and the Iraq war – but who are now convinced they’ve ‘got their party back.’

Yet it’s ideas and issues rather than demographics that throw up the biggest divides between Labour and Tory grassroots.

Take austerity: some 98% of Labour members think it’s gone too far, compared to just 11% of Conservative members. Or how about the idea that government should redistribute income to the less well-off? Only 15% of the Tory rank and file agree, compared to 94% of their Labour counterparts. Their contrasting support for the idea that ordinary working people don’t get their fair share of the nation’s wealth is – at 19% versus 97% – similarly striking.

Social and moral issues throw up big differences too. Take law and order: 54% of Tory members support the death penalty, compared to just nine per cent of Labour members. Or gay marriage, supported by just 41% of rank-and-file Tories but 85% of their Labour counterparts.

And finally, even inevitably, there’s Brexit. Only around a quarter of Conservative members appear to favour staying in the single market and the customs union – an option favoured by around 85% of Labour members, some 78% of whom (compared to just 14% of Tories) would like to see a second referendum on leaving the EU.

How much longer Labour’s grassroots will stay content with Mr Corbyn’s ‘constructive ambiguity’ on Brexit, then, is surely a moot point.

Gay marriage is supported by just 41% of rank-and-file Tories but 85% of their Labour counterparts

The ESRC Party Members Project (PMP) is a three-year project run by Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti and funded by the ESRC. It aims to study party membership in the six largest British parties: the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, UKIP, the Greens, and the SNP.

Email partymembersproject@gmail.com
Web esrcpartymembersproject.org
www.qmul.ac.uk/media/qmul/media/publications/Grassroots,-Britain’s-Party-Members.pdf
fullfact.org/news/how-old-average-conservative-party-member/
The wellbeing of the population has become a major concern for researchers and policymakers. The journey to and from work consumes about one hour per day for the average commuter and two hours per day for one in seven commuters. It has been found to be one of the least enjoyable daytime activities. Commuting is therefore a potentially relevant factor for the wellbeing of the working population.

Detailed research has been carried out to find out what affects the commuting experience and has shown that higher stress occurs for those with longer commute durations and more unpredictable conditions. Researchers have come up with a standardised way of measuring satisfaction with the commute and found that those who walk and cycle to work tend to have the highest satisfaction, while those using public transport have the lowest. And finding ways to use commute journeys productively has been shown to be beneficial: Those who find that the commute has value beyond arriving at the destination have higher commute satisfaction. But while this research is informative, it does not tell us how commuting affects overall personal wellbeing – how we are doing on the whole as individuals.

The ‘Commuting and Wellbeing Study’ set out to get a full picture of the impact of commuting on our lives. The study used panel data from Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study, which tracks the lives of a large, representative sample of households in England each year. The dataset allowed us to examine how changes in different aspects of wellbeing from one year to the next were related to changing commuting circumstances for more than 26,000 workers in England over a five-year period.

We found that how long it takes to get to work affects wellbeing in a number of ways. Each additional minute of commuting time (all else being equal) reduces job satisfaction, reduces leisure time satisfaction, increases strain in people’s lives and worsens mental health. The mode of transport makes a difference. Those who walk or cycle to work do not report reductions in leisure time satisfaction in the same way as other commuters which is probably because active commuting is seen as a beneficial use of time (eg, for getting exercise). Those with long commutes by rail do not have the level of strain of those with long commutes by car – or those with shorter rail commutes. Perhaps because those on longer rail journeys are more likely to get a seat and have comfortable conditions to relax or even to work. Those who work from home are found to have higher job satisfaction and leisure time satisfaction than those who travel to work.

Whilst we found that longer commute times have adverse wellbeing effects for job satisfaction, and even more markedly for leisure time satisfaction, they were not found to have a large impact on life satisfaction overall, at least in the short-term. Our analysis indicated that this is because people take on longer commute times for jobs which provide higher salaries and other benefits which serve to increase life satisfaction. This does not mean that the other negative impacts of longer commutes can be disregarded – they are still experienced by those in question. Furthermore, we found that those persisting with long commutes for a number of years tended to have consistently lower life satisfaction than other workers. There appears to be a group of commuters who accept unfavourable commutes and are unable or unwilling to change them in spite of their adverse impacts in the long run.

Our findings have particularly important implications for employers. An additional 20 minutes of commuting each day has (on average) the equivalent effect on job satisfaction as a 19% reduction in income – this is a loss of £4,080 per annum for someone earning £21,600 (the median value for our sample). We also found that employees with longer commute times are more likely to change job, which has implications for staff retention. The overall message for employers is that job satisfaction can be improved if workers have opportunities to reduce their time spent commuting, to walk or cycle to work and to work from home.

The transport sector can only do so much to enhance the options available to people and make journeys quicker and more pleasant. It is also a matter of housing, job opportunities and employment practices. Our study was undertaken in partnership with the Department for Transport and with representation from the Department of Health, Department for Communities and Local Government, Office for National Statistics and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing; I hope the study will encourage stakeholders to come together to improve the daily lives of working people.

Kiron Chatterjee is Associate Professor in Travel Behaviour at the University of the West of England, Bristol. The Commuting & Wellbeing study was led by Dr Chatterjee at UWE and ran for eighteen months from February 2016 to July 2017. A summary report from the study is available at: travelbehaviour.com/outputs-commuting-wellbeing

Email kiron.chatterjee@uwe.ac.uk
Coping with sleep disruption is one of the most difficult aspects of parenting a new baby, and one for which first-time parents are often ill-prepared.

Anticipation during pregnancy of a baby that loves to sleep in its carefully prepared crib is rarely borne out by reality, and research has shown that unrealistic expectations are often reinforced by well-wishers and extended family members: even complete strangers seem to take an avid interest in whether new babies are ‘good’ and sleep ‘through the night’.

Initially most parents follow a path of least resistance, implementing strategies that minimise their own sleep disruption while meeting their baby's night-time needs. These might involve shifting their bedtimes to match their baby’s sleep times, bringing the baby into their bed, sleeping on a mattress next to the baby’s cot, or alternating night-time care between parents.

Although met with initial sympathy, parents soon find themselves receiving substantial criticism and advice if their flexible adaptations for coping with baby-related sleep disruption extend for more than a few weeks.

New parents report they are chastised for not having their babies ‘in a routine’, for not allowing them to ‘self-soothe’, and for not implementing a ‘sleep training’ regime. Parents often reveal that they lie to family, friends and health professionals to avoid a telling-off.

All of these recommendations for creating a ‘good baby’, however, are products of a particular set of cultural values regarding the night-time needs of babies, prominent in countries such as the UK, USA, and Australia that are not found elsewhere in the world.

This apparent Anglo-American obsession with babies’ sleep means that sooner or later many parents wonder whether their baby has a sleep problem, or worse, is naughty and wilfully refusing to sleep.

Night-time then becomes a battle-ground with parents pitting the pursuit of a ‘decent night’s sleep’ against their babies’ biological needs for contact, comfort and regular night-time feeds. As a result, babies may be medicalised, medicated, punished and, in extreme cases, abused for displaying typical human-infant behaviour (waking at night, requiring night-feeding, crying when left alone).

For parents the mismatch between cultural expectations and the reality of their new baby can result in distress, anxiety and postpartum depression, fuelling confusion and conflict within families. Research has found that mothers with poorer mental health believe their infants have more night waking and bedtime distress, are more bothered by these sleep issues, and seek more treatment for their infants’ sleep problems. Parents with poor sleep also over-report sleep problems in their children.

The problem is that parents of 700,000 babies born annually in the UK currently receive no clear information, either before or after the birth of their child, about normal patterns of infant sleep development, or how to cope with infant-related sleep disruption, while also keeping infant sleep environments safe. In turn, health professionals receive little to no training on normal infant sleep or parental sleep issues, and consequently struggle to provide appropriate information and support.

Durham University’s Parent-Infant Sleep Lab aims to rectify this.

For the past 20 years anthropologists at Durham University have worked with more than 5,000 parents and babies, to learn how parents manage night-time infant care, what their perceptions of infant sleep are, and how parents’ coping strategies, infant feeding methods, and infant sleep safety intersect. In 2011 they took on the challenge of using this research knowledge to help improve parents’ understanding of their babies’ sleep.
The goal was to make the latest information on infant sleep development, infant sleep safety, and night-time parenting freely available to anyone with access to the internet – and to raise the prominence of infants’ biological needs to help frame realistic expectations.

With ESRC Follow-On Funding, the team worked with research-users from three parent-support charities (UNICEF UK, La Leche League, and NCT) to establish the Infant Sleep Information Source website, launched in March 2012.

The website, which has been accessed more than two million times across the world, is endorsed by several parent-infant support charities and is signposted to parents by NHS Choices, a host of NHS Trusts, and the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence.

User-research revealed the website was frequently read by parents using mobile phones (often while feeding/settling infants in the small hours), so funding was provided by Durham University to develop the Infant Sleep Info app to make access to this information even easier. As knowledge of the website and app has grown, the team has begun to offer workshops for health professionals who wish to support parents in managing their expectations and coping with normal infant-related sleep disruption.

The Infant Sleep Information Source does not address clinical sleep problems, nor does it provide individual infant sleep advice. However, parents report finding the information provided to be ‘reassuring’, ‘life-altering’, and ‘sanity-saving’. Health professionals, meanwhile report that it gives them confidence to discuss infant sleep with parents and colleagues, and that it is an authoritative source of information to which they point new parents.

In recognition of the success of the team’s work, in February 2018, the Parent-Infant Sleep Lab team and Durham University received the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for ‘leading influential research on parent infant sleep with a widely-used public information service’.

The team hopes that gradually the myth of the somnolent ‘good baby’ may be consigned to the past, and parents will receive the information and support they need to enjoy the start of their parenting journey without feeling compelled to lie about, or ‘fix’ their perfectly normal baby.
The creative industries were defined in a UK government mapping document of 2001 which built on groundbreaking work begun in 1998. The agreed definition was ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.’ These include:

- Advertising & Marketing
- Architecture
- Crafts
- Design (product, graphic, fashion)
- Animation & Visual Effects
- Film, TV and Video
- Radio
- Photography
- IT, Software (‘Creative Tech’)
- Museums and Galleries
- Libraries
- Publishing
- Music, Performing and Visual Arts
- Animation & Visual Effects
- Crafts
- Museums and Galleries

The creative industries outpace the 12 largest industries of the UK economy.

They are bigger than many sectors which have been traditionally viewed as important to the economy or which are expected to be important in future.

- They return four times the GVA of the automotive industry,
- six times as much as life sciences
- and nearly 10 times that of aerospace.

Gross value added (GVA) contributed by the creative industries in 2015, 5.3% of the UK economy (comparable to the construction or information sectors). Between 2010 and 2015 this grew by 34% – faster than any other sector.
Growth of film and TV industries in Yorkshire and Humber outstrips that of every other part of the UK, increasing by 40% from 2015 to 2016.

Entries for GCSEs in arts and creative subjects fell by 8% in 2016, according to official statistics published by Ofqual. This was compared with a growth of 0.3% in the total number of GCSE entries in all subjects.

This was a drop of 46,000 in entries in art and design subjects, design and technology, drama, media film and TV studies, music, and performing/expressive arts compared with 2015.

Most seriously affected was design and technology, which attracted 19,000 fewer exam entries in 2016. Least affected was music with 1,500 fewer candidates.

The creative industries accounted for 5.8% of all jobs in the UK in 2015. It ranged from 1 in 30 jobs (3.2%) in the North East to 1 in 8 jobs (11.1%) in London. Almost a third (30.8%) of all creative industries jobs were based in London.

Growth of film and TV industries in Yorkshire and Humber outstrips that of every other part of the UK, increasing by 40% from 2015 to 2016.

Total jobs in the creative economy across the UK. This increased by 5.1 per cent between 2014 and 2015 (2.8 million to 2.9 million jobs) and by 19.6 per cent since 2011.

The creative industries could deliver close to £130 billion GVA by 2025 and approximately one million new jobs could be created by 2030.

Europe was the continent in receipt of the majority of exports of services from the UK creative industries in 2014, with 57.3 per cent of the total exports of services by UK creative industries.

The US was the market in receipt of the greatest proportion of exports of services from the UK creative industries in 2014, with 25.3 per cent of the total exports of services.

The creative tech industry (IT, software and computer services within the creative industries) now employs just over a third (30.8%) of those working in the creative industries.

The creative industries accounted for 1 in 17 of all jobs in the UK in 2015.

The creative industries could deliver close to £130 billion GVA by 2025 and approximately one million new jobs could be created by 2030.

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Research into action

Professor Jennifer Rubin, ESRC’s new Chief Executive and Executive Chair Designate, explains her goals for the ESRC, her research background and how social science can help address global problems to improve outcomes. By Martin Ince

Professor Jennifer Rubin has just become the ESRC’s Chief Executive and Executive Chair Designate. In April, the post will transform into that of Executive Chair of ESRC, one of the nine constituent bodies of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

She comes to ESRC from King’s College London, where she is professor of public policy and was director of the King’s Policy Institute. She has extensive experience of academic life and of social science consultancy, and before joining King’s was executive vice president of a not-for-profit research organisation, RAND Corporation’s European offices.

Asked about her first priorities on joining ESRC, Professor Rubin points to the unique moment that is the creation of UKRI. She sees it as the opportunity to create something that “more than ever facilitates research funding across disciplines, so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” She says: “My first institutional priority is to make a success of the ESRC becoming part of UKRI and to enhance the pivotal contribution of the social sciences to the UK research and innovation landscape. This will call for coordinated, strategic working within ESRC and with the other eight bodies that will constitute UKRI.”

Rubin is clear that this ambition will only succeed if ESRC is supporting world-leading science, and is working with the world’s best social scientists and funders. “Inevitably,” she says, “we social scientists will identify some areas in which we could be doing better.” This might involve strengthening data infrastructure and data linking, training of graduate students and early career researchers, and as she puts it, “some new vehicles” for facilitating working across academic and bridging institutions on pressing societal issues. She says: “I am ambitious for us to be supporting excellent social science which helps us understand human behaviour, social relations and society, and addresses societal challenges.”

Despite her background in commissioned research as well as in academic social science, Rubin emphasises her commitment to so-called pure research. As she sees it, the dichotomy between pure and applied is overstated. “Much curiosity-driven research ends up useful. A now familiar example is the way that anthropological research turned out to be valuable in understanding the spread of disease during the Ebola epidemic, and in generating strategies to tackle that spread. Applying more theoretical and conceptual approaches to empirical challenges may not only inform those challenges, but also creates feedback loops that help develop and improve the theoretical and conceptual starting points.” She is “a firm believer” in the value of long-term research that “is not limited to one set agenda or one policy cycle.” In helping to foster the excitement of researching the social world and the understanding it creates, she says, curiosity-driven research is of great value.

Rubin also stresses the importance of social science to delivering on UKRI’s ambitions. “Social science can be key to turning much research and innovation into effective action”

...
Antibiotic use is a subject close to Rubin’s heart, and is the example she cites when asked to name a favourite research project. She was involved in the O’Neill Review on Antimicrobial Resistance – a growing problem which threatens the effectiveness of much modern medicine. She led a study that drew out scenarios for the cost of antimicrobial resistance to the year 2050. This approach, she says, “Allows us to see that the problem is not just a medical or clinical one.” By keeping people away from work, or preventing operations from being carried out, it can have broad effects for social wellbeing and on the labour market. The conclusions were graphic: even in the base case, not the worst case, the human and financial costs are likely to be massive. The findings have been presented in the UK and around the world by Lord [Jim] O’Neill, chair of the review, and by Dame Sally Davies, chief medical officer for England.

Global ambition
In recent years, ESRC has grown its international reach. Rubin recognises the importance of continuing this reach in the coming years. In her view: “The UK is presently one of the big winners from EU research funding, and our people are highly sought as collaborators. I hope to find ways to continue and strengthen these relationships. She regards NORFACE, the European funders’ body for the social sciences, as one of several possible future mechanisms for doing so. She is also keen to work with partners beyond Europe, naming Japan and the US as prospects. Rubin says: “I have met researchers and funders from Germany, the US and Australia who are anxious to work with us, and I am finding a lot of goodwill for UK social science. I am confident that we’ll find ways to continue to be closely involved in the EU research landscape.”

The basic products of research funding are new knowledge and the people needed to develop and use it. Rubin is conscious that she joins ESRC at a time when both expertise and experts are sometimes discussed as objects of suspicion rather than deference. “Let’s be empirical about this,” she says, “trust in science and scientists remains much higher than for most others involved in policy debates, and has not fallen. While we are in turbulent times with respect to political attitudes, the data does not bear out the (often misquoted) suggestion that most people have ‘had enough of experts’.” However, she does see the need to rethink how research is communicated in the context of social media. “The research people are hearing about may be brilliant and accurate, but it might not give the whole picture.”

As an example, she points to the way in which economists have come under fire in debates on immigration. Of course, economists tend
understandably to focus on the economic costs and benefits. But in Rubin’s view, people’s concerns are also “cultural and psychological, and contain important regional variations.” This, she thinks, is an illustration of the need for interdisciplinary social science. “We need to understand whether people will have £5 less or £10 more in their pockets, but we also need to understand how important this is to them, and how it relates to other concerns and challenges they face.”

**Defining influences**

Jennifer Rubin’s choice of some of the social scientists who have inspired her and shaped her thinking reflect this broad view of the field. From her undergraduate years reading European Politics at Loughborough University, she cites Marie Jahoda as an influence. Jahoda was a psychologist who carried out research in an economically-stricken mining community in her native Austria. She developed key insights into the importance of work, not so much as a source of money but as the wellspring of people’s sense of self-worth and of their ability to structure their lives. This helped illustrate the way social structures and societal and economic change impact on people’s identity and everyday experience.

An influence on her thinking as a graduate student in Social and Political Sciences at Cambridge was Mary Ainsworth, the US psychologist who developed a novel way to operationalise and measure infant behaviour in studying attachment theory, which she sees as “a key link between family social relations and individual psychology and behaviour.” Her work has also been influenced by that of Gordon Allport, who developed contact theory. His work, she thinks, has been helpful in understanding intergroup relations and prejudice, and “has spawned further research which can inform thinking about some of the current challenges for diverse communities.” She has also long been impressed by the methodological and conceptual innovation embodied by Robert Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work*, based on his research in Italy on the key ingredients of the differential success met in establishing new structures of regional governance across the country.

This diverse outlook explains Rubin’s answer to the inviting but tricky question of the research issue she would pursue if she had indefinite resources to throw at the task. She points first to inequality, including its geographical aspects. “The gains from globalisation have created winners and losers across and within countries, so that many are disaffected”, she says. Linked to this is the issue of trust in political systems. What are some innovations, mechanisms and behaviours that might help? Tackling the pivotal question of whether and how we might increase productivity is also high on her list, with its potential to make a difference to many societal challenges, as well as improving overall economic performance. Then there are the many important social, legal and ethical challenges around AI...

This massive agenda matches Rubin’s enthusiasm for ambitious social science which is of value to a wide range of stakeholders. She says: “Addressing these challenges involves geography, sociology, economics, political science, anthropology and psychology. The complex set of issues faced by different communities and countries spans all disciplines of the social sciences as well as health, scientific innovation and more.”

Professor Jennifer Rubin is Professor of Public Policy at King’s College London and former Director of the Policy Institute at King’s. Throughout her career, her aim has been to bring excellent research to bear on policy and practice challenges. Jennifer’s principal research areas include migration, integration and intolerance; communities, crime and justice policy; and the intersections between public health and related areas such as alcohol and drugs policy.

Before joining King’s Professor Rubin built and led the justice and home affairs research programme at RAND Europe for ten years. She has served on the not-for-profit policy research institution’s executive team most recently as Executive Vice President, helping to lead its quadrupling in size in Europe. In addition to research, Professor Rubin is a member of the Ministry of Justice’s Data, Evidence and Science Board and is the UK representative on NATO’s task force on ethnic intolerance in the military. She has served on the Advisory Board for a multimillion-pound AHRC doctoral training programme at the University of Cambridge and has been social scientific advisor to numerous projects including Nuffield Foundation research on fair trials for foreign nationals. She advises and briefs her work to the Executive offices of the UK and several other European governments, the US, New Zealand and the European Commission.

Jennifer obtained her PhD at the University of Cambridge in social and political sciences at King’s College, following a first class degree in European Politics at Loughborough University.
Once again, the ESRC Festival of Social Science demonstrated the breadth and diversity of social science and the issues it is examining across the UK.

The 2017 Festival, held during the first week of November, marked the Festival’s 15th anniversary. It broke records with 309 events held involving 1,348 social science researchers and attended by a total estimated audience of 36,500. The 2017 Festival helped audiences discover how social science shapes public policy and contributes to making the economy more competitive, as well as offering a better understanding of 21st-century society.

While Brexit and politics figured prominently, the events were as diverse as ever and covered subjects such as food, chickens, cubs, cocoa, drones, sign language, robots, online dating and much more, with varied formats including debates, conferences, workshops, seminars, exhibitions and film screenings. The events were aimed at a wide range of audiences including schoolchildren, parents, policymakers, artists, and general public.

In Scotland, researchers from the University of Glasgow injected a dose of social science into a busy Saturday at Glasgow’s IKEA with research-themed activities for young people in an IKEA café takeover, featuring table-based games, quizzes and interactive exhibits; and researchers dotted around the store – sustainable food researchers in the kitchens and sociologists of dirt in the bathrooms.

Over in Northern Ireland, Belfast social scientists ran a Brexit clinic to examine how negotiations are progressing and what the implications are, with particular reference to the future of the border between the Northern Ireland and the Republic.

In Sheffield an interactive event with members of the general public – in particular those from ethnic minority communities – joined people from third sector organisations, social and healthcare professionals to discuss the notion of honour and its implications, to break the silence surrounding honour and honour-related violence.

Manchester hosted a special film screening of Anna Lo’s memoir, The place I call home (2016). Lo, the first China-born parliamentarian in Europe, journeyed from Hong Kong to Belfast in 1974 and served two terms in the Northern Ireland Assembly, before retiring from her political career in 2016. The film screening encouraged the audience to reflect on the challenges that migrants face finding home abroad and combining multiple identities, as well as ethnic minorities’ engagement with politics.

In Lincoln an interactive day of free activities for families, children and young people launched a children’s rights initiative for Lincoln – to be recognised as a UNICEF Child-Friendly City. Staff and student researchers from the University of Lincoln helped attendees find out more about children’s rights granted under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and what is already known about children’s rights in Lincoln.

Cardiff staged Significantus – a touring piano and spoken word project created by composer-
pianist Lola Perrin. Lola’s latest composition is inspired by climate change to stimulate more people to talk about how we can increase our ambition to deal with climate change. Significantus was performed in Cardiff in collaboration with environmental social scientists Dr Stuart Capstick (Cardiff University) and Dr Adam Corner (Climate Outreach) who both carry out research into how people understand and respond to climate change.

On the other side of the country, an event on digital intimacy showcased the latest research from the University of Essex on online dating, digital communication in romantic relationships, sexting, digital loneliness, digital addiction, and online sex. The event was designed to help people find a right balance between moral panic and imprudence when using digital media in their intimate lives.

In London grandparents and their grandchildren in the Kentish Town area were invited to drop-in after school to Torriano Primary School’s Earth Cafe for a tea party to explore the grandparents’ relationship with their grandchildren. Grandchildren recorded their grandparents and grandchildren interviewed their grandchildren. Grandparents gave their views on what grandparenting means to them, what kind of care they provide, how they manage to fit this into their lives, and to voice some of the tensions they may face.

Finally, academics in Bristol also focused on generational differences with an intergenerational dialogue on climate change. Recent elections in the UK, including the Brexit vote, have brought to light a generational divide between younger and older citizens. The event explored this divide head on by inviting young people and their grandparents to an event to explore whether climate change is a young person’s problem; whether young people are more concerned with climate change, whether older generations feel that they have a role to play, and whose responsibility it should be to take.

Sue Haydock, ESRC Communications Officer, who runs the Festival said: “This was a special year for the ESRC as it marked the festival’s 15th anniversary. Once again, the events held across the UK did not disappoint with an imaginative and thought-provoking range of subjects and formats that showed the relevance of social science and how it is making a difference to people’s lives.”

For more information on the ESRC Festival of social science, see: www.esrc.ac.uk/public-engagement/festival-of-social-science/about-the-festival/
The generation gap

Declining property wealth and less generous private pensions mean that today’s young adults struggle to accumulate wealth at the same rate as their predecessors. Inherited wealth could now be more important than ever. By Andrew Hood, Institute for Fiscal Studies

To get a comprehensive picture of the wealth of different generations one can look at total net household wealth per adult: the sum of the value of any property owned (minus mortgage debt), the value of financial assets held (minus any financial debts) and wealth held in private pensions, all divided by the number of adults in the household. On this comprehensive basis, those born in the early 1980s (the early 1980s ‘cohort’) have significantly less wealth than those born in the previous decade did at around the same age – despite having about the same income. In their early 30s, the early 1980s cohort had average (median) household wealth per adult of £27,000 – about half the average wealth holdings of the 1970s cohort at around the same age (£53,000).

It also looks unlikely that the 1970s cohort will hold as much wealth as those born 10 years earlier did at the same age. Over the six years from 2006-08 to 2012-14 (the latest data available at the time of writing), their average wealth rose by only £20,000 (to £73,000). To match the average wealth holdings of the 1960s cohort in their early 40s, their average wealth needs to have risen by £57,000 in the four years since.

As outlined above, the key driver of this failure of younger cohorts to match the wealth accumulation of their predecessors is a decline in property wealth. Both when comparing the 1970s and early 1980s cohorts, and when looking at the 1960s and 1970s cohorts, it is clear that the wealth differential between the two cohorts at similar ages is driven by the lower net property wealth of the younger cohort – both private pension wealth and financial wealth look similar across cohorts when they are compared at similar ages.

One obvious reason for the decline in the average property wealth of young adults is that many fewer of them are homeowners than was the case in the past – and this decline in the homeownership rate across generations looks likely to persist. Of those born in the 1940s and 1950s, around 80% have become owner-occupiers, but it seems highly unlikely that any of the more recent cohorts will match that homeownership rate.

Looking first at the 1960s cohort, they had a similar homeownership rate to their predecessors around the age of 40 (70%) but the proportion owning a home appears to have stalled at that level over the last 10 years. The homeownership rate of the 1970s cohort also looks to have stalled over the last 10 years, but at the lower rate of around 60%. And the homeownership rate of those born in the early 1980s is substantially lower than any other post-war cohort at the same age. At the age of 30, 40% of those born in the early 1980s were owner-occupiers, compared with 55% of the 1940s and 1970s cohorts, and more than 60% of the 1950s and 1960s cohorts. The last cohort to have a similar homeownership rate to those born in the early 1980s at the same age was those born 50 years earlier in the inter-war period.

The increasing difficulty of getting on the housing ladder is not the only way in which it has got harder for young adults to accumulate wealth. At the same time as house prices have risen...
dramatically relative to earnings, the generosity of private pension provision has fallen substantially. In the early 2000s, it became clear that the generous defined benefit (DB) pension schemes many employers had in place were unaffordable, with key reasons being increases in expected longevity and poor stock market performance. Most firms responded by closing these schemes to new members, in many cases replacing them with less generous defined contribution (DC) schemes.

For those born in the 1950s and 1960s, the result was a sharp decline in the proportion of private sector employees who were active members of a DB scheme as they moved through working-age life (and in many cases moved employer). But for those born in the 1970s and early 1980s, it means that the vast majority of private sector employees have never had access to a DB pension scheme. In their early 30s, less than 10% of private sector employees born in the early 1980s were active members of a DB scheme, compared with more than 15% of those born in the 1970s and nearly 40% of those born in the 1960s.

As mentioned above, the switch from DB to DC schemes has been associated with a large reduction in the generosity of employer pension contributions. Of those in DB schemes in 2015, 90% received an employer contribution equivalent to 10% of their earnings or more, compared with only 13% of those in DC schemes. The switch also represents a transfer of risk from employers to employees as, in DB schemes, firms rather than employees bear the investment return and longevity risk. There is therefore good reason to think that younger cohorts will struggle to accumulate the pension wealth of their predecessors (certainly as a share of earnings), and they will certainly face greater uncertainty with regard to their future living standards than those cohorts with greater access to DB schemes.

It is not all doom and gloom for younger generations in terms of wealth accumulation. The introduction of ‘automatic enrolment’ means young adults are now more likely to be accumulating some private pension wealth than those born in previous decades were at the same age – though it is uncertain whether this effect will persist as the minimum amount people are required to contribute. And younger generations are much more likely to inherit significant wealth than older ones were – though it is those who already have the most wealth who are expected to benefit to the greatest extent. In fact, the role of inherited wealth could be to transform an issue of wealth inequality between generations into one of wealth inequality within the younger generation. Combined with the challenges young adults face in attempting to accumulate wealth of their own in the form of property or pensions, the increasing significance of inheritances and other intergenerational wealth transfers could mean we’re heading for a future where how much wealth your parents have matters more than it used to.
A broken housing system?

With ever-worsening housing affordability, first-time buyers left behind and tenants struggling to meet their rents, is the UK housing market officially broken? Professor Ken Gibb, Director of CaCHE, a major new research centre on housing, looks at the evidence.

CHANCELLOR PHILIP HAMMOND stated in the Autumn Budget statement: “House prices are increasingly out of reach for many.” He made a fairly obvious point — median house prices in England and Wales are now above £200,000, with eight in 10 houses too expensive for people on ordinary wages. Is the UK housing market in crisis?

“I don’t find the shorthand phrase ‘housing crisis’ very helpful, but prefer to think of the housing system as confronting multiple, overlapping challenges which periodically ‘blow up’,” says Professor Ken Gibb, Director of the new UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE). “Unaffordable housing is one of several challenges — others are the UK economy’s vulnerability to instability in the housing market, lack of access to home ownership, homelessness, and the lack of sufficient new housing supply — particularly affordable, low-cost and social housing.”

CaCHE is funded by the ESRC, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and aims to provide new research evidence on housing for policymakers.

“Are there some things we know quite a lot about, and other areas that are contested or relatively overlooked. One necessary early task that CaCHE will undertake is to identify what we know we don’t know — the ‘known unknowns’ — and also map and identify housing research that is underway.”

Navigating a complex housing sector

This is no easy task. The existing research evidence on housing spans several disciplines and a wide range of different methods and techniques. Complicating matters is also that the housing market involves a number of different actors — national and local authorities and regulators, house builders, private landlords, infrastructure and environment agencies.

“CaCHE starts from a housing system perspective — these different stakeholders, segments and interests operate interdependently. We need to understand the dynamics of this system better if we are to make sense of the evidence, the problems and the required policy responses,” Gibb points out.

“The problems are not simple and neither are the solutions. They inevitably require political processes reconciling insiders and outsider interests and the building of consensus over difficult choices, if we are to make real long-term progress in areas such as housing taxation, the location of new housing or the shape of housing-related welfare benefits.”

Taking the political out of policy

Producing evidence is only one part of the challenge — there needs to be political will to act on this evidence. Throughout the years there has been a tendency for policymakers to look at the housing sector through a party political lens, acknowledges Professor Gibb.

The housing system is confronting several challenges including unaffordable house prices and the lack of sufficient new housing supply — particularly affordable, low-cost and social housing.
Housing is dominated by the existing stock of dwellings while policy change takes time

More recently, the launch of independent ‘What Works’ initiatives and the commitment to legislative impact assessments are encouraging a more objective scrutiny of research evidence for policy.

“One important point of course is that housing is dominated by the existing stock of dwellings while policy change takes time, usually more than one Parliament, to work through. So, a big problem is the lack of patient political capital. It is unquestionably unhelpful that successive governments have rapidly turned over housing ministers – I believe there have been more than 15 in the last 20 years,” says Gibb.

A boost for housing research

As a large new investment in housing research, encompassing seven research themes, 13 consortium partners and three co-funders, CaCHE looks set to give housing research a major boost and expand academic influence on policy.

“We need to be central to the campaign to restore evidence, rigorous knowledge and analysis to policymaking in housing. Our research will be prioritised according to the views of housing and research users through our sub-national knowledge exchange hubs, each acting as a group representing the regional housing system. By helping to demonstrate what works and what does not work, we intend to show the added value that good evidence brings to policymaking – including preventing heading down policy cul-de-sacs,” adds the CaCHE Director.

To reach this goal, he and his team will manage a research centre spread across multiple universities, organisations and disciplines. But Professor Gibb is undaunted: “CaCHE is designed to reflect the width and complexity of the housing sector in contemporary British society. We had to be UK-wide in focus, committed to collaboration with stakeholders, and genuinely multi-disciplinary. To do all of this naturally points towards a large distributed centre across all parts of the UK and, in the end, with 13 consortium partners. It is one thing to direct a core team of staff; it is quite another to oversee 30 co-investigators spread far and wide. CaCHE is a great and rare opportunity, but it is also a challenge that cannot be taken on in anything other than a whole-hearted way,” he concludes.
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News briefs

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD LEADS NEW PRODUCTIVITY INSIGHTS NETWORK

The ESRC has announced the establishment of the Productivity Insights Network which will assess the state of productivity research in the UK to improve understanding of the factors affecting productivity and informing the development of new strategies and research.

As well as providing leadership and being a forum for collaboration, the network will:
- pull together interdisciplinary research groups and other networks in academia, policymaking and business
- promote the use of innovative methods
- develop a series of small-scale studies
- complement (and collaborate with) existing research agendas, whether or not they are ESRC-funded
- contribute to policy development
- run small scale competitions to allocate funding to academics outside of the network to undertake relevant projects.

The Productivity Insights Network will be led by Professors Philip McCann and Tim Vorley of Sheffield University Management School. They will lead a total of nine universities: University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, University of Strathclyde, Durham University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Leeds and University of Essex.

The network will also benefit from the involvement of two private sector collaborators – Cambridge Econometrics and SQW Ltd. The wider Productivity Insights Network has a membership of over 50 academics as well as a growing number of public, private and third sector partners.

For more information, follow Productivity Insights Network on Twitter: @ProductivityNW

EIGHT ESRC RESEARCH CENTRES GRANTED TRANSITION FUNDING

Eight established research centres have been awarded a total of £6.9m to continue their work under a new funding model designed to secure the long-term sustainability of social science research excellence in the UK.

In December 2017 the first ‘transition review’ took place for existing centres coming to the end of their five-year grant. The review approved continued funding for the following ESRC research centres to undertake social science research:
- Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability Centre (STEPS)
- Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE)
- Centre For Macroeconomics: Working towards a stable and sustainable growth path
- Systemic Risk Centre
- Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (CCCEP)
- International Centre for Life Course Studies in Society and Health: Centre Mid-Term Review Proposal (ICLS)
- ESRC Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS)
- Centre for Population Change (CPC)

The ESRC has announced that each of these centres will receive ‘transition funding’ typically equating to 45% of the full economic costs of their original five-year grant funding. For the first time, this will be co-funded with contributions from ESRC (20%) and their host research organisation (25%).

The new centres’ transition funding policy marks a step-change in the way ESRC supports its centres. It follows a review into how ESRC could continue to foster and sustain the excellence and impact of its centres over the long term, without reducing investment elsewhere.

The new policy acknowledges that while ESRC is not in a position to fund existing centres in full for a further five years, an additional period of three to five years of ESRC support at a lower level would assist these centres to maximise the impact and use of their research findings, methods and data developments, and provide a base level of funding to support them to become more self-sustaining.

For more information see: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-large-investments/esrc-centres-and-institutes

NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRATION

The complex topic of migration could be better understood if several academic disciplines worked together to explain it, according to the leader of a new research team, jointly funded by the ESRC and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Dr Laura Hammond, Reader in Development Studies at SOAS University of London, principal investigator of the Migration Leadership Team, will seek to improve collaboration on migration studies between the social sciences, the arts and humanities.

The Migration Leadership Team will review existing research on migration, highlight best practice and identify opportunities and priorities for new research. It will identify areas of research to prioritise, determine how to make an impact, and ways to communicate and collaborate that are likely to help bridge research, policy and public engagement.

This approach will help spot where research will have the most impact, by establishing links between research and practice.

For more information see:
www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-large-investments/esrc-centres-and-institutes
People

NEW YEAR HONOURS 2018
A number of prominent social scientists and ESRC grant holders have been honoured in the New Year Honours list. Congratulations to everyone honoured.

Knighthoods
Professor Timothy Besley, CBE, Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science; Former ESRC grant holder. For services to Economics and Public Policy.

Professor John Curtice, FBA FRSE, Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde and Senior Research Fellow, NatCen Social Research; ESRC grant holder. For services to the Social Sciences and Politics.

Professor Bernard Silverman, Lately Chief Scientific Adviser, Home Office; ESRC grant holder. For public service and services to Science.

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)
Professor David Nevin Fraser Bell; ESRC grant holder. For services to Economics and Public Policy.

Professor Diane Coyle, OBE; ESRC grant holder. For services to Economics and the Public Understanding of Economics.

Professor Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath; ESRC grant holder. For services to Children and Social Mobility.

Professor Jane Humphries, Professor of Economic History, University of Oxford; Former ESRC grant holder. For services to Social Science and Economic History.

Professor Andrew Morris, FRSE, lately Chief Scientist (Health), Scottish Government and Vice-Principal (Data Science), University of Edinburgh; Former ESRC grant holder. For services to Science in Scotland.

Professor Ngaire Woods, Dean, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University; ESRC grant holder. For services to Higher Education and Public Policy.

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)
Professor Sally-Ann Cooper, Professor of Learning Disabilities, University of Glasgow; ESRC grant holder. For services to Science and Medicine.

Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)
Ms Madeleine Sumption, Director, Migration Observatory, University of Oxford; ESRC grant holder and winner of the 2017 Celebrating Impact Prize for Outstanding Impact in Society. For services to Social Science.

ESRC-FUNDED RESEARCHERS WIN PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS
The world-leading social science research undertaken at the University of Essex through the ESRC-funded Institute for Social and Economic Research has received the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education. The Prize is the highest form of national recognition for the work of a UK university and will be officially bestowed on the University at Buckingham Palace in early 2018 by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

The Parent-Infant Sleep Lab at Durham University (see full article in this issue page 18) was also awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize. The Sleep Lab’s online Infant Sleep Information Source, which received funding from ESRC, has been accessed more than two million times from countries across the world, and is shared and recommended by parents and health professionals as a reliable evidence-based home of information on normal infant sleep.

Meanwhile, winners of the 2017 THE Awards were announced at a ceremony in London.

‘Pushing the boundaries’, a research initiative led by Dr David James Cantor, won the Research Project of the Year: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences award. The three-year initiative was supported by an ESRC Future Research Leader grant.

Professor John Curtice of the University of Strathclyde received the Lord Dearing Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his academic career in psephology – the study of elections and voting – and his extensive media and public engagement work, which has been widely credited with making complex political issues accessible to a wide audience. Professor Curtice has been involved with many projects supported by ESRC, and is currently a fellow on the ESRC-funded UK in a Changing Europe initiative.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) topped the shortlist in the Innovation in Research Methods category at the prestigious Market Research Society Awards for its work developing Britain’s first random probability-based mixed-mode panel. The NatCen Panel was set up in 2016 and designed to maximise methodological rigour using the methodology recommended by the Polling Inquiry into the 2015 General Election. It is the first mixed mode (online and telephone) panel in Britain based on people selected at random; it draws its sample from the random probability British Social Attitudes survey sample.

And a team of researchers who were funded through an ESRC ‘Urgency’ Grant in 2014-15 have been recognised for their contribution to public debate and policy by the Royal Historical Society at its Public History Prize awards 2018.

The team – Professor Adrian Bingham (Sheffield), Dr Lucy Delap (Cambridge), and Professor Louise Jackson (Edinburgh) – were winners of the Public Debate and Policy category for their work in promoting deeper understanding of experiences of child sexual abuse and responses to it in England and Wales between 1918 and 1990. Their research analysed newspaper reporting, legal contexts and social work practices. The team have given talks for non-academic groups, published briefing papers, and undertaken consultancy and media work; their work has been used in relation to official inquiries. The team have worked closely with History & Policy, the national partnership that brings together historians, journalists and policymakers.
Publications

**Brexit and British Politics**

In this incisive book, leading analysts of UK and EU politics Geoffrey Evans and Anand Menon step back from the immediacy and hyperbole of the Referendum to explain what happened on 23 June 2016, and why. Brexit, they argue, was the product of both long-term dissatisfaction with the EU and a gradual breakdown in the relationship between parties and voters that spawned detachment, disinterest and disenchantment. Exploring its subsequent impact on the June 2017 General Election, they reveal the extent to which Brexit has shattered the contemporary equilibrium of British politics. ■

*Brexit and British Politics* by Geoffrey Evans and Anand Menon. ISBN 9781509523863 (paperback), 140 pages @ £10.77. For more information see: politybooks.com/?s=brexit+and+british+politics

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**The Feminization of Sports Fandom: A Sociological Study**

This is the first study to focus on the phenomenon of the feminization of sports fandom. Including original research on football and rugby union in the UK, it looks at the increasing opportunities for women to become sports fans in contemporary society and critically examines the way this form of leisure is valued by women. Drawing upon feminist thinking and intersectionality, it shows how women from different social classes and age groups consume the spectacle of sport. ■

*The Feminization of Sports Fandom: A Sociological Study* by Stacey Pope. ISBN 9781138916081 (hardback), 280 pages @ £90. For more information see: www.routledge.com

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**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CALL ON THE FUTURE OF CANADA-UK TRADE RELATIONS**

ESRC and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada have launched an international competition to assess the state of research knowledge on Canada-UK trade relationships.

This unique competition will foster international research collaboration and, through the synthesis of existing knowledge, identify research strengths and gaps around Canada-UK trade relations. The resulting findings on diverse issues related to trade between Canada and the UK – such as inclusion, labour and environment, trade barriers, and technological and digital transformations – will deepen understanding needed for future trading relationships, and support evidence-based decision-making and policy development.

This international competition focuses exclusively on collaborative research projects. Proposed projects must involve at least two researchers, one affiliated with a postsecondary institution in Canada, the other with a UK-based university or approved, independent research organisation.

As many as 20 projects will be funded, valued at up to £30,000 each. Proposals for Knowledge Synthesis Grants on understanding the future of Canada-UK trade relations may involve any disciplines and approaches or subject areas eligible for ESRC and SSHRC funding.

SSHRC and the ESRC will organise two workshops to convene award holders and key stakeholders from across the business, community and government sectors. The first workshop will take place in July 2018, in Ottawa, Canada. In December 2018, a second workshop will be held in London, UK, timed with the release of the knowledge synthesis reports.

The key aim of the workshops is to share results from the knowledge synthesis reports, and to contribute evidence for decision-making and policy development.

The deadline to apply for these grants is 28 March 2018.

For more information, see: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/understanding-the-future-of-canada-uk-trade-relationships

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**EVENTS**

**8 MARCH**

**Brexit and sub-national government**

This UK in a Changing Europe initiative event, in partnership with LSE’s Institute of Public Affairs, will provide an opportunity to assess the impact of Brexit on the existing institutional settlement, exploring ways to promote the civic and economic empowerment of Britain’s cities and regions in the post-Brexit political landscape.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/brexit-and-sub-national-government-conference-tickets-42681036128?aff=es2

**14 MARCH**

**Spring Statement 2018: IFS analysis**

The morning after Chancellor Philip Hammond’s Spring Statement IFS researchers will present their analysis of the public finances, putting them in the context of recent trends, and will discuss economic challenges facing the country. They will also respond to any announcements on policy made by the Chancellor and set out the impact of measures set to come into force this April.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spring-statement-2018-ifs-analysis-tickets-42672061284

**15 MARCH**

**Introduction to the Understanding Society/ BHPS Harmonised data**

This joint webinar between the UK Data Service and Understanding Society/The Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) will give an introduction to accessing and using the harmonised data with examples of what research can be undertaken and the benefits it can bring to your research. The webinar will also point researchers to useful resources, and where to go for help.

ukdataservice.ac.uk/news-and-events/eventitems/?id=5254

**15 MARCH**

**Using Creative Research Methods**

This course will outline creative research methods and show you how to use them at every stage of the research process. Assuming a good knowledge of conventional research methods, the course will introduce arts-based methods, research using technology, mixed methods, and transformative research frameworks such as participatory and activist research.

www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/show.php?article=7705
Making sense of society

The ESRC magazine Society Now aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. It addresses a wide range of readers, from the MP to the businessperson, the voluntary worker to the teacher, the public through to the social scientist, and is published four times a year (spring, summer, autumn and winter).

Society Now offers a readable, intelligent, concise overview of current issues concerning society.

To subscribe to the magazine, please send an email including your full name and address to: societynow@esrc.ac.uk

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@ESRC

The Economic and Social Research Council
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon SN2 1UJ
Tel: +44 (0)1793 413000
Fax: +44 (0)1793 413001

EDITOR IN CHIEF Jacky Clake jacky.clake@esrc.ac.uk
EDITOR AND DESIGNER Nick Stevens nick.stevens@esrc.ac.uk
INFOGRAPHIC Tidy Designs