



# the note

Staff and student magazine for the School of Sociology and Social Policy

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*Cover image: 'Musical Crossing' by Chris Kealy (Flickr)*

## A note from the Editor:

Welcome to the second edition of The Note. As ever we focus on a diversity of issues and experiences. From social work education to controversies raised by fresher's week and from accommodation issues to choral singing the Note aims to cover a diversity of critical and sometimes just plain amusing issues. Got something to say? Then drop me an e mail, and you too could write in our next issue planned for early next year.

In the meantime... welcome to our best issue yet.

Nick Stevenson

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# A new outlook on life

As a 38 year old woman, who is also a mother of four children and has had no formal education since leaving school at the age of 15 years old, considering university was a daunting process. After successfully completing an Access course in Social Science I was then able to pursue my aspirations in terms of attending university.

As a mature student and entering one of the most prestigious universities in the UK, I questioned if I had the ability to take on such a huge venture whilst being a mother and a partner in terms of time-management and balancing the responsibilities that come with these roles. In addition to this I was concerned with my age as university is largely associated with the younger generation. Nevertheless, with the support of my family and the desire and determination to become a Social Worker, I knew this was achievable.



I can honestly say my first year at university has been one of the hardest but most rewarding experiences. I have learned the importance of managing my time efficiently and to be open to all experiences, approaching them with a confident and optimistic attitude. I have met people from all walks of life and through this have learned to look at different perspectives. I have gained knowledge about my chosen career and subjects that underpin social work.

Overall, having completed and thoroughly enjoyed my first year, my confidence in my potential to succeed in my degree has grown. I am looking forwards to continuing my studies and fully welcome the new challenges that year 2 may bring.

*Bernadette Evans is a second year undergraduate student in the Centre for Social Work*

# Overcoming Challenges

For many of you in your final year, the very thought of completing a dissertation by May seems a daunting task and somewhat petrifying. But fear not! Here are a few words of encouragement written by someone who has been there, done that, and got the certificate.

Entering third year I had a host of concerns about my dissertation, varying from time management to reading enough around my topic. Writing a dissertation was a huge learning curve, and an experience that forced me to hit the ground running from day one. Two major hurdles that I faced was deciding on a topic that was 'do-able' within 12,000 words and a structure. For someone who starts with big ideas and tends to go bigger, it took six months until October 2013 for me to finally settle on a dissertation topic that was challenging, yet achievable within the timeframe! It is great to be passionate about a topic, especially in a year-long project but it is also important to remember it is about the *quality* of the content not quantity.

However it was the second hurdle, deciding on a structure and portraying my thoughts in a concise way, that proved to be the biggest challenge of the year. I learnt to structure by documenting my thoughts and dedicating sessions to organising my dissertation into chapters. Proof reading of course became an essential tool to see how clearly I was portraying my ideas, and it especially helps if you have friends or relatives who voluntarily (!) offer to read full drafts towards the end of the year.

Perhaps one of the main lessons I learnt during my experience of writing a dissertation is that the challenges you face, no matter how big or small, can be overcome. And through the solutions you find you discover a whole level of intellect that you did not think you had before. With a good support network, confidence in your abilities, time management and organisation you will be well on your way to a successful dissertation you can be proud of.

*Alice Turnbull*

# Freshers' Week: Initiation and Inequality in Market-Led Universities

Initiation practices speak to the values and structures of the institution or group that is being entered. A friend of mine told me that when he entered the police force as a young black man in the 1990s, his fellow white police cadets welcomed him to the training college by knocking on his door dressed up in Ku Klux Klan outfits. It was a joke, they said afterwards (Ha ha ha! Aren't you laughing? What's wrong with you? Don't you have a sense of humour?). The joke told him much about the culture of the group he was joining and his place in it, a culture well described by [Manny Barot and Kelly Jussab](#). Black officers in this white racist space had a stark choice - either laugh at the 'jokes' and be complicit in their own denigration, or challenge them and demonstrate that they lacked the attributes of loyalty and reliability that were central to belonging to the community of police officers.



*Image courtesy of Beki Hooper via Impact Nottingham*

What does the sexist [ditty recently chanted by freshers students](#) at the University of Nottingham tell us about universities as places of study and work? The rhyme is an overtly hostile statement about women being of use and value only in so far as they serve as sexual objects for men. In fact, the chant says, it doesn't even matter whether women are alive, since even as dead bodies, they can still fulfil a sexual function. The students who chanted this ditty would doubtless say it was only a joke – they do not *really* want to rape a dead woman. But as with the white police cadets, such 'jesting' constitutes a symbolic statement about the social territory initiates are entering, and the terms on which 'outsiders' (those

sociologist [Nirmal Puwar](#) describes as 'Space Invaders') can be included. Through this [and similar sexist freshers' activities](#), female students are aggressively reminded that even though women comprise a sizeable proportion of the student body, university culture (like that of wider society) continues to devalue 'femininity'. To question this is to lack a sense of humour, to overreact, be unreasonable, silly, hysterical, in short, to be a 'woman', and so lacking the qualification for belonging.

*Prof Julia O'Connell Davidson*

Julia researches prostitution, sex tourism, and human 'trafficking', raising questions of power and offering a critique of dominant liberal fictions about contract, freedom, citizenship and human rights. Julia is especially interested in how we can critique those theoretical traditions that approach power as domination without slipping into the relativism and subjectivism of much post-modern and post-structuralist theory.

The Nottingham students' chant has been condemned by the University management and the Students Union, who stress that only a small minority of students were involved. But the impact goes well beyond the small number of individual chanters, affecting all those who heard the chant and even all those who heard or read about it after the event. What is it like for female students to have to share halls of residence, lecture theatres, and seminar rooms with male students who may have seen fit to join in this chanting, or who may share the sentiments behind it? And what is it like for the female members of university staff who have to serve them?

Now that [Universities are private corporations](#) as much as seats of learning, student appraisal of their 'learning experience' is deployed as a marketing tool, and lecturers are forcefully enjoined by management to ensure that students are 'satisfied'. Student

# Freshers' Week: Initiation and Inequality in Market-Led Universities

evaluation of teaching is already significant for promotion and job security, and set to become more so in coming years. The young men who initiated and participated in this chant and similar sexist fresher activities may be censured as intolerably 'laddish' by University spokespeople today, but in a few months time, as they complete their evaluations of the performance of members of staff, the same University management will treat their opinion as that of a 'valued customer'.

That universities have set in place a system which allows female lecturers' careers to be influenced by their ability to 'satisfy', among others, young men who view women in the terms expressed in this and similar chants, should give pause for thought about the new market regime's implications for equal opportunities. The sexist chanters may have been a small minority, but many students – probably the majority - arrive at university with social baggage that includes a set of assumptions about gender, age, racial minority groups, and/or gay people, and stereotypes about who has the authority to impart knowledge. These assumptions and stereotypes are not the only determinants of their evaluation of their lecturers' performance, but it is hard to imagine that they play no role in that appraisal.

In the case of women, gay, and racial minority staff, open-ended comments on student evaluation of teaching questionnaires sometimes make their role explicit. In 24 years of university teaching, I have seen students use such questionnaires to comment on women and gay lecturers' clothing, bodies, and 'hotness'; and to remark on black and Asian lecturers' speech idioms and accents, as well as to question their qualification to lecture on subjects in which they are in fact experts. But where positive assessment is linked to lecturers who are seen to embody the authority to lecture (they are older, straight, male or white), there will be no "give away" offensive comments to expose such bias. Whiteness, maleness and straightness is unremarkable in a straight white male space – it's only the bodies that don't "belong" that get scrutinised as

bodies, rather than as academics.

There is, of course, nothing new about the fact that some students freely express overtly denigrating sexism or racism or homophobia – behaviour like that reported during this year's freshers' week has a long and sorry history. Nor is there anything new about gender, race and sexual inequalities in universities as workplaces (hence, the strong visibility of women and growing visibility of black and ethnic minority people on campus as students, which diminishes as you look up the ranks of the university hierarchy, until you reach the almost exclusively **white** and predominantly **male** professorial and senior management at the top).



Image courtesy of University of Nottingham (Flickr)

But there are new reasons to be disturbed by these phenomena. In the context of privatized, market-driven higher education, will 'customers' want to pay £9,000 a year to have their prejudices challenged? Or will their prejudices help to shape the face of British universities, and ensure that they continue as white, straight, male terrain onto which Space Invaders are allowed, providing they do not make a fuss about their position as such?

*Julia O'Connell Davidson is Professor of Sociology in the School of Sociology and Social Policy.*

# Dispatches from Gaza

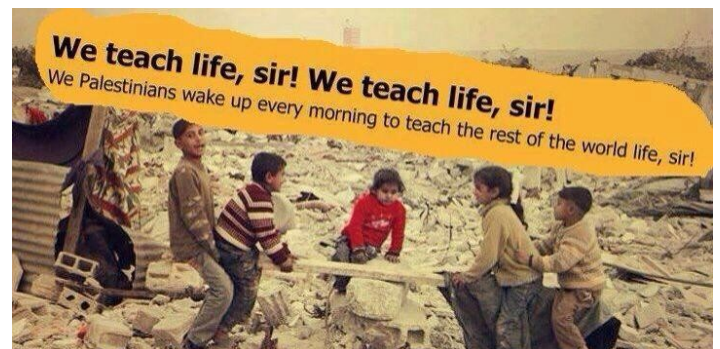
I have now lived through three large-scale military attacks on the Gaza Strip since Israel's decision to pull out its stationed troops and illegal settlers in 2006, also known as the 'disengagement'. The disengagement was not the end of Gaza's occupation by Israel which began in 1967, merely the beginning of a new state of affairs characterised by the full-scale land, sea and air blockade of Gaza which is now entering its eighth year. The first large-scale attack took place in 2008-09, the disproportionality in casualties – 1400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and 10 Israeli soldiers – is what inspired me to do a PhD which examined Israeli solidarity activism with the Palestinian struggle for justice, freedom and equality. Since then there was November 2012; and most recently July-August 2014. This latest attack was the bloodiest to date with over 2000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and 73 Israelis, mostly soldiers, killed.

## *Dr Teodora Todorova*

*Teodora's PhD thesis was on the subject of critical Israeli responses to the Palestinian call for Just Peace (2014). More broadly her work is concerned with ethico-political responsibility and praxis in the context of ethno-nationalist conflict, grassroots activism and transnational civil society responses to gendered and racialised power and state violence.*

The mainstream news, which at least within academia, is well documented as producing biased reporting of the conflict, often portrays the conflict as a symmetrical affair between Israel and Hamas. Background to the 1967 Occupation or even previous attacks is often missing. An eighteen year old watching the news in July would have only been 12 or 13 in 2008 and might not even be aware that a similar attack had happened because that event is rarely mentioned in the mass media. It is therefore not surprising that the lack of historical context about the Occupation, or for that matter Palestinian dispossession in 1948 (80% of Gaza's residents are registered refugees originally from the area that is

now the state of Israel); leaves the average person confused. Patterns of military aggression are similarly lost, and so is the reason why Palestinian militant factions might be firing rockets; whether we agree or disagree with their right to do so. The emphasis on Gaza as a distinct geo-political unit also obscures the fact that Israel's Occupation extends to the West Bank where Israeli troops and illegal settlers are still on the ground and very much in charge.



As a result of my PhD thesis I have Palestinian and Israeli friends and this has meant experiencing the attacks in a personal as well as political and academic manner. It is hard to explain what it is like to watch the news and my Facebook feeds during these times. My Israeli friends post photos of the small anti-war protests they go to; most of them are anti-occupation activists. They also post photos of their small children playing on the beach relatively safe from harm, as it should be for children everywhere. They are safe because Israel has an aerial defence system called "The Dome" which intercepts and destroys almost all rockets fired from Gaza, and most of the rockets are pretty primitive to begin with. The posts I get from Gaza are something else entirely. Friend's neighbours' houses razed to the ground. People complaining about the constant sound of hovering drones making them live in permanent fear (the drones are always there even in times of "calm"), because they don't know which is a surveillance drone and which is about to drop a bomb on their neighbourhood. People's entire families dying in bombing raids, and then the fact that the electricity doesn't run most of the time so that my friends can get on the internet and post "I'm still alive". There is a human story behind political

# Dispatches from Gaza

decisions and actions, but unfortunately only politics can solve this issue. No one won at the end of this latest attack, and the pattern suggests it is sadly only a matter of when next. The Occupation and blockade are ongoing, tons of high grade bombs by Israel and homemade rockets by Hamas will continue to be fired as long as the people are forgotten and treated like collateral damage.

In July-August I was editing an academic paper about Israeli solidarity with Palestinians, it was a tough job, but the people I was writing about have a much tougher job, and unlike me they don't get to turn off Facebook and the TV and take a break on a sunny summer day. The encounter with the human cost of the Occupation and dispossession in Palestine-Israel, in the West Bank as well as in Gaza, has contributed to my adoption of an activist academic approach and analysis to the conflict. I believe that as an academic I have a duty to speak truth to power; to show asymmetry and reveal the workings of oppression where there is no balance if the fact sheet is truly balanced. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the revered anti-apartheid activist has been quoted as saying on numerous occasions "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor".

As academics we have access to information and knowledge that not only describes and shapes the world but has the potential to change it. Our analysis can reshape the views of willing listeners and decision makers, and it can empower civil society with the knowledge and information necessary to put pressure on decision makers to work towards fairer and more democratic forms of citizenship. Everyone benefits from an honest account of the realities on the ground. Only an honest examination can point to the real extent of the duties and responsibilities of those in power towards the people under their control. If we know that Israel is in charge but refuse to say it for the sake of "balance" and "neutrality" we are left in a limbo. We have a duty to the very real people who pay the price for our neutrality again and again. What we should be asking for is that the state in charge of 4.5 million occupied Palestinians takes responsibility for its subjects and all the care and protection that implies; or that it grants them independence and the right to self-govern free from occupation and dispossession. Anything less is little more than wilful ignorance and complicity.

*Dr Teodora Todorova is a Teaching Associate in the School of Sociology and Social Policy.*



# Studying Sociology

So, why did I choose to study sociology? Well, my original response would be because I was reasonably good at it. I enjoyed sociology at A level and, to be honest, it was the only subject which I thought would keep me captivated for a full three years. I know what you're thinking- not a very dutiful sociology student. However, my time at university has given me the ability to answer this in a rather more informed and purposeful way, provoking a passion which was hitherto absent.

Firstly, for me, sociology provides insight and explanation into the most mundane aspects of everyday life, equipping me with a broadened and critical perspective of our social world. I have found that sociology instigates healthy (and sometimes heated) debate, providing the ability to think and argue for one's self. Ranging from different epistemologies, to the varying definitions of religious fundamentalism, sociology allows you to form a grounded opinion and to convey this in a precise and articulate manner. However, sociology is and does more than this. University has opened my eyes to the influence and relevance sociology has for everything and everyone around us. University has shown me that sociology is a lot more than a mere sum of interesting explanations, facts and theories. I've come to appreciate that the social sciences are not confined to the lecture theatre and that sociological endeavours engage with the real world, having an impact upon real people.



Image courtesy of Zuleyka Zevallos (Flickr: sociology at work)

Sociology has the potential to literally change the world. It champions social justice, fights for the collective, and challenges the selfish and individualistic tendencies which are riddled within everyday discourse. It turns, as Mills would argue, private troubles into public issues, providing answers and solutions to the many social issues with which we are faced. Finally, on a more personal note, I have found that studying sociology provokes empathy and the development of a social conscience. With the many studies and theories that I have read, the more I have been able to place myself within the shoes of others.



Image courtesy of Sarah Horrigan (Flickr: horrigans)

With the development of a sociological outlook, I have come to view the world from a perspective which is located within the collective. I have come to view the world from a position which values and appreciates the influence and importance of the social. Essentially, I have come to appreciate this fascinating and complex phenomenon called a society.

*Amy Hall is a third year undergraduate student in the School of Sociology and Social Policy*



# Sociology in action: What's going on around us?

Fancy a break from the books? As sociologists (and as students!) it is easy to become caught up in the academic bubble. You start the year by burying your head in a large (and often cumbersome) book of theory and by the time you look up the seasons have changed and the year has passed. Here I aim to invite and entice you to step away from the books for a moment, to venture outside of the campus walls (well, metaphorically speaking) and step out into the local Nottingham scene. In particular, I am talking about activities and places that demonstrate sociology in practice on a day to day basis.



Image courtesy of [blogs.xtreamlab.net/sumac](http://blogs.xtreamlab.net/sumac)

A central hub of activity within the local activist scene is the Sumac Centre at Forest Fields, a non-profit run community and social club which welcomes individuals and groups who are interested 'in campaigning for human and animal rights, the environment, peace and co-operation world-wide'. Don't worry though, you don't have to be a crusader for world peace to attend- there are weekly social events and a cheap, volunteer-run bar so it's a great place to just hang out with friends (think of it as an edgier, non-capitalist version of The Central Perk). Most Saturday nights there's a People's Kitchen which is a charity fundraising vegan and vegetarian meal put on to support a different cause each week, organised entirely by various volunteers in the community. The food is great, the money goes to a good cause and you get a three course meal for a fiver or less (alongside a cheap bar- have I mentioned the cheap bar?), not bad for a Saturday night out and highly sympathetic

towards students' poor penniless purses! Everyone and anyone is welcome and the atmosphere is always super friendly. See the [Sumac](#) group for future events.

Having wined and dined at the Sumac if you do fancy a return to the books then be sure to check out [Five Leaves](#) in the city centre, an independent bookshop that, despite its modest size, is a bit of an Aladdin's cave for sociologists! Check out their website for upcoming events as they often have talks by authors on Monday evenings and you get the entry price (a few quid) off any purchases made on the night. Oh, and free wine.



Image courtesy of [People's Assembly Nottingham \(Facebook\)](#)

There are also frequent events held by [Nottingham's People's Assembly against Austerity](#), a group which campaigns against austerity measures and to protect vital services such as the NHS. The local group is made up of a friendly bunch of people who help organise and publicise key protests and public talks with speakers against austerity (including sociologists such as Ruth Lister). They also run social events including trips to local cinemas to watch political and sociological films such as *Pride* (at Broadway, where there is also a bar!) and they often put on cheap transport to bigger protests in London and elsewhere. Check out the [Nottingham People's Assembly](#) group for more info!

*Emma Craddock is a third year PhD Researcher in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. She began her PhD in September 2012 researching individuals' experiences of political activism against austerity in the local area of Nottinghamshire.*

# Reflections on an imagined ethnography

At the beginning of 2014 I visited Sri Lanka with my husband and some friends. One of the daily trips involved the climbing of the Sigiriya Rock, a remarkable archaeological site. It constituted an immense 200m rock topped by a ruined fortress surrounded by beautiful gardens.

For the first time in my life, I felt like an explorer of an unique and symbolic setting. Whilst going through the garden I was observing everything around me with brand-new eyes. I wanted to ensure that I saw and experienced and cast to memory and film as much detail as I could (observation period). While I was proceeding, I questioned our tour guide about the meaning of every feature and every animal and plant living in that special place (my key informants). When I approached the bottom of the rock, I was so immersed in that reality that it became incredibly familiar. Just then, the level path finished and I started to climb the first of many sets of stairs. Every set of stairs gave me a clearer idea about the venture that I was undertaking (interviews with all research participants). At that point, I could not see the rock anymore; I was completely enveloped by the surrounding jungle.

Eventually, I reached the foot of the rock and was faced with the task of climbing approximately 1,200 very precipitous steps to reach my goal of seeing the ruined fort. I took my time, I did not rush. During the climb I passed many interesting features ranging from wall paintings and ancient art to wild monkeys and signs warning about possible hornet attacks, all of which gave me a better understanding of my experience (writing up). Out of breath, I climbed the last few steps and saw the ruined fort. I was overawed by its ancient beauty. Now, I could see the garden below with more clarity, realising its complex shape and architecture. My horizons were now broadened and I could see over the jungle tree tops to other ancient sites and statues and see how this monument related to all the others (engagement with the vast literature).

Only after reaching the top did I realise that, during

this course of actions, I was driven by my natural instinct to nurture my curiosity as explorer (the why). To understand that place I stimulated my imagination to visualise how life was for the people that lived there according to the stories and information that I was told (the what). I used my body as an instrument to create an interpretative and aesthetic reconstruction of people, stories, events, places, symbolisms, etc. to communicate the experience firstly to myself and then to others (the how). I blended images, sounds and interpretations in a new creative written form. In the end, the expression of truth tends to have a beautiful quality in that it is able to let tacit knowledge emerge by making it explicit and, at the same time, enriching it.

*Domenica Urzi is a PhD candidate in the School of Sociology and Social Policy.*

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## Me and Kate Bush

At a certain point this year it seemed as if the whole country had gone mad for Kate Bush. Stories circulated in the media about just how quickly the tickets for her concerts had sold out. This was rapidly followed up with more breathless information about the impossibility of getting a ticket unless you were willing to spend at least five hundred pounds to buy one off a punter. I did not try that hard to get one, and predictably ended up empty handed. At a gig (the Rescue Rooms) the weekend before the concerts began I started talking to someone who told me she was going to London the week after next to see Kate with her mother. She described how her mother and she had listened to Kate Bush while she was growing up. This was clearly an important day for both of them. It all sounded as though she was a much bigger fan than me. Then another friend told me how in her group of friends they had memorised the songs to all her albums. Is this even possible? Anyhow I was left

# Me and Kate Bush

feeling I did not deserve a ticket. If she is only going to play live once every 35 years then others probably deserve to see her more than I do. However, listening again to her music I remembered that Kate Bush's 'The Kick Inside' was the first album I had bought 'with my own money'. This meant money I had earned with the sweat of my brow. In 1978 I had left school and got a job in a department store. I hated it. Days spent sweeping the floor, emptying bins, crushing cardboard and (as Marx so memorably put it) 'avoiding work like the plague'. Like millions of others I had first seen Kate Bush's jaunty performance of 'Wuthering Heights' on Top of the Pops in 1978. Of course I was in love with her and with my first week's wages I bought her long playing vinyl recording. Music was comparatively expensive back then and buying a whole album seemed like a big commitment. These were the days before file sharing and downloads. If you wanted to share music then the only way to do this was via a tape player.



Image courtesy of Hans Thijs. Flickr: @Piano Piano!

In the summer of 1978 I would return home from work tired, wash and sit in my room while smoking a cigarette listening to Kate Bush. For me the music seemed to come from another galaxy. Music, like many other forms of culture is about temporarily displacing the moment. Often it is about dreaming of being somewhere or even someone else. For a few hours in the evening I was no longer someone who worked in a department store, but was able to listen to the opening of a dark, mysterious and poetic world.

The songs were about sitting in cafes in Paris, being in and out of love, and of course being a woman. The awkward adolescent male that I was had just about had it with heavy metal (ok I admit it, I had seen AC/DC play in Derby) and was discovering something new and different. The idea of dreaming is central to Kate Bush's music and often crops up in her songs. One of her less commercially successful recordings (although I think it is rather brilliant) was even called 'The Dreaming'. On later music Kate has sung about domesticity, her relationship with her son, and most importantly her feelings. There have even been more overtly political songs about militarism and the ecological crisis. Of course she is often understood in terms of the bohemian myth and she seems to have an unashamed love of art, poetry and nature. It was however the feminine nature of the music that drew me. In this respect, reading many of the newspaper articles and magazine journalism that has covered Kate Bush's career it is notable just how many women musicians cite her as an influence. On one level this is not surprising as within rock and pop women are still almost as invisible as they are in the sports section. Despite the impact of Kate Bush, Joni Mitchell and more recently P.J. Harvey women performers remain comparatively marginal.

Over the years I have followed Kate Bush's music on and off. Like many people I have my favourites, but nothing has ever come close to my first encounter. The media of course persist in treating Kate Bush as a recluse and as someone who does not share herself readily in interviews. It seems as if being in the public eye means you have no right to privacy. The place Kate Bush does share herself is through her art. If you want to know what is going on inside just listen to her music. May be I should have tried a bit harder to get that ticket.

*Nick Stevenson is Reader in Sociology in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. Nick's current research is on the idea of civil society, the public sphere and more cultural understandings of citizenship. He is also a Kate Bush fan.*

# Singing: Food for the soul

I have always loved making music, and come from a long line of singers and pianists. As a child growing up in West Wales, music and singing were everywhere, and at secondary school and university I took advantage of all the musical opportunities available - variously, as a solo singer, member of chamber choirs, larger choruses, conductor of a madrigal group, pianist and composer, and treading the boards in several lead roles for the Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

*Dr Anne-Marie Kramer*

*Anne-Marie is the Undergraduate Admissions Tutor for Sociology, Criminology and Social Policy and Deputy Director of the ICEMIC Research Centre. Anne-Marie's research interests are broadly located in the sociology of personal life and the family, gender, identity and memory.*

Then came a period of living abroad, heavy smoking, and a PhD, and the birth of my daughters, and although I still played the piano regularly, I came to feel that singing was something I could no longer manage. But there had always been a singing hole in my life, and once my younger daughter was at school, I decided that I absolutely had to sing again.

I auditioned for, and joined, my local chamber choir, the Lea Singers, in January 2012. Since then I have started to take singing lessons again with Deborah Miles-Johnson, and discovered I am a full-bodied old-fashioned contralto (this is clearly flattering me, but think Kathleen Ferrier). And I have taken part in more concerts than I can list here, with lots of solos, which I absolutely love, as there's nothing I like more than singing, on my own, in front of a big crowd. In the last two years, we have sung Vivaldi's Gloria at St Martin-in-the-Fields at the invitation of the Director of the Brandenburg Choral Festival; we have taken the weekend services at sung Eucharist, Matins and Evensong services at Durham, York, Coventry, Wells and St Albans Cathedrals; we have given an average of 4 concerts in our local area per year; had a 'bring and sing' each year; and we have initiated a singing festival

which brings together choirs from across the area, alongside lieder recitals and singing masterclasses.

We sing a lot of sacred music (particularly Byrd, Tavener and Howells), English music (Finzi and Stanford are favourites), madrigals and motets, and every two years, larger scale works like Haydn Nelson Mass and Brahms Requiem. In the next three months we will be singing the services at St George's Chapel at Windsor in October, putting on an Advent Concert (Pärt, Britten, Mendelssohn, Poulenc and Gibbons), and our charity Christmas concert in our local public halls.

Singing is food for my soul. It's what sustains and



refreshes me and takes me out of the mundane: it is uplifting, inspiring, collegial, moving, and provoking all at once. It's about putting your heart on your sleeve, letting it all out, and at the same time blending in with, and accommodating others. It's that combination of self-expression and group working which makes it irresistible: it's at the core of who I am and want to be. I can think of no better way to spend my Wednesday evenings and weekends. If you loved to sing, and have stopped - what's stopping you? Get out there and do it!

[www.leasingers.co.uk](http://www.leasingers.co.uk)

*Anne-Marie Kramer is a Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy.*

# A Career in Social Work: Making a Difference

The [Centre for Social Work](#) (CSW) has been educating social workers for many decades. We have some wonderful alumni including [Meg Munn](#), the Sheffield Heeley MP, and the newly qualified social worker of the year (2013) [Ruth Aten-Sherwood](#). We deliver graduate and postgraduate social work qualifying programmes, and we are proud to have exceptionally high employment rates – we have reached 100% some years for our MA students. But qualifying as a social worker is so much more than entering a profession where you are employable. Social work is a profession that changes lives, both your own life and the lives of vulnerable adults, children and families. In a recent government review of social work education, social workers were described as professionals, practitioners, and social scientists. This is a wonderfully informed analysis of social work and explains why we sit within the School of Sociology and Social Policy and why our students share their learning with groups from across the School.



*Image courtesy of University of Nottingham Social Work (Facebook)*

I qualified as a social worker in 1985 and spent many years working in the voluntary sector, local authorities, child protection agencies, and national advocacy groups. My work supported adults and children so they could remain at home with their family, or they could be cared for safely and find long term possibilities for security and stability. But I also went through times where I failed to make a difference, where social work support couldn't help and where problems seemed intractable. When faced

with such challenges in part it is the team around you, the support offered by other social workers that makes such a difference. It is a profession where there are strong values about respect, responsibility, and taking care of others, where diversity is valued and where there is an ethical commitment to practising in such a way that self-esteem and self-belief is nurtured in those you support.

The students on our programmes will, on occasion, describe what a tough learning experience it can be, but also what an enjoyable and rewarding time it is. The programme includes significant time on placement, giving you the chance to learn in a supervised and controlled environment before you qualify. The staff within the CSW are leading UK scholars and are involved in national developments in social work education, keeping students in touch with cutting edge developments in research and practice. This relationship between theory, research and practice is vital and a key reason our graduates are so well respected as they move into qualified practice. The staff provide strong tutorial support, and understand the opportunities and challenges student social workers face (all CSW staff are qualified social workers or have extensive social care experience).

In a time of growing inequalities, where austerity means those with the least suffer the most and where poverty has become the hallmark of those needing support, social work offers an opportunity to make a difference and challenges government discourses that generate a distaste for the poor rather than a dislike of poverty. So, if all this inspires you (and we hope it does!) talk to a member of the CSW or talk to the [Social Work Society](#) about training to be a social worker. I can honestly say I have never regretted my career choice. I don't think I can identify another profession so able to make a difference and offering such a breadth of opportunity to work with so many different families, groups and communities.

*Kate Morris is Professor of Social Work in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. Kate is the Director of the Centre for Social Work.*

# What is the “Central Perk” to living with friends at Uni?

***It’s how we all dream it will be – there will be a Monica and Chandler, a Ross and Rachel and a Phoebe and a Joey. There will be minced beef trifle, turkeys on heads and mammoth gaming sessions resulting in “The Claw”. There may even be fancy dress costumes to rival the “Holiday Armadillo”...***

We all have an idealised vision of how we want living out of halls to be – and whilst still living in the very special halls bubble that seems like a perfectly realistic expectation. But what you may have heard definitely rings true – you don’t truly know a person until you live with them. Luckily, this article is here to give you a few tips and tricks to make moving into off-campus accommodation a dream come true...

*The one where you think carefully:*

It is so easy to get caught up in the excitement of living with your new best Uni buddies. Granted, you have to start thinking about housing pretty early (with contracts usually being signed by February), and so you can’t know every little facet of their personalities, but think carefully about what you do know about them. Do you really want to have to live with the drama queen 24/7? Can you handle the mess of that one guy who can’t even keep his one room in halls tidy? Will that “quirky” friend really seem all that charming when faced with them at the breakfast table? Consider what you know already and make your decision from that.

*The one where you have a meeting:*

Once you’ve figured out who you are living with, I would highly recommend that you have a meeting to discuss the basic details. Topics such as whether you want to live in Beeston or Lenton, what your collective budget bracket is for rent, and what you’re prepared to pay for in terms of utilities are all good starting points. Also make sure you all have the same standards. This ensures everyone is on the same page and means that you’ve already done half the work before you even start looking at houses.

*The one where you sync your watches (and opinions):*

Okay, so maybe syncing watches is a little extreme, but agreeing on a time that is best for everyone for house viewings and meetings with your new landlord is important. You cannot expect housemates to be happy to move into a house that they have never seen, paying money to someone they have never met. Find a time that suits everyone, and as often as possible, all make decisions together. If one person really isn’t happy, don’t push them to share your view. At the end of the day, they are trying to choose somewhere they would be comfortable to live – and if they aren’t happy, then you won’t be either.



*The one where you go on holiday:*

At the end of first year, after exams, try to go on holiday with your housemates. It doesn’t matter where – Canada, Corfu, Cornwall – the point is that you go somewhere where you will have to work together as a team to navigate your holiday. This can either be the biggest blessing, or a catastrophic curse. I would highly recommend it either way – everyone loves a holiday, and it can be the perfect opportunity to create those memories and stories that you will be talking about for the months to come. That time where the kooky waiter kept flirting with your friend? Yeah, she’ll be reminded about him for a while...It can also be a good chance to figure out what your roles are in the house – you’ll see which ones are the proactive, organised housemates, and which ones shouldn’t be given any important jobs if you want them to get sorted!

# What is the “Central Perk” to living with friends at Uni?



*The one where you communicate and build:*

The last tip I have for you is to talk, talk, talk! Once you move in together, lines of communication need to be kept open. And I don't mean passive-aggressively SnapChatting a picture of their dirty dishes to them constantly as a hint to get them done. I mean actually talk. Like, you know, with your voice and actual words. This is the only way to make sure that things stay

harmonious. On the flip side, listen. Your demands are not the only ones that matter. Think about the people who you are living with, and seriously, be considerate of others – It will save so many arguments! Living with friends and having to grow up is a big step. Yes, that first big bill is scary. Yes, there will be cooking disasters. And yes, there will be arguments. But as long as you talk to each other, respect your housemates, stay organised, and everyone tries to stay on the same page, there is hope. So whilst we may not be able to perfectly replicate the New York adventures of our favourite TV characters, we may be able to find a little piece of it in Nottingham after all.

*Rebekah Sanders is a third year undergraduate student in the School of Sociology and Social Policy*

## Looking Back

I've been given the challenge of summarising my 3 years of university in 200-300 words which reminds me of how concise my essays had to be. Using the past tense is also peculiar to me as I adapted to student life so much so that it breaks my heart knowing it's all over.

My journey began on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011 and, after many failed attempts to login to my UCAS track, I learned that I had secured my spot at the University of Nottingham (my mum loved clarifying to anyone she met that I attended THE University of Nottingham).

Three years have whizzed by and I can say whole-heartedly that it was my final year that was my favourite. This is not only from a social life viewpoint but also academically. I felt that third year challenged my belief systems through the modules I studied, which include *The Sociology of Prisons and Incarceration* and *The Sociological Perspectives of Medicine: The Case of Psychiatry*. Even now I am very aware of these social issues as there are regular news stories focusing on them, plus I attended a seminar on Mental Health in the Workplace on behalf of my workplace in their Human Resources department.

It confirms that Sociology isn't airy-fairy because what we study is contemporary and has significance. I chose my degree because my teachers told me that if I was going to study something for 3 years I may as well enjoy it. They were right.

To end this piece, I don't think there is a better way to conclude other than Graduation where my 3 years in Nottingham came to an end on a glorious July afternoon. When my name was called to collect my degree I remembered that this was my time and to walk down that stage with pride. Now it is your turn. Good luck!

*Lauren Feldman graduated in June 2014 with a BA (Hons) in Sociology*