



BSA Auto/Biography Study Group

Centre for Biography and Education,
University of Southampton
and
Department of Education,
Brunel University London

BSA Auto/Biography Study Group Christmas Conference

**Friends House, Euston Road
173-177 Euston Road, London
7th December 2018**

Past and Present Lives



**BRITISH
SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**

BSA Registered Charity Number: 1080235

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the one day BSA Auto/Biography Study Group Christmas Conference. The programme is exciting, varied and interesting, and we are really looking forward to the discussions that arise during the day.

Thanks to all of you for your support of the group and contribution to the conference.

Very best wishes

Anne

2019 Summer Conference

'Auto/Biography and Childhood'
will be held at Wolfson College, Oxford 18th-20th July 2019.

Keynote Speaker: Andrew Sparkes

**Michael Erben is now accepting titles and 250 word abstracts
(michaelerben@gmail.com)**

Delegate information

Contact Details

Friends House, Religious Society of Friends, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ. Telephone: 0207 663 1000

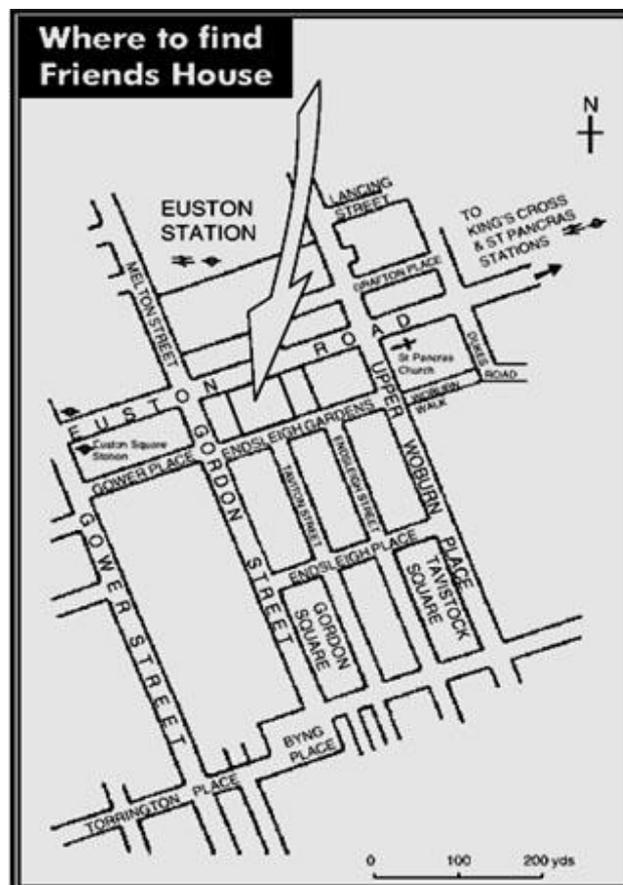
Travelling to Friends House

Friends House is on the south side of Euston Road directly opposite Euston station (BR main line, Victoria and Northern underground lines).

Walking: It is a ten minute walk from King's Cross and St. Pancras main line and underground stations, and five minutes from Euston Square underground station.

By Bus: Buses 10, 18, 30, 73 and 205 pass the door; 59, 68, 91, 168, and 253 stop nearby.

By Car: Friends House is within a meter-parking zone. Charges must be paid Monday to Friday 0830 – 1830, Saturday 0900 – 1630. There are alternative parking facilities under Euston Station.



AV Facilities

Facilities and notes for audio-visual presentations: each presentation room has full facilities for PowerPoint and access to the internet. Some rooms also have sound.

Past and Present Lives: Programme

0930-1000: Registration in the second-floor lobby
Refreshments and pastries in the Elizabeth Fry Room

1000-1010 Welcome: Elizabeth Fry Room

1010-1110 Keynote: Elizabeth Fry Room

The Best Days of Your Life? A comparative study of the educational experience in this country over 100 years: an analysis of schooling past and present.

Josie Abbott

Chair: Michael Erben

1110-1140: Refreshments: Elizabeth Fry Room

1140-1225: Paper Session

Elizabeth Fry Room

Obituaries: Revelations and Meanings of Life

Amanda Norman

Chair: Julie Parsons

Margaret Fell Room

Living large in diet culture: an auto photographic study of the lived experience of a woman in a larger body from a HAES® perspective.

Simone Harding

Chair: Jeni Nicholson

1225-1330: Lunch: Elizabeth Fry Room

1330-1415: Paper Session

Elizabeth Fry Room

Reconciling past and past present lives, whilst imagining 'non-criminalised' future selves. Narratives of reflection from prisoners working at a resettlement scheme.

Julie Parsons

Chair: Judith Chapman

Margaret Fell Room

The Tooth Fairy: embodied legacies of colonisation in the works of Yinka Shonibare MBE and Elaine Mitchener

Ronda Gowland Pryde

Chair: Jenny Byrne

1415-1445: Refreshments: Elizabeth Fry Room

1445-1530: Paper Session

Elizabeth Fry Room

"It's not research, it's just stories": an exploration into the challenges and triumphs of biographic research'

Joanna Thurston and Louise Oliver

Chair: Ronda Gowland Pryde

Margaret Fell Room

Post-hum[an]ous life writing: Digital Corporeality and End-of-life writing

Emma Newport

Chair: Gayle Letherby

1530-1600: Close: Elizabeth Fry Room

Abstracts

The Best Days of Your Life? A comparative study of the educational experience in this country over 100 years: an analysis of schooling past and present.

Josie Abbott

In this paper I return to a particular interest of mine, viz the history of education, and then look at today's school society and the experiences of today's generation through the same lens, drawing out themes to link across the generations. The paper builds on work I undertook many years ago using an auto/biographical approach to tell the stories of three generations of one family. At that time using a combination of literature search and oral history I looked at social changes in juxtaposition with an evolving education system and how it was for the actors within the lived experience. Now I want to see where this evolution has brought us. Again, I use a blend of literature source and personal experiences via a biographical approach and draw comparisons with the actuality experienced today within the 2018 educational system. Are they indeed the best days of your life or is this only realised in retrospect through the rose-tinted lens of time?

The Tooth Fairy: embodied legacies of colonialisation in the works of Yinka Shonibare MBE and Elaine Mitchener

Ronda Gowland Pryde

The legacies of colonialisation in past and present lives is discussed through the practices of embodiment in the specific art works of Yinka Shonibare MBE and Elaine Mitchener. From Shonibare's series of winged mannequins, *Food Faerie*, (2010-2016) to Mitchener's *Sweet Tooth* (2018) performances, in this paper, I explore how the legacies of colonialisation impact on lives, communities and histories throughout time.

In his recent curated exhibition for Arts Council Collection: *Criminal Ornamentation*, (2018-2019) Shonibare, reflects on Adolf Loo's essay *Ornament and Crime*, (1908). In this essay, Loo's argued against pattern and ornamentation considering it reflective of bad taste and primitive people's who adorn themselves with tattoos. Incorporating pattern and ornament in his work, as an embodied act of social and political expression, Shonibare uses Dutch Wax prints developed as a result of colonial trade.

The vivid, multi-sensory performances of Elaine Mitchener, in *Sweet Tooth* are informed by historical research of the slave trade and legacies of Jazz music, where past and present lives and communities are converged. Embodying the lived experiences of slavery from historical records and accounts of those that were able to articulate their realities, Mitchener re-presents the colonialisation of the body.

By closely examining *Food Faerie* and *Sweet Tooth*, I conclude that embodiment in creative practice is significant as both as a means of representing and re-representing past and present lives and as a discursive act of reflecting lived experiences, which push hegemonic representations and histories.

Living large in diet culture: an auto photographic study of the lived experience of a woman in a larger body from a HAES® perspective.

Simone Harding

Diet culture preserves the “thin ideal” as a phenomenon that values thinness above all other body types. This phenomenon is supported by weight centric research correlating weight with health. The pathology of weight and the use of weight as a surrogate marker of mortality has led to fat phobia and stigma for people living in larger bodies. The consequences of fat phobia for are profound. Stigma associated with fatness is pervasive and in every layer of private and public life. For a person living in a larger body, navigating a world that demonises a fat body is stressful and traumatising.

HAES® is an approach that is weight inclusive. It rejects the idealising or pathologising of specific weights and respects body diversity. Using image based research, I want to tell the story of a woman in a larger body, living in diet culture and moving from a weight centric to a weight neutral world-view. Her present life is beginning to unpack diet culture, expose narrow beauty standards and explore how weight stigma presents in her lived experience. In documenting her story with past and present images, I hope to share how profoundly weight stigma has narrated her experience of being a woman and how it is possible to re-write a story by looking through a different lens.

HAES® stands for "Health at Every Size®". It is a registered trademark. HAES® is an approach developed by the Association For Size, Diversity and Health (ASDAH) <https://www.sizediversityandhealth.org/>

Obituaries: Revelations and Meanings of Life

Amanda Norman

This paper discusses obituaries as a form of narrative and how a person’s life can be revealed and discussed within a period of time. It reveals their social position and draws together an appreciation of the value of the individual’s life in the wider social context. A good obituary should therefore be as dispassionate and as many sided as possible. It is a balance between chronicling and commemorating the life lived (Jackson, 2007). An obituary therefore provides an opportunity for readers to capture a life through the lens of the writer during the period they lived. In this study documentary analysis of individuals specifically the selection of obituaries, were revealed to illustrate how the collation of a person’s life were recorded. In analysing several obituaries of the same person, a portrayal of the character of the individual emerged. Obituaries provided a personalised interpretation of the individuals’ actions and highlighted key events / epiphanies of their chronological life, or altered life course. As an academic, obituaries can be inspirational to how individuals not only contribute but shape the fabrics of society in which they are immersed in.

Post-hum[an]ous life writing: Digital Corporeality and End-of-life writing

Emma Newport

Between 2012 and 2017, a contributor to Mumsnet, a popular parenting forum online, began recording a third-person account under the pseudonym lamtheZombie: firstly of her ongoing divorce and secondly of her experience of increasingly aggressive cancer. In January 2017, lamtheZombie died; her threads have been preserved by MumsnetHQ. What is left behind forms a cellular tissue of posts, a text-culture that provides a holistic and innovative form of obituary.

In this paper, I suggest that digital end-of-life writing can be understood as a form of cytoarchitecture, creating a tissue of comments that construct a more bodily, multi-dimensional cyber-selfhood. In that sense, there is post-hum[an]ous self that continues to exist in cyberspace in a far more complex version of existence than traditional records of mortality such as the newspaper obituary. Thus, the aptly named lamtheZombie and what she called her 'scattered limbs' can be regathered, reconstituted and reanimated into a new digitised corporeality that feeds into current explorations of the post-human, in which the latest ideas of existing beyond death are largely dependent on experiments with uploading the self into cyberspace. In this way, we bear witness to, and, as writers, may contribute to, a new democratisation of the death-process. This paper invites writers to rethink end-of-life writing as a communal act that generates a digital equivalent of memory tissue that is able to preserve and even partially animate those who record their lives, and are recorded, in cyberspace.

Reconciling past and past present lives, whilst imagining 'non-criminalised' future selves. Narratives of reflection from prisoners working at a resettlement scheme.

Julie Parsons

Since 2015 I have worked on consecutive externally funded research projects at a resettlement scheme (RS) that works with criminalised individuals (referred to as trainees). The RS works with men released on temporary licence from the local prison and others on community orders referred through probation. To date I have 75+ interview transcripts from 30 men and one woman, mostly due to the co-production of blog posts for the Photographic-electronic Narrative (PeN) project. The focus of this paper is on narratives from nine prisoners, interviewed over 12 months from July 2017. During this time, the men worked at the RS from two to twelve months prior to release from prison and were interviewed for the PeN project from one to five times. For these trainees' custodial sentences are obstacles that disrupt and detract, they are stigmatising but also traumatising events that put a full stop to ordinary everyday life (as well as criminal activity in some cases). The RS enables trainees to work outside of the prison estate in a non-judgemental environment with non-criminalised individuals from a range of backgrounds. Trainees therefore tend to reflect on their past and present lives in the context of imaginary social capital (Quinn 2010, Ivana 2016). They are keen to explain who they were before they were imprisoned and who they hope to become on release. For most, the present is ignored in favour of creating a socially acceptable past self, whilst generating the possibilities for imagining a future (non-criminalised) self.

“It’s not research, it’s just stories”: an exploration into the challenges and triumphs of biographic research’

Dr Joanna Thurston and Louise Oliver

The aim of this working paper is to present a narrative depicting personal insights into the challenges and triumphs of conducting and disseminating biographical research. Within this film we will explore the academic acceptance, scholarly engagement and dissemination of biographical research, through the lived experiences of scholars and those new to the methodology. Throughout each of the author’s research journeys, we, as early career researchers, have often been prompted to defend the robustness of our methodological choice. We each experienced active dissuasion of its use but learnt that our experiences were not unique. The view that biographical research is “Not research...Just stories” is still evident within many academic contexts. In order to explore this ongoing challenge we will be conducting filmed interviews. Using well known scholars and early career researchers, the interviews will consider the journey of biographical research, from its conception through to the present day. Personal perspectives will address the challenges faced and overcome in the academic application of the methodology, and anticipated new challenges moving forward.

This research will be presented as a short film bringing together the individual interviews allowing the audience to be taken on a journey through the evolution of biographical research, from real world perspectives.

Delegate List

Amanda Norman

Anne Chappell

Emma Newport

Gayle Letherby

Gill Clarke

Jeni Nicholson

Jenny Byrne

Joanna Thurston

Josie Abbott

Judith Chapman

Julie Parsons

Juliet Hall

Louise Oliver

Melanie Hall

Mich Page

Michael Erben

Ronda Gowland Pryde

Sallyann Bentham

Simone Harding

Terence Martin

