



Warning signs: sociologists talk about threats to society

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Rise in anti-vaccine sentiment includes pet owners, event hears

Human-Animal studies group: The rise in anti-vaccine sentiment among the public now includes pet owners, Dr Pru Hobson-West, of the University of Nottingham, told a recent event.

Dr Hobson-West, Associate Professor in the School of Sociology and Social Policy, gave a lecture to the British Veterinary Association Congress at the London Vet Show on reasons why some owners are questioning the merits of vaccination.

In the lecture, entitled 'The rise of the anti-vaxxers: how should vets respond?' Dr Hobson-West responded to a report showing an 18 per cent fall in the number of dogs, cats and rabbits being vaccinated.

In her talk, she said that it was important to look at pet owners' trust in veterinary advice, rather than just provide education about the risk of diseases.

"These people are questioning the success narrative of medicine and the same thing is now happening in companion animal work," she said. "Trust in vets is potentially undermined by perceived conflicts of interest.

"What if vaccine critique is the symptom of something else – a wider disease, a wider problem in society to do with risk, trust and science? The challenge is that we have to be very careful not to avoid misdiagnosing it,



Dr Pru Hobson-West

otherwise we will make it worse.

"Social media may now be spreading critical ideas related to human and animal vaccination and is undoubtedly speeding up the sharing of ideas between countries. However, critique of vaccines goes back to the 19th century.

"It is essential that vets appear willing to

discuss owners' concerns. I hope the veterinary profession will not rush to judgement but seek to learn lessons from the detailed sociological research on human vaccination debates."

Dr Hobson-West, a founder member of the Human-Animal Studies Group, is now working on a comparison of childhood and pet vaccine controversies.

In other study group news, Dr Corey Lee Wrenn has had a book published which argues that campaigning organisations can become monopolies that stifle progress towards their aims.

In *Animal Rights in the Age of Nonprofits*, Dr Wrenn, of the University of Kent, finds that modern social movements are dominated by bureaucratically oriented non-profits, which creates tension between activists and those in charge in the organisation.

Her analysis of archival literature and interviews with leaders finds that non-profits can monopolise the movement, disempower competitors and erode democratic access and decision-making. It considers how inequality within social movements can stifle social progress.

Dr Wrenn is Chair of the Animals and Society section of the American Sociological Association and the book is published by the University of Michigan Press.

Postgraduate convenors join youth group

Two postgraduate convenors, Sophie Atherton and Wendy Gill, have been appointed by the **Youth Studies Group**.

Sophie is a second year PhD sociology student at the University of Manchester whose work focuses on the secondary school experiences of young people who are transgender and non-binary.

"Through my new role I hope to help create and develop a channel of communication for myself and other academics across various areas of sociology on the positioning and experiences of young people in society," she said.

Wendy is a second year PhD student at Durham University who is undertaking a participatory project on the longevity and sustainability of the Guide Association.

"As a youth work practitioner as well as a researcher, it is important that my work is collaborative and includes the voice of young people," she said.

The two were appointed by the group's co-convenors, Dr Benjamin Hanckel, of King's College London, Dr Caitlin Nunn, of Manchester Metropolitan University, and Dr Karenza Moore, of Salford University, after



Sophie Atherton

an appeal on its Twitter feed, @BSAYouthSG

The appointments help fulfil one of the group's key aims, to include, support and learn from postgraduate and early career researchers.

The expanding group plans to run further events on the ethical challenges of



Wendy Gill

contemporary sociological research with young people, and the relationship between youth studies research and the youth work field. It held a well-attended workshop on youth intersections in September. For more on the group, see: www.britisoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/youth-study-group