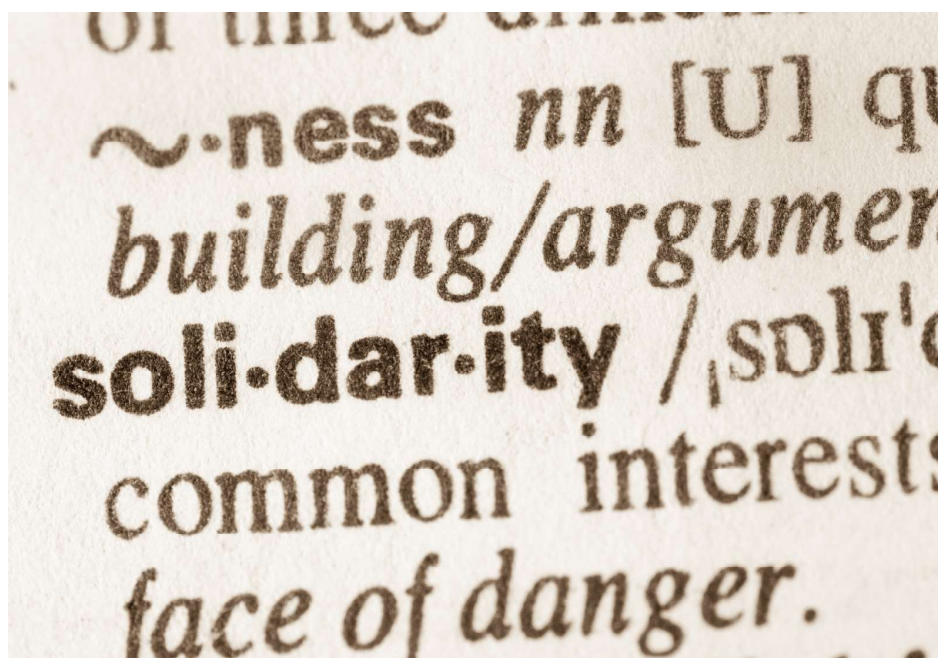




Network

Recording the working lives of sociologists for over 40 years **Issue 137, Spring 2021**



University of East London: protest saves jobs

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- **From GCSE to careers: our progress in a series of charts**
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Weight expectations wins prize for research on obesity stigma

King's College London: Dr Oli Williams has won the Best Early Career Research prize in the 2020 Medical Humanities Awards for research on weight stigma that led to an influential publication, a BBC broadcast and an appearance before parliament.

Dr Williams won for his project, 'The weight of expectation: how stigma gets under the skin and is bad for our health', which he developed from his PhD at the University of Leicester, undertaken from 2010 to 2014.

He observed weight-loss groups in the Midlands and combined people's experiences of weight-management with biomedical and social research to highlight how stigma about obesity is ineffective at promoting weight-loss. Instead, he found that it detrimentally impacts people's health and discriminates against poorer sections of society.

Dr Williams worked with illustrator Jade Sarson to turn these findings into a comic book, *The Weight of Expectation*. Artwork from this was exhibited nationally and is used by health services around the world to improve standards of care and teach the next generation about the detrimental impacts of weight-based stigma.

He then brought together researchers, healthcare professionals and patient advocates to call on Cancer Research UK to stop running campaigns stigmatising obesity.

This led to appearances on ITV News and

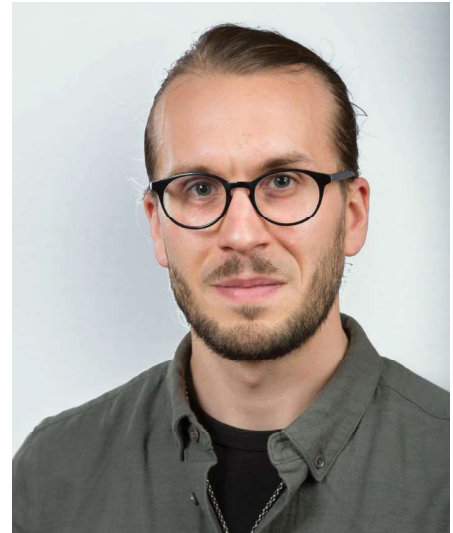


A cartoon from *Weight of Expectation*

on the BBC's website, and a dialogue with the charity.

As part of winning the Medical Humanities Award, run by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in association with Wellcome, Dr Williams' research was featured on BBC Radio 3 and the AHRC-BBC New Thinking podcast.

The citation for the award says that Dr Williams was "demonstrating leadership as a doctoral student" and that the comic was "having international impact".



Dr Oli Williams

He was selected to address the All-Party Parliamentary Group conference on obesity in March last year on the theme of 'How to beat obesity stigma?', alongside panellists including Jenni Murray, the former Woman's Hour presenter.

In 2018, Dr Williams was asked to give the Margaret Mead Award Lecture for Social Sciences and has delivered keynote lectures for the Association for the Study of Obesity on the Island of Ireland and the British Dietetic Association.

International vegan group is launched

University of Kent: The first conference of the International Association of Vegan Sociologists was held online last year, with 100 people in North America, Europe and Australia attending sessions.

The association, founded by Dr Corey Wrenn last May, will hold its annual conference this year in October on the theme of 'The vegan promise'.

Dr Wrenn has also launched a 'Sociology and animals' podcast series, which interviews researchers working in the field, and the *Student Journal of Vegan Sociology*, a student-centred publication which calls for new ways of human and animal interactions.

In other news from the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, Dr David Garbin organised a series of webinars bringing together sociologists, anthropologists, visual artists, urban planners and engineering scientists as part of his two-year project, 'Pneumacity'. This explores the urban ecology and economy of informal roadside tyre waste infrastructure in mega-city Lagos in



Dr Corey Wrenn

Nigeria and is run with the universities of York, Lagos, Toronto and Mohamed VI in Morocco.

Dr Alexander Hensby and Dr Barbara Adewumi began a longitudinal study of 27 high-potential undergraduates from widening participation backgrounds, to identify potential barriers to belonging among BAME students and BTEC entrants.

The Centre for the Study of Social and Political Movements hosted a panel discussion, 'Activism amidst Covid-19', featuring speakers from the UK and US.

Dr Joy Zhang recorded a documentary on 'Science denial in a "post-truth" era' with Lee McIntyre, of Boston University, for the Aspen Institute.

Books written by members of the school will be published later this year. Dr Carolyn Pedwell's *Revolutionary Routines: The Habits of Social Transformation* argues that seemingly minor everyday habits are the key to meaningful change, drawing on the politics of Trumpism and Brexit, nudge theory, social media and Black Lives Matter.

Dr Zhang's book, *The Elephant and the Dragon in Contemporary Life Sciences*, written with Dr Saheli Datta Burton, illuminates a de-colonised vision of science governance and demonstrates how key global regulatory challenges are reflected in, rather than created by, China and India's rapid development.