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CATHIE MARSH
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Professor Cathie Marsh tragically died on New Year's Day aged 41, following several months of treatment for breast cancer. The loss of a young sociologist will be felt keenly by the discipline and by all who knew her.

Cathie Marsh read Chinese then Social and Political Sciences (SPS) at Cambridge University, before joining the SSRC Survey Unit in the mid-1970s. She was a Lecturer at Cambridge and Fellow of Newnham College, before moving in the mid-1980s with her family to Manchester. It is still a rare achievement in British sociology for a woman with children to reach the heights of the profession as Cathie did, being promoted to Professor at the University of Manchester in 1992. Her untimely death is all the more significant because of the stature of her achievements. We can only wonder about what she would have achieved in the second half of her career.

In a short space it is hard to encapsulate her contribution to sociology, because her interests were so diverse; she was a prodigious scholar in a wide range of cognate fields, including statistics, political science and social psychology.

As a young lecturer at Cambridge, Cathie came to the attention of the wider sociological community in 1979, with her article in *Sociology*— 'Problems with Surveys'. This was reprinted in several collections and formed the basis of her book *The Survey Method* (1982). This work broke the mould of the anti-survey establishment in sociology, which was prominent during the 1970s. It provided a trenchant critique of Cicourel and the 'anti-positivists' which is still as fresh and poignant as when it was written. She argued convincingly that surveys can measure respondent's meanings, providing a passionate defence of survey research and an attack on the crude characterisations of the survey by many critics.

Cathie transformed statistics from being seen as a dry and dusty subject which sociology students were forced under duress to learn. She saw statistics as a tool for social action and a means for better understanding society, particularly inequalities within society. This approach is exemplified in her book *Exploring Data* (1988a), which I reviewed for the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*:

> Marsh's book provides an ideal tool through which social scientists can painlessly grasp the necessary technical competences while being engrossed in a range of contemporary social issues. It is very rare to actually read a data analysis book from

> cover to cover, to find it enjoyable, interesting and sometimes inspiring, yet at the same time to learn often technically demanding material . . . . Marsh's characteristic style is bold and good humoured. We are treated to fascinating historical asides which aptly portray the case in point, for example, the poignant illustration that deaths of women passengers on the Titanic varied from nearly half for third class passengers to 3 percent for first class passengers is used to introduce the discussion of class differentials in mortality.

Cathie was at the forefront in methodological debates on areas as diverse as the problems of quota sampling (Marsh and Scarbrough 1990), conceptualising social class (Marsh 1986), and developing better measures of segregation and inequality (Blackburn and Marsh 1991). She was equally at home with market research surveys and political opinion polling, for example, whether opinion polls are part of the democratic process with respondents conceived as citizens and whether ideological manipulation is inherent in polls (Marsh 1979b). Her interests in political issues and the methodology of opinion polls were combined in *Public Opinion and Nuclear Defence* (Marsh and Fraser 1989).

Cathie's activities in statistics and methodology led to rare achievements for a sociologist, such as Chair of the Social Statistics section of the Royal Statistical Society (1990–92), and receiving the silver medal of the British Market Research Society in 1992 for the best journal article published the previous year. Her knowledge and abilities were recognised by the Economic and Social Research Council, as a member of various committees, including Research Resources and Methods (1985–87), Society and Politics Research Development Group (1987–89) and the Working Group on the 1991 Census (1986–90).

One of Cathie's greatest achievements is unlikely to be fully recognised by the academic community for a number of years. She spearheaded negotiations with the Census Offices for the release of a Sample of Anonymised Records (SAR) from the British 1991 Census. Such public use samples have been available in the USA and Canada for many years, but in Britain were said to contravene the 1920 Census Act. Through marshalling detailed evidence (Marsh *et al.* 1988; Marsh *et al.* 1991), skilful lobbying and sheer determination, Cathie Marsh was able to secure the release of a two percent sample of individuals and a one percent sample of households from the 1991 Census. The ESRC Census Microdata Unit at the University of Manchester, which she established to distribute census microdata, will remain a powerful living testimony to her pioneering work.

Cathie worked with many different scholars and researchers, all of whom have benefited from her enthusiasm, sharp intellect and sound good sense: she inspired, challenged and confronted others, always with good humour. At the same time, she was exacting, expecting the same high standards of fellow researchers, as those she set for herself. Cathie gave generously, sharing her time to assist others and revelling in academic debate.

Cathie Marsh's contributions to sociology span many areas, including class, employment, unemployment, education, voting, households and families. She

was joint organiser of the 1990 BSA Annual Conference, co-editing two conference volumes (Marsh and Arber 1992; Burrows and Marsh 1992). She was an active researcher on the ESRC-funded Social Change and Economic Life Initiative, co-editor of a forthcoming book on unemployment (Gallie, Marsh and Vogler, forthcoming), and was working on a User Guide to the 1991 Census (Dale and Marsh 1993). Her work continued until days before her death.

In her masterly review of research on the effects of unemployment, which is still as fresh and stimulating as when it was written, her words are particularly moving for those who knew her:

> The process of coming to terms with the loss of work is considered similar to the process of grieving, and coming to terms with the loss of any other dearly loved person or symbolic object. (There are) many similarities in response to unemployment and bereavement: pre-occupation, feelings of anger and guilt, loss of self-identity, (and) the need to work hard psychologically to bring the subjective, assumptive world into line with the new reality. . . . In many important respects, however, unemployment is *not* like being bereaved. It is not final in the same way, and is certainly not experienced as final. . . . Moreover, the central object lost, the particular job, is not the stimulus for grief as it is in bereavement; people hope to find another job, but not the one they actually lost (Marsh 1988b:362, emphasis in the original).

Unlike unemployment, Cathie's death is final. We can never replace Cathie, but her presence will remain to inspire, influence and challenge a great many scholars and friends throughout the world.

I was privileged to have known Cathie Marsh and deeply mourn her death. Her loss to sociology was very great, but can never reach the significance of her loss to her husband, David, and her sons, Jamie and Geoffrey.

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