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# Arne Kalleberg reflects on 90 years of Social Forces



## Social Forces

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Sociology has adopted much more sophisticated methods and theories over the last one hundred years. The growth in specialization has made it difficult for many scholars to have a good sense of what is happening in areas in which they are not specialists. But *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>), a leading international social science research journal, has grown and changed along with it. The [90th anniversary issue](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/4341/2) (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/4341/2>) has just published and is free for viewing for a limited time.

We sat down with Kenan Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) editor Arne Kalleberg (<http://www.unc.edu/~arnekal/>) to discuss the past, present, and future of sociology, social sciences, and the journal.

**When did you join the journal?**

I became Editor of *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) on 1 July 2010. My association with the journal began much earlier, however, in 1986, when I joined the editorial board upon being appointed as a Professor at the Sociology Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (All faculty members at UNC-Chapel are on the editorial board.)

**What do you know now that you wish you had known when you took over the editorship?**

So far, my editorship has gone fairly smoothly (“knock on wood”). One thing I was very worried about was whether we could get timely reviews from referees. This has been a constant challenge, but I have been pleasantly surprised that this has not been as difficult as I feared.

**How has your editorship impacted your own academic interests or methods?**

Editing *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) has broadened my scholarly interests. Since *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) is a general sociology journal, I now regularly read papers on diverse set of topics, most of which I wouldn't have ordinarily read. This has given me a much greater sense of the variety of research that is going on in sociology. Moreover, as *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) also encourages submissions from social science fields in addition to sociology (such as psychology, economics, history, among others), I have been able to keep up with some of the exciting in research in those fields as well.

My editorship has also impacted my teaching. I now teach an annual course for graduate students on “publishing in sociology.” In this course, we discuss the various aspects of publishing, from writing the paper, to reviewing, writing cover letters, and responding to reviews. Students come to the course with a paper they are working on, and the goal is to submit the paper to a real journal by the end of the semester.

**What was one of the most unexpected things to come out of *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) in its 90-year history?**

This is a hard question, as I have been associated with *Social Forces* (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) for less than a third of its long history. For the 90th anniversary, I asked authors of the most highly cited articles in the past four decades to write [recollections about their articles](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/4341/2) (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/4341/2>), reflecting on their impact on the field and on the direction research on their topics has taken since they wrote them. I was somewhat surprised that everyone I invited responded enthusiastically to this invitation and wrote very compelling reflections. (I was much less surprised by the latter than the former!)

**What is the current state of research in this field?**

Research in sociology is more sophisticated than ever. Sociology has always sought to incorporate the latest advances in methodology (both quantitative and qualitative) as well as from related social sciences (such as anthropology, economics, psychology, among others) in its pursuit of answers to the most pressing and interesting questions about social life.

**What do you think the future holds for this field?**

Sociology is alive and well, and is more vibrant and vital than ever. For example, membership in the American Sociological Association has been high in recent years. The number of baccalaureate degrees awarded in sociology has increased by 70 percent since 1990, the number of master's degrees has increased by about two-thirds in the last fifteen years, and number of doctorates has increased steadily since 1990.

A major reason why sociology is so healthy is that it is increasingly relevant and essential to explanations of a growing number of issues and problems faced by societies and nations around the world. We need sociology now more than ever before because many of the challenges facing us in the 21st century involve social forces, often in interaction with physical and biological factors.

### What do you think the future holds for academic journals?

Peer-reviewed academic journals are likely to continue to play a central role in the transmission of cutting-edge scientific research. Their form is likely to continue to evolve, however, as technological innovations create new opportunities to communicate this research to various audiences. For example, the life of print journals is likely to be limited, as journals move to on-line delivery. Moreover, social media is transforming markedly the ways in which we can inform the scientific community (and the public more generally) about the latest scientific advances. But regardless of the medium, peer review will continue to be essential to maintain the quality of research and thinking that is transmitted.

### What's your vision of [Social Forces](http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/) (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) in 10 years for the 100th anniversary issue?

My goal is for [Social Forces](http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/) (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>) to become the leading international social science research journal in the world. There are four components of our internationalization strategy.

First, we have expanded our Editorial Board by adding members representing 23 countries in addition to the United States. We will rely heavily on these Editorial Board members to identify high quality research emanating in their countries and to encourage authors to submit their best work to [Social Forces](http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/) (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/>). The International Editorial Board — together with their American counterparts (both at UNC-Chapel Hill and elsewhere) — will be asked to review manuscripts, suggest potential reviewers and to advise the journal on a variety of issues.

Second, we will give priority to publishing research that is comparative and cross-national in content. I will also encourage authors to consider the comparative implications of their research, even though the data analyzed might be from a single country.

Third, we will seek to increase the journal's readership by scholars in countries across the globe. Our efforts in pursuit of this goal will be aided considerably by our partnership with OUP, which has an extensive international marketing operation and a well-established presence and reputation around the world.

Finally, we are attempting to achieve all these goals in part by forming affiliations with a variety of national sociological associations. We will mark our progress toward this goal by locating affiliated national association on the world map that will appear in the front matter of the journal starting with the 90th anniversary issue (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/4341/2>).

[Arne L. Kalleberg](http://www.unc.edu/~arnekal/) (<http://www.unc.edu/~arnekal/>) is a Kenan Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published more than 100 articles and chapters and eleven books on topics related to the sociology of work, organizations, occupations and industries, labor markets, and social stratification. His most recent book is **Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s** (Russell Sage Foundation, 2011). He is currently working on projects that examine the growth of precarious work in Asia and institutional determinants of inequality in the United States. He served as President of the American Sociological Association in 2007-2008.