

The Times

Obituaries

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Professor Margaret Stacey

Sociologist whose passion for the rights of women and children took feminism in new directions

MEG STACEY was one of the creators of the academic field of medical sociology. Her empirical studies of children in hospital and the division of labour in healthcare led to significant works which were read not only by other sociologists but also by policymakers, as was her conceptual writing on concepts of health and illness, medical accountability and ethics, and, more recently, on genetics and assisted reproduction.

She was an unceasing advocate of the welfare of children and patients in hospital. She worked for human rights into her old age, visiting Montenegro in 1999 to work for peace with Women in Black.

A vigorous feminist, she was at the forefront of numerous struggles on behalf of women, and her feminism suffused her writing. The book she wrote with Marion Price about women, power and politics won the Fawcett Prize. Her challenge to accepted conceptualisations of the public-private divide and the division of labour took feminist thinking in new directions.

Margaret Stacey was born in 1922 in London and was educated at the City of London School for Girls. In 1943 she took a first in economics at the London School of Economics.

In 1944 she served as labour officer in the Royal Ordnance factory. She married Frank Stacey, a political scientist, in 1945 while he was on leave from military service in Germany. She then became a tutor at Oxford until 1951, when she followed her husband to Swansea, where he took a post in the politics department of what is now the University of Wales. She was "unwaged, but not unemployed", kept busy rearing children and writing *Tradition and Change*.

She was a founding member of the sociology department at Swansea, and was appointed senior lecturer in 1970. Two years later she became director of the Medical Sociology Research Centre. Attracted by her writings and her reputation as a generous mentor and teacher, talented students flocked to her.

In 1974 the Staceys moved to the Midlands, where she took a chair at the University of Warwick. Her husband died in 1977, and she later completed his book on the ombudsmen. She chaired the sociology department until 1979, and then between 1985 and her retirement in 1989 she chaired both the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Studies and the management committee of the Nursing Policy Studies Centre, which she had established. She also held numerous visiting professorships and lectureships in America, Africa, Iceland, Finland and Australia.

Having been a key figure in the establishment of the British Sociological Association's medical sociology group, she was elected president of the association in 1981.

Passionate about the public good, she was an indefatigable participant on innumerable local organisations concerned with women and children's wellbeing. At the national level she served for eight years on the General Medical Council.

The University of Warwick opened its Centre for Health and Society in 1999 with an international conference in her honour, at which she reflected that the theme of her various

undertakings had been the question of suffering, “particularly the suffering which we human beings inflict on one another, individually or collectively”.

Although she took pleasure in her professional accomplishments, Stacey also thoroughly enjoyed her large family and circle of colleagues and students, many of whom became close friends.

Witty and fun-loving, she set many a gracious dinner table for family and friends.

She is survived by three sons and two daughters.

Margaret Stacey, sociologist, was born on March 27, 1922. She died on February 10, 2004, aged 81.