

Professor Hilary Sommerlad

Professor of Law
Director of Research, Centre for Professional Legal Education and Research

[Birmingham Law School \(/schools/law/index.aspx\)](/schools/law/index.aspx)

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About

Hilary has been researching the relationship between the changing structure of the legal profession and law work and the participation of women and black and minority ethnic lawyers for over two decades. She is the co-author of the first full length study of women solicitors in England and Wales: *Gender, Choice and Commitment: Women Solicitors and the struggle for equal status* (Aldershot, Dartmouth 1998) and has written numerous papers and chapters on gender, ethnicity and class in the legal profession. Most recently she was commissioned by the Legal Services Board to lead a study on diversity in the profession: *Diversity in the legal profession in England and Wales: a qualitative study of barriers and individual choices*. She is also internationally recognised for her work on legal aid and access to justice, and has conducted funded projects for the Law Society, the Nuffield Foundation and the Ministry of Justice. She is a member of the International Legal Aid Group and the Equal Justices Initiative, and is articles editor for *Legal Ethics*. She also serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Law and Society*, the *International Journal of the Legal Profession* and *The British Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. Before joining Birmingham in 2013, she held Chairs at the University of Leicester and Leeds Metropolitan University, where she established and directed a Centre for Diversity in the Professions.

Feedback and office hours

My feedback and office hours will be as follows:

January: 15th 11.00-1.00; 19th 1-3; 28th 10.30-12.30;
February: 6th 10.30-12.30; 11th 10.30-12.30; 18th 11-1; 25th 11-1;
March: 4th 10.30-12.30; 11th 10.30-12.30; 17th 12-2; 25th 10.30-12.30

If you cannot make any of these times please email me on h.a.k.sommerlad@bham.ac.uk (mailto:h.a.k.sommerlad@bham.ac.uk)

Qualifications

- BA Hons History Cambridge
- PGCE (distinction) Leeds University
- PhD Politics York
- Common Professional Examination (distinction) Leeds Polytechnic
- Law Society Finals
- Solicitor

Biography

Hilary read History at Cambridge and subsequently took her PhD in International Politics at the University of York. After lecturing in Politics at York, she retrained and practised as a solicitor in a legal aid firm and also worked as a researcher on the MacDonald Inquiry into Racism and Racial Violence in Manchester Schools (I. MacDonald *Murder in the Playground* Beacon Books 1990). She returned to lecturing in the 1990, taking up a position at Leeds Metropolitan University to carry out research into Women Lawyers. She has continued to specialise in research into the legal profession, and set up and directed the Leeds Metropolitan University Centre for Diversity in the Professions. In 2010 she was appointed Professor of Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Leicester. In April 2013 she joined Birmingham Law School as CEPLER Director of Research.

Hilary has given over a hundred presentations and has frequently been invited and funded to speak, including as the keynote presenter, at international conferences and workshops. She has been visiting professor at The Centre for Independent Social Research, St Petersburg, 2013; UCLA Law School, Los Angeles, 2011; Osgoode Hall Law School, University of York, Toronto, 2006; Griffiths University Law School, Australia, 2002, and will act as Distinguished Visiting Mentor at ANU, Canberra July 2014.

Teaching

- Regulation of the Legal Profession (LLB)
- Criminal Law (LLB)

Postgraduate supervision

Hilary is currently co-supervising a PhD on The Role of Human Rights in a Counter-Hegemonic Political Project at the University of Leicester, and a PhD on The Potential for Miscarriages of Justice to Occur as a Result of Non-defendant Witness Biased Evidence Laws at Birmingham. She has previously supervised to completion PhDs on a critical race perspective on the accountancy profession, a critical race feminist perspective on law, jurisprudence and justice, and the professionalization of public relations.

She would be interested in supervising in the areas of gender, critical race and the legal profession, and access to justice.

Research

Hilary's funded research projects and output are concerned with the transformation of the profession which has taken place over the course of the last 3-4 decades. This includes work on the impact of the rationalization of the legal services market, including regulatory reform, and the way these developments are intertwined with the entry of women and minority groups into the profession. She continues to participate in projects on these developments which have compared the experience of jurisdictions in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia, and to explore the implications of the transformed market for legal education and training. Her externally funded research projects include a study for the Department of Constitutional Affairs (now MOJ) on [Training and Regulating the providers of publicly funded legal advice services](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/training-regulating-legal-advice.htm) (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110201125714/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/training-regulating-legal-advice.htm>) (2009). She has also worked extensively on legal aid reform and access to justice and has been a member of the International Legal Aid Group since 1999. Her most recent work has explored the impact on the voluntary advice sector of the cuts in legal aid as a result of LASPO, diversity in the judiciary and the emergence of professional casualised labour markets.

Other activities

Hilary is the CEPLER Director of Research, and is currently also acting as the Centre's Director. She is also a member of the Law School Executive Group.

Hilary's external activities include membership of numerous national and international research groups, such as the [White Spaces Network](http://www.wun.ac.uk/research/white-spaces-network) (<http://www.wun.ac.uk/research/white-spaces-network>); the Legal Education Research Network; the US Law and Society Association International Research Collaborative on Women Judges and the RCSL International Working Group for Comparative Studies of Legal Professions (she is also Chair of the WG's sub-group: Professional Identity and Ethics); she also belongs to several organisations seeking to influence policy (such as the HEA Race Education and Race Action Group).

As a result of the relevance of her research to policy she has frequently acted as a consultant; for instance, from 2013- by Sandra Yamate CEO The Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession (Chicago); from 2010- by the MOJ; Christopher Stephens (Chairman, Judicial Appointments Commission) and Jenny Rowe (CEO Supreme Court) (in her capacity as member of executive committee of Equal Justices Initiative (EJI)); by the Low Commission on Legal Aid 2012-3; by the Legal Services Board in connection with a literature review of quality of legal services and clients, Oct. 2011, and on the implementation of recommendations from [commissioned research into practice 2011](http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/what_we_do/consultations/open/pdf/diversity_consultation_publish.pdf) (http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/what_we_do/consultations/open/pdf/diversity_consultation_publish.pdf); by Opportunity Now and Race for Opportunity Diversity campaigns from [Business in the Community September 2011](http://bitcdiversity.org.uk/events/legalsectorspotlight.html) (<http://bitcdiversity.org.uk/events/legalsectorspotlight.html>); by Margaret Sentamu (Diversity Management and Recruitment Consultant) on *Diversity in the Retail Sector*, July 2011; by the Savile Group plc, Manchester, 2010-11 on *Diversity and Talent Management*; Ministry of Justice Constitution and Judiciary Division, and Advisory Panel on [Judicial Diversity](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110201125714/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/judicial-diversity-report.htm) (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110201125714/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/judicial-diversity-report.htm>) 2009-10; on *Enhancing Judicial Diversity*; by *Fair Access to the Professions Panel* (Alan Milburn, MP) 2009; by the "Equally Professional Network", EHRC, 2009.

Publications

Books and Published Reports

- (with Webley, L; Muzio, D; Tomlinson, J and Duff, L) [Diversity in the legal profession in England and Wales: a qualitative study of barriers and individual choices](http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/what_we_do/Research/Publications/pdf/lsb_diversity_in_the_legal_profession_final_rev.pdf) (http://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/what_we_do/Research/Publications/pdf/lsb_diversity_in_the_legal_profession_final_rev.pdf) (London, Legal Services Board, 2010; Reissued London University of Westminster Law Press 2013 ISBN: 978-0-9927330-0-1)
- (with Peter Sanderson) [Training and Regulating those providing Publicly Funded Legal Advice Services: a Case Study of Civil Provision](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110201125714/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/training-regulating-legal-advice.htm) (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110201125714/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/training-regulating-legal-advice.htm>) (London, Ministry of Justice, 2009)
- (with David Wall) *Legally Aided Clients and their Solicitor: qualitative perspectives on quality and Legal Aid*. 1999 (London RPPU, The Law Society)
- (with Peter Sanderson) *Gender, Choice and Commitment: Women Solicitors and the struggle for equal status*. 1998 (Aldershot, Dartmouth) ISBN 1 84014 454 8

Chapters in Books, Conference Proceedings and Reports

- 'Let History judge? Gender, race, class and performative identity: a study of women judges in England and Wales' in Schultz, U & Shaw, G (eds) *Gender and Judging* (Oxford, Hart Publishing 2013) pp 355-375, Paperback ISBN 9781841136400
- 'Socio-legal studies and the cultural practice of lawyering' in D. Feenan (ed) *Exploring the 'socio': socio-legal studies* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013) pp 181-202, ISBN: 9780230337183
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Colonising Law for the poor: reconfiguring legal advice in the new regulatory state' in V. Bryson & P. Fisher (eds) *Redefining Social Justice: New Labour Rhetoric and Reality* (Manchester, Manchester University Press 2011) pp 178-200, Paperback ISBN – 0-7190-8221-4; Hardback -0-7190-8220-7
- 'Discourses of diversity and merit and exclusionary practices: barriers to entry and progression' in L. Cooper & S. Walters (eds) *Critical perspectives on Lifelong Learning and Work* (Cape Town, Human Sciences Research Council 2009) pp 106-22, ISBN 978 - 0 - 7969 - 2283 - 0
- 'That obscure object of desire: sex equality and the legal profession' R. Hunter (ed) *Rethinking Equality Projects in Law: Feminist Challenges* (Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2008) pp 171-94, ISBN 9781841138398
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Legal Workers and paralegals – new avenues for services?' In *Legal Aid; a New Beginning?* (International Legal Aid Group (ILAG), Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, 2007) pp 445-64
- 'Acerca de las implicaciones sociales y politicas de la reforma del sistema de asistencia juridical en el Reino Unido' in H. Birgin & B. Kohen (eds) *Acceso a la Justicia como garantia de igualdad*, (Buenos Aires, Editorial Biblos colleccion, 2006) pp 83-108, ISBN 950-786-0620-4
- 'Becoming a lawyer: gender and the processes of professional socialization', in E. Sheehy & S. McIntyre (eds) *Calling for Change: Women, Law and the Legal Profession Ten Years after Touchstones for Change* (Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 2006) pp 159-77, ISBN 0-7766-0620-4
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Gender, Power and Law in Screwball Comedy' in S. Greenfield & S. Osborn (eds) *Law and Popular Culture* (London, Routledge, 2006) pp 200-20, ISBN 0-415-37647-5
- 'Gravy Train or Graveyard of Social Citizenship? Regulatory reform of Legal Aid', in *Legal Services, International Research Conference Proceedings* (London, Legal Services Research Centre, 2004)
- 'Can women lawyers differently? A perspective from the UK', in U. Schultz & G Shaw (eds) *Women in the World's Legal Profession, an international study* (Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2003) pp 191-224, ISBN 1 84113 320 5
- 'Costs and Benefits of Quality Assurance Mechanisms in the Delivery of Public Funded Legal Services: Some Qualitative Views', in *Legal Services, International Conference 2002, Research Conference Proceedings* (London, Legal Services Research Centre, 2002) pp 364-81
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Professionalism, Discrimination, Difference and Choice in Women's experience of Law Jobs' in P. Thomas (ed) *Discriminating Lawyers* (London: Cavendish, 2000) pp 155 – 82, ISBN 1 85941 603 9
- 'Access to Justice & quality: a bespoke service of the procedural approach' in *Legal Aid: a changing world, Proceedings Research Conference* (Legal Aid board Research Unit & UCL, 1999) pp 133 – 56
- 'The Gendering of the Professional Subject: commitment, choice & social closure in the Legal Profession' in C. McGlynn (ed.), *Legal Feminisms - Theory & Practice*, (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1998) pp 3-20, ISBN: 1855219271

- 'Criminal legal aid reforms and the restructuring of legal professionalism', in R. Young & D. Wall (eds.) *Access to Criminal Justice* (London: Blackstone Press Ltd 1996) pp 292-312, ISBN: 185431 5021
- 'Succeeding in the Legal Profession: Attitudinal Barriers to Female Success' *Conference Proceedings, Removing the Barriers: Legal Services and the Legal Profession*. (London: The Law Society, 1995) pp 82-88
- 'Women in a changing profession', in J. Shapland (ed.) *The Changing Shape of the Legal Profession. Sheffield (Proceedings of Inaugural Conference of Institute for the Study of the Legal Profession, Sheffield, 1994)* pp 37-58

Forthcoming Book Chapters

- "Citizenship and Access to Justice in the 'home of liberal democracy' in A. Kondakov (ed) *Socio Legal Studies in Russia* (2013/4)
- (with Louise Ashley) 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' in L. Empson; D. Muzio; J. Broschak & B. Hinings (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms* Oxford University Press (2014)
- 'The new "professionalism" in England and Wales: talent, diversity, and a legal precariat ' in S. Headworth; R. Nelson; R. Dinovitzer & D. Wilkins (eds) *Rhetoric and Reality* (2014)

Journal Articles_

- **"Diversity, Merit and the English judiciary: the lessons that can be learned from the reform of selection processes, a UK contribution (<http://www.urbanlawjournal.com/diversity-merit-and-the-english-judiciary/>)"**.40 *FORDHAM URB. L.J. CITY SQUARE* 94 (December 2013). pp. 94-107
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Social justice on the margins: the future of the not for profit sector as providers of legal advice in England and Wales' 2013 *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 35 (3) pp. 305-327
- (with Jenny Tomlinson, Daniel Muzio, Lisa Webley & Liz Duff) **'Structure, agency and career strategies of women and Black and Minority Ethnic individuals in the legal profession (<http://hum.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/06/0018726712460556>)'** *Human Relations* (in press)
- 'Minorities, Merit, and Misrecognition in the Globalized Profession', 2012 *Fordham Law Review* 80, pp 2482-2512
- 'The commercialisation of law and the enterprising legal practitioner: continuity and change' 2011 *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 18 (1-2), pp 73-108
- (with Francis, A) 'Access to legal work experience and its role in the (re)production of legal professional identity', 2009 *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 16 (1), pp 63-86
- 'Reflections on the reconfiguration of Access to Justice', 2008 *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 15 (3), pp 179-93
- "What are you doing here? You should be working in a hair salon or something.' Outsider status and professional socialization in the solicitors' profession', 2008 *Web Journal of Current Legal Issues*
- 'Researching and theorizing the processes of professional identity formation', 2007 *Journal of Law & Society*, 34 (2), pp 190-217
- "Gravy Train' or Graveyard of Social Citizenship? Some thoughts on the social and political implications of the reform of Legal Aid' (translated into Japanese) 2005 *Legal Review* (Japan) Summer, pp 117-47
- 'Some reflections on the Relationship between Citizenship, Access to Justice and the reform of Legal Aid', 2004 *Journal of Law & Society*, 31 (3), pp 345-6
- 'Shaping the size and composition of the profession', 2004 *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 11 (1 & 2), pp 67-80
- 'Women solicitors in a fractured profession: intersections of gender and professionalism in England and Wales' 2003 *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 10 (1), pp 213-234
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'Exploring the limits to the standardization of the expert knowledge of lawyers: quality and legal aid in the United Kingdom', 2002 *Syracuse Law Review*, 54 (4), pp 987-1016
- "I've lost the plot", an everyday story of legal aid lawyers', 2001 *Journal of Law and Society*, 28, pp. 335 - 60
- 'English Perspectives on quality: the client-led model - a third way', 2000 *University of British Columbia Law Review*, 33 (2), pp 491-518
- 'The implementation of quality initiatives and the New Public Management in the legal aid sector in England and Wales: bureaucratisation, stratification and surveillance' 1999 *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 6, pp 311 - 43
- (with Peter Sanderson) 'The legal labour market and training needs of women returners', 1997 *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 49 (1), pp 45-64.
- 'Managerialism and the legal professional: a new professional paradigm', 1995 *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 2(2/3), pp 159-185.
- 'The myth of feminisation: women and cultural change in the legal profession', 1994 *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 1 (1), pp.31-53.

