

Kaye Middleton Fillmore, 1941–2013



Jellinek Award-winning sociologist Kaye Middleton Fillmore died at her home in Northern California on 24 February 2013. A longstanding member of the international sociological and epidemiological alcohol research community, she will be greatly missed by many friends, colleagues and even, one may suspect, some of the worthy adversaries she crossed swords with over the years.

Kaye's contributions covered the full spectrum of social science research on alcohol, and she was adept at picking scientific issues with significant policy implications. Yet her orientation to those issues always reflected a 'let the chips fall where they may' attitude, no matter how controversial her work's policy implications might have been.

Many of Kaye's scores of research publications were jointly authored, attesting to much of her work's collaborative character. As principal investigator, Kaye generously offered younger researchers the lead in conducting analyses and preparing papers, also affording them first authorship placement. Many of Kaye's publications were singly authored as well, and these included numerous memorably provocative analyses and thought pieces. Kaye Fillmore's work ethic, her dogged commitment to bringing her research projects to fruition, her spirited senses of fair play and of the sanctity of science's ideals combined to give her the redoubtable reputation and the high esteem of her international research collegium.

Kaye Fillmore was perhaps best known for her contributions to longitudinal research on drinking practices and problems. She got an early start on this kind of research. Her dissertation, completed at Rutgers University in 1977, followed-up a subsample of Straus and Bacon's classic *Drinking in College* [1] study. Kaye's earliest papers on this long-term follow-up [2,3] offered first glimpses of the changeability and patterning in drinking and problems between the college years and middle age. As Selden D. Bacon's last graduate student, she carried forward his thought and disciplinary perspective into a new generation of researchers.

In 1978, Kaye was recruited to Berkeley's Social (later, Alcohol) Research Group (ARG). She remained there for 10 years, during which time she successfully carried out numerous research projects and soaked in the work and thought of her new set of colleagues. Kaye was equally adept at producing new science and exercising her keen interest in the historical context and social construction of scientific thought in the alcohol studies domain. For example, her essay 'When angels fall . . .': Women's drinking as cultural preoccupation and as a reality' [4] became a classic—combining survey analysis, social trends, historical assessment and the sociology of scientific knowledge into a feminist analysis. Not dissimilarly, a paper on workplace alcohol problems took a long historical view of the contrasting temperance movement and alcoholism movement orientations to the issue. 'Room argues', she wrote therein, 'that much of social science research in the alcohol field has served to reinforce, rather than test, existing ideologies. Nowhere is this more true than in the occupational alcoholism literature' [[5], p. 57–58]. In yet another pathbreaking paper, Kaye explored the social victim's vantage point in alcohol survey research [6]. This seminal analysis lighted the way toward a more balanced scientific view of the burden imposed by alcohol problems on both the self and on other.

Longitudinal research remained the bread-and-butter enterprise that provided the space for her other conceptual, historical, and sociological interests and writings. Kaye left ARG in 1988 and joined the University of California, San Francisco. There, her work on the Collaborative Alcohol-Related Longitudinal Project produced multiple kinds of scientific outputs. One analysis of the relative contributions of genetics and social environment to alcohol problems kicked off a nature–nurture controversy within alcohol studies. A byproduct of the skirmish was a joint call, issued by Kaye and geneticist Soren Sigvardsson, for better understanding and more

communication between biological and social alcohol science. Another focus lay on the subject of spontaneous remission in alcohol problems. True to form, Kaye, years later, also offered a contextual analysis of natural remission research in light of the rise of the public health model and other factors shaping contemporary scientific inquiry on that topic [7].

In 1991, Kaye and the collaborative longitudinal team published five articles on the meta-analysis of cross-national studies in a single issue of *Addiction*. The late Griffith Edwards' introduction to this series of papers sounded both a cautious and an optimistic note. 'All those background worries about the validity and reliability of survey methods (only half the alcohol consumed admitted to the questioner on the doorstep)', he wrote,

are likely to be compounded and multiplied when one moves on from analysis to meta-analysis. But what is meanwhile indisputable is that this field of scholarship will benefit from the challenge and stimulation set by the project on which Kaye Fillmore and her colleagues now report. Their work deserves to be carefully read and widely debated [[8], p. 1190]

Kaye's leadership of the international collaborative longitudinal study encouraged the growth of additional global collaborations. For example, she contributed her team's expertise in methods of combining disparate measures from separate countries' alcohol surveys to the fledging GENACIS project, which, over 20 years, developed into a multinational collaboration of 40 countries on 6 continents [9].

In the mid-1990s Kaye also made her presence felt in the emerging debate over the alcohol industry's contested role in the support of alcohol science. She forcefully argued that value-free alcohol science, regardless of the funding source, was an illusion, buttressing her case with examples of extra-scientific influence from the modern history of alcohol science [10]. In the late 1990s, Kaye redirected her research team's attention to the beverage-specific character of the aggregate relationship between per capita alcohol consumption and the cirrhosis mortality rate, finding that cirrhosis mortality in the USA comported much more closely with per capita spirits consumption than with total alcohol, beer consumption or wine consumption. This finding resulted in numerous spin-offs and subsequent publications for Kaye and her team, including one offering a critical re-examination of the well-known dip in cirrhosis mortality observed in wartime Paris during the German occupation [11].

In 1999, Kaye won the Jellinek Memorial Award. The award's citation noted Kaye's 'contribution to basic understanding about the life course of drinking and of

alcohol problems in a multinational context'. Soon after, Kaye published a 'brief editorial' in *Addiction* questioning the prevailing scientific orthodoxy that light or moderate alcohol consumption offered a protective effect with respect to 'premature death in general and cardiovascular disease in particular'. [12] Inspired by A.G. Shaper's work [13], Kaye's subsequent meta-analysis on this issue [14] concluded that the well-known protective effect attributed to light drinkers was significantly eroded, perhaps even eliminated, among studies that avoided misclassification of ex-drinkers into the abstainer reference group. Kaye continued a spirited research partnership with Tim Stockwell (Canada) and Tanya Chikritzhs (Australia) that began before the 2006 paper's publication and stretched over the last 10 years of her career. In 2009, Kaye joined the Institute for Scientific Analysis in San Francisco. The same year, Kaye was awarded a National Institutes of Health Challenge Grant, one of only 840 scientists to secure these American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grants among 200 000 applicants.

A regular attendee at the Kettil Bruun Society's annual and thematic meetings, Kaye established many long-lasting friendships in the international alcohol epidemiology community. Kaye leaves behind her spouse, Richard 'Dick' Fillmore, who turned his life over to her care in the final weeks of her life, and two sons, Matthew Fillmore and Steven Fillmore. Kaye also leaves behind Ron Lawson, longtime business partner and friend. She was rendered mute by a serious stroke in the last few weeks of her life, yet Kaye Middleton Fillmore's voice will continue to be heard in the science and sociology to which she devoted her long career and her remarkable strength.

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