



Global Transformations

Newsletter of the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University

Sociology Department - Year in Review

FIRST JOHN AND RUTH USEEM ENDOWMENT AWARDED



Svetla Dimitrova

One of the most exciting Departmental accomplishments in 2012 was the successful establishment of an endowment that recognizes the contributions and legacy of former department faculty **John and Ruth Useem**. More than fifty former students, colleagues and family members made contributions to the endowment. Dr. Ann Cottrell, who received her Ph.D. from MSU in 1970 and who is a Professor Emerita at San Diego State University, played a crucial leadership role in moving the endowment forward by giving her own gift and encouraging others to do so. The Department was pleased to host Dr. Cottrell last year when she gave an outstanding presentation on "John and Ruth Hill Useem: The Sociologists and their Third Culture Legacy."

Subsequently, the department was able to award the first Useem Award to Ph.D. candidate Svetla Dimitrova. The award will enable Ms. Dimitrova to collect data for her Ph.D. dissertation. As Ms. Dimitrova noted:

"I am honored to be the first recipient of the John and Ruth Useem Endowment Award. With this award I plan to develop my dissertation proposal assessing the utility of Peace Corps as

a lens for the study of development more broadly and the postsocialist transformation process in Bulgaria more narrowly. My dissertation will investigate the various ways through which the cross-cultural people-to-people Peace Corps agency of volunteers, staff and local partners in Bulgaria in the 1991 to 2012 period has created knowledge and practice of development at the international, national and community level."

The second Useem Endowment Award will be made during the Spring 2013 semester.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ➔ Endowment Awarded
- ➔ Gelbard Wins
- ➔ Message from the Chair
- ➔ Faculty Retirements
- ➔ Graduate Collective
- ➔ Spotlight
- ➔ Department News
- ➔ In the News
- ➔ USA Attended MSA

GELBARD WINS TIAA-CREF RUTH SIMMS HAMILTON FELLOWSHIP



Alexandra P. Gelbard

The Ruth Simms Hamilton Fellowship honors the memory and work of former Sociology Professor **Ruth Simms Hamilton** and supports cutting-edge, graduate-level research that furthers the study of African Diaspora. The Sociology Department is honored to announce that one of this year's recipients is **Alexandra P. Gelbard**. Ms. Gelbard is a Ph.D. candidate who is examining the social function of music within African Diaspora communities. Her dissertation focuses on conga as it is played in Santiago de Cuba, the largest city in the Oriente portion of Cuba, and the neighborhood of Los Hoyos, defined as an "imagined community" of African descendants who practice distinctive cultural and religious traditions. This research engages Ruth Simms Hamilton's framework for studying the African Diaspora. Alexandra was honored at a reception hosted by the MSU Graduate School in March, 2013.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Michigan State University

509 E. Circle Drive, Room 316 Berkey Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1111
College of Social Science
517-355-6640 www.sociology.msu.edu



Raymond Jussaume

Message from the Chair

Greetings to all our Alumni and Friends!

The last 18 months have passed so much more quickly than I had anticipated! There has been so much to learn about our great department and University. One recent highlight was the opportunity to travel with several of our undergraduate majors to attend the Michigan Sociological Society meetings in Grand Rapids. You would be proud to see our students at such a gathering.

The Sociology Department is undergoing change as it works with President Simon and the rest of MSU to be "Bolder by Design." Some of the exciting news that we have to report upon in this newsletter include the establishment of the John and Ruth Useem Endowment Award, the hiring of a new Undergraduate Program Coordinator, the retirement of several dedicated faculty and the promotion of two others.

Traditionally, this newsletter has focused on sharing with you all that is happening in our department, but in the future I would like to include news on some of you. Please consider sharing with us a story about what you are up to. Send your story to me (jussaume@msu.edu) or John Duda (dudaj@msu.edu). We also have a request at the end of this newsletter for your contact information so that we can learn more from your experiences to build an even better Sociology Department for our current and future students.

Please enjoy this latest edition of our newsletter and do communicate with us soon and often.

Raymond Jussaume, Professor and Chair

FACULTY RETIREMENTS

A major change took place in the Department of Sociology with the retirement of four of its most eminent faculty. At the end of the spring 2012, a grand retirement reception was held for Drs. Janet Bokemeier, Stan Kaplowitz, Thomas Connor and Harry Perlstadt, who together contributed more than 150 years of service to MSU and the Department of Sociology.

Dr. Janet Bokemeier joined MSU in 1990. At MSU, Dr. Bokemeier served as Director of the Evaluation Division of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, as Associate Director of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, as Co-Director of the MSU Family and Community Together Coalition (FACT), and as Chair of the Sociology Department from 2004 to 2010. She was presented with the MSU Distinguished Faculty Award in 1996, and the College of Social Science Faculty Initiative Award in 1995 and 1996. Dr. Bokemeier's research and teaching interests have been focused on rural families and communities, family quality, and the intersection of work, family and gender issues.

Dr. Stan Kaplowitz joined the Department of Sociology at MSU in 1971. He became Full Professor in 1984, and has served as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Communication since 1989. Dr. Kaplowitz is a leading expert in the field of Social Psychology, with a special emphasis on attitudes, belief measurement, and

communication. Over the years, he taught such classes as Statistics, Experimental Methods, Political Sociology, and the Social Psychology of Health and Well-Being. His research has included studies on feeding practices for children, understanding lead poisoning risks, communication between physicians and cancer patients and energy conservation.

Dr. Thomas Connor began his career with the MSU Department of Sociology in 1966 and served as Department Chair from 1999 to 2003. Dr. Connor has been a specialist in interpersonal behavior, the social psychology of well-being and health, mathematical sociology and research methods. His interests include the study of intimate partner violence, measurement theory and practice, and stratification systems in small face-to-face groups, and he taught classes on the Sociology of the Family, Social Psychology, Political Sociology and Graduate Methods.

During his career which began at MSU in 1968, **Dr. Harry Perlstadt** served as director of the Program in Bioethics, Humanities and Society. Dr. Perlstadt's areas of interest are medical sociology, occupations and organizations, applied sociology and human research protections/ethics. He has evaluated health programs and initiatives, and was a founder and first chair of the Commission on Applied and Clinical Sociology.

To keep up with all of the exciting research that is being done by our faculty and students, please visit our website at www.sociology.msu.edu

THE SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE COLLECTIVE

The Sociology Collective's main focus this year is to engage with the Department as it prepares for its upcoming External Review. This includes integrating graduate student perspectives into the department self-study and conducting the second annual sociology graduate student survey. We are using this time to facilitate dialogue between graduate students, faculty, and administration regarding the current and future vision of the graduate program. One focal point is the current mentoring needs of graduate students. We are also encouraging graduate student co-mentoring in the department, and we are encouraging students to promote their work and take ownership of their space by posting publications, presentation titles, and other projects in and around the TA office. Also, Department Chair Ray Jussaume hosted a "drinks with the chair" night out.

NEW FACE IN THE DEPARTMENT



Elyse Packard

Elyse Packard is our new Undergraduate Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor. Elyse studied Sociology as an undergrad at Central Michigan University and finished her Masters Degree at CMU in Professional Counseling in May 2012. Elyse helps our undergraduate

students plan their courses, explore minors, specializations, internships and post-graduate plans. Elyse is also the faculty advisor to the Undergraduate Sociology Association, which has participated in multiple volunteer events this year. Elyse (Packard@msu.edu) would love to hear from alumni regarding suggestions for improving the undergraduate program, including internship and other opportunities for students.

SPOTLIGHT

Graduate Student

Dilshani Sarathchandra is a PhD candidate whose research focuses on Science and Technology Studies and Risk Communication. Currently Dilshani is working on her dissertation titled "University Bio-Scientists Risk Epistemologies and Research Choices." Her research explores three distinct aspects of risk decisions of university bio-scientists; 1) ways in which scientists conceptualize risk, 2) effects of demographic and contextual factors on scientists' risk perceptions, and 3) associations between risk perceptions and research choices among scientists. In the future, Dilshani hopes to expand this research to explore nuances of risk perceptions among public and private sector scientists as well as scientists in physical, chemical, and engineering fields.



Dilshani Sarathchandra

Undergraduate Student

Undergraduate Sociology Major **Brette Fischer** recently had the opportunity to interview city officials and others making decisions about public art in New Orleans and Montreal. In Brette's own words:

"Before this research, I wasn't aware how extensive the process is of maintaining new and interesting pieces of art in a city. Presenting my research at the Undergraduate Research and Art Fair at Michigan State University and at the North Central Sociological Association meetings in Pittsburgh were great experiences in many ways. Graffiti is often thought of as a controversial topic, so it was great to see people interested in the topic, open to new perspectives on graffiti, and engaging in conversation after the presentations. Doing this research has led me to think about many more concepts I would like to study and conduct research sometime in the future."



Brette Fischer

To help us reduce costs and improve communication with alumni and friends, we would be grateful if you would fill out and send us the attached card or e-mail us the information at contact@sociology.msu.edu.

NAME		
E-MAIL		
HOME ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
TITLE		
BUSINESS NAME		
BUSINESS ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
PREFERRED TELEPHONE		
DEGREE	YEAR OF GRADUATION	

Register me for e-mail updates.

News (personal and professional milestones, recent accomplishments and recognition)

Please mail completed card, fax: 517-432-2856 or email: contact@sociology.msu.edu

For information on giving to the MSU Department of Sociology, please visit the alumni page on our website www.sociology.msu.edu or call Nick McLaren toll free at (866) 761-4199.

Thank you for saving us the cost of postage

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology
College of Social Science
509 E. Circle Drive
Room 316 Berkey Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1111

Undergraduate Professional Development Endowed Fund

The Department of Sociology is committed to creating an endowed Undergraduate Professional Development Fund which will enable the department to provide support to our undergraduate students in the form of scholarships, conferences, study abroad, and research opportunities. As of this writing, just over \$5,000 has been raised toward a goal of \$30,000. The establishment of this fund is a top department priority. We are asking you to join us in this effort by making a gift in support of this endowment. If you are interested in doing so, call Nick McLaren toll free at 866-761-4199 or view instructions on the back of this card to make your gift online today. Thank you!

YOU CAN DONATE TO OUR DEPARTMENT ONLINE.

www.socialscience.msu.edu/alumni/giving.html

- Scroll down and click on make an online gift
- Under search for a fund type in Sociology
- Box will drop down with list of funds
- Click on fund of your choice
- Complete donation

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



IN THE NEWS

MSU SOCIOLOGISTS

Dr. Hui Liu's research on same-sex marriage and health has been receiving national attention and recognition in media outlets such as Time, US News and World Report, NBC News and the LA Times. Dr. Liu's recent study, co-authored by Corinne Reczek and Dustin Brown and appearing in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, looked at how cohabiting men and women described their health in comparison to different-sex married, different-sex cohabiting, unpartnered divorced, widowed, and never-married counterparts. "When we controlled for socioeconomic status, the odds of reporting poor or fair health were about 61 percent higher for same-sex cohabiting men than for men in heterosexual marriages. And the odds of reporting poor or fair health were about 46 percent higher for same-sex cohabiting women than for women in heterosexual marriages," said Dr. Liu.

Dr. Soma Chaudhuri was recently interviewed by Al-Jazeera English service as part of a feature documentary on witch hunts in India. Dr. Chaudhuri spent seven months studying witch hunts in her native India and discovered that the economic self-help groups have made it part of their agenda to defend their fellow plantation workers against the hunts. Witch hunts, she explains, are fueled by the tribal workers' belief in the existence of witches and the desperate need of this population to make sense of rampant diseases in villages. The entire documentary can be viewed by visiting: www.aljazeera.com and searching for "a curse in the family".

ALUMNI

Dr. Teri Swezey (PhD 2004) recently returned to Chapel Hill, NC after walking and riding her bicycle 2,255 miles from Wrightsville Beach, NC to Flagstaff, AZ on behalf of vulnerable elderly and their caregivers as part of SOAR Feat 2012.

Promotions



In 2012 the department celebrated the promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of **Drs. Zhenmei Zhang** and **Sandra Marquart-Pyatt**. Drs. Zhang and Marquart-Pyatt are part of an impressive cohort of young scholars who will be the foundation of the department's academic excellence for years to come.

Prior to joining MSU's Sociology Department in 2006, Dr. Zhang was an assistant professor at Bowling Green State University. Her research interests are in the sociology of aging, social demography, and family sociology. Dr. Zhang has studied the effects of social relationships on mental and physical health, and the role of gender in moderating the impact of social relationships on health. Dr. Zhang is also examining health inequalities in China. Some of the classes that Dr. Zhang teaches are Family and Society, Basic Demographic Techniques, Contemporary Sociological Research on the Family, and Demography and Public Health.

Dr. Sandra Marquart-Pyatt arrived at Michigan State University in 2009 from Utah State University, where she had been an Assistant Professor of Sociology. Her primary intellectual interests relate to the study of politics and human-environment interactions. She has conducted extensive cross-national research on the political attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of individuals shape macro level outcomes pertaining to key environmental and political problems. Dr. Marquart-Pyatt has been teaching Political Sociology, Multi-Equation Quantitative Methods, and Global Environmental Change.

Undergraduate Sociology Association (USA) attended Michigan Sociological Association (MSA) Conference

This past October, the USA traveled to Calvin College for a conference of the Michigan Sociological Association (MSA). One member, **Amy Nezamzadeh**, presented a paper she wrote entitled Food Insecurity Among Refugees in America.

The USA works with MSU Sociology graduate students, TAs and faculty to explore, explain, and discuss our social world, and is dedicated to serving the East Lansing community in a

positive way. USA students meet to learn about graduate school, intellectual scholarship, and career opportunities, and offer services on campus and in the communities surrounding East Lansing communities. USA members have also volunteered at the MSU Food Bank, organizing and distributing food to families in need, and also have worked at Haven House, a local homeless shelter.