I’m very excited about this second annual edition of the UNLV Sociology Newsletter. It gives us a chance to connect with our colleagues, alumni, and friends and to describe our wide ranging contributions to the college, university, profession, and community. As chair, I get to see up close all the important work that we do as a department and I remain deeply impressed with the intellectual seriousness and practical importance of our research and teaching. I’m honored and grateful to work with such a smart, congenial, and conscientious group of people.

In the following pages you’ll see evidence of our department’s rich scholarship and stellar teaching. Some of our accomplishments are highlighted by faculty research and teaching awards from our professional associations, as well as some of UNLV’s highest accolades. Our graduate students also have an impressive record on the awards front, garnering top university honors and scholarship support for their hard work. Equally impressive to me is our faculty and graduate students’ prolific public sociology, which takes the form of media interviews, essays and blogs, report writing, and consultations. These activities demonstrate the timely and insightful quality of our research on today’s major public issues.

There’s been an invigorating liveliness in the department throughout the past year. Part of this energy has come from our outstanding brown bag lecture series that brought scholars from around the world to tell us about their research. We also held another very successful department open house that drew more than 200 undergraduate students together with our faculty and graduate students to build camaraderie and draw new recruits to our major. And, the growing SLICES program brought an increasing number of students into the department, as well as many faculty and administrators asking about this new and exciting learning experience.

On personnel matters, I am very happy to report that we have added to our ranks this year. We were fortunate to hire Dr. Kerie Francis as an Assistant Professor-in-Residence. Kerie brings a wealth of teaching experience. She has stepped in to lead our required classical theory courses, created a popular Culture and Politics of Reproduction course, and she draws students to our major through her very popular introductory sociology courses. Also, our colleague and alumnus, Dr. Bo Bernhard, Executive Director of the International Gaming Institute was named the Philip Satre Chair of Gaming Studies at UNR. Yes, you read that correctly – UNR. But don’t worry, Bo is not leaving UNLV. His position bridges UNLV and UNR and he’s planning collaborative projects in gaming studies between the two schools. This is quite a coup, but we sort of expect the unexpected from Bo these days.

There’s a lot of vital but under-acknowledged daily work needed to keep turning the department’s wheels. I deeply appreciate Pam Weiss and Connie Dye’s ability to manage our office so well. I’m also deeply indebted to our Executive Committee—Dr. Barb Brents, Dr. Christie Batson, and Dr. Simon Gottschalk—for their hard work and invaluable advice during the year. Likewise, our graduate representatives—Rachel MacFarlane and Jennifer Stevens—gave vital insight into graduate student needs. As I move into my second term as chair, I look forward to working with UNLV’s new College of Liberal Arts Dean, Chris Heavey to build on Sociology’s already solid foundation.

Finally, a great big thanks to Dr. Georgiann Davis for editing our newsletter. She somehow finds the time to put this publication together in the midst of all her other important activities. We are all grateful for it.

Happy reading!

Robert
Assistant Professor Wins Teaching Award

Ranita Ray received the 2015 UNLV William Morris Award for Excellence in Teaching for her outstanding undergraduate and graduate teaching and mentorship.

Teaching and Service Learning Extraordinaire

Anna Smedley-López received the 2015 Faculty-in-Residence/Lecturer Award for Excellence in Teaching for her inspirational undergraduate teaching and mentorship. In addition to the Social Action Grant awarded by Sociologists for Women in Society, she also received support from the Nevada Regents Service Program to fund two student assistants to work under guidance with SLICES (Service Learning Initiative for Community Engagement in Sociology).

Urban Sociologist Honored by SSSI

Michael Borer received the 2015 Early-in-Career Award from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. He also delivered the 2015 George Hébert Mead Lecture during the annual convention of National Communication Association. His lecture was titled “Sensuous Knowledge and the Rise of Aesthetic Urbanism.”

An Award Winning Teacher

After receiving the prestigious UNLV Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award and the Alex G. and Faye Spanos Distinguished Teaching Award last year, Andrew Spivak received the 2016 Regents’ Teaching Award for his exceptional teaching and mentorship at UNLV.

Elected to the Publications Committee

Robert Futrell was elected to the publications committee of the Pacific Sociological Association.

Award Winning Public Sociology Author

Georgiann Davis received the 2016 Donald Light Award for the Applied or Public Practice of Medical Sociology from the Medical Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association for her new book Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis. She also received the 2015 Public Sociology Alumni award from the University of Illinois at Chicago where she completed her PhD in 2011. She was also elected to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer for the ASA Sexualities Section Council.

Welcome New Faculty

Kerie Frances (PhD 2015, University of Nevada, Las Vegas) officially joined our department in Fall 2016 as an Assistant Professor-in-Residence.
Congratulations Students!

Outstanding SOC Senior
Regina Shivers
Blaine Pennock

Outstanding SOC Junior
Cassidy Lopez
Danielle Fazio

Outstanding SOC Service Award
Mariana Sarmiento-Hernandez

Outstanding MA Student
Alex Simmons

Outstanding Graduate Student Paper
Nicole Jenkins

Outstanding PhD Student & James Frey Grad Research Scholarship
Jason Scott

Graduate Student Teaching Award
Suzanne Becker

Graduate Student Public SOC Award
Andrea Dassopulos
Sarah St. John
Christina Parreira

Dr. Barb Brents, Director of Graduate Studies, pictured above and to the left with graduate student award winners. Dr. Christie Batson, Director of Undergraduate Studies, pictured above and to the right with undergraduate student award winners. Pictured below are the new AKD (Sociology Honor Society) undergraduate and graduate student inductees.
Jennifer Whitmer (PhD, 2015) accepted a tenure track position at California State University, Stanislaus.

Marko Salvaggio (PhD, Sept. 2016) accepted a tenure track position at Goucher College. He will defend his dissertation on September 9, 2016.

Tyler Schaffer (PhD, 2016) defended his dissertation titled, “Growing Together? Community, Culture, and Gardening in Downtown Las Vegas.” He will be joining California State University, Stanislaus as a tenure track faculty member fall 2016.

Chris Conner (PhD, 2015) defended his dissertation. He currently holds a tenure track position at Washburn University. He is pictured to the left with his advisor, Dr. David Dickens.

Jennifer Heineman (PhD, 2016) defended her dissertation titled “Schoolgirls: Embodiment Practices Among Current and Former Sex Workers in Academia.” She’s currently teaching at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.
Alessandra Lanti received the Patricia Sastaunik Scholarship Award. She also obtained her Clinical Professional Counseling Intern license. She will begin counseling folks at Gender Justice Nevada, focusing on sex positive, empowerment based therapy for sex workers. She will also be doing sexual therapy in general.

In addition to a number of DOS awards, Jason Scott was awarded the 2016 COLA Dean’s Grant Award, the 2016-17 Patricia Sastaunik Scholarship, the 2016 Office of International Programs Study Abroad Scholarship, and second place in the GPSA Outstanding Presentation Award in the Social Science GPSA Research Forum.

Many graduate students passed their comprehensives exams, including Genevieve Minter (left) who passed her exam in environmental sociology and Erick B. López (right) who passed his exam in race and ethnicity.

Denise Cook received the 2015 Education Debt Reduction Scholarship, with a scholarship award of $10,000 from the Golden Key International Honour Society. She also was recognized as a Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar (Spring 2016).

Nicholas Baxter received a UNLV Foundation President’s Graduate Research Fellowship. This fellowship gives Nick $25,000 and one year for dissertation work.

Valarie Burke received Administrative Faculty of the Year Award at UNLV, a NACADA Region 9 Excellence in Advising Administrative Award, and was featured in the Chapter Officer Volunteer Spotlight for Phi Kappa Phi.

Many of our graduate students presented at conferences this past academic year. Pictured below from left to right are just a few of the students who presented: Maddie Evans, Josiah Kidwell, Nickie Jenkins, Alexander Simmons, Marta Soligo, and Jennifer Reed.

Congratulations Grad Students!
Hot off the press!
Check out these new publications by UNLV sociology faculty.

Erick López and Takashi Yamashita published “Acculturation, Income and Vegetable Consumption Behaviors Among Latino Adults in the US: A Mediation Analysis with the Bootstrapping Technique” in *The Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

Takashi Yamashita published a co-authored paper with Erick López, Jennifer Stevens, and others titled “Public Health Perspectives on Health Literacy in Older Populations” in *Health Literacy Among Older Adults*.


Valarie Burke and co-authors published “Staff Members’ Perceptions of Student Veterans’ Transition at a Public Two-Year and Four Year Institution” in *Educational Research: Theory & Practice*.


Ranita Ray and Georgiann Davis published their co-authored paper, “Pharmacists Can’t Administer Opportunity: The Role of Neuroenhancers in Educational Inequalities” in the *American Journal of Bioethics*.

Ranita Ray published her article “Exchange and Intimacy in the Inner City: Rethinking Kinship Ties of the Urban Poor” in *the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.


David Dickens published “Social Marking in Memory Entrepreneurship: The Battle Over Zapata’s Legacy” in *Qualitative Sociology Review* with alumnus Tyler Schaler.
The 2015 UNLV Sociology Open House

Students across campus stopped by the department during the 2015 Sociology Open House to learn more about sociology while enjoying pizza!

Stay tuned for the 2016 Sociology Open House!
Service Learning Initiative for Community Engagement in Sociology

Supported by a Social Action Grant from Sociologists for Women in Society and the Nevada Regents Service Program, *SLICES* is an academically rigorous, cross-discipline, community based, leadership and knowledge project. Spending more than a year in the program, students learn about the experiences of different racial and ethnic groups. They engage in key sociological texts, scholarly and popular texts from the communities they are learning about, and the partner with local community organizations to complete a community based research project. They also learn about and practice applying a social change model of leadership. *SLICES* is led by Dr. Anna Smedley-López.

2016 Las Vegas Community Partners:
- Las Vegas Chapter of the National Association of 100 Black Women
- Immigrants Justice Initiative (IJI)
- Native Youth Outreach and Sierra Club (a partnership for the Gold Butte Initiative)
- UNLV Community Based Initiative (CBI)

UNLV Partners:
- Student Engagement and Diversity (Office of Service-Learning and Leadership and Civic Engagement Minor)
- Sociology Liaison Librarian
- Office of Undergraduate Research
- Career Services
Barb Brents made substantial public contributions this year. In addition to being interviewed for the *New York Magazine* cover story “Is Prostitution Just Another Job?” she was quoted in numerous *Las Vegas Review Journal* articles, offered insight to CNN in an article titled “Nevada Brothels: Things to Know in Wake of Lamar Odom’s Collapse” as well as *Time* magazine in their piece “Nevada’s Struggling Brothels in Spotlight After Lamar Odom Incident.” She also appeared on *Nevada Public Radio* in a segment titled “Selling Sex: Studying Nevada’s Legal and Illegal Sex Industry.”

Christina Parreira was quoted in The Guardian in an article titled, “Survival of the Freakiest: How Some of Nevada’s Brothels are Staying Afloat.” She was also a guest on KNPR’s segment “Selling Sex: Studying Nevada’s Legal and Illegal Sex Industry” as well as KPVM TV where she discussed experiences working in a legal brothel.

Georgiann Davis appeared on the *Dr. Phil Show* to discuss intersex with parents of an intersex child. She also was quoted in The Daily Tar Heel in an article titled, “Intersex Conditions Pose Unique Challenges for UNC, Duke Doctors.” Her work was also mentioned in an NPR piece titled, “What Does It Mean To Be Intersex?”, as well as in a BuzzFeed article titled “Born In Between: Should Doctors Operate On Intersex Babies?”

Erick B López appeared in videos discussing the important of diversity in higher education in Nevada. These videos include Nevada System of Higher Education Summit Video 1 & 2, 2015.

Marta Soligo co-authored an article with Andrea Paleni titled “AltoBrembo: Discovering the Culture of the Mountain” on sustainable tourism and local communities on the 14 AM report of United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Robert Futrell was featured in *The New Yorker* in the essay “San Bernadino and the Mechanics of a Double Life.” He was also featured on Inside Charlottesville on the segment “Tragic and Racially Motivated Mass Killing in Charleston, South Carolina.” He was also featured on Police Promoting Unity, KCEP 99.1 in a segment titled “Racism and Law Enforcement.”

Christie Batson was interviewed by the Las Vegas Review-Journal in an article titled, “Ethiopian Community Evolved in Las Vegas Over Last Decades.”

Alessandra Lanti’s essay “How Is Midlife Treating You?” was excerpted in Barbara Bradley Hagerty’s—correspondent for NPR and the *New York Times* bestselling author—new book *Life Reimagined: The Science, Art, and Opportunity of Midlife*. She will also read the essay on NPR during her radio series on Midlife.

David Dickens hosted and delivered an informal talk on Las Vegas to a group of Urban Planning Scholars (faculty and students) from the University of Toronto who were conducting research on Las Vegas.

Michael Borer was quoted in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* in an article titled, “Watching Buildings Fall on the Strip Another Excuse to Party.”

Dmitri Shalin published “Remembering Sherri Cavan, 1938–2016” for the *UNLV Center for Democratic Culture*. 
UNLV Sociology Snapshots

(below) Undergraduate students describe their internship experiences at the departments undergraduate research symposium. From left to right: Jessica Jose, Claudia Chiang-Lopez, Patricia Haddad, Elizabeth Robinson, and Francis Lauritzen.

(below) Nickie Jenkins, Dr. Ranita Ray, Dr. Georgiann Davis, and Maddie Evans celebrate the end a great academic year!

(above) Dr. Christie Batson and her research team conducted a four-day data collection event in the Sherman Gardens Housing Project.

(left) Dr. Michael Ian Borer, with his newly minted PhD Student Dr. Tyler Schaffer!

(below) Faculty selfie at the December 2015 commencement ceremony.

(left) Dr. Christie Batson and (her daughter) with several students volunteers at the Shield of Hope and LVMPD South Central Area Command Christmas Event.
Nicole Jenkins celebrates her Graduate Student Paper Award with her advisor, Dr. Ranita Ray.

Jason Scott celebrates his outstanding PhD Award with his advisor, Dr. Barb Brents.

A handful of sociology faculty take a break from the Pacific Sociological Association meetings to enjoy dinner together.

Dr. Christie Batson and members from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority during a two-day DOJ workshop in Portland on “Community Collaboration and Contemporary Community Policing.”

Undergraduate student Claudia Chiang-Lopez presenting her research on the Latino Youth Leadership Conference at the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association held in Oakland.
Dr. Robert Futrell stands proud alongside Dean Dr. Chris Hudgins and Associate Dean Dr. Jennifer Kean during the COLA Honors Convocation where SOC graduate student award winners Ray MacFarlane and Jason Scott were recognized.

(above) Super sharp students share college success strategies with first semester freshmen in Dr. Smedley-López’s First Year Seminar.

(below) Newly minted Dr. Chris Conner celebrates with his dissertation committee after a fabulous defense.

(below) Dr. Barb Brents and Christina Parreira presenting their work at the Association of American Geographers conference while alumna Dr. Jennifer Heineman offers listening support.

(left) Undergraduate student Brittney Ballestersos presenting “Reporting Sex Work in Sin City: Depictions of Prostitution in the Las Vegas Print Media.”
Dr. Christie Batson was invited by the Desert Research Institute to moderate a panel on how to improve cultural inclusion in our informal education institutions (National Parks, State Parks, Science Centers, Museums, etc.) The panel had representatives from the Urban and Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Paiute Tribe of Las Vegas.

The Sociology Department wouldn’t function without administrative assistance from Connie Dye (left) and Pam Weiss (right). Mrs. Dye recently celebrated her 15th year university anniversary, and although not new to the university, Mrs. Weiss joined our department last Fall. We are fortunate to have them in our department!

This year Dr. Ranita Ray organized a very successful brown bag speaker series for the Department of Sociology! The series featured speakers from all around the world covering topics from white supremacy to immigration. Pictured below from left to right is alumnus Dr. Pete Simi (PhD, 2003, University of Nevada, Las Vegas) and Dr. Pallavi Banerjee (PhD, 2012, University of Illinois at Chicago). This year’s lineup promises to be another great year filled with amazing speakers. Follow the Department of Sociology on Facebook to never miss a talk!
In May, Dr. Michael Ian Borer and his wife Katrina welcomed their second son, Julian Dean Borer.

Dr. Andrew Spivak and his wife Aurelia had their first child, Ian, who just turned six-months old in June.

Valarie Burke, and family, celebrated the birth of their first child, Jace.

Penny, a rescued French Bulldog, poses with Contesting Intersex, her pet parent’s (Dr. Georgiann Davis) new book!

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