Message from the Chair, Dr. Robert Futrell

This has been a very exciting year for UNLV Sociology. Throughout this third annual UNLV Sociology Newsletter, you will see outstanding and wide-ranging faculty, staff, and student accomplishments. Our collective activities demonstrate steadfast commitment to educating students, advancing sociological research, and serving our community. I remain more impressed than ever with the intellectual seriousness and practical importance demonstrated by all our activities. I also feel very honored and grateful to work with such a smart, congenial, and conscientious group of people.

We’ve had a stellar (and very busy) year on the hiring front. I am very pleased to say that we are adding four exceptionally talented faculty members to our department. Our first search brought us two outstanding scholars: Dr. Courtney Carter (Ph.D. Univ. of Illinois-Chicago) focuses on racial construction processes, particularly how racial ideas structure organizational norms, values and practices. Her recent research examines the impact of HBCUs’ diversity efforts on the meaning and significance of race for the organizations.; Dr. Cassandra Rodrigues (Ph.D., UMass-Amherst) focuses on immigration and citizenship, race and gender, family, media, and labor. Her primary research asks how citizenship is a negotiated ideal for racialized groups and how work can be the site of raced and gendered inequality.

Our second search drew another two top-notch scholars: Dr. Tirth Bhatta (Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University) focuses on medical sociology, aging, health disparities, and demography. His research addresses the mechanisms underlying socioeconomic differences in health across different generations.; Dr. Liz Lawrence (Ph.D. University of Colorado-Boulder) focuses on education, health, inequality, and demography. Her main research looks at the how and why educational attainment is so tightly-coupled to health outcomes through life. Dr. Carter, Dr. Rodriguez, and Dr. Bhatta join us this Fall. Dr. Lawrence will join us in January 2018, after completing her post-doc at UNC’s Carolina Population Center.

We’re also very happy to welcome Dean Christopher Heavey to lead the College of Liberal Arts. Dean Heavey is a long-time UNLV professor and administrator. He has held numerous roles across the university, including COLA Associate Dean and Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education. Dean Heavey’s tireless energy, broad vision, and collaborative leadership style has injected a new excitement into the college. Dean Heavey also promoted our colleague Jennifer Keene to Executive Associate Dean overseeing faculty and college policy. The College of Liberal Arts leadership is in excellent hands.

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 views, essays and blogs, report writing, consultations, and community-based research. These activities demonstrate the timely and insightful quality of our work on today’s major public issues.

An invigorating liveliness continued to infuse our department throughout the past year. This energy comes from our efforts to build a collective esprit de corps through activities such as our brown bag lecture series that brings scholars from around the world, our department open house that draws more than 200 undergraduate students, and Dr. Smedley-Lopez’s award winning SLICES program that connects students to the department and the wider community.

There’s a lot of vital daily work needed to keep turning the department’s wheels. I deeply appreciate Pam Weiss and Connie Dye’s efforts to manage our office so well. I’m also indebted to our Executive Committee—Dr. Barb Brents, Dr. Micheal Borer, Dr. Christie Batson, and Dr. Andrew Spivak for their hard work and invaluable advice during the year. Likewise, our graduate representatives—Chris Wakefield and Maddie Evans gave vital insight into graduate student needs.

Finally, an enormous 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 and we are all very grateful for it.

Happy reading!

Robert
Welcome, New Sociology Faculty!

Courteney Carter, Ph.D.
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Ph.D., Sociology, 2015
- University of Illinois at Chicago, M.A., Sociology, 2009

Areas of Specialization: race in organizations, diversity, and HBCUs

Tirth Bhatta, Ph.D.
- Case Western Reserve University, Ph.D., Sociology, 2017
- Miami University, M.A., Gerontological Studies, 2010
- Tribhuvan University, M.S., Statistics, 2004
- Tri-Chandra College, B.S., Statistics, 2002

Areas of Specialization: social stratification; health disparities; intersectionality of race, gender, and education; contextual variation (e.g., cohort, neighborhood, national context); life course; medical sociology; non-material resources (e.g., altruism, spirituality); quantitative methods

Liz Lawrence, Ph.D.
- University of Colorado Boulder, Ph.D., Sociology, 2015
- University of Colorado Boulder, M.A., Sociology, 2012
- University of Notre Dame, B.A., Philosophy, 2002

Areas of Specialization: health disparities, social inequality, education, life course, and social demography

Cassaundra Rodriguez, Ph.D.
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Ph.D., Sociology, 2017
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, M.A., Sociology, 2013
- California State University Northridge, B.A., Sociology and Gender & Women’s Studies, 2011

Areas of Specialization: immigration and citizenship, race and gender, family, media, and work
Elected to Publications Committee
Michael Ian Borer was elected to the Publications Committee of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction.

Exceptional Teaching
Kerie Francis received the 2016 UNLV Faculty-in-Residence/Lecturer Award for Excellence in Teaching for her extraordinary undergraduate teaching and mentorship.

Elected in Professional Associations
Ranita Ray was elected as chair of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division. She was also elected as co-chair of the Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) Sister-to-Sister committee.

Research and Assessment Awards
Christie Batson received the UNLV 2017 Community-Based Research Faculty Award as well as the 2017 Academic Assessment Award for a Department or Program.

Service Learning Award
Anna Smedley-López received the 2016-2017 UNLV Office of Community Engagement Service Learning Award.

Academic Success Center
Robert Futrell received the 2016/17 UNLV Faculty Award from the Academic Success Center.

Award Winning Researcher, Teacher, Activist
Georgiann Davis received the 2017 Distinguished Book Award from ASA's Sex and Gender Section for her book *Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis*. She also received the 2017 Sex and Gender Section's Feminist Scholar-Activist Award. On campus, Dr. Davis received the 2016 William Morris Award for Excellence in Teaching at UNLV as well as Honorary Institution Faculty/Staff Member of the Month (Nov 2016) from the National Resident Hall Honorary.
SOC Award Winners

Office of Undergraduate Research Symposium, Spring 2017

First Place Winners, Business and Liberal Arts Session

“It Takes a Community: A Community-Based Approach to Minority Health Coalition Building”

Community Partner: Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition

Peer Facilitators: Micajah Daniels (Sociology minor) and Eli Thompson (Sociology major)

Micajah and Eli are both long-time leaders in SLICES. Micajah has been a peer facilitator for several community partner projects including: 100 Black Women, The Intersection, and the Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition (NMHEC). Eli has been a research team member for the Community Based Initiative project and is now a peer facilitator for the NMHEC project. Micajah and Eli also both testified at the Nevada State Legislature along side the NMHEC for Assembly Bill 141 in support of refunding and re-staffing Nevada’s Office of Minority Health.

Office of Undergraduate Research Symposium, Spring 2017

Honorable Mention, Interdisciplinary Oral Presentations

“Respectability Politics and Black Lives Matter”

Ashley Hamilton (Sociology major, SLICES programming assistant)

Ashley’s undergraduate research and activism focus on the Black Lives Matter Movement is an outgrowth of her work as a SLICES peer facilitator for the 100 Black Women project on the prison pipeline. Ashley is a co-founder of the UNLV Black Lives Matter RSO, the coordinator for the very successful Black Lives Matter Teach-In, and has been accepted into the McNair Scholars Program.

Office of Undergraduate Research Symposium, Fall 2016

First Place Winners, Urban Affairs, Business and Liberal Arts Session

“Now You See Me, Now You Don’t: The Destruction of Gold Butte”

Community Partner: Protect Gold Butte Initiative

Peer Facilitators: Camisha Fagan (Sociology major)

Camisha is a founding member of SLICES leadership team. She was the peer facilitator for the Protect Gold Butte Initiative project and worked on the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Las Vegas Chapter project. Camisha spend the spring semester studying abroad in Ghana and is now working on her McNair Scholars undergraduate research that examines the intersection of race and sexual orientation.
AKD Inductees

New AKD undergraduate and graduate student inductees pictured to the left and below with Dr. Andrew Spivak, Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Congratulations, Grad Students!

**MA Graduates**

Nicole Jenkins, M.A.

Maddie Jo Evans, M.A.

**PhD Graduates**

Suzanne Becker, Ph.D.

Deogratius Mshigeni, Ph.D.

Jacqui Ragin, Ph.D.

pictured right w/ Executive Associate Dean Dr. Jennifer Keene

Michelle Gladman, Ph.D.

pictured left w/ Dr. Barb Brents
Denise Cook successfully defended her Dissertation Prospectus in May 2017. She also relocated to Washington DC this past March 2017 to begin a career at the Department of Homeland Security in Human Resources. As of May 30th has earned a promotion and she is now working with the DHS Chief of Staff.

Nicole Jenkins was awarded a Jean Nidetch Scholarship, 2017-2018

Erick López was selected to attend the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Workshop on Health Disparities, Health Inequities and Vulnerable Populations part of Interuniversity Consortium of Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He also received a Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Love of Learning Scholarship.

Nicholas Baxter was hired as visiting lecturer at Knox College.


Coming soon from the University of California Press!
Dr. Barb Brents was quoted in a NY Times Magazine cover story titled “Is Prostitution Just Another Job?” Her work was also cited in an article at The Conversation titled “Should prostitution be decriminalized?” and it was discussed in an article as part of her collaboration with Point Taken, a new program from WGBH. Locally, Dr. Brents was quoted in Las Vegas Weekly in a news article titled “Checking in on Vegas’ Illegal Escort Industry” and in another by the Las Vegas Review-Journal titled “Prostitution in Nevada has its Advantages, Experts Say.”

Dr. Michael Ian Borer was quoted in “Hairstylist Shelley Gregory Brings Rainbow Hair to Las Vegas” and “Escape rooms like The Basement quickly growing in Las Vegas popularity” in the Las Vegas Review Journal. Dr. Borer also served as an expert and mentor for a Clark High School student’s senior thesis about uses of social media and interpretations of privacy.

Dr. Dmitri Shalin and the UNLV Center for Democratic Culture spearheaded a letter of support from the American, British, and Canadian Associations’ for the Levada Center in Russia.

Jennifer Reed was quoted in “Steps of Change’ Helps Columbiana Families Dealing with Addiction,” 21 WFMJ-TV-Youngstown-Warren Ohio. She was also quoted in Salem News in a piece titled “Steps of Change Held Saturday.” And she was interviewed in a podcast at The Broken Brain titled “Ecosexuality with Jennifer Reed.” She was also quoted in a VICE article titled “Ecosexuals Believe Having Sex with the Earth Could Save It.”

Dr. Anna Smedley-López was interviewed for a 2017’s Most Diverse Cities in America article by Richie Bernado of WalletHub.

Dr. Robert Futrell was featured on Here and Now, National Public Radio show produced by WBUR-Boston titled “Could Dylann Roof become a martyr for white supremacists?” Dr. Futrell was also featured in ThinkProgress in a piece titled “Dylann Roof was not ‘self-radicalized.’ He was part of a racist community.”

Sociology Alumna Dr. Colleen Hall-Patton was quoted in “Jack in the Blocks Quilt Design.”

Dr. Georgiann Davis (above) wrote several op-eds and appeared in numerous media outlets which you can read more about on her website (georgianndavis.com), but perhaps her biggest public sociology contribution of the year was being interviewed by Katie Couric for a National Geographic special titled the Gender Revolution: A Journey with Katie Couric. Dr. Davis was also named the 2017 American Sociological Association’s Sex and Gender Section’s Feminist Scholar-Activist of the year.
Congrats, Graduates!
Nicole Jenkins celebrates her outstanding MA Student Award with her advisor, Dr. Ranita Ray.

UNLV Librarian Heidi Johnson with Dr. Anna Smedley-López

Meetings can be fun!

Sociology is well represented at Major Madness!
Dr. Dmitri Shalin co-hosted a conference titled “Refugee Crisis: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” The panelists pictured above and to the left are Counsel Generals from German, French and British consulates in the United States.

(left) Ph.D. Student Dawn Lighthiser was recently awarded a Letter of Appreciation from Sheriff Lombardo and LVMPD for her work with LVMPD and the Safe Village Initiative on the D-Street Strong Initiative. During the past 12 months, Dawn worked as a research assistant on Dr. Christie Batson’s “Neighborhood Resiliency” project that included a collaboration between two faith-based organizations located on D-Street in the historic West Las Vegas community. Dawn worked with Muhammad Mosque 75 and Greater New Jerusalem Church to collect and match resident needs assessment data with service providers in the community. She and Dr. Batson have presented this research at two professional conferences and will be submitting a manuscript for publication this Fall.
Sociology SLICES peer facilitator and student leader, Camisha Fagan, spent the spring semester studying in Ghana, Africa. When asked what was the most important thing that she learned, Camisha said: “Of course with study abroad people advise you to go in with an open mind. I think people should truly take that into account. Once you open your mind to various cultures, customs, goods, etc. and stop comparing them to your own I think that is when you can truly experience a great study abroad experience. From Ghana I think that the most important thing that I learned is that change is okay, although it might be an unsettling feeling I would advise folks to welcome it so they can truly experience the diverse aspects of being in another culture.”
(above) graduate assistant and part-time instructor retreat, 2016

(above) **Dr. Barb Brents** snaps a selfie with graduate students and alumna **Dr. Jennifer Whitmer**

(below) UNLV Sociology is on FIRE with their College of Liberal Arts Awards and Scholarships!
(left) COLA Dean Dr. Chris Heavey and COLA Executive Associate Dean Dr. Jennifer Keene visit a sociology undergraduate poster presentation.

(right) Dr. Robert Futrell and Ms. Connie Dye and Ms. Pam Weiss enjoy lunch at a campus celebration.

(below) UNLV Sociology, and the COLA University Forum Lecture Series, hosted Dr. Catherine Connell from Boston University. She delivered a talk based on her book *School’s Out: Gay and Lesbian Teachers in the Classroom*. 
This year many of the service learning projects and the individual student interests overlapped with state policy initiatives. SLICES programming assistant, Ashley Hamilton, and peer facilitator, Micajah Daniels met with U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto to discuss equitable healthcare in the U.S.

The Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition work group attended multiple community events, including legislative sessions, in support of AB 141 that proposed refunding and re-staffing the State of Nevada Office of Minority Health. Peer facilitators Micajah Daniels and Eli Thompson testified in front of the State Assembly and team members Shannon Williams and Hayley Blish attended.

Mariana Sarmiento Hernández and Mariana Rodriguez SLICES community partners with the UndocuNetwork and Esmeralda Cruz Lopez, SLICES peer facilitator met with U.S. Senator Catherin Cortez Masto to discuss how institutions of education in Nevada could better serve our undocu/DACAmented student population.

For more information about SLICES:
Contact Dr. Anna C. Smedley-López at anna.smedley@unlv.edu
Follow us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/ServiceLearninginSociology/
Visit us on the Department of Sociology website at https://www.unlv.edu/sociology/community-outreach
Join SLICES Registered Student Organization at https://involvementcenter.unlv.edu/organization/ServiceLearningClub
Jennifer Reed welcomed her fourth grandchild, Legend (right).

From Rachel Macfarlane (pictured right with Jen Stevens): Jen Stevens found an abandoned bulldog who had just had puppies. She was so mellow she thought of my daughter, Sagan. We had tried to find her a dog before, as is recommended for autistic children, but couldn’t find a good match. Rufus, or Rucify as we call her, has been perfect and lets the kids maul her, play with her face and will cuddle for hours. She is the perfect dog-pic, fur-log, therapy dog that we could ask for. Thanks for looking out, Jen!

Antoinette Izzo and Kyle Rodgers welcomed the birth of Hunter (right).

Farewell, Dr. Taka Yamashita! (left) We wish you the best at University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

Jennifer Reed welcomed her fourth grandchild, Legend (right).

(Left) Alumnus Dr. Pete Simi moved to Chapman University to become Director of the Earl Babbie Research Center and an Associate Professor of Sociology.

Dr. Georgiann Davis (left) ran into Katy Perry on campus!

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