Welcome to the UNT Sociology Newsletter!

Summer 2013

Click on the links below to explore recent news from UNT’s Sociology Department

**Departmental News**
Find out more about the Department’s *Welcome Back Dinner* on August 30th at the Crystal Ballroom.

**Research News**
Get a quick overview of Drs. Yeatt’s and Cready’s summer trip to China and South Korea.

**Faculty News**
Hear about the latest Sociology faculty additions, Dr. Michael F. Thompson and Dr. Helen Potts.

**Staff News**
Administrative Specialist, Shannon Selby, graduated this August with her Bachelor’s degree in Sociology.

**Student News**
Learn more about doctoral students Michael Niño and Swati Singh’s research projects that they presented at the ASA conference in New York City.

**Alumni News**
Where are they now? Read about the successes of UNT Sociology alumnus, Jack Dison, and the latest news about Lisa Zottarelli, Yuying Shen, and Amy DeWitt.

**Donate**
Learn how you can make a direct impact on the UNT Sociology Department.
Sociology Department Welcomes A New Faculty Member, Dr. Michael F. Thompson

Dr. Michael Thompson joins the UNT faculty this fall as an Assistant Professor of Sociology. He comes to us from Grinnell College where he has worked since Fall 2011. He is broadly interested in political and economic sociology with a focus on stratification, socioeconomic mobility, workforce development, and social movements. Read more about Dr. Thompson in the Faculty section of The Eagle’s Eye.

Annual Dinner Kicks Off the New Semester on August 30th

The Annual Welcome Back Dinner will take place Friday, August 30th at the Crystal Ballroom. All faculty, staff, and students are invited to enjoy an evening of great food and good conversations as we welcome our new faculty, including Dr. Helen Potts and Dr. Michael Thompson. The event takes place from 5:30pm to 9:00pm, and guests are welcome to come and go. RSVPs are requested by Thursday, August 29th at 5pm, and should be sent to Shannon Selby at:

Shannon.Selby@unt.edu
or
(940) 656-2296.

We look forward to seeing you there.
Dr. Cynthia Cready Appointed Director of the Sociology Graduate Program

Starting September 1, 2013, Dr. Cynthia Cready will begin her tenure as the Director of the Sociology Graduate Programs. Dr. Cready began her career in Sociology at UNT in the Fall of 2000 as a Lecturer. She became an Assistant Professor in 2002 and is now an Associate Professor. Thank you to Dr. George Yancey for his service for the last several years as the Director and, more recently, Dr. Gabe Ignatow for serving as the co-Director in charge of recruitment. The Department of Sociology has benefited greatly from their work and leadership.

Dr. Dale Yeatts Invited to Join the UNT China Advisory Council

Dr. Yeatts has been invited to join the Provost’s China Advisory Council (CAC). The CAC serves as UNT’s internal advisory board and is charged with making strategic recommendations to academic affairs and the university at-large in developing, refining and achieving UNT’s goals in China.

46 Undergraduate and 5 Graduate Students Walk in August

The Department of Sociology continues to have one of the largest groups of graduates at UNT. On August 9th and 10th, a total of 51 students graduated with degrees from the Department. Of these 51 students, 46 completed a sociology Bachelor of Arts degree. A total of five completed a graduate degree, three with a Master of Science, one with a Ph.D. in Sociology and one with a Ph.D. in Applied Gerontology. Congratulations!

Sociology
Natalie Jo Johnson, Ph.D.
Wendy Lynn Jackson, MS

Aging
TimMarie Chloe’Uvonne Williams, Ph.D.
Carolyn Jo Kimball, MS
Karen A. Ruggles, MS
Featured Scholarship: Hiram Friedsam Graduate Scholarship

This graduate-level scholarship was created in memory of Dr. Hiram Friedsam, former UNT Professor and Dean of PACS. Dr. Friedsam first joined what was then known as North Texas State College as an Assistant Professor of Sociology in 1948, and served as Chairman of the Sociology Department from 1954 to 1972. He then served as the founding dean of the School of Community Service (now known as the College of Public Affairs and Community Service, or PACS) from 1973 to 1982. He also founded what was then known as the Center of Studies in Aging in 1968, when it was one of the first of its kind in the country.

Dr. Friedsam served as a participant in conferences on aging at the White House in 1961, 1971, and 1981, and was a member of the Governor's Committee on Aging from 1960 to 1964. He also was a former president of the Southwestern Social Science Association and the Texas Society on Aging, and was a former editor of the academic journal, "The Gerontologist."

Dr. Friedsam received the President's Award in 1981—the highest honor the university can bestow on an individual or group that brings outstanding recognition to UNT. In 1993, a $100,000 scholarship fund was set up in his honor to create the Hiram Friedsam Graduate Scholarship, which provides financial assistance for graduate students in Sociology and Aging. (Source: The North Texan, UNT Magazine.)
Sociology Professors Awarded Funds for Research in China

This Summer, Drs. Yeatts and Cready were awarded $6000 from the Charn Uswhochrome International Development Fund for the following research proposal:

“Collaboration Between Faculty at Zhejiang University and UNT (and Potentially Others): Factors Affecting the Health and Well-Being of the Elderly.” The grant was distributed by the UNT International office.

The funds paid for Drs. Yeatts and Cready as well as a graduate student, Chencheng Yang, to travel to Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. Zhejiang University has been ranked as one of the top five universities in China. While there, they worked with Professor Mi and his team of faculty and graduate students in developing research ideas related to pensions available to the Chinese village elderly. Further, Zhejiang University’s College of Public Affairs and UNT are establishing an official memorandum of understanding that expresses their desire to work together.

As part of their trip to Asia, Drs. Yeatts and Cready also attended the International Conference on Gerontology and Geriatrics in Seoul, South Korea where they presented a paper entitled: “Environment and Subjective Well-Being of the Rural Chinese Elderly: A Multilevel Analysis Using the CHARLS Pilot Data.” The paper has received a revise and resubmit to the prestigious Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences (additional co-authors include Drs. May Pei, Yuying Shen, and Hao Lou). A second paper entitled: “Environment and Health of the Chinese Elderly: Examining the CHARLS Pilot Study of a Rich and Poor Province” has also received a revise and resubmit from the highly competitive journal: Social Science and Medicine, again with Drs. May Pei, Yuying Shen, and Hao Lou as co-authors.

Photo: Dr. Dale Yeatts, Professor Xiaomei Pei, Dr. Cynthia Cready, and two graduate students from Tsinghua University at a Korean restaurant in Seoul attending the International Conference on Gerontology and Geriatrics.
UNT Sociology faculty and students recently attended the 103rd annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in New York City, New York from August 10—14, 2013. The theme for this year’s meeting was “Interrogating Inequality: Linking Micro and Macro.”

Faculty Presentations:
“Text mining for comparative cultural analysis” Dr. Gabe Ignatow (UNT Sociology) and Rada Mihalcea (UNT Computer Science and Engineering).

“Disclosure of positive serostatus among people living with HIV in Tema, Ghana: Decisions and outcomes” Dr. Ami Moore (UNT Sociology) and Ethel Sakitey (University of Legon).

“Microloans and Women’s Mobility in India” Swati Singh (UNT Sociology Doctoral Candidate) and Dr. Cynthia Cready (UNT Sociology).

Student Presentations:


Association of Christians Teaching Sociology’s 2013 Annual Conference in Palos Heights, IL

This summer, three Sociology graduate students, Lindsey Johnson, Chao-Lun (Jacob) Huang, and Alicia Brunson, attended the annual conference for the Association for Christians Teaching Sociology (ACTS) in Palos Heights, Illinois. The graduate students presented papers on topics related to racial and ethnic habitus, aging among US Asian populations, and perceptions of historical stereotypes in film.
Gerontology & Sociology Faculty Offer Courses in Nigeria

Under an agreement with Nigeria’s National Universities Commission, program faculty members and affiliate faculty began teaching an Applied Gerontology Certificate to 24 Nigerian university faculty. Drs. Keith Turner and James Swan of the applied gerontology program in the Sociology Department, Dr. Ami Moore of the Sociology Department, Dr. Iftekhar Amin of UNT Dallas (UNT Sociology doctoral graduate) and soon-to-be Applied Gerontology PhD graduate Oscar Atumah spent two weeks in Abuja, capital of Nigeria, teaching three of the five classes required for the Applied Gerontology Certificate program. The 24 students are doctoral faculty from 12 Nigerian universities selected for the program.

The aim of the program is to better equip these faculty to teach gerontology in their universities, to begin joint research on issues of aging in Nigeria, to be involved in developing community-based programs for elders throughout Nigeria, to develop postgraduate applied gerontology curricula for Nigerian Universities, and to contribute to the founding of a Center for Aging and Sustainability in Nigeria under the auspices of the Dave Omo-karo Foundation there. While in Abuja, Drs. Turner, Swan and Moore also participated in two days of meetings of the committee developing NUC’s Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for Postgraduate Degree Programs in Gerontology for Nigerian Universities.

Students earning the Applied Gerontology Certificate will complete their program by taking their final program class in spring 2014 while in residence on the Denton campus as visiting scholars. Dr. Emem Omo-karo, director of the Dave Omokaro Foundation will visit during that time. The agreements and ongoing work with Nigeria is only the beginning. Other initiatives in India and China are also being developed.
Recent Faculty & Student Publications

Amini Reza, Stanley Ingman, and Ann Reed Wilder. (Accepted, in press). Health Related Quality of Life (HRQOL) and Health Insurance Among Middle Age and Old Age Americans. *Journal of Aging in Emerging Economies.*


Singh, Swati. (Forthcoming). The Effects of Microfinance Programs on Women Members in Traditional Societies. *Gender, Place, & Culture.*


To see other publications by UNT sociologists, visit unt.edu/soci.
Sociology Department Welcomes New Faculty Member, Dr. Michael F. Thompson

Starting September 1, Dr. Michael Franklin Thompson is joining the UNT faculty as an Assistant Professor of Sociology. He comes to us from Grinnel College where he began in Fall 2011. He is broadly interested in political and economic sociology with a focus on stratification, socioeconomic mobility, workforce development, and social movements. His current research focuses on how political institutions influence the enactment of state minimum wage legislation across the U.S. and the impact of these laws on income inequality and employment.

Before joining the Grinnell faculty, Dr. Thompson served as a research analyst for the Indiana Business Research Center, collaborating on grant-funded projects for the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, the Economic Development Administration and the Lumina Foundation.

Dr. Thompson has experience teaching introductory and political sociology courses, as well as applied statistical methods, during his time at Indiana University-Bloomington as well as at Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC).

Though born in New York, Dr. Thompson grew up in the Caribbean nation of Trinidad & Tobago. He returned to the US for college at Yale and spent a few years doing social work in New York City and business research in Trinidad before joining IU Sociology. He now lives in Denton with his wife Laila Amine (also a UNT faculty member) and enjoys high school volunteering, Gumboot dancing, swimming and listening to music from across the globe.
Beginning September 1, Dr. Helen Potts will begin as a full-time Lecturer in the UNT Sociology Department. Although Dr. Potts previously lectured for many Sociology courses at UNT, she was employed in the Undergraduate Studies Department as part of the Core Academy. She will be teaching Introduction to Sociology and Urban Sociology during the upcoming Fall semester.

Dr. Potts graduated from UNT with a Ph.D. in Sociology in 2007. Her main areas of research are social capital, research methods/statistics, and social organizations. "I was fortunate to gain a great deal of experience in survey implementation and research as a research assistant where I worked for multiple years on the Nursing Home research study conducted by Drs. Yeatts and Cready," says Dr. Potts.

Her dissertation pulled from each of her three areas of concentration and is entitled “The Role of Social Capital in Organizations: The Precursors and Effects of Social Capital among Certified Nurse Aides in Nursing Homes”. Her dissertation committee was chaired by Dr. David Williamson.

Since graduating, Dr. Potts has focused her attention on teaching. Immediately after graduation, she gained a position at UNT-Dallas where she expanded her abilities to teach sociology to a wide range of students. A few years later, she returned to Denton for the position in the Core Academy. “This position,” she says, “allowed me to form long-standing relationships with professors across campus in the formation of learning communities.”

Dr. Potts has taught nearly 20 different courses in Sociology in a myriad of ways ranging from face-to-face, NextGen, and online. She hopes to continue strengthening her passion for teaching and learning better ways to connect to the student population. “Above all, I am grateful for the opportunity I have to come back to the Sociology Department as a faculty member with these assets.”
Shannon Selby Graduates from Sociology Department

This summer, Shannon Selby, Administrative Specialist for the Sociology Department, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. Her graduation ceremony took place on Saturday, August 10th at 9am at the UNT Coliseum.

Shannon’s mother, Jackie Thames, who works for the PACS Computing Services as an Operations Manager, was also an alumnae of the UNT Sociology Department. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a minor in Anthropology in August of 2002. When Shannon was in high school, she watched her mother work hard to earn her degree, and she learned the discipline involved in being a serious student. She also developed her own interest in sociology during that time, so when choosing her major, she decided to follow in her mother’s footsteps. Shannon is interested in non-profit management and fundraising, and hopes to pursue these fields in her future career. Congratulations, Shannon!
Doctoral Student Michael Niño Analyses Peer Networks and Social Withdrawal among Immigrant Adolescents

This fall, Michael Niño begins his third year of the Sociology Ph.D. program. In August, he presented his paper “The dynamic relationship between immigrant peer networks and health risk behaviors: Selective Acculturation or Classic Assimilation?” at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting in New York City, NY. Here’s what Michael told The Eagle’s Eye:

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your research?
A: My current research focuses on the dynamic relationship between generational immigrant peer networks and risk-taking behaviors. In addition to this project, I am also working on two papers examining the effect different forms of social withdrawal have on delinquency, violence and risk-taking behaviors from early adolescence to adulthood.

In addition, my dissertation research uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to examine how selective acculturation influences the relationship between immigrant generation and four interconnected domains of health and wellbeing among immigrants: healthy behaviors, obesity, prehypertension/hypertension, and pre-diabetes/diabetes. The expectation is that the research will better inform obesity, diabetes, and hypertension prevention efforts, particularly among immigrants groups.

Q: What classes do you teach at UNT?
A: My teaching experience is concentrated in methods in the social sciences. Over the last two years I have taught upper-division sociology courses in quantitative data collection, social statistics, and methodological approaches in qualitative research. (Continued on next page)
Doctoral Student Michael Niño Continued

Q: How did you first become interested in sociology?
A: Growing up a Hispanic male in a predominantly white neighborhood in West Texas, I never felt I quite fit anywhere. I do not speak Spanish and for most of my life did not feel connected to the culture of my parents. At the same time, I never really felt part of the predominantly white culture that I was surrounded by my entire life. As an undergraduate, sociological research allowed me to better understand my position in society and the social forces that shaped my social reality. Since then, I have devoted my short academic life to sociology and feel privileged to be awakened to a world I only thought I knew.

Q: What are your future goals?
My goal is to obtain a position at an institution of higher education which would provide me an opportunity to make meaningful contributions in my areas of interest. I also aim to continue teaching methods in the social sciences and other substantive areas in sociology.

Sociology Graduate Students Accepted into Research Support Program

Michael Niño, Eunkyung Kim, and Reza Amini, along with their Program Advisors Dr. Gabe Ignatow, Dr. Cynthia Cready, and Dr. Stan Ingman, have been chosen to participate in the Graduate Student Research and Fellowship Support Program (GSRFWP) at UNT. The goal of this program, which is cosponsored by the Office of Research and Economic Development, the Office for Nationally Competitive Scholarships, and the Toulouse Graduate School, is to stimulate funded graduate student research and a culture of UNT students and their mentors applying regularly for Fellowships and Dissertation Improvement grants. This year, only 30 students out of 43 who applied for the award were selected, with Kim, Amini, and Niño earning three of those spots.
Doctoral Student Swati Singh Studies the Effect of Microloans on Female Social Position in India

**Swati Singh** is beginning her fourth year of the Ph.D. program at UNT. She recently presented her paper “Microloans and Women’s Mobility in India” at the ASA Annual Meeting in New York City.

**Q: What is your academic background?**
I hold a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Economics and a Master’s degree in Social Work from Lucknow University in India.

**Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your research and any upcoming projects?**
My research interests are in the areas of microfinance and gender relations in India. I am currently working on a National Family and Health Survey dataset from India to examine if the economic benefits of microloans and group participation in the program influence the gender scripts and women’s social position in the household. More specifically, what is the impact of these microfinance programs on women’s decision making power and their physical mobility?

**Q: What classes do you teach at UNT?**
I have taught Sociology of Marriage and Family and Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity courses in the past semesters at UNT. I have also taught online courses.

**Q: How did you first become interested in sociology?**
Sociology has always interested me as I feel it is a part of our daily life. However, my interest in this subject grew stronger when I started traveling with my family to different countries and meeting people of diverse culture, ethnicity and background.

**Q: What are you future goals?**
My future goals are to advance in my research areas and teach sociology. Through my teaching, I want students to develop interest in sociology and use it creatively in their everyday lives.
Nikolitsa Grigoropoulou, who will begin the Sociology Ph.D. “pass through” program in August 2013, has been awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to fund her studies at UNT. She comes to UNT from Pantheon University in Athens, Greece where she earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology.

With this scholarship, Nikolitsa will receive a grant of up to $18,000 to fund her first year at UNT, plus round-trip travel allowance, health and accident insurance, as well as orientations and enrichment seminars to prepare her for her trip. She is also provided with continual contact and mentorship from an international “family” of other Fulbright scholars that value her progress and motivate her in her endeavors. Nikolitsa commented that “during my stay in the U.S., I feel as an ambassador of the Greek culture and the Fulbright’s spirit which genuinely promotes cultural and educational interchange.”

The Fulbright Program, established in the U.S. in 1946, is one of the most acknowledged international educational exchange programs in the world. The Fulbright Foundation in Greece particularly is the oldest Fulbright Program in Europe, and the second oldest in the world. In fact, this year, 2013, the Greek Foundation celebrates its 65th anniversary. Its goal is to offer scholarships to Greek and American citizens – students, teachers, scholars, and artists – to pursue a wide variety of educational projects such as studying, teaching, lecturing, or conducting research in the United States and Greece respectively.

Nikolitsa describes applying for a Fulbright scholarship as a long procedure that can last a few months and includes several steps, such as a personal registration with the Greek program coordinator, an online application of several pages and an obligatory interview with a 5 to 7 person committee. The decision for grantees is announced 2 or 3 days after the interview.

For more information on the Fulbright Program, visit [http://www.cies.org/](http://www.cies.org/)
Nichola Williams spent two weeks during the summer collecting data in Los Molinos, a working-class neighborhood of Guadalajara, Mexico. She worked closely with the faculty and staff of an elementary school there called Colegio Unión México, who were interested in improving the health and wellbeing of the community where the school resides.

The purpose of the “Los Molinos Healthy Communities Study” was to improve knowledge of the community and help the school identify neighborhood-level health problems that play a significant role in their students’ educational and developmental outcomes.

During her time there, Nichola collected over 200 written surveys and conducted 3 focus groups with members of the community. Her main areas of assessment included: family characteristics, health care access, crime, community activities, road safety, transportation, and environmental issues.

Her final report to the school included quantifiable evidence of the community’s major barriers to health and wellbeing. Once these main issues were identified, she was able to provide 7 key recommendations for future development. Colegio Unión México hopes to foster community engagement among its parent volunteers and create a neighborhood activist group. The school plans to use the study’s recommendations to outline specific goals for this group and to justify improvement funds from the city of Guadalajara.

Nichola was awarded $2000 from the PACS Community Renewal Fund for this project. Dr. Stan Ingman facilitated the connection between Nichola and the staff at Colegio Union Mexico.
Alumni Spotlight: Jack Dison Uses Restorative Justice Techniques in SF Bay Area

Dr. Jack E. Dison, graduated from UNT with his Ph.D. in 1977. He then spent 25 years in faculty and administrative positions at Arkansas State University before retiring from academia in 2000. Currently, Dr. Dison works in the field of criminal justice in the San Francisco Bay area. For the past ten years, he has been working with local non-profits to apply a unique approach in their work, called Restorative Justice. This approach differs from traditional criminal justice in that it views crime not only as a violation of the law, but also as a series of broken relationships. It utilizes direct meetings between victims and offenders where a trained facilitator coordinates dialogues meant to address and repair these broken relationships. Often times, victims find healing and offenders become accountable, allowing both to move towards new directions in their lives.

To become involved in these restorative justice dialogues, both parties must be assessed to determine suitability for the process. If found suitable, both parties then make a commitment to the restorative process, by participating in separate preparatory work as well as the face-to-face facilitated meeting. Both parties contribute to the dialogue by telling their story of the offense and its impact on their lives.

(Continued on next page).
Alumni Spotlight: Jack Dison Continued

They then work together to find ways to “make things as right as possible.”

Dr. Dison describes this work as both challenging and fulfilling. He often recognizes that his sociological perspective plays a role in his job as well as his theoretical background in criminology, both of which he acquired during his time at UNT.

Other Alumni News

Dr. Lisa Zottarelli, Ph.D. Sociology (2002) has recently accepted a job as Chair of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at San Antonio College in San Antonio, Texas. Until recently, Dr. Zottarelli was employed as an Associate Professor at Texas Women’s University in Denton.

Dr. Amy DeWitt, Ph.D. Sociology (2005), was recently promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Criminal Justice, Geography and Anthropology at Shepherd University in West Virginia. She is also serving as chair of the department.

Dr. Yuying Shen, Ph.D. Sociology (2009) has been offered a Visiting Professorship at Texas Tech University for the second year in a row. Dr. Yeatts was her major professor. Dr. Shen has recently had a paper accepted for publication and has three papers under review.
There are many ways to support the UNT Sociology department. Financial contributions are most welcome, but we also appreciate our alumni who give their time to speak to our current students and new graduates by providing advice about careers in specific areas. Thank you!

Make a Donation
The Department of Sociology appreciates your financial support. Every dollar contributed to the department has a direct impact on our students. Your gift helps support critical opportunities for students, including scholarships, lectures, travel support, and any number of educational events that augment the classroom experience. For more information about additional ways you can help, please contact Dan Rodeheaver, Chair of the Department, at (940) 565-2296 or email at rodeheaver@unt.edu. Read more about Sociology scholarships in the Departmental News section of this newsletter.