

Inside this issue:

Faculty Research: Chikako Usui	2
Alumni News	2
What I Learned On My Job- Hunting Safari	3
Congratulations!	4

Sociology Update

Holiday Edition, December 2007

Shared Vision and Energy

Sociology is the study of the social world and the behavior of people, with a focus on creating an understanding of society in a rapidly changing world. Sociology prepares students to deal with contemporary social issues using skills they acquire in critical thinking and empirical research. Sociologists study a vast terrain of topics from race and ethnicity, inequalities, education, organizations, social problems, policy processes and more. Sociology, as a liberal arts discipline, provides an **intellectually liberating education**. Sociology infuses social and public debates with theory and evidence. To use the “sociological imagination” is to **think critically and holistically** and **work empirically**.

This newsletter features research by the faculty, sociology students, and the alumni. We find great energy in the development of careers among the alumni. **D’Lane Compton** (MA 2001) has just defended her dissertation at Texas A&M, has a co-authored book to be published from SUNY press, and will start teaching at Davidson College. **Dmitry Khodvakov** (BA 2000) is completing his PhD at Rutgers University. His dissertation examines how organizations develop mechanisms of cooperation and coordination. His work has been published in the 2007 September issue of *Social Forces* (one of the top sociological journals). **Takako Nomi** (MA 2002) leads a successful career at the CCSR, the University of Chicago after completing her Ph. D. at Penn State University in 2006. Two of our graduate students, **Clifton Glore** and **Brian Quarnstrom**, are the winners of awards for academic excellence this year. They reflect upon how their experiences in our graduate program relate to their careers. **Sara Baalman** (MA 2006) describes her strategies and resilience in finding a great job at Washington University.

I am very proud of these outstanding achievements. Our students and alumni are thriving and provide vital models guiding our department in its contribution to defining UMSL in the coming decades. I wish to thank everyone for sharing insights and playing an important role in energizing the life of the sociology program.

Best wishes for happy holidays and a new year.

Chikako Usui, Ph.D.
Chair

Faculty Research: Dr. Nancy Shields

Children and Community Violence in South Africa

Nancy Shields, along with her colleagues Kathy Nadasen (Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Western Cape) and Lois Piece (Director of the School of Social Work at the University of Missouri-St. Louis), is conducting research on children and community violence in five Townships surrounding Cape Town, South Africa. Dr. Shields has visited Cape Town twice, in March 2006 and July 2007. The research is supported by the University of Missouri and the University of the Western Cape.

This collaborative research examines the relationship between exposure to community violence and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among young children. Since the end of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994, rates of violent crime have increased dramatically. Over the past 13 years, violence in South Africa has shifted from violence of a political nature to high rates of community and domestic violence. This has resulted in high exposure to violence among the children living in the Cape Townships. For example, these researchers found that 40% of their sample of 247 children had observed a murder in their neighborhood. They also found a strong relationship between exposure to violence and psychological distress. However, other factors, such as social support, moderates the relationship. Their published work and presentations have focused on South Africa, but they have also collected the same data on a sample of 166 children living in the City of St. Louis. This will enable them to compare the prevalence and impact of violence in South Africa and the U.S. Plans are underway to follow the South African children over time, to understand the long-term impact of exposure to community violence.

According to Dr. Shields, the work has been both challenging and rewarding. For example, an early challenge was to translate many traditional social psychological measures into both Afrikaans and Xhosa, since many of the children are not fluent in English. A reward has been successfully working with and getting to know her collaborator, Kathy Nadasen, who is so geographically distant.



Faculty Research: Dr. Chikako Usui

How will Japan Deal with its Demographic Challenge in the 21st Century?



Japan has become the “poster child” for the graying of developed countries as the result of the world’s longest and healthiest lives. In 2006, over 21% of the Japanese population was aged 65 years or older (as compared to 12.5% in the US). Will the demographic change lead to a crisis or is it manageable for policy makers? Many observers argue Japan will lose future economic vitality, in part from the shrinking labor force, the lack of “new blood” in society, under-consumption by older age groups, and the growing burden on national health care and pension systems.

Chikako Usui is critical of analysts who are too quick to assume that the growth of older population is an economic encumbrance. She emphasizes that demographic changes are an intrinsic part of social organization of society. Population aging is better viewed in the context of the robustness of the economy and government social policy.

Usui has addressed this issue to academic audiences, policy makers, and the general public in a variety of conference venues in the U.S. and abroad. According to Dr. Usui, productivity (getting more output from each worker) is crucial to understanding the problems of aging society. In the 21st century, developed countries are shifting from a Fordist to post-Fordist economy with new levels of productive capacity. Any discussion of aging society must take this into account.

The term “Fordist” refers to a specific industrial organization system associated with the innovations of the Ford Motor Company during the early 20th century. Essentially, a Fordist economy is based on mass-production technology, with products having a relatively long life cycle. The auto, steel, and rubber industries are good examples of the leading sectors in a Fordist economy. In contrast, a post-Fordist economy is more oriented to the application of information technology. It is geared to the flexible production of selective goods and the consumption of a variety of goods. Goods and services have relatively short production life cycles, requiring continuous innovation. The computer software, telecommunications, and information-based service industries represent the leading sectors of this type of economy.

In the Fordist economy, education followed by a stable, lifelong job characterized a typical male worker’s adulthood. Worker skills, once acquired, have relatively long life cycles and the productivity level remains relatively stable throughout their working lives. ‘Retirement’ is a socially created category to manage the work force of a Fordist economy. In the post-Fordist economy, workers must adjust to the flexible production system by upgrading their skills and seeking multiple careers over their lifetimes. The payoff for an educational investment does not last for a lifetime; new career junctures require additional training. Retirement will be replaced with active aging. Dr. Usui compares this transformation (from a Fordist to a post-Fordist economy) to the agricultural revolution of the 20th century, which dramatically boosted farmers’ capacity to feed an expanding population. The manufacturing sector has similarly used technology to raise productivity. Today, service industries are integrating intensive use of information technology and boosting productivity while reducing the number of workers needed. The growth of IT related capital stock and productivity improvements could alleviate and offset the aging related problems in the future.

Usui also suggests that Japan’s healthy population means potential social and economic output of the society. The active older people are a productive resource to society, as volunteers, caregivers, providers of childcare as well as consumers. Quality of life is an important goal for seniors, creating demands in “silver” industries such as healthcare, housing, telecommunications, foods, cosmetics, travel, entertainment, financial and educational services and more.

According to Usui, the aging problem will look quite different in ten to twenty years. Japan has a good chance of successfully making policy adjustments because Japanese people do not view a leisure-based retirement as an entitlement. They do not expect to completely take it easy in retirement, partly because Japan’s public pension programs are relatively new (introduced in the 1960s as compared to Social Security introduced in 1935 in the U.S.). Continuing as a productive member of society is still seen as virtuous. Thus, leaders in Japan can implement policies for promoting active aging compared to other countries where generations of people have looked to retirement as “prepaid leisure.”

Alumni News

D’Lane Compton (M.A. in Sociology, UMSL, 2001; Ph. D. in Sociology, Texas A&M, 2007): I feel it was good fortune that landed me at the UMSL graduate program in sociology. While I did have some ideas about what I wanted to study and whom I wanted to work with, my initial approach to graduate studies was actually quite naive and somewhat immature. The plan was simple—do as little as I had to in order to graduate. However, my ‘great plan’ failed. Instead, I was stimulated and in some cases forced to do more by both my professors and fellow graduate students. I also received a great foundation in gender and qualitative methods. While I have never struggled in school, I was first challenged during my time at UMSL. Since then, I have continued to be challenged and to challenge myself while working on my PhD at Texas A&M.

I have developed two primary areas of research interests: social psychology and demography. My social psychological research is concerned with the generation and effects of stigmas in small group interaction. My demographic work involves various demographic methodologies to the 2000 census same-sex unmarried partner category. It includes a qualitative analysis of same-sex households—including how accurately the data capture gays and lesbians living in the U.S and how useful it is for demographic analyses. This research, coupled with research examining other demographic aspects of sexual orientation including residential, occupational, and legislative issues, is the subject of a book

continued on Page 3...

...continued from Page 2

co-authored with Amanda K. Baumle and Dudley L. Poston, *The Demography of Sexual Orientation*, to be published by SUNY Press in 2008.

I have just defended my dissertation and have accepted a visiting scholar position at Davidson College in North Carolina. During this time, I have made many reflections on my past and I accredit my time at UMSL as turning me into a more “serious” student of sociology and as having introduced me to Academia.

[Note: D’Lane wrote her MA thesis on gender and the Texas University’s bonfire traditions. The Texas A&M’s bonfire tradition dates back to 1909. Texas A&M University was originally established as an all-male military institution, and as the Bonfire is an prominent tradition at the university, the event has almost always been a male-led tradition. She examined the induction, progression, and position of women with the Texas A&M Bonfire tradition as they relate to governing and producing of sex stratification and roles.]

Dmitry Khodyakov (BA in Sociology, 2000): I am currently completing my PhD at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. My dissertation focuses on the notion of leadership in organizations that appear to be leaderless but in fact have multiple leaders. By studying large conductorless orchestras, I examine the advantages and challenges of multiple leadership in organizations.

My research on *Orpheus*, the largest contemporary conductorless orchestra, was published as lead article in the September 2007 issue of *Social Forces*. Using a qualitative approach, I examined two processes of intra-organizational cooperation and coordination – control and trust. My article discusses how *Orpheus* rehearses and performs without a baton holder. The analysis supports the duality perspective of trust-control relationships. While competence trust and goodwill trust enable musicians to participate in organizational decision-making and be creative, it is behavioral, input, output and social control strategies that facilitate the development of trust and help ensure the orchestra’s long-term success.

Besides studying leadership in conductorless orchestras, I am also interested in the end-of-life health care planning among older adults. My articles on this topic, co-authored with Debby Carr, were recently published in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* and the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*. In addition, my paper, “Trust as a Process: A Three-Dimensional Approach”, was one of the winners of the *Fourth Worldwide Competition for Junior Sociologists*, organized by the International Sociological Association in 2006. The article was published in *Sociology*, which is one of the official journals of the British Sociological Association.

Takako Nomi (MA in sociology, 2002; PhD Pennsylvania State University 2006): I was enrolled in the education theory and policy program at Penn State University where I focused on sociology of education. I felt that the master’s program at UMSL prepared me very well to go through classes and research in the PhD program. I would say that class experience was no different, and in fact, one of the best and most challenging courses I had was a sociology course at UMSL. The PhD program taught me a lot about doing research and what it takes to get a position in different institutions (both academic and non-academic) after completing the program. It was also a place to build a life-long relationship with other students and faculty. Completing a dissertation is challenging—I have seen so many people struggling to finish. But, the dissertation phase could be the best time of the program in many ways. It is important to choose a topic that you are passionate about that keeps you going. After graduating from the program, I have also learned that getting a PhD is not an end. It is just the beginning (and it is a good beginning).

[Note: Dr. Nomi is a senior research analyst at the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. Her latest publication “Self-fulfilling Prophecy” was published in *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (edited by George Ritzer) in 2007.]

What I Learned On My Job-Hunting Safari By Sara Baalman, Sociology M.A. 2006

One of the most exciting moments of my life was when I graduated with my Master of Arts in Sociology from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. It was then time to begin the next adventure, move out into the “real world”, and start my career. The first question I asked myself was what type of environment do I want to work in? During my academic career, I worked as a student assistant in various departments of the university and absolutely loved the atmosphere and people, so I decided to focus my search in academic settings. Now that I knew *where* I wanted to work the next question was how do I find a job in the hundreds of universities throughout the country? I decided that I wanted to stay in the general vicinity of the St. Louis area because my family is here. By searching on the internet, I was able to find a few job-hunting search engines specifically for universities and community colleges around the country. These search engines allowed me the opportunity to search open positions at universities or community colleges with which I was not familiar. All I had to do was input my information and what I was looking for and it did all the hard work for me. In addition, I diligently checked the job postings of all the community colleges and universities in the Metro-East area. I made an effort to check job postings every Monday and Wednesday. Retaining a “search schedule” assisted me in staying focused on the task of finding a job. After eight months of hard work and painstaking searching, I received an e-mail from my now employer, Washington University in St. Louis. Hooray!

The next step was the interview. I think the key to a successful interview is to view it as a sales pitch. You are there to sell yourself to your possible employer. No one knows you better than *you*. Key points to remember are to (a) dress appropriately. (It’s always better to be overdressed than underdressed.) (b) think positive, be positive and convince the employer there is no one out there who is going to be a better candidate and do a better job than you! and (c) be prepared. A number of websites list the most frequently asked interview questions. Print out a list of questions, think about your responses and practice with someone, if possible. Even if your interviewer doesn’t ask those particular questions, you have been actively thinking about your traits and qualities and will be able to respond quickly and easily. You’ll be much more confident during your interview if you have thought about possible responses beforehand.

Overall, my advice to you is to stay focused and be patient. I found a great job; what you want is out there and you’ll find it too. Good Luck!



University Missouri-St. Louis
Department of Sociology-707 Tower
One University Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63121-4400
(314) 516-6366; e-mail: porterfielda@umsl.edu

Come visit us on the web!

www.umsl.edu/divisions/artscience/sociology

Department Chair: Chikako Usui
Managing Editor: Amanda Porterfield

Join Our E-mail List!

Please e-mail porterfielda@umsl.edu with your name and e-mail address. You will be notified of upcoming Sociology Department events.

We are grateful to all those who gave gifts of cash to the Department of Sociology.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Congratulations, Winners of Graduate Student Awards for Excellence

Thanks to the Graduate School, we made special awards to two graduate students in recognition of their academic excellence. Winners are: Clifton Glore and Brian Quarnstrom.

Clifton Glore

I have a Masters degree in social work from St. Louis University and an M.B.A. from Webster University. Currently, I coordinate the Human Services Career Program at St. Louis Community College-Meramec. Along with coordinating the career program I teach courses such as Introduction to Human Services, Theories and Skills, and Group Practice in Human Services.

I'm attending the University of Missouri-St. Louis to pursue a Masters degree in sociology. I am also working on a certificate in gerontology. I enjoy teaching and hope someday to teach sociology full time. Some of my favorite courses at UMSL include Race, Crime, and Justice; Feminist Theory & Social Science Research; Aging and Health Behavior; Health Care Policy; and Social Perspectives on Catastrophic Events, High-Risk Technologies, & Homeland Security Policies (in which I earned a certificate in *Terrorism Prevention for Law Enforcement Professionals*).

What I enjoy most about the courses I take at UMSL is hearing about the research done by my professors. They have done some amazing research in both national and international settings. [Note: Clifton began his graduate career with us in Fall 2006.]

Brian Quarnstrom

My experience in the M.A. Sociology program at UMSL has been beneficial in many avenues of my life. With a career in federal law enforcement, the application of theories and perspectives obtained through the sociology courses has been a very valuable resource to my everyday work life. I particularly found Dr. Iron's course on the *Sociology of Catastrophes and Homeland Security* to be immensely interesting and provided great instruction on "thinking outside the box." Also, Dr. McCall's course on Organizations and Environments helped sociologically explain the structural rigidity and social behavior that is often found when working in a bureaucracy. These courses plus others have helped me professionally by heightening my analytical skills and social awareness. They also served as a great resource for policy analysis and critical thinking.

In addition to providing insight into occurrences within the job function, the instruction I have received in the Sociology program has provided with me the skills to help dissect everyday social interaction. I was especially intrigued by Erving Goffman's theories of the presentation of self and symbolic interaction, which have helped me understand the order of interpersonal relationships and social interaction. The knowledge acquired in the Sociology program has greatly benefited me and is sure to continue influencing my life, professional or otherwise. I would like to credit the professors in the program for having personal interest in the success of the students and for creating an "open door environment" that makes participation in the program an enjoyable experience. [Note: Brian has earned MA in December 2007.]
