

VERITAS VINCIT

Spring 2015

Inside this issue:

Message from the Chair	1-2
Undergraduate News	3-5
Graduate News	6
Editorial	7
Awards Ceremony	8-10
Students' Forum	11-16
Big Lights, Big University	17
Ferguson is Everywhere	18-20

Message from the Chair

Dr. Raymond Russell

As the 2014-2015 academic year draws to a close, many of our students have begun to make plans for the summer and/or for life after UCR. Christina Munoz, for example, has been accepted into UCR's Summer Research Internship for 2015. Assistant Professor Tanya Nieri will serve as Christina's faculty mentor for this internship. In addition, Asbeidy Solano has been accepted into the Minority Summer Research Internship Program, with Professor Ellen Reese as her faculty mentor. We congratulate Christina and Asbeidy for their acceptance into these programs.

Many graduating seniors are making plans to pursue Master's degrees in the fall. For example, Diana Kim is entering the University of San Francisco's program leading to a Master's in Counseling Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy. Mario Marquez is entering UCLA's program in Social Work, and Evin Capel has received a fellowship from UCLA's School of Social Welfare. Elisabeth Ramos will study for a Master's in Criminal Justice and Law & Society at UC Irvine. Shanequa Black is entering the program leading to a Master's in Social Work at USC. Micah Carlson will pursue a Master's in Social Work at CSU San Bernardino. Andrew Perez is entering the Master's program in Sociology at CSU Sacramento. In addition, three of our graduating seniors are entering PhD programs in Sociology: Ann Nguyen at UCSB, Joel Herrera at UCLA, and John Maldonado at Princeton University. We are proud of all of these students and our other 2015 graduates, and wish all of them success in their future studies and careers.

Congratulations are also due to six seniors who will receive special honors at graduation in recognition of outstanding achievements as undergraduates. Anna Sanchez will be honored as the Outstanding Graduate for 2014-2015 in the Sociology/Law & Society program. Connie Choi will receive the award given to the Outstanding Graduate in the Sociology and Administrative Studies joint major. Finally Genieve Co, Joel Herrera, John Maldonado, and Haoi-An Nguyen will share this year's award given to the Outstanding Graduate in Sociology.

Many of our graduate students are also making interesting plans for summer research or for work on dissertations. Julisa McCoy has accepted a summer fellowship/internship with the Women's Health and Rights team at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., to help her prepare for a dissertation on reproductive rights. Alessandro Morosin has received a grant from UC Mexus that will allow him to attend the Oaxaca Summer Institute in Mexico. Alessandro will use the visit to begin pre-dissertation field work on how rural communities respond to mining projects.

REMINDERS

- Giving to Sociology
- ASA Conference is in Chicago
- Society for Study of Social Problems Conference is in Chicago
- Articles for Fall Issue
- Editorial Board

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UCR graduate student Ian Breckenridge-Jackson is a co-founder and co-director of The Lower Ninth Ward Living Museum in New Orleans. Ian and his collaborators have recently been awarded a Community Action Research Initiative (CARI) grant through the American Sociological Association to support their work with the museum. The grant will help fund focus groups among residents of the Lower Ninth Ward to explore their understandings of the past, present, and future of the neighborhood.

Several of our graduate students have won fellowships to support work on dissertations in the coming academic year. Three have been chosen to receive competitive fellowships that are awarded annually by UCR's Graduate Division. Elizabeth Schwarz and Ninochka (Nosh) McTaggart will receive support through Dissertation Year Program fellowships, and Michaela Curran has been selected as a recipient of the Graduate Research Mentorship Award. In addition, Edwin Elias has been awarded a Dissertation Research Grant from the University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States [UC MEXUS] to support work on his dissertation, "New Dreams: The Impact of DACA on Undocumented Youth." We congratulate all of these students for being selected to receive these competitive grants and fellowships, and wish them success in their research. We also congratulate Dinur Blum, Jermaine Cathcart, Caryn Gerstenberger, and Natasha Radojic for their selection as the Outstanding TAs in Sociology for 2014-2015.

Other UCR Sociology graduate students, such as Ryan Trettevik and Jacob Apkarian, have recently defended their PhD dissertations successfully, or are scheduled to do so by the end of the year. Jacob Apkarian has accepted a position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Virginia Tech. Tony Roberts has accepted a similar position at Cal State LA, while Jason Struna will join the faculty at the University of Puget Sound. We have grown close to all of these students during the years that they have spent as our students, our graduate research assistants, and our TAs, and so we will miss all of them, but they go with our congratulations and best wishes.

Our faculty have also been quite busy in 2014-2015 earning academic distinctions of various kinds. Professor Jan Stets is now completing the first of a planned three years as Co-Editor of the journal *Social Psychology Quarterly*. After spending a year as President-Elect of the Pacific Sociological Association, Professor Robert Nash Parker has now become its President, while Associate Professor Karen Pyke has become the PSA's new President-Elect. Associate Professor Pyke was also selected to receive this year's PSA award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching, while Professor Stets and Professor of the Graduate Division Peter Burke are co-winners of this year's PSA award for Distinguished Contributions to *Sociological Perspectives*. Professor Christopher Chase-Dunn began 2014-2015 as President of the California Sociological Association. He was also honored at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in August 2014, when the ASA's section on the Political Economy of the World System presented him with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

The previous two issues of this newsletter were the first to be circulated to as many former students in Sociology at UCR as UC had email addresses for. Reaching out to so many people produced warm responses from many former students. Some have paid visits to us, many have sent emails, and many have also made generous gifts. We use such donations to help undergraduate and graduate students to attend and make presentations at conferences, and to defray costs associated with their research. The students, faculty, and staff of UCR's Department of Sociology are grateful to the many alumni and friends of our department whose gifts help make such support possible. We also look forward to receiving more emails about what our alumni have been doing since graduation.

Spring 2015 Undergraduate News

Ellen Reese, Sociology Undergraduate Adviser

Outstanding Undergraduate in Sociology Awards: This year, we had a grand total of six winners for our Department's Outstanding Undergraduate Sociology Awards, which are given by the Undergraduate Affairs Committee for the students considered most outstanding in their major. We congratulate each of the following students on their accomplishments.

Outstanding Undergraduate in Sociology: Co-winners are *Genieve Co, Joel Herrera, John Maldonado, and Hai-An Nguyen*

Outstanding Undergraduate in Sociology/Administrative Studies: *Connie Choi*

Outstanding Undergraduate in Sociology/Law & Society: *Anna Sanchez*

Sociology Honors Club: As Undergraduate Adviser, I had the pleasure of serving as the faculty mentor for the Sociology Honors Club, which is now open to any Sociology major with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or above.

In Fall 2014, Cinthya Gonzalez was elected as President of the Sociology Honors Club. At its first meeting, the group voted to open admission to the club to majors of all levels with a GPA of 3.5 and above. They also voted in favor of organizing several workshops for Sociology majors. These included a Fall 2014 workshop focusing on the graduate and professional school application process, and two offerings of a "Career Workshops for Sociology Majors" (held in Winter 2015 and Spring 2015). The career workshops, led by Elizabeth Montgomery from the Career Services office, were particularly popular, and attended by more than 80 students. The power point presentations for these workshops can be found under the "Sociology Career and Graduate/Professional Schools workshop" link at:

http://sociology.ucr.edu/undergraduate_program/index.html

In Spring 2014, we held an open meeting of the Sociology Honors Club for all eligible students. At that meeting, we elected new officers to serve in the 2015-2016 academic year. Beginning their terms this April, the new Sociology Honors Club officers for 2015-16 are:

Nicole L Martin (Co-President)

Margarita Garcia-Torres (Co-President)

Cecilia Ureno (Vice President)

Alejandra Nuevo (Secretary/Treasurer)

The new Honors Club officers and I are in the process of organizing a student panel on the graduate and professional school application process, to be held in Spring 2015, that will feature graduating seniors who have been admitted to various programs this year. The group agreed to meet about once per month during the academic year and to organize at least one workshop or event per quarter. Students also expressed interest in providing informal peer mentoring for Sociology majors.

Allies Safe Zone Seminar: With support from the Sociology faculty, Toi Thibodeaux (Program Director of the LGBT Resource Center), the Sociology Department Colloquium Committee, and I worked together to organize and promote an Allies Safe Zone seminar for members of our department and other members of our campus community. A total of 23 Sociology faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students (including 6 faculty members), participated in the seminar held on April 23, 2015. At the training, we learned about issues affecting lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and intersexed people and about local resources available to them. Those completing the training were invited to become official "allies" that agree to provide "a safe haven, a listening ear, and reliable support" for LGBT people.

A Trans Allies seminar will be offered on Thursday, 5/8/15 at 1-4pm in HUB 268 open to those who have already completed the Allies Safe Zone seminar. As the LGBT Resource Center describes it, "This training session includes a transgender/genderqueer student panel; dialogue around gender identity issues; resources and referral training; and strategies for addressing genderism and transphobia. Participants obtain helpful materials, choose to sign the Trans Allies contract and receive a "Trans ALLY" placard." To register for the Trans Allies seminar, contact go to the UC Learning Center website, <http://www.uclearning.ucr.edu> If you have trouble with that website, you can RSVP by contacting Toi Thibodeaux at 951.827.2267 or toi.thibodeaux@ucr.edu

Internships: Sociology majors have opportunities to obtain course credit for both research internships and internships in the community.

Sociology 197: Research Internship (1-4 units; S/NC) is a directed research course open to upper-division undergraduate students through which you assist a faculty member with their research. You enroll through a paper form (available from Student Advisers) with consent of a ladder-ranked faculty (those listed as faculty on the Sociology department website).

Sociology 198-I: Individual Internship is a course through which you can obtain professional experience by volunteering for a local organization, such as a local non-profit organization, a business, service center, or labor union. Up to 15 upper division students in Sociology who have earned a C grade or better in Soc 1 (or Soc 1H), Soc 4, and have completed at least 12 units of upper division sociology course work are eligible to enroll in this course. For more information about the Sociology 198-I course, how to find potential site supervisors, and how to enroll in this course, please see: http://sociology.ucr.edu/undergraduate_program/Sociology198-I.html

In the 2014-15 academic year, I supervised a total of 38 Sociology 198-I internships (with a few students repeating the course for more than one quarter). Students gained valuable professional skills and experience while they worked with various organizations in the Southern California region and in Washington DC, including various social service organizations, businesses, government agencies, and other types of community and labor organizations.

Sociology 199H: Senior Honors Research and **Sociology 195: Senior Thesis.** A total of 5 Sociology graduating seniors are completing senior thesis projects this 2014-15 academic year through Sociology 199H/Sociology 195. Their names, thesis titles, and advisers are listed below

Micah Carlson

Thesis Title: Aging Out of Youth Culture: An Exploration into the Formations of Lifestyle and Career Choices of the 'Punk' Adult

Faculty Adviser: Christopher Chase-Dunn

Cinthya Gonzalez

Thesis Title: Factors Shaping Transfer Students' Academic Success

and Integration within Higher Education: An Evaluation of UCR's Transfer Outreach Program

Faculty Adviser: Ellen Reese

Joel Herrera

Thesis Title: Globalization, (Anti)Neoliberalism, and Left Turns in Latin America

Faculty Advisers: Christopher Chase-Dunn and Matthew Mahutga

Roman Nunez

Thesis Title: The Perceptions of Campus Climate on Undergraduate Student-Parents' Academic Performance

Faculty Adviser: Tanya Nieri

Anna Sanchez

Title: Campus Involvement and Student-Parents

Faculty Adviser: Tanya Nieri

Using funds from the Sociology Department's capstone seminar development grant, all five of these students presented their research at the 2014 meeting of the California Sociological Association in Riverside. In addition, some of these students also presented their research at the 2015 meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association in Long Beach and/or the 2015 Undergraduate Research Symposium at UC-Riverside.

For more information about enrolling in the Sociology 199H: Sociology Honors Research course for 2015-16, students should contact the Sociology Undergraduate Adviser, Ellen Reese (ellen.reese@ucr.edu). Students must be a graduating senior have an overall GPA of 3.5 or above or consent of the instructor to enroll in Sociology 199H.

New Capstone Seminars Offered and Approved: With support of our current Chair, the Sociology Department is committed to increasing the number of small, capstone seminars offered to our majors. Towards this end, Department offered several capstone seminars through its new, Sociology 186 (E-Z): Topics in Sociology series this year. These included Sociology 186-E: Mind, Brain, and Society, taught by Dr. Alexandra Maryanski in Fall 2014, and Sociology 186-G: Seminar in Micro-Sociology, taught by Dr. Jonathan Turner in Spring 2015. In addition, Dr. Pyke offered a two-unit course, Sociology 152: Qualitative Research Seminar with a Focus on Occupations in Winter 2015.

The university has approved a new open-topic course, Sociology 187: Capstone Seminar in Sociology, which can be offered next year. Through this course, Sociology juniors and seniors can enroll in a small seminar. To enroll, students must have upper-division status and have completed Sociology 3 and 4 with a C- or above. With help from Edwin Elias (our Capstone Seminar Development Coordinator), five faculty have already developed syllabi for courses that can be offered through this course:

Dr. Adalberto Aguirre, "Mexican Americans in the Social Sciences"

Dr. Augustine Kposowa, "Immigration and Health"

Dr. Tanya Nieri, "Sociology of Health and Health Disparities"

Dr. Sharon Oselin, "Women in Crime"

Dr. Ellen Reese, "Social Movements in the United States"

New Advising Staff: The Departments of Sociology and Anthropology are currently in the process of hiring a new student adviser to work alongside with our two current student advisers, Holly Easley and Kimberly Etzweiler. This is welcome news, especially since our student advisers work with about 1,000 Sociology, Sociology/Administrative Studies, and Sociology/Law and Society majors along with about 500 Anthropology majors. Once hired, the new adviser is likely to begin the position this summer.



Message from the Graduate Director Dr. Katja Guenther

The 2014-15 academic year has been a year of growth and change for the graduate program in sociology. We welcomed a wonderful new cohort of nine students in the fall of 2014. The members of the 2014 cohort have brought a diverse range of interests and perspectives into our department. A particularly sociable and vocal group of students, they have enlivened our seminars and our department hallways, and I fully expect they will enrich the discipline with their innovative programs of research. An ambitious group, several of them applied for external grants this year, and Jessica Moronez received an Honorable Mention in the Ford Foundation Fellowship competition.

Our current graduate students—new and continuing—also supported our efforts at recruiting a fantastic new cohort for fall, 2015. Eight new graduate students will join the program in the fall. The cohort includes two recipients of the Eugene Cota Robles Award and one recipient of the new Provost's Fellowship, of which only ten were awarded campus-wide. Our new 2015 cohort members are:

Patrick Braciszewski, BA in Sociology from Drexel University, Social Psychology and Organization & Institutions

Melanie Kushida, BA in Sociology, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Social Psychology and Gender

Allison Monterrosa, BA and MA in Sociology, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Gender, Race & Class, and Criminology & Sociolegal Studies

Teresa Neal, BA in History, University of Oregon, MA in History, San Diego State University, currently a PhD candidate in History at UC Irvine, PEGSC

Evelyn Pruneda, BA in Politics, Occidental College, Master's in Public Administration, California State University, Fresno, Race & Class and PEGSC

Drew Reese, BA in business administration at UCR, Organizations & Institutions, Social Psychology

Zeinab Shuker, BA and MA, Sociology from the University of Memphis, PEGSC and Gender

Min Yoo, BA in Sociology, Occidental College, Race & Class

In addition to helping recruit our incoming cohort, graduate students across cohorts participated in our faculty recruitment efforts. While we regrettably don't expect to have any new faculty joining the department in fall, 2015, candidate visits presented graduate students with opportunities to hear about new research in the discipline, observe the process of job searching, and experience job talks. Participation in these searches has benefits for both students and the department: students experience important professional socialization, while also helping our recruitment efforts by impressing our visitors with their engagement and ideas.

As the academic year comes to a close, we now also prepare to say farewell to several students who have recently or will be completing their doctoral studies with us, including Jake Apkarian, Tony Jacobs, Natasha Radojicic, Jason Struna, and Ryan Trettevik. Prof. Russell's contribution to our newsletter details more about their plans. We wish them the best in their future pursuits, and hope they will keep in touch.

I myself am also saying farewell to the sociology graduate program as I am joining the Department of Gender and Sexuality Studies here at UCR, and am thus stepping down as Graduate Adviser in sociology. I of course will be just a few buildings away in INTS, and invite you to stay in contact and visit me there. Working with graduate students in my capacity as Graduate Adviser has been a rewarding experience for me, and I wish all graduate students the best for fulfilling experiences as sociologists.

Police Violence Undermines American Foreign Policy

Augustine J. Kposowa

For years, the United States has prided itself on being a moral force for good in the world. Indeed, the State Department regularly publishes its annual **Country Reports of Human Rights Practices** on nearly all nations receiving assistance and all member states of the United Nations in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended and the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. At its website, the Department of State describes the reports as covering “internationally recognized individual, civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements.” <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/reports/>. On page 35 of the 2010 **National Security Strategy**, the Obama administration proudly proclaims: “The United States believes certain values are universal and will work to promote them worldwide. These include an individual’s freedom to speak their mind, assemble without fear, worship as they please, and choose their own leaders; they also include dignity, tolerance, and equality among all people, and the fair and equitable administration of justice.”

Accumulating evidence of police violence in the forms of rampant shooting deaths of unarmed citizens, beatings, and other sadistic practices is eroding not only the legitimacy of US police forces as presently constituted, but US moral leadership and prestige in the world, an outcome that complicates diplomacy at both bilateral and multi lateral levels between the nation and other countries. In their totality, the killings constitute significant violations of fundamental human rights as enshrined in the UDHR, for the ***taking of another person’s life is the ultimate denial of that individual’s right to live***, granted to them by their maker.

The United States is signatory to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. Due to its police actions, the country now stands accused of violating **Article 3** (Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person); **Article 5** (No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) [choking as in New York was inhuman and torture]; **Article 7** (All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law). It has seemed over the years, especially since 2012 that Black men and women are NOT entitled to equal protection of the law, given the frequency with which they have been murdered by police, the indifference shown by prosecutors, politicians, and grand juries, and the incredible ease with which killers have been let go. The nation is in denial of a serious problem.

It is rather ironic that for one country in the Western Hemisphere, the State Department wrote as follows: “Significant human rights-related problems included police and military involvement in serious abuses, including unlawful killings, physical abuse, torture, and disappearances.” The foregoing was about Mexico, on page 2 of that country’s 2013 Human Rights Report. However, if one were to remove references to ‘military’ and ‘disappearances,’ the description may very well describe the US in recent memory (2012 to 2015). The resulting entry could then read: In the United States, in 2014 “significant human rights- related problems included police in serious abuses, including unlawful killings, beatings, choking of Black citizens; Security forces, acting both in and out of the line of duty, arbitrarily or unlawfully killed several Black persons, often with impunity.” Does the expression ‘American exceptionalism’ really mean anything anymore? If so, what?

How seriously would other countries ever take US accusations of human rights abuses when the whole world witnesses similar or worse violations in America? Would the President be able to raise human rights issues with foreign dignitaries anymore, given how hypocritical that might look? This is just one way that U.S. police may have undermined American foreign policy. It has occurred at a time when the country was rebuilding its image following the damage done to it by the Iraq invasion, Abu Ghraib torture videos, Guantanamo, the existence of CIA torture chambers in various countries (including Poland, Lithuania, Thailand, Romania, Afghanistan, and many others). Yes, US police are surely making America’s image rebranding much more difficult!

2015 Department of Sociology Awards Ceremony

The Department of Sociology held its annual **Awards and Recognition Reception** on Wednesday, 28 May 2015, and awards were given in the following categories:

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE IN SOCIOLOGY/ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

Connie Choi: Connie Choi has the highest overall GPA in her major (3.6) and an upper-division GPA of 3.8. Dr. Nieri reports that she highly recommends her for this honor since she was impressed by Connie's "commitment to learning and excellence" She goes on to add that, "Connie Choi took Soc 144 with me in Winter 2014. She received an A+ and was, thus, in the top 1% of the students in the class. She received an A+ on her final paper which was a well-written and thoughtful review of the research literature on marital rape and its physical and psychological consequences." Ms. Choi plans to apply to a graduate program in the field of social work.



Connie Choi receives the Outstanding Graduate in Sociology/Administrative Studies Award from Chair, Dr. Raymond Russell

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE IN SOCIOLOGY/LAW & SOCIETY

Anna Sanchez: In addition to maintaining an overall GPA of 3.96, Anna Sanchez is completing an excellent senior thesis this year, "Non-traditional Struggles: Campus Involvement within the UCR Student-Parent Population." Through this project, she analyzes original survey data collected among UCR's student-parents by Ms. Sanchez and other members of the Student Parent Research Team last spring. Her senior thesis adviser, Dr. Tanya Nieri, describes Ms. Sanchez as "excellent student" who is "highly engaged" and "a creative problem solver." She also reports that her research is highly significant as it provides new findings for the "academic literatures on family and higher education" and can help to "inform UCR policy and programming for student parents." Ms. Sanchez plans to go to law school after graduating from UCR.

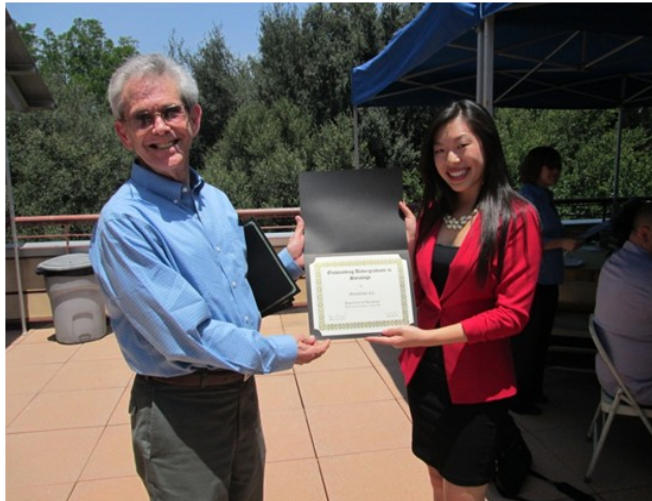


Anna Sanchez receives the Outstanding Graduate in Sociology/Law and Society Award from Department Chair, Dr. Raymond Russell

Annual Awards Ceremony, 28 May 2015

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE IN SOCIOLOGY (4 CO-WINNERS)

Genevieve Co: A double major in Sociology and Business Administration, Ms. Co has maintained an overall 4.0 GPA and completed two senior theses through the university honors program, both of which were presented at UCR's Undergraduate Research Symposium. Dr. Nieri was her mentor for Sociology senior thesis, completed in 2012, which was entitled "Perceived Division of Labor & Work-Family Conflict Among U.S. Married and Cohabiting Women in Heterosexual Couples." She later published this paper with Dr. Nieri in UCR's Undergraduate Research Journal. Her 2nd thesis in Business, completed in 2014, was "Deliciousness, Made for You"- Strategic Marketing Plan of McDonald's McCafé Beverage Line." Professor Karen Pyke commends her not only for her academic excellence but also for her high level of community and campus involvement. She reports that, "Genevieve Co founded a [non-profit] organization [Love for Humanity] that gives backpacks with healthy food to poor elementary students on Fridays so they have food to eat over the weekend. Meanwhile, Genevieve served as a tutor in the UCR University Writing Department assisting 18 students individually on a weekly basis and was a mentor to incoming students in the UCR CHASS First Learning Communities." In 2013, Ms. Co received a university honors scholarship for her experiential learning and off-campus activities with Love for Humanity and she plans to continue to lead the organization as the organization's treasurer and board member. Her immediate career aspirations include freelance strategic, marketing consulting and management and she plans to pursue a MBA degree.



Genevieve Co receives the Outstanding Graduate in Sociology Award from Department Chair, Dr. Raymond Russell

John Maldonado: In addition to maintaining an overall GPA of 4.0, John Maldonado (a double-major in Sociology and Ethnic Studies) completed an excellent senior thesis last year, "Overcrowding as a Determinant of Violence in California State Prisons." Professor David Swanson, his senior thesis adviser, writes, "Of the more than 4,000 undergraduate students I have taught, Mr. Maldonado rates in the top one percent in terms of general academic capabilities (intellectual ability and curiosity, high ethical standards, drive, attention to detail, willingness to work hard, and the ability to work effectively on several projects simultaneously)." Mr. Maldonado also worked on Professor Steven Brint's Colleges & Universities project and participated in the Mentoring Summer Research Internship Program at UCR last summer. Mr. Maldonado has accepted a generous offer from the Sociology graduate program at Princeton University, where he will pursue his PhD degree.

Joel Herrera: In addition to maintaining an overall GPA of 3.9, Joel Herrera completed an excellent senior thesis entitled, "Globalization, Liberalization, and Left Turns in Latin America." He has also completed several co-authored papers for publication with Professor Christopher Chase-Dunn and actively participated in multiple research conferences. Dr. Chase-Dunn writes that, "His participation on collaborative research projects and his initiative in the individual research he is doing for his senior project demonstrate that he is an enthusiastic and productive sociological researcher who is performing far above the level of his undergraduate peers. He will have an important career in social science." Joel has accepted a generous offer from UCLA's graduate program, where he will pursue his PhD degree.



Joel Herrera receives the Outstanding Graduate in Sociology Award from Department Chair, Raymond Russell

Haoi-An Nguyen: In addition to carrying a cumulative GPA of 3.794, and a Soc GPA of 3.861, Haoi-An completed an excellent senior thesis entitled "Labor Market Failure in Advanced Capitalist States." She was also an active participant in Professor Mahutga's graduate political economy seminar. Describing Nguyen's academic merits, her senior thesis adviser Matthew Mahutga writes, "The theoretical sophistication she displayed in her essay examinations was higher than many graduate students I've encountered over the course of my career... Hoai-An is among the top 1 percent of students I've had the privilege to teach here at Riverside... She will undoubtedly make us proud for years to come." Ms. Nguyen has accepted a generous offer from UC Santa Barbara's sociology program, where she plans to pursue her PhD degree.



STUDENTS' FORUM

Physicians as Scapegoats in Chinese Health System Reform

By Shu Xuan

Shu Xuan is Senior Major in Public Policy at the University of California, Riverside. Her academic interests are in Policy making in Medicine, Political Sociology, and Social Change in China.



On March 31, 2015, Dr. Zhou Xiaohui, head of the surgical department of Sichuan People's Hospital, committed suicide at home because of continuous threats and assault from his patients. On October 25, 2013, Dr. Wang Yunjie, chief physician of Wenling Hospital in southern China, was killed by a patient, who was not satisfied with his results of a surgery. Two other physicians were seriously injured. On March 23, 2012, a 17 year old boy at the First Affiliated Hospital of Harbin Medical University in northern China, fatally stabbed Wang Hao, a junior doctor. Three other physicians were injured in the attack. Both Dr. Wang Yunjie and Wang Hao were not involved in the murderers' treatments in the hospitals.

The above incidents are not unique, and are not some anomaly. According to McKinsey's survey of nearly 6,000 physicians in 3,300 hospitals, 59% of doctors said they had been verbally assaulted by a patient or a patient's family member. And 6% said they have been physically assaulted by patients. Statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Health show that in 2006, there were 9831 cases of violence reports in hospitals, and 5519 physicians, nurses and hospital staff were harmed to some extent. However, by 2010 the number of violence reports had increased to 17243, representing a 71% increase annually.

As a result, physicians worry about their safety and consider their profession as a hazardous occupation. In addition medical students are concerned about the wisdom of selecting medicine as a field of study. A recent large survey showed that over 70% of physicians would not want their own children to go into the profession, and 76% of the same respondents would not choose medicine, given a second chance. Such sentiments are leading to fears of a human resource crisis in the medical profession.

In order to find out the underline reasons why the current patient-doctor relationship is so deteriorative in China, we have to review the historic reforms of the China health care system. Since its birth in 1949, the People's Republic of China has undertaken four health system reforms. The first one was that the Chinese communist party created a health system similar to that of the former Soviet Union. It was government owned, and operated all health care facilities and employed the workforce. No health insurance was needed because services were nearly free.

In 1984, a second phase began when "government funding of hospitals dropped dramatically...The government continued to own hospitals but exerted little control over the behavior of health care organizations, which acted like for-profit entities in a mostly unregulated market" (David & William, 2015, p.1281). However, the reform left the vast majority of population uninsured in a free-market health care system. In addition, due to the low level of government funding, the salary of the health care workforce was kept at a relatively very low level. On the other hand, government allowed generous prices for drugs and technical services. Therefore, the system gave incentives for physicians to over-prescribe and over-investigate. Consequently, costs of care increased while access for citizens declined. "By the late 1990s, this market-reform experiment had resulted in public anger and distrust toward health care institutions and professionals, and even in widespread physical attacks on physicians. Discontent with lack of access to health care fueled public protests, especially in less affluent rural areas, that threatened social stability and the political control of the Communist Party" (David & William, 2015, p.1283).

In 2003, the third reform focused on a modest health insurance covering some hospital expenses for rural residents. By 2008, “China’s leaders had concluded that major reforms in both insurance and the delivery system were necessary to shore up the system and ensure social stability” (David & William Hsiao, 2015, p.1283). By 2012, “a government-subsidized insurance system provided 95% of the population with modest but comprehensive health coverage” (David & William, 2015, p.1283). However, the problem on how to reform public hospitals has not been resolved.

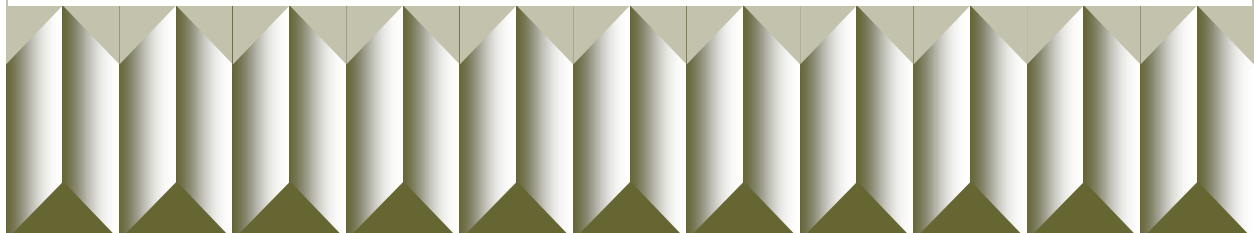
In 2012, the government announced the fourth reform goal: they would allow private investors to own up to 20% of China’s hospitals by 2015, and double the preexisting rate. This time, reforming public hospitals is taking center stage. Therefore, the success of Chinese health system reform depends on whether the public hospital can be restructured. As we can see, Chinese government is using “private sector competition to stimulate changes in the otherwise stymied public hospital reform,” and “partly naively treating the health sector as just another sector to boost economic growth” (Winnie & William, 2014, p.58). Consequently, China returns to greater reliance on the market again. However, this time government plays a pivotal role in the reform of health system.

As we can see, health system reforms in China seek political outcomes, which means that ideologies of the government and the market are the main drives for the reforms. However, according to China’s experiments, it has been shown that laissez-faire market forces for funding and delivering health care results in a faulty health care system. Therefore, some government involvement is necessary. The current Chinese health system is unique because on one hand, public hospitals as non-profit organizations, undertake the basic function of promoting a “socialist harmonious society.” On the other hand, the operation of the public hospitals is driven by a market mechanism, which concentrates on revenue-generating activities. Such a distorted system makes physicians scapegoats blamed by the public, and turns their profession into a risky occupation.

The ongoing fourth reform in China is facing many challenges, such as the large population national-wide, an aging population, the big gap between the poor and the rich in accessing or affording reasonable quality care, and the deteriorating doctor-patient relationship etc. There is a long way to go for the health system reform in China. The consequences of past and on-going changes are still unknown, and future remains uncertain and unpredictable.

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Race as Basis for Alarming Police Brutality in the United States

By Nicole L. Martin

Nicole L. Martin is a third year Major in the Sociology Department at UC Riverside. Nicole's primary focus is in law and society, especially the administration of law as it relates to racial minorities. In summer 2015, Nicole will be doing an internship in the UCDC Program in the nation's capital.



I vividly remember skipping through the playground, two ponytails swinging, as I excitedly invited some of my friends to my birthday sleepover. This burst of energy soon crashed down as one of my 'friends' informed me she was not able to attend my party. I was one of the few Black students in my elementary school, which predominantly comprised Whites and Persians. She hesitated and said, "My mom does not let me sleepover at Black people's houses." Being a naïve 7 year old, I hysterically cried. I was hurt, shocked, but mostly confused. One's parent should be their child's role model, who is responsible for instilling the right values to their child. My 'friend's' mother misled her daughter into thinking Blacks were dangerous and untrustworthy. Before this instance, my race had never been a defining feature that separated me from others.

My perspective on race has obviously changed since that experience. I am no longer blind to the deep seated anti-Black prejudice, and the accompanying discrimination and unequal treatment persistently accorded African Americans in the United States. Being an African American woman has made me critical of the type of society I reside in. The U.S. offers a very misleading image about equality for all people. African Americans frequently face daily indignities due to their physical appearance. Erroneous stereotypes have been attached to Blacks, making them seem dangerous and suspicious. These exaggerated beliefs have an effect on the nation's agents of social control, namely law enforcement and their behavior and actions towards African Americans. However, the issue of police brutality is now more apparent than hidden. I would like to contemplate the idea that our society has truly progressed, but in light of recent and ongoing dramatic events in police misbehavior, the bigotry expressed in comments by police unions, such as the Fraternal Order of Police, failure to indict police officers even in presence of overwhelming evidence of malfeasance, it would be foolhardy for any Black person to believe in progress or sleep peacefully.

Police brutality was always there, but technology and social media have amplified it in a way never seen before. There are some who hold on to a misguided belief that race no longer matters. They may even use as 'evidence' the election of President Obama, or the appointment of an African American Attorney-General. However, such examples constitute exceptionalism, and they do not reflect fundamental shifts in societal attitudes and behavior. The issue of police violence suggests that in some instances, we have reverted to the past, especially keeping in mind the anti-black origins of police forces in the U.S. (slave patrols, for example). The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal...." Yet throughout American history, the statement above has in effect become nothing more than an empty slogan, like so many others in this land, for example, 'equal opportunity for all' though contraindicated by a class-based society, or 'innocent until proved guilty' despite the reality that in most instances, a mere **allegation** of wrongdoing is enough to destroy someone's reputation permanently.

Excessive and inappropriate use of force is prevalent in the U.S., with officers abusing power and taking advantage of citizens they are supposed to protect. The Rodney King police drama was in 1992, yet similar cases have recently occurred. Police officers who engage in beatings, shooting deaths, and choking deaths rely on the facile and often 'convenient' excuse of their lives being threatened. As a result, they are often let off with no charge, even if the suspect or target was unarmed or complying with instructions. Young black males are the main targets of police abuse of power because of persistent stereotypes against them. These stereotypes stem from ideologies promoting white superiority that have been prevalent since the antebellum period and pervade almost every institution and daily social interaction in this country.

Trends have occurred with more recent publicized police brutality cases. With reference to Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Ezell Ford, John Crawford, unarmed black men were killed by white police officers. The year 2014 is one that Black people the world over may never look upon with favor when they consider the amount of violence perpetrated against their race by U.S. police forces.

"I can't breathe," murmured Eric Garner, in his last moments on earth before he was murdered by a white policeman, Daniel Pantaleo. He had put him in a chokehold, a banned practice in the New York Police Department (Lee 2014). McLaughlin (2014) states that in Cleveland, Ohio, Tamir Rice, a twelve-year old African American boy, was shot within seconds by white policemen. Due to the shooting, Tamir died the following day. Similarly in Beavercreek Ohio, John Crawford, was shot and killed by a white police officer in Walmart, for carrying a pellet gun from Walmart's sporting goods section (Seville 2014). In South Los Angeles, Ezell Ford was shot in the back during an investigative stop, while lying on the floor, and was reportedly complying with the officer (Mather & Winton 2014).

These gruesome and cruel incidents make it clear that we live in a White dominated society. American society glorifies Whites, and will do anything to protect a system rigged for their success. African Americans, on the other hand, are left defenseless and do not receive the same protection as Whites. These events are truly sickening, due to the fact that the departed were innocent and unarmed. Their only crime: **Living while Black!** Yet the people who caused their deaths are let off with little or no punishment, their consciences (if any) apparently cleared by a perception that the person they murdered was subhuman.

African Americans have received unequal treatment for hundreds of years, dating back to the founding of the Republic. The stereotypes originated during the antebellum period. The belief in white superiority remains. Beliefs that Blacks are inferior, aggressive, and dangerous have been present for over 150 years. In slavery, Blacks were treated inhumanely and were viewed as barbaric, hostile, and incompetent. Whites in that era believed Blacks were inferior and needed to be controlled. Whites viewed themselves as custodians of the Africans on the plantations, and believed it was their responsibility to keep them in order.

Today who is safe? I have a seventeen-year old brother, several family members, and friends who are young African American males that are not protected by the law force. Rather, they are subjects of suspicion. My brother could have easily been another headline for one who has lost his life due to police brutality. Nationwide, these events reveal that police take advantage of the marginalized, and are protectors of the elite and the status quo. Being African American can be terrifying if you constantly worry about your life being taken by someone in uniform waiving a badge and swinging guns even though you may just be minding your own business. I am troubled by the fact that I personally experienced discrimination due to my race at the age of 7, and yet at 20, the problem persists. For peace to reign, attitudes and beliefs must change. Too many have died; too many are in pain due to persistence of stereotypes and the devaluation of Blacks in American society. The nation can no longer live in national denial that there is something fundamentally wrong in our society. The fact that protesters have been shouting 'Black lives matter' is in itself an indictment of our country, for that is an issue that should be taken for granted. Imagine constant eulogies: 'White lives matter!'

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Spanish Speaking Women and the Sexual Aspects of Zumba

By Christine Munoz

Christine Muñoz is a third year Sociology and Spanish major. She is passionate about helping others and research. Christine is inspired to pursue a career in social work where she can help ethnic families from underprivileged backgrounds. She wants to do this by pursuing a Master's or PhD in Social Work. Christine would like to thank Dr. Tanya Nieri for her guidance and mentorship and the Undergraduate Research Mini-Grant for providing financial support.



Zumba, a Latin-inspired dance fitness program, has emerged as an immensely popular form of physical activity. Zumba is available in 185 countries and serving 14 million people worldwide. Zumba is different from traditional group fitness because of its blend of rhythms of Latin, hip-hop, and other world music into Latin dance styles. Zumba's minimal verbal cueing, simple, repetitive choreography, and focus on fun make it accessible to new consumers of physical activity and attractive to experienced consumers. Zumba features sexualized aspects and it is visible in some of the dance movements and music.

Zumba may provide strategies on reducing health disparities by attracting ethnic minority groups. Research on health disparities show that language barriers contribute to reduced access to and quality of care among ethnic minority groups. Cultural involvement and cultural care are seen by colleagues, specialists, and policy makers as essential to communicate with racial/ethnic minority populations. Latinos/Hispanics in the United States experience disproportionately high rates of cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes, and significant barriers to regular physical. Physical activity reduces the risk of disease, but Latinos/Hispanics in the United States have less access to exercise facilities and health programs. Research has not yet explored the reasons for Zumba's popularity. Its popularity and growth suggest that Zumba may have positive impacts on health disparities by attracting new consumers to physical activity and retaining existing consumers by providing culturally competent fitness services.

These factors are what led to my research question: How do Spanish-speaking women subjectively experience the sexual aspects of Zumba? My study is a part of a broader study of Zumba fitness focusing on ethnically diverse women of all ages. My analysis used a subsample of the data. Qualitative interviews were conducted in the Fall 2014 with 15 adult, female Zumba participants from metro Los Angeles and Inland Empire, CA. Interviews were completed in participants' chosen location, and were audio-recorded for about 1-2 hours. All 15 interviews were conducted in Spanish. The eligibility was to take Zumba in 12 months prior to interview, predominately Spanish Speaking, be female, and be over the age of 30. The participants received Target gift cards as incentives.

All 15 interviews were conducted in Spanish. The eligibility was to take Zumba in 12 months prior to interview, predominately Spanish Speaking, be female, and be over the age of 30. The participants received Target gift cards as incentives.

In the results, I learned that all 15 women loved Zumba. However, they differed in their reactions to the sexual aspects of Zumba. I categorized them in four groups: 1) Loved Zumba's sexual aspects: there were 7 participants that loved the sexual aspects and felt comfortable performing the sexual movements. 2) Accepted Zumba's sexual aspects: there were 4 of the participants accepted the sexual aspects but do not feel comfortable performing the sexual movements. 3) Disliked Zumba's sexual aspects: there were 2 participants that acknowledged the sexual aspects of Zumba but refused to perform them and went with alternative options. 4) Did not recognize Zumba's sexual aspects: There were two participants that did not acknowledge Zumba sexual aspects, but instead saw it as a workout.

In conclusion, women have different experiences of the sexual aspects of Zumba. The women can choose how to respond to the sexuality that is present without being judged for their choice. No matter what they choose, they like the activity. Thus, relative to other fitness options, Zumba may offer greater freedom to explore their sexuality through sexualized movement. Furthermore, within Zumba, women feel they have a choice about whether to engage in the sexual aspects. Zumba may be empowering through its expansion of choice.

An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 2015 Undergraduate Research Forum held at the University of California, Riverside. The study builds on prior and ongoing work by UCR sociology Professor Tanya Nieri and UCR graduate and Chancellor's Research Fellow Rachel Aguilar that examines Zumba participation among the general population of fitness consumers.

Bright Lights, Big University

Brighter LED lamps mean better visibility, with not much more energy consumption

By **Kris Lovekin** On MAY 28, 2015

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (www.ucr.edu) – Big Springs Drive has more of a glow after dark to brighten the way for UC Riverside students walking back and forth to the residence halls. The change comes from new LED lamps, which are brighter and more energy efficient.

The impetus for the project came from Samantha Ubillus, a UCR sophomore, who frequently walks back and forth after sunset. She saw too many dark bushes, and too many shadows. She researched LED lights and told Chancellor Kim A. Wilcox that the campus could just switch the lamps to LED, which stands for lightemitting diode.

Vice Chancellor Ron T. Coley made it a priority, and Ken Mueller, who directs the tradespeople who make physical improvements to the campus, asked the team to go make it happen.



New LED lamps make the walk a little brighter along Big Springs Drive.

PHOTO BY PETER PHUN

“We replaced the old 100 watt high pressure sodium fixtures with new high intensity LED fixtures that have four times the lighting performance with only a 43 watt increase in power consumption,” he said. They installed 16 new lamps along Big Springs Drive. Each lamp cost \$800. “These lamps are rated to last 100,000 hours,” Mueller said.

“Oh my gosh, it seems much brighter now,” said Ubillus, who is 19 and from Buena Park. “It was a dramatic difference,” she said, during the first few days after the change. She said her focus on the LED lights was prompted by a class assignment. She has settled on sociology as a major and she said she likes the way sociology looks at everyday things.

“Comments like Samantha’s are more important than people realize,” said Coley, who came to UCR recently from UC Berkeley. “If we are going to streamline our operation and make it more efficient, we need everyone’s suggestions.” These are the not the first lamps to be changed, Mueller said. Over the past three years, UC Riverside has been able to update about 10 percent of campus lighting with high efficiency LED lamps and fixtures. He said three of the most notable LED relamp projects are: Parking Lot 26, Physics 2000 lecture hall and the University Theatre.

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Ferguson is everywhere, the future is unwritten: A tumultuous year in review

By Alessandro Morosin

Alessandro is a third year doctoral student in UC Riverside's Sociology Department. He has interests in global political economy, social conflict, and theory. He will spend part of this summer in Southern Mexico carrying out pre-dissertation research on the response by rural social movement networks to mining.



As sociologists, we can clearly discern that we are living through some unique historical times. Something has shifted in the country. For almost the entire past school year, since we first heard of the town of Ferguson, Missouri in which college-bound teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer, dynamic movements of political resistance have sprung up to confront the policies of America's carceral state, existing movements have been galvanized, and politicians and authority figures have scrambled to respond. A great many people have begun to question, for the first time in their lives, why police murders keep happening, what can be done about them, and how this is all connected to the social order we live in (or *under*).

The point of this contribution to our newsletter is not to suggest that sociology offers the one true vantage point to make sense of this society's history and persistent reality of violence. Neither is my goal here to sketch some synthetic theory about power, institutions, emotions, stratification, and contentious politics while using the world's only declining superpower as a case study (though it would definitely be interesting and worthwhile to pursue that project in other venues). Instead, I decided to try and show how a sociological perspective might help us interpret some broad patterns happening all around us, both some truly disturbing and hopeful ones. I argue that racialized mass incarceration and police murder are systemic *public issues* that are not just deeply meaningful to sociologists, or to certain *types* of sociologists, but indeed to everyone concerned about the future quality of life that awaits us.

A traditional sociological analysis would probably begin by binding the investigation in temporal and geographical terms. Different people will give varying summations of when mass incarceration began in earnest, and whether some police departments are "better" or "worse" due to some combination of variables. Others may question whether the character of protests and rebellions we've seen this past year should be understood as local matters, or as cyclical phenomena intertwined in some way with similar eruptions from below that have asserted themselves in other countries too numerous to list here.

In binding police brutality in time, we could start as far back as 1704, when the colony of Carolina developed the nation's first slave patrol at the service of landowners to recover and punish slaves who escaped. The brutality of the slave patrols served as a constant reminder of what could happen to slaves who resisted their designation as *property*.¹ Of course today, what was once the "colony of Carolina" remains home to the family heirs of Walter Scott, whose cold-blooded murder after a routine traffic stop was captured in a viral video.

Or we might look to the period of Reconstruction and its aftermath, when vigilante and mob violence against people of color actually increased, and lynchings took place with the complicity and active encouragement of all too many whites, not only in the South. We should consider (and teach to our students) how a recent five-year report by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) documented 3,959 lynchings of Black people in 12 Southern states between 1877 and 1950.² The authors actually find that previous reports failed to count an additional 700 lynchings. Fewer than one percent of lynch mob participants were ever convicted and punished.³

Flash forward to today's "mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness," as the subtitle for Michelle Alexander's bestseller so aptly puts it. A 2001 report from the U.S. Justice Department calculated that 3,696 Black people were killed by police between 1976 and 1998. But even these data are unreliable, since jurisdictions release shooting death statistics on a voluntary basis. Activist groups have started releasing their own investigations. The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement documented 313 deaths of Black people by police, vigilantes, and security guards in the year 2012 alone.⁴ A new report by the Washington Post claims twice as many people are shot by U.S. police as the official counts from the FBI claim. The Post counted 385 such deaths in the first 5 months of this year, amounting to more than two per day.⁵ It would seem that the first thing a government who was aiming to reduce deaths from police shootings would do is begin accurately tracking them.

Since this still hasn't happened, a good question for sociologists, indeed anyone, to follow up with would be "why might a government *not* want to reduce this?"

One common element between the slave patrols of the antebellum South, the lynchings, and today's "Walter Scotts" is that beatings and even extrajudicial execution could befall a person of color for alleged crimes, or for seemingly doing nothing at all. Like other forms of terror, its sheer randomness only inspires more fear in a given population. The scope of today's punitive practices (be they judicial or extra-judicial) is similarly wide enough to maim and frighten entire racial communities, far beyond the alleged perpetrators of crimes.

Also, very akin to the federal government's near refusal to investigate lynchings throughout our history, it seems that mass defiance and the specter of greater "disorder" has served as the only tool powerful enough to put even a handful of the police themselves on trial. Days of rioting as well as civil disobedience in Oakland undoubtedly played a role in finally convicting officer Johannes Mehserle of involuntary manslaughter for shooting unarmed Oscar Grant in the back on a new year's eve train, a painful story which was rendered in the recent film "Fruitvale Station." Grand jury investigations of police misconduct in Ferguson, Staten Island and now Baltimore only transpired after unmistakable outrage. After state officials announced a curfew last summer in Ferguson, crowds from Mike Brown's neighborhood and supporters bravely remained in the streets chanting "No curfew, no peace." It is telling that two states have deployed National Guard troops to reassert control over contested streets in a period of several months this year.

Still, in most cases, not even the international attention generated by protests, the advocacy of family members, or the existence of non-white criminal justice officials and government representatives has been sufficient to indict (let alone convict) police officers. A Wisconsin District Attorney announced on May 12 that no charges would be sought against the officer who shot and killed 19-year-old Tony Robinson in Madison. (On Friday, May 22, students from two South Central Los Angeles high schools walked out in protest over this and in solidarity with the protests in Baltimore. They also marched to the site where mentally ill youth Ezell Ford was shot in the back by LAPD).⁶ Nor did an Ohio Judge decide to pronounce Cleveland area cop Michael Brelo guilty in a recent verdict. Brelo was among 13 officers who fired 137 shots into a car of two unarmed passengers after they presumed the sound of the backfiring car to be gunshots.

Good sociology should be able to tell us why the pattern persists, as well as why it matters. At a time like this, our syllabi should be tweaked to give space to these debates that are shaping our future. It should explore the range of analyses and solutions on how to resolve the issue, not only those analyses and solutions with which we are most familiar or more comfortable talking about.

Too many titles and resources for us to read and teach come to mind to list here, but I'll offer one from a practitioner in our corner of the country. Appalled by what she witnessed in the Trayvon Martin case, Los Angeles-based trial attorney and NBC News analyst Lisa Bloom interviewed key trial participants in her 2014 book *Suspicion Nation: The Inside Story of the Trayvon Martin Injustice and Why We Continue to Repeat It*. In her frequent writings and media appearances this year, Bloom noted how the same prosecution supposedly dedicated to obtaining an indictment for police officers never once asked officer Darren Wilson if he shot Mike Brown while his hands were in the air. She also points out there was no reason the whole Ferguson case needed to go to a Grand Jury, as the testimony of six witnesses was more than enough to provide a reasonable doubt of Wilson's version of events. Bloom poignantly notes that if small drug offenders and minority youth were given the same treatment prosecutors gave officers in Missouri and New York, we wouldn't be the undisputed world leader in incarceration rates per capita.

Reports can help lead to action, and action can move the public to confront the scope of an epidemic. Coinciding with a vigil of over 300 people on May 20 in NYC's Union Square, the African American Policy Forum released "[#SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women](#)," an important and damning document "highlighting stories of Black women who have been killed by police and shining a light on forms of police brutality often experienced by women such as sexual assault."⁷ Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Director of the African American Policy Forum and co-author of the brief, spoke at the vigil.

The fact that 300 immigrants rose up against deplorable conditions in a private immigration detention center in West Texas in February,⁸ as well as the continued operation of Guantanamo Bay Prison and its corresponding legal code, underscores basic questions of human rights just as much as the trends in policing we've been witnessing. Perhaps this can explain some of the data I came across in my thesis research.

According to a cross-national longitudinal measure known as the Political Terror Scale, used widely in comparative political science research, the United States has been slipping into the status of a semi-authoritarian country. For every year from 2004 to 2011 (the last year for which I have data), the authors of the PTS measure coded the U.S. as a among a group of countries with “extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.”⁹

In this context, I consider the walk-outs, marches, freeway blockades, bridge closures, and very public die-ins we’ve seen throughout the year in hundreds of locales across this country extremely important and effective tools. They resemble the confrontational tactics social movements apply in most other countries where people intend to disrupt the daily functioning of institutions responsible for record corruption, high inequality, or brutality. The organized as well as spontaneous protests since Ferguson in this country have a number of achievements. They have brought interlinked crises into the public domain, reframed the societal terms of discourse over matters which cut to the very heart and legitimacy of our social structure, and forced the political class to acknowledge an epidemic of mass incarceration and racial profiling (or in the words of more enlightened public officials, “the existence of mistrust between police and most communities of color.”)

The tactic of occupying public space is reminiscent of what put the Occupy Movement on the map. But the level of contestation we’re seeing today and the amount of arrests for civil disobedience (including heavy charges against several UC Santa Cruz students for blocking a freeway on Martin Luther King Day) goes beyond what Occupy seemed willing to “put on the line” in defense of its claims. It is indeed a new juncture in U.S. social movement history, and it may even prove to be a turning point in the political evolution of the country, depending on how the situation further develops. Statements of support for these protests from some prominent academics, lawyers, actors, writers, athletes and artists have also gone a long way in delegitimizing the policies in question and in legitimizing grassroots resistance, though there is still a great need to draw more public support from people of conscience with social followings.

Last Fall, over 1400 sociologists (including a number in our department) signed a statement that was circulating, which read in part “We urge law enforcement, policymakers, media and the nation to consider decades of sociological analysis and research that can inform the necessary conversations and solutions required to address the systemic issues that the events in Ferguson have raised.”¹⁰

As we move into the next school year, let us all continue to dedicate time and discussion to these key “public problems” (as C. Wright Mills would of course call them). While each of our disciplinary strengths as a department offers much potential to make sense of these issues, and we should indeed bring our sociological toolkit to bear on these issues inside and outside the classroom in an ongoing manner, the underlying questions are much more than academic. They have to do with what kind of society we wish to live in and what degree of inequality and discrimination we are prepared to accept.

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Department of Sociology

1334 Watkins Hall
University of California
900 University Avenue
Riverside, CA 92521
USA
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Editorial Board

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1150 Watkins Hall
Department of Sociology
University of California
Riverside, CA 92521
Augustine.kposowa@ucr.edu

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