

The Sociology INVESTIGATOR

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, 32611



"I Train Social Scientists"

by Barbara Zsembik, Associate Professor

“The inherent challenge of the “research mentor” is to provide the scaffold that allows students to be responsible for their education without letting them feel abandoned.”

—Professor Barbara Zsembik

"If I pass Dr. Zsembik's methods course," began a college senior celebrity, describing his plans after graduation during an interview with a reporter from *The Alligator*. It was my second year at UF as a new Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography. I had little teaching experience and a lot of anxiety about my ability to both teach and do research, and you know, get tenured. I had always loved the creative nature of independent research projects since grade school, it now formed a primary obligation in my job description. So I chose to teach methods as my second undergraduate course because it would be fun and improve my own research skills. I loved both teaching and research, seeing them as intertwined, but now braced myself to learn the worst about my teaching. There it was, in black and white, printed and distributed to anyone and everyone. How did I get in this spot?

I never could decide what I was going to be when I grew up. I

had no great talents, many interests, and too much energy. In fact, my high school teachers told me I wasn't college material. But in my junior year I met Sister Jeanette, a guidance counselor who was determined to get me into college before she died of some horrible unnamed cancer. Her personal attention and belief in my abilities now motivate me to do the same for my students. My GPA and SAT scores were good enough to get me into the local university, and Sister Jeanette and the ubiquitous high school aptitude tests funneled me into a nursing major.

My work experiences shaped how I design my courses, especially the undergraduate and graduate methods courses. I had a variety of jobs in the service sector during high school, college, and nurse training. I had work as a babysitter, jobs in fast food chains or local family restaurants, and night shift duty as a nursing assistant in nursing homes. I drifted through nurse training and into nursing jobs in hospitals, nursing homes,

women's clinics, and home health care. I picked up a lot of supervisory and managerial duties, and worked with a wide range of clients and co-workers in a variety of settings. Eventually, however, I went back to school and ended up with that Ph.D. in sociology.

What do I do? I train social scientists. A major in social science is not vocational training, and shouldn't be. But students expect that they should be able to get a job with their degrees. I agree. Because developing school-career linkages is an important mission of higher education, I try to provide some professional training in my courses. I balance two important aspects of higher education: the opportunity to expand personal intellectual hori-

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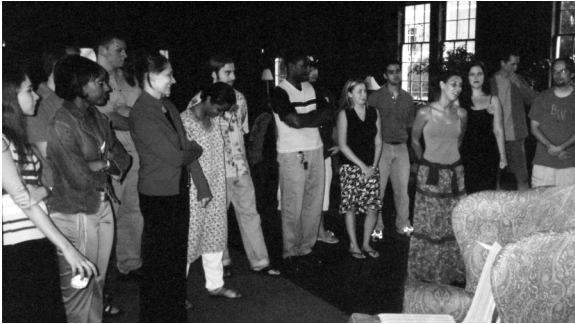
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Each New Academic Year Brings... Football, Hurricanes, and the

Fall Reception!



Reception snapshots, clockwise from top left: entering class of graduate students, Ben and Joyce Gorman with Gorman Award winner Kuniko Chijiwa, John Henretta with Humphreys Leadership Prize winner Jeanne Collins, John Henretta with Vandiver Award winners Dan Dexheimer and Shannon Houvouras.

At the beginning of each new academic year the Sociology Department hosts the annual Fall Reception. The highlight is always the awards given to graduate students. The ceremony began with the Vandiver Graduate Teaching Award, named after our retired and much esteemed colleague, Joseph Vandiver. A member of our department for many years, Van was present this fall to give the award to co-winners Dan Dexheimer and Shannon Houvouras, who have shown themselves to be consistently creative teachers who motivate students to perform at a high level. Constance Shehan mentors both Dan and Shannon.

Kuniko Chijiwa received the Jerome A. Connor Dissertation Award for her research, titled "Spatial-Temporal Analysis of

Relationships among Color, Household Structure, and Child Mortality in Sao Paulo, Brazil." Her work displays a clear theoretical design that leads to precise and testable hypotheses. Stephen Perz served as her dissertation advisor. With the support of the Jerome A. Connor Student Enrichment Endowment, the Sociology Department is able to recognize excellence in graduate student research. Mr. Connor graduated from the University of Florida in 1931. He received the first Masters Degree given by the Department of Sociology with a thesis titled "Survey of Housing Conditions for Students at the University of Florida." One wonders what it was like then.

In addition, Kuniko Chijiwa received the Gorman Award, named after our friend and former colleague,



Benjamin Gorman. This award is given in recognition of sophisticated work by graduate students using quantitative methods. In her Sao Paulo study, Kuniko developed expertise in demographic methods, geographic information systems (using satellite data), and spatial econometrics. Ben and his wife Joyce attended the reception and presented the award to Kuniko.

The Strieb Award went to Dana Berkowitz for her paper, titled "The Interaction of Drag Queens and Gay Men in Public and Private Places." This award is named after Gordon Strieb, who was Graduate Research Professor in the department for many years. It goes to the outstanding scholarly paper written by a graduate student each year. Gordon

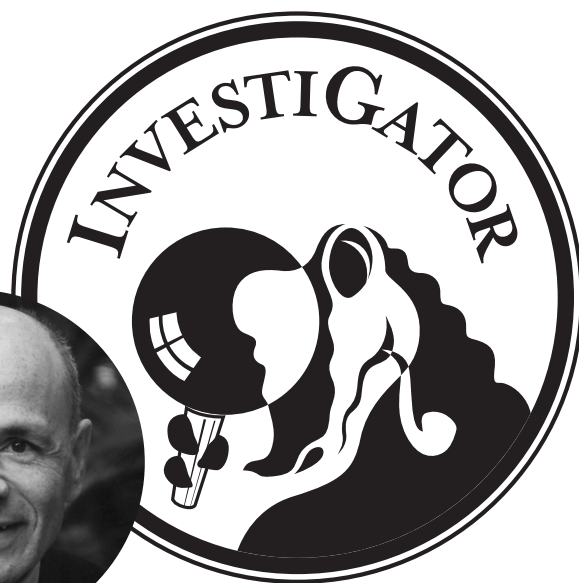
Strieb and his wife Ruth were in attendance and presented the award to Dana. As with several other nominated papers, Dana's is already under submission to an academic journal. Her supervisors are Constance Shehan and Kendall Broad.

Finally, the Department's newest award is the Jack B. Humphries Leadership Prize. Mr. Humphrey graduated from UF in 1949 and estab-

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Fresh Faces in Town



Gainesville has many new residents at the beginning of each academic year, adding an air of excitement to the campus.

Sociology has contributed more than its share this fall. We were joined by 18 new graduate students, a record for us. They are a very diverse group. Five were UF undergraduates, two are international students (from India and Brazil), and the rest come to us from colleges around the U.S. We also added two new faculty, Regina Bures and Alin Ceobanu. Regina received her Ph.D. from Brown University, she comes to us from the State University of New York at Albany, where she held a research position. Regina's research areas include aging and urban sociology. Alin Ceobanu received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois last spring. At UF, he holds a joint appointment in Sociology and the Center for European Studies. Alin's research focuses on ethnicity and nationalism in Europe, and his presence adds a new dimension to our curriculum.

Soon after we welcomed all our new members, two unwelcome visitors, hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, blew into town to provide some unsolicited tree pruning. None of our students or faculty

were injured, though two faculty had tree limbs crash through their roofs. UF closed briefly for each storm, but everything returned to normal very quickly. We're all thankful for escaping without serious harm and mindful of the thousands of Floridians—including, perhaps, some of you—whose lives have been severely disrupted by one or more hurricanes this year.

The department is making significant progress on two fronts this fall. After years of too-rapid growth, our number of undergraduate majors remained stable this August. We've worked very hard over the past few years to accommodate our growing enrollments. We've increased our department advising staff and this year we're offering 400 seats in our required junior-level research methods course. Most of the credit for helping us cope with rapidly growing numbers over the past few years belongs to our undergraduate coordinator, Dr. Marian Borg. With slowing growth, we hope we can concentrate on improving the quality of undergraduate instruction, with smaller classes and

an increasing variety of courses.

We've also been authorized to hire a new faculty member with interests in environmental sociology. Loyal readers of the Investigator will recall a number of previous stories on our plans to increase our offerings in this area. The development of interdisciplinary environmental science research is a high priority in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the University as a whole. We see active participation in this effort as critical to ensuring Sociology will play a central role in the intellectual life of the University of Florida in coming decades. We hope to add additional faculty in this area in future years.

As always, we value your support and interest in the department. If you'll write to us about the exciting developments in your lives, we'll share them with your friends in a future issue of the Investigator.

John Henretta
Chair, Sociology

zons and to provide a minimal level of employability with a B.A. or M.A. in social sciences. In any discipline or major, there is enough agreement on the necessary basic skills to determine which classes are required. In sociology, social theory, research methods, and social statistics make up the core curriculum which defines the skill set that the typical undergraduate sociology major “should know.” I design learning activities in which students gain mastery of skills by doing—and practicing. Mastery is evaluated in multiple ways: oral communication, different types of writing, tests on basic concepts and practices, and use of conventional information technology equipment and procedures.

In my role as “research mentor,” I guide undergraduate and graduate students in their development of critical reasoning skills through a series of reading, writing, and oral communication discovery assignments. The inherent challenge of the “research mentor” is to provide the scaffold that allows students to be responsible for building their education without letting them feel abandoned. Typically, the assignments are gathered into a portfolio and are turned

into a final coherent project. The portfolio permits me to gauge performance according to each student’s learning curve. I repeatedly offer strong editorial comments on written work to foster mastery of substantive content as well as the craftsmanship of clear, crisp prose. I integrate a considerable amount of computer work into each of my courses, sometimes barely keeping up myself with ever-new waves of software, data, and analytical techniques. The student with a B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. should enter the market with a strong set of research skills and be able to successfully compete with other liberal arts majors or sociologists for choice jobs.

To further enhance the process of discovery, I often design group assignments. Teamwork encourages students to spend more time on assignments and gives them experience managing the social character of the workplace. It also permits stronger students to participate in teaching struggling students, an experience that increases the level of mastery for both groups.

A healthy teaching career is reflected in the successes of students. I am especially proud to have mentored many African American and Latino/a men and

women through undergraduate and graduate programs. I include undergraduate and graduate students in my own research projects, leading to presentations at professional conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and gainful employment. The undergraduates have gone into competitive social science programs, M.A. students have secured good research positions as epidemiologists and health care analysts, and Ph.D. students have successfully competed for post-doctoral research positions and positions as new assistant professors.

But most sociology majors do not aim for a research career and feel annoyed to have to complete a demanding methods course. I read further in *The Alligator* interview with the college senior celebrity, expecting to hear that complaint. I learned from his and other students’ feedback that the class wasn’t so awful, even kind of fun at times. Witnessing their discovery of the adventure of research, and hearing them confess to ENJOYING the research process, IS my most genuine delight in teaching. Thank you Sister Jeanette.

lished this prize through a bequest in honor of his teachers, Winston W. Ehrmann and John M. Maclachlan. The award goes to an undergraduate who displays both a high level of academic achievement and leadership in extra-curricular activities. The first prize goes to Jeanne Collins, who is a third-year dual major in sociology and psychology. Jeanne has a 4.0 upper division grade point average and a 4.0 average in all her sociology courses. Over the last few years, she has worked with children and youth in educational and after-school programs, with the elderly in nursing homes, and with homeless and unemployed persons, along with other activities.

The students, in addition to having their names placed on plaques kept in

the department, receive a cash award. The hard-working faculty committee in charge of deciding on the awards this year was composed of Leonard Beeghley, Marian Borg, and Stephen Perz (who did not participate in the discussion of Kuniko Chijiwa’s award).

The Department also introduced and welcomed its newest graduate students. Eighteen new students entered the program from as far as away as India and as near as, well, Gainesville. Do you suppose they will live better than students did in 1931?

Dean Neil Sullivan spoke for a few minutes, reminding us that these awards represent a homage to instructors past, a nod to those present, and a gift to the future. They also reflect the Department’s commitment to teach-

ing, even as the University seems poised to move to the next level as a research institution. His remarks stimulated the retired faculty present to reminisce about the history of the Department.

In informal conversation, discussion ranged from the fortunes of the Gator football team to our recruiting possibilities for the coming year. We are slated to hire an environmental sociologist and may possibly seek someone for a joint appointment in African American Studies. No one talked about the weather, which turned out to be the major problem we faced this fall. Even so, we look to the future with great optimism.

Reflections: A Proud Graduate of the University of Florida

by **Carladenise Armbrister Edwards, Ph.D. (2001)**

The Investigator asked Carladenise Armbrister Edwards to reflect on the impact her sociological training has had on her life.

I started my academic career as a pre-med psychology major at the University of Pennsylvania with the dream of becoming a forensic psychiatrist. My education and training would allow me to play a pivotal role in helping the police find all of the Hannibal Lecters of the world. Look out Jody Foster, here comes Carla Armbrister! I was going to make my mark in life and in Black history by becoming the first African-American female to rid the planet of psychopaths! Well, big dreams die hard, just like the victims in psycho-thriller movies.

Today, at age 34, I am not a forensic psychiatrist. I am a medical sociologist. I dropped the pre-med because I disliked being the only African-American female in all of my science courses, and I dropped the psychology because I hate seeing rats in mazes and cats in cages! My academic advisor encouraged me to find a major that I liked and a subject that I was good at and stick with it. I loved the study of people and civilizations. I enjoyed theory and writing, so sociology seemed like the logical fit, and it truly has turned out to be the best fit for me.

After receiving a Bachelor's degree in sociology with a concentration in crime and deviance, I

returned to my psychological roots and received a Master of Science degree in education with a concentration in psychological services. I had no idea what I was going to do for a living, but my grades were good and I loved learning about human behavior, social organization, and cognitive processes. I decided to pursue my Ph.D. at the University of Florida in sociology, as opposed to psychology, because sociology appealed to my social consciousness and strong desire to save the world, as opposed to an individual.

The education and training I received while pursuing my degree in sociology were invaluable. The research skills and strong written communication skills I developed allowed me to market myself in numerous areas. I have had the opportunity to work in academia as an Assistant Dean, a fulltime instructor, an adjunct faculty member, and a project director for several grant funded projects. I have also served as an administrator and research and policy analyst for the state of Florida's Medicaid program, as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In each of these positions, I have been able to use my critical thinking skills, research skills, and content knowledge to influ-

ence health care research and to direct national and state health policy.

While pursuing my Ph.D. at the University of Florida, I focused my studies on health disparities, health outcomes, and social and behavioral theory and methods. In my spare time, I polished my administrative and leadership skills by serving on issue-based committees, working with the Office of Minority Programs, and assisting faculty with research projects. From this, I discovered that learning for me was very similar to the learning process of the rats and cats that struggled to get out of the cage or maneuvered through the maze set up by the researcher. Whether the learning took place in the classroom or the complex microcosm of a universe that the university represents, the lessons were all valuable.

Presently, I am serving as the Vice President of Operations for Williams, Stern, and Associates, a health services research and evaluation firm in Miami, Florida, and I am the Executive Director for the



Governor's Health Information Infrastructure Advisory Board for the state of Florida. At times, I miss my big dream of becoming the conqueror of evil, but I think I may still have the chance to positively influence people and, perhaps, even civilization at some point in my lifetime.

As a proud UF graduate, I encourage others to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Florida and I encourage alumni to support their departments and colleges. The faculty and staff in the Department of Sociology have contributed significantly to my present success and to my future accomplishments. The sociology department's faculty and staff were my best cheerleaders. The department provided me with the opportunity to teach, conduct research, and to study with prominent scholars in the field of gerontology, research, race relations, and criminology. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the success of the next generation of UF sociologists.



Alumni Updates

Julian Bridges, B.A., 1952; M.A., 1969; Ph.D., 1973. Julian retired as Professor of Sociology from Hardin-Simmons University in July. He was honored by the Alumni Association for his thirty one years of dedicated service at Hardin-Simmons. He reports that one of the highlights of his career was the opportunity to teach and influence more than 7,000 students.

Claire Ann Coignard, B.A., 1995. Claire is the manager of community resources and services at the Torrance Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles. TMMC is an independent community hospital. She notes, "I never made it out of Los Angeles after finishing my graduate degree in gerontology at the University of Southern California. But L.A. has been good to me!"

Carladenise Arbrister Edwards, Ph.D., 2001. In July, Carladenise became chief operating office and a senior project manager at Williams, Sterns, & Associates, a consulting firm located in Miami that specializes in health services research and analysis.

William A. Mellen, Ph.D., 1975. The Florida Senate recently appointed William to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation. This corporation examines the policy, funding, and effectiveness of state supported substance abuse and mental health programs. It consists of twelve appointees—four by the House, four by the Senate, and four by the Governor.

Eric A. Wagner, Ph.D., 1973. Eric is Professor Emeritus at Ohio University. He recently received the "Founders Citation" from the Board of Trustees. Last given in 1977 (and only 20 times in the school's history), the award recognizes Eric's numerous teaching awards over the years, his "remarkable devotion" to his students, his extraordinary fundraising efforts, and his many other contributions to the University.

Please let us know what is going on in your life. You may return the alumni update form to the department via post, or email Professor Leonard Beeghly at lbeegh@soc.ufl.edu. We want to hear from you!

In Appreciation

The Department of Sociology extends warm thanks to the following friends and alumni who graciously donated funds to our educational program over the last year or so. These funds are vital to our educational mission, and we are most appreciative.

Mr. Jason Ackerman
Ms. Kerry Ann Cerreta Allen
Dr. Richard E. Ball
Dr. Allen Barton
Ms. Elizabeth Buerger
Drs. Scott & Ruby Beck
Ms. Barbara J. Burns
Mr. Peter J. Carter
Ms. Claire Ann Coignard
Dr. & Mrs. Ken Davidson
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Dr. & Mrs. Walter D. Tropf
John S. Wachtel
Dr. Eric Wagner
Dr. Charles & Mrs. Sandra Warner
Dr. George A. Watkins
Dr. Aaron Wolfson
Mr. Douglas & Mrs. Sandy Wright

In addition, several persons who made donations preferred to remain anonymous. We thank you very much. You know who you are!

Welcome New Faculty!



Regina Bures



Alin Mihai Ceobanu

Regina Bures joined the faculty this fall as an Assistant Professor of Sociology. Before coming to UF, Regina was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago and Senior Research Scientist at the University at Albany's Lewis Mumford Center. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University in 1998. Her research focuses on aging and the life course as well as historical patterns of urban change. In her most recent publications, she looks at racial differences in family complexity and family stability and health in midlife. Currently, Regina is teaching Social Inequality and Urban Sociology. Regina likes gardening, bicycling, and spending time outdoors with her husband and two dogs. She commented to the *Investigator*, "I am excited to be here. Everyone in the department is collegial and the Florida students are great."

Alin Mihai Ceobanu also joined the faculty this fall as an Assistant Professor of Sociology with a joint appointment in the Center for European Studies. Alin received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May, 2004. His research focuses on social and political order and change, particularly on post-communist societies in Europe, as well as on intergroup relations. In his dissertation, for example, he examined the relationship between various instances of nationalist sentiment and public opinion on immigrants and immigration policies in nine Central and Eastern European countries. More recently, he has been studying the cross-regional influence of ideology and party preferences on attitudes toward the welfare state in Romania. This year, Alin teaches courses on Nationalism and Ethnicity, and Culture and Identity in the "New Europe." His other teaching interests include Political Sociology, Sociological Theory, and Research Methods. Alin likes playing tennis, reading Latin American novelists (García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, Sábato, Carpentier, etc.), black coffee, the music of Händel, outdoor trips and Swiss white chocolate. He commented to the *Investigator* that "...nobody turns their heads when I wear my orange and blue Illinois cap here. Well, that's not entirely true...I remember that, one day, I was kindly served with an extended middle finger by a driver whose license plate I could not see. Not that I was really affected by the gesture, but not knowing if it was a Seminole or a [Michigan] Wolverine fan really made me mad that day!"

Keep your classmates up to date! Please use this form for address changes and/or to tell us what you are up to. Alumni updates can be sent via post to the address above or emailed to Professor Leonard Beeghley at lbeegh@soc.ufl.edu.



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Non-Profit Org

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Gainesville FL

Name:

Address:

Date Graduated:

Present Activities:

E-mail:

Address Service Requested

Humor Corner:

Q:

Why did the graduate of Florida State University stare at the can of orange juice?

A:

It said "concentrate."