

Sociology News

Summer 2025 Edition

Department of Sociology, Case Western Reserve University

Letter from the Chair

Dear Sociology Friends,

I am excited to report that our department has had another banner year! From awards, to community events, to successful defenses, this newsletter is teeming with reasons to celebrate. Professor Rebecca Schut joined our faculty this past year, bringing her expertise in demography, migration, and health disparities to our curriculum and research portfolio. She is already putting her skills to work: she was awarded a Russell Sage Foundation grant this past spring for her new project building a longitudinal database of state immigration laws and public health indicators. You can learn more about Professor Schut from her interview with Zach Milko on page 2. I am also pleased to announce that Professor Cassi Pittman Claytor was named the Robson Junior Endowed Chair by Provost Joy Ward. Congratulations on this great recognition of your work!

This past year we also welcomed Professor Casey Schroeder to the department as our new full-time Lecturer, bringing her enthusiastic teaching to the classroom. We wished Professor Danielle Czarnecki well as she transitioned to a new position at University of Michigan, but are thrilled that she will continue to teach her Reproductive Rights class for us!

Congratulations to our newest Ph.D. graduates: Abolade Oladimeji, Reema Sen, Liz Nalepa, and Michael Slone! Be sure to check out the list of professional accomplishments of our students in this newsletter and a report from the Sociology Graduate Student Association outgoing President, Kate Freeman. As you can see, they know how to mix fun and learning!

Our undergraduate program posted a record number of majors and minors this year with no sign of slowing down. We had seven students present their exciting independent Capstone projects in December under the direction of Professor Dannefer. You can see their project titles on page 8. We also inducted nine new members into the Iota Chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta, the Sociology Honors Society.

Take a moment to peruse our Sociology News to see the exciting things happening all over the department! And, as always, we'd love to hear from you! Drop us a line and let us know what you are working on, thinking about, or achieving!

Cheers, Jessica

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Meet Dr. Rebecca Schut, Assistant Professor of Sociology by Zachary Milko



This fall, the Department of Sociology was delighted to welcome Dr. Rebecca Schut, a dynamic scholar whose research, teaching, and energy bring fresh insight and enthusiasm to our community. A proud Philadelphia native—“the best city in the world,” she says—Dr. Schut blends intellectual rigor with an engaging, down-to-earth approach that makes her a standout in both the classroom and the field.

Dr. Schut's research explores critical intersections of immigration, health, and demographic change. With support from a Russell Sage Foundation Pipeline Grant, she is currently leading the construction of a landmark longitudinal database tracking all U.S. state immigration policies from 1990 to 2025. The project examines how demographic shifts at the state level shape immigration policy over time.

Another thread of Dr. Schut's work focuses on how immigrants' education and occupational status impact health outcomes—a topic she argues is often overlooked and understudied. “Even with legal status and high occupational attainment, health outcomes among immigrants don't always match expectations,” she explains. Her work invites us to rethink assumptions about work, status, and well-being through a more nuanced lens, grounded in data.

Dr. Schut's interest in immigration and health is both personal and academic. With family roots in Argentina and formative experiences in diverse, immigrant-rich environments, she has long been interested in questions of integration, care, and social belonging. “I want to use my work to make a policy impact and question the assumptions we bring to research, including my own,” she explains. When asked about advice to aspiring quantitative researchers, she said: “Get comfortable with STATA and R. Take as many methods courses as you can—it's the best investment you can make in your training.”

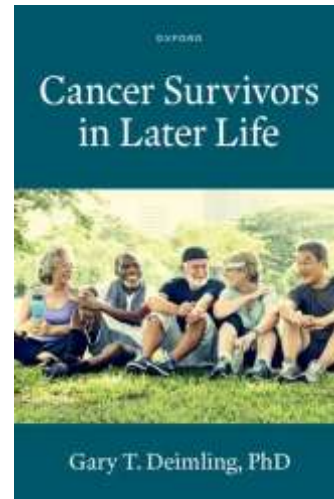
In the classroom, Dr. Schut is known for her approachable, high-energy teaching style. She fosters open dialogue, encourages curiosity, and believes in the power of connection: in her own words, “if students feel they can talk, they can grow.” She strives to help students see how their lived experiences connect to larger sociological patterns—turning lectures into moments of discovery and inspiration.

When she's not teaching or conducting research, you might find Dr. Schut hiking the ledges of Cuyahoga Valley, planning a trip (she just returned from Portugal a few months ago and Norway this past summer), or watching *The White Lotus* on HBO. She's a devoted foodie with a soft spot for sushi, arepas, and the Oreo Dream cheesecake from Cheesecake Factory, and a budding birdwatcher who can't get enough of YouTube streams of bald eagles and hummingbirds. Her favorite color is black—“because I'm always in black clothing”—and her favorite animals? It's a toss-up between red pandas, giant pandas, and whichever bird she's watching at the moment.

Emeritus Professor Gary Deimling Publishes a Book

In what became his retirement “labor of love,” Professor Deimling worked to compile and synthesize his significant body of work studying long-term cancer survivors. He founded the Cancer Survivors Research Program (CSRP) through which he recruited and followed the largest known cohort of cancer survivors (more than 500) through their physical, social, medical, and psychological journeys. In a medical era where many people can live decades after a diagnosis and treatment of cancer, this work has been imperative in understanding potential longer-term challenges, as well as shifting perspectives on posttraumatic transformation and growth.

This research agenda was funded by five federal grants over 20 years and more than 30 research articles. The CSRP has funded and trained many students over the decades, including some of our current students such as Colleen Kavanah, Dyanna Burnham, and former student Spencer Ciaralli who is a co-author on one of the book’s chapters. The final chapter, by Eva and Boaz Kahana, represents their key contributions and collaborations with Professor Deimling over the many years. Special thanks also to the College of Arts and Sciences with their Finish Line award that helped with the editorial work.



Haoming Song Appointed to Editorial Board



In February, Dr. Haoming Song, Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department, was selected to serve on the inaugural editorial board of *Sex & Sexualities*, the newest American Sociological Association (ASA) journal. This exciting appointment reflects Dr. Song’s growing contributions to the sociology of sexualities, particularly in the study of LGBTQ families and their intersection with social inequality.

Sex & Sexualities aims to publish cutting-edge sociological research on sexualities, fostering a space for rigorous intersectional, interdisciplinary, transnational, feminist, and critical scholarship. The journal seeks to center

work that interrogates sexualities as both a site of resistance to and reproduction of broader patterns of social marginalization. It is published twice a year and features a variety of formats. “I am thrilled to join the editorial board for *Sex & Sexualities*,” Dr. Song shared. “I’m excited to see the groundbreaking research that will emerge from this journal and look forward to reviewing papers that expand our understanding of LGBTQ families in the global context.”

Faculty and Alumni Advocate for Continued Funding of Aging Research on Capitol Hill



In April 2025, Professors Jessica Kelley, Adam Perzynski (2008), and John Schumacher (2000) joined nearly 100 scholars to advocate for more funding for research on older adults and aging. The advocacy event, sponsored by the Gerontological Society of America, paired scientists with their Representatives and Senators to raise awareness about the scientific and economic importance of federal funding. The advocates emphasized the impact of cuts to NIH funding to finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease and other age-related diseases. Our research also finds ways that the government can save money by preventing unnecessary hospitalizations and providing caregiving support so working-age adults can stay in the labor force. They pointed out that every \$1 of NIH funding generates \$2.50 in economic activity. If the proposed cuts to indirect

costs go forward at 15%, as proposed, Ohio will lose \$450M every year and will see an immediate loss of 2,100 high-skill jobs. Cuyahoga County alone will lose \$112M annually. You can track the ongoing financial losses by US county here: <https://scienceimpacts.org/>. Professors Kelley and Perzynski met with the offices of Shontel Brown, Bernie Moreno, and John Husted. John Schumacher met with representatives of Maryland.



Professor Gran Returns from a One-Year Appointment with Army Research Office

From May 2024 to May 2025, I served as Associate Director for External Relations and Outreach at the Army Research Office (ARO), a federal agency comparable to the National Science Foundation in its support of basic scientific research and graduate training. This appointment, pursued through longstanding professional networks—including colleagues from the Minerva Research Initiative—aligned with my prior work at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Conference of Lawyers and Scientists, and the Jefferson Science Fellowship. My role focused on external engagement: I convened a Council of university and college Presidents, Chancellors, and Vice Presidents for Research, and collaborated with national advisory bodies and scientific societies such as the National Academies and the Association of American Universities to strengthen ties between ARO and the academic research community.

My tenure coincided with significant leadership transitions at ARO and broader shifts in federal agency expectations following the 2024 Presidential election. Despite these challenges, I remained committed to the role and was honored with an award recognizing my contributions. As organizational restructuring signaled the likely conclusion of my position, I was happy to receive the opportunity of returning to the faculty effective July 1, 2025.

Black Communities' Past, Present, & Future - Pathways to Sustainability and Resilience

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is well-positioned to advance scholarship and engagement on the topic of climate change and environmental justice. To build infrastructure in this area, Professor Pittman Claytor organized an interdisciplinary grant writing workshop on April 25th 2025, that featured distinguished scholar and funding expert Dr. Dorceta Taylor, Wangari Maathai Professor of Environmental Justice at the Yale School for the Environment. The grant proposal development workshop was attended by an interdisciplinary group of 12 CWRU faculty members from across the university, as well as representatives from community organizations and CWRU centers and institutions.



In addition to the grant workshop, Dr. Taylor also gave a university-wide colloquial address entitled “Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Intersection of Civil Rights and Environmental Justice.” Her presentation unveiled new historical research illustrating how King's interactions with the natural world shaped his worldview throughout his life—from his lack of access to green spaces in his segregated neighborhood growing up and his work as a tenant farmer during college summers, to his advocacy for sanitation workers. Taylor explored how environmental justice was integral to this civil rights icon's activism. The colloquium was cosponsored by the departments of Sociology and Cognitive Science, the Baker-

Nord Center for the Humanities, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Engagement and the Social Justice Institute.

Community-Based Participatory Research on Climate Resilience: East Cleveland Community Event

Developing People, Power, and Partnership, a community conversation, was hosted by the CWRU Climate Action Network (CAN) on Saturday, October 12, 2024 at the East Cleveland Public Library, to advance conversations with residents of East Cleveland and Glenville about the impacts of climate change on their community, and the possible collaborations and partnerships that can be forged with CWRU students, faculty, and research centers to advance climate positive initiatives and to advocate for environmental justice. Prof. Cassi Pittman Claytor (Sociology) took the lead in organizing the multi-



faceted event, which entailed a Community and Organization Fair and presentation of focus group results attitudes and perceptions of climate change from key stakeholders in the community and university, conducted by Professor Pittman Claytor, Brian Gran, Cyrus Taylor, and Ina Martin. The event also featured a keynote address by Simone Lightfoot, renowned community organizer in the areas of environmental justice and education.

NIA-Funded International Webinar and Mentoring Program

Professors Jessica Kelley and Dale Dannefer were awarded a National Institute on Aging R13 Conference grant to develop an international methodological webinar on Comparative Life Course Research. The purpose of the webinar was three-fold: (1) introduce new researchers to this line of inquiry and resources available; (2) stimulate comparative research on aging and the life course among those already engaged with the major cohort studies; (3) provide tools for undertaking the analysis. The team also consisted of alumna Wenxuan Huang (Johns Hopkins University), and current students Poshan Dahal, Yuanchang Zhao, and Nan Zhou. The webinar was attended by 147 people from ten countries. The second component of the R13 was a series of mentored research projects, where early career scholars from around the world were paired with an expert mentor to conduct an original comparative research project. The collection of papers from this experience will appear in *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies* later in 2025.



Two Department Members Honored with Flora Stone Mather Awards



The Annual Women of Achievement & Spotlight Awards of the Flora Stone Mather Women's Center at CWRU celebrates the scholarship and research of women faculty and outstanding achievements by women campus staff and students. This award recognizes women who, like Flora Stone Mather, address problems in their community and work innovatively and tirelessly to solve them through significant philanthropic and communal service and other acts of generosity. **Danielle Czarnecki** was awarded the Outstanding Faculty award and **Anvitha Ravipati** was awarded the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

Danielle Czarnecki, Ph.D. is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the department of Sociology. Her research focuses on issues related to gender, technology, and reproduction. Her current research examines people's moral lives in the context of their experiences with contested medical technologies and procedures. Her work has been published in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Gender & Society*, *Qualitative Sociology*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*, and *Contraception*. She was nominated by her current students in celebration of her outstanding teaching.

Anvitha Ravipati's commitment to advocating for women's education and leadership is evident through her academic and community-oriented work. As a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Case Western Reserve University, her dissertation entitled "Feminist Empowerment among Women Farmers in Communities Undergoing Agroecological Transition: A Cross-Cultural Study," focuses on the empowerment of women farmers, particularly in agroecological transitions, a field that Anvitha is deeply invested in academically and practically. Her research investigates

how small-scale farms operated by women benefit from agroecological practices compared to conventional farming, emphasizing leadership, decision-making, and community engagement.

2025 AKD Initiates and Undergraduate Award Recipients



On April 18, 2025, nine students were initiated into the Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) International Sociology Honor Society and sixteen students were recipients of Undergraduate Awards.

This year's AKD initiates were Amani Alvi, Anthony Curcio, Kylie Farrell, Jenny Fu, Naomi

Hillyer, Elijah O'Connor, Amy Romanowski, Sen Shiba, and Harshini Velchamy.

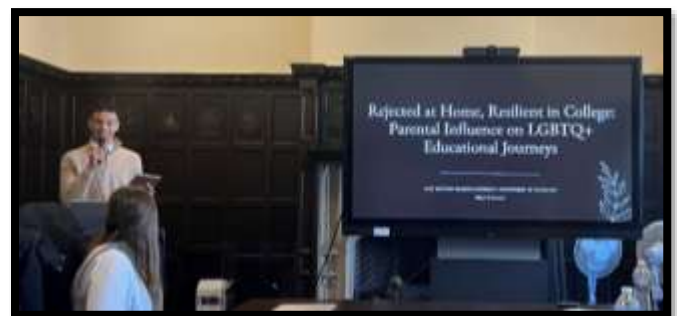
The Schermerhorn Award for outstanding students in sociology went to John Paul Brewster and Alex Flores. The Mark Lefton Award for excellence in sociological studies went to Myi Ferris, Isabella Nava, and Deyshanna Birch. The Stella Berkeley-Friedman Award to seniors for the highest academic achievement in the study of sociology went to Amanda Myles and Sabrina Wicker. The Robert C. Davis Award for demonstrated commitment to sociological studies went to Elijah O'Connor and Abra Lisowski. On behalf of the Department of Sociology, congratulations on all of your outstanding accomplishments!

Sociology Senior Capstone Presentations

On December 13, 6 sociology majors presented their Senior Capstone Experience (SOCI 392). This year, led by Professor Dale Dannefer, each of these independent projects reflected the student's emerging intellectual interests and strengths. The research topics addressed an array of sociological issues using both quantitative and qualitative evidence such as the effects of COVID-19 on school



learning; the effects of relationships with parents of college experiences of LGBTQ+ students; the post-October 7 University context on pro-Palestinian students; the relation between "human-centered" urban design and quality of life; and the experiences of immigrants held in privately owned detention centers. They presented their final projects at a department Capstone Day where faculty and students celebrate their accomplishments.



2025 Senior Capstone Project Presentations

Rejected at Home, Resilient in College: Parental Influence on LGBTQ+ Educational Journeys

Elijah O'Connor

"They Treat Their Dogs Better Than They Treat Us":
Psychological Effects of Detention on Latino Immigrants

Chloe Smith

October 7 and its Aftermath: The Impact on Pro-Palestinian
Students

Kamar Taweel

Human Centered Design and City Quality of Life

David White

Left Behind: The Pandemic's Toll on U.S. Elementary Students

Alyssa Zimmerman

Congratulations to our Graduate Award Winners!



Each spring, faculty and staff from each department nominate students for awards offered through the School of Graduate Studies. Zachary Milko and Yuanchang Zhao were both awarded the 2025 Graduate Dean's Instructional Excellence Award. Anvitha Ravipati was awarded the Richard Zdanis Graduate Research Award. Nan Zhou and Yuanchang Zhao were both awarded the Marie Haug Award for Excellence in Aging Studies.

Letter from Outgoing SGSA

President Kate Freeman

Dear Department of Sociology,

My name is Kate Freeman and I am proud to be closing out my final of three years as part of SGSA here at CWRU. First, I'd like to shout out the following graduate students, who achieved big things this school year! Over the past year, SGSA has hosted a variety of events designed to foster community, support academic success, and create meaningful connections among our graduate students. These would not have been possible without the support of our officers, as well as the students in all cohorts who engaged with us!

Here's a look back at some of the highlights:



- **Learning:** In the fall, students gathered for thoughtful discussions in our ongoing Social Constructs Reading Club, diving into critical works on social constructs and theory. Guest lectures by our beloved faculty members Dr. Rebecca Schut and Dr. Danielle Czarnecki also enriched our academic calendar in both semesters with fresh perspectives and dynamic scholarship.

- **Experiencing:** Our successful peer mentorship program continued into its third year, supporting student success through connection and guidance. We spent our afternoons together this year playing pickleball, riding roller coasters at Cedar Point, eating lots of fajitas and pho at our Happy Hour events, and learning all about Picasso at the Cleveland Art Museum thanks to our resident art expert Yuanchang Zhao!

- **Creating:** Our winter writing retreats, co-sponsored by the department, offered a productive and supportive space for tackling mid-year writing goals. This was a welcome addition to our monthly Writing Days, which provided us with focused time to make progress on papers, proposals, and dissertations in a supportive environment throughout the year.

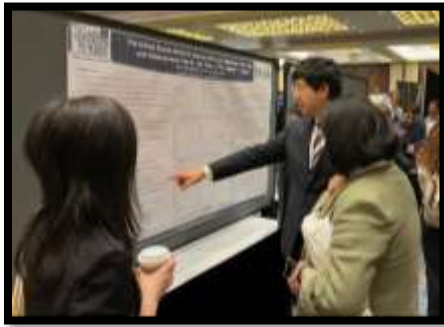
- **Celebrating:** Whether it was a night of playing board games or carving pumpkins, we took time to celebrate and be in community in Old Hillel many times throughout the fall and spring. Some of my favorites were Friendsgiving—with some sociology-themed trivia questions and cozy prizes for the winners!—and the Spring Celebration.

Finally, *congratulations to our SGSA officers for next year*: Zach Milko (President), Amy Romanauski and John Whesu (Vice Presidents), Colleen Kavanagh (Treasurer), and Oluwatimileyin Aborisade (Student Representative). In my time in our program, it has been my pleasure to be both Vice President and President of our SGSA, and while I'm sad to step down, I know these folks will do an absolutely amazing job next year!



With immense gratitude,
Kate Freeman

2024-2025 Student & Faculty Conference Presentations

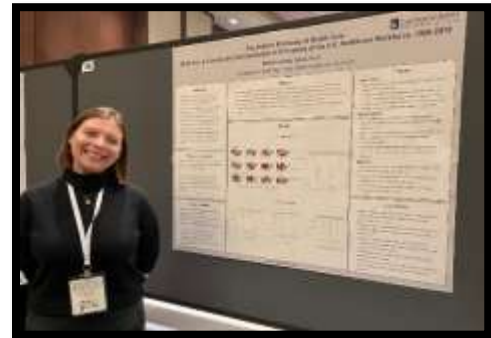


American Sociological Association

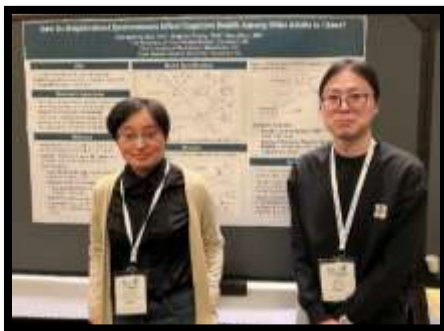
- Erdmans, Mary Patrice and Zachary Slade Milko. 2024, August. "I'm a Little Bit Professional Revolutionary: Activism over the Life Course." Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montréal, Canada.
- Freeman, Kate J., and Timothy Black. 2024, August. "Men Don't Come to Places Like This": Defining Masculinity in An Alternative Incarceration Facility in Cleveland. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montréal, Canada.
- Milko, Zachary Slade. 2024, August. "Examining New Frontiers of Black Queer Identity Expression on TikTok." Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montréal, Canada.

Association for Humanist Sociology (AHS)

- Erdmans, Mary Patrice and Zachary Slade Milko. 2024, October. "Activism over the Life Course: Solidarity Activists and the Development of Radical Habitus." Paper presented at the Association for Humanist Sociology Annual Meeting, Rochester, New York.
- Freeman, Kate J., and Timothy Black. 2024, October. "If You Don't Learn Nothing, You Ain't Gon Become a Man": Defining



Masculinity in An Alternative Incarceration Facility in Cleveland. Paper presented at the Association for Humanist Sociology Annual Meeting, Rochester, New York.



National Women's Studies

- Freeman, Kate J. 2024, November. No Boys Allowed?: An Exploration of Masculinities Work in Women's Centers. Paper presented at the National Women's Studies Annual Conference, Detroit, Michigan.

Eastern Sociological Society

- Milko, Zachary Slade, and Kate J. Freeman. 2025, March. "Your Identity is Not Up For Debate": How the Black LGBTQ+ Community is Queering Racial Projects on TikTok. Paper presented at the Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Freeman, Kate J., and Timothy Black. 2025, March. "Standing on Your Own Two": Constructing Masculine Identities in an Alternative Incarceration Facility. Paper presented at the Eastern Sociological Society Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts.

Population Association of America

- Song, Haoming and Yuanchang Zhao. "Perceived Social Isolation among Older Heterosexual and LGB Adults: The Role of Marital Status." Poster presented at the Population Association of America annual meeting, Washington, DC.
- Schut, Rebecca. "The Political Economy of Health Care: State Policies, Political Climates, and the Distribution and Composition of the US Healthcare Workforce, 1960-2019." Poster presented at the Population Association of America annual meeting, Washington, DC.
- Han, Chengming, Jingwen Zhang, and Nan Zhou. "How Do Neighborhood Environments Affect Cognitive Health among Older Adults in China?" Poster presented at the Population Association of America annual meeting, Washington, DC.

Celebrating Successful Dissertation Defenses!



The Department of Sociology saw six separate dissertation defenses successfully defended in the 2023-2024 academic year.

- "Obstetric Violence" – Liz Nalepa
- Spatial Patterns of Sleep Disorder in Cleveland: Residential Segregation as a Fundamental Cause? – Abolade Oladimeji
- "The Legal Consciousness of Skilled Immigrants" – Reema Sen
- Crowd Control: Platform Capitalism and the Labor Process – Mike Slone

Department Publications and Faculty Updates

Publications

Timothy Black. 2025. "Back to the Future: Placing the Florida Decision in Historical Context." *Critical Sociology* 51(2): 335-351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205241259358>

Timothy Black, Casey Lynn Lewis, and Lacey Caporale. 2025. "Wasted Time: Legal Temporal Obligations and Reentering Citizens." *Social Service Review* 99(3): <https://doi.org/10.1086/736713>

Song, Haoming. "Structural stigma and mental health among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults: Policy protection and cultural acceptance." *Social Science & Medicine* 373 (2025): 117985.

Chen, L., Mao, X., Kahana, E., & Zhao, W. (2025). 'Self-reliance first, children's care-giving second': older adults' experience and conceptualisation of ageing-in-place in rural China. *Ageing & Society*, 45(4), 710-730.

Yu, Jiao, Huang, Wenxuan, & Kahana, E. (2025). Temporal and Racial/Ethnic Patterns of Social Engagement among Older Adults: Evidence from American Time Use Survey 2019 to 2022. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 44(1), 116-125.

Huang, Wenxuan and Jessica Kelley. 2025. "Where Do We Go from Here? Partnership- Parenthood Trajectories of Cohabitation following First Union in the United States." *Demographic Research*. 53: 245-260. DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2025.53.9

Other Professional Activities and Honors

Cassi Pittman Claytor was honored by Hathaway Brown School's Science Research and Engineering Program (SREP) as their 2025 Outstanding Supervising Scientist for her mentorship of students conducting their own independent research projects.

Cassi Pittman Claytor was named a 2025 Faculty Champion of Sustainability by the CWRU Office of Sustainability and Energy for her community research on environmental justice.

Haoming Song was awarded a W.P. Jones Presidential Faculty Development Fund by the College of Arts and Sciences, CWRU.

Support the Department of Sociology!

Please consider supporting the Department of Sociology as we continue building on our achievements. You can contribute to our success by making a tax deductible gift to the department. Your gift allows us to continue to offer opportunities for our students to excel academically and to conduct important research.