Letter from the Chair

Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to the winter 2020-21 edition of Sociology News! In these extraordinary times, it has been impressive to watch our faculty, students, and staff respond rapidly and effectively to demands unimaginable a year ago -- moving courses online and developing proficiency in holding and participating in most all meetings on Zoom while continuing to conduct research, facilitate students’ progress and keep strong connections with each other.

Despite the challenges, the past year has been a highly productive one for the Department of Sociology. We celebrated the graduation of three Ph.D. students, Holly Renzhofer Pappada, Christine Schneider, and Anne Bryden, as well as a lively class of Sociology majors. Three faculty members -- Tim Black, Cassi Pittman Claytor and Heather Hurwitz -- published books, and Jessica Kelley was appointed editor of a major journal. Brian Gran was awarded a prestigious Jefferson Science Fellowship and NSF grant, and other faculty and students were recognized with notable awards. In collaboration with alumna Anne Bryden, Gran and Sue Hinze received funding for an ambitious research project to understand the challenges facing victims of spinal cord injuries. By all indications, this trend is continuing: at least two more books by sociology faculty (Dannefer and Gran) are slated for release in early 2021, and in addition to ongoing research endeavors several faculty are undertaking timely research on COVID-related and other issues.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID, the Department of Sociology managed to host three major colloquia during the year. In the spring, we hosted former ASA president Michael Burawoy of UC Berkeley. In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others that sparked the Black Lives Matters protests and widespread racial reckoning this past year, the department announced in June that we would dedicate the 2020-21 colloquium season to issues of racial inequality and social justice. You can read about the two fall events on page 6 in the newsletter, and two more are scheduled in the spring, the first on February 26. Special thanks to the joint faculty and graduate student programming committee organizing these events.

This issue also reports some very sad news. As some of you know, the Department was hard-hit in November by the passing of Boaz Kahana, Eva’s husband of 58 years. Boaz, who was Professor of Psychology at CSU and Co-director of the Elderly Care Research Center, was a treasured friend and mentor to generations of Sociology students and faculty. This is a loss that is being deeply and widely felt.

As always, we are eager to hear alumni news. Please keep us informed of any job opening that may be of interest to our recent graduates and students. And also feel free to encourage any prospective grad or undergrad students to consider Sociology at CWRU!

-Dale Dannefer, Chair
Department Highlights

Jessica Kelley appointed Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences

In October, The Gerontological Society of America named Jessica Kelley, Professor of Sociology, as the next Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences (JGSS). The flagship social science journal for the GSA, JGSS publishes cutting-edge social science on age, aging, and the life course in ten issues per year and its impact factor, over 3.5, is one of the highest in the field of gerontology. In her introductory editorial, Kelley announced three focus areas of her editorship: 1) to increase diversity in research on aging – “both in who is researched and who is doing the research”, 2) to expand the international impact of the journal, encouraging more contributions from regions underrepresented in gerontology; 3) to encourage research that links current events or structural issues to the health and well-being of older adults, such as the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, LGBTQ+ rights, and privatization of long-term care. As one of her first initiatives, Kelley announced a joint special issue with JGPS (Psychological Sciences) on “Psychological and Social Dynamics of the Aging Experience among Racial/Ethnic Minorities.” A second special issue focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older adults is currently underway.

Link to the call for papers:

Link to launch editorial:
https://academic.oup.com/psychsocgerontology/article/76/1/101/6006262

Three Professors of Sociology publish books in 2020

Black Privilege: Modern Middle-Class Blacks with Credentials and Cash to Spend
By Cassi Pittman Claytor from Stanford University Press

New York City has the largest population of black Americans out of any metropolitan area in the United States. It is home to a steadily rising number of socio-economically privileged blacks. In Black Privilege Cassi Pittman Claytor examines how this economically advantaged group experiences privilege, having credentials that grant them access to elite spaces and resources with which they can purchase luxuries, while still confronting persistent anti-black bias and racial stigma.

Drawing on the everyday experiences of black middle-class individuals, Pittman Claytor offers vivid accounts of their consumer experiences and cultural flexibility in the places where they live, work, and play. Whether it is the majority white Wall Street firm where they’re employed, or the majority black Baptist church where they worship, questions of class and racial identity are equally on their minds. They navigate divergent social worlds that demand, at times, middle-class sensibilities, pedigree, and cultural acumen; and at other times pride in and connection with other blacks.
Rich qualitative data and original analysis help account for this special kind of privilege and the entitlements it affords—materially in terms of the things they consume, as well as symbolically, as they strive to be unapologetically black in a society where a racial consumer hierarchy prevails.

Are We The 99%? The Occupy Movement, Feminism, and Intersectionality
By Heather McKee Hurwitz from Temple University Press

The protestors that comprised the Occupy Wall Street movement came from diverse backgrounds. But how were these activists—who sought radical social change through many ideologies—able to break down oppressions and obstacles within the movement? And in what ways did the movement perpetuate status-quo structures of inequality?

Are We the 99%? is the first comprehensive feminist and intersectional analysis of the Occupy movement. Heather McKee Hurwitz considers how women, people of color, and genderqueer activists struggled to be heard and understood. Despite cries of “We are the 99%,” signaling solidarity, certain groups were unwelcome or unable to participate. Moreover, problems with racism, sexism, and discrimination due to sexuality and class persisted within the movement. Using immersive first-hand accounts of activists’ experiences, online communications, and media coverage of the movement, Hurwitz reveals lessons gleaned from the conflicts within the Occupy movement. She compares her findings to those of other contemporary protest movements—nationally and globally—so that future movements can avoid infighting and deploy an “intersectional imperative” to embrace both diversity and inclusivity.

It’s A Setup: Fathering from the Social and Economic Margins
By Timothy Black and Sky Keyes from Oxford University Press

The expectation for fathers to be more involved with parenting their children and pitching in at home are higher than ever, yet broad social, political, and economic changes have made it more difficult for low-income men to be fathers. In It’s a Setup, Timothy Black and Sky Keyes ground a moving and intimate narrative in the political and economic circumstances that shape the lives of low-income fathers. Based on 138 life history interviews, they expose the contradiction that while the norms and expectations of father involvement have changed rapidly within a generation, labor force and state support for fathering on the margins has deteriorated. Tracking these life histories, they move us through the lived experiences of job precarity, welfare cuts, punitive child support courts, public housing neglect, and the criminalization of poverty to demonstrate that without transformative systemic change, individual determination is not enough. Fathers on the social and economic margins are setup to fail.
Department Highlights

Brian Gran named Jefferson Science Fellow

The U.S. Department of State selected professor of Sociology Brian Gran as a National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Jefferson Science Fellow (JSF). During this yearlong fellowship, Gran will focus on children’s and human rights.

“I’m very interested in how my scholarship can contribute but also, I’m interested in the flipside of what I’m going to learn—how human rights can promote stability and make things better for society,” Gran said. “This will be a chance to see up close how this works in practice. This is stuff that may change the way the world works”.

Following the fellowship year, the Jefferson Science Fellow returns to his/her academic career, but remains available to the U.S. Department of State/USAID for short-term projects over the subsequent five years.

Eva Kahana wins Diekhoff Award

In May, Eva Kahana received the Diekhoff Award for distinguished graduate student mentoring. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the education of graduate students through advising and teaching.

“Being a mentor is not some special project I’m doing, it’s who I am” said Kahana, “We’re all born into race and religion and, for most part, gender- these are things we didn’t really choose, so we have to reach out to one another as human beings first… being a mentor means having love in your heart for every person”.

Cassi Pittman Claytor named one of the top “100 People Transforming Business” by Business Insider Magazine

Cassi Pittman Claytor was featured in Business Insider magazine as one of “100 People Transforming Business” for her work with Sephora. Professor Claytor’s research specializes in racism in retail. From the article:

“In 2019, Sephora shut down its stores for an hour to educate employees about racial bias. The beauty retailer commissioned Cassi Pittman Claytor, an assistant professor of sociology at Case Western Reserve University, to present research on how racism plays out in retail.

Together with colleague David Crockett, Pittman Claytor created a model that demonstrates how racism interferes in each part of the customer journey, from the moment a consumer realizes they have a need to the moment they make that purchase.

Pittman Claytor referenced common Black retail experiences, like the feeling that they are being watched closely by store associates, or not being greeted by employees when they enter a store.”
Department Highlights

Anne Bryden, Brian Gran and Sue Hinze collaborate on DoD and Neilsen Foundation grants addressing spinal cord injury

In collaboration with Kim Anderson (Department of Physical Medicine and MetroHealth), Department of Sociology alumna Anne Bryden, Brian Gran and Sue Hinze (faculty) were funded by the Department of Defense's Spinal Cord Injury Research Program is funding their project entitled, “Perspectives on Recovery and Interventions to Restore Function Across the First Year of Spinal Cord Injury.” The $803,000 award supports research that compares needs of Veterans who have experienced spinal cord injury, as well as needs of those Veterans’ caregivers, with civilians and their caretakers, during the first year of injury as they attempt to reintegrate into the community.

The team also obtained a two-year, $200,000 pilot grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation with Anne Bryden as PI entitled “Psychosocial Impacts of Navigating Care Transitions on Caregivers of People with Spinal Cord Injury.”

Congratulations to Sociology’s graduate student award winners!

In spring 2020, four graduate students received prestigious Case Western Reserve University awards. Collette Ngana received the Graduate Dean’s Instructional Excellence Award, Polina Ermoshkina received the Marie Haug Award, Erin Phelps received the Graduate Student Appreciation Award, and Jacob Rivera received the Ruth Barber Moon Award. Please join us in congratulating all of these students!

Spencier Ciaralli awarded AAUW grant

Graduate student Spencier Ciaralli was awarded a dissertation fellowship from the American Association of University Women. This fellowship is awarded to applicants who have a demonstrated scholarly excellence, quality of their proposed project, and is committed to women’s issues in the academic profession/community. Congratulations Spencier!
Department Highlights

Charisse Burden-Stelly delivers colloquium on Racial Capitalism

In October, the Department of Sociology, along with The Department of History and African and African American Studies, hosted our first virtual colloquium of the semester, “Modern U.S. Racial Capitalism: History, Theory and Lessons for the Present”. Dr. Charisse Burden-Stelly spoke to faculty and students about the history of modern U.S. racial capitalism and its implications for the present.

Burden-Stelly is a scholar of political theory, political economy and intellectual history. She is an assistant professor of Africana studies and political science at Carleton College and the 2020-21 visiting scholar in the Race and Capitalism Project and political science department at the University of Chicago. Burden-Stelly is the co-author, with Gerald Horne, of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Life in American History. Her published work appears in journals, including Small Axe, Souls, Du Bois Review, Socialism and Democracy, International Journal of Africana Studies, and the CLR James Journal. She is the guest editor of the forthcoming Claudia Jones: Foremother of World Revolution, a special issue of The Journal of Intersectionality. She is also a regular contributor to Black Perspectives, the award-winning blog of the African American Intellectual Honor Society.

Panel discusses U.S. Prison Movements in wake of pandemic

The Department of Sociology hosted our second virtual colloquium of the fall semester, “Prison Resistance: Inside/Outside Movements to Transform U.S. Prisons”, on November 11, organized by Professor Tim Black. The pandemic has exposed the abhorrent and deadly conditions inside our prisons. Join us as a panel of scholars and activists discuss the history of prison movements and their prospects for addressing the crisis today.

Speakers included Amani Sawari, writer and founder of SawariMedia LLC; Reuben Jonathan Miller, sociologist, criminologist and social worker; Dan Berger, Professor at University of Washington Bothell, Dr. Toussaint Losier, Assistant Professor in the W.E.B. Dr Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; and Ronald D. Simpson-Bey, a leader in the movement to decarcerate American and Director of Outreach for JustLeadershipUSA.
Department Highlights

Michael Burawoy lectures on W.E.B. DuBois and meets with graduate students

From Left to Right: Erin Phelps, Spencier Ciaralli, Collette Ngana, Polina Ermoshkina, Jacob Rivera, Dr. Michael Burawoy, Casey Albitz, Michael Slone

Professor Michael Burawoy of UC Berkeley delivered a colloquium, “What Shall We Do with The Canon: The Significance of W.E.B Du Bois” at his sociology colloquium in February 2020.

Sociology graduate students enjoy their time with UC Berkley sociologist Michael Burawoy. Professor Burawoy, known for his contributions to Marxist sociology, sociological theory, public sociology, and ethnographic research methods, presented his most recent work entitled, *What Shall We Do with The Canon: The Significance of W.E.B Du Bois* at his sociology colloquium on February 14th, 2020.

Christine Schneider, Holley Renzhofer Pappada and Anne Bryden both successfully defended their dissertations in 2020. Please join us in congratulating them!

“The Experience and Psycho-Social Implications of Chronic Pain: The Importance of a Medical Diagnosis”
*Holly Renzhofer Pappada*

“The Living the Forgetting Experience: An Exploration Inquiry of the Lived Experience of MCI among Older Disabled Veterans”
*Christine Schneider*

“Navigating Resources after Spinal Cord Injury: The Utility of Human Rights”
*Anne Bryden*
Faculty Updates

In addition to Business Insider (see page 8), Cassi Pittman Claytor has been featured in numerous publications for her work in racism in retail. Professor Claytor has appeared in Vogue Business, Glossy, U.S. News and World Report, Forbes, MSN Money and The Guardian. In her Guardian article “Shopping while black: yes, bias against black customers is real,” Pittman Claytor shares important insight on why black consumers continue to encounter racism when they are merely trying to spend their money. It is an extension of her work on the everyday forms of discrimination that black consumers encounter in the marketplace and calls out retail stores for institutional practices that perpetuate the practice.

Recently, Bobbi Brown Cosmetics had featured Dr. Pittman Claytor in their “Pretty Powerful” Black Women Series. You can read more about Dr. Pittman Claytor and her accomplishments at her website, cassipittmanclaytor.com

In December 2020, Dale Dannefer received the Arnold M. Heller Memorial Award at the Annual Meeting of Menorah Park Center for Senior Living, Cleveland. The Heller Award recognized individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the field of gerontology and geriatrics. Recipients are selected by a committee of prior awardees based on their positive impact on the field of aging through their vision and work.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a Rapid Research Response grant (RAPID) to Case Western Reserve University to examine instances of governments suspending human rights in the name of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by Professor Gran, the project will assign scores based on how emergency measures have or have not stuck a balance between slowing the pandemic and honoring existing commitments to human rights.

Heather Hurwitz has been speaking across the country about the themes in her book new book Are We the 99%? She has been a guest on many radio and TV programs including KKUP (The Wimmin's Music Program) in Santa Cruz, CA, WGVU (Grand Rapids PBS/NPR affiliate), Burt Cohen's Keeping Democracy Alive podcast and radio show in New Hampshire and on Pacifica stations across the US and global outposts, and many more in between. Her book was also featured at the Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) National Winter Meeting Book Salon entitled Legacies of Women’s Protest. More resources about the book and listen to the interviews here: www.arewethe99book.com

Jessica Kelley and co-editor Roland Thorpe published their first volume as editors of the Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics: Economic Inequality in Later Life. This volume explores the current state of economic inequality later in life, and the forces that are creating and ever-widening economic gap for each, for each successive cohort. This volume features contributions from sociologists and economists such as: Christopher Phillipson, Debby Carr, Ronald Angel, and Katherine Newman. CWRU sociologists Professor Dale Dannefer, Marissa Gilbert, and Chengming Han contributed a chapter on the role of systemic racism in wealth-building policies developed across the 20th century.
Graduate Student Updates

In late December of 2019, Ph.D. candidate Casey Albitz was quoted in the *New York Times* regarding her work with the housing courts in Cleveland, which is also the topic of her dissertation. Albitz stated that “[e]viction court can present, at least, an opportunity to connect tenants with agencies that might help halt cycles of poverty, said Casey Albitz, who runs the court’s social service referral program.

The American Sociological Association (ASA) held their annual conference virtually in August of 2020. Several sociology graduate students presented at the event. Jiao Yu presented on her paper “A Cohort Analysis of Fertility History Trajectory of Women in China 1910-1959, Wenxuan Huang and Professor Jessica Kelley presented “Where Do We Go from Here? Social Inequality in the Partnership Parenthood Outcomes After the First Cohabitation”. Jacob Rivera, Marissa Gilbert and Professor Cassi Pittman Claytor presented on their paper “Queer Spaces in Black Places” and Abolade Oladimeji presented his paper “Do Care Recievers’ Gender Predit Levels of Depressice Symptoms Among African American Caregivers?”. Well done everyone!

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.
Student Updates

Sociology Senior Capstone Presentations

On December 8, 2020, seven sociology majors presented their Senior Capstone Experience (SOCI 392). Each of these independent projects reflected student’s emerging intellectual interests and strengths. The topics were drawn diverse sociological areas and utilized a number of methodologies.

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
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<tr>
<td>Esther Kim</td>
<td>“Mask Wearing Behaviors in the USE and South Korea during the Pandemic”</td>
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<td>Maria Fallavollita</td>
<td>“LGBT Youth Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic”</td>
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<td>David Gueye</td>
<td>“How the Media Reinforces Negative Perceptions of African Americans”</td>
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<td>Crystal Tascon</td>
<td>“The Intersection among Race, Class, and State Prison Populations”</td>
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<td>Gabrielle Jones</td>
<td>“The Sociology of Racial Inequality, Food Swamps, and the Role of Capitalism”</td>
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<td>Anisha Bhargava</td>
<td>“Racial Disparities in Maternal Mortality”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kiana Loo</td>
<td>“Understanding Structural Inequities and Native American COVID19 Outcomes”</td>
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Five students were initiated into the Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) International Sociology Honor Society and thirteen students were recipients of Undergraduate Awards. Although we could not celebrate their achievements in person this year, we are very proud of their work!

This year’s AKD initiates were Calvin RosCharles Gibson, Jacob Rivera, Antria Karthic, Adrianna Smell, and Yuhyun Kim. The James Dysart Magee Award that is awarded to an outstanding senior in Social and Behavioral Sciences went to Jasmine Cuenca. The Mark Lefton Award for excellence in sociological studies went to Jasmine Cuenca, Yihong Nie, and Rochelle Stephens. The Robert C. Davis Award for demonstrated commitment to sociological studies went to Calvin Gibson, Obasi Ndukwe, Kira Kelecji Oparah, and Riley Simko. The Schermerhorn Award for an outstanding student in sociology went to Darnelle Crenshaw, Paritosh Joshi, Divya Manoharan, and Amanda Spangler. The Stella Berkeley-Friedman Award to a senior for the highest academic achievement in the study of sociology went to Maria Fallavollita and Isa Malik.

For fourth-year undergraduate sociology students Kiana Loo and Vanessa Pilatova, volunteer work and community involvement have been key themes during their time at Case Western Reserve University. The duo first met as Civic Engagement Scholars and office assistants with the Center for Civic Engagement and Learning. It’s through CCEL that the suitemates got involved with political activism, volunteering together this fall to work the polls during the November 2020 election.

“Working at the polls was honestly one of the best experiences I’ve had with the Cleveland community,” Loo said. “I think in a time of such uncertainty and craziness, seeing the way that people came together to not only vote but help others vote was really inspirational. It was a hopeful reminder of the power of solidarity, community, and democracy.

Alumni Updates

Sociology alum Michael Flatt, PhD was featured on WKYC Channel 3 news discussing sociology and race. Dr. Flatt is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Tri-C and Adjunct Instructor in the Department of Bioethics at CWRU. Congratulations Dr. Flatt!
Alumni Updates

Jessica Kelley and CWRU Sociology alumna Jielu Lin were awarded the “Outstanding Publication Award” for their paper, “From Noise to Signal: The Age and Social Patterning of Intra-Individual Variability in Late-Life Health” by the Section on Aging and the Life Course at last year’s meeting of the American Sociological Association. The paper appeared in the Journal of Gerontology Social Sciences. Kelley and Lin (currently assistant professor at the University of Northern Arizona)

Other Department of Sociology Publications


Kahana, E. Why policies that protect older adults are more important than ever. Editorial. *Journal of Elder Policy*, 1, 1-7.


Jones, Morgan H. Emily K. Reinke; Alexander Zajichek; Jessica A. Kelley-Moore; Michael M. Khair; Tennison L. Malcolm; Anunziato Amendola; Jack T. Andrish; Robert H. Brophy; Flanigan, David; Laura J. Huston; Kaeding, Christopher; Robert G. Marx; Matthew J. Matava; Richard D. Parker; Brian R. Wolf; Rick W. Wright; Kurt P. Spindler. “Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status Predicts Patient Outcomes Two Years After ACL Reconstruction Surgery.” *Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine (OJSM)*. 7(6). Doi: 2325967119851073.


Boaz Kahana, Professor Eva Kahana's husband and soul mate for 58 years and a colleague, collaborator, mentor and valued friend to generations of CWRU Sociology faculty, students, staff and alumnae, passed away on November 6, 2020 at age 86. Boaz was Professor of Psychology at Cleveland State University, where he remained vigorously engaged in teaching and conducting research until his retirement this past year. He was also Co-director, along with Eva, of the Elderly Care Research Center. Boaz offered all those he met a unique combination of generosity of spirit, humor and intellectual stimulation.

Boaz's first language was Hebrew, and he attended the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Boaz graduated from Yeshiva University in 1955 and after pursuing training in clinical psychology in New York, he received a Ph.D. in human development from the University of Chicago in 1966. Dr. Kahana taught at Washington University in St. Louis, and Oakland University in Michigan, before joining Cleveland State University in 1984. He served as department chair for several years and engaged in full time teaching and research until he retired in 2019. Boaz was committed to the success of his students and his colleagues. A recipient of numerous awards for his teaching and research, Boaz authored over 200 publications spanning the fields of developmental psychology, gerontology, and traumatic stress. He will be deeply and widely missed.

To honor Boaz’s legacy, the Gerontological Society of America is establishing the Boaz Kahana Student Poster Award, which will recognize a current BSS student member, graduate or undergraduate, for original and innovative research relevant to mental health and aging. Further details will be forthcoming from GSA.