

# SOCIOLOGY speaks

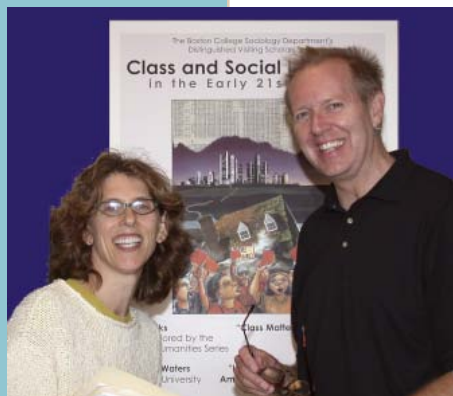
2004-2005

The Newsletter of the Sociology Department at Boston College

## Sociology and Social Justice in an Era of Global Social Change

### Message from the Chairperson, Stephen Pfohl

Academic Year 2004-05 was both exciting and labor-intensive for the Boston College Sociology Department. In addition to a continued high level of scholarly productivity and commitment to



Juliet Schor and Stephen Pfohl

teaching excellence and service, of particular importance this year were the successful completion of national searches for tenure-track faculty positions in the areas of Sociology of African American Society and Advanced Quantitative Methods, an engaging Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series on Black Social Thought and Research in the Early Twenty-first Century,

the awarding of tenure and promotion to Associate Professor Leslie Salzinger, and the selection of Juliet Schor for a three-year term as Department Chairperson beginning in AY 2005-06. These important developments, along with the bestowal of major scholarly awards and honors to our faculty and graduate students, are likely to shape the future of our department for years to come, making the BC Sociology Department an increasingly exciting place to conduct justice-oriented sociological inquiry and teaching.

In conducting tenure-track searches for new faculty in the areas of Sociology of African American Society and Advanced Quantitative Methods we were this year able to hire the top ranked candidates in each of our applicant pools. In Sociology of African American Society, the department hired Associate Professor Zine Magubane (Ph.D. Harvard University, 1997) and Assistant Professor C. Shawn McGuffey (Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, 2005). In Advanced Quantitative Methods we hired Assistant Professor Natasha Sarkisian (Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, 2005). A detailed profile of each new professor is included elsewhere in this issue of *Sociology Speaks*. What follows is a brief introduction to our

three new faculty members.

Zine Magubane is a prolific scholar whose specializations include social theory, sociology of postcoloniality, race and ethnicity, globalization, race and popular culture, gender and sexuality, and sociology of African societies. Her published work includes *Bringing the Empire Home: Imagining Race, Gender and Class in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), *Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies* (African World Press, 2004) and with Reitu Mabokela *Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy* (Routledge, 2005). Zine is also the author of numerous journal articles and chapters on a wide range of topics.

Shawn McGuffey's main areas of research and teaching include social psychology, sociology of race, class and gender, sociology of childhood and the family, African American family life in the United States, and qualitative research methods. His published work to date includes "Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone," an article in *Gender and Society* with B. Lindsay Rich, and "Engendering Trauma: Gender, Race and Mother Blame," also in *Gender and Society* and a result of Shawn's dissertation research on the impact of the trauma of child sexual abuse upon families engaged in group therapy.

Natasha (Natalia) Sarkisian will come to BC with sophisticated expertise in a wide range of advanced quantitative methods as well as sociology of family, race, class and gender, and social inequalities. The winner of multiple "best paper" awards for scholarship while a graduate student, Natasha's published work include "Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization," co-authored with Naomi Gerstel in the *American Sociological Review*. In addition, Professor Sarkisian's recently completed dissertation examines the relative integration of black, Latino and white families.

The 2004-05 academic year also marked the fourth of the department's very successful

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## Message from the Chairperson

Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series. This series brings leading social science theorists and researchers to the Boston College campus for several days of intensive scholarly exchange and dialogue with sociology department graduate students and faculty. Sponsored by a generous gift from Robert and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey and the Beckman Coulter Foundation, the theme for this year's Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series was Black Social Thought and Research in the Early Twenty-first Century. Participating scholars included Tricia Rose, Professor and Chairperson of the American Studies Program at University of California, Santa Cruz; Alondra Nelson, Assistant Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Yale University; and Prudence Carter, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. Each scholar this year delivered a well-attended public lecture and conducted an engaging two-hour faculty/graduate student seminar on a topic of her choosing. Tricia Rose's lecture was titled "Commercial Race in Contemporary Hip Hop," revisiting and updating her influential exploration of hip hop culture in her book *Black Noise*. Rose's seminar explored the realm of intimacy in black women's lives as also a realm of social and political movement. Alondra Nelson's lecture, "The Pursuit of African Roots in the Age of Genomics," examined the cultural impact of new technologies permitting members of the African diaspora to make genealogical connections with African ancestors. Alondra's seminar on "Afrofuturism" addressed the role of people of African descent in shaping the imagination and use of new information technologies. Prudence Carter's lecture, "Education and Black Achievement in the United States and South Africa," compared the outcomes of educational initiatives in these two countries, while her seminar invited analyses of strategies aimed at addressing the complex legacies of racism and social disadvantage within contemporary educational institutions.

The tenure and promotion of Leslie Salzinger to the rank of Associate Professor during her first year of full-time teaching at Boston College was another major event for the Sociology Department this year. Leslie completed her Ph.D. at University of California, Berkeley in 1998 and had been teaching as an Assistant Professor at University of Chicago until joining the faculty of Boston College this year. An accom-

plished ethnographer, feminist social theorist, and recent Book Review Editor for the *American Journal of Sociology*, Leslie's published work includes the new book, *Genders In Production* (University of California Press, 2003), a critically acclaimed ethnography of gendered forms of labor in four maquiladora factories in Ciudad Juarez, and with Michael Burawoy and other co-editors, the highly influential volume *Ethnography Unbound* (University of California Press, 1991). During academic year 2004-05 Professor Salzinger taught graduate-level seminars on feminist theories of gender and ethnographic methods and with Sarah Babb co-taught a large core undergraduate course on global sociology. Leslie's current research involves comparative ethnographic research of financial trading in New York City and Mexico City. Leslie was also the recipient of two major scholarly honors during the past year, as *Genders In Production* was awarded Honorable Mention as Best Book of the year by both the American Sociological Association's Sex and Gender Section and the Latin American Studies Association.

Other Boston College faculty and graduate students also received prominent awards over the last year. Sarah Babb's book *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton University Press, 2001) was named Co-Recipient of the 2004 Viviana Zelizer Prize for Best Book in Economic Sociology by the Economic Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association. Sarah was also awarded a prestigious Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for 2005-06 to pursue research on the sociological history and organizational dynamics of the International Monetary Fund. At BC, Sarah was also awarded a highly competitive eighty-percent paid sabbatical leave for the next academic year. William Gamson (with co-authors Myra Marx Ferey, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht) was named Recipient of the American Sociological Association's Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section Best Book Award for *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Bill was also named 2005 Recipient of Merit Award of the Eastern Sociological Association for his outstanding contributions to the discipline of sociology and the Eastern Sociological Association. In addition, Ph.D. candidate Abigail Brooks was named 2004 Recipient of the Best Graduate Student Paper Award of the Aging and Life Course Section of the Society

for the Study of Social Problems for the paper “Under the Knife and Proud of It: An Analysis of the Normalization of Cosmetic Surgery,” while Professor Paul Schervish was named for the fourth year in a row to the *Nonprofit Time*’s “Power and Influence Top 50.”

Also notable this year was the presence of three Visiting Scholars hosted by the Sociology Department, including Vered Malka, the Hebrew University, Adriana da Rosa Amaral, Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil, and Marjorie Devault, Syracuse University. Each of these scholars contributed to the overall intellectual environment of the department. Important as well were an assortment of prestigious awards and honors bestowed upon Ph.D. students in the Sociology Department. William Wood was selected as the 2005-06 Recipient of the Benedict Alper Graduate Fellowship. William was also honored as the 2004 Recipient of the Severyn Bruyn Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Paper in Sociology for his article “(Virtual) Myths,” published in the refereed journal *Critical Sociology*. Aimee van Wagenen, who also serves as a student representative to the Executive Board of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, was the holder of the Alper Fellowship during 2004-05. Graduate Teaching Fellow Jeffery Langstraat was named as a 2005 recipient of the Donald White Award for Teaching Excellence, while Abigail Brooks and Aimee van Wagenen won prestigious Boston College Dissertation Fellowships. In addition, Anders Hayden, William Wood, Chiwen Bao, Michelle Gawerc, Lara Birk, and Adria Goodson each received highly competitive graduate fellowships.

Academic year 2004-05 was also a time of transitions for the Boston College Sociology Department. Collectively, our department transitioned upward in the ranking of leading graduate programs published by *U.S. News and World Report*. This transition represents but a single step in recognizing what is clearly evident to anyone who is familiar with sociology at Boston College in recent years—that we are rapidly acquiring a reputation as a leading site for justice-oriented sociological research and teaching. At an individual level, the transition this year of Professor Jeanne Guillemain from full-time faculty member to Research Professor represents another important development. In early January of 2005 Jeanne’s new book, *Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-*

*Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism*, was published by Columbia University Press. Relieved of teaching responsibilities, Jeanne’s new position will enable her to remain at Boston College as part of our department’s scholarly community as she continues to pursue research and writing, as well as possible applications for external funding for research.

In closing, it is important to mention one additional transition taking place in the Boston College Sociology Department this year—a transition to Juliet Schor as our next Department Chairperson. It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair over the last seven years. During that time period, and due in large measure to a variety of important hiring initiatives and innovations in our graduate and undergraduate programs, the department has grown manifestly stronger in a great many ways. I am and will remain enormously grateful to the many faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff whose generous and creative labor have helped make the department what it is today. I am grateful as well to Deans Joseph Quinn and Michael Smyer and to Academic Vice-President Jack Neuhauser and Associate Academic Vice-President Patricia DeLeeuw for the strong administrative and financial support they have routinely provided. Over this last year, I am particularly indebted to the tireless labor of Assistant Chairperson and Graduate Director Sarah Babb and also department staff members Jean Lovett and Jessica Alvarez. Jean Lovett deserves special thanks as the principal editor of this and other recent editions of our *Sociology Speaks* newsletter. I have no doubt that Juliet Schor, our new Chairperson, will also benefit extensively from all these sources of support, just as all of us will benefit by Julie’s energetic leadership.

One last thing—As you read through this issue of *Sociology Speaks* I encourage you to send us your own observations and thoughts about the challenges facing sociology in the troubled times in which we live. If you are an alumnus of our department, please send us an e-mail and let us know what you are up to—what you are researching and writing, what you are teaching, and/or how you are engaged in efforts aimed at fostering social justice. If you are contemplating joining our department as a prospective student or faculty member, I urge you to

## Message from the Chairperson

## Message from the Chairperson

check out our department website and to read materials published by our faculty and students.

Given unprecedented transformations in the global historical nature of economic, political, and cultural institutions, and the omnipresence of new social technologies of power and privilege, it is important that sociology today construct theories, methodologies, and modes of practice adequate to the complex terrains in which we live and work. This is true, regardless of whether sociologists are studying the gendered seductions and racialized constraints of advanced consumer society, or the prospects for democratic renewal in a world where the dominant forms of politics are today corporately engineered, and where peacemaking activities are subordinated to a con-

tinuing coloniality of power and the ceaseless bankrolling of war. Innovative approaches to theory, methods and sociological practice are also necessary when confronting questions such as how best to enhance equality within one's church, or how to make sustainable the economy, ecology, and safety of one's neighborhood, or how to countermand the pleasure and terror of profit-driven big media. Efforts aimed at producing sociological inquiry responsive to the demands of our times are a key aspect of sociology at Boston College. As you read this and other recent issues of *Sociology Speaks*, I suspect you will learn this for yourself. Again, and on behalf of the BC Sociology department, I invite your responses, thoughts, and comments.

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# Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series 2005

## Black Social Thought and Research in the Early Twenty-First Century



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**Tricia Rose**

University of California Santa Cruz



**Alondra Nelson**

Yale University



**Prudence Carter**

Harvard University

*In Spring 2005, the Sociology Department hosted its fourth Distinguished Visiting Scholar Series. Tricia Rose, Alondra Nelson, and Prudence Carter sparked an ongoing conversation on topics like the evolution and commercialization of Hip Hop; futurism and speculative theory in African American culture; and Black educational achievement in the U.S. and South Africa. Below, members of the Sociology Department reflect on the lectures and seminars given by these provocative, cutting edge scholars.*

The 2005 series was funded by a gift from Robert and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey and Beckman Coulter.

# Tricia Rose

## Commercial Race in Contemporary Hip Hop and *Intimate Justice: Black Women, Sexuality, and the Future of Black Social Movements*

by  
Chiwen Bao

On February 28, 2005, Professor Tricia Rose opened the Sociology Department's 2005 Distinguished Visiting Scholar series entitled "Black Social Thought and Research in the 21st Century" with a captivating public lecture and engaging seminar for faculty and graduate students. Boston College was thrilled to receive the celebrated author of *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. In her trailblazing and award-winning first book, Dr. Rose cuts through discursive distortions and misrepresentations to critically and theoretically analyze the growth, potency and implications of rap music and hip hop culture in America. Eleven years after its first publication, her tour de force continues to serve as an influential scholarly compass that orients ongoing discussions, debates and analyses of hip hop as an aesthetic and political space where race, class, gender, sexuality and resistance are represented, commodified, negotiated and re-created. Her most recent work, *Longing to Tell: Black Women Talk about Sexuality and Intimacy*, is the first compilation of black women's oral histories about sexuality and is an important contribution to black feminist thought. It garnered much attention and praise for foregrounding previously marginalized, silenced and stereotyped experiences of gender, race and sexuality.

After completing her undergraduate studies in Sociology at Yale University, Professor Rose earned her masters and doctorate degrees in American Civilization at Brown University. She then taught in the History Department and Africana Studies at New York University before entering her current position as Professor and Chairperson of Ameri-

can Studies at University of California at Santa Cruz. She lectures widely, has been featured on radio and television and has had essays appear in publications ranging from the *New York Times* to *Vibe* magazine. *Black Noise*, which emerged from her dissertation work, won the prestigious American Book Award in 1995 and was named among *Village Voice's* top 25 books of 1994.

Delivering her lecture at BC entitled "Commercial Race in Contemporary Hip Hop," she mesmerized and challenged a diverse crowd of community members, faculty and students with



PHOTO BY BRAD OLSON

Tricia Rose

her sharp analyses and interrogations of how race and black culture are produced and represented within a backdrop of a market-driven industry. Drawing upon her fluency with popular culture and her acute analytical skills, Professor Rose shared her insights on the music industry and racial representations while also sampling music, welcoming questions and engaging the audience in an interactive dialogue. Flowing through the many layers of issues related to contemporary hip hop, she endeavored to understand the complex entanglements and implications of cultural expressive forms that are embedded within capitalism, commercialism and consumerism, institutions which are constructed and upheld by reinforced structures of racism and sexism.

Examining historical and political contexts of developments in black popular culture, she explored how this particular powerful musical genre and cultural phenomenon of hip hop has evolved into a sonic force that is contradictory and complicated, simultaneously marginal and popular, political and commodified. For instance, she delved into the quandaries of commercial production, consumption and exportation of cultural products that reap profits from lifestyle demonstrations and representations of stereotypical black masculinity and the objectification of women. Professor Rose also traced the ways in which market logic becomes articulated through commercial rap and hip hop by feeding off of a voyeuristic fascination with the “street” and “ghetto” life. Instead of simply leaving her cultural criticism as an abstract academic exercise, she pushed the intellectual exercise into the realm of the personal by challenging everyone to wrestle with our complicity in constructing a spectacle of black masculinity, to interrogate our own touristic pleasures of objectification, and to grapple with desires, sexual subtexts and motivations that fuel the massive white and suburban consumption of hip hop. While the beats and its affiliated subcultures had initially emerged as liberating spaces for cultural resistance and political expression, she suggested that these revolutionary aspects of hip hop have become distorted by production and consumption demands. What largely remains in the commercial domain is a shadow of hip hop’s legacy as a medium for social criticism and black emotional intimacy.

Professor Rose ventured to explore another culturally and politically expressive space the following day in the seminar on “Intimate Justice: Black Women, Sexuality and the Future of Black Social Movements.” Drawing from her own research and writing as well as that of Toni Cade Bambara and Iris Marion Young, she led the seminar through a discussion of publicly and privately assaulted personhoods and the possibilities and needs for change and justice through intimate spaces. She discussed narratives from her second book that registered women’s experiences of emotional abuse,

physical violence and other antagonisms within relationships. She then introduced her understanding of how these relational difficulties and damages were symptomatic of being situated in racialized structures of oppression. Contextualized within these debilitating structures, intimate relationships have become repositories and disposal grounds for individuals who have been rendered unlovable and whose souls have been threatened and assaulted historically, corporeally and continuously by larger society. Where intimate spaces hold the possibility of safely harboring the vestiges of willful power, structures of racism and sexism have distorted and impinged upon experiences of intimacy and sexuality where the injuries that play out in public spaces do so in private spaces as well.

Imagining and holding onto the possibility of social change, Professor Rose posited a notion of intimate justice where the self is the revolutionary unit and relationships are the medium for politics of change. She suggested that social justice movements can also be envisioned as occurring through intimate spaces which can be environments that prove conducive to fostering individuals’ requisite strength needed to confront challenges and enact change. Intimacy, as she defined it, can provide opportunities for revealing and sustaining the self safely and fully so that self-transformation, strength and resiliency can be nurtured through trust, connection and love. Professor Rose drew upon Toni Cade Bambara’s work to understand how justice, among many things, is also an intimate matter which requires developing a disposition of hope. Recognizing how our emotional and political environments are rather deplete with sources of hope, especially in communities that bear extended impacted injuries, Professor Rose offered the possibility of relying on individuals that can lend strength and inspiration to fuel the hope necessary for beginning a process of self and social transformation. Furthermore, unlike movements that foster alienation between individuals and communities, she discussed how a model of intimate justice is sustained through strategies of survival that are about connection and coali-

Tricia Rose

Visiting  
Scholar  
Series  
2005

tion-building. However, recognizing possible misinterpretations of this theory of social change, Professor Rose discussed with seminar participants the tactical need to be cautious of how the language of intimate justice can become misappropriated and deployed to feed a problematic and damaging rhetoric of victimization and self-help.

Across the two days Professor Rose spent at Boston College, she invigorated the community with her intellectual and scholarly brilliance, her thoughtful eloquence and insights, and her unparalleled humanity. The dynamism and poignancy of Professor Rose's words and passion opened up conversations about the contradictions and complexities of popular culture and racial representation, commodified subjectivities, embodied experiences and social change. Social justice, whether through expressive media or intimacy, was an underlying theme of her lecture and seminar. Through her ruminations on commercial hip hop and intimate injuries, Professor Rose revealed the interwoven narratives of history, racial and gender politics, and institutions that promote alienation and others that cultivate empowerment. Leaving an indelible mark on the psyches of many, Professor Rose left Boston having aroused contemplations of how human relatedness, embodied experience and creative expression can cultivate the grounds for justice by reminding us of our shared humanity and quest for dignity.

## Alondra Nelson

### The Pursuit of African roots in the Age of Genomics and Futurism and Speculative Theory in African-American Culture

by  
Stephen Pfohl

Alondra Nelson, the second participant in this year's Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series on "Black Social Thought and Research in the Early Twenty-First Century," is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Yale University. Alondra

Nelson is also the author of several cutting-edge works on the relationship between technology and race. Indeed, while still an Assistant Professor, Alondra has already established herself as an influential voice in scholarly inquiries into the intersections between technology, culture, and race. I was delighted when Professor Nelson agreed to participate in this year's Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series. I had recently assigned Alondra's introduction to a special issue of *Social Text* she edited on the theme of "Afrofuturism" as required reading for my graduate-level seminar on "Postmodernity and Social Theory." As such, I was eager to meet Alondra and to have Boston College faculty and students become acquainted with her engaging work.

At Yale Professor Nelson teaches a wide variety of courses, including Sociology of Health and Illness; Social Movements, Health Culture and Society; African Americans and Social Thought; Race, Racisms and Social Theory; Technology, Identity and Culture in the Contemporary United States; Information Technology and Society; and From Civil Rights to Black Power. In addition to her scholarly acuity and teaching, Alondra Nelson is also a public sociologist of sorts, having recently served as a member of the Connecticut N.A.A.C.P.'s statewide blue ribbon committee which authored a report on the health status of African Americans in Connecticut, and as an expert witness at public hearings on the racialized character of healthcare inequalities in that state.

Alondra Nelson graduated *magna cum laude* from University of California San Diego in 1994 as an undergraduate major in Anthropology. She was awarded the M.A. in American Studies from New York University in 1998 and completed her Ph.D. in American Studies at NYU in 2003. In 1997 Alondra authored the essay "Race and Technology: Beyond the Digital Divide" for a published volume on *Race and Public Policy* edited by Makani Thoma. In this work Alondra pursued questions about the use of technologies within social contexts governed by racialized vectors of power in ways that extend well beyond debates concerning who is granted or de-

nied access to new information technologies. “Race and Technology” examines the complex and often creative uses of technology by peoples of color in everyday life. In 1997 Alondra also co-authored with Thuy Linh Tu, Alicia Headlam Hines and Debra Wexler “Communities on the Verge: Intersections and Disjunctures in the New Information Order,” a critical meditation on the uneven and unequal effects of technological innovations in the contemporary society. With Thuy N. Tu and Alicia Headlam Hines Nelson also co-edited the acclaimed *Technicolor: Race, Technology and Everyday Life* (New York University Press, 2001).

Like Alondra Nelson’s other work, *Technicolor* broadens the critical study of technology to explore the intersections between race, ethnicity and technology, while also examining the impact of racism at a global level on the invention and use of specific forms of technology. The case studies assembled in this volume address not only new digital technologies but a wide range of technologies operating in the interstices of everyday life—from automobiles and cell phones to CB radios in taxis. This book also features important case studies of historical innovations in technology by people of color, including discussions of Indian H1B workers, artists associated with the Detroit techno music scene, Karaoke performers, and Chicano internata. In “Hidden Circuits,” Nelson’s co-authored contribution to this volume, Alondra examines how diverse groups of people of color create, use, and reconfigure technologies in both residential communities and the workplace. Related themes are at play in the special issue of *Social Text* Alondra edited on Afrofuturism. Here Nelson dissembles “exotic” stereotypes that present people of African descent as “the anti-avatar of digital life,” such that blackness is “constructed as always oppositional to technologically driven chronicles of progress.”

The term Afrofuturism is drawn, in part, from the 1909 “Manifesto of Futurism” produced by the Italian artist and theorist Filippo Tomasso Marinetti. But unlike Marinetti’s hyper-masculine aesthetic obsessions with the beauty of speed and the technological erasure of history, memory,

and tradition—obsessions that led Marinetti to later glorify violence and war, espouse fascism, and embrace Italian military attacks on Ethiopia and Libya—Afrofuturism takes its inspiration from works such as the critical theoretical writings of Mark Dery and Ishmael Reed’s groundbreaking 1972 novel *Mumbo Jumbo*. Envisioning “things to come” from the perspective of African diasporic culture, Afrofuturism concerns innovative engagements with new technology and media that are “grounded in the histories of black communities” and what might be called the dynamic construction of a “living past.” In this sense, Afrofuturism also distances itself from recent “neocritics” of new information technologies, such as Timothy Leary and Allucquère Rosanne Stone, who advocate such things as a technological freedom from human bodily constraints and an affirmation of technologically fragmented and multiple selves. By contrast, Afrofuturism approaches technological decenterings of the self through the more complex lens of what W.E.B. DuBois referred to as “double consciousness,” embracing both the memorable historical sorrows and the critical epistemological advantages that this term implies. An expanded version of the *Social Text* issue edited by Alondra Nelson on Afrofuturism is scheduled for forthcoming publication as a book with Duke University Press.

Alondra Nelson’s public lecture at Boston College was titled “The Pursuit of African Roots in the Age of Genomics.” In this lecture Alondra examined the use of new genetic technologies by African Americans and other members of the global African diaspora to trace their genealogical roots to specific kinship groups and geographical locations in



PHOTO BY CASEY SCHMIDT

Alondra Nelson

Africa. Nelson's work on this topic represents one aspect of a new book manuscript she is producing on African American's relations to technological innovations in the areas of health and social identity. Tentatively titled *Black Power as Bio-Politics: Black Nationalism, Health Activism and the Politics of Knowledge*, the book also deals with sociological questions pertaining to genetic disease, medical models that pathologize social unrest, and the racialized cultural politics of reproductive rights. For Nelson, as for Paul Gilroy, a previous participant in our Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series, new genomic technologies promise to destabilize race as a putative biological entity, revealing instead the thoroughly historical character of race as a social construction.

Genomic technologies today also operate in the consumer marketplace where they address long-standing cultural and psychic yearnings on the part of diasporic blacks to discover and scientifically document the specificity of their African origins. Following the purchase of a genomic identity linking physical traces of one's family to a particular region and ancestral context, African diasporic consumers are able to reconstruct new senses of who they are and from what communities they hail prior to the world historical violence of slavery. This practice itself has world historical implications, as consumers of such new genomic-based genealogies often undergo complex personal and cultural transformations, identifying with groups and geographical regions about which they previously knew little. In her compelling lecture and subsequent discussion Nelson used materials drawn from interviews with consumers of such unprecedented genealogical resources to explore the complex emotional, social, racial, and political identifications engendered by these new technologies of the self. In this sense, Alondra's research involves a cultural mapping of new forms of genetic kinship ushered into existence under the mystique and authority associated with genomic science. The implications of discovering new African kin were often dramatic. While some consumers were faced with an unanticipated awareness of the

genetic hybridity of their ancestry, others traveled to visit their genomic "motherland" and became advocates for newly found African relatives.

Alondra Nelson's faculty/graduate student seminar on "Futurism and Speculative Theory in African American Culture" provided another exciting entry point into critical sociological discussions of race and technology. The jump-off point involved Alondra's writings on Afrofuturism and the provocative work of Robin D.G. Kelley, Mark Dery and Kowdo Eshun. Nelson traced the origins of this project to her years as a graduate student in American Studies at New York University when she participated as part of a collective of black artists and writers who sought to combine poetics, pedagogy and politics. One result was the development of an on-line community aimed at exploring the promise of Afrofuturism to counter "primitivist" stereotypes of Blacks as anti-technological—a problematic and all too common subtext for analyses of today's so-called "digital divide."

Nelson discussed the figurative use of utopian and science fiction-like themes in African diasporic approaches to technology. At play within the "speculative theoretical poetics" of writers and artists—including novelists Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, and Samuel Delaney and musicians such as Sun Ra or DJ Spooky (Paul D. Miller)—are themes suggesting an embrace of technologies that carry the African diaspora into a utopian social realm beyond identities marked by race and racism. Acknowledging a debt to Tricia Rose, another participant in this year's Distinguished Visiting Scholars Series, Nelson also explored the "sonic force" of black poetics as a mode of epistemological engagement reaching beyond the cultural constraints of words and traditional academic discourse. This led to a lively discussion of new global technologies of communication and the potential of such new media to overturn racialized structures of power, while energizing social movements aimed at the realization of social justice. The connections evoked by Alondra between imaginative poetics and social activism proved particularly engaging to seminar participants, a number of

whom were prospective Ph.D. students visiting Boston College as part of our department's annual graduate recruitment weekend. As the concluding event in Nelson's visit to BC, this seminar also provided ample insight into Alondra's brilliance as both a scholar and university-level educator and challenged all of us to imagine forms of social movement adequate to the times in which we live.

## Prudence Carter

### Education and Black Achievement in the United States and South Africa and Race and the Hierarchy of Meanings in Schools

by Michael J Cermak

As part of his 2004 speech to the Democratic National Convention, Barack Obama remarked that in order to help black students achieve we must, "*eradicate the slander that says that a black child with a book is acting white.*" What Senator Obama cited



PHOTO BY JEAN LOVETT

Prudence Carter

is an increasingly pervasive stereotype in the mainstream; black youth, custodian of a stylized subculture with a deeply marginalized history, appear to reject educational culture, which manifests in a glaring achievement disparity in reading, math, and sci-

ence. Theorists such as John Ogbu hold that the culture of black youth is a form of resistance and opposition that rejects the dominant white culture and academic achievement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Prudence Carter of Harvard University has taken on an opposition of her own, one that challenges the progenitors of the theory of oppositional culture as it applies to minority youth in educational settings. In mid April, as part of the Distinguished Seminar Series in contemporary African American thought, the Boston College sociology department was pleased to host two lectures by Carter who shared her national and international work on the sociology of education.

Carter joins a new group of scholars who have found that black youth actually adhere quite readily to the mainstream notions of achievement and accept the educational framework as a tool for upward mobility (Gould, 1999). "Acting white," contends Carter, is not so much a statement used to police the boundaries of educational achievement; rather it is a rejection of white habits of speech, dress, music and interactional styles (Carter, 2003). The black students' struggle is not rooted in levels of educational aptitude alone. It is also rooted in the incompatibilities of teacher-student cultural styles. Carter's research in New York with black youth from low-income families portrays a student more attuned to classroom dynamics than the image afforded by popular stereotype, as the following quote from a female student emphasizes:

Like I say, I mean... the way you present yourself to someone, that's the approach that they take upon you. And some Black kids, you know, when they go to school, the first thing the teacher looks at is how you present yourself. So you come to school with the baggy pants and hat to the back, with the radio, they look at you and be like,

"I'm not going to waste my time." But they see the other, like you know, quiet, and then that's the one they'll spend more time with. But not knowing that person came with the baggy pants, could be more intelligent, you know, have more intellectuals [sic] than a quiet person. (148)

Carter's interviewee reflects that presentation of oneself is a large factor in the classroom, and she identifies specific cultural markers of black youth and the larger hip-hop culture. Her further probes find youth who express similar knowledge of the importance of adapting mainstream culture in educational settings, but also protest the skewed portrayal of black history and yearn for a more in depth level of education in African American studies both contemporary and historical. It is this apathy towards both the teacher's implicit denigration of black cultural forms and of existing culturally monotone material that is a major factor in disengagement of many youth in educational settings. The result, however, is the same; even though progress has been made in black educational achievement since the 1950s when schools were desegregated, this progress has been matched by the white majority and the racial gap persists undiminished.

The US is not the only nation with marginalized racial minorities, nor is it the most recently desegregated system. South Africa has only ten years since the end of apartheid and it is there that Carter employs an analytical comparison of the cultural hierarchy in schools. In South Africa the numerical proportion of the marginalized culture is reversed (black Africans are about 75% of the population), the public schools require tuition, and there are uniforms and rules against ethnic expressions of hair style. Despite these differences there is still an educational achievement gap similar to that seen in the US. What this means is that there are underlying dynamics of how dominant races impose cultural meanings upon non-dominant cultures within educational settings and this manifests in educational achievement disparities, clear hindrances to the mission of desegregation and socioeconomic equality in both the South African nation and our own. The bridges built with foreign academics by Carter in

her six month stay in South Africa will undoubtedly spawn novel approaches to cultural differences in educational achievement (Carter, 2004).

Carter's forthcoming book *Keepin' It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White* (Oxford University Press August 2005) will elaborate on her research into the cultural hierarchy in schools in the US and South Africa and how this affects the racial identity and educational achievement of marginalized youth. In her public lecture, Carter hinted at a useful framework she is developing for understanding the varying achievement within black youth. There are *cultural mainstreamers*, those black youth who accept the dominant ideology of learning and culture; *cultural stragglers* are those that can navigate between cultural structures in context appropriate ways; and lastly there are the *non-compliants*, those who view the cultural hierarchy as rigid and are reluctant to stray from their own culture. Her research has found that those who do well in the educational system are not necessarily the mainstreamers, but the cultural stragglers, the ones who can navigate between dominant and non-dominant cultures. These are the students who can maintain their cultural authenticity among their peers, while playing the educational game and reaping its benefits. The non-compliants who often struggle in school should not be viewed as problematic, Carter warns. They are a reminder that simply increasing the resources delivered to schools while failing to address glaring cultural insensitivities of both the educators and materials conveyed will not suffice.

During the seminar with faculty and graduate students Carter elaborated upon her theoretical approach to understanding the aforementioned differences in teacher and student cultures. The baggy pants, hat to the back, and radio, cited by her interviewee, as well as other indicators of black youth culture such as the hip-hop swagger and boisterous verbal exchanges are a dynamic of mannerisms, and commodities, which can be brought under the auspices of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory.

Cultural capital theorists typically associate the benefits of adhering to the dominant cultural practices, but Carter argues that the black youth culture is structured by its own form of *non-dominant* cultural capital. Viewing black youth culture as structured by a non-dominant cultural capital opens research into the benefits of the practices held by black youth, benefits which have hitherto been ignored by a fixation of cultural capital theory only on the dominant culture and who does or does not conform. Understanding these social benefits can ultimately aid the implementation of more culturally sensitive education. The implications for the non-dominant cultural capital as it varies across class and gender were avidly discussed during the seminar.

Research into educational problems exists in a current political shift towards a “testocracy,” whereby new high stakes standardized testing is being instituted nationwide. The testing is a product of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and it has placed unprecedented pressure on low-resource urban schools. Over the past few years I have been teaching in the Boston public schools, and have had a front row view of how this sweeping policy has placed a stranglehold on diversification of the curriculum. Since there are real sanctions against schools that fail to make progress for all racial categories many teachers are consumed with a “teaching to the test” culture. From Carter’s research the testocracy can now be seen as a political move that will continue to erode the already tenuous strain between black student and teacher forms of cultural capital. We can see that educational success, in the current system, requires adherence to the mainstream cultural capital and lays the substrate for a selective medium that will discriminate against the non-dominant forms and undermine the tolerance of cultural differences our society purports.

Those concerned with the educational achievement gap can view black youth culture as an impediment to upward mobility and try, through higher stakes standardized testing, to encourage the forfeit of cultural identity in the name of higher test scores, or they can heed Carter’s work to understand how non-dominant cultural capital conveys benefits to the holder and develop new

materials which more harmoniously tap into pre-existing cultural resources. The latter is a method which will hopefully develop cultural stragglers, those who can navigate between dominant and non-dominant cultures without sacrificing their authenticity.

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### Patricia Arend

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### Christian Gilde

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### Susan Legere

“Change in the Church, Change in the Classroom: Institutionalizing Holocaust Education in Catholic Schools,” Presented at the Bridging Disciplines, Spanning the World: Approaches to Identities, Institutions and Inequalities Conference sponsored by the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies. Princeton, New Jersey, April 9, 2005.

“Change in the Church, Change in the Classroom: Institutionalizing Holocaust Education in Catholic Schools,” Presented at the Cultural Studies in Education Conference, Teachers College. New York, New York, April 22, 2005.

### Sandra George O’Neil

“The Road to Superfund: Environmental Equity Examined for Twenty Years of Listing,” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. San Francisco, CA, August 2004.

### Joelle Sano

“Schools Strike Out: The Impact of Publicly Funded Stadiums on Public Schools,” Presented at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society. Washington, D.C., March 20, 2005.

### John Shandra

“Global Capitalism and Flows of Foreign Direct Investment: A Quantitative, Cross-National Analysis,” with Robert J. S. Ross and Bruce London. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 44: 199-238 (2004).

“Environmental Degradation and Child Mortality: A Quantitative, Cross-National Analysis,” with Bruce London, Presented at the American Sociological Association’s Annual Conference. San Francisco, CA, August 2004.

### Matthew Williams

“Notional Defined Contribution Accounts: Neoliberal Ideology and the Political Economy of Pension Reform,” with John B. Williamson, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64: 2 (2005).



PHOTO BY JEAN LOVETT

Ph.D. student Aimee van Wagenen and recent faculty hire Shawn McGuffey before Prudence Carter’s public lecture.

# Tricks of the Teaching Trade

May 19, the department sponsored a “Tricks of the Teaching Trade” workshop for Teaching Fellows and Assistants, both new and returning. The day-long workshop was organized



Jeff Langstraat

and led by Donald White Teaching Excellence Award winner Jeffrey Langstraat. In addition, Paul Gray, Eve Spangler, and

Mike Malec generously gave of their time to lead discussion on various topics. Stephen Pfohl and Sarah Babb also provided insight to the graduate students who attended: Anders Hayden, Christian Gilde, David Nnyanzi, Masa Higo, Matt Williams, and Michelle Gawerc,

The day was divided into two sections, with the morning devoted to such nuts-and-bolts things as syllabus construction, selecting textbooks, and teaching resources, while the more open-ended afternoon session focused on classroom concerns

like facilitating conversation, lecturing, creating assignments, and working with students. While Boston College offers several resources for graduate students who teach, this workshop condensed many topics not covered by the general orientation (like how to create a syllabus) while focusing specifically on teaching sociology.

A consensus emerged, among both the faculty and students who attended, that this is something the department should continue to sponsor. While both faculty and students were enthusiastic about the workshop itself, Jeffrey was more excited about what happened afterwards (partially because the stress of leading the workshop had by then dissipated). In an email to the participants, he discussed a peer-mentoring group he had been a part of while on the faculty of Minnesota State University, Mankato, and wrote: “I think the thing I want to stress is that you should treat today as part of a larger conversation. When I left McGuinn, it was cool to hear people still talking about teaching issues. If I could make one suggestion it would be this: keep talking to each other about this stuff. It helps you become a better teacher.”

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## Graduate Student Awards 2004-2005

**Boston College Dissertation Fellowship:** Abigail Brooks, Aimee van Wagenen

**Benedict Alper Graduate Fellowship:** William Wood

**Donald J. White Award for Teaching Excellence:** Jeffrey Langstraat

**Boston College Graduate Presidential Fellowships:** Chiwen Bao, Michelle Gawerc, Anders Hayden

**Severyn T. Bruyn Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Social Economy and Social Justice:** William Wood for his paper "(Virtual) Myths" (published in *Critical Sociology* Vol. 30, No. 2: 513-548).

**Elected Graduate Student Representative, Board of Directors, Society for the Study of Social Problems, 2003-06:** Aimee van Wagenen

Abigail Brooks was named 2004 Recipient of the Best Graduate Student Paper Award of the Aging and Life Course section of the Society for the Study of Social Problems for her paper “Under the Knife and Proud of It: An Analysis of the Normalization of Cosmetic Surgery.”

# Reaching Out About Depression

by  
*Autumn  
Green*

Autumn Green was a Sociology MA student when she first encountered ROAD. She is currently a Ph.D. student specializing in Poverty and Creative Sociology.

Like most of the best things in life, a mental health project was never part of my plan. While I have suffered from depression since early adolescence, it was something I considered taboo to address or even acknowledge. I was introduced formally to ROAD (Reaching Out About Depression) when cofounders Angie Littwin and Joy Walker came as guest speakers to a grad course I was taking, Lisa Dodson's SC592 Work and Family in Low Income America. While Angie and Joy expressed an interest in recruiting student volunteers to help with the project, I was interested in the project in a much more personal way: as a low-income mother who lives in Cambridge. Professor Dodson encouraged me to contact Angie to learn more about ROAD. I had absolutely no idea, however, where this would take me and how much it would change my life.

When I met with Angie about ROAD, I discovered that a lot of both my personal and educational background overlapped with its philosophy and approach. As an undergraduate I'd studied non-violent social change including Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication, which I was happy to learn was a principal component of the ROAD group. Throughout my work with this project, my identity has continued to fluidly flow between my personal and academic selves. While I never intended ROAD as an academic venture, it has blended the personal aspects of my own life and the principles of my sociological training.

ROAD is a women's community activist group based in Cambridge and primarily serving low-income Cambridge women (although any woman is welcome). The group was founded and is perpetuated on a philosophy of feminist community based action and research around the central issue of depression and mental health in the lives of low income women. This philosophy takes on a social psychological perspective in seeking to explore the complex web of women's lived daily realities, where depression is one of many symptoms of greater social ills and injustices. Taking this perspective demands a new approach, recognizing and responding to the links between mental health and social wellbeing.

Taking this approach is of course neither

traditional nor easy. It required the initial drive of eight women, including myself, who wanted to take an issue that was personal, even taboo, and use it as a basis for social activism. At its most basic level, this activism involved providing safe-space, a welcoming atmosphere, childcare and dinner on a Friday night. Without laying out these essential planks of enablement, women like myself would be left stranded without a bridge to our communities. Once these essential foundations were in place we were able to craft a 12 week workshop series designed to pull other community women out of the darkness of depression (even if only for a few hours) to discuss tangible life issues with others who shared similar experiences. The workshops covered a range of issues that were brainstormed, designed and facilitated by us: women who have all been there. We covered everything from general discussions about what depression is (and is not), to practical day to day life issues: relationships, motherhood, the social pressures of discrimination, racism and classism. We then moved into intense workshops exploring difficult issues like domestic violence, substance abuse and suicide.

Through its collaboration and affiliation with the BC Counseling department and Harvard Law School, ROAD was able to provide an additional form of therapy by offering each of the original seven facilitators a resource team consisting of two graduate student volunteers (one from BC Counseling and one from Harvard Law). These teams were able to help us face the complex demands of our daily lives with both moral and hands-on support. Through this invaluable service, I was able to carry a heavier load and even take out some time for myself.

The plethora of things that I have gained from ROAD can't be captured in simple words. As a sociologist I've lived out feminist action-research as both facilitator and participant. Few sociologists have such an opportunity to be part of a project of this nature from the inside. I've learned to see mental health as a web holistically bound to the self and social realities that people live. I've become part of a community, an activist, a friend, a confidant and a role-model. I've become a happier person, a better mom, able to take on more and to take care of myself at the same time.

# Graduate Degrees Awarded

Academic Year 2004-2005

**John Shandra, Ph.D.:** “The Economics and Politics of Deforestation: A Quantitative, Cross-National Analysis”

Most previous cross-national studies of deforestation have been criticized for being largely atheoretical. While these studies provide some initial insights into deforestation, the absence of theory is problematic because the choice of variables for models remains unguided in that variables are included according to data availability or other ad hoc reasons. I address this concern by conducting an empirical analysis of deforestation informed by five different perspectives using the stochastic impacts (STI) by regression (R) on population (P), affluence (A), and technology (T) or STIRPAT analytical framework. In doing so, I include variables not taken into account in previous research but theoretically relevant to any study of deforestation. These measures include democracy, international non-governmental organizations, and political protests. Initially, these variables do not explain a significant amount of variation in deforestation. However, subsequent analyses incorporating interaction terms suggest international non-governmental organizations and political protests reduce deforestation more in democratic nations than in repressive nations. Analyses also reveal that export partner concentration, commodity concentration, multinational corporate penetration, and International Monetary Fund conditionality increase deforestation more in repressive nations than in democratic nations. I increase the validity and reliability of the findings by estimating the models with three missing data techniques including listwise deletion, group mean substitution, and full information maximum likelihood estimation. Similarly, I use a variety of different model specifications. The findings remain stable and consistent regardless of the method for handling incomplete data and the indicators included in the models.

**Sandra George O’Neil, Ph.D.:** “Environmental Justice In The Superfund Clean-Up Process”

In this work, I examine the concerns of the next generation of environmental justice – namely tracing the impacts of race, class and family composition on environmental remediation, or clean-up efforts. This study focuses on environmental “cleanup” justice, and the differential process of Superfund listing across different socioeconomic, racial, gender, and family variables. The overall logic of my argument remains the same; poor people, people in communities of color, and single parent families are at an on-going disadvantage in the remediation process, as they are in the processes which lead to initial exposures. The influence of demographic variables in the Superfund clean up process however, is not as straightforward as past environmental justice research, which supported a more clear-cut relationship between poor and minorities and exposure to environmental hazards. The association between Superfund listings and marginalized populations is one with many fine distinctions since a Superfund listing is dependent on several changeable factors such as: the Superfund budget, community pressure and organization, the availability of alternative cleanup strategies outside the scope of the EPA, and changes in the implementation of the Superfund program itself. Given these complexities, we would expect to see the pattern of association between race, class, family composition and environmental clean-ups to have far more nuances than the relationship between these factors and environmental exposures.

**Michael Philip Anastario, M.A.:** “A Cross-national Analysis of Income and Health: Material, Psychosocial, and Physiological Mechanisms”

**Matthew A. Gregory, M.A.:** “Sport, Violence and Masculinity: Caught In A Web”

**Cheryl Diana Stults, M.A.:** “Hormone Replacement Therapy: Decision-Making After the Woman’s Health Initiative”

# Three New Faculty Hires: Zine Magubane, Shawn McGuffey, Natasha Sarkisian

by  
Stephen Pfohl

Over the last academic year national searches were conducted to make tenure-track faculty hires in the areas of Sociology of African American Society and Advanced Quantitative Methods. After screening a large number of candidates and conducting on-campus interviews, it is with great pleasure that I report that we were able to successfully recruit our top candidates for each position and with the support of the Boston College administration make two hires in the area of Sociology of African American Sociology. A brief description of new faculty members Zine Magubane, C. Shawn McGuffey and Natasha Sarkisian is provided below.

## Zine Magubane

Zine Magubane will join the faculty of Boston College as an Associate Professor of Sociology. She completed her B.A. in Political Economy at Princeton University in 1991 and her Ph.D. in Sociology at Harvard University in 1997. From 1997 to 2005 Zine was employed as first an Assistant then Associate Professor of Sociology at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Professor Magubane also taught at University of Cape Town in South Africa during 1996-1997 and served as a Research Associate with the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria, South Africa from 1998-2000.

While at University of Illinois Zine established herself as a prolific writer and influential scholar. Her areas of specialization include social theory, sociology of post-coloniality, race and ethnicity, globalization, race and popular culture, gender and sexuality, and sociology of African societies. Professor Magubane is the author of *Bringing the Empire Home: Imagining Race, Gender and Class in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2004) and the editor of two other books—*Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies* (African World Press, 2004) and, with Reitu Mabokela, *Race, Gender and the Status*

*of Black South African Women in the Academy* (Routledge, 2005). In addition, Zine has authored numerous refereed journal articles and published chapters on a wide range of topics.

Her work to date revolves around a series of insightful critical analyses of the social dynamics of ideology and, in particular, racialized ideology as a global historical and material force. Throughout her work Zine pays particular attention to historically specific connections between cultural, political, and economic realms of power, and to the complex ways in which racialized, gendered, and class-based ideologies reciprocally shape each other. In pursuing the question of how ideology works, her research also deals extensively with two major geographical areas of the world - the United States and Southern Africa. Substantive topics explored by Magubane include the relationship between racialized and gendered stereotypes and the global historical construction of social class, the political “reality effects” of popular culture images of gendered black bodies and sexuality, the fate of African societies in the context of capitalist globalization, and the limits of scientific discourses about race when science fails to engage critically with questions of institutional racism. These themes converge in Professor Magubane’s book *Bringing the Empire Home*. This work makes use of a wide range of historical materials to explore the cultural construction and political uses of discursive images of black Africans in nineteenth century England during the peak years of the British Empire. Here Zine shows how cultural stereotypes of blacks mirror related images of women and working class people in contributing to the naturalization of cruel social hierarchies as well as the subhuman treatment of South African blacks. The book also includes a highly revealing analysis of how blacks in South Africa interpreted the culture, religion and economy of conquering whites. *Bringing the Empire Home* concludes with a path-breaking sociological discussion of the material economic force of discursive stereotypes and images.

In addition to bringing her exciting scholarly talents to Boston College, Zine Magubane will also join our faculty with an established record of teaching excellence. In describing her own teaching, Magubane observes, “The philosophy that informs my teaching is that students learn best when in an



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ZINE MAGUBANE

popular culture, gender and sexuality, and sociology of African societies. Professor Magubane is the author of *Bringing the Empire Home: Imagining Race, Gender and Class in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2004) and the editor of two other books—*Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies* (African World Press, 2004) and, with Reitu Mabokela, *Race, Gender and the Status*

atmosphere that is simultaneously intellectually challenging, culturally diverse, and supportive of divergent views. My foremost aim is to facilitate discussion and debate such that students retain a firm grasp of the readings and lectures while at the same time learning to critique and challenge them. . . My aim is to encourage students to use their critical faculties and to develop the ability to formulate their own opinions on the assigned texts and materials.” By all accounts, Zine’s teaching has routinely succeeded in meeting these aims. While teaching at University of Illinois, Professor Magubane was included on four separate occasions on a campus-wide list of “Teachers Voted Excellent by their Students.” In fall of 2005 Zine will teach the graduate-level seminar Introduction to Postcoloniality, and in spring semester 2006 will teach Race and Popular Culture.

### Shawn McGuffey

Shawn McGuffey will join the faculty of Boston College as an Assistant Professor of Sociology after completing his Ph.D. in Sociology at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Professor McGuffey’s main areas of research and teaching include social psychology, sociology of race, class and gender, sociology of childhood and the family, and qualitative methods. Many of these concerns are evident in Shawn’s published work to date, particularly in “Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone,” a 1999 article in *Gender and Society* with B. Lindsay Rich, and “Engendering Trauma: Gender, Race and Mother Blame,” also accepted for publication in *Gender and Society*. The “Engendering Trauma” article is based on data from Shawn’s 2005 dissertation on the impact of child sexual abuse for family and gender relations. “Parental Responses to Extrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse of Boys,” an earlier paper by Shawn also based on his dissertation research, was awarded the distinction of Outstanding Graduate Student Paper of 2002 by the Department of Sociology at University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

“Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone” resulted from research Shawn McGuffey conducted while still an undergraduate major in Sociology and Anthropology at Transylvania University. Grounded in the methods of participant observation and Shawn’s experiences as a counselor at a summer camp for middle-school children, “Playing in the Gender Transgression Zone” explores the performance of “hegemonic masculin-

ity” on the part of high status boys and the implications that this form of hierarchical social interaction has for both young men and young women.

The interactive complexity of gender, race and class is also a focal point in Shawn McGuffey’s dissertation, *Engendering Trauma: Gender, Race, and Family After Child Sexual Abuse*. This work examines the impact of child sexual abuse on families participating in group therapy following the extrafamilial sexual abuse of young boys. To explore this issue McGuffey gained access to a group therapy program, which enabled him to observe parents interacting with therapists and each other and to conduct multiple interviews with both staff members and parents. Based on these unique sources of data, Shawn makes important inferences about how interactions between gender, sexuality, and race contribute to how parents cope with the abuse of their sons. Of particular concern are the ways that coming to terms with sexual abuse can stir parental homophobia and/or racial anxiety and lead to increased investment in traditional gender roles. Mothers of abused children were often forced to bear the burden of blame, and families traumatized by child sexual abuse tend to reaffirm traditional cultural norms privileging masculinity and masculine expressions of power.

*Engendering Trauma* is a compelling study of the social impact of trauma on the family, as well as the nucleus of what is likely to be a series of influential journal articles and an important book. The first article drawn from Shawn’s dissertation examines the social dynamics of “mother blame.” This was recently accepted for publication in *Gender and Society*. He also plans to extend his dissertation research in several ways - reinterviewing as many of the parents in his study as possible and compiling materials on how survivors make sense of their sexual abuse.

In addition to bringing his strengths as a scholar, Shawn McGuffey will also come to Boston College as an experienced university-level teacher and the recipient of a Teaching



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAWN MCGUFFEY

Excellence Award from the University of Massachusetts in 2000. While a graduate student at University of Massachusetts, Shawn taught courses in the areas of family; race, class and gender; social inequality; social problems; and most recently a seminar on writing sociology. In his first year at Boston College he will teach a course on race, class and gender, as well as an introduction to African American society.

### **Natasha Sarkisian**

Natasha (Natalia) Sarkisian, a native of Russia, completed her undergraduate studies at the State Academy of Management in Moscow and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. With a sophisticated expertise in a wide range of advanced quantitative methods, Natasha will join our ten-

ure-track faculty with a well-deserved reputation as an outstanding teacher of statistics. The department has already become acquainted with Natasha as she was selected for a one-year position as a Visiting Instructor in Sociology for academic year 2004-05. During this period she taught two graduate-level seminars in advanced statistics and undergraduate courses in Sociology of the Family. Following a national search in the area of advanced quantitative methods Natasha was selected for a tenure-track position as an Assistant Pro-

fessor of Sociology.

In addition to her familiarity with a wide range of advanced statistical methods, Natasha Sarkisian is also already an accomplished scholar in areas pertaining to sociology of family, race, class and gender, and social inequalities. A 2001-02 recipient of the prestigious Rose Fellowship of the American Sociological Association and recipient of a Dissertation Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council for 2003-04, Natasha is also the recipient of several other important awards and honors. These include Best Academic Paper of 2000 and Best Professional Paper of 2002 at University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Best Graduate Student Paper Award for 2001 of the Racial and Ethnic Minorities Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems; Best Graduate Student Paper Award for 2001 of the Family Section of the

American Sociological Association; Best Graduate Student Paper for 2003 of the Carework Network; the Christina Maria Riegos Distinguished Student Paper Award for 2003 of the Latino/a Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association; and Honorable Mention for the Rose Coser Laub Award for Best Dissertation Proposal of 2003 of the Eastern Sociological Association.

In her dissertation Natasha Sarkisian brings her expertise in quantitative methods to bear upon an important and long debated empirical topic - whether black and Latino families are more or less integrated in comparison to white families of the same social class. Entitled *Kin Support in Black and White: Structure, Culture, and Extended Family Ties*, her thesis makes use of the National Survey of Families and Households in exploring questions at the sociological intersections of race, class and gender. Her findings are particularly relevant in countering two kinds of sets of existing research on the status of Black families - those that romanticize the super-organizational character of extended black family networks and those that paint a picture of the black family as disorganized or pathological. By contrast, Natasha discovered high levels of similarity in support provided by both black and white men to families, while noting key differences in the kinds of support provided by women.

Natasha Sarkisian's dissertation represents the nucleus of what is likely to result in an influential book on kinship support structures. In addition, key elements of her research have already been accepted for publication as refereed journal articles. With her graduate mentor and collaborator Naomi Gerstel, she's authored three journal articles and is planning grant applications aimed at extending and deepening their previous research on gender, race, class and kinship support networks. She's also written two methodological articles on mathematical modeling and is presently at work on an article examining methodological issues she encountered in the course of her dissertation research.

Like fellow Ph.D. student Shawn McGuffey, while at University of Massachusetts Natasha Sarkisian also gained considerable experience as a university-level instructor. At Boston College Natasha will offer a variety of graduate seminars in advanced quantitative methods and also courses on sociology of family and the intersections of race, class, and gender.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATASHA SARKISIAN

## The Global Justice Game: A Progress Report

by  
Bill Gamson

Bill Gamson continues to develop his Global Justice game simulation, working with graduate student Matt Williams and undergraduate research assistants Jesse Kirdahy-Scalia and Chris Laws. By the end of December, we will have completed six trial runs in classes, covering five different cases. These include a trial run conducted at Tufts by Paul Joseph in which we supplied the material via e-mail and were not present during the actual play of the game. Several more trial runs are scheduled for the first half of 2005 including some in faraway places such as Minneapolis and some in training camps for activists rather than in conventional classroom settings.

Participants play one of seven related cases, with each case consisting of about 12 teams. Each case is broken up into five phases, and involves a different set of global justice issues. Their titles provide some sense of what they highlight:

- Biopiracy in Plantanogway
- Factory Fire in Fabrikistan
- Selling Green in Fabrikistan
- Cancer Alley
- Dumping in Banglabush
- What's the Beef
- Making a Better World: The Capstone Case

The five phases include:

**Phase 1:** Strategic Planning. Participants meet with members from their own teams to discuss strategy.

**Phase 2:** Meeting and Negotiation. Participants talk with other team members and try to influence events to their advantage.

**Phase 3:** Action Decisions. Participants decide what actions to take for their team.

**Phase 4:** Press Conferences. Teams present a press release and answer questions about their decisions.

**Phase 5:** Broadcasts. Journalist teams present their own perspective on the game's events.

After each case, coordinators facilitate discussion to help participants understand the operation of the global economy. The final case asks participants to consider a variety of proposals for creating a better system.

While the game is still in a process of constant revision after each trial run, we plan to post materials on the MRAP web-site where they can be downloaded by coordinators who contact us for instructions. Interested parties should get in touch with Bill Gamson ([gamson@bc.edu](mailto:gamson@bc.edu)).

## Michael Agliardo Joins Sociology Department

by  
Stephen Pfobl

Michael Agliardo, S.J. is a Jesuit priest completing his Ph.D. in Sociology at UC, San Diego. In 2005-06 Michael will be a Jesuit Postdoctoral Fellow in Sociology at BC. His dissertation, *Between Heaven and Earth: Catholic Environmentalism, Religious Pluralism, and the Public Role of Religion in Contemporary America*, examines the emergence of a new pluralistic paradigm for advancing the "common good," exploring how religiously inspired activists in the Pacific Northwest engage with several social realms—the public sphere, the religious marketplace, and academy.

Michael Agliardo's areas of sociological expertise include cultural sociology, environmental sociology, sociology of religion, classical social theory, comparative historical methods, and social movements theory. Before beginning graduate studies in sociology, Michael completed his B.A. in 1984 at Harvard University, majoring in medieval European history and minoring in Chinese history. Father Agliardo also received a Masters in Divinity from Weston Jesuit School of Theology in 1993 and an STL in Systematic and Historical Theology, also at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. From 1994-1997 Michael served as an Adjunct Instructor of Theology at Fordham University, teaching Introduction to Theology, New Testament, Wisdom Literature in Scripture and also Religion in China. From 2000-2005 Michael served as a pastoral minister for a local Mayan community in southern California. In this capacity, Agliardo reflected regularly with community members about the impact of economic globalization on their lives and the lives of their relatives in Guatemala. Michael has also traveled extensively in Guatemala and Latin America, as well as China, Taiwan and parts of South East Asia. While at Boston College next year, in addition to completing his dissertation, Michael Agliardo will teach courses in environmental sociology.

# Charles Derber's *Hidden Power*: *What You Need To Know To Save Our Democracy*

Professor David  
Karp and  
Jean Lovett  
Interview  
Professor  
Charles Derber

Charles Derber is a popular sociology professor specializing in economics and social justice, and a political activist whose involvement in liberal causes dates as far back as the 1960s civil rights movement and as recently as his 2002 arrest for supporting the Service Employees International Union strike (see *Sociology Speaks* 2002-3). He's also one of the department's most prolific authors, with ten books published to date on subjects like the American Dream, the intersection of power and culture, the role of the United States in the world, and the question of how ordinary citizens can have more influence over political decision making. David Karp and I talked with him about his latest book, *Hidden Power: What You Need to Know to Save Our Democracy*, and about the special challenges of applying sociological analysis to current events.

J. Lovett

JL: Tell me about *Hidden Power*.

CD: There's a quote from Theodore Roosevelt: "The difference between democracy and dictatorships is that in dictatorships, the power is visible. In democracies, the power is invisible." Which is to say that we know who runs a dictatorship, specifically the dictator. In a democracy, it's always more complex than that. So part of this book is an effort to analyze the hidden power

behind the democratic process...My argument is that America – and this grows out of my earlier book, *Regime Change Begins at Home* – has been governed by a series of relatively hidden power systems that I call regimes. These can be structures of power that are governed largely by financial institutions and corporations, as I believe is the case today, where both political parties are largely in the service of those corporations. Or historically there have also been regimes which have been more representative of popular concerns as expressed through labor unions in the New Deal or through reformist groups in the Progressive era. So part of this

book is an effort to trace the history of hidden power in the United States as well as describe the system of hidden power that's operating in the United States today.

But there's a second meaning of hidden power, which is the idea that there's a latent and relatively invisible power that still resides in the people to change the country and make the government and ruling institutions more responsive to their needs. But my argument here is that this tradition, which has allowed people to express this kind of latent power, has largely been repressed, abandoned, or forgotten. And it resides in forms of political traditions including populism and progressivism that are relatively enfeebled,

unknown, and lost to popular consciousness. To the extent they're known, people remain cynical or skeptical because so many people feel powerless completely to effectuate anything that makes a difference. It's hard enough to make a difference in your own life, let alone the country and the world. So the title of *Hidden Power* carries a dual meaning. You do have the power to change the country, but if you want to do so, you have to understand how the country is being run now, you have to understand the dynamics of hidden power.

JL: I'm wondering if this is part of a larger project, if your books have a kind of progression.

CD: Yes, I've been writing about corporate power and the power of ruling elites and of people to make change over my last four or five books, starting with *Corporation Nation*, which was a broad treatment of corporate power in the United States, and then *People Before Profit* which is an analysis of power in the world system, and I'm involved in something of a trilogy right now. *Regime Change* introduced the concept of regimes as systems of power in the United States. *Hidden Power* goes into a deeper analysis of the history of American regimes and how they've changed and gives a much more in depth analysis of the potential of a regime change that might move to the right in this country...

There's also an analysis in this book of the ways in which the current regime maintains its invisibility, and it does so by a very ironic and interesting process. The people who rule the country present themselves as populist insurgents against a presumed Establishment that is represented in activist courts or in east coast universities or Hollywood or other liberal bastions of presumed establishment authority. The interesting thing about the current ruling regime is that while exercising dominance over all three branches of government, it's managed to succeed in largely persuading people in the red states that in fact, they – that is, the people running the country – are rebels and challengers to an overwhelmingly powerful liberal establishment that is controlling America and will likely control America for a long time to come. This is a form of what I call pseudo-populism, or black magic, which legitimates a group of controlling elites in the name of insurgency against an alleged liberal power structure. It's a fascinating model of legitimation...

This same strategy, by the way, has been used by right wing rulers over large periods of time, so it's not a new strategy. It was used by almost all right wing regimes in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including fascist regimes, and it's had a long history in the United States as well. Progressive populists face the paradox that the right wing has seized the popular imagination by arguing that liberal elites subvert traditional values...

This book, while arguing that we're in a period of potential change in the basic structure and power of the country, argues that change could go either even further right, toward a really dangerous form of a proto-fascist kind of control, or toward a more progressive alternative, which doesn't look like it's in the wings immediately but has a long history itself in the U.S. It would not be the first time in American history if an overwhelmingly right wing political system were to be replaced by a popular upsurge from a progressive perspective. You can think of, for example, the movement from the 20s to the 30s. The 1920s was a very business dominated regime and the New Deal replaced it with a progressive governing system, just as the Progressive era at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century replaced the Gilded Age and the business tycoons of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. So the last part of the book is an effort to demonstrate that all is not lost, and that we have good historical models for change. And I think that remains a possibility today...If you look at substantive policy, the Bush administration's popularity has sunk to unprecedented low levels, on policies from Social Security to Medicare to the war in Iraq... Which is not to say that this is evidence that there is going to be a regime change toward the left, but that there's a possibility if progressive movements and the Democratic party can go through the kind of changes that are necessary. And a good part of *Hidden Power* is an effort to lay out how progressive forces can mobilize the economic agenda and the moral resonance to connect with a public who basically is afraid but can be receptive to a progressive populist agenda.

JL: You had said this was part of a trilogy.

CD: Oh, yes. So the first book, *Regime Change*, lays out the basic concept of regimes and a little bit of the history. The second book looks at how the regime could move either to the right toward a more authoritarian, even less democratic model

or toward the left, and what people might do to move it in a more progressive direction. If there is to be a third volume of this, it's going to look more closely at the history of far right regimes, like the one in power today, and examine what keeps them in power and what has led to change in such systems over time, with a particular focus on drawing examples from the fascist period in Germany. Even though I don't think we're in a fascist period, there are a lot of interesting parallels and enormously instructive lessons.

DK: You face difficulties that lots of people don't face because your work is so timely. You're kind of on the cusp of writing about things as they happen. I hear that the third volume you're talking about concerns historical things, but do you run the risk, you think, of writing stuff that history will show to be wrong?

CD: Yes. I wrote a book in the 80s about the nuclear arms race right as the Soviet Union fell apart. It came out a month after the Soviet Union imploded.

But these themes have slightly more universality. *Hidden Power* explores possibilities of a turn both to the right and to the left. So its relevance would sustain itself however the U.S. moves in the next election. And the book to come – I believe that the issues that are raised about right wing power are quite independent of whether the Democrats or the Republicans are in power. Because there will be pressures toward and strategies for right wing power even under Democratic administrations, the threat of authoritarianism, proto-fascism, in response to terrorist attacks, in response to economic cri-



F. OPPEP (1901) FROM CARTOON CAVALCADE, CONSOLIDATED PUBLISHERS 1944

sis, and the conservative backlash on moral values – it’s just simply going to be part of American politics for a long time to come. . . .

So yeah, my work of course is always vulnerable – anybody who writes about current events can be upended by surprises – but I think what I’ve learned after writing many such books is that because things come out so quickly on the Internet and people can get information so quickly, and things do change so rapidly, to write a book you have to be identifying themes that are likely to resonate in the culture politically for a long period to come. And that’s the value of a book dealing with political issues these days – if it’s going to survive, it’s got to have insights into longer term issues that are likely to be very much on people’s plates quite independent of the results of a particular election.

JL: It does have kind of a prophetic quality, though, and I’m wondering whether this prophetic quality, this attempt to sort of change the world, is common to other sociological works.

CD: . . . The prophetic tradition in sociology was identified with people like C. Wright Mills, Marx, and others whose goal in writing was not only to describe the world but to change it, who embraced a value oriented position, writing with an explicit commitment to values like social justice and so forth. So I certainly think of myself as part of that tradition in sociology. And I mean it’s prophetic not in the sense that I think I can predict the future but in the sense that I try to write books that awaken people to alarming, dangerous developments in the modern world, and offer some hopefully useful mental tool kits for understanding how to think about these realities and respond to them. . . .

Even if you’re within the prophetic tradition, you have a responsibility - and your work is only going to be valuable - if you’re identifying as clearly as possible forces and dynamics and systems in the world that people from any political perspective can find utility in. . . . This is not work for the Democratic party, which I don’t particularly identify with or any other party – and it’s not work simply to promote a specific political agenda, but rather it’s prophetic in the sense that I think you meant it, Jean, that it’s an effort to awaken people to fundamental crises of values and justice and to offer people

historical insights and conceptual tools for understanding what is happening and thinking about how people can reasonably try to change these things.

DK: I’m wondering about this curious paradox of populism. I mean, when I pick up the newspaper everyday, I read about evolution in schools, I read about conservative people being appointed and going on to the Supreme Court, I read about the whole blurring of the religion and the state kind of thing. . . . and everything that I see and hear, and maybe it’s just the lens through which I look at the world, seems to belie the idea that there’s this group of lefty people who are really in fact controlling things. . . . And so what I’m wondering about is how black magic continues to work in the face of daily pieces of evidence that people on the right are making more and more incursions into the way this country is run and really wielding the power.

CD: That’s partly why I call it black magic. It is fiction, and it is clear, I think, that political control in this country is incredibly concentrated in corporations and the conservative sector of the Republican party. And yet, the sense that a liberal establishment dominates the country is very widespread among people in the red states. Part of *Hidden Power* is an effort to explain how that’s possible. It’s possible partly because all right wing states have had in recent decades extraordinarily effective propaganda machinery, and the media play an enormous role in this. The educational apparatus and the intelligentsia all play an important role in this too in that they present a view of the world that is supportive of all kinds of things that are not consistent with reality. It’s important to recognize that churches are one of the most sophisticated and important shapers of the way people think of the world and the right wing Christian movements have played an enormously important role in persuading people that a liberal establishment is dominating their lives.

It’s also important to remember, though, that these are not completely fictions. In other words, right wing administrations and their view of the world are typically backlashes against periods of progressive change. Since the 1960s in the realm of culture, but even through a much longer period, genuine, dramatic change has occurred in everything from the role of women in society to the position of homosexuals to the separation of religion and the state and so forth. The period of the

New Deal, which lasted over much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *was* in fact a liberal establishment, and it *did* change the country, and much of what we're seeing today *is* a backlash or reaction to much of that change. Right wing movements are very often a response to periods of progressive change that lead to a cycle of backlashes – it was very much true in the 30s in Germany, because the period of the Weimar Republic during the 20s was a period of enormous sexual freedom, coming out of gays, experimentation in art and theater, and a challenge to the traditional conservative culture of Germany that the right and people like Hitler were able to exploit. It is part of where that fascist resonance came from...It's one of those endemic characteristics of right wing regimes. So I guess what I'm saying is that things that seem like total fiction or black magic have historically very often been portrayed as reality – the notion that Jews ran the world was total fiction –

JL: The section on black magic reminds me of Kenneth Burke's analysis of *Mein Kampf*. One of the things he says is that Hitler managed to take an economic problem and blame it on social causes, by making Jews the scapegoats. It seems to me that what you're describing is similar.

CD: Yes, it's very similar. I mean, the core of right wing politics is essentially a politics of culture, which persuades people that the problems they may be facing in their economic lives, or their social lives, are largely a function of culturally seductive traitors, people who are immoral and subverters of the most fundamental cultural traditions of the nation. The right wing converts politics into cultural nationalism instead of class or class struggle. That was the pattern of almost all right wing European regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it's the pattern of right wing politics today, to persuade people that the master narrative of their lives is about culture and the subversion of values rather than about economic power and the undermining of people's means of having a reasonable economic security. And that's an astounding triumph, given the central economic viability of people's lives and how severe the economic threats to middle America have become. I think the fact that few liberals can really address these questions or understand them is a measure of how far we need to go in developing a resonant progressive analysis and have a chance to turn things around...

DK: We've talked about this about a million times, but writing is such a humbling thing to do, when you're trying to participate in a conversation, and you walk into a book store and there are thousands of books, so how do you measure or think about the success of your work? Aside from the pleasure of just working through the ideas, the pleasure of writing and of discussion –

CD: I see books and writing as simply one part of a multi-faceted effort to get one's ideas out into the world and one's actions more empowered...I see books as part of a corpus of works, activity, stuff that comes out on the web, personal conversation; it's all part of a conversation that you and a large number of other people are having with each other and with the general population. As I've done more books and gotten older, I've realized that the power of any one book to make a huge difference in the world is obviously very limited, with the exception of a tiny number of books, and therefore what you can hope for from most books is that they can be generative of an ongoing conversation, contribute to it, help move the conversation a little bit further, provide the author and the readers with an opportunity to move their thinking and their action further a step or so...

I think there's a lot of individualistic mythology in academia about books. Books are collective productions in many ways. I get my ideas from talking with colleagues like David Karp and John Williamson, and – they're a product of constant interaction and conversation with the larger world. And so they're really collective products. They're reflections of a given era, and products of a given era, and they're reflections of certain communities of thinkers and thought. Why then would one write a book, recognizing that it's just like a drop of a river or an ocean that is going to move whether your particular part of the stream is considered or not? You have to be deeply engaged in a way that makes it both a pleasurable and an inevitable thing to do because it's just an expression of who you are and you can't really imagine not doing it. And it's also consistent with the idea that the river flows and gets strong when enough people experience that inevitability.

*Edited by  
Jean Lovett*

## Alumni Notes

**Karen Bettez-Halnon** (Ph.D., 1996), Associate Professor at Pennsylvania State University Abington. In 2004 she published “Fake Bullet Holes and Ghettopoly: Or, From Code of the Street to Code of Consumption” in the Winter issue of the Newsletter of the Marxist Section of the ASA, and “Inside Shock Music Carnival: Spectacle as Contested Terrain” in the October issue of *Critical Sociology*. In 2005 she’s published “Alienation Incorporated: ‘F\*\*\* the Mainstream Music’ in the Mainstream” in the May issue of *Current Sociology*, and “Philly Folk Culture” in July/August *Footnotes*, Publication of the American Sociological Association. She also wrote “The Power of Four-Twenty” in James A. Inciardi and Karen McElrath’s *The American Drug Scene: An Anthology* (Roxbury 2004) and co-wrote with Lauren Langmen “Globalization and the Grotesque” in Bill Robinson and Rich Appelbaum’s *Critical Globalization Studies* (Routledge 2005).

**Avery Gordon** (Ph.D., 1990), Professor of Sociology at the University of California Santa Barbara. In 2004 she published *Keeping Good Time: Reflections on Knowledge, Power, and People* (Paradigm).

**Michele Garvin** (Ph.D., 1981), Chair of the Health Care Group of Ropes & Gray. In 2004 she published, with Blair Bernard, “Cost Remains an Issue in Medicare Drug Plan” in the January 2004 issue of *Women’s Business Boston: The Professional and Business Woman’s Journal*. She’s been listed in successive editions of *The Best Lawyers in America* and *Massachusetts Super Lawyers*.

**Susan Guarino-Ghezzi** (Ph.D., 1986), Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Stonehill College. Her book *Understanding Crime: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, co-written with A. Javier Trevino, was published by Anderson Publishing in 2005. She also co-wrote *Balancing Juvenile Justice* with Edward J. Loughran, published by Transaction Publishers in 2004.

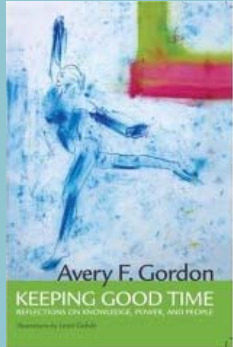
**David Croteau** (Ph.D. 1993), Assistant Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University), Charlotte Ryan (Ph.D., 1991, Research Professor at Boston College), and William Hoynes (Ph.D., 1992, Professor of Sociology at Vassar College) published *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics and Social Movement Scholarship* (University of Minnesota Press) in 2005.

**Kelly Joyce** (Ph.D., 2001), Assistant Professor at William and Mary, has just been elected Secretary-Treasurer of the ASA Section of Science, Knowledge, and Technology. Also, her article, “Appealing Images: Magnetic Resonance Imaging and the Production of Authoritative Knowledge,” was published in the June 2005 issue of *Social Studies of Science*.

**Patricia Leavy** (Ph.D., 2002), Assistant Professor at Stonehill College. She recently developed a Gender Studies Program (with a major and minor), and now serves as Director of the program.

**Kathleen Ordell Korgen** (Ph.D., 1997), Assistant Professor at William Paterson University. In 2005, she published a book review in *New Politics* of *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness* by Melanie E. L. Bush. In the same year, with P. Odell and G. Wang, she also published “Cross-racial Friendships and Social Distance Between Racial Groups on a College Campus” in *Innovative Higher Education*.

**Michael Rustad** (Ph.D., 1981), Resident Faculty member at Suffolk University Law School. He’s recently published “Rebooting Cybertort Law” (co-written with Thomas H. Koenig) in *Washington Law Review* (2005); “Foreword to Thomas E. Lambert Jr., Tort Law Conference Symposium Issue, Sophisticated New Tort Theories,” in *The Journal Of High Technology Law* (2005); “Happy No More: Federalism Derailed by the Court That Would be King of Punitive Damages” in the *Maryland Law Review Symposium Issue: Calabresi’s The Cost of Accidents: A Generation of Impact on Law and Scholarship* (2005); “Jay Feinman’s Unmaking Law,” *Trial Magazine* (2004); “Toxic Torts, Politics and Environmental Justice: The Case for Crimtorts,” (co-written with Thomas H. Koenig) in *Law & Politics* (2004); “Punitive Damages in Medical Malpractice: A New Audit” (co-written with Thomas H. Koenig) in *LNC Resources: Where Litigation & Health Care Come To-*



gether (2004); “Cybertorts and Legal Lag: An Empirical Analysis” (co-written with Thomas H. Koenig) in *S. Cal. Interdisc. L. J.* (2004); and “Punitive Damages in Cyberspace: Where in the World is the Consumer” in the *Symposium Issue: Consumer Law of Chapman Law Review* (2004).

**A. Javier Trevino** (Ph.D., 1990), Associate Professor of Sociology at Wheaton, has served on the Advisory Editorial Board of *Social Problems*, 2002-2005. His book *Understanding Crime: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, co-written with Susan Guarino-Ghezzi, was published by Anderson Publishing in 2005. In 2004 he also wrote “The Influence of C. Wright Mills on Students for a Democratic Society” and “The Hispanic Writings of C. Wright Mills” in *C. Wright Mills: Three Volumes*, edited by Stanley Aronowitz. In 2005 he wrote the Introduction to Han Kelsen’s *General Theory of Law and State*, “Parsons’s Action-System Requisite Model and Weber’s Elective Affinity: A Convergence of Convenience” in *Journal of Classical Sociology*, “Jeremy Bentham,” and “Prohibition” in *Encyclopedia of Criminology*, edited by Richard A. Wright and J. Mitchell Miller, and “Remembering George Washington on the Rio Grande” in *Storytelling Sociology: Narrative as Social Inquiry* edited by Ronald J. Berger and Richard Quinney.

**Jonathon White** (Ph.D., 2002), Assistant Professor at Colby College, where he recently won the Charles Bassett Teaching Award. He has published a series of non-academic pamphlets for the UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on war-affected youth issues.

## Where Are They Now?

**Beverley J. Anderson** (Ph.D., 1985) is now the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at Chicago State University.

**Isabel Araiza** (Ph.D., 2004) is an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi.

**Janet Boguslaw** (Ph.D., 1999) is a Senior Research Associate with The Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

**Julie Childers** (Ph.D., 2004) is Professor of Community Economic Development at Southern New Hampshire University.

**Christina Clamp** (Ph.D., 1985) is currently Chair of the Board of Directors of the ICA Group (Boston), Vice President of the Allston/Brighton Community Development Corporation (Boston), and member of the Board of National Cooperative Business Association. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Research Center in CED.

**Eitan Elimi** (Ph.D. 2004) is now at The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

**Lori Girshick** (Ph.D., 1992) has been working as the Coordinator of the Wingspan Anti-Violence Project, a community-based program working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) domestic and sexual violence, hate crimes, harassment and discrimination.

**Lee Hargraves** (Ph.D., 1994) is an Associate Professor in Family Medicine and Community Health with UMass Medical School.

**John Shandra** (Ph.D. 2005) is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Stony Brook University, N.Y.

**David Toscano** (Ph.D., 1972) is running for election for the 57th District in the House of Delegates in Charlottesville, VA. He’s served on the Charlottesville City Council, as Mayor, and on several state boards and commissions.

**Amanda Udis-Kessler** (Ph.D., 2002) has accepted a position as Director of Institutional Research at Colorado College.



David Toscano and friends

Interview by  
Mark Sullivan  
in the March 31  
issue of the  
*Chronicle*

## ***BIOTERRORISM: FEAR, HISTORY AND REALITY***

*How easy would it be for deadly gas or germs to be released in Times Square or at the Super Bowl, or for a suicidal zealot to infect himself with smallpox and pass the disease to morning commuters at Union Station? How could these scenarios be prevented?*

Professor Jeanne Guillemin, one of America's foremost authorities on the history of biological weaponry, is a Sociology research professor at BC, a senior fellow in the Security Studies Program at MIT, and author, most recently, of *Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism*, newly released by Columbia University Press. In an interview with *Chronicle* staff writer Mark Sullivan, Guillemin discussed the origins of, and misconceptions surrounding, bioterrorism.

It remains unclear what the threat of bioterrorism really is, since to date we have only imagined scenarios and no real mass event. The technical skills and materials to execute attacks with explosives, as history demonstrates, are much more common than those essential for a biological weapons attack and are obviously preferred by terrorists. Meanwhile, it has been possible to exploit public fear regarding anthrax, smallpox, and other diseases and to initiate federal programs

in the name of biodefense that we can only hope will not divert the United States from basic research on solutions for more pressing infectious disease threats. New emerging diseases such as SARS and avian flu deserve concerted attention, not just in basic research but in the reinforcement of public health systems in general.

As for smallpox, the only known reserves are kept at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and at the Vector Institute in Novosibirsk in Russia. High security around those reserves or their complete destruction now that smallpox has been eradicated would be the best protection of world populations vulnerable to the disease.

In the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the media and think tanks broadcast explicit scenarios of Saddam Hussein's henchmen infected with smallpox invading the US and starting a massive epidemic. This scare scenario was a precursor to the 2003 smallpox vaccination program that started with the military and was to

extend to first responders and then, by October 2003, to the entire US population. The risks associated with the vaccine (for example, for older people already at risk for heart disease or those with autoimmune problems) proved much worse than any foreign threat and the program failed. Federal stocks of vaccines or antibiotics are a good idea and we do maintain them. But exaggerations of the threat of bioterrorism have tended to divert biomedical resources and attention from actual, preventable diseases that kill or disable many thousands of people every day, such as HIV-AIDS, malaria, drug-resistant tuberculosis, cholera, and sleeping sickness, to say nothing of other health problems.

*What do you see as the most likely form of attack to be launched by bioterrorists? What should be the first line of defense?*

What bioterrorists? What bioterrorism? We should insert the word "potential" before either of these words and demand that our intelligence community provide realistic assessments of the threat, that is, of any group or state that has means and intent to so threaten the nation. We should remember that even the mailing of the 2001 anthrax letters was a crime rather than any kind of mass attack and likely perpetrated by an American scientist.

As for the first line of defense, history shows that government secrecy is the worst threat to national safety. The defining characteristics of the major programs (in France, Canada, the United Kingdom, United States, and the Soviet Union) was a lack of public knowledge about the development of the military means to spread disease among civilians who were and are the most vulnerable to an unusual outbreak. How can any of us protect ourselves against such an event, whether it occurs intentionally or by other means, without full knowledge of the options for prevention or protection through vaccines or antibiotics?

Having long ago abandoned biological warfare, the United States is not about to resume any offensive program. Still, a highly secret defensive program can pose risks to the public. As happened too often in past programs, dangerous innovations evolved on the basis of "looking-glass" reasoning - to acquire some dreamed-up advantage an enemy might

have, in order to defend against it. The pioneering of more virulent pathogens, for example, and more efficient attack technology could through accident or sabotage seriously jeopardize public health and national security. It is of particular concern now, for instance, that nearly 100 percent of the scientists applying for the billions now available for biodefense research have had no experience with select agents. Most have little knowledge of the military history of these agents, which is one of the reasons I wrote my book.

*Why haven't chemical or bio-weapons been used more than they have in the century since mustard gas was introduced in the trenches of World War I? What has kept these weapons in check?*

After World War I, four important factors - national leadership, military resistance, public sentiment, and international treaties - restrained chemical weapons use and these influenced states to steer clear of biological weapons as well. First, some key national leaders were against chemical and biological weapons use. President Franklin Roosevelt had great antipathy for them. Adolph Hitler did as well and he refused to allow his military scientists even to develop biological weapons, a fact the Allies learned only late in 1944 after they had built up their own programs.

Second, from a military perspective, chemical weapons were unpredictable or seemed less honorable than guns and high explosives that could be targeted on the enemy. Third, after World War I, public sentiment turned strongly against chemical weapons and influenced national leaders to create the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which banned the use of chemical and biological weapons. In the Vietnam War era, the US use of riot control gas led to public outcry that then extended to biological weapons.

President Richard Nixon in 1969 shut down the US biological weapons program, an extraordinary gesture that paved the way to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the belated US ratification of the Geneva Protocol. In 1993, with leadership from President George H. W. Bush, nearly all the world's nations signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, which like the BWC, bans all program-related activities along with the trade

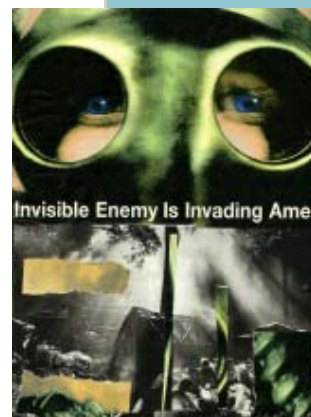
or possession of such weapons.

Up until now the world has been lucky that various restraints have worked. To take our protection from biological weapons out of the realm of chance is going to require leadership that is vigilant on multiple fronts. Much more needs to be done on legal restraints, for example, in involving the developing nations of the world that are poised to benefit from the biotechnology revolution in efforts that maximize transparency and so reduce the risks of military programs and of the dissemination of biological weapons to terrorists by states or in the world arms market.

In the last century we had two frightening examples of states acting in defiance of treaties against germ weapons. After 1925 Japan refused to ratify the Geneva Protocol and instead covertly instituted an enormous biological warfare program in occupied Manchuria, in pursuit of a secret advantage. In World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army then secretly used crude germ weapons (such as plague-infected fleas) against Chinese cities and towns. With similar secrecy, the USSR committed itself to the Biological Weapons Convention and then, in 1975, embarked on a huge offensive biological program.

*What should be done to keep chemical or bio-weapons in check?*

We live now in a much more transparent international environment, with relatively few states interested in remaining closed to the outside world or able to do so for long. The Biological Weapons Convention could and should have a permanent organization, as the Chemical Weapons Convention does in the Hague, to promote compliance through a general promotion of increased communication and on-site inspections of state and private pharmaceutical and military research facilities. The US has been most averse to this approach, arguing that commercial patents and military defense must be protected. Yet we are unwise to hold ourselves apart from the global risks of any pandemic, deliberate or not, which demands humanitarian objectives.



*The Enemy*  
Stephen Pfohl

# Undergraduate Achievements

## The William A. Gamson Award

This award was established during AY 2001-02 by the Sociology Department in honor of William Gamson. It is to be given each year to a graduating senior for outstanding academic achievement in sociology. The 2004 Recipient of this award was Leah R. Middleton. Ms. Middleton was also selected to represent the class of 2006 in receiving her B.A. during the BC commencement ceremony in May.

### Dean's Scholars

#### Class of 2006:

Claire O'Connell  
Katherine Schulte

### Sophomore Scholars

#### Class of 2007:

Katrina King  
Chase Rolls  
Jennifer Schretter

## Sociology Undergraduate Honors Program

Coordinated by Professor David Karp, the Sociology Department Honors Program is composed of a junior-year seminar, SC 550 "Important Readings in Sociology" and a two-seminar Senior Thesis seminar, SC 555 and SC 556. In AY 2004-2005 the following students participated in our Honors Program:

#### Class of 2005:

Sarah Ha, Brianna Hoffner, Blair Kanis, Jesse Kirdahy-Scalia, Dyan Kozaczka, Christopher Pesce, Maureen Traynor, Arivee Vargas, and Michael Yaksich

#### Class of 2006:

Lisa Andre, Kelly Brashear, Sarah Burns, Elena Dimattia, Megan Quinlan, and Kelly Stone

## Honors Theses

Brianna Hoffner: "Undeveloped Advising: An Administrative Quagmire and Undergraduate Detriment"

Blair Kanis: "Mestizaje: The Quest for Cultural Citizenship"

Sarah Ha: "Suffering in Silence: An Overview of the Asian-American Experience with Mental Health issues"

Jesse Kirdahy-Scalia: "Star Wars Galaxies and the Division of Labor"

Maureen Traynor: "Gendered Expectations: Masculinity and Femininity in Catholic, Single Sex High Schools"

Arivee Vargas: "Latinos: Striving for Empowerment through Education"

Michael Yaksich: "Consuming Queer: The Commodification of Culture and its Effects on Social Acceptance"



*Protest*  
by Blair Kanis

Blair Kanis traveled to Ecuador as part of her research project. She took a series of photographs there to accompany her thesis, including *Protest*, above.

## **Omar González Wins Romero Award**

For the second year in a row, a Sociology major has won BC's Archbishop Oscar A. Romero Scholarship. Omar González received the award on March 19 at the annual banquet, held this year in the Welch Dining Room at Lyons Hall. Omar and the previous year's winner, Arivee Vargas, both spoke at the event.



PHOTO BY LINDSAY MORTON (THE HEIGHTS)

Omar González

In his remarks, according to *The Heights*, González said, "I vow to change the demographics of the ethnicity of college students across the nation until they become representative of the nation's population. This might seem like a lofty utopian delusion, but I will not rest until this vision comes to fruition. And if it is not accomplished in my lifetime, I recognize that I am not a master builder, just a worker."

Vargas was also quoted by *The Heights*: "We cannot be afraid to stand up and speak the truth, even when some will criticize it as 'radical.' They called Romero a radical, even a communist. But like Romero, we must all take responsibility for the problems of our community, and take a proactive role in engaging in the struggle to advance it."

Sociology Professor Sarah Babb recommended Omar for the award, noting his impressive debating skills, compassion, and his political commitment, demonstrated by his involvement in various leadership and community activities. He has served as preceptor for the Options Through Education program, a pre-college program to help students from disadvantaged groups make the transition to college. He has also been extremely active in the AHANA organization and the Organization for Latin American Affairs, and has served as Chairman of the Membership Committee of the Boston College chapter of the NAACP. Along the way

he has surmounted various obstacles, attesting to his intelligence, motivation, and strength of character.

The Romero Scholarship is named for the martyred Archbishop of El Salvador, who was assassinated in 1980 because of his defense of the poor and oppressed of his country. The award covers 75% of the recipient's senior year tuition.

## **Alpha Kappa Delta Undergraduate Sociology Honor Society**

Professor Michael Malec coordinated this year's induction into the AKD Honor Society in Spring 2005. The following Sociology Majors were inducted into AKD at this time:

Lisa S. Andre, Kelly A. Brashear, Melissa J. Cox, Carolyn M. Dorazio, Jesse Kirdahy-Scalia, Faith Kirkpatrick, Alexandra D. McManama, Claire A. O'Connell, Abbey M. Prior, Alexandra E. Russell, Katherine E. Schulte, Maureen Traynor, Robert Williams, Jr.

## **Matthew Thompson Wins Fulbright, Stars in Candide**

Matthew Thompson, Sociology major '05, starred in the title role of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*, produced at Boston College last Spring. More recently he was one of 14 BC students to receive a Fulbright Fellowship. According to the *Chronicle*, Matt "goes on a teaching assistantship to Germany, where he will divide his time between English and American Studies instruction and community enrichment activities. Building on his Senior Honors Thesis project in the use of performance art in social criticism, he will work with students and the community to express opinion through acting, singing and dancing. On his return he will pursue graduate studies in musical theater at the Boston Conservatory."



PHOTO BY CHRIS HUANG (THE HEIGHTS)

Matt Thompson in *Candide*

# Media Research Action Project (MRAP) Highlights

by  
Bill Gamson

The weekly Wednesday morning Media Research Action Project (MRAP) seminar continues to thrive, providing support and feedback for its regular members and visitors. This Fall, we were able to nurse each other through the bruises of the election season as well as provide each other feedback on our ongoing work including:



HTTP://GALLERY.CSW.ORG/IN/GALLERY/GLOBEART04

by Fionnuala Gerrity

Charlotte Ryan's forthcoming book on how the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence developed its media capacity and changed the media

coverage of domestic violence;

The Global Justice Game (described in a separate item in *Sociology Speaks*);

Dissertations and papers in progress by several regular participants including Kevin Carragee (Suffolk University), Jordi Trullen (Carroll School of Management), Jeff Langstraat, Adria Goodson, Jesse Kirdahy-Scalia, and Johanna Pabst (Sociology);

Visiting scholar Vered Malka from Israel who has attended regularly and presented her dissertation work on "The Internet as a Tool for American Political Reporters," showing how the Internet is affecting journalists' choice and use of sources;

Former MRAP regulars such as Sharon Kurtz (Suffolk University) and Alfredo DaCunha who renewed their MRAP connections by making it to several sessions.

In addition, we had our usual sessions with invited scholars and activists including:

A session with Erin Steuter, Mt. Allison University, on the use of exterminationist rhetoric in media coverage of the "war on terrorism."

A strategy session with a group attempting to keep Our Lady of the Presentation School in Brighton from being closed by the Archdiocese.

A forthcoming session with several people from Brit Tzedek v' Shalom on research and action strategies to further their goal of promoting a more active U.S. role in bringing about a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally, we spent part of several sessions on our plans to expand our web-site to make it a more active means of integrating and keeping in touch with the MRAP Diaspora, now spreading to many places outside of the Boston area. This will be a major and continuing project over the next year as we include such items as the Global Justice Game materials and various working papers on our expanded and active site and keep in more active contact with MRAP associates.

We have several exciting sessions scheduled for the Spring term, 2005, and current and former students and MRAP associates in the greater Boston area are invited to join us at our usual Wednesday morning time. If interested, please get in touch with Charlotte Ryan ([ryanc@bc.edu](mailto:ryanc@bc.edu)) or Bill Gamson ([gamson@bc.edu](mailto:gamson@bc.edu)).

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# Up in the Attic: The National Association for Women in Catholic Higher Education

by  
Rachael  
Kenney

Tucked away on the fifth floor of McGuinn Hall is a national association affiliated with the Sociology and Women's Studies departments that much of the university is not aware of. Founded in 1991 by Professor Sharlene Hesse-Biber, the National Association for Women in Catholic Higher Education (NAWCHE, pronounced like Naw-chee) is an organization that works to better the situation for women in Catholic higher education. Over the years NAWCHE has organized seven biennial conferences hosted by institutions across the country. In addition to its conferences, NAWCHE publishes a newsletter, *Making Connections*, that is distributed to members in pdf and hard copy form. In 2003, NAWCHE's current director, Hesse-Biber, and Boston College graduate student Denise Leckenby co-edited *Women in Catholic Higher Education: Border Work, Living Experiences, and Social Justice* (Lexington Books). One reviewer of this work notes that the essays in the book "...not only capture the difficulties that many women have faced, but they also detail the positive experiences as well. Many essays offer insight into the productive roles women have carved out for themselves in Catholic universities... *Women in Catholic Higher Education* should be required reading for both educators and administrators at Catholic universities and colleges."\*

This year NAWCHE's staff consists of two second year MA students, Rachael Kenney and Christian Gilde, who are working to change the face of NAWCHE at Boston College with a feminist speaker series.

In March of 2005 NAWCHE hosted renowned writer and guest speaker Peggy Orenstein, author of *Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Love, Kids and Life in a Half Changed World*. The university response was tremendous, with small donors from all over the university contributing funding for

this speaker. This academic year NAWCHE is raising funds to bring Sarah Willie, author of *Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race* (planned for October 6<sup>th</sup>) and Liza Featherstone, author of *Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers Rights at Walmart* (planned for November 8<sup>th</sup>) to Boston College. Both speakers are eager to share their work with the Boston College community inside the classroom and by presenting a public lecture on campus.

Planning for NAWCHE's eighth biennial conference is also underway. The 2006 conference, slated for June 9-10 at Georgetown University in Washington DC, is titled *Making Connections VIII: Enacting Social Justice: The Status of Women in Catholic Higher Education*. We encourage our Boston College undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty to think about presenting their research in the form of a roundtable, paper session, workshop, or seminar. This is a wonderful opportunity to present, especially for students who are going on the job market.

We look forward to our Feminist Guest speakers this fall and hope the university response will as generous and exciting as it was for Peggy Orenstein's. Please visit our NAWCHE webpage ([www.bc.edu/nawche](http://www.bc.edu/nawche)), or e-mail us ([nawche@bc.edu](mailto:nawche@bc.edu)), call (617.552.4198), or stop by the "attic" (McGuinn 519a).

\*Terri Skarzenski (2005). *Women's Studies*, 34: 106-107.



Peggy Orenstein

HTTP://WPR.ORG/BOOK/020623A.HTM

# The Genealogy of Cyberpunk

## Stephen Pfohl Interviews Visiting Scholar Adriana Amaral

SP: So, tell me a little bit about your project that brought you to the states, and what kind of work you've been doing, and what you see as the future of your work.

AA: I got interested in cyberculture, I guess, in '97, when I was an undergrad. I read Baudrillard, his early work, because I was working with a teacher on semiotics. I was, by that time, using the internet a lot. I have always liked science fiction because it's something that has really interested me, all the questions and everything. And so I started this PhD project in 2002. And what interested me was the whole aesthetic issue. I used to work as a journalist for newspapers and develop websites about music and culture, so aesthetics was always a part of my work. And so I started to read about it and I read William Gibson and his works and I read Philip K. Dick, and then I made a kind of connection. And I was always interested also in philosophy and philosophy of technique, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, so I came up with this idea of making kind of a genealogy of cyberpunk. Because we have the concept and we have lots of books and it's always dissolved in different areas such as literary criticism, sociology and so on. And I was trying to – OK, let's *organize* this, because even though it's been 10 years of the movement, we don't have this organized thing.

SP: Well, that makes sense, when you start out in talking about your interest in fiction and also

talking about Baudrillard, I mean, sometimes people read Baudrillard a little bit more as a fictive writer than as a theorist and he himself, in some sense, denies theory and talks about, at some level, really trying to build a kind of fictive discourse to raise attention to what the realities are in the present. What do you see – you also mentioned aesthetics – what do you see as the role of either fiction or aesthetics in terms of drawing attention to stuff that sociologists would want to call facts and changing historical reality? What's the advantage of aesthetics and fiction as opposed to straight theory?

AA: I think aesthetics is the thing that calls up more the attention of the people. Even though they don't know what's going on, when you see a sub-culture you have the whole aesthetic process and the symbolic process. It's that that makes the connection. I don't know if you know the work of Maffesoli, the French sociologist.

SP: A little bit.

AA: He always talks about aesthetics as this link between people, so that's my view of aesthetics in the sociological term.

SP: Philip Dick in some ways wrote a long time ago now, do you find his work is relevant for the present? In some ways it's a little prophetic of where we're moving right now.

AA: Prophetic is a strong word, but sometimes his

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Adriana Amaral joined the BC Sociology department as a visiting scholar from Porte Alegre, a city in southern Brazil about the size of Boston but well into the southern hemisphere near Argentina. She is a Ph.D. student at her university, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), which awarded her a grant to study and do research abroad. Her research encompasses a broad view of the "cyberpunk aesthetic," its nature and origins and its current status in post-modern society. She includes the 1950's pioneering work of the mathematician Norbert Wiener's "cybernetics," the 1980's science fiction literature and films, and the 1990's emergence of hackers, crackers and slackers of the present pop era. She seeks to connect all three phases in a comprehensive view of the cybernetic society. Adri is building her work around the writings of Philip K. Dick, author of the literary sources of the films *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, and *Minority Report*. Also relevant are *The Matrix*, *Batman*, and her favorite, *Star Wars*. Her work and understanding of pop culture are quite penetrating, and I have invited her to present a paper on her research at next year's Pop Culture Association conference in Atlanta.

- Sy Leventman

commentators use it to describe him. But I would say that he posed questions – behind the surface – because before *The Matrix* and everything like all the video games, the simulation stuff is all there. He deals with these mental structures, and alternative realities. And also, coming back to the aesthetics, he also put this dark side in, linked it to the noir detective stories. And that, through my research, I came back to the plot of the gothic romances. That is an important theme. Whenever you're doing a kind of Nietzschean genealogy, you're not looking for a beginning, because that would be against what he talks about, but you're searching for forces that integrate and lay behind a social or moral phenomenon. But you have to summarize and see the ruptures and analogies. And I see these changes, I see the gothic romances and the counter culture of the '60s, and that Philip K. Dick belongs to this counter culture, and then, in the 80s, the cyberpunk movement.

SP: That makes sense to me. And, in terms of the genealogy, you're right, it isn't a matter of searching for the beginnings because in some sense there's always trajectories and crossroads and beginnings start again – but some people have thought – I picture someone like Stuart Hall, who talked about post-modernity as really being an American meditation on its own culture being exported. Now you're obviously not coming from America but Brazil, and cyberpunk isn't limited seemingly to any one national border. How do you think of cyber culture in relation to what someone would call post-modernity as a change in the tensions of modernity, and how do you think about it in relation to national borders?

AA: I think, in this sense, it doesn't have any national borders. The first thing, if you think about the work of MacKenzie Wark and the hacker stuff, you see that the information is free. So here I am, I'm Brazilian, and I'm from the south, and I'm completely different from my compatriots from the north. And I'm here, and I find myself very at home here. So I don't have problems, I go to the clubs and the music's the same, I listen to the radio, it's the same, the things that I read are the same. I didn't have a great culture shock. And I think this is part of the techno-culture, the cyber culture. Because – of course we have these small differences, but I didn't have the cultural shock that we used to have, I guess, 100 years ago. So I talk to

the people and we talk the same way.

SP: I guess it's a global subculture or a global counter culture in some ways, that these are no longer confined by national boundaries, and they carry electronically but they also, I guess, carry in terms of what you're calling aesthetics and style and appearance. I mean, you could *see* – I guess visually even – people associated with cyber culture and stuff like this.

AA: Yeah, I was thinking about that this weekend because I went to New York to visit my cousin and I was with some friends that I met there, and we were at a party in his apartment, and he turned on his computer with a lot of mp3 music, and we were laughing because it was the same music that I have on my computer back in Brazil. The same tracks.

SP: Music is an interesting thing to think about, how these cultures carry beyond borders, because it works more with resonance and tone and not only really just content. Or you know, in some sense, because lyrics could be in English and how do those translate into Portuguese? – but it isn't really just about lyrics, I think it is about tones and vibrations and tonality. I'm interested in what you think about that aspect.

AA: I think it has to do with identification. I see it in two ways: the things that I read and also from what I experience in all the places that I've been. Even if I go to Sao Paulo or to France, anywhere, I feel very connected because of this little identification that you see between the different sub-cultures within a big culture that is cyber culture.

SP: What do you make of the sense that some people call this almost a neo tribal culture? Does that make sense to you? How does cyber culture differ from modern, bureaucratic, rationality? Is there some kind of collective community dimension that some people have called tribal? You think of tribal before modernity, but here it's like an electronic tribalism. How do you think of such questions?



Adriana Amaral

PHOTO BY BRAD OLSON

*Adriana  
Amaral*

## *Genealogy of Cyberpunk*

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*You cannot escape  
from it. I think this is  
the most important  
part I've learned  
about cyber culture  
...it's impossible to  
escape.*

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AA: I've been thinking about this a lot. I think in a certain way, it is tribal. It doesn't have boundaries, if you know what you want, you can get it because of the availability of information. For instance, my personal interest, I like electronic music, so electronic music is almost the same everywhere around the world. Once you know where you have to go, the people there act the same, dress the same, speak the same language. Of course, there are some differences in cultural backgrounds. I see it as very connected. I don't know if we can call it a community because it does not have a main objective. Of course, we have social networks and people trying to do stuff through the internet such as movements. They have importance, but I think it's more an hedonistic thing.

SP: That makes me wonder a little bit. Walter Benjamin once tried to talk about the difference between the politicalization of aesthetics and he was for this, I think, as a form of change and raising questions, and then just the aesthetization of politics, maybe which would empty the tension out of politics by turning it into more of a spectator's sport or something like that. Do you see those tensions within cyber culture yourself?

AA: Yes, of course. On one side, people think this so called "X" generation is not interested in politics, but I don't think this is true. If we think about people who have been writing web logs against Bush, and even people from Iraq, these last few years, since Sept. 11, 2001, people became more interested in politics, even though it's not something in the "official" media. It's on the web, on the streets, people discussing it in cab rides, etc.

SP: I agree. Even though on the surface of things, when you think about the Bush administration now, things look pretty conservative from the US point of view, but all these other cultures are thriving both in and beneath and along the side. I guess you can think it's a swarming net of other real differences from that and it may be a real descent from it too.

AA: Yes, it's the decentralization of politics. Politics are everywhere.

SP: Philip K. Dick's work, you were saying earlier, has this sort of gothic and darker dimension, and Baudrillard's thought could be a hyper pessimism, the road of corporations, the world of machines all of sudden now ruling bodies that previously had desired to be in the flesh or in community. But some things I hear from you are more optimistically toned, in terms of these subcultures.

AA: It depends. Some things are very pessimistic and some things are very optimistic. For me, it's difficult because I have two sides. I have my academic side and I have my work as a person and all my subcultures I've been involved in since the age of 14. You have to look beyond the pessimism and optimism. Like in our conversation about plastic surgery, from one side, it's such a good thing that people can change themselves, but from the other side, you have corporations and the media trying to impose the image of models on women. There are some contradictions and you have to deal with them. They are part of the whole culture.

SP: That makes sense, rather than thinking you can be outside the realm of contradictions, to work against their grain, to be within them, which is part of being in this world.

AA: You cannot escape from it. I think this is the most important part I've learned about cyber culture, if you're on one side or the other... it's impossible to escape.

SP: How does that make the project of critical theory different? There was a time when critical theory tried to distance itself from the dominant place so it can comment back upon it. But here you're really suggesting a world that we're really participants in, in terms of its circuitry. How then, do you register criticism?

AA: Times have changed, things have changed, since the Frankfurt School, so it's hard to judge. I still think about when Adorno wrote those essays about jazz and he said it was bad. But in a certain way, it was a good thing for the black community, they became very popular and gained self respect even if you didn't like it. It's so difficult to judge things nowadays. I think we are in kind of a zone, we are so immersed in it, that it's difficult to breathe and to go out and say "this is this" or "this is that." Our role as sociologists and critics, we're always

trying to solve a puzzle. This is why I think about aesthetics, through it, we can visualize better.

SP: That strikes me as really important. I go back to think of people like Marshall McLuhan, who thought of the artist as the antenna of social change. Sociologists tend to think that social science is different from the humanities, but do we need kind of a new sociology with artistic antenna?

AA: I think so. Sociology and philosophy got stuck in their own castles. They got separated from the empiricist world. It's like "I'm here, I'm academic, I only read and do research." I think it requires a new kind of sensibility. We have been trained to think, "Well, if you're an engineer, you have to do this kind of work. If you've studied social sciences or philosophy you have to be in this field." But what I see is that the fields are moving on to each other, bumping together, literature and sociology and everything. And we don't know: What do we do now?

SP: But maybe out of those bumps, you find a creative spark, new possibilities; hybrid forms of both knowledge and social action.

You're getting ready now to go back to Brazil and yet you've talked about in some ways the cyberpunk culture carries well beyond national borders, so it's not like you entirely left them, but what should people from North America know about the practice of critical thought in Brazil that we might not know? - By virtue of us being located in the center of a certain kind of empire that doesn't pay much attention to the rest of the world, we think everything begins in the states. Are there lessons from critical theory in practice that people ought to know about here in the states that you know more about by being in Brazil?

AA: I see the main difference in Brazil is that people want to know why things are happening. For example, there is a social network from Google called "Orkut."

SP: I haven't accessed that one.

AA: In order to enter, you have to be invited by one of your friends, it's a social network like "FaceBook" and "MyPlace," but for some reason, many Brazilians have entered into "Orkut"

even in North American communities. It has become a huge case in Brazil. Now, news websites are reporting that this is a real place where real things happen and if you're not a part of "Orkut" then you're no one in Brazil. It's all very weird. All my friends are there and I've been there since the beginning. You can find people that you haven't spoken to in 10-15 years. There are more Brazilians than North Americans in there. We're very connected. I was talking to my niece, who was



Scene from *Bladerunner*

in an exchange program in Germany, and she was telling me "It's amazing, they do not use the internet as much as we do." And she was in Germany, the center of a technological world! Here in the US we're used to having technology like DSL, and I found that in France and Germany, they don't really care.

SP: What do you think accounts for that? Culturally in Brazil, at least those who have access, are much more desirous, it sounds like, of finding connections in the net then say maybe some of those European countries or maybe even parts of Boston. I think of Brazil as also having a highly developed hypermodern culture and some parts of Brazil are still very rural.

AA: It's a huge country. It's like the US. California is completely different from Boston and from New York and from the south, and it's the same with Brazil. Of course we have a unit, but it's constructed. All the images we send to the world are constructed. It's very simulated. It's like the 50's and 60's, when President Vargas made connections with the American president and started making movies with Carmen Miranda and everybody thinks Brazilians are like that. It's a constructed image.

*Adriana  
Amaral*

## *Genealogy of Cyberpunk*

[HTTP://HOME.COGECO.CA/](http://HOME.COGECO.CA/)

# Faculty Pages

## Bill Gamson Receives the Merit Award of the Eastern Sociological Society

by  
Sarah Babb



Carolyn Hodges Persell and Bill Gamson

“It’s not very often that you see me in a jacket and tie,” Professor Gamson quipped to the assembled audience. It was an occasion worthy of pomp and formality. On March 19, 2005, William Gamson of the BC Sociology Department was awarded the Merit Award of the Eastern Sociological Society, along with Caroline Hodges Persell of New York University. The Merit Award is given annually to distinguished scholars who have made outstanding contributions to the discipline of sociology and the ESS.

Professor Gamson received his Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Michigan in 1959. He came to Boston College in 1982, after teaching at Michigan for many years. For decades, Professor Gamson has been nationally and internationally recognized for his contributions to the study of social movements. Among his many dozens of publications are *Talking Politics* (Cambridge 1992), which looks at the complex interaction between the mass media and public opinion. He served as President of the Eastern Sociological Society in 1989, and as President of the American Sociological Association in 1993-94. In keeping with the maxim “think globally, act locally,” Professor Gamson directs the Media Research and Action Program (MRAP), which helps social movements navigate issues of access and bias in the mass media. Among his current projects is a game simulation of corporate globalization issues, tentatively entitled “Global Justice: The Game.”

## Severyn Bruyn Receives William Foote Whyte Distinguished Career Award

by  
Jean Lovett

Professor Emeritus Severyn T. Bruyn was also recognized this year, when the ASA section on Sociological Practice awarded him the 2005 William Foote Whyte Distinguished Career Award. The award ceremony was held on Tuesday August 16th during the 100th anniversary meetings of the ASA in Philadelphia.

In describing this award, the Sociological Practice newsletter ([http://techsociety.com/asa/socpractice\\_sum0605.pdf](http://techsociety.com/asa/socpractice_sum0605.pdf)) notes that Bruyn “was among the first to write extensively on the philosophy and logic of participant observation. From his early work interning as a sociologist in the federal prison system in the late 1940s through his work in the 50s directing a program in community development, he explored and developed new arenas for sociological practice.” He led the way in other areas as well, including “the sociological aspects of business and the ‘social economy.’” The newsletter also mentions his field research in Central America, the Caribbean, and Europe, and his leadership of BC conferences for world peace and community development.

Professor Bruyn is the author of several books: *The Human Perspective in Sociology: The Methodology of Participant Observation* (1966), *The Social Economy: People Transforming Modern Business* (1977), *The Field of Social Investment* (1987), *A Civil Economy: Transforming the Market in the Twenty-First Century* (2000), and others. His most recent work, *A Civil Republic: Beyond Capitalism and Nationalism* (2005), concerns the problems of economic injustice, ecological destruction, and the rise of authoritarian government. It describes his strategy of societal development and interdisciplinary research intended to inspire more sustainable government policies.

## Faculty Pages

PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH BABB



Sarah Babb

**Sarah Babb** was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for the 2005-06 academic year. She will pursue research on the complex ways in which global economic ideas rise and fall from historical prominence within a context of multi-national economic and political institutions

Professor Babb also received the 2004 Viviana Zelizer Prize for Best Book in Economic Sociology by the Economic Sociology Section of the ASA for *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton University Press, 2001). (Co-recipient Harrison White won for *Markets from Networks: Socioeconomic Models of Production*.) In making their selection, the committee stated that both of these works "elucidate and explain different aspects of one of the most important topics in the modern economy as well as in modern discourse, namely the market" (<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionecon/econsoc04f.pdf>).

**William Gamson** (with co-authors Myra Marx Ferec, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht), received the ASA's Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section Best Book Award for *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge University Press 2002).

**Leslie Salzinger** received Honorary Mention for ASA's Sex and Gender Section's Best Book Award for *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories* (University of California Press, 2003).

Professor Salzinger also won Honorary Mention for Best Book Award of the Latin American Studies Association for *Genders in Production*.

As Director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy (CWP), **Paul Schervish** was awarded several grants: a 5th year extension of his grant from the T.B. Murphy Foundation; the second full year of a multi-year grant from the Lilly Endowment; a second year of Funding from the Boston Foundation to continue work on regional variations in charitable giving; an Impact Foundation grant funding the North Dakota Wealth Transfer Study, a Boston Foundation Grant funding the Boston Metropolitan Area Wealth Transfer Study; and a grant from the John Templeton Foundation to support dissemination of the center's research in published articles.

**John Donovan** (pictured here with retired Lynch School of Education faculty member Jean Mooney) helped establish the BC Association of Retired Faculty suite in the new building on Campanella. The suite is named in his honor, as the plaque in the photograph indicates.

**Catherine Riessman** received a Leverhulme Visiting Professor Fellowship, Institute for Advanced Studies at Bristol University, U.K. She gave several university wide lectures and led an interdepartmental workshop in narrative methods during the Spring of 2005.



Jean Mooney and John Donovan

PHOTO BY LEE PELLEGRINI (THE CHRONICLE)

## Faculty Pages, continued

**Juliet Schor** was interviewed on NBC's "Today" show regarding children and consumerism, and was quoted by the *New York Times* on consumer's increasing desire for upscale accessories and gadgets. An opinion piece she wrote on advertising to children was published by the *Washington Post*, *Houston Chronicle*, and other newspapers. She also offered tips for raising money-smart children in *Money* magazine and discussed Americans' hectic work schedules on the WBUR-FM program "Here and Now." In addition, she was featured by *US News & World Report*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Detroit News*, *Business Week*, *People*, the *Boston Globe*, *Toronto Star*, National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" and Salon.com, among other media. (The above text is from the *Chronicle*. She was also featured in the *Chronicle* itself.)

## Faculty Publications

Faculty Publications can now be found on our website at <http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/sociology/faculty/publications/> (listed under the Faculty link on our home page).

# SOCIOLOGY speaks

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