



# The Department of Sociology Newsletter

JUNE 2021

## From our Department Head:



Dear Friends of the OSU Sociology Department:

I am excited to share events of the 2020-21 academic year! The resilience, dedication, and creativity of our students, faculty, and staff continues to amaze me as we learn and grow through unprecedented challenges related to the pandemic.

In 2020-2021, the name of our building was changed after years of organizing, we engaged in enhancement of and greater attention to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion on campus and in our classrooms, and launched two important departmental student support initiatives. The first initiative, the 'Food for Thought

'Micro-pantry' is a donation-supported free food access option located in the department. Developed via faculty research on food inequality and the work of students in an Introductory Sociology course asked to apply Sociological theories and methods to address challenges of food access on campus, the micro-pantry is available to students, staff, and faculty in need of food resources and toiletry items. The second initiative offered an opportunity to award several 'Sociology Student Support Scholarships,' in addition to our yearly scholarship awards. The Sociology Student Support Scholarship uses funds from the Sociology General Scholarship to provide emergency academic financial support for Sociology majors. This year we awarded four \$500 scholarships and hope to make this scholarship available to students each year. Thank you to our donors for their generous contributions!

For the 2021-22 academic year, expect curricular revisions to meet the needs of current and future undergraduate students on our Stillwater campus and enhance offerings in the Criminology and Criminal Justice (CCJ), Environment and Society, and Social Services areas. We also anticipate a robust slate of classes and degree options as we partner with the OSU-Tulsa campus in the years ahead and strengthen our online/outreach offerings. After a brief delay, the department will collaborate with the OSU Police Department to offer "Bridging Partnerships through Policing" a course introducing students to the realities of modern law enforcement. An integrative and exciting addition to the CCJ area, the class sets the stage for additional innovation in course construction.

Dr. Katie Constantin, who completed her PhD in Sociology from Texas A&M University, joins us this summer! Her research and teaching will enhance our existing CCJ and Social Psychology areas. Welcome Dr. Constantin!

In these challenging times, we continue to be resilient. I am immensely proud of the Sociology community we are building at OSU and of our undergraduate and graduate students as they use the skills gained in our program to pursue their goals. As OSU Sociology looks forward to the next academic year, I welcome alumni to be in touch to tell us about your experiences, accomplishments, and life transitions. It is always a pleasure to hear from you! Feel free to visit our website at <https://sociology.okstate.edu/> or visit us on social media.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer!

*Tamara L. Mix*

Tamara L. Mix, PhD

Dresser Professor and Department Head of Sociology

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# Meet our New Faculty



The Department of Sociology welcomes **Dr. Katie Constantin** as the newest addition to our faculty! Dr. Constantin will be joining us in Fall 2021 as an Assistant Professor. She recently completed her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. She also earned her M.A. in Sociology from the University of New Orleans in 2016, and her B.A. in Anthropology & Sociology from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee in 2014.

Dr. Constantin's specialty areas include Law, Crime, and Deviance and Social Psychology. Her research focuses on cooperation and punishment in public goods, games, as well as sexual violence and victimization. Her most recent publication "Unequal and Unfair: Free Riding in One-Shot Interactions" examines the effect of status (as indicated by gender) on perceptions of and reactions to free riders.

# Campus, the Community, and Collaboration



**Dr. Jared Fitzgerald of the Department of Sociology.**

As we emphasize throughout this newsletter, this past year has been difficult for our entire campus community. Relocating to a new state and starting a new job can be stressful under normal circumstances, but doing so amid a global pandemic is particularly challenging. We checked in with our newest department member, **Dr. Jared Fitzgerald**, to talk more about his first year at Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Fitzgerald joined the Department of Sociology this past fall after earning his Ph.D. from Boston College in May 2020. He previously graduated from the University of Utah (M.S. in Sociology) and Boise State University (B.A. in History, minor in Sociology). Dr. Fitzgerald's research focuses on the political economy of environmental change and sustainability, and he is particularly interested in understanding pathways to sustainability that protect the environment as well as improve human wellbeing. Although new faculty normally arrive to welcome parties and lots of coffee meetings, Dr. Fitzgerald's experience was far from the norm. Nearly all department members have been working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Dr. Fitzgerald told us that colleagues have been extremely supportive and that he has been impressed with the resilience of the students at OSU.

Despite the difficulties of starting a job during a pandemic, Dr. Fitzgerald hit the ground running this past year, co-authoring two articles on environmental and public health outcomes. He also began collaborating with Assistant Professor of Political Science, Dr. Kristin Olofsson, on an exciting new project focusing on sustainability in rural Oklahoma, with an emphasis on Harmon and Tillman counties. This mixed methods project, which is funded by Oklahoma State University's Rural Renewal Initiative, links global sustainable development goals to the rural Oklahoma context. Through both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the project aims to equip local residents with the tools they need to build local organizational capacities, create policy change, and maintain healthy, vibrant, and self-sustaining local economies. Drs. Olofsson and Fitzgerald write that effective policies "are typically best crafted with participatory and deliberative processes that directly engage community members, recognize the complexity of problems in rural areas, and make use of that complexity to craft effective policy interventions." Although local organizations and leaders typically spearheaded this process in the past, since the 1970s local political party organizations have slowly been replaced by "media-driven and mass audience-based persuasion tactics." This has had dire consequences for rural communities "where there are typically few or no other local organizational structures present to absorb communities' vulnerabilities and channel community actions toward policy interventions."

The project has proceeded in stages. The first stage involves collecting quantitative data measuring, among others, public health, environment and natural resources, education and economic outcomes. The second stage, which will begin this summer, involves community engagement and interviews in Harmon and Tillman counties. Dr. Fitzgerald told us that this project "involves interdisciplinary collaboration not only between faculty members but also with graduate and undergraduate students from both departments as well." In addition to undergraduate students from political science, sociology PhD students Belal Hossain and Martha Sibley will have major roles in both data collection and analysis this coming summer. When asked about what most excites him about this project, Dr. Fitzgerald remarked that it is "the ability to connect global sustainability efforts to efforts in local and rural areas. The global issues can often be disconnected from local issues (particularly in rural areas) in the sustainability discourse. This is an exciting opportunity to think about how sustainability efforts operate at smaller scales and how local and global efforts can complement each other."



**Dr. Kristin Olofsson of the Department of Political Science.**

# Learning From Our Campus Community

Several years ago, a survey was developed and emailed to a random sample of 5,000 OSU students. Of the over 500 students who responded, 43% reported that they were food insecure. Food insecurity is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

In Spring 2019, **Dr. Tamara Mix** brought this data to her class of Introductory Sociology (SOC 1113) students, asking them to apply knowledge of sociological theories and concepts to create solutions-based approaches to food access challenges on campus. In response to students' insights, Food for Thought was initiated by Dr. Mix when she became Department Head that following June.



Food for Thought, Micro-pantry is a free food access option located in the Sociology Department breakroom/lounge on the 4th floor of the Social Sciences and Humanities building, directly next to the Main Office. The micro-pantry is available to students, staff, and faculty seeking food and toiletry items, and includes both shelf-stable and small amounts of perishable items. Food for Thought is supported by donations, and welcomes all support.



The Department of Sociology is not the only group on campus who is fighting food insecurities within the OSU community. In addition to Food for Thought, those in need of resources can visit the SGA Food Pantry, The Trough, and take advantage of the "Forgot Your Lunch?" Program. Also available is a CampusLink group called "Pete's Eats," a food availability notification group for students who receive emails about opportunities for free food on and off campus. Additional off-campus resources, support and information may also be found through the Department of Leadership and Campus Life.



Staff member, **Sarah Lyon**, completed the Oklahoma State University's Leadership Development Program (LDP) this past February! The LDP is an innovative program designed to enhance the leadership skills of managers, supervisors, and administrative personnel at OSU. Participants of the Leadership Development Program must complete 2 core courses and 20 elective courses within 3 years.

Sarah has been an integral member of the Department of Sociology since July 2019. She told us that the program has helped her to identify her skills, strengths, and weaknesses, and has enabled her to develop in ways that "continue to help generate success at OSU." The LDP has also helped her feel more connected: "Being able to have collaborative discussions, no matter if the classes were virtual or face to face, helped engage me more in the OSU community." Stop by the Department of Sociology main office to say hello and learn more about the LDP!

# What Goes Around, Comes Around

By Dr. Stephen Perkins

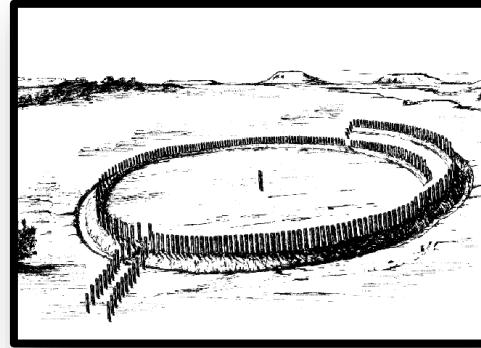
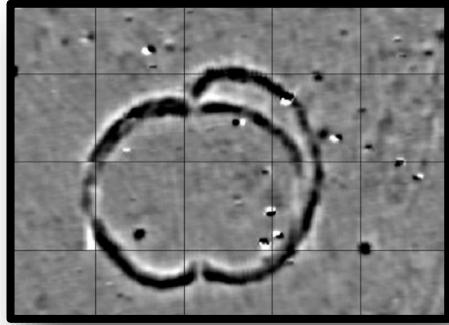
Way back in 1984, OSU undergraduates Debby Sweet, Stephen Perkins, and Chris Turner joined an 8-week archaeological field school sponsored by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey and the University of Oklahoma. The dig was held in Washita County, Oklahoma at the Duncan site, believed at that time to be an early Wichita Indian village occupied circa AD 1450.



1984 fieldschool staff and students, including D. Sweet (kneeling on left); S. Perkins (standing, 4th from left); and C. Turner (standing, 7th from left).

After the summer, both Chris and Debby returned to OSU where they soon graduated with degrees in sociology. Today, Debby remains in the Department of Sociology as an administrative support specialist. Chris joined the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Service officer. Stephen, meanwhile, transferred to OU in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in anthropology. After 18 years away, Dr. Perkins returned to OSU's Sociology Department in 2002, where he now serves as Associate Professor of Anthropology. As Dr. Perkins approaches his 20th year in the Department, it's only appropriate that he return to the field site where it all began in western Oklahoma.

Currently, Dr. Perkins is using never before published analyses from the 1984 excavations in combination with more recent geophysical data regarding Duncan's fortification ditch and palisade (see images below). As it turns out, Duncan contains one of the earliest indigenous fortifications known on the southern Plains. Once thought to be a village, Duncan now appears to be a seasonally occupied port of trade where Wichita people bartered with nomadic Apache bands occupying the high plains of the Texas Panhandle. Situated in a contested landscape, Wichita people insured their safety by constructing a circular wooden palisade, including an overlapping "baffle" to make entry by enemies more difficult.



Gradiometer Image courtesy of Dr. Scott Hammerstedt; Artistic depiction courtesy of Dr. Richard Drass.

Who knew in 1984 what signing up for an archaeological field school would lead to!

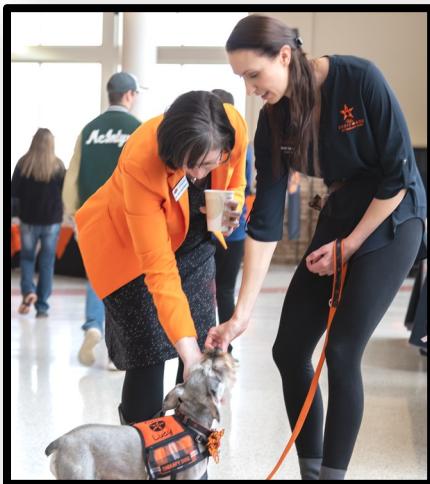
You can learn more about Dr. Perkins' research in his 2021 article in *Plains Anthropologist* co-authored with Susan C. Vehik, Richard R. Drass, and Sarah Trabert: "Florence-A chert end scrapers from the Lasley Vore (34TU65), Deer Creek (34KA3) and Longest (34JF1) sites and the eighteenth-century southern Plains hide trade."

# Lived Pandemic Realities:

By Maggie Leon-Corwin and Dr. Rachel M. Schmitz

Since March 2020, we have each observed and experienced unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19. As sociologists on a continual journey to understand our social world and enact positive change through our work, we feel compelled to share our experiences striving to document the lived realities of diversity in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has certainly spotlighted and exacerbated numerous social inequalities among marginalized groups in the areas of health, support networks, and structural resources. We share our attempts to process these growing disparities through both community outreach and research scholarship. **Our projects elevate the struggles and resilience of people enduring inequities and the incredible ways they have resisted oppression and thrived in the face of significant adversity.**

## Resilience and Adaptive Capacity at OSU



Dr. Schmitz representing the Department of Sociology at Up-Close along with Pete's Posse member Lucy Schmitz!

COVID-19 has shaped increased reports of feelings of isolation due to a shift to remote work, loss of control over day-to-day routines, as well as physical and mental illness. Through these challenges, newly developed public-facing and personal projects designed to facilitate coping and promote mental well-being underscore the value of community building in enhancing adaptive capacity and resilience. Most recently conceptualized by scholars Carpenter, Council, and Burnett as a process, resilience refers to the ability to adapt to and recover from external stressors, such as COVID-19. Through remote community engagement via existing and newly emergent professional development and fellowship organizations, professionals in our field have promoted adaptive capacity and resilience within our community. Community building has occurred among graduate students and early career academic professionals through recurring virtual co-working sessions with colleagues locally and across the country. Virtual practice presentations for job talks, dissertation and thesis defenses, and regular writing sessions simulate the camaraderie of in-office work without neglecting the collegiality of scholarship within our departments.

Similarly, existing support networks

have emerged through organizations such as Alpha Kappa Delta and the Sociology Graduate Student Association focused on personal and professional development in a new era in which such foci can be neglected.

Returning to the classroom in Fall 2020, we as a community navigated challenges like new modes of instruction, sociopolitical unrest, and mental and physical illness induced by COVID-19. In particular, interactions with students regarding pandemic-related physical and mental challenges have provided valuable space for reflection on the role of compassion in the classroom. After a three-week hiatus due to COVID-related illness, a student shared the following disclosure through communication connecting her to resources and supports: "Yesterday was the first day that I could breathe well enough to cry and I cried all day."



Sociology Ph.D. Student,  
Maggie Leon-Corwin.

# Sociological Understandings through Community & Scholarship

OSU leaders have pushed for us to be understanding and flexible, but this student comment demonstrates the value of compassion in teaching. We do not have to compromise rigor to curate a supportive learning environment. Through hard work and an incredible demonstration of resilience, this student completed coursework and graduated in December 2020 having survived COVID-19 and an unprecedented semester. This interaction, and others like it, can shape our approaches to learning and further refine our pedagogy. This is essential, as we have each risen to the challenges associated with new modes of instruction. From relying upon diverse methods for instruction, to incorporating new technology in the classroom, we have each gone above and beyond for our students to ensure quality education and learning.

## LBGTQ+ Community Based Resilience

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ+) people already experience heightened health disparities and minority stressors, and the pandemic further amplified gender and sexuality-based inequalities. People are also navigating technology in new and heightened ways, which can create unique sources of stress.

Collaborating with Dr. Jennifer Tabler (University of Wyoming) and Dr. Ruby Charak (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), our study's objective was to examine LGBTQ+ people's experiences and understandings of the pandemic through a concurrent, triangulation design and convergence analytic model of mixed methods. We surveyed 457 adults ages 18+ from predominantly rural regions ( $n=117$  LGBTQ+-identifying), and completed follow-up in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with  $n=43$  LGBTQ+ people. Qualitatively, LGBTQ+ people experienced constraints to building community connections. Pandemic-induced stressors were major challenges, such as worrying about social conflict, amplified technology usage, and self-care barriers. On a brighter note, LGBTQ+ participants also used innovative strengths-based health promotion strategies to manage pandemic stress. Quantitatively, LGBTQ+ respondents had higher pandemic stress levels and elevated COVID-19 checking behaviors (i.e., news updates, checking on loved ones) relative to non-LGBTQ+ peers. Exemplifying both struggles and strength, LGBTQ+ respondents reported higher problematic reliance on cellphones/smartphones, but they also spent more time chatting/speaking online to friends, which points to community-based resilience.



**Dr. Ruby Charak of  
UTRGV's Department of  
Psychological Science.**



**Dr. Jennifer Tabler of  
UW's Department of  
Sociology.**

The pandemic's impacts on our sociological understandings and applications have been significant and will evolve as we develop our community and research endeavors. We believe it is our social and professional responsibility to leverage our distinctive training and skills into positive social change with the hope of learning from the pandemic and utilizing that knowledge to transform our return to "normal" into something better and more equitable for all.

# A Letter From Our Graduate Students

*Dear Faculty, Staff, and Advisors,*

Mentorship is a fundamental component of graduate student success and influences our personal and professional growth. Through the 2020-2021 academic school year, disruption in traditional modes of communication has presented challenges to how faculty and advisors engage with student mentees. Even so, as emerging professionals in our field, we recognize and appreciate the effort faculty and advisors have put forth in ensuring we continue to receive support and guidance through unique and unprecedented times.

You have each continued to excel at advising and mentoring, never missing a beat and continuing to provide support and guidance as we completed theses, dissertations, and coursework. At times, you have each provided structure in times of great uncertainty, offering support and guidance with patience and grace. Despite rampant ‘zoom fatigue,’ you have scheduled regular remote meetings via Zoom, providing us with the most valued gift of time with which we could solicit advice. Your kindness and compassion through the pandemic have meaning beyond words for our personal and professional development—we appreciate you. Thank you for recognizing the challenges we have faced and for working with us to identify solutions. Your guidance, motivation, and emotional support have gone above and beyond what we could have ever anticipated. **Thank you.**



Recent graduates Summer Graham (above) and Michelle Estes (below) pose with their mentor, Dr. Kelley Sittner, at the Spring 2021 graduate commencement.



*Sincerely,*

*The Sociology Graduate Students*

# Graduate Students Staying Involved

Each year, the College of Arts and Sciences holds a Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition for both Undergraduates and Graduates to showcase their research. This year, in the Graduate 3MT competition, one of our Ph.D. candidates,

**Dhruba Sinha** was selected as a finalist!

Dhruba's thesis, entitled "Making Sense of Citizen Identity in Light of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): Capturing Citizen Identity Work Among Indian Citizens" which discusses the idea of identity through citizenship, how identity war has been trigger through specific policies and laws, as well as information on how structural change can alter a group of individuals internally. Dhruba's research primarily focuses on group identity, group relations, and social movements. She is also interested in studying events of extreme conflict.



## Recent Publications (2020–Present)

<b>Michelle Estes</b>	Carlisle, Zachary T. and Michelle L. Estes. 2021. "Safety in Numbers? A Qualitative Analysis of the 1999 National Firearms Survey." <i>The Qualitative Report</i> 26(1): 262-273.
<b>Belal Hossain</b>	Sittner, Kelley J. and Michelle L. Estes. 2020. "Adult Outcomes of Justice Involved Indigenous Youth." <i>Race and Justice</i> .
<b>Belal Hossain</b>	Hossain, Md Belal, Michael A. Long, Paul B. Stretesy, 2021. "Welfare State Spending, Income Inequality and Food Insecurity in Affluent Nations: A Cross-National Examination of OECD Countries." <i>Sustainability</i> 13: 324-338.
<b>Srijana Karki</b>	Rabby, Yasin Wahid, Md Belal Hossain, and Joynal Abedin. 2020. "Landslide Susceptibility Mapping in Three Upazilas of Rangamati Hill District Bangladesh: Application and Comparison of GIS-based Machine Learning Methods." <i>Geocarto International</i> .
<b>Srijana Karki</b>	Uddin, Jalal, Najwa Alharbi, Md Helal Uddin, Md Belal Hossain, Serra Sevde Hatipoğlu, Leann D. Long, and April P. Carson. 2020. "Parenting Stress and Family Resilience Affect the Association of Adverse Childhood Experiences with Children's Mental Health and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder." <i>Journal of Affective Disorders</i> 272(1): 104-109.
<b>Maggie Leon-Corwin (Chamberlain)</b>	Karki, Srijana and Tamara L. Mix. Forthcoming. "A Yam between Two Rocks: A Comparative Analysis of Disaster in Nepali and Indian News Reporting of the 2015 Gorkha (Nepal) Earthquake." <i>International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters</i> .
<b>Maggie Leon-Corwin (Chamberlain)</b>	Karki, Srijana. 2021. "Complexities of Menstruation in Kathmandu, Nepal" <i>Contexts</i> . 20(1): 62-63.
<b>Dhruba Sinha</b>	Campbell, Nnenna, Maggie Leon-Corwin, Liesel A. Ritchie, and Jamie Vickery. 2020. "Human-Induced Seismicity: Risk Perceptions in the State of Oklahoma." <i>The Extractive Industries and Society</i> .
<b>Dhruba Sinha</b>	Das, Dhruba, and Monica M. Whitham. Forthcoming. "Framing the Collective 'We' and the Antagonistic 'Other' through Metacontrast: Intragroup Homogenization and Intergroup Polarization in the Hindu Nationalist Movement." <i>Sociological Forum</i> .
<b>Dhruba Sinha</b>	Coley, Jonathan S., and Dhruba Das. 2020. "Creating Safe Spaces: Opportunities, Resources, and LGBTQ Student Groups at U.S. Colleges and Universities." <i>Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World</i> 6:1-12.
<b>Dhruba Sinha</b>	Coley, Jonathan S., Dakota K. T. Raynes, and Dhruba Das. 2020. "Are Social Movements Truly Social? The Prosocial and Antisocial Outcomes of Social Movements The prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements." <i>Sociology Compass</i> 14(8): 1-14.
<b>Adam Straub</b>	Straub, Adam M. 2021. "'Natural Disasters Don't Kill People, Governments Kill People': Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico—recreancy, and 'Risk Society'" <i>Natural Hazards</i> 105(2): 1603-1621.
<b>Christine Thomas</b>	McLaughlin, Heather and Christine Thomas. Forthcoming. "Costs vs. Compensation: Legal and Policy Recommendations for Addressing Workplace Sexual Harassment." <i>Saint Louis University Journal of Health Law &amp; Policy</i> .

# Graduate Student Awards



## The O.D. Duncan, Outstanding Graduate Student Award: **Lara Gonçalves**

Named in honor of the man who founded the Department of Sociology and Rural Life at Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University), the O.D. Duncan Outstanding Graduate Student award is given to one student each year who exemplifies excellence in the areas of research, teaching, campus involvement and Sociological practice.

Lara Gonçalves defended her MS thesis titled "University Student Food Insecurity in the Wake of Covid-19" in February 2021. She has recently co-authored articles in Sustainability and Frontiers in Public Health on the topic of food insecurity. Lara will be continuing on to the OSU PhD program in Fall 2021. Congratulations to Lara!



## The Richard Dodder Scholarship Award: **Belal Hossain**

The Richard Dodder Scholarship award is given to one student each year that has done an outstanding job of practicing Sociology in an applied manner through teaching, research or community involvement.

Belal Hossain is in his second year in the PhD program. Belal has co-authored five journal articles during the last three years in the areas of ecologically unequal exchange (Hydrological Sciences Journal), food insecurity (Sustainability), vulnerability (International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction), and related areas. His paper "Gender Differences in Hypertension: A Context of Groundwater Salinity and Climate Change in Coastal Bangladesh" was also selected as the third place winner in the 2021 Alpha Kappa Delta Graduate Paper Competition. Congratulations Belal!



## The Sarah Belusko Award: **Maggie León-Corwin and Jessica Schachle**

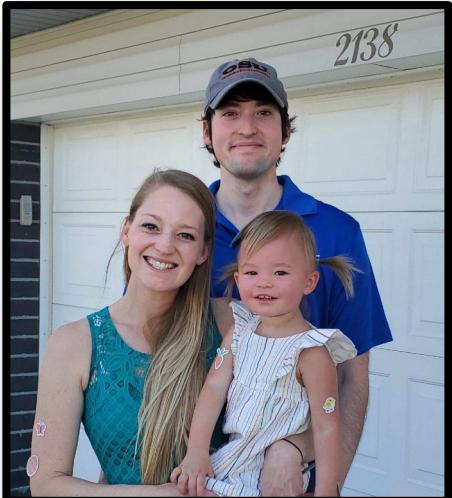
Given in honor of former and greatly missed PhD student Sarah Belusko, this award is presented to a graduate student demonstrating commitment to community, engagement with innovative classroom strategies and the pursuit of creative research endeavors.

Maggie León-Corwin is in her fourth year of the PhD program. Maggie has co-authored four journal articles in the last few years in the areas of spatial analysis (Human Ecology Review), green criminology (Punishment & Society) and fracking related induced seismicity (The Extractive Industries and Society). She is currently a research assistant on the Oklahoma NSF EPSCoR project. Congratulations to Maggie!



Jessica Schachle is in her second year of the PhD program and her current research focuses on the 2018 Oklahoma teacher walkout. Her first two sole authored manuscripts based on this research are currently under review at Sociological Focus and Feminist Media Studies. Jessica is also engaged in a collaborative project on how environmental and political threats over the last century have contributed to the growth of the Sierra Club. Congratulations Jessica!

# 2020 Graduate Degree Recipients: Where are they now?



**Dr. Zachary Carlisle** earned his Ph.D. in Spring 2020. Dr. Carlisle's dissertation, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Men's Lived Experiences with Sexual Violence as College Students*, was chaired by Dr. Heather McLaughlin, Dr. Rachel Schmitz, Dr. Monica Whitham of the OSU Sociology Department, and Dr. Allen Finchum of the OSU Geography Department.

Dr. Carlisle is currently an Assistant Professor of Social Sciences at Midland University in Fremont, NE, teaching courses in Research Methods, Social Inequality, and Social Psychology. He is continuing to study men's experiences with sexual violence, and has had three papers accepted for publication in 2021.

On a personal note, Zac's daughter, Autumn, is turning 2 this summer! Zac told us, "My partner Theresa and I love spending time with her, and we are looking forward to (hopefully) spending more time with friends and family this summer."



**Lexi Almy** successfully defended her M.S. thesis entitled *An Examination of Social Supports during Graduate School and How they Moderate Stressors, Anxiety, Depression, Flourishing, and Positive Well-Being*, in the Summer of 2020! Committee members were Dr. Kelley Sittner, Dr. Liesel Ritchie, and Dr. Rachel Schmitz of the OSU Sociology Department.

Lexi is currently continuing her graduate career here in the Oklahoma State Department of Sociology's Ph.D. program. Her research focuses on mental health and positive well-being of graduate students. Lexi also looks forward to incorporating teaching methods that support mental health and well-being in the classroom as well as promoting a shift in culture surrounding well-being for graduate students.

# Creative Collaboration:

By Dr. Corinne Schwarz and Leigh Welch

We have all experienced drastic shifts in our personal and professional lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic: the socially distanced classroom, the masked trips to the grocery store, the isolation at home. Unsurprisingly, our research projects also felt the impacts of pandemic living. **Dr. Corinne Schwarz**, Assistant Professor of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies (GWST), and **Leigh Welch**, Sociology and Political Science major, embarked on a collaborative qualitative research project exploring the role of frontline workers in the anti-violence sector during COVID-19. They began their Zoom interviews late in the Fall 2020 semester, after they had grown more comfortable with an exclusively virtual approach to conversations and communication. Below, they share some of their thoughts on the challenges and surprises of launching a research project about COVID-19 during the pandemic.

## Interviews are easier on Zoom...

Before launching this research project, we had very limited experience with online research. We had either conducted or learned how to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants in a face-to-face context. Phone interviews were rare! In many ways, this project was a crash course for both of us in learning how to navigate remote interviews. We benefitted from fellow Sociology department members like **Dr. Rachel Schmitz**, who is a pro at remote interviews. Her informal guidance was instrumental in thinking through our initial project design. As well, we had to continually remind ourselves that we were going to mess up—and that's ok! Sometimes our technology crashed; sometimes our participants' computers crashed or failed to connect to Zoom on Wifi. Flexibility and humility became even more important.

One of the biggest methodological findings of our project is that it is simply far easier to schedule an interview on Zoom without navigating commuting times. Our research design focused on states in the Great Plains, including Oklahoma. While some of our participants lived within our communities, others could only be reached through a long car drive.

Zoom allowed us to find small windows of time in our respective schedules. In-person interviews require a certain degree of "wiggle room" around the interview itself: time to prep your office for a visitor, drive to a location, wait for a longer-running meeting to conclude. With Zoom, we had a set time reserved on our calendars—our interview time was ostensibly protected.

This process also seemed easier for our participants. Our sample size grew larger and faster than previous research projects. The ease of using Zoom resulted in what we consider a great data set for the "pilot project" stage of our work. Between November 2020 and February 2021, we were able to complete 17 interviews with service providers across eight anti-violence organizations.

## However, co-researcher collaboration is far more challenging virtually!

After being on Zoom for classes, meetings, and social events, it is really, really hard to set yet another appointment for the brainstorming and workshopping that goes along with a collaborative research project. Zoom fatigue was a real factor in the pace of our project. Sometimes, especially after conducting a Zoom interview, it was just too overwhelming to consider talking about our data collection and analysis virtually.



**Dr. Corinne Schwarz, Assistant Professor of GWST in the Department of Sociology.**

# Qualitative Research Despite COVID-19 Challenges

While there are certainly great platforms to help facilitate collaboration and communication, like Google Jamboards that approximate drawing on dry erase boards and creating sticky note webs, there is simply something about the generative process of working in physical spaces together. We might be able to hit “share screen” on our Zoom to show each other our work, but there is some intangible piece of the collaborative process that’s removed in this remote teamwork.

One of the newer challenges we must navigate is remote conference presentation. We are delighted that we get to share our first analysis, “It’s Like Being a Parent at Work: Anti-Violence Frontline Work, Boundaries, and Intimacy During COVID-19,” at the May 2021 Law and Society Association conference meeting. In some ways, a virtual conference is easier to navigate—there is slightly lower anxiety presenting remotely versus in-person, and we do not have to navigate travel to Chicago around the panels we want to attend. However, we have to prepare our PowerPoint and practice our presentation remotely, which is not intuitive.

**Just like our interview participants, we felt the push-and-pull of boundaries during COVID-19.**



**Sociology and Political Science Major,  
Leigh Welch.**

One of the most surreal experiences for us was when our interviewees’ words mirrored our feelings about work during COVID-19. Even though the contexts were wildly different—we were navigating the stress of academic labor, while our interview participants were dealing with the nuances of anti-violence service provision—the core feelings were the same. Interviewees shared how the virtual office erased certain boundaries.

When your living room is now the space where you conduct telehealth appointments or when your kitchen table is where you fill out case management paperwork, “public” and “private” spaces might feel one in the same. Similarly, for professors and students, when you’re teaching a class in your makeshift office/game room or doing homework in your shared dorm space, it becomes far easier for work to bleed into your self-determined “off-hours.”

Many service providers shared their feelings of loss for those random, spontaneous moments of in-person connection. Before COVID-19, large meetings between co-workers and community stakeholders contained more than the meeting itself—maybe you arrived early to chat with someone sitting next to you, or maybe a conversation after the meeting ended turned into a coffee date and future collaborative plans. From the academic angle, we think about how many interesting ideas emerge as colleagues walk between meetings together, how many office hour sessions turn into ideas for research projects.

**Launching a new project during COVID-19 is a great idea.**

Seriously! At certain points of the pandemic, we shared that we felt like we were in *Groundhog’s Day*. The routine of our lives thankfully kept us safe and secure from COVID-19—and these routines also felt very isolating at times. Having a new project that required both of us to think creatively together and talk to new people was a lifeline. And we felt this echoed by many of our interviewees—we were sometimes the only new people they were speaking to in the course of their day or week, too. We often left our interviews feeling energized and in solidarity with these frontline workers. We are all navigating the challenges of life under a pandemic together, and there was something powerfully affirming about getting the opportunity to research the strategies and solutions others were using to navigate this new normal.

# The Renamed Social Sciences & Humanities Building

In March 2020, the OSU Student Government Association (SGA) and two subsequent committees of campus leaders submitted a resolution supporting the removal of the "Murray" name from Murray and North Murray Halls. But this resolution wasn't the first time community members expressed opposition to memorializing the Murray name, which has been a source of controversy for over 20 years.

The buildings were named after William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, who played a critical role in establishing the State of Oklahoma in 1907. Murray was selected as Oklahoma's first Speaker of the House, serving from 1907 to 1909. He then served as a U.S. Representative from 1913 to 1917, and was elected as the ninth Governor of Oklahoma in 1931.

In 1935, during Murray's final year as Governor, Oklahoma A&M President, Dr. Henry G. Bennett, named our building Murray Hall. It was a women's dormitory until 1970 and continued to house students until 1984. However, it then remained mostly dormant until renovations were planned in 2002. At this time, several committees and student-led groups organized to remove Murray's name from the building. While many regarded Murray as an important political figure in Oklahoma history, others criticized his harmful policies and beliefs.

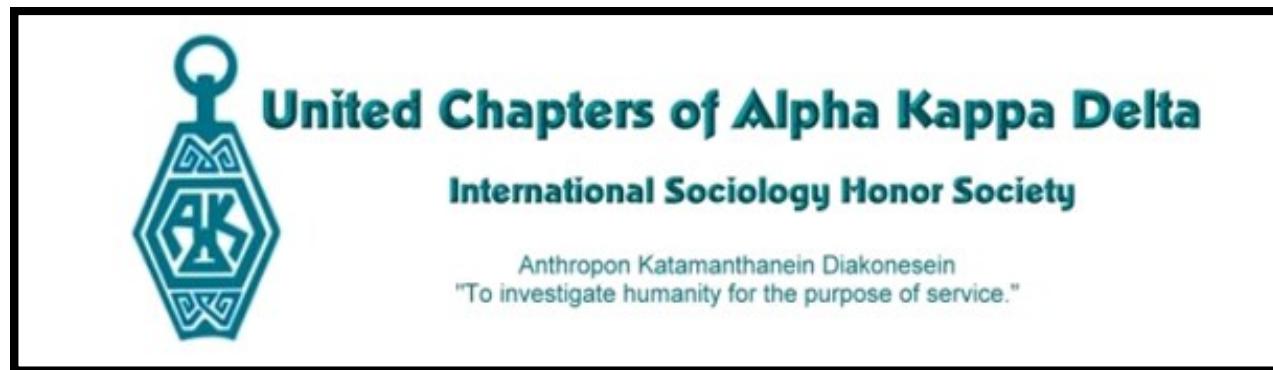
The 1906-1907 Constitutional Convention, over which Murray presided, formed a government and constitution for the State that incorporated progressive reform. However, among this reform, African Americans were completely discriminated against. In Murray's Opening remarks to the convention, he stated "We should adopt a provision prohibiting the mixed marriages of the negroes with other races in the State, and provide for separate schools and give the Legislature the power to separate them in waiting rooms and on passenger coaches, and all other institutions in the State. We have no desire to do the negro any injustice. We shall protect him in his real rights, No one can entirely be said to educate him or civilize another." Then during his governorship in 1931, Murray proposed a transformation of higher education, limiting educational and economic opportunity for minorities and the disenfranchised.

Fast forward to June 2020, when a committee comprised of representatives from the SGA, Faculty Council, Staff Council, Alumni Association, and the OSU Foundation unanimously voted to rename Murray Hall. The decision was then upheld by the OSU Facilities Planning and Space Utilization Committee, OSU President, Burns Hargis, and ultimately approved by the OSU A&M Board of Regents. Following the Board of Regents' decision, President Hargis issued the following statement: "Oklahoma State is committed to eliminating systemic racism and embracing our responsibility as an institution of learning to find solutions to inequality and justice. Removing the 'Murray' name is one such step." This change reflects the University's commitment to accountability within its community, and, hopefully, helps to facilitate diversity and inclusion. Until more permanent names are chosen, the building formally known as Murray Hall will be known as Social Sciences and Humanities Building and North Murray Hall will be known as Psychology Building.



For more information on the life and events surrounding William H. Murray and Murray Hall, visit the exhibit in the basement of the Social Sciences and Humanities Building. This exhibit was created by Dr. Bill Bryans and Claudette Robertson of the OSU Department of History.

# Alpha Kappa Delta Inductees



We are pleased to announce that two graduate students and five undergraduate students were inducted into the international sociology honors society, Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD), during the 2020-2021 academic year!

Congratulations to our newest AKD members:

*Elli Billingsley, Colin Broermann,  
Gabby Gomez, Ashley Grither,  
Vanessa Moore, Eden Nay,  
And Joanna Young*

Founded in 1920, AKD promotes excellence in the study of sociology, the research of social problems, and other social and intellectual activities that improve the human condition. AKD now has over 130,000 lifetime members affiliated with more than 670 chapters worldwide. The Oklahoma State University chapter, Gamma of Oklahoma, was founded in 1969. Membership is limited to students who have maintained a record of high academic achievement and have completed a significant amount of coursework in sociology. Members are eligible to receive grants to present at sociology conferences and are able to compete in AKD-sponsored paper contests.

# Undergraduate

In the past, the Department of Sociology has held an in-person awards ceremony to give our students the opportunity to be recognized in front of their family, friends, and peers. While we hope to reintroduce our ceremony in the future, this year we chose to recognize our undergraduate award winners via social media during finals week of this past spring semester and here in our newsletter.

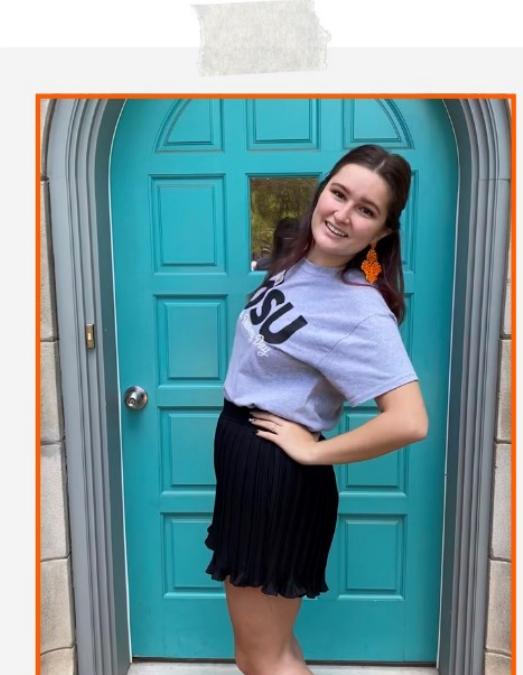
Congratulations again to all our undergraduate award winners!

## *Outstanding Senior Award*



*Alannah Templon*

## *Benjamin Gregory Wood Award*



*Grace Robinson*

## Student Awards

*The Richard  
Dodder Award*

*Beverly  
Schooling*

*The Mabel  
Dixon Looper  
Scholarship*

*Monserrat  
Solorzano -  
Franco*

*The Fourjay  
Foundation  
Scholarship*

*Julie  
Kulla*

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