SDSU Department of Sociology

Improving Human Well-being by Investigating Social Inequalities
Contents

03 Message from the Department Chair - Norah P. Shultz
05 Message from the Graduate Advisor - Jung Min Choi & Timothy Brown
06 Message from the Undergraduate Advisor - Michelle Lenoue
07 Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE)
10 Faculty News
13 Undergraduate Award Winners
14 Graduate Student News
14 Alumni News
16 Commencement
17 This Year's Events
19 Faculty Publications
Welcome to this year’s edition of the SDSU Sociology Department Newsletter. This is my first time to introduce you (or re-introduce you) to our department through this annual e-publication which highlights the many achievements and activities of our students, faculty, and staff.

I became the department chair on August 17. Let me begin by introducing myself. I came to San Diego State University in the summer of 2016 as the associate vice president of student achievement but decided to return to a faculty role in 2020.

I have been a sociologist since my undergraduate years. I majored in social science with a concentration in sociology as an undergrad and both my master’s and Ph.D. are in sociology. I have specialized in research methods since I was a graduate student. I investigated several areas before concentrating in the study of higher education about 25 years ago.

This fall my newest publication, “Revising the Curriculum and Co-Curriculum to Engage Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” is slated for publication from Routledge. I'm also lucky that I can study my passions – baseball and animals, through the lens of sociology.

This past year two of our faculty, Dr. Joseph Gibbons and Dr. Minjeong Kim, were promoted to professor. We also hired a new Assistant Professor Dr. Neftalie Williams, who will begin teaching in the fall. Two new staff members also joined our team. Jenna Petruzzo started in the early fall of 2022 and Griffin Cassell joined our team in the spring. They have both added so much to what we are able to accomplish.

We hosted some excellent events including our Annual Speaker Series, Loss in the City: Anti-Blackness and Racial Capitalism in the Nation’s Capital given by Tanya Golash-Boza. We co-sponsored two additional lectures, “Roots of the Revolts: Segregation, Serial Displacement, and Gentrification in St. Louis, Baltimore and Beyond” featuring Derek Hyra and “Feeling Politics: The Role of Emotions in Environmental Racism Fights” featuring Nadia Kim. Our faculty held a “research hour,” with four presenters during the year.

I want to draw your attention to the activities related to Mobilization. Under the leadership of Dr. Johnston, we once again hosted an international conference and continued publication of an international journal. The department is also part of the Surf/Skate Studies Collaborative due to the work of Dr. Michael Roberts, and Dr. Williams will be an exciting addition to this team of researchers. This collaborative hosted an international conference and also published a journal. (cont.)
Dr. Choi and our graduate students host an annual conference on Praxis in Education. This conference is sponsored by The Dignified Learning Project, a nonprofit founded by lecturer Dr. Charlene Holkenbrink-Monk when she was a graduate student. The conference was preceded by the 2023 Graduate Student Symposium, featuring Antonia Darder who presented “Embodying Social Justice through a Pedagogy of Love.”

For this upcoming year we are still making plans for the annual speaker series for this fall but are tentatively planning on a panel on how sociology is part of our national and international discourse.

I look forward to supporting the department as we continue to do the excellent work already underway. The two points below are part of the statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion from the university’s plan:

- Enhancing students’ ability to contribute to community-minded diversity initiatives
- Expanding the type of regional, national and international high impact practices that provide experiences for students to research and work with diverse community organizations

This is where I think we can really contribute to the university and the lives of our students. The research of our faculty is well suited to this work and our Center for Community Engagement has laid the foundation for us to become campus leaders in this regard. On the website you can see the research of our faculty members that has involved our students in community efforts.

As we engage in our own strategic planning along with the College of Arts and Letters these are some of the ideas that we can keep at the center.

As is said – looking forward!

Norah P. Shultz
Chair, Department of Sociology
Hello everyone!

As the new graduate advisor, I want to say welcome to fall 2023! First of all, I want to thank my predecessor, Dr. Tim Brown, who guided our graduate program to new heights during his tenure. Under his leadership, the program excelled in many areas.

We've had numerous graduates who were accepted to major Ph.D. programs with scholarships and fellowships. The Sociology Graduate Student Committee hosted the nationally recognized Dr. Charis Kubrin (2022) and world-renowned Dr. Antonia Darder (2023) for their annual speaker series. And many of our graduate students presented various research/academic papers at local, state, and national conferences.

As the incoming graduate advisor, I am committed to continuing this level of excellence and with the help of our wonderfully talented staff, faculty, and students (both current and incoming), I am hopeful that we can build on it. I would like to extend a special welcome to the new cohort of 2023! I look forward to meeting all of you and getting to know each of you better. Let's make this a memorable academic year.

It has been a privilege to serve as the department’s graduate advisor for these past three years. I am proud of the many successes our graduate students have had during those years. I am especially so for the 90% two-year graduation and matriculation rate our students have upheld during my tenure as advisor. I find this number that much more impressive when considering much of it was during the turbulent COVID-19 times. Our M.A. students never ceased to impress me in both their dedication to their scholarship and their quest for finding answers and harnessing their sociological imagination.

The thesis and comprehensive exams our students devoted so much time and energy have complimented the strong tradition of graduate student research in our department. Of course, these accomplishments do not happen in a vacuum, it speaks volumes to the dedication of the Department of Sociology faculty and their commitment to helping students achieve their goals.

While it is bittersweet for my time as advisor to end, I am excited to turn the reins over to Dr. Choi. I am confident in Dr. Choi’s passion for student success and know he will only improve on the current successes of our program. The future is indeed bright for the M.A. program in sociology at SDSU.

Jung Min Choi, Ph.D.
Professor & Incoming Graduate Advisor

Tim Brown, Ph.D.
Professor & Outgoing Graduate Advisor

San Diego State University
My name is Michelle Lenoue, and I am the sociology undergraduate advisor. I received my M.A. in Latin American Studies at SDSU and a B.A. in anthropology/sociology at Plymouth State University (New Hampshire).

I have served as a student success advisor in the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) at SDSU for more than seven years and have been supporting students' success in various roles in the assistant dean's office for Student Affairs for 17 years. In spring 2023, I was honored to take on the role of undergraduate advisor for sociology. After a semester of working with such engaged students and faculty who are making a positive impact in our communities and beyond, I am excited to see what this year brings.

During the 2022-2023 academic year there were nearly 500 sociology majors and more than 200 minors. Of the majors, 177 graduated, one third of them doing so with honors. I want to recognize and congratulate David Trujillo, who was chosen as the 2022-23 Outstanding Graduating Senior in Sociology. We are excited to welcome a new cohort of sociology students this fall!

As advisor, I invite you to reach out and meet with me about major and minor requirements, general education, minor exploration, and high impact educational practices. I also hope to meet some of you in my role as co-advisor to the College of Arts and Letters Student Council. Besides being the major advisor for sociology and Asian Studies, I also serve as the liaison in CAL for both transfer students and international students and am familiar with the particular issues these students face. All majors and minors are welcome to contact me at advising.sociology@sdsu.edu or through SDSU Navigate for an advising appointment, I look forward to meeting you!
Commitment to CCRE

The Center for Community Research and Engagement aims to promote community-based projects through collaborative research, critical analysis, high impact classes, and public outreach in order to explore societal inequities and advance social change.

- Create and sustain a network of scholars who are actively engaged in community-based projects;
- Foster an environment for innovative thinking on solutions to community challenges;
- Develop opportunities for student involvement in community-based research and action projects to enhance learning;
- Provide an outlet for the publication and dissemination of the findings of community-based research and the outcomes of community engagement;
- Facilitate workshops, colloquia, and conferences to support exchanges and collaborations related to community research and engagement.
Our Institutional Commitment to Community Based Projects

During this past academic year, three of Dr. Shultz’s classes worked with the Sage Project so the students could apply what they were learning in the classroom to real issues in the San Diego region.

As stated on their website, “The Sage Project is a program within the Center for Regional Sustainability at San Diego State University with a simple goal: improving quality of life in our region through community-based projects, in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.” While the Sage Project has several current partners, all three of Dr. Shultz’s classes were engaged with the San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition.

In the fall and in the spring Survey & Experimental Research Methods (SOC 407) classes conducted needs assessments. The fall class created a survey to determine overall community needs related to sustainability. The class divided into “geographic groups,” based on ZIP Codes in southeast San Diego and used the same survey. Data was collected through social media and in-person.
The spring class focused on one of the major projects for SDUSC, the San Diego Energy Equity Campus at Valencia Park, and how it could be connected to the community, serving a role in a sustainable future for the residents of Southeast San Diego. This time the class divided into three groups investigating different topics. One group surveyed residents about potential training opportunities to be held at the Energy Equity Campus for jobs in sustainable industries. Another group, following up on some of the answers to the survey questions from the fall 2022 survey, surveyed residents about food options available to them in their immediate neighborhoods and if there might be a way that the Energy Equity Campus could fill a void for better produce options. The third group surveyed local college students who were from this area and asked them, retrospectively, about what internships in sustainable industries would have been appealing to them. The spring class used similar methods to the fall class, but the latter group relied primarily on personal networks.

For both classes, since convenience sampling was used, students gathered demographic data about the area and compared the demographic data of the respondents to determine if their samples were somewhat comparable (although not statistically representative) to the population.

In the graduate seminar Field Practicum (SOC 796), the students followed up on the data from the fall class. Using a variety of methods, they attempted to resolve some of the anomalies that had been found in previous data and also researched potential policy solutions.

For example, in the fall 52% of the respondents either strongly “agreed/agree/or probably agreed” to the statement “I feel that my park’s playground equipment is safe for children.”

On a visit to the area, conducting ethnographic research, the students took photos of the playground equipment:

While the anomaly of the previous data was not resolved, it is clear that the playgrounds are not comparable to those in other areas of the city.

One striking finding from the fall 2022 data was that 64% of the respondents felt that the local government had not adequately prioritized educational funding in their communities. The students, through secondary data analysis and research, determined how funding was distributed and why this appeared to be the case.

The students presented solutions to the problems above which could be linked to the Energy Equity Campus. This integrated all the work from the academic year into a cohesive needs assessment with recommendations.

Southeast San Diego Schools, Suspension and Absentee Rates:

- Most school funding from the State is based on student attendance.
- The chart on the right shows student attendance from various schools in Southeast San Diego from worst to best in color range: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, and Blue.
- Clearly there is a large amount of students getting suspended and/or missing school which would tremendously affect school funding in that region.
- It’s possible that this chart may hold the answer to why respondents feel that there local Government hasn’t prioritized educational funding in the Southeast San Diego region.
Tour of two UNESCO world heritage site slave castles where many Africans were kept captive until being shipped to the Americas (North, Central, and South):

- Elmina Castle, the first and the oldest European building on African soil. Elmina was built in 1482 by the Portuguese, the Dutch seized the fort from the Portuguese in 1637 and the British seized the castle from the Dutch in 1872
- Cape Coast Castle, built in 1555 by the Portuguese and seized by the Swedish Africa Company in 1653

Tour of Accra, the capital city of Ghana

Visit to Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti kingdom which is over 300 years old

Experience the Assin Manso (the slave river), where captured Africans took the last bath on the way to the slave castles to then be sent to the Americas and to never again come back to Africa

Tour of the Nkyinkim Museum, which is an evolving art installation/monument of sculptured pieces, portraying the story of African slave trade and the resilience of our ancestors

Visit to the W.E.B DuBois Centre in Accra, Ghana

Participation in a traditional Ghanaian naming ceremony (going back to your roots) by local chiefs

Some of the trip highlights are the following:

- From January 2-12, 2023, I embarked on a cultural, historical, and heritage trip to Ghana which is on the West Coast of the African continent. Ghana has a significant role in Africa and to Pan-Africanism due to being the first African country to become free from colonization, becoming independent from England in 1957.
Charlene Holkenbrink-Monk

"I successfully defended my dissertation on March 20, 2023, and have successfully completed my Ph.D.

I presented at NCORE on June 3 a piece where I am a co-writer, entitled, "Kick Ass or Kiss Ass: Autoethnographic Reflections on Doctoral Camaraderie as Survival."

And both a personal and professional one: the nonprofit, The Dignified Learning Project, that I started when I was a master's student in the Department of Sociology at SDSU and that I've kept going is launching two programs: 1) The Institute for Community-Engaged Research, which will focus on participatory action research and other community-engaged approaches both to conduct research and to train others to do the same, and, 2) Worldbuilding for Justice, which will be an arts program focused on arts for community building and how to reimagine a better future through literacy, arts, and solidarity."

Minjeong Kim

Minjeong Kim gave invited talks on her recent book, “Redefining Multicultural Families in South Korea,” in the Center for Korean Studies at UC, Berkeley and in the Institute of Asian Studies at Portland State University. She also gave a talk on her current project on Korean immigrant communities in the U.S.-Mexico border region at her alma mater, the University at Albany in New York. In 2023-2024, Kim will be on sabbatical.

Amy Wong

"My book, "Stories of Survival: The Paradox of Suicide Vulnerability and Resiliency among Asian American College Students," was published by Oxford University Press on July 21, 2023. I gave a talk to our department during the Sociology Research Hour (April 2023) to discuss this book.

I received the Milestone Award for my 30 years of service in the Department of Sociology and was invited to the University House by President Adela de la Torre to celebrate this professional accomplishment.

I am also a recipient of an SDSU CAL Microgrant to be used for research. Microgrants are supported with SDSU Research Foundation Funds.

SPLICE, the Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship at SDSU College of Arts and Letters, relaunched its publication. All student submissions had a faculty mentor and my mentee's paper was accepted for publication. Toki Lee's paper is called: "Dead Weight: Narratives of Transgender Social Death."
Michael Roberts

Mike Roberts was the recipient of the Department of Sociology’s 2023 Outstanding Faculty Award. In other news, Professor Roberts co-founded the Surf and Skate Studies Collaborative at SDSU. The SSSC is an interdisciplinary endeavor that has 12 faculty members from SDSU and two scholars from other universities that seeks to be a hub for research and community engagement through hosting conferences and publishing cutting-edge research in the area of surfing and skateboarding studies.

He co-organized an international conference on the history, culture and politics of surfing and skateboarding here at SDSU that took place last April. Scholars from all over the world attended “The Stoke Sessions” conference, and keynote speakers included Tony and Steve Hawk and Selema Masekela. Former world champion surfer Shaun Tomson also attended and gave a talk. You can find more information about the conference and watch a video with presenters here: The Stoke Sessions.

The SSSC is also launching a new journal this year, titled Board Cultures: the International Journal of Surfing and Skateboarding Studies, published by SDSU Press. In addition, Professor Roberts is co-editing a special issue on surfing and skateboarding for the journal Sport in Society and co-editing a book titled “Roll and Flow, the Cultural Politics of Surfing and Skateboarding” (SDSU Press).

Stephen Suh

Stephen Suh received a 2023 SDSU Seed Grant for his research on Korean American Culinary Entrepreneurs in South Korea and the US.
Undergraduate Award Winners

Excellence in Sociological Research
Elizabeth Castelo-Gil

Excellence in Community Engagement
Emily Pham

Outstanding Graduating Senior
David Trujillo

Gordon Clanton Scholarship Award
Emma Scout Kubow

As the recipient of the Gordon Clanton Scholarship Award, I got to work with the Del Mar Historical Society (DMHS) in researching and interviewing Monty C. Woolley. This award was funded by Del Mar Community Connections, which provides support to the Del Mar senior population through transportation, guidance, and social, cultural, health, and educational opportunities. This interview, as well as all of the Del Mar Oral Histories, are archived in a special section of the Del Mar branch of the San Diego County Library.

Over the few months that I worked with this group, I learned a great deal about the history of Del Mar and the factors and people that contributed to its growth. My main mentor through this, Annie Duval, took me on a driving tour of Del Mar and provided me with many resources to fully understand the history of this village.

At the end of March, I got to interview Monty with a comprehensive list of questions and probes that covered topics ranging from his childhood, pastimes, his family’s role in Del Mar, and what he could recall of famous events that took place here. It was incredibly interesting to hear the life story of someone with 94 years of experience, history, and anecdotes. I cannot wait to read the official transcribed version at the Del Mar Library once it is published.
Sara Ajami recently completed her M.A. thesis entitled “Violence of Light: The Art of Collateral Damage.” Her academic plan for the next several years consists of pursuing her dual acceptance into the Cultural Studies Ph.D. program and the MFA in art program at Claremont Graduate University. “I was awarded the highest level of fellowship in both arenas and am very excited to fuse and pursue my passions simultaneously!”

Alumni News

Trevor Auldrige Reveles is currently studying to obtain a Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is happy to report that he has won numerous awards over the past year, including:

2023-2024 Josephine de Karman Fellowship Awardee:
I received the Josephine de Karman Fellowship which is a $25,000 dissertation fellowship given to six Ph.D. students across the University of California, Stanford University, and the California Institute of Technology. The purpose of this Fellowship program is to recognize and assist students whose scholastic achievements reflect Professor Von Karman’s high standards.*

2023-2024 Russell Sage Foundation Dissertation Research Grant Awardee:
I received the RSF DRG which is a $10,000 grant given to 30 Ph.D. students nationwide to "support innovative and high-quality dissertation research projects that address questions relevant to RSF’s priority areas: Behavioral Science and Decision Making in Context; Future of Work; Race, Ethnicity and Immigration; Immigration and Immigrant Integration; and Social, Political, and Economic Inequality."

2022-2023 UCSB Chicano Studies Dissertation Grant Awardee:
I received the UCSB Chicano Studies Dissertation Grant which is a $2,500 dissertation research awarded annually to six Ph.D. students at UCSB whose research addresses social justice topics affecting Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities.
My name is Mitzy D. Ruelas (she/her/ella), a sociology alumni who graduated in 2015. Some of my favorite memories are the lectures of Dr. Choi and Professor Semm. I’d go as far as saying that those lectures changed my life!

Currently, I am a registered associate marriage and family therapist working at a couple of group practices, one of which is in San Diego. As a mental health professional, I aim to bring awareness to the impact social systems and social injustice has on peoples’ mental health and wellbeing. And as a therapist, I use what I learned in my undergraduate studies, graduate program, and life experiences to support individuals and families in their healing journey.

Scott Schmidhauser, who received his B.A. from the Department of Sociology in 2018, recently graduated from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine with a DMD degree.
The Sociology Department held its annual commencement ceremony in Montezuma Hall on Friday, May 12. We were proud to host such a large crowd of families, friends, and loved ones celebrating the department's graduates.

Congratulations to the Class of 2023!
This Year's Events

The Sociology Department had a busy academic year. We delivered another Annual Lecture Series, welcomed speakers such as Nadia Kim, Derek Hyra, and Antonia Darder to deliver riveting research, and cosponsored the exciting Surf/Skate Conference.

The 2022 Annual Lecture Series featured Tanya Golash-Boza, Ph.D providing a presentation entitled “Loss in the City: Anti-Blackness and Racial Capitalism in the Nation’s Capital.” Dr. Golash-Boza is the founder of the Racism, Capitalism, and the Law (RCL) Lab and a professor of sociology at the University of California, Merced. SDSU Professor Audrey Beck moderated a short Q&A session. The event also included an important recognition of scholarship awardees, including the John O. and Mary L. Anderson Memorial Endowed Scholarship in Sociology, and a reception afterwards.

This year’s Annual Lecture Series will be in a slightly different format. The event will be structured as a panel discussion featuring Michel Estefan, Rafael Hernandez, and a third speaker TBA. The topic will be “Sociology in the Public Discourse: Navigating Troubled Times” on Wednesday, November 8.
The opening plenary session on Friday morning was inaugurated by Provost Ochoa and Assistant Dean Borgstrom from CAL. Then, a project by three eminent scholars of right-wing politics was the first presentation. Kathleen Blee (Pitt), Pete Simi (Chapman), and Robert Futrell (UNLV) presented their research on white supremacism in the Republican party. Then Adam Burston (Santa Barbara) discussed his research exploring why some minorities support alt-right groups. Johnston ended the session with his presentation, “Truth, Lies, and MAGAism.”

The second plenary focused on violent and nonviolent strategies, with several cutting-edge papers by Zachary Steinhard-Threlkeld (UCLA), Rebecca Haines,(McGill), and Brandon Simms, (American University). The third plenary session was about the rapidly changing media environment. Chih-Jou Jay Chen (Academia Sinica) spoke about his research on social media and China’s white paper movement. Ed Amenta (UCI) spoke about the factors behind good and bad coverage of movements, and Alex DiBranco (Yale) spoke about the media tactics of the Christian right.

The closing session may have been the best, with Nella Van Dyke (UC Merced) speaking about a large collective project she leads on extremism among Republicans. Elena Pavan (University of Trento) discussed her creative approach to movement hybridity, and Debora Almeida (University of Brasilia) spoke on movement-party relations in Brazil. The relationship between major political parties and the extreme right is a compelling topic not only in the US but in South America and Europe.

The Department of Sociology looks forward to these conferences in the years to come. Their presence at SDSU, plus sponsorship by the department’s premier journal, Mobilization Quarterly, a top-ranked review of contentious politics research, are consistent contributions to international scholarship at the R-1 level for our campus.
Faculty Publications

**Timothy Brown**


**Joseph Gibbons**


Faculty Publications

**Rachel Horn-Langford**

Horn-Langford, Rachel. Conference Presentation:
New England Educational Research Organization (NEERO) in May of 2023: Research in Progress Roundtable
Title: Implementing critical literacy: Early-career Transitions from a Social Justice-Oriented Teacher Education Program to the Classroom

Book chapter:

**Minjeong Kim**


**Norma Ojeda**


**Stephen Suh**
