

Think Sociology!

Thoughts from the Head

The last newsletter, our Patricia Marchak issue, highlighted social change, international relations, and teaching. This current issue addresses similar global concerns, but now with a focus on language and love, on differences (or not) between Canadians and Americans, and on ageing and health.

Sociology travels. In all of this research, understanding the personal in the context of global patterns is enriching and rewarding. Is language a barrier to romance? For some of us, apparently not, as Carrie Yodanis shows. Being in a romantic relationship with partners who speak a different first language can be quite rewarding and successful. Love overcomes obstacles. Canadian and American cities feel different, both to Canadians and Americans, but on some issues our citizens think alike, while on others they differ. Figuring out which is which remains perplexing as Ed Grabb demonstrates.

As in past issues of the newsletter, we also celebrate some notable accomplishments. One such accomplishment is the third issue of *Sojourners*, an undergraduate research journal that our students produce. Yun-Jou Chang is the current editor (see

page 3). Another accomplishment is Dan Zuberi's winning of the prestigious William Lyon MacKenzie King Fellowship at Harvard (p. 2). Finally, Ralph Matthews and Nathan Young have seen their book, *The Aquaculture Controversy in Canada*, receive the distinguished K.D. Srivastava prize from UBC Press (p. 3).

We highlight one last significant accomplishment – Dr. Anne Martin-Matthew's honorary degree from Newcastle University. Her research on ageing and health led to her being honoured with this degree. Accolades like this are badges of ability that recognize lifetime scholarly achievements. Individual honours, like this one and the others noted above, are great personal rewards of which people must be justly proud, but they also reflect well on everyone associated with the Department – alumni, staff, students, and faculty. Good things happen from here.

And not to let an opportunity slip – it is not too late to make a contribution to the Patricia Marchak International Research Excellence Scholarship. Cheques gratefully accepted at the Department of Sociology, 6303 NW Marine Drive, Vancouver BC, V6T 1Z1.♦



Neil Guppy
Department Head

Cross-language Relationships

by Carrie Yodanis



A few years ago, I began interviewing people who were in romantic relationships with a partner who speaks a different first language. Along with student assistants, I have now conducted 28 interviews with people in these

cross-language relationships. The interviews were rich and included many surprises. I am now writing about my findings, addressing two questions – How do differences in language impact the power dynamics in relationships? Why would someone start a relationship with a partner who speaks a different language?

When I began this research, I expected that language differences would shape the dynamics between partners. In all these relationships, the couples needed to decide which language to speak together. I expected that the person speaking their own first language in the relationship would be in a better position to have their say in decision making and win arguments when they occurred. To an extent this was true, but the story was much more complex than my initial expectations. I found that first language speakers were at an advantage in the rela-

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tionship, but they also acted in surprising ways to diminish their advantage and their partners acted in ways to use their comparative lack of language skills to their own advantage. Respondents who spoke their own first language in the relationship recognized their advantages. They sometimes talked to their partners in a simple way that suggested they were less intelligent because of their limited skills in their language. They also had an advantage in winning arguments. They could speak quickly, making it difficult for their partner to understand or contribute. They spoke for their partners by finishing their sentences when they hesitated to find the right words to express their feelings. First language speakers also corrected their partner's language, especially as a tactic when they believed they were losing a fight.

Partners who spoke their second language in their relationships did not accept their disadvantage. Instead, they found ways to use their language skills to their advantage. For example, they corrected the grammar, vocabulary, and spelling of their partners when they spoke their first language, suggesting that their partners were incompetent in their own language. This had a strong effect because a second language speaker was demonstrating better knowledge of their partner's language. They often brought in third party verification to these discussions in the form of dictionaries, other written evidence, or even wait staff at restaurants. This left the first language speaker frustrated and annoyed.

Second language speakers also used their lack of language skills strategically. In a disagreement, they would make rude or incendiary comments to their partner, but later deny the intent, blaming it on their limited language abilities saying, "I didn't understand what that meant...it is not my first language." But sometimes they knew exactly what they were doing. As one man explained, "Sometimes when I say something bad, then I just say, 'I don't know, it's not my language and I didn't mean it.' I asked him, 'Does she believe you?'" He answered, "She often does."

Perhaps surprisingly, I found that first language speakers also acted to diminish their communication advantages. They spoke slowly to give their partners time to respond. They made efforts to learn and speak their partner's language, which took a great deal of time and effort and reduced their language advantage. For example, one man who worked hard to learn Spanish, the language his partner spoke, found himself in the position of "being a grown man speaking like a 7 year old child". Many couples worked toward equitable relationships, even when it meant giving up advantages.

Indeed couples use language differences as part of their expressions of affection. Partners learn how to say "I love you" or have a special name they use from their partner's language. One English speaking woman explained that when she and her Spanish partner say "I love you", "I always say it in Spanish and he will always say it in English." Another woman said that her English speaking partner gave her a nickname in Hindi, her first language. She said, "which was really funny because it was not even like a nickname in Hindi that couples use. It was like a random word in Hindi, which he made it his affectionate way of calling me and that was very

nice."

Cross-language relationships are challenging and require patience. At the start of their relationships, expressing even the most basic ideas requires extra communication effort and misunderstandings often lead to missed meetings, hurt feelings, and arguments. Why would people enter and stay in such relationships?

Interethnic relationships are often considered a sign of the blurring of cultural and social boundaries between ethnic groups. As ethnic groups become more similar and differences less important, members of those groups are more likely to date and marry. In the study of partners who speak different first languages, we found something different. Rather than the declining importance of differences, we found that people actively pursued the relationships because of the differences they included. They found the cultural differences interesting, challenging, and attractive. Some people pursued a partner from a specific culture that they loved and as result, were better able to affiliate with that culture. Respondents

also reflected on their intimate relationships as part of their multicultural identities – as people who travel the world and appreciate a range of cultures beyond their own.

Efforts to meet someone from a different culture were active and strategic. People joined clubs to increase the chances of meeting someone from a different culture. They chose online dating profiles based on the same criteria.

As many explained, the relationships were worth the effort. A number of respondents were married or planning to marry. Others had been in multiple interethnic relationships and many said that they would do it again. As one woman explained, "when you start a relationship with someone from a different culture, who speaks a different language, it gives you a feeling of romance, attraction. I enjoy it.... Of course [there are] a lot of frustrations. But it's different right? Always something new, fresh, something to learn... the difference can be mysterious."

People seek to meet, fall in love, and marry across cultural differences. The differences lead to new challenges in the relationship, but as previous research shows, successfully working those challenges can make relationships stronger. ♦

In the study of partners who speak different first languages, we found.... rather than the declining importance of differences, we found that people actively pursued the relationships because of the differences they included.

MacKenzie King Fellowship

Dan Zuberi is the recipient of the 2011-2012 William Lyon MacKenzie King Research Fellowship at Harvard University. The fellowship is granted by the Canada Program at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs to a scholar from any discipline engaged in Canada-U.S. comparative research. He will teach two courses in the Department of Sociology at Harvard. This is a very prestigious award, previously held by other UBC scholars that include Dr. John Helliwell, Economics, and Dr. Richard Johnston, Political Science.

Undergraduate Journal of Sociology - Volume 3 now released!

Here's a Sneak Preview of Volume Three...

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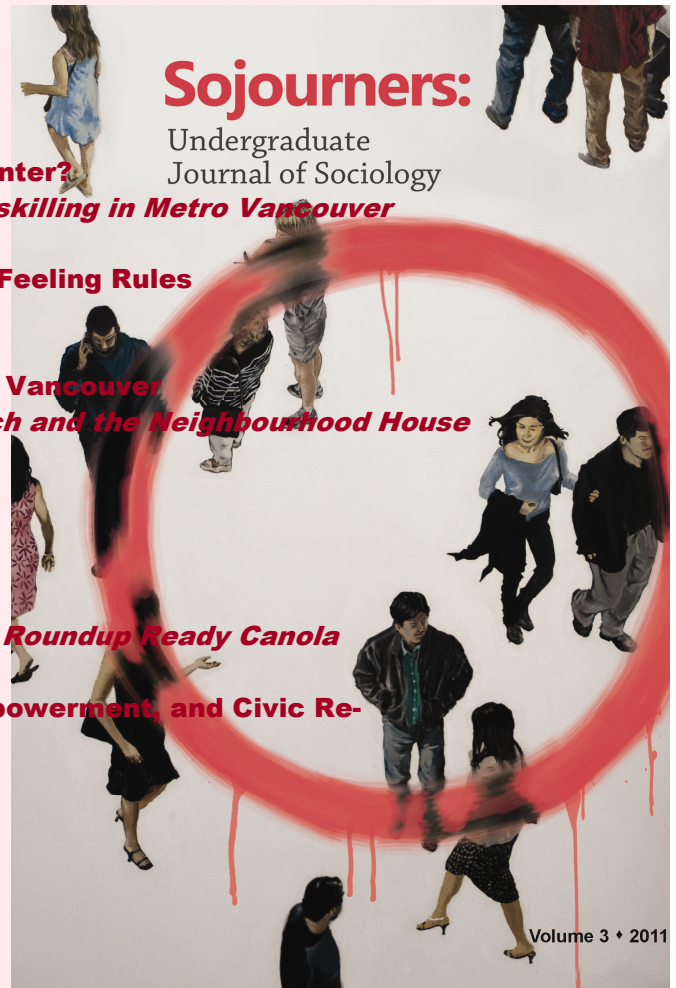
A People United

Representing the Other through Film

Sojourners is sponsored by the Department of Sociology at UBC.

It is one of the few peer- and faculty-reviewed undergraduate Sociology journals currently published in North America.

To order your copy for \$10 (plus postage) or for more information, email socijournal@gmail.com or click on the journal link on the www.soci.ubc.ca homepage.



Ralph Matthews Wins UBC Press Book Prize

Ralph Matthews, and his co-author Nathan Young, have been awarded the 2011 K.D. Srivastava Prize, named in honour of UBC professor emeritus K.D. Srivastava, for their book *The Aquaculture Controversy in Canada: Activism, Policy, and Contested Science*.

The award is given each year by the Publications Board of UBC Press to the author(s) of a work of outstanding scholarly quality published by the Press in the previous year.

The jury stated that it was "impressed by the original contribution of *The Aquaculture Controversy in Canada* to understanding how and why the controversy over aquaculture in Canada is so deep and lasting."

Comparing Canadians and Americans

by Ed Grabb



Comparing Canadians and Americans is a popular pastime for both of our peoples. This is especially true for Canadians, who pay considerable attention to their southern neighbours, pondering the ways that they seem both similar and different. My own impressions of the United States go back to my childhood in Chatham, a small Ontario town just an hour's drive from Detroit. Like so many Canadians, my early sense of the world was greatly influenced by American culture, by American music, sports, movies, television news, and so on. I have since devoted much of my academic life to studying the Canadian-American relationship, in collaboration with such talented people as Jim Curtis, Doug Baer, Monica Hwang, and others. I thought I might share with you some highlights from this research. There are three main questions that I consider: How similar or different are we? Are there important internal differences in the two societies? And, are we becoming increasingly different or similar over time?

The answer to the first question is that, on most dimensions, Canadians and Americans are not nearly as different as many assume. For example, a common belief is that Americans are much more individualistic than Canadians, especially on questions like the importance of personal freedom. Americans allegedly put a higher value on being allowed to succeed or fail on their own, without relying on or even trusting government involvement in their lives. However, most research shows that Canadians embrace basically the same individualistic beliefs as Americans, including the idea that economic inequality is OK, if it is based on individual merit or effort. It is true

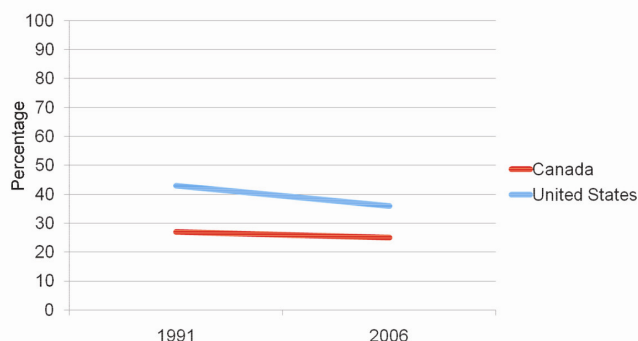
that Canadians experience more government intervention than Americans, and are somewhat more accepting of it, but the preferences of the two peoples are often similar in this regard. Consider the health care issue, for example, which has been so contentious since President Obama took office. Many assume that Americans are widely opposed to government health care. In fact, though, NY Times/CBS opinion polls going back as far as 1980 show consistently that most Americans, like most Canadians, support "national health insurance, financed by tax money, which would pay for most health care services." Most Americans do not reject government involvement in health. It seems, instead, that well-organized lobby groups, right-wing media, and conservative political leaders have succeeded in using misinformation campaigns and related scare tactics to undermine the majority's will on this issue. As for American distrust of government, most research shows that, apart from extreme (and thankfully rare) events like political assassinations in the US, Americans generally exhibit slightly *more* trust and respect toward their government and politicians than do Canadians.

The answer to the second question is that the differences *within* our two countries are much more noteworthy than the differences *between* them. The basis for this assessment is outlined in the book, *Regions Apart*, which I wrote with Jim Curtis. One of our major findings was that Canada and the United States are better understood, not as two separate nations, but as four relatively distinct regional sub-societies. These include a politically and culturally left-liberal Quebec, a politically and culturally conservative US South, and two remaining entities, English Canada and the US "North," which fall between the two extremes and are usually quite similar. The four regions align this way on a diverse range of dimensions, including: level of government spending and taxation, unionization rates, support for gay rights, beliefs about the death penalty and criminal justice, support for the military, attitudes about interracial marriage, and so on. The consistency in these patterns is truly striking, underscoring how important it is to account for fundamental internal differences whenever we compare Canada and the US.

Finally, there is the debate over the question: are the two countries and peoples becoming increasingly different or are they becoming more alike? The short answer to this key question is: "yes." By that I mean that, over time, the two nations go through regular periods of *both divergence and convergence*, depending on the historical period and the issue being considered. But Canada and the US are unlikely to drift very far from each other on most issues, because of the many cultural, political, and economic commonalities that bind us together. There are numerous historical illustrations of our divergence and convergence, including everything from the abolition of slavery (Canada did this first and later the US), to entrance into the two World Wars (both times Canada did this first and then the US), to the development of national social welfare policies (the US actually did this first, under

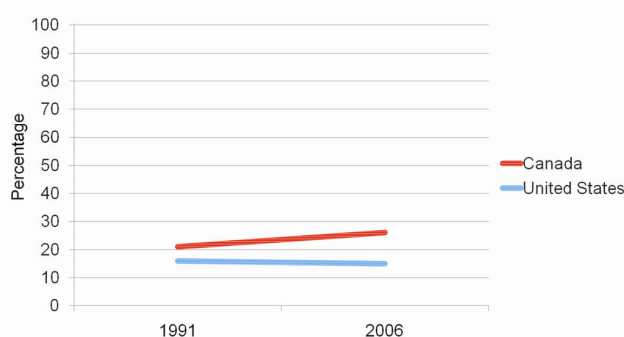
Roosevelt's New Deal, and then Canada followed). For some recent evidence, I quickly compared Canadians and Americans on 35 different attitudinal and behavioural measures included in the World Values Surveys of 1991 and 2006. I found, first of all, generally small Canada-US differences across all these measures. On the convergence-divergence question, I found some modest convergence on half of the items. For example, e.g., in 1991 Americans were more likely by 16% to go to religious services once a week or more, but by 2006 the dif-

Table 1: Attend religious services at least once a week



ference dropped to 11% (Table 1). Some minor divergence were found on about one third of the items looked at; e.g. Canadians were more likely by 5% to engage in peaceful demonstrations in 1991, but the difference increased to 11% by 2006 (Table 2). I found no change either way on the remaining questions.

Table 2: Participation in peaceful demonstrations



So, there we have it. Canadians and Americans are not identical, but they are a lot alike, especially if we look at the general populations as a whole (rather than the elites), and especially if we focus on English Canada and the US North. I don't see these patterns changing any time soon. ♦

Image behind Ed Grabb is the cover art from his book *Regions Apart*, depicting the 'four distinct regional sub-societies' in Canada.

Canada Foundation for Innovation Awards (CFI) given to our Faculty...

Recently the Department has received funding for renovations to the building that will help in creating new, state-of-the-art research space. The money comes from a cooperative arrangement between the Federal Government (Canada Foundation for Innovation, Leaders Opportunity Fund) and the BC Provincial government (the BC Knowledge Development Fund).

One project is headed by **Wendy Roth:**

“Infrastructure Security for Private, Sensitive Research on the Social Impact of Genetic Ancestry Testing”

In this project Professor Roth is examining various sociological features of the new genetic testing industry. She will explore how genetic ancestry testing affects conceptions of race and ethnicity, racial attitudes, and interracial interactions.

The second project is led by **Daniyal Zuberi** which will see the creation of a *“Qualitative Data Analysis Lab for Policy Research”*

This new research space will allow Dr. Zuberi to continue his comparative Canada-U.S. research on social policy, urban poverty, immigration, low-wage work, and reducing health-care-related infection rates.

In combination these two projects represent an infusion of over \$300,000 in space renovation for the Department creating two specialized labs that will enhance our collective ability to undertake leading edge research and help in furthering student training.



Canada Foundation for Innovation
Fondation canadienne pour l'innovation

Anne Martin-Matthews receives Honorary Degree for Contributions to the Fields of Ageing and Health

The following honorary citation was published by the Press Office, Newcastle University, following the ceremony December 6, 2010.

Anne Martin-Matthews is a pioneer in the social science of ageing. As society ages, so ageing becomes fashionable. Baby-boomers, obsessed with youth when young themselves, are now thinking more about later years, as the boom threatens to bust the generations spawned since. 60 is the new 40 – some of us will be 39 forever.

But Professor Martin-Matthews started to think about social issues around ageing a long time ago – when most of her generation of sociologists were researching gender, sexuality, race or class. These dimensions are relevant to older people too, but age was not on most agendas then. Anne's interests were stimulated by her PhD supervisor, Victor Marshall, who offered the very first course in the sociology of ageing just as Anne started her own PhD in the early 70s.

Professor Martin-Matthews' interests have always revolved around the theme of 'family' and the variety of extended, contracted, amended and protracted roles that adults play in families – as husbands and wives, carers and recipients of care. Indeed her interest has been not so much in roles, as in their transitions – particularly in later life – from employee to pensioner, from wife to widow. Her interest in these issues was kindled in part by experiences as a child observing her grandfather in Newfoundland, and then as a lodger, and later partial carer for, an elderly widowed woman who had already coped with the loss of her own child. Professor Martin-Matthews has also researched home carers and the kind of daily transition faced by those with dual responsibilities – the professional carer who returns home from work each night to assume the role as carer of their own relatives.

Anne was born and educated in Newfoundland where her first degree was in Sociology and Anthropology. She used these disciplines and her personal experience of relocation in her Masters thesis at McMaster University in Ontario, about the transitions involved in relocating Newfoundlanders in the city of Hamilton. Relocation remained the nominal focus of her PhD in Sociology there too, largely because the funders of it – the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation – insisted that it should. But she was focussing her interests on ageing even then. From McMaster, which later honoured her

as Distinguished Alumnus in 1997, she gained her first lectureship in the department of Family Studies at the University of Guelph. She remained there for 20 years.

That's when she began explicitly to research role transitions at key times in life – including later stages such as retirement but also earlier transitions such as that to the state of 'childlessness' by infertile women, or those voluntarily childless. Her dynamism and drive were apparent even before she gained tenure. In the early 1980s the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada offered a competition to fund infrastructure for the development of ageing research in the social sciences. Anne persuaded her Dean that they should put in a bid. This was funded – unusually perhaps as Guelph was not, at that time, a major research university.

So, Anne became the founding director of the University of Guelph's Gerontology Research Centre in 1983, and remained in this role for three terms, until 1995. At Guelph too she was funded as one of the co-principal investigators in the Canadian Ageing Research Network – funded through Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence Program – drawing funding from three major funding agencies in Canada. Guelph recognised her leadership and outstanding research contributions with a Macdonald Institute Centenary Award in 2003.

Her ability to work across disciplines and funding agencies has become crystallised in her

current role, assumed after she joined the University of British Columbia in 1998. Anne now directs the Canadian National Institute of Ageing, one of 13 institutes of the Canadian Institute of Health Research, which is the organisation funding medical research in Canada. She is the only institute Scientific Director who is a social scientist. The Institute is not a research centre but a research facilitator. Its job is to set the research agenda for the nation and then allocate funding to particular areas of strategic priority – for example, 23 million Canadian dollars on mobility in ageing, and 32 million on cognitive impairments. The personal achievement that she herself singles out in this role is working over several years to help shape and secure funding for the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Ageing. This study will follow some 50,000 Canadian women and men who start out from 45 to 85 years old. These volunteers will be followed up at three-year intervals for up to 20 years or more. A fair few transitions can be studied from that!



One key peer review committee noted that the Canadian Longitudinal Study is, “a significant research endeavour of a magnitude that ...has not been seen before in population aging, a wonderful resource for decades to come in terms of factors which influence health in seniors..., [and]...one of a kind even by international standards”.... Newcastle University’s Institute of Ageing and Health enjoys strong links with Anne’s Institute and anticipates linkage with this new longitudinal study too. This is one example of the international as well as interdisciplinary links forged by Professor Martin-Matthews, with Japan and China as well as the UK. Of course this involves a fair bit of travel. Her sociologist husband, whose academic work also takes him away often, says that one month last year their paths crossed just three times – in airports.

Engagement with policy makers and users of research is high on Anne’s agenda too – and she does this extraordinarily widely and successfully – with Canadian governmental ministers one day, explaining problems of ill health in the elderly, and with a self-help group of seniors the next. Her Institute advisory group includes senior citizens, not just scientists. And she organises Cafés Scientifique in several regions, and in both French and English, each year.

On top of all this she keeps her own research going, publishing frequently and collaborating widely with other scholars, including husband Ralph. On Ralph’s 65th birthday she commented that he had finally reached the age she was professionally interested in. He said that after 37 years of marriage he was delighted that he could still interest her at all. ♦

Recipients of Arts Undergraduate Research Awards (AURA):

Richard Carpiano, on his project
“*Neighboring Behavior in Canada: Undergraduate Internship in Quantitative Social Research*”.

Jennifer Chun, on her project
“*Language Travels: Korean Temporary Residents in Vancouver*”.

Neil Guppy, on his project “*Sex Education in the BC High School Curriculum*”.

Wendy Roth, on her project “*Racial Technology: The Social Impact of DNA Ancestry Testing: Test-Taker Study*”.

From our Graduate Student Council of Sociology (GSCS)...

**BEYOND
THE NORM**
Changing and Challenging Perspectives
on Social Research

MAY 6-7 2011
Department of Sociology, UBC

"Thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of grad students, including our great new MA and PhD cohort, 2010/2011 has so far been a fantastic year for the GSCS. In the fall, *Springboards* (our student-run seminar series) allowed grad students to help each other out with funding applications, comprehensive exams, and their life/work balance. *Springboards* continues this term with an exciting line-up of students who will share and workshop their ongoing work.

We are also working to organize our **Annual Graduate Conference**, which will take place in the department on May 6 and 7 and is entitled 'Beyond the Norm: Changing and Challenging Perspectives on Social Research'. For details and panel information, check the new GSCS website <http://blogs.ubc.ca/ubcsocigrads/> to stay in touch with us.

This year also marked the start of a **Mentorship program** between grad students and sociology majors, to help undergraduates navigate the muddy waters of writing an honors thesis, applying to grad school, and finishing up a degree. This initiative, spearheaded by Kerry Watts, gathered easy support and will hopefully set a precedent for years to come.

As you can see, it has been a busy and exciting year here at the GSCS, and we hope to keep up the good work. If you're not already involved with us, it's always a good time to start. Come to any of our admin meetings (see our calendar on the website) - there are always opportunities to help out, or make new things happen!"

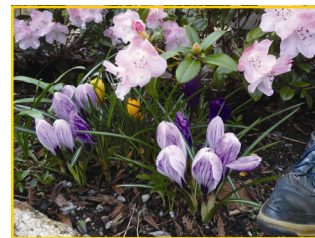
- Hélène Frohard-Dourlent, President, GSCS

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Think Sociology!



With many thanks to our generous recent Donors...

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(Apologies if we have missed anyone who should be on this list!)

Attention Sociology Alumni!

● Would you rather have this sent to you electronically? ● Would you like to receive notices about departmental events such as the Sociology Seminar Series? ● Do you have an address change/correction? Reply to us at socihead@interchange.ubc.ca with your exact preference!

Think Sociology is issued semiannually. Editors: Neil Guppy and Kristin Sopotiuik. Photos: Kristin Sopotiuik,.