



## Thoughts from the Head

**T**he Spring 2017 issue of *Think Sociology!* promises to be a good read. Social trust, inequality, political recognition, careers. These are concepts that drive sociological imaginations, are fundamental issues in Canadian society, and we have included them all here. Cary Wu addresses important questions surrounding immigrant integration in Canada through the lens of social trust. Edward Hadden examines the fundamental question of income inequality and our perceptions of class. You will also find contributions from two former undergraduate students who have moved on from UBC. Amanda Cheong shares her research about statelessness in Malaysia. Jasmine Luk shares her post-university career path, and explains how she avoided “living in a box”.

These contributions all come from graduate and undergraduate UBC Sociology students. Reading them allows me to reflect on the tremendous promise that our students hold. A number of recent student awards also attest to that promise. The Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) has awarded Francois Lachapelle and Patrick Burnett with the Best Graduate Student Paper Award and Noor Hewaidi with the CSA Outstanding Graduating Stu-

dent Award. Nicole Mallette received a Killam Graduate Teaching Award. Jory Smallenberg and Andy Holmes received Wesbrook & Premier Undergraduate Scholarships. Jory also received a UBC Faculty of Arts Student Leadership Award and the Governor General’s Silver Medal for academic achievement.

Our faculty have also been recognized with recent awards. Nathan Lauster’s received the John Porter Book Award for his book, *The Death and Life of Single Family Housing*. UBC awarded Rima Wilkes with the Killam Senior Research Prize, and Wendy Roth received a Killam Research Fellowship. Amin Ghaziani received the Canada Research Chair in Sexuality and Urban Studies and Beth Hirsh received the Canada Research Chair in Law and Inequality. Catherine Corrigan-Brown and Silvia Bartolic

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## 1 Canada / 3 Immigrant Populations

### How Education Explains Inequalities in Trust

**By Cary Wu**  
*Ph.D. Candidate*



**I**mmigration leads to both demographic and cultural diversity. However, researchers who study immigration tend to assume that the cost of this diversity is lower social cohesion, lower social integration, and lower democratic participation. New immigrants are less likely to engage in politics, to participate in civic associations, and to trust the generalized other. For this reason, there has been considerable debate about the merits of immigration, especially from non-western societies.

In the past year, Canada has welcomed more than 320,000 permanent residents including 46,700 refugees, the highest immigrant intake in decades. This immigration level is likely to remain as Canada’s 2017 Immigration Plan and also has a target of 300,000 new immigrants. In

a country with a population of 35 million, does the growing number of immigrants engender problems for solidarity and democracy in Canada?

In the case of generalized trust, recent studies suggest that Canada’s new immigrants are as, if not more, trusting than the native-born population. Here I investigate further 1) how immigrants who have landed through different programs trust differently than Canadian natives, and 2) how education helps explain the gap in trust inequality between immigrants and natives.

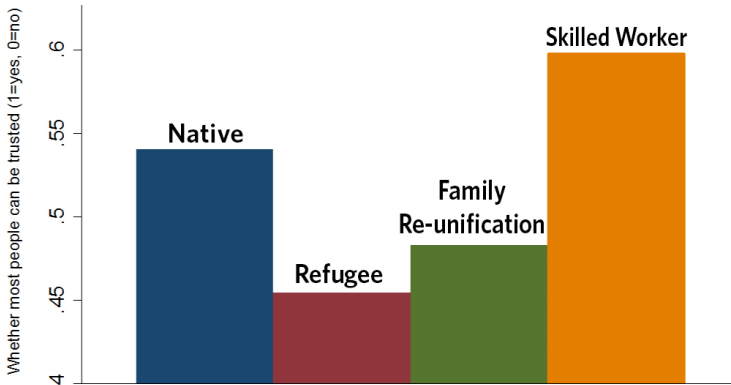
To do this, I make use of the recent 27th cycle of Canadian General Social Survey (CGSS, 2013). In 2013, with a theme on social identity, the CGSS surveyed a total of 18,740 native-born Canadians and 8,046 recent immigrants. I measured generalized trust using the standard question “whether most people can be trusted” with the response coded as yes/no categories. In general, Canada’s immigrants come in through either the refugee, family reunification, or skilled worker programs. As a mediator

*Continues on next page...*

to explain trust inequalities between immigrants of different landed programs and the native-born population, education is measured through whether a respondent has less than high school education, high school education, post-secondary diploma, or university degree.

**Figure 1**

**Trust Inequalities  
Between Immigrants of Different Landed Program and Natives**



**Figure 1** shows that skilled workers trust the most (about 60% say most people can be trusted), followed by the native-born population (54%). Refugee and family re-unification immigrants trust significantly less with a level of 45% and 48%, respectively. However, if we group immigrants all together, we find that immigrants are as trusting as the native-born population (53.4% vs. 54.03%). Current studies have a tendency to treat immigrants as a monolithic group. Figure 1 clearly demonstrates that it is important to consider the specific nature of immigrants.

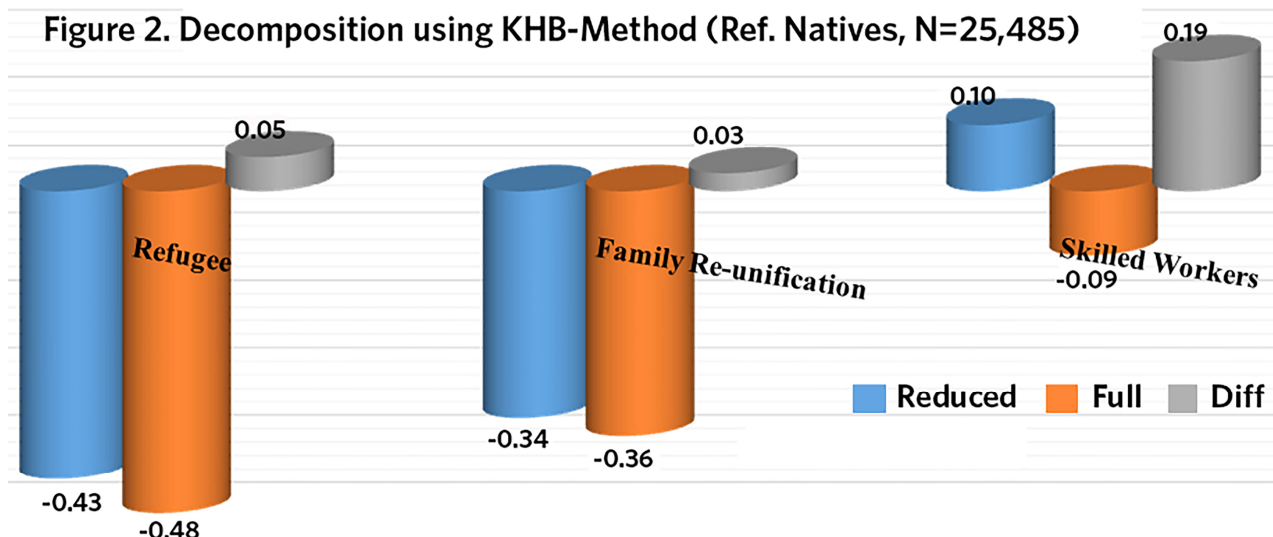
Why do some immigrants trust more while others trust less than the native-born population? To answer this question, I consider how education explains trust inequities across groups. I also control for demographic variables including gender, age, household income, marital status, religion, urban residence and region. From the total effect, the analysis can disentangle both the direct effect of immigrants of different landed programs as well as the indirect effect that goes through education for each group.

**Figure 2** shows specifically how refugee immigrants, family re-unification immigrants, and skilled workers trust more or trust less than natives (Full) and how education mediates the gaps (Diff). The native-born population is omitted in the figure as the reference group. The negative direct effects (Full) across all three groups tell us that immigrants, regardless of how they landed, trust less than the native-born population. The positive indirect effects (Diff) across all three groups tell us that education helps reduce the trust inequalities between immigrants and the native-born. The combination of direct and indirect effect is the total effect (Reduced). The total effect demonstrates that, while refugees and family re-unification immigrants still trust less than local natives, because they are often highly educated, skilled workers trust significantly more.

Hence, for refugees and family-unification immigrants, it might be not that they bring in a culture of distrust, rather, it is that, because they are less educated they typically must occupy a lower power position in the new country. Powerless immigrants are less likely to take risk and therefore trust less. However, since most of Canada's immigrants are skilled workers, they are highly educated and therefore very trusting. To a large extent, it is education that helps the majority number of immigrants overcome their powerless status in Canada. In other words, Canada's point systems help select more trusting immigrants from all over the world.

Immigrants are diverse. They come from different cultures, and different countries could generate different types of immigrant due to their unique immigration policy. Depending on the contexts of country of origin as well as the country of destination, some immigrants might exhibit lower levels of trust while others exhibit higher. Therefore, it is not right to label them as a group of low trust citizens, and it is not right to regard them as a cultural threat. For Canada, while we continue welcoming refugees and encourage family reunification, there is also an urgent need to help those in the refugee and family reunification classes gain power through education and training programs. ■

**Figure 2. Decomposition using KHB-Method (Ref. Natives, N=25,485)**



# Perceptions of Inequality and Social Class

By Ed Haddon  
Ph.D. Candidate

Income inequality has increased substantially within the last three decades. Indeed, throughout the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it has reached levels not seen in the past fifty years, including in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Growing awareness of income inequality has only intensified with the recent global financial crisis, and as a result this issue has now permeated mainstream discussion. Most agree that wealth inequality across the globe is at historic highs and that increases in income inequality pose a serious threat to societal well-being and stability.<sup>2</sup>

The consequences that flow from increases in inequalities have been widely discussed.<sup>3</sup> One of the consequences of inequality is that it alters what people feel they are entitled to with regards to society. Higher levels of income inequality result in a growing distance between people and often promote a sense of bitterness and resentment towards others which can manifest in terms of less social interaction between individuals. As a result, people may feel powerless and reduce their involvement in civic and other social pursuits;<sup>4</sup> the trustworthiness people perceive in others may be profoundly changed;<sup>5</sup> and in more unequal societies people are less willing to take action which would improve the living conditions of fellow citizens.<sup>6</sup> Studies have also found connections between inequality and various social issues including health,<sup>7,8,9</sup> civic disengagement,<sup>10</sup> and reduced social trust.<sup>11,12</sup> What this growing body of literature reinforces is the notion that inequality has important consequences for societies.

The consequences of income inequality are apparent and one central question has been how individuals from various social positions in society will react. One theory suggests public discontent across the board, including the formation of social movements and the potential for revolutions. Within sociology, the possible effects of individuals' social positions on their perceptions of inequality has been extensively investigated. Indeed, a large body of scholarship has explored how socioeconomic status intersects with other dimensions of inequality, such as those organized around gender and race. That such effects are evident is unquestioned. While I do not seek to downplay these concerns, the focus of my research aims to raise a further issue that has so far received, in my opinion, remarkably little attention: that is the conceptualization and measurement of one's social class and the implications that this has on perceptions of inequality.

Much work on perceptions of inequality in North America tends to harness a one-dimensional measure of socioeconomic status or use education, income, or occupation as ad hoc measures of social class. Notably, scholars produce findings supporting both claims that class has no effect or that it is a salient categorization for understanding perceptions of inequality with research that conflates class with status-based indicators such as education, income or occupation; which are certainly by-products of class but are not wholly determinations of it. Class is the mortar between these aspects and they should be separated if the perceptions people hold of their societies are to be fully understood.

A key reason why there have been conflicting findings with regards to class-related differences in perceptions of inequality is that researchers have often operationalised and conceptualised these aspects differently. This illustrates the need to separate aspects of status and class within an analysis as both are tapping into differing systems of stratification.<sup>13</sup> For example, disadvantaged classes may perceive existing inequalities not to be justified; whereas those with limited education accept these. It is precisely their economic vulnerability in terms of low income, low levels of education, wage dependency and occupational insecurity that may lead disadvantaged classes to disprove of existing levels of inequality.

To my knowledge there are no quantitatively based studies that have investigated subjective inequality using a traditional measure of social class. Such a study could assess the power in employing a socio-

logical based measure of class, while evaluating the continued relevance of Max Weber's class-status distinction.

To rectify the gap in the literature, I employ data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Spanning over two decades, from 1987 to 2009, the data allows me to explore change and stability in attitudes about inequality. While in the early stages of analysis, preliminary results suggest that social class does have a unique effect on people's perceptions of inequality which differs from that of education and occupation. My next steps will be to explore whether the effects of class have increased during periods of rising inequality and if these are stronger in countries where inequality is greater and its effects more evident. (See *Graphs on back cover, following endnotes.*)

***Class is the mortar between these aspects [status-based indicators such as education, income or occupation] and they should be separated if the perceptions people hold of their societies are to be fully understood.***

<sup>1</sup>OECD. 2013. "Crisis squeezes income and puts pressure on inequality and poverty: New Results from the OECD Income Distribution Database." no. Retrieved September 4, 2015 (<http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/OECD2013-Inequality-and-Poverty-8p.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup>Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.



## What Does it Mean to be Uncounted?

By Amanda Cheong

BA Hons. UBC 2012; PhD Candidate, Sociology and Social Policy, Princeton University



Lim Zu Yi is just six years old, and yet he is already more familiar with the inside of a court room than most adults. On a sleepless night before March 16, the date of his latest judgment at the Malaysian Court of Appeal, Zu Yi uttered to himself, as he does every time before such appearances, “I pray, pray, pray that I will get my IC [identity card].”

Zu Yi is stateless. Due to the peculiarities of Malaysian law and the circumstances of his birth, he belongs to no country and is barred from many spheres of public life. Zu Yi was born out of wedlock in Kuala Lumpur to a Malaysian man and a Thai woman, who abruptly left the household when Zu Yi was only six months old. The law stipulates that illegitimate children are considered to follow the nationality of their mother only. Despite his best efforts, however, Zu Yi’s father has been unable to regain contact with their child’s biological mother, who had allegedly returned to Thailand. This is beside the point anyway, since Zu Yi has spent his entire life in Malaysia, is being raised by his Malaysian family, and has no meaningful connections to any other country.

On the morning of March 16, Zu Yi’s prayers went unanswered again. The Court of Appeal upheld the High Court’s 2014 decision to reject Zu Yi’s initial claim for Malaysian citizenship. In their view, his citizenship status is beyond dispute: taking into account the marital status of his parents and his mother’s nationality, Zu Yi is Thai. Of course, since his mother is no longer in the picture, it is not practically possible for Zu Yi to actually inherit Thai nationality from her.

Lawyers for Liberty, the local human rights NGO representing Zu Yi and his family, plan to appeal once more. In the meanwhile, Zu Yi’s legal status and future remain uncertain.



Siti was born to unauthorized Filipino immigrants around 1991 in Sabah, the state with the highest poverty and in-migration rates in Malaysia. Because Siti’s mother was afraid of getting arrested by the police, and because she could not afford the hospital fees anyway, Siti was delivered at home. Consequently, Siti’s birth was never registered. No country, neither Malaysia nor the Philippines, knows that she legally exists. Without papers, Siti could not go to school while growing up, or find

formal employment. One morning in 2011, on the way to her job as a cleaner, Siti was caught by the police and placed in *rumah merah* (translated from Malay as the “red room,” referring to an immigration detention centre) for an entire month before being deported to the Philippines. This was her first time in her parents’ country.

For a year, Siti tried to regularize her status in the Philippines, with the goal of returning to her home in Sabah to be with her family. This proved to be a difficult task, as she had no documentary proof that she was Filipino. She paid an agent all of the money she could accumulate to help her get a passport, but he ended up running away, leaving her in desperate circumstances. As a last resort, an uncle smuggled her illegally back to the east coast of Sabah by boat. She continued her journey by land for over 300km more before finally being reunited with her parents, brothers, and sisters.

Documents are always on Siti’s mind. Without a birth certificate, passport, or identity card, she is constantly at risk of being harassed and extorted by the authorities, and of being deported again to a country that she is effectively a stranger to. Though in her heart she feels that she is Sabahan, she does not know where she legally is meant to belong.



**Students on the way to school at an informal learning center in Sabah. Many children of Filipino and Indonesian descent born in Sabah lack vital documents to prove their existence.**

These are just two of the countless people worldwide who I consider in my dissertation to be “uncounted.” Much research in sociology draws attention to how governments manage their populations by sorting them into institutionalized social categories—citizen/alien, black/white, male/female, minor/adult—which come with varying degrees of membership and entitlement. In my research, I focus on

an under-theorized spectrum—that which spans the counted (those whose lives are officially recorded and therefore recognized) and the uncounted (those who are excluded from governments’ registration systems entirely). The vulnerabilities that come with being completely uncounted are unique in comparison to other forms of subjugation. Uncounted peoples exist outside of the social structure: there is no category that they are relegated to. Not only are they at greater risk of exclusion from mainstream institutions, such as education, healthcare, and the formal labour market, but their marginalization also often occurs without recourse to protection from any governmental body.

Through my fieldwork in Malaysia, I will be examining the causes and consequences of being uncounted. I

## Assessing Fidel

By Bob Ratner, *Professor Emeritus*

*The death of Fidel Castro several months ago was followed by a volley of blistering diatribes against the 'Maximum Leader', including one scurrilous guest editorial in a December edition of The Vancouver Sun. They published only the first paragraph of my response (online), pleading space restrictions. My gratitude to the Sociology Newsletter for providing a wide audience for the entire piece. I think it deserves thoughtful consideration for those weighing the perils for and against democracy.*

It grieves me to read the vitriolic, unbalanced criticisms of Fidel Castro by some commentators in the wake of his death. His detractors seem to forget the murderous dictatorship, bolstered by U.S. Mafia bosses, that Castro's revolutionary movement supplanted. How, really, could Castro have led Cuba for 50 years, staved off U.S. military aggression, and endured periods of economic peril, had the people not been for him? How did a poor country, made poorer by the senseless U.S. embargo, survive to achieve the heights of national literacy, free education, and expert medical care? Why is Fidel lionized by so many world leaders, including our own, if he was the villain depicted by his opponents, who chose exile rather than accept the necessary changes wrought by the Cuban revolution?

My first impressions of Castro came in 1959 when he and his cigar-chomping confederates arrived in jeeps and battle fatigues on the campus of Columbia University in N.Y.C. where I was an undergraduate. One of my professors at the time was C. Wright Mills, a renowned iconoclast who was soon to write a book defending the Cuban Revolution (Listen Yankee, 1960) and whose teaching favourably inclined me toward the changes taking place in Cuba. Over the course of my career as a UBC Sociology professor, I made two visits to Cuba, one as a member of a group of North American criminologists on a study tour of the Cuban criminal justice system (1985), and the other as a participant in an international academic conference (2000). On the first visit, our group was introduced to diverse examples, in action, of the courts, prisons, and civil and political systems, including lengthy interviews with key officials. I asked hard questions, sometimes upsetting my American colleagues, but our hosts answered with alacrity, insisting smartly that "There are no indiscreet questions, only indis-

creet answers." Our tour ended with an outdoor evening dialogue with one of the many Neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. A party militant (or 'professional') conducted the group meeting, but all of our questions were answered by the assembled villagers with gusto and apparent candor. If it was staged, they were wonderful actors. On our last day, my Canadian colleague and I visited a family at their home in Havana. The husband had once taught at UBC, moved to Cuba, married, and had three children, one of whom had just returned from Kiev University to help celebrate his parents' twenty-fifth anniversary. Soon after we arrived for the interview, a party member, described as a friend, knocked on the door and joined us for the full three hours. This seemed a little ominous at first, but we had an animated discussion where no question went unanswered. Naturally I wondered about the presence of a party official at each of the two occasions---whether the situations were being monitored in some respects so that the 'wrong' messages were not conveyed to outsiders. Even so, the exchanges were frank and nuanced, portraying a Cuban society that was still in struggle but thankfully liberated from an ugly past.

The academic conference that I attended in 2000 came not long after the 'special period' during which Cuba suffered new privations after the loss of its bulwark Soviet Union trade partner. Now buses and taxis had returned to the streets and Cuba was no longer reeling economically, although the U.S. embargo continued. But there were still blighted areas in Havana; even in the convention centre flustered delegates emerged from bathroom stalls that were without toilet paper, an unaffordable luxury in many public places. Yet most of the people I spoke with told me that they loved Fidel and would fight to preserve the values enshrined by the revolution. Of course, they wanted more in the way of material comforts and hoped for some eventual political reforms. Both are now achievable if Fidel's critics would relent and enable change to take a salutary course. ■



challenge two taken-for-granted assumptions: 1) that the expansion of identification and registration systems is always in the interest of states; and 2) that underdevelopment is an adequate explanation for why uncouneted populations persist today. I point out that, in many cases, it is no accident that some people get left out. Who counts, and how they are counted, are inherently political decisions that are often part of larger strategies of exploitation and exclusion.

*Note: I am so thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the Think Sociology! newsletter. I am ever grateful to the UBC Sociology Department for fostering my commitment to issues of legal status and migration, and continue to use the theoretical and methodological lessons learned in undergrad in my current work as a graduate student. I miss Vancouver very much—even my old hour-long commutes on the 25 to campus, and the puddle-ridden trek from the bus loop to ANSO! I can be reached at [ar-cheong@princeton.edu](mailto:ar-cheong@princeton.edu).* ■



# I Majored in Sociology and I Didn't End Up Living in a Box

By Jasmine Luk

When I was seventeen years old, my parents pushed me to study Business at university because they believed that Business majors were the most employable. I applied to the Business programs at UBC and SFU and was successfully admitted to both. When I wanted to change my program of choice to Arts, my parents were rather worried. When I took SOCI 100 with Dr. Neil Guppy and discovered that I was deeply interested in this subject called sociology, my parents were even more worried. It was exactly ten years ago when I declared my major, and at that time I joined the Facebook group, "I Picked a Major I Like, and One Day I Will Probably Live in a Box". Fortunately, things didn't exactly pan out the way that I had imagined it would.

During my time at UBC, I gained invaluable critical thinking as well as interpersonal skills through formal courses, the co-op program, and involvements with various student associations (including the SSA), mentorship programs, undergraduate conferences, and other opportunities. The co-op program is one of the best things that I took part in at UBC, and each co-op work term served as a building block that helped me gain the skills to qualify for more advanced work in the next co-op term. I started my first co-op term as a Program Assistant with the City of Vancouver, where I went door-to-door conducting in-person surveys and getting chased by a few dogs along the way. Nonetheless, this helped me gain hands-on research experiences from design and implementation to analysis and reporting. During my SOCI 380 (Survey Research) class, Dr. Sean Lauer referred me for an opportunity to assist Dr. Guppy with conducting an internal review of the Coordinated Arts Program. Under Dr. Guppy's guidance and mentorship, I learned a lot of soft skills and gained experiences analyzing data using the statistical software SPSS outside of a classroom environment. The SPSS experiences later allowed me to qualify for my final co-op position as a Research and Policy Analyst with a federal government department in Ottawa, where I then had the opportunity to listen to Associate Deputy Ministers and see policy making in action.

In 2011, I graduated with an Honours in Sociology and minor in International Relations; but I could not be bridged directly into my dream public service job as I had hoped. The federal government administration at the time announced a target of eliminating over 19,000 federal public service jobs over a three-year period, and public service opportunities became incredibly scarce. I worked in the non-profit sector for a period of time until I came across a UBC LinkedIn posting for a four-month temporary Assistant-level position with Citizenship & Immigration Canada

(CIC). With a leap of faith, I decided to take the opportunity.

CIC has always been one of the federal departments that I wanted to work for because immigration policy is a primary research interest of mine. In my Honours thesis ("*Who Works at Your Local Tim Hortons? - An Examination of Immigrant Deskilling in Metro Vancouver*"), I looked at the barriers and pathways of post-secondary educated immigrants who were working in secondary labour markets in Vancouver, with guidance from my incredibly supportive thesis supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Chun. As I developed my career at CIC over the next few years, I experienced humbling moments when I worked in front-line operations and spoke face-to-face with refugees and newcomers who shared stories of the reasons driving their decisions to come to Canada. I conducted interviews with over a thousand citizenship applicants, followed by making decisions on their applications; and I had the privilege of celebrating with rooms of excited new Canadians as they attended their citizenship ceremonies.

Eventually, I shifted from working in a program operational capacity to a more analytical role as I took on the position of a Security Analyst with the RCMP; and I currently work in the Analysis & Occurrence, Planning & Reporting division at Transport Canada. This past year, I decided that I now have a solid foundation with the Canadian public service and it is a good time for me to broaden my perspectives and further develop myself both personally and professionally. In fall 2017, I will be attending the Masters of Public Policy program at the University of Cambridge in the U.K., and I look forward to the new insights that I will be able to gain there.

In case you are a new graduate or if you are just unsure what career paths you can pursue with a Sociology major, I hope that my experiences can give you an example of the post-university pathway of someone who once thought they would end up living in a box. I was also once in those shoes, worried about the marketability of an Arts degree and uncertain about the various unknowns. Looking back, I am glad that I decided to pursue a major that I was truly interested in. Whether I will one day have increasing capacities to shape government policies or whether life takes me in a completely unexpected direction – I hope I will always be able to see the world with a vivid sociological imagination! ■



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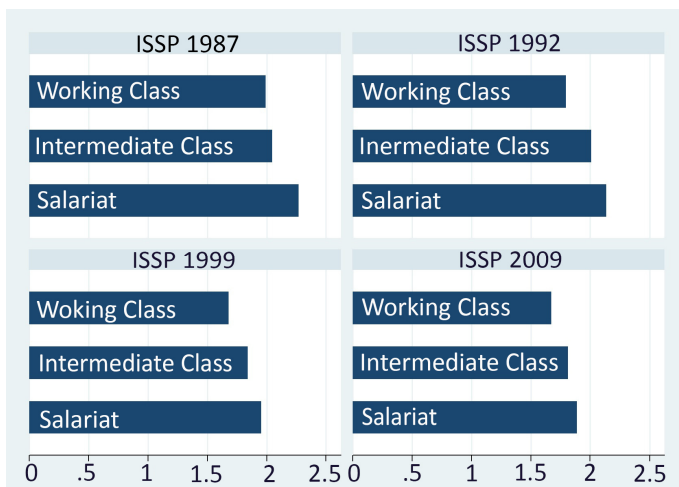
were both recognized by UBC as outstanding teachers with Killam Teaching Prizes. I was fortunate to receive the Angus Reid Applied Sociology Award from the Canadian Sociological Association.

This will be the last newsletter with me as Acting Head of Sociology. For two years, it has been wonderful to lead such a successful department. Our faculty are leaders in their fields and truly collegial, our students are inspiring, and our staff are a joy to work with. The Fall 2017 issue will see Professor Guy Stecklov take over as Department Head of Sociology. As I leave my role and consider the near and distant future of our department, I see great promise. ■

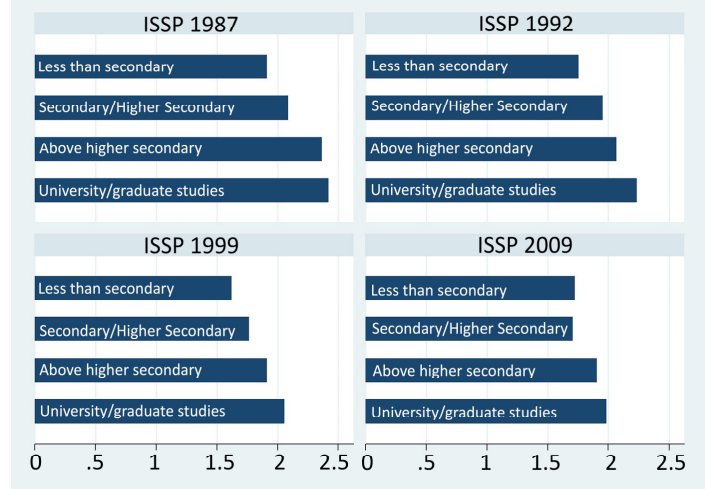


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- <sup>4</sup>Lancee, Bram, and Herman G. Van de Werfhorst. 2012. "Income inequality and participation: A comparison of 24 European countries." *Social Science Research* no. 41 (5):1166-1178.
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Graph 1: Mean responses of the various classes to a question which asks respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree that income inequalities in their societies are too large. The inequality variable is coded such that higher values means less agreement that inequalities are too large. We can see that across all years the working classes (most disadvantaged) and intermediate classes are more critical of inequalities in their societies in comparison to the salariat class (the most advantaged).



Graph 2: Mean responses of various education levels. What this shows is that those with lower levels of education tend to be more critical of inequalities in their societies more so than those with higher levels of education. This trend has persisted throughout the years.

Going to the ASA in August?  
Join us! at our annual  
UBC & UofT  
Joint Reception at the ASA  
2017



Monday Aug 14  
6:30-8:00 p.m.

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